

## **Title**

What is the intent? Screening tools for employment in clinical healthcare delivery systems

## **Abstract**

### **Background**

The relationship between work and health is complex and bidirectional, where work can have both health-harming and health-enhancing effects. Though employment is recognized as a social determinant of health, and clinical healthcare delivery systems are increasingly using screening tools to ask patients about social needs, little research has explored the extent to which employment-related social risk is captured in these screening tools.

### **Objective**

There is a need to better understand how social risk screening impacts specific patient populations; how characteristics of single domains of social risk can be leveraged to tailor screening tools for more effective patient care; and how the implementation of related interventions can influence health outcomes. This study aimed to identify and characterize employment- and work-related questions in social risk screening tools that have been implemented in clinical healthcare delivery systems.

### **Methods**

We conducted a qualitative content analysis of employment-related items in screening tools that have been implemented in clinical healthcare service delivery systems. Three content areas guided data extraction and analysis: Setting, Domain, and Level of Contextualization.

### **Results**

Screening tools that asked employment-related questions were implemented in settings that were diverse in the populations served and the scope of care provided. Several existing screening tools lacked a clear purpose and ranged widely depending on the setting in which they are implemented. The intent of employment-related items focused on four domains: Social Risk Factor, Social Need, Employment Exposure, and Legal Need. Most questions were found to have a low Level of Contextualization and were largely focused on identifying an individual's employment status.

### **Conclusion**

Clinical healthcare delivery systems should carefully consider what domain(s) they aim to capture and how they anticipate using screening tools. Assessing the intent of screening tool items would provide other mechanisms to study comparative effectiveness and generate insight for providers to better tailor screening tools for patient care.