



**HEALTHY MINDS PHILLY**

# Best Practices Guide

**HOSTING AN IN-PERSON MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING EVENT**





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# Introduction

Thank you for hosting an in-person mental health screening event. The objectives for hosting an event are:

- To educate community members on the signs and symptoms of mood and anxiety disorders (depression, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bipolar disorder) so that they are more easily recognized, and stigma is reduced.
- To give participants a clear picture of whether the symptoms they have been feeling could potentially be a mood or anxiety disorder. The screenings provide a quick, simple, and easy way to do this.
- To connect at-risk participants with quality treatment options.

This best practices guide is designed to help you think through the steps you can take to host an educational and screening event.

## WHAT'S IN YOUR KIT?

1. Screening Forms and Scoring Instructions for depression, GAD, PTSD, and bipolar disorder
2. Clinician materials
3. Educational materials
4. Promotional materials
5. Login information for the Downloadable Resource Center

## WHY SCREEN?

Mood and anxiety disorders are common, costly, and treatable. The major issue is that they often go unrecognized. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1 in 4 adults in the United States currently suffer from a mental illness. In 2009, the US Preventive Services Task Force and the Institute of Medicine endorsed screening as an early intervention tool for depression in primary care settings. Screenings are a quick way to identify those who may be in need of treatment.

## SCREENING OPTIONS

Our screenings can be used in different ways. The screenings can be quickly conducted during an in-person event on paper or on a laptop or tablet through self-administration or with an event staff member, volunteer, or clinician. We highly recommend that the screenings are done while attending the in-person event in order to allow the participant the opportunity to speak with a clinician regarding their results.

# Components of Hosting a Screening Event: An Overview

## WHAT SHOULD A MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING EVENT OFFER?

- An anonymous mental health self-assessment (via paper or online screening form)
- A clinician or mental health professional to discuss screening results
- A list of referrals to local mental health care providers
- A variety of educational resources

## WHEN SHOULD I CONDUCT MY EVENT?

- We encourage you to think about hosting your event around a national observance day, week, or month, like National Depression Screening Day or May is Mental Health Month.
- You can also conduct your event any day that is convenient for your organization. A great way to guarantee attendance is to incorporate the screening event into an existing health fair or other well-attended community-based activity in which your organization is participating.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO PRIOR TO THE SCREENING PROGRAM?

If you are looking to become familiar with the program and materials, take some time to review this Best Practices Guide, the kit materials, and **Downloadable Resource Center** at [HealthyMindsPhilly.org/resources/bhs](https://HealthyMindsPhilly.org/resources/bhs)

The Downloadable Resource Center is designed to maximize your promotional efforts for your event. It includes electronic versions of:

- Educational Materials and Resources
- Publicity and Promotional Materials / Templates
  - Press Release Template
  - Calendar Listing Template
  - Customizable Promotional Posters and Flyers
  - Social Media Posts Template
  - Promotional Emails Template

On the next several pages you will find an optional six week event planning timeline. Please feel free to use this to help guide your efforts.

# PLANNING CHECKLIST

## FOUR TO SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO SCREENING PROGRAM

Select the date, hours of operation, and location for screening.

- Host your program in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic. If you have available staff, set up more than one event location.
- Hours of operation can vary. Some events are as short as two hours where others may run all day or over the course of a weekend.
- Location does not need to be in your own office, on the street, or even in the immediate neighborhood. Consider reaching out to a local mall, grocery store, or outside of a public transit authority stop.
- Consider any permits or permissions you may need to have in advance.
- Consider locations with internet access if you plan to use online screenings.

Identify staff, volunteers, and clinicians.

- Identify staff and/or volunteers to help attract attention to your table, hand out educational materials and referral information, and conduct screenings with individuals. **Volunteers do not need to be clinicians.**
- Identify **at least one clinician** to help conduct screening interviews and provide clinical expertise on the screening day. The clinician will also be used as a resource for the participants showing signs of mental distress.

Brainstorm ideas with your team on how you want to run and promote your event.

- Consider having a guest speaker talk about his/her experience with overcoming a mood and/or anxiety disorder.
- Get creative! Organize a t-shirt or poster design contest or a social media campaign to market the program.
- Decide if you are going to screen individuals with paper forms and/or the online screenings. If you are using online screenings, determine the best way to offer them: tablet, laptop, smartphone, etc.

## THREE WEEKS PRIOR

Begin the publicity campaign for your event.

