
PROVIDER BULLETIN

Alcohol Misuse: Screening and Behavioral Counseling Interventions in Primary Care



Consistent with United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations and the Medi-Cal Provider Manual, providers must annually screen adults aged 18 years or older for alcohol misuse and provide members engaged in risky drinking with brief behavioral counseling interventions to reduce alcohol misuse.

The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) requires the use of the following validated screening tools:

- The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT)
- The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test-Consumption (AUDIT-C), or
- A single-question screening, such as asking “How many times in the past year have you had 4 (for women and all adults older than 65 years) or 5 (for men) or more drinks in a day?”

Behavioral Counseling Interventions for Alcohol Misuse

Interventions may be delivered by face-to-face sessions, written self-help materials, computer- or Web-based programs, or telephone counseling. They may include cognitive behavioral strategies, such as action plans, drinking diaries, stress management, or problem solving.

Coding for Encounter Data-submit encounters with these codes:

- H0049 - A full screen, using a Medi-Cal approved screening instrument
- H0050 - Brief intervention services (15 minutes)

Referral to Mental Health/Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

Upon screening and evaluation, members who meet the criteria for AUD as defined by the current DSM (DSM-5), are referred for further evaluation and treatment to the county department for alcohol and substance use disorder treatment services.

If you have questions about this bulletin, please call Liza Johnson at 818-265-0800, x232. *Source: Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) All Plan Letter 18-014*
