

## NJ Screening, Brief intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Program: Addressing Adolescent Substance Use in New Jersey

Substance use affects all age groups across the lifespan. Adolescence and young adulthood are vulnerable developmental periods for the onset of both substance use disorder and other mental health disorders. (American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)) According to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, 52,000 (7.71%) 12- to 17-year-olds in New Jersey reported using drugs within the last month of being surveyed. Those surveyed were found to be 3.66% more likely to use alcohol than the average American in their age group. In the last year alone, 2.52% of 12- to 17-year-olds in NJ met the criteria for an illicit drug use disorder and 1.48% met the criteria for an alcohol use disorder.

NJAAP also recognizes that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially overwhelmingly stressful events that happen in childhood, that can have long-term impacts on health, opportunity, and well-being. ACEs include abuse and neglect or household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders. (AAP) Research has demonstrated a strong relationship between childhood exposure to chronic stressful events and a range of health problems throughout a person's life, including those associated with substance misuse. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Pediatricians and pediatric health care professionals are uniquely positioned to partner with families and support children who have experienced adversity (AAP) and are also able to intervene early or provide age-appropriate substance use services to families. (AAP)

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families has provided grant funding to NJAAP to launch a new program that will provide education to pediatric clinicians in primary and specialty care, community-based clinicians, school physicians, school nurses, and other school-based mental health service providers about the early detection and management of adolescents with substance use concerns. Through this funding, NJAAP launched the NJ SBIRT Program. The SBIRT model is a public health approach, based on scientific evidence, that aims to identify patients who may be using substances and offers early intervention services to those at risk of developing substance use disorders and providing timely services to individuals who may be struggling with substance use, misuse or dependence. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and AAP)

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The NJ SBIRT program strives to spread awareness of adolescent substance use, misuse and dependence and share the benefits of the SBIRT model. Since the grant work began in January 2024, the program educated 113 individuals via two education webinars, one with a target audience of primary care providers and another focused on reaching school personnel. The NJ SBIRT team facilitated presentations at NJAAP's Annual Conference on substance use and the SBIRT model, reaching 89 participants. Lastly, the NJ SBIRT program hosted a series of regional continuing education dinner presentations, where a total of 59 participants were provided a background on adolescent substance use, the SBIRT model and were also able to network with one another and community organization representatives to build connections for referral and resource needs.



*Steven Kairys, MD, MPH, FAAP presenting on adolescent substance use and the SBIRT model during the Northern Dinner Continuing Education event.*

In September of 2024, the NJ SBIRT team launched a closed Project ECHO<sup>®</sup> educational series that will conclude in April 2025. This quality improvement (QI) program includes a cohort of 9 NJ pediatric practices in primary and specialty care, including 43 multidisciplinary team members. The goal of the ECHO program is to improve the provision of care regarding substance use, through the integration of the SBIRT model into practice workflow. This 8-month ECHO series offers monthly virtual sessions providing education about the importance of substance use prevention, screening for early identification of risk factors and use and misuse of substances, strategies for brief interventions in the practice setting, including motivational interviewing, and referral to treatment for adolescents in need. The Hub Faculty team consists of seven subject matter experts with backgrounds in substance use prevention, adolescent health, child abuse/neglect prevention, quality improvement work, primary care, emergency care and school-based nursing. The NJ SBIRT team supports the selected practice teams in integrating the SBIRT model into their care settings, by utilizing QI methodologies and providing coaching support.

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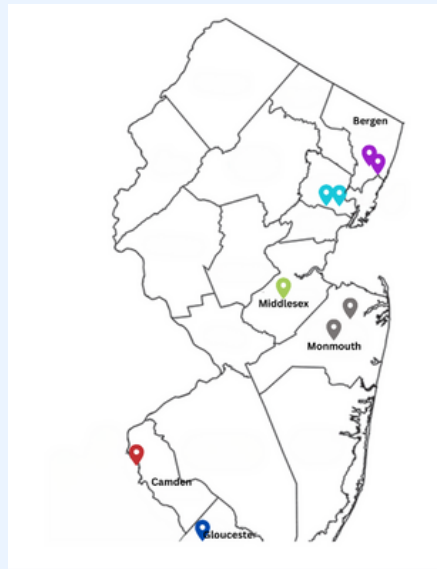
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## ALL TEACH, ALL LEARN



*Project ECHO uses an “All Teach, All Learn” model where data, didactic and case presentations are reviewed. The knowledge and recommendations discussed during the sessions between the specialists and participants is tested and refined through work with the community.*



*Cohort 1 includes 9 pediatric practices in primary and specialty care, representing Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, Monmouth, Camden and Gloucester counties.*

The NJ SBIRT Program will continue this work into the Summer of 2025, hosting another educational webinar and opening a Request for Applications for Cohort 2 of the Project ECHO program. For more information, please visit [the NJ SBIRT website](https://www.njsbirt.org) or contact Stephanie Pinney at [spinney@njaap.org](mailto:spinney@njaap.org).

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