

# Project Adapt

## Researchers look for ways to reduce drug use and delinquency among juveniles released from institutions

**H**al is a 15 year old resident of Echo Glen School for juvenile offenders, described by his counselor as incredibly vivacious and charming. He is also known for his destructive tantrums, which have included breaking chairs in his cottage because he felt "he had been good for too long," which didn't fit his abusive, tough guy self-image. Hal's brother is an inmate at the Monroe Reformatory, his father is a pimp, and his mother has had three marriages, all to physically and emotionally abusive men.

Mary is 19 and will be leaving Echo Glen soon after two years, during which time she graduated from high school and worked hard to get out. The daughter of a prostitute and drug addict, she spent many years in foster homes and group homes.

Both Hal and Mary are taking part in a three and one-half year research project called ADAPT, which stands for Adolescent Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment for Institutionalized Delinquents. ADAPT is a collaborative project of the Division of Juvenile Rehabilitation and the Center for Social Welfare Research at the University of Washington School of Social Work. It is funded by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Professors David Hawkins and Richard Catalano of the School of Social Work are the principal investigators.

The purpose of the project is to test the effectiveness of reentry and after-care intervention for institutionalized delinquents. The goals are to reduce delinquent youngsters' likelihood of association with drug-using peers in their community after they leave Echo Glen, to reduce their own drug-dependent or addictive behavior patterns and to reduce the likelihood of future criminal activity and need for drug treatment correctional services.

The project has two phases for each

of the approximately 30 King and Pierce County youths who are in the clinical program at one time. During the first ten weeks, while they are still at Echo Glen, they learn skills training, community explorations, and social networking. The emphasis is on learning to stay out of trouble and to have fun. Since most participants have drug or alcohol related delinquency problems, the emphasis is also on learning to avoid these problems and developing a more positive lifestyle. This includes discovering how to initiate and maintain friendships with persons not involved with drugs and alcohol.

Thirty-one more young people are enrolled in the project's control group and are involved in the regular treatment available through Echo Glen and parole.

During the training period at Echo Glen, the youth also receive help in preparing to reenter their home community. They may take day trips with their case managers to potential schools, jobs, or community activities. Parents or guardians are also visited, and a plan is developed to help prevent each youth from slipping back into alcohol or drug use or delinquency.

When a youth in the program is ready to leave Echo Glen for the community, he enters Phase Two of the program which provides follow-up assistance by his case manager. During this six month period the youth works to establish a successful home life and find new friends and interests. This takes considerable support, since many returning youths don't have friends who aren't themselves in trouble. Making friends is often a problem for them because they have never learned the necessary social skills. Even more important is teaching each youth the ability to say "no" to the temptations of returning to habits which contributed to their previous delinquency. As project clinical

directory Kathy Burgoyne indicates, "It's tough for a youth to face Friday night with nothing to do, and still resist returning to old friends and habits. That's why we emphasize getting into activities these kids enjoy." However, most communities have only limited resources for older youths. A support group of project ADAPT enrollees who have returned to the community has been started, so that youths who return first can in turn give support and friendship to those subsequently leaving Echo Glen. Burgoyne says it is very important that families be involved as much as possible with the youths who leave Echo Glen, and efforts are made by case managers to do this.

The lives of youths leaving Echo Glen, both those in the treatment program and those in the control group, continue to be monitored. An effort is made to follow up on their circumstances six months after they leave the institution and again after one year. This helps the program determine if the material presented at Echo Glen was beneficial to the youths and whether it changed their perceptions of themselves or school. Did it change their behavior? Were they able to make use of their new skills? How did it affect their use of drugs? Comparisons can be made between youths in the program and those in the control group.

Dr. Richard Catalano, co-principal investigator, said that the program can make both personal and environmental changes in each youth's life so they will be more social, use new skills, and have more fun. They will want to do new things and will realize that antisocial behavior will only threaten their new life. By providing consistent case management, both inside the institution and in the community, the program will allow each youth the opportunity to achieve positive independence. ■