

How Effective is  
the Indianapolis Teen Challenge Program  
in Helping Teenage Girls Deal with  
Life Controlling Problems?

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**HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE INDIANAPOLIS TEEN CHALLENGE PROGRAM IN  
HELPING TEENAGE GIRLS DEAL WITH  
LIFE CONTROLLING PROBLEMS?**

The Teen Challenge program was founded in 1958 by Reverend David Wilkerson. He originally began this outreach to youth gang members in New York city. Wilkerson believed, that Jesus Christ would ultimately make the difference in peoples lives, and could break the hold that such things as gang membership, drugs and alcohol had on them. Therefore, he preached the christian gospel and after a young person committed his or her life to Christ, and if he or she would voluntarily commit to the Teen Challenge program, then an active effort to make changes in that persons life could begin (Manuel 1987).

Since that time, Teen Challenge has expanded to both adult and adolescent programs across the United States and parts of South America and Europe.

In 1976, the Health, Education & Welfare Department conducted a study of the largest Teen Challenge center, which is located in Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania. The study was conducted to determine the programs success rate. This scientific study proved that eighty-six percent of the residents of the Teen Challenge Program had remained drug and alcohol free for over 5 years. The success rate of Teen Challenge was then compared to other detoxification

facilities in which the cure rate was only one percent and community centers, in which the success rate was ten percent (Teen Challenge, Pushing the Cure).

The Teen Challenge Program in Indianapolis is a long term residential treatment center that deals primarily with girls ages fourteen to seventeen. The girls that come to the Teen Challenge program have various "life controlling problems". These problems include drug and alcohol addiction, physical or sexual abuse, juvenile delinquency of all types and severe cases of being incorrigible.

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this report is to determine the success rate of the Indianapolis Teen Challenge program. The success of the program will be indicated by the complete abstinence from drugs and alcohol, the improvement of family relations, the helpfulness of the program in the opinion of past residents, and if the resident accepted Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior and has remained a christian since leaving the program.

Scope of the Study:

The research data was primarily obtained by distributing a questionnaire to residents from the past three years. The questionnaire was mailed to the residents, as well as being administered by phone.

### Methods Utilized:

A questionnaire was developed concerning the effectiveness of the Teen Challenge Program, and consequently, distributed and administered to thirty-eight girls that had been residents of the Teen Challenge program within the past three years. Of the thirty-eight that were surveyed sixty percent, or twenty-three girls responded.

After developing a questionnaire, secondary research was conducted concerning the success of other Teen Challenge programs, in order to compare the success rate in Indianapolis to that of other Teen Challenge centers. Articles concerning the treatment of adolescents with alcohol and drug addictions were also reviewed. In addition, articles concerning aftercare for institutionalized adolescents was consulted in order to develop recommendations for future use.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Resident Information:

The average age of the residents when first entering the Teen Challenge Program is fifteen. When the girls enter the program, they bring with them a great deal of issues that must be dealt with before successfully completing the program. In order to successfully complete the program, the resident must complete all of the necessary requirements. After completing all of the necessary requirements the resident graduates from the program.

When asked why they came to the Teen Challenge program, many numerous answers, were given. Of the girls surveyed, the number one cause for placement was rebellion, the second was drug abuse, and thirdly were those that had suffered from some type of abuse. Other causes included alcohol problems, juvenile delinquency, truancy from school and lastly girls that had been court ordered to the facility.

Table I.

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## Reason for Placement

95%	Rebellion
58%	Drug Abuse
57%	Physical or Sexual Abuse
48%	Alcohol Abuse
43%	Juvenile Delinquency
30%	Truancey
13%	Court Ordered Placement

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The average stay at the Teen Challenge program is eight to eleven months, however, those that graduate often stay a year or longer. The survey results indicated that fifty percent of the graduates stay in the program eight to eleven months and forty percent stay in the program one year or more.

