

National Health Advisory Panels & Professional Societies Recommend Mental Health Checkups

INTRODUCTION

There is now overwhelming agreement among medical professional societies and national health advisory panels; adolescent mental health screening is the recommended standard of care.

In early 2009, recommendations endorsing screening were issued by the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM). More recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Task Force on Mental Health issued guidance recommending an assessment of mental health at primary care visits and suggesting the use of a pre-visit questionnaire incorporating age-appropriate validated screening instruments.

These statements added to the existing body of statements and recommendations to screen adolescents for mental illness from the AAP *Bright Futures* guidelines, the American Medical Association (AMA), the Society for Adolescent Medicine, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and the American Psychological Association.

HEALTH CARE ADVISORY PANELS

Institute of Medicine

The IOM and the National Research Council (NRC), as a part of the National Academy of Sciences, provides independent, objective, evidence-based advice on health-related matters to policymakers, health professionals, the private sector, and the public.

In its 2009 report, *Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People*, the IOM states that mental health screening in primary care settings offers the potential to intervene early and prevent fully developed disorders.

According to the IOM, physicians who use their judgment in the absence of evidence-based screening tools identify fewer than 50 percent of teens at risk. Additionally, only an estimated one-third of physicians currently inquire about mental health during the regular adolescent health exam. Anecdotal evidence suggests that only a fraction of these inquiries involve the use of evidence-based screening tools.

Mental health screening in primary care settings offers the potential to intervene early and prevent fully developed disorders.

- IOM, 2009

The report highlights primary care as one of the most promising locations for adolescent mental health screening and states that a number of effective screening tools are already available for use in medical settings.

The IOM report also concludes that interventions made before the onset of full-blown disorders offer the greatest opportunity to avoid substantial costs to individuals, families, and the health care and other social systems – an estimated \$247 billion annually.

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force

The USPSTF is the leading independent panel of private sector experts in prevention and primary care and conducts rigorous, impartial assessments of scientific evidence for the effectiveness of a broad range of services. Its recommendations are considered the gold standard for clinical preventive services.

The Task Force recommends that adolescents age 12 to 18 receive an annual depression screen from their primary care provider.

- USPSTF, 2009

The USPSTF reviewed the evidence on the benefits and potential risks of screening, the accuracy of screening questionnaires available for use in primary care settings, and the benefits and risks of treating depression. This

thorough review showed that screening questionnaires developed for primary care accurately identify depression in adolescents and that effective treatments are available. The resulting Task Force recommendation, with a *Grade B*, is that all adolescents age 12 to 18 receive an annual depression screen from their primary care provider.

Grade	Grade Definition	Suggestion for Practice
B	The USPSTF recommends the service. There is high certainty that the net benefit is moderate or there is moderate certainty that net benefit is moderate to substantial.	Offer or provide this services

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

American Academy of Pediatrics

The AAP national health promotion and disease prevention guidelines recommend that all adolescents receive a mental health evaluation during annual well-child visits. The AAP guidelines, *Bright Futures*, are a national standard of care recommended by Congress and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

One of the most efficient ways for health care professionals to improve the recognition and treatment of psychosocial problems in children and adolescents is by using a mental health screening test.

- AAP, 2008

Recognizing the increasingly important role that pediatric primary care clinicians play in promoting the social-emotional health of children, the AAP Task Force on Mental Health released recommendations for enhancing pediatric mental health care in June 2010. The Task Force recommends that primary care visits address mental health by assessing the functioning of the child and family. The Task Force also suggests the use of a pre-visit questionnaire incorporating validated screening instruments in order to assess mental health and psychosocial functioning.

American Medical Association

The AMA Guidelines for Adolescent Preventive Services (GAPS) approach is a model that uses a systematic strategy for screening and health guidance by primary care physicians. GAPS recommend that physicians identify adolescent depression and risk of suicide through early identification on an annual basis for all adolescents.

The Society for Adolescent Medicine

The Society for Adolescent Medicine has endorsed AAP and AMA guidelines, which recommend annual evaluation and screening for mental health problems in adolescence.

The American Academy of Family Physicians

The AAFP's position on mental health stresses the importance of early identification of mental health problems in primary care and screening patients for suicide risk.

In accordance with the USPSTF guidelines, the AAFP Recommendations for Clinical Preventive Services recommend primary care providers screen adolescents (12 -18 years) for major depressive disorder annually.

- AAFP, 2009

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

A NAPNAP position statement supporting the integration of mental health care in pediatric primary care settings recommends that: "Using a lifespan approach, mental health promotion and screening starts at the beginning of life and continues through adolescence into adulthood."

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

AACAP joins the AAP in endorsing mental health checkups in primary care. In a 2009 publication of the medical journal *Pediatrics*, AACAP together with AAP called for improvements in mental health services in primary care, including access to mental health screening.

The American Psychological Association

For health care reform, the American Psychological Association prioritizes access to quality mental and behavioral health promotion, screening and referral, prevention, early intervention, and wellness services across the lifespan, with particular attention to at-risk populations.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTERS

Checkup Now Coalition



The Jed Foundation

Active Minds

Families USA

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/ The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA