



“What Is Screening?”

Slide 1: Welcome to the Webinar “What is Screening.” This is one of 11 webinars developed by the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) for the RTI Implementer Webinar Series. My name is Amy Peterson and I provide technical assistance support for the Center. This webinar provides an in-depth look at screening, considerations for screening tools, and considerations for implementing screening in a district or school. If you have not already, you may want to pause the webinar and print out the accompanying handouts.

Slide 2: As I mentioned, the Center has developed a series of webinars to cover information that is important for RTI implementation. On this slide, you can see the different webinars available in the series. While you can watch the webinars in any sequence, we recommend that you first watch “What is RTI?” to ensure you have an understanding of how RTI is discussed in this series. Prior to watching this webinar it is also recommended that you watch the “Understanding Types of Assessment within an RTI Framework.” Following this webinar, you can learn more about screening data and establishing a screening process. There is also a series on progress monitoring and the multi-level prevention system.

Slide 3: The objectives for this training are: to recognize the purpose and focus of screening; to use the Screening Tools Chart to learn about screening tools; and to understand the timeframe for screening.

Slide 4: One helpful way to check your understanding throughout the webinar is to complete the accompanying vocabulary handout. The handout provides a table with a list of key terms in the left hand column. the right side of the table, you can track your understanding both before and after viewing the webinar. Before viewing the webinar, you should make predictions about what you think each of the terms mean. Throughout the webinar, you can then complete the final meaning column, based on the definitions provided. You might also want to draw a picture or a sketch or provide examples in the far right column. On the slide, you can see an example of one way to do this.

If you have not done so already pause the webinar now and make predictions for the key terms of this webinar. Press play when you are ready to continue.

Slide 5: This is the graphic used by the Center to show Response to Intervention and its essential components. This training will focus on the essential component of screening—which you can see on the left of your screen. Without screening, it is difficult to determine who should be progress monitored or who should receive supplemental interventions or instruction. Screening is



necessary for this initial decision making. As you can see, data-based decision making is at the center of the graphic because it is important for all three of the essential components. Without data-based decision making, RTI is technically not being implemented. Throughout the series of webinars, you will see that data-based decision making is embedded within the discussions of each of the essential components.

Slide 6: This slide provides an overview of the information presented throughout the webinar.

As you can see, the purpose of screening is to identify those students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes. Because RTI is a framework for providing services, the outcomes you are concerned about could be just about anything. For example, academic achievement, behavior, graduation, or post-school outcomes. Sites, states, districts, and schools typically identify what outcomes students are expected to achieve, and then screen to see which students are not likely to achieve those outcomes. Screening can answer the questions: Is our core curriculum and instruction effective? Which students need additional assessment and instruction?

For example, if the desired outcome is graduation, a quick screen of attendance and credits—predictors of graduation—can reveal which students are likely to meet the requirements of graduation and which will need additional support. If the desired outcome is mastery on end-of-year tests, student performance measures, such as curriculum-based measurement (CBM), can reveal which students are not likely to pass the test and need additional support.

The **focus of screening** is on **all students**, not just those students we may believe are at risk. Students may slip through the cracks unless there is a systematic process for screening in place. Screening is not a diagnostic assessment; it is a brief, reliable, and valid assessment to identify which students may need additional assessments, such as progress monitoring or diagnostic assessments, or additional instructional support. The tools should demonstrate diagnostic accuracy for predicting learning or behavioral outcomes. In other words, they should be able to accurately identify who could be at risk.

At minimum, **screening should be administered more than once per year**, such as at the beginning of the year and the middle of the year. Schools and districts that wish to use screening data to evaluate program effectiveness, to establish local norms and cut scores, and to provide data to the next year teacher typically choose to administer the screening three times a year (in fall, winter, and spring) and should select a screening tool that provides alternative forms and multiple benchmarks.

Slide 7: The screening process is not unique to education. In fact, standardized screening processes are common in many other fields, such as cancer screenings, courtesy checks during oil changes, and vision screenings in the primary grades. In all of these cases, as in education, the



purpose is to identify indicators that predict if more testing or further intervention is needed. The main purpose of all screening processes is to identify and address potential problems early, in order to prevent bigger problems in the future.

Slide 8: The same principle applies in learning environments. In addition to identifying students at risk for poor learning outcomes and who need additional assessment and intervention, screening data also can help to answer key questions about the effectiveness of your curriculum and instruction.

Slide 9: The focus of screening is on all students. The idea is that no students will fall through the cracks, and that we can catch students who might be doing well at the beginning of the year but are struggling later by assessing multiple times during the year.

