

For the Coach: Module 6

OVERVIEW OF MODULE 6

The goal of Module 6 is to train senior members of the student organization to conduct brief check-ins with the group's younger members following an incident of high-risk behavior, especially when the behavior resulted in a problem. This is a special intervention for members who are not adopting lower-risk practices with alcohol and are a consistent source of alcohol-related problems at events, even when alcohol isn't being formally served.

These check-ins are designed to do two things:

- Help the member to understand what they did and how it affected themselves and the people around them. The member may have been in a blackout and not know what happened
- Begin the process of gently questioning the member about whether their behavior/level of intoxication is getting them closer to the person they want to be and the life they want to live. The conversation alone will not cause a person to change, but it can help them to think about potential disconnects between their use of alcohol and their life goals

It's important that the person doing the check-in and the subject of the check-in have some form of relationship. The member initiating the check-in should be non-judgmental, objective, and non-confrontational, with no opinion or feelings connected to what happened or the member they are speaking with. The student conducting the check-in should not expect the other person to agree, confess, apologize, provide an explanation, vow to change, or offer restitution. The member who is being checked in on should feel well-supported but not coddled; he or she should not feel the need to defend him- or herself, save face, or argue.

Check-ins must be separate from any other form of member accountability or judicial process. Member accountability and judicial processes may be occurring, but they should not be connected in any way to the check-in. In addition, the check-ins must be confidential, with nothing shared during the conversation used against the student in any way. Confidentiality and separation from the judicial process are absolutely essential to the strategy. If there is any concern that the member initiating the check-in may be unable to abide by these ground rules, it is better not to do the check-in.

These check-ins are based on the well-studied strategy of brief motivational interviewing (BMI). Based in research, BMI is an effective way to begin the process of reducing high-risk alcohol consumption. For some people, recognizing the contrast between their personal goals and their drinking practices is enough to motivate them to begin thinking about making change.

Learning to have this type of check-in conversation can be difficult. But there is growing evidence that when student leaders, peers, faculty, resident advisors, and other non-professionals have training and practice, they can use the strategy effectively. You may choose to conduct this training yourself, or bring in someone from the campus or community who is familiar with BMI. Be sure to make yourself available to practice with students who are willing to do the check-ins so they can enhance their approach.

If the student in question seems to get into similar problematic situations on a regular basis, there may be more going on than a young person who acts inappropriately. The student may have a beginning dependency on alcohol or other substances or difficulty coping with the stress of school or life in general. In these cases, it is important to remember that the person conducting the check-in and everyone else in the group is not a trained professional able to take on these issues. In this situation, the check-in conversation should conclude with an offer to help the member connect with resources on campus or in the community that can provide additional support and guidance (e.g., the campus counseling center, alcohol and drug center, a community group). The person conducting the check-in needs to know when to suggest the resources and have the contact information handy. The offer of additional resources should simply be a suggestion and not an edict. The member will have to come to their own decision to access the resources, which may happen long after the check-in.

It is essential to ensure that check-in conversations be private and confidential. The person conducting the check in must not disclose any part of the conversation with others. The other members of the group should not be aware of the conversation or what was discussed.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- 1. Read through the Module 6 Check-In Tool before meeting with the student leaders.**
- 2. Review the materials with the leaders so that they understand the intent of the strategy.**
Explore with them the best way to recruit and train older members to conduct check-in conversations. They may want to have just one or two senior members take on this role.
- 3. Together with the student leader team, create guidelines describing the circumstances that require a check-in conversation.** This information will need to be included in the training.
- 4. You will need to assist with the training, and perhaps conduct it yourself.** Everything needed to lead the training is in the Check-In Tool, including the when, where, and why of check-ins and the easy-to-remember, four-step CWIC check-in process. The tool provides suggestions for what to say at each step of the check-in.
- 5. It takes practice to carry out these conversations comfortably.** Schedule times for the senior members chosen to do check-ins to practice their approach. You may either coach students yourself during these practice sessions or identify someone else on campus who is knowledgeable about BMI to do the coaching.
- 6. Help the student leaders to compile and maintain a list of relevant campus and community resources for students who want additional help addressing their alcohol use or other issues they may be dealing with.**
- 7. You can play an important role supporting the student member who was the subject of the check-in, especially if the student decides to access additional resources.** Students in this situation need to feel that you are on their side and that you want only their success.