

The Effectiveness of Halfway House Services

Villanova University's Human Organization Science Institute, under contract to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, conducted a five-year study of the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment services for Medical Assistance recipients. This study specifically focused on the impact of Pennsylvania's Act 152 (1988), expanding the availability of drug and alcohol treatment to Medicaid recipients. This study, to date the largest of its kind in the nation (involving over 10,000 individuals), examined the relationship between various types of drug and alcohol treatment and selected outcome measures (changes in client behavior), including subsequent use of additional drug and alcohol treatments, use of inpatient medical services, employment and earnings and criminal activity.

The study also examined service use and delivery in four different funding streams: Single County Authorities (SCAs) as managed by the Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Pennsylvania Department of Health; Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) under capitation contracts with the Office of Medical Assistance Programs, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare; the Philadelphia-based Health Insuring Organization (HIO/HealthPASS), also under a capitation contract with the Department of Public Welfare; and, clients using services through the traditional Fee-For-Service entitlement program.

The study used a combination of evaluation methods. Qualitative research (interviews, focus groups, document review) was conducted to determine the content and context of decision and policy making activities, program design and implementation efforts, and best practices for service delivery. Quantitative research used data from a variety of state agencies as well as service providers to statistically describe and document the populations being served and the services being used, and applied multivariate statistical analyses to determine the effectiveness of treatment as related to the selected client outcomes (changes in behavior during the five year study period). Cost of treatment studies was also completed.

A major highlight of the study recognizes the modality of treatment offered at a halfway house by stating:

Long-Term Non-Hospital, Residential Rehabilitation is most commonly statistically associated with positive changes in client outcomes, including reductions in overall arrests, violent crimes, crimes against persons, property crimes, drug-related offenses, and public order crimes. This treatment modality is also associated with increases in employment and wages earned, as well as a reduction in relapse and the need for subsequent drug and alcohol treatment.