Mental Health Screening (6-20 Years)

C&TC Requirements

General
Mental health surveillance is required at all C&TC visits for all ages. This includes obtaining the child and family’s mental health history and the child’s history of exposure to trauma.

Mental health screening using an approved, standardized instrument is recommended for all C&TC visits age 6 through 11 years, and is required for age 12 through 20 years.

Personnel
Mental health surveillance must be completed by a licensed healthcare provider: physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or registered or public health nurse (RN, PHN) who has completed the C&TC Comprehensive Screening training through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

Qualifications for mental health screening are instrument-specific; refer to the instrument’s manual for more information.

Documentation
Document surveillance in the C&TC visit record. Document screening with the name of the instrument, the score, and anticipatory guidance based on the results given to the parent/caregiver or youth. For positive results, document referral and follow-up plan.

For documentation examples, refer to the C&TC Documentation Forms for Providers and Clinics (www.dhs.state.mn.us).

Procedure

Instruments
The following instruments are recommended:

General Mental Health Screening
- Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC)
- Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN-SS)

Depression Screening
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9 or PHQ-9 Modified for Teens)
- PHQ-2, followed by more robust validated screener (e.g., PHQ-9) for positive results; for more details, refer to PHQ-2 Review (www.health.state.mn.us)
- Kutcher Adolescent Depression Scale (KADS)
- Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI-II)
- Children’s Depression Inventory (CDI-2)

Refer to the detailed comparison table of approved mental health screening instruments (mn.gov/dhs)

Referral
It is critical that children with identified concerns receive or be referred for specialized services (Weitzman & Wegner, 2015). Refer to the map of school-linked mental health agencies across Minnesota (www.dhs.state.mn.us), or search for statewide mental health or substance use disorder treatment agencies (www.fasttrackermn.org).

The Psychiatric Assistance Line (PAL) (www.mnpsychconsult.com) or 855-431-6468 is a free service provided by PrairieCare Medical Group and available to health professionals. Any provider can call for mental health triage and referral, or for a consultation with a Board-Certified Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist regarding a patient.
Follow-Up
After making a referral, ensure the young person or family obtained services without encountering barriers, and that the services were effective. Provide more frequent C&TC or other follow-up visits in clinic if needed.

Importance of Mental Health Screening

Professional Recommendations
American Academy of Pediatrics
Standardized depression screening is recommended at all well-child checks beginning at 12 years of age (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021).

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force
It is a Grade B recommendation to screen for major depressive disorder at 12-18 years when systems are in place to ensure accurate diagnosis, psychotherapy, and follow-up (U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, 2016).

Resources
Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Children’s Mental Health Programs and Services (www.mn.gov/dhs)

References

For More Information
The Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) program is administered through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Health.
For questions about this fact sheet or to obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-3650 email health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us.
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