

## **Overview of Federal Government study of Teen Challenge Teen Challenge, Brooklyn, NY and Rehrersburg, PA**

Teen Challenge claims of a 70% cure rate for the drug addicts graduating from their program attracted the attention of the U.S. Federal Government in 1973. Most secular drug rehabilitation programs at that time only experienced a cure rate of 1-15% of their graduates. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, funded the first year of this study to evaluate the long term results of Teen Challenge program.

This study focused on all students in the class of 1968 that entered Teen Challenge in Brooklyn, NY, and then transferred to Teen Challenge in Rehrersburg, PA, for the second half of their training. This follow-up study seven years later (1975) sought to determine six variables: what proportion of the program participants were still drug free, no legal involvements, employed or pursuing education, a part of a family unit, participating in church activities, and physical and mental health.

The survey was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Catherine Hess, M.D., the former assistant chief of the Cancer Control Program of the U.S. Public Health Service, who had previously served as the Medical Director for the New York Hospital Methadone Clinic. The main premise of the study was to demonstrate that introduction of a religious component into the treatment of drug addicts is the one aspect which produces the large success rate.

The National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago developed the survey instrument, located survey participants, conducted the personal interviews, and obtained a urine sample to test for drugs. The National Medical Services, Inc., of Philadelphia, PA, conducted the drug screening detection for this population.

Research results were categorized into three groups.

P1 were students that entered Teen Challenge in Brooklyn, NY, but dropped out and never attended the Rehrersburg, PA, program.

P2 were students that completed the Brooklyn program who later dropped out of the Rehrersburg program.

P3 were graduates of the Rehrersburg Training Center program

A total of 186 persons were interviewed for this project, P1=70, P2=52, and P3=64. The P3 group of 64 represented 97% of the total population possible. The results of this survey clearly indicated the success of the Teen Challenge program in the following areas:

- \* The Teen Challenge definition of “drug-free” means abstaining from all use of narcotics, marijuana, alcohol, and cigarettes. 67% of the graduates (P3) are drug-free as indicated by the urinalysis test. (86% stated they were drug-free on the questionnaire.)
  
- \* 72% of the graduates (P3) continued their education upon completion of Teen Challenge. The areas include getting their G.E.D., or pursuing college level education.

- \* 75% of the graduates (P3) indicated their current status as employed. 73% of the graduates are self-supporting by earning their own salary. Of those who are currently employed, 58% have been at their present job for over one year.
- \* 87.5% of the graduates did not require additional treatment in drug treatment programs after leaving Teen Challenge. Over 90% considered themselves addicted to drugs before entering Teen Challenge.
- \* 67% of the graduates are regularly attending church. 57% of the graduates are involved in church work.
- \* 90% of all survey participants had been arrested before entering Teen Challenge. These 147 people had been arrested 1020 times. In the seven years since leaving Teen Challenge, 79% of P1 have been arrested, P2= 56%, and P3= 30% have been arrested.
- \* 92% of the graduates (P3) report good-excellent health, whereas the numbers are significantly lower for the other two groups, P1=59% and P2=75%.

Two more documents are available which give a more detailed description of this study. Both are available from the Teen Challenge USA office.

NIDA Services Research Report: An Evaluation of the Teen Challenge Treatment Program. A publication of the U.S. Dept. of Health Education, & Welfare. DHEW Publication No. (ADM) 77-425 Printed 1977.

Research Summation, by Dr. Catherine B. Hess. Dr. Hess headed this study of Teen Challenge.

To obtain a copy of these, contact:

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Or visit the website: [www.iTeenChallenge.org](http://www.iTeenChallenge.org) and go to the "Resources" section