

Recovery High Schools as a Protective Factor against the Progression of Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders

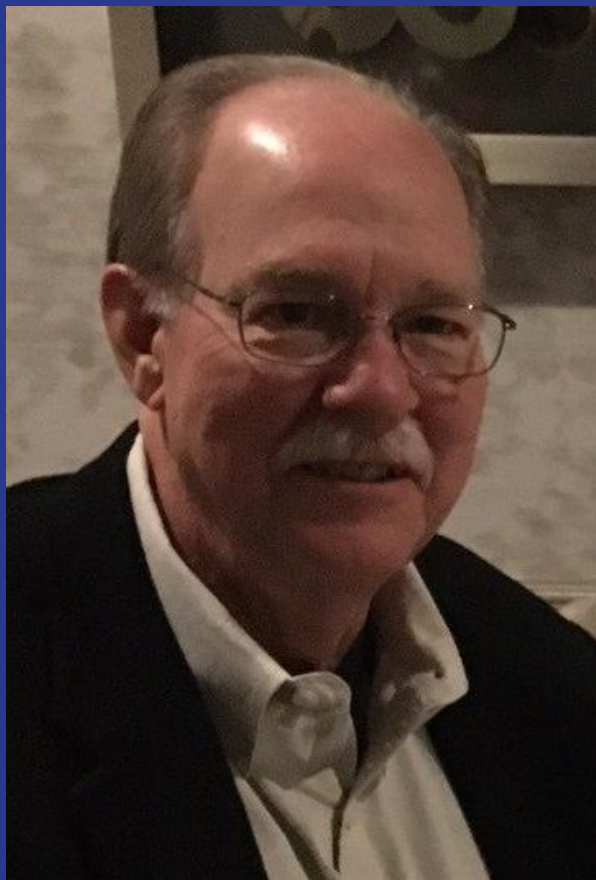
Step 1.)
We admitted that we were
powerless over our addiction, that
our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 3.) We made a
decision to turn our will and
our lives over to the care of God
as we understood Him.

Step 2.) We came to believe that a Power
greater than ourselves could restore us to
sanity.

Dr. Andy Finch
Vanderbilt
University

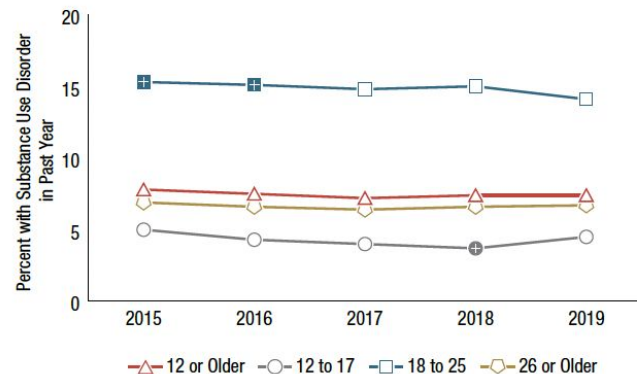
Opioid Response Network
Webinar Series
September 28, 2022



Dr. Paul Moberg
1949-2022

Substance Use Disorders and Treatment by Age Group

Figure 45. Substance Use Disorder in the Past Year among People Aged 12 or Older: 2015-2019



* Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Figure 45 Table. Substance Use Disorder in the Past Year among People Aged 12 or Older: 2015-2019

Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
12 or Older	7.8	7.5	7.2	7.4	7.4
12 to 17	5.0	4.3	4.0	3.7*	4.5
18 to 25	15.3*	15.1*	14.8	15.0	14.1
26 or Older	6.9	6.6	6.4	6.6	6.7

* Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Aged 12 to 17

Among adolescents aged 12 to 17 in 2019, 0.7 percent (or 172,000 people) received any substance use treatment in the past year ([Figure 65](#) and 2019 DT 7.51). These estimates in 2019 were similar to the estimates in 2015 to 2018.

Aged 18 to 25

Among young adults aged 18 to 25 in 2019, 1.7 percent (or 578,000 people) received any substance use treatment in the past year ([Figure 65](#) and 2019 DT 7.51). These estimates in 2019 were similar to the estimates in 2015 to 2018.

Recovery High Schools



CHANGING LIVES THROUGH CHANGING STORIES:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS
IN RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION

By

B. Tova Rubin

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Psychology

February, 2002

Nashville, Tennessee

The deep deep tragedies
That walk about this school
The victimized
The invisible
The raw and angry souls
That have every right to be
I may be older in years
But their maturity is visible in their eyes
Eyes that reflect years of suffering
Well beyond their actual birthdates

And they tell me their stories
And sometimes it is almost too much to listen
I don't want to hear
I don't want it to be true
Somebody tell me how this could be
Why is the world so silent
When there is all of this horror around us?¹⁰⁹
And they even have gratitude
If I had not experienced that, they say
Then I wouldn't be me today

And I am awed and amazed
I am deeply impressed
When I hear them
I listen to them
And I am learning so much
About not taking for granted
About honesty
And the danger of lies
Even the smallest
About facing myself
And not pretending I am anything I am not

So much of their lives ahead of them
And yet every day is a struggle
To remember that escaping doesn't help
It may feel like it helps
Or at least they won't feel anything
Which is better than reality sometimes
And they have to remind each other
That escaping leads to nowhere
And they have all been there
And miraculously / They have come back alive



Poem recited by Maggie Ratley, 2021



RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL DEFINITIONAL COMPONENTS

- A. Primary purpose is to educate students in recovery from substance use or co-occurring disorders.**
- B. Meet state requirements for awarding a secondary school diploma, i.e. school offers credits leading to a state-recognized high school diploma, and student is not just getting tutored or completing work from another school while there.**

SOURCE: Association of Recovery Schools, 2013



RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL DEFINITIONAL COMPONENTS

- C. **Intent that all students enrolled be in recovery and working a program of recovery from substance use or co-occurring disorders** as determined by the student and the School;
- D. **Available to any student in recovery who meets state or district eligibility requirements for attendance**, i.e., students do not have to go through a particular treatment program to enroll, and the school is not simply the academic component of a primary or extended-care treatment facility or therapeutic boarding school.

SOURCE: Association of Recovery Schools, 2013

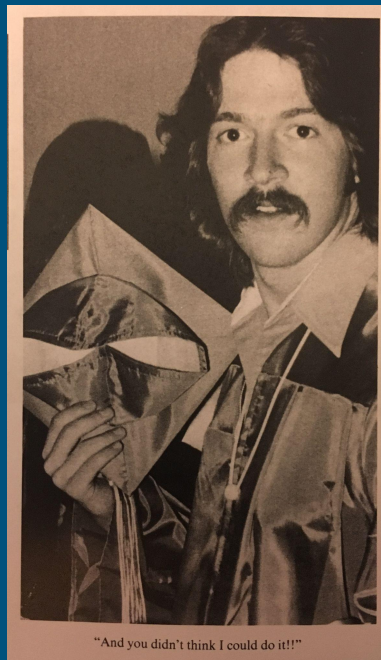
WHAT RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS ARE & ARE NOT...

- Are places youth enroll voluntarily
- Promote abstinence for all youth who choose to attend
- Enroll students following different pathways to recovery
- Value student leadership, ownership, and voice
- *Are not treatment programs and are not designed to provide primary treatment*
- *Do not usually require prior participation in any form of treatment*
- *Do not supplant or replace treatment*
- *Do not replace mental health treatment or ongoing services*
- Some students may not benefit from an RHS, based on where they are in the stages of change... Are uniquely situated to refer these youth to the services they need

