

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Healthcare Professionals Train for Substance-Abuse Prevention**

DENVER (July 20, 2009) – [SBIRT Colorado](#) (Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment), a public health program in Colorado, is offering free training for healthcare providers to help identify substance (alcohol and other drugs) abuse in patients before it becomes a larger problem. By recognizing substance abuse early on, Colorado and other states can save billions of dollars in healthcare costs, according to the *Shoveling Up II Report*, released May 2009 by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

According to the *Shoveling Up* report, the State of Colorado alone spends approximately \$202 million annually on healthcare problems related to substance abuse.

“Child abuse, loss of productivity, crime rates and traffic safety are a few examples of the societal impacts that incur costs beyond that of the health of the patient,” said Brie Reimann, program director for SBIRT Colorado.

Early intervention is essential to preventing health consequences. Because physicians and other healthcare professionals are often in the best position to address substance abuse in patients, SBIRT Colorado is receiving national attention for its comprehensive, integrated public health approach. By training healthcare providers to implement SBIRT as a universal screening process, similar to that of screening for hypertension healthcare costs can be reduced and patients’ health can be improved.

For the next two years, SBIRT is offering free in-office training sessions for healthcare providers throughout Colorado to raise awareness, encourage implementation of standardized screening and brief intervention processes, and stimulate prevention. This universal screening approach will reduce risky alcohol and other drug use before it leads to abuse or addiction. With minimal training, screening and brief intervention can be incorporated into general check-ups, thus raising awareness about one’s responsibility for good health.

To schedule free training sessions and learn more about the number one preventable health issue, healthcare professionals are invited to call (303) 369-0039, ext. 245, or e-mail at [SBIRTInfo@peerassist.org](mailto:SBIRTInfo@peerassist.org).

To date, SBIRT has connected with more than 50,000 patients and 50 hospitals and clinics in the Rocky Mountain region to initiate substance use prevention through screening.

“Since implementing the SBIRT process in early 2008 at Vail Valley Medical Center, we’ve seen a 50 percent reduction in the days patients report using alcohol and other drugs during a six month follow up interview,” said Anne Wardrop, RN, trauma program manager at Vail Valley Medical Center. “We are trained to incorporate the screening,

and it has become an important part of how we keep our community healthier and safer. Prevention is priceless.”

Startling statistics drove the need for SBIRT in Colorado:

- The 2005 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey noted that 60.6 percent of 12th-graders used alcohol.
- The Drug Abuse Warning Network’s “DAWN Live!” study reports that Colorado ranks 19 percent higher than the national average and fifth in the nation in per capita consumption of alcohol.

“Coloradoans are often thought of as having active and healthy lifestyles. It’s no surprise that SBIRT will make the way for thinking about substance abuse prevention as an essential practice in healthcare and its importance for both the physicians and patients in our state,” said Reimann. “The goal of SBIRT is to identify people before they become addicted to substances and encourage healthier behaviors. I am confident that patients accessing the Colorado healthcare system will seek these services from their healthcare provider for their general well being and to improve their health.”

### **About SBIRT Colorado**

SBIRT or ‘Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment’ is a comprehensive, integrated, public health approach to the delivery of early intervention and referral to treatment services for persons who are at risk of developing substance use disorders, as well as those with substance use disorders. SBIRT Colorado is an initiative of Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.; funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT); administered by the Division of Behavioral Health; and managed by Peer Assistance Services, Inc. The program promotes universal screenings and brief interventions which create awareness about the number one preventable health issue – substance use. For more information and screening locations visit [www.improvinghealthcolorado.org](http://www.improvinghealthcolorado.org).

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