

Community Stability and Safety

The Impact of Licensed Residential Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centers

Solutions for Treatment Expansion Project (STEP) • May, 2003

The Solutions for Treatment Expansion Project (STEP) recommends that all 19 local governments within San Diego County adopt a uniform process for evaluating applications for residential alcohol and drug treatment programs in their jurisdictions. Each local government would adopt a specially designed addendum to its conditional use permit (CUP) applications for this purpose.

The application that would be required of treatment providers is designed to promote public discussion. It is also intended to alleviate community residents' fears about any safety issues that they may perceive are related to a treatment program that might be located near them. To that end, STEP has collected a range of data supporting the view that licensed residential treatment facilities promote community safety and are neighborhood assets. Highlights of the data are presented in this fact sheet.

Summary of Findings

The documented need for residential substance abuse treatment in San Diego County is compounded by the fact that existing facilities are unevenly distributed throughout the region, compelling many people who seek treatment to leave their own communities. Public concerns about the impact of treatment centers can be allayed by data showing that, in large part, property values and crime rates near treatment centers are either equivalent to or more favorable than the equivalents in comparable areas. Further, most residents who do live near licensed programs believe the treatment facilities have a neutral or positive effect on their communities.

A DEMONSTRATED NEED FOR TREATMENT

The need for residential treatment services in the county is substantial, the existing beds are not sufficient to meet the need and the distribution of facilities is uneven, according to data from San Diego County Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) and

estimates by the San Diego Alcohol and Drug Services Providers Association (ADSPA).

- In San Diego County there are 19 local governments, only eight of which have licensed residential treatment programs (ADS) in their jurisdictions.
- Several cities and incorporated County areas without licensed residential treatment facilities are among the highest sources of treatment admissions (by ZIP Code) to programs in other cities (ADS).
- In 2001 and 2002, 15,652 individuals were treated in the 36 County-funded licensed residential programs (ADS).
- For every person treated in 2001 and 2002, an estimated three others sought treatment but were unable to find an available bed for up to three months. As a result, approximately 45,000 people actively seeking treatment in the San Diego County-funded system were unable to enter a residential program when they tried to (ADSPA).

PROPERTY VALUE COMPARISON

In 2002 STEP commissioned a licensed realtor to measure the sale value of homes located within five blocks of treatment facilities against that of comparable homes located farther from the facilities

but in the same general areas. A total of 71 property sales were assessed from subject and comparison areas in different regions of the county (Oceanside, Escondido, San Diego, Lemon Grove, Chula Vista) and types of neighborhood (urban, suburban, residential, commercial, high/low-crime). The eight state-licensed residential alcohol and drug treatment programs surveyed in seven areas had all been in their present locations ranging from five to 50 years.

- In five locations surveyed, property values near treatment facilities were slightly higher than in the comparison areas. In one location property values were approximately the same, and in one location property values were slightly lower.

CRIME RATE COMPARISON

STEP undertook an analysis of crime incident data mapped by the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) in nine diverse neighborhoods in which licensed treatment facilities are located. Crimes reported in September and October of 2002 in the area immediately adjacent to facilities are compared to crimes reported during the same period in the larger neighborhood surrounding those facilities.

- Crime levels in the areas surveyed were consistently lower next to licensed treatment facilities than elsewhere in the same areas.
- Higher crime rates in the areas surveyed tended to center around alcohol sales outlets and other areas with higher risks of drug availability.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

As part of a comprehensive telephone poll commissioned by IPS, 202 adult residents of San Diego County living within one-half mile of a licensed residential substance abuse treatment facility were surveyed. They lived in a total of six Census tracts in which treatment centers were located. The Social Science Research Labs at San Diego State University conducted the poll between Jan. 30 and Feb. 1,

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2003, with a margin of error of +/- 6.9% at the 95th percentile confidence interval.

- Almost 4 out of 5 residents surveyed within one-half mile of a licensed treatment facility (78%) said they think property values in their neighborhood are increasing.
- More than 7 out of 10 residents surveyed within one-half mile of a licensed treatment facility (72%) said they think residential alcohol and drug treatment centers have a positive or neutral effect on neighborhoods.

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