

## Administering and Scoring the PHQ-A Screening Questionnaire

---

### Administering

- Patient checks in at the Reception desk.
- Reception will present the PHQ-A (PHQ-9 modified for Adolescents) Questionnaire using the script below:

"We are screening for symptoms of depressed mood at all 12-year-old physical exams. Please have your child fill out this questionnaire if he/she wants to, or we can administer the form for him/her. Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ (or state the name of the provider or NP if the provider is an NP) will discuss the results with all of you together during the appointment."
- The PHQ-A (PHQ-9 modified for Adolescents) takes less than five minutes to complete and score.
- If patient decides to complete the PHQ-A by himself/herself, he/she should be left alone to complete the PHQ-A in a private area, such as an exam room or a private area of the waiting room.
- The PHQ-A can also be administered and scored by a nurse, medical technician, physician assistant, physician or other office staff.
- Patients should be informed of their confidentiality rights before the PHQ-A is administered.
- It is recommended that parents are informed that a mental health checkup will be administered as part of the exam.
- Office staff will give the completed PHQ-A to the provider as it may have comments on it, and unclear marks made by the patient can be reviewed.

### Scoring

- Each item on the PHQ-A is scored as follows:

Not at all = 0   Several Days = 1   More than half the days = 2   Nearly every day = 3

- To calculate the score, add all of the item scores together:

Item	Number of Items	Weight	Weighted Score
Not at all		X 0	
Several Days		X 1	
More than half the days		X 2	
Nearly every day		X 3	
TOTAL			

## Instructions on coding and interpreting the scores

### Coding

- HCPCS outcome codes used to bill for administering the PHQ-A Screening Questionnaire:

PHQ-A Scored <b>POSITIVE</b> for Depressive Symptoms <b>≥ 5</b>	PHQ-A scored <b>NEGATIVE</b> for Depressive Symptoms <b>≤ 0-4</b>
<b>G8431</b> Follow-up plan by PCP or referral to BH provider	<b>G8510</b> A follow-up plan is not required

### Interpreting the scores:

	<b>Total score</b>	<b>Recommended Next Steps</b>
<b>None or Minimal depressive symptoms</b>	0-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PCP reviews with patient</li><li>Confirms negatives</li><li>Option to discuss additional issues</li><li>Considers other diagnosis (ADHD, etc) and treats accordingly, if applicable</li></ul>
<b>Mild to Moderate depressive symptoms</b>	5-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Watchful waiting</li><li>Supportive counseling</li><li>Educate member to call if symptoms deteriorate</li><li>Repeat PHQ-A at PCP follow-up</li><li>Consider referral if PHQ-A scores fall in high risk areas</li></ul>
<b>Moderate to severe depressive symptoms</b>	15-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consider anti-depressant medication management through PCP (w/ consultation if needed)</li><li>Consider referral/linkage to community-based organizations, school-based counseling, etc</li><li>Consider referral to psychiatrist for medication and/or to therapist for therapy services</li></ul>
<b>Severe depressive symptoms</b>	20-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Immediate referral to <b>CalOptima Behavioral Health Line at 1-855-877-3885</b></li></ul>

- Patients that score positive on their PHQ-A should be evaluated by the primary care provider (PCP) to determine if the symptoms endorsed on the questionnaire are significant, causing impairment and warrant a referral to a mental health specialist or follow-up or treatment by the PCP.
- For patients who score negative on the PHQ-A, it is recommended that the PCP briefly review the symptoms marked as “sometimes” and “often” with the patient.

Please complete the CMS 1500 Health Insurance Claim form and mail it to:

**CalOptima Claims Department**  
**PO Box 11037**  
**Orange, CA 92856**

### Engaging and Informing Parents

- Inform parents of the screening results (positive or negative), and recommendations for referral, treatment or follow-up.
- Provide parents with information about the next steps and offer support and assistance with finding or making an appointment with a behavioral health specialist.
- Give information to parents about why the referral is being made, how the services you are referring can help, and details about where you are sending them.
- Compile a list of appropriate referral resources in the community and share that list with families of patients that receive a referral.