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RESIDENTIAL CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS

IN MINNESOTA:

AN EVALUATION REPORT

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A. INTRODUCTION

ACQUISITIONS

Under the direction of the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control, the Evaluation Unit is charged with providing the Commission with the kinds of evaluation information which may be used to make policy decisions about the dispersement of LEAA funds. The major policy at issue was whether the Commission should continue to provide funds for the development and implementation of new halfway houses for parolees.¹ Given this policy orientation for evaluation research, the decision was made to analyze halfway houses as a group and focus on their common goals, instead of developing individual evaluations for individual projects.²

¹It should be emphasized that this evaluation was directed by the policies of the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control relevant to the allocation of LEAA funds for corrections programs in Minnesota. In addition to the policy on funding halfway house programs--for which effectiveness and recidivism results are most important--policy recommendations were based on the need for new programs (using occupancy data), on the costs of programs (using cost/client/day data), and on the Commission's policy that LEAA monies should be used in Minnesota to develop and test innovative criminal justice programs. Finally, it must be noted that such policy decisions are political decisions for which evaluation results are only one type of information available to the decision-makers.

²The Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control has a firm policy of funding individual programs for a maximum of thirty-six months. Given the amount of time required to collect and analyze data on the effectiveness of individual programs, the three-year time constraint also makes evaluations of individual programs impractical from the standpoint of funding decisions on individual grants. However, this does not mean that individual programs are ignored. The Evaluation Unit normally provides short reports on projects being considered for continuation funding. The report on the first year of operations is generally a descriptive report which covers such topics as program structure, staff organization, staff background and training, startup problems, and descriptions of the clients. Second-year reports are presented in the form

For purposes of this evaluation, the term "halfway house" refers to a "residential facility designed to facilitate the transition of paroled, adult ex-offenders who are returning to society from institutional confinement." The limitation to adults serves to distinguish halfway houses from juvenile residences which serve juveniles. The identification of paroled ex-offenders as the target population of halfway houses distinguishes the primary intervention stage of these projects from that of P.O.R.T. projects¹ in which the primary intervention stage is probation.

B. HALFWAY HOUSES

Halfway houses are funded to achieve specific goals by implementing treatment programs for their clients. A review of the goals and objectives of these programs helps to present an overview of the halfway houses included in this evaluation.² There are two purposes for discussing the goals and objectives of halfway houses. First, statements of goals and objectives provide a basis for describing what the projects are attempting to accomplish. Second, goals and objectives are the standards by which projects are held accountable. The LEAA

of data summaries, including descriptions of clients, effectiveness of residence, and recidivism. Both reports are used to inform Commission members about the project and to describe the progress which has been made. After three years of LEAA funding, continuation funding must be obtained from state and local sources. The Evaluation Unit has frequently prepared and presented reports on individual projects seeking continuation funding from other agencies.

¹"P.O.R.T." stands for "Probationed Offenders Rehabilitation and Training." Whereas halfway houses normally accept residents following incarceration, P.O.R.T. projects normally accept residents as an alternative to incarceration. Kay Knapp reports on P.O.R.T. projects in Minnesota in "P.O.R.T. Projects: Alternatives to Incarceration?" at this conference.

²One of the advantages of policy-oriented evaluation research is that one can concentrate on a number of different programs which share the same goals. This allows one to increase the data base for measures of effectiveness. However, there are corresponding disadvantages to this approach. For example, some programs may have unique goals which are not shared by other programs. These may not receive the attention they deserve in policy-oriented evaluations.

program is based on a management-by-objective approach. This approach requires grantees to focus on and to articulate what they plan to accomplish, rather than simply stating what they plan to do. Thus, the accountability of recipients of LEAA funds is based, in part, upon their achievement of stated goals.

As operationalized by the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control, the term "goal" refers to a statement of the impact, or effect, the project should have if it is successful. Although there are a number of differences among halfway houses, the eight programs included in this evaluation share the following goals:¹

- (A) To reduce the recidivism rate of the client population relative to the rate of a comparable group of parolees who do not participate in halfway house programs.
- (B) To increase (i) employment, (ii) educational level, and/or (iii) vocational skills of their clients.
- (C) To rehabilitate ex-offenders placed in the projects.
- (D) To demonstrate that ex-offenders can be effective staff members of halfway houses.

