



BRIEF INTERVENTION

# **SAOR Screening and Brief Intervention for Problem Alcohol and Substance Use**

**Nicola Corrigan  
HSE National Social Inclusion Office**



## Health Diversion Programme

- Option to attend for a health intervention
- SAOR Screening and Brief Intervention
- Establish a SAOR service in each CHO
  - Funding for 9 SAOR practitioners
  - Standard operating procedure
  - Standard job description
  - Outcome framework for monitoring and evaluation
  - Software package for recording
  - NDTRS





# Health Diversion Programme

## 9 SAOR practitioners

- Deliver the SAOR screening and brief intervention
- Establish and coordinate local referral pathways for the SAOR service
- Make onward referrals as necessary
- Report



# What is brief intervention?

A short, structured and helpful conversation about alcohol and drugs

- Identifying the issue
- Motivating for change

Healthcare or non-healthcare settings

- Universities
- Community projects
- Probation

By healthcare or non-healthcare professionals

- Community workers
- Public health nurses
- Midwives
- Youth workers
- Probation officers
- Gardaí

5 – 25 minutes

# A brief intervention is that which

EMCDDA (2017)

1

Is delivered with the aim of **preventing** substance use, delaying initiation of substance use, reducing risk of harmful use

2

May include MI or other therapeutic approaches

3

Does not provide a long-term treatment programme

4

Does not necessarily target people who are dependent but can be used when the nature and extent of drug use is still unclear

5

Is an **early intervention** which may lead to referral to treatment

## Is screening and brief intervention effective?

- Madras, B.K., Compton, W.M., Avula, D., Stegbauer, T., Stein, J.B. and Clark, H.W., 2009. ***Screening, brief interventions, referral to treatment (SBIRT) for illicit drug and alcohol use at multiple healthcare sites: comparison at intake and 6 months later***
- WHO Assist project (Humeniuk et al 2008) ***International randomised controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness of BI for illicit drugs***
- ***Treatment and care for people with drug use disorders in contact with the criminal justice system*** (WHO, UNODC, 2019)
- ***The International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders*** (WHO, UNODC, 2020)



# S A R

The logo for the SAOR initiative, where the letter 'O' is replaced by a stylized graphic of three human figures in teal and purple, holding hands in a circle.

## Screening and Brief Intervention For Problem Alcohol and Substance Use

Guide for Practice

© O'Shea, Goff & Armstrong 2009 /2017



Seirbhís Sláinte  
Níos Fearr  
á Forbairt

Building a  
Better Health  
Service

# SAOR provides the structure to have the conversation with someone

S

Support

A

Ask and Assess

O

Offer Assistance

R

Refer



## SUPPORT

- Connecting with the person
- Having an open friendly style
- Having an empathic non-judgemental approach
- Supporting self-efficacy
- Informing the person of services available

A large, white, serif capital letter 'S' is centered on a teal, parallelogram-shaped background that is tilted to the right. The background has a subtle drop shadow effect.

# A

## ASK AND ASSESS

- Asking about alcohol/substance use
- Eliciting the person's concerns
- Establishing the person's expectations
- Screening and assessment
- Observing for withdrawal symptoms
- Exploring the context
- Gauging importance and confidence

## OFFER ASSISTANCE

- Advising and giving feedback
- Assigning responsibility for change
- Allowing for a menu of options
- Agreeing goals



# R

## REFER

- Discussing treatment options with the person
- Making a referral to appropriate services if required
- Ensuring appropriate follow-up care/support
- Closing the consultation

# When to refer to a specialist service

**Dependence**

**Evidence of dependence**  
Screening questions (DUDIT)

**Withdrawal**

**Evidence of withdrawal**  
Physically or mentally unwell

**Complications**

**Evidence of complications**  
Physiological, eg injuries  
Psychosocial, eg legal problems  
Mental health, eg self-harm

**Request**

**Request!**  
The person themselves requests a referral!

<b>Supports</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Builds up trust</li><li>• Helps person to open up &amp; talk</li></ul>
<b>Asks &amp; Assesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gets a description of the nature and extent of substance use</li><li>• Gauges readiness to change</li></ul>
<b>Offers Assistance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives information on menu of choices</li><li>• Agrees next step</li></ul>
<b>Refers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Links them with the right supports</li></ul>

## Next steps: Monitoring and evaluation

- NDTRS – field on Health Diversion
- The SAOR outcome framework: measures and outcomes (Shorter, G.W., Corrigan, N., Keenan, E., Percy, A. (2022))
  - Recent drug use
  - Average consumption
  - Impact of drug use
  - Knowledge of impact of drug use
  - Quality of life

Thank you!