

Youth's addiction recovery predicted with AA-related helping tool

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A Case Western Reserve University professor has found that young people addicted to alcohol and drugs can increase their chances of recovery by helping others.

In 2010, Maria Pagano, PhD, found that adults who became involved in Alcoholics Anonymous-related service-type work were more likely to stay sober 10 years following [treatment](#) and have increased interest in others, a [positive health](#) outcome.

Now, new research by Pagano finds that youths in AA respond the same way. In a study of nearly 200 juvenile offenders, she found that youth who became active in AA-related helping (AAH) during treatment were less likely to test positive for [alcohol](#) and drugs during treatment and had greater psychosocial improvement.

The study, "Assessing Youth Participation in AA-Related Helping: Validity of the Service to Others in Sobriety (SOS) Questionnaire in an Adolescent Sample," is published in the January-February issue of *The American Journal on Addictions*. The questionnaire, which Pagano created, can help clinicians identify youths low in service participation and suggest AAH activities to promote their recovery.

AAH includes acts of good citizenship, formal service positions, [public outreach](#) and sharing personal experience to another fellow addict. The SOS tool lists service activities in the 12-step program that are free, available seven days a week and do not require long-term commitment,

special skills, prior experience or length of time sober.

Using the adult-validated SOS questionnaire from her first study, Pagano sampled juvenile offenders that had been court-referred to residential treatment in Northeast Ohio. Her investigation developed the first brief assessment of adolescent participation in AAH.

"The SOS tool provides a snapshot of a patient's level of service participation. An SOS score of 40 or higher is associated with greater abstinence as measured by urine toxicology screens," Pagano said. "Given AAH participation during treatment significantly improves the likelihood of long-term abstinence, interventions that facilitate early engagement in service are critical during the few weeks of treatment when motivation to change behavior is the highest."

Pagano is continuing to follow the cohort of [juvenile offenders](#) to examine the impact of AAH on long-term recidivism outcomes.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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