### Alcohol Use:

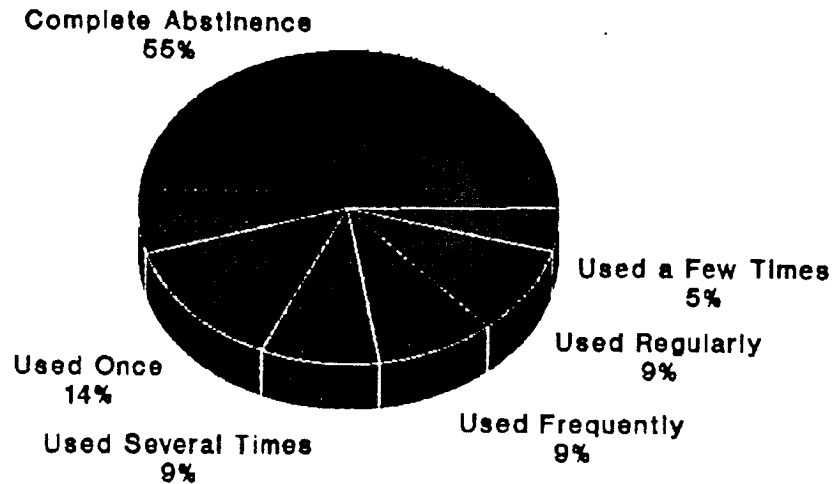
The abuse of alcohol among teenagers has increased dramatically in the past ten years. Ninety-two percent of all high school seniors reported having consumed alcohol at some time in their life, and sixty-three percent reported that they were currently using alcohol. Due to this increase, there have been new endeavors to create effective treatment centers for those individuals that have either an alcohol dependency or abuse problem (Morehouse 355-356). The need is great, and continually growing for effective adolescent treatment centers, and the endeavor of Teen Challenge is to meet that need.

The survey findings indicated, that fifty-five percent of all the girls that had been a resident of the program had completely abstained from the use of alcohol. Of those that used alcohol, fourteen percent indicated that they had only used alcohol one time, five percent had used alcohol a few times, and nine percent indicated that they had drunk some type of alcoholic beverage, several times, frequently or regularly.

### Drug Use:

Not only is the use of alcohol on the rise among high school seniors, but also, the use of drugs is on the increase. According

# Alcohol Use After Program



## Frequency of Alcohol Consumption

Includes Graduates and Non-Graduates

Figure I.

to "The State of a Child in Indiana", the state of Indiana ranks above the national average in every category of drug use. This includes the use of marijuana, cocaine, crack, inhalants, amphetamines, tranquilizers, narcotics, psychedelics, heroin and steroids. This is an indicator as to why effective adolescent programs are so important and desperately necessary.

Thirty percent of the girls that enter Teen Challenge go on to complete the entire program. Of this group seventy percent remain drug free and sixty-one percent of all the girls that enter the Teen Challenge Program remain drug free.

