

Project Amp: Expanding the Community of Recovery



Project Amp and Recovery Community Organizations

Recovery Community Organizations are leaders in supporting people seeking recovery support services in their local areas. Their commitment to peer-based recovery supports make RCOs a perfect fit for the delivery of [Project Amp](#) — a young adult peer-based substance use prevention and early intervention model for adolescents. With Project Amp, RCOs have the opportunity to expand the community of recovery by introducing youth to the

power of peer support through trained, near-aged mentors, develop new partnerships with schools and community-based organizations, and work to prevent addiction before it starts.

Project Amp: A Prevention and Early Intervention Model that Harnesses the Power of Peer Support

Project Amp is a substance use prevention and early intervention model that connects youth who are at low to moderate risk for substance use with near-age peer mentors. These peer mentors — ages 18-30 — are trained in the Project Amp curriculum (which can be delivered in-person or [virtually](#)), have lived experience of substance use and related behavioral health challenges, and self-identify as being in recovery. Through this peer-based connection, Project Amp supports young people to develop healthy strategies for coping with the challenges in their lives and pursuing their personal goals.

Person-centered peer support is underutilized in youth prevention and early intervention approaches. With Project Amp, peers play a valuable role in supporting youth who may be at risk of problem substance use. By sharing their own experiences of substance use and related challenges, peers help adolescents to recognize risks, build awareness, and garner the skills, strategies, and support they need to live well. Project Amp mentors have the unique opportunity to share with young people the skills they developed to make their own recovery and well-being possible.

There are different ways to implement Project Amp in school, health, and other community settings, including as an adaptation of [youth SBIRT](#); as a universal or targeted substance use prevention and early intervention program independent of the SBIRT model; and as a program offering for interested young people. Regardless of how it is implemented, Project Amp combines several evidence-based prevention strategies including screening and brief intervention, motivational interviewing, and peer support. Designed with youth in mind, the Project Amp curriculum is developmentally appropriate. Youth participants report several benefits, including reduced substance use, improved stress management, and greater capacity to deal with difficult situations in school, with friends, or at home.

Project Amp Strengthens Recovery Communities

The recovery community has the power to alter the trajectory of young people who are contemplating their substance use by connecting them with near-aged peers with lived experience. With Project Amp, RCOs can:

1. Broaden their reach to schools. Schools are already delivering health services and substance use programming. In fact, [one in three students](#) rely on schools as their primary source of mental health care. While some schools are delivering Project Amp, many lack the infrastructure and

capacity to directly hire young adult peers. Fortunately, schools can use various funding mechanisms to contract with local RCOs to implement the Project Amp curriculum. Not all substance use programs delivered in schools are informed by evidence-based practices like peer support and motivational interviewing. RCOs have peer staff and supervisors with the skills and experience to change that, and to ensure all young people who struggle with substance use have access to a program that works.

2. Build partnerships with other community-based organizations. As young adult peers work with Project Amp participants, they can identify the types of services and supports that youth need to live healthier lives, and work with community organizations to connect young people to those services. This provides RCOs the opportunity to expand their partnerships and ensure holistic pathways to recovery that meet the needs of each unique youth participant. With a well-developed and diverse network of service providers, RCOs can ensure youth are empowered to define what wellness looks like for them and that they have access to the services they need to reduce substance use risk and achieve their goals.

3. Increase their impact by introducing more youth to peer support. [Research suggests](#) that the younger a person is when they start using alcohol and drugs, the more likely they are to develop substance use disorders later in life. Project Amp is a model that intervenes before it's too late by connecting young people who are struggling with substance use risk to people who understand what it's like: near-age peers in recovery. We know peer support works, and Project Amp is one of the few prevention models with peer support at its core.

4. Transform the way schools and communities respond to substance use and addiction. Many schools and communities [punish](#) young people for their substance use. Rather than connect young people to services and support, schools often suspend, expel, or refer students


to law enforcement. This pushes youth out of the classroom, reduces access to protective factors, and often leads to increased stress that exacerbates the risk of continued drug and alcohol use. Through the implementation of Project Amp, RCOs can reach more young people with supportive, strengths-based, trauma-informed services and help shift the way schools and communities respond.

various roles and settings, and act as a launch pad for a career in peer support, prevention and recovery, and many other human services roles. By increasing your organization’s capacity to provide high-quality substance use prevention and early intervention support to schools, health centers, or other youth-focused agencies, you will raise your visibility as a key resource in the community. Additionally, you may be able to use Project Amp as a contracting opportunity for your RCO, which improves your sustainability and diversifies and expands your reach.

Benefits of Infusing Project Amp into Your RCO Offerings

Project Amp mentors have the opportunity to receive evidence-based skills training, which can be used in

Program Site	Brief Mentorship Intervention	Community Supports
<p>Schools, School-based Health Centers, or Health Centers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect low to moderate risk youth to Project Amp through screening, or other referral and engagement pathways • May host on-site or virtual mentorship sessions, or do so via a community partner • Provide supervision to mentors, directly or via community partner 	<p>Project Amp: Amplifying Our Futures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Amp mentors are young adults in recovery (ages 18-30) • Mentors meet with youth participants 4-6 times over 1-2 months • Sessions focus on: interests, strengths, and goals; social and community supports; stress, alcohol and drug use; and other topics related to wellness 	<p>Positive Social Networks in the Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors help to identify and facilitate connections with relevant community supports • Mentors may serve as a bridge to other, ongoing services and supports • Supports might include youth-specific prevention, treatment, or recovery resources; or recreation, social, school-based, faith-based, and other community resources



Mentors engage youth to help them connect with Project Amp, complete the sessions, and consider if additional supports are needed

This brief was generated in collaboration with [Community Catalyst](#).



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