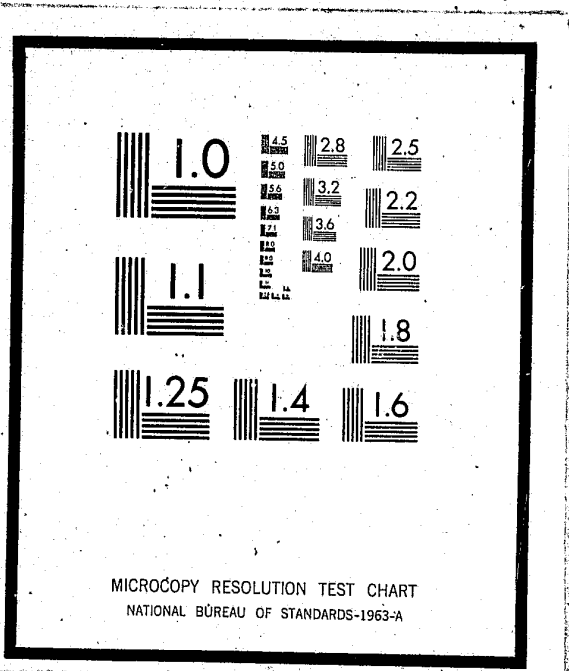


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PROJECT MORAD

MORRISON COUNTY ^(MAY) ADOLESCENT GROUP HOME

A Preliminary Evaluation Report

prepared by

Project Evaluation Unit

Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control

March, 1974

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I. DESCRIPTION

A. THE PROJECT

1. Background Information

Project MORAD is a group home for Morrison County youth between the ages of eight and eighteen years. This project was originally funded in July, 1973 by the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control. Because this is a first year project that had some start-up problems (which will be discussed later) none of the residents has completed the program. Consequently, this report will not follow the usual format for residential programs. What follows is a description of the MORAD program and of the progress the project has made during its first year of operation.

Mr. Donald Rudek, the Project Director, developed the idea of a group home for Morrison County youth into the 1973 grant application which was approved by the Governor's Crime Commission. The purpose of the home is to provide an alternative to state institutions for youth adjudicated delinquent by the judicial system. Mr. Rudek felt that youth with relatively minor, but adjudicable, behavior problems would be more effectively treated by keeping them in the community than by committing them to the YCC. He also thought the group home would provide a focus for coordinating available social services which work with youth.

Construction of the group home began August 1, 1973. The facility is a unified structure of two mobile homes located on Mr. Rudek's farm, about a half mile from the community of Little Falls in Morrison County. The facility itself consists of twelve rooms. There are seven bedrooms, including one for

house parents. Each of the clients has had a single bedroom, although there are three bedrooms for double occupancy as the project takes in additional residents. The capacity of the residential program is six clients plus the house parents and their children. The project is currently negotiating with local authorities to use an additional bed for crisis placements on a short term basis. In addition to the bedrooms, the home includes two full baths, a private half-bath for female youth, a common living room for all residents, and office space for the staff.

Recreational opportunities in the home include table games, magazines, and television. A basketball court, weight lifting equipment and a volley ball court is located in the barn on the Rudek farm. Project MORAD is also completing a hobby shop in a separate building next to the group home.

Although the project is located on a farm outside Little Falls, residents have easy access to all community resources. Transportation does not appear to be a problem for MORAD clientele. All residents have been enrolled in school during their stay at the project and are eligible for school bus service. The project director and house parents have mileage allowances for transporting clients to program activities. The project is near enough to Little Falls that clients are within walking distance to all local resources.

One of the outstanding features of this project is the total acceptance of the project by the local community. Mr. Rudek believes that one of the main reasons this project was funded is the "... complete cooperation received from the community, the school system, the Morrison County Board of Commissioners, Social Services, the clergy of the Little Falls area, the

Little Falls chapter of the JAYCEES, the Episcopal Churchwomen of Minnesota, and the general community of Morrison County residents." Indeed, when asked which local organizations support the project, Mr. Rudek was able to name most organizations and their type of support. He did report that there had been earlier resistance from the police and sheriff, but that both now support Project MORAD. No current opposition to the project has been brought to Mr. Rudek's attention.

