



2.7.9 DEPRESSION SCREENING

POLICY:

For all clients, providers should screen for depression when staff-assisted depression care supports are in place to ensure accurate diagnosis, effective treatment, and follow-up (114,115). Staff-assisted care supports are defined as clinical staff members assisting the primary care clinician by providing direct depression care, such as care support or coordination, case management, or mental health treatment. The lowest effective staff supports consist of a screening nurse who advises primary care clinicians of a positive screen and provides a protocol facilitating referral to behavioral therapy.

Providers also may follow the American Psychiatric Association (116) and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (117) recommendations to assess risk for suicide among persons experiencing depression and other risk factors. (QFP)

Subrecipients are encouraged to routinely screen clients for depression. The Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ) is the screening tool of choice to be utilized within the ND FPP. Each participating agency must develop a policy based on the following procedure and modify it to reflect the specific operation of their agency.

PROCEDURE:

Prior to administering the PHQ-2, the provider must explain to the client that the appointment will remain confidential except for 1) if someone is hurting you; 2) if you feel like hurting someone; 3) you feel like hurting yourself; or 4) you are hurting yourself.

Agency staff will administer the PHQ-2. A PHQ-2 score ranges from 0-6. The authors¹ reference identifies a PHQ-2 cutoff score of 3 as the optimal cut point for screening purposes and stated that a cut point of 2 would enhance sensitivity, whereas a cut point of 4 would improve specificity.

Any client with positive mental health screening (PHQ score of 1 or greater) should be assessed, provided brief counseling and/or referred for appropriate care if needed.

Agency staff will administer the PHQ-9 if applicable, according to cut-off score for the PHQ-2 determined by the subrecipient. When administering the PHQ-9, agency will refer to the severity score on the scoring guidance² for follow up and referral.

Documentation of administering the PHQ-2 and/or PHQ-9 as well as follow-up and referral, **must** be documented in the client record and on the CVR.

Agency staff will complete the Client Visit Report (CVR) for every client, frequency identified on the PHQ-2 form (every two weeks).

Release of information for referral purposes must only include information about suicide risk. Information in regard to other family planning services **must** be kept confidential per Title X guidelines.



Because of the link between depression and suicide, a referral to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline [Lifeline \(suicidepreventionlifeline.org\)](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) follow-up should be offered if the answer to question 9 is positive in any way. Further exploration should be conducted and if it is found that the client has suicidal thoughts or a plan and the means to carry it out, proper action should be taken, such as calling law enforcement for an escort to the hospital or treatment center for an evaluation.

If parents of adolescents need to be notified of referral of services, notification should follow the agency's established policy.

North Dakota and National Behavioral Health Resources:

- [Home - SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)
- [Mental Health | Health and Human Services North Dakota](#)
- [24/7 Recovery Talk | Health and Human Services North Dakota](#), a toll-free number **1.844.44.TALK2** and speak to a trained peer support specialist with lived experience in addiction to chat and receive support.
- Call **2-1-1 or 701-235-SEEK** [Get Help Now – FirstLink \(myfirstlink.org\)](#)
- Call **9-8-8** Suicide & Crisis LIFELINE [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline | SAMHSA](#)

RESOURCES:

U.S. Preventive Task Force [Final Recommendation Statement: Depression in Adults: Screening | United States Preventive Services Taskforce \(uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org\)](#)

ND FPP Protocol HM 5 Health Screenings

PHQ-2 screening tool: [PHQ-2 \(English\) \(stanford.edu\)](#)

PHQ-9 screening tool: [PHQ-9 depression scale.pdf \(nih.gov\)](#)