Origins



Freedom Road School
Charleston, SC
1973



PDAP GED School
Houston, TX
1976



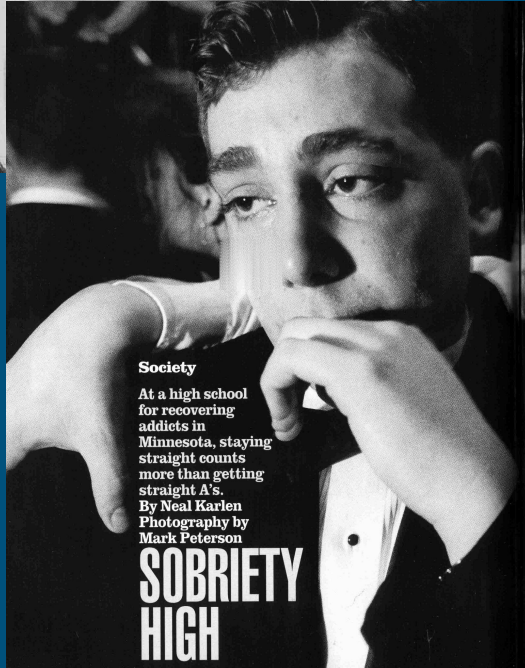
Phoenix I, 1979
Silver Spring, MD



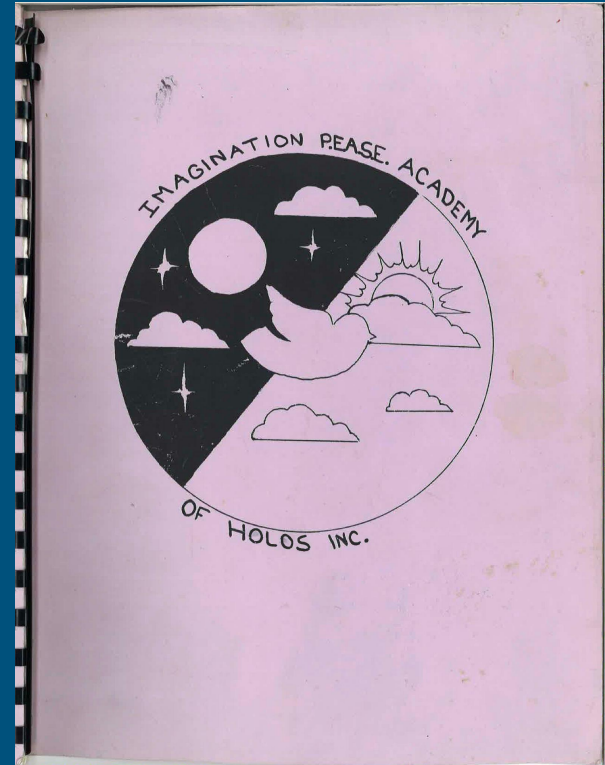
Phoenix II, 1983
Gaithersburg, MD

Origins

Sobriety High Where Troubled Teens Get a Clean Start ▶



Sobriety High
1987-2013



PEASE Academy 1989-present

- 1971 - PDAP becomes 1st APG
- 1973 - Charleston school district partners with tx ctr on a school for students with SUDs
- 1976 - GED school becomes 1st school for youth in recovery not affiliated with tx program
- 1979 - Phoenix School opens in Silver Spring, MD
- 2002 - ARS hosts 1st Conference in Washington

former drug addict and alcoholic, counsels a teenage Hamilton listens and offer su

child is a drug user too."

...their children," he said matter-of-factly. "But rings made with surgical-grade stainless steel posts.



By JOHN A. ALSTON
Staff Reporter

Education and therapy is the freedom road for teenagers with drug abuse problems at the Freedom School Family Health Center.

The center is the Freedom Road School attended by 26 teenagers entering the school's Substance Abuse Program.

"I think we've discovered something very important about the treatment of the adolescent," said center director Dr. Derril Edwards.

According to DeLemon, the school has been successful in providing academic credit while receiving intensive treatment for drug abuse.

The school process takes place outside of the normal school environment where the student first becomes involved with drugs.

"Every child taken into this program has school problems," DeLeon said.

DeLeon said that if the student at the center have probably been in or out of school several times, expelled or suspended by school authorities.

Regardless of their school status, they are certain to be below the average intelligence level of 90.

At Fetter, the youths receive therapy in individual sessions during the afternoons.

They also may run the Freedom Road horizon, however.

Presently, the salaries of the two teachers are \$8,000 a year each.

If money for the salaries can't be found, DeLeon said the school will have to back up students when school officials send them.

Outlining what the school does, teacher Derril Edwards said the idea was to give the students "something with a special curriculum for each student."

Edwards and James Gordas instruct the students under the general supervision of the Charleston County School System.

Road School as a division of its "Hemlock Broom" instructional program.

The school was begun in October last year when the "graduates" and been placed back in the public schools.

DeLeon said the test will come in the fall when most of the students currently enrolled in Freedom Road will probably return to school.

The main factor as to when a student is released from the daily treatment program is his progress.

Participants in the treatment program must attend at least 12 weeks of treatment. The duration can be as long as 15 months.

Education and therapy is the freedom road for teen-agers with drug abuse problems at the Franklin C. Fetter Family Health Center.

Proving the point is the Freedom Road School attended by 26 teen-agers enrolled in the center's Substance Abuse Program.

"I think we've discovered something very important about the treatment of the adolescent," said center director Louis DeLeon.

According to DeLeon, the school allows a teen-ager to preserve his academic credit while receiving intensive treatment for drug abuse.

And, he added, the process takes

place inside of the normal school environment where the student first became involved with drugs.

"Every child taken into this program has a problem," said the principal, explaining that most youths enrolled at the center have probably been in trouble with the law and have been expelled or suspended by school authorities.

Regardless of their school status, they are certain to be below the academic average of the school, he said.

Most of the youths report coming in the mornings and attend school in the afternoons.

All is not rosy on the Freedom Road horizon, however.

Low salaries of the two teachers are to end on June 3 when the

regular school year expires.

"As of now we're faced with the hard, cold reality of June 3," DeLeon said.

If money for the salaries can't be found, DeLeon said the school will have to close operation and that could mean a backlog of students when school resumes in the fall.

Outlining what the school does, teacher Derrill Edwards said the idea is to "pick up on student interests" with a special curriculum for each student.