Two reasons for community support can be identified. First, from the beginning of the project's development, Mr. Rudek and supporters of the project have had good public relations with the local community. Mr. Rudek personally contacted early opponents to the group home in efforts to neutralize their opposition by explaining what MORAD would offer Morrison County and its youth. The project staff has explained MORAD and its goals to most of the civic organizations in the area. The project also purchased a copy of the Community Corrections Training Center's presentation "No Straight Road" and added information about Project MORAD as part of the local presentation on community corrections. A number of radio spots and newspaper articles have also been used to inform the local community about MORAD. One indication of the extent of publicity about and interest in MORAD is that approximately 200 people attended an open house at Project MORAD on December 2, 1973.

Second, community members were involved in the project from its beginning through representation on the MORAD Advisory Board. The Advisory Board includes the following people:

Gilbert Kapsner, Chairman, Morrison County Welfare Board
Rev. Ted Berktold, Episcopal Church, clergy representative

Ronald Sczublewski, Little Falls JAYCEES
Shirley Wright, Morrison County Probation Officer
Glenn Tridgell, Morrison County School Psychologist
Ruth Thomas, ASCW, Northern Pines Mental Health Clinic
Roger Thielen, private citizen representative
Jerry Larson, Counselor, Alcoholics Anonymous
Conner Anderson, Continuing Education Program

The responsibilities of the Advisory Board center on four activities: (i) reviewing reports made to the Board by the project director, (ii) providing constructive criticism as needed for the improvement of the project, (iii) reviewing applications for the positions of house parents and assistant house parents, and (iv) making final decisions on prospective clients' admissions to the project.

The Governor's Crime Commission awarded \$34,818.00 to Project MORAD in 1973. The State of Minnesota contributed \$4,658.00 to the project for a total award of \$39,476.00. The grantee's in-kind contribution was \$8,436.00, for a total operating budget of \$47,912.00. Although the award was granted on July 2, 1973, funds for the project were not released until October, 1973. Consequently, construction at the group home site was not completed until November 20. The first youth admitted to the project was accepted on December 5, 1973. To date Project MORAD has accepted three clients, of whom none has completed residency. Since the project opened only one youth from Morrison County, who chose not to apply to MORAD, has been committed to the YCC. One girl was committed to the YCC before MORAD had decided to accept female clients.

2. Project MORAD's Goals

There are three main goals of Project MORAD: (A) To reduce the number of Morrison County youth who must be placed in state institutions following adjudication; (B) To reduce recidivism among Morrison County youth who have been

adjudicated delinquent; and (C) To develop a coordinated approach of all social agencies dealing with youth who need help with problems.

During the first year of operation the following objectives were pursued toward these goals:

1. To provide the judicial system with an alternative to probation or YCC commitment in disposition and sentencing of juvenile offenders (Goal A).
2. To provide a positive, family-type setting for youth found to have behavior problems in the community (Goals A and B).
3. To reduce negative (acting out) behavior of youth in the environment of the group home through counseling, model training, employment-seeking service and professional and paraprofessional help in matters of mental health (Goals B and C).
4. To retain youth in an educational setting within the immediate area (Goal B).
5. To act as a re-entry home for the transition from an institution back to the community for youth who need additional socialization (Goal B).
6. To correlate all agencies into one group of human resources to deal with youth (Goal C).
7. To provide follow-up guidance and counseling for the youth and his/her family (Goal B).

Some of the features of the MORAD program can be drawn from the above set of objectives. First, Project MORAD is a family-style group home with live-in house parents, instead of a group home with twenty-four hour counseling services (Objective 2). Second, the target population consists of two groups: youth who would otherwise be incarcerated (Objective 1) and youth who are re-entering the community following incarceration (Objective 5). Third, a strong educational emphasis is built into the program (Objective 4). Fourth, Project MORAD acts as a focus of and a referral source for existing

social agencies which help project clients (Objective 6). Fifth, one aspect of the program will include follow-up involvement with former clients (Objective 7).

