

Minnesota Teen Challenge follow-up study Summary

Minnesota Teen Challenge is one of the largest residential drug and alcohol treatment programs in the state of Minnesota. The program serves both teens and adults and focuses on spiritual and emotional wellness, enhancing social skills, improving work habits, building supportive relationships, and growing in Christian faith.

About the graduates

Between 2001 and 2005, 512 men, women, and youth graduated from the Minnesota Teen Challenge 12-month Life Care program. Nearly two-thirds of program participants (65%) were adult men, 20 percent were adult women, and 15 percent were teenagers at the time of treatment.

About the study

Wilder Research, an independent evaluator, conducted a survey of randomly selected graduates who had left the program from 2001 to 2005. Between October 2006 and January 2007, 174 graduates, 55 percent of the sample selected for follow-up, were interviewed by Wilder Research staff.

Participant backgrounds

- Prior to admission, participants used a wide range of substances, especially alcohol and marijuana. Alcohol and methamphetamine were named as the biggest problems.
- 62 percent had been in treatment before they came to Teen Challenge (an average of 3.5 times); the vast majority rated these episodes as “less effective” than Teen Challenge.

Current abstinence and substance use

- In the six months prior to follow-up, 73 percent of adult graduates reported no use.
- 51 percent of adults stated they had not had a single relapse.
- Among youth graduates, abstinence rates are lower with 37 percent of youth reporting no use in the prior six months and 29 percent reporting no relapses since graduating Teen Challenge.

Other findings include:

- Among all recent 2005 graduates, including teens and adults, 57 percent reported no relapses, and 74 percent reported no use in the past six months.
- The main relapse substances were alcohol and marijuana.
- Only 32 percent of respondents used tobacco products at follow-up compared to 89 percent at entry to Teen Challenge.

Relapse and sobriety factors

- The top two contributing factors to relapse were “hanging out with the wrong crowd” (36% of participants) and having the desire to use (25%). Stress, boredom, and anger were also frequently mentioned.
- The top two factors helping to maintain sobriety were staying connected to God (58%) and family (34%). Determination, relationships with healthy people, and accountability were also frequently mentioned.

Other outcomes at follow-up

- 55 percent had attended school since graduating Teen Challenge; 31 percent were currently in school.
- 80 percent were either working 30 or more hours a week or a full-time student.
- 50 percent were living in their own house or apartment, and 35 percent were living with relatives, friends, or roommates.
- The vast majority said their relationships with friends and family had improved.
- A small proportion reported legal problems after graduation; 10 percent were charged with a new crime, and 13 percent had been incarcerated. Legal involvement is not surprising considering that Teen Challenge receives a growing number of referrals from the criminal justice system.

Feedback about Minnesota Teen Challenge

Over 80 percent rated the overall quality of Teen Challenge as “outstanding” or “very good. When asked to name what helped most, the faith-based aspects of the program were mentioned most frequently.

For more information: This summary presents highlights of the *Following-up with graduates of Minnesota Teen Challenge: Results of telephone surveys with persons completing treatment in 2001 through 2005*. For more information about this report, contact Michelle Decker Gerrard or Greg Owen at Wilder Research, 651-647-4600.

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