

## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** Youth today are more involved and have greater access to drugs and alcohol than any prior generation. Prior research suggests an association between abstinence and religiosity/God-consciousness (GC), but few studies have differentiated religious practice from GC, theorized as a main component of sustained sobriety. This study explores GC among juvenile offenders entering chemical dependency treatment and the link between increased GC and increased care for self and others.

**Method:** Study participants consisted of 195 juveniles (50% female, aged 14-18 years) court-referred to an 8-week AOD treatment program. Assessment of GC, AOD use, and narcissistic behaviors were assessed at intake and discharge. Multiple regressions were performed to determine the relationship between increased GC and changes in AOD use, and narcissistic behaviors.

**Results:** Approximately one out of three youths (27%) entered treatment as an agnostic/atheist (AGN) and one out of three AGN youths (32%) became spiritual over the course of the 8-week treatment period. At intake, low levels of GC were associated with higher AOD severity and elevated narcissistic behaviors. Results from multiple regression analyses showed that increased GC was associated with fewer positive toxicology screens, reduced narcissistic behaviors, and increased service participation during treatment.

**Conclusion:** Results show that many youth enter treatment with no faith but obtain faith as they get sober. Increased GC was associated with improved care of self in terms of less AOD use by biomarker measurement and increased other regard as indicated from lowered narcissistic behaviors and increased service participation. Future drug use intervention programs may consider facilitation of GC among high-risk youth.