

UIC Solutions Suite Podcast Series

Transcript for *Health Passport: Your Journey to Wellness*

Recorded by Patricia Nemec

Announcer: Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Solutions Suite to obtain free tools that promote health, self-direction, and employment for the behavioral health field.

Hi, my name is Pat Nemec and I work as a consultant with Peggy Swarbrick at the Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey Wellness Institute. Peggy and I assist with activities at the University of Illinois Chicago Center on Integrated Health and Self-Directed Recovery. We offer a Solutions Suite of free health, self-direction, and employment tools for the behavioral health field. You can visit the Solutions Suite on the website where you found this podcast, at www.center4healthandsdc.org.

Today, I want to tell you about one of the tools found in our Solutions Suite, called *Health Passport*. This tool was created in a joint project by the UIC Center and the Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey Wellness Institute.

We created the *Health Passport* to help people learn better ways to improve their wellness. You may know that people who use public behavioral health system services have a high rate of medical problems and risk for disease. We designed this tool to help people learn about their health risks and status. It's also designed to help them feel more comfortable asking medical providers about getting common health screenings or tests. We have used the *Health Passport* as part of a health fair, but it also is a helpful tool that you can use on your own.

Our *Health Passport* is a 12-page booklet. It describes 7 simple tests that are commonly used to assess health risks. Each page includes a description of the test, has a space to record test results, and recommends health web sites that can be visited to learn more. You can download the *Health Passport* or watch our webinar to learn about each of these tests and to find out more about how to use the *Passport* to record and track your results.

The first section of the *Health Passport* addresses weight and waist circumference. People who score in the overweight or obese range may have increased risk for many health conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, or sleep apnea. Being under-weight also can present health challenges, such as a weakened immune system and fragile bones that can break more easily.

The *Health Passport* explains two common tests for identifying the risks associated with weight, and provides spaces to record results. The first weight test is for Body Mass Index, which is also called BMI. It is calculated by taking your height and weight. The second weight test described in this section of the *Health Passport* is for measuring waist circumference, which is how many inches you are around the middle. Waist circumference is a different measure from BMI, but is also related to health risks.

There is space in your *Passport* to record your height, weight, BMI, and waist circumference. You can get these measurements from your health care provider, at a health fair, or you can do it yourself.

Weight is a sensitive topic. Remember, if you are using the *Health Passport* to help others, it's important to be supportive and encouraging, so they feel okay about stepping on the scale. Use a shame-free approach and assure their privacy when taking measurements. If you're using the *Health Passport* for yourself, you may be uncomfortable about sharing your numbers and your concerns with health care providers, but remember that they can discuss possible causes and safe ways to address weight issues.

The second section of the *Health Passport* addresses cholesterol and triglycerides, which are measured using a blood test. These are fat-like substances that your body needs, but too much of this can lead to heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other health problems. High blood cholesterol and high triglycerides are very common for people who take certain psychiatric medications. The *Passport* describes healthy and unhealthy levels of cholesterol and triglycerides and has space to record your test results. Keep in mind that high cholesterol and triglycerides can be controlled with medicine, a healthy diet, and exercise, so knowing your numbers can help you make healthy choices every day.

The next section in the *Health Passport* is glucose testing for diabetes screening, which is done with a blood test. Diabetes can cause serious health problems like heart disease, blindness, and kidney failure. Many people in mental health recovery are at high risk for insulin resistance and diabetes, possibly psychiatric medications and other prescription drugs. Early detection and treatment of diabetes can decrease the risk of developing complications such as skin and eye problems, nerve damage, and stroke. The *Health Passport* uses the hemoglobin A1c test, which gives your average blood glucose level over the past three months. You can record your test results in the *Passport* and learn about healthy and unhealthy glucose levels based on this test.

Blood pressure is recorded in the fourth section in the *Health Passport*. Blood pressure goes up and down throughout the day. When it goes up and stays high, it's called high blood pressure, or hypertension. High blood pressure is a serious health risk that can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. It is very common among people with mental health conditions. African Americans are also at greater risk for high blood pressure than are white European Americans. Because a person can have high blood pressure and not know it, and it can be fatal, it is sometimes called The Silent Killer.

Other sections the *Health Passport* cover alcohol and substance use, smoking, and a heart health assessment. You also will find a list of health resources, with links to related web sites, and steps for getting healthier. Finally, there is a page to summarize your health tests.

If you're using the *Health Passport* to support others, you may want to give them simple medical fact sheets for more information on body mass index, diabetes, cholesterol, high blood pressure, and smoking. You also may want to share information on health habits and routines, including different types of exercise, and motivation to exercise. Some of these handouts are available as part of the UIC Solutions Suite tool on planning a health fair.

The *Health Passport* can help people become aware of and track their health risks and progress. This tool can be empowering increasing awareness of wellness habits within one's control, such as diet, sleep, walking, smoking, or alcohol use. Some people like to take their *Health Passport* to their medical appointments to keep track of their progress and discuss it with their health care providers.

If you still have questions after listening to this podcast, check out our *Health Passport* webinar.

Announcer: Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional Solutions Suite recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Center's web site.