Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Short Screener (GAIN-SS) Tool

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately 61.5 million Americans, or one in four adults, experience mental illness in a given year. About 13.6 million Americans, or one in seventeen adults, live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder. Serious mental illness costs America $193.2 billion in lost earnings per year.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that approximately 8.9 million adults have co-occurring disorders: that is they have both a mental and substance use disorder. But only 7.4 percent of individuals receive treatment for both conditions with 55.8 percent receiving no treatment at all.

It is well known that a large number of those with mental illness and substance use disorders do not seek treatment and will “suffer in silence.” Governor McAuliffe’s new A Healthy Virginia plan aims to target the populations most in need of services and help them before they go into crisis. Virginians would benefit from an emphasis in preventative care, especially those that have high a prevalence of complex and co-morbid illnesses such as our Medicaid population.

The need for screening for these disorders is vital for the identification, diagnosis and treatment of these conditions. Since these individuals may often be identified in other systems such as correctional facilities, emergency rooms, schools or social services, a short and precise assessment tool is necessary that can be used with minimal training.

The Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Short Screener (GAIN-SS) is a brief five minute instrument designed to quickly and accurately screen general populations of both adults and adolescents to detect psychiatric disorders, substance use disorders, or crime and violence problems. The screener helps identify those who would benefit from further assessment or referral for these issues, and also rules out those who do not have a behavioral health disorder.

The GAIN-SS was developed by Chestnut Health Systems in response to demands from professionals from a number of different treatment systems to make the process of behavioral health assessment and referral more efficient. This screening assessment was found to have sensitivity and specificity rates in the 90 percent or more range, making it an accurate and precise tool to detect mental illness or its absence.

While the licensing cost to use the screener is $100, it has been endorsed by the Department of Mental Health and Disability Services as an appropriate and effective screening tool.

*In Virginia, Magellan contracts as Magellan Healthcare, Inc., f/k/a Magellan Behavioral Health, Inc., which is a subsidiary of Magellan Health, Inc.