

Request for Proposals

Training and Implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in Integrative Care Settings in Illinois

**Updated and Reissued 11/21/2024*

Introduction

The Illinois Behavioral Health Workforce Center (BHCW) was established in 2022 to address a critical shortage of qualified behavioral health care professionals across the state of Illinois and to increase residents' access to high-quality behavioral health care. One common point of entry into behavioral health services is through primary care providers, and co-locating primary care and behavioral health services in integrated care (IC) settings represents an important opportunity for promoting access to services. To facilitate high-quality services, behavioral health providers in IC settings need effective brief therapy interventions that can maximize the benefit of immediate access to behavioral health services in the IC model. BHCW has selected Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) as an evidence-based model suitable for the unique opportunities and challenges in IC settings.

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

SFBT is a strengths-based approach to brief psychotherapy that avoids problematizing clients' situations and instead focuses on building solutions based on the client's existing strengths and resources and guided by the client's desired future. Though clients are free to share the history and extent of their presenting problems, the questions asked by the therapist do not seek to explore the problem or how it started. Instead, SFBT uses a unique set of skills, techniques and questions to explore exceptions to the existing problem (times and situations when the problem does not occur or is less bothersome), previous successes and the strengths that the client used to achieve them, and a detailed picture of the future the client would like to have once the problem is gone (or is less bothersome). SFBT was originally designed as a brief therapy approach and has shown benefits in medical settings and with low doses of treatment. With the expectation that these benefits can improve the efficiency and quality of behavioral health services provided in IC settings, BHCW has developed a SFBT training and implementation initiative to provide training and support for IC agencies to train their staff and implement SFBT.

This RFP is being issued by the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) to identify organizations to receive funding to participate in the next round of training and implementation of SFBT in IC settings. Agencies that have previously received funding through the initiative are welcome to apply through this RFP, and applications may include providers who have previously received SFBT training through the initiative. Selected applicants will receive funding to cover training

costs and staff time for participation in the initiative depending on the number of providers trained and the specific training and implementation protocol each provider receives.

SFBT Training and Implementation Initiative

Based on the findings of the initial pilot evaluation of the BHWC SFBT Training and Implementation Initiative, further funding is being made available to expand training opportunities in SFBT for providers in integrated care settings through live virtual online trainings. We will also conduct an evaluation of the SFBT training and implementation initiative to better understand the outcomes of the implementation protocol. The present round of the initiative will include a baseline implementation protocol as well as an additional “solution-focused learning collaborative” component intended to promote adoption, fidelity, and sustainability of SFBT in integrated care settings. Specifically, the BHWC wants to know if enhancing training with a solution-focused learning collaborative is a beneficial addition to expert-led training on SFBT. Individual providers will be randomly assigned to join the solution-focused learning collaborative or to receive the standard implementation protocol without the learning collaborative. During the application, agencies should identify providers who will attend basic or advanced SFBT trainings and who are willing to participate in the learning collaborative via Zoom for 2 hours per month (if randomly assigned) during the implementation phase. Staff time for participation in the training and learning collaborative will be covered by funds in the initiative to account for time spent away from reimbursable client activities.

All training costs and staff time for training will be covered by BHWC funding. The SFBT training and implementation initiative will consist of:

- A 2-hour introductory training provided through BHWC open to any clinic staff on the philosophy and approach of SFBT
- Training for behavioral health providers conducting direct care services in integrated care (selected by the site) to receive two days (13 hours) of basic training in SFBT (or 6.5 hours of advanced training if they previously received basic training in a prior round of the initiative).
- Reimbursement to cover staff time during 13 hours of basic training at a rate not to exceed \$125 per hour
- Distribution of the most recent version of the SFBT Treatment Manual to all behavioral health providers receiving SFBT training
- Biweekly e-mails with tips and reminders for providers to use SFBT in sessions
- Provider self-review of their fidelity to SFBT techniques and principles
- Reimbursement to the agency for three hours of staff time per provider to complete client outcome measures during a two-week evaluation period

The solution-focused learning collaborative component will consist of:

- Biweekly virtual meetings with a BHWC-facilitator and other providers in integrated care settings across the state for learning collaborative sessions. The sessions will include the use and modeling of SFBT techniques and philosophy in the facilitation of the collaborative by an SFBT expert with an emphasis on a co-constructive process that facilitates peer-to-peer learning on how to best implement SFBT in integrated care.
- Reimbursement to cover staff time during eight hours of learning collaborative sessions over a four-month implementation period at a rate not to exceed \$125 per hour.

Evaluation

As part of the SFBT training and implementation initiative, each agency will evaluate client outcomes from services during a 2-week evaluation period after the implementation period. The evaluation will include a brief questionnaire provided by BHWC and should be completed at the start and end of each session conducted during the evaluation period by providers who received training through this round of the initiative. Providers will be asked to submit de-identified client evaluation forms after the evaluation phase has ended. Additionally, a brief final report specifying the number of staff who completed SFBT training through the initiative and a 1–2-page description of SFBT implementation at the agency should be submitted to BHWC following the evaluation phase.

