

A Standard Approach to Addiction & Mental Health (AMH) Screening

Every door is the right door

People seeking addiction or mental health services have significant rates of concurrent disorders: Lifetime prevalence is estimated between 40-50%.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) AMH has adopted the Health Canada 2001 evidence-informed practice recommendation that:

- Everyone coming in for substance use concerns will be screened for mental health issues.
- Everyone coming in for mental health issues will be screened for substance use concerns.

Our promise to clients

Every client and their family who seeks addiction or mental health services through AHS will be screened for both addiction and mental health issues in an accepting and non-judgmental way.

What is screening?

Screening is an important part of the clinical decision-making process. Screening does not diagnose. Instead, screening helps the clinician to flag and follow-up on areas that need further attention. This may be a mental health issue, an addiction issue, or both.

The benefits of standardized screening

A standard approach to screening improves consistent and early recognition of addiction, mental health and concurrent disorder referral and treatment needs. Screening for concurrent disorders ensures that we can do a better job of serving those people already coming through our doors.

There are many reasons to have a standard approach to screening, including:

- Providing a menu of evidence-informed tools consistently across the service continuum
- Ensuring early recognition of both addiction and mental health issues
- Welcoming clients at any door and providing seamless access to appropriate services
- Improving client engagement and outcomes
- Providing a more consistent client experience across services
- Using a common language among staff
- Enhancing communication and collaboration within and between services (inside and outside of AHS)

How are screening and assessment different?

Screening:

- Identifies the possibility of an issue
- Is done early in contact
- Usually leads to immediate action
- Is universal
- Is usually brief
- Can be self-administered

Assessment:

- Gathers detailed information
- Is done after a need is identified
- Forms the base for the treatment plan
- Is more selective and targeted
- Is usually longer
- Is usually done in person