



screening & brief intervention

Office of National Drug Control Policy 2008

Substance abuse is one of our Nation's most significant public health challenges. It destroys lives, undermines families, and costs hundreds of billions of dollars annually in health care, legal, workplace, and other expenses. In order to reduce the misery and addiction caused by substance abuse in the United States, the Federal government has launched an innovative new effort which will use our Nation's health care system to help diagnose, intervene in, and treat drug abuse before it becomes a more serious problem.

Detecting Drug Use Early Saves Lives

- Today, there are over 23 million Americans who meet the medical definition of abuse or addiction to drugs and alcohol. Over 95% of those Americans in need of treatment but who did not receive it are unaware that they need help and have not sought help from a health care professional. (NSDUH 2007)
- The majority of Americans see a health care provider at least once a year. By encouraging health care professionals to identify at-risk populations and intervene early, we can significantly reduce the abuse of alcohol and addiction to drugs among Americans.
- After screening for drug using behavior, medical professionals can provide brief substance abuse intervention, if necessary.
- These research-based intervention dialogs help explain to patients the consequences of drug use and provides them with a solid strategy to reduce or eliminate substance use.
- Existing substance abuse intervention programs already have a record of success with regard to reducing substance abuse and other health problems associated with drug use.
- Early identification and intervention for substance abuse is also very cost-effective.

Improving our Health Care System to Reduce Drug Addiction

- The Federal Government has established a demonstration program entitled, "Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment" (SBIRT). This program has begun screening and providing brief interventions in hospitals, primary care settings, colleges, and one tribal council.
- To date, Federally-funded SBIRT programs have been established in 17 States: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin.
- As of February 2008, more than 605,469 patients have been screened as part of the SBIRT demonstration program, and over 22% of patient populations have screened positive. Of these, 16% received a brief intervention; 3.7% received brief drug treatment; and 3.7% were referred to specialized drug treatment programs. (SAMHSA)
- A six month follow-up review of patients showed significant declines in substance abuse after the brief interventions.
- Since January 2007, doctors can bill Medicaid for drug and alcohol abuse screening using "CMS codes" approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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States with Established Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment (SBIRT) Programs

