



## About Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)

SBIRT is a comprehensive, integrated, public health approach to the delivery of early intervention and treatment services for persons with substance use disorders, as well as those who are at risk of developing these disorders. The SBIRT acronym stands for Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment. Primary care centers, hospital emergency rooms, trauma centers, and other community settings provide opportunities for early intervention with at-risk substance users before more severe consequences occur. An estimated 20% of the general population is considered at risk because of harmful substance use patterns, and it is this group of individuals that is targeted by SBIRT.

- Screening quickly assesses the severity of substance use and identifies the appropriate level of intervention.
- Brief Intervention focuses on increasing insight and awareness regarding substance use and motivation toward behavioral change.
- Referral to Treatment provides those identified as needing more extensive treatment with access to specialty care.

### The SBIRT Process

#### **SBIRT is relatively easy for diverse providers to learn.**

The SBIRT approach is easy to learn, relative to other behavioral treatment techniques that may require lengthy specialized training. Since 2003, SBIRT has been successfully implemented in diverse medical settings by various healthcare providers such as physicians, nurses, social workers, health educators, and paraprofessionals.

#### **SBIRT uses brief, validated, universal screening tools.**

These tools allow healthcare professionals to address the problem behavior even when the patient is not actively seeking treatment for the problem. Screening tools such as the AUDIT and DAST-10 can accurately and quickly identify individuals whose alcohol and substance use places them at risk in as little time as 2-4 minutes. Because of its brevity and its universal application (i.e., it can be used with all patients), SBIRT may be more generally accepted by busy healthcare providers. National data show that approximately 80% of all patients in primary care settings screen negative for at-risk substance use and therefore require no intervention. Thus, universal screening procedures enable providers to efficiently focus on those most in need of some type of intervention.

#### **SBIRT is appropriate for patients identified through screening to be at moderate risk for substance use problems.**

The goal of a brief intervention is to educate patients and increase their motivation to reduce risky behavior. Research shows that short conversations with a healthcare professional can reduce a patient's substance use. Brief treatment typically involves one to five sessions lasting about 15-20 minutes. Rooted in the principles of Motivational Interviewing, the Brief Negotiated Interview (BNI) is the SBIRT brief treatment most commonly used by healthcare providers.

## **SBIRT incorporates a strong referral component to link patients to specialty treatment.**

Among patients engaged in at-risk substance use, approximately 5% has a diagnosable alcohol or substance use disorder (SUD) that requires specialized treatment. SBIRT practice integrates effective strategies for referring those in need to specialty treatment settings if the screening site cannot provide these more intensive services. Active referral procedures that employ a "warm-handoff" approach are most successful in linking patients with substance use disorders to specialty treatment settings. In addition, monitoring patient compliance with SUD treatment is critical to a comprehensive health care approach. Thus, the availability of well-established referral and follow-up protocols is essential to the implementation and maintenance of SBIRT.

## **Screening and Brief Intervention Medicaid Reimbursement in Louisiana**

The cost effectiveness of SBIRT is now well established and SBIRT practice is reimbursable in Louisiana.

<b>Medicaid</b>	H0049	Alcohol and/or drug screening	\$14.35
	H0050	Alcohol and/or drug screening, brief intervention, per 15 minutes	\$33.47

A RA Message was issued on 10/15/2013 to providers (via lamedicaid.com) regarding how to avoid denial of these codes due to recent updates to the National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) edits. The message indicated that when these services are appropriately performed on the same date of service as Evaluation and Management (E/M) services, the E/M service may be submitted with Modifier 25. Documentation in the clinical record must substantiate each service. HCPCS codes H0049 and H0050 should be accompanied by the TH modifier and reimbursement for these services is restricted to once per pregnancy. Some commercial insurance companies may also cover these services.

## **SBIRT Training for Health Professionals**

In October of 2015 the LSU School of Social Work (within the College of Human Sciences and Education) received a multi-year award from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA,) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (#TI026017), to provide SBIRT training to social work students and other health professionals across the state. The *LA-SBIRT Project to Address Healthcare Workforce Issues (LA-SBIRT)* seeks to increase the number of skilled professionals who can identify problematic an at-risk substance use and appropriately intervene to prevent substance use disorders from developing.

The SBIRT training curriculum developed by *LA-SBIRT* project staff consists of 4 distinct, multi-media modules that can be delivered as either stand-alone or all-day trainings. Topics include: (1) SBIRT: An Overview, (2) Screening, (3) Brief Intervention, and (4) Referral to Treatment. A stand-alone module, SBIRT Implementation, is also available. SAMHSA's SBIRT Online Training program is also available to healthcare professionals, and can be accessed through SAMHSA's Learning Management System (LMS) – Ideas Exchange. Registration with SAMHSA's LMS-Ideas Exchange is a simple process, but must be facilitated by *LA-SBIRT* project staff.

For more information about SBIRT training for health professionals, please contact **Betsy Wilks, LA-SBIRT Project Manager**, [betsyw@lsu.edu](mailto:betsyw@lsu.edu).