

## UNDERSTANDING EVALUATIONS (ASSESSMENTS) IN THE COURTS

Intended only to provide general information and basic differences between evaluations

	Purpose	Usually Administered By	Type of Information Gathered
Alcohol Evaluation	To assess a client's alcohol use. Most often used for client's with alcohol related driving offenses. Does not usually provide much information about dependency and habits.	A professional trained in substance abuse and addictions.	Basic information regarding alcohol use obtained through written and oral questioning, as well as urinary analysis. If the alcohol evaluation suggests possible dependency issues, a more detailed dependency evaluation should be completed.
Competency Evaluation	To determine whether or not a client is able to consult rationally with his/her attorney in order to aid in his/her own defense and to determine whether or not the client has a rational and factual understanding of the charges. If the client is found incompetent, the evaluation can also determine whether or not the client can be restored to competency.	A licensed psychologist or psychiatrist with forensic training and/or certification in administering competency evaluations.	Will likely include background information on the client, a review of information from collateral sources, a mental status examination (observing information such as orientation, appearance, affect and mood, speech, quality of thought, intelligence level, level of insight into self, memory abilities, current medications, etc.), existing diagnosis, prognosis, and information obtained directly regarding competency (i.e. ability to consult with lawyer, rational and factual understandings of the criminal proceedings, etc.), and an overall opinion of competency from the evaluator. The evaluation often includes information obtained from collateral contacts (GAL, attorney, family, etc.), personal interview with client, any provided records, a formal competency interview, any other tests that the evaluator deemed appropriate, and a mental status examination.
Domestic Violence Assessment	To assess the presence, severity, and impact of domestic violence. Assessments can be administered for the identified survivor, the identified perpetrator, a child's exposure to DV, a teen's exposure to DV and teen relationship violence. These assessments can be used clients with charges involving domestic violence, as well as clients with whom you believe might have been negatively impacted/affected by domestic violence.	A licensed mental health professional.	A DV assessment might obtain information about immediate safety needs, the pattern and history of abuse, connections between DV and health (physical and mental health) concerns, access to treatment, advocacy, and support groups, and addressing future safety. These assessments can also be used to determine the amount of time that a client might spend in domestic violence therapy.

<b>Dependency Evaluation</b>	To assess, in greater depth, the impact of substance use on a client, specifically as it relates to dependency, use habits, and severity. Can be used to formulate a substance related DSM diagnosis.	A professional specifically trained in recognizing and treating addictions – i.e. specifically trained nurse, therapist, social worker, physician, etc.	A dependency evaluation might assess general symptoms of chemical dependency, physical or withdrawal symptoms, behavior and personality changes, financial and legal history, problems in everyday functioning (school, job, etc.), and treatment or addiction history.
<b>Medication Evaluation</b>	To determine whether or not medication is appropriate as a treatment option or to reassess a client's medication usage and management.	Psychiatrist or Physician	An evaluation of whether or not medication is an appropriate (and sometimes necessary) treatment option given the client's current mental health diagnosis and history of mental health and substance use. The evaluation can also be used to assess the current use of medication as treatment and whether or not it is still appropriate (including type, regiment, and dosage of meds).
<b>Mental Health Evaluation</b>	To assess (or re-assess) a client's mental health status. These assessments are not meant to provide a diagnosis, but rather to identify areas in need of further assessment, areas to focus treatment on, and potential impact on general functioning. Most often does not include formalized psychological testing.	Master's level clinician, i.e. a therapist at Community Reach Center.	Can vary depending on the specific person or agency administering the evaluation, but most often, the evaluator will gather information on and assess for problem behaviors, suicidality, anger, mood and affect, any unusual thoughts or beliefs, impulse control, trauma, substance use, family characteristics and history: all contributing to the creation of a diagnostic impression of the client.
<b>Neuropsychological Evaluation</b>	Used to assess and obtain information about a client's cognitive, motor, behavioral, linguistic, and executive functioning.	A trained, neuropsychologist .	These evaluations can use formalized testing instruments to assess a variety of domains, including: intellectual functioning, academic achievement, language processing, visuospatial processing, attention/concentration, verbal learning and memory, visual learning and memory, executive functions, speed of processing, sensory-perceptual functions, motor speed and strength, motivation, and personality assessment.
<b>Offense Specific Evaluation</b>	An OSE would be administered to a client who currently has an open case for a sex offense or has a past adjudication or conviction for a sex offense. The evaluation is intended to assess a client's risk of reoffending.	An SOMB approved mental health professional.	Evaluations could include clinical interviews, mental status exams, sexual history questionnaires, and personality testing. Information gathered might include levels of risk and specific risk factors and an examination of the client's mental health, social/system functioning, family and environmental functioning, and offending behaviors. Types of evaluations administered could be sex-offense specific,

			psychosexual, parental risk assessments, or re-assessment evaluations.
Psychological Evaluation	To assess a person, their behavior, and personality, in order to confirm or rule-out potential diagnoses and guide treatment.	Licensed Psychologist or depending on state statutes, other licensed mental health professionals, i.e. licensed clinical social workers.	Most often a combination of standardized psychological tests, interviews, observations, and informal assessment. An evaluation will likely include the reason for referral, pertinent history, current and past medical status and medication usage, mental health symptoms, any past evaluations, the types of assessments used and tests administered, the diagnostic impressions, and potentially a diagnosis and treatment recommendations. The battery of tests administered will differ based on client presentation and needs.
Substance Use Evaluation	To assess (or re-assess) a client's current and past use of substances and to evaluate the signs, symptoms, and severity of substance use and dependence. Most often administered when the Mental Health Evaluation suggests a need for further assessment or when there is an evident cause for concern.	A professional specifically trained in recognizing and treating addictions – i.e. specifically trained nurse, therapist, social worker, physician, etc.	Will ask questions to gather information about current drug and/or alcohol use, treatment and health history, pattern of behavior, symptoms, and the impact of the substance use on the client's life. The evaluation could also include a urinary analysis, used to assess current habits/patterns of consumption. These evaluations will address a large spectrum of substances, including alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs.
Suicide Assessment	A suicide assessment can be brief or more in depth depending on the circumstances and context. The purpose is to identify whether or not the client is at risk of harming him/herself.	Can vary greatly depending on context, but should be a trained mental health professional.	Information gathered should include; identifying risk and protective factors, conducting a suicide inquiry (suicidal thoughts, plans, behavior, and intent), and determining the risk level and appropriate intervention.