

# Depression Screening and Management in Primary Care

## A Quality Improvement Project from the Partners For Kids' Quality Improvement Coaching Program

### Project Overview

The Partners For Kids' Quality Improvement (QI) Coaching Program offers primary care providers a QI project for depression screening and management, supporting the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation for early universal screening for adolescent depression. This project provides best practice guidance and expert support in the implementation of universal screening for depression in adolescents, as well as further evaluation for patients who screen positive with initiation of a primary care-based management plan.

### Rationale

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders in the United States. Data obtained during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic estimates 25% of youth experience clinically significant depression. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, in 2021 only 40.6% of U.S. adolescents with a major depressive episode received treatment in the past year. Primary care providers are often the first contact for children with behavioral health concerns, as access to behavioral health services is increasingly limited due to the rising numbers of affected youth combined with a national shortage of mental health providers. The literature is clear that pediatric primary care providers are essential for the identification and management of depressed youth.

### Project Components

- Implement **screening for depression** in adolescents ages 12-21 years of age using a standardized tool
- Create a standardized **process for further evaluation** of positive screens
- Develop an evidence-based **treatment plan** for management of depression
- Provide resources to connect patients and families with **mental health expertise**
- **Utilize a safety resource/plan** developed specifically for primary care for all patients with increased risk for suicide.

### Practice Benefits

- Adhere to American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines for depression screening and management
- Achieve improved patient outcomes
- Eligible for Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Part IV credit
- Strengthen QI knowledge and skills to better impact other disease processes
- Improve billing of appropriate behavioral health management codes
- Customized to fit your practice

### Support Resources Available

- Expertise and guidance from Partners For Kids' quality team members
- Education from and consultation with Partners For Kids' subject matter experts and Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH) affiliated primary care specialists
- Access to Partners For Kids' behavioral health prescribing guidelines and Care Coordination services
- Data support using your practice's electronic health record and claims data

For more information, contact [PFKQICoaching@NationwideChildrens.org](mailto:PFKQICoaching@NationwideChildrens.org)

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