

Behavioral Health Case Example

Recommendation 3

Hospital leaders should encourage and actively participate in 1) developing a community-wide and/or regional plan for persons with behavioral health disorders and 2) coordinating community agencies addressing behavioral health needs.

Collaborative Initiative Meets the Needs of High-risk Youth **Oakwood Healthcare System, Dearborn, MI**

Summary

Through its Taylor Teen Health Center, Oakwood Healthcare System collaborated with the local police department and school district to address a critical gap in prevention services for young people at risk. The goal of the Oakwood Taylor Teen Health Center Youth Prevention Initiative is to prevent youth violence and substance abuse and keep early/first time offenders out of the traditional youth justice system by impacting their attitudes through extended programs that emphasize education, resistance skills, pro-social opportunity, self-esteem, and family involvement.

Community and Hospital

Taylor, MI, is in the downriver section of metropolitan Detroit, an area that is south of Dearborn, north of Monroe, west of the Detroit River and just east of Detroit Metropolitan Airport. In 2000 the population of Taylor was 65,868. The median income was \$42,944 per household, with 8.9 percent of the population living below the Federal Poverty Level.

Oakwood Healthcare System, located in southeast Michigan, is a comprehensive regional network providing services to more than 1.2 million people in 34 southeastern Michigan communities over a 500 square mile area. The system includes four hospitals totaling 1,300 beds and 41 primary care/specialty care sites.

Program Overview

While Oakwood Healthcare System views itself as a leader and innovator in community health, it has placed great emphasis on the concept of partnership, maintaining the philosophy that an effective leader doesn't walk alone. Accordingly, Oakwood's Taylor Teen Health Center has maintained a longstanding practice of engaging numerous community agencies, resources and stakeholders in the identification of community issues and the development and implementation of pertinent community health programs.

The Center is a school-linked adolescent health center that has worked toward its mission to positively impact the health of adolescents and young adults in partnership with them and their families, schools, and community through a variety of medical care, health promotion, risk reduction, STD/HIV testing, counseling and other programs. Development of the Taylor Youth Prevention Initiative in 1995 was the result of a longstanding relationship between Oakwood, the Taylor Police Department, and the Taylor School District that has included resource and record sharing specifically for the purpose of creating and optimizing responsive programs for youth in need.

The focus of the initiative is the southwest portion of Taylor, MI, a community

disproportionately affected by poverty, crime, violence and substance abuse. When Taylor Youth Prevention Initiative program development began, 51 percent of households with minor children were living at or below poverty level--four times the state average. Data from a variety of surveys revealed youth prevalence rates for use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs to be substantially higher within the Taylor School District than the average use across all downriver communities and the nation. The rate of truancy, youth violence, crime, and criminal sexual conduct had reached alarming proportions.

In addition to the unacceptably high levels of overall delinquency in Taylor, the rate of juvenile detention was among the highest of any downriver community. Additional investigation revealed that, while youth were being referred into the juvenile justice system in increasingly high numbers, the system was becoming increasingly ineffective in dealing with the variety of problems held by these youth. Once within the system, very little was being done to address the potential for and realized high rates of recidivism.

These compelling statistics and circumstances served as the basis for the Oakwood Taylor Teen Health Center Youth Prevention Initiative, an initiative designed to address a critical gap in prevention services for young people at risk. The goal of the initiative is to prevent youth violence and drug use and to keep youth out of the traditional justice system by impacting their attitudes through extended programs that emphasize education, resistance skills, pro-social opportunity, self-esteem, and family involvement. Two programs, the Taylor Teen Opportunity through Prevention Services (TTOPS) and Taylor Teen Summer Acts & Prevention Academy, comprise the initiative.

Taylor Teen Opportunity through Prevention Services

Since its inception ten years ago, the primary goal of TTOPS has been to keep juveniles out of the traditional juvenile justice system while at the same time addressing problem behaviors. Program objectives are geared toward reducing risk factors that predispose youth toward delinquent behavior and bolstering protective factors that predispose youth toward pro-social behavior and prevent recidivism. Designed to offer an effective combination of youth skill and personal accountability development, core program components emphasize violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, community service, and family involvement.

The TTOPS program targets youth from Taylor who are between the ages of 11 and 17 and who are first time or early juvenile offenders for crimes or offenses such as retail fraud, simple larceny, vandalism, truancy, and assault. Recruiting efforts emphasize the 11 to 14-year-old subset, as evidence suggests that teens arrested before 15 years of age are three times more likely to develop serious problems later in life and that younger participants are more responsive than their older counterparts to intensive, diversion-oriented programs. TTOPS is considered a critical resource for these youth given that more than 50 percent are chronic truants or runaways and therefore don't access services or referrals through the school system. Many are in need of substance abuse and/or mental health services which they would not otherwise receive.

