

Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)

Reference and Resource
Guide for Providers

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Overview

The Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program is a crucial initiative designed to proactively address substance use¹. Its primary goals are:

- **Prevention:** To prevent members from developing a substance use disorder (SUD).
- **Early Detection:** To facilitate the early identification of suspected SUDs.
- **Referral to Treatment:** To effectively connect members with appropriate treatment services when needed.

Important Note: SBIRT services are specifically intended for individuals who have not yet been diagnosed with a SUD or who are not currently receiving SUD treatment. These services are foundational for early intervention rather than ongoing treatment.

Program Updates and Compliance: To ensure that our approach to addressing substance use disorders remains at the forefront of healthcare, this guide will be updated periodically to reflect evolving industry standards, best practices in screening, and the latest advancements in evidence-based treatment modalities. Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals (HMO SNP) want to ensure that our providers are informed with the most current knowledge and tools to effectively identify, assess, and guide patients toward appropriate interventions and comprehensive treatment pathways, ultimately enhancing patient care.

Brief Screening/Assessment

The pre-screen, also referred to as a Brief Screen or Assessment, involves asking brief, broad questions related to a patient's alcohol and drug use, typically focusing on the past 12 months. A standard pre-screening form will usually consist of two questions: one to assess alcohol consumption and another for recreational drug use.

Administration and Review: The pre-screen can be administered efficiently, for example, by the patient completing a written screener in the waiting room or as part of the rooming process when vital signs are taken by staff. While a licensed professional is not required to administer the pre-screener, it is recommended that the results be reviewed with the patient by a licensed/credentialed provider.

Outcome and Follow-up: If the pre-screening results do not indicate a need for a full screen or assessment, it is important to still provide positive reinforcement and education to the patient regarding substance use prevention. If the pre-screening results indicate the presence of concerning patterns of substance use, a full screening/ assessment should then be completed.

Full Screening/Assessment

Full screenings and assessments involve the administration of an evidence-based/validated screening tool to comprehensively evaluate a patient's substance use patterns and levels. These in-depth assessments are crucial for understanding the extent of risk and guiding appropriate interventions.

Purpose and Provider Responsibility: Providers are asked to utilize an evidence-based screening and assessment tool to accurately identify patients at risk for substance use-related problems. Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals support these services across a wide variety of settings to maximize the identification of at-risk individuals.

Evidence-Based Tools: Several evidence-based screening and assessment tools are recognized for their effectiveness. These include, but are not limited to:

- The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)²
- The Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST)³
- The Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST)⁴
- The Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Friends, Trouble Screening Test (CRAFFT) (specifically for adolescents)⁵
- The Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenagers (POSIT)⁶

Additional resources and links to these and other screening/assessment tools can be found at: <https://oasas.ny.gov/sbirt>

Brief Intervention

Brief Interventions are targeted, interactive conversations with patients designed to motivate and support positive changes in health-related behaviors concerning substance use. These interventions are a critical management strategy for patients identified with risky or problematic alcohol or other drug use, particularly those who are not yet dependent on the substance.

- **Approach and Focus:** Brief Intervention may consist of a single session or multiple sessions. The primary goal is to increase a patient's insight and awareness regarding the potential risks of ongoing substance use to their overall health.
- **Recommended Technique:** The use of Motivational Interviewing (MI) is highly suggested as an integral part of Brief Intervention. MI is a patient-centered approach that strengthens an individual's own motivation and commitment to

positive behavior change, effectively opening the conversation to discuss resources and support.⁷

- **Timing:** Intervention services may be delivered on the same date of service as the screening/assessment or on a subsequent date, based on clinical need.

