



SEFBHN Recommended Level 1 Screeners

In a Zero Suicide agency, all consumers are screened for suicide risk on their first contact and at every subsequent contact. All staff members use the same tool and procedures to ensure that consumers with suicide risk are identified.

When standardized procedures are in place to assess for suicide risk, staff can use the same language, which is understood by all, to discuss a consumer's status and make plans for appropriate care.

Why is it important to screen for feelings of depression and hopelessness instead of just suicidal ideation? Suicidal ideation, by itself, is not a valid predictor of suicide attempts. Research has found that it is equally important to assess for feelings of hopelessness, despair, anhedonia, and emotional pain (Zero Suicide Toolkit & Centers for Disease Control, 2018).

Zero Suicide Recommended Level 1 Screeners:

Patient Health Questionnaires (PHQ-9 & PHQ-2)

- Free training & tools here: <https://www.phqscreeners.com/>

PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire 9) is validated for use in screening Major Depressive Disorder and suicidal ideation. A score of 15 or higher on the PHQ-9 should trigger a Level 2 Screener (as this score indicates moderate-to-high depression)

PHQ-2 (Patient Health Questionnaire 2) is validated for use in screening for Major Depressive Disorder. It includes the first 2 questions of the PHQ-9.

There is also the PHQ (Public Health Questionnaire - Full) and the PHQ-A (Public Health Questionnaire – Adolescent). The PHQ-A is specifically designed for children and adolescents. Training and resources for the PHQ and the PHQ-A can also be accessed at the link above.

** Once it is established that a person is experiencing feelings of depression, hopelessness and/or despair, a complete assessment of suicidal thinking and behavior, including the nature and extent of the risk, should be done immediately. This would be the Level 2 Screener.