



Alcohol and Other Drug Screening and Brief Intervention Measures
Washington Circle
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The Washington Circle develops evidence-based performance measures for alcohol and other drug services across the continuum of care. The continuum includes prevention, recognition, treatment, and maintenance. In the area of recognition, the Circle has established and disseminated a measure focused on identification, a process measure that includes receipt of any addiction-related services (claims containing a diagnosis of alcohol or other drug abuse or dependence services).

The Washington Circle recognizes that often, however, alcohol and other drug problems are not identified, and are not identified early. Early identification can lead to prevention of more severe consequences and can lead to sooner receipt of treatment. Therefore, the Circle has pursued development of a “screening” process measure. In developing such a measure, it is clear that a single measure of “screening” would not be feasible or necessarily desirable, for a number of reasons. For example, performance measures are most useful when they are specific. In the area of screening, the setting, population and target (e.g. risky alcohol use, alcohol dependence, marijuana use, cigarette use, drug dependence, prescription drug abuse) must be specified. This specificity relates to a number of issues including clinical and policy considerations (e.g. feasibility, priorities). Furthermore, new measures should fit in the broader context of performance measures (precedent). Smoking cessation performance measures are already in existence in HEDIS (Health Employer Data and Information Set) and as such the Circle is not pursuing a smoking measure or pursuing a measure that would combine alcohol and other drugs including tobacco. These considerations are not all equal however. For example, although feasibility and precedent are important, the evidence base for a measure is more important, as is (perhaps next) the clinical imperative or opportunity to improve the quality of care where it could have the greatest impact on individual or population health.

Given these considerations, the Circle, the Washington Circle Policy Group, and the Screening Workgroup, have a plan for Alcohol and Other Drug Screening and Brief Intervention Measures, that conceptualizes a number of measures that will be specified on different timetables depending on evidence, clinical, policy, and feasibility considerations.

The measures all address screening in general (as distinguished from addiction specialty) health care settings, but vary in their target health risk (unhealthy alcohol use, drug use, unhealthy alcohol and drug use), target age groups (adult, adolescent), and activity (screening, brief intervention for people with identified risk). Regarding tobacco, the

Washington Circle endorses the NCQA/HEDIS measures that are in existence. The Washington Circle will begin with alcohol screening in adults and then with addressing adolescents.