Patient Education Opportunities

While not all patients will require brief intervention and a referral to treatment for substance use when screened, opportunities will present themselves to provide prevention education to lessen the likelihood that a substance use disorder will develop in the future:

Opportunity	Talking Points
Adolescent populations	• Addressing Peer Pressure • Predisposition to developing a substance use disorder⁸
Adult Populations who admit to social drinking	• Signs that social drinking is progressing to problematic drinking • Binge drinking • Long term health effects of alcohol • Impact of alcohol use on chronic physical conditions⁹ • Alcohol interactions with prescription medications
Childbearing age/ Pregnancy	• Risk to unborn child related to alcohol or substance use • Risk of opioids during pregnancy¹⁰
When prescribing a new medication that has the potential for misuse/ abuse/ dependency <i>(Opioids, benzodiazepines, stimulants)</i>	• The potential for misuse of, or dependency upon medications • Importance of appropriate medication disposal/ drug take back programs • Use of naloxone (Narcan), especially with high dosages of opioids being prescribed.¹⁰
Family member or friend of someone with a substance use disorder	• Offer resources for support groups for family and friends such as Nar Anon and Al anon
For patients who are not interested in treatment or do not	• Provide resources and information on safer use practices and reduced risks, including education on safe injection

Opportunity	Talking Points
view their patterns of use as problematic	practices, fentanyl test strips, wound care, and prevention of infectious diseases like HIV and Hepatitis C¹¹ • Emphasize the critical importance of naloxone (Narcan) education, including recognizing an overdose and effective administration • Highlight the availability of services that meet individuals “where they are,” offering support without preconditions, such as drop-in centers, peer support, and basic needs linkages

Documentation

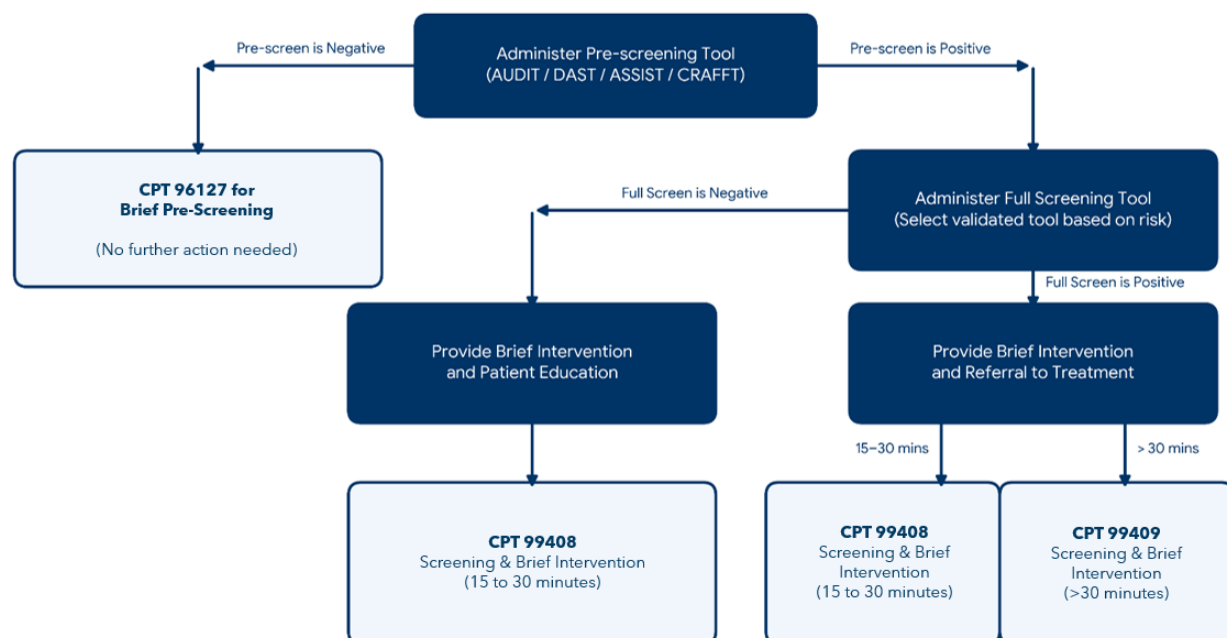
The procedure codes used to report SBIRT services are consistent among all provider types.