- Coordinate active participation with staff, supporters, and partner organizations.
- Use the provided publicity, marketing, and promotional materials on the Downloadable Resource Center (i.e. the customizable press release that you can send out to local newspapers). We made it easy for you to insert your individual organization's information!
- If you have additional funds, consider purchasing giveaway items like water bottles, pens, and key chains. If that is not possible, ask local companies to donate giveaway items and/or refreshments.

## TWO WEEKS PRIOR

Publicize and Promote!

- Hang posters, hand out wallet cards, and run advertisements. Make sure to mention the date, time, and address of your event.

Develop Referral List

- Think of local mental health care providers as well as state or national resources.
- Remember to include information such as phone number and a physical address.

### Conduct a Training Meeting

- Invite both staff and volunteers.
- Review all the program materials and list of referrals to mental health care providers.
- Thoroughly discuss the screening forms and the process for providing feedback to participants.

### Develop an Emergency Contingency Plan

- Work with your identified clinician(s) in advance. Develop clear steps to take in the unlikely event that an emergency occurs during your event. This could include a participant disclosing that they are having dark and/or suicidal thoughts.
  - Notify the local hospital emergency room, crisis center, and/or mental health facility about the screening event, especially if they are listed on your referral list. (This also presents an opportunity for cross promotion.)
  - Develop a brief, written plan or list of steps to take, including but not limited to: staff or volunteers notifying the clinician on-hand; clinician notifying local ER or nearby mental health clinic; clinician reassuring participant that they will find them help.

## ONE WEEK PRIOR

### Final Publicity:

- Send emails, post on Facebook, tweet on Twitter, make announcements at meetings and throughout the community. Word of mouth can go a long way! (If you're short on time, visit the Downloadable Resource Center for social media posts that we have created for you).
- Determine the best local media contacts (health reporters, assignment editors, news directors) to receive your press release. Send the release via email with relevant information on your screening program including date, time, location, and potential interview contacts.

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- 1. PAY ATTENTION TO THE SUICIDE QUESTION:** Be sure to take note of the answer to the suicide question (Question 9 on the HANDS® Depression screening tool), regardless of the total screening score. Participants who score one point or more on this question should be referred for further evaluation. If they appear actively suicidal during the screening interview they should be taken immediately to a hospital emergency room or a crisis center.

Individuals who are concerned that a friend or loved one may be suicidal should be asked to complete the Suicide Risk Questionnaire included in your screening kit. They can also be referred to Screening for Mental Health, Inc.'s, "Stop a Suicide" website at [www.StopASuicide.org](http://www.StopASuicide.org). This website teaches individuals how to recognize and respond to signs of suicidal ideation in family members, friends, and co-workers, as well as themselves.

- 2. SCREENINGS ARE EDUCATIONAL:** It is important to convey to participants that your screening event is a public education program and that screenings are informational, not diagnostic. For this reason, no diagnoses, treatment recommendations, or second opinions should be given by staff. A full mental health consultation will be needed to make an actual diagnosis. If someone wants more information or a full evaluation, they should be directed to your referral information for local treatment options.

## PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

One of the most important factors in implementing successful event programming is making sure everyone knows the who, what, where, and when details. It typically takes a person viewing or hearing something up to seven times before taking action. There are so many ways to ensure this happens if you consider using a variety of communication mediums. To make your publicity campaign as easy as possible, there are customizable publicity materials available on the Downloadable Resource Center (Login information can be found on Page 3).

### ACTIVE PROMOTION

- Develop relationships with local media contacts
- Start a newsletter
- Host a webinar
- Run local advertisements or PSAs (public service announcements)
- Place flyers and posters in high-traffic areas including libraries, grocery stores, hospital, lobbies, churches, senior centers, restaurants, etc.

### PASSIVE PROMOTION

- Place flyers and posters in high-traffic areas including libraries, grocery stores, hospital, lobbies, churches, senior centers, restaurants, etc.
- Start a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter
- Start a blog

### GET SOCIAL

You can extend your reach even further if you promote your event electronically. This can be done by taking advantage of social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. These channels are viral in nature and enable you to reach a much larger audience through the “share” and “retweet” features. You can also advertise your event in your organization’s e-newsletters or start a blog. Connect with existing partners or other organizations that might have an interest in your event and ask them to promote it through their communications channels, too.



