

Writing an Effective Referral Request for Clients with Traumatic Brain Injury

What NOT to do: When you get in touch with a neuropsychologist, do not limit your referral request to something simple and non-specific, such as, “Please do a neuropsychological assessment on my client; I think he/she might have a TBI.”

What to do instead: When you do contact a neuropsychologist, let them know the general nature of the problem, “My client might have a TBI,” and then go on to ask very specific questions about issues that are relevant to the capacities your client would need to assist you & consent to a plea:

Sample questions that might be useful:

Does this person have sleep difficulties, which are common in TBI, and if so, did you test him/her on a day when he/she had had a sufficient amount of sleep?

What is the specific nature of this person’s memory problems?

How much difficulty does this person have learning new information?

How well can he/she understand and remember complex statements?

Can he/she remember sequences of events?

Can he/she remember sequences of events from 2 years ago?

How does he/she do on different tests of working memory?

How well does this person do on measures of social cognition? Is he/she overly trusting?

How would you, as a neuropsychologist, judge this person’s vulnerability to undue influence?

Can this person tell, as well as anyone can, when someone is deceiving them?

How well does this person do on measures of generativity, such as fluency or object uses tests?

How does he/she do on tests of environmental dependency?

How does he/she do on measures of impulse control?

How are his/her emotion regulation skills, and how will/did you assess this?

How was his/her mood when you tested him/her?

How would you, as a neuropsychologist, judge this person’s ability to imagine options other than the ones presented to him/her?

How likely do you think this person is to just go along with things suggested to him/her, that is, how acquiescent do you think this person is?

How is his/her ability to pay attention to something when he/she has distractions?

How is his/her ability to track a conversation – to understand and remember what was said?

How is this person’s ability to give appropriate weight to potential positive and negative outcomes – can you tell anything about how he/she would do on something like the Iowa Gambling task?

How likely is it that this person is malingering, and doesn’t really have a brain injury? In assessing this, please use multiple tests of effort/symptom validity.

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