Line of Business (LOB)	Screening Type	Procedure Code	Description
DE Medicaid DE Medicare D-SNP	Pre-Screening	96127	Brief Emotional/ Behavioral Assessment Screening: • Less than 5 minutes ◦ Covers services for alcohol and drug use in adults and adolescents. ◦ Approved to be billed at each patient visit when medically necessary
DE Medicaid DE Medicare D-SNP	Full Screening	99408 99409	• An alcohol/substance use screening and brief intervention (15-30 min) • An alcohol/substance use screening and brief intervention (>30 min)

Additional Information

- Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) is not designed to address smoking and tobacco cessation services unless it is a co-occurring diagnosis with another substance such as drugs or alcohol.
- Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) may be provided face-to-face with the member, through telehealth/telemedicine, or telephonically.

SBIRT Workflow



Training and Education

To directly deliver screening, assessment and intervention services, providers are encouraged to participate in training that provides information about the implementation of evidence-based protocols for screening, brief interventions, and referrals to treatment (SBIRT). Face-to-face training and consultations are available through various entities.

Line of Business (LOB)	Screening Type	Procedure Code	Description
Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals	Virtual and live webinar options on "Introduction to SBIRT" offered by Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals.	Free course. Offers CME and CEU credits to physicians, nurses, LPC, LMFT, and Social Workers (LSW/LCSW).	Providers may access training through the Allegheny Health Network (AHN) continuing education credits website at https://cme.ahn.org/content/introduction-sbirt-enduring-training-expires-january-21-2026 or reach out to Shannen Lauffer, Clinical Addiction Specialist, at Shannen.lauffer@highmark.com .
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health	The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health offers SBIRT training along with other BH and SUD specific trainings on their site.	Free online training videos and resources. CE credits are not available at this time.	Providers can find more information at: https://atrc.dhss.delaware.gov/resource-library
Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network	The Northwest ATTC offers a range of SBIRT training and technical assistance (TA) services to health care organizations and professionals.	Free online training videos and resources. Continuing Education credit options available.	Providers can find more information at: https://attcnetwork.org/northwest-sbirt/
Caron Treatment Services	A leader in addiction medicine, they offer several resources and educational trainings related to substance use and behavioral health topics.	Free online virtual training for healthcare professionals and school-based professionals. No CE credits at this time.	Providers can find more information at: https://www.caron.org/digital-learning/screening-brief-intervention-and-referral-to-treatment-sbirt
Health Knowledge	Health Knowledge offers two virtual online SBIRT training options including SBIRT for Health & Behavioral Health Professionals and Dental School SBIRT Curriculum- Foundational Training for SUDs.	Continuing Education: This course offers 3 contact hours of continuing education for nursing, social work, and counseling professionals (CNE, NASW and NAADAC) for a fee of \$5 per hour	Providers can find more information at: https://healthknowledge.org/course/index.php?categoryid=50

Referral to Treatment

After a patient has a positive substance use screen and has received a brief intervention to discuss changing their substance use patterns, a referral to treatment may be offered. It is crucial to understand that **treatment and recovery are not one size fits all**. Patients' unique life circumstances, preferences, and challenges mean that the most clinically appropriate level of care might not always be immediately accessible or suitable. Therefore, when offering a referral, **educate patients on a variety of pathways and treatment options**. Presenting diverse choices increases the likelihood that patients will find a suitable fit and be willing to engage in treatment and recovery.

