

## DRUG REHABILITATION IS A BIG-MONEY BUSINESS, BUT IT OFFERS NO SURE-CURE

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They are sitting in a stuffy room, 15 young people who on this summer night are far from a shopping mall, a pool, a street, or any other place they would like to be. This is a secret they all share -- a need to talk about their addictions and to help keep each other from sliding back into a life bolstered by drugs and alcohol.

This gathering in downtown Syracuse is one of dozens of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings held every day in the area. The young people are sitting together. Nearby are another 20 adults.

They know that getting off drugs is a cinch.

Staying off is agony.

It's nightmares. Flashbacks. Cravings. Memory lapses. Losing old friends.

And after all the pain, most young people go back to drugs and alcohol within a year.

Drug and alcohol counseling and rehabilitation has grown into a \$3 billion-a-year industry. If every addict sought and received treatment, drug rehabilitation would be a \$30 billion industry. That would rival the size of Chrysler Corp.

The treatment of New York state's addicts and alcoholics will cost more than \$440 million this year, according to state agencies overseeing the programs. Five years ago, the cost was \$275 million.

As many as 3,500 young people in Onondaga County may need drug treatment, according to the county Department of Mental Health. There's usually a waiting list at rehabilitation centers.

Young people, often pushed by a desperate parent or a stern judge, try to quit in many different ways.

Some rehabilitation programs take kids away, put them in dormitories and try to teach them to quit. A typical month-long visit costs \$7,000 to \$10,000. It can cost more than \$50,000 at some private facilities.

Other young people try to live at home and go to counseling. Medicaid, the government's insurance for the poor, pays for many programs. An hour of counseling can cost \$15 to \$90.

Some kids even try acupuncture to quell the desire for drugs. That costs several hundred dollars.

Many others turn to Alcoholics Anonymous and other anonymous help groups. They offer free meetings where recovering addicts help each other stay clean.

Getting a young person off drugs usually starts with pleas and threats from parents. Then they turn to schools, churches and friends for counseling.

If that doesn't work, parents or judges often force a young person to enter rehabilitation centers like Rush Recovery Center in Syracuse, Conifer Park in Scotia or Clear Brook near Wilkes Barre, Pa.

For parents, it's one thing to admit a son or daughter may have a problem. It's another thing to force them into rehabilitation.

Diane, a suburban mother whose teen-age son was an addict and alcoholic, didn't believe her own support group when they told her it was time to get her son into rehab.

"No way. Not my child," she recalls telling the group. "He doesn't have a problem that bad."

Her anger gave way to feelings of guilt. It must be her fault that he has a problem, she thought. Finally, she agreed that it was time to put him into rehabilitation.

A rehabilitation center is a mix of medical institution, day camp and boot camp.

It usually starts with a couple days of detoxification. Coming off years of drug and alcohol addiction can bring on hallucinations, nose bleeds, nightmares, convulsions and stomach aches.

But most young bodies are able to bounce back without severe withdrawal symptoms, said Otto Feliu. He is the administrative director of alcoholism and substance abuse services at Crouse Irving Memorial Hospital. Young people also may not have used drugs as long as an adult might have, he said.

Counselors tell young people that alcoholism and drug addiction are diseases. Young people can then talk with peers and counselors about ways to deal with their diseases.

"I want a safe, comfortable place for these kids to be able to come and let it all come out," said Judy Clark, a counselor at Rush Recovery Center. "Who else can they tell, of an adult nature, that doesn't give them some kind of criticism?"

Sometimes rehabilitation works. Most of the time it doesn't.

Drug counselors not working in the rehabilitation centers estimate as many as nine out of every 10 young people go back to drugs. Rehabilitation center directors admit clients use drugs again, but they say that it's less than 90 percent. Often, the people who use again have learned enough to quit a second time.

For parents, it's tough to watch a child slide back.

"They give you all these false hopes," said Sue Bordonaro, whose teen-age son Rob went to Conifer Park and got hooked on drugs again. "The kids at the time are very sincere about getting off."

Some young people think rehabilitation is a big waste.

