

California Community Colleges HEALTH & WELLNESS



California Community College Mental Health Screening Tools

Community colleges nationwide are experiencing a surge in requests for mental health services.ⁱ Data from California Community Colleges (CCC) reveal that more students are requesting mental health support than ever before.ⁱⁱ ⁱⁱⁱ These trends are consistent with national data showing increased demand, including interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators, and survey data at the campus, district, and system level.^{iv} ^v At the same time, data show that many students who could benefit from mental health supports do not access them. They are unaware of their availability; deterred by stigma; or unable to navigate the logistical barriers for receiving services through the campus.^{vi} ^{vii}

There is substantial evidence that shows that good mental health is a key variable in predicting academic success.^{viii} ^{ix} Yet budgets on many CCC campuses have tightened, and there are few additional resources for mental health. One way to work within these constraints is to have a system in place through which students are screened for mental health challenges and resources are allocated where there is the greatest need. For some campuses, this may mean referring students to on-campus mental health services; for other campuses, it may require a referral to a community-based service.

Screening is a critical tool for alleviating and ameliorating the mental health challenges that can impede academic success. However, screening should not be implemented unless there are sufficient resources—including staff, space, time, and money—to serve students identified as high-need. If your campus does not currently have the capacity to address mental health needs either on- or off-campus, you can learn more about college-community mental health partnerships in this guide: [*Building Collaborative Relationships: Community Colleges, County Mental Health Departments, and Local Mental Health Providers.*](#)

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of screening tools that can be implemented at the CCC. The first step is to identify the goals of the screening. In general, there are three types of screening, each of which is described separately below. Depending on your goals, however, you may wish to use a combination of screening tools as part of an overall campus mental health and wellness approach. These tools are complementary and can help your campus expand mental health service capacity at both the student and population level.

What is “Universal Screening”?

Universal screening is used to identify students who are at risk for behavioral health and academic challenges. These screenings are generally brief and can be administered quickly. Screenings may focus on overall wellness or on a specific aspect of behavioral health (e.g., depression, suicidality). Ideally, universal screenings are delivered to all students on campus during a predetermined period. For feasibility, CCC may consider administering the screening to a subset of students (e.g., those who use campus health services).

Encouraging Students to Complete the Screening

- Link to screening on college Facebook, newsletters, and website, including registration page
- Participate in mental health awareness week and feature screening link prominently
- Offer short presentations to faculty and staff about the location and purpose of the survey during meetings
- Host a voluntary self-assessment tool on all campus health webpages that includes scoring rubric and contact information for students needing help
- Use marketing and branding to create an awareness campaign on campus
- Recruit academic counselors and registrars to disseminate information about the survey
- Set up screening computers and kiosks around campus (like MindKare) to promote visibility and reduce stigma

Universal screening: These tools allow a campus to engage in truly universal screenings. Universal screenings are tools that reach all students on your campus rather than a subset (e.g., students seen by health care providers or academic counselors). These screenings can capture the mental health needs of students who do not seek other types of campus support services. Many universal screening tools are free, have been thoroughly researched and are considered reliable. These self-assessments can be disseminated through campus websites or via email to students. Positive screenings must then link students to services. If the campus has onsite mental health services, positive screens should route students to the health services webpage and encourage students to make an appointment. If your campus has referral relationships with county or community mental health providers, you should work with your partners to include screening results as part of your overall referral pathway. If the campus does not have onsite mental health services or referral relationships with other providers, students should be directed to one of the mental health hotlines included in this document.

Clinical screening tools: Clinical instruments are administered in student health settings by medical practitioners, or by other appropriately trained staff. It is generally recommended that these screenings be administered to all students seen through campus health services, and that students are rescreened at every visit. Included in this document are links to several clinical screening tools that have been deemed reliable through robust evaluation studies. Initial screening instruments are typically brief and may be linked to a longer tool which additionally assesses students who screen positive. As a best practice, students who screen positive should be immediately referred to mental health services on or off campus.

Population screening: These screenings are not intended to identify particular students but rather the prevalence of mental health challenges across the campus or district. These surveys collect de-identified data and report mental health findings at the aggregate level. There is value in this for mental health champions making the case for increased mental health services. These data may also position a campus to pursue external funding from foundations and government. Data retrieved through this process can be compared to district, state, and national data to gauge the relative needs of students on an individual campus. In general, these are longer surveys and may allow campuses to customize the survey questions to answer campus-specific questions. It typically takes several months to reach a response rate that is statistically reliable. Many companies include outreach strategies as part of their survey package.