Edwards and James Gordan instruct the students under the general supervision of the Charleston County School Board which has recognized Freedom

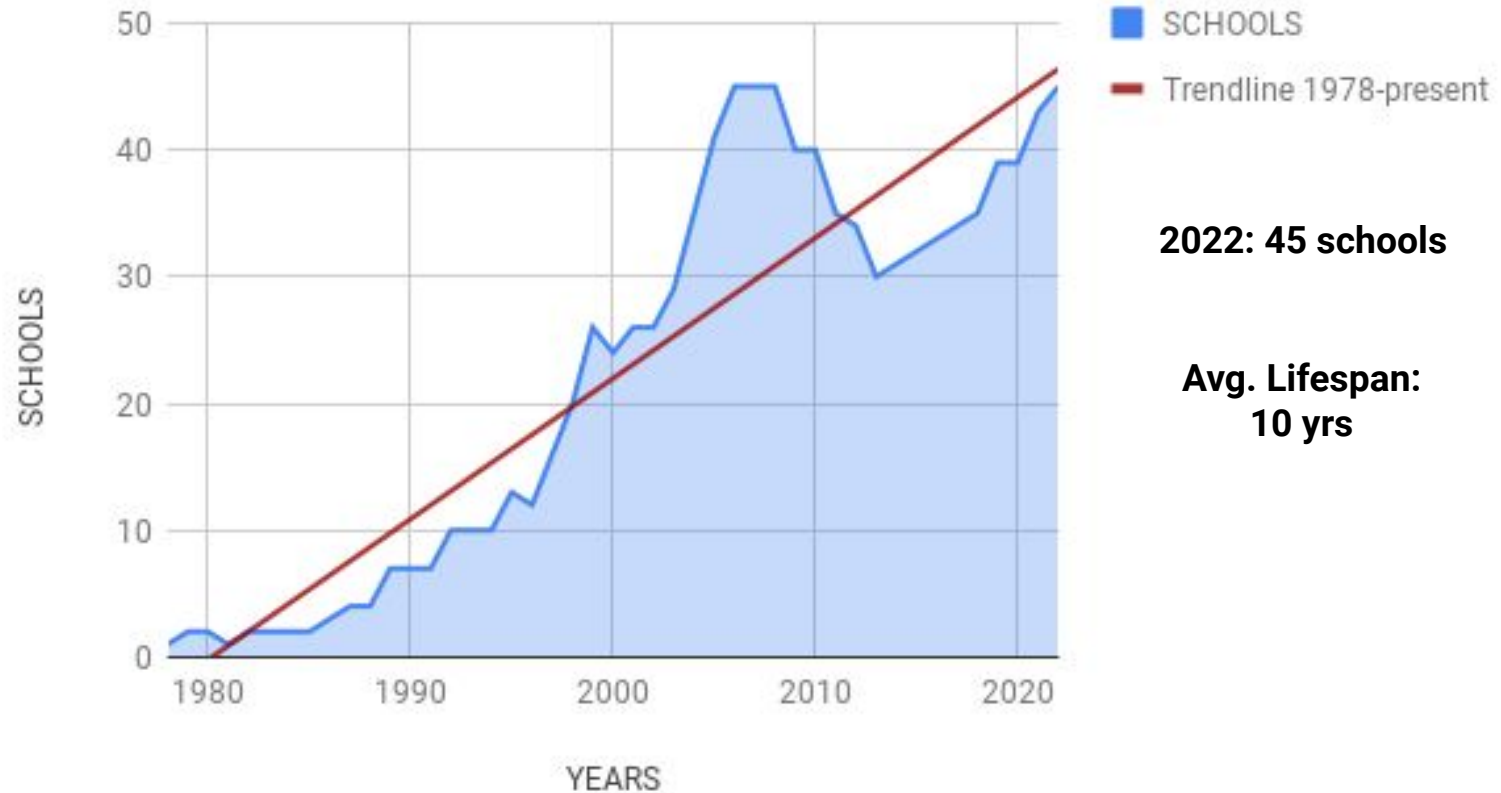
The school was begun in October and so far 40 students have "graduated" and have been sent back to the public schools with apparently good results, officials said.

However, the test will come in the fall when most of the students currently enrolled are expected to probably be returned to public schools.

The main factor as to when a student will return to public school is when released from the daily drug program, DeLay said.

Participants in the treatment program must attend at least 12 weeks officials said and the duration can be as long as 15 months.

