



Backgrounder on the Youth Risky Drinking Checkup from CARBC (Centre for Addictions Research of BC)

A **youth** Risky Drinking Checkup has been developed to complement CARBC's adult tool. The youth checkup is partly adapted from the validated CRAFFT screening tool designed for adolescents and made available by the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research at Children's Hospital, Boston MA. CARBC's youth checkup is aimed at individuals under (what is also the provincial legal age of) 19 years old in recognition that average initiation to alcohol occurs well before they reach majority status. The checkup concerns itself with (1) situational indicators of problems with respect to alcohol and (2) apparent frequency of intoxication, since episodes of inebriation are often the setting for significant immediate harm to young people.

The youth Risky Drinking Checkup asks just seven questions, six yes/no queries in regard to some salient alcohol-related experiences and one inquiring about how recently (if ever) the individual has gotten drunk. From the responses an overall profile is determined of a safer or riskier drinking pattern, indicating a need or not for further assessment. Answers to each question afford clinicians opportunity to engage a youth in discussion of pertinent issues of healthy and potentially harmful behavior.

The youth Risky Drinking Checkup package is comprised of a set of materials similar to the adult screen and also viewable under Alcohol Reality Check at publications.carbc.ca. A single page questionnaire can be easily completed, with the clinician subsequently registering the score on the page and retaining it for records after a discussion session with the individual. To facilitate that processing of results with a meaningful debrief interview briefly addressing the youth's answers to the questions, the package includes a single page Quick Scoring Aid and a Screening Guide booklet for clinicians. Materials to be supplied to the participant are the Take-home Results card and the youth Alcohol Resource card (recommendations and references). Both double-sided cards are formatted for printing in an 8.5" x 3.5" handy size.

As with the adult screen, neither those administering the overall process, nor clinicians conducting the debrief interview to conclude the youth checkup, need to be substance use specialists in order to serve adolescents willing to take the test. However, to facilitate effective delivery these personnel should familiarize themselves in advance with the supporting pieces. The screening guide in particular provides orientation to an advised approach to the exercise, the logic behind the instrument and how discussion might be furthered during the interview session. Counsel to those 15 and under should especially encourage them to refrain from use until older (19+), both to support their overall healthy development and to reduce the likelihood of drinking problems later ("It's well worth it to wait."). The youth Alcohol Resource card offers CARBC's low-risk drinking recommendations for BC youth.

CARBC has developed an online version of the youth checkup, programmed to offer printable, personalized responses to those who take the test (as a person under 19 yrs. old; more specifically under 16 or 16-18). This web rendition of the youth Risky Drinking Checkup is available at alcoholreality.ca. The page also provides direct links to other alcohol-related youth resources from CARBC. In screening events utilizing this online tool where resources do not permit provision to the participant of printouts with the detailed computer-generated feedback, clinicians could still supply results and summary advice. The results can be quickly transferred from the online feedback page to the Take-home Results card, and the youth Alcohol Resource card should be given out as well to the participant.

Those who utilize the youth Risky Drinking Checkup in a public event screening a number of young people, or who utilize it in a regular ongoing way to reach a number of youth over time, are encouraged to provide CARBC with some feedback and summary records from such employment of the tool. This can be readily done using the evaluation and report form also available in the youth Alcohol Reality Check package at publications.carbc.ca.