

# Atlanta EMA Screening Tool

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## Standards and Procedures

**Ryan White Part A Program  
Fulton County Government  
[Revised August 2018]**

[This document outlines protocol for Atlanta EMA Screening Tool in Ryan White Part A Agencies.]

## Purpose

The Atlanta EMA Screening Tool consists of standardized Case Management, Mental Health, Substance use, and Legal questions. The purpose of this tool is to provide a uniform way to identify Persons Living with HIV (PLWH) who needs an assessment conducted. Given this standardized approach, clients will receive the same follow-up for assessment, treatment and/or referrals based on their responses, regardless of the agency.

*Please note that agencies may decide to add more questions to their screening tool; however, the questions listed in these standards must be asked first before an agency's additional questions.*

## Policy

All agencies must use the Atlanta EMA Screening Tool if receiving Part A funds to provide Outpatient Ambulatory Health Services, Substance Abuse-Outpatient, Mental Health, Case Management (medical or non-medical) or Referral for Health Care and Support services.

## Standards

- New and re-enrolling clients are screened in a face-to-face confidential setting with the appropriate staff immediately following eligibility determination using the Atlanta EMA screening tool.
- Agencies will inform clients of their screening disposition in writing, specifically whether or not they are being referred for a case management, mental health, substance use or legal assessment.
- The completed Atlanta EMA Screening Tool should be added to the client's record and client data entered into CAREWare.
- Agencies that are referring a client for a case management, mental health, substance use or legal assessment must send a copy of the screen within two business days to the entity that will be completing the assessment.
- Clients who disagree with their screening disposition will have an appointment with the identified agency grievance staff person within 72 hours. Client record must include signature of client noting this and the schedule appointment time with the identified agency grievance staff person.
- Clients will be rescreened within 5 business days of the client reporting emergent needs that will have serious, immediate consequences for the client if those needs are not met.

## Procedures

Once client is determined to be Ryan White Eligible, screen the client with the Atlanta EMA Screening Tool. The screen must be conducted in a face-to-face confidential setting.

1. Start the screen by stating to client introduction below:  
*“I’m going to ask you some Yes or No questions about your personal behavior and living situation to get you started. We ask these questions of all of our new clients as part of our intake process or during the recertification process for current clients.”*
2. Fill out all information at top of screen (i.e. name, agency, start time, etc.)
  - a. If you do not have information available, ask the client..i.e. “What was your sex at birth?” Or “What is your gender identity?”
3. Begin by answering pre-screen question based on your knowledge and observation of the client. Do not ask client.

<b>Pre-screen Question</b>	
Is there a barrier that prevents the client from completing the screen (cannot communicate in English, is deaf or hard of hearing, lack of capacity, etc.)?	
“barrier”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cannot communicate orally in English (does not mean illiterate)</li><li>• Is deaf or hard of hearing</li><li>• Developmentally disabled</li><li>• Lack of capacity (intoxicated, inebriated, mentally impaired)</li></ul>

- ✓ **If yes, pause screen and address client needs. Note barrier on last page of screen**
  - ✓ If no, continue to question one.
4. Ask client questions 1 through 21.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <b>Ask questions EXACTLY AS WRITTEN</b></li><li>✓ Try to keep your voice and face <b>neutral</b> and calm. Do not react to a client’s answer. If you feel you need to affirm when a client answers a question, say “ok” or nod, rather than “great!” or another term that could be considered a judgment.</li><li>✓ Be aware of questions with <b>skip patterns</b> – whether or not you ask the second part of the question will depend on the client’s response<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Note the skip patterns for Questions 9 , 10 and 16</li></ul></li></ul>
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Ryan White Part A Program: Atlanta EMA Screening Tool Procedures

*If a client does not respond with a yes or no:*

- ✓ Say “I understand, but if you had to answer yes or no, what would your answer be?”

*If a client does not know what a question means:*

- ✓ Say “Let me read it to you again” and repeat the question
- ✓ Offer clarifications on terms based on the Appendix section

5. Count responses in gray column to questions 1 through 21 using instructions in the right hand column
    - ✓ **Tally results for entire screen**
    - ✓ For each section, count the number of circled responses in the *gray* column
    - ✓ Note time screen ended
  6. Complete table on last page
    - ✓ Note outcome of screen and whether referred for case management, mental health and/or substance use assessments
  7. Share results with client and the agency that is receiving the referral.
    - ✓ Keep copy of results in client’s file
    - ✓ Enter data into CAREWare
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## Appendix: Screening Questions Clarification

