

What is it?

- The PCL-5 is a 20-item self-report questionnaire that assesses the severity of symptoms associated with exposure to trauma
- There are three versions available (without Criterion A, brief Criterion A, & with extended Criterion A)
- PCL-5 can be administered verbally or completed independently by a client
- Total Severity Score along with Subscale totals, and number of symptoms considered present are easily determined
- PCL-5 parallels DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for PTSD
- The client's responses on the PCL-5 can provide useful information to aid in diagnosis and treatment planning

Administration

The PCL-5:

- Completed by adults aged 19 years and older
- May be read to clients, if necessary
- May be administered by non-clinical staff
- Interpretation of PCL-5 scores are only to be done by a trained clinician who possesses a Master's degree or higher
- While the developer has not identified any "critical items," a thorough review of Key Items should be completed by clinical personnel and may include items 9, 15 and 16



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
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PCL-5 Quick Guide

The PCL-5 was developed by staff at the National Center for PTSD and is freely available on DMH's Outcomes webpage (www.dmh.lacounty.gov/outcomes)

Completed by adult clients aged 19 years and older, within the "21-day window" associated with the First and Last EBP Treatment Sessions, and every six months for treatment lasting six months or longer, for the following EBPs:

- Individual Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-Trauma (CBT-Trauma)
- Seeking Safety (SS)
- Managing and Adapting Practice-Traumatic Stress (MAP-Traumatic Stress)
- Prolonged Exposure for PTSD (PE)

Sections of the PCL-5 which includes extended Criterion A

Optional Life Experience Checklist-(LEC-5)

- **Trauma History**
-Assesses whether client experienced any one of 17 types of trauma at any point in his/her life and how it was experienced
-Helps to establish category A for a diagnosis of PTSD in DSM-5
- **Self-Report**
-Asks client to identify the worst traumatic event experienced
-Asks client to write a brief narrative describing the event and answer several questions about how it was experienced and length of time since the event(s)

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL-5)

- **Intrusion Symptom Category B (Items 1-5):**
 - Recurrent or involuntary distressing dreams, memories, thoughts, or feelings related to the traumatic event(s)
- **Persistent Avoidance Category C (Items 6-7):**
 - Avoidance or efforts to avoid internal or external reminders of the traumatic event(s)
- **Negative Alterations in Cognitions and Mood Category D (Items 8-14)**
 - Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs about oneself, the world, others, negative mood states, inability to experience positive emotions
- **Increased Arousal Category E (Items 15-20)**
 - Marked increase in arousal or reactivity such as irritability, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, sleep or concentration problems

Client circles the number corresponding to how much he or she has been bothered by each problem listed on the PCL-5 **in the past month**:

0	Not at all	
1	A little bit	
2	Moderately	Symptom Scores ≥ 2 are "present"
3	Quite a bit	
4	Extremely	

The preliminary cut-point for the Total Scale Score is **33** but remains subject to change

Scoring Information

- Please review the questionnaire to ensure the client has answered every item
- Total Scale Score is the sum of the 20 circled items
- Subscale Scores can be derived by adding circled items within each symptom category
- Count the number of circled items within each division that have a score of 2 or more to determine the number of symptoms considered present
- The DMH has developed a Simple Scoring Calculator for the PCL-5 to determine Total Scale and Subscale scores and can assist in treatment planning and in outcome evaluation