

# Arts & Culture Social Prescribing Assessment (AC-SPA)

## Purpose

This tool is designed as a conversation guide for service providers exploring arts and culture social prescribing with clients. Feel free to adapt the questions as some may have already been covered in the initial assessment. Once a client expresses interest in arts and culture, the AC-SPA can help you explore their interests, readiness, and goals, guiding referrals and supporting the development of a follow-up plan.

## Guidelines

This guide was developed using a trauma-informed approach and is designed to aid the service provider in providing trauma-informed and psychologically safe care.

Trauma-informed care is a way of working with people that understands how past difficult or harmful experiences can affect how someone feels, behaves, learns, and interacts with people and services. **Trauma-informed care is not a therapy or checklist - it is a mindset and that shapes how care is provided.**

This approach is particularly useful when working with immigrants and newcomers, who may have experienced stress or trauma that can affect trust and participation in services. What may appear as disengagement is often a protective response. By prioritizing safety and respect, a trauma-informed approach helps people feel comfortable engaging.

Using trauma-informed principles allows service providers to create safety, build trust, and offer choice and control so individuals feel respected and understood.

- **Safety:** Help create a calm, respectful space. You can't force someone to feel safe, but you can be a safer person by using thoughtful words, steady body language, and predictable routines.
- **Trust:** Be reliable and clear. How you listen and respond matters. People affected by trauma notice tone, timing, and follow-through. Think: "How might this reaction make sense if someone had been hurt before?"
- **Choice:** Offer options and control. Trauma often takes away choice; giving choice helps people feel empowered again. Always share enough information so they can decide, and set the pace.
- **Voice:** Make space for people to speak and be heard. Ask for their input, encourage questions, and follow their lead when possible. This restores agency and helps tailor care to what they actually need.
- **Strengths & Resilience:** Look for what's working and what the person has already overcome. Many behaviours make sense as ways of coping. Acknowledge their resilience and build on it.

Incorporating these practices into the social prescribing assessment helps create a welcoming, respectful experience where individuals feel safe to share their needs and interests. When people feel heard and in control, referrals to arts and culture activities are more meaningful, supportive, and likely to succeed.

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Find out what matters...

## 1. Creative interests

You don't need any experience in arts or culture to get started. Trying something new is part of the process, and just being curious is enough to begin.

- Have you ever tried any arts activities before? Which ones did you enjoy?
- Are there cultural events or gatherings you've attended that you liked or remembered?
- Are there creative activities you do now or would like to try?
- Are there arts or cultural activities that feel interesting or comforting to you?

## 2. Culture, identity, and belonging

I'd love to hear about the things that are meaningful to you. This could be cultural traditions, creative activities, or communities you feel connected to.

- Are there cultural traditions or practices that are important to you?
- Is connecting with your cultural or language community important to you?
- Are there creative activities you enjoy or would like to try?
- Are there communities or groups you would like to reconnect with/be part of?

## 3. Social preferences

How would you like to take part in arts or cultural activities?

- On my own    With someone I know    In a group    I am not sure yet

How much time with others or social connection feels comfortable for you right now?

## 4. Access and supports

Do any of these things affect your ability to take part in arts or cultural activities?

- Cost    Transportation    Accessibility needs    Scheduling    Language  
 Childcare    Energy or health    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What supports would help you participate in the arts and culture activity?

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## 5. Comfort and readiness

How do you feel about trying a creative or cultural activity at this time?

- Comfortable  Somewhat comfortable  Unsure  Not ready right now

What would help you feel safer or more comfortable?

## 6. Hopes and goals

What do you hope this experience will help you with?

- Feeling less stressed  Improved mood  Connection with others  
 Confidence  Routine and structure  Joy  meaning  less isolated  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How will you be able to tell if this experience is helpful for you?

## 7. Reflect on the conversation

Share back what you heard, "Thank you for sharing, what I am hearing is..."

- Strengths and interests shared
- Barriers and supports identified
- Possible arts and culture options

## 8. Follow-up plan

- Review your organizations social prescribing process
  - I.e. number and frequency of sessions, length of service, link worker contact
- If you require time to research and collect more information on referrals, let the client know your next steps.
  - "I will follow-up next week with more details on some arts and culture sites I think would be suitable for you"
- Plan time to make warm referrals
- Schedule the next meeting