

# Increasing Capacity to Work Effectively With Young People at Risk of Hepatitis C: Supporting the Youth Sector

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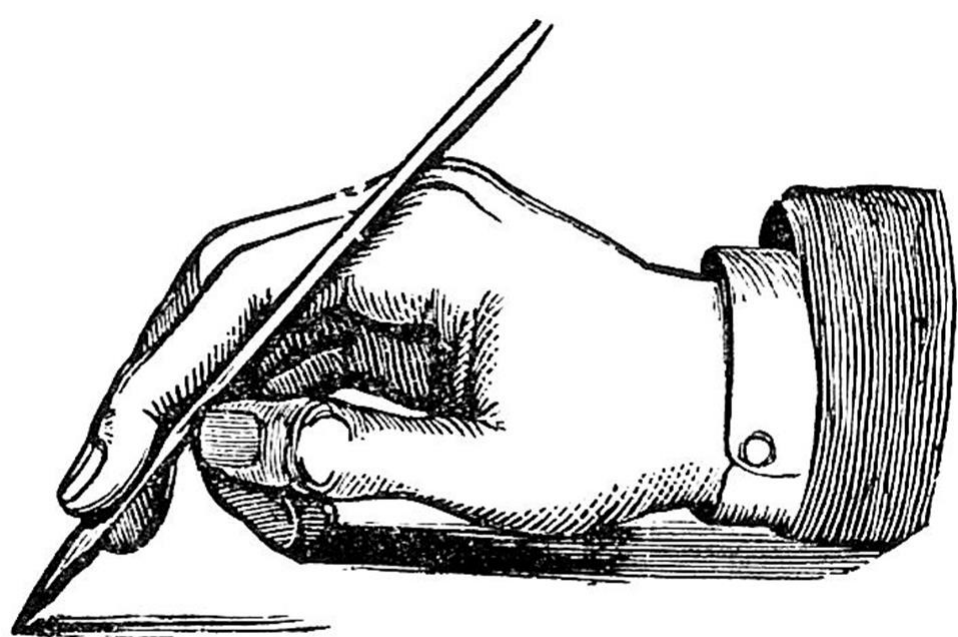
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## Background

Young people who have recently started injecting engage in riskier injection practices and have a higher incidence of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection.

They often depend on youth services for help with their drug use, and harm reduction support, including HCV prevention.

However, many youth workers feel reluctant discussing these issues because of a lack of knowledge about injecting, HCV and harm reduction services.



## Method

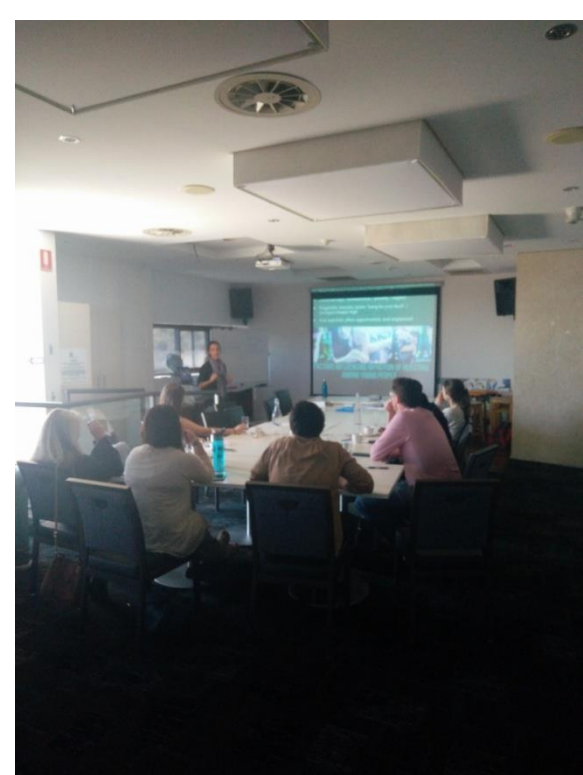


*Youth at Risk* is an evidence-based training package for workers in contact with young people at risk of, or currently injecting.

It aims to facilitate effective engagement with such clients by enhancing HCV knowledge and confidence; building relationships between participants and harm reduction services; and encouraging incorporation of harm reduction in service provision.



Between November 2016 and January 2018, *Youth at Risk* was delivered to 117 employees of youth and/or community services, and relevant TAFE students. Questionnaires administered pre- and post-training assessed changes in knowledge and attitudes, specifically with respect to HCV and injecting.



