

# Screening and Management of Depression in Primary Care

A Quality Improvement Project  
from the Partners For Kids QI Coaching Program

## Project Overview

The Partners For Kids (PFK) Quality Improvement 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 will provide best practices 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. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, the prevalence of adolescent depression in 2019 was 13% and recent data suggest that number has climbed to around 20% during the COVID-19 pandemic. While suicide is the third leading cause of death in adolescents, only one-third of depressed teens receive treatment. Primary care providers are often the first contact for children with behavioral health concerns. Studies have found that patient outcomes improve when there is collaboration between a primary care provider and a behavioral health specialist in the identification and treatment of adolescent depression.

## Project Components

- Implement **screening for depression** in adolescents ages 12-21 years of age utilizing a standardized screening tool
- Create a standardized **process for further evaluation** of positive screens
- Develop an evidence-based **treatment plan** for management of depression including individualized **safety plans** to address the high risk for suicide in this population
- Utilize a team-based approach to generate **individualized patient goals for functioning** in the home, at school, and with peers
- Provide resources to connect patients and families with **mental health expertise**

## 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
- Customize to fit your practice

## Support Resources Available

- Expertise and guidance from Partners For Kids (PFK) quality improvement specialists
- Training from Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH) affiliated primary care and mental health specialists
- Education from, and consultation with, PFK pharmacists
- Access to PFK behavioral health prescribing guidelines
- Data support using your practice electronic health record and claims data

For more information about PFK QI projects, please contact PFK QI Coaching at  
[PFKQICoaching@NationwideChildrens.org](mailto:PFKQICoaching@NationwideChildrens.org)

PARTNERS  
FOR KIDS

