

Adolescent Substance Abuse: A Public Health Priority

State-Specific Resource Guide for Healthcare Professionals

Research shows that only one out of every ten adolescents who need substance abuse treatment receive it, and of those who do receive treatment, only 25% get enough. With 44% of adolescent treatment referrals coming from the criminal justice system, and only 5% from healthcare providers, it is essential that screening for substance abuse and mental health in high-risk youth be increased in various settings and at various times to catch problems before they escalate to a criminal level.

The Physician Leadership on National Drug Policy has developed a resource guide for professionals in health care, education, community organizations, and the juvenile justice system. This guide is part of our continuing efforts to promote the identification and treatment of adolescent substance abuse in various settings and build collaborative networks among different agencies that interact with youth. Originally created for the state of Rhode Island and directed toward the healthcare professional, the guide has been a great success and is now available in a generic form that can be easily tailored to include resources and information specific to your state or region. We are currently working with several other states (i.e., North Carolina, Alaska, Massachusetts) to distribute guides to healthcare professionals throughout their regions.

This resource guide features a variety of materials organized in a clinical step-by-step approach to walk the clinician through the process for screening a child for substance abuse and mental health problems. Materials include: age-appropriate screening tools for substance abuse, mental health, and family psychosocial problems/risk factors; sections for you to include state-specific treatment and mental health referral resources; a section for you to incorporate your state or region's financing of care information; resources to obtain additional information; and useful handouts for parents and families. The majority of the information is presented in both English and Spanish.

We invite you to download the guide free of charge, supplement it with your region-specific resources (particularly behind the treatment, resources, and financing tabs of the guide), and disseminate it to all interested parties. An integrated multidisciplinary approach is essential to ensure that substance abuse and mental health problems are identified and treated for all youth who need treatment, in all communities.

We encourage you to use this guide to help develop collaborative relationships in your community through conferences, workshops, or simply through the sharing of information.

This guide was created as a direct result of recommendations from the "[Adolescent Substance Abuse: A Public Health Priority](#)" report. Please follow the link to find more information about the scope of Adolescent Substance Abuse and recommendations for improved recognition, treatment, and policy change.