

CHAPTER FIVE - RESULTS

The data reported on in this chapter come from my experience creating an evaluation process and from applying the created evaluation process to the Alternative House Shelter program. This chapter will address both the “lessons learned” related to conducting the evaluation and the results of the evaluation itself. The majority of the results are based on participants’ responses to open-ended questions which were coded using constant comparative qualitative analyses methods. The themes that emerged provide an understanding of the participants’ opinions of their experiences of the Alternative House shelter program. These themes are expanded upon using data gathered during qualitative interviews, which were also coded using constant comparative qualitative analyses methods. A portion of the results come from quantitative data which was analyzed using the SPSS statistical software package. This section begins with the results of the process of creating and administering the evaluation and follows with the results of the evaluation as it was applied to the Alternative House program. Results from the latter section are described in terms of the guiding research questions.

The Process of Creating and Administering the Teen Shelter Evaluation Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was developed over a four-month period. Key administrators completed open-ended questionnaires about the program’s mission and goals. I interviewed one administrator at length about what the agency would like to learn from the evaluation process. We established the following evaluation goals: a.) to learn what teens, parents and staff think are the helpful and unhelpful aspects of the shelter, b.) to establish what types of clients use the shelter, c.) to learn why clients use the shelter and why they leave, d.) to learn what suggestions and requests clients have regarding the shelter. This information would be used for the purposes of improving the shelter program. We divided the program into components to elicit more specific responses regarding all aspects of the shelter. The questionnaires were developed based on the goals established by the administrators.

I first drafted a copy of one general questionnaire, incorporating all of the questions that administrators were interested in learning about. This questionnaire would

later be developed into a set of three different questionnaires, each specific to one of three participants groups: teens, parents and staff. Copies of this draft were given to all five administrators and my research advisor for edits. Edited copies were returned to me and I produced another draft for revisions. This process took four months and resulted in five drafts before the final set of questionnaires were finished. The questionnaires included all components of the shelter program, ranging from intake, general program characteristics, family therapy, evening and education groups, staff, intern and volunteer contact, and discharge. However, I realized later that one component of the AH program, individual counseling, was left out. This omission was discovered during an interview with a teen who talked about how helpful the individual time with the therapist had been.

Due to several flaws in the questionnaires developed, I learned that it would have been better to conduct a pilot test to receive feedback from participants regarding the wording, content, and layout of the questionnaire. For example, the demographics section of the parent questionnaire may have been confusing to parents. Some of the parents gave their teen's age instead of their own. There were also some questions that were awkwardly worded, and therefore may not have elicited the information we were hoping to learn. For example, "In what ways do you think you will not use these skills in the future?" appears to have been confusing to some clients, since many left it blank. Further, the absence of a section relating to individual therapy may have been discovered during the feedback from a pilot test of the questionnaire.

I have also learned that the layout of the questionnaire made analyzing the data difficult. The large range in question type (yes/no, scaling, open-ended, and multiple choice) made it very hard to develop a concise method of data interpretation. It may have been more helpful to base the questionnaire on a survey that had already been developed and used. This way, one could see before the application of the evaluation how the data would be interpreted into results. A blue-print from start to finish may have made the entire evaluation process smoother.

The most important factor in the development of the questionnaire, though, was the key administrators' support of the evaluation. Because we were writing a questionnaire without a blue-print, a lot of time, energy and thought was demanded of the

administrators. I know that without their support and encouragement, this evaluation would never have been completed. It is key to have the full support of the agency administrators before beginning the evaluation process.

Questionnaire Distribution

Because I had the full support of the agency administrators, they were amenable to encouraging staff to distribute questionnaires to the clients at the shelter. To encourage staff further, I attended several staff meetings. I attended one meeting at the beginning of the evaluation process and I attended one meeting approximately two months later. During the early stages of the questionnaire distribution phase, staff members were consistent and enthusiastic about administering questionnaires. They had teens complete their questionnaires about an hour before their parents arrived for discharge. They asked parents to complete the questionnaires prior to leaving AH, but all parents but two opted to complete them at home. Only three parents mailed the questionnaires back to me.

I learned that it might have been helpful to attend additional staff meetings to encourage the staff's continued cooperation and to explain the changes that were made to the evaluation process. For example, after several weeks of distributing questionnaires, the census at the shelter became very low for several months. During this time, staff were not as consistent about administering questionnaires to clients. It seems staff may have fallen out of the habit of administering the evaluation when the shelter was not taking many intakes, and therefore, not conducting many discharges. When the census went back up, staff continued to administer questionnaires inconsistently. This may have occurred because staff members tend to be very busy, and distributing questionnaires was a relatively new task that was not an innate part of the program structure. This might make it hard for them to find the time to administer questionnaires and to consistently remember that they should be a part of every discharge.

Also, at this time, I began conducting qualitative interviews with clients to supplement the limited questionnaire responses. It may have seemed to some staff that because interviews were being conducted, questionnaires no longer needed to be administered to the other clients. It was also very hard to engage parents to participate in the evaluation process. In the future, it may be helpful to make evaluation a standard part

of the discharge procedure. Ethically, parents would have the right to decline participation. However, it seems if the study was framed as a standard part of the discharge procedure, and not a new, special addition that is highly optional, parents may be more inclined to spend the ten minutes it would take to complete a questionnaire. In fact, if the money were available, it seems like the best option would be to hire someone to attend every discharge and administer the questionnaires and conduct interviews so that staff would not have to remember to add evaluation to an already full work load.

Program Responsiveness

As I already mentioned, it seems imperative to procure the support of the key administrators before embarking on an evaluation study. Because I am an employee of the Alternative House agency, but not a staff member of the shelter, I believe the administrators had a different level of trust and responsiveness regarding my efforts to conduct an evaluation of the shelter. I learned that having a prior professional relationship with the administrators was beneficial to gaining their support. Because I am not a staff member at the teen shelter, there were not any issues related to my job performance or advancement related to the outcome of the study.

Without the administrators' support and active effort, the study would not have been completed. Since it took a lot of time and effort to make the evaluation a success, I learned that to ensure their continued enthusiasm and commitment to the study, it was beneficial to offer them more return than simple gratitude. I offered to help them use the results to improve the shelter. This benefit helped keep administrators enthusiastic and cooperative. The possibility of having a published article about the shelter and information that could be used to help market the program may have increased their commitment and energy even more.

I also learned that the evaluation process needs to be as unintrusive as possible. The program administrators must be comfortable with all of the data collection methods in order to be committed to the evaluation. For example, when I realized I would need to collect more data in addition to questionnaires completed by clients currently using the shelter, I had to brainstorm with the administrators and my thesis committee about what would be an appropriate means of collecting additional data. We decided that qualitative

interviews would be appropriate. In order for the administrators to feel comfortable with me conducting interviews, they stipulated a shelter therapist would need to supervise teen interviews. This might have skewed the data collected during these interviews because teens may not have felt comfortable revealing negative opinions in front of a shelter staff member. However, interviews had to be conducted in a way that felt comfortable to the administrators. It is important that everyone, researcher, administrators, and participants feel comfortable and confident with the method of data collection in order for the evaluation to be successful.

Data Analysis

During the cross-coding sessions I had with my advisor, I realized it was essential to have another researcher coding the data with me. At times, one of us would miss a theme in a certain section, and the other would explain the relevance of this theme to the other. Other times, we had coded themes differently, and upon discussion, we could come to an agreement about which way to code a particular response. Without the feedback of another researcher, it would have been easy to miscode or to fail to recognize themes altogether.

Alternative House Evaluation Results

Eleven teens, five parents, and four staff members at Alternative House completed questionnaires. Two parents and two teens completed verbal interviews. The information reported below reflects the results from the questionnaires which are enhanced by the data from the interviews. Since respondents sometimes chose to respond with more than one answer, data were tallied according to the number of responses, rather than the number of participants. Results are shown as the number of participants who responded in a similar way (same theme), and then this number is illustrated as a percentage of the total participants who completed questionnaires. For example, if 10 of the 11 teens responded to a question, and three answered “talking,” results would be displayed as “Three teens (27.3%) responded talking was important.”

General Program Characteristics

Research Question: What are clients’ reasons for admission into the Alternative House Shelter?

Participants were given a list of reasons from which to choose their responses. Their choices were (a) respite (needed a break from the family), (b) homelessness (no where else to stay), (c) inexpensive/free, (d) teen ran away from home, (e) teen did not feel safe at home, (f) parents did not feel safe with teen at home, (g) placed by Social Services, (h) kicked out of the house, and (i) other. Teens and parents could choose as many as they thought applicable.

Teen Responses: *What are clients' reasons for admission into the Alternative House Shelter?*

All eleven teens who completed questionnaires answered this question. Respite was the most common reason for admission chosen by the teens. Eight of the eleven teens (72.7%) indicated that one reason for coming to the shelter was to get a break from the conflict they were experiencing at home. The next most common reason teens chose was "ran away from home." Four teens (36.4%) chose this response. Three (27.3%) of the teens chose "getting kicked out of the house" and three teens also chose "referral from the Department of Social Services" as reasons for admission to AH.

"Teen did not feel safe at home" and "parents did not feel safe with teen at home" were each chosen by two (18.2%) teens as one reason they were staying at Alternative House. Two teens (18.2%) also responded that one reason they chose to stay at Alternative House was because the shelter was free. Two teens (18.2%) indicated they had some "other" reason for admission. Only one teen (9.1%) reported homelessness was a reason for his/her admission into the shelter.

Although only four teens chose running away as a reason for using the shelter, in a different question, six teens reported having run away from home at some time. Of these six, three stated they ran away because they were either currently being physically abused at home or were afraid of being abused. Therefore, there seems to be some overlap between the category of running away and the category of teen safety. In a sense, having one's safety threatened appears to be a context for running away for some teens. One female participant wrote that she ran away because "I was in foster care and the lady's daughter threatened to hurt me. I did not like it there."

Parent Responses: What are clients' reasons for admission into the Alternative House Shelter?

All five parents who completed questionnaires answered this question. Four of the five parents (80%) reported that the respite was one reason why their teens were using the shelter. Two parents (40%) reported that they felt their safety was in jeopardy with their children at home. One female guardian stated in her interview, "I wasn't thrilled with the fact that he had been commenting about taking knives and stuff such as this. In his state of mind, it didn't make me feel very comfortable. I had reported this to the police and they said, 'Sorry, that's the way it goes.'" When parents' safety is threatened, they may refer their child to Alternative House as a last resort before kicking them out.

One parent reported she wanted her child out of the house to protect the safety of the child. During an interview, a female parent also stated teen safety was a reason, explaining, "I was ready to be in jail for almost hitting [my teen], or me just letting [my teen] go." For this mother, the term "letting the teen go" means she will kick the teen out of the house. This statement suggests another context for teens getting kicked out of the house. Not only is parent safety a context for teens' removal from the home, but teen safety also appears to be a context for some parents when they kick a teen out.

