



Guidance for the Use of Screening Instruments for Co-occurring Mental Health Conditions in NYS OASAS Certified Programs

Introduction:

OASAS program regulations require that patients be screened for co-occurring mental health conditions. Each program should use validated mental health screening instruments for this purpose. Mental health screening instruments are intended to identify the possible presence of a mental health condition that requires further assessment.

Most screenings are self-administered, can be completed in under ten minutes, and, with few exceptions, are available in multiple languages. They are typically administered during the admission process so mental health conditions can be quickly identified and arrangements for further assessment be made promptly. If, on further clinical assessment, a patient reports mental health symptoms that were not identified by a screening instrument(s) administered during the admission process, the same screening instrument(s) may be administered again to help identify the possible presence of mental health condition. Administering a different screening instrument(s) that more directly addresses the reported symptoms is another option in this circumstance.

Validated screening instruments have been categorized into required mental health domains and non-required health domains. General Mental Health screening instruments ask questions about all required mental health domains and should be administered to every patient admitted to a program. If a General Mental Health Screening instrument does not include a question about suicide, the program must administer a separate suicide screening instrument as well. Further detailed guidance on policies and protocols for suicide screening, assessment, and risk reduction is forthcoming, and will supplement and supersede this guidance as it relates to suicide screening.

If a program does not use a General Mental Health screening instrument, they must administer a separate screening instrument for each of the required mental health domains. In addition, programs may choose to administer screens for any individual required and/or non-required mental health domain to obtain more information about mental health conditions specific to the population they serve and/or the type of services they provide, in order to help guide the need for further assessment.

The required mental health domains for adults and for adolescents are:

- a. Suicide
- b. Depression, including perinatal depression when indicated
- c. Trauma
- d. Anxiety



The non-required health domains for adults and adolescents are:

- a. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
 - b. Bipolar Disorder
 - c. Eating Disorders
 - d. Psychosis (screening instrument for Adults, only)
 - e. Functioning and impairment (screening instrument for Adults, only)
- To have uniformity in the mental health screening instruments utilized by the programs, a list of recommended, validated mental health screening instruments has been compiled for adult and adolescent populations and links to these screening instruments may be found at the end of this Guidance.

Policies and Procedures:

Programs should develop policies and procedures around the use of mental health screening instruments that include:

- when they are administered,
- who may administer the non-self-report instruments,
- what training will be given to those who administer the instruments,
- what procedures are or will be in place to arrange further assessment for positive screens, **AND**
- an established timeline by which urgent mental health issues, such as suicidal ideation/risk, and non-urgent mental health issues are further evaluated by licensed or otherwise qualified clinical staff.

These procedures would include further assessment for urgent and non-urgent mental health conditions, including but not limited to suicide risk per other OASAS guidance.

Screening for General Mental Health problems and/or the required domains ***should occur first***. Although programs may choose to screen individually for specific domains either instead of, or in addition to a General Mental Health screen, ***it is recommended*** that programs administer one of the following General Mental Health screening instruments:

- a. The Modified Mini Screen (MMS) **OR** the Mental Health Screening Form-III (MHSF-III) **OR** the K10 **OR** the K6 to every adult.
- b. The Pediatric Symptom Checklist 17 Youth (PSC-17-Y) **OR** the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ 17+) to every adolescent.

Programs can use mental health screening instruments for other mental health domains or conditions not listed in this Guidance. If the program uses a screening instrument not approved by OASAS for required or non-required mental health domains, or for other conditions not listed in this guidance, the program should ensure that the screening instrument is evidence based and has been validated by research.

Programs must request permission from OASAS prior to using a screening instrument other than those recommended.

The results of all mental health screening instruments and the actions taken for further evaluation and treatment for patients who screen positive must be documented in the patient record.

Links to recommended, validated mental health screening instruments:

[Adult Screening Instruments](#)

[Adolescent Screening Instruments](#)

Further questions should be emailed to PICM@oasas.ny.gov