

Active Minds

SUPER: Substance Use Prevention Evidence-Based Resource, UCLA ISAP

Developer website: activeminds.org

Practice record last updated March 17, 2026

Cost	Practice Focus
FREE	MH

Practice Summary

Active Minds is a community- and school-based mental health promotion program for youth age 14–25. Through student-led chapters, peer education, campaigns, and national initiatives, Active Minds promotes mental health awareness, suicide prevention, and help-seeking behaviors. Programs are delivered through ongoing campus and community engagement rather than a fixed session structure, and include events, trainings, storytelling campaigns, and advocacy efforts. Active Minds emphasizes peer-to-peer connection, reducing stigma, and increasing knowledge and support around mental health.

Practice Details

Substance Use Prevention Category	• Not Applicable
Practice Level	• Individual • Relationship • Community or Society
Substance Use Prevention Strategy	• Not Applicable
Practice Components	Individual • Communication Skills Training • Insight Building • Psychoeducation • Self-Efficacy or Self-Esteem Enhancement Relationship • Peer-Led Approaches • Pro-Social Connections and Activities • Support Networking Community/Society • Media Campaigns • Shifting Community Norms
Population Age	• Age 13-17 • Age 18-20
Populations of Focus	• General Population
Settings	• School (K-12) • Community-based program
Parent/Caregiver Involvement	• No parent or caregiver involvement
Recommended Staffing	• Teachers or educators • Prevention staff • Peers

Prevention Focus	Substance Use Prevention Focus • None Mental Health Wellness and Promotion Focus • Mental Health - General • Anxiety • Depression
Training and Technical Assistance	Active Minds provides training, toolkits, and support for student leaders and chapter advisors, including guidance on running campus chapters, implementing campaigns, and facilitating mental health programming.
Program Costs	Free. Please visit the developer's website listed above for updated information about implementation costs.
Adaptations	Programs are adaptable across high schools, colleges, and communities, with flexibility in implementation (events, campaigns, chapters).

Risk and Protective Factors

Youth Substance Use Risk and Protective Factors

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	• Poor coping skills and behaviors	• Emotional self-regulation • High self-esteem • Personal engagement in two or more of the following: school, peers, athletics, employment, religion/spirituality, culture • Strong coping skills (e.g., problem-solving skills, ability to stand up for beliefs and values)
Family and Relationships	• None	• None
School, Peer, and Community	• None	• Opportunities for the development of skills and interests • Positive peer relationships • Opportunities for prosocial engagement in the school and community • Positive social norms • Presence of mentors and healthy adults for positive emotional support

Youth Mental Health Risk and Protective Factors

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	• Low self-esteem • Poor coping skills and behaviors	• Positive self-regard • Emotional self-regulation • High self-esteem • Personal engagement in two or more of the following: school, peers, athletics, employment, religion/spirituality, culture • Strong coping skills (e.g., problem-solving skills, ability to stand up for beliefs and values)
Family and Relationships	• None	• None

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
School, Peer, and Community	• Lack of access to support services	• Strong peer relationships • Opportunities for prosocial engagement in the school and community • Positive social norms • Presence of mentors and healthy adults for positive emotional support

Shared Substance Use and Mental Health Risk and Protective Factors

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	• Poor coping skills and behaviors	• Emotional self-regulation • High self-esteem • Personal engagement in two or more of the following: school, peers, athletics, employment, religion/spirituality, culture • Strong coping skills (e.g., problem-solving skills, ability to stand up for beliefs and values)
Family and Relationships	• None	• None
School, Peer, and Community	• None	• Opportunities for prosocial engagement in the school and community • Positive social norms • Presence of mentors and healthy adults for positive emotional support

Empirical Evidence of Impact

Prevention Focus	Outcome	Population Age	Evidence Strength and Study Populations of Focus
Mental Health (General)	Improved Relationships and Community Connectedness	College (18-24)	Promising (General Population) [References 1-2]
Mental Health (General)	Behavior, Attitudes, and Functioning	College (18-24)	Promising (General Population) [References 1]

References

- [1] Sontag-Padilla, L., Dunbar, M. S., Ye, F., Kase, C., Fein, R., Abelson, S., ... & Stein, B. D. (2018). Strengthening college students' mental health knowledge, awareness, and helping behaviors: the impact of active minds, a peer mental health organization. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 57(7), 500-507
- [2] Stern, C. A., & LaChappelle, M. E. (2023). Program considerations and addressing At-Risk populations in active Minds clubs: A brief report. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 59(5), 1027-1034

What California Providers Are Saying

We have not yet spoken to any California providers who have experience implementing Active Minds. If you have implemented the program, we would love to hear from you. Please [contact us](#).