Joe, a 17-year-old Liverpool High School student, was free-basing cocaine, using LSD, smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol and popping pills in the months leading up to his trip to rehab last year. He didn't want to go.

"I may have a problem with drugs, but I'm not an addict," he recalled telling his rehab counselor the first day. "In rehab, I said I was addicted, but I'm not sure I believed it. I didn't want to believe I was addicted. I was 17."

He decided to make the best out of a bad situation and tried to become the best person in the entire center.

"I filled out the paper work," he said, laughing. "I told stories that I never did. I shared in group all the time. I got people to open up and talk about themselves. I was an egomaniac."

He came home and figured he was cured.

"I got this thing beat. Hey, look how great I am doing," he said.

He stayed off drugs for three months. Then he smoked pot again.

"By the time school started, I was ripping," he said "I was high before school, high during school, high after school, high at night. That was four or five times a day smoking pot."

Joe finally quit by going to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Whether or not drug rehabilitation works, it's definitely a big and growing business.

In Onondaga County, local and state governments spent at least \$4.5 million on treatment and counseling. Insurance companies often pick up the tab for many people. Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Syracuse paid out \$2 million last year for drug rehabilitation in Central New York.

Nationally, drug treatment centers raked in \$1.3 billion in 1987, up from \$534 million five years earlier, according to a survey. Another \$1.7 billion went into alcoholism treatment, up from \$1.1 billion five years earlier.

The number of treatment centers has risen from 7,100 in 1982 to 8,500 in 1987, according to the latest nationwide survey of rehabilitation programs. Rehabilitation experts say the number of programs has increased in the past two years, but no complete census has been conducted.

Despite the growth, there is still a shortfall.

Across the state, about 3,400 people, including 38 in Central New York, are waiting to get into treatment programs, said Doug Rosenberry, spokesman for the state Division of Substance Abuse Services.

A new center scheduled to open in November may alleviate some of the waiting in Central New York. Crouse Irving Memorial Hospital built the 40-bed inpatient rehabilitation center in DeWitt. Twenty beds will be for young people, and kids unable to afford the program will be accepted, said Feliu, the hospital's substance abuse program director.

**A few rehabilitation centers use controversial tactics that have landed them in court for false imprisonment.**

**Straight, Inc. near Boston, for instance, keeps newcomers under control by forcing them to keep hold of each others' belt loops. Clients there for a longer time keep the new ones in line.**

One of the more unusual treatment methods being used in Central New York combines acupuncture with psychiatry.

Dr. Nasri Ghaly, whose office is in the State Tower Building, said he can treat drug addictions by releasing the human body's own endorphins to take the place of drugs, nicotine, alcohol.

"I give you the natural high so you don't need to go do this stuff," Ghaly explained.

He pushes needles into the ear. Sometimes also the leg, depending on the drug of addiction.

The patients sit there, not feeling the needle pricks, for about 45 minutes. Then they are sent home with tiny staples taped to the precise points. If they get an urge, they're to press on the staple.

Ghaly said acupuncture works in 85 percent of the cases. Some people wind up addicted to acupuncture, but that's a safer addiction, he said, much like people who love jogging.

It all costs \$60 to \$90 per session, and it usually takes at least six sessions to work.

Whether it's acupuncture or rehab, taking the first step and quitting is only the start.

Recovering addicts and alcoholics say the secret is really, really wanting to quit. Rehabilitation programs aren't a cure. They say they must work at staying clean.

It's not easy.

"If I had to go back to my old school and my old reputation, it would be hard," said a 17-year-old red-headed girl enrolled in an outpatient program at the Rush Recovery Center. "I'd have people coming up to me, 'You got some speed?' or 'Got any coke for me?'"

The girl, dressed in black and white, with lots of costume jewelry, joined several other recovering addicts at Benjamin Rush last month to talk about drugs. They didn't want their names used.

They puffed on cigarettes and passed a box of candy. Talk was marked with obscenities. People recovering often replace their addictions with others, like candy and cigarettes.

These young people meet once a week to talk about what's bothering them. They talk less about their bodies and more about pressures from drug-using friends, hassles from parents, hassles at school, the cravings for drugs.

