



## **TOOLS FOR ASSESSING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS**

### **IENE 6**

**Contemporary large migration waves into Europe: Enabling health workers to provide psychological support to migrants and refugees and develop strategies for dealing with their own emotional needs.**

### **Intellectual Output 7**

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## TOOLS AND PROTOCOLS FOR ASSESSING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Psychological distress is common among people who are affected by war- trauma and migration-stress. Refugees can suffer from many physical and psychological symptoms and disorders, partly owing to the stressful experiences they have. Assessing the stressful experiences and the symptoms and disorders is challenging but the assessment process has a critical importance for providing proper psychological first aid.

In this writing, you can find several resources for assessing mental health needs and problems in refugees and screening instruments for these reason.

### Resource 1

#### **Title:** Refugee Health Technical Assistance Service

**Subtitles:** (Selected few)

- Assessments for Trauma and Mental Health in Refugees
- Screening for Emotional Distress and Mental Health

**Organization:** The Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center (RHTAC)

**Year:** Unspecified

**Authors:** Most of the material which is in the website was adapted from:

Rhema SH, Gray A, Verbillis-Kolp S, Farmer B, Hollifield M (2013) Screening for Mental Health in Refugees, in *Refugee Health Care: An Essential Medical Guide*. Annamalai A (Ed), Springer, New York,

Hollifield M, Warner T, Lian N, Krakow B, Jenkins JH, Kesler J, Stevenson J, Westermeyer J. Measuring trauma and health status in refugees: a critical review. *JAMA*. 288:611-621, 2002

References may be found in the website.

**Source/Link:**

<http://refugeehealthta.org/physical-mental-health/mental-health/adult-mental-health/screening-for-emotional-distress-and-mental-health/>

<http://refugeehealthta.org/physical-mental-health/mental-health/adult-mental-health/assessments-for-trauma-and-mental-health-in-refugees/>

**Purpose of the Tool:** This website gives us a brief summary of assessment tools and screening instruments for mental health in refugees.

**Description/ Brief Summary:** There is useful information in the website for assessing refugees mental health needs. The basic principles for assessment are:

- Provide safe private environment
- Beware of possible traumatic immigration history
- Ask about immigration history and trauma history
- If torture/trauma history is elicited consider:
  - Sensitiveness in examining
  - More through review of social situation
  - More through review of mental health symptoms

**Recommend mental health referral when:**

- Suicide ideation or behavior
- Psychotic symptoms
- Cases that make provider anxious
- Failure to respond to treatment

**Refugee mental health considerations:**

- Discussing mental health issues does not worsen mental health
- Not discussing mental health issues does not make them go away
- Developing a way to speak about symptoms possibly related to stress (somatic/functional) that sets realistic expectations for patient is most effective
- Treatments are available and effective for mental health symptoms and problems

**In this website you can find a detailed information about screening instruments such as:**

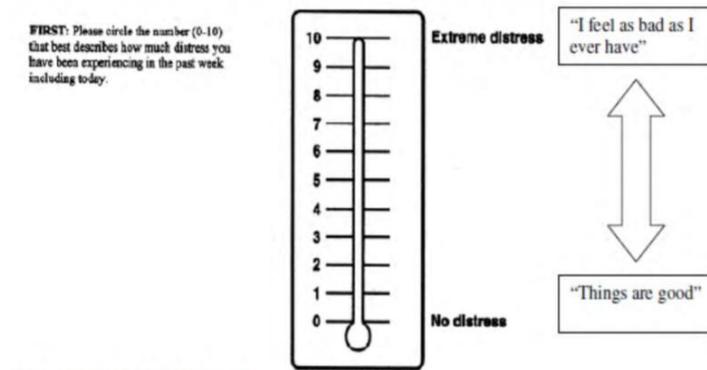
- The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ)
- Post Migration Living Difficulties Scale (PMLD)
- The 32-item Resettlement Stressor Scale (RSS)
- The War Trauma Scale (WTS)

- The Comprehensive Trauma Inventory – 104 (CTI-104)
- The New Mexico Refugee Symptom Checklist – 121 (NMRSC-121)

There are also useful webinars which are about addressing mental health needs for refugees and an instruction for a scale which is named Refugee Mental Health Screening-15 (RHS-15). It is a scale which has 15 questions.

