

Following up with graduates of Minnesota Teen Challenge

Results summary

Minnesota Teen Challenge is one of the largest residential drug and alcohol treatment and recovery programs in the state of Minnesota. The 13-15 month faith based recovery program is designed to assist both teens and adults in breaking free from chemical addiction by addressing their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.

About the study

Wilder Research, an independent evaluator, sampled and conducted one-year follow-up telephone interviews with graduates who completed treatment between August 2007 and May 2009. This study followed a 2007 study of Teen Challenge graduates who completed treatment between 2001 and 2005.

Direct comparisons are made between current findings and data for 2005 graduates, because both follow-up periods were approximately one year after participants graduated.

PARTICIPATION IN TWO 12-MONTH FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

	2010 Study	2007 Study
Report year	2010	2007
Graduation year	8/2007-5/2009	2005
Number of graduates	315	154
Number selected for follow-up	238	81
Number participating in interviews	141	68
Response rate	59%*	85%

*Note: Outcomes for individuals who could not be contacted for interview are unknown.

A total of 141 men, women, and teens participated in follow up interviews. Over half (55%) were adult men, 34 percent were adult women, and 10 percent were teenagers (6% boys and 4% girls).

Participant background

Participants used a wide range of substances prior to their admission to Teen Challenge. Alcohol and marijuana were the most-used substances.

SUBSTANCES USED AND BIGGEST PROBLEM AT TIME OF ADMISSION

	Used	Biggest problem
Alcohol	84%	34%
Marijuana	67%	7%
Cocaine	60%	7%
Methamphetamine	50%	29%
Crack	44%	10%
Prescription meds	38%	3%

Current sobriety and substance use

- **At one year follow-up, the percentage of Teen Challenge graduates who consistently report sobriety has improved:** 62 percent of graduates from the 2010 study reported *no relapses since graduation nor use in the past 6 months* compared to 57 percent of 2005 graduates.
- **6-month sobriety rates have remained constant:** In both studies, 2005 graduates and recent graduates, 74 percent reported no use of alcohol or drugs during the six months prior to follow-up interviews.
- **Tobacco use at follow up has declined:** Only 32 percent of respondents used tobacco products at follow-up compared to 89 percent at entry to Teen Challenge.

Relapse rates

- **At one year follow-up, the percentage of Teen Challenge graduates who reported that they had not relapsed has improved:** 73 percent of graduates from the 2010 study reported “no relapse” during the year following graduation compared to 60 percent of the 2005 graduates
- **The main relapse substances were:** alcohol (26%), marijuana and prescription drugs (each 9%).

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KEY OUTCOMES AT ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP

	2007-2009 graduates (141)	2005 graduates (68)
Consistently reported no relapse since graduation nor use in past six months	62%	57%
No use in the past 6-months	74%	74%
Treatment after Teen Challenge	6%	11%
Substance use past year (6 months for 2005 grads):		
Alcohol	26%	19%
Marijuana	9%	10%
Arrested since graduation	5%	12%
Incarcerated since treatment	4%	9%
Had a mentor at follow-up contact	65%	56%
Rated Teen Challenge quality "outstanding"	53%	44%

Relapse and sobriety factors

- **The top three factors contributing to relapse were:** "family problems" (24%), "loneliness" (21%), and "hanging out with the wrong crowd" (18%).
- **The top three supports for maintaining sobriety were:** "staying connected to God" (62%), "family" (36%), and "hanging out with positive people" (22%).

Other outcomes at follow-up

- **Having a job and a mentor after program completion reduces the likelihood of relapse.** Study findings show that graduates who have both are significantly more likely to avoid relapse than those who have neither.
- **At follow-up, 74 percent of respondents were employed:** Given the economic conditions at the time of follow-up, these employment rates represent a significant positive outcome.

Over half of graduates have focused on education after graduation from Teen Challenge: 58 percent had attended school since graduating Teen Challenge; of those, 68 percent were currently in school.

- **A small proportion of graduates reported legal problems since they left Teen Challenge:** six graduates were charged with a new crime, and seven were incarcerated.

Spiritual commitment and involvement

- **Spiritual commitment and involvement are important for most graduates:** Almost all (96%) said they made a personal commitment to Christ either while at Teen Challenge or immediately before and 94 percent said this commitment "definitely" helped their sobriety.
- **Graduates have continued spiritual involvement after graduation:** 90 percent made a connection to a church or ministry within 6 months of graduating and at the time of follow-up, 74 percent reported attending church at least once per week.

Feedback about Minnesota Teen Challenge

- **Nearly all graduates report that Teen Challenge taught them how to have a chemical-free lifestyle:** 96% reported that this was "completely" or "mostly" true.
- **Graduates are satisfied with the quality of Teen Challenge:** Over half (53%) rated the overall quality of Teen Challenge as "outstanding," up from 44 percent of 2005 graduates.
- **A majority of graduates agree that a greater emphasis must be placed on transitioning back into the community or "real world."**
- **There were a variety of aspects of Teen Challenge that respondents felt helped them:** Most often mentioned were the various faith-based components of the program and the Teen Challenge staff.

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *Following up with graduates of Minnesota Teen Challenge: results of one-year interviews with persons completing treatment in 2007 through 2009*. For more information about this report, contact Rachel Hardeman or Michelle Decker Gerrard at Wilder Research, 651-280-2700.

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