

Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral for Treatment (SBIRT)

A new initiative developed by Ensuring Solutions, with the assistance of a cohort of employee assistance program (EAP) provider organizations, seeks to standardize the delivery and increase the use of alcohol screening and brief intervention in the workplace; the initiative, dubbed the Brief Intervention Group (BIG) Initiative, launched in 2010 to promote the use of Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) by EAPs. Aetna and OptumHealth, both partners in the BIG Initiative, have implemented the techniques across their EAP businesses. Pilots involving Aetna, OptumHealth, and ValueOptions are in progress with early outcome reports expected before the end of 2010. To reduce the social, financial, and health costs of risky drinking, the long-term goal of the BIG Initiative is to promote the use of SBIRT across the EAP industry so that alcohol screening and brief intervention will be considered routine practice.

The BIG Initiative has received funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (\$350,000), the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (\$150,000), and recently received a small educational grant from Alkermes, Inc., which manufactures Vivitrol, a treatment for alcohol dependence. Active partners in the BIG Initiative include Aetna, ValueOptions, OptumHealth, Federal Occupational Health, Chestnut, CIGNA, Magellan, MHN, PPC Worldwide, Ceridian, APS, and other health plans..... [Free access, just login to read more or email me at esap1234@gmail.com for a copy.]

In April 2010, Ensuring Solutions released a report, “Workplace Alcohol Screening, Brief Intervention, & EAPs: BIG (Brief Intervention Group) Initiative,” describing the initiative and its goals.

The report authors,



Tracy McPherson

Tracy L. McPherson, Ph.D. and Eric Goplerud, Ph.D., noted that annually about five percent of employees with access to EAP’s receive brief counseling for mental health, substance use, or stress-related issues. The size of the group seeking counseling from an EAP was estimated at a minimum of five million people; of those, in 2009 only about 160,000 of EAP cases explicitly identified alcohol use as a primary problem.



Eric Goplerud

To measure the increase, the BIG Initiative set the following progress benchmarks: By October 2010, increase the number of EAP clients who are identified with an alcohol problem by 50% of the 2009 rate of less than five percent. By October 2011, another 50% increase in the identification rate from the 2009 baseline. Since starting work on the BIG Initiative in October 2009, the members have developed training materials and have

planned to work with EAP providers and suppliers to standardize SBIRT delivery in call centers and among networks of office-based affiliates. The training materials include sample scripts for integrating SBIRT into call center operations and office interviews; definitions of standard drink sizes, risk scoring, and intervention levels; and summary results of the three pilot projects conducted by BIG Initiative members to evaluate the effect of including routine SBIRT for workplace EAPs. The campaign now includes employers, large national EAP vendors in the United States and Canada, regional and corporate EAP's, professional clinical associations, federal and state agencies, benefits consultants, and researchers. The BIG Initiative has four key committees focused on the following activities: New Initiative Promotes Industry-Wide Use of SBIRT by EAPs <http://www.openminds.com/circlehome/eprint/omol/2010/092010mhcd8.htm?>
1 of 2 9/20/2010 10:43 am

Steering Committee – includes senior leaders in the EAP field
Implementation Committee – focused on changing EAP call center practices
Marketing outreach Committee –focused on training for office-based EAP professionals
Performance Measurement and Accountability Committee – focused on identification of measurement tools to assess program impact on employee health and on business outcomes related to employee health and productivity A link to the full text of “Workplace Alcohol Screening, Brief Intervention, & EAP’s: BIG (Brief Intervention Group) Initiative” may be found in *The OPEN MINDS Circle Library* at www.openminds.com/circlehome/eprint/indres/040510mhcdbiginitiative.htm

For more information, contact: Tracy L. McPherson, Ph.D., Assistant Research Professor, Center for Integrated Behavioral Health Policy, Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems, George Washington University Medical Center, 2021 K Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, District of Columbia 20006; 202-994-4307; Fax: 202-994-3472; E-mail: esap1234@gmail.com; Web site: www.ensuringsolutions.org; or www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/CIBH/.

New Initiative Promotes Industry-Wide Use of SBIRT by EAPs. (2010, September 20). OPEN MINDS Weekly News Wire.
© Copyright 2010, OPEN MINDS