One parent reported using the shelter because the teen was homeless. One parent responded that her teen used the shelter because the teen ran away. The fact that the shelter was free was also chosen by one parent, as was "other." No parent chose "a referral by the Department of Social Services" or "the teen was kicked out of the house" as reasons for admission.

Several themes were revealed during the interviews that were not present in questionnaire responses. Both parent interviewees reported strong feelings of desperation as a reason for their desire to have their teens at the shelter. One parent referred to her pre-stay interactions with her teen as "all of this horror." She explained,

I was concerned about my own physical well-being. I felt like a ticking time bomb...I found out from all of this stress that I was starting to have angina attacks...I'm telling you, if you guys hadn't taken him, I think I would have taken him somewhere else. I was fearful that I

would hurt him. I was at that point where I would have hurt him. The other parent also reported similar feelings of fear of inflicting harm on her child. She expressed her desperation by stating, “I have no where to turn to, the police already told me that if I am abusing them at all they will be taken. They’re dad won’t take them...I was almost ready to be in jail for hurting my child.”

The theme of desperation occurs in the context of another theme that emerged from parent interviews. Both parents interviewed talked about feeling blamed for the difficulties they were having with their teens. One parent reported, “I’ve been to other places that said, ‘You could have done a better job as a parent.’ I’ve been to several places like that. I mean, I feel guilty enough dropping [my teen] off, let alone having this backwash of ‘You could have done better.’” The other parent reported a similar experience: “They tell you, they look at me as if I am a bad mother.”

Along with feeling blamed, both parents reported feeling like there was no other resource available or willing to help them. One parent stated, “I was so glad it [Alternative House] was here because nobody was ready to take this on. I went to the police station; the social worker never called me back. There is no help from the school. They can’t see that people really need help.” The other parent had similar experiences: “I had reported [these negative behaviors] to the police and they said, ‘I’m sorry, that’s the way it goes.’” She went on to say, “The places I heard about were like \$205 a day and insurance won’t cover it and I’m like, something’s wrong with this picture...I’ve looked into Social Services. To them, when a child is 12, they are considered an adult. There is no day care for kids that age.” The frustration at the lack of help available and feeling blamed seemed to contribute to the level of desperation these parents felt. Feeling desperate and without any other options were important reasons some parents chose to use the Alternative House shelter as a placement for their teens

Staff Responses: *What are clients’ reasons for admission into the Alternative House Shelter?*

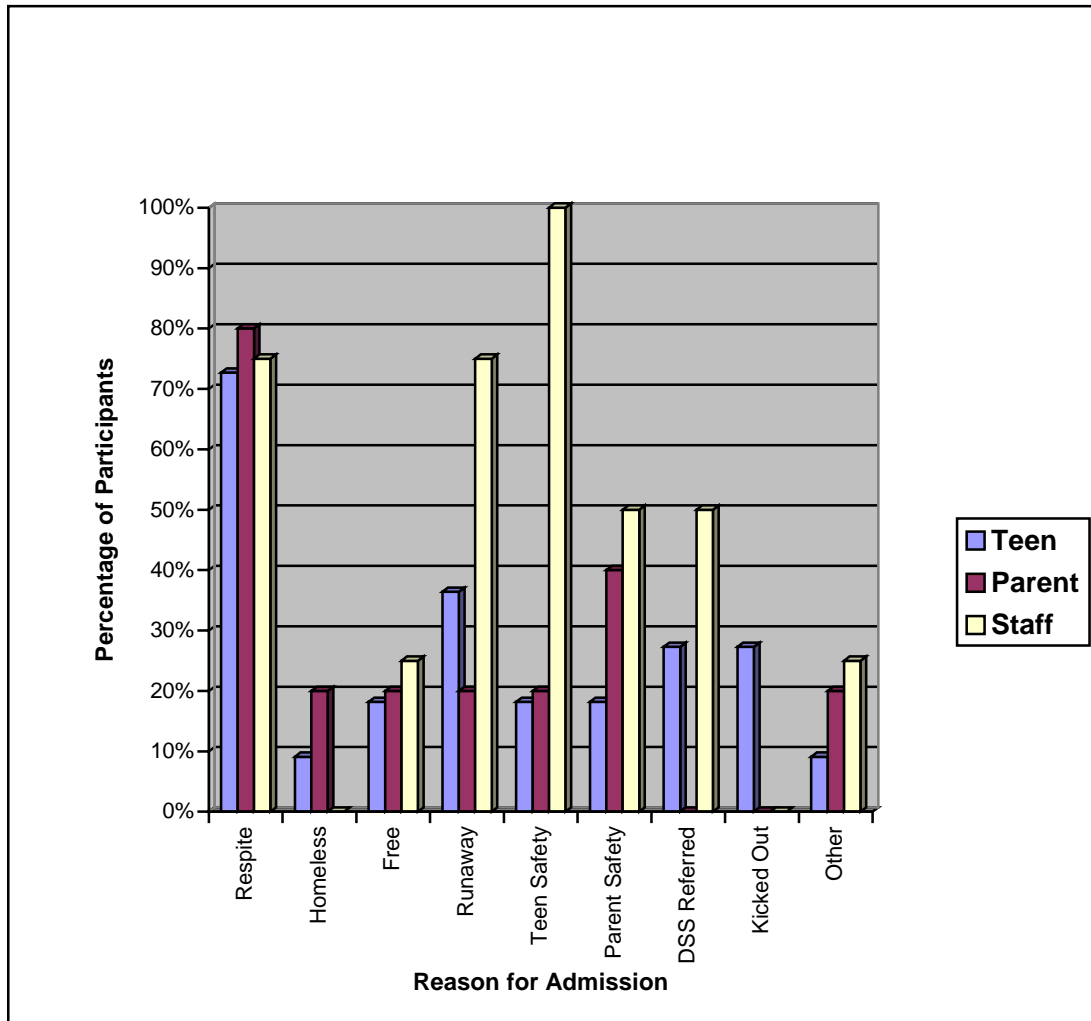
Staff members were asked to rate the three most common reasons for teens’ admission to the shelter. All four staff members who completed questionnaires (100%) reported that teens come to the shelter because of issues with teen safety at home. “Using

the shelter for a respite from the family” was chosen by three staff members (75%), as was “running away from home.” Two staff members (50%) chose “issues of parent safety” and two also chose “a referral from the Department of Social Services.” The fact that the program is free of charge was chosen by one staff member, as was “other.” No staff member chose “teen homelessness” or “teens getting kicked out of their house” as common reasons for teens’ admission to Alternative House.

Summary of Reasons for Admission

All three participant groups were similar in their responses that respite was a common reason for teens’ admission into the shelter, as can be seen in Figure 1. All three groups also tended to report that relatively few teens stayed at the shelter due to homelessness or because it was a free service to the community. The other reasons for admission were not as congruent between participant groups.

Figure 1: Percentage of Participants Reporting Each Reason for Admission



Research Question: What are clients' reasons for discharge from the Alternative House shelter?

Participants were given a list of reasons from which to choose their responses. Their choices were (a) two-week maximum stay completed, (b) family felt ready to reunite, (c) dissatisfaction with the Alternative House shelter, (d) teen unable to comply with Alternative House rules, (e) alternative placement was found, and (f) other. Teens and parents could choose as many as they thought applicable.

Teen Responses: What are clients' reasons for discharge from the Alternative House shelter?

All eleven teens who completed questionnaires answered this question. Ten of the eleven teens (90.9%) indicated that one of their reasons for leaving the Alternative House shelter was that they had completed the maximum stay of two weeks. As one young adolescent remarked in the interview, “My two weeks are up...but I’ll be coming back tomorrow to visit.” This statement implies that although the maximum two-week stay is completed, some teens want to maintain a connection with the shelter. Two teens (18.2%) reported that finding another placement was one of their reasons for leaving. “Failure to comply with Alternative House rules” and “other” were each chosen by one teen as a reason for leaving Alternative House. No teen chose “dissatisfaction with the shelter” or a “readiness to reunite with their family.”

The interview with one young teen revealed a reason for leaving that the questionnaire data did not. During the interview, the youth stated “educational reasons” for leaving, explaining, “This is the last full week of school and I didn’t want to miss all of my friends leaving, and I wouldn’t be able to go to school [if the youth stayed at the shelter]. And I have a lot of work to catch up on that I’m missing out on. So it’s mostly educational, why I want to leave.” This was the only concrete, clarified reason for leaving indicated by a teen that did not appear on the questionnaire.

Although none of the teens who completed questionnaires chose “family felt ready to reunite,” both teens who were interviewed did mention this reason for leaving Alternative House. They both reported feeling ready to go home. One teen stated, “I think I’ve come a far way from the day I came here. Stuff that I was doing before, I’m not doing now and I feel like I’m ready to go home now.” Teens reported during the interviews changes they had noticed in themselves and their family members. One teen admitted s/he recognized that s/he had really “screwed up” at home. The teen talked about being accountable for his/her actions and understanding the consequences of negative behaviors. The teen stated, “I’m trying to stay away from smoking and gangs, not stealing and lying...I used to have a lot of attitude with my parents...I know it’s going to be a lot better, or I have to leave.” One teen simply stated, “I feel a lot better.”

Teens noted changes in the parents as well. One teen stated, “I know my parents trust me more, because I came here...I know if I get into a fight at home, my [parent] will

say ‘Pack your bags, you’re out!’ One teen talked about feeling, because of his/her participation with Alternative House, that his/her parents understood the teen more, stating, “I think they understand what’s going on more. AH helped them a lot.”

Although both teen interviewees reported feeling confident about going home, both also expressed doubt about the future at home. One teen explained, “I don’t think my [male guardian] is excited about me coming home. I know I won’t use what I learned with him.” The other teen stated, “My mom hasn’t been here. I know I’m ready to be home, but I can’t say for her. I’ll just have to see what it’s like at home. My mom hasn’t been here. She may not have changed, or she may change and then change back.”

Parent Responses: *What are clients’ reasons for discharge from the Alternative House shelter?*

All five of the parents who completed questionnaires (100%) responded that one of the reasons their teens were leaving the shelter was because the teen had stayed the two-week maximum. Two parents (40%) reported finding another placement for the teen. No parent chose “the teen’s inability to follow Alternative House rules,” “dissatisfaction with the shelter,” “a readiness for family reunification,” or any “other” reason for their teens’ discharge from the shelter. However, in the interviews, both parents stated they felt ready to have their teen come home. Parents also reported during the interviews changes they had noticed in themselves and their family members. One parent explained a change she had noticed in her teen, stating “She leaves me many messages and I feel like she finally does realize she cannot do what she does now. I think she is ready to come home and I am ready to have her home.” Another parent explained, “I’ve seen a difference in [my teen]. The emotional attitude is up much more...I think, on the phone last night, that was the first real emotion I’ve gotten from [my teen].”

Parents also noticed changes in themselves. Both parents talked about finding a better bottom line with their teens. One parent explained, “I sat the other kids down and I said in no uncertain terms, ‘If you can’t follow the rules, you’re out.’ This has been a real clarifying time...I’m at the point where I can’t make exceptions anymore.” Both parents also expressed a new understanding of their part in fixing the problem. One parent explained that she was accountable, “It’s goals for [my teen] and it’s goals for me. I have

a portion of what I need to do for [my teen]. One hand washes the other, I think that's very true. It's not all on [my teen]...I'm going to try to work from home. Be home more."

