

# Saint Louis RECOVERY High School



**ST. LOUIS STUDENTS NEED A LIFELINE. A RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL CAN DELIVER ONE.** Recovery high schools are diploma-granting institutions that provide academic and recovery support for students who are committed to substance use disorder recovery.

## Why does St. Louis need a Recovery High School?

Surroundings matter, especially to teens. Exposure to and access to alcohol or other drugs “normalizes” substance abuse and makes it “the thing to do”. Studies indicate that 60 to 70 percent of students with addiction problems relapse upon returning to their former high schools after treatment. Spending time in places where they previously used drugs or seeing friends they’ve used drugs with can trigger relapse. Academic demands and intense course work can also contribute to the temptation to use substance abuse as an escape from stress.

## What is a Recovery High School?

Recovery high schools are diploma-granting secondary schools that exclusively serve students recovering from substance abuse and dependency. In a recovery high school, students work their substance use disorder (SUD) program while working on their HS diploma. They will have the same academic experience as other high school students, but will have recovery-specific activities and specialized staff to support them. 5280 High School is an example of an effective program in Denver, CO.

## Are Recovery High Schools effective?

NIH studies have found that that recovery high schools provide an increased probability of high school graduation and increased rates of sobriety. Substance abuse is more common among students who drop out of high school and has been associated with substance abuse later in life.

## Can we do this here?

The state of Missouri has passed legislation (SB 681) that would allow for the establishment of up to four public recovery high schools by school districts in metropolitan areas. We would love to see one of these high schools established in the St. Louis area. BeFreeKC is working on establishing one in the Kansas City area, looking to open in the fall of 2024.

**A RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL WILL HELP  
SAVE THE LIVES OF MISSOURI STUDENTS.**

## URGENT REALITIES

- Between 2019 and 2021, the number of overdose deaths doubled among teenagers in the U.S
- Alcohol-related deaths in Missouri are more likely to involve underage drinkers.
- Around 17,000 Missourians between ages 12-17 have a substance use disorder (SUD)

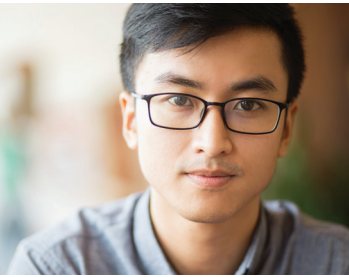


Learn more about  
how you can help



Questions? **Kelli Unnerstall**  
Contact: 314.422.7009  
kelli@aspireadvocates.org

**Jamie Vollmer**  
314.276-3655  
jamie@ebistl.com



# Four Totally Fair Questions

## ABOUT THE ST. LOUIS RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT



### What is a Recovery High School (RHS)?

- Alternative school concept introduced in **1987**
- Students work their substance abuse disorder (SUD) program while working on their **HS diploma**
- About **20-80 students**: separate building, academics, counseling, family support, random drug testing
- Now **45** schools in **21** states
- Significant **funding approved** by 101st Missouri state legislature in **May 2022**



Saint Louis  
RECOVERY  
High School



### Who needs an RHS?

Of **72,194** metro Missouri teens (ages **14-19**):

- **25%** offered, sold or given drugs on school property
- **22.7%** abusing prescription drugs
- **18.8%** actively binge drinking
- **10.4%** used meth
- **5.5%** used cocaine
- **2.9%** used heroin



### Who is eligible?

- Any Metro-area **high school student** in SUD recovery can apply
- No **prior substance use** disorder treatment required
- Referrals **accepted** from teachers, counselors, therapists, and parents/guardians
- Students age **18+** may self-refer



### Does this concept work?

Compared to traditional SUD interventions:

- **20** percentage points higher graduation rates
- Average **5** fewer absences per 90 days
- **17** percentage points lower dropout rates
- **2** times higher likelihood of complete abstinence

Sources: 2020 U.S. Census, 2019 Center for Disease Control (CDC) Youth Risk Behaviors Survey, J Ment Health Policy Econ. 2019 September 01



Learn more about  
how you can help



Want to learn more?  
Contact us

[AspireAdvocates.org](https://AspireAdvocates.org)

**Kelli Unnerstall**

314.422.7009

[kelli@aspireadvocates.org](mailto:kelli@aspireadvocates.org)

**Jamie Vollmer**

314.276-3655

[jamie@ebistl.com](mailto:jamie@ebistl.com)