Engaging Parents in Treatment, Recovery and Parenting:

Effective Strategies of Specialized Treatment and Recovery Services (STARS)
Program Context

- Sacramento County population: 1.5 million
- In 2004, there were approximately 7,000 substantiated child abuse/neglect referrals, in Sacramento\(^1\).
- An estimated 70 to 90% of child welfare cases involve families affected by substance use
- Over 50% of those cases are methamphetamine related.

1. Center for Social Services Research, University of California at Berkeley

Sacramento County Prior to STARS and Dependency Drug Court

- Reunification rate about 18-20%
- Parents unable to access AOD treatment
- Social workers, attorneys, courts often uninformed on parent progress
- Drug testing not uniform and results often delayed
In the Last Decade Sacramento Has Implemented Comprehensive Reforms

Five Components of Reform

1. Comprehensive cross-system joint training
2. Substance Abuse Treatment System of Care
3. Early Intervention Specialists
4. Recovery Management Specialists (STARS)
5. Dependency Drug Court

Sacramento County after STARS and Dependency Drug Court

- Reunification rates at 40–45%
- Reunification is occurring more quickly – almost twice as fast
- Parents truly have “treatment on demand”
- All parties involved in the case are informed at every stage of treatment
- All parents receive random observed “instant” drug testing
Sacramento County Drug Court Model

Level 1 DDC Hearings
- 30 days
- 60 days
- 90 days
- 180 days

Level 2 DDC Level 2

DDC Graduation

Weekly or biweekly hearings

Review Hearings

Myth

- Clients addicted to methamphetamine do not complete treatment
Reality

- Data show that methamphetamine treatment completion rates are not very different than those for other addictive drugs.
STARS Goals

- Effect client change by removing barriers to treatment and providing support coupled with strict accountability.

- Provide CPS/Dependency Courts with accurate and reliable documentation regarding client progress through treatment.

STARS Services

- 25 Recovery Specialists
- Offer support and monitoring of AOD related case activities
- Immediate access to recovery management and treatment services
- Liaisons among clients, CWS, AOD, treatment providers and the Court
- Compliance monitoring - twice monthly reports for the Dependency Drug Court
- Funded through local tobacco litigation settlement funds (30%), used to match State and Federal Title IV-E case management funds (70%)
The 5 Points of STARS Success

- Integrity
- Positivism
- Professionalism
- Servant Leadership
- Customer Service

Obstacles to Client Change

- Late-stage addiction
- Resistance to “the system”
- Lack of hope
- Methamphetamine addicts are often dismissed in dependency cases or prejudged.
- Methamphetamine affects brain chemistry often leading to reduced memory and attention rates.
Barriers Specific to Men

- The child welfare case often originates with the mother, creating or reinforcing father’s denial
- Men are less likely to be able to ask for help or show vulnerability
- Women dominate the social services field
- Women often dominate co-ed treatment
- Fathers don’t have healthy role models

Achieving Our Goals

- Program Philosophy
- Support
- Intake
- Intangibles
STARS Philosophy

- Our belief is that when we combine an empathetic, supportive environment with one that stresses accountability, we are able to create change in a profound way.

- Each parent we work with is encouraged to accept responsibility for every action he/she participates in.

Providing Support

- Recovery Specialist acts almost as a “personal trainer”

- Support specific not only to gender but to the substances abused.

- Recovery Specialists don’t allow clients to give up after a mistake or relapse.

- Recovery Specialist helps to bring methamphetamine addicts past “the wall” or depression that accompanies recovery.
Intake

- Parent is immediately assessed for AOD issues at Detention Hearing.
- Each parent is assessed individually, helping to break denial surrounding significant other.
- Facility location

Intake

- Rapid intake
- Immediate access to treatment
- Immediate contact with Recovery Specialist – gender specific
Treatment Access

- Instant assessment and referral to APPROPRIATE treatment
- Removing barriers to ENTERING treatment
- Active support for parents, such as helping to phone for appointment, driving parents to first appointment
- Immediate re-assessment upon relapse or treatment failure

Effective Methamphetamine Treatment Components

- Minimum of six months to one year of treatment
- Structured, intensive and comprehensive
- Focus on “coping mechanisms”
- Cognitive-behavioral in nature
Three Strategies for Working with Methamphetamine-Abusing Parents

- Use of Motivational Interviewing Techniques
- Role-modeling
- Accountability

Motivational Interviewing

- Alternative to theory that denial and resistance must be smashed
- Described as “dancing” not “wrestling”
- Works well with men as it eliminates the power struggle
Incorporating the Principles of Motivational Interviewing

- Express empathy
- Support self-efficacy
- Roll with resistance
- Develop discrepancy

Role Models

- Recovery Specialists are:
  - Certified addiction specialists
  - Believable and approachable
  - Comfortable with some self-disclosure
  - Non-punitive in approach
Intangibles

- Belief in redemption and recovery
- Overcome prejudices that exist
- We give 100% for client’s 100%
- Passion

Love
Passion
Hope