Screening is a two-stage process. Universal screening is the first stage. A brief assessment for all students is conducted at the beginning of the school year, and then many times in the winter and spring. For students who score at or below the cut score on the universal screener, a second stage of screening is then conducted to more accurately predict which students are truly at risk for poor learning outcomes. This second stage involves additional, more in-depth testing or short-term progress monitoring to confirm a student's at-risk status.

All measures for screening should be an educationally valid outcome. What is screened should be based on the needs and goals of the school. Schools typically screen in reading, mathematics, and behavior, but may also consider screening in other areas of need, such as language or writing.

Slide 10: When selecting screening tools you must choose reliable, valid tools that demonstrate diagnostic accuracy for predicting which students will develop learning or behavioral difficulties. General outcome measures are commonly used as screeners, because the goal is to predict an outcome.

You must choose age-appropriate outcome measures that capture student ability. It is important that the screener you choose has strong classification accuracy, meaning that the screening tool is able to accurately classify students into "at-risk" and "not at-risk" categories. In reading, for example, in order to have good classification accuracy, screeners target reading or reading-related skills that are pertinent to the grade and time the screen is administered in order to have good classification accuracy. In kindergarten, relevant skills could include phonemic awareness, letter and sound knowledge, and vocabulary. In later grades, such as second and third grades, measures should assess the number and type of words students can read and comprehend, and the fluency of those skills.



We may have different screeners to assess different outcome measures. No screener can do it all.

Slide 11: Here is an example screener. This copy is placed in front of the student. Students are provided with standardized directions and asked to read aloud for one minute. To get an accurate score for CBM for reading at each screening period, students read three one-minute passages, and the median or middle score is recorded.

Slide 12: The Center has developed a screening tools chart that can be accessed through the Center’s website. We will now look at the process for using the tools chart, recommended in the User’s Guide, which is also available on the Center’s website, and we will review how the chart is structured to include both indicators of valid tools and efficiency factors.

Slide 13: The tools chart includes a large amount of information designed to assist you in selecting a tool that is most appropriate for use in your classroom, school, or district. The “best” tool is not going to be the same for every user and is not determined by any single element on the chart. Users of the chart should review all of the different elements of the chart when making a decision. The Center recommends following six steps for using the tools charts. These are included in the User’s Guide and are listed on the slide here: Gathering a team, determining your needs, determining your priorities, familiarizing yourself with the content and language of the chart, reviewing the data, and asking for more information. You can see more information about this in the User’s Guide on the Center’s website.

Slide 14: Often, decisions about appropriate screening tools will involve the input of multiple teachers and staff. When using the tools chart, a team of key constituents should review the information together. In gathering this team, you should think about the following questions: Who should be involved in selecting a screening tool? What types of expertise and what perspectives should be involved in selecting the tool?

Slide 15: The most appropriate screening tool for you will depend on the specific needs of your school or district. In determining your needs, you should think about the following questions: For what skills do I need a screening tool? For which specific academic outcome or measure am I interested in screening? For what grades do I need a screening tool? Will this screening tool be used with all students or only a specific subgroup of students? Which subgroup?

Slide 16: In addition to determining your needs for a screening tool, your team should also consider its priorities. Although you may want a tool that meets all of these criteria, such a tool may not exist. You will need to weigh your priorities carefully when making your selection. In determining your priorities, you should think about the following questions. For example, if cost is a priority ask, “Is it a tool that can be purchased for a reasonable cost?”



Another example would be about training. Is it a tool that offers ready access to training and technical support for staff? You can see other examples on the slide.

Slide 17: There are four main areas on which tools are evaluated: ratings of technical rigor, efficiency, implementation requirements (for example, cost, training needs) and the data submitted by the vendor (reliability data, validity data). The ratings of technical rigor are represented with rating bubbles, similar to the symbols used in the Consumer Reports. A full bubble indicates convincing evidence, and an empty bubble indicates unconvincing evidence. There is a legend at the bottom of the tools chart that provides information about both of these.

Slide 18: The first area that is presented is the ratings of technical rigor. For each of these standards, the Technical Review Committee (TRC), a committee of experts in the field, reviewed data submitted by developers of the tools and gave a rating of “convincing,” “partially convincing,” “unconvincing,” or “no evidence.” If using the tools chart online, you can click on the name of the standard in the column heads of the chart to view a definition and a rubric used by the TRC. As you can see, there are five pieces of information on the chart for technical rigor. The first—classification accuracy—indicates the extent to which a screening tool is able to accurately classify students into “at risk for poor learning outcomes” and “not at risk for poor learning outcomes” categories. The second—generalizability—is the extent to which results generated from one population can be applied to another population. A tool is considered more generalizable if studies have been conducted on larger, more representative samples. The third—reliability—is the consistency with which a tool classifies students from one administration to the next. A tool is considered reliable if it produces the same results when administering the test under different conditions, at different times, or using different forms of the test. Validity, the fourth—the extent to which a tool accurately measures the underlying construct that it is intended to measure. The fifth—disaggregated data—is whether the data are disaggregated when they are calculated and reported separately for specific sub-populations. For example, race, economic status, academic performance, and so on.

