

Provider Notice

To: PerformCare Provider Network
From: PerformCare, Pennsylvania
Date: August 24, 2023
Subject: Treatment for Depression – Toolkit 1

In this three-part series, PerformCare will be distributing resources to assist with diagnosing and treating depression. An educational handout is included with each installation.

Please distribute this material to all clinical staff for use in their work.

Depression affects a wide range of the population, with upward trends across all ages over the past several years. The negative impact that symptoms of depression can have on the quality of life are enormous. Timely and accurate diagnosis, as well as effective and accessible treatment is imperative. When provided as a standalone treatment, antidepressant medication boasts significant efficacy rates, particularly during the acute treatment phase. However, adherence to medication can be a challenge for some Members, meaning that despite what is currently being offered, some PerformCare Members do not continue treatment for the recommended timeframes. Part one of this toolkit provides information on recognizing and screening for depression.

Recognizing and Screening for Depression:Rates of Depression in the United States

[\(https://www.singlecare.com/blog/news/depression-statistics/\)](https://www.singlecare.com/blog/news/depression-statistics/)

Depression is on the rise in the United States. Experiencing symptoms of depression can sometimes be related to thoughts of self-harm and/or self-injury. Routine screening for depression during appointments, regardless of presenting concerns, is best practice.

USPSTF Depression and Suicide in Adults

[\(https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/document/draft-evidence-review/screening-depression-suicide-risk-adults\)](https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/document/draft-evidence-review/screening-depression-suicide-risk-adults)

The United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) is an independent panel with expertise in primary care and prevention. Although this guide was developed for use in primary

care it provides an extensive research base that behavioral health providers may find useful; particularly regarding screening tools. This website provides a summary of the research supporting this recommendation and discusses other areas for consideration (e.g., treatment of depression; population differences; comorbidities).

[USPSTF Screening for Depression in Children and Adolescents](#)

<https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/screening-depression-suicide-risk-children-adolescents>

Similar to the above resource, this website provides information about the routine screening for depression in children and adolescents ages 12- to 18-years of age. Research identifying risk factors (e.g., demographics) that may impact depression and/or suicidal thinking is also presented.

[Patient Health Questionnaire \(PHQ-9\) Depression Screener](#)

https://med.stanford.edu/fastlab/research/imapp/msrs/_jcr_content/main/accordion/accordion_content3/download_256324296/file.res/PHQ9%20id%20date%2008.03.pdf

The PHQ-9 is a widely used self-report measure of depression in individuals ages 12 and above. It is a brief, easily administered instrument with good sensitivity and specificity, which is supported in the literature. Scoring typically takes less than 5 minutes and an interpretation guide is also available. The instrument also screens for self-harm, and responses can provide a good starting point to discuss Member safety and how symptoms of depression may be impacting daily functioning.

[Patient Health Questionnaire - 2 \(PHQ-2\)](#)

<https://www.apa.org/pi/about/publications/caregivers/practice-settings/assessment/tools/patient-health>

The PHQ-2 uses only the first two items of the PHQ-9. This very brief questionnaire can be used as a pre-screening tool that can assist with determining the need for additional assessment, and can be used either in place of, or prior to, the administration of the PHQ-9. That is, responses to these two items will indicate whether to administer the full PHQ-9. This website also provides a brief discussion on the PHQ-2.

[Patient Health Questionnaire - Adolescent](#)

https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/member_resources/toolbox_for_clinical_practice_and_outcomes/symptoms/GLAD-PC_PHQ-9.pdf

This is a version of the PHQ-9 and has been modified specifically for teens (ages 12 – 18). This version, from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, also includes a scoring guide.

[World Health Organization-Five Wellbeing Index \(WHO-5\)](#)

<https://ogg.osu.edu/media/documents/MB%20Stream/who5.pdf>

The WHO-5 is a 5-item measure of emotional well-being/quality of life. The instrument has shown good sensitivity and specificity and can be used for Members ages 9 and older, as well as being available in many languages.

Psychometric validity of the WHO-5 is well established. A review of the literature (located here: [Statistical Foundation of the WHO-5](#)) provides additional information, as well as discusses the use of this tool as an outcome measure.

Please see the handout below for information that can assist with Member education on this topic, can be reviewed with Members during appointment time, left in waiting areas, or included in information that the Member takes home.

What is Depression?

Feeling sad or unhappy is a common emotion that people may experience at times.

For some, these feelings may worsen, or last for long periods of time, leading to a diagnosis of depression.

A person can become vulnerable to depression at various times throughout life. Being depressed can also mean a higher risk for thoughts of self-harm.

Fortunately, there are several options to effectively treat depression. But treatment must start with accurately recognizing and diagnosing depression. You are a valuable partner in helping to recognize and diagnose depression.

Depression is an illness that can affect anyone—regardless of age, race, income, culture, or education. Research suggests that genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors play a role in depression.

Some symptoms of depression include:

- Sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies or activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, or being “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and that do not ease even with treatment
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or attempt to hurt yourself

Depression can affect people differently, depending on their age

Younger adults

with depression are more likely to be irritable, complain of weight gain and may spend a lot of time sleeping, and have a negative view of the future.

Middle-aged adults

with depression may have felt this way other times in their life and may feel sad, hopeless, and have trouble sleeping. Weight changes may also happen. Some people have gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea or constipation.

Older adults

with depression commonly experience sadness or grief or have less obvious symptoms. They may report a lack of emotions rather than a depressed mood. Older adults are more likely to have other medical conditions, or pain, that may cause, or contribute to, depression.

Self-Assessment of Depression

Depression is one of the most common illnesses around the world. It is also on the rise, among people of all ages. Doctors are encouraged to check for signs of depression with all patients even if they are coming in with other complaints.

You are an important partner, along with your doctor, in recognizing and correctly diagnosing depression.

Maybe you do not “think” of yourself as being depressed, but *has there been a change in your behavior, mood, or activities recently* (often over the last 2 weeks)?

Ask the people who know you if they have observed a change in you. An online self-assessment may also be useful. You can use the results to start a discussion with your doctor about your symptoms as well as to discuss options for treatment.