

Phoenix House

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RAND STUDY DOCUMENTS BENEFITS OF PHOENIX HOUSE ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

A study published this week in a leading scientific journal found that adolescents treated at one of Phoenix House's teen treatment centers demonstrated substantial reductions in drug use and unlawful behavior and an improvement in psychological status – and that the Phoenix Academy outperformed other juvenile programs in achieving these objectives.

The study tracked 175 youths ages 13 to 17 who received treatment at the Phoenix Academy of Los Angeles after being placed on probation by juvenile justice authorities. The treated group was compared with 274 adolescent probationers with similar profiles, including drug use, criminal activity and other factors, in other residential programs. The study was completed by researchers at the RAND Corporation and appears in the current issue of the journal, Psychology of Addictive Behaviors.

The adolescents in the study were followed for one year, with researchers collecting periodic information about their drug use, psychological health and criminal behavior. Improvement among the treated adolescents began immediately and continued for at least twelve months.

“This study provides clear empirical evidence that the therapeutic community model employed by Phoenix House can have a positive, lasting impact on teens in the juvenile justice system,” said Mitchell S. Rosenthal, M.D., president of Phoenix House.

“The researchers at RAND have demonstrated not only that the Phoenix Academy achieves its goals of reducing substance abuse and criminal behavior among its participants, but also that it achieves them more effectively than other residential placements for probationers.”

Among the study's key findings are:

- Adolescents who took part in the Phoenix Academy program consistently reported less drug use both during and after the period when most were in the residential portion of the treatment.
- Adolescents in the Phoenix Academy program received mental health benefits from treatment, including reductions in symptoms of depression, anxiety and other forms of psychological distress.

- Adolescents in the Phoenix Academy program showed declines in several crime-related outcomes, including arrests.
- Adolescents in the Phoenix Academy program continued to show reductions in the symptoms of psychological distress after completing treatment. According to the researchers, “this may suggest that Phoenix Academy treatment fosters coping strategies or develops other internal resources on which youths successfully draw even after they return to the environments that originally contributed to their psychological distress.”
- The sole aspect of behavior in which the comparison group showed greater benefits than the Phoenix House sample was in reduced use of tobacco.

The Phoenix Academy of Los Angeles is one of eleven Phoenix Academies operated by Phoenix House nationwide. Other programs are located in: Santa Ana and San Diego, CA; Augusta, ME; Springfield, MA; Dublin, NH; Long Island and Westchester, NY; Pascoag, RI; Austin and Dallas, TX.

Phoenix House is the nation’s largest nonprofit provider of substance abuse treatment and prevention services, operating more than 100 programs in nine states. Since 1967, Phoenix House has treated more than 100,000 substance abusers – currently caring for a population of more than 6,000 at residential centers for adults, residential Phoenix Academies combining long-term treatment and schooling for adolescents, outpatient, after school, and day programs.

Funding for the study was provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, as part of its nationwide “Exemplary Adolescent Treatment Models” project. Additional funding was provided by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Authors of the study are RAND researchers Andrew R. Morral, Daniel F. McCaffrey and Greg Ridgeway.

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