Guidelines for Approaching Possible Unhealthy Substance Use

Do you have an issue with alcohol or drug use?

Yes

I see that you are having an issue with alcohol or drug use.
Unfortunately, lots of people are in this situation. It can be hard on you, and your family

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

Please tell me a little about your alcohol/drug use.

Are you getting help?
Who/what’s helping?
e.g., talking with family or friend, counselor, treatment program, support group, religious group, medication

How are you dealing with this?
What else could you try?

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

No, other reason

No, getting enough help

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?

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

Supported parent’s choice
Reassured
Gave parent handout
F/U
No action needed

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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?