



## **BASICS**—Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention of College Students

### **PROVEN RESULTS**

- 67% of students receiving the BASICS intervention “resolved” their behavior, meaning that, statistically, their alcohol use was no different from normal or low-risk students or “reliably improved,” meaning their alcohol use significantly improved from baseline to followup 4 years later, compared to 55% of controls (a statistically significant 12% difference)
- Positive results documented in controlled studies at three different universities



### **BASICS**—Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention of College Students:

A Harm Reduction Approach—is a preventive intervention for college students 18 to 24 years old. It is aimed at students who drink alcohol heavily and have experienced or are at risk for alcohol-related problems such as poor class attendance, missed assignments, accidents, sexual assault, and violence.

Students often conform to patterns of heavy drinking they see as acceptable while holding false beliefs about alcohol’s effects or actual alcohol-use norms. BASICS is designed to help students make better alcohol-use decisions. The program’s style is empathetic, not confrontational or judgmental, and—

- Reduces the adverse effects of alcohol consumption
- Promotes reduced drinking
- Promotes healthier choices among young adults
- Provides important information and coping skills for risk reduction

BASICS is conducted over the course of only two interviews, and these brief, limited interventions prompt students to change their drinking patterns. While research also shows that, over time, the majority of students who drink heavily will reduce consumption without the intervention, BASICS speeds the process. BASICS is designed to affect the individual; however, post-intervention students often comment that they respond differently to friends as a result of participation. Thus, if implemented densely (e.g., dormitory or other residential settings), BASICS may have a broader effect.

### **INTENDED POPULATION**

BASICS was designed for college students 18 to 24 years old who drink heavily and have experienced negative consequences as a result. NREPP\* reviewed evaluations of college freshmen who were followed for 4 years. The program is not designed for students who are alcohol dependent, but it can be used as part of a stepped-care approach for assessment, advice, and referral to specialty care. BASICS has been evaluated with non-treatment-seeking students in large, traditional university settings but may be tailored for use with young adults in other settings such as the military.

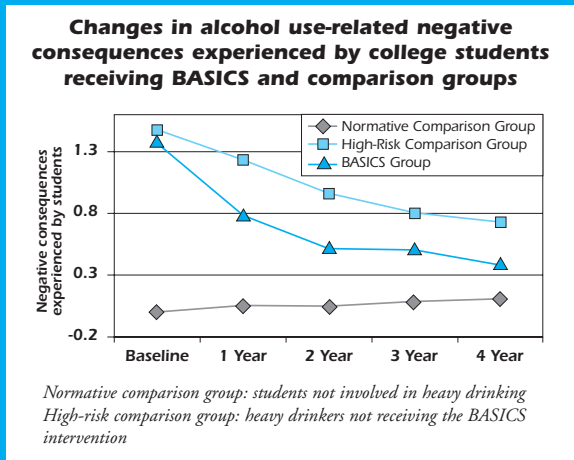
### **HOW IT WORKS**

As a harm reduction approach, BASICS aims to motivate students to reduce risky behaviors rather than focus on a specific drinking goal such as abstinence or reduced drinking. Students can be identified through routine screening or through referral from medical, housing, or disciplinary services. There are two 50-minute interviews. Before or after the first interview, the student receives a self-report questionnaire to complete. From the questionnaire and the first



## OUTCOMES

On average, students who drink heavily as freshmen tend to report few negative consequences over time as the reasons for drinking diminish or change. However, those who received BASICS reported fewer consequences and more rapid change. The risk period for young adults may thus be minimized through this brief intervention. Other independent studies suggest that receiving personal feedback is a critical part of the BASICS program. Those receiving general alcohol education without the feedback did not fare as well as those receiving BASICS.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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interview, information is gathered about the student's alcohol consumption pattern, personal beliefs about alcohol, understanding of social alcohol norms, and family history.

The second interview, which occurs approximately 1 week after the initial interview, provides the student with personalized feedback on myths about alcohol's effects, facts on alcohol norms, ways to reduce future risks associated with alcohol use, and a menu of options to assist in making changes.

## IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

BASICS can be implemented in a variety of settings, including university health and mental health centers, residential units, and administrative offices. Private offices are needed for confidential interviews.

### Training and Technical Assistance

Training (or supervision by trained personnel) is recommended to implement BASICS and, depending on staff experience, it can be completed in 1 to 2 days. Trainees need interviewing skills, and many paraprofessionals can effectively deliver the program. Training encompasses knowledge of alcohol use among college students and specific clinical techniques such as nonconfrontational interviewing. The BASICS developers can provide onsite and offsite training.

Program implementation requires the development of assessment and feedback tools tailored to the specific setting and population. The BASICS workbook provides sample tools and additional information, and assistance can be obtained through consultation with the program developer.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPER

### G. Alan Marlatt, Ph.D.

BASICS was developed with the support of research grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to Dr. G. Alan Marlatt at the University of Washington. Coinvestigators in the development of the first evaluation study were John S. Baer, Ph.D., and Daniel R. Kivlahan, Ph.D. Dr. Marlatt and his associates are clinical research psychologists who have focused on the development of innovative programs for addictive behaviors.

\* National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices

*Program detail and citations can be obtained at  
<http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov>*

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