

## **Directions For Scoring The Modified Simple Screening Instrument for Substance Abuse (MSSI-SA)<sup>1</sup>**

The MSSI-SA can be administered either in the form of a clinical interview or as a self-administered test. In order to minimize clinical or administrative burden, we recommend that providers give individuals the self-administered form. Some providers, however, may prefer to administer the screen as a clinical interview. Regardless, the screening forms should be accompanied by a careful explanation of the individual's rights to confidentiality, as well as any limits to confidentiality. Providers should clearly inform respondents as to the purpose of the MSSI-SA, explaining that the information elicited will be used to benefit, not punish, the individual being screened.

The screen contains 16 questions. The individual's name and the date the form is completed should be entered on the top. Questions 1-13 ask about the previous six months, and questions 14-16 ask about lifetime experience. The screen was devised to measure the following domains: substance consumption, preoccupation and loss of control, adverse consequences, problem recognition, and tolerance withdrawal.

Although the MSSI-SA is a 16-item scale, only 14 questions are scored. The total possible score ranges from 0 to 14. Neither question 1a or 1b, which elicits information about substance use in the past 6 months, nor question 15, which elicits information about substance abuse within the individual's family history, are scored. In both instances, "yes" responses provide important background information, but they are too general to be useful for scoring. For the remaining questions, the number of "yes" answers per question is assigned one point. Note that only one point can be assigned to a question. Any checkmark for question 5 counts as a "Yes" and should be added to the score; however, even if there are multiple checkmarks for question 5, only one point is assigned. A separate scoring page for the MSSI-SA is enclosed and can be used for record keeping. This scoring page should not be given to the consumer with the self-administered version of the screen.

The current recommendation is that a score of greater than or equal to 4 indicates moderate to high degree of risk for alcohol and other drug abuse. For the purpose of this project, a score of 4 or more will be interpreted as a positive screen and indicates the need for further assessment. A score of less than 4, however, does not necessarily indicate the absence of alcohol and other drug problems, as a low score may reflect denial, lack of truthfulness in the individual's responses, or current substance abuse treatment. Clinicians should discuss the results of the MSSI-SA with the consumer, and record the discussion in the chart.

<sup>1</sup> The Simple Screening Instrument for Substance Abuse (SSI-SA) has been modified by the New York City Department of Mental Hygiene to include prescription and over-the-counter medications/drugs (see Question 1b, Question 2 and directions on the screen). The rest of the screen, including the scoring range, remains unchanged. For more information about the unmodified SSI-SA, see TIP 42, *Substance Abuse Treatment for Persons with Co-Occurring Disorders* (Center for Substance Use Treatment 2004).