Project Step Up:  
A Study to Reduce Alcohol Consumption in Youth Exposed to Alcohol Prenatally

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Alcohol Use in Adolescence

- Prevalent  
  - Nearly two thirds of 10th graders have tried alcohol  
  - Underage drinking sales: $22 billion/year

- Problematic  
  - Results in impairment in learning, memory, visuospatial functioning, and attention  
  - Use before age 15 = 4x more likely to be dependent as adults than those who first drank at 21  
  - Alcohol plays a key role in accidents, homicides, suicides, and is the leading causes of death among youth  
  - 21% of youth 16-20 reported driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs within the past year  
  - Linked to up to two thirds of sexual assaults of teens and college students

Prenatal Alcohol Exposure and Teen Alcohol Use

- Prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) causes life long developmental impairments  
  - Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs)  
  - Impairments in attention, executive functioning, learning, memory, visuospatial ability, judgment, social cognition

- Given these impairments, teens with PAE are at greater risk for alcohol misuse and dependence than typically-developing teens

- This places them at greater risk for negative legal, health-related, social, and psychological consequences associated with alcohol misuse and dependence

Why Intervention is Important

- To prevent  
  - Progression to teen alcohol misuse/dependence  
  - Legal involvement due to alcohol misuse/dependence  
  - Psychological problems associated with alcohol misuse/dependence  
  - Additional neurocognitive damage by alcohol  
  - Involvement with additional substances  
  - Involvement with deviant peer groups

- To foster  
  - Adaptive coping abilities without alcohol use  
  - Skills to resist peer pressure to use alcohol  
  - Improved relationship with family members

Project Step Up

- Alcohol use intervention for teens 16-18 years of age who have been prenatally exposed to alcohol (N=100)

- Relies on empirically supported alcohol intervention for typically developing teens (Project Options; Brown et al., 2005), adapted for use with teens with PAE

- Teen Goals: Reduce alcohol consumption, reduce positive expectancies about alcohol use, reduce negative consequences from alcohol use, increase feelings of self-efficacy about ability to abstain from alcohol

- Parent Goals: To demonstrate improved skills in talking to their teens about alcohol use and misuse
Overview of Intervention

- 6 weekly sessions, 60 minutes each
- Parents and teens attend separate sessions, concurrently
- Empirically supported components
  - Project Options (Brown et al., 2005)
  - Normative Feedback Regarding Peer Alcohol Use
  - Alcohol Expectancies
  - Education on Standard Drink Size
  - Adaptive Coping Skills
  - Self-Efficacy
- Parental Involvement
  - Modeling
  - Monitoring

Structure of Sessions

- Teen and Parent Group Sessions
  - Group size: 10 for teens; 10+ for parents
  - Session length: 60 min
  - Sessions held once per week
  - Two group leaders per group
  - Content includes didactic presentations, handouts/workbooks, role-playing/behavioral rehearsal, and group discussion
  - Teen session content adapted for use with teens with PAE and associated difficulties with language, memory, attention, and cognitive processing

Study Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Delayed Treatment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1 Assessment</td>
<td>T1 Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-week Intervention</td>
<td>6-week Wait</td>
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<tr>
<td>T2 Assessment</td>
<td>T2 Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-month Wait</td>
<td>6-month Wait</td>
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<td>T3 Assessment</td>
<td>T3 Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-week Intervention</td>
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<td>T4 Assessment</td>
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Description of Sessions

- Session 1:
  - Parents: Pre-test, PAE and development, FASD criteria, reframing teen behaviors, executive functioning
  - Teens: Pre-test, perceptions of peer EIOH use, normative information regarding peer EIOH use, positive activities

- Session 2:
  - Parents: EIOH and typically developing teens, EIOH and teens with PAE, protective factors, signs of misuse
  - Teens: EIOH beliefs/expectations, EIOH expectancy challenge video

- Session 3:
  - Parents: Importance of structure for teen, benefits of strong parent-teen relationship, supervision and communication
  - Teens: Coping without using EIOH, standard drink size, amount of EIOH in common beverages

Description of Sessions

- Session 4:
  - Parents: Monitoring your teen, handling common scenarios of potential conflict, parent modeling of drinking in the home
  - Teens: Types of drinkers, negative consequences of drinking, resisting peer pressure to drink

- Session 5:
  - Parents: How to talk to your teen about EIOH, facts and myths about drinking
  - Teens: APE (anticipate, plan, evaluate), practicing resistance and refusal skills, handling situations where EIOH is present

- Session 6:
  - Parents: Action steps, parent self-care, post-test, additional resources, graduation
  - Teens: Practicing communication skills to avoid risky/negative situations or problems with others, post-test, graduation

Outcome Measures

- Health and Behavior Survey (HBS) Assesses current alcohol use and associated behaviors/consequences within the past month, including use of other illicit drugs
- Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI) Assesses the impact of alcohol on social and health functioning
- Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire-3 (AEQ-3) Assesses reasons for drinking alcohol: global positive; social and physical pleasure; social expressiveness; sexual enhancement; power and aggression; tension reduction and relaxation; cognitive and physical impairment; and careless unconcern
Outcome Measures

- **Perceived Benefit of Drinking Scale (PBDS)** Assesses alcohol expectancy, including frequency, situational use, consequences of use, perceived benefits of use, and peer/parental use of alcohol.
- **Decisional Balance Scale (DBS)** Assesses two drinking factors: advantages of drinking and disadvantages of drinking.
- **Brief Situational Confidence Questionnaire (BSCQ)** Assesses confidence to cope with unpleasant emotions, physical discomfort, testing control, urges and temptations, pleasant time with others, conflict with others, pleasant emotions, social pressure to drink without engaging in consumption.

Predictor or Intervening Measures

- **Child Interview for Psychiatric Syndromes (ChIPS)** - a structured clinical interview screening for current symptoms, duration, and impairment for 20 DSM-IV Axis I Disorders. Current study assessing: MDD/Dysthymia, GAD, ADHD, ODD, CD, Substance Abuse, Mania, Hypomania, and Schizophrenia/Psychosis.
- **The Awareness of Social Inference Test (TASIT)** - video vignettes re: emotional expressions and integration of contextual info in normal social encounters: emotion recognition, social inference (minimal/enriched).

Long Term Goal

- We expect that this intervention will provide an effective, acceptable, and cost-effective model for the prevention of negative alcohol-related outcomes.
- It is anticipated that the findings from this research will facilitate a systematic comprehensive and accessible continuum of care for persons with an FASD that will:
  1) Improve quality of life
  2) Prevent the development of secondary disabling conditions
  3) Provide support and assistance to individuals with FASDs and their families.