

# Substance abuse with screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) in action: improving patient lives



## What is SBIRT?

SBIRT is an evidence-based approach to identifying patients who use alcohol and other drugs at dangerous levels. The goal of SBIRT is to reduce and prevent related health consequences, disease, accidents, and injuries. Risky substance use is a health issue that often goes undetected. By incorporating this evidence based tool, demonstrated to be reliable in identifying individuals with risk for a substance use disorder, significant harm can be prevented.

SBIRT can be performed in a variety of settings, and screening does not have to be performed by a physician. SBIRT incorporates screening for all types of substance use with brief, tailored feedback, and advice. Simple feedback on risky behavior can be one of the most critical influences on changing patient behavior.

## Why use SBIRT?

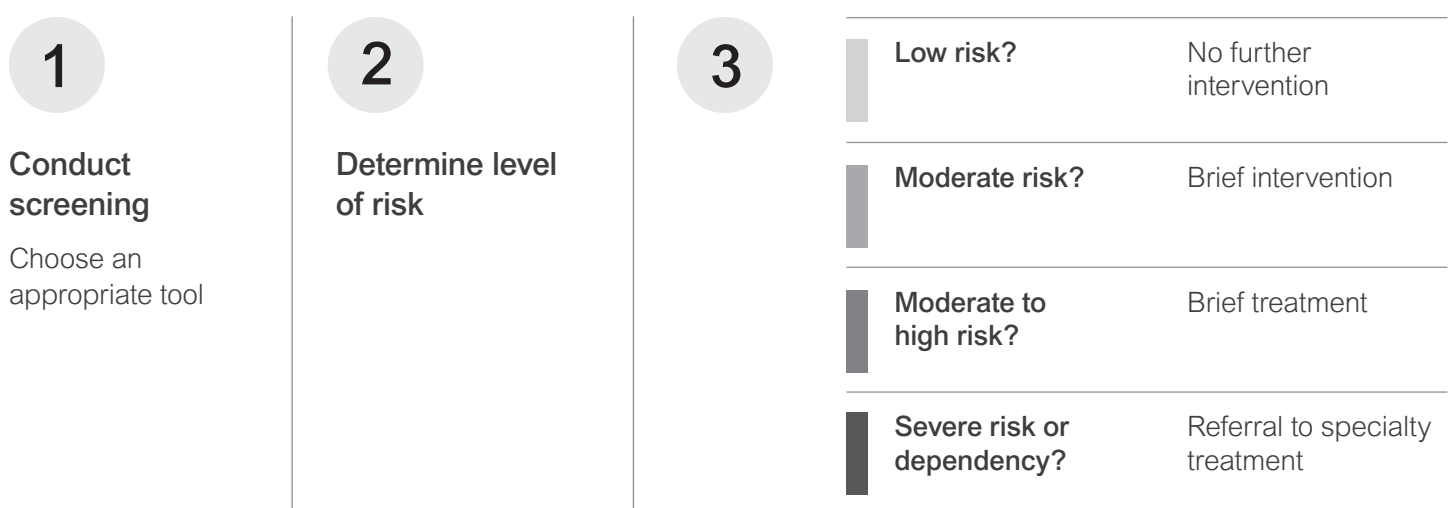
- SBIRT is an effective tool for identifying risky behavior and providing appropriate intervention.
- By screening for high risk behavior, healthcare providers use evidence based brief interventions focusing on health and consequences, and preventing future problems.
- Brief intervention focuses on increasing 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.
- SBIRT reduces costly healthcare utilization.
- SBIRT is reimbursable through Medicaid.
- SBIRT is appropriate for any patient, regardless of age, gender, or health status.

When we say...	We mean...
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a short, structured consultation to identify the right amount of treatment</li> <li>• Use common screening tools</li> </ul>
Brief intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate patients and increase motivation to reduce risky behavior</li> <li>• Brief education intervention increases motivation to reduce risky behavior</li> <li>• Typically 5 to 10 minutes</li> </ul>
Brief treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill goals of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Changing the immediate behavior or thoughts about a risky behavior</li> <li>– Addressing longstanding problems associated with harmful drinking and drug misuse</li> <li>– Helping patients with higher levels of disorder obtain more long-term care</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Typically 5 to 12 minutes</li> </ul>
Referral to treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a patient meets the diagnostic criteria for substance dependence or other mental illnesses as defined by the most current <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</i>, it is recommended you refer them to a specialty provider</li> </ul>

## Who delivers SBIRT services?

Primary care centers, hospital emergency rooms, trauma centers, and community health settings have the best chance to intervene early with at-risk substance users and prevent more severe consequences. PCPs are the primary source of SBIRT services; however, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and behavioral health providers play an important role as well. SBIRT services are intended to be delivered in primary care medical settings, as the first line of substance use harm reduction, identification, and referral to specialized services.

## SBIRT process flow



# Implementing SBIRT into care management

## Prescreens

A prescreen, also known as a brief screen, is defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as “a rapid, proactive procedure to identify individuals who may have a condition or be at risk for a condition before obvious manifestations occur.” It involves short questions relating to alcohol and drug use and must be administered before beginning a full screening. There are multiple screening tools to use for different populations:

Screening tool	Age range or population	Overview
Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT)	All patients	Developed by the WHO; appropriate for all ages, genders, and cultures
Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Abuse Involvement Screen Test (ASSIST)	Adults	Developed by the WHO; simple screener for hazardous use of substances (including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs)
Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST10)	Adults	Screener for drug involvement; does not include alcohol, during last 12 months
Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Family or Friends, Trouble (CRAFFT)	Adolescents	Alcohol and drug screening tool for patients < 21; recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics
Screening to Brief Intervention (S2BI)	Adolescents	Assesses frequency of alcohol and substance use; for patients ages 12 to 17
NIAAA Alcohol Screening for Youth	Adolescents and children	Two-item scale to assess alcohol use (self and friends/family); for patients ages 9 to 18
Tolerance, Annoyance, Cut Down, Eye Opener (T-ACE)	Pregnant women	Four-item scale to assess alcohol use in pregnant women; recommended for OB/GYNs
Tolerance, Worried, Eye Opener, Amnesia, K/Cut Down (TWEAK)	Pregnant women	Five item scale to screen for risky drinking during pregnancy



## Need help with a referral to a behavioral health specialist?

Referrals can be complex and involve coordination across different types of services. We can help! **Call us at 800-454-3730.** We're glad to help you get our members this important kind of care.

## Sources

1. Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) in Behavioral Healthcare, 4/1/2019, [www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov).
2. *Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners*, American Public Health Association, page 8.

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