

Nonprofit offers scholarships for training to screen for substance abuse

The Outreach Training Institute, headquartered in Richmond Hill, Queens, is offering scholarships to health care workers for a course called Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment. The institute is the training arm of the nonprofit drug and alcohol treatment program Outreach.

The nonprofit was awarded funding from the state Department of Health to train 50 New York City-based licensed and credentialed health workers this year on the model as well as 40 Northern Metro region-based health workers. The training May 22 in Queens can accommodate eligible scholarship recipients who work in both regions. It will enable physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists and other providers to bill for SBIRT services.

SBIRT is an evidence-based prevention and early-intervention practice for patients with substance use disorder that can reduce related health consequences and lower health care costs, the institute said.

"It's really a model for those who are not directly versed or trained in understanding addiction to get them more comfortable and regard substance used disorder as a public health problem," said Kendra Chiu, senior director of grants, communications and fundraising at Outreach. "If we can treat the whole person by referring them to the care they need, we can really address all of the concerns that they bring."

New York City has the highest hospitalization rates per 10,000 for drug-related causes among all regions in the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment program, data shows, and the second-lowest percentage for engagement.

The training is designed to help providers feel more empowered to engage patients with substance use disorder, Chiu said, and to help providers get patients motivated to consider treatment and appropriately refer patients to that treatment.