



TRUE TALK: POWER OF PREVENTION

# WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

## OVERVIEW

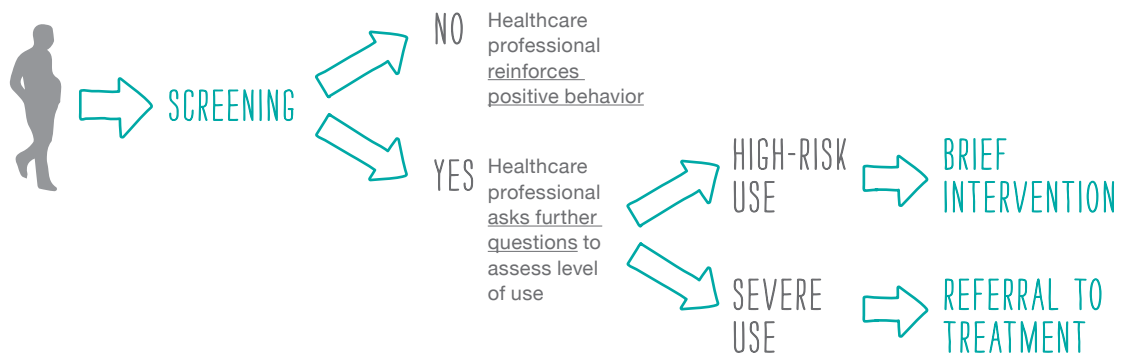
Young people in Georgia are gaining access to health insurance at historic levels, creating new opportunities to increase access to essential prevention and treatment services. At the same time, misuse of and addiction to alcohol and drugs blunt the potential of too many young Georgians. To address this growing public health concern, *Georgians for a Healthy Future* (GHF) and the *Georgia Council on Substance Abuse* (GCSA) are launching an initiative to expand services to prevent addiction among Georgia's youth.

Ninety percent of Americans who meet the medical criteria for addiction started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before they were 18, and drugs and alcohol are big contributors to all three leading causes of teen deaths. Here in Georgia, 23 percent of Georgia's high school students drank alcohol for the first time before age 12. Even more worrying, approximately 8 percent of Georgia adolescents reported using a drug in the past month and 15 percent reported using alcohol in the past month.

Research supports that early access to screening and counseling can help young people avoid the destructive consequences of drug and alcohol misuse and addiction. Too often, the adults that young people trust most don't know how to begin the conversation. SBIRT, which stands for Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment, is an evidence-based approach that gets adolescents talking about their use.

## PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

SBIRT stands for Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment. SBIRT is a set of tools that helps identify alcohol or drug problems and guides follow-up counseling and treatment if a problem exists. It is an effective prevention and treatment program, endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.



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#### SCREENING IS IMPORTANT.

Identifying young people who use alcohol or drugs is a very important first step in preventing drug and alcohol misuse. Studies show that simply asking young people about drugs and alcohol can lead to positive behavior changes.

#### BRIEF INTERVENTIONS ARE EFFECTIVE.

- **Alcohol use** — There is a growing body of research supporting the use of brief interventions in schools, colleges, and hospital emergency departments to address alcohol use among young people. Young people respond to this counseling by drinking less often and reducing the number of drinks consumed at one time. Brief interventions help college students cut back their drinking by an average of six drinks per week.
- **Drug use** — Recent studies show brief interventions delivered in a primary care office, emergency department, or a school setting reduce marijuana use among adolescents. In one study, short counseling sessions led young people ages 14-21 to use marijuana four fewer days per month.

#### TREATMENT.

Sometimes youth have reached the stage where treatment is necessary. In these cases, adolescents will be referred to appropriate treatment.

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## SBIRT IN GEORGIA

Together, GCSA and GHF are working to improve access to SBIRT, especially for youth ages 15 to 22 across the state. The project aims to improve access and insurance coverage for SBIRT by increasing both the number and type of locations where youth can access those services, and increasing the number and type of professionals who can conduct screening and brief intervention.

This project is part of a national project managed by Community Catalyst and funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. If you are interested in joining our statewide coalition to improve access to SBIRT, please contact Laura Colbert, Georgians for a Healthy Future's Community Outreach Manager, at [lcolbert@healthyfuturega.org](mailto:lcolbert@healthyfuturega.org). To stay updated about the project, please contact our Communications Coordinator Anna Cullen to sign up for our newsletter. Anna can be reached at [acullen@healthyfuturega.org](mailto:acullen@healthyfuturega.org). You can also learn more at [www.healthyfuturega.org](http://www.healthyfuturega.org) and [www.gasubstanceabuse.org](http://www.gasubstanceabuse.org).