Slide 19: The last four columns of the chart offer information about the efficiency of each screening tool. This includes: the administration format, i.e., is the tool designed to be administered to an individual or to a group or both?; the administration and scoring time, i.e., how long it takes to administer and score the tool?; the scoring key, i.e., is a scoring key provided? If not, is it scored by a computer?; and finally, the norms/Benchmarks, i.e., are benchmarks and/or norms available for reference?

Slide 20: The tools chart offers an “implementation table” for each tool, which can be accessed by clicking on the name of the tool. The implementation table includes the following information: the cost of the tool, the training required to implement the tool, the level of staff



expertise required to administer the tool, where to go for training and technical support, and how scores are reported. This information is provided by the vendor.

Slide 21: The tools chart also includes detail about the actual data that were submitted to the TRC for review. These data can be viewed by clicking on any of the rating bubbles in the cells in the chart.

The Center recommends that you look for tools that conducted classification studies with outcome measures and samples similar to your population and outcome of interest. By clicking on the rating bubble, you will obtain more information about which tool is most appropriate for which populations of students.

To explain the ratings, it is recommended that someone on the team is familiar with data.

Slide 22: Examining these data can be useful for a number of reasons. You may see two or more tools that received the same rating for a particular standard, so how do you know which one really best meets your needs? By clicking on the rating and viewing the actual data, you have more information to help you determine which tool is most appropriate. For example, for classification accuracy, the chart includes statistics about how well a tool classifies students, as well as the outcome measure, and details about the sample that was used to generate these statistics.

The detailed data can also help you determine the tools that are most appropriate for certain subgroups of students. For example, your district or subgroup of interest may comprise mostly of English language learners (ELLs), and you may be interested in how accurately the tool classifies students for risk categories, how reliable it is, and how valid it is, for only the ELL students. By clicking on the bubble in the disaggregated data column, you will be able to see detailed data about how well the tool works among various subgroups.

Slide 23: You may find that the tools chart does not provide you with all the information you need. For example, what if a tool that you are interested in does not have disaggregated data for a particular subgroup that is important to you? If this is the case, the Center recommends you ask the vendor or developer. Developers who have chosen to submit their tools for review and publish them on the chart are interested in meeting the needs of their customers. As such, they are interested in doing more research to provide data that you need. Similarly, if a tool that you currently use or are interested in learning about is not on the chart, call the developer of that tool, let them know about the TRC review process and the tools chart, and ask them to consider submitting the tool for review.

The tools chart provides publisher contact information in the pop-ups found in the second column.



Slide 24: For more information about the six recommended steps for using the screening tool chart and selecting a tool, check out the NCRTI User Guide, which is available for download on the Center’s website. In addition, there is a glossary of terms on the Center’s website that provides definitions for all the different terms related to screening.

Slide 25: The last section is about the timeframe for screening. When should screening occur and how long does it take to screen?

Many schools and districts screen at least three times a year, in the fall, winter, and spring. This allows schools to use screening data to evaluate the effectiveness of the core curriculum and instruction across the year and to establish local norms and cut-scores, and it also provides data for the next year teachers to use. Regardless of the number of times that screeners are used, screeners should remain consistent across school years and sites and must target skills pertinent to the grade and time the screen is administered.

As mentioned earlier when we were talking about the screening tools chart, screening can be delivered in two ways: individually or as a group. There might be different times allotted for these different kinds of administration. All this information is available on the screening tools chart. For example, screeners can be individually administered tests, which take approximately 1 to 5 minutes or they can be class-wide tests, which range from 2 minutes to 60 minutes. Depending on the number of the students in the class that are being screened, it might be more time efficient to do a class-wide test or it might be more time efficient to do a individually administered test.

Slide 26: Thank you for taking the time to listen to “What is Screening”. To find more resources on this topic or to view other webinars in the implementer series, visit www.rti4success.org.

You can also view additional information about RTI and Screening on the RTI Action Network and the IDEA Partnership websites. Their websites are listed on the screen. Thank you.