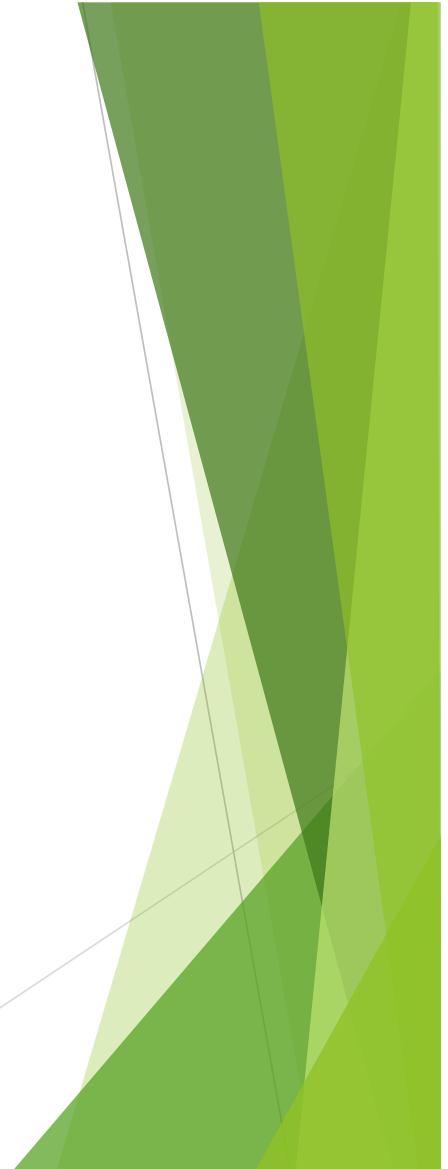


Alternative Peer Groups: Adolescent Recovery From Substance Use

Judy Nelson, Susan Henderson, and Steve Lackey
Sam Houston State University
TCA Conference 2014

Please take a moment and introduce yourselves to someone around you. Find out:

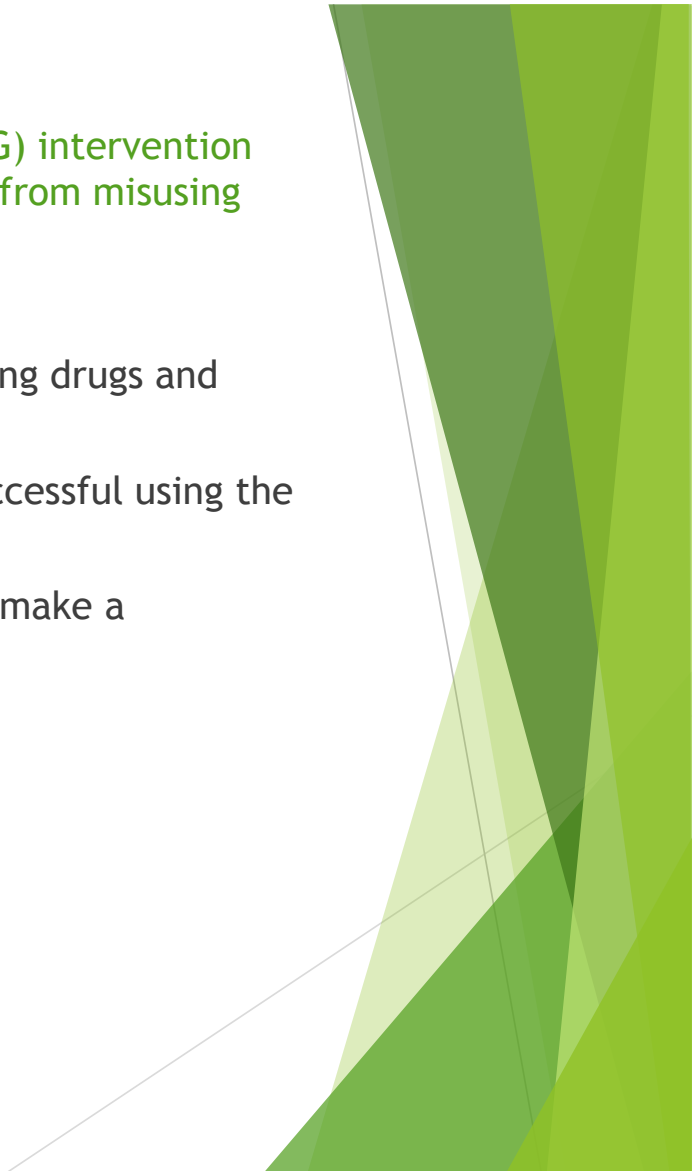
- ▶ Who are our participants?
- ▶ What are you doing now to help teens recover from substance use?
- ▶ What do you want to do to help teens recover from substance use?



Learn how the Alternative Peer Group (APG) intervention assists youth and young adults in recovery from misusing drugs and/or alcohol. Specifically learn:

- (a) What youth need to recover from abusing drugs and alcohol
- (b) How agencies and school have been successful using the APG intervention
- (c) What you can do in your community to make a difference

First, a little background!



