

Interim guidance for the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs Shorter Screener (GAIN-SS)

Document version: 1.0

Released December 2024

Intended to be used in conjunction with the Behavioral Health Data Guide (BHDG)

Overview

The Health Care Authority (HCA) has recently become aware that changes to scoring in the most recent versions (v 3.0+) of the GAIN-SS have created concerns about compatibility with the Behavioral Health Data System (BHDS). HCA plans to assess the use of the GAIN-SS in 2025. In the interim, this document provides guidance for providers who have implemented the GAIN-SS v3.0+ (see subsequent pages for specifics).

Providers who have not yet adopted the GAIN-SS v3.0 can continue to use the existing guidance in the BHDG without change.

Common questions

What is the difference between the GAIN-SS v3.0+ and the previous version?

The new version (v3.0+) includes four screening questions. The previous versions had three screening questions. The new version (v3.0+) also has more items included in two of the screening questions, which can produce scores higher than five (the previous maximum) for those questions.

What screening question was added to the GAIN-SS?

The new version (v3.0+) includes CVScr 4.

My organization has not yet adopted the most recent version of the GAIN-SS. Do we need to?

No, HCA does not require that providers adopt the new version (v3.0+) or make any associated changes to existing practices. Your organization can continue to submit using the instructions in the BHDG.

I don't know which version of the GAIN-SS I'm using. How do I tell?

If your version includes the CVScr 4 question, then you are using the new version (v3.0+).

How do I score the new version (v3.0) of the GAIN-SS?

Please refer to the scoring guidance provided by Chestnut Health Systems, available on the HCA website and at [Chestnut's website](#). For additional resources, please [visit the GAIN-SS webpage](#).

Background

What is the GAIN-SS?

The Global Appraisal of Individual Needs Shorter Screener (GAIN-SS) is a brief 5 to 10-minute instrument designed to quickly and accurately screen general populations of both adults and adolescents for possible internalizing or externalizing psychiatric disorders, substance use disorders, or crime and violence problems. A result of moderate to high problem severity in any single area or overall suggests the need for further assessment (for example, with the comprehensive, two-hour GAIN Initial biopsychosocial instrument) or referral to some part of the behavioral health treatment system. This progressive approach enables agencies to direct time and resources to where they are needed most.

The most recent version of the GAIN-SS (v3.0+) comprises four sub screeners (five to seven items each): the Internalizing Disorder Screener (IDScr), the Externalizing Disorder Screener (EDScr), the Substance Disorder Screener (SDScr), and the Crime and Violence Screener (CVScr). The four sub-screeners combined form the 23-item Total Disorder Screener (TDSr).

Contractual requirement for use:

The use of the GAIN-SS—and consideration of co-occurring disorders into the treatment plan—is required in HCA’s contracts with MCOs and BH-ASOs (IMC contract section 9.8.3, BH-ASO contract section 9.5.13). Accordingly, Behavioral Health Agency (BHA) providers providing services to Apple Health enrollees are required to use the GAIN-SS.

History

Historically, the requirement to use the GAIN-SS stems from legislation (E2SSB 5763, 2005) and is in statute: [RCW 71.24.630: Integrated, comprehensive screening and assessment process for substance use and mental disorders](#).

As described in the 2005 bill, the intent of this legislation was to increase coordination of treatment and services for co-occurring disorders, with the ultimate goal of improving treatment outcomes: “The legislature finds that a substantial number of persons have co-occurring mental and substance abuse disorders and that identification and integrated treatment of co-occurring disorders is critical to successful outcomes and recovery.” (page 2, 14-17)

Based on the criteria specified in RCW 71.24.630 (1)(a), the GAIN-SS was selected as the initial screening tool because it is broadly applicable across a range of co-occurring disorders, can be used for all ages, and is relatively short and cost-effective.

Interim guidance

Co-Occurring Disorder Screening (IDS)

Corresponds to page 115 of the Behavioral Health Data Guide v5.9

Section

Co-occurring disorder

Definition

The IDS score is one of three produced upon completion of the co-occurring disorders screening process. The IDS score is a screening question included in the GAIN-SS tool.

Code values

Code	Value
0	IDS Score of 0
1	IDS Score of 1
2	IDS Score of 2
3	IDS Score of 3
4	IDS Score of 4
5	IDS Score of 5 or greater
8	Refused
9	Unable to complete

Rules

- When reporting the outcome of a completed screening, a value between 0 (zero) and 5 must be provided for the IDS score.
- Use 8 to indicate the client refuses to participate in the specific scale.
- Use 9 to indicate the client is unable to complete the specific scale.
- Must attempt to screen all individuals ages thirteen (13) and above using the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screener (GAIN-SS).

Data use

State reporting

Validation

Must be valid code

Co-Occurring Disorder Screening (EDS)

Corresponds to page 116 of the Behavioral Health Data Guide v5.9

Section

Co-occurring disorder

Definition

The EDS score is one of three produced upon completion of the co-occurring disorders screening process. The EDS score is a screening question included in the GAIN-SS tool.

Code values

Code	Value
0	EDS Score of 0
1	EDS Score of 1
2	EDS Score of 2
3	EDS Score of 3
4	EDS Score of 4
5	EDS Score of 5 or greater
8	Refused
9	Unable to complete

Rules

- When reporting the outcome of a completed screening, a value between 0 (zero) and 5 must be provided for the EDS score.
- Use 8 to indicate the client refuses to participate in the specific scale.
- Use 9 to indicate the client is unable to complete the specific scale.
- Must attempt to screen all individuals ages thirteen (13) and above using the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screener (GAIN-SS).

Data use

State reporting

Validation

Must be valid code

Co-Occurring Disorder Screening (SDS)

Corresponds to page 117 of the Behavioral Health Data Guide v5.9

NOTE: Scoring consistent across versions – no changes

Section

Co-occurring disorder

Definition

The SDS score is one of three produced upon completion of the co-occurring disorders screening process. The SDS score is a screening question included in the GAIN-SS tool.

Code values

Code	Value
0	SDS Score of 0
1	SDS Score of 1
2	SDS Score of 2
3	SDS Score of 3
4	SDS Score of 4
5	SDS Score of 5
8	Refused
9	Unable to complete

Rules

- When reporting the outcome of a completed screening, a value between 0 (zero) and 5 must be provided for the SDS score.
- Use 8 to indicate the client refuses to participate in the specific scale.
- Use 9 to indicate the client is unable to complete the specific scale.
- Must attempt to screen all individuals ages thirteen (13) and above using the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screener (GAIN-SS).

Data use

State reporting

Validation

Must be valid code

GAIN-SS item CVScr 4

Not included in the Behavioral Health Data Guide.

Do not include scores for this item in BHDS data submissions.