

Adolescent Treatment in Therapeutic Communities: National Data on Availability

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Therapeutic Communities for Substance Abuse Treatment

- Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TCs in delivering substance abuse treatment
 - In adults
 - In adolescents
- There are few national data that describe the characteristics of TCs in the US



The “Classic” TC Model

- Long-term residential program
- Primarily serving adult clients
- “Community as Method” approach (DeLeon, 2000), with a focus on the “whole person”
- Measurable elements of culture and structure in the Survey of Essential Elements Questionnaire (DeLeon & Melnick, 1996)



Element 1: TC Perspective

- Normative dimensions of TC culture
- Views on addiction
- Views on “right living” including values such as the work ethic, personal responsibility, and responsibility towards others
- Views on roles of counselors as role models of these values



Element 2: Client Hierarchy

- TCs are known for organizing clients into a hierarchy
- Based on time in treatment and clinical progress
- More senior clients take on greater responsibilities within the TC, such as facilitating groups and acting as role models



Element 3: Therapeutic Role of Clients

- Given the emphasis on “community as method,” TCs are known for clients playing significant therapeutic roles within the TC
- Confronting negative behavior & attitudes of others
- Helping others achieve goals
- Affirming progress of others



Element 4: Therapeutic Role of Work

- Work is viewed as having therapeutic importance in the process of recovery
- Vocational training
- Employment during later stages
- Sometimes these jobs are part of TC-owned businesses



Element 5: Aspects of the Program

- Three main stages of treatment: orientation/induction, primary treatment, and re-entry
- Frequent seminars about “right living” and the recovery process
- Meetings to address problems that arise within the TC
- Rituals and traditions to build a sense of community belonging



Element 6: Discipline within the TC

- Rules of behavior with sanctions for violations
- Emphasis on discipline being an opportunity for learning



Modifications to the TC Model

- Literature suggests several changes:
 - Shorter lengths of stay
 - Rise of outpatient services in TC settings
 - Application of TC Model to new patient populations, e.g. adolescents
- Raises the question of whether and how the elements of the TC Model are being modified



Research Questions

- To what extent are TCs offering treatment services to adolescent clients?
- Are there significant differences TCs with adolescent programs and adult-only TCs in adherence to the six TC elements?
- Are these two types of TCs differentiated by varying reliance on certain types of referral sources?



Methods

- Nationally representative sample of 380 TCs
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Offer substance abuse treatment services
 - Community-based (excludes correctional and VHA facilities)
 - Staff and administrator self-identify the program as a therapeutic community
- Data collected via face-to-face interviews with administrators and/or clinical directors
- Participation rate of 86% among eligible TCs
- Complete data on all measures from 360 TCs



Measures

- Dependent variable: TC offers a treatment track for adolescents (1 = yes, 0 = no)
 - Logistic regression for analysis
- Mean scales drawn from 31 items of the SEEQ
 - *TC perspective* ($\alpha = .82$)
 - *Client hierarchy* ($\alpha = .85$)
 - *Therapeutic roles of clients* ($\alpha = .84$)
 - *Work as therapy* ($\alpha = .80$)
 - *Aspects of program* ($\alpha = .82$)
 - *Discipline* ($\alpha = .84$)



Measures (continued)

- Referral sources
 - % referrals via program alumni
 - % referrals via drug courts
 - % referrals via other aspects of legal system
 - % referrals via social service agencies
- Organizational Variables
 - Residential-only TC
 - Membership in Therapeutic Communities of America (TCA)
 - Accreditation by JCAHO or CARF
 - Size (number of counselors)
 - Age of the TC in years



Descriptive Statistics: Basic Characteristics

	% or Mean (S.D.)
Offers Adolescent Track	24.44%
Residential-Only TC	53.06%
Membership in TCA	23.33%
Accreditation JCAHO/CARF	30.56%
Number of Counselors	11.68 (22.83)
TC Age in Years	20.29 (12.30)



Descriptive Statistics: TC Elements

	Mean (S.D.)
TC Perspective	4.69 (.44)
Client Hierarchy	3.79 (1.35)
Therapeutic Roles of Clients	4.32 (.88)
Work as Therapy	3.76 (1.32)
Aspects of Program	4.38 (.92)
Discipline	4.66 (.73)



Descriptive Statistics: Referral Sources

	Mean (S.D.)
% from program alumni	10.68 (14.29)
% from drug courts	16.51 (22.04)
% from other legal system	40.36 (31.27)
% from social service agencies	21.58 (23.75)



Logistic Regression of Adolescent Tx: TC Elements

	b (S.E.)	Odds Ratio
TC Perspective	.600 (.396)	---
Client Hierarchy	.243 (.154)	---
Therapeutic Role of Clients	-.441 (.217)*	.644
Work as Therapy	-.652 (.133)***	.521
Aspects of Program	.067 (.217)	---
Discipline	.196 (.272)	---

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Net of referral sources & control variables



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TC Elements as Predictors of Adolescent Treatment

- Work as Therapy
 - Vocational training & emphasis on employability
 - Likely less immediately relevant for adolescents
- Therapeutic Roles of Clients
 - Confronting negative behaviors/attitudes, providing affirmations, helping other achieve goals
 - This therapeutic role may be less appropriate for the developmental stage of adolescence



Logistic Regression of Adolescent Tx: Referral Sources

	b (S.E.)	Odds Ratio For S.D. Δ in X	(S.D. of X)
% from program alumni	-.057 (.017)**	.442	(14.29)
% from drug courts	.009 (.006)	---	---
% from other legal system	.013 (.005)**	1.487	(31.27)
% social service agencies	.009 (.006)	---	---



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† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Net of TC elements & control variables

Logistic Regression of Adolescent Tx: Organizational Variables

	b (S.E.)	Odds Ratio
Residential-Only Services	-1.037 (.308)**	.354
Membership in TCA	.729 (.330)*	2.073
Accreditation (JCAHO/CARF)	.901 (.306)**	2.461
TC Size (# counselors)	.008 (.006)	---
TC Age in years	-.008 (.012)	---



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† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Net of TC elements & referral sources

Summary

- About a quarter of TCs in a nationally representative sample offered a treatment track for adolescents
- Overall, there was strong adherence to the TC elements
- Evidence that TCs with adolescent programs have made some modifications to these elements
 - Less adherence to Therapeutic Roles of Clients
 - Less adherence to Work as Therapy
- No differences in TC perspective, Client Hierarchy, Aspects of Program, & Discipline



Summary (continued)

- Some differences in referral sources
 - Less reliance on alumni referrals
 - More reliance on legal system (but non-drug court) referrals
- TCs offering adolescent services were:
 - Less likely to only offer residential services
 - More likely to be in TCA
 - More likely to be accredited by JCAHO/CARF



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