

# Study shows young adults with addiction benefit from active twelve step group participation

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Young adults undergoing addiction treatment benefit from regular participation in Twelve Step-based self-help groups after discharge, according to a naturalistic study published electronically and in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. The study was conducted collaboratively by the Center for Addiction Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School and the Butler Center for Research at Hazelden.

"Very little is known about the effects of Twelve Step attendance and involvement on outcomes for young adults. Our study shows that Twelve Step community resources, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), can provide local, accessible and cost-effective recovery resources for young adults during a stage in life when such support is rare," explains John F. Kelly, Ph.D., of the Center for Addiction Medicine. Kelly authored the study with Robert L. Stout, Ph.D., of Decision Sciences Institute in Providence, Rhode Island, and Valerie Slaymaker, Ph.D., of the Butler Center for Research at Hazelden in Center City, Minnesota.

"Alcohol and drug use is high among young adults in general compared to other age groups. Young people who are in early recovery from addiction face a tough time finding social support and supportive peer networks," said Slaymaker. "Because typical AA and NA groups are mostly comprised of middle-aged adults, we were pleased to find young

adults can affiliate and fully engage in these support groups, and their engagement improves substance use outcomes over time."

Analyses of over 300 [young adults](#), ages 18-24, attending multidisciplinary, Twelve Step-based residential treatment for alcohol or other drug [addiction](#) focused on the extent to which participation and active involvement in community Twelve Step groups contributed to substance use outcomes over the course of one year following discharge. Average AA/NA attendance peaked at approximately 3 times per week at 3 months post-discharge, and dropped to just over once per week at the one year follow-up. Greater attendance was independently associated with higher abstinence days, even controlling for a variety of other factors such as motivation. An even stronger relationship was found for active group involvement, such as speaking up during meetings—an effect that grew over time.

Overall, the data suggest that merely attending community Twelve Step groups, while helpful, will only take a young adult's recovery so far. Consistent and active involvement maintains and increases the benefit of participation, resulting in sustained and improved outcomes over time.

Provided by Hazelden

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