

BACKGROUND

The *Substance Use and Harms Screen* is a short questionnaire to support a brief motivational conversation. It is not intended to yield a diagnosis. The screen provides a reliable indication of a young person's current substance use issues compared to community norms. This provides the opportunity to help a young person think about any harms their alcohol or other drug use may be causing in their life, and to explore ways they might make positive changes.

STEPS IN SCORING AND DISCUSSING RESULTS

1 Score the screen

Calculate the participant's total score for questions 1-8 and record it at the bottom of the screening form. For each question:

- Not true = 0
- Somewhat true = 1
- Certainly true = 2

2 Indicate the level of risk

The total score for questions 1-8 indicates the participant's level of risk for experiencing harm related to alcohol or other drug use. Indicate this at the bottom of the screening form.

- score of <2 = low risk
- score of 2-4 = increased risk
- score of >4 = high risk

3 Discuss the results with the participant

You can even score the screen together and discuss the results as you go. Be sure to commend the participant for positive choices and encourage reflection and planning toward positive change where appropriate. In addition to the potential harms indicated by questions 1-8, question 9 provides an opportunity to explore the participant's actual pattern of use (see *Tips* below).

4 Provide the participant with take-home material

This includes the take-home card provided. It may also include other relevant literature available at the screening site. Be sure to retain the original screening form and return it to the site planner.

TIPS FOR THE DEBRIEF

You are there as a friendly helper. An approach that is empathic, non-judgmental and collaborative is more likely to inspire reflection, impart hope and incite a positive course of action. Your role is to increase intentionality and confidence.

- Use open-ended questions that encourage the participant to think about issues and share those thoughts. For example, you might say
 - So, how was that? How do you think the information might be useful?
 - Do the results of the screening surprise you in any way, and how might you react to that?
- Be curious and engage in reflective listening that invites the participant to amplify (or correct) ideas put forward. For example, you might say
 - I see that even though you have scored high on some points, you don't drive or ride with others under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Can you tell me a bit about how you maintain that?
 - You indicated that you were high last week (question 9). How many times would that be true in the last 3 months? (More often indicates higher risk and suggests opportunity to **explore** what benefit the participant perceives from use and what harms might be associated with that pattern of use.)
 - If you were going to make a change in any of these areas, which would it be? ... How would you go about it?
- Encourage “change talk” that engages the participant in exploring the value and possibility of change. As people articulate ideas about changing, they become more likely to attempt changes.
 - If the participant has made even a passing reference to a desire to cut down, you might say, So you would feel more positive about things if you cut down.
 - Or if the participant has spoken of an over-reliance on alcohol or some other drug, you could say, You seem concerned about relying too much on alcohol [or the other drug].
- Be attentive to possible connections with the participant's results on other screens and help them explore those connections. For example you might say
 - As we discussed earlier, you've had some challenges with anxiety/depression. How do you see your substance use as related to your experience of being quite stressed/really worried/really down?
- Help the participant leave with a strong sense of their ability to manage their use and to draw on community support. For example, you might say
 - Your previous successes at changing show you can make the changes you need to.
 - Family, friends, and local professionals can all be an important part of a caring support network for you. Who do you have in your life that can help support you?