



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Pediatric Intake Form

The Pediatric Intake Form can be used with each family entering your care and readministered annually. Individuals with low literacy skills or whose first language is not English may require assistance to complete the form.

SCORING

Reading the Pediatric Intake Form, also known as the Family Psychosocial Screen, as a whole can help the primary care health professional develop a general understanding of the history, functioning, questions, and concerns of each family.

In addition, specific areas of the Pediatric Intake Form can be scored to provide further insight into specific areas of a family's functioning.

PARENTAL DEPRESSION

Under the heading "Family Activities" are three questions that screen for parental depression. A positive response to two or more questions is considered a positive screen. For parents with a positive screen, it may be helpful to explore other symptoms of depression such as changes in appetite, weight, sleep, activities, energy level, and ability to concentrate; feelings of hopelessness; and suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts) or suicidal intent. Reassuring parents that depression is common is helpful, as is noting the availability of treatment options provided by mental health professionals and the positive prognosis for the treatment of depression. (See Bridge Topic: Parental Depression, p. 303.)

SUBSTANCE USE

Under the heading "Drinking and Drugs" are seven questions that screen for parental substance abuse. A positive response to any of the first six questions is considered a positive screen. Parents with a positive screen should be asked about frequency of substance use and how their substance use affects their family. A physician's advice to quit smoking is often highly effective, but a physician's advice to stop abusing substances may be less so. Refer for further assessment and treatment as indicated.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Under the heading "Family Health Habits" are four questions that screen for domestic violence. A parent who responds positively to any of these questions should receive further assessment and counseling, including exploration of the extent and patterns of violence, and discussion of safety issues for children and adolescents in the home (including gun storage). A parent may need assistance with making an escape plan and should be referred to hotlines or shelters. Health professionals should affirm that domestic violence is wrong but not uncommon. Victims need follow-up visits and ongoing support even if they return to the abuser. Forming a therapeutic relationship centered around the child's safety and well-being is recommended because children and adolescents are at risk for physical abuse in homes where there is domestic violence. (See Bridge Topic: Domestic Violence, p. 227.)

PARENTAL HISTORY OF ABUSE

Under the heading "When You Were a Child" are eight questions that screen for parents' histories of abuse. A background of abuse predisposes parents to disciplinary practices that may be abusive or too permissive. A positive response to any of the first four questions is considered a positive screen. The last four questions help gather additional information about disciplinary techniques and parents' need for counseling or parenting classes. (See Bridge Topic: Child Maltreatment, p. 213.)

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Under the heading "Help and Support" are questions that screen for social support, a strong factor in reducing life stresses and parenting stresses. Adequate social support helps ensure that parents have appropriate models for parenting practices and disciplinary techniques. If the parent's answers to the first three questions indicate that she has access to fewer than two support persons or that she is less than satisfied with the support she has, the screen is considered positive. Offer referrals to parenting groups, social work services,

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home visitor programs, or community family support services.

The Pediatric Intake Form also assesses a number of other risk factors for developmental and behavior problems. Risk factors include frequent household moves, being a single parent, having three or more children in the home, having less than a high school education, and being unemployed. Scoring four or more risk factors, including having mental health problems and an authoritarian parenting style (observed when parents use commands excessively or are negative and less than responsive to child-initiated interests), is associated with a substantial drop in children's I.Q. and school achievement. In such cases, children should be referred for early stimulation programs such as Head Start or a quality child care or preschool program.

REFERENCES

- Kemper KJ. 1992. Self-administered questionnaire for structured psychosocial screening in pediatrics. *Pediatrics* 89(3):433-436.
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