Project MORAD had also hoped to become self-sufficient (i.e., independent of LEAA funding) by the end of the first year. However, this objective will not be attained. Consequently, MORAD is requesting continuation funds from the Governor's Crime Commission for its second year of operation.

3. Project Staff

Project MORAD is administered by the Morrison County Board of Commissioners, which supplies financial supervision for the project. Mr. Rudek, the project director, is accountable to the County Board of Commissioners. As project director, he is primarily responsible for the treatment and rehabilitation program, direct supervision of the house parents, and coordination of and communication with all agencies involved in the project. Mr. Rudek acts as the chairman of the Advisory Board, which provides advice and criticism of the operation of Project MORAD. As project director, he is also responsible for staff training and for counseling clients. Mr. Rudek has assumed the part-time position of secretary for the project in addition to his responsibilities as project director.

DuWayne and Bonnie Matthews were hired for the positions of house parents on October 1, 1973. As house parents, they are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the group home. They are to provide a "normal, home-style" living environment in the group home. House parents are responsible for maintenance of the group home, preparation and service of meals, twenty-four hour

supervision of the residents, and counseling clients. They are responsible for keeping financial records of expenses and payments they make, and for keeping charts on each resident's progress. They are accountable to the project director with whom they communicate daily. Although Mr. Mathews may accept part-time employment, at least one of the house parents must be at the project at all times. As part of the educational emphasis at MORAD, house parents also tutor the residents.

Assistant house parents are hired on a part-time basis to cover vacations and weekends during which the house parents are relieved of their duties. When on duty, the assistant house parents have the same responsibilities as the regular house parents. They provide approximately sixty days of coverage at the group home during a year.

The project director and the house parents (full-time and assistant) are the only staff members of Project MORAD. Together they carry complete responsibility for the operation of the project and the supervision of the clientele. As was indicated, both positions include responsibilities for counseling clients. The project director also provides in-service training to the house parents or makes arrangements for other training sessions. As an example of the latter, Mr. and Mrs. Mathews spent one day working with the house parents at the Personnel Adjustment Training House, (PATH) a residential project in Brainerd. The director was involved in establishment of the PATH and worked as Special Schools Counselor there prior to establishing Project MORAD. All staff members are presently taking a home study course "Parents and Teachers," a behavior management course offered by Research Press of Champaign, Illinois.

4. Program Structure

The primary focus of the MORAD program is to change clients' previous

patterns of negative behavior by developing positive behavior patterns. There are three phases to this program. When a client is admitted to Project MORAD, he (or she) enters a thirty-day orientation and diagnostic phase. During this phase of the program, the client adjusts to the group home environment, completes a contract with the project, and undergoes educational and psychological testing. At the end of the orientation period, the client enters the second phase of the project, during which he (she) is a regular resident at the group home and works toward completing the contract. In the third, or follow-up phase, the client has been released from the group home but maintains contact with Project MORAD and its resources for a three-year period.

We can identify four components of the group home program aimed at developing positive behavior patterns: counseling, training, education and a form of behavior modification. Project MORAD offers individual and group counseling in the group home and makes referrals for psychological counseling as needed. For individual counseling, each client meets daily with either the project director or the house parents to review his (her) problems and progress. Most of the individual counseling is concentrated on individual problems and needs.

Group counseling sessions are held twice a week at MORAD. Group sessions center on immediate needs of the program, e.g., rules changes for the house; future needs of clients, e.g., education and employment; training, e.g., job-seeking skills; and personal problems of clients. Both residents and staff members participate in the group sessions, which use a combination of staff advice and peer pressure to help individuals reach solutions to problems.

This type of group counseling is not in the style of high pressure guided group interaction we have seen in some of the other residential programs. It is a vehicle for discussing problems, suggesting solutions, and reaching

resolutions as a group. In a sense, the group sessions also have a training function by showing clients that their problems are not necessarily unique to themselves, and that others (including peers) can help individuals solve problems.