One 16-year-old boy toyed with dealing drugs. Not using them, he adds, just selling them. But he talks about using drugs again so he would go back to safety -- the rehabilitation program that he calls the "pink cloud."

A 13-year-old girl who used to sell LSD said it's hard to go back to school. The other day, she said, the class listened to some of President Bush's speech on drugs. Suddenly, all the other students turned and stared at her. It embarrassed her. It hurt her.

Bridget Sheridan, a 16-year-old Liverpool junior who attended another rehabilitation center, returned to Liverpool High School in March. The kids teased her and offered to get high with her. One kid poured Sweet and Low on his desk, shaped it into a line of "cocaine" and blew it in her face. Three days later, she switched to night school.

- Caption: NICHOLAS LISI/Staff photographer CAROL WERBECK of Syracuse undergoes acupuncture for treatment of alcohol and nicotine addiction. Dr. Nasri Ghaly of Syracuse applied the needles, which he says release the body's own endorphins, chemicals that take the place of the drugs. Color. NICHOLAS LISI/Staff photographer BRIDGET SHERIDAN of Liverpool, top, underwent treatment for drug abuse, then faced ridicule from students when she went back to school. Dr. Nasri Ghaly, below, uses acupuncture to treat Carol Werbeck for alcohol and nicotine addiction. File photo DR. RONALD DOHERTY runs the Rush Recovery Center, a drug rehabilitation center in Syracuse. Rehabilitation center counselors and directors admit most kids they treat go back on drugs within a year.

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## He got help but there's no guarantee for future

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Related story on page A-01.

Each day Donald Hardy would stop on his way to school to drink from a "nice-sized" bottle of liquor he kept stashed in a field.

But when he finally realized that alcohol and drugs were controlling his life, Donald did what 15-year-old boys should do: He told his parents.

"He told us he didn't think he could stop," recalls his father, Donald Hardy, a Providence firefighter.

But Rhode Island has no facility that treats boys addicted to liquor or drugs. The only adolescent treatment center in the state is Caritas House, a 19-bed facility for girls.

Donald finally found treatment, of sorts. Through the intervention of the Providence Fire Department's Employee Assistance Program, he spent a month last spring at High Point, a North Kingstown facility geared, like most treatment programs in the state, for adults.

How does he handle his problem today?

"I just don't go near it anymore," says Donald, leaning back in his chair, smiling now and then. "I don't bother with it."

But his father and Frank Brothers, the department's employee assistance director, say they expect Donald to have a relapse. The boy needed at least six months in a residential program designed for teenagers, not adults, they say. And he doesn't attend any support program, like Alcoholics Anonymous.

That's where a state treatment center for boys would have helped.

Adolescents can find daytime treatment throughout the state. But those with addictions requiring intensive rehabilitation have limited options: Caritas House, if they're female and if a bed is available; or a facility out of state.

The state Division of Substance Abuse has no statistics on the number of adolescent boys and girls seeking treatment. And only recently did the division begin to develop a waiting list.

Before this, says division director Richard H. Freeman, "It was very counterproductive to develop a waiting list for something that didn't exist."

But Freeman and drug-treatment advocates agree that a dire need exists.

"If they set up 10 centers they could fill them," says Susan D. Wallace, the director of Caritas House. "I would say there are several hundred kids out there in need of residential treatment."

Freeman says the state has several plans to address the urgent need, in addition to opening a 12-bed facility for boys on the Zambarano Memorial Hospital grounds in Burrillville.

It plans to build at least another three centers, for a total of 48 beds, through a \$3.2 million bond passed in 1988. The state has already bought property in Richmond for the first site.

It is working with High Point and the Good Hope treatment center in West Greenwich to develop programs for adolescents. And it is negotiating with facilities elsewhere in New England to treat Rhode Island adolescents while the state expands its own program.

Meanwhile, Freeman says, the state is paying for the rehabilitation of four boys and two girls at Straight Inc., a facility in Stoughton, Mass.

Frank Brothers and Donald Hardy acknowledge that the younger Hardy is fortunate. For example, insurance paid the High Point bill, which ranged from \$8,000 to \$10,000. Still, they say, the boy's struggle is far from over.

"Something's going to trigger him," says Brothers.

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