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS BY YEAR





Hope Academy

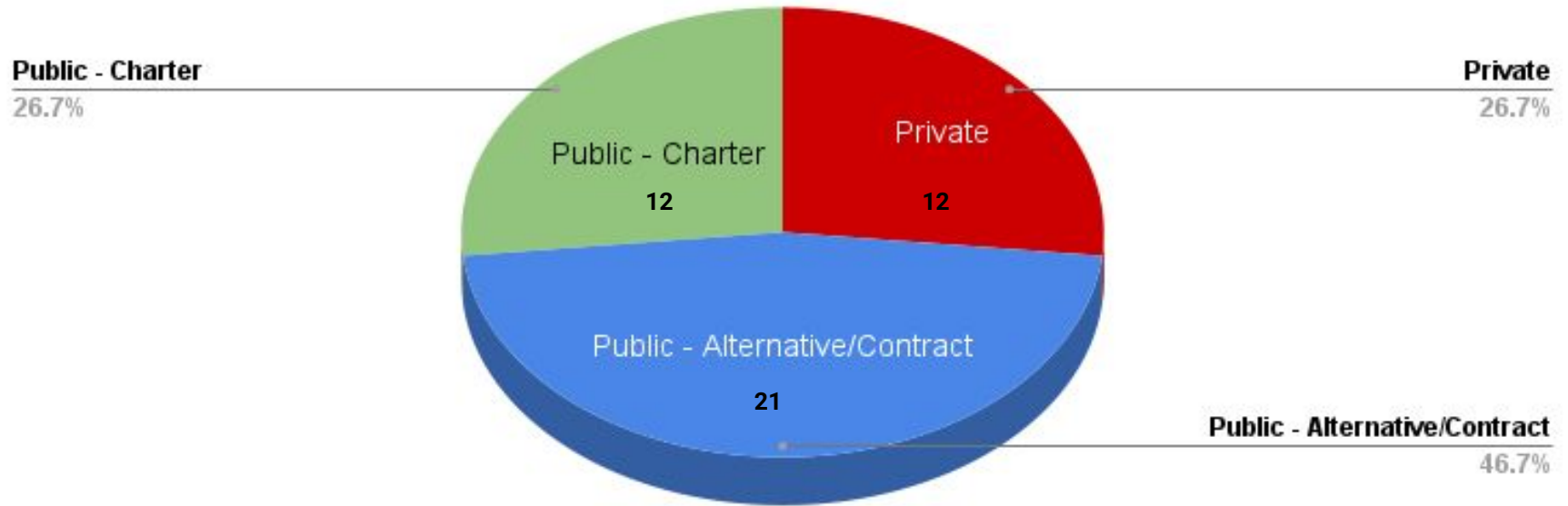
Accredited Recovery High Schools

- Archway Academy (Houston)
- P.E.A.S.E Academy (Minneapolis)
- Insight Program (White Bear Lake, MN)
- William J. Ostiguy High School (Boston)
- Hope Academy (Indianapolis)
- Mission Academy (Oklahoma City)
- University High School (Austin, TX)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYCVEJ5rD1M&t=150s>

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL FUNDING MODELS





Student Engagement

The semester student enrollment of reporting recovery schools, the gender distribution among that student population, and the activities that contribute to recovery school attendance.



2-115

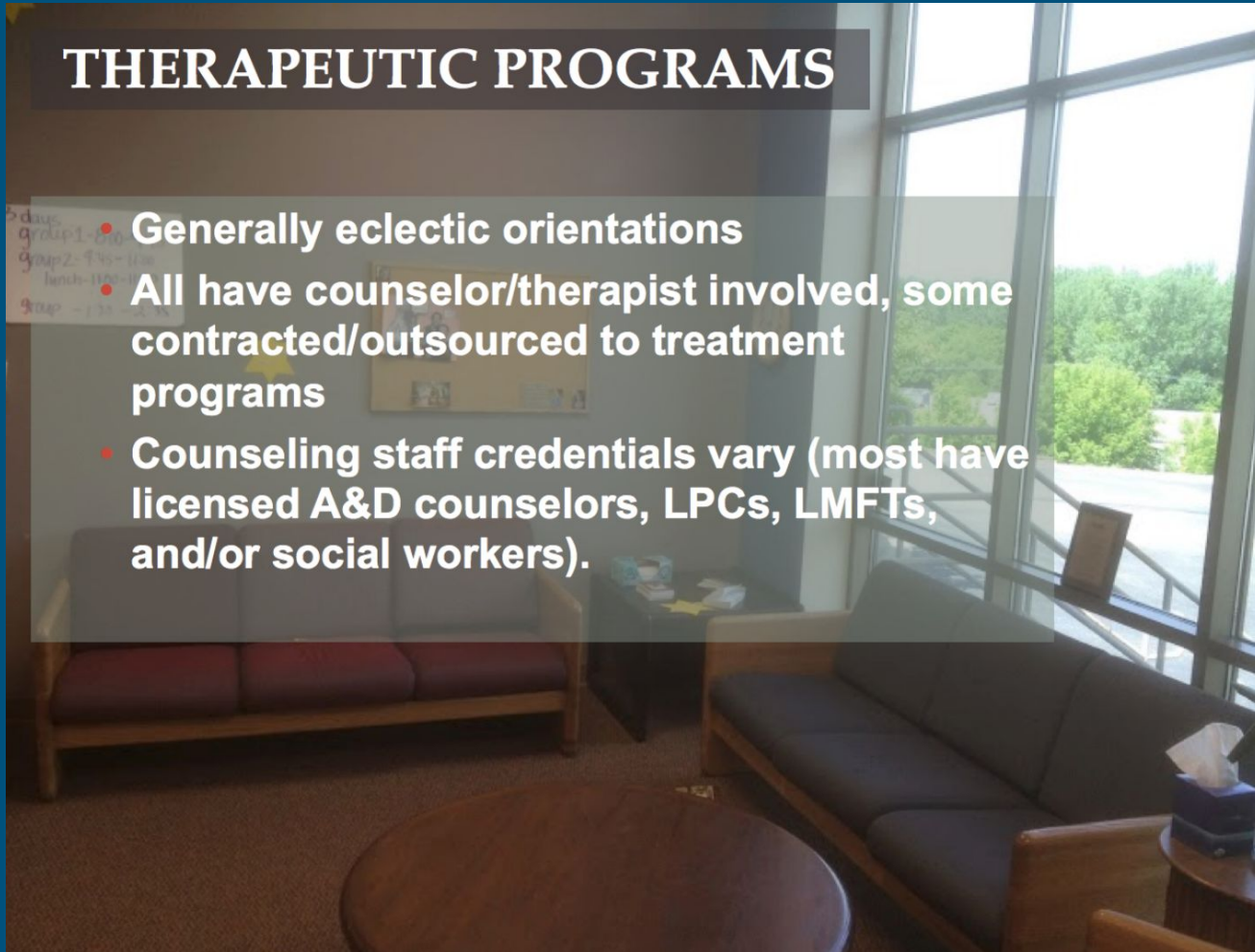
Range of Students
Enrolled in a Recovery
High School