If psychological tests administered during the orientation phase of the program reveal psychological problems, Project MORAD will refer clients to professional help. The School Psychologist and the Northern Pines Mental Health Clinic have agreed to provide psychological or psychiatric counseling to MORAD clients.

A unique feature of MORAD, which includes counseling, educational and training aspects of the program, is a college level course which meets twice a week. The course is offered in Little Falls by the Brainerd Community College. During the winter quarter, a Human Dimensions course, emphasizing communications skills, was taken by MORAD clients and staff. During the spring quarter, a course in Basic Sociology will be offered. Project MORAD pays the tuition of staff and residents. Parents and guardians of clients are encouraged to take the courses, but attendance has been very spotty. In addition to the educational value of the courses, clients receive college credit for passing the courses.

Training at Project MORAD normally takes place informally in the group home. Training concentrates on such things as personal hygiene, financial or bookkeeping guidance, budgeting, menu planning and housekeeping. Most of this training takes place in conjunction with other aspects of the group home program. For example, a client will receive training in menu planning, budget-

ing, and food preparation when it is his (her) turn to assist with meal preparation, including planning meals, buying groceries, and serving food. Staff members tutor clients as needed for the educational aspects of the program. More formal training sessions occur in the group meetings and college courses mentioned above.

As was noted earlier in Section 2, one of the objectives of MORAD is to retain youth in an educational setting. The project emphasizes the value of education and encourages clients to remain in school. Full cooperation with this aspect of the program has come from the school system. Clients may attend night classes in the Continuing Education Program or the regular sessions of the public schools.

Thus far, all MORAD residents have chosen to continue their education. While they are in school, their behavior and progress are closely monitored. The MORAD staff meets monthly with the clients' instructors, school counselors, and the school psychologist to discuss each client's progress. During the initial period of residency, daily reports on a student's behavior and school work are submitted by each teacher. If a client makes satisfactory progress through this part of the program, the reports are reduced to once per week. If progress continues, the client is put on an honor system in which he reports on his own progress and problems in school.

While none of the clients has chosen to enter the labor market full-time, Project MORAD has been working on developing employment resources for its clients. At this time, they have commitments from local employers who have

agreed to provide part-time employment to those clients who want to work. Mr. Rudek, however, reports that full-time employment in the Little Falls area will pose a problem for those who drop out of school altogether. Since employment will replace the educational component of the program for those clients who do not enroll in school, MORAD may not be able to handle many clients who do not enroll. However, the project has not had to face this issue and is working to resolve it.

The fourth component of the group home program is a variant of the "token economy" type of behavior modification. A list of jobs that must be done at the group home is developed. Each job is discussed and assigned a monetary value based either on an hourly rate or on a cost-for-completion basis. Clients may be assigned to or volunteer for specific jobs. Their work on each job is evaluated by the staff. If the job has been satisfactorily completed, the client receives the base pay, which is entered in his (her) account with the project. However, if the job was not completed or was poorly done, a portion of the base pay may be deducted from the amount credited to the client for that job. Similarly, if a client completes a job very well, he (she) may receive a bonus for the job. Each client must earn enough money each week to pay for school lunches. Additional earnings are used as an allowance for the client.

5. Admissions Procedures

Project MORAD has developed a four-step process through which candidates must proceed to be admitted to the group home. Step One is referral to the project. Project MORAD will take referrals from any county agency, juvenile court, the school system, or parents. However, prospective clients will be

considered only if they qualify under the following set of Admissions Guidelines:

The guidelines set forth below will be used by the Advisory Board to evaluate candidates for placement at MORAD.

