

From SMART to FAST

By Amy Barnhorst, MD

THE EVIDENCE-BASED BEST practices used to develop the SMART Medical Clearance protocol were utilized to develop a tool for non-clinical personnel to use in the field as part of the Sacramento County Mobile Crisis Team program. The Field Assessment and Screening Tool (FAST form) was developed at SSVMS by two emergency medicine physicians and an emergency psychiatrist to expedite access to emergency psychiatric services at Sacramento County's Intake Stabilization Unit (ISU). The FAST form enables non-clinician members of the Sacramento County Mobile Crisis Team to determine if an individual is appropriate for direct transport to the Sacramento County Inpatient Stabilization Unit.

The FAST form is a series of questions designed to identify patients that require further medical evaluation in an Emergency Department. If a patient's medical issues are not present, or deemed low risk for complications, the Mobile Crisis Team can bypass the ED and transport the patient directly to inpatient care at the Sacramento County ISU.

Two entities in Sacramento County currently utilize the FAST form. One is the Mobile Crisis Services Teams (MCSTs), comprised of a county mental health clinician and a law enforcement officer. MCSTs are dispatched to behavioral or psychiatric emergencies in Sacramento County and have been using the FAST form since May 2015. The FAST form is also used by the Sacramento County's Law Enforcement Consult Line (LECL). When a law enforcement agency has identified an individual who meets criteria for a 5150 hold, a county clinician reviews the FAST form questions with the officer to determine if the individual meets criteria for direct transfer to the ISU. LECL has been using the FAST form process since January 2016.

The FAST form has successfully diverted patients who otherwise would be transported to one of the Sacramento region's EDs. As of July 2017, MCST transported 150 people directly to the ISU by

using the FAST form. Additionally, out of 169 calls to the Law Enforcement Consult Line, law enforcement officers were able to bring 94 patients directly to the ICU, thus avoiding the ED. Between the two programs, a total of 246 individuals circumvented the ED during their psychiatric crisis, and were able to instead access psychiatric care at the ISU. New MCST units are being trained on the FAST process, and it will be rolled out to more law enforcement agencies in the coming year.

abarnhorst@ucdavis.edu

NOTE: Dr. Amy Barnhorst, Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Services, U.C. Davis Medical Center, is an emergency psychiatrist at the Sacramento County Mental Health Treatment Center and a member of the SSVMS team that developed SMART Medical Clearance and the FAST form.