

New warm line helps clinicians tackle patients' substance abuse

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A free, nationwide service was launched today to help primary care providers seeking to identify and advise substance-abusing patients. The service, Physician Clinical Support System for Primary Care (PCSS-P), offers peer-to-peer mentorship and resources on incorporating screening and follow-up into regular patient care. PCSS-P is a project of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, and the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM).

NIDA also launched a quick screening tool to help health care providers identify these patients.

The warm line service—"warm" because the response is within 24 hours rather than an immediate response typical of a hotline—is available to physicians and other health care providers at no cost. Providers register with PCSS-P and receive the contact information of a mentor who is a specialist in screening, brief intervention, treatment and referral for patients with [substance abuse](#) problems. Mentors can then be contacted, via phone or email, with specific questions about clinical situations involving alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. To take advantage of the service, physicians can call PCSS-P at 877-630-8812, or register online at www.PCSSmentor.org.

The service is an extension of NIDAMED, NIDA's initiative to give health care professionals the tools and resources to screen their adult patients for tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. The initiative stresses the importance of the patient-doctor relationship in identifying unhealthy

behaviors before they evolve into life threatening conditions.

NIDA's Quick Screen is an online interactive single-question screen that asks, "In the past year, how many times have you used the following: alcohol (more than 4 or 5 drinks in a day for women or men, respectively); tobacco products; prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons; and illegal drugs?" If a patient indicates past year use of illegal drugs, or prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons, the clinician has the option of conducting NIDA's full screening tool for the specific drugs abused.

"Primary care providers can be the first line of defense against substance abuse and addiction but they need the right tools and resources," said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "Our NIDAMED [screening tool](#) is a user-friendly, interactive means to help providers quickly screen their patients for [drug abuse](#). PCSS-P goes a step further, providing peer-to-peer mentorship in the use of these resources."

PCSS-P builds on the success of other warm line models offering peer-to-peer advice on using buprenorphine and methadone to treat opioid dependence. This new warm line is targeted to [primary care](#) providers and offers help as providers introduce drug abuse screening into their practices.

Provided by National Institutes of Health

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