

Function of Brief Annual Screening for SBIRT

This is a clarification about the screening process for SBIRT, emphasizing the role of the brief screening process.

Process

The brief screening process is critical to the SBIRT implementation and is often added to existing forms and/or combined with screening for depression and other health screenings. The brief screen consists of a 2-3 questions given annually where any answer of “1 or more” triggers the need for further screening for alcohol (such as the AUDIT) or substances (such as the DAST). The brief screening questions are:

- 1) How many times in the last year have you had
 - a. 5 or more drinks a day (for men)
 - b. 4 or more drinks a day (for women)
- 2) How many times in the last year have you used a recreational drug or used a prescription medication for nonmedical purposes?

Utility

The use of the brief screen is an established process of an overall SBIRT intervention established by [SAMHSA](#) and [NIAAA](#), and implemented by national SBIRT programs, such as [National SBIRT ATTC](#). Research wise, [brief screens have been shown to be effective](#) to identify dependency, abuse, and risky drinking, and [are as sensitive, but not as specific, as larger screens](#).

Practically, the brief screen helps to:

- Reduce negative impact on patients from over screening
 - Only 23-25% of the patient population will need further screening beyond the brief annual questions, preventing about 75% of patients from becoming frustrated when answering multiple questions which are irrelevant to their situation
- Reduce the time in facilitating screening
 - In busy medical settings, it is critical to keep the screening process efficient in order to adequately intervene with those who need brief intervention and referral to treatment

Metrics

Currently (July 2014), SBIRT is being measured through the billing / encounter system, which limits the ability to determine full implementation. In the next couple of years, the Electronic Health Record (EHR) will be used to identify the various levels of SBIRT implementation, including the brief screen given annually, and will likely become part of SBIRT metrics tied to incentive payments.

References & Questions

Further clarification can be found in the [SBIRT Guidance Document](#) and a list of approved screening tools can be found at [Addictions & Mental Health SBIRT](#). Please feel free to seek further clarification with Michael Oyster at 503-945-9813 or Michael.W.Oyster@state.or.us