



HRDI

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Transforming Lives by Enhancing Drug Prevention, Treatment and Creating Alternative Pathways in the Adjudication Process

October 17, 2011

A Safe Haven Foundation 2750 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago, Illinois

Joel K. Johnson, M.Ed.
HRDI President & CEO

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), untreated drug and alcohol abuse costs the United States an estimated \$346 billion per year. Federal research indicates that only 18.2 percent of Americans needing treatment for addiction actually receive it. When addiction is not identified and treated properly, the consequences to society are multiplied by the onset of other costly diseases, as well as increased rates of crime, violence, and health and social costs.

America must recognize that addiction is a health problem. Like other illnesses, coverage for services should be provided by all private and public payers, comparable to and integrated with delivery systems for medical/surgical and obstetrical care.

Individuals with alcohol and other drug problems who have committed nonviolent crimes should have opportunities for deferred prosecution or for incarceration alternatives that involve addiction treatment and recovery services; and individuals who are incarcerated and need treatment for addiction should have access to appropriate care while incarcerated.

The appropriate services continuum for Substance Abuse/Mental Health issues should be based on a clinical assessment and diagnosis using evidence based, clinically relevant measurements such as the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), Patient Placement Criteria.

Treatment is optimum when provided through a continuum of coordinated interventions that include residential care, out-patient treatment, follow up and recovery management services.

Comprehensive service systems are required to address the range of patient needs beyond the cessation of drug use, which ultimately can result in long term recovery.

Optimum results are achieved when clinically-assessed needs are matched to services that are appropriate and consider the required level of frequency, intensity, duration and setting.

Specific wellness promotion strategies can foster resiliency and recovery across the lifespan of individuals in diverse ethnic and cultural communities.

To bring the issue home, the 2008 Illinois Youth Survey indicated that of the **Sixth grade** students in Cook County (IL) that responded to the survey (9576 students in 158 schools): 10% alcohol; 2% tobacco; and 1% marijuana use was reported within 30 days. **Eighth grade** (10333 students in 146 schools) students reported 26% alcohol; 6% tobacco; and 10% marijuana use within 30 days. **Tenth grade** (7936 students in 49 schools) reported 37% alcohol; 11% tobacco; and 17% marijuana use within 30 days. Finally **Twelfth grade** (6660 students in 49 schools) students reported 50% alcohol; 18% tobacco; and 21% marijuana use.

In 2010, Chicago led the country, when it was reported in June 2011 that 83% of the men processed at Cook County Jail, tested positive for drugs (<http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/5978519-418/worst-in-nation-83-percent-of-chicago-arrestees-have-drugs-in-system.html>).

HRDI operates a men's residential treatment (diversion) program, *Nearwest*, in Chicago's Pilsen Community. The program, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, provides ASAM's level III.5 treatment to 20 men, eighteen years old and up, who have been referred by the criminal justice system in Cook County (IL) and surrounding counties. On average we provide services to nearly 200 men annually, and are able to fill open beds within 24 hours.

HRDI's *Chicago Girls Program*, funded by the Chicago Department of Health, provides level ASAM III.5 residential treatment to sixteen adolescent girls, ages twelve to seventeen. 38% percent of our referrals originate from the criminal justice system. 98% of this population report using marijuana. 71% used daily. The average age of first use was thirteen.

Similarly, HRDI's *Child & Adolescent Substance Abuse Program*, and outpatient level I program, services on average, 50 teenagers at a time, ages twelve to seventeen. 79% of these clients are referred from the criminal justice system. 52% of this population report using marijuana daily. 23% reported using both marijuana and alcohol.

Immediate federal action should include the following policy recommendations:

1. Increase federal funding and promote Medicaid improvements to secure a sustainable effective client-based continuum of care for addicted individuals, which also recognize the effects of addiction on our country's children and families.
2. Facilitate the development of a quality workforce by offering addiction specialists, those in ancillary professions, and peer providers with appropriate career-ladder choices and professional training specific to addiction.
3. Remove discriminatory policies that impede access to private and public health services for those with alcohol and drug problems, including co-occurring illness.