



St. Louis County Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Initiative - *Public Health and Human Services Department*

Initiative Story

In November 2012, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, along with other State officials, was in Duluth to announce and outline the Minnesota State Substance Abuse Strategy. Following the news conference, a group of local professionals came together to discuss the rise in opioid related hospitalizations, treatment admissions, and heightened concerns regarding the impact of opioid misuse within Northeastern Minnesota.

Out of that conversation, grew a plan to bring together a multidisciplinary team of professionals to address the impact of opioid misuse in Northeast Minnesota. Representatives from health care, public health, human services, Fond du Lac Human Services, law enforcement, treatment providers, corrections/probation, and the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy met for the first time in January 2013 to form the Opioid Abuse Response Strategies (OARS) Task Force with the mission to create community-based solutions for those impacted by substance use disorders.

Program Intent

Since its inception, OARS has grown to over 75 representatives from across the professional continuum as well as members from the lay community throughout Carlton and St. Louis Counties. In late 2013, the Public Health and Human Services Department Director and Adult Services Senior Manager, along with other OARS representatives approached the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners with a proposal to address the opioid crisis facing St. Louis County by the formation of a Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Initiative (SAPII).

SAPII endorsed *Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)* as a best practice model.

SBIRT is an evidenced based, public health approach proven effective in the identification and intervention with individuals at risk of developing or struggling with a substance use disorder.

- SAPII workers are certified SBIRT trainers and have been providing SBIRT training to professionals, including schools, social workers, public health nurses, correction and probation officers for the past four years.
- SAPII social workers are part of the Minnesota Sixth Judicial Court District, DWI SBIRT project. The overall project was developed and managed initially by the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI) in early 2014. This unique and innovative initiative uses the *Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)* within the court process for first time DWI offenders.

The idea is that reducing alcohol consumption or adopting safer drinking behaviors will reduce future risks associated with alcohol consumption. After four years, the project continues beyond the initial pilot phase; as of June 2017, 894 people have been referred for the SBIRT process, 562 (62.8%) individuals have been SBIRT'ed and 342 (60.8 %) have completed follow up. The overwhelming majority of individuals screened have been found to be in the category of lowest risk with respect to risky alcohol use.

- In March 2018, SAPII social workers implemented an SBIRT pilot project in South St. Louis County with at risk youth referred by the Children and Family Services, Children's Mental Health social worker. The SAPII social worker meets with the youth and their parent for the initial session. The youth is then screened for risky substance use and if indicated, brief intervention sessions follow. To date, we have worked with three youth with positive outcomes. There are plans to expand the service outside of South St. Louis County.

Implementation

On January 14, 2014, the County Board of Commissioners approved by unanimous vote, the formation of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention pilot project that included the hiring of four, FTE social workers using one-time prevention and intervention funds. Following the 2014 pilot year and after review of the outcomes of the pilot project, the Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Initiative was incorporated into the PHHS budget with continued funding for the four positions. In 2016, a Public Health Educator replaced one of the Social Work positions and in 2017, a second Health Educator position was added to the SAPII team, which now includes three Social Workers and two Public Health Educators providing substance abuse prevention and intervention services throughout St. Louis County, including:

Professional Development and Training

- SBIRT training within PHHS and to outside professional organizations and schools
- Substance Abuse and Addiction training
- Drug Trends
- Parental Substance Use and Child Welfare training
- Foster Parent training
- Adolescent Substance Misuse/Abuse training

Services Exclusively for Child Welfare

- Expedited Rule 25 Chemical Health Assessments and treatment coordination when parental substance use has resulted in removal of the child(ren) from the home or when there is risk of removal due to parental substance use
- Case consultation with child welfare social workers
- Parental substance use and child welfare training designed specifically for child welfare workers and foster parents

Community Education and Outreach

- Expedited Rule 25 Chemical Health Assessments and streamlined access to appropriate substance abuse treatment
- DWI SBIRT screening
- Community Education forums/town halls/panel presentations
- St. Louis County Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Facebook page

Consultation Services

- Information regarding substance abuse, interventions, and treatment options for individuals, family members, and professionals
- Assistance to parents/family members with questions/concerns about a loved one's substance use
- Q & A for professionals, employers, and others

School-Focused Prevention

- Assistance with student coalition building
- Address needs of "high-risk" students
- Advisory Team Member ISD 709, Minnesota Model of School Based Diversion Project for Students with Co-occurring Disorders
- Parent Education and Prevention training
- Student Education and Prevention training

State of Minnesota STR Grant

- SAPII social worker lead grant writer for the STR grant RFP
- SAPII team directly involved in STR grant activities

Results

General Public/Community

- Increased communication and coordination among community entities through outreach
- Increased awareness regarding substance abuse and addiction through public forums and town hall meetings
- Reduced stigma surrounding addiction and treatment modalities, (specifically MAT and Naloxone)

Schools

- Partnered with ISD 709 on alternatives to suspension related to substance use and serve as advisory team members for Minnesota Model of School Based Diversion Project for Students with Co-occurring Disorders.
- Student drug/alcohol education
- Participation in School Health Fairs
- SBIRT training for schools throughout St. Louis County

County PHHS

- Expedited Rule 25 Chemical Health Assessments for CFS Division/Child Welfare, including treatment coordination leading to fewer and/or shortened foster care/out-of-home placements for children when parental substance use is the primary contributing factor to the child maltreatment
- SBIRT training for maternal and child health public health nurses
- SBIRT sessions with at risk youth referred by their children's mental health social worker

Law Enforcement

- Resource card distributed by law enforcement
- Outreach with individuals after law enforcement responds to an opioid overdose
- Support of implementation of a pre-booking diversion program

Lessons Learned

- **Data Collection:** Not a strong component of the initial program. Needed to develop measurable outcomes with evaluation methods in place;
- **Buy-in from inside/outside entities:** Need buy-in at the administrative-level for implementation of initiatives both within PHHS and with outside organizations; and,
- **Turf/Boundary Issues:** Unexpected outcome resulting in need for better planning and including partners not initially involved.

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