

Choosing a drug treatment plan Series: PG; Parental Guidance; Doctor's Office

[CITY Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Author: BRUCE A. EPSTEIN

Date: Jun 1, 1992

Start Page: 5.D

Section: FLORIDIAN

Text Word Count: 1027

Document Text

Many believe that the slow erosion of "good old American values" has been largely due to the crumbling of the American family unit. One reason for this problem has been the specter of substance abuse.

When a youngster needs help for an alcohol or drug abuse problem, parents have important decisions to make. These decisions often have to be made quickly. Not surprisingly, most parents faced with this situation have little knowledge of where to turn for help.

An initial move would be to obtain a list of local drug abuse treatment programs. Such lists for our area may be obtained from a variety of sources:

Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). A current list of licensed treatment programs can be obtained from the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Program Office of the local HRS district headquarters by calling 588-6600.

Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association. A directory of licensed alcohol and drug abuse treatment, intervention and prevention programs is available to the public from the association at a nominal cost. Call 893-2121 for more information.

Schools. High school principals, school social workers and guidance counselors are familiar with local treatment programs.

Therapeutic Communities of America (TCA). TCA is a national professional organization that represents long term alcohol and drug abuse treatment programs throughout the United States. Most midsize and large cities have TCA programs.

Straight Inc., in St. Petersburg, is an example of a long-term substance abuse treatment program based upon the therapeutic community model, and I am a member of its board. Since its founding in 1976, Straight has treated more than 50,000 family members nationwide with a 70 percent success rate. Straight is fully licensed and accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations the nation's recognized accrediting agency. The phone number for Straight is 577-6011.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). The institute is the main federal agency that funds drug abuse treatment and research in the United States. A hot line is available daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for referrals to programs throughout the country. The hot line number is (800) 662-4357.

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (301 468-2600) can provide names of mental health practitioners who have special expertise in the treatment of drug-involved adolescents.

There are many factors to consider when the time comes to choose a treatment program. Selecting the best program for your child is selecting a doctor - get recommendations, ask questions and gather all the information you can.

No single program is right for everyone. Programs vary greatly in their approach to treating substance abusers and their families. Programs also differ greatly in the cost of treatment. Appropriate treatment can range from weekly outpatient group or individual counseling to daily day care treatment to residential treatment lasting many months.

When evaluating a program for their children, parents should consider the following questions:

1. Does the program require total abstinence from drugs?

Most experts in drug treatment agree that programs requiring total abstinence from drugs are the most successful.

Only when the body is free of drugs can the process of recovery begin. It may take several weeks of no drug use for the body to cleanse itself. It is important that the child be in a therapeutic and protective environment, one that can keep him drug-free until the chemicals are out of his system.

2. Does the program make provisions for the fact that drug involvement is a chronic illness?

Parents should be wary of "quick fixes" for children with severe drug and behavior problems. Situations that developed over a long period of time usually require long-term treatment.

The program should provide some formal aftercare that enables the drug-free child and family to return to the program on a regular basis for ongoing counseling and support.

3. Does the program have a family component that recognizes the importance of parent and sibling involvement?

Drug use affects the behavior and feelings of the entire family. The most effective treatment programs treat drug use as a family problem and strongly encourage the involvement of all family members in the treatment process.

4. Does the program address the addictive process and its consequences?

Drug use leads to problems in every area of a child's life. Successful treatment programs help children reconstruct the areas of their lives that have been damaged by drug use, such as family relationships, education, the use of leisure time and self-esteem.

Once parents decide on a specific program, the following need to be considered:

How long is the program? What are its goals for participants?

Is the program licensed by HRS or accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations? Does the program have other credentials or accreditation?

What are the qualifications of the staff?

Does the program have a board of directors or an advisory group? Have local community groups been involved with the program, and do they support it?

Is there a parent group or a volunteer group affiliated with the program? Does the program work with the families or provide drug education to parents?

Is the program properly registered with the county or state?

How long has the program been providing treatment services?

It is always advisable to visit the programs you are considering for your child and get a first-hand view. It is important to be comfortable with what you see. With a little time and diligence, a parent can become well-informed about which programs offer quality services.

Even though parents may feel that something must be done "right now," a little investigation is in order to help their child obtain the most appropriate treatment available.

Deciding to enroll a child in a formal substance abuse program is not an easy decision. Getting involved is a first and difficult move.

Dr. Bruce A. Epstein has practiced pediatrics in St. Petersburg since 1973. He is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He is married and has three grown children. If you have questions for Dr. Epstein, write to Doctor's Office, Parental Guidance/Floridian, the Times, P.O. Box 419, St. Petersburg 33731-0419.

