

What is SBIRT?

What if patients could control tobacco, alcohol and other substance abuse problems on their own before they became serious enough to become a burden on the healthcare system or destroy lives?

What a simple concept! This deceptively simple idea is the basic premise behind the SBIRT program. SBIRT is a screening process designed to target individuals with non-dependant use and provide effective strategies for intervention prior to the need for more extensive treatment. SBIRT is preventive care against risky substance use which can eventually lead to medical and/or mental health problems.

SBIRT (pronounced ess-bert) is an acronym meaning:

Screen - quick and simple assessment to identify patients who may be at risk for dependence.

Brief Intervention – a short motivational interview which helps increase awareness and insight into risky use of substances and motivates patients toward positive behavioral change

Referral to Treatment – identifying individuals with a severe problem or dependence in need of more extensive treatment and specialty care, and referring them to such care

The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division of the Wyoming Department of Health is highly advocating implementation of the SBIRT program. SBIRT is a program supported by the World Health Organization and SAMHSA with proven results in drastically lowering substance use in individuals found to have risky behaviors. Dr. H. Westley Clark, the director for SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) says, "Promoting services like SBIRT to all parts of the Nation is a crucial part of SAMHSA's mission to reach everyone struggling with substance abuse issues."

The ASSIST Tool

The ASSIST tool used in the SBIRT process screens for the use of tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines, inhalants, sedatives, hallucinogens, opiates and abnormal use of prescription medications. The idea of SBIRT is to screen everyone who comes into a participating primary health care facility, clinic or emergency room to detect risky use which may have health-related consequences. For those who screen positive for tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, health risks are explained to the patient and a motivational interview is completed with the purpose of empowering the patient to cut

back or stop risky behaviors. Health Education and tools are then offered to help the patient curtail substance use before it escalates.

Supporting Data

SAMHSA and the World Health Organization have gathered increasingly positive data over the last 6 years from 17 federally funded states which heavily support SBIRT in health care settings. In a report released in Sept. 2009 by the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, researchers reviewing data on 459,599 screenings found:

- Illicit drug use was reduced by 67.7%
- Heavy alcohol use dropped by 38.6%

Statistics were gathered from patients on a six month follow-up after a brief intervention.

Post-intervention statistics among illicit drug users receiving brief intervention or treatment reported that patients felt healthier while experiencing fewer emotional problems and increased employment status. They also reported:

- 64.3% fewer arrests
- 45.8% who were homeless had found a place to live

It is plain to see that the benefits of the SBIRT program reach far beyond the boundaries of health care. SBIRT intervention uses a teachable moment to empower others to change their lives and the lives of their families.

The national statistics gathered for SBIRT have been focused around alcohol and illicit drug use but the ASSIST tool also screens for tobacco use which is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. Tobacco use statistics in Wyoming are higher than the national average and the Wyoming Department of Health sees the benefit of increasing the use of tobacco cessation programs through the SBIRT screening process.

SBIRT Pilot programs

Since February of 2008, Kathy Cordell has been an active advocate of SBIRT in Wyoming. She has completed pilot programs at the Cheyenne Community Clinic (a free health care clinic for the uninsured) and the emergency department at Cheyenne Regional Medical Center (CRMC). Statistics were gathered from both programs in which over 500 individuals were interviewed.

Substance use stats from the free clinic are as follows:

- 72% of patients reported active tobacco use and received a brief intervention
- 20% of patients received a brief intervention toward alcohol use
- 6% of patients received brief intervention toward illicit drug use

Pilot program statistics at CRMC were similar except 64% of patients reported active tobacco use. In both pilot programs, an incredible 80% of those testing positive for tobacco use in these

pilot programs wanted to quite smoking or receive information about cessation at the time of the interventio! Effective cessation strategies were discussed with these patients and they were given information about the Wyoming QuitLine. If they were interested and if the physician agreed, they were given a prescription for tobacco cessation medications on site (Chantix, Wellbutrin or Zyban). Integrating SBIRT Wyoming with the Wyoming QuitLine and coordinating follow-up will help more individuals to succeed with their tobacco cessation efforts. A fax referral to the QuitLine can be signed at the medical facility and sent directly to the call center ensuring a follow-up phone call within 48 hours to the patient.

Information gained from SBIRT programs around the country and these Wyoming pilot programs have helped establish implementation efforts in several medical facilities around Wyoming. Several counties have implemented the use of SBIRT into public health and Cheyenne Regional Medical Center, Park County Hospital, Sheridan Memorial Hospital, University of Wyoming Family Medicine and Campbell County Memorial Hospital are currently in various stages of fact gathering and implementation.