In addition to the agency program evaluation, behavioral health providers receiving training in SFBT through the training and implementation initiative will be invited to participate in an evaluation of the pilot initiative including surveys regarding their perspectives and experiences with the implementation initiative. This evaluation will consist of provider surveys before and after SFBT training and at the end of the implementation period, as well as follow-up focus groups following the agency program evaluation phase. Participation in the evaluation will be voluntary for providers receiving training through BHWC, and participants will be able to receive incentives totaling up to \$120 for completion of surveys and focus groups. If a provider is not assigned to the solution-focused learning collaborative component and the evaluation supports continuation of the learning collaborative, those providers will be invited to attend future free sessions of the learning collaborative (no reimbursement of staff time will be provided for learning collaborative participation after the implementation phase has ended).

Identifying Providers and Calculating Budget Minimum and Maximum

This RFP is open to both new participants and those who have already participated in previous rounds of the SFBT Implementation Initiative. For new agencies who have not previously received funding for SFBT training, each staff member identified in the application will receive a 2-day SFBT basics course (13 hours) conducted through live virtual training by the BHWC-

selected training provider. For agencies who have previously received funding for SFBT training, please identify whether each provider in the application is new to the initiative (i.e. has not received any prior SFBT training) or has previously received training through the initiative (e.g. the 2-day SFBT Basics course). New providers will receive the 2-day SFBT basics course. Providers who have previously received SFBT training will be provided with a 1-day (6.5 hour) advanced training on SFBT through the selected trainer during this round of the initiative. New and previously trained providers may also be randomly assigned to join the solution-focused learning collaborative. Training costs will be paid directly to the training provider by BHWC. If an agency needs to book a slot in an existing class for a provider and pays the trainer themselves, this cost will be added to the amount for the final payment. Please note maximum amounts allowed in a budget for each provider in the table below. Please use the provided budget calculator and submit the excel file of the budget along with the application.

Allowed Budget Guidelines (maximum)	New Provider	Previously Trained Provider	New Provider in Learning Collaborative	Previously Trained Provider in Learning Collaborative
Staff Time	\$2,000.00	\$1,187.50	\$3,000	\$2,187.50

Fidelity and Sustainability

SFBT fidelity measures will be made available to providers to assist self-review of their fidelity to SFBT techniques and processes. Though the measures will be included in provider surveys of the evaluation component, copies will also be made available to agencies to support providers' use of SFBT. Applications should also include a general plan for how SFBT implementation will be sustained in their organization following the end of the SFBT training and implementation initiative through BHWC. Items in a sustainability plan might include processes and incentives to facilitate continued use of SFBT by providers, retention efforts to encourage providers and champions trained during the initiative to remain at the agency, and/or other funding sources (agency funds or funding sources other than BHWC) for future staff training on SFBT.

Eligibility Criteria

Agencies applying for funding through the RFP must have one or more sites operating as integrated care settings (behavioral health and medical) with behavioral health clinicians providing brief intervention with clients. Each provider identified for funding in the application should be willing to participate in the solution-focused learning collaborative if randomly assigned to receive the collaborative. There is no limit on the number of providers that can be included in an application and the RFP is open to providers who previously received SFBT training through the initiative. However, based on funding levels we may not be able to fund all providers in an application and priority will be given to new providers who have not previously received SFBT training.

Requests For Proposals

If your organization meets the eligibility criteria noted above and is interested in pursuing this opportunity, please submit your proposal application by email in PDF format to Adriana Scurto at ascurto@uic.edu. Please direct any questions about the evaluation component to Dr. Ray Eads at rayeads@uic.edu. Applications may be up to 8 narrative pages in length, including the budget and budget justification. Please include the following information:

1. Applicant organization name, contact person and contact information (phone, email).
2. Names and locations of site(s) that will be involved in SFBT training/implementation (within the state of Illinois).
3. Names, licensure and roles of specific providers who will receive training through the initiative. For each provider, please identify whether they have previously received SFBT training and whether they will participate in the basics or advanced training in this round of the initiative. Please include a statement that each provider is willing to participate in the solution-focused learning collaborative if they are randomly assigned to receive that component.
4. Description of integrated care services provided at the IC sites/clinics, including name of integrated care model (if applicable, such as CoCM, PCBH, etc.), description of behavioral health services provided, including brief intervention, psychiatric collaboration, medication-assisted recovery, etc. This description can be general and does not need to be specific to each individual provider.
5. Characteristics (demographic, cultural, etc.) of population served by the IC sites/clinics.
6. Implementation plan for how your agency will implement and use SFBT during the implementation phase of the initiative
7. Sustainability plan for how your agency will continue to use SFBT following the end of the pilot initiative, including any plans for retention of staff who received training and/or future plans for staff training on SFBT (without the need for further Center funds)
8. Draft budget and brief budget justification narrative. Please use the provided Excel calculator and budget template for your estimated budget.

Project Timeline

RFP Release	11/21/2024
Informational Conference Calls	12/5/2024 at 10 a.m., 1/8/2025 at 2 p.m.
Applications due	1/21/2025
Awards announced	1/31/2025
Trainings begin on or after	2/17/2025
Award invoice submission	2/28/2025
Evaluation phase	6/16/2025 – 6/27/2025
Final report due	7/25/2025

Informational zoom meetings will be held at 10 a.m. on 12/5/2024 and again at 2 p.m. on 1/8/2025 to review the SFBT Training & Implementation Initiative, the details of the RFP, and to answer questions regarding application development. Please email ascurto@uic.edu for the meeting link.