

Project LIFT provides therapy through the unique platform of vocational training. At no cost, at-risk 14-21-year-old young men and women engage in hands on training in skilled trades while licensed therapists provide evidence based mental health and substance abuse treatment. This strategy, which we call “Therapy Under the Hood of a Car” features skilled instructors in auto repair, HVAC, welding, boat building and restoration, screen printing, solar installation, carpentry & construction, and more! Apprentice style training in the skilled trades using industry standard equipment has attracted local employers who volunteer to train the teens and seek out prospective employees, allowing for job placement and a viable path to economic self-sufficiency. Teens are referred by the juvenile justice system, probation officers, school guidance counselors, and community partners. Project LIFT’s treatment strategy has proven more efficient and effective with adolescents than standard counseling, resulting in hopeful, sober, employable, and productive citizens.

By removing the stigma associated with vocational training, and empowering teens to cultivate the dignity that results from mastering a skilled trade, we can foster success. Job placement assistance is offered upon program completion, and we have developed strategic partnerships with local businesses who hire our program graduates. Each day of programming ends with a family style meal, where youth gather to eat alongside staff and mentors. This is pivotal, as it develops a sense of community, respect, and belonging. Many of the teens we serve do not experience this simple, yet meaningful ritual at home, and it helps to create a foundation of trust that breaks down barriers to engaging fully in treatment.

A separate Boys Program and Girls Program are offered, and participants are paid a stipend for the work they do, as long as they test clean for drugs and alcohol. Random urine drug testing is conducted for all participants weekly. Incentive pay places value on their hard work and creates additional incentive to stay clean and motivated. It also contributes to our focus on Two-Generational Poverty Alleviation, increasing the family income by an average of \$13,000 annually.

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