**DREAM**  
TEAM



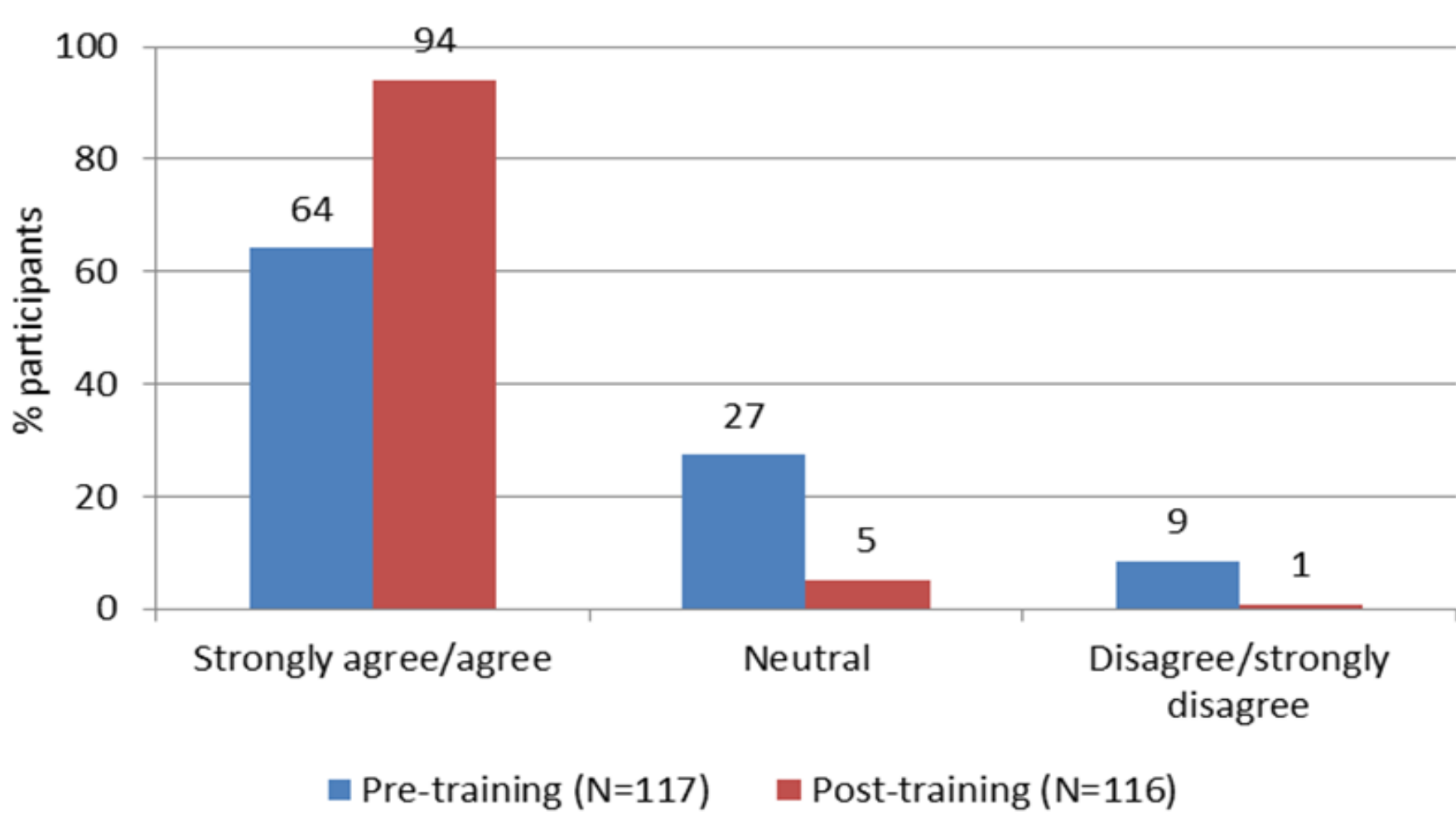
## Results

### Training boosted confidence around injecting and HCV-related issues.

Compared to pre-training results, substantially higher proportions of participants agreed post-training that they:

- Felt comfortable working with young people at risk of or currently injecting (64% to 94%).