Like with the teens, the issue of family readiness also revealed a theme of doubt felt by the two parents interviewed. One parent stated, "I'm very worried about [the teen's] attitude. I'm afraid it's only going to go down when [the teen] goes to school tomorrow. I'm just waiting for that. [The teen] has only been here for two weeks. I'm just worried that the backbone there may be gone...There's still a bit of reserve there." The other parent also stated, "I'll look for change, but [the teen]'s only been gone for one week...what do you expect?" It appears that the short length of the program contributes to parents' feelings of doubt.

Staff Responses: *What are clients' reasons for discharge from the Alternative House shelter?*

Staff members were asked to identify the three most common reasons teens had for leaving the shelter. All four staff members who completed questionnaires (100%) responded that "the teens' inability to follow the rules at the shelter" was a common reason for discharge. When teens enter the shelter, they agree to live by the rules of the program. If they are unable to do so, they are asked to leave. Four staff members (100%) also thought that "a readiness to reunite with family" and "the completion of the two-week maximum stay" were also common reasons for teens' discharge from the shelter. One staff member identified "finding another placement" as a common reason for discharge. No staff member chose "client dissatisfaction with the shelter" or "other" as common reasons for discharge.

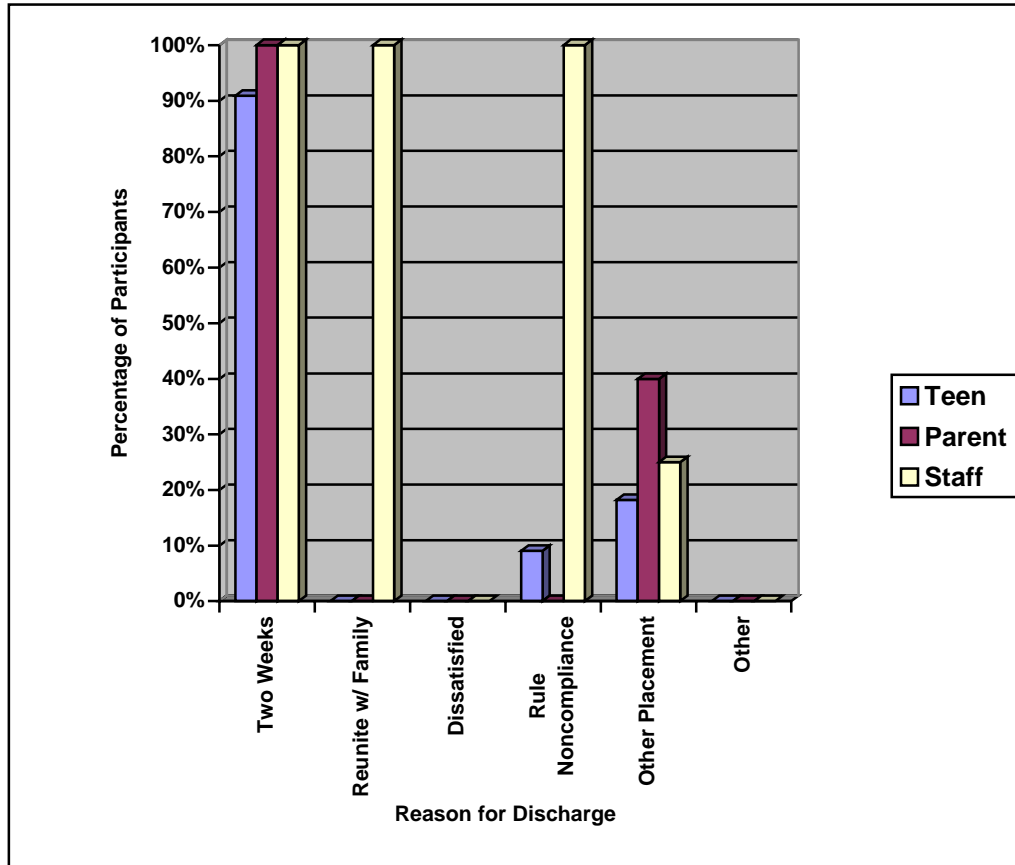
Summary of Reasons for Discharge

None of the three participant groups identified "dissatisfaction with the shelter" as a reason teens were discharged from the shelter. As can be seen in Figure 2, all three participant groups reported that the completion of the two-week maximum stay at the shelter was a common reason for teens' to be discharged from the shelter. All three groups also chose the option of another placement as a reason for discharge with some consistency. Neither teens nor parents chose "readiness to reunite" as a reason for

discharge, but it seems that although there is doubt about how well they will manage problems when the teen returns home, some families are able to see concrete, salient differences in both the teens and parents. It appears that seeing these changes helps engender hope for the future, and people seem to take these changes as an indicator that the program has been helpful to the family. It is obvious from the interviews that with this hope comes doubt and fear that these changes may not last.

Figure 2

Percentage of Participants Reporting Each Reason for Discharge



Research Question: What do clients find most helpful about the Alternative House Program?

Teen Responses

All eleven teens who completed questionnaires (100%) responded to this question. The teens’ short answers to this open-ended question were coded into five categories: Talking, Counseling, Respite, People, and Program Structure. Answers were coded as *Talking* if they contained any reference to verbal communication. Answers were coded as *Counseling* if they specifically used the words “counseling” or “therapy.” Answers were coded as *Respite* if they referred to any “break” or “time away” from the family. Answers were coded as *People* if they contained any specific names of people, any reference to counselors, staff, or peers in the program, or simply used the word “people.” The category of *People* was divided into two subcategories, *Staff* and *Peer Connection*. *Staff* was identified by any reference to anyone working at Alternative House. *Peer Connection* was coded if there was a reference to peers staying at the shelter

with the teen. Answers were coded as *Program Structure* if there was a reference to the daily schedule or the manner in which activities occur in the shelter.

Four of the eleven teens (36.4%) who completed questionnaires stated *Talking* was one of the most helpful things about Alternative House. One of these teens specified that “talking about problems” was what helped the most. The two teens interviewed also reported talking was helpful. For example, one teen stated what was most helpful about the shelter was “talking to somebody about what’s going on, getting my anger out.” It appears that verbalizing the problem and expressing the emotions related to the problem are what teens find helpful about talking. The previous interview response suggests there is a sense of catharsis in expressing emotions through words.

Four teens (36.4%) also described the *People* at the shelter as being one of the most helpful aspects of the program. Three teens (27.3%) identified the people as staff members. One respondent wrote, “They had personal relationships with all of the residents. They tried so hard to listen, understand, care, believe, trust, respect, and help you. I felt like they really do care.” Both teen interviewees also stated caring staff was a helpful aspect of the shelter. One teen explained, “People here are always helpful, like nice staff. The staff was always asking if you were okay. They were caring, they acted like they cared.” These responses suggest that teens tended to feel accepted by the staff and that the staff was genuine in their efforts to be helpful. Therefore, it seems acceptance by and connection with a caring adult authority figure is one of the most helpful aspects of the program for some of the teens.

One teen identified a *Peer Connection* as the most helpful aspect. She wrote the most helpful thing was “the trust to talk to people my age.” The peer connection was also a prominent theme during the interviews. A resident said one of the most helpful things was that “I gained new friends here. I looked up to one of the residents...It’s educational to talk with someone who has been through a whole bunch of stuff you haven’t been through.” It seems that the opportunity to build trusting relationships with peers is an important part of the peer connection. It also seems that guidance and advice from a peer can be an effective way for some teens to learn new coping skills. Therefore, the peer

connection is a helpful aspect of the shelter for some teens as a means to learn new skills or to be a part of a trusting relationship.

Three teens (27.3%) stated that the opportunity for *Respite* was one of the most helpful aspects of the program. One teen explained the respite simply by writing, “It gave me a break from my mom.” Another elaborated by writing that the respite gave her “time away from my parents to work problems out.” One teen described the respite as a time to “lose my anger.” Another stated it gave him/her time “to think.” The break from the intense family conflict seems to allow teens to feel more ready to work to solve the problems that brought them to the shelter. The teens’ answers suggest that they are able to benefit from the respite on both an emotional and a cognitive level. It appears that they find they are calmer and are better able to think through their family problems.

Two teens (18.2%) identified *Counseling* as one of the most helpful aspects of the shelter program. One teen who was interviewed also found the counseling to be very helpful, explaining, “I think there’s a lot of help here. See, I don’t like counselors all that much, but I like Marc [the shelter therapist]. He understands me. I talked to Marc a lot and that helped me.” It seems counseling is both a forum for the aforementioned theme of *Talking*, and a place where, because of specific counselor characteristics, a teen can feel understood.

One teen identified the *Program Structure* to be one of the most helpful aspects. She wrote, “The schedule really helped. They didn’t lock you down or make you do anything. However, they gave you discipline and consequences, which are good.” Interview data supported the idea that the structure of the program is a helpful component for some of the teens. The program structure allows teens to stay in touch with old friends and teens can return to the shelter as visitors rather than residents. This aspect of the program structure was identified as very helpful for one interviewee. The youth explained the flexibility for visits after discharge would be helpful, stating “I’m going to keep visiting here to stay on track.” The daily schedule of events, the structure and consistency of activities, and the limits set through the rules and consequences of the program seem to be very helpful for some teens. The flexibility with visits also seems to

be a helpful component of the program because it allows the teens to stay connected to family and friends during their stay and connected to the program after discharge.

Teens were asked in a separate question to describe what was helpful or not helpful about the teen interns and volunteers. Teens found them helpful because they were similar in age, were fun to have around, they were easy to talk to, and teens felt understood by them. Very few teen participants had anything negative to say about the teen volunteers and interns. See Tables 2 and 3 for a complete summary of the responses to the questions regarding teen volunteers and interns.

Teens were also asked in a separate, open-ended question, what they thought were “teen-friendly” aspects of the shelter. The teens commonly cited the *People* at the shelter and the *Program Structure* as examples of teen-friendliness. See Tables 4 and 5 for summaries of participant responses regarding “teen-friendliness.” On a scale from one to ten, the mean score for teens’ perception of the “teen-friendliness” of the shelter was an 8.75; see Table 6 for a complete summary of the results.

