

Brief Intervention for Substance Use Designed for Primary Care Providers

STEP 1: Build Rapport

1. **Ask consent to approach the topic**
2. **Bring up the subject**

- I appreciate you answering our health questionnaire. I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about your responses. **Is that okay with you?**
- Tell me about a typical day in your life. Where does your current [substance use behavior] fit in?

STEP 2: Pros & Cons

1. **Explore pros and cons of behavior**
2. **Summarize them for your patient**

- Help me understand, through your eyes, the good things about [substance use behavior]?
- What are some of the not-so-good things?
- So, on one hand [PROS] and on the other [CONS].

STEP 3: Offer Info & Feedback

1. **Ask consent about sharing info**
2. **Discuss questionnaire results**
3. **Link behaviors to consequences**
4. **Prompt a response**

- I have some information on [substance use behavior]. Would you mind if I shared it with you?
- We know that [substance use behavior]...
- ...can put you at risk for [consequences: social or legal, illness, and injury]. It can also cause health problems like [insert relevant medical information].
- What are your thoughts on that?

STEP 4: Build Readiness to Change

1. **Introduce the "Readiness Ruler"**
2. **Reinforce positives**
3. **Ask about a lower number**

- On a scale from 1 to 10, how ready are you to make any changes in your [substance use behavior]?
- You marked _____. That's great! That means you're _____% ready to make a change. Why did you choose that number and not a lower one?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that you will be able to make this change?

STEP 5: Negotiate Action Plan

1. **Emphasize strengths**
2. **Identify supports**
3. **Write down steps**
4. **Offer appropriate resources**
5. **Thank the patient**

- What are some steps/options that will work for you to stay healthy and safe?
- What will help you to reduce the things you don't like about [substance use behaviors/effects]?
- What supports do you have for making this change?
- Tell me about a challenge you overcame in the past. How can you use those supports/resources to help you now?
- Those are great ideas! Is it okay for me to write down your plan for you to keep as a reminder?
- Will you summarize the steps you'll take to change your [substance use behavior]?
- I have some additional resources that people sometimes find helpful. Would you like to hear about them? Thank you for talking with me today.

If you need support **navigating care** for your patient, or want expert consultation on your patient's care, you can contact the **Adult Psychiatric Access Line (APAL)**.

APAL offers **free** care navigation and consultation for Virginia prescribers who care for adult patients with behavioral health and substance use concerns.

