

## Screening Tools Help Guide:

### CENTER FOR EPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDIES DEPRESSION SCALE (CES-D SCALE)

#### Background:

The CES-D is a valuable tool for identifying a group at-risk for depression and for studying the relationship between depressive symptoms and other variables. Previous research supports the use of the scale in epidemiologic research, in needs assessment studies conducted by or for health planners, and as a screening measure. The CES-D scale is designed to measure depressive symptoms in the general population (i.e., nonpsychiatric persons older than 18). The 20-item self-administered scale measures the major components of depressive symptomatology, including depressive mood, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite, and sleep disturbance. The items of the scale are symptoms associated with depression that have been used in previously validated, longer scales. The CES-D was tested in household interview surveys and in psychiatric settings. It was found to have very high internal consistency and adequate test-retest repeatability. Validity was established by patterns of correlations with other self-report measures, by correlations with clinical ratings of depression, and by relationships with other variables that support its construct validity. Reliability, validity, and factor structure were similar across a wide variety of demographic characteristics in the general population samples tested. The CES-D is used for initial screening of symptoms related to depression or psychological distress. However, because the CES-D does not assess the full range of depression symptoms (for example, it does not assess suicidality) and because it assesses the occurrence of symptoms only during the past week, users are cautioned against relying on the CES-D exclusively. Therefore, it is suggested that the scale be used only as an indicator of symptoms relating to depression, not as a means to clinically diagnose depression. It has also been used extensively for research purposes to investigate levels of depression among the non-psychiatric population.

**Scoring:**

Respondents indicate the frequency or duration of time (in the past week) that they have experienced certain feelings/situations. They circle a number between 0 and 3; 0 indicates that the situation occurred “rarely or none of the time” (less than 1 day), 1 indicates “some or a little of the time” (1 to 2 days), 2 indicates “occasionally or a moderate amount of time” (3 to 4 days), and 3 indicates “most or all of the time” (5 to 7 days). Four items are worded in a positive direction to break tendencies toward response set, as well as to assess positive affect (or its absence).

Sample items include:

- “I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me.”
- “I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.”
- “I felt hopeful about the future.”
- “I felt that people dislike me.”

The scale takes only a few minutes to score by hand. After adjusting the scores for the four positive-feature items, the item scores are summed to obtain the total scale score.

**References:**

Radloff (1977); Comstock & Helsing (1976); Weissman, Shlomoskas, Pottenger, Prusoff, & Locke (1977)