Table 2

<u>Helpful Aspects of Teen Volunteers and Interns</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Age Commonality	2	18.2	“They weren’t that much older so we could feel better about telling them our problems.”
Talking	2	18.2	“Easier to talk to.”
Like/Nice/Fun	5	45.5	“They made me laugh and I loved having them around.”
Understanding	1	9.1	“I felt as if they knew where I was coming from a bit more.”
No response	3	27.3	Left blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Day to Day Tasks	4	100	“When it gets hectic, they are a blessing to do group, answer phones, help cook, etc.”
Fresh Perspective	2	50	“They bring new ideas to group.”
Talking	2	50	“They are able to talk to teens on a different level.”
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Table 3

<u>Not Helpful Aspects of Teen Volunteers and Interns</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Nothing	8	72.8	“Nothing.”
Rule Related	2	18.2	“Some of the residents would take advantage of them because they aren’t too familiar with the rules.”
Lack of Familiarity	1	9.1	“We didn’t know them that well.”
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Nothing	1	25	“I think it’s very helpful”
Inactivity	1	25	“They must not use their time just to sit and talk, but be willing to help out with all jobs needed.”
Not Sharing Information	1	25	“When they don’t share info learned with staff.”
Untrained	1	25	“If they don’t know what they are doing, they can get in the way.”
No Response	1	25	Left blank
N = Number of responses			
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Table 4

<u>Teen –Friendly Aspects of Alternative House</u>				
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>				
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Program Structure		2	18.2	“Free time, recreation and sleep.”
People	Staff	4	36.4	“Staff treated me respectfully.”
	Peer Connection	3	27.3	“Helping each other.”
Learning		1	9.1	“Learning about AIDS, sex, etc.”
No response		4	36.4	Left blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>				
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Program Structure		3	75	“Earned free-time.”
People	Staff	1	25	“Support all problems and be accessible at all times.”
Amenities		1	25	“TV, Sony Play-Station.”
No Response		1	25	Left blank
N = Number of responses				
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires				
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded				

Table 5

<u>Not Teen –Friendly Aspects of Alternative House</u>				
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>				
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
People	Staff	1	9.1	Staff named
	Peer Conflict	1	9.1	“That sixth grader, he would flip out over nothing!”
Program Structure		3	27.3	“Quiet Time.”
No Response		6	54.5	Left blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>				
<i>Aspect</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Program Structure		3	75	“Bedtime curfew, chores.”
Rule Related		1	25	“Not consistent with rules at all times.”
Place Blame		1	25	“Will put blame on them if applicable.”
No Response		1	25	Left blank
N = Number of responses				
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires				
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded				

Table 6

Results of Scaled Ratings					
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	% Satisfied
Teen Average Length of Stay	14	4.06	8	26	
Rating Overall Helpfulness					
Teen	8.23	1.48	5	10	100
Parent	9.29	0.95	8	10	100
Staff	8.50	1.29	7	10	100
Rating Teen Friendliness					
Teen	8.96	1.32	6	10	100
Staff	8.25	1.25	7	10	100
Rating Parent Friendliness					
Parent	9.30	1.21	7	10	100
Staff	8.00	2.16	5	10	100
Rating Family Therapy Helpfulness					
Teen	6.11	3.06	2	10	67
Parent	7.50	3.21	2	10	83
Staff	8.25	1.71	6	10	100
Rating Hopefulness for Change					

Teen	6.00	1.85	4	10	88
Parent	9.25	1.06	8.5	10	100
Staff	8.25	2.36	5	10	100

Parent Responses: What do clients find most helpful about the Alternative House Program?

Three of the five parents who completed questionnaires answered this question. Parents' short-answers to this question were coded into two categories: Respite and Counseling. Two parents had no response to this question. Answers were coded according to the same criteria as the teen responses. Three of the five parents who completed questionnaires (60%) reported that *Respite* was one of the most helpful aspects of the Alternative House program. One parent described the respite aspect of Alternative House as "the safe and caring environment offered to my son." Another wrote that it was "an immediate place to send him." Having a resource available when needed and having a place where a parent can feel their child is safe and well-cared for, seem to be important aspects of the respite experience. One parent wrote that having *Counseling* available was one of the most helpful aspects of the program. Two parents (40%) left the question blank.

The interviews with the parents revealed several other themes. Both parents who were interviewed talked about the people being a helpful aspect of the program. Two themes emerged within the *People* category: *General staff characteristics* and *Staff/Parent cooperation*. Both parents stated that positive attributes of the staff were helpful. One parent explained, "Staff was great. I think the interest they showed in [my teen] was very helpful. They were always very supportive of [my teen]." The other parent stated she felt like she could "trust these people I leave [my teen] with." It appears that feeling like the staff members are caring, supportive people who will treat the teens well is a helpful aspect of the program for some parents.

The theme of *Staff/Parent Cooperation* was also prominent in the interviews. One parent told a story about interacting with the staff around an incident her teen had been involved in at the shelter. Her teen told a staff member about having inappropriate and dangerous items at home. She reported staff were very helpful, open and honest with

her about this report. She stated she didn't feel attacked and that staff were considerate of all parties involved. She summarized the experience saying, "That was handled well. [Staff] called me and they realized that it may be something [the teen] was simply saying to bring attention to [the teen]. And we got it straightened out right away." Another example of *Parent/Staff Cooperation* involved telephone calls to the teen. One parent explained, "I would try to call and of course, they would say '[the teen] isn't here' and they were very polite and they would remind me of times to call, and give [the teen] messages. And they allowed [the teen] access to the phone during non-call times. I mean, they have the routine and I'm sure they have to have one, but it wasn't set in stone and that was nice." It appears that the staff's ability to be flexible and work with parents on an individual basis, for example, allowing them access to the teen at non-specified times, was a helpful part of the program for some parents. This experience seems to help parents feel supported by the staff.

The *Program Structure* was another theme that emerged during the interviews with parents. One parent stated she appreciated the daily activities and the way the program was designed to educate the teen, explaining, "It wasn't just a baby-sitting society."

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was *Talking*. Parents appreciated having someone available to talk with their teen. One parent explained she was particularly glad that staff could talk with her teen since she didn't feel capable of talking with the youth about their problems stating, "I don't know how to talk to [my teen] and I have to find people to talk to [my teen] for me." She later went on to express how grateful she was that she could trust the Alternative House staff to talk with her teen in an effective and competent manner.

Parents were asked in a separate, open-ended question, what they thought were "parent-friendly" aspects of the shelter. Four of the five parents (80%) responded that *Communicative Staff* was a "parent-friendly" aspect of the program. Other responses included the *Program Structure* and the *Counseling* that was available; see Tables 7 and 8 for a summary of responses. Parents were asked to rate their perception of the

program’s “parent friendliness” on a scale from one to ten. Parents’ mean score was a 9.75. See Table 6 for a complete summary of responses.

Table 7

<u>Parent–Friendly Aspects of Alternative House</u>			
<u>Parent Responses (n=5)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Communicative Staff	4	80	“Always willing to answer questions and listen.”
Program Structure	1	20	“We could call and talk whenever we wanted.”
Counseling	1	20	“Counseling.”
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Program Structure	2	50	“Allow parents to visit, kids do chores.”
Counseling	2	50	“Parents like family counseling.”
No Response	1	25	Left blank
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Table 8

<u>Not Parent–Friendly Aspects of Alternative House</u>			
<u>Parent Responses (n=5)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Program Structure	1	20	“Peer influence was great due to free time visitation.”
Vague Information	1	20	“Sometimes the info you received was a bit sketchy”
No Response	3	60	Left blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Program Structure	3	75	“Kids have earned free-time, limiting parental contact.”
Vague Information	1	25	“Not disclosing all info to parents due to confidentiality.”
Place Blame	1	25	“Will place blame where it is at.”
No Response	1	25	Left blank

N = Number of responses
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded

Staff Responses: What do clients find most helpful about the Alternative House Program?

All four staff who completed questionnaires answered this question. Staff responses were coded into three categories: Respite, People, and Program Structure. Answers were coded according to the same criteria identified in the teen section. Two of the four staff (50%) who completed the questionnaires responded that the *Respite* was the most helpful aspect of the program for clients. Two staff (50%) identified *People*, specifically the *Peer Connection*, as helpful to clients. One staff explained the peer connection served as an opportunity to “see other teens have the same problems they are going through.” Thus ending the isolation teens may feel, coupled with learning from other teens’, seems to be thought of as helpful by some staff.

One staff member cited the *Program Structure*, specifically, that Alternative House “is a real house that has warmth, not institutionalized, and it has structure, but enough freedom also” as the most helpful part of the program for clients. It appears some staff believe the group-home structure of the program helps teens do well in the program. Like the teens, the staff found the combination of limits and freedom to be a helpful aspect as well.

Staff members were asked in a separate question to describe what was helpful or not helpful about the teen interns and volunteers. Staff found them helpful because they were able to help complete day-to-day tasks, added energy and a fresh perspective to the program and talked with the teens in a different way than they were able. Staff were concerned about the volunteers and interns when they did not communicate important information to staff or when they did not participate actively in all aspects of the program

tasks. See Tables 2 and 3 for a complete summary of the responses to the questions related to teen volunteers and interns.

Staff were also asked in a separate, open-ended question, what they thought were “teen-friendly” and “parent friendly” aspects of the shelter. The staff commonly cited the *People* at the shelter and the *Program Structure* as examples of “teen-friendliness”; see Tables 4 and 5 for summaries of participant responses regarding “teen-friendliness.” On a scale from one to ten, the mean score for staff’s perception of the “teen-friendliness” of the shelter was an 8.25; see Table 6 for a complete summary of the results. *Program Structure* and *Counseling* were identified by staff as “parent-friendly” aspects of the shelter. See Tables 7 and 8 for a complete summary of responses. The mean score for staff’s rating of “parent-friendliness” on a scale from one to ten was an 8.00 (see Table 6).

Summary of Responses: What do clients find most helpful about the Alternative House Program?

All three participant groups identified *Respite* as a helpful aspect of the Alternative House program (See Table 9). The *People*, whether staff or peers, and the *Program Structure* were also noted as helpful by all three groups, either in the questionnaires or during the interviews. *Counseling* was noted by all three groups as a helpful aspect of the shelter, either directly or as related to a “parent-friendly” aspect of the shelter.

Table 9

<u>Most Helpful Aspects of Alternative House</u>				
Teen Responses (n=11)				
Program Aspect	Subcategory	N	%	Example
Talking		4	36.4	“I could talk to anyone, 24/7.”
Counseling		2	18.2	“Lots of counseling attention.”
Respite		3	27.3	“Time away from my parents to work problems out.”
People	Staff	3	27.3	“I felt like the staff really did care.”
	Peer Connection	1	9.1	“The trust to talk to people my age.”
Program Structure		1	9.1	“The schedule really helped.”
Parent Responses (n=5)				
Program Aspect	Subcategory	N	%	Example
Respite		3	60	“Gave us an immediate place to send him.”
Counseling		1	20	“Counseling available.”
No Response		2	40	Left blank

Staff Responses (n=4)				
Program Aspect	Subcategory	N	%	Example
Respite		2	50	“Gives the clients and their family a break.”
People	Peer Connection	2	50	“The chance to bond with peers who are experiencing similar problems”
Program Structure		1	25	“This house has structure, but enough freedom also.”

N = Number of responses
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded

Research Question: What do clients find least helpful about the Alternative House Shelter program?