Below is a table of treatment options that can be offered and reviewed with the patient:

Treatment Option	Abbr.	Definition
Community Mental Health Centers	CMHC	While their primary focus is mental health, many CMHCs integrate substance use disorder treatment due to the high co-occurrence of these conditions, serving as a "dual diagnosis" or "co-occurring disorders" facility.
Medication Assisted Recovery	MAR	Usually refers to FDA-approved medications for either Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) or Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). May also include other medications like nicotine replacement therapy, mental health medications, and other medications that support the recovery process. Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) can include Methadone, Buprenorphine, and Naltrexone, including brand names such as Suboxone, Subutex, and Vivitrol.
Office-Based Addiction Treatment / Office-Based Opioid Treatment	OBAT / OBOT	Seeking treatment from trained professionals, particularly those experienced in managing and treating SUDs. Offers individual and group therapy sessions. May be medical, clinical, or both. Some examples of professionals include LSW, LCSW, LPC, LMFT, psychologists, providers board-certified in Addiction Medicine or Psychiatry, and other professionals with addiction-related certifications such as CAADC, CARN, CADAC, and CARN-AP.

Treatment Option	Abbr.	Definition
Mutual Aid Groups	AA / NA / Celebrate Recovery	Voluntary collaborative groups serving community members. These groups create networks of care and generosity to meet the immediate needs of individuals. Can be secular (not concerned with religion, spirituality, or church) or non-secular (relating to or involving religious or spiritual matters).
Peer-Based Recovery Support	CRS / CPS	Services provided by individuals who have lived experience with substance misuse and identify as in recovery from SUD. The peers help others determine and navigate their individualized recovery pathway, ensuring it best suits them, their needs, and their wants. Embedded in both a variety of professional treatment settings as well as within a variety of community settings.
Recovery Community Organizations	RCO	A non-profit organization founded and led by people with direct lived experience with substance use challenges and recovery. No formal framework allows individuals to use any pathway to recovery to connect and provide support.
Harm Reduction	HR	Encompasses practical strategies and ideas focused on reducing the negative health and social consequences associated with drug use. This approach supports positive change without judgment and respects the rights of individuals who use drugs.

Harm Reduction Concepts

- **Syringe Service Programs (SSPs):** Community-based prevention programs offering a range of vital services. These programs typically provide linkage to substance use treatment, along with access to sterile syringes and injection equipment, and safe disposal of used equipment. SSPs also offer vaccination, testing, and linkage to care for various infectious diseases.¹¹
- **Safe Consumption Sites:** A health and social response to the substance use epidemic, particularly for intravenous drug use. These are controlled, fixed, or mobile spaces where individuals can use pre-obtained drugs under the supervision and support of trained personnel.

- **Naloxone (Narcan):** A life-saving medication that rapidly reverses opioid overdose. As an opioid antagonist, it attaches to opioid receptors, effectively blocking and reversing the effects of other opioids. Naloxone can quickly restore normal breathing in individuals whose breathing has slowed or stopped due to an opioid overdose. Importantly, Naloxone has no effect on someone without opioids in their system and is not a treatment for opioid use disorder.¹²

Referral Resources

Once your patient has identified a pathway to recovery that they would like to pursue, there are several resources available to assist in locating services in their area. Below are national, state, and local resources that can assist in locating services.

National

Resource	Service Description	Contact
SAMHSA National Helpline	Provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.	Call 1-800-662-4357 (TTY: 711)
National Treatment Locator	Confidential and anonymous resource for persons seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders.	Visit https://www.findtreatment.gov/
Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	Free and confidential support for people in distress, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also offers specialized services for individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired, those who prefer to communicate in Spanish, and military veterans.	Call or text 988
Never Use Alone	A toll-free national hotline for individuals who use drugs while alone and are at risk of overdose. This harm reduction service offers overdose prevention, detection, and life-saving crisis response. Peer operators are available 24/7/365. An operator will gather the caller's first name, exact location, and phone number. If the caller stops responding, the operator will promptly alert EMS to a possible overdose.	Call 1-877-696-1996

