Screeners & Assessments for Identifying Barriers to Attendance

Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance summarizes information about several vetted and validated tools that school districts in Washington can use to help identify barriers to attendance faced by students and families. This guidance supports schools and districts to meet the requirement established in RCW 28A.225.020 which states schools must "take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the child's absences" between the 2nd and 7th unexcused absence; for middle and high school students, the law specifies that this step "must include application of the Washington assessment of the risks and needs of students (WARNS) **or other assessment**".

This guidance is not intended to be comprehensive of all existing tools. We highlight several that are validated in research and provide more information about commonly used tools.

How to Use this Document

Districts and schools can use the information below to:

1) Identify a screener that is well suited for the student(s) and their school or district (which includes the common barriers they want to screen for, the age group they will be screening, as well as their financial and human resource capacity for implementation) or

2) Consider if the screener they are currently using is sufficient to identify the barriers faced by their students and families to yield actionable information.

Note: When selecting a screener that will be used in conjunction with filing truancy petitions, connect with your local juvenile court to ensure it meets any requirements the court may have.

A Note on Screener vs. Assessment

Screeners are typically administered to determine if a particular issue exists and identify if a full assessment is warranted. They are helpful for identifying individuals who may need immediate assistance or further assessment and for tracking change over time. Assessments provide a more detailed review and evaluation of issues identified by a screener. They should typically only be administered by topic specific professionals and can help determine the nature or severity of an issue. Some tools may call themselves assessments when they perform more like a screener. We will use the term screener throughout this guidance. More information about the distinction is available here.

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Validated Screeners to Address Barriers to Attendance

Tool	What it Screens For	Administration Method & Training Requirements	Average Time to Complete & Cost
WARNS https://warns.wsu.edu/	The WARNS allows professionals to prioritize services for those youth most at-risk for school failure, including dropout. The six Needs Scales in the WARNS include: • Aggression-Defiance • Substance Abuse • Family Environment • Depression-Anxiety • Peer Deviance • School Engagement	Administration method: Self-entry online (paper version is available if requested) Training Requirements: Training videos are available onlinehttps://warns.wsu.edu/training_videos/	Average time to complete: 10 to 30 minutes Cost: https://warns.wsu.edu/subscription-costs/
Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism- Blended or Virtual (RCA-BV) https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Reasons-for-Chronic-Absenteeism-Survey-Blended-or-Virtual-Version.pdf	The RCA is designed for secondary students (6th-12th grade) who have missed 10% or more instructional days. The survey is comprised of • 14 demographics and perception of absences questions • 28 items measuring multifaceted reasons for absences • three open-ended questions asking about other reasons for missing school, the reasons they do come to school, and what would help them come to school more often.	Administration method: Online survey platform (Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, etc.) or paper; self-report Training Requirements: None	Average time to complete: 10 minutes Cost: Free
School Refusal Assessment Screener- Revised	The SRAS-R helps identify which of the four functions of school refusal are at the root of a student's school avoidance:	Administration method: Paper, self-report	Average time to complete: 10 minutes

Student version: https://www.insa.network/images/Georgines_uploads/SRAS-R_English_-_Child.pdf Parent version: https://schoolavoidance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SRAS-interactive-pdf-004.pdf	1. To stay away from objects or situations at school that make the child feel unpleasant physical symptoms or general distress. 2. To avoid social or evaluative situations at school that is painful to the child (school-related performance situations). 3. To receive attention from a parent or significant other 4. To obtain tangible rewards that make staying home more enjoyable/comfortable than going to school	<u>Training Requirements:</u> None; staff do need to understand the scores & corresponding recommended steps More information: https://schoolavoidance.org/school-avoidance-101/#assessment-scale	<u>Cost</u>: Free
Flourishing Life Assessment https://flourishinglife.com	This assessment is based on principles of positive psychology which emphasize the importance of a strengths-based approach to individual development and growth. Domains measured include: • Mindset orientation • Resilience capacity • Performance capacity Categories of risk (Aggression/Defiance; Depression/Anxiety; Substance Abuse; Peer Deviance; Family Support Environment; and School Engagement)	<u>Administration method:</u> Self-entry online <u>Training Requirements:</u> 2-hour training with Flourishing Life	<u>Average time to complete:</u> 30-40 minutes <u>Cost:</u> • Single school: $300 set up fee, $500 annual fee • Multi-school (2+): $200 set up fee per school, $300 annual fee per school Additional fee per questionnaire ($5-$10)

Locally Developed Screeners & Assessments

Some districts have developed their own screeners for barriers to attendance. Example from Washington School Districts are available on the OSPI Attendance Resources webpage under Screeners.

- 2022-23 Student Assessment of Barriers to Attendance
- Peninsula SD Assessment with HOPE scale
- Peninsula SD Attendance Reassessment with HOPE Scale
- Parent Assessment of Barriers to Attendance

Note: These local examples may reflect school district policy for excused absences. Be sure to check your district's policy and procedure on responding to excessive excused absences and align the screener accordingly.

If you are considering developing your own screener, consider including measures of protective factors; research shows that enhancing protective factors can not only serve as a buffer against the harmful effects of negative situations, but also support students to engage in positive behaviors (Protective Factors in Schools, CDC).

Evidence-Based Screening Tools for Social, Emotional and Behavioral, and Mental Health

The screeners in the table above are particularly adapted to addressing barriers to attendance. To learn about more screeners that are designed to specifically address Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health, consider Appendix C of OSPI's Model District Template: Student Social, Emotional and Behavioral, and Mental Health Recognition, Screening, and Response.

Additional Tools

Tool & Link	What It's Used For	Administration Method & Training Requirements	Average Time to Complete & Cost
Hope Scale https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/ossi/k12supports/healthyyouthsurvey/pubdocs/HopeScale_HYS.pdf	The Hope Scale measures a child's hope through six questions - three that examine pathways and three that look at agency. "Research has linked hope with overall physical, psychological,	Administration method: Paper Training Requirements: None	Average time to complete: 5 minutes Cost: Free

	and social wellbeing. Children who can identify a means to carry out goals (pathways) and the ability to initiate and sustain action towards goals (agency) are considered more hopeful."		
GAIN-SS https://gaincc.org/instruments/	"The GAIN-SS is a screener to be used in general populations to quickly and accurately identify clients who would be flagged as having one or more behavioral health disorders on the GAIN-I." Domains: • Internalizing disorders • Externalizing disorders • Substance disorders • Crime and violence	Administration method: Paper or computer; self or staff administered Training Requirements: Self-paced online training takes approximately 60 minutes. Can be purchased agency-wide with unlimited number of people at your agency or as a per-person training session.	Average time to complete: 5 minutes Cost: Web-based application: $360 per GAIN ABS user per year with discounts provided for purchasing multiple user accounts Paper version only: GAIN licensing costs $150 per agency and covers five years of use

Special Thanks