



# Substance Abuse with Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment in Action (SBIRT)

## What is SBIRT and why use it?

Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment, commonly referred to as SBIRT, is defined by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as 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.”

- Screening quickly assesses the severity of substance use and identifies the appropriate level of treatment.
- 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 primary goal of SBIRT is to identify and effectively intervene with those who are at moderate or high risk for psychosocial or healthcare problems related to their substance use.

**According to SAMHSA, a SBIRT encounter is characterized as:**

- Brief (typically about 5 to 10 minutes for brief intervention and 5 to 12 minutes for brief treatment)
- Universal
- Targeting one or more behaviors regarding risky alcohol and drug use
- Delivered in a public health, nonsubstance use treatment setting
- Comprehensive — comprising screening and referral
- Involving research, evaluation and collection of experiential evidence to assess the model’s effectiveness

### Screening

Use common screening tools such as the *Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)*; the *CAGE Questionnaire*; and the *Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST)*.

### Brief intervention

Educate patients and increase their motivation to reduce risky behavior.

### Brief treatment

Fulfill goals of:

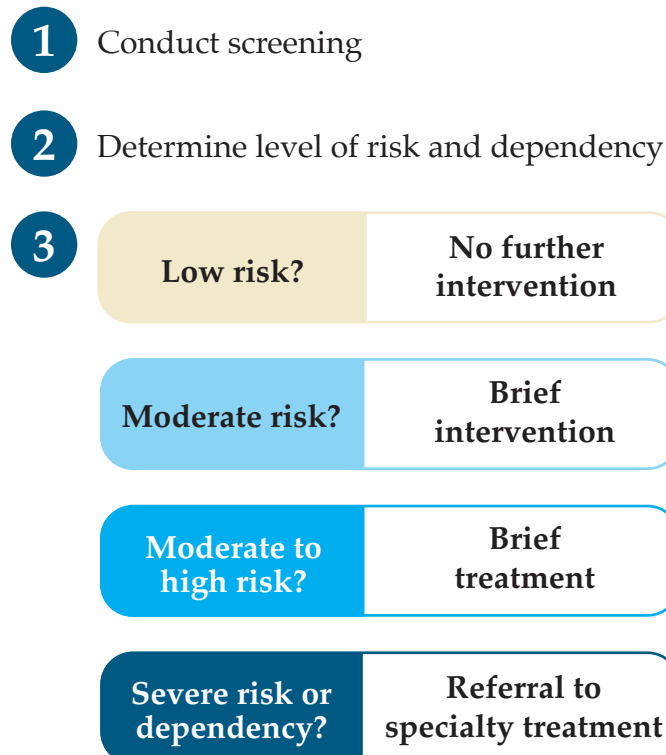
- Changing the immediate behavior or thoughts about a risky behavior.
- Addressing longstanding problems with harmful drinking and drug misuse.
- Helping patients with higher levels of disorder obtain more long-term care.

### Referral to treatment

If a patient meets the diagnostic criteria for substance dependence or other mental illnesses as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, we recommend you refer him or her to a specialty provider. Referrals can be complex and involve coordination across different types of services — We can help! Call us at **1-844-594-5072** Monday to Saturday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET.



## SBIRT process flow



## Billing codes

- 99408 — SBIRT: Alcohol and substance (other than tobacco) abuse structure screening (for example, AUDIT, DAST) and brief intervention (SBI) services; 15 to 30 minutes
- 99409 — SBIRT: Alcohol and substance (other than tobacco) abuse structure screening (for example, AUDIT, DAST) and brief intervention (SBI) services; over 30 minutes

## Who delivers SBIRT services?

Primary care centers provide opportunities for early intervention with at-risk substance users before more severe consequences occur. **Screening** quickly assesses the severity of substance use and identifies the appropriate level of treatment. **Brief intervention** focuses on increasing insight and awareness regarding substance use and motivation toward behavioral change. **Referral to treatment** provides those identified as needing treatment that is more extensive with access to specialty care.

## Implementing SBIRT into care management

- **Choose a screening tool.**  
We recommend the *AUDIT*, *CAGE Questionnaire*, *TWEAK* scale, *4P's Plus*® Screening Tool or *CRAFFT* Screening Tool.
- **Decide who will conduct the screening and intervention and when it will occur.**  
It can be as simple as a nurse performing a brief screening while taking a patient's blood pressure.
- **If needed, refer patients to additional treatment.**

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

Call us if you have questions or need assistance. We're glad to help you get our members this important kind of care.

### Notes:

- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) in Behavioral Healthcare, 4/16/2020, [www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov).
- *Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners*, American Public Health Association, page 8.

<https://provider.healthybluenc.com>

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