Average
Student
Enrollment
is **32**

THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS

- Generally eclectic orientations
- All have counselor/therapist involved, some contracted/outsourced to treatment programs
- Counseling staff credentials vary (most have licensed A&D counselors, LPCs, LMFTs, and/or social workers).



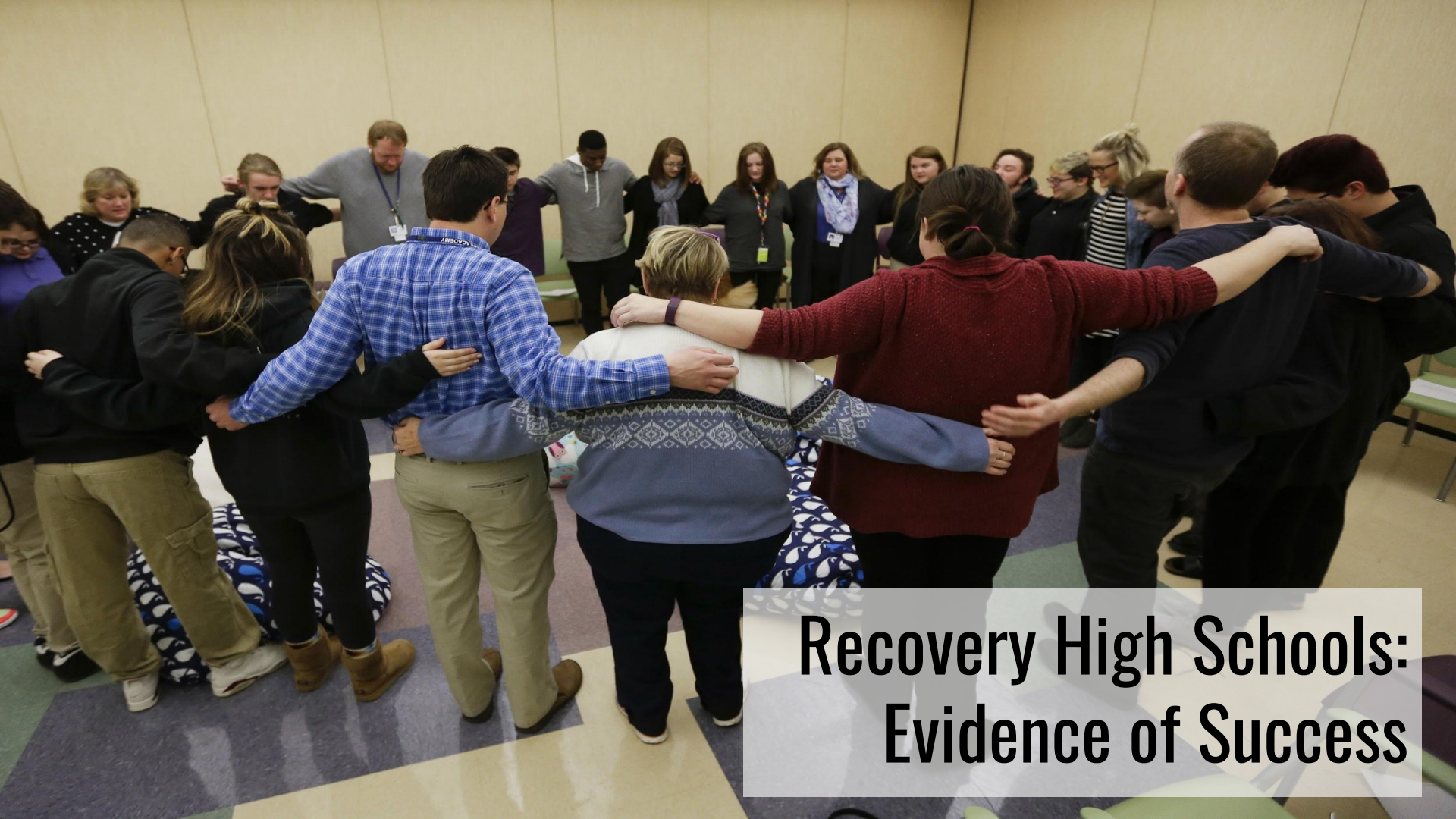
Alternative Peer Groups

Community-based, family-centered, professionally staffed, positive peer support program that offers prosocial activities, counseling, and case-management for people who struggle with substance use or self-destructive behaviors (Collier)