Teen Responses

All eleven teens who completed questionnaires answered this question. The teens’ responses to this question were coded into three categories: Rules-Related, No Change in Parents, and Nothing. Answers were coded as *Rules-Related* if a specific rule was identified. Answers were coded as *No Change in Parent* if the teen mentioned anything negative about a parent remaining the same or not changing, for example “My mom’s attitude didn’t change and she still acts like a bitch.” Answers were coded as *Nothing* if clients wrote “none,” “nothing,” or “N/A.”

Four teens (36.4%) responded that the least helpful aspect of the shelter was something related to the rules of the house. Teens identified specific rules such as “having to stay in at night,” “all of the chores I had to do,” and “the no touching rule.” This theme emerged in both interviews as well. One teen stated, “I think they should cut back on some of the rules, like you having to eat three meals a day. Unless you have an eating disorder or something, I don’t think they should force you to eat. You’re grown enough to know if you’re hungry or not hungry.”

Although some teens appeared to dislike specific rules in the program, a theme emerged in both the questionnaires and the interviews of understanding and respecting the rules even if they were disliked. For example, one teen wrote, “The no touching rule. One of the girl residents was having a bad day, but I wasn’t allowed to touch her. I wanted to give her a hug. However, it’s a very good rule overall. I understand that if you

touch some of the residents, it triggers something very bad and they become violent.” Another teen spoke of this same rule in an interview: “We have this really important rule, ‘no touching,’ that sucks. It’s important, but it still sucks.” These answers suggest that although teens tend to dislike some rules, they understand why and how they might be important to follow. It seems that although they may not like some of the rules, they can still respect their importance.

Two teens (18.2%) stated the least helpful aspect of the program was that they did not experience any change in their parents. One female wrote, “The fact that when I’m going home, nothing has changed with my parents.” This same theme emerged in the interviews. There was some doubt about the future because parents may not have changed during the teens’ two-week shelter stay. One teen said, “My mom hasn’t been here. She may not have changed, or she may change and then change back.” It seems teens worry that they may have benefited from the program, but because their parents are not receiving the same services they are, they may return to the same dysfunctional home situation they left.

Four teens (45.5%) did not list a concrete answer for this question and instead wrote “nothing,” or “N/A.” This indicates that almost half of the teens did not think of anything negative to say about the program, even when given a confidential chance to do so.

Two themes emerged in the interviews that were not reported on the questionnaires. *Peer conflict* was identified as one of the least helpful aspects of the shelter by both interviewees. One explained, “The other teens still pick on you, and the older ones, they have a lot of experience, and they talk about it. I don’t want to hear it, it’s disgusting.” It appears that verbal confrontations and exposure to unsolicited conversation topics affected both teens in a negative way. One teen discussed the ability to develop coping skills given the peer conflict, stating “[Another resident] had a problem. I couldn’t stand her. I just mostly ignored her. I’d turn and usually leave.”

Another issue that one interviewee discussed was the fact that the teen’s problem was not addressed early enough during the stay at Alternative House. The teen stated that the staff didn’t talk about what her problem was and it wasn’t addressed during group or

one-on-one interactions with staff. This teen expressed feeling that her stay was pointless because her issues were not addressed until her last day at the shelter.

In a separate, open-ended question, teens were asked how the shelter stay improved the relationship between the teens and their parents. Eight of the eleven teens (72.8%) either responded it did not help the relationship at all, or left the question blank, indicating they had no answer for how the shelter program improved the relationship. See Table 10 for a summary of the participants' responses. Although teens generally did not feel the program had improved their family relationships, the majority of the teen clients reported feeling hopeful that the parent/teen relationship would be better after the shelter stay. Teens were asked to rate, on a scale from one to ten, how hopeful they were that their relationships with their parents would be improved after their stay at Alternative House. Teens' mean score was a 6.33 (see Table 6).

Table 10

<u>How the Alternative House Stay Improves the Teen/Parent Relationship</u>			
<i>Teen Responses (n=11)</i>			
Relationship Aspect	N	%	Example
Communication	3	27.3	"We have been able to talk to each other and get along."
No help	5	45.5	"None at all."
No response	3	27.3	Left blank
Hopefulness	1	9.1	"With rules that we made up for each other, my mom might get a little better."
<i>Parent Responses (n=5)</i>			
Relationship Aspect	N	%	Example
No help	2	40	"It didn't help."
No response	2	40	Left blank
Calmed	1	20	"Separation helped tone down anger."
Motivation	1	20	"Made everyone realize we must deal with the situation."
<i>Staff Responses (n=4)</i>			
Relationship Aspect	N	%	Example
Communication	2	50	"Communication between parent and teen."
Motivation	3	75	"The AH stay can show each side (parent/teen) that they are willing to work and make things work out."
Cognitive Emphasis	2	50	"It gives both parties a chance to think about ways to make their situation better."
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

[Empty box]

Parent Responses: What do clients find least helpful about the Alternative House Shelter program?

Four of the five parents who completed questionnaires answered this question. Parent responses were coded into three categories: Program Structure, No Change in Teen, and Nothing. One parent left this question blank. Answers were coded as *Program Structure* if there was a reference to the daily schedule or the manner in which activities occur in the shelter. Answers were coded as *No Change in Teen* if the parent mentioned anything negative about a teen remaining the same or not changing, for example “Staff was unable to force my child to explain actions.” Answers were coded as *Nothing* according to the same criteria identified in the teen section.

Two parents (40%) responded that they thought the least helpful aspect of the program was related to the *Program Structure*. One parent wrote, “No attempt was made to get him to work on his schoolwork. He thought he was on vacation.” This specific point about the school component of the program structure was addressed in the interviews as well. One female parent said, “It would be nice if they could go to the closest school. The alternative school, so they would not miss so much school. That would be very helpful for all of the kids here. Some probably might come here if they don’t like school.”

One parent responded that the least helpful aspect of the program was that there had been *No Change in her Teen* concerning communication. This mother wrote, “Staff was unable to force child to explain actions.” It seems this parent had expectations about the staff’s ability to elicit change from the teen that were not fulfilled. One parent wrote “nothing” in response to this question.

During one interview, a theme emerged that was not identified by parents who completed questionnaires. Although this parent found staff to be very helpful throughout her child’s stay, her first interaction with staff on the phone was unpleasant. She talked about feeling like staff might have an “attitude” or that they might blame her the same way other agencies had because of the tone of voice the staff member was using. This incident was revisited several times in the interview and it was obvious that this

interaction had left an impression on her. She explained, “When I called, for the first time, I had a feeling that you all would not be interested in taking [my teen]. This caused a lot of anxiety. And I don’t know if it was just that my reaction was so high, if I was creating this, but to have the thought that you might not take him, ‘Oh dear, here it comes.’ And like I said, when you are asking questions like this [intake questions], I think you really need to think about where people are coming from. Talk in some easier way, more tactfully, some way to talk with someone who is getting ready to devour something.” It seems this parent wanted her first interaction with staff to be a more pleasant experience.

In a separate, open-ended question, parents were asked how the shelter stay improved the relationship between them and their teens. Four of the five parents (80%) either responded the program did not help the relationship at all, or left the question blank, indicating they had no response to how the program may have helped the parent/teen relationship. See Table 10 for a summary of the responses. Although parents generally did not think the program had improved their family relationships, the majority of the parent clients reported feeling hopeful that the parent/teen relationship would be better after the shelter stay. Parents were asked to rate, on a scale from one to ten, how hopeful they were that their relationships with their teens would be improved after the stay at Alternative House. Parents’ mean score was a 10 (see Table 6).

Staff Responses: What do clients find least helpful about the Alternative House Shelter program?

All four staff members responded to this question. Staff responses were coded into two categories: Program Structure and Nothing. Answers were coded according to the same criteria as the teen and parent responses. Two staff (50%) thought that the least helpful aspect of the shelter was related to the *Program Structure*. One wrote, “The program is only two weeks long” and the other wrote, “Quiet time/recreation seem to be a little lengthy.” Two staff (50%) responded to this question with “nothing.”

Summary of Responses: What do clients find least helpful about the Alternative House Shelter program?

All three participant groups were similar in their opinions of the least helpful aspects of the shelter, as can be seen in Table 11. Nearly half of each of the three groups did not identify a “least helpful” aspect of the program. Teens and parents both identified *No Change in the Other* as one of the least helpful aspects of the shelter. Parents and staff both identified specific examples of the *Program Structure* that they believed were the least helpful aspects of the program. It appears the parents found the lack of structure around school issues to be an unhelpful part of the program

Table 11

<u>Least Helpful Aspects of Alternative House</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
Program Aspect	N	%	Example
Rules Related	4	36.4	“The no-touching rule.”
Nothing	5	45.5	“None/Nothing.”
No Change in Parents	2	18.2	“My mom’s attitude didn’t change.”
<u>Parent Responses (n=5)</u>			
Program Aspect	N	%	Example
Program Structure	2	40	“Too liberal with free time.”
Nothing	1	20	“Nothing.”
No Change in Teen	1	20	“Staff was unable to force child to explain actions.”
No Response	1	20	Left Blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
Program Aspect	N	%	Example
Program Structure	2	50	“Only two weeks long.”
Nothing	2	50	“Can’t think of anything.”
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Research Question: What would you like to see added to the Alternative House program?

Teen Responses

Eight of the eleven teens who completed questionnaires answered this question. Three teens left this question blank. The teens' answers were coded into four categories: Program Structure, Amenities, Service Related, and Nothing. Answers were coded as *Program Structure* if there was a reference to the daily schedule or the manner in which activities occur in the shelter. Answers were coded *Amenities* if there was a reference to a specific feature or comfort of the shelter, for example "A bigger house." Answers were coded as *Service Related* if there was a reference to a specific educational or therapeutic activity or tool. Answers were coded as *Nothing* if clients wrote "none," "nothing," or "N/A."

Four teens (36.4%) suggested a change to the *Program Structure*. Three teens suggested "more free time" and one teen suggested "more time to sleep." The teens seemed to want more time to be unsupervised or more time to rest and relax.

Three teens (27.3%) suggested an improvement in the *Amenities* of the house. "A bigger house for more teens," "a better selection of movies," and "a new basketball hoop" were all identified as specific amenities teens would like to see added to the program. The amenities were related to both improving the quality and diversity of recreational activities and to accommodating more teens. During an interview, one teen offered an additional amenities related suggestion: "You need to fumigate, there are too many bugs."

One teen suggested a *Service-Related* change of "more educational videos" to address a wider range of topics because "all they [the current movies] talk about is violence, guns, sex, drugs, and that's all." This request relates to the theme of one's problem not being addressed that was identified in the teens' "least helpful" section. This questionnaire response seems to support the notion that the shelter could be more helpful if both staff and the psychoeducational materials addressed the specific problems of the teens at the shelter. During an interview, a teen suggested, "The staff should read up on each kid. And they don't have to tell the other residents that are here, but they should talk about them during group or education, the problems, they should show videos on that, not just drug abuse and alcohol abuse and AIDS and stuff like that." The teen also went on to add, "They should address problems earlier." During an interview, a service-related

request for an after-care component was also made. The teen stated, “I want to come back for groups, to keep on the right track.”

Two teens wrote “nothing” in response to the request for suggestions to the program. One teen who was interviewed stated that everything was addressed during the shelter stay.

