Quality Guide: Screening

The *Quality Guide: Screening* is part of a collection of resources developed by the Center for School Mental Health for The SHAPE System that provides guidance to help comprehensive school mental health systems (CSMHSs) advance the quality and sustainability of their services and supports. This guide includes background information on screening for student mental health concerns, possible action steps, and resources to help systems incorporate screening into a long-term quality program plan.

Background:

The *Screening* domain within the *School Mental Health Quality Assessment Survey* queries the number of students enrolled in grades K-12 as the maximum possible number of students screened. The *Screening* domain then includes three overall indicators about screening processes, followed by seven follow-up indicators about specific screening types, as follows:

(1) Number of students screened for mental health concerns of any type; of those, the:
(2) Number of students identified as being at-risk for or having mental health problems that interfered with functioning;
(3) Number of unduplicated students who received a school mental health service within 7 days of identification of being at-risk for or having a mental health problem
(4) Number of students who received depression screening;
(5) Number of students who received suicidality screening;
(4) Number of students who received substance use screening;
(5) Number of students who received trauma screening;
(6) Number of students who received anxiety screening;
(7) Number of students who received general mental health screening;
(8) Number of students who received other mental health screening

> *Screening can be conducted using a systematic tool or process with an entire population, such as a school's student body or grade level(s), to identify individual students at risk for or having a mental health concern.*

Mental health screening is the assessment of students to determine whether they may be at risk for a mental health concern. Screening can be conducted using a systematic tool or process with an entire population, such as a school's student body or grade level(s), to identify individual students at risk for or having a mental health concern. This does <u>not</u> include comprehensive assessments for students already identified as being at-risk for or having mental health problems.

Importance of Screening

Mental health and substance use screening in schools is a foundational element of an overall comprehensive approach to behavioral health prevention, early identification, and intervention services. The early onset and high co-occurrence and recurrence of mental health and substance use disorders as well as the success of early recognition and treatment provide strong evidence for universal screening. Schools are a critical setting for screening, consistent with the larger population health movement toward improving the public health of all students and families. Screening can also be a sensitive and challenging undertaking within individual schools and school districts.

Purposes of Screening
- ✓ Identify students at risk for poor outcomes
- ✓ Identify students who may need monitoring or intervention (i.e., secondary or tertiary)
- ✓ Inform decisions about needed services based on identified needs and strengths
- ✓ Identify personal strengths/wellness as well as emotional distress or mental health risk
- ✓ Assess effectiveness of core social/emotional/behavioral curriculum provided universally

Screening tools or processes in schools may include:
- ✓ Office discipline referrals (ODRs)
- ✓ Teacher/Peer nominations
- ✓ Informal/"Homegrown" screening measures
- ✓ Formalized, validated screening measures

Number of individuals screened is the most common national behavioral health performance indicator. However, a quality improvement process also involves monitoring the number of students who were identified, triaged to, and received services and supports based on screening data. Review the Action Steps below to get started.

Action Steps:
1. Assemble a team.
- o Work within your school mental health team(s) to assemble a team of key family-school-community stakeholders to plan and implement a universal screening process for your specific school or school district.
- o Provide education to stakeholders on the benefits of mental health screening, and discuss their views on how it should be conducted in your school(s) and how the data will be used and shared.

2. Select screening tool(s).
- o Choose tool(s) that is/are reliable, valid, and evidence-based.
- o Consider the following questions:
  - – Can it be purchased for a reasonable cost?
  - – How long does it take to administer and score?
  - – Does it come with ready access to training and technical support for staff?
  - – Does is screen for WHAT we want to know? (e.g., type of mental health risk, age range?)

3. Establish a tracking, triage, and referral system.
- o Identify team(s) that will use screening data to inform decisions about student mental health.
- o Develop a data collection process involving multiple team members and plan for data entry, analysis, and sharing at the outset.
- o Address legal and ethical considerations such as parent/guardian consent, student privacy, and a plan to screen students in a timely manner.
- o Plan to address student mental health concerns identified within school and/or the community. Ensure you have a current resource map of local mental health services before collecting screening data. See the Quality Guide: Needs Assessment and Resource Mapping and associated resources for more information.
- o Evaluate data sharing practices across team members. If barriers are identified, address them

Published by the Center for School Mental Health, Baltimore, Maryland 2018
Permission is given to duplicate this document for professional use, as long as it is unaltered and complete.
This document should be cited as Center for School Mental Health (2018). Quality Guide: Screening.
Retrieved from www.theSHAPESystem.com

with improved processes for HIPAA- and FERPA-compliant data sharing.

4. Collect screening and follow-up data.
o   Implement the screening procedures, share data as appropriate, and utilize data to plan school mental health services and supports at the individual, family, group, classroom, grade level, and/or school-wide level.

Resources:

Websites and Web-based Materials
o   Center for School Mental Health Summary of Free Assessment Measures. (2015). http://csmh.umaryland.edu/media/SOM/Microsites/CSMH/docs/Resources/ClinicianTools/Summary-of-Free-Assessment-Measures---And-Google-Doc-Link-to-Measures-Saved.pdf

o   Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research Screening Briefs. http://www.rti4success.org/resource/screening-briefs

o   Desrochers, J., & Houck, G. (2013). Depression in Children and Adolescents: Guidelines for School Practice. Handout H: Mental Health Screening in Schools. https://www.schoolhealth.com/media/pdf/11892_depressionbook_preview.pdf

o   Screening for Concurrent Substance Use and Mental Health Problems in Youth. https://www.porticonetwork.ca/documents/489955/494758/Screening+for+Concurrent+Substance+Use+and+Mental+Health+Problems+in+Youth+PDF/aa31224c-ff0e-41ff-aeb8-900075fd855c

o   UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools. *Screening Mental Health Problems in Schools.* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policyissues/mhscreeningissues.pdf

Articles and Guides
o   Essex, M. J., Kraemer, H. C., Slattery, M. J., Burk, L. R., Thomas Boyce, W., Woodward, H. R., & Kupfer, D. J. (2009). Screening for childhood mental health problems: Outcomes and early identification. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 50,* 562-570.

o   Godin, C., Mostrom, K., & Aby, M. (2009). *Screening for the possibility of co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder in the behavioral health setting.* Washington, DC: Department of Human Services Chemical and Mental Health Services Administration.

o   SAMHSA Co-Occurring Center for Excellence (2006). *Screening, assessment, and treatment planning for persons with co-occurring disorders* (Overview paper 2). Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Resources.

o   Weist, M. D., Rubin, M., Moore, E., Adelsheim, S., & Wrobel, G. (2007). Mental health screening in schools. *Journal of School Health, 77,* 53-58.