

Minnesota Teen Challenge follow-up study Results summary

Minnesota Teen Challenge is one of the largest residential drug and alcohol treatment and recovery programs in the state of Minnesota. The 13-15 month faith based recovery program is designed to assist both teens and adults in breaking free from chemical addiction by addressing their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.

About the graduates

Between 2007 and 2009, 315 men, women, and youth graduated from the Minnesota Teen Challenge 12-month Life Care program. Nearly two-thirds of program participants (66%) were adult men, 23 percent were adult women, and 11 percent were teenagers at the time of treatment.

About the study

Wilder Research, an independent evaluator, sampled and conducted one-year follow-up telephone interviews with graduates who completed treatment between August 2007 and May 2009. In total, 154 graduates, 59 percent of the sample selected for follow-up, were interviewed by Wilder Research staff.

Participant backgrounds

- Over half (55%) of respondents were adult men, 34 percent were adult women, and 10 percent were teenagers (6% boys and 4% girls).
- Prior to admission, participants used a wide range of substances, especially alcohol and marijuana. Alcohol and methamphetamine were named as the biggest problems.

Current abstinence and substance use

- 74 percent of graduates reported no use in the six months prior to follow-up.
- 62 percent of graduates reported no relapses since graduation nor use in the past 6 months.
- Among youth graduates, abstinence rates are lower with 64 percent of youth reporting no use in the prior six months and 47 percent reporting no relapses since graduating Teen Challenge.

Other findings include:

- The main relapse substances were alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs.
- Tobacco use at follow up has declined: Only 32 percent of respondents used tobacco products at follow-up compared to 89 percent at entry to Teen Challenge.

Relapse and sobriety factors

- The top three factors contributing to relapse were: “family problems” (24%), “loneliness” (21%), and “hanging out with the wrong crowd” (18%).
- The top three supports for maintaining sobriety were: “staying connected to God” (62%), “family” (36%), and “hanging out with positive people” (22%).

Other outcomes at follow-up

- 58 percent had attended school since graduating Teen Challenge; 68 percent were currently in school.
- 77 percent were either working 30 or more hours a week or a full-time student.
- 40 percent were living in their own house or apartment, and 33 percent were living with relatives, friends, or roommates.
- The vast majority said their relationships with friends and family had improved.
- A small proportion of graduates reported legal problems since they left Teen Challenge: six graduates were charged with a new crime, and seven were incarcerated. Legal involvement is not surprising considering that Teen Challenge receives referrals from the criminal justice system.
- Having a job and a mentor after program completion reduces the likelihood of relapse. Study findings show that graduates who have both are significantly more likely to avoid relapse than those who have neither.

Feedback about Minnesota Teen Challenge

Over 80 percent rated the overall quality of Teen Challenge as “outstanding” or “very good. When asked to name what helped most, the faith-based aspects of the program were mentioned most frequently.

For more information: This summary presents highlights of the *Following up with graduates of Minnesota Teen Challenge: results of one-year interviews with persons completing treatment in 2007 through 2009*. For more information about this report, contact Michelle Decker Gerrard or Rachel Hardeman at Wilder Research, 651-280-2700.

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January 2011