Personal Experience Screening Questionnaire (PESQ)

Emily Trask, Ph.D.

Child and Adolescent Services Research Center

3020 Children's Way, MC 5033, San Diego, CA 92123

E-mail: evtrask@ucsd.edu

Overview

- ❖ Purpose of the PESQ

- ❖ Administration

- ❖ Reviewing

- ❖ Interpretation

- ❖ Measuring Symptom Improvement

Purpose of the PESQ

- ❖ Screen adolescents for substance abuse

- ❖ Help service providers make appropriate referrals

- ❖ Track outcomes overtime (i.e., substance abuse severity)

- ❖ Gather detailed substance use information (e.g., frequency, type, and severity of use)

- ❖ Identify treatment goals (e.g., reduce daily use of cigarettes, reduce substance abuse severity)

Administration

- ❖ Who Completes it:

    - BHS programs with a specialized AOD counselor(s) ONLY

    - "Using" - Client is currently using substances or has history of substance use

    - Youth ages 12-18

- ❖ Administered at Intake & Discharge

- ❖ 10 minutes to complete

- ❖ Measure based on their experiences in the last month (Except Part III)

Note: *Forms are available in English & Spanish*

Using the Measure to Engage Clients

❖ Complete the PESQ collaboratively (e.g., laugh about silly items, explain unclear items, use it as a dialogue to help the youth tell their story; complete as interview)

❖ Use the PESQ to jointly identify treatment goals

❖ Complete the PESQ before the last session so it can be reviewed with your client at discharge (instill self-efficacy or open dialogue about need for additional services) and used in discharge planning paperwork

Obtaining Accurate Information

❖ Consider completing it after a few sessions to first build rapport

❖ Readminister the PESQ in the middle of treatment if you believe the client was minimizing during the intake PESQ

❖ Complete it with their mental health clinician so everyone has the same information and understanding

Reviewing the Form for Critical Items

❖ 30. I think about killing myself

❖ 33. Someone in my family hits me when they are angry

❖ 34. I am afraid of someone because they have been sexual with me

Interpretation

Validation Scales

❖ **Infrequency (INF):**

- Red Flag - Client may be "faking bad" or faking the severity of their substance use (perhaps for attention)

❖ **Defensiveness (DEF):**

- Red Flag - Client may be "faking good" or minimizing their substance use

Problem Severity Scale

❖ **Problem Severity (PS):**

- Measure of problem severity

- Red Flag- Indicates potential need for substance abuse referral / treatment (client is likely to have a substance abuse problem)

  o Males 12-15 = 30+

- o   Males 16-18 = 35+

- o   Females 12-15 = 30+

- o   Females 16-18 = 34+

- **If Infrequency and/or Defensiveness scales are a "red flag," then interpret the substance use severity scale with caution**

Identifying Clients at the Greatest Risk of Substance Problems

- ❖ Client meets clinical cutpoint on the problem severity scale (higher problem severity scores indicate possible drug dependence and drug abuse)

- ❖ Client reported trying "hard" drugs (e.g., heroin, cocaine)

- ❖ Client reported frequent substance use in past 12 months

- ❖ Client said they first used substances regularly at a younger age

Measuring Symptom Improvement

Measuring Symptom Improvement for Individual Clients

- ❖ Two ways to look at reported symptom improvement on the PESQ Problem Severity Scale from intake to discharge:

  - Do clients who start treatment above the clinical cutpoint, fall below the cutpoint at discharge?

  - Do clients report at least a 4-8 point decrease from intake to discharge (1/2 to 1 standard deviation)?

Measuring Symptom Improvement Systemwide

- ❖ Average change across all youth who had intake and discharge PESQ scores and were classified as 'users' in FY 15-16 was 7.5.

- ❖ This represents a moderate to large change reported in youth substance abuse symptoms from intake to discharge.

Additional Information

- ❖ Detailed PESQ scoring and administrative information:

  https://psychiatry.ucsd.edu/research/casrc/resources/SOCE/Pages/Data-Entry-System.aspx

- ❖ General PESQ Questions: soce@casrc.org