### *Case Management Screening Questions*

<b>Question 1</b>	
Are you able to do <i>things that are necessary for your health and well-being</i> ? Some examples are getting to your doctor’s appointments, preparing meals, filling out forms <b>OR</b> budgeting. (If yes) Is there <i>someone who is always able to help you when you need assistance</i> ?	
“things that are necessary for your health and well-being”	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Any</b> activities related to independent living, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation to your doctor’s appointments</li> <li>• Preparing meals</li> <li>• Filling out forms</li> <li>• Budgeting money</li> <li>• Shopping for groceries or personal items</li> <li>• Performing light or heavy housework</li> <li>• Using a telephone</li> </ul>
“someone who is always able to help you when you need assistance”	Client has a reliable person that can consistently help them with the types of activities noted above
<p>Sample client answers and suggested responses:</p> <p><b>Sometimes it's hard for me to find a ride to the clinic.</b>  <i>So would you say you are able to get to the clinic?</i></p> <p><b>What about shopping?</b>  <i>Yes, shopping for grocery and personal items are included.</i></p> <p><b>I don't have a doctor.</b>  <i>What about other activities, such as shopping for groceries and personal items.</i></p> <p><b>What do you mean by assistance?</b>  <i>Can someone take you to the clinic when you need help?</i></p> <p><b>Sometimes my brother helps me.</b>  <i>Is your brother able to help you all of the time?</i></p>	

**Question 2**

Do you have a doctor, nurse or **other health care provider** that is treating you for your HIV? (If yes) In the past year, have you ever missed your appointments AND not rescheduled them?

- “other health care provider”
- A clinical provider who is treating them for their HIV:
- Nurse practitioner (NP)
  - Physician Assistant (PA)
  - Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
  - Registered Nurse (RN)
- NOT a:
- Mental health provider
  - Substance abuse professional
  - Social worker
  - Peer counselor

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**When I need something, I go to the clinic.**

*So would you say that the clinic is treating you for your HIV?*

**My family doctor doesn't know I have HIV disease.**

*So is there anyone who is treating you for your HIV?*

**Appointments to where?**

*Medical appointments.*

**Last month I missed an appointment and called and left a message, but no one ever called me back.**

*When that happened were you ever able to reschedule the appointment?*

**Question 3**

Are you **currently** taking any **prescribed medications**? These could be any kind of medications, such as antiretrovirals for your HIV or medications for another illness like diabetes or depression. (If yes) Are you **taking these medications the way your health care provider has instructed you**?

- “prescribed medications”
- Medications like:
- Antiretrovirals for your HIV
  - Medications for chronic illnesses like:
    - diabetes
    - depression
    - hypertension
    - etc.

<b>Question 3 (continued)</b>	
“taking these medications the way your health care provider has instructed you”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• According to the instructions the provider has told you and that are printed on the pill bottle or medication packaging</li><li>• Does not take “drug holidays”</li></ul>
Sample client answers and suggested responses:	
<b>What about blood pressure medication?</b> <i>Yes, the question is asking about any kind of prescribed medication.</i>	
<b>I take medication, but I'm not sure what it's for.</b> <i>Does your doctor or the clinic have to write you a prescription so that you can get the medicine?</i>	
<b>I take my friends meds.</b> <i>Do you have any meds prescribed to you by a doctor?</i>	
<b>Sometimes I forget, but only for a couple of days.</b> <i>(Mark no, any miss counts)</i>	

<b>Question 4</b>	
Are your <b>basic needs</b> for things like food and toiletries met <b>every month</b> ?	
“basic needs”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Able to buy basic necessities like food and toiletries</li><li>• Toiletries are things, such as a toothpaste or a hairbrush, that you use for personal grooming or dressing</li></ul>
Sample client answers and suggested responses:	
<b>I want to do for myself.</b> <i>Ok, but if you had to say yes or no, would you say you are able to meet your basic needs?</i>	
<b>My mother helps me out.</b> <i>Ok, would you say that with your mother's help you are able to meet your basic needs?</i>	
<b>What are toiletries?</b> <i>Toiletries are things, like toothpaste or a hairbrush that you use for personal grooming or dressing.</i>	

**Question 5**

Do you need legal assistance with access to benefits such as Social Security, TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare or other programs?

Do you need legal assistance with matters such as: Guardianship or Wills, Power of Attorney, Probation or Parole, Criminal History, Bankruptcy, Debt, Housing Conditions or Employment Discrimination, Eviction Proceedings?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I'm out on bail.**

*(Mark yes, has a pending court date)*

**What about a suspended driver's license?**

*Yes.*

**I have to go to court for public intoxication.**

*Yes.*

**Have you been denied benefits such as SSDI, TANF, SNAP or other programs?**

*Yes.*

**Question 6**

In the **past year**, have you been *sexually active*? (If yes) In the **past year**, have you used condoms every time you had sex?

