

## Verbal Descriptor Scale – Iowa Pain Thermometer-Revised

Instructions follow detailing the use of the Iowa Pain Thermometer-Revised to assess pain intensity for persons able to self report<sup>1</sup>. Research indicates this is tool is the best choice for most older adults.

**Purpose:** This scale is used to assess pain intensity in individuals who are able to self report<sup>1</sup> and is the best choice for most older adults.

**When to Use:** Use the Verbal Descriptor Scale

- At admission
- At each quarterly nursing review
- Each shift in individuals with pain
- Each time a change in an individual's pain status is reported
- Following a pain intervention to evaluate treatment effectiveness

**How to Use:** Ask the individual to point to the words on the thermometer show how bad or severe their pain is right NOW. Compare the words chosen after each use to the previous words to evaluate if pain has increased or decreased.

**Documentation:** Document/record all scores or words in a location that is readily accessible to others on the health care team.

**Note:** To use as a pocket guide, print the Pain Thermometer and directions document front to back on card stock paper to create two tools. Cut to size and laminate for increased durability.

<sup>1</sup> Self-report of pain is defined as the ability to indicate presence and/or severity of pain verbally, in writing, or by other means such as finger span, pointing, head movement, or blinking eyes to answer yes or no questions.

**Reference:** Herr, K. & Mobily, P. (1993). Comparison of selected pain assessment tools for use with the elderly. *Applied Nursing Research*, 6(1), 39-46.

