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## Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment (SBIRT) Award

Under a \$17,000,000, five-year cooperative agreement, Pennsylvania has partnered with the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) of the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration on a cooperative project to encourage health care providers to screen and provide advice or counseling to their patients who misuse alcohol or other drugs. The goal is to influence their risky behavior patterns and reduce their exposure to the negative consequences of misuse. The SBIRT program is one of two nationally identified initiatives of the President's Drug Control Strategy. The SBIRT initiative is also designed to improve the linkages between general community health care and specialized substance abuse treatment providers to facilitate access to care when needed.

Studies have shown that brief intervention in general medical settings can be effective in encouraging individuals to reduce or eliminate problematic use. It is hoped that this will 1) have the long-term impact of reducing the number of individuals who eventually become dependent on or addicted to alcohol and other drugs of abuse and 2) identify individuals who are dependent on or addicted to alcohol or other substances and refer them to treatment earlier than might otherwise happen. To facilitate this, each project has designed a method that provides for: routine screening of substance use patterns in medical and community settings; identification of individuals with substance use-related problems; and an appropriate intervention when needed – brief intervention, additional assessment, brief treatment, referral to drug and alcohol treatment, etc.

The SBIRT project consists of the following elements:

- A continuum of screening, intervention, and facilitated referral to treatment in medical and community settings throughout the Commonwealth.
- Education and appropriate intervention for hazardous and harmful substance use, including referral to substance abuse treatment when clinically indicated.
- Identification of systems barriers and initiatives to improve policies that promote the identification of individuals with risky substance use in general medical and community settings, and improve access to care for individuals with substance use disorders.
- Models of service delivery that incorporate best practices and state-of-the-art knowledge on prevention, intervention and substance disorder treatment.
- Specialized training is provided to key staff within the targeted communities by the Northeast Addiction Technology Transfer Center (NeATTC), the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) grantee that is administered by the Pittsburgh-based Institute for Research, Education and Training in Addictions (IRETA).

The Pennsylvania SBIRT initiative is currently in the second year of operation. It has been initially funded in three target communities, Allegheny, Philadelphia, and the Huntingdon-Mifflin-Juniata area. It is hoped that these localities will provide a diverse opportunity to learn how to best adapt the approach in urban and rural settings throughout the state. Thus far, over 8500 individuals have been screened for at-risk use during their visits to the participating providers.