“sexually active”

- Engaging in oral, anal or vaginal sexual intercourse

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I haven't had sex in three months.**

*Ok, but in the nine months before that were you sexually active?*

**I always have sex with the same person.**

*(Mark yes)*

**Sometimes I forget.**

*So would you say you don't always use condoms?*

**What about oral sex?**

*Yes, the question is asking about any kind of sex.*

**When I have condoms.**

*Ok, what about when you don't have condoms?*



<b>Question 7</b>	
<b>Screener observation- do not ask client</b>	
Circle “yes” if there are any signs of:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client appears to be hallucinating (seeing or hearing things that others don’t see or hear)</li> <li>• Drug use (track marks, visible intoxication, etc.)</li> <li>• Impaired mental ability</li> <li>• Inappropriate clothing for weather</li> <li>• Poor hygiene</li> <li>• Unstable mood</li> <li>• Agitation</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Mania/hyperactivity</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Other signs that lead you to believe the client is either unable or unwilling to answer questions truthfully</li> </ul>
<p>✓ If yes, circle “Y” and note your observations in the space provided.</p> <p>✓ If no, circle “N” for no and continue to next question</p>	

<b>Question 8</b>	
<b>During the next three months, are you going to need help finding a place to live OR are you past due on your utilities, rent or mortgage?</b>	
“need help finding a place to live”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being homeless</li> <li>• Home is uninhabitable</li> <li>• Living in a shelter</li> <li>• Temporarily staying with friends/family</li> <li>• In need of an assisted living facility</li> </ul>
“past due on your utilities, rent or mortgage”	<p>This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eviction is imminent</li> <li>• The client has received past due notices and/or eviction notices</li> </ul>
<p>Sample client answers and suggested responses:</p> <p><b>I’m staying with a friend right now. We haven't discussed next month.</b>  <i>Do you think it’s likely you may need help next month?</i></p> <p><b>My rent is really high...</b>  <i>Ok, have you been notified that you are past due on your rent?</i></p>	

## *Mental Health and Substance Use Screening Questions*

- ✓ **Ask questions EXACTLY AS WRITTEN**
- ✓ **Note the skip patterns for Questions 9, 10 and 16**

### **Question 9**

Are you **currently** being treated for a substance use problem? This includes getting help from a professional like a psychologist or counselor.

**(If yes, skip to question 16)**

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I would like to get in treatment.**

*Ok, so you are not currently in treatment?*

**I go to 12 step meetings.**

*Ok, but do you go talk to a professional like a psychologist or counselor?*

### **Question 10**

Have you **ever** drank alcohol or done drugs?

**(If yes, skip to question 16)**

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**Does my Xanax count?**

*Your Xanax counts if you take it more than prescribed by your doctor.*

### **Question 11**

During the **past month**, have you felt you ought to cut down on your drinking or drug use?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I haven't had enough money to buy much.**

*Well, have you felt like you should cut down?*

**I know that they get high at the shelter but I try to fight it.**

*Well, have you felt like you ought to cut down?*

**I haven't figured out where to buy them yet.**

*Well, have you felt like you ought to cut down?*

**Question 12**

During the **past month**, have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking or drug use?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I haven't had enough money to buy much.**

*Well, have people annoyed you by talking about your drinking or drug use?*

**Question 13**

During the **past month**, have you felt bad or guilty about your drinking or drug use?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I wish I could stop.**

*Ok, would you say that you've felt bad or guilty?*

**Question 14**

During the **past month**, have you had a drink or used drugs first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover (an eye-opener)?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I work the night shift so I drink in the morning when I get off - does that count?**

*No, the question is asking about if you had a drink or drugs when you wake up.*

**Question 15**

In the **past year**, have you used a needle to inject drugs? (If yes) In the **past year**, have you **shared needles or works**?

“shared needles or works”

- Using needles and/or drug paraphernalia (cookers, cotton balls, etc.) used by others
- Allowing others to use needles and/or drug paraphernalia the client has used

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**What are injecting drugs?**

*Drugs that are taken by using needles to inject the drug into your body through your veins or under the skin.*

**I tried it once, but that was a long time ago.**

*(Mark no, time frame is past year)*

**Question 15 (continued)**

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I take Insulin.**

*(Mark yes for any injectable drug)*

**I always bring my own needles.**

*But do you share them?*

**What are works?**

*Works are things like needles or spoons that a person uses when injecting drugs.*

**I was always the one who used them first.**

*Ok, but were they new needles or works?*

**Question 16**

Are you **currently** being treated for a mental health problem? This includes getting help from a professional like a psychologist or counselor, or taking medication for depression or anxiety.

**(If yes, end and score screen)**

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I take my friends Xanax because they had some extra.**

*Are you taking any medication for a mental health problem that has been prescribed to you?*

**Question 17**

During the **past month**, have you been hearing or seeing things that other people don't seem to hear or see?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**What do you mean?**

*Do you hallucinate or hear voices?*

**Question 18**

During the **past month**, have you often been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**Wouldn't you be if you were homeless?**

*Ok, should I mark yes or no to that question?*

**Question 19**

During the **past month**, have you often been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things?

During the **past month**, have you noticed that you don't enjoy doing things as much as you used to?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**I don't have money to do things.**

*The question is asking about all kinds of things, whether they cost money or not.*

**Question 20**

During the **past month**, have you had thoughts:

Of wanting to give up?

Of going to sleep and not wanting to wake up?

Of not wanting to go on living?

That you would be better off if you were dead?

Of wanting to hurt or harm yourself in some way?

Of wanting to kill yourself?

Sample client answers and suggested responses:

**Question 21**

During the **past month**, have you had thoughts of:

Wanting to harm or hurt other people?

Wanting to kill other people?

Sample client answers and suggested responses: