

Evaluation of the Services Provided Under the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD)

September 2007

Background

This profile highlights results of the evaluation of services provided under the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD), which came into effect on July 1, 2006. The act applies to children under 18 years of age. Since the majority of children receiving PChAD services are between the ages of 14 to 17, they are often referred to as youth.

The act gives parents or guardians another way to help youth who will not voluntarily seek treatment even though they are using alcohol or other drugs in a manner that is likely to harm themselves or others. PChAD allows parents and guardians to apply to the court to authorize the apprehension of youth abusing drugs, with confinement for a period of not more than five days in a protective safe house (PSH). The parent or guardian may convey the youth to the PSH or, in situations where that is not possible, the court may authorize police to apprehend and convey the youth to the PSH. Once in the PSH, the youth receives supervised detoxification and assessment for his or her use of alcohol or other drugs. Staff work with the youth and family to develop a discharge plan with treatment recommendations.

Evaluation Process

AADAC Research Services contracted Pivotal Research to conduct Phase I of an evaluation of PChAD services provided under the act. The evaluation looked at processes for awareness, understanding and access to PChAD services; implementation of those services; and the value of offering services related to PChAD. Data sources included AADAC's client monitoring system, two online surveys of staff, and surveys of youth and their parents or guardians. The client surveys were completed at discharge from the PSH and at one, three and six months after discharge. Most of the youth (92%) indicated that the reason they were at the PSH was related to alcohol or other drug use; 8% indicated they

were unsure of the reason. Some youth do not initially define their use as problematic and thus do not report their use as the reason they are admitted to the PChAD program.

During the evaluation period (December 2006 to June 2007), participating youth and their parents/guardians were surveyed by telephone at the point of the youth's discharge from the Protective Safe House (PSH) and at one, three and six months following the discharge. The potential survey population at discharge was 329 individuals (youth and parents). Thirty individuals were removed from this population due to invalid consents. Of the remaining 299 potential participants, 244 individuals (93 youth and 151 parents) completed the discharge survey. Survey completion for the subsequent surveys was as follows: one-month - 165 (53 youth and 112 parents), three-months - 75 (21 youth and 54 parents), and six-months - 14 (3 youth and 11 parents). The six-month follow-up group was small because the program had started so recently: few youth had been treated early enough for six months to have elapsed.

Forty-six staff completed the first survey in April 2007 and 24 completed the second survey in June 2007. The decrease between the first and second staff survey responses is due to significant staff turnover in the PSH sites.

Findings

Youth

- The majority of youth who completed the survey were between ages 14 and 17, with a fairly even split by gender.
- Evaluation results showed that the majority of youth were satisfied with PChAD intake (41% were very satisfied, 49% were somewhat satisfied) and assessment procedures (46% were very satisfied, 48% were somewhat satisfied).
- About half (49%) of youth sought voluntary treatment when they were discharged.

- Over half (58%) of youth reported an improvement in their quality of life one month after discharge (see Table 1), especially in the areas of family relationships and physical health.

Table 1. Youth reporting quality of life change one month after discharge

Attribute	Better (%)	Same (%)	Worse (%)
Relationship with family	66	30	4
Physical health	66	28	6
Self image	53	41	6
Employment situation	46	49	5
School situation	58	24	18
Use of free time	65	33	2
Financial situation	52	38	10
Legal situation	57	36	7
Overall	58	35	7

Parents and Guardians

- About three-quarters of parents/guardians (77%) were aware of the intent of PChAD.
- The majority were very satisfied with youth safety at the PSH and perceived services as timely and responsive in terms of access to counsellors and the 1-888 line.
- Most parents/guardians were satisfied with intake and assessment procedures.
- Level of involvement in treatment planning was related to overall satisfaction with the program. Results show that the more involved the parent or guardian is in the treatment plan process and follow-up services, the higher his or her satisfaction with PChAD services.

Room for Improvement

- A significant portion of parents and guardians were not satisfied with the support for their families to continue treatment or the availability of support in the community. These issues will be explored further in the next phase of the evaluation.
- Although most parents and guardians (81%) perceived that five days is too short, most youth (86%) thought this was too long for the program. Like parents and guardians, staff felt that the program was too short. Program length will be considered in future amendments of the act..

Phase II of the Evaluation

Initial planning of the next phase of the evaluation is currently underway. It will focus on

- 1) conducting a more in-depth evaluation of the outcomes related to the effectiveness of the service
- 2) examining clients' perceptions regarding opportunities for prevention and access to resources by families before they reach the stage of a court order
- 3) providing recommendations to AADAC for the continued development and provision of services related to PChAD

For further information, contact AADAC Research Services (780-427-0116) or AADAC Youth Services (in Edmonton, 780-422-7383 or Calgary, 403-297-4664).