American Society of Addictions Medicine

New definition in 2011:

Addiction is a chronic brain disease, not just bad behaviors or bad choices.

- ▶ Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.
- ▶ Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.

ASAM Definition: A,B,C,D,E

► **Addiction** is characterized by:

1. **Inability to consistently Abstain;**
2. **Impairment in Behavioral control;**
3. **Craving; or increased “hunger” for drugs or rewarding experiences;**
4. **Diminished recognition of significant problems with one’s behaviors and interpersonal relationships; and**
5. **A dysfunctional Emotional response**

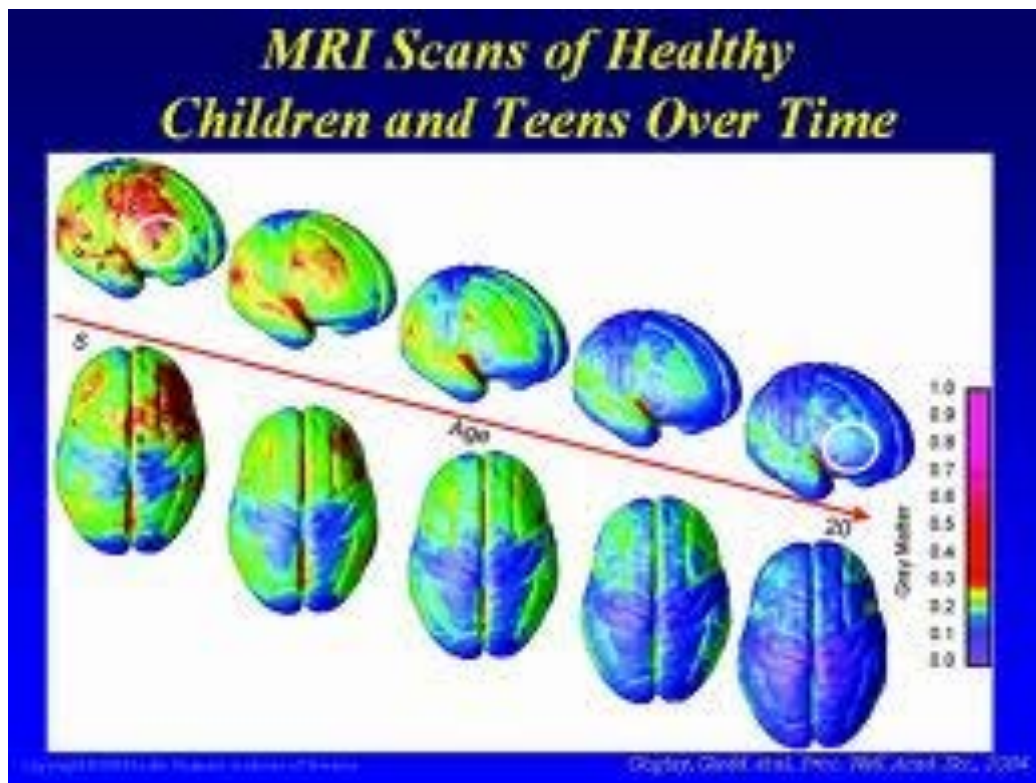
The ACE Study: Adverse Childhood Experiences



Adverse Childhood Experiences: Risk Factors for Substance Abuse



Healthy Brain Development



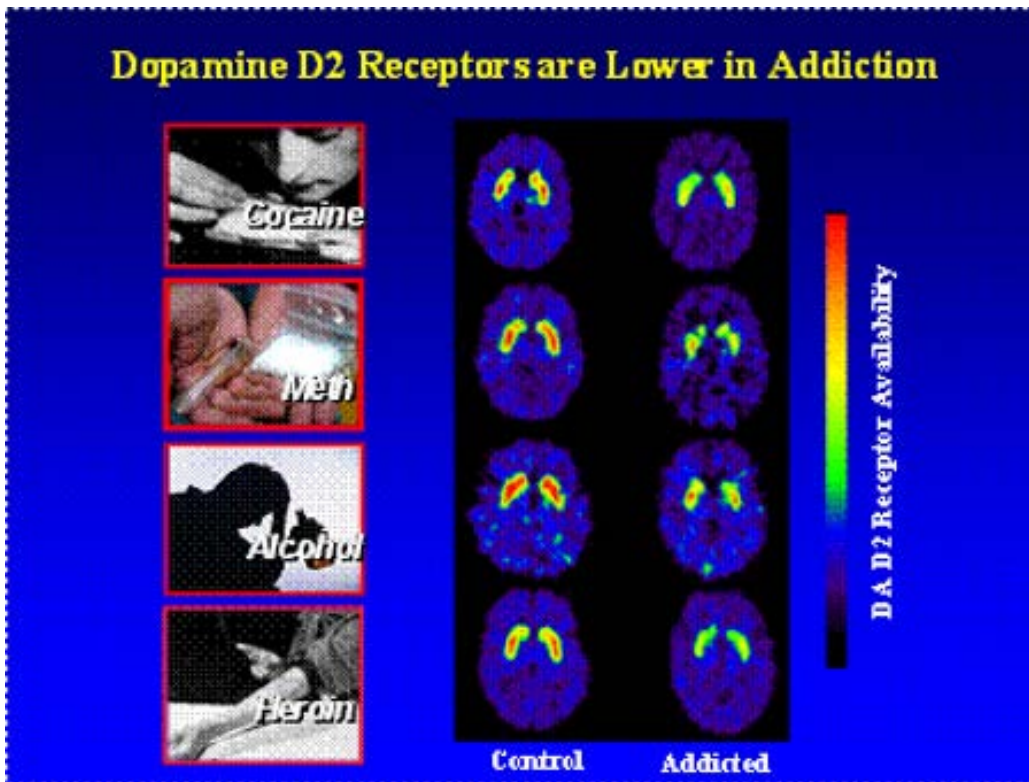
The Teenage Brain on Drugs: What We See



Drugs and the Teen Brain



The Teenage Brain on Drugs: What We Don't See



Hijacking of the Brain

Addictive Brain Response

If Alcohol Or Other Drugs Makes You Feel Really Good
You're At High Risk Of Addiction.

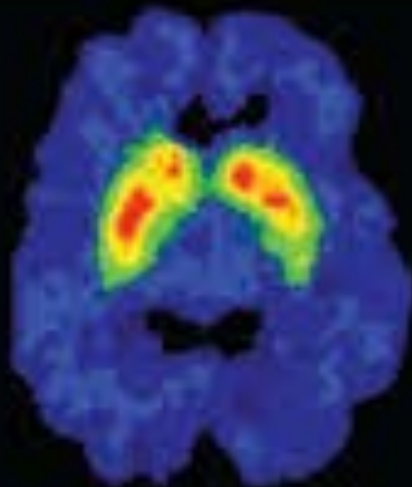


- Floods The Brain With Pleasure Chemicals
- Deprives The brain Of Warning Chemicals
- Creates Intense Euphoria
- Inhibits Anxiety and Fear Even When In Real Threat
- Impairs Judgment and Impulse Control

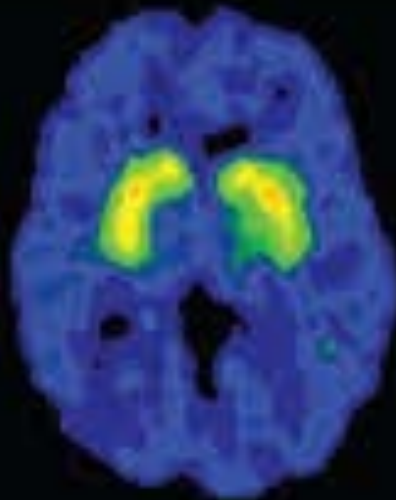
Straight Talk About Addiction by Terry Gorski - www.relapse.org - www.cenaps.com

HOPE: Brain Recovery with Prolonged Abstinence

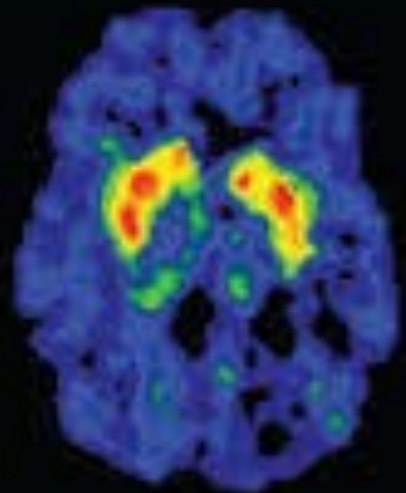
BRAIN RECOVERY WITH PROLONGED ABSTINENCE



