

## VALIDATED MEASURES & STANDARDIZED TOOLS

### DESCRIPTION

Validated measures and standardized tools are used by mental health staff to assess behavioral and emotional risk factors (e.g. substance abuse) as well as [strengths](#) and resiliencies. These measures are one component of providing an accurate clinical assessment of a student's presenting problem.

### RATIONALE

An accurate assessment of mental health issues during the evaluation process will help drive treatment in the right direction and ensure the most positive outcomes for students and their families. Often families or teachers will make inaccurate attributions for the child or adolescent's problem, which can send treatment in the wrong direction; or the student him/herself, will deny problems or not bring them up unless specifically asked. A thorough evaluation includes multiple validated measures of the mental health spectrum. These measures also enhance initial, ongoing, and outcome evaluations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

*The following recommendations offer general guidelines to school mental health providers, schools and stakeholders on selecting and using validated measures and standardized tools. The resource list includes examples and links to various validated measures, including Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Strengths/Resiliencies, and Risk Behavior assessments.*

1. Become familiar with the range of measures and standardized tools used in the school setting. Note their intended purpose, their method of use, and the population for which they are designed (See resource section below).
2. Choose brief and validated measures that complement the school mental health program's scope of practice. Determine purpose of tool and rationale for choosing the particular measure. If a measure is to be used across a program, communicate purpose and rationale to all school mental health staff.
3. Choose which specific instruments will be utilized to screen and assess individual students for various experiences, including risk and protective factors, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, etc.
4. Identify the school mental health staff that will be responsible for screening and/or assessment scoring and follow up.
5. Establish timeline of when screening and/or assessment measures are initially administered and when follow up measurements are taken.
6. If in a school-based health center, conduct an annual [comprehensive risk assessment](#) (e.g., Bright Futures, Pediatric Symptom Checklist, Guidelines for Adolescent Preventive Services Questionnaire).
7. Recognize that with any mental health screening and/or assessment tool, there is a possibility of false positive errors and screens do not allow for definitive statements about a student's problems and need. Screening measures do, however, provide a preliminary indication that something may be wrong.

## REFERENCES

UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools (n.d.) *Screening/Assessing Students: Indicators and Tools*. Retrieved from [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/student\\_tt/topic2-review.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/student_tt/topic2-review.pdf)

The University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health (2008). *School Mental Health Quality Assessment Questionnaire (SMHQAQ) Quality Indicator Power points, Indicators 3,8*. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Clin/QAIRsrc/QAQP>.

Weist, M. (2007) *Mental Health Screening in Schools*, Journal of School Health. Vol. 77 (2). Retrieved from <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/117974090/PDFSTART>.

## RESOURCES

<http://www.nasbhc.org/site/c.jsJPKWPFJrH/b.3015369/>

Specific validated screening measures tools commonly used in school-based health centers.

<http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Clin/QAIRsrc/Free%20Assessments%206.18.08.pdf>

A summary of free assessment measures available online.

<http://lib.adai.washington.edu/instruments/>

Substance Use Screening & Assessment Instruments Database from the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute

<http://www.ahwg.net/resources/toolkit.htm>

Adolescent Provider ToolKit contains screening and intervention tools.

<http://www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/nida/instrumentListing.html>

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Measurement Instrument Collection