



What is the difference between RY and CAST?

We get this question all the time: from agencies considering our programs; from sites using one and thinking of adding the other; and from grant writers needing to distinguish between the two programs.

So, what's the difference? Here are the basics:

Reconnecting Youth (RY) is a semester-long CLASS, implemented in the school, as part of the regular schedule, and is offered for credit and a grade. RY was designed for students at risk for school dropout, and we have an algorithm/formula using referrals and student records to determine who "qualifies". RY class size should not exceed 10-12 students. RY has a rich evidence-base as a Tier 3 or Indicated prevention program.

Coping and Support Training (CAST) is a 12-session GROUP, which can be implemented in a variety of locations: schools, mental health agencies, faith-based organizations, juvenile detention centers, private practice, etc. CAST groups should have 6-8 youth max. CAST can be offered as

- a Universal (Tier 1) prevention program offered to all youth in a setting, grade or grouping; (*NOTE the word "offered", as an invitation and ability to opt out is essential!)
- a Selective (Tier 2) prevention program to youth in at-risk groups (such as 8th graders transitioning to high school, Alaska Native/Native American/First Nation youth, GLBQ populations, or youth showing signs of risk for school dropout); OR
- an Indicated (Tier 3) prevention program for high-risk individuals identified through screening (e.g., for suicide risk – this is what we did in our studies).

Perhaps more important is what RY and CAST share in common:

- Youth should be **invited**, not assigned to the program. *
- **Diversity** in a class/group in terms of risk factors, gender, age, experiences and strengths are beneficial to the success of all of the individuals in the program.
- **Life skills** are taught, modeled, practiced and applied to real-life situations, in and outside of the class/group context.
- The emphasis is on developing a **positive peer culture** and **adult support system**, both of which bolster personal growth and other protective factors.
- Both of the programs' goals are to **increase school achievement, drug use control and mood management** (by decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors, such as personal control, problem-solving coping, and support resources).
- **Anyone can teach either RY or CAST** as long as they are passionate about working with at-risk youth and are willing to deliver the program as designed. We've had teachers, administrators, school nurses, counselors, outside mental health agency staff, and well-loved security guards and probation officers teach both RY and CAST!
- Training is **HIGHLY** recommended! These are both **evidence-based programs** with over 15 years of research to support their outcomes, when delivered with fidelity (i.e., as designed and tested). Training will ensure your implementation readiness.
- **Both programs change lives!!** See our [website](#) for multiple national Evidence-Based Programs listings, our published results and numerous testimonials.