

Botvin LifeSkills Training Middle School

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

Developer website: <https://www.lifeskillstraining.com/botvin-lifeskills-training-middle-school-program/>

Practice record last updated September 15, 2026

Cost	Prevention Category	Practice Focus	Practice Focus
Over \$500	Universal Direct	SU	MH

Practice Summary

Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST) Middle School is a 30-session curriculum focused on developing personal self-management (goal-setting, decision-making, stress reduction), social skills (communication, assertiveness) and drug resistance skills. Sessions are interactive, blending group discussions, role-plays, and discussions of real-world skill application. The program is structured to be delivered at the classroom level by teachers, prevention specialists or counselors.

Practice Details

Substance Use Prevention Category	• Universal Direct
Practice Level	• Individual • Relationship
Substance Use Prevention Strategy	• Education
Practice Components	Individual • Assertiveness Training • Cognitive Behavioral Strategies • Goal Setting • Problem Solving • Psychoeducation • Relaxation • Self-Efficacy or Self-Esteem Enhancement • Skills Training Relationship • Peer Norm Development Community/Society • None
Population Age	• Age 6-12 • Age 13-17
Populations of Focus	• General Population • Hispanic or Latino
Settings	• School (K-12)
Parent/Caregiver Involvement	• No parent or caregiver involvement

Recommended Staffing	• Community members • Health or social work counselor, therapist or professional (licensed) • Health or social work counselor, therapist or professional (unlicensed) • Law enforcement • Mentors • Peers • Prevention staff • Teachers or educators
Prevention Focus	Substance Use Prevention Focus • Substance Use - General Mental Health Wellness and Promotion Focus • Behavioral and Conduct Disorders • Mental Health - General
Training and Technical Assistance	Formal training is highly recommended to ensure program fidelity. The developer offers free implementation resources to support program planning, fidelity tracking, and identify potential funding opportunities. Staff also provide standard technical assistance, as well as more intensive and customized training and technical assistance for a fee.
Program Costs	Over \$500. Please visit the developer's website listed above for updated information about implementation costs.
Adaptations	Botvin LST has been implemented with youth in all 50 states and in 32 countries. However, the developer advises that to achieve optimal results, Botvin LST should be implemented carefully and completely.

Risk and Protective Factors

Youth Substance Use Risk and Protective Factors

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	• Conduct Disorder • Early and persistent antisocial behavior • Early initiation of substance use • Favorable attitudes towards substance use • Rebelliousness • Negative emotional state • Poor coping skills and behaviors	• Positive social orientation (e.g. engaging in healthy activities, accepting rules and community values, positive social engagement) • Emotional self-regulation • High self-esteem • 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	• Accessibility or availability of substances • Lack of plans or ambitions for the future • Norms favorable towards substance use • Substance use among peers	• Positive social norms

Youth Mental Health Risk and Protective Factors

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	• Low self-esteem • Negative emotional state • Poor coping skills and behaviors	• Emotional self-regulation • High self-esteem • 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	• Aggression towards peers • School violence • Norms favorable towards substance use • Substance use among peers	• Ability to make friends and get along well with others • Clear expectations for behavior • Positive social norms

Shared Substance Use and Mental Health Risk and Protective Factors

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Individual	• Negative emotional state • Poor coping skills and behaviors	• Emotional self-regulation • High self-esteem • 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	• Norms favorable towards substance use • Substance use among peers	• Positive social norms

Empirical Evidence of Impact

Prevention Focus	Outcome	Population Age	Evidence Strength and Study Populations of Focus
Alcohol	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (White) [References 1-5]
Tobacco	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (White) [References 1-7]
Cannabis	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (White) [References 1-5]
Prescription Opioids	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (White) [References 8-10]
Substance Use (General)	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (White) [References 5,11-12]
Methamphetamine	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Moderate (White) [References 13]
Barbiturates	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Moderate (White) [References 4,8]
Substance Use (General)	Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, or Beliefs	Middle School	Strong (White) [References 5,14]
Tobacco	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (General Population) [References 15-19]
Alcohol	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Strong (General Population) [References 16,18-21]
Cannabis	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Moderate (General Population) [References 16,18-19]

Prevention Focus	Outcome	Population Age	Evidence Strength and Study Populations of Focus
Inhalants	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Moderate (General Population) [References 18,22]
Prescription Drugs	Reduced Use or Delayed Initiation	Middle School	Moderate (General Population) [References 19]
Behavioral or Conduct Disorder	Symptom Prevention or Improvement	Middle School	Strong (General Population) [References 23-24]

References

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What California Providers Are Saying

What They Like About Botvin LifeSkills Training:

- The program aligns well with other standards and criteria for school programs.
- The lesson materials provide a solid structure for conducting sessions.
- Evaluation outcomes demonstrate that the program is effective.
- The program is efficient, making it a good fit for implementation in classroom settings.
- The focus on self-esteem, socio-emotional learning, and skill development empower youth and prepare them to handle real-world challenges.

Tips and Recommendations for Implementing Botvin LifeSkills Training:

- Offering incentives and other supports can facilitate follow-up evaluation activities.
- Ensure that instructors have sufficient time to thoroughly understand the materials and build confidence to deliver the program.
- Be prepared to answer questions that may arise during sensitive conversations, as these are not always addressed in the curriculum.
- The program can be adapted to explore topics more deeply as needed and to create opportunities for students to reflect on the materials discussed.
- Supplementing the materials with information specific to the local population and community trends can make the program more relevant and impactful.
- Materials for younger students may need to be adapted to be more age and culturally appropriate.
- Some of the materials may need to be updated.