Trainings

Since June of 2008, Kathy Cordell has conducted SBIRT and motivational interviewing training seminars around the state of Wyoming. All trainings are paid for by the Wyoming Department of Health. Four types of trainings are available

1. **Informational Training**
One hour session providing the basics of SBIRT, motivational interviewing and implementation within Wyoming. Intended for those gathering facts and making decisions about SBIRT but not necessarily implementing the service yet.
2. **Brief SBIRT Training**
Four hour introduction to SBIRT, learning the basics of MI skills and discussion of implementation. For those who will be working closely with SBIRT but not fully involved with intervention (eg., billing, clinic managers, medical staff not completing the interventions)
3. **Comprehensive MI/SBIRT training**
Eight hour, more complete training with hands-on use of the ASSIST tool and MI techniques. Recommended for those who will actually be working with patients and other who want to learn more about SBIRT and MI
4. **2-day intensive motivational interview training**
Training over two days, seven hours each day. Highly recommended for those who will be conducting SBIRT interviews and others who want to incorporate MI in the workplace. Trainings will be very interactive offering practice using roll play and real play sessions. MI trainings will be offered statewide twice a year.

Need for SBIRT in Wyoming

Each year in the United States 17 million adults have a serious problem with alcohol, yet only 3 million will get help. Millions more use illicit drugs but unless they face legal implications, few will seek treatment. Tobacco use causes a myriad of health care issues most of which could be better managed, alleviated or prevented if patients either cut back or stopped using tobacco. Health care providers see the devastation substance use brings to their patients and how it increases the health care burden due to chronic disease. Insurance premiums continue to rise because of these chronic burdens and our health care system is in crisis. Ultimately, all Wyoming residents suffer due to the effect of substance use on the overall health of our citizens and the detriment to our economic well-being. According to a report from the Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids, health care costs in Wyoming which are directly related to only smoking have reached \$136 million dollars annually!

Substance abuse does not discriminate. It doesn't care if you are rich or poor, famous or unknown, a man, a woman or even a child. It does not discriminate based on age, race, culture or religious background. Substance abuse is an equal opportunity destroyer. The phrase 'addiction doesn't care' not only suggests that substance abuse casts a long shadow but also that any individual, no matter who, can be vulnerable to the ravages of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. The residents of Wyoming are no exception. According to recent statistics released by Wyoming State Agencies:

- Alcohol was a factor in 70.7% of all arrestsⁱ
- DUI arrests accounted for 32% of all arrests statewide
- 16.7% of adults in Wyoming reported binge drinking in the last 30 daysⁱⁱ
- 77.8% of Wyoming residents view alcohol abuse by adults as a serious problemⁱⁱⁱ
- 71% believe that binge drinking on college campuses is a problem
- Every pack of cigarettes sold in Wyoming costs \$7.26 in health costs and loss of productivity due to health related issues from smoking. (Wyoming BRFSS)
- Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug and most users do not consider their use a problem
- The overuse and misuse of prescription medications is the fastest growing category of drug abuse in Wyoming

Also:

- Excessive alcohol use is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States
- Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death nationwide (CDC)
- The American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma says more than half of patients who come into ERs are intoxicated at the time of injury

Substance use problems statewide are major contributors to violent crimes, domestic abuse, child abuse and accidents. Wyoming health care facilities, legal and judiciary systems, and mental treatment centers are over-full and under-staffed and a large portion of this influx can be attributed to use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Substance use also has a direct correlation to increasing health care costs. If these trends in substance use patterns are not dealt with effectively, our health care systems could be totally over-run.

According to data from a 2005 BRFSS survey, Wyoming had an estimated

- 40,000 residents dependent on or abusing alcohol
- 12,000 residents were abusing, dependant or addicted to drugs
- 38,000 did not receive required alcohol rehab treatment
- 11,000 did not receive required drug addiction treatment
- 12,000 Wyoming children now under the age of 18 will die from smoking

The serious side of these numbers is that they are growing. Our communities are affected by a rising number of risky users as well as alcohol and drug abusers with an increase in healthcare concerns, crime rates and violence. More public awareness and better health education will benefit the alcohol or drug abuser and their families, and it will increase the health of our Wyoming communities as a whole.

SBIRT is a cost-efficient, evidence-based, preventative health care strategy which has proven to be very effective in reducing substance use rates. SBIRT Wyoming is following the lead of many programs which have developed very successful statistics and we hope to create and sustain the same kind of success in Wyoming.

Billing codes

Wyoming Medicaid billing codes for SBIRT screenings were activated in January of 2009. Wyoming is one of the few states currently reimbursing for SBIRT services making this program financially accesible to all medical establishments who bill Medicaid. Screenings are reimbursed at the following rate:

H0049	Alcohol and/or drug screening	\$24.00
H0050	Alcohol and/or drug service, brief intervention, per 15 minutes	\$48.00

Blue Cross/ Blue Shield has also activated CPT codes for SBIRT services for those members who qualify. Further private insurance reimbursement, which is already in place in several states, is currently being sought for SBIRT services in Wyoming. CPT codes are as follows:

CPT 99408	Alcohol and/or substance abuse structured screening and brief intervention services; 15 to 30 minutes	\$33.41
CPT 99409	Alcohol and/or substance abuse structured screening and brief intervention services; greater than 30 minutes	\$65.51

ⁱ Wyoming Association of Sherrifs and Chiefs of Police, Evaluation of Alcohol Factors in Custodial Arrests in the State of Wyoming - 2008

ⁱⁱ Wyoming Risk Factor Surveillance System - 2006

ⁱⁱⁱ Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center – University of Wyoming, Wyoming Alcohol Uses Survey, 2006