Healthy Person



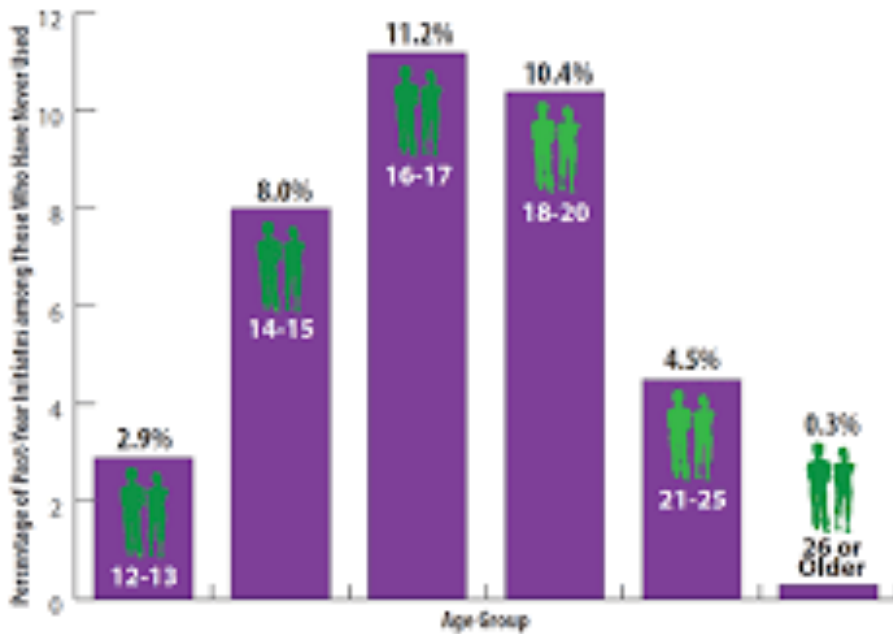
METH Abuser
1 month abstinence



METH Abuser
14 months abstinence

The Drug Danger Zone

The Drug Danger Zone: Most Illicit Drug Use Starts in the Teenage Years

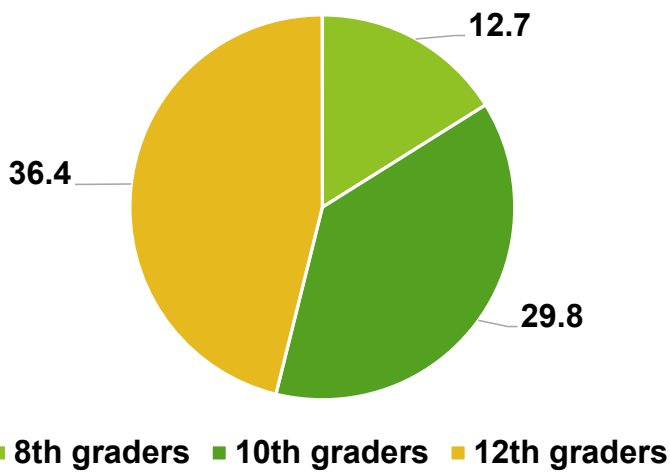


Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2011 and 2012.

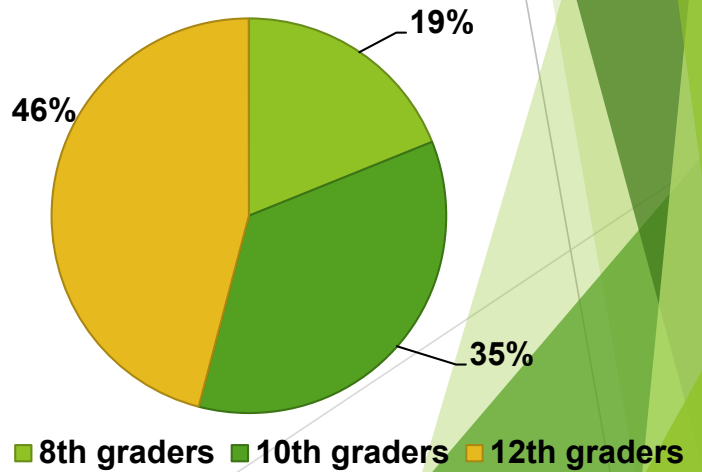
Substance Use Prevalence

- Illicit drugs are holding steady
- Increase in psychotherapeutic drugs
- Alcohol is the most widely used substance by adolescents

Annual Prevalence of Marijuana Use

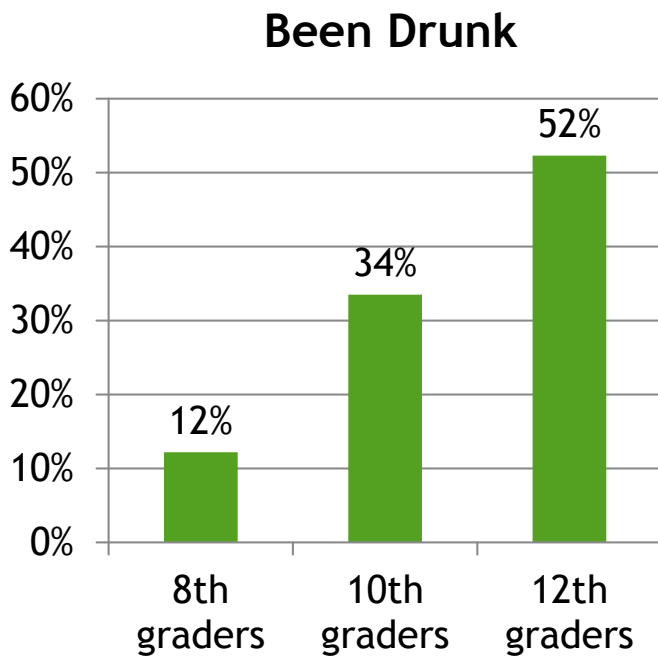


Annual Prevalence of Alcohol Use



(MTF, 2014)