Screening Tools

Universal Screening Tools

ULifeline Self-Evaluator (http://www.ulifeline.org/self_evaluator)

Description. Created in partnership with The Jed Foundation, this tool is an anonymous, confidential web-based resource center allowing college students to search for information regarding emotional health, including alcohol, drugs, stress, sleep, depression, and suicide prevention. The assessment takes about ten minutes and screens for thirteen of the most common mental health conditions that college students face. This screening does not provide a diagnosis, but identifies problems that could be impacting thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Referral. Suicide prevention hotlines that are available by call or text are clearly promoted on each page. Students are asked to identify the school they attend. For schools in their database, respondents will receive campus-specific information about mental health services. Registration with ULifeline is free for schools and all CCC are encouraged to submit their information.

Administration. Self-administered tool that can be used on behalf on an individual or on behalf of a friend

Platform. Web

Price. Free

Subscription. Free registration for CCC

MindWise Screening Online Screening Platform (<https://www.mindwise.org>)

Description. This online, self-administered screening is designed to be integrated into existing campus websites. Screenings assess mood and anxiety disorders; eating disorders; and alcohol disorders. Respondents are given results that indicate whether there is a probable mental health disorder. Campuses are provided with a toolkit of promotional materials that can be used to market the availability of the screening. The service also provides data on trends or patterns on the campus, as well as data on usage and platform.

Referral. Students in participating schools are connected to their school's mental health services information. Students at unaffiliated schools are directed to <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>, which lists crisis call and text lines as well as a searchable database of local mental health treatment options. **Administration.** Self-administered tool

Platform. Web and mobile

Price. \$600-\$1,200, depending on population

Subscription. Annual

Psych Central (<http://www.Psychcentral.com/quizzes>)

Description. Psych Central provides an array of online, self-scoring, free screenings. Each is developed by the founding psychologist on staff and adopted or adapted based on research reviews. Screenings are generally subject to validation research, but are not meant to be used as diagnostics. Screenings include adult and child ADHD; anxiety and mood tests; autism tests; eating disorder tests; OCD and PTSD tests; and other specialized tests for specific mental health disorders. Tests are generally brief and return a score of minor, moderate, or severe conditions.

Referral. None

Platform. Online

Price. Free

Subscription. None required, though individuals who wish to save their tests and track them over time must register with the site

Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) (<http://cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-c-ssrs/cssrs-for-communities-and-healthcare/#filter=.general-use.english>)

Description. The C-SSRS is a two-to-six question survey designed to assess risk for suicidal ideation or attempts. It was designed for use across settings, including first responders; healthcare; military; education; and correctional facilities. The campus version can be integrated into existing electronic health records and can be administered by counselors, nurses, teacher, coaches, resident assistants, and students. No-cost administration training materials are available through the website. This has been subject to multiple evaluation studies and is considered valid and reliable.

Referral. Campuses determine their threshold for intervention and create referral pathways

Platform. Online and analog

Price. Free

Subscription. None

Notes. The survey is available in more than 100 country-specific languages

Clinical Screening Tools

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Interactive Screening Program (ISP) (<https://afsp.org/our-work/interactive-screening-program>)

Description. ISP provides a confidential, anonymous mental health screening based on the PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9). Students receive a unique identifying number to communicate with staff. Students

who screen positive receive a personalized response from a campus counselor. Enrolled campuses develop their own customized website through which students can message back-and-forth with clinical staff and make in-person appointments as needed. ISP also helps promote outreach and engagement based on the availability of both clinical staff and students.

Referral. The project can only be implemented by campuses who have sufficient clinical capacity to respond to students in distress; the site refers to the campus clinical team

Platform. Web-based

Price. A one-time start-up fee of \$2,500 and an annual program fee of \$2,500

Subscription. Campuses must sign up for three-year service contracts

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) Screeners (<https://www.phqscreeners.com/>)

Description. The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) is a diagnostic tool for mental health disorders used by health care professionals that is quick and easy for patients to complete. PHQ tools are developed for use in clinical settings as part of primary or integrated care. The PHQ, a self-administered version of the PRIME-MD, contains the mood (PHQ-9), anxiety, alcohol, eating, and somatoform modules as covered in the original PRIME-MD. The GAD-7 was subsequently developed as a brief scale for anxiety. Students who screen positive should be referred to treatment and followed up with regularly. This has been subject to multiple evaluation studies and is considered valid and reliable.

