

Differences Between Screening and Assessment

Introduction

Screenings and assessments are conducted in many disciplines and for a wide-variety of reasons. Often, screenings and assessments are discussed as if they are interchangeable tools that are used the same way for the same purpose. There are, however, critical distinctions between the two types of tools. Understanding the differences can help individuals who find themselves responsible for the development of a screening or assessment tool move forward confidently and avoid misusing the tools

What is the Difference?

The answer to this question is simple. Typically, a screening is done to determine if a particular issue exists that warrants a full assessment. While screening and assessment are connected, each has characteristics that separate it from the other.

Screening Characteristics

Screenings are done as an evaluation to determine if there is a particular issue. Screenings are designed with established criteria to inform decision making on if an assessment is merited. Below are the standard characteristics of a screening tool:

1. Broader and used to identify conditions that may warrant further assessment
2. Used to identify individuals who need immediate assistance
3. Used to identify individuals who may need further evaluation
4. Can be administered by anyone who has been trained to administer a specific tool
5. Used to track change over time
6. Not intended to be conclusive or diagnostic

Assessment Characteristics

Conversely, assessments are intended to provide a more in-depth review and evaluation for issues identified by a screening. Therefore, assessments are more comprehensive because they are intended to gain a deep understanding of a need in order to make connections with an appropriate service. It is important to note the

importance of validated assessments. Validated assessments are those that have been tested and retested to ensure reliability. Below are the standard characteristics of an assessment tool:

1. Scope is more focused on specific topic areas
2. Used to define the nature of a particular issue
3. Used to determine the severity of a particular issue
4. Should only be administered by topic specific professionals (e.g. substance abuse assessments should be administered by professional clinicians)
5. Can be conclusive and used to inform diagnoses
6. Used to inform formal solutions

Additional Screening and Assessment Resources:

There are several resources available on this topic, specifically as it pertains to victims of crime and trauma survivors. Those resources can be located by visiting the following links:

Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center: [Victim Service Provider Intake and Needs Assessment](#)

Center for Victims Research: [Tools for Screening and Assessment](#), [Quick Reference on Screening and Assessment](#)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: [Treatment and Practices for Screening and Assessment](#)

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