Lifetime Prevalence of Alcohol



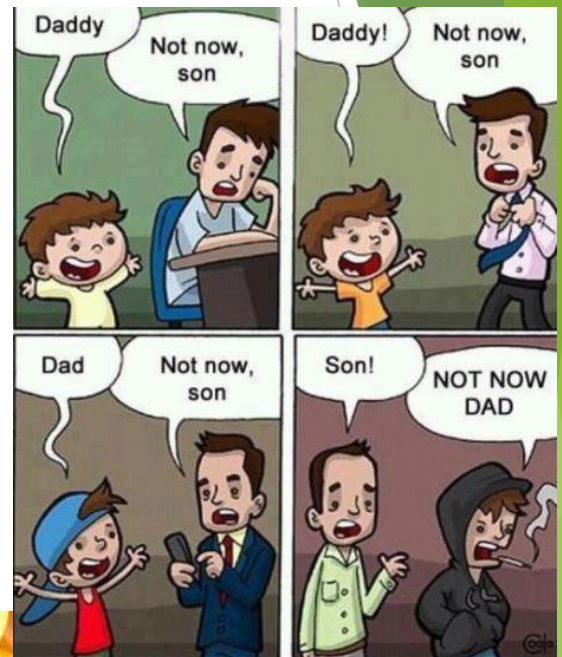
Consequences

- ▶ Decrease in school performance
- ▶ High school drop-out
- ▶ Poor job stability
- ▶ Limited employment opportunities
- ▶ Decreased job stability
- ▶ Lower wages
- ▶ Greater chance of juvenile offenses

(Bryant et al., 2003; Fergusson et al., 2003; Fothergill et al., 2008; Griffin et al., 2011; Liddle et al., 2009; McLeod et al., 2012)

Risk Factors

- ▶ Family
 - ▶ History of drug abuse
 - ▶ Conflict & chaotic home environment
 - ▶ Ineffective parenting
- ▶ School
 - ▶ Academic failure
 - ▶ Lack of commitment
 - ▶ Deviant peers
 - ▶ Truancy
- ▶ Individual
 - ▶ Rebelliousness
 - ▶ Poor coping skills
 - ▶ Mental health problems



What happens to families?

- ▶ Low self esteem, withdrawal, parental unavailability, lack of trust in adults, concern about own addictive tendencies, and adapting to dysfunction
- ▶ Barriers in trying to get help for another family member
- ▶ Under-servicing for families battling addiction problems
- ▶ Lack of understanding of strategies to develop positive family resilience when under pressure from addiction
- ▶ More support needed, particularly emotional support.
- ▶ Overall there is often a lack of knowledge about the nature of addiction

Protective Factors

- ▶ Family
 - ▶ Strong family bonding
 - ▶ Parental monitoring
 - ▶ Parental involvement
 - ▶ Parental modeling
 - ▶ Lack of conflict
- ▶ Individual
 - ▶ Positive attitude
 - ▶ Good self-esteem
 - ▶ Autonomy
- ▶ External
 - ▶ **Support systems - prosocial groups**
 - ▶ Conventional norms about drug use



Studies

- ▶ Researchers have found that teens start using drugs and alcohol for four main reasons:
 - ▶ (1) to improve their mood
 - ▶ (2) to receive social rewards
 - ▶ (3) to reduce negative feelings
 - ▶ (4) to avoid social rejection
- ▶ Teens who reported social reasons for drinking were more likely to report moderate drinking.
- ▶ Teens who wanted to improve their mood reported heavy alcohol use.
- ▶ Teens looking to reduce negative feelings showed problematic drinking patterns.

(Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2005)

What is recovery?

- ▶ A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.
 - ▶ Person-driven;
 - ▶ Occurs via many pathways;
 - ▶ Is holistic;
 - ▶ Is supported by peers;
 - ▶ Is supported through relationships;
 - ▶ Is culturally-based and influenced;
 - ▶ Is supported by addressing trauma;
 - ▶ Involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility;
 - ▶ Is based on respect; and
 - ▶ Emerges from hope.

What youth need to recover from drug and alcohol misuse.

- ▶ According to National Institute on Drug Abuse:
 - ▶ Seek help
 - ▶ Embrace new habits
 - ▶ Take it one step at a time
 - ▶ Find treatment

See NIDA website for details on each step.

The Intervention: Alternative Peer Groups



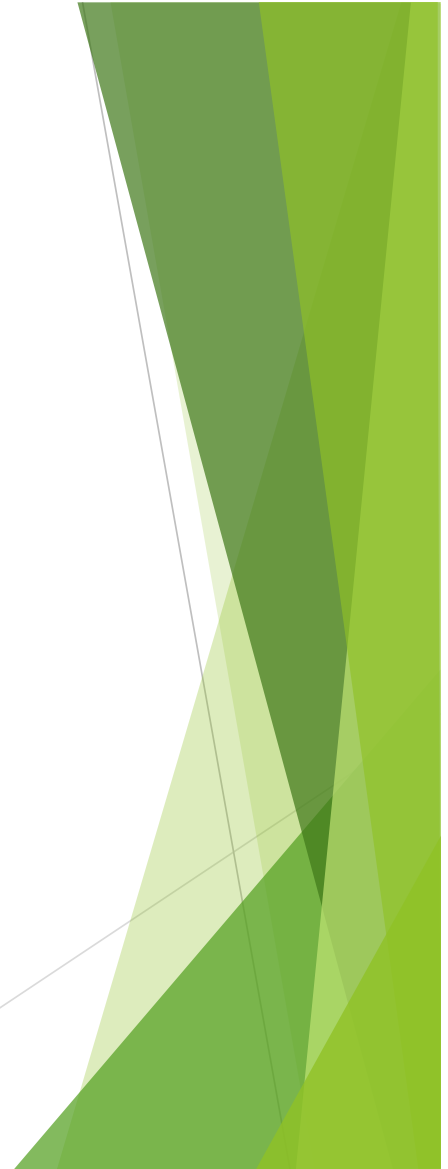
Our team of researchers collaborated to evaluate a non-profit, community agency recovery program for adolescents and young adults to see if these claims are true.