TTOPS is voluntary and is offered to the offending youth and parents after arrest and referral. Both youth and parents must agree with TTOPS placement and must agree to adhere to minimum participation requirements in order to graduate and have charges dropped from the offending youth's record. Youth who have committed a crime subject to criminal prosecution but do not agree to participate in TTOPS are petitioned to Wayne County Juvenile Court.

An intake assessment explores risk and protective factors and is comprehensive for substance abuse and mental health issues. Youth who wish to participate in TTOPS must consent to random drug screens. Those who test positive are required to undergo more extensive assessment to determine whether outside treatment is necessary. The Teen Center maintains relationships with a number of agencies able to provide psychiatric care and substance abuse treatment.

The core TTOPS program consists of sessions that are held either three days weekly for five weeks (summertime) or once weekly, on Saturdays, for eight weeks (spring and fall). The Teen Center and Police Department collaborated in the selection of curricula and co-facilitate programming. Youth program days are six hours in length and include the following components:

- Second Step, a violence prevention/social skill development curriculum designed to reduce impulsivity and aggressive behavior.
- Project Alert, substance abuse prevention curriculum that utilizes strategies stressing self-efficacy, goal setting, active involvement and practice, modeling, validation, and respect.
- Studies indicate that youth who have the opportunity for pro-social community involvement and who are recognized for that involvement are less likely to engage in problem behaviors. TTOPS has fostered strong relationships with a number of community agencies for this purpose.
- In order to provide time and an additional mechanism to reflect on learning experiences, youth participate in daily journaling relative to their activities.
- Additionally, core programming engages youth in prevention activities geared toward eliminating high-risk behaviors related to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, and pregnancy. Additional skill development activities focus on goal setting, decision-making, job skills, and development of clear values.

Parents of youth enrolled in TTOPS complete Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens (STEP) parenting classes. STEP classes emphasize several elements critical to teen parenting and positive family management, including setting clear standards for behavior, fostering communication between teen and parent, changing parent responses to their teens, communicating respect and encouragement, and using consequences to build responsibility.

Taylor Teen Summer Arts & Prevention Academy

Launched in 1997, the Taylor Teen Summer Arts & Prevention Academy utilizes the arts (i.e., fine art, dance, drama, and music) in combination with (1) alcohol, tobacco & other drug prevention education and resistance skills training; and (2) violence prevention education and resistance skills training to help youth learn about goal setting, the possibility of a career in the arts and the importance of living a life free of violence and drugs in order to reach personal goals. This extended summertime program begins with Oakwood Taylor Teen Health Center staff visiting classrooms for grades 4 through 7 to tell students about the upcoming program and offer the opportunity to enroll. Teachers, principals and counselors identify specific students well suited for the program. Interested students apply for the program through a brief questionnaire.

The program was initially designed to serve 60 youth, but has served as many as 86. To date, no application has been denied. The eight-week Academy is held mid-June through mid-August, with three sessions weekly. This schedule includes daily prevention sessions, arts instruction, field trips, outdoor recreation, a morning snack, and healthy lunch. The Summer Arts Academy includes door-to-door transportation in school district buses to and from the host site

for the Academy, also provided by the school district.

The Summer Arts Academy targets its efforts on attitudes and behaviors relative to violence and illegal drug use through the use of two research based curricula: Second Step and Project Alert. Taylor Teen Center Prevention counselors and peer educators facilitate each session. A DARE officer from the City of Taylor Police Department Youth Bureau may attend specific sessions to reinforce messages of Second Step and Project Alert. By the end of the Academy, students are comfortable in practicing resistance techniques, and the benefits of resisting internal and external pressures are reinforced.

In addition to artists, program staffing includes a director, who generally oversees the Academy and who also serves as program director for the Taylor Teen Health Center. Two Teen Center Prevention counselors facilitate curricula and implement the overall program. Four intensively trained peer educators work as mentors to youth participants and as assistants to prevention counselors.

The Summer Arts Academy is divided into four "mini-academies," one for each modality: visual art, dance, drama, and music. Each two-week mini-academy features a skilled, subcontracted artist/instructor with experience in working with at-risk youth. Although the arts are considered an enticement to the prevention program, artists incorporate prevention messages into their lessons. Lessons reinforce anti-drug and violence goals. Studies suggest that the arts and humanities provide children with different ways to process cognitive information and express their knowledge, and that they teach discipline, teamwork, and the tangible rewards that each can bring.

Summer Arts Academy curriculum also includes three to four cultural field trips to local arts destinations; "parent evenings" that allow parents the opportunity to meet with Academy staff and discuss their child's participation; and a Summer Arts Showcase, where children perform and demonstrate what they have learned throughout the summer.

The Taylor Youth Prevention Initiative is a unique resource for the community given the critical gap in available prevention services for youth living in this area. TTOPS exists not simply as a "reaction" and punishment for early offenders, but instead takes more of a proactive and positive approach, examining and addressing each young offender's risk factors and emphasizing skill-building and pro-social opportunity. The Summer Arts Academy is particularly unique in that existing anti-drug and violence curricula are not typically coupled with extended immersion in the arts.