Parent Responses: *What would you like to see added to the Alternative House program?*

Three out of the five parents who completed questionnaires answered this question. Parents’ answers were coded into two categories: Program structure and Nothing. Answers were coded according to the same criteria as the teen responses. One parent responded that she would like to make a change in the *Program Structure* as it related to the counseling the teens receive. She wrote, “More counseling for the kids rather than once a week.” This theme emerged in the interviews as well. One parent suggested, “More family therapy sessions.” Both parents interviewed suggested that it would be helpful to have continued counseling with the Alternative House therapist after the teens are discharged. One parent stated, “To have a family therapist that the insurance would cover through it, through the AH, like a follow up after. It would be like they already had identification and they know each family.” These responses indicate that some parents find the counseling to be an effective, but limited, part of the program and would like to see more counseling sessions added, or a continued therapeutic relationship, in order to improve the program.

Four parents (80%) had no suggestions for additions to the shelter program. Two parents wrote “nothing” and two parents indicated their lack of suggestions by leaving the question blank.

Staff Responses: *What would you like to see added to the Alternative House program?*

Two of the four staff who completed questionnaires answered this question. Their responses were coded into three categories: Program Structure and Activities. Answers were coded as *Activities* if they mentioned an activity that was not specified as a therapeutic or educational tool, for example “field trips.” Other answers were coded according to the same criteria as the teen and parent responses.

One staff suggested changes in the *Program Structure*, specifically, “a more structured recreation period each day” and “more emphasis on having residents work on their school work while at Alternative House.” It seems this staff member believes the residents could benefit from more limits and direction during their recreation time. The second suggestion regarding schoolwork supports the parents’ responses that there is too little emphasis on school while the teens are in the program.

One staff responded that an *Activity* of “more field trips” would be a beneficial addition to the program. This response seems to speak to the previous staff’s concerns that teens do not have enough structured activities during their stay at the shelter. Two staff (50%) left this question blank.

Summary of Responses: What would you like to see added to the Alternative House program?

All three participant groups had suggestions related to the *Program Structure*, as can be seen in Table 12. All three groups also had many participants who did not have any suggestions to give. Other suggestions were not congruent among groups and included things like improved *Amenities*, an individual focus on each teen for *Service-Related* issues, and more *Activities* for the teens.

Table 12

<u>Suggested Additions to the Alternative House Program</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
Program Aspect	N	%	Example
Service Related	1	9.1	“More educational videos.”
Program Structure	4	36.4	“More free time.”
Amenities	3	27.3	“A new basketball hoop.”
Nothing	2	18.2	“Nothing.”
NoResponse	3	27.3	Left Blank
<u>Parent Responses (n=5)</u>			
Program Aspect	N	%	Example
Program Structure	1	20	“More counseling for the kids rather than once a week.”
Nothing	2	40	“Nothing.”
No Response	2	40	Left Blank

Staff Responses (n=4)

Program Aspect	N	%	Example
Program Structure	2	50	“More structured recreation period each day.”
Activities	1	25	“More field trips.”
No Response	2	50	Left blank

N = Number of responses

n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires

% = Percentage of the total participants who responded

Research Question: How do clients rate the helpfulness of the Alternative House program on a scale ranging from one (not at all helpful) to ten (very helpful)?

Teen Responses

All eleven teens who completed questionnaires answered this question. Teen responses to this scaling question ranged from a rating of a 5 to a 10. One teen rated the overall helpfulness of the program a 5; two teens (18.2%) rated it a 7; three teens (27.3%) rated it an 8; three teens (27.3%) rated it a 9; and two teens (18.2%) rated the overall helpfulness of the shelter a 10. The teens’ mean score for the rating of overall helpfulness was 8.18 with a standard deviation of 1.47. All scores were between five and ten, indicating that 100% of the participants were somewhat to very satisfied with the degree to which the program was helpful.

Parent Responses

All five parents who completed questionnaires answered this question. Parent responses to the rating of helpfulness of the overall program ranged from an 8 to a 10. Two parents (40%) rated the program helpfulness an 8 and one parent (20%) rated it a 9. Two parents (40%) rate the program helpfulness a 10. The parents’ mean score for the

rating of program helpfulness was a 9.0 with a standard deviation of 1.0. All scores were between eight and ten, connoting 100% satisfaction.

Staff Responses

All four staff who completed questionnaires answered this question. Staff responses to this scale ranged from a 7 to a 10. The ratings of 7, 8, 9 and 10 were each chosen by one staff member (25%) as their opinion of the helpfulness rating of the Alternative House program. The staff's mean score was an 8.5 with a standard deviation of 1.29. All ratings were between 7 and 10, connoting 100% satisfaction.

Summary of Responses

All participant groups rated the program as moderately to very helpful. Table 6 illustrates that all participants were satisfied with the helpfulness of the shelter.

Family Therapy at Alternative House

Research Question: What do clients find most helpful about the family therapy they receive at Alternative House?

Teen Responses

Eight of the eleven teens who completed questionnaires (72.7%) reported they received family therapy at the Alternative House shelter during their stay. All eight of the teens who received family therapy answered this question. The answers from the open-ended question regarding the most helpful aspect of family therapy were coded into three categories: Talking/Self-Expression, Listening, and Nothing. Answers were coded as *Talking* if they contained any reference to verbal communication. Answers were coded as *Listening* if they referred to listening as a benefit. For example "I got to talk as well as listen to my dad talk and explain things" was coded as *Talking* and as *Listening*, because both were cited as separate, important aspects of the therapeutic process. Answers were coded as *Nothing* if participants wrote "nothing," "N/A," or "I don't know."

Four teens (36.4%) wrote that *Talking* and/or self-expression was one of the most helpful aspects of the family therapy they received. One teen wrote, "I let out why I was angry at mom and I felt good after saying it." Another wrote, "We got to talk through

some family issues.” It seems that the catharsis of expressing one’s feelings was an important part of the talking process. Talking also appears to be a method these participants used to work out family problems.

One teen stated *Listening* was an important aspect of family therapy. In the statement, “I got to talk as well as actually listen to my dad talk and explain things” it is clear that listening is an entirely separate benefit of the therapy than talking and self-expression. It appears that listening to a parent explain his or her side of things, or having some give and take during the communication process, is a helpful aspect of the therapeutic process.

Of the two teens interviewed, one reported receiving family therapy. This teen had a positive impression of family therapy stating, “My grandmother talked a lot and I think that was good. So did my uncle, that’s good. My grandmother and uncle cooperated and so did I.” This theme of family cooperation did not surface in the teens’ questionnaires, but emerged from the interview. It seems experiencing family cooperation while talking in therapy was helpful to this teen.

It also appears the therapist’s qualities were one of the most helpful aspects of therapy for this teen interviewee. Marc, the Alternative House therapist, was described by this teen as the only therapist with whom s/he has ever felt comfortable, “See, I don’t like counselors at all that much, but I like Marc [the AH therapist]. I talked to Marc a lot and that helped me.” The teen also stated Marc was the only therapist who ever understood him/her. This theme of therapist qualities did not surface in the questionnaires, but was a prominent theme during the interview with the teen who had received family therapy at the shelter.

Three teens (27.3%) answered this question by writing “nothing” in the space provided. The three blank responses belonged to the teens who did not receive family therapy.

Parent Responses: What do clients find most helpful about the family therapy they receive at Alternative House?

All five of the parents who returned questionnaires (100%) reported that they received family therapy at Alternative House. All five parents answered this question.

Questionnaire responses were coded into five different categories: Referrals, Not Helpful, Change in Teen, Direct Approach, and Mediation. Answers to this question were diverse. One parent stated the referrals she received had been the most helpful aspect of the family therapy. She wrote, “Information on alternative future placement.” Because Alternative House is a two-week program, one of the main functions of family therapy is to give the family referrals for other professionals in the community who can help families work through their problems. This theme also emerged in the interviews. Both parents who were interviewed stated that referrals were very helpful and they both wanted more referrals given to parents so they could have more resources for future help.

One parent wrote that family therapy at Alternative House “wasn’t really too helpful.” This parent did not elaborate as to why therapy was not helpful. One parent wrote that the *Change in her Teen* was the most helpful aspect of family therapy, he “was calmer and more ready to handle problems.” This parent seems to attribute the child’s change to family therapy at Alternative House. One parent stated “a new direct approach” was most helpful. This theme relates to therapist qualities mentioned during the teen interviews. It appears that some parents find the therapist’s *Direct Approach* helpful. Finally, one parent responded that *Mediation* was the most helpful.

The themes of *Mediation* and the *Direct Approach* developed in the interview as well. Of the two parents who were interviewed, one reported receiving family therapy. The one parent interviewee who had received family therapy talked about mediation: “I think that we saw it was nice to have input from a third party, for that to be there. He can look at this and say, ‘Hey, ho, ho, ho. We’re kinda veering off of the subject.’” This parent talked about how important it was to have someone there with her family while they talked. She stated the therapist kept the intensity of the conversation down and encouraged her family members to talk in a calm, productive manner. She later addressed the therapist’s approach as something that was very helpful also. She stated, “I’ve been involved in therapy for seven years; it’s taken that long. And that session here was probably one of the best I’ve had...because he really focused in, and maybe it was because in the other sessions we were trying to out some pretense on what had happened and here it was like, ‘Look, you’re here for a reason. There’s no more game playing, and

there's no more pretending. This is it.' It was a slap in the face. I think we all needed that." It seems that the therapist's direct approach allows some families in crisis the opportunity to finally deal with the immediate problem in a helpful and proactive way. The mediation the therapist provides appears to provide some families with a safety net, a way to make sure their emotions and discussions will be kept in check.

The only other theme that emerged from the interview that wasn't addressed by the questionnaire respondents was the theme of *Talking*. The interviewee stated, like the teens, she appreciated "having everyone here to talk. That was great." Again, family cooperation seems to be an important part of the therapeutic process for some families. The teen and parent *Talking* responses also suggest that having the opportunity to talk in a calmer setting, rather than in the intense conflictual setting that may have characterized their homes, is a very helpful aspect of the family therapy.

Staff Responses: What do clients find most helpful about the family therapy they receive at Alternative House?

Staff members were asked what they think clients find most helpful about the family therapy at Alternative House. Their responses were divided into two categories: Talking and Mediation. Answers were coded according to the same criteria as the teen and parent responses. Four staff (100%) thought that *Talking* was one of the most helpful aspects of the family therapy received at Alternative House. One staff wrote, it "gives the parents and teens a chance to communicate." Another elaborated, "It may be the first time that many of the clients/parents have taken an honest look at their lives together." It seems that staff notice that some families, like the teens and parents whose responses are discussed above, have been so conflictual at home, the family therapy at the shelter may be a rare opportunity for them to talk in a calmer environment.

Two staff (50%) members thought *Mediation* was one of the most helpful aspects of family therapy. One staff member explained, "There is a mediator there to help parents/child talk through their problems." Like the parents, staff seem to be aware that

the mediation provided a safety net for some of the families, and therefore added to the helpfulness of the therapeutic process.