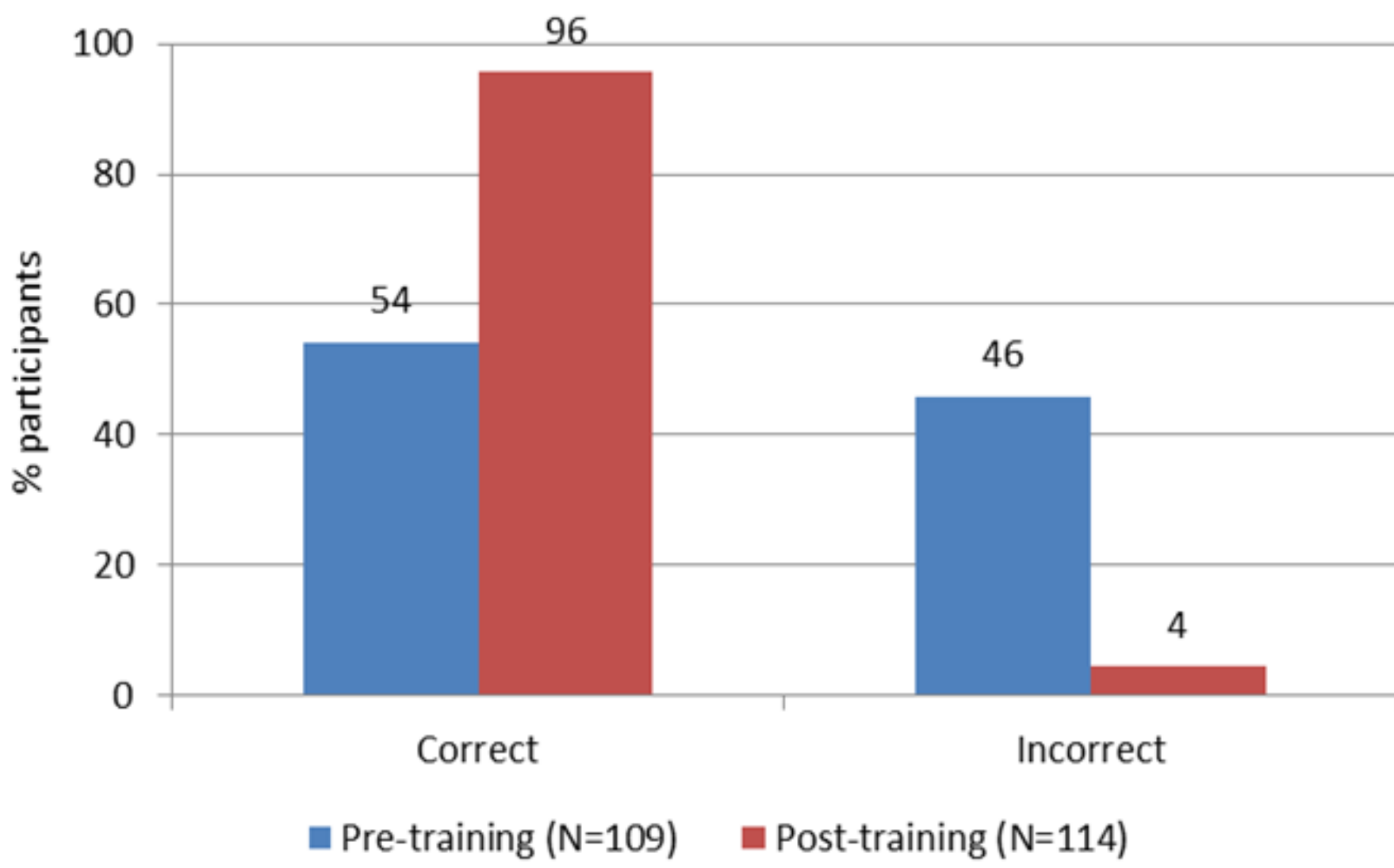
Pre- and post-training ratings of agreement with the statement, *I feel comfortable working with young people who inject drugs or may be at risk of injecting drugs*



- Felt confident in their knowledge of HCV (21% to 96%) and young people who inject (23% to 89%), and their capacity to discuss such matters (49% to 95%).

