



**Newton Public Schools
Substance Use Screening**

November 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The City of Newton has a screening program in grades 8 and 10 related to the use of alcohol, marijuana and other substances. The goal of this program is to let students know that we are available to reinforce healthy decisions and to assist them in obtaining support if needed for substance use related problems.

Data from the Newton Public Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey consistently demonstrates that by the end of high school, significant numbers of students report use of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and other drugs: either having tried it or using it regularly. In order to help prevent students from starting to use substances, or intervene with early use, we will be conducting a verbal substance use screening program in grade 10 during the week of December 10th and February 25th.

The goals of this screening program are to:

- Reinforce healthy decisions
- Help prevent students from starting to use substances
- Intervene with early use
- Assist students in obtaining support if needed for substance use related problems
- Comply with state law M.G.L. Chapter 71, Sections 96 & 97

All screenings will be conducted confidentially by our school nurses or counselors in private one-on-one sessions. Student responses will not be shared with parents unless they rise to a specific level of risk, and the student signs the *Consent to Disclose Confidential Information* form as per state guidelines. Students who are not using substances will have their healthy choices reinforced by the screener. The screener will provide brief feedback to any student who reports using substances, or who is at risk for future substance use. If needed, screeners will refer students to school counseling staff for further evaluation. This program focuses on harm prevention and does not generate disciplinary action. Results of the screening will not be included in your child's school record.

We will be using the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program that utilizes the CRAFFT II screening tool: the most commonly used substance use screening tool for adolescents in Massachusetts. This is a structured, evidence-based verbal screening that promotes prevention, early detection, risk assessment, brief counseling and, when needed, referral to treatment.

As with any school screening, you have the right to opt your child out of this screening. Please contact the school nurse if you have any questions about this program, or if you do not want your child to participate in this screening. Additionally, screening is voluntary and students may choose not to answer some or all of the screening questions.

We encourage all parents/guardians to talk with their child about substance use. For ideas on how to begin these conversations, please visit the SBIRT section on our School Health website for links to helpful resources: www.newtonma.gov/schoolhealth

Sincerely,

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