15. question of the scale can also be useful for quick assessment:

### Distress Thermometer



<http://refugeehealthta.org/webinars/mental-health-screening-and-care/refugee-mental-health-screening-operationalizing-the-rhs-15/>

<http://refugeehealthta.org/webinars/mental-health-screening-and-care/tools-and-strategies-for-refugee-mental-health-screening-introducing-the-rhs-15-2/>

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This website is available only in English.

**Conclusions/ Recommendations:** A refugee's expression of distress requires careful consideration of a variety of factors therefore a detailed and careful examination has become an important part of the assessment process. This website gives some clues about this factors. In the website you can find lots of different instruments' name but for original ones you should ask for permission from the author of scale.

## Resource 2

# Title: Assessing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs and Resources: Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings

**Organization:** World Health Organization (WHO), The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

**Year:** 2012

**Authors:** Wietse A. Tol (Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health) and Mark van Ommeren (WHO)

**Source/Link:**

<http://www.unhcr.org/509bb3229.pdf>

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**Purpose of the Tool:** This toolkit is made for primarily for public health agencies which needs and uses assessment process after disasters.

**Description/Brief Summary:** This document gives a good framework to whom will work with refugees and traumas after disasters. This document assumes you know about mental health and psychosocial concepts as outlined in the IASC, MHPSS Guidelines (2007). It gives a general information about assessment process, assessment methodology, and how to translate assessment into action. This toolkit has 12 tools which are for coordination and advocacy, For MHPSS through health services, For MHPSS through different sectors, including through community support. You can find different assessment methods in this guide. For example:

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tool (page: 34-40) provides information about mental health needs for refugees. It includes these questions:

- The next questions are about how you have been feeling during the last two weeks. About how often during the last two weeks did you feel so afraid that nothing could calm you down — would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time?
- About how often during the last two weeks did you feel so angry that you felt out of control — would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time?
- During the last two weeks, about how often did you feel so uninterested in things that you used to like, that you did not want to do anything at all? (IF NEC: all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time?)
- During the last two weeks, about how often did you feel so hopeless that you did not want to carry on living? (IF NEC: all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time?)
- You may have experienced one or more events that have been intensely upsetting to you, such as the recent emergency/disaster/war.12 During the last two weeks, about how often did you feel so severely upset about the emergency/disaster/war or another event in your life, that you tried to avoid places, people, conversations or activities that reminded you of such event? (IF

NEC: all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time?)

- The next question is about how these feelings of fear, anger, fatigue, disinterest, hopelessness or upset may have affected you during the last two weeks. During the last two weeks, about how often were you unable to carry out essential activities for daily living because of these feelings? (IF NEC: all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time?)

The 10<sup>th</sup> (page: 63-69) and 11<sup>th</sup> (page: 70-73) provides information for learning about local perspectives on problems and coping to develop an appropriate MHPSS response.

The 12<sup>th</sup> (74-77) tool provides questions to be used in interviews with people who are severely affected by the humanitarian crisis, for example, because of direct exposure to major trauma or loss. This first question is for free listing. Free listing means asking an individual to provide as many answers to a single question as possible. It includes these questions:

- Could you list the problems you are currently experiencing because of the humanitarian situation? [WHEN THE PERSON STOPS LISTING PROBLEMS, YOU CAN PROBE WITH] What other problems are you currently experiencing because of the humanitarian situation? [WHEN THE PERSON AGAIN STOPS LISTING PROBLEMS, PROBE WITH] What else? What other problems are you currently experiencing because of the humanitarian situation?
- I am especially interested in [INSERT ANY RELEVANT PSYCHOSOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS MENTIONED ABOVE]. [FOR EACH PROBLEM OF INTEREST, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS]
  - Could you tell me how [INSERT PROBLEM] affects your daily life?
  - Have you tried to find support for this problem?
  - Could you describe how you have tried to deal with this problem? What did you do first? And after that?
  - Have you received support from others in dealing with this problem?
  - Who gave you this support?
  - What kind of support did you get?
  - To what extent did this help to deal with the problem?
  - Do you feel you need additional support with this problem?