### Training enhanced participants' knowledge about hepatitis C treatment.

Proportion of participants who responded correctly that hepatitis C can be cured, pre- and post-training

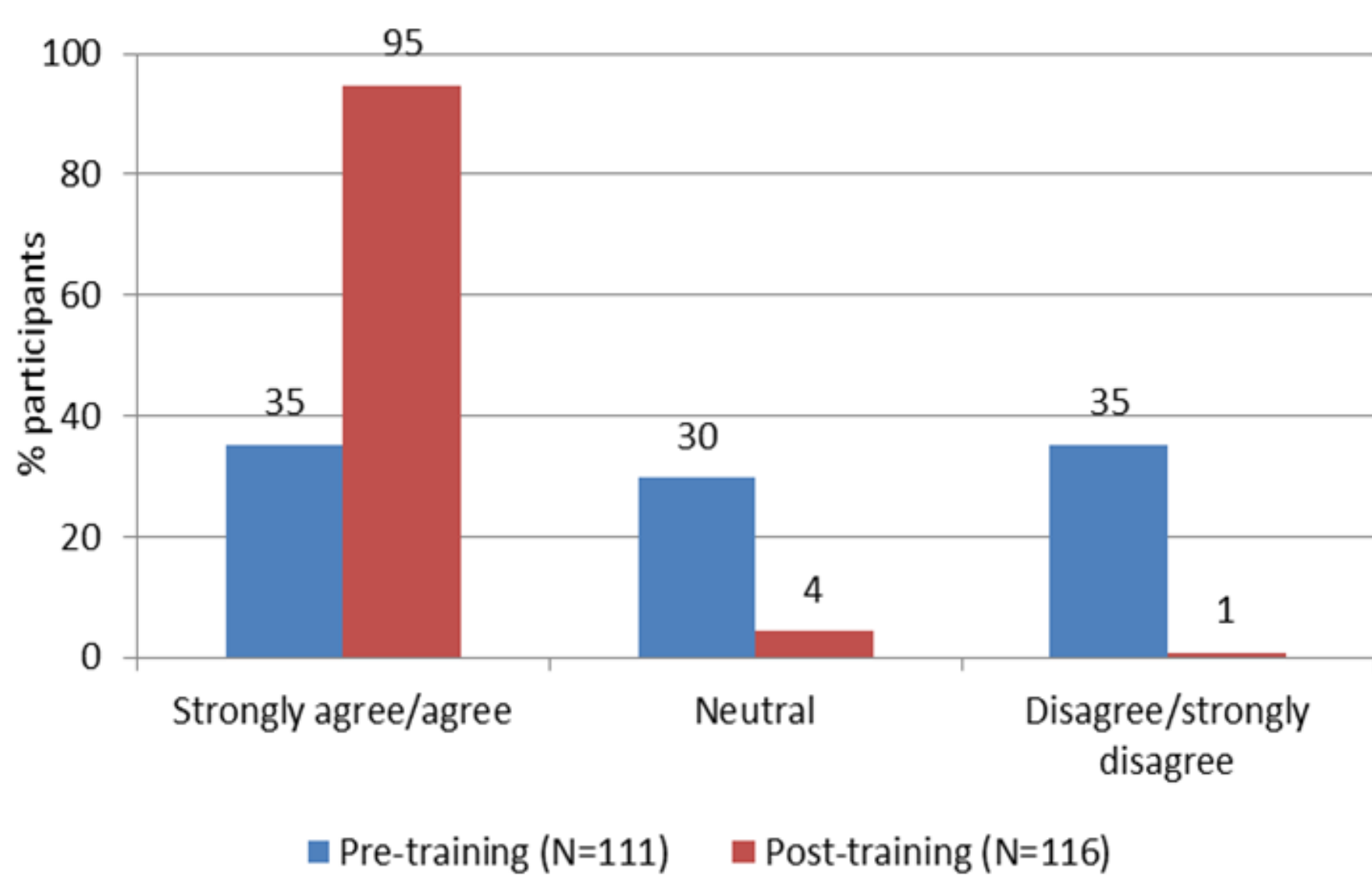


### Relationships between the harm reduction and youth sectors were strengthened.

More participants agreed/strongly agreed post-training that:

- Their clients would benefit from Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) access (68% to 85%).
- They knew where to refer clients for harm reduction services (35% to 95%).

Pre- and post-training ratings of agreement with the statement, *I know to where/who/which services to refer my clients for hepatitis C, NSP and injecting drug use information and services*



## Results (continued)

95% of participants indicated post-training that they would support their service's greater involvement in harm reduction programs.

Qualitative feedback reflected a range of intentions to expand client access to harm reduction supports. Support for, and connection to NSP services were consistent themes.