Delaware Resources

Resource	Service Description	Contact
Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH)	The lead state agency responsible for planning, developing, and maintaining a comprehensive system of prevention, treatment, and recovery services for Delawareans affected by substance use disorders and mental illness.	https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dsamh/ 302-255-9399 To find a specific provider type/specialty/location on the DSAMH site please use this link: https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dsamh/provdir.html
RISE Program	The Resilience through Independence, Success, and Empowerment (RISE) program is for Medicaid recipients only, two locations at Brandywine Counseling and Community Services and NorthNode Group. Offering various services to support recovery including medication management and support through detox and treatment. This program supports the perinatal population as well.	NorthNode: 302-257-3135 RISE - NorthNode Group Counseling Brandywine: 302-656-2348 RISE Adolescent Program - BCCS Brandywine Counseling & Community Services
DSAM Bridge Clinics	These clinics provide immediate, low-barrier access to addiction treatment, mental health support, and medication-assisted treatment without needing an appointment. Located in all three counties, these clinics offer walk-in screenings, addiction medication, and naloxone training to support.	https://www.helpisherede.com/addiction/treatment-and-recovery/bridge-clinics#locations

Mutual Aid Resources

Support Group Name	Group Type	Website Link
LifeRing	Secular: Abstinence-based, anonymous organization,	https://lifering.org/

Support Group Name	Group Type	Website Link
	in-person and virtual meeting options.	
SMART Recovery	Secular: Self-management and recovery training.	https://www.smartrecovery.org/
Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS)	Secular: Anonymous sober support network.	https://www.sossobriety.org/
Celebrate Recovery	Non-Secular: Christ-centered, 12-step recovery programs.	https://www.celebraterecovery.com/
Recovery Dharma	Non-Secular: Mindfulness and Buddhist-based recovery. Peer-led, non-theistic, trauma-informed.	https://recoverydharma.org/
Refuge Recovery	Non-Secular: Buddhist-oriented recovery program.	https://www.refugerecovery.org/
Wellbriety	Non-Secular: Culturally based recovery program based on the beliefs of Indigenous people.	Visit https://wellbrietymovement.com/
Family Support Groups	Nar-anon Family Groups: A 12-Step Program for Family and Friends of individuals with substance use disorders. Also offered is Narateen which provides support specifically to teens. - In person and virtual meeting options Al-Anon Family groups: A support group for family and friends of individuals with alcohol use disorders. Also offered is Alateen which provides support	https://www.nar-anon.org/ https://al-anon.org/

Support Group Name	Group Type	Website Link
	specifically for teens. In person and virtual meeting options.	
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)	Support: 12-step support group for alcohol use.	https://www.aa.org/
Narcotics Anonymous (NA)	Support: 12-step support group for drug use.	https://na.org/

Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals Delaware Benefits

Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals Delaware cover the treatment for substance use disorders for Medicare D-SNP and Medicaid members including:

- Inpatient care
- Outpatient care
- Outpatient therapy and groups
- Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs)

Additional Supports

Wayspring

Medicaid recipients only, with telehealth and in-person services offered.

- **Overview:** Wayspring's comprehensive care model actively engages eligible members through a range of outreach methods, including in-person outreach, phone calls, emails, and meetings at treatment facilities. An interdisciplinary care team—including physicians, advanced practice nurses, licensed counselors, and engagement specialists—offers support (virtually and in-person) for SDoH needs such as housing, mobile phone access, financial assistance, and more, alongside physical, behavioral, and substance use care. Wayspring also extends and enhances the care members receive by ensuring they're connected to the right inpatient or outpatient facility for their needs. Their providers support outpatient care, or can serve as an additional layer of

resources, offering backup and supplemental care to facilities.

- **Referrals:** Visit <https://mywayspring.com/contact/> or call 1-888-929-7774.

Telehealth: Ophelia Health

- **Overview:** Broaden your patient treatment options and reduce geographical transportation barriers by providing telehealth visits for your patients. If your practice does not have capacity to provide telehealth services but you feel your patient would benefit, Highmark Health Options and Highmark Health Options Duals have providers such as Ophelia Health in network to provide opioid use disorder treatment exclusively using a telehealth modality of care. In most cases, appointments on the same day are available.
- **Referrals:** Text or call 215-585-2144 or visit <https://ophelia.com/>.

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