



Both nationally and in Connecticut, young people are showing consistent increases in anxiety, depression, and suicidality and are at high risk for substance misuse. Their struggles have a ripple effect on their family. In response, Connecticut DCF and DMHAS, through the ASSERT Project and Wheeler Clinic's CROSS initiative, are providing seed grants to organizations throughout the state to start up SMART Recovery® programs in local communities. The purpose is to improve the behavioral health of teens and young adults by increasing the evidence-based support options available to them directly as well as to their family and friends.

Components of each community SMART program:

1. Free weekly SMART Recovery group for young people seeking support for mental health, substance misuse, or other addictive behavior
2. Free monthly social activities for young people to promote healthy social relationships
3. Free weekly SMART Family & Friends group for those affected by the struggles of a loved one

Each program is meant to become sustainable within a year. At that point, it is expected that community groups (schools, youth leaders, parents, individuals in recovery...) will ensure continued facilitation of the groups, through providing support and stipends to existing facilitators and/or training volunteers to become new facilitators.

### **What is SMART Recovery®?**

SMART Recovery provides support and skills development—not clinical treatment—for those affected by a mental health challenge or addiction. Led by a trained facilitator, people in free SMART Recovery support groups help each other while learning strategies to take control of their behaviors and make healthier choices.

SMART stands for “Self-Management and Recovery Training.” The “self-management” aspect means that these groups go beyond providing peer support; they also include skills training through facilitation, worksheets, and discussion. Participants learn to analyze their thoughts and behaviors, recognize the impact of their actions, and develop plans to make changes in their life. The tools and techniques used in the SMART Recovery group are based on Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy, which is related to Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT). The tools and techniques used in the SMART Family & Friends group are based on the CRAFT model, which has a 64% success rate of helping get a loved one into treatment (higher than the Johnson “intervention” model). SMART groups are also available *online* at [smartrecovery.org](http://smartrecovery.org) so people can always access additional support beyond weekly face-to-face meetings.

SMART groups differ from 12-step programs, but can be complementary for those who benefit from AA, NA, etc.:

- SMART groups are led by trained facilitators using evidence-based tools
- Peer support is provided through face-to-face and online meetings, rather than through a sponsor
- Focus is on the individual's personal power of choice rather than a higher power
- Cross talk is allowed
- Participants are encouraged to participate for as long as the group feels helpful; not a life-long commitment

Visit CT's SMART Recovery landing page at [www.TurningPointCT.org/SMART](http://www.TurningPointCT.org/SMART) to find face-to-face groups in CT or the upcoming Spanish-language phone groups. Find online groups in English at [www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org).