SOURCE:

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Alternative-Peer-Group-%3A-A-Model-for-Youth-Recovery-Collier-Hilliker/74424b9e12f2f00dd9ff941afbdf866f729417f>



**Recovery High Schools:
Evidence of Success**

Acknowledgements

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Andria Botzet, Christine Dittel, Tamara Fahnhorst, Patrick McIlvaine
Stephanie Lindsley, Barbara Hill, Falon French, David Weimer



Baseline Characteristics of Participants

Twelve Month Pruned Sample (n=187)

Demographics	<i>M (SD) or %</i>
Age	16.3 (1.0)
Male	51%
White (Non-Hispanic)	78%
African-American	11%
Hispanic	9%
Alcohol Use Disorder	60%
Other Drug Use Disorder	94%
Opioid Use Disorder	15%
Prior treatment for substance use disorder	100%
Co-Morbid Mental Health Condition (SCID)	92%
Prior MH Treatment	88%

*Pruned of 23 students outside propensity score balanced range

Treatment History

Twelve Month Pruned Sample (n=187)

SUD Treatment History	
Inpatient/residential	59%
Outpatient	84%
AA/NA	64%
MH Treatment History	
Inpatient/residential	38%
Outpatient	80%
Ever psychiatric medication	87%
Days of mental health services in past 90	17

Mental Health Disorders

(Mini-SCID, percent lifetime)

Meets criteria for:	Percent
Major depressive disorder	80
Generalized anxiety disorder	64
Antisocial personality disorder	45
Suicide risk	44
Panic disorder	38
Posttraumatic stress disorder	31
Hypomanic episode	20
Manic episode	17
Obsessive-compulsive disorder	12
<i>Any of the nine MH disorders</i>	92

Compared to students in non-recovery high schools who have received substance use treatment, *students in recovery high schools:*

- (a) have **higher graduation rates**;
- (b) report significantly **lower absenteeism**;
- (c) are **more likely to abstain** from using substances; and
- (d) have significantly **fewer days using** marijuana and other drugs.

Cost-Benefit

- A cost-benefit analysis indicated that the **high school graduation rate** for recovery high school (RHS) students is at least 20 percentage points higher than the graduation rate for similar students who have had SUD treatment but did not participate in a RHS for at least 30 days.
- A conservative estimate of the present value of **net benefits of about \$32 thousand**

Attendance and Completion

- Students who attended RHSs reported **significantly less overall absenteeism**. RHS attendance was thus associated with over one-half a standard deviation improvement in absenteeism—an effect *equivalent to 5 fewer absences from school over the past 90 days.*
- Students who attended RHSs had **significantly lower odds of dropping out** of high school compared to students attending non-RHSs. The *predicted probability of high school dropout was 10% for RHS students and 27% for non-RHS students.*