Summary of Responses: What do clients find most helpful about the family therapy they receive at Alternative House?

Talking and *Mediation* were two themes that all three participant groups identified as an important aspect of family therapy (see Table 13). *Listening* was a theme unique to the teens. The *Direct Approach* of the therapist, receiving *Referrals*, and seeing some *Change in the Teen* were themes unique to the parents' responses.

Table 13

<u>Most Helpful Aspects of Family Therapy at Alternative House</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
Therapy Aspect	N	%	Example
Nothing	3	27.3	"Not successful-Nothing."
Talking/Self-Expression	4	36.4	"We got to talk through some family issues."
Listen	1	9.1	"I got to talk as well as actually listen to my dad talk and explain things."
No Response	3	27.3	Left Blank
<u>Parent Responses (n=5)</u>			
Therapy Aspect	N	%	Example
Referrals	1	20	"Information on alternative future placement."
Nothing	1	20	"It really wasn't too helpful."
Change in Teen	1	20	"Child was calmer and more ready to handle problems."
Approach	1	20	"A new direct approach."
Mediation	1	20	"Mediation."
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
Therapy Aspect	N	%	Example
Talking/Self-Expression	4	100	"Gives the parents and their teen a chance to communicate."
Mediation	2	50	"That there is a mediator there to help parents/child talk through their problems."

N = Number of responses
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded

Research Question: What do clients find least helpful about the family therapy they receive at the Alternative House shelter?

Teen Responses

Of the eleven teens who completed questionnaires, eight reported receiving family therapy at Alternative House. All of these eight answered this question. Some teens may not receive family therapy while at the shelter for a variety of reasons. Some do not stay at the shelter long enough to schedule a session. Some teens' families refuse to participate in therapy. Some teens have other extenuating circumstances that keep them from participating in family therapy sessions. Teen responses to this question were coded into four categories: Family Contact, Not Understood, Service Related, and Nothing.

Answers were coded as *Family Contact* if participants made any negative reference to being with family members during their stay at the shelter. Answers were coded as *Not Understood* if participants made any reference to feeling like others did not understand their point of view during therapy. Answers were coded as *Service Related* if there was a reference to a specific educational or therapeutic activity or tool. Answers were coded as "Nothing" if participants wrote "nothing," "N/A," or "I don't know."

Four teens (36.4%) did not identify an aspect of family therapy that they thought was least helpful; their answers were coded as *Nothing*. Three of the teens did not receive family therapy and therefore left this question blank. The teen interviewee who had received family therapy at Alternative House also stated there was "nothing" least helpful about the service. Two teens (18.2%) thought that family contact was the least helpful aspect of family therapy. One teen wrote, "I had to see my parents during the two weeks I was away from home." This suggests that the contact with family members may somehow detract from the respite aspect of the program that the majority of participants responded was a vital part of the helpfulness of the program.

One teen wrote *Not being Understood* was the least helpful aspect of family therapy. She explained, “I don’t think they really understood where I was coming from.” This suggests not all teens experienced the therapy in the same way. Some felt very understood and connected to the therapist and their parents during therapy sessions, while some felt misunderstood. It makes sense that the therapy might seem fruitless if one does not feel heard or understood by others. One teen wrote that a *Service-Related* aspect, “limited time to counsel” was the least helpful part of the family therapy s/he received at Alternative House. It appears this teen would like longer sessions in order to feel like the therapy has been more helpful. This is congruent with the parents’ suggestion in an earlier question that there be more time for counseling incorporated into the program.

Parent Responses: What do clients find least helpful about the family therapy they receive at the Alternative House shelter?

All five parents who completed questionnaires reported receiving family therapy. Three of the five parents who completed the questionnaires answered this question. Two parents left the question blank. Parent responses were coded into three categories: Program Structure, Ineffective, and Nothing. Answers were coded as *Program Structure* and *Nothing* according to the same criteria as the responses from previous questions. Answers were coded as *Ineffective* if the participant wrote anything about the therapeutic process being incapable of solving a particular issue, for example, “was unable to get to the core of the child’s problem.”

One parent wrote that the least helpful aspect of family therapy was related to *Program Structure*, that is, it was too short. The interviews with the parents supported this complaint. One parent stated that she would like “more family therapy sessions” incorporated into the program. Another parent elaborated by saying it would be helpful “to have a family therapist that the insurance would cover, through AH, like a follow up after.” It seems a more extensive therapeutic component, with longer sessions and a greater number of sessions during the two weeks, would be helpful for some clients.

One parent responded that therapy had been *Ineffective* because it “was unable to get to the core of the child’s problem.” This parent did not recommend any ways to

improve on this process. One parent wrote “nothing/I don’t know” in response to this question.

Staff Responses: What do clients find least helpful about the family therapy they receive at the Alternative House shelter?

Three of the four staff who completed questionnaires answered this question. One staff member left this question blank. Staff responses were coded into two categories: Family Effort and Crisis. Answers were coded as *Family Effort* if participants made reference to little or no family effort, or to a negative client attitude. Answers were coded as *Crisis* if participants referred to an intense level of conflict or tension experienced by the family.

Two staff members (50%) stated they believed the least helpful aspect of the family therapy at Alternative House was the fact that some families do not put any effort into the therapy. One staff member wrote, “Some families have been involved with family counseling and don’t feel it has worked. They agree to do this, but don’t put forth any effort forward.” Another explained, “Some families feel that they don’t need help from AH.” It seems that some staff believe therapy can only be helpful if the client wants to be helped, and they notice a positive relationship between little family effort and a family’s experience of therapy at the shelter as unhelpful.

One staff member responded that the crisis felt by the family during the Alternative House stay was the least helpful aspect of therapy: “There is a lot of tension, bad feelings between the family at this point and it is difficult.” This response suggests that the intensity of the crisis may make the therapeutic process hard to manage. It seems there may be too much negative history built up for some clients, and by the time they get to therapy at Alternative House, there is little room left for a positive experience.

Summary of Responses: What do clients find least helpful about the family therapy they receive at the Alternative House shelter?

Both teen and parent participant groups had respondents who answered the question about what was least helpful about family therapy by writing “nothing” (see Table 14). Some teens and parents indicated dissatisfaction with the limited opportunity

to receive family counseling. Only staff members mentioned family effort as a least helpful aspect of the family therapy.

Table 14

<u>Least Helpful Aspects of Family Therapy at Alternative House</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
Therapy Aspect	N	%	Example
Nothing	4	36.4	“Nothing/I don’t know.”
Not Understood	1	9.1	“I don’t think they really understood where I was coming from.”
Family Contact	2	18.2	“Seeing my parents.”
Service Related	1	9.1	“We had limited time to counsel.”
No Response	3	27.3	Left Blank
<u>Parent Responses (n=5)</u>			
Therapy Aspect	N	%	Example
Nothing	1	20	“Nothing.”
Program Structure	1	20	“Short term.”
Ineffective	1	20	“Was unable to get to the core of child’s problem.”
No Response	2	40	Left Blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
Therapy Aspect	N	%	Example
Family Effort	2	50	“Some families don’t put forth any effort forward.”
Crisis	1	25	“There is a lot of tension, bad feelings between the family at this point and it is difficult.”
No Response	1	25	Left blank
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Other Program Aspects

Research Question: What do teens find most helpful about the Evening and Education Groups?

Teen Responses

Nine of the eleven teens who completed questionnaires answered this question. Answers were coded into four categories: Learning, Talking/Self-Expression, Therapeutic Activity, and Peer Connection. The category of *Peer Connection* was further divided into three subcategories: Interaction, Perspective and Break Isolation. Answers were coded as *Learning* if clients used the word “learn” or some form of “was taught” in their response.

Answers were coded as *Talking* if they contained any reference to verbal communication. Answers were coded as *Therapeutic Activity* if participants referred to a particular therapeutic game or activity used in group, for example, “the Value Auction Game.” *Peer Connection* was used if there was a reference to peers staying at the shelter with the teen. These responses were further subcategorized as *Interaction* if the response referred to a group effort, or used the word “interaction” when referring to peers. Responses were subcategorized as *Perspective* if participants reported gaining perspective on their situation, using words like “everyone has problems, nobody’s perfect.” Answers were subcategorized as *Break Isolation* if they communicated a feeling of no longer being alone.

Five teens (45.5%) responded that *Learning* something new was one of the most helpful aspects of the evening and education groups. Most responses did not indicate a particular subject, but referred to learning in a more general context. The interviews revealed particular topics the teens enjoyed learning about. One teen stated, “I liked last night’s group on AIDS. We had a guy come in from Whitman Walker. It was tight. He taught us a lot.” The other teen interviewee also talked about this group, saying “I learned a lot of information I didn’t know before. He told us more than at school. I don’t think they were allowed to talk about that in school. He told us more about the dangers of some of the things and that kind of information really helped me.” It appears that learning about the dangers of unprotected sex, as well as drug use and other relevant topics is helpful to some of the teens.

Teens were asked in a separate question to mark any of the following skills they thought they had learned during their stay at the shelter: a.) anger management, b.) coping, c.) communication, d.) interpersonal relationship, and e.) conflict resolution skills. Four of the teens (36.4%) wrote that they learned one or more of the skills during a therapeutic activity, usually done during group (see Table 15). Other sources of skill development included *Interaction with Staff* (36.4%), *Talking* (45.5%) and *Life Experience* (18.2%). See Figure 3 for a complete summary of participants’ responses to the types of skills clients learned.

Two teens (18.2%) responded that *Talking* or expressing themselves was the most helpful part of the groups. One teen wrote, “People talked out their feelings” and the other said, “I got to talk about my problems with other people who have the same.” These responses suggest that not only is talking a cathartic activity, it is a means to learn more about how others handle the same types of problems.

Two teens (18.2%) answered that the *Therapeutic Activities* done in group were the most helpful aspect. One teen identified a particular activity, the Value Auction Game and the other responded that because some of the activities contain a group effort, they are particularly helpful because “you learn how to work with others.”

Six teens (54.6%) responded that a *Peer Connection* was the most helpful aspect of the evening and education groups. Two of these teens (18.2%) thought the *Interaction* they experienced with their peers was the most helpful thing. They were not clear as to why this interaction was particularly beneficial, but one might get a sense from the other subcategories. Two teens (18.2%) wrote that gaining *Perspective* on their problems during their interaction with their peers was a very helpful part of the groups. One teen wrote, “You learn that everyone has problems, nobody’s perfect.” It seems gaining the knowledge that all people experience pain and frustration and hearing about how problems can be solved is reassuring for some teens. Two teens (18.2%) expressed a *Break in Isolation* as the reason why the connection with peers was the most helpful part of the groups. Realizing they were not alone and would get help and support from people who understood their problems, and who may have also experienced similar problems, seems to be the most helpful part of the group experience for some teens. Two teens (18.2%) left the question blank, indicating they had no response to this question.

