



# Evaluating the Efficacy of Recovery Ally Programs: Preliminary Evidence From a First Year Pilot

Benjamin Markham, Kirsten Price, Kenneth Waller, Chelsea Shore (advisor) & Mia Gomez (mentor)



## Abstract

- Students engage in risky and unhealthy behaviors involving substance (mis)use that can negatively impact their lives.
- Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) combat this by promoting supportive environments.
- Living Intentionally, Finding Togetherness (LIFT) is the CRP at Florida State University (FSU) designed to support students in recovery from addiction or substance use disorders, including dismantling stigmas surrounding recovery.
- Individuals in recovery experience stigma which brings them feelings of shame in a time of need (Luoma et. al, 2007).
- The Recovery Ally Program (RAP) is an outreach pathway by LIFT that teaches self-monitoring around addictive behaviors and addresses stigmas about the recovery community by encouraging conversations regarding substance (mis)use among peers.
- This presentation describes our implementation process using a student-centered approach, evaluation, and directions for scaling.

## Intervention/RAP

- RAP is a 2-hour interactive workshop at FSU that covers the full continuum of allyship from substance use, through misuse, and into recovery.
- Aligned with department and institutional values, this program defines recovery, or remission from addiction, as merely the absence of problems (Hasin et. al, 2013) and not necessarily the abstinence of substance(s).
- RAP encourages students to change the way they think about addiction, alter how they talk about substance misuse, and adapt how they approach recovery.
- Students gain tangible tools for recognizing warning signs, initiating conversations, and connecting with resources to address addiction and substance misuse through individual and collaborative worksheets.
- This presentation describes our implementation process using a student-centered approach, evaluation, and directions for scaling.

## Methods

- Evaluation uses a pre-/post-test design through QR codes and their personal cellular devices.
- The survey has 28 questions; including identifiers of the participant along with their connection to the recovery community.
- **Part 1** uses 16-statements on a 5-point Likert scale to gauge participants **attitudes towards substance use** (i.e., “It is acceptable for a person to use substances because they like the taste”).
- **Part 2** uses X-statements attempts to assess participants **stigmas towards recovery** on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., “Most people would willingly accept someone who has been treated for substance use as a close friend”).
- The post-survey includes an additional survey section for participants to evaluate their satisfaction with the presentation (i.e., favorite and least favorite parts about the program; **Part 3**).
- Results from pre-/post-survey are compared to determine whether the intervention reduces stigmas around recovery and the evaluation areas of improvement.

## Preliminary Findings & Discussion

- Current results from **Part 1** of the survey (attitudes toward substance use) indicate some changes in attitudes towards substance use
  - 9 of the 16 questions (56.25%) show a **decrease** in mean from the pre and post measures, suggesting students are thinking more critically about *why* other people using substances is justifiable
  - 7 of the 16 questions (43.75%) show an **increase** in mean from the pre and post measure; these items related mostly to celebratory occasions or processing emotions, suggesting students agreed with their peers substance use intermittently when do so responsibly
- Current results from **Part 2** of the survey (stigmas towards people in recovery) suggest a reduction in stigma
  - 5 out of 8 (62.5%) of the questions showed an **increase** in the mean after the program while 3 out of 8 (37.5%) saw a **decrease** in the mean
- Qualitative results from **Part 3** indicate student participants enjoyed the RAP, found in both informative and interactive, where people were likely to recommend the program to a friend (7.6/10).
- Cumulatively, these results provides some evidence that the RAP is effective in changing attitudes towards people who use substances and reducing stigma towards people in recovery
- Unfortunately the small sample size (N = 13) prevented significance testing for the current report

## Results

Part 1			Part 2		
Item	Baseline Mean	Post Mean	Item	Baseline Mean	Post Mean
Question: Why do people like using substances?					
Because they like the taste	2.20	2.60	Most people would willingly accept someone who has been treated for substance use as a close friend	2.75	3.00
Because they like the feeling	2.53	2.20	Most people believe that someone who has been treated for substance use is just as trustworthy as the average citizen	1.87	3.00
Because it is exciting	2.21	3.00	Most people would accept someone who has been treated for substance use as a teacher of young children in public school	1.90	3.00
To get high	2.49	2.20	Most people would hire someone who has been treated for substance use to take care of their children	2.07	2.20
To cope with stress	2.40	3.00	Most people think less of a person who has been in treatment for substance use	2.63	2.20
To deal with feelings of depression and anxiety	2.51	3.00	Most employers will hire someone who has been treated for substance use if he or she is qualified for the job	2.37	2.20
To improve their mood	2.59	2.40	Most employers will pass over the application of someone who has been treated for substance in favor of another applicant	3.15	2.40
To help them enjoy a party	2.27	3.00	Most people would be willing to dare someone who has been treated for substance use	2.49	3.00
To help them feel more confident	2.28	2.20			
Due to pressure from others	1.71	1.60			
To avoid feeling left out	1.95	1.60			
To avoid being teased about not using	1.61	1.60			
To help them be more sociable	2.09	1.60			
To celebrate a special occasion	2.71	3.00			
To improve athletic performance	1.47	1.60			
To improve academic performance	1.87	1.60			

## References

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- Hasin, D. S., O'Brien, C. P., Auriacombe, M., Borges, G., Bucholz, K., Budney, A., Compton, W. M., Crowley, T., Ling, W., Petry, N. M., Schuckit, M., & Grant, B. F. (2013). DSM-5 criteria for Substance Use Disorders: Recommendations and Rationale. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(8), 834–851. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2013.12060782>