## DAY-OF-EVENT ESSENTIALS

### BEFORE PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE:

- ✓ Discuss the plan with your staff for handling clinical emergencies.
- ✓ Review with your staff ways they can encourage people to stop by your table and take a screening. **(Please refer to Appendix A for a brief message that you can copy and hand out to staff or volunteers to use as talking points.)**
- ✓ Organize your information table.
- ✓ Set up laptops or tablets, if you have them, and test the internet connection.
- ✓ Hang posters and other visual items to attract community members.

### DURING YOUR PROGRAM:

- ✓ Stand in front of the table to greet those passing by and encourage them to approach the table.
- ✓ Choose 1-2 educational materials or wallet cards to hand out at a nearby location or entrance.
- ✓ Offering participants the opportunity to participate in a free “stress check-up” or “mood check” may encourage participants to take a screening.
- ✓ Incentives are also an important part of hosting a successful event.
- ✓ While participants are waiting to speak with a clinician, assist in finding relevant educational brochures or direct them to useful websites.
- ✓ If someone is uncomfortable filling out the screening at the event, allow them to take the screening forms with them or suggest they visit the online screening at [HealthyMindsPhilly.org](https://HealthyMindsPhilly.org). **Provide all participants with a list of local mental health resources.**

### AFTER SCREENING EVENT:

- ✓ Process the event with staff and volunteers. Feedback from participants is invaluable so be certain to collect it in some form, if it is shared with you.
- ✓ **Complete the Event Feedback Form electronically on [HealthyMindsPhilly.org](https://HealthyMindsPhilly.org).**

### IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

1. Screening forms are copyrighted and may not be reproduced in any way. To order additional screening forms, please call 781-239-0071 or go to our website at [shop.mentalhealthscreening.org](https://shop.mentalhealthscreening.org)
2. It is important to convey to participants that NDSD is an education and awareness program and that screenings are informational, not diagnostic.

### YOUR FEEDBACK IS INVALUABLE!

**Immediately following your event, please complete the Event Feedback Form available online at [HealthyMindsPhilly.org/resources/bhs](https://HealthyMindsPhilly.org/resources/bhs).** Your feedback helps us ensure our materials and programs are meeting your needs and the needs of the community.

## WHO WE ARE:

Screening for Mental Health, Inc. (SMH), first introduced the concept of large-scale mental health screenings with National Depression Screening Day in 1991. Our mission is to provide innovative mental health and substance abuse resources, linking those in need with quality treatment options. At SMH we envision a world where mental health is viewed and treated with the same gravity as physical health. SMH programs include both in-person and online education and screening for depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, alcohol use disorders, and suicide prevention.

## SCREENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS:

National Depression Screening Day®  
National Alcohol Screening Day®  
National Eating Disorders Screening Program®  
CollegeResponse®  
College SOS  
CommunityResponse®  
SOS Signs of Suicide® (Middle School and High School)  
Feel Good Bingo® (for older adults)  
Signs of Self-Injury (High School)  
Military Pathways® (for Military installations and VAs)  
WorkplaceResponse®  
HealthcareResponse®

Thousands of organizations worldwide including hospitals, mental health centers, social service agencies, government agencies, military installations, older adult facilities, primary care clinicians, colleges, secondary schools, corporations, and HMO's utilize SMH's educational and screening programs, and in turn, have reached millions of people ranging from teenagers to older adults.

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### References

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Improving Early Identification & Treatment of Adolescent Depression: Considerations & Strategies for Health Plans. (n.d.). NIHCM Foundation. Retrieved April 9, 2014, from [http://www.nihcm.org/pdf/Adol\\_MH\\_Issue\\_Brief\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nihcm.org/pdf/Adol_MH_Issue_Brief_FINAL.pdf)

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## APPENDIX A

### HANDOUT FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Thank you for volunteering your time for our event today!

If you are not sure of the best way to engage a passerby, please take a look below for sample talking points. Please feel free to use your own wording, but the message below will help people understand what we are doing here today:

Would you like to learn about our public awareness campaign? We are trying to promote mental health and wellness in Philadelphia. Most people know someone with a common mental health disorder, such as depression or posttraumatic stress disorder, but they don't realize how well treatment can work.

We are getting people to be proactive about helping themselves or a loved one, because we believe that regular mental health checkups are just as important as regular physical health checkups. I am not a licensed mental health clinician and these screenings are not diagnostic, but are meant to give you sense of whether or not you may want to seek further evaluation.

Would you like to take a screening for yourself? Or take home educational information for you or a loved one?