Referral. Referrals are made at the time of the screening by the medical professional charged with the patient's care

Platform. The PHQ tools can be administered in person, through a web or mobile app, or over the phone

Price. PHQ tools are free and widely available

Subscription. None

Notes. The PHQ tools have been translated into multiple languages

Beck Depression Inventory (<https://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/products/100000159/beck-depression-inventoryii-bdi-ii.html>)

Description. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) is a tool to measure intensity, severity, and depth of depression in patients. It can be used in behavioral health, primary, or integrated care settings. It typically takes five to ten minutes to complete in a healthcare setting. There is a seven-question version for use in primary care settings, and a 21-question version for use in mental health settings. It can be administered by healthcare providers, including those holding a master's degree in an appropriate field. This has been subject to multiple evaluation studies and is considered valid and reliable.

Referral. Referrals should be made promptly following survey administration

Platform. Web or analog

Price. Approximately \$100, based on population size

Subscription. Annual

Notes. Spanish language version available

Zung Self-Rating Depression (<https://psychology-tools.com/zung-depression-scale>)

Description. The Zung instrument can be used in clinical settings, drug trials, and research contexts, and as a personal self-assessment. It is designed to measure the severity of depression. It has 20 questions, each of which has four possible responses. Once scored, the survey indicates the presence and degree of depression. There are also tools to track changes in response rates over time. This has been subject to multiple evaluation studies and is considered valid and reliable.

Referral. Referrals should be made promptly in clinical or research contexts ; if self-administered, the respondent is routed to a fee-for-service telehealth website (www.betterhelp.com)

Platform. Web or analog

Price. Free

Subscription. None

Notes. Available in other languages

Population Screening

National College Health Assessment (NCHA) (<https://www.acha.org/ncha>)

Description. The NCHA covers a range of behavioral health issues including substance use; sexual health; weight, nutrition, and exercise; mental health; and personal safety and violence. This comprehensive, confidential survey can track campus-level metrics and help identify common behavioral health risks. These data can inform resource allocation and outreach programs and can be used to qualify for additional sources of funding. Campuses are provided with the raw data as well as an institutional report.

Referral. None

Platform. Web-based or analog

Price. Price is based on number of students and depending on whether administration is web-based or analog

Subscription. None

Notes. Reminders to non-responders, thank you notes, custom variable, and additional reporting can be purchased

JED Campus (<https://www.jedcampus.org/about>)

Description. The JED Foundation offers a four-year program to guide schools through the process of effectively addressing behavioral health issues on campus. Participating schools are supported by a dedicated Campus Advisor who guides them through assessment, strategic planning, implementation, and sustainability. JED completes a comprehensive baseline assessment using the Healthy Minds Survey which is repeated in Year 4 to monitor progress. Initial assessment data are used to guide strategic planning, and JED provides regular reports that document the impact of the program.

Referral. ULifeline.org

Platform. Multiple

Price. \$22,000

Subscription. The one-time fee covers four years of ongoing, progressive support

Notes. Financial aid is available; Individual consultation outside of the comprehensive program is also available

Healthy Minds Network (<http://www.healthymindsnetwork.org/>)

Description: The Healthy Minds Network (HMN) survey is an annual, web-based survey which tracks mental health, service utilization, and related issues among undergraduate and graduate students. Each year, the HMN enrolls colleges and universities to participate in their data collection efforts. The goal is to collect data that can shape campus-specific policy and practice on each participating campus. In addition to the base survey, campuses can customize their data collection by adding two elective modules to the standard modules. Each campus receives a custom report based on their data.

Referral. None

Platform. Web

Price. The fee for community colleges to enroll in the survey is \$500

Subscription. None

Personal Growth Initiative Scale (<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers/personal-growth-initiative-scale>)

Description. The PGIS is a measure of student wellness. It is a nine-item self-report that indicates personal growth initiative (e.g., active involvement in changing and developing as a person). This survey can be administered universally to all students, or to a subset of students. As a clinical tool, it can be used as an assessment of those seeking campus health services. At the population level, the survey can be completed anonymously and used to assess campus-level change over time.

Referral. None

Platform. Web-based or analog

Price. Free

Subscription. None

California Community Colleges Health & Wellness

www.cccstudentmentalhealth.org

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