

Screening for Trauma

People involved in the justice system can have high levels of trauma as well as mental health and substance use disorders. When a person enters the justice system, it is important to screen for each of these.

Screening is meant to be a brief process that identifies specific issues for an individual and it should be conducted routinely. Assessment is a longer process to explore and document an individual's comprehensive needs and problems.

Screening should:

- Be conducted for all individuals shortly after entry into the justice system
- Detect mental health, substance use, and trauma disorders
- Identify any critical issues such as violent tendencies, serious medical problems, and potential for suicide
- Identify those individuals who require specialized approaches and/or treatment

Screening may take the form of:

- Self-report instruments
- Interviews
- Review of records

When selecting an instrument consider:

- Has the instrument been tested and validated?
- What is the cost of the instrument?
- Is there training involved in administering it?
- Does it require a mental health professional to score or review it?
- How much time is involved?
- How will it fit with current policies and procedures?

Screening Instruments for Trauma

- Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC-PTSD)
- PTSD Checklist – Civilian Version (PCL-C)
- Stressful Life Events Questionnaire (for previous traumatic events) (SLESQ-R)
- Impact of Events Scale (IES) (self-report measure of current level of subjective stress as consequence of traumatic event)