This document is to help the psychiatrist or therapist at the GCSU Counseling Center in determining whether your child has a problem with attention and, if so, what might be behind it. You have had the opportunity to see your child grow up and have a long-term perspective that we need. We appreciate your taking the time to complete this form.

Not every problem with attention comes from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Sometimes anxious thoughts interfere with a student’s ability to concentrate. Other times depression can result in reduced thinking abilities that can look like ADHD. Sometimes there is something going on in a student’s life, like a loss or major change, that occupies their attention temporarily. There are some students who simply have brains that are wired differently and their attentional problem is part of a bigger picture that involves them thinking differently. These students may have unusual strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others.

Sometimes a student comes to us complaining of depression or anxiety and we find that attentional problems are at the root of their problems. Some students become anxious about their performance because they cannot study properly and remember what they have read. They feel like they are not going to make it. There are students who have primary attentional problems who have become depressed because their difficulties in keeping up with others contribute to their feeling like an outsider or failure.

Sometimes when we hear students complain that their parents are too protective, we suspect that the parents have a sixth sense and can tell their child needs something extra from them and respond to that need almost without having to think about it.

Sometimes when a student has a brain that is wired differently it affects their ability to interact. There are many variations on wiring and the symptoms fall all across a range. Here are some examples. Please circle the ones that seem to fit your child. Feel free to write comments out to the side.

They tend to have very little eye contact with you or others.

They understand that you care about them but when you go to hug them or touch them, they don’t like it.

While they will respond to other people, they don’t seem to want to initiate social interactions with them.

They keep their observation of other people to themselves and don’t seem to want to share what they think about other people.

Sometimes, they will get too close to someone they are speaking to and not realize they have moved in to their personal space. They may be overly talkative about a special interest of theirs. When they do talk they talk too much about one thing.

Usually, however, they actually prefer to be alone.

They don’t like to talk about themselves either and never have.

They don’t seem to be aware of the things happening around them and don’t seem interested.

They have problems with cues that make it difficult for them in social situations.

They have difficulty in reading your facial expression or body language. So they see a person with a sad face but don’t realize they are sad. If someone is getting upset at something they are doing, they can’t tell they are because they can’t read their facial expression.

They may not understand jokes or figures of speech.

They are not selfish but, try as they might, they don’t seem to understand other’s feelings. What seems obvious to you does not seem obvious to them.

Their problem with understanding others can lead to them be vulnerable to being used by others because they are overly trusting and can’t figure out other’s motives.

Sometimes they say things that they observe about other people that hurt the person’s feelings but seems like just an innocent observation on their part. They can’t see why it was inappropriate for them to say it.

Sometimes they have problems regulating their emotions and get irritable and frustrated easily.

They tend to do the same things over and over each day and love the routine. They get upset if you try to change it.

They have a very deep knowledge of one or two particular subjects they like.

Being on a team never interested them.

In looking at the problems that come mainly from deficits in attention, students may have had many of these symptoms their whole life but because they were bright and worked hard it was not evident that they had a problem. Many students who have ADHD are not restless or hyperactive, but just day dream and so don’t come to anyone’s attention. People have the mistaken notion that a child with ADHD has to always be going like an engine, is obnoxious, and not smart. That is not true.

In college there is much less structure and no one to prompt them. The things they have to study are more complex and the material comes very fast ­­­­---so fast that they can’t make up for it by studying for an extra-long time. In high school the teacher taught the book in class. In college the teacher expects them to read the book and elaborates on the book with added materials but may not cover the same material. Instead of just giving back memorized data that was given to them, they are now expected to use the things they have learned to draw complicated conclusions. All this makes college a different animal than high school and deficits become more obvious. Even straight A high school students can have ADHD or brain wiring problems. It is not about being smart or not.

When your child was in elementary or middle school, did you notice that they did not pay attention to details and so often made careless mistakes even when they knew the answer?

Did you find that if you had to tell them one chore to do and have them come back for directions on the next, because if you gave them three things to do they would never remember all three?

Did they have problems following your directions? If you told them how to get somewhere, could they remember the directions?

Little kids blurt things out, but did you notice that they still do?

Little kids have trouble waiting in line but did you notice that waiting in line for them seems even now to be torture?

Did everyone like your child because they were bubbly and vivacious and a little scatter brained in a funny way?

Did you and their friends find yourselves asking them,” Are you listening to me?”

Students with attentional problems often have procrastination as part of their symptoms. They look lazy but that is not it. They put off starting things and have trouble finishing things they started. Does that sound like your child?

Did you find yourself having to help them stay organized because they were so unorganized?

Kids with attentional problem lose interest in what they are reading if it is not a leisure book. This makes them not want to do their homework and when they do it they may get up several times . Did you find yourself having to get them back on task a lot?

When they had some kind of project that required organization, did you find they really needed your help both in getting it started and in planning and then in persisting to finish it?

Did you find that you had to make sure they were in a quiet place to study and that little things seemed to distract them that did not distract their brother or sister?

Do they tell you they have to reread things over and over?

Do they seem to have problems remembering what they have read even then?

Do they have a good bit of difficulty doing things that require multiple steps or remembering things and putting them together?

Can they simply watch a long tv show without doing something else at the same time?

Did their teacher say that they often talked to their neighbor in class and seemed bored?

Have they lost friends because they blurted out something or forgot something or just seemed too impatient for their friends?

Is there anyone in your family that seems to have had many of these symptoms as well?

Was there anything about their birth that may have caused them problems?

Have they been in a sports or car accident that resulted in a blow to the skull?

In looking at how anxiety might be a factor, which of these things seems true of them these days?

They seem to always be worrying about something.

They have felt panicky and gotten short of breath or shaky or felt a sense of dread and heart palpitations?

Do they realize their worrying is not reasonable but still can’t stop?

Are they grumpy a lot?

Do they have tight muscles in their neck/ and shoulders and maybe sometimes have headaches from it?

Are they tired a lot?

Which of these symptoms of depression do they seem to be showing these days?

Can’t get to sleep and aren’t rested? Wake up in the middle of the night and can’t get back to sleep?

Have lost interest in things they used to like and tell you they don’t enjoy things much anymore?

Are faking it but you can tell when they really aren’t themselves and don’t want to be around their friends.

Everything seems harder for them, even things that were easier just last year.

They don’t want to get up in the morning.

They don’t want to go out with you and do things.

They seem to feel guilty and put themselves down a lot.

Their friends have gotten tired of asking them to do things or their friends seem to be hovering over them out of worry.

They either do comfort eating or they just don’t want to eat as much and don’t seem to enjoy eating.

They can’t concentrate and give up quicker than they used to on tasks.

They cry easily, or they are easily upset or irritated and seem to look on the negative side of things.

They say indirect comments about how life seems like too much hassle.

Another factor we have not mention is the effect of marijuana on studying. Do they use it?

Please use the rest of this page and the backs of the pages to write anything else you would like to that you think might help us in our decision making. Thank you for your time and effort.