



A new online training course has been produced by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), together with Medscape, to assist health care professionals conduct alcohol screening for adolescents, according to a report published by the National Institutes of Health.

Noting that about 190,000 people under age 21 visit emergency rooms for alcohol-related injuries and about 5,000 die as a result of underage drinking each year, the NIAAA has produced a new online training course designed to help health care professionals conduct rapid, evidence-based alcohol screening and brief intervention with youth.

The course presents three scenarios for youth at different levels of risk for alcohol-related harm, and illustrates a four-step clinical screening process.

The course uses a quick two-question screening tool, which asks about the drinking habits of an adolescent's friends and their own drinking.

The course also provides a risk estimator and lessons on how to conduct an intervention according to a patient's risk. In addition, the course gives an overview of brief motivational interviewing, which is considered to have the best potential effectiveness among teens.

"Some may see underage drinking as a harmless rite of passage, but when you look at the risks, it is a big deal," coauthor of the course Vivian B. Faden, Ph.D., director of the Office of Science Policy and Communications at NIAAA, said in a statement. "We developed the guide and the continuing medical education course to help health care professionals reduce underage drinking and its risks in a way that fits easily into their practice."