



THE
SEED

'Innovative,
Effective'

(Editor's Note: A Washington consultant firm did an in-depth study of The **Seed** drug rehabilitation program earlier this year at the request of the Florida Drug Abuse Advisory Council. The study was favorable toward The **Seed**. Today, we'll give you the highlights of the study. Thursday, we'll report on the council's majority review of the study, and Friday you'll read about the council's minority view.)

KAY MASTERS
Staff Writer

The Seed is achieving "remarkable success with a large number of clients" from a specific target population and "appears to be a well-run, competently-organized program," a recent study reports.

The study by a Washington consultant, Addiction Consultation and Evaluation, P.C. (ACE), was requested by a subcommittee of The Florida Drug Abuse Advisory Council. The council was set up last year by Gov. Reubin Askew to look into The Seed and its licensing problems in Dade County.

The ACE staff began its evaluation of The Seed with on-site inspections of the programs in Broward, Pinellas and St. Lucie counties. The Dade County site closed in September 1973 when its home was slated for demolition. Participants were transferred to the Broward Seed.

Investigation included random staff interviews, conversations with Seed-selected clients and parents, ex-Seed clients selected for interview by the Florida Drug Abuse Program regional coordinator in Dade County, discussions with representatives of schools and drug programs in the county and interviews with concerned friends or relatives of Seed clients throughout The Seed.

The on-site investigation was accomplished through attending open, closed and graduate Seed meetings as well as visiting foster homes and interviewing foster parents about their part in the program.

The ACE study described the average "seedling" as white, soft drug users with an average three-year drug history. The age range is 12-25 years with 13-16 dominating. Though males outnumber females in the study's total population, females dominate in the 13-16 age group.

The Seed's goals are for clients to leave the program drug-free, show positive attitude changes and exhibit improvements in family relationships and school or work performance.

The study's total client number is 4,554 at the three sites in October 1973

The study's total client number is 4,554 at the three sites in October 1973 with an active caseload of 1,326.

Consent of the clients is not necessary at admission. Parents are required to consent and participate in the program. Persons having lengthy opiate addiction, criminal records or past age 25 are referred to other treatment programs.

Most clients, 68 per cent, are referred by doctors, lawyers, parents and friends. Court referrals comprise 17 per cent with school counselor referrals at 15 per cent.

Phase I of the treatment lasts a minimum of 15-30 days in which the youngsters remain at the program from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and then go to a secure foster home until the next morning. Sessions are led by staff members who have graduated from the program and been trained by The Seed. The study reports "the desire for acceptance, peer group pressures and repetition appear to be the major forces in operation."

Phase II begins "when a client is deemed ready to return home or to a permanent foster home," the study says. It may consist of the same 10-10 daily meetings or reduced three-night-a-week participation. Lasting a minimum of three to six months, phase II allows clients to serve as "oldcomers" for those in the first phase of treatment.

"After a seedling has completed Phase I, has returned home and has given indications of being responsible enough to supervise a newcomer, the parent is contacted to learn whether a newcomer may be brought home," the study says. "The parent, having already been oriented, is aware of the foster parents' role of providing food, shelter, and of taking security precautions, such as putting locks on the bedroom door shared by the newcomer and the oldcomer and of making windows secure to prevent newcomers from running away during their initial treatment phase."

Progress of the "seedling" is assessed during staff meetings with decisions as to treatment changes and graduation made by senior staff members based on their observations and reports from the rest of the staff. Criteria for graduation are that the participant no longer uses drugs and displays a positive or improved attitude toward himself, his family and society.

The Seed claims a 90 per cent success rate. The study picked June 1972 at random for analysis of "success." Of the 163 in the group, 21 left in less than eight days and were not included in the analysis. Analysis of the remaining 142 left the study with a success rate in excess of 88 per cent.

"It is quite apparent from an analysis of The Seed that this program represents an innovative and unique approach to drug rehabilitation," the study says.

"It is quite apparent from an analysis of The Seed that this program represents an innovative and unique approach to drug rehabilitation," the study says. "In addition, the program has demonstrated an effectiveness in its efforts that is excellent."

ACE staff personnel found "every charge levied against the program (e.g. brutality, emotional breakdowns, etc.) proved to be unfounded rumors when checked out and further, even the program 'failures' claimed the program helped a large number of people when they were asked . . ."

"The inescapable conclusion, then, is that The Seed is an effective and useful program that probably has been over-evaluated and the subject of undue public controversy," the study says.

The report blamed Seed licensing problems in Dade County on the state: regional coordinator's preconceived negative feelings about the program. It suggests much closer control of such officials by the state.

"For the most part, ACE considers The Seed to be an effective program with criticisms regarding lack of professional staff and poor staff training to be either irrelevant in terms of program functioning or unfounded," the study concludes. "ACE documented The Seed's performance through a study based on a random selection of a one-month cohort of admissions. ACE verified an 88 per cent success rate during this period for those clients studied."

The report charged The Seed has been subjected to more intensive studies than necessary. It accuses public officials of "acting in a discriminatory manner against The Seed while failing to perform even the simplest evaluations of the many other programs in the State of Florida."

"It appears that the state has placed a great deal of responsibility at the level of the regional councils and the regional coordinators," the report says. "However, it also appears that some of these individuals, often key members on the council or the coordinators, have special interests in some of the programs which they coordinate."

"With increasing state responsibility for revenue sharing in the field of drug abuse, we feel the situation in Florida is a very dangerous one. Unless the state can exercise quality control over its licensing and funding mechanisms with staff who are capable of performing evaluations in an effective manner, great inequities in funding and licensing could occur, resulting in an inability to provide comprehensive drug abuse treatment."

The only "discrepancy" found by the study with regard to The Seed and state funding was the fact the parent rather than the client signs a consent form. The report recommends The Seed require clients to sign consent - to - treatment

state funding was the fact the parent rather than the client signs a consent form. The report recommends The Seed require clients to sign consent - to - treatment forms as well as the parents. It also recommends the form contain adequate information about the program and explain it is not a legal contract.

"In conclusion, The Seed is not a panacea for drug abuse," the report concludes. "It is aimed at a specific target population and cannot help everyone in that group. Nonetheless, it is achieving remarkable success with a large number of clients and appears to be a well-run, competently - organized program."