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This manual is available only in English.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** This toolkit has useful tables. The guide has 12 tools which are easy to use in the field. This guide provides an approach for selecting the right tools. For different situation you could select a few different tools and adapt them within each assessment project.

## Resource 3

# Title: Screening and Assessing Immigrant and Refugee Youth in School-Based Mental Health Programs

**Organization:** Center for Health and Health Care in Schools [www.healthinschools.org](http://www.healthinschools.org)

**Year:** 2008

**Authors:** Dina Birman and Wing Yi Chan

**Source/Link:**

[https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue\\_briefs/2008/rwif29520](https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2008/rwif29520)

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**Purpose of the Tool:** This document provides an overview of screening, identification, and assessment tools and processes that can be used by practitioners and researchers who care for immigrant and refugee youth.

**Description/Brief Summary:** This guide provides information about mental health needs, and gives information about existing scales and tools to screen school-aged children refugees and migrants (page: 14-21). It also gives information about efficacy and effectiveness of these tools (page: 7-9). Some of the assessment tools for youth population are:

- The Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)
- The Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANSMH)

This guide strongly emphasizes that:

- As a first step, and throughout the process, it is critical to involve consultants from the local immigrant/refugee community to help design the screening process and identify possible measures to use. Such consultants may be parents from the community, professionals or paraprofessionals who themselves have immigrated from the same country, as well as professionals knowledgeable about this community. Importantly, a team approach that includes a range of expertise is likely to provide the most information and result in the most culturally sensitive process.
- If translation is required, it is important to use the “decentering” procedure described earlier in the paper (Brislin, 1986). It is imperative that the resulting translations are discussed by a team including translators, members of the local ethnic community, and mental health professionals. Translators and consultants from the local community can help ensure that the translated measures are meaningful, appropriate, and acceptable to the target community. However translators who have also been trained in mental health are rarely available. Therefore involvement of mental health professionals on the team is essential to help assure that the translated and adapted measure continues to be valid, and capture the construct of interest.

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This manual is available only in English.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** One of the advantages about this document is its focus on the youth population. This guide clarifies when to use which tool for what purpose. This document offers an approach to assessment that should help professional care givers review information that is already available.

## Resource 4

### **Title: Mental Health Screening Recommendations for Newly Arrived Refugees in Minnesota**

**Organization:** Minnesota Department of Health Refugee Health Program

**Year:** 2014

**Authors:** Susan Dicker, Ann O’Fallon, Greg Vinson, Patricia Shannon

**Source/Link:**

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/refugee/guide/mhguidelines14.pdf>

**Purpose of the Tool:** This document provides screening questions for assessment

**Description/Brief Summary:** This tool is designed for developing a mental health screening process for newly arrived refugees. The members who make contribution to this Project included experts in refugee mental health, refugee screening clinicians, policy makers, and other professionals in the field of international health.

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This manual is available only in English.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** This guide provides information about recommended screening questions. (page: 16)

## Resource 5

### **Title: Vulnerability Screening Tool**

**Organization:** The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Detention Coalition, OAK Foundation  
**Year:** 2016

**Authors:** The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Detention Coalition, OAK Foundation

**Source/Link:**

<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/detention/57fe30b14/unhcr-idc-vulnerability-screening-tool-identifying-addressing-vulnerability.html>

**Purpose of the Tool:** This purpose of this tool is to identify situations of vulnerability, to encourage early intervention, effective care of individuals in need. Also it aims to reduce the presumption of detention and to encourage a consideration of placement options.

