

Implementing the Personalized Feedback Index

What the PFI is: The Personalized Feedback Index, or PFI, is a web-based assessment and feedback program. Research shows that going through the PFI can result in cutting down on drinking and in a reduction in consequences, when the PFI is implemented as part of a comprehensive campus plan. If you are interested in reading some of the research on interventions like the PFI, go to step 5 in the Program Support section of the 360 Proof Portal. There are two articles that review the literature on individual-focused interventions.

What the PFI is not: The PFI is not a survey to collect student data that will be used to inform goal-setting for your campus. The PFI is an intervention; the Core Survey, National College Health Assessment, or 360 Proof Student Alcohol Use Survey Questions are examples of surveys to be used for data collection.

Who should you ask to complete the PFI?

Here are some ideas about target populations.

- Student-athletes
- Incoming first-year students
- Fraternity and sorority members
- All students
- Mandated students
- Counseling center clients
- Health center patients
- Residence hall
- Self-referrals

The 360 Proof PFI was designed for the entire student body, and the promotional materials included in 360 Proof are designed to help you reach all students on campus. If an individual indicates they are an intercollegiate student-athlete, they will receive some feedback specifically for student-athletes.

Since incoming first-year students are at very high risk for heavy alcohol use and consequences, you might request all incoming students take the PFI. There might be a residence hall or residential area of the campus where there are a high number of problems reported, perhaps even campus safety calls, related to drinking and partying. You could run a campaign to attract students to refer themselves, perhaps in conjunction with a campus health fair or other event.

Students who violate alcohol policies — in the majority of cases some of our highest-risk students — would benefit from a brief intervention. Counseling center clients and health center patients may be at high risk. We know that mood disorders like depression and anxiety often go hand-in-hand with alcohol or other drug abuse or dependence. We also know that many students present at the health center with mental health problems, sometimes showing up in physical symptoms like stomachaches or back pain. So asking every student who is served in the counseling center or health center to complete the PFI makes sense. Members of Greek letter organizations are also generally at high risk, according to the data, so may also benefit from a brief intervention.

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Where can the PFI be administered?

Here are some ideas about venues.

- On the student's mobile device, tablet or laptop
- Health services
- Judicial office
- Health promotion
- Counseling center

While student completion of the PFI on their own device will likely be the most common, there are some other alternatives to consider, such as at the judicial office, during the first meeting or interview after all student violations of campus alcohol or other drug policy, residence hall policy, code of conduct, etc. Or, you might ask every intake to the counseling center and health services to complete the PFI on a computer you provide — not just students being seen for alcohol-related problems, because students will rarely self-refer. But, you might draw in more self-referrals for alcohol problems with a really effective marketing campaign. You might ask every student enrolling in any kind of health promotion class or at all activities like health fairs to do the PFI.

How do students access the PFI?

To complete the PFI, students are given a link, and then they complete a series of questions that primarily addresses their alcohol use, or non-use for abstainers, and the unwanted effects they have experienced as a result of their drinking. The PFI isn't a test to pass or fail. There really are no right or wrong answers. It takes most students about 5-10 minutes to read the personalized feedback they receive based on their answers to the questions. The system generates a PDF of the feedback so the student can keep it. Students are also provided a list of contacts and resources to use in case the PFI questions or feedback cause them to want to discuss any issues.

When should we administer, or not administer, the PFI?

If you decide to do a full-blown, campus-wide PFI intervention, or even just work with specific populations of students, you'll want to be careful about when you ask students to answer questions about their drinking patterns. Since the questions in the PFI about consumption include a timeframe, like "Please indicate the number of drinks that you typically consumed on each day of the week over the past 30 days," the true number of drinks the student typically consumes could be quite inflated if you administer the PFI the week after spring break, or during the first 6-week period of the year when first-year students in particular may establish patterns of heavy alcohol use. This could go either way — intervene early and you're getting data from their summer; wait a month and the past-month data provides the collegiate frame of reference. There are pros and cons to any time period.

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What not to do

1. Don't refer to the PFI as a "test."
2. The PFI is confidential, so we want students to feel comfortable being as honest as possible — don't do anything that would compromise their comfort, like asking to see the feedback. That said, do make it clear that you're open to listening if anyone is concerned about the feedback they got.

The PFI in Your Overall Effort

Like any other tool, the PFI can't do every job. It can be one element in your toolkit as you choose programs to reduce high-risk drinking and related consequences.

If you're wondering whether students will really go to the PFI and take it, and then read their feedback, here is some encouragement. According to the research, drinkers are even more interested than non-drinkers in taking the PFI. At-risk drinkers, who drink up to 6 drinks per drinking occasion, are more interested than the heaviest drinkers who drink 7 or more drinks per occasion. This is important because students who are at risk, not the heaviest drinkers, account for the largest proportion of alcohol-related harm on campus.

So it is important to expose heavier drinkers to promotional messages that talk about how they could benefit.