SBIRT IN PRIMARY CARE

Tips for Effective Brief Interventions

mosaic GROUP

Brief interventions are short, focused conversations that help patients reflect on their overall health and motivate change. Alcohol and substance use conversations should be integrated into the broader discussion of the patient's overall health, rather than treated as a separate issue, to support a whole-person approach to care.

We understand your time with each patient is limited, but know that even a few minutes can make a meaningful impact on your patient's health and safety and encourage patients to think differently about their well-being.

Create a Comfortable, Supportive Environment

- **Use a nonjudgmental and empathetic tone** to build trust.
- **Ensure privacy** to help patients feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics.
- **Avoid stigmatizing or assuming language:** Instead of "I have some patients who are alcoholics," say "I work with patients who want to make changes in their alcohol use."

Ask Permission and Invite Dialogue

- **Begin with a collaborative approach:** "Would it be okay if we talked about your alcohol use today?"
- **Encourage patients to share their perspective:** "What are your thoughts on your current substance use?"

Use Motivational Interviewing Techniques

- **Ask open-ended questions:** "What do you enjoy about drinking? What concerns do you have?"
- **Affirm strengths:** Highlight past successes or healthy decisions.
- **Reflect back** what the patient says to show understanding.
- **Summarize points** to guide next steps.

Collaboratively Set Next Steps

- **Encourage small, achievable goals** (e.g., reducing drinks per week).
- **Offer educational resources**, apps (SunnySide), or handouts.
- **If appropriate, discuss community referral options** or additional support.

Focus on Impact

Remember: Brief interventions are about planting a seed of change. Even a short, empathetic conversation can encourage patients to take steps toward healthier choices.