

# Steps of selecting psychological assessment instruments

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Before a counselor decides to select which assessment instrument to implement, the counselor should undertake the following steps.

Firstly, the counselor need to identify what kind of information is useful and truly needed. For example, for a client with gambling addiction, it would be useful to collect information of the gambling frequency, duration, level of addiction. In addition, counselors also need to take note that the gathering of assessment information should be done at various points throughout the counseling process.

Secondly, examine what are the various strategies to attain this information. Before deciding to use which strategies, counselor need to find a suitable tool that fits their competency level. Counselors need to consider using formal or informal techniques to obtain the information effectively.

Counselors may consider using both formal and informal assessment tools as it contributes to a comprehensive analysis of clients. In addition, analyzing client attributes like what kind of assessment method can result in an optimum output from a client. For example, client may be more comfortable in handwritten answers, multiple choice-based questions, behavioral checklist, typing in computer form or a semi-structured interview. This analysis can improve the quality and quantity of the information gathered.

Thirdly, counselors need to look for the assessment resources by using the Mental Measurements Yearbooks (MMY), Educational testing service and PsycTESTS retrievable online to look for different assessment instruments.

Next, counselors must evaluate their assessment strategies by finding out if the purpose of instrument matches the counselor's needs because it will be useless if it does not provide relevant information that is required. The counselor should determine the instrument's purpose by reading the manual's instruction and explanation of how it measures the behaviors related to that purpose. Counselors also need to evaluate the instrument development by examining the procedures if there is any evidence of careful construction of items and detailed item analysis. They also should take into consideration whether the instruments used are suitable for the client. For example, evaluation of differential item functioning should be done when it is used for clients from different ethnic groups to control group differences.

Counselor also must evaluate the norming group or criterion in a referenced instrument. The counselor needs to analyze if the instrument norming group is appropriate for their clients. For example, the appropriate norming sample should be considered when working with clients in terms of age, gender, racial or ethnic makeup, socioeconomic status, educational level, and geographic representation. In a criterion referenced instrument, counselors must analyze the procedures by the developers of how a criterion is set for passing by looking for documentation. It may include standards from professional organizations, reviews by leading researchers, and studies of curriculum to be convincing that the determination of the criterion was based on suitable information and careful analysis.

Counselors also must evaluate the instrument's interpretation of the results. As different instruments have different scoring options and interpretative

reports, counselors can use the interpretative handouts for interpreting the results and reflect how they are going to use the information in counseling share it with client effectively.

Lastly, counselors also need to consider practical issues like the fees involved as it can affect the decision of choosing to use certain instrument because some instruments are quite expensive even though it can supply relevant information and beneficial to clients. In addition, counselors need to consider that some clients may not be willing or able to spend hours taking long assessment tools. For example, a child with attention deficit disorder in a formal setting will face difficulties in completing the test and stretching the duration of the assessment time will result in an inaccurate assessment.

Finally, select the most suitable strategy, discuss with clients on the purpose and usage of the tools.