

Crucial Linkages: Cross-Training Sexual & Reproductive Health and Behavioral Health Providers for Integrated Care and Improved Outcomes through the Link Study

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Background

- ❖ The number of pregnant people with opioid use disorder has more than quadrupled from 1999 to 2014.
- ❖ Evidence indicates that integrating SRH and BH services leads to improved health outcomes.
- ❖ Barriers faced by providers include lack of comfort discussing Substance Use Disorder (SUD) needs with patients, fear of patient reaction, and time constraints.

Methods

- ❖ 4-year pilot program funded by the Office of Population Affairs
- ❖ 1.5 day interactive cross-training with behavioral health and Title X family planning providers that included evidence-based SUD screening tools, motivational interviewing and SBIRT model
- ❖ Pre/post training survey to measure provider knowledge and self-efficacy
- ❖ Collected screening and referral data from participating providers at baseline, 3- and 6-months post-training

Results

- ❖ Trained a total of **30 providers** across **3 states**.
- ❖ Increased knowledge of SRH and SUD services available within their communities
- ❖ **Increased** and **sustained** SRH and SUD provider relationships
- ❖ Only 1 of 3 sites provided referral data at two timepoints, this site only showed slight improvement: 0% of clients referred to SUD services at baseline, 2% at 3 months, and 3% at 6 months

Linking sexual & reproductive health and behavioral health providers can help improve quality of care and ensure providers have the knowledge and self-efficacy to screen and refer patients with substance use needs.

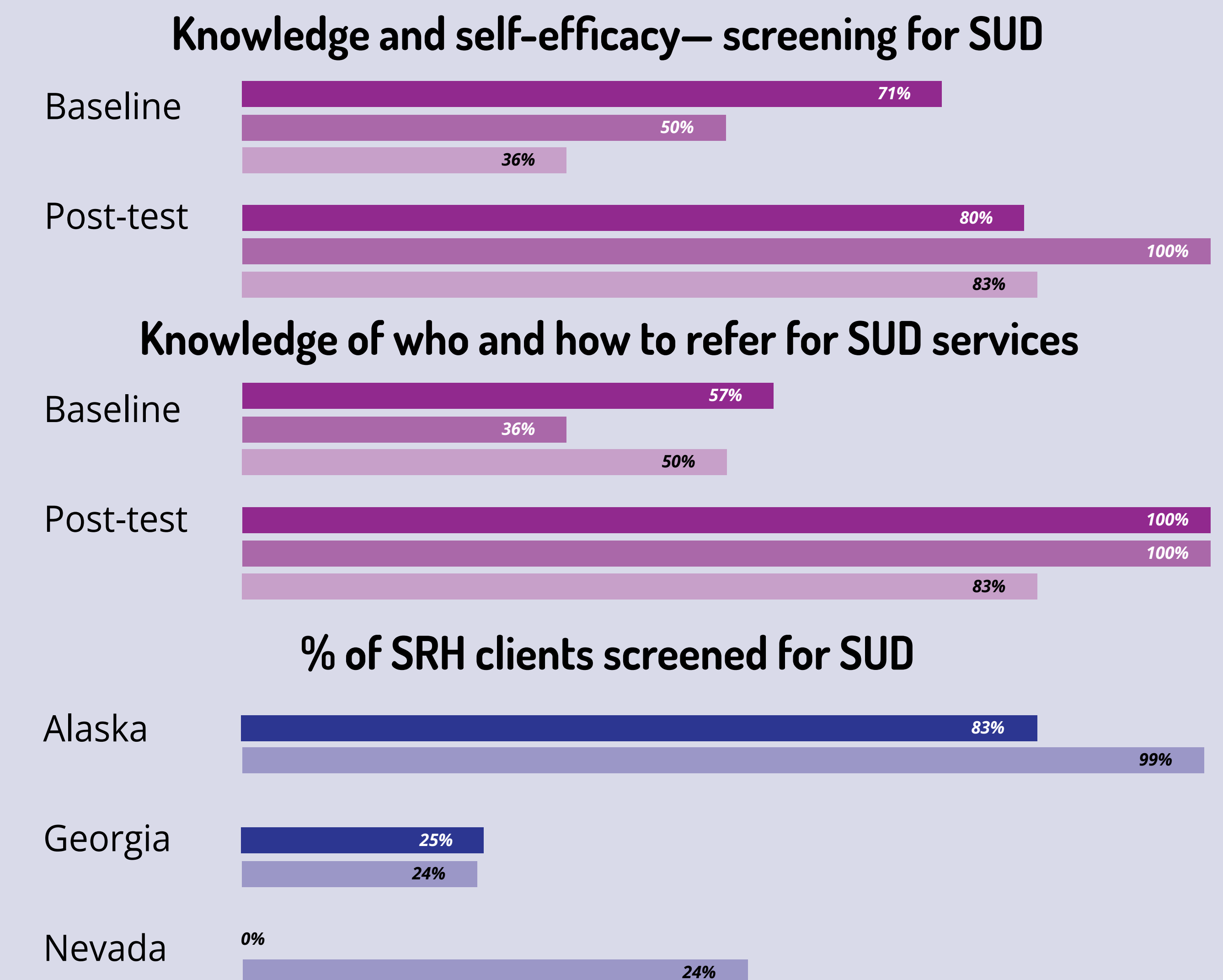
General findings from The Link Study:

Participants felt the training activities were interactive and encouraged open dialogue with SRH & SUD healthcare providers and clinic staff. Cross-training participants also appreciated having the opportunity to learn from each other and generate ideas collaboratively.

“My goal was just a way to connect the two [sexual & reproductive health and substance use services] comfortably to where you can easily transition from one to the other during the visits.”

- Link Study Participant

Results



Discussion

- ❖ Training across disciplines can improve screening for both SRH and SUD services.
- ❖ Although screening increased significantly, we did not see a meaningful improvement of referrals which could be due to inability to send and track referrals through providers EHR systems
- ❖ Providers mentioned a need for local resources and links to more than one provider in their community.
- ❖ With rates of substance use continuing to rise and significant changes to sexual & reproductive health measures in the US, processes and lessons learned from studies like this one will be critical to help improve health outcomes for clients with substance use needs.