**Description/Brief Summary:** This tool is designed for health care workers and volunteers who works for refugees and asylum seekers. The explanation of vulnerability and the purpose and rationale of screening could be useful for decision makers. This tool gives information about vulnerability and how to assess this different situations and what we can do with different groups such as lgbt persons or children.

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This manual is available only in English.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** This guide provides information about different situations can cause vulnerability and it also has a useful screening tool for vulnerability. This guide has useful communication tips for different groups.

For example for lgbt persons it says:

It is important to avoid assumptions and to adopt inclusive language. Use non-gender specific terms; for example, ask: "Are you in a relationship?" rather than "Are you married?" and "What is your partner's name?" rather than "What is your wife's name?" In some situations it might be useful to enquire: "People identified as belonging to a sexual minority or as LGBTI may be at risk of danger... does this affect you or a member of your family?" A supportive response if and when someone does disclose is important; then explore: "What would keep you safe, and what support do you need?"

For elderly persons it says:

Is the elderly person separated from her/his family/primary carers? If so what assistance is required to restore family links?

- Does the elderly person have any physical signs of illness, neglect, injury, distress or cognitive impairment?
- Can you establish that the elderly person is safe and appropriately assisted (or independently able) to undertake day-to-day tasks as previously identified? Ask: "Do your older family members have any difficulty with day-to-day tasks? What support do you require to assist with these tasks?" Preferably, ask the elderly person directly.
- Is the elderly person's accommodation appropriate given any specific needs?

## Resource 6

### Title: EASO Tool For Identification Of Persons With Special Needs

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**Organization:** European Asylum Support Office

**Year:** 2016

**Authors:** European Asylum Support Office

**Source/Link:**

<https://ipsn.easo.europa.eu/easo-tool-identification-persons-special-needs>

**Purpose of the Tool:** The primary objective of this tool is to facilitate the timely identification of persons with special procedural and/or reception needs. It may be used at any stage of the asylum procedure and at any stage of the reception process.

**Description/Brief Summary:** This is a easy to use tool for detecting different needs for different groups. With this tool you can select different needs just few clicks and with that it gives a detailed information for interview arrangements, post interview actions and how to conduct interview.

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This manual is available only in English.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** This guide provides information for different groups and different needs such as disabled people, elderly people etc.

## Resource 7

### Title: PROTECT- Questionnaire and Observations for Early Identification of Asylum Seekers Having Suffered Traumatic Experiences

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**Organization:** Process of Recognition and Orientation of Torture Victims in European Countries to

## Facilitate Care and Treatment- EU Project

**Year:** Unspecified

**Authors:** PROTECT-ABLE EU PROJECT

**Source/Link:**

<http://protect-able.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/protect-questionnaire-english.pdf>

**Purpose of the Tool:** The primary objective of this tool is to facilitate the early recognition of persons having suffered traumatic experiences, e.g. victims of torture, psychological, physical or sexual violence.

**Description/Brief Summary:** This is a easy to use tool for detecting traumatic events with 10 questions. And it gives the degree of risk for further actions.

**Special Features (Validation, Language Options etc):** This manual is available only in English.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** This tool has 10 questions which are:

1. Do you often have problem falling asleep ?
- 2 Do you often have nightmares ?
- 3 Do you often suffer from headaches ?
- 4 Do you often suffer from other physical pains ?
- 5 Do you easily get angry ?
- 6 Do you often think about painful past events ?
- 7 Do you often feel scared or frightened ?
- 8 Do you often forget things in your daily life ?
- 9 Do you find yourself losing interest in things ?
- 10 Do you often have trouble concentrating ?

And with scoring these questions health care worker or volunteer can detect the risk of person and can easily select the person who should be referred to further medical examination.