

UIC Solutions Suite Webinar Series

Transcript for *Health Passport: Your Journey to Wellness*

Recorded by Patricia Nemec

Slide 1

Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the University of Illinois at Chicago 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.

Slide 2

Hello. 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 UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery, which offers 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 webinar, at www.center4healthandsdc.org.

Slide 3

Today, I will be discussing how to use 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. This project, the UIC Center, and the Solutions Suite are jointly funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Community Living; and by the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The work of the Center does not necessarily represent the policy of any agency or endorsement by the federal government.

Slide 4

There are several learning objectives for this webinar. You'll learn about the purpose and format of the *Health Passport* and why we think it is an important tool. You'll also learn about how you can use the passport to help the people you work with, either individually or as part of a health and wellness fair. You also can use the passport for yourself to track your health status and progress.

Slide 5

We created the *Health Passport* to help people learn better ways to improve their wellness. People served by the public behavioral health system have a high rate of medical problems and risk for disease. Research shows that people in this service system are dying, on average, 25 years earlier than the general population. Many are living with preventable chronic medical conditions. 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.

Slide 6

According to Dr. Peggy Swarbrick, wellness is a conscious, deliberate process that requires we become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle. We believe that, once you know your health status, you can make choices that help you get and stay well. The *Health Passport* is designed to do this by raising people's awareness of simple tests that measure health status, and explaining why those tests are important. It also offers a way to keep track of test results and health risks, along with wellness lifestyle habits and strategies for reducing these risks.

Slide 7:

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. Next, I will describe each of the tests, and how to use the *Passport* to record and track your results.

Slide 8

The first section of the *Health Passport* addresses weight and waist circumference. Knowing your weight is important because, if you score in the overweight or obese range, you may have increased risk for diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, arthritis, asthma, and 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 space 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. Your BMI gives you an idea about the amount of fat in your body. What's considered to be a healthy BMI varies by gender, age, and race, so it's important to understand your results based on your personal characteristics.

Slide 9

If you're calculating your own BMI, or you're measuring it for others as part of a health fair, we recommend using an online calculator, such as the one provided by the National Institutes of Health, which you can find in an online search using the key words, NIH BMI calculator. Using this calculator, you'll see that, if you are 5 feet 6 inches tall, and you weigh 145 pounds, your BMI, is 23.4, which puts you in the range of normal weight. If you are 5 feet 6 inches tall and you weigh 175 pounds, your BMI is 28.2, indicating you are overweight. If you are 5 feet 6 inches tall and you weigh 195 pounds, your BMI is 31.5, which is in the obese range. As I said earlier, research has shown that a BMI outside of the normal range is associated with a higher risk of several diseases or health problems.

Slide 10

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. For example, men who are obese with a waist measurement of more than 40 inches are at very high risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. Women have the same increased risk if their waist circumference is 35 inches or more. Increased waist circumference is a risk even for people whose weight is in the normal range. If your doctor or nurse practitioner is concerned about your

weight, he or she will take your waist measurement. Again, you can ask for the result to be recorded in your *Passport*, or do it yourself. If you're measuring your own waist, or doing it for others in a health fair, stand up and place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hip bones. For the most accurate number, don't pull the tape too tightly and measure your waist just after you breathe out.

Slide 11

Weight is a sensitive topic. This means that, 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. Emotional support and acceptance can help create a shame-free approach. You also will need to assure their privacy, especially if you're weighing or measuring people at a health fair or a behavioral health program. If you're using the *Health Passport* for yourself, you may be uncomfortable about sharing your numbers and your concerns with providers. Anyone who is overweight or underweight should be working with a health care provider, like a doctor or nurse practitioner, to discuss possible causes and safe ways to address their weight. Health care providers need to be empathic and non-judgmental when discussing issues of weight and health. If you or someone you support feels disrespected by a health care provider, you may need to advocate for better treatment or a new provider. The UIC Solutions Suite includes a booklet on *Raising Difficult Issues with Your Service Provider* that may be helpful in this situation.

Slide 12

The second section of the *Health Passport* addresses cholesterol and triglycerides, which are measured using a blood test. Cholesterol and triglycerides are fat-like substances that your body needs. However, if you have too much of them in your blood, 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.

Slide 13

The *Passport* describes the test results that indicate healthy and unhealthy levels of cholesterol and triglycerides. There is space to record 4 numbers related to these tests: total cholesterol; LDL, or low-density lipoproteins; HDL, or high-density lipoproteins; and triglycerides. Think of the L in LDL as standing for lousy cholesterol because it contributes to clogged arteries, which can cause heart disease or stroke. Think of the H in HDL as standing for happy cholesterol because it can help remove LDL from the arteries. If you get a cholesterol or triglycerides test from your health provider, he or she can record the results in your *Passport*. If either one is elevated, you'll discuss ways to lower it. If you get a cholesterol or triglycerides test at a health fair, or if you're testing it for someone else at a health fair, the results can be recorded into the *Passport*. If you learn at a health fair that your total cholesterol, LDL, or triglycerides levels are elevated, it's a good idea to speak with a doctor to see if further testing is needed. The good news is that high cholesterol and triglycerides can be controlled with medicine and by creating a lifestyle that includes a healthy diet and exercise. This is a good example of how knowing your numbers can help you make healthy choices every day.

Slide 14

The third section in the *Health Passport* addresses glucose testing for diabetes screening, which is done with a blood test. When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin

or can't use its own insulin well. This causes sugar to build up in the blood. 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, which may be partially due to the use of psychiatric medications and other prescription drugs. The American Diabetes Association emphasizes that early detection and treatment of diabetes can decrease the risk of developing complications such as skin and eye problems, nerve damage, and stroke.

