Algorithm for Approaching Possible Unhealthy Substance Use

1. **In the past 3 months, have you had 4 or more drinks in one day?**
   - Yes
     - I see you’ve been having or using ___.
       - e.g., >3 drinks/day, illegal drugs, misused prescription drugs
     - Unfortunately, lots of people are in this situation. It can be hard on you, and your family
   - No

2. **In the past 3 months, have you used an illegal drug or a prescription medication for nonmedical reasons?**
   - Yes
     - How do you feel about using ___?
       - How’s this affecting you, your family?
         - e.g., want to drink or use drugs most days, feel sick if you don’t have a drink or a drug, miss work or school, big mood swings, trouble eating or sleeping
     - Are you getting help?
       - Who/what’s helping?
         - e.g., talking with family or friend, counselor, treatment program, support group, religious group, medication
   - No

3. **Would you like (more) help?**
   - Yes
     - What kind of help would you consider?
       - e.g., talking with family or friend, counseling, treatment program, support group, medication, religious group
     - What might be the benefit of getting help?
       - Encourage getting help
     - What makes it hard to get help?
       - Suggest barriers, address them
     - What would make it easier to get help?
   - No
     - No, getting enough help
     - No, other reason

4. **Offered help**
   - Gave parent handout
   - Made referral in-house or community
   - F/U

5. **Supported parent’s choice**
   - Reassured
   - Gave parent handout
   - F/U
   - No action needed
Unhealthy Substance Use – Addressing Possible Barriers

Barrier: I don’t know where to get help

Response:

- Yes, it’s often hard to know where to go
- If you’re interested, I can recommend clinics or professionals
- We have someone here who can help. Would you like me to connect you with her/him?
- Here’s a handout with useful info on good helplines, websites and other nearby places that help

Barrier: It will get better with time

Response:

- I hear you that you feel it’ll get better with time
- While some things get better with time, how long would you want to wait before feeling better?
- How would you feel about trying a program or counseling so you can feel better sooner?
- I know you want to feel your best for your child; professional help should help you feel better soon

Barrier: I don’t feel that bad

Response:

- I’m glad you don’t feel that bad
- Still, I’d like to help you, and am concerned how this is affecting you and your child
- Would you consider talking with someone, and see how you feel? You may be pleasantly surprised

Barrier: I’d feel embarrassed

Response:

- I see that you’re embarrassed about getting help
- I understand. Lots of people feel that way
- There are lots of reasons people face these problems
- Many parents need help, and many are getting help. You’re not alone! This is not your fault
- Talking with someone may be uncomfortable, especially at first. After a little time, it should get easier. And, counselors keep your info confidential. Would you like me to recommend professionals I think are really good?
- I have helpful info in this handout. Take a look, and please think about this
Barrier: **I don't have the time**

Response:
- I hear you that there’s not the time to deal with this; you’re busy!
- Still, do you think this may be important – for you, your family, your child?
- It’s hard to be a good parent if you’re feeling bad
- Would you like us to try find to someone who can work with your schedule?

Barrier: **Costs too much**

Response:
- I understand the cost makes this hard
- Do you know that insurance for treatment has gotten better?
- Would you like me to see what you’re eligible for?
- Also, some professionals/clinics accept what you’re able to pay and some offer free care
- This is so important. Would you like me to try to find something you can afford?

Barrier: **I tried getting help before, but it didn’t work**

Response:

**If access was the problem:**
- I see you tried but couldn’t find help
- I’m sure that was frustrating
- I know some who are really good and have helped lots of parents
- Would you like me to recommend professionals I think you’ll find really helpful?

**If quality of service was the problem:**
- A lot of people feel unsure about treatment or counseling
- Have you had a bad experience with these? I understand that must be discouraging
- Do you think this could be different if you had someone really good?
- Would you like me to recommend professionals I think you’ll find really helpful?

Barrier: **I don’t think it’s affecting my child(ren)**

Response:
- I hear you that you don’t think it’s hurting your child
- Do you sometimes think that kids pick up on more that we realize?
- It’s hard to be a good parent when you’re feeling bad. I know you want to be a terrific parent. Talking with someone should help you feel better
Barrier: I don’t have childcare

Response:

- Yes, childcare can be tough to find
- Perhaps family or a friend can provide childcare while you focus on your health
- What do you think?

Barrier: I don’t have transportation

Response:

- I see transportation is a problem
- Unfortunately, this is so common
- Would you like me to see if there's something close to home or on a bus route?