

Passetti, L., Greene, L., White, W., & Godley, M. (2019) The volunteer recovery support for adolescents (VRSA) experiment: Design and implementation. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 98, 1-8.

Conclusions and recommendations

“VRSA is a flexible, potentially low-cost model for providing recovery support services that is acceptable to adolescents and effective, especially at higher session completion rates (Godley et al., 2019 in this issue). Recruiting, retaining, training, and supervising volunteers proved both feasible and sustainable over nearly 4 years during this research. Students in colleges and universities proved a readily available source of volunteers for VRSA, thus overcoming a typical obstacle to sustaining volunteer service programs over time. Importantly, volunteers (most of who were not in recovery) were able to successfully implement the model with fidelity. Several implementation science researchers have provided additional guidelines to help future researchers replicate and test VRSA in other settings and contexts. Issues to consider are (a) the culture of the clients to be served; (b) provider and staff attitudes toward VRSA; (c) the presence of a skilled implementation leader; (d) the ability to engage stakeholders; (e) the culture of the organization implementing VRSA; (f) policy and funding structures; (g) who will deliver the implementation strategy; (h) how implementation steps are defined; (i) which staffing patterns need to be modified; and (j) barriers to implementation (Damschroder et al., 2017; Jäger et al., 2016; Ober et al., 2015; Powell et al., 2012, 2017; Proctor, Powell, & McMillen, 2013; Rowe et al., 2013). In addition, recent implementation studies on interorganizational planning and collaboration (Friedmann et al., 2015; Welsh et al., 2016) suggest that such strategies may be a beneficial area of investigation to engage more youth in VRSA, increase VRSA session dosage across a greater number of youth (Godley et al., 2019 in this issue), and improve assertive linkages of youth back to treatment when indicated. Other areas of fruitful research may be to identify how best to recruit student volunteers, meaningfully reward and/or recognize volunteers, define and measure volunteer commitment and variables that predict it, investigate if matching gender, race/ethnicity or other variables affect results, find better ways to attract youth and emerging adults to serve as volunteers, and discover ways in which young volunteers can maximize their similarities to youth in order to be compelling role models (e.g., increase experience-based discussions of succeeding in college, job-hunting).” (page 6)

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