The interviews revealed another important component of the *Peer Connection* derived from participating in groups. One teen talked about the importance of the goodbye group held the night before discharge. The teen stated it was an important time to say goodbye to all of the new friends the teen had made, and to staff. This ritual seemed to mark the teen’s success in the program, and to connect the teen to the other residents in the program. Group members expressed positive feelings about their stay together and hopeful feelings about the teen’s upcoming discharge. When teens were

asked on the questionnaire what was helpful about having other teens in the program with them, they responded with the same themes: a.) general *Interaction*, b.) *Breaking Isolation*, c.) gaining *Perspective*, d.) *Learning skills*, and e.) receiving *Support*. Some teens also stated peer conflict was a negative aspect of having other teens in the program, but almost half of the teens (45.5%) had nothing bad to say about having peers in the program. See Tables 16 and 17 for a complete summary of the teens’ responses.

Only four teens (36.4%) had complaints about the evening and education groups. Two teens (18.2%) stated they were sometimes boring and two teens (18.2%) had a problem with the time. One teen thought groups were too long, and one teen was disappointed that groups seemed to end “just when it starts getting fun.”

Table 15

<u>How Clients Learn Skills at Alternative House</u>			
(Skills include anger management, coping, communication, interpersonal relationship, conflict resolution, and parenting)			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
Activity	N	%	Example
Staff Interaction	4	36.4	“By the staff helping me when things come up.”
Talking	5	45.5	“We talked about them.”
Therapeutic Activity	4	36.4	“We did activities or games about them.”

Experience	2	18.2	“Just things happened to me.”
No Response	1	9.1	Left blank
<i>Parent Responses (n=5)</i>			
Activity	N	%	Example
Counseling	1	20	“Counseling sessions.”
Experience	1	20	“Being in the same room and not fighting with each other.”
No Response	1	20	Left blank
No skills learned	2	40	“I did not learn any of these coping skills.”
<i>Staff Responses (n=4)</i>			
Activity	N	%	Example
Therapeutic Activity	4	100	“Teens learn these skills during education and group.”
Counseling	3	75	“Family counseling.”
Peer Connection	2	50	“Communicating and living with other residents.”
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Figure 3

Types of Skills Clients Learn at Alternative House as Reported by Teens, Parents, and Staff

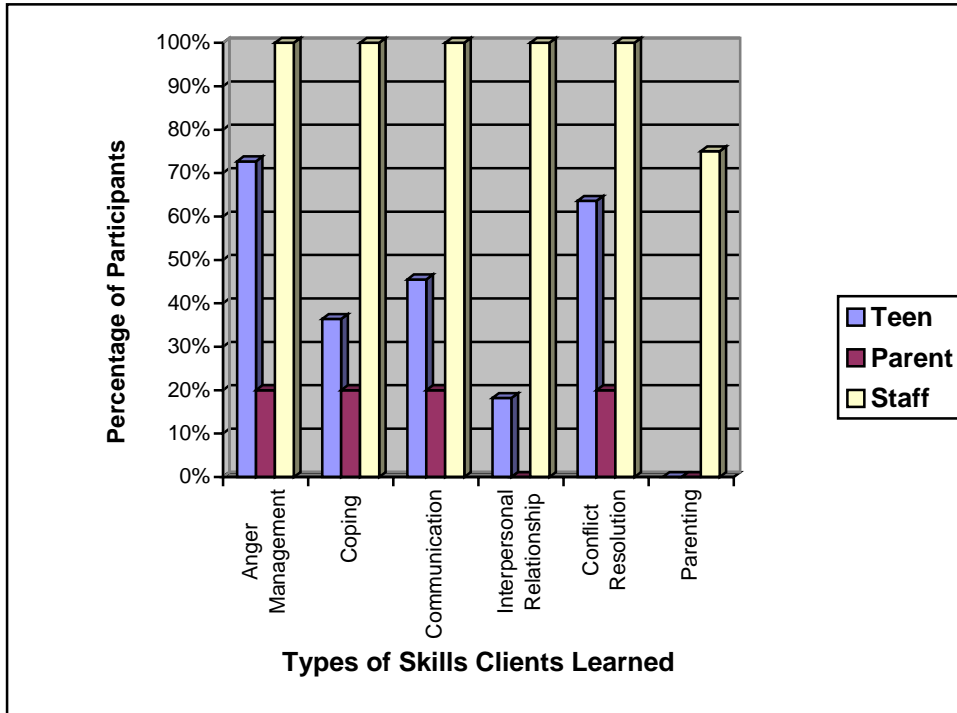


Table 16

What Teens Find Helpful About Having Peers in the Program With Them				
Teen Responses (n=11)				
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Peer Connection	Interaction	2	18.2	“Learning to interact with other people.”
	Break Isolation	2	18.2	“To see that you are not alone.”
	Perspective	2	18.2	“To see others’ perspective on my situation.”
	Learn Skills	1	9.1	“Gave me a chance to see how other teens cope.”
	Support	1	9.1	“When one needs support and love, they are there.”
Nothing		3	27.3	Left blank
Positive Affirmation		1	9.1	“I thought it was cool.”

N = Number of responses
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded

Table 17

What Teens Do Not Find Helpful About Having Peers in the Program With Them

Teen Responses (n=11)

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Example</i>
Nothing	3	27.3	“Nothing”
Conflict with Peers	5	45.5	“We would get into fights a lot.”
Share Time	1	9.1	“Sometimes I felt like I had to hold back and give others a chance.”
No Response	2	18.2	Left blank

N = Number of responses

n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires

% = Percentage of the total participants who responded

Staff Responses: What do teens find most helpful about the Evening and Education Groups?

All four staff members (100%) who completed questionnaires answered this question. Responses were coded into four categories: Talking/Self-Expression, Issues, Peer Connection, and Learning. *Peer Connection* was further subdivided into two categories: Break Isolation and Interaction. Answers were coded according to the same criteria as the teen responses. Answers were coded *Issues* if staff used the word “issues” in their answer.

Two staff members (50%) reported that the most helpful aspect of the group for the teens was the opportunity to *Talk* and express themselves. One staff explained, “They get a chance to talk and discuss what is on their minds.” It seems that some staff think the cathartic release some teens experience during group when they unburden themselves of their problems is a powerful aspect of group.

Two staff members (50%) responded that the *Issues* addressed during group were one of the most helpful aspects. One staff wrote, “We work on issues that are directly related to the group of teens that we have.” The other explained groups “offer residents an opportunity to deal with serious issues in an open and honest fashion.” These answers suggest that not only are the issues pertinent to the teens, as was observed in their responses about learning new things, but so is the opportunity to discuss the issue in an open and honest fashion. Having knowledgeable staff present to facilitate a productive

conversation, as well as provide factual information on serious topics, seems to be an important component of the group experience.

Two staff members (50%) cited a *Peer Connection* as a helpful aspect of the groups for teens. One staff member responded that teens benefit from the peer connection because it helped *Break the Isolation* they feel, explaining, “Teens can see others are dealing with the same problems they are.” This sense of not being the only one with a particular problem seems to be comforting to some teens. One staff member answered that the *Interaction* teens have with one another is the beneficial aspect of the connection to peers, explaining, “It gives the residents a chance to work together.” This suggests that the teens learn how to work together during the interaction, strengthening their cooperative social skills.

One staff member reported that the information the teens learn is the most helpful aspect of the groups. The staff member explains, “These groups also show different options available for people as well as the consequences for their actions.” This suggests that not only are the teens learning facts about drugs and safe sex, but they are also learning coping skills they can use to help them learn how to handle their problems differently.

Staff were given a list of skills the administrators hoped clients would learn while at the shelter. These skills included anger management, coping, communication, interpersonal relationship, conflict resolution and parenting skills. All four staff members (100%) responded that they thought the teen clients learned all of these skills and their primary source of learning was the education and evening groups (see Table 15). Staff also cited counseling (75%) and peers (50%) as other sources of skill development. See Figure 3 for a summary of skills learned as reported by all three participant groups.

Three of the four staff members (75%) expressed at least one negative aspect of the evening and education groups. Two staff members wrote about the videos, explaining “The videos are outdated” and “We use a lot of videos. We need more hands-on activities.” One staff member responded that Education group was too long. Another staff member complained that sometimes the wide age range of the kids can “sometimes make it hard to get a point across.”

Summary of Responses: What do teens find most helpful about the Evening and Education Groups?

Both participant groups identified *Talking, Learning, and a Peer Connection* as helpful aspects of the evening and education groups, as can be seen in Table 18. A summary of what was least helpful about the groups can be seen in Table 19

Table 18

<u>Most Helpful Aspects of the Evening and Education Groups</u>				
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>				
Group Aspect	Subcategory	N	%	Example
Talking/Self-Expression		2	18.2	“People talked out their feelings.”
Learning		5	45.5	“I learned that drugs can kill you the first time.”
Therapeutic Activity		2	18.2	“The value auction game.”
Peer Connection	Interaction	2	18.2	“A chance to interact with the other kids.”
	Perspective	2	18.2	“You start to learn that everyone has problems.”
	Break Isolation	2	18.2	“You learn that you are not all alone.”
No Response		2	18.2	Left blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>				
Group Aspect	Subcategory	N	%	Example
Talking/Self-Expression		2	50	“It gives the residents a chance to speak out.”
Issues		2	50	“We work on issues that are directly related to teens.”
Peer Connection	Break Isolation	1	25	“Teens can see others are dealing with the same problems they are.”
	Interaction	1	25	“Gives the residents a chance to work together.”
Learning		1	25	“These groups show different options available.”
N = Number of responses				
n = Number of participants who completed questionnaires				
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded				

Table 19

<u>Least Helpful Aspects of the Evening and Education Groups</u>			
<u>Teen Responses (n=11)</u>			
Group Aspect	N	%	Example
Program Structure	2	18.2	“Too long.”
Boring	2	18.2	“They were kinda boring.”
Nothing	4	36.4	“Nothing.”
No Response	3	27.3	Left Blank
<u>Staff Responses (n=4)</u>			
Group Aspect	N	%	Example
Service Related	2	50	“AH has too many videos that are outdated.”
Program Structure	1	25	“Education is too long.”
Peer Connection	1	25	“The age difference of teens can sometimes make it hard to get a point across.”
Nothing	1	25	“I think groups are important.”
N = Number of responses			
<u>n</u> = Number of participants who completed questionnaires			
% = Percentage of the total participants who responded			

Program Summary

Research Question: Would you recommend the Alternative House Shelter Program?

Given all of the preceding responses about what was helpful and not helpful about the program, all five parents (100%) and all four staff members (100%) would recommend the program to others. Ten of the eleven teens who completed the questionnaire answered this question. All ten (91% of the total number of teen participants) stated they would recommend the shelter (see Figure 4). Both teens and both parents who were interviewed also stated they would recommend the shelter to others. One teen explained, “I have a lot of friends who could really use it. They need to turn their lives around. As a matter of fact, when I get home, I’m gonna be like, ‘Hey P., there’s a place I went to, you gotta get into that junk!’”

Figure 4

Percentage of Participants Who Would Recommend the Alternative House Shelter as Reported by Teens, Parents, and Staff

