

SAMPLE LETTER 1

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This year all Massachusetts school districts are required to include a substance use preventive screening as part of their annual mandated universal health-screening program. Our district will use the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) protocol with students in grades 7 & 9. The SBIRT protocol facilitates a one-on-one conversation between each student and a school nurse or counselor in an effort to prevent or at least delay the start of using harmful substances, such as alcohol and marijuana. This program focuses on reinforcing healthy decisions and addressing concerning behaviors around substance use with the goal of improving health, safety and success in school.

We will use the CRAFFT II screening interview, which is the most commonly used substance use screening tool for adolescents in Massachusetts. All screenings will be conducted in a confidential setting in private one-on-one sessions with one of the nurses or counselors trained in SBIRT screening. Students who are not using substances will have their healthy choices reinforced. The screener will provide brief feedback to any student who reports using substances, or is determined to be at risk for future substance use. What your child tells the screener is confidential, and will not be shared with any other person without prior written consent of the student, parent or guardian, except in cases of immediate medical emergency or when disclosure is otherwise required by state law. No written record of the results of this verbal screening are kept with information that identifies any individual student. Screening results will not be included in your child's school record.

The student's parent or guardian may opt-out of the screening by written notification any time prior to or during the screening. Students may also opt out at the time of the screening. Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions or would like your child to opt-out of the screening.

Together, schools and parents CAN make a difference for the youth in our community. One way to prevent youth substance use is to talk with your child about your thoughts and expectations regarding substance use. You can view the CRAFFT tool and other SBIRT resources on www.masbirt.org/schools website.

Regards,

School Principal

(over for second sample letter)

SAMPLE LETTER 2

We are writing to inform you of a new initiative in our schools relating to the use of alcohol, marijuana and other substances. Health survey data consistently demonstrates that a small number of middle school students have used these substances and by the end of high school, many more students report substance use. As trusted providers in the school, we are uniquely positioned to discuss substance use among young people, identify early use, its related risks and intervene when appropriate.

In order to help prevent students from using substances (INSERT SCHOOL NAME) will be incorporating an interview-based screening for 7th and 9th grade students into our annual state mandated universal health screening process. The Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) focuses on substance use prevention, early detection, risk assessment, brief intervention and a referral process that can be utilized in the school setting. It is approved by MA Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Confidential verbal screening sessions will be approximately 5-10 minutes and conducted in private, one-on-one sessions using the CRAFFT screening tool. All students will receive some educational information during the SBIRT screening. Students who are not using substances will have their healthy choices reinforced by the screener. The screener will provide a brief negotiated intervention to students who report using substances or are at risk for future substance use. With consent, referrals may be made for high risk students to school mental health professionals for further assessment and “next steps”.

M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 97(c) “any statement...made by a pupil during a verbal substance use disorder screening shall be considered confidential and shall not be disclosed by a person receiving the statement...except in cases of immediate medical emergency”. In this case, the screener and student will determine next steps together. No written results with identifying information are kept in any school record.

As with any school screening, you have the right to opt your child out of this screening. Please contact [INSERT CONTACT NAME AND TITLE], via email [INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS] by (INSERT DATE). Additionally, students may opt out at the time of the screening. Screening will be conducted on (INSERT DATES).

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Sincerely,

Nurse Leader

Principal