Slide 15

There are different tests to determine whether you have diabetes. The test described in the *Health Passport* is the hemoglobin A1c test. This test gives the average blood glucose level over the past three months to determine whether a person has diabetes or pre-diabetes. The *Passport* defines what is considered to be healthy and unhealthy glucose levels based on this test. A1c kits are sold at most pharmacies, and are designed to be used at home. If you take your own A1c, you can record your result in the *Passport*. If your A1c is high, you can repeat the test on another day. If it's still high, then other tests might be needed and it's important to follow up with a health care provider as soon as possible. If your doctor is administering the A1c test, the result can be recorded in the *Passport*.

Slide 16

The fourth section in the *Health Passport* addresses blood pressure. Blood pressure is needed to move the blood through the body. Blood pressure goes up and down throughout the day. When it goes up and stays high, it's called high blood pressure. When this happens, your heart has to pump harder than it should to move blood around your body. The medical term for high blood pressure is 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.

Slide 17

Blood pressure is measured with an inflatable cuff around the arm. The results are two numbers. The first or top number is the systolic pressure and the second or bottom number is the diastolic pressure. Normal blood pressure is defined as below 120-over-80, meaning the top number should be 120 or less, and bottom number should be 80 or less. A blood pressure reading of 160-over-100 is considered dangerously high. If your blood pressure is high, you'll talk with your healthcare provider about ways to reduce it through diet, exercise, stress management, and possibly medication.

There are two main ways you can take your blood pressure on your own for recording in the *Health Passport*. You can purchase a digital machine to use at home, which may be covered by your health insurance, or you can go to a local pharmacy that has a machine to get a reading. Be aware that many people feel nervous when checking their blood pressure, or when someone else takes it, which can make the numbers appear falsely high.

Blood pressure also can vary from day to day and even during a single day. So, it's important to take another reading if yours is high, after you rest and breathe deeply for a few minutes.

Slide 18

The fifth section of the *Health Passport* addresses alcohol and substance use, which are leading causes of preventable disease, disability, and death in the U.S. If you're using the *Passport* on your own, this section can raise awareness about when your drinking and drug use become problematic, and reassure you that help is available. If you're assessing lifestyle risks at a health fair, we encourage you to include an assessment of whether your participants are at risk from drinking or drug use. There are two free, commonly used tests you can use. The first is called the Drug Abuse Screening Test, or DAST. The second is called the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test, or AUDIT. These scales are not included in the *Health Passport*, but both are available online at www.drugabuse.gov. If you administer these tests, you can record their results in the *Health Passport* and discuss possible next steps.

Slide 19

Smoking is linked to many health problems, so nicotine use is included as the sixth test in the *Health Passport*. Smoking is associated with lung disease, cancer, heart disease, and stroke. It's featured in the *Health Passport* because dependence on tobacco is extremely common among people in mental health recovery. If you're using the *Health Passport* on your own, this section can raise awareness about cigarette smoking, and reassure you that help is available. If you're assessing lifestyle risks at a health fair, we encourage you to include an assessment of nicotine use and dependence for your participants. Various questionnaires can be used for this. Our *Health Passport* recommends using the Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence. This scale is not included in the *Passport*, but can easily be found with an online search using the key words, Fagerstrom Test. Once it's been administered, you can record people's results in the *Health Passport* and discuss possible next steps. Again, this discussion is best handled using a shame-free approach, using former smokers who can share how they quit or cut down. Many free educational resources are available for people who want to learn more about how to cut down or quit smoking. A good place to start is www.smokefree.gov.

Slide 20

Because many people in recovery have heart health risks such as hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, and sleep apnea, we included this in our *Health Passport*. We recommend using the well-known Framingham Cardiac Risk Assessment, which is a web-based application that calculates the risk of heart attack within the next 10 years. The result also shows how that risk compares to the risk of other people of the same age and sex. To do the calculation, people need to know their total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, systolic blood pressure, and smoking status. People also share their age, gender, and whether they use blood pressure medication.

This calculator can be found using an online search with the key words, Framingham Calculator. Once you're in the calculator, be sure to check the box in the top right-hand corner to note whether you're using U.S. measurements. If you do the calculator online yourself, you can record your results into your *Health Passport*. If your risk calculates as higher than 10%, it's important to discuss it with a doctor. If you administer the Framingham assessment to others, you'll want to encourage anyone with a score of higher than 10% to talk with a doctor. You also can show people how much their risk would be reduced if they could answer that they do not smoke, or if their cholesterol or blood pressure were lower.

Slide 21

The next section of the *Health Passport* is a list of health resources, with links to related web sites. If you're using the *Health Passport* to support others, you may want to give them simple medical fact sheets with more information on body mass index, diabetes, cholesterol, high blood pressure, and smoking. You also may want to have handouts available that focus 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. Reliable information is also available from MedlinePlus, which is part of the National Library of Medicine.

Slide 22

Next, the *Health Passport* lists five steps for getting healthier. Passport users are encouraged to consider eating well, staying physically active, doing things they enjoy, drinking plenty of water every day, and getting regular health screenings.

Slide 23

The last page of the *Health Passport* is a form where people can keep a record of their health tests, including the dates they were done and the results. Some people like to take this to their medical appointments to keep track of their progress and discuss it with their health care providers.

The *Health Passport* can help people become aware of and track their health risks and progress. This tool can be empowering by increasing awareness of wellness habits that are within their control, such as their diet, sleep, walking, smoking, or alcohol use. By learning about the links between health risks and wellness habits, people can start making better choices for a wellness lifestyle.

Slide 24

If you still have questions after participating in this webinar on our *Health Passport*, you can request free technical assistance, which we offer on a time-limited basis. Call us at 312.355.1696 or click on the free technical assistance button on the *Health Passport* page of our web site to learn more.

Slide 25

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