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New State of the Art Treatment for Teens with Substance Use Problems

Burlington, VT—Spectrum Youth and Family Services and Dartmouth College’s Medical School have teamed up to offer a new innovative, outpatient treatment research program for teens and their families struggling with problems related to substance use.

The Teen Intervention Program for Substance Use (TIPS) program combines weekly, individual motivational and behavioral coping skills counseling and a motivational incentive program that involves earning rewards for getting and staying abstinent.

“Spectrum was selected to partner with Dartmouth because of their superior leadership and active use of the most effective treatment strategies available,” said Dr. Alan Budney, Co-Director of the Dartmouth Addiction Treatment and Research Program.

“Spectrum and their clinical leader, Annie Ramniceanu, are unique in their enthusiasm for embracing opportunities to modify their programs when new information about more potent options becomes available. It is very difficult to change substance use patterns and behavior. So we always look to clinical science to guide our ideas, and Spectrum leadership thinks the same way.”

In the TIPS program, parents or guardians also meet weekly with the counselor to develop and manage a reward and consequence plan for the home that can motivate abstinence from substance use. These types of interventions can increase the probability that teens can be successful in stopping marijuana and other substance use compared to usual programs offered in community settings.

In addition, this research program is designed to test whether or not a computerized program can further increase the chances that teens in treatment can get and stay clean from all substances.

“The hope is that their thinking ability will improve, which will help them make better decisions when faced with risky situations, and may even help with school performance,” said Ramniceanu, Spectrum’s deputy director.

The program is funded by a research grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which was awarded to Drs. Alan Budney and Catherine Stanger, faculty members at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. They have spent the last 15 years continuously working on science-based ways to improve substance abuse treatment outcomes so that teens and their families have a better chance of success when seeking help.

Dr. Alan Budney is a Professor at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Rutgers University in 1989. He was a postdoctoral fellow and faculty member at the University of Vermont from 1990 to 2005, and then was a Professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences until he moved to Dartmouth in 2012. Over the last 20 years he has conducted extensive research on the development and evaluation of innovative behavioral treatments for substance abuse, specializing in marijuana use disorders in adults and adolescents. His clinical research has focused on integrating abstinence-based incentive programs with more traditional therapies, and using computer-assisted therapies to enhance the cost effectiveness of these approaches. Dr. Budney is a Fellow and Past-President of the Division 28 (Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse) of the American Psychological Association, and is President-Elect of Division 50 (Addictions). He was a member of the substance use disorders working group for the development of the DSM-5, and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the College on Problems of Drug Dependence. He has served on numerous grant review committees at the NIH, was on the scientific review board of the Center for Medical Cannabis Research at the University of California San Diego, and participated regularly with the Office of National Drug Control Policy on their Marijuana and Kids Media Campaign. Dr. Budney has been an active member of many community task forces targeting reduction in delinquency, violence, and substance abuse.

Dr. Catherine Stanger is an Associate Professor at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. She received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Rutgers University in 1990. She was a postdoctoral fellow and faculty member at the University of Vermont from 1989 to 2005, and then was an Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences until she moved to Dartmouth in 2012. Over the last 20 years, in collaboration with Dr. Budney, she has conducted extensive research on the development and evaluation of innovative family based interventions, specializing in parenting interventions for diverse populations including substance abusing parents, and adolescents with substance use problems. Her clinical research has focused on innovative ways to use incentives to motivate behavior change in both teens and parents, and she has collaborated with groups across the country to use her interventions. In addition, she has integrated research on decision-making and brain processes into her work in order to understand risk factors and to improve treatment outcomes. Dr. Stanger's work has been funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development. She is a licensed clinical psychologist in the States of Vermont and New Hampshire. She is an active member of many community substance abuse prevention coalitions.

Annie Ramniceanu, MS, LCMHC, LADC is licensed in Vermont as both a Clinical Mental Health Counselor and Alcohol and Drug Counselor. She has worked at Spectrum Youth &

Family Services in Burlington, VT for over 15 years and is currently the Associate Executive Director of Clinical Programs. She has also been on the faculty of the University Of Vermont College of Medicine since 2010. Annie was an Adjunct Professor in the Graduate Counseling Program at the University of Vermont for many years; was appointed by the Commissioner of the BISHCA Banking, Insurance Securities and Health Care Administration to serve on the Independent Panel of Mental Health Care Professionals for over 7 years. She has provided consultation to several New England States, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and other Research/Development companies. She was a contributor to the SAMHSA/CSAT (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment) Treatment Improvement Protocol Manual on Best practices for Clinical Supervision. Annie currently serves as Chair of the State of Vermont Alcohol and Drug Certification Board and is the Vice President of the IC & RC, (International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium) which is the global expert and leader in certifying Alcohol and Drug Counselors. In 2012 the Burlington Business & Professional Women awarded her the "Woman of Achievement award" and she was also selected by Vermont Works for Women as one of Vermont's 25 Most Outstanding Women for their Labor of Love 25th anniversary celebration. In May 2013, she and retired District Court Judge, Ben Joseph, received the Antonio B. Pomerleau Medal of Honor for "Rapid Referral", a program they created to reduce the number of drug-related offenses appearing in Chittenden County district court. Rapid Referral was also showcased in The New York Times column "The Fixes."

Spectrum Youth and Family Services

Founded in 1970, Spectrum is a nationally recognized leader in helping youth ages 14-22 and their families turn their lives around. Each year, Spectrum serves 2,000 teenagers, young adults, people with a history of substance use, psychiatric problems, or violence, and their family members. Their programs for youth are centered in Burlington and St. Albans, and can be found in eight of Vermont's twelve counties. Spectrum's mission is to empower teenagers, young adults, and their families to make and sustain positive changes through prevention, intervention, and life skills services.

Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth

The Audrey and Theodor Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, founded in 1797, strives to improve the lives of the people it serves: students, patients, and local and global communities. The School builds healthier communities through innovations in research, education, and patient care. As one of America's top medical schools, the Geisel School of Medicine is committed to creating new generations of diverse leaders who will help solve our most vexing challenges in healthcare.