

# HVSSSC

## Hudson Valley Student Support Services Center

175 Route 32 North | New Paltz, NY 12561 | Phone: 845-255-4874 | Fax: 845-255-3836

FACT SHEET

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Mary Grenz Jalloh, M.S., M.P.H., CHES, B.C.S.C.R.  
Executive Director

Tammy Rhein, L.M.S.W., C.A.S.A.C., CPP  
Program Coordinator

### STAFF TOOLS

## Brief Assessment and Intervention Tools For Tobacco Use

School administrators, pupil personnel staff, and/or school nurses can utilize these brief assessment and intervention tools with students to address tobacco use.

#### Assessment

The 5 A-s and 5 R-s are guidelines used in the Clinical Practice Guidelines published by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

#### 5 A-s

- Ask, screen for tobacco use. If currently using tobacco.
- Advise, to quit, showing interest and concern .
- Assess, willingness to quit. If less than willing, use 5 R-s (see below)
- Assist, with quitting (educate, counsel) and/or
- Arrange, referral to in-school and/or community program

#### Intervention

#### 5 R-s

- Relevance—Tailor advice to each student. Encourage the person to indicate why quitting is personally relevant; be specific. Disease risks, family or social situations, health concerns, age/gender issues.
- Risks—Outline the risks of continued tobacco use. Ask student to identify potential negative consequences of tobacco use. Acute risks, long term risks, environmental risks.
- Rewards—Outline the benefits of quitting. Improved health, sense of taste and smell improves, save money, self esteem increases.
- Roadblocks—Ask student to identify barriers to quitting and note elements of treatment that could address barriers. Examples of barriers: withdrawal symptoms, fear of failure, weight gain, lack of support, depression, enjoyment of tobacco.
- Repetition—The motivational intervention should be repeated every consult. Inform that most people have repeated attempts before remaining abstinent, reframe any quit attempt as a “successful” in its effort, gain what can be learned to improve next attempt.

#### Cessation Strategies

Simple cessation strategies to support an intervention are:

#### 5 D-s

- Delay—tell yourself, “not now, maybe later”
- Drink water—refreshing and cleansing
- Do something else—shift your focus to something else, keep busy
- Deep breathing—take several slow relaxing deep breaths
- Discuss your feelings—talk to reduce stress

#### Additional Strategies

A further assessment could determine a student’s degree of nicotine dependence and at which stage of change a student is at in order to improve intervention strategies.

**Degree of dependence:** Determine if situational or chemical.

- Situational—use tobacco only in certain situations or occasions
- Chemical—use tobacco consistently regardless of situation
- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (patches, gums) with teens; only if chemical dependent and serious about stopping

**Stages of Change:** Engage a student at his/her current stage in the change process and work toward the next stage.

- Pre-contemplation—person has not yet identified behavior (tobacco use) as a problem
- Contemplation—person is aware of problem and thinking about taking action
- Preparation—person is acquiring information and planning quit strategies
- Action—person takes specific steps to quit tobacco use or has quit and has been tobacco free for a day or more
- Maintenance—person has a period of tobacco abstinence and continues to practice alternative behaviors to support tobacco-free life style

**Strengths and Goals:** When discussing cessation and strategies it is useful to determine and review the student’s strengths and goals. This can:

- Show interest in student’s positive qualities

- Support ego, self esteem
- Realize how goals conflict with tobacco use  
Demonstrate how an acquired skill of his/her own was a *process* of improvement, just as getting free of tobacco

**Questions: What's the truth?** When intervening with student who is at the Pre-contemplation or Contemplation stage of change, the following two questions could be asked of the student:

1. *"Which is more true- that you don't want to quit (yet)*  
*OR*

*You don't want to go through the withdrawal, don't know how you'll cope without tobacco?"*

-If the latter is "true," then discuss what's the point of he/she saying "I don't want to quit," if it's not true. Problem is that your brain only believes what it is told, so "why fool yourself." Since the issue is actually withdrawal and coping, those are areas for discussion. Knowledge and practice can develop new skills and can begin a process in a positive direction. A model for any new skill development.

2. *"If by some miracle you woke up tomorrow morning and did not crave tobacco, would you 'start' smoking/chewing again and go out a buy a pack/tin?"*

-If the student would not go and buy a pack/tin and "start" again, then reflect that he/she must not really want to use tobacco and that you are both on the "same team," really wanting the same goal.

**Build on Success:** Progress can be any positive change or new behavior. Willingness is an essential attitude to develop. For example, the process can begin with willingness to engage in more honest open conversation about their tobacco use.

For students only at the contemplation stage, "quitting" in the near future is not necessarily the focus. Focusing on "quitting" may only create anxiety, fear of failure, grief, and resistance reaction. Increasing knowledge and awareness of how tobacco use impacts their present life and future goals could be discussed. Progress of any sort or degree *forward* while receiving enthusiastic acknowledgement encourages the tobacco user, gives them a good feeling, and builds on success. Nicotine (drug) users are generally seeking an elevated mood and stress relief.

Active progress can be paying more attention to "triggers," writing down their reasons to quit and reading list before using, initiating the use of substitute items or behaviors (5Ds), and moving on to designated periods of abstinence.

Preparation and Practice are good parts of any plan or new skill development. If "not ready to quit yet," than they can do what they *are* ready or able to do. Building on success, having efforts recognized, and generating positive feelings helps to keep students engaged in the process. After all, caring attention and achievement recognition are strong motivators for adolescents, even when they act as if they "couldn't care less."