The TEAM



Alternative Peer Group Intervention



Components of the APG

- ▶ 12 step meetings
- ▶ Individual and family counseling
- ▶ Intensive outpatient groups
- ▶ After school hangouts
- ▶ Weekend social activities
- ▶ Collaboration with referring clinicians



Sober High Schools



Clients

- ▶ Clients: 13 to 18 younger group
18 to 25 older group

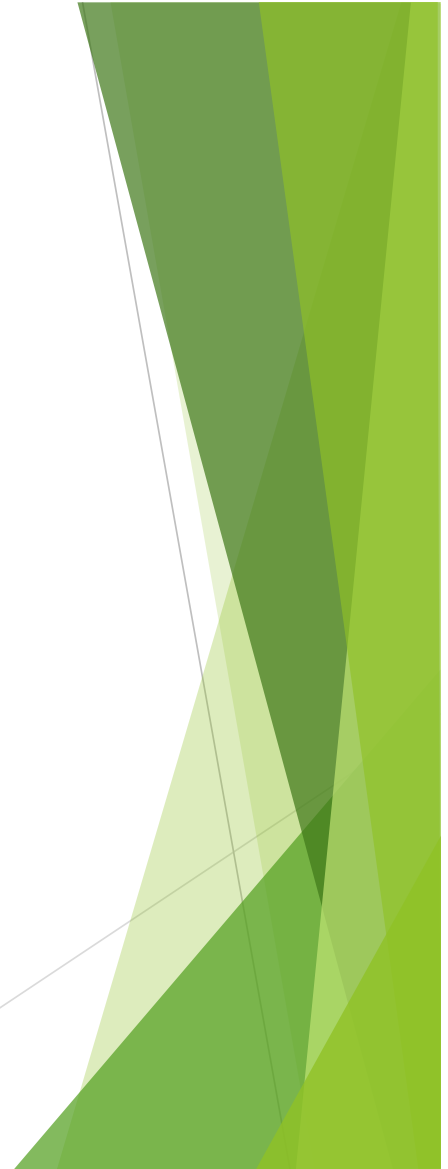


- ▶ Parents



The Agency: Palmer Drug Abuse Program (PDAP)

- ▶ Dr. Danielle Lutz, Executive Director, PDAP
- ▶ Bruce Nixon, Program Director, PDAP
- ▶ Counselors, Interns, Office staff
- ▶ Stakeholders: The Board, Community Stakeholders, Mental Health Agencies and Practitioners, the Community at-large



A few words from Dr. Danielle Lutz

Youth can expect to be in a group with their own peers where they can relate to each other in discussing common challenges and choices of positive solutions. They can expect an environment that is safe, sober, and where their information will remain confidential. Additionally, the youth are in an environment where they participate in recovery-oriented social activities. We want the youth to engage in behaviors that are typical for teenagers without the stress of drugs and alcohol being a trigger for other behaviors. (July, 2014)

Consultants

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Assistant Dean, Health and Kinesiology
College of Health Sciences
Sam Houston State University



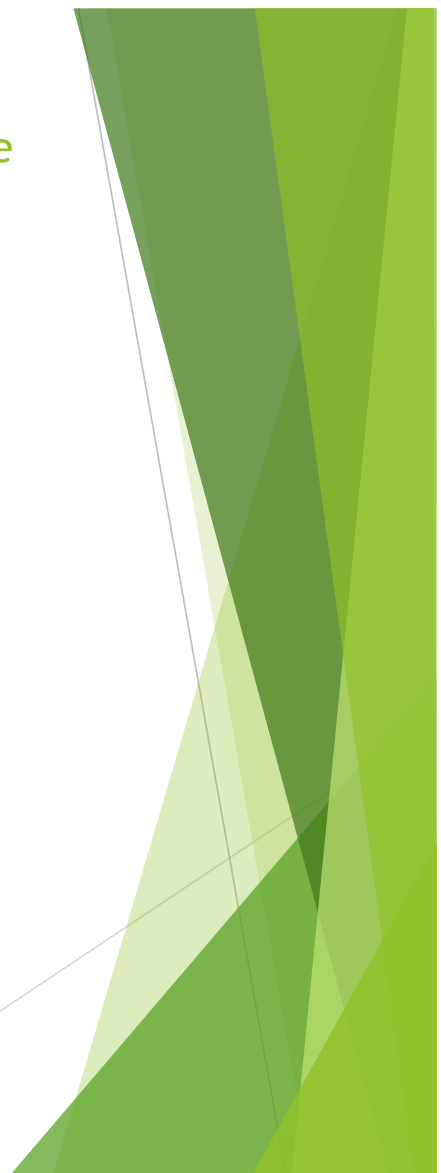
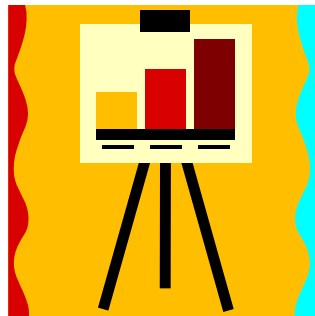
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Doctoral Assistants

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Doctoral Graduate Assistant
Counselor Education
Sam Houston State University
- ▶ Steve Lackey
Private practice
Recent doctoral graduate
Counselor Education
Sam Houston State University



What we have learned from studying the Alternative Peer Group, or what our results show.



