INTRODUCTION

This Findings at a Glance report summarizes results from the annual outcome evaluation for the 2016 Adolescent Kentucky Treatment Outcome Study (AKTOS). The goal of AKTOS is to examine client satisfaction and outcomes for several specific targeted factors including: (1) substance use, (2) mental health, (3) education, (4) involvement with the justice system, and (5) recovery support.

AKTOS examines treatment outcomes for youth (ages 11-17) who receive publicly funded substance abuse treatment in Community Mental Health Centers in Kentucky. A full report is published biannually to allow for analysis of a larger sample of adolescents across two fiscal years. Results for this study included data on 181 adolescent clients who attended publicly-funded substance abuse treatment programs in Kentucky between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2014 and then completed a follow-up survey approximately 12 months later (an average of 337 days). There were no direct refusals and a high follow-up rate (90%).

DESCRIPTION OF CLIENTS INCLUDED IN THE FOLLOW-UP SAMPLE

Of these 181 adolescents who completed a follow-up interview:
- Most (70%) were male.
- The majority of follow-up clients were White (80%). A minority were African American/Black (10%) and 11% were Hispanic, American Indian, or multiracial.1
- They were an average of 15.5 years old at the time of the intake interview. The majority of adolescents (56%) were 16 or 17 years old at intake.
- Clients reported first using alcohol at 13.4 years old and drugs at 12.9 years old.

TARGETED FACTORS AT FOLLOW-UP

PAST-12-MONTH SUBSTANCE USE

92% of clients reported any illegal drug use at intake
38% of clients reported any illegal drug use at follow-up

67% of clients reported any alcohol use at intake
37% of clients reported any alcohol use at follow-up

72% of clients reported smoking tobacco at intake

AMONG ADOLESCENTS WHO DID NOT REPORT ABSTAINING FROM ALCOHOL AT BOTH INTAKE AND FOLLOW-UP (N = 52)...
44% of clients met criteria for severe alcohol use disorder at intake
13% of clients met criteria for severe alcohol use disorder at follow-up

AMONG ADOLESCENTS WHO DID NOT REPORT ABSTAINING FROM DRUGS AT BOTH INTAKE AND FOLLOW-UP (N = 78)...
44% of clients met criteria for severe drug use disorder at intake
8% of clients met criteria for severe drug use disorder at follow-up

1 Percentages sum to over 100 due to rounding.
**PAST-12-MONTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS**

- **Depression**: 40% at intake, 13% at follow-up
- **Anxiety**: 34% at intake, 14% at follow-up
- **Aggressive Behaviors**: 49% at intake, 20% at follow-up
- **Attention Deficit Symptoms**: 53% at intake, 24% at follow-up
- **Suicide Ideation**: 14% at intake, 7% at follow-up

**School Performance**

- **Average GPA at intake**: 2.3, among clients enrolled in school
- **Average GPA at follow-up**: 2.7, among clients enrolled in school
- **Average Number of Absences at Intake**: 11.9
- **Average Number of Absences at Follow-up**: 6.6
- **Detention, Suspension, or Expulsion**: 19% at intake, 56% at follow-up

**Criminal Justice System Involvement**

- **Past-12-Month Arrest**: 43% of clients reported any arrest at intake, 33% at follow-up
- **Past-12-Month Incarceration**: 32% of clients reported at least one night of incarceration at intake, 27% at follow-up
- **Self-Reported Justice System Supervision**: 53% of clients reported being under criminal justice system supervision at intake, 25% at follow-up

*Not a significant change from intake to follow-up.*

"They taught me a lot and helped me a lot. They made me WANT to be sober."

-AKTOS FOLLOW-UP CLIENT
PROGRAM SATISFACTION

At follow-up, adolescents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the treatment program on a scale from 1 (worst treatment imaginable) to 10 (best treatment).

7.7 average rating

99% understood their treatment plan
92% felt better about themselves after participation
95% felt they received the services they needed
99% understood what was expected of them
97% felt they were treated with respect

“They helped me with my behavior by GIVING ME THE TOOLS I needed.”
AKTOS FOLLOW-UP CLIENT

INVESTING IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT FOR YOUTH

There is a robust association between adolescent substance use, worse school performance, and lower educational attainment. This association bolsters the assumption that investment in substance abuse treatment leads not only to decreased substance use for many adolescents, but it also allows for greater educational attainment and subsequently higher earnings. By comparing the expected yearly earnings of AKTOS youth (based upon the level of educational attainment) and the cost of substance abuse treatment for adolescents included in this analysis, the return to society on treatment expenditures can be expressed such that for every $1.00 spent on treatment there is a $4.84 return in estimated employment additions to local and state economies.

$4.84 COST-SAVINGS FOR TAXPAYERS

CONCLUSION

Overall, evaluation results indicate that publicly-funded substance abuse treatment for adolescents is successful in facilitating positive changes in clients in a variety of areas including decreased substance use, decreased severity of substance use disorders, decreased mental health problems, improved school performance and decreased disciplinary issues at school, and a decrease in supervision by the justice system. Results also suggest clients appreciate their experiences in the community mental health center (CMHC) substance abuse treatment programs. Investment in treatment for today’s substance using adolescents may translate into not only avoidance of substantial health care, mental health care, public benefit, and criminal justice system costs, but may also lead to gains in education, employment, health, and other less tangible qualities (e.g., social capabilities, parenting, quality of life) of adolescents who grow into tomorrow’s adults.