



**National Eating Disorders Association**  
165 W. 46<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10036

TEL 212-575-6200  
FAX 212-575-1650  
WEB [NationalEatingDisorders.org](http://NationalEatingDisorders.org)

October 9, 2012

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Hon. Linda T. (“Toddy”) Puller  
Chair, Joint Commission on Health Care  
c/o Dr. Michele Chesser  
Joint Commission on Health Care  
P.O. Box 1322  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Chairman Puller:

On behalf of the National Eating Disorders Association (“NEDA”), we are writing to ask the Joint Commission on Health Care (“JCHC”) to adopt policy options to improve education, awareness, and treatment of eating disorders in Virginia through an evidence-based school screening method.

NEDA is the leading not for profit organization representing millions of individuals and families affected by eating disorders. Presently, over 1,500 NEDA members reside in Virginia. NEDA is grateful to the Joint Commission on Health Care for approving policy options last year that led to significant research into eating disorder education, awareness, and treatment. This research, conducted by a joint Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Department of Education work group, thoroughly reviewed available eating disorder screening tools and considered their potential for efficacy in a school based setting.

Significantly, the work group identified the SCOFF questionnaire as an evidence-based short screening interview that school nurses, school psychologists, school counselors, teachers, or administrators can use in working with students. The work group specifically recommended in favor of the SCOFF method because of its ease of use and short time required for administration.

Peer-reviewed studies, published in leading national medical journals, have consistently found that eating disorder screening methods can effectively identify the earliest symptoms of an eating disorder and lead to potentially life-saving treatment. As the Joint Commission’s study on eating disorders revealed: Less than 45% of affected individuals seek treatment for their eating disorder. Studies have demonstrated that up to 20% of eating disordered individuals will die without treatment, and all eating disorders can lead to severe, chronic health complications. As the Commission’s study also identified, eating disorder on-set often occurs during middle to high school age. Accordingly, a school-screening program could provide desperately needed assistance in supporting the early identification and appropriate medical treatment for eating disorders.

NEDA respectfully requests that the Joint Commission on Health Care adopt policy options supporting the introduction of legislation in the 2013 General Assembly Session to implement the use of the SCOFF questionnaire to annually screen for eating disorders in Virginia’s public middle and high school students. In





**National Eating Disorders Association**  
165 W. 46<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10036

TEL 212-575-6200  
FAX 212-575-1650  
WEB [NationalEatingDisorders.org](http://NationalEatingDisorders.org)

addition to the substantial health benefits, such an initiative would also likely create significant cost savings for the Commonwealth. According to the Joint Commission's study, since 2006, Virginia's Medicaid program has spent nearly \$2,000,000 in hospitalization costs for eating disorder patients. By identifying eating disorders early, through the SCOFF screening method, many of these hospitalizations may be able to be avoided.

Thank you for your careful attention to the issue of eating disorders. NEDA appreciates your thoughtful consideration of the work group's findings and asks that you endorse legislation to implement the SCOFF evidence-based screening program to annually screen for eating disorders in Virginia's public middle and high school students.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Lara Gregorio*

Lara Gregorio, LCSW  
STAR Program Manager  
National Eating Disorders Association