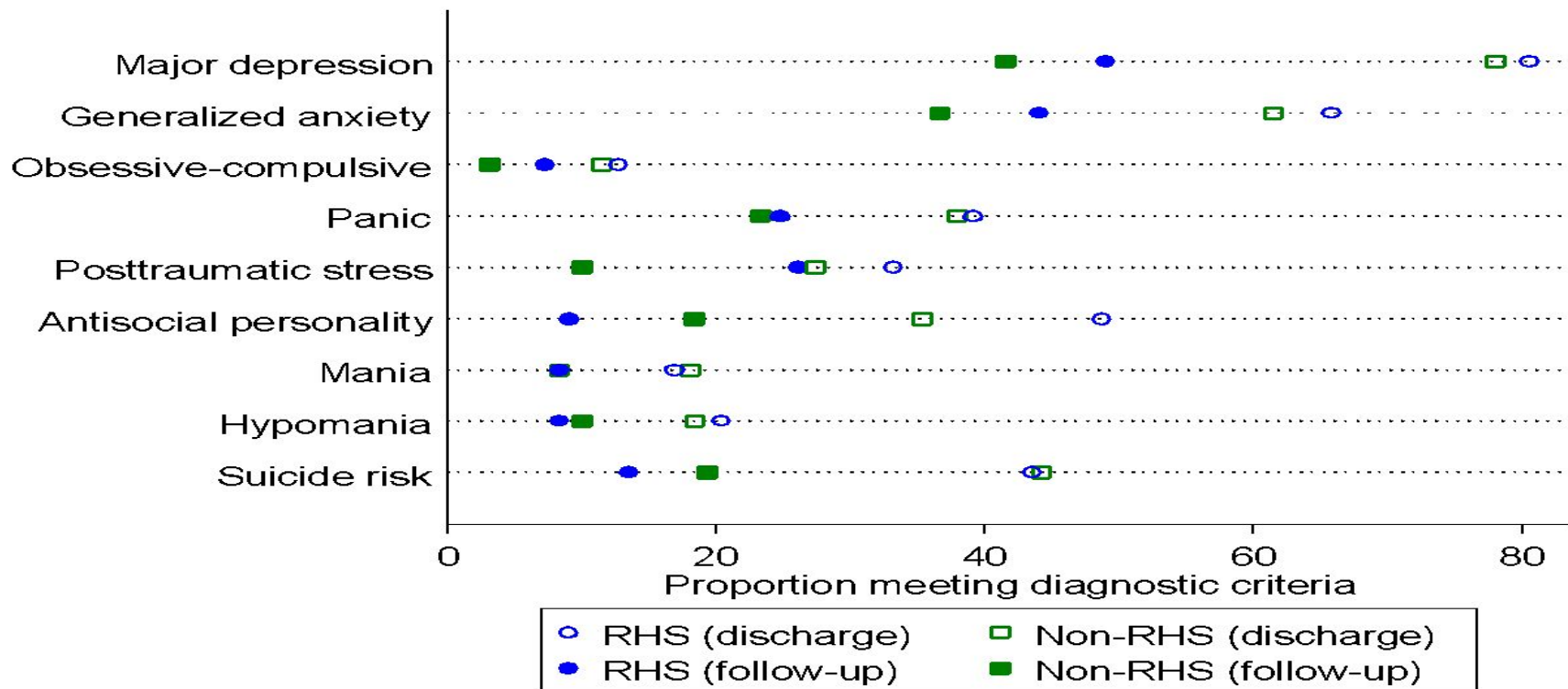
Mental Health Findings

Both groups significantly improved in mental health over time but there was not a significant difference between RHS and non-RHS students in mental health improvement.

Tanner-Smith, E., Finch, A.J., Hennessy, E.A., & Moberg, D.P. (2018). Effects of recovery high school attendance on students' mental health symptoms. *International Journal of Mental Health & Addiction*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-017-9863-7>

Mental Health Outcomes at Six Months

(adjusted for propensity scores and baseline values)



Cumulative Observations

What have we learned based on our Program of Research?

- RHSs are important option in continuum of recovery support, in particular serve students with
 - Co-occurring disorders
 - Severe substance use disorders
 - High need for services and support
 - Deserving of multi-system braided funding!

Cumulative Observations (2)

- Most programs studied appear to be successful in supporting young people in recovery, and providing (at least transitional) academic services
- Substance use outcomes are very positive based on rigorous quasi-experimental analysis using propensity scoring to equate groups.
- Academic outcomes show promise but effects are small
- Mental Health Outcomes show similar reductions in symptomatology in RHS and comparison group

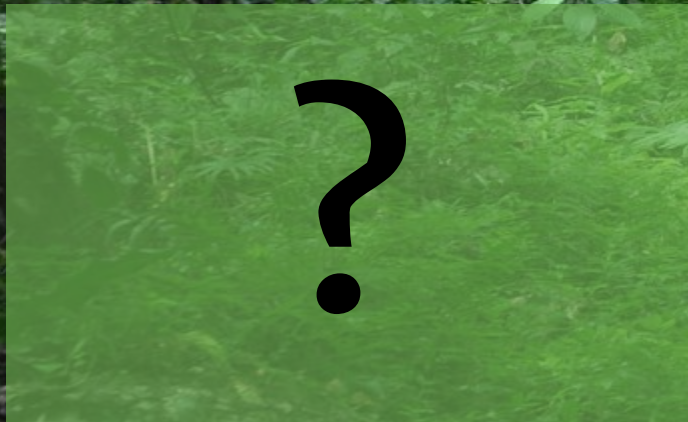
Cumulative Observations (3)

- Adding more counselors with mental health certification may help better address the co-occurring disorders faced by the majority of RHS students.
- RHSs should consider providing more needed family supports by providing linkages to evidence based family services, either in the school or in the community.
- Should consider structural changes that might reduce racial and socioeconomic status disparities both in RHSs and in the general treatment and continuing care field.

The Heaviness of Now

- **COVID Impact:**
 - **Diminished enrollments**
 - **Mental health and substance misuse crisis**
 - **Recessions led to cuts in local funding for small, speciality programs (2008 to 2013 example)**





“This school saved my life”

“Whether stated figuratively or literally, multiple students in multiple sites expressed the **life-sustaining** nature of these programs. After extensive study and consideration, **we believe that without these programs, dozens of our state’s young people would be substantially worse off** both in terms of their academic and their recovery progress.”

- From An Evaluation of Massachusetts Recovery High School Programs (Mazur & Brody, 2020)