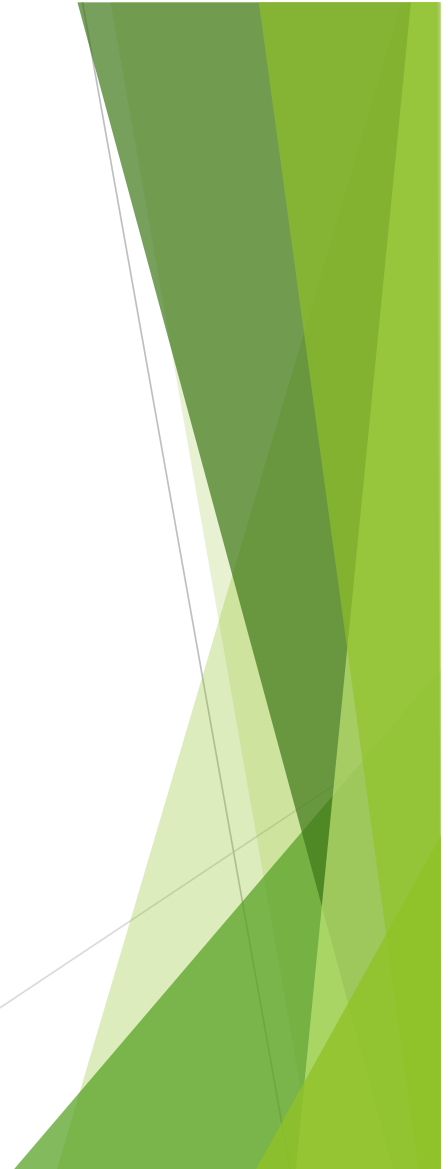
What works?

- ▶ Programs that focus on life and social skills are most effective
- ▶ Programs that involve interactions among participants and encourage them to learn drug refusal skills are more effective than non-interactive programs.
- ▶ Interventions that focus on direct and indirect (e.g., media) influences on substance use appear to be more effective than interventions that do not focus on social influences.
- ▶ Programs that emphasize norms for and a social commitment to not using drugs are superior to those without this emphasis.
- ▶ Adding community components to school-based programs appears to add to their effectiveness.
- ▶ Programs delivered primarily by peer leaders have increased effectiveness.
- ▶ Adding training in life skills to trainings that focus on social resistance skills may increase program effectiveness.

- ▶ Source: O'Connell, M. E., Boat, T., & Warner, K. E. (Eds.). (2009). Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people: Progress and possibilities. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

Programs that focus on life and social skills

- ▶ it saved my *life*
- ▶ the number one defining moment in my *life*
- ▶ an opportunity to have *lifelong* friends and a career
- ▶ I had to learn to *live my life*
- ▶ *Life* was more than just surviving



Programs that involve interactions among participants

- ▶ it was more a kind of *positive peer pressure*
- ▶ the positive confirmation; getting that from *our peers*
- ▶ I needed to hear it from *other people*; so I didn't feel alone
- ▶ The real magic for me was the word *peer*

Interventions that focus on direct and indirect (e.g., media) influences on substance use appear to be more effective than interventions that do not focus on social influences

- ▶ began to participate in my **social circles**
- ▶ my behavior completely changed towards **school**
- ▶ the APG pressure was so **magnetically affecting kids**
- ▶ stay in touch through **social media**

Programs that emphasize norms for and a social commitment to not using drugs are superior to those without this emphasis.

- ▶ Gave us an *alternative peer group* to be associated with
- ▶ the only thing you had to do to be a part of this group; *be drug free*
- ▶ They made it fun to be *sober*
- ▶ A place to date girls and live life *free of drugs*
- ▶ Learned how to navigate life *without the use of drugs and alcohol*

