

Screening and Health Literacy

- **Get to know your patient population.** What are their cultural beliefs and practices? What are their preferred communication channels for interfacing with their healthcare team? Efforts to adapt to the cultural and linguistic norms of the population served will increase accuracy in measuring the targeted symptoms or conditions.
- **Know and use a patient's preferred language.** In practicum placements, this information should be clearly displayed in an accessible field in the patient's chart. Do your research to determine which screening tools are readily available in the patient's preferred language. For example, the PHQ-9 has been translated to over 30 languages. When a screening tool doesn't have a validated translation, students are encouraged to discuss what site resources are available to address this gap. For example, a certified translator (to translate the written screener) or certified interpreter (to verbally translate the screening tool instructions, either by phone or in person) may be available resources. Some agencies may also have community health workers that can assist.
- **Consider alternative administration formats.** Consider a patient's level of comfort or ability to access technology enabled screening tools, for example, via an electronic patient health portal, via a mobile app, or on an in-clinic iPad presented at check-in.
- **Use clear and simplified language where possible.** While it is generally important for verbal administration of screeners to provide the instructions as they are written by the test developers, a patient's response gives you important information for potential collaboration and tailoring. For example, a look of confusion could be due to difficulty hearing, the patient may need to receive the question at a slower pace, or need to receive the information via a visual presentation. If administering the screening tool verbally, first, read the questions verbatim at a steady pace, clearly enunciated. If using a certified interpreter, ensure they understand that questions need to be provided exactly as is read to them. Simplifying language and providing guidance supports accurate responses.
- **Consider and advocate for utilization of the patient's trusted sources.** For example, a patient could feel uncomfortable providing responses to questions pertaining to behavioral health symptoms with an individual with whom they don't have a previously established relationship. Inviting a colleague who knows the patient well to join, or including a support person with patient consent, may alleviate anxiety related to intimate information sharing.