



Project Venture

Proven Results*

- 2001 program participants demonstrated a 32% decrease in past 30-day alcohol use ($p < .05$), pre- to posttest.
- 2003 program participants did not significantly ($p < .05$) increase alcohol or marijuana use, pre- to posttest, compared to control group youth, who increased use by 16% and 14%, respectively.



Project Venture (PV) is an outdoors experiential youth development program designed for high-risk American Indian youth. NREPP* has reviewed outcome data from program evaluation surveys conducted with middle school-aged American Indian youth and youth from other ethnic groups. Project Venture aims to prevent substance use and related problems through:

- Classroom-based problem-solving and skill-building activities
- Outdoor adventure-based experiential activities
- Adventure camps and treks
- Community-oriented service learning

The program relies on American Indian traditional values to help youth develop positive self-concept, effective social skills, a community service ethic, internal locus of control, and increased decisionmaking and problem-solving skills.

INTENDED POPULATION

Project Venture was designed for and tested with early adolescents in grades 5 through 9 in American Indian school and community settings (approximately 75 percent American Indian) in rural and low socioeconomic areas. NREPP* has reviewed program evaluations conducted within these settings and populations. PV also has been replicated in rural Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian settings and in urban American Indian settings. PV also has been implemented with youth in grades 4 and 10 through 12, but was not studied systematically with these populations. PV can be adapted for all cultural/ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

HOW IT WORKS

Project Venture typically consists of 20 to 30 hourly classroom sessions delivered over the course of a school year during which youth also engage in experiential games and initiatives facilitated by a PV staff member. Through these classroom-based sessions, a smaller number of youth are recruited and enrolled into the program's community-based activities that include increasingly challenging outdoor activities such as team- and trust-building, hiking, bicycling, climbing, and rappelling. During these activities, delivered to groups of 7 to 15 youth per staff member, PV staff work with youth to plan, implement, and debrief in specific ways that use the experiences as metaphors for life. The community-based component also includes four service-learning projects per year, which are designed to facilitate service leadership. School vacations and summertime include a weeklong camp and/or wilderness trek for participants. Older high school-age youth are selected and trained as service staff, where they become peer role models during Project



OUTCOMES

A repeated measures ANCOVA design tested the effects of Project Venture on treatment and control youth from baseline to 15 months (Wave 2) and 21 months (Wave 3) after program exit. Results indicate that Project Venture participants were less likely to be current users of alcohol ($p < .05$) at Waves 2 and 3 than those in the control group. Program effect sizes (η^2) were calculated for past 30-day alcohol use at .20. Additionally, there were more modest effect sizes for past 30-day cigarette smoking (.11) and marijuana use (.13).

The National Study of High Risk Youth found that 2 years after program enrollment, Project Venture participants had a 25% increase in past 30-day alcohol use ($p < .05$), compared to a 64% ($p < .05$) increase seen in control group youth.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Venture's year-long community-based components. The community component can include 150 hours or more of program services.

In addition, four potluck dinners or other community events for families, such as "family fun days," are conducted throughout the year. The program's youth facilitate a portion of the activities, providing opportunities for parents to see their children as capable and skilled.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Project Venture is a relatively complex model, so an initial orientation session between the developer and potential replication team (on- or offsite or by phone) is recommended to determine the site's readiness and capacity. The developer can provide guidance regarding staffing, connecting with schools, and related issues. Key direct service and support staff are required to enroll in a 2-day (minimum) basic onsite training in order to purchase *Project Venture Replication Guide*.

Implementers are required to contact the developer to obtain implementation and evaluation support at least quarterly during the program's first year, and at least semiannually during subsequent program years. PV implementers are encouraged to obtain a formal agreement with participating schools, to use community/cultural resources, and to access recreational space and equipment. Project Venture recommends a minimum of 1 staff per 25 youth in the classroom component and 1 staff for 7 to 15 youth in the community-based component.

PROGRAM DEVELOPERS

Project Venture was developed by the National Indian Youth Leadership Project (NIYLP), an American Indian-owned and -operated, community-based, nonprofit organization with nearly 20 years of experience in youth development. NIYLP has conducted summer youth leadership camps since 1986, from which grew the year-round Project Venture model. In 1990, NIYLP received its first SAMHSA/CSAP grant to implement Project Venture. The program has operated continuously since that time in Native and other communities, regionally, and nationally, with nearly 30 implementations in 11 States.

* National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices

Program detail and citations can be obtained at
<http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov>

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