

Primary Care Trauma-Informed Screening and Assessment Process

This guide is not a complete list of questions as the tools themselves provide those questions. In particular, the Life Events Checklist Interview includes the following (links are included here):

- [Standard self-report](#) (PDF)
- [Extended self-report](#) (PDF)
- [Interview](#) (PDF)

Introduction

- As a general rule, do screening as early as possible in intake process.
- If not advisable to screen during initial meeting or in the event of a negative screen, repeat the brief set of questions periodically. With establishment of safety and trust, patient may be more able to disclose later.
- Maximize patient choice and control and place priority on their preferences regarding self-protection and self-soothing needs. Honor the pace of the patient.
- Experiences of trauma are based on the individual's perception of an event, and therefore, all possible traumatic events may not be listed as part of a screening or assessment tool.
- Be clear and respectful with the patient about the steps and process of screening and assessment (e.g. "I would like to ask you some sensitive questions about...")
- Be clear with the patient about the reason for the questions, for example:
 - > "We have found that many people who come here for services have experienced many challenges in their lives, for example, some have been physically or sexually abused, or have experienced neglect."
 - > "Because this can have such an important impact on a person's life, mentally, physically and emotionally, we ask everyone about traumatic life experiences."
- Be clear about the patient's right to self-administer or stop the process at any time (e.g. "If you would like to answer these questions on your own or wish to stop or delay this interview at any time, you can.")
- Be clear about the patient's right to not answer questions (e.g., "If you would rather not answer any question, just let me know, and we'll go on to something else.")

Steps in the Process

1. Screening

- a. Identify the traumatic events/experiences (Extended Life Events Checklist)
- b. Range of events may include experiencing and/or witnessing natural disasters, serious accidents, deaths, physical and sexual abuse, and other events that may not be listed on the screening tool.
- c. Even if person identifies only one adverse experience, trauma assessment is recommended.

2. Assessment

- a. Explore the traumatic experience in more detail (Life Events Checklist Interview)
 - i. Ask about timing and frequency (In the past 6 months, ongoing)
 - ii. Ask about current danger (Are you currently afraid that someone might hurt you?)
 - iii. Use unambiguous and straightforward language to avoid confusion and encourage straightforward responses
- b. Determine how the trauma has affected the person (e.g. Trauma Screening Questionnaire, PTSD screen)

3. Treatment/Referral

- a. Determine service needs in partnership with patient
- b. Explore recommendations and resources with patient
- c. Work closely with patient to ensure connection to identified resources and services

4. Follow Up

- a. Follow up with patient to determine if they have followed through on recommendations or services and whether or not they find these helpful