



# Care Conversations about Substance Use for Adolescent Service Providers

*Talking about substance use as part of your role as an Adolescent Service Provider can be an important part of helping clients/patients/participants with overall mental well being and is form of prevention. The use of Alcohol, Marijuana, Opioids, Stimulants and other substances can have a profound impact on how an adolescent functions as well as their brain development. Here are some important steps to having these conversations.*

- 1 Ensure that you feel comfortable talking about substance use with clients/patients/participants. This might include examining your own bias or taking additional training to become more familiar with the basics of how substance use might impact someone's mental wellbeing and brain development.

## 2 CHECKING IN WITH THE ADOLESCENTS ABOUT THEIR USE OF SUBSTANCES

- This can be done through formal service provision such as the inclusion of SBIRT or other screening protocols.
- It is important to cover confidentiality and what you are required to report before asking further questions.

## 3 YOU CAN USE THE EXAMPLES BELOW TO HELP WITH THIS CONVERSATION

"One thing I like to ask everyone I work with is how they take care of themselves. What helps you get through stress or tough moments?"

"Sometimes people use different things, like substances, to cope or to feel okay. Would you be open to telling me a little about what that might look like for you?"

### ***If an adolescent reports use, you might say:***

"I really appreciate you being honest with me. I'm not here to judge you or get you in trouble. My job is to understand what's going on for you and make sure you have accurate information and support.

Whether you decide to make changes to your substance use is ultimately up to you. I just want to make sure you have the facts so you can make the best decision for yourself."

### ***You could go on to ask:***

"What do you feel you get from using? What does it help with most?"

"What don't you like about using?"

"Are there times when using feels safer or riskier for you?"

"Has anything changed recently in how or why you're using?"

"What kind of support would feel helpful for you around this, if any?"

- 4 Once you have brought up the conversation, you can give the SPI General Information Card, [Substance Awareness Tools](#) handout, [The Teen Brain: 7 Things to Know](#), or any other resources that you might have on any substance that the person is using. You can also talk with the person about any appropriate community resources or interventions that might help the person. Every time you open these conversations, there is the opportunity to impact someone's wellbeing in a positive way!