[Illustration]

COLOR PHOTO; Caption: Dr. Bruce A. Epstein

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Get yer Giants cards here Series: DAYS OFF

[CITY Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Author: JIM BULLARD

Date: Aug 14, 1992

Start Page: 31

Section: WEEKEND

Text Word Count: 433

Document Text

The Tampa Bay Giants may be a reality - is your collection up to snuff?

Whether you're looking for that elusive Willie Mays card, Will Clark's rookie card or the latest Giants team set, dealers probably will have what you seek this weekend at trading card shows from St. Petersburg to Orlando.

Card shows this weekend include:

St. Petersburg: The Tampa Bay Trading Card and Memorabilia Show will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday at 3001 Gandy Blvd., between U.S. 19 and Interstate 275. The event will include door prizes and 60 dealer tables. Admission is \$1 (children under age 12 are free). The show is sponsored by Straight Inc. For information call 576-8929.

Brandon: Former Oakland Athletic Garry Hancock will sign autographs at the Sportscard and Memorabilia Show from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday at Brandon Recreation Center, 510 E Sadie St. Autographs are free. Admission is \$1 for adults, 50 cents for children ages 6-14. Children under 6 are admitted free and qualify for door prizes. Proceeds benefit Friends of the County Parks. For information call Sportscard World at 651-1132 or Joe Raguckas at 272-5840.

Sarasota: The Baseball Card, Comic Book, Coin and Stamp Show will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday at Sarasota Civic Center Exhibition Hall, 801 N Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. The event will include 60 dealers and various door prizes. Admission is free. For information call Marge Honkanen at (813) 574-7731 or Gail Palmer at (813) 772-0254.

Lakeland: The Lakeland Sports Card Show will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at Lakeland Mall, 1108 E Memorial Blvd. The show will include 50 dealer tables. Admission is free. For information call 686-9043.

Orlando: All-time hit leader Pete Rose and Denny McLain, baseball's last 30-game winner, will be the guest signers Saturday and Sunday at the Baseball Card and Memorabilia Show at the Orlando Expo Center, Room 300, 400 W Livingston St. Show hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Rose will give autographs from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday; they're \$15 apiece, \$50 apiece for bats. McLain will sign free autographs (limit two per person) from 1 to 3 p.m. Sunday.

The event will include 100 dealer tables. Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages 6-12. Children under 6 are admitted free. Advance tickets are available at various Tampa Bay area trading card specialty stores. For information call (407) 846-3429.

[Illustration]

COLOR PHOTO, (2); baseball: cards: 92, (2); Caption: A montage of baseball cards.; The Willie Mays card.

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Medicare sues to recover overpayment to hospital company

[CITY Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Author: DENISE L. AMOS

Date: Sep 24, 1992

Start Page: 6 E

Section: BUSINESS

Text Word Count: 382

Document Text

Seven years ago Medicare overpaid a now-defunct St. Petersburg hospital company nearly \$1-million. Now it wants that money back.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Tampa filed a lawsuit in federal court last week seeking repayment from three former executives of U.S. Health Corp., the erstwhile owner of Pembroke Pines General Hospital in Pembroke Pines.

U.S. Health, which was based in St. Petersburg, dissolved in 1985, selling off its assets. Humana Inc. now operates Pembroke Pines General Hospital.

According to the lawsuit, U.S. Health officials in 1985 protested the amount that Medicare reimbursed the hospital company for medical malpractice premiums in 1984. The company's premiums that year totaled \$320,984 and the hospital was to be reimbursed a portion of that amount.

Medicare responded a year later through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, its intermediary. Instead of paying a fraction of the premium, Blue Cross miscalculated the amount owed and paid the hospital company \$956,034 - nearly three times the premium amount.

Blue Cross wrote the check in 1986, a year after U.S. Health was dissolved, so the funds were deposited in a fund used to pay creditors and shareholders.

Three years later, in 1989, Blue Cross requested the Medicare funds back.

James H. Brown, a St. Petersburg resident who was company treasurer at the time, wrote back, stating that the company "is no longer in business and has been liquidated since 1985." The new owners, he said, were not liable for U.S. Health's debts.

Brown is one of three former executives mentioned as defendants. St. Petersburg businessman Walter P. Loebenberg and Bernadine Braithwaite, an official at Straight Inc. in St. Petersburg, also were named. All three were executives, directors and shareholders of U.S. Health at the time.

None of them was available for comment Tuesday.

The U.S. Attorney's Office contends in the suit that Brown, Loebenberg as president and Braithwaite as corporate secretary had to know that Medicare had paid too much when they received it. They have since not given an accounting of what happened to the money, the suit says, and they should not have allowed it to be disbursed without repaying Medicare first.

The lawsuit seeks most of the money back - \$788,986 plus \$78,898 in penalties and unspecified interest charges.

A trial date has not been set.

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<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/tampabay/access/54274367.html?FMT...> Medicare sues to recover overpayment to hospital company - Newsp...

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