**"approaches to NSP and their value!"**

**"knowledge and encouragement of NSP"**

**"will look into options for integrating harm minimisation/hep C"**

**"to network closer with our local NSP"**

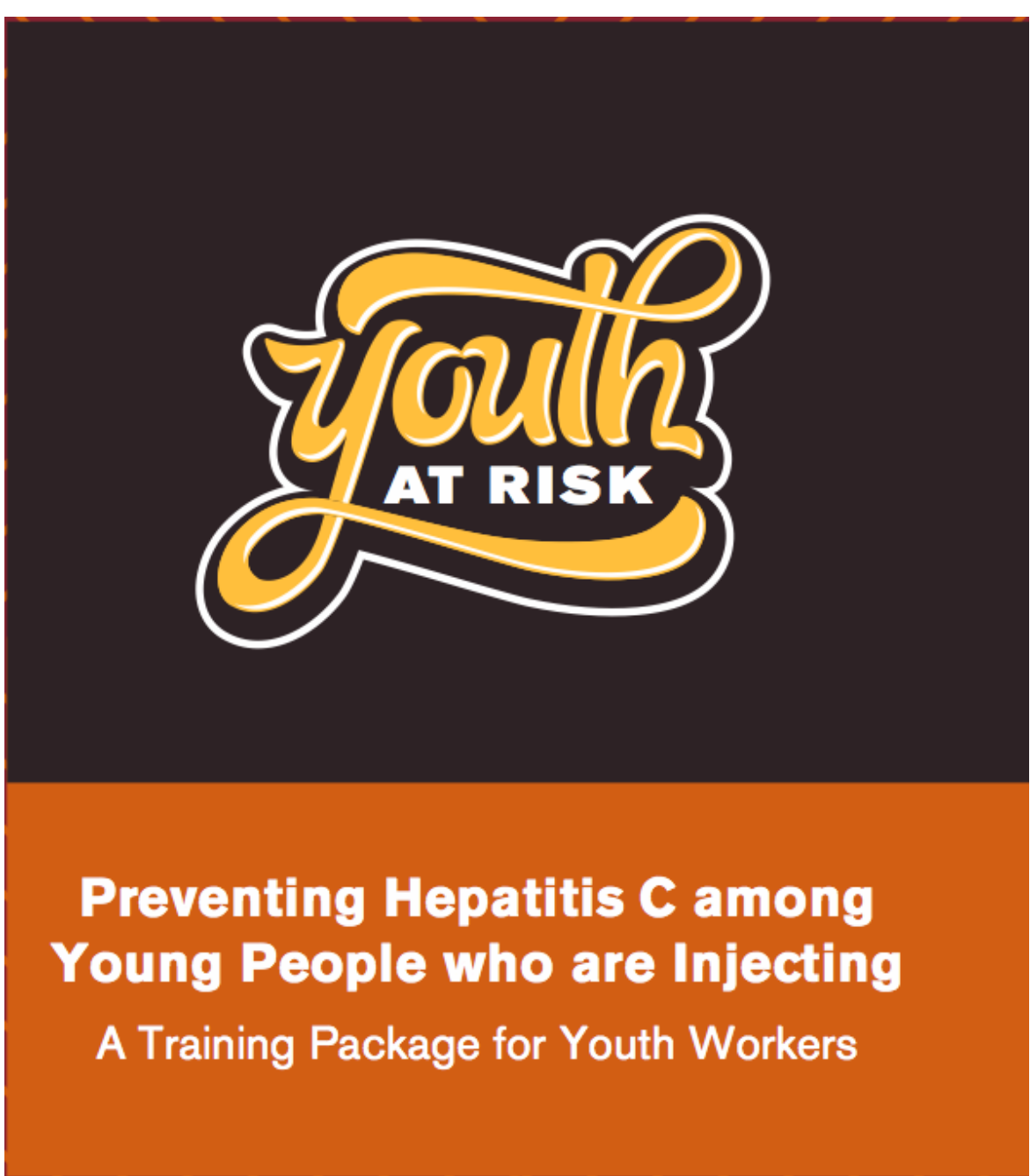
**"pathways to becoming [a] secondary NSP"**

## Conclusion

*Youth at Risk* assists workers to effectively support the health and wellbeing of young people who inject drugs or are at risk of doing so in the future.

The training enhances knowledge around HCV, injecting and harm reduction, as well as confidence and comfort around these issues.

It creates opportunities to improve linkages between the youth, AOD and harm reduction sectors and pathways into health care for 'at risk' young people.



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