Program Funding

Partners have participated by contributing funds directly and/or securing grant funds; providing in-kind administrative services; and/or providing general oversight and serving in a fiduciary role. Oakwood's Taylor Teen Center has provided staff for direct program implementation, day to day operations, and administrative services. The School District has provided host facilities, transportation, recruitment and coordination of curriculum. The Police Department has provided specially trained officers for recruitment and referral and staffing assistance with educational curricula.

Approximately \$40,000 in annual Academy operating expenses has been funded through the Michigan Office of Drug Control Policy Governor's Discretionary Fund along with Southeast Michigan Community Alliance and City of Taylor Block Grant funding, and financial support

from several private foundations. Community stakeholders (e.g., artists, vendors) have also continued to support the program through in-kind donations of supplies/materials and through provision of reduced fee services.

Program Impact

Outcomes and evaluation have been emphasized as critical components of Taylor Teen Health Center programming and serve as the method by which the Center determines whether programs should be sustained. Program evaluation includes both qualitative and quantitative analysis utilizing several measurement sources. Evaluation is organized into process evaluation, which details actual development and implementation of program components, and outcome evaluation, which describes the progress made by youth as a result of program efforts.

Evidence shows that TTOPS is effective and that the key program elements are addressing program goals. Approximately 1,100 youth have been served through TTOPS. Ninety-seven percent of those who enroll complete the program and graduate. Independent evaluation over the last decade reveals that only 10 to 12 percent of TTOPS graduates have been arrested within 6 months to a year after program completion. Recent pre-post survey results indicate a decrease of more than 71 percent of indicators for attitudes favoring violence. Additionally, for 92 percent of perceived behavior change indicators, more than half of survey respondents indicated significant positive behavior change (i.e. for nearly all of the questions, more than half of the participants indicated significant positive behavior change). An average of 72 percent of youth reported positive change across all indicators.

Pre/post survey results for the most recent Summer Arts Academy indicate violent behaviors decreased across all grades in 71 percent of twelve indicators. With regard to substance abuse, surveys revealed an overall decrease in attitudes favoring alcohol, tobacco and other drug use across all grades, with 95 percent of related survey indicators showing decreases ranging from 1 to 60 percent. Results also showed actual use to have decreased to 0 percent across all grades. Parent observation checklists reveal an impressive 98 percent rate of information sharing, with children proactively demonstrating knowledge and resistance skills at home.

Obstacles or Challenges

Most of the challenges have been related to reductions in funding. The 2008 summer arts academy was almost cancelled due to reduced funding and increased restrictions by funders.

Success Factors

The extraordinary success of this initiative is largely due to the level of collaboration between partners. Oakwood found that the combined effort of multiple partners achieved a greater result than individual efforts of multiple agencies directed toward a like goal. Collaboration maximizes use of available resources and enhances referral and recruitment while eliminating duplicity of effort.

Lessons Learned and Advice to Others

For others interested in being involved in similar programs, the Oakwood Healthcare System experience provides some helpful advice:

- Involve everyone--parents, peers, and community. The potential for positively impacting the youth and the whole family is heightened when parents "buy in" to the program. Children often cite differences between program messages and what they observe at home. By creating parent "buy-in" through opportunities for parents to participate in programming and provide feedback, parents--often for the first time—become conscientious of program messages and begin to reinforce them at home. Research suggests peer mentoring adds credibility to program messages and enhances participants' ability to model appropriate behavior outside of the teaching environment. Involving community partners and stakeholders is key to success. Not only are the combined efforts of multiple community resources often more effective than multiple individual efforts focused on the same problem, but the involvement of community stakeholders demonstrates a "caring" community.
- Evaluation and outcomes are important--if you use them. Develop evaluation tools that do more than count numbers served. Raw quantitative data is helpful, but, in addition, examination of qualitative data that includes participants, staff, and parents are extremely helpful in identifying specific strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for program development. Qualitative data is also very effective in showcasing program impact to community members, thus expanding buy-in and support. Use data to tell your story.
- Prevention is a key element. Rather than developing programs in response to the "aftermath," consider addressing the cause of the problem. Particularly where youth programming is concerned, "an ounce of prevention may *really* be worth a pound of cure." Statistics related to this target population revealed that 6th graders were far less involved in risk behaviors than 8th graders, so the relevance and potential future community impact of prevention programming for younger grades became obvious.
- Remember to provide the "positives." Research-based preventive education curricula (e.g., drug education, violence resistance skills, etc.) are certainly vital in prevention programming; however, opening the door to positive alternatives for negative behaviors can energize youth, develop creative and other skills, and highlight the potential for a productive and rewarding future. Particularly with regard to youth offenders, make sure that programming emphasizes positive as opposed to simple "punishment."

Contact

Christie Wilkewitz
 Director, Taylor Teen Health Center
 Oakwood Healthcare System
 WILKEWIC@oakwood.org
 734-942-2273