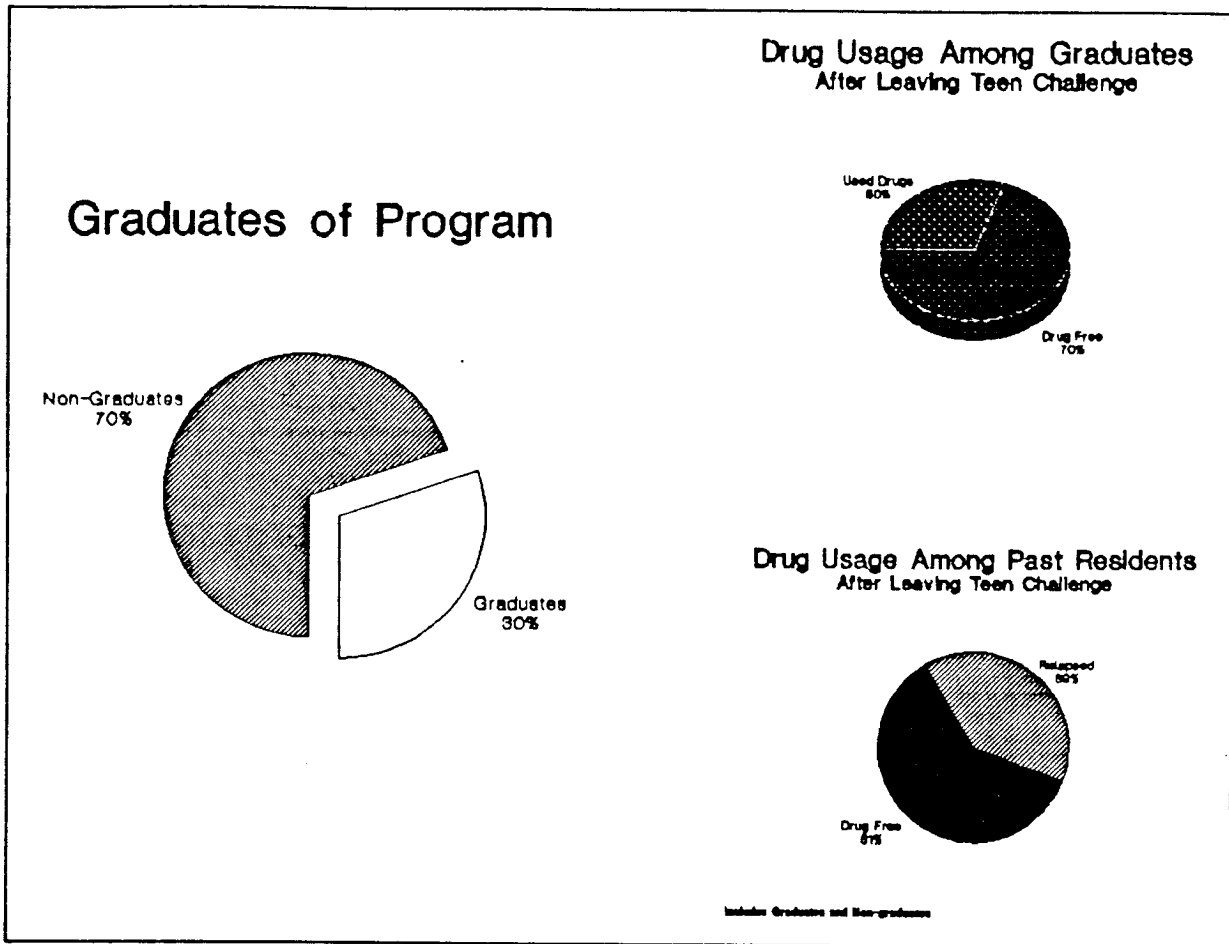


Figure II.

Of those individuals that had used drugs since leaving the program, four percent reported having used drugs once, nine percent reported using drugs a few times, or several times, and thirteen percent indicated that they had used drugs frequently. None of the previous residents indicated that they were using drugs on a regular basis.



Table II.

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## Frequency of Drug Usage After Leaving Teen Challenge

61%	Complete Abstinence
4%	Used Once
9%	Used a Few Times
9%	Used Drugs Several Times
13%	Used Drugs Frequently
0%	Use Drugs Regularly

Includes Graduates and Non-Graduates

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### Tobacco Use:

The national average of high school seniors that have reported smoking cigarettes was forty percent, the average number in Indiana is approximately sixty-nine percent, and, in addition, the use of smokeless tobacco is higher in the state of Indiana ("The State of a Child in Indiana" 5). This high percentage is also reflected in the number of girls that use tobacco products after leaving the program.