The immediate focus of halfway house programs is to resolve economic, psychological, and social problems of their clients. Project planners believe criminal behavior is a result of or response to problems of these types. The objectives of halfway houses encompass a number of basic approaches developed to resolve these problems and to achieve program goals. First, most halfway houses begin providing counseling to clients prior to their release from

¹The eight programs are: Alpha House, a program for male, adult parolees, which has recently developed a program for sex offenders; Anishinabe Longhouse, a program for Indian men; Anishinabe Waki-igan, a program for Indian men released from the Minneapolis Workhouse (Waki-igan closed in January, 1975); Freedom House, a program for male and female adults, particularly offenders with chemical abuse problems; Pi House, a program for female parolees which closed in January, 1976; Reshape, a program for chemically dependent parolees from the Reformatory for Men; Retreat House, a program for male parolees; and 180 Degrees, a program for male and female parolees.

correctional institutions. Pre-release counseling concentrates on helping inmates develop realistic parole plans which will be implemented when the client begins residence in the community project. Second, halfway houses provide either services and counseling for all types of problems their clients have, or arrangements for needed services via referrals to appropriate agencies. Third, many halfway houses employ ex-offenders, particularly in counseling positions. Project planners believe the effectiveness of halfway houses depends on the development of trust between the client and his counselor. Project planners also believe that this trust is more easily and effectively developed when the counselor is an ex-offender who has had to face the same types of problems and obstacles the client faces. Fourth, most halfway houses encourage clients who have completed residence to return to the projects for counseling and support. Finally, halfway houses hope to become community projects which are effective in helping ex-offenders avoid returning to criminal behavior. Both individual and group counseling techniques are used throughout halfway house programs.¹

The ultimate goal of halfway house programs is to reduce the recidivism rate of the client population, i.e., achievement of Goal (A). The "philosophy" underlying these programs is that through the achievement of Goals (B) and (C), achievement of Goal (A) will follow. Consequently, these programs concentrate on solving the problems of individual clients and increasing the client's education and/or employment prospects. The combination of individual and group counseling within the project and the use of existing community agencies outside the project is thought to be the most realistic approach toward

¹ A complete description of halfway house programs is presented in Residential Community Corrections Programs: A Preliminary Evaluation, Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control, (April, 1975), Chapter 4, pp. 69-129.

achieving Goals (B) and (C).

There is no single theory of criminal behavior and rehabilitation on which residential corrections programs are based. From the goals and objectives of these programs a number of possible causes of criminal behavior can be inferred: lack of education, lack of employable skills, poor employment histories, drug or alcohol abuse, immaturity, family problems, and so on. The programs of halfway houses are designed to help clients resolve these problems. Consequently, the residential programs are hybrids of theories of criminal behavior and rehabilitation. None of these programs is specifically designed to test those theories.

C. EVALUATION OF EFFORTS

Two types of evaluation measures were used to analyze the results for halfway houses: measures of efforts and measures of effects. Two aspects of the efforts projects expend serving clients are presented. First, the flow of clients through projects and the occupancy rates of projects are discussed in order to provide a rough measure of the efficiency with which projects are used by the criminal justice system. Second, the costs which projects expend in serving clients are considered.

The average length of residence in halfway houses varied, by project, from two months to six-and-a-half months. In each project, clients who completed the residential program tended to remain in residence longer than clients terminated prior to completing their residential programs. The average length of residence for those who completed residence exceeded nine months at one program, but was less than six months at the other halfway houses. Thus, halfway

houses have relatively short periods of residence for their clients.

Occupancy rates measured from the time these projects began accepting residents varied from 40.0% to 84.4%. However, during 1975, the occupancy rates of halfway houses increased substantially and varied from 60.0% to 94.0%, with an average rate of 74.6% per project. Although occupancy rates of halfway houses increased in 1975, these results do not suggest a need for new residential projects. Few halfway houses have consistently operated at or near capacity. Moreover, at least part of the increase in the occupancy rates of halfway houses is due to increased admissions of probationers in 1975. Thus, these results indicate that there are sufficient residential programs for parolees.

A cost/client/day measure was based on the expenditures of the project and the average number of clients/day. During 1975, the costs of halfway houses serving males varied from \$13.59 to \$38.37/client/day. As a comparison, the costs/inmate/day were \$26.99 at the State Prison and \$31.03 at the Reformatory for Men. Three of the halfway houses serving males had costs/client/day lower than those of both the Prison and the Reformatory, whereas only two halfway houses had costs/client/day appreciably greater than that of the Reformatory. Halfway houses serving females had costs which varied from \$14.57 to \$31.41/client/day. These costs were less than that of the Correctional Institution for Women, which had a cost/inmate/day of \$65.02. Consequently, halfway houses do operate at costs comparable to or less than those of corresponding state correctional institutions.¹

¹This conclusion depends on whether these costs are comparable. Because halfway houses usually accept clients paroled from state institutions, actual treatment costs include costs of incarceration and of halfway house placement. If residents are paroled to halfway houses in lieu of further incarceration, these data indicate that halfway houses do not increase and may even decrease

D. EFFECTS OF RESIDENCE

Evaluation of the effects of these projects employed two types of measures. First, measures were taken to compare socioeconomic status at intake and at termination from residence to determine whether halfway houses were affecting the problems with which their clients entered the programs. Second, measures of the recidivism of clients during and after residence were made.

The first measure of the effectiveness of halfway house programs is the proportion of clients who satisfactorily completed their residential programs. Because halfway house programs use either a phase progression system or a contract to determine when a client has completed the residential program, "satisfactorily completed residence" is defined as "completion of the phased residential program or residential contract." Clients who have satisfactorily completed residence are those clients who, in the judgment of project staff, have achieved the objectives with which they began residence. Clients who failed to satisfactorily complete residence are those clients who were terminated from the program for reasons of lack of cooperation, poor adjustment, absconding, rearrested, convicted of a new offense, or revocation of parole or probation. Clients who neither satisfactorily completed nor failed to satisfactorily complete the residential programs were terminated for neutral reasons, which include voluntary termination, withdrawn by referring agency, transferred to another program, and death.

Based on this classification, there are three classes of reasons for

treatment costs. However, if halfway houses are used as supplements for paroles which would have been granted anyway, costs of halfway house residence represent increases in costs of treatment. Cost effectiveness analysis would help to resolve this problem. Charles M. Gray and Chris Johnston-Conover present a model for such analyses in "Cost Effectiveness of Residential Community Corrections: An Analytical Prototype" at this conference.

which a client may have been terminated from residence: satisfactorily completed residence, failed to satisfactorily complete residence, and neutral. Of 625 clients on whom termination data were available, 32.8% satisfactorily completed residence. However, 45.0% of the halfway house clients failed to satisfactorily complete their residential programs. The primary reasons for failing to satisfactorily complete residence were "absconded" (19.8%) and "lack of cooperation/poor adjustment" (17.8%). The remaining 22.2% were terminated from residence for neutral reasons. The fact that so few clients satisfactorily complete the programs suggests that, for a variety of reasons, residential corrections programs are an inappropriate form of rehabilitation for a majority of the persons for whom these programs are now being used.¹

The data provide evidence that halfway house programs are helping to increase employment among their residents: there was an increase of 24% from intake to termination among all halfway house clients. Moreover, clients who satisfactorily completed residence had an increase of 42%. However, changes in educational level and vocational skills were slight. Even clients who satisfactorily completed residence in halfway houses showed little increase in education and vocational training, although 9% of the satisfactory clients completed

¹Reasons for termination from residence in halfway houses were reviewed for 1975 and for prior years. Prior to 1975, 31.2% of the halfway house clients satisfactorily completed residence, 43.7% failed to satisfactorily complete residence, and 25.1% were terminated for neutral reasons. During 1975, 35.2% satisfactorily completed residence, 47.0% failed to do so, and 17.8% terminated for neutral reasons. The increase in clients who satisfactorily completed residence does not appear to be significant. Overall, only 3.3% of the halfway house clients were terminated for reasons of new convictions and revocations.

Further data on reasons for termination and other program effects are presented in Residential Community Corrections Programs in Minnesota: An Evaluation Report, Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control, (November, 1976), Chapter 5, pp. 116-138. Appendix G of this report presents a brief literature review which indicates that the low rates of program completion in Minnesota's residential community corrections programs appear to be typical of most residential programs.

high school level education during residence. Consequently, progress toward fulfilling the goal of increasing education, vocational skill and employment is due primarily to increased employment of halfway house residents.

Halfway house residents had a 13% reduction in perceived financial problems and a 24% reduction in clients relying on governmental assistance for support. As was the case with employment, clients who satisfactorily completed residence were much more likely to resolve their financial problems and become independent of governmental assistance than were those who failed to satisfactorily complete residence.

Although clients who satisfactorily complete residence, in general, have more favorable changes in socioeconomic variables than do clients who fail to satisfactorily complete residence, these results should not be misinterpreted. The relationship between satisfactory completion of the program and favorable change in socioeconomic variables is, in part, definitional because such changes may be a part of the contracts for the residential program. However, if residents who satisfactorily complete the program did not show greater improvement than unsatisfactory clients, the value of remaining in and satisfactorily completing residence could be questioned. Yet only about one-third of the halfway house clients satisfactorily complete residence. If these programs are to have an increased impact, halfway houses will have to increase the number of persons who satisfactorily complete residence, since it is these persons who show the greatest improvement while in the program. With the exception of employment, the overall impact of these programs has been slight.

E. RECIDIVISM

The analysis of recidivism of halfway house clients used two measures of recidivism: total convictions and revocations, and felony convictions and revocations. This analysis also looked at recidivism of clients during residence, at recidivism of clients who satisfactorily completed residence and clients who failed to satisfactorily complete residence following termination from residence, and at recidivism of halfway house clients and a comparison group.¹

The recidivism of clients who satisfactorily completed residence was compared to the recidivism of clients who failed to satisfactorily complete residence.² The results show that during the first six months and twelve months following termination from residence, clients who satisfactorily completed residence has a significantly lower recidivism rate than did clients who failed to satisfactorily complete residence. This conclusion holds for recidivism measured in terms of felonies and revocations and in terms of total convictions and revocations. However, by the end of the twenty-four month follow-up period, there were no significant differences between the recidivism of satisfactory clients and of unsatisfactory clients. By the end of the twenty-four month period, 21.1% of the clients who satisfactorily completed residence were recidivists and 24.5% of the clients who failed to satisfactorily complete residence

¹Comparison group members were randomly selected among persons who were released from the State Prison, State Reformatory for Men, and Correctional Institution for Women and who met the formal, objective selection criteria for admission to halfway house programs; i.e., who were adults who had been convicted of two or more offenses and were released from state correctional institutions. Appendix D of Residential Community Corrections Programs in Minnesota: An Evaluation Report presents a comparison of the characteristics of halfway house clients and comparison group members. Appendix F reviews the methodology for the analysis of adult recidivism.

²Recidivism data on clients who were terminated from residence for neutral reasons were not included in this part of the recidivism analysis.

were recidivists. Consequently, while these results show that satisfactory clients are less likely to recidivate than are unsatisfactory clients during the first year following termination from residence, they also show that satisfactorily completing residence in a halfway houses does not have any significant long-term effect on recidivism.

The recidivism of halfway house clients was compared to that of a comparison group in two, overlapping time periods. First, comparisons were made for an "at-risk" period which is concerned with the recidivism of halfway house clients from intake to residence and with the recidivism of comparison group members from placement on parole. Second, the recidivism of halfway house clients was measured from termination from residence and compared to that of the comparison group members.

The results show that during the six-month at-risk period there were no significant differences between the recidivism rates of halfway house clients and comparison group members. This conclusion holds for recidivism measured in terms of felonies and revocations and in terms of total convictions and revocations. Since this is also the period during which the influence of halfway house programs ought to be most effective, it appears that participation in halfway house programs has no detectable effect on recidivism. However, this conclusion must be viewed in relation to the differences between halfway house clients and comparison group members.¹

¹Comparisons of halfway house clients and comparison group members revealed major differences between these two groups in terms of sex, ethnic background, and months incarcerated for most recent conviction. However, preliminary analysis found no relationship among background characteristics, program participation, and recidivism. In particular, no relationships were found for sex, ethnic background, and months in institutions for most recent conviction. Furthermore, the recidivism of halfway house clients was reanalyzed using only

By the end of the twelve-month at-risk period, the results show that the comparison group had significantly more total recidivism than did the halfway house group, although there was no significant difference between the groups when recidivism was measured in terms of felonies and revocations. By the end of the twenty-four month at-risk period, the recidivism of comparison group members was significantly higher than that of halfway house clients on both measures of recidivism. However, given the results from the six-month at-risk period--when the influence of halfway house programs should be strongest--differences between the groups in later follow-up periods cannot be attributed solely to participation in halfway house programs.

But at-risk recidivism information includes the recidivism of halfway house clients who entered programs for a short time and recidivated during residence. Consequently, the recidivism of halfway house clients following termination from residence (and, thus, not including recidivism during residence) was compared to the recidivism of the comparison group.¹ The results of this comparison were essentially the same as the results for the at-risk periods. During the first six months of the post-residence follow-up period, there were no significant differences between the recidivism of halfway house clients and that of comparison group members. However, in the twelve-month and twenty-four month post-residence follow-up periods, the recidivism of comparison group members

those clients who had been released from state institutions. Comparisons between this group of halfway house clients and comparison group members led to the same results as the comparisons using all halfway house clients.

¹In effect, the at-risk analysis assumes that the "treatment" program is incarceration and views regular parole and parole plus halfway house placement as two post-treatment alternatives. In contrast, the post-residence analysis views incarceration and incarceration plus halfway house placement as two forms of "treatment" with nonresidential parole as the normal post-treatment modality.

was significantly higher--on both measures of recidivism--than that of the halfway house clients. Again, because there were no significant differences in the six-month post-residence period, these results indicate that participation in halfway house programs does not significantly affect recidivism.

The analysis of the recidivism of halfway house clients sought answers to two questions. First, what effect does satisfactorily completing a have on recidivism? On the basis of the data, satisfactorily completing a halfway house program decreases the likelihood of recidivism in the first year following termination from residence but has no long-term effect on recidivism. By the end of the first two years following residence, there were no significant differences between the recidivism of those clients who satisfactorily completed residence and of clients who failed to satisfactorily complete residence. Second, what effect does participation in a halfway house program have on recidivism? Subject to the comparability of the comparison group members and halfway house clients on those characteristics relevant to recidivism,¹ the results show no detectable short-run differences in recidivism which may be attributable to participation in halfway house programs. Long-term differences, which were detected, cannot be attributed solely to participation in halfway house programs.

¹Although preliminary analysis does not indicate that differences between these two groups do significantly affect recidivism, uncontrolled differences might have effects. In particular, information on actual chemical abuse/dependency and on juvenile correctional histories--which are thought to be relevant to recidivism--was not available on members of both groups. Moreover, it is not evident that we have knowledge of all those factors which are relevant to recidivism.

F. MUSINGS ABOUT EVALUATION

Where does this type of evaluation lead? To answer this question, I want to note some of the advantages and disadvantages of this approach to evaluation and to suggest that, while it fits the needs of the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control of Minnesota, it may not represent an approach which would be useful in other agencies.

Among the advantages of this type of approach are the following: First, by analyzing the effectiveness of a number of residential programs by measuring their ability to achieve common goals, the Evaluation Unit is able to provide information on a number of approaches to post-institutional residential programming. Second, this approach allows the Unit to evaluate a number of programs with limited personnel. Third, this approach provides the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control with the kind of evaluation information needed to make policy decisions about LEAA funding in Minnesota. Fourth, the evaluation results are available for other states considering similar policy decisions. Fifth, this type of approach to evaluation can be implemented in those contexts of criminal justice research and evaluation in which evaluators do not have control of program variables and/or access to control groups.

Among the disadvantages of this approach are the following: First, evaluators do not have control of program variables and/or access to control groups. Consequently, many program variations are implemented within single programs which may affect effectiveness. This also hinders generalizability of results. Second, this type of approach does not allow us to fully analyze program components and strategies. Consequently, although we may be able to say a great deal about halfway houses as a group, we do not have detailed

information on individual projects. Thus, while we are able to tell a project whether it is doing better or worse than other projects, we cannot say why this is so. Third, although the results of this type of evaluation are available to other agencies considering funding halfway houses, no results are available which indicate what the specific program structures of those projects should be.

Despite these limitations, policy-oriented evaluations which group projects according to common goals and target populations do serve the needs of the Governor's Crime Commission. Policy decisions form the basis for the funding decisions of the Commission. In this context, the major policy decision for this report is whether the Commission should continue to fund new halfway houses. Our approach to the evaluation of halfway houses provides information about the effectiveness of halfway houses. At a more specific level, the Commission must make decisions about funding individual programs for particular target populations. But the Commission has traditionally allowed applicants wide leeway in the development and implementation of treatment modalities for specific target populations--provided that applicants can demonstrate the need for a program for a specific target population. Refunding decisions for second- and third-year grants do use evaluations, but primarily in a monitoring role not as measures of effectiveness. Finally, Minnesota is not a large criminal justice state in terms of potential target populations. Although the implementation and evaluation of experimental treatment programs are important, replication of individual programs is not a major need in Minnesota. For example, there are variations among the eight halfway houses included in this report both in terms of program structure and in terms of target populations. This reflects the diversity of subpopulations within the parolee population. Indeed, although a number of halfway houses were quite similar in their

original applications, they have each developed in such a way that they are now recognized as being adept at handling particular types of offenders.

In summary, these evaluations lead to fulfillment of the needs of the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control relative to evaluation information. This agency has a strong commitment to evaluation and seeks information which will help it form policies for the dispersement of LEAA funds. But it views this funds as experimental funds for new treatment programs and allows grantees to develop and implement their own programs. That is, it is not committed to funding any particular types of treatment programs. An agency which is primarily concerned with the effectiveness of treatment modalities and for selecting among these modalities would require a different approach to evaluation research.

END