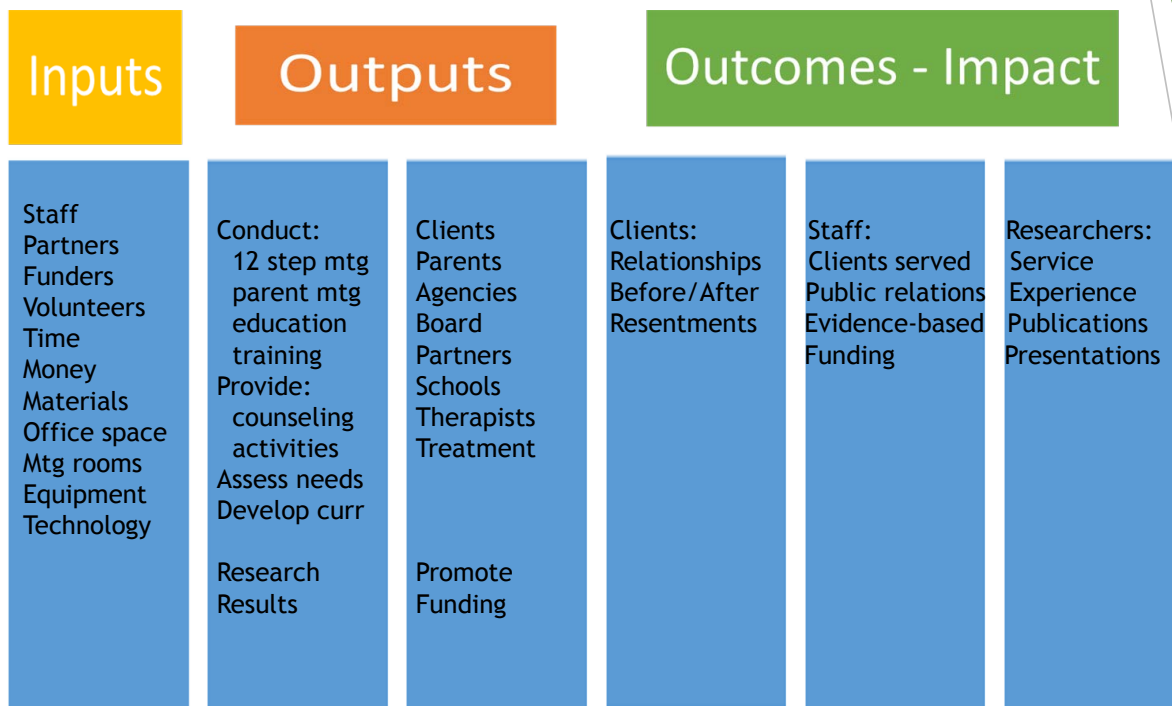
Programs delivered primarily by peer leaders have increased effectiveness.

- ▶ I was on the *steering committee*
- ▶ I was on the very first *steering committee*
- ▶ have places of *leadership*; lead meetings; be on committees

Adding training in life skills to trainings that focus on social resistance skills may increase program effectiveness.

- ▶ There was a *solution to* dealing with *life's problems*
- ▶ it was more of a personal discussion about *life skills*
- ▶ began to teach me some *tools*
- ▶ I had the *skills* to change
- ▶ What you *need to succeed* literally exists within you

A LOGIC MODEL for the PALMER DRUG ABUSE PROGRAM



RESULTS: explore preliminary results for the program evaluation of the Palmer Drug Abuse Program in Houston, Texas

Outcomes - Impact

Clients:

Relationships
self
peers
higher being
Before & After
life lessons
accountable
Resentments

Staff:

Clients served
Public relations
Evidence-based
Funding

Stakeholders:

Safe community
Future leaders
Collaboration

Researchers:

Service
Experience
Publications
Presentations

What We Learned: Peer Recovery Support Groups

Peer recovery support groups that:

- ▶ precede formal treatment, strengthen a peer's motivation for change
- ▶ accompany treatment, provide a community connection during treatment
- ▶ follow treatment, support relapse prevention
- ▶ are delivered apart from treatment to someone who cannot enter the formal treatment system or chooses not to do so, provides an opportunity for recovery

What We Learned: Strategies for Peer Support Groups

- ▶ Strengths-based rather than focusing on deficits
- ▶ Not a focus on telling war stories, but a place to find self-worth
- ▶ Encourage leadership; allow participants to “own” the program
- ▶ Understand and honor self-direction, empowerment, and choice
- ▶ Accept each participant and where he/she is in the recovery process
- ▶ Identify peer leaders and use them to help others
- ▶ The multiplier effect

What can you do?

- ▶ Be transparent (doing drugs is not a normal part of growing up)
- ▶ Know your community resources; visit and learn
- ▶ Collaborate with community agencies and other stakeholders
- ▶ Start your own alternative peer groups or support one coming to your neighborhood
- ▶ January 26 to February 1 - National Drug Facts Week
- ▶ PeerX Educators' Guide to Prescription Drug Abuse and other resources on the TCA website under this program
 - ▶ Facts, lesson plans, and resources
- ▶ Ask for help

How will you start?

- ▶ With a partner, discuss the community resources in your area.
- ▶ How can you partner with one, some, or all of them to provide support for teens who are interested in recovery?
- ▶ What is the first step you will take?

Dr. Danielle Lutz, Executive Director, Palmer Drug Abuse Program

PDAP has rich history in addressing youth substance abuse since 1971. We are proud to be the founding Alternative Peer Group (APG) model for adolescent recovery and appreciate being a part of the growth of services for youth and their families that supports a high level of success for Houston youth suffering from the devastating effects of drug and alcohol abuse. (July, 2014)



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