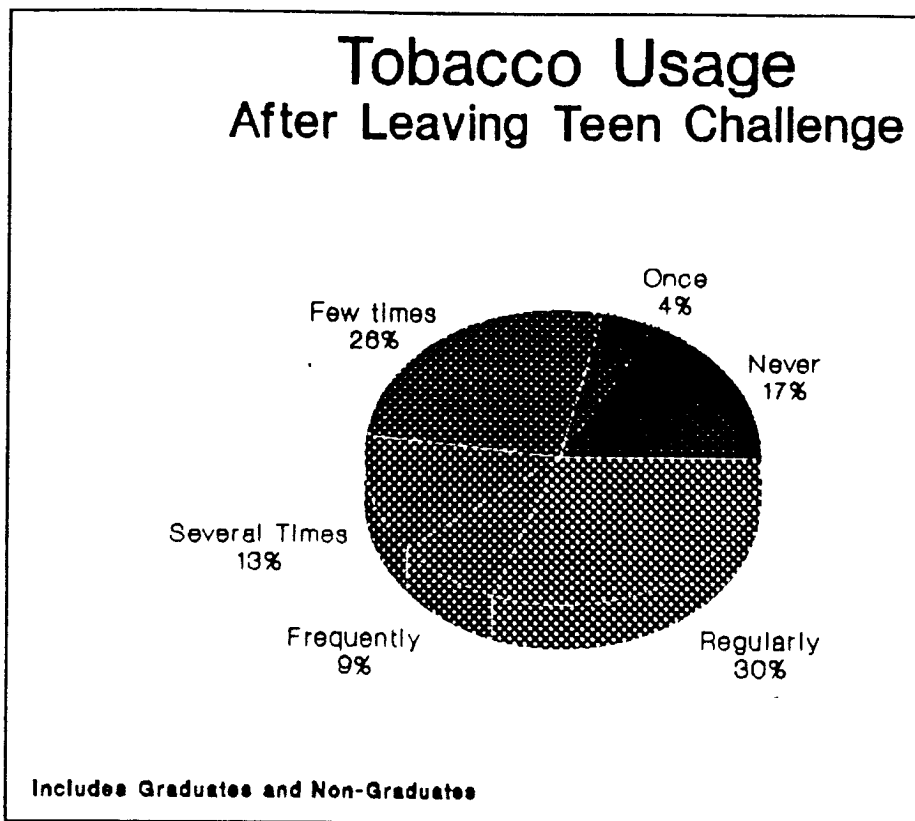


Figure III.

After leaving the Teen Challenge program, eighty-three percent of the girls reported that they had used tobacco products. Of this eighty-three percent, four percent indicated that they had used tobacco one time since leaving, twenty-six percent a few times, thirteen percent several times, ten percent frequently and the greatest number, thirty percent use tobacco products on a regular basis.

#### Family Relationships:

Many times when girls come to Teen Challenge, the parents are bringing their daughter as a last resort. They do not know how to help their daughter, and therefore, it is understandable that in

many cases the family relationship is significantly strained. The survey results signify that sixty-one percent of all family relationships show improvement after leaving the program, and the percentage is seventy percent for those that successfully complete the program.

Degree of Benefit:

When the previous residents were asked about the overall benefit of their experience at Teen Challenge, the majority, fifty-two percent, believed that they had been helped very much, thirteen percent believed Teen Challenge was helpful, thirty percent felt that Teen Challenge had helped somewhat, and four percent felt that Teen Challenge did not help.

Table III.

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## Helpfulness of Program

(In the opinion of past residents).

52%	Helped Very Much
13%	Was Helpful
30%	Helped Somewhat
4%	Did Not Help

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### Religious Training:

Teen Challenge is founded upon the ideal that sin, not personal shortcomings, is the root or cause of all types of deviant behavior, and that the only true "cure" for sin and its symptoms is Jesus Christ as savior of every individual's life. If the desire to sin, the root problem, is removed from a person's life by Jesus Christ, then the symptoms will also begin to disappear (Teen Challenge, Pushing the Cure).

When the previous residents were asked if they had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior while at Teen Challenge, one hundred percent of the graduates responded yes, and as a whole, ninety-six percent responded yes as well. Unfortunately, only fifty-two percent of all the residents have remained faithful to the Christian faith.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the findings of the study, conclusions can be drawn as to the effectiveness of the Indianapolis Teen Challenge program.

1. Fifty-eight percent of all the past residents are no longer using any form of alcohol.
2. Sixty-one percent of all Indianapolis Teen Challenge residents are no longer using any type of drugs.

3. Seventy percent of those that successfully graduated from the Indianapolis Teen Challenge are no longer using any type of drugs.
4. Eighty-three percent of the past Teen Challenge residents have used tobacco since leaving the program. Of these, thirty-seven percent use tobacco on a regular basis.
5. Sixty-one percent of all residents believe that their family relationships have improved as a result of Teen Challenge in Indianapolis.
6. Seventy percent of all graduates believe that their family relationships have improved as a result of their involvement at Indianapolis Teen Challenge.
7. Ninety-six percent of all the Teen Challenge residents accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior while enrolled at Indianapolis Teen Challenge.
8. One hundred percent of all Teen Challenge graduates accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior while enrolled in the Indianapolis Teen Challenge program.
9. Fifty-two percent of all residents have remained faithful to the christian faith.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the conclusions that are drawn from the study of prior residents of the Indianapolis Teen Challenge program, the following recommendations are being made.

1. To place an even greater emphasis upon the personal relationship that residents have with Jesus Christ. This may be done by attending church services, reading and studying the Bible, and praying.
2. To emphasize the importance of turning over all things to Jesus Christ, not just drugs and alcohol.
3. To encourage and teach about abstaining from the use tobacco products as strongly as drugs and alcohol.
4. Consider, for the future, establishing a half-way house or mid-home for graduates of the Teen Challenge program. This would offer graduates the ability to re-enter the "real world", while still having the support of the Teen Challenge staff and the security of the program. This type of establishment would not only provide support for graduates, but would also provide an alternative to returning to the situation they faced before entering the program.

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