

Local Treatment Provider Demonstrates Success with High-Risk Youth

This month's release of the 2009 Partnership Attitude Tracking (PAT) study sends a warning of a possible shift in the direction of adolescent substance use, with significant increases reported by teenagers in 2009 compared to 2008¹. This national survey recorded a one-year increase in past year marijuana use (32% in 2008 to 38% in 2009) and Ecstasy use (6% in 2008 to 10% in 2009) among students in grades 9 -12. It also noted an increase in the percentage of teens who reported using alcohol in the past month from 35 percent to 39 percent. The study warns parents to be aware and act early if they suspect their child is at risk. It also notes that this rise comes at a time when federal money is being drained from prevention and intervention services.

These findings are important to keep in mind when reviewing the recent outcomes of Phoenix House of San Diego's Family as Healers (FAH) alcohol and drug treatment program. Funded through grants from The California Endowment and Alliance Healthcare Foundation, FAH expanded Phoenix House's residential and outpatient treatment services to include families. FAH offered evidence-based treatment involving family members in counseling and social events within the therapeutic community. Youth participating in FAH had extensive involvement in substance use, delinquent behavior, poor school performance, and disruptive living situations. For example, youth were around 13 years old on average when they first started using alcohol and/or drugs, with over two-thirds reporting using two or more substances. Furthermore, over half of participants had prior arrests, averaging about three (not shown).

As Table 1 shows, of those youth who agreed to participate in the evaluation and were interviewed at six months post-exit, nearly two-thirds (63%) reported being sober in the past 30 days and 43 percent had remained drug free the entire six months since leaving treatment. In addition, a little more than three-quarters (76%) were crime free and over half (55%) were enrolled in school or employed. Youth also reported improved family relations (63%).

Table 1
FAH Clients Report Positive Outcomes Six Months Post-Exit

	Six Months Post-Exit
Clean and Sober the Last 30 Days	63%
Drug Free	43%
Crime Free	76%
Enrolled in School/Employed	55%
Improved Family Relations	63%
TOTAL	71 - 72

NOTES: Cases with missing information not included
SOURCES: SANDAG FAH Staff Follow-up Interviews

Serving some of the highest risk youth in the San Diego County systems (e.g., Health and Human Services and juvenile justice), outcomes of FAH suggest that the program had success in reducing participants' substance use and delinquent behaviors. However, this program like other treatment programs around the county, has been deeply impacted by budgetary reductions. While PAT is just one indicator of adolescents' substance use, it does call to attention the possibility of a "perfect storm". Specifically, the increase in demand for treatment is occurring during a time of reduced resources. To learn more about the outcomes of the FAH program and drug trends in San Diego, please visit www.sandag/cjc.

¹ Author (2010). **The Partnership for Drug-Free America and MetLife Foundation: 2009 Parents and Teens Attitude Tracking Study** [On-line]. Available at http://www.drugfree.org/Files/PATS_Full_Report_2009_PDF.