1. Candidates must be youth, between the ages of eight and eighteen.
2. The Intake Board should not consider youth who have indicated a pattern of behavior which would place MORAD or its inhabitants in immediate danger.
3. Only youth from Morrison and Crow Wing Counties will be considered because the re-entry depends on frequent communications between the staff and the parents of the youth.
4. Any applicant with a diagnosis of severe retardation, severe psychiatric disorder or a severe physical handicap which the program is not equipped to handle should not be considered.
5. Candidates should be eligible for assistance from the Morrison and Crow Wing County welfare system or other agency within Morrison or Crow Wing Counties.
6. Parents or legal guardians of the youth must indicate a desire to have their child placed in MORAD, and must be willing to work with the staff for the eventual return of their child.
7. All sources of referrals for candidates will be considered. No candidate will be denied admission because of race, color, creed, national origin or sex.
8. The Board of Admissions shall consist of a minimum of four of the following personnel:
 - a. house parents
 - b. a member of the Advisory Board
 - c. probation officer
 - d. social welfare case worker
 - e. director of the Northern Pines Mental Health Clinic
 - f. representatives of the school system
 - g. project director of MORAD
9. Forms necessary/requested for placement:
 - a. court order, if referral is from court
 - b. parental information sheet
 - c. parental permission form
 - d. intake contract form
 - e. emergency locator
 - f. social history form
 - g. community-based corrections facilities, intake information form
10. MORAD shall act as an emergency placement hostel for youth by verbal recommendation upon reference by any recognized agency of the Counties.
11. Emergency placement will be completed without the above mentioned forms. If the youth is admitted as a regular resident, those forms must then be completed.

12. Any portion of a day shall constitute one day's lodging for the purposes of per diem charges.

Although MORAD will accept youth on an emergency basis, emergency placements will be for no more than twenty-four hours, or until the next working day for holiday and weekend placements.

Once a referral is made, as much data as is available on the youth is collected by the MORAD staff. The youth's record in school, including any recent problems, is obtained from the school system. A social history of the youth is completed with his (her) developmental history, family background, present problems, and the need for a placement such as MORAD. The results of any recent intelligence and/or psychological tests are added to the social history. This information will become part of the youth's file at MORAD after he is accepted.

The third step in the admissions process is an interview of the youth and parents or legal guardian by the project director. During the interview, the director will determine how willing the parents are to place their child at MORAD and gain a general idea of the youth's behavior pattern. The interview is used to explain the MORAD program and to assess the youth's expected progress in the group home. During this interview, the parents will fill out the Parental Permission form, the Parent Information Sheet, and the Emergency Locator form. The candidate for MORAD will work with the director or the house parents on developing the contract.

Upon entering MORAD, the youth is required to sign a contract with the house parents. This contract indicates types of behavior that have been problems in the past, e.g., truancy, and that the youth agrees to change while in

the program. The client also agrees to attend school or to seek employment during his (her) residency. If the youth becomes employed, a bank account will be established and the youth agrees to budget his (her) earnings in accord with the advice of MORAD staff. In the contract, the youth further agrees to attend the Human Dimensions and Basic Sociology courses and to accept the counseling of MORAD staff members and any counselors to whom he (she) may be referred. This contract is signed by the youth and the house parents and is witnessed by a representative of the referring agency which keeps a copy of the contract.

The Admissions Board will then review the application for placement. Although only four members of the Board need be present to act on the application, the project director, house parents and a member of the Advisory Board must be present.

The final step in the admissions process is a visit to the group home by the parents and the youth. Any further questions they have about the MORAD program and its expectations of the youth are answered at this time. The project director informs them that during the first thirty days of residency the youth is in an orientation phase during which he (she) will be under strict supervision by the MORAD staff. The rules and privileges of the program are explained to the youth and he (she) is admitted as a resident.

During the orientation period the progress of the youth is closely watched. If the youth has problems or needs of which the staff was not aware at intake, a "mini-contract" to deal with the problems or needs is negotiated. At the end of the orientation period the placement in MORAD is reviewed by the director,

house parents and other residents. After the orientation period, the client may begin to visit his (her) home and is allowed a freer hand in planning his (her) activities. Once a client has completed the orientation period, he (she) will not be removed from the program unless the youth's behavior becomes belligerent to the extent of damaging persons or property. The Advisory Board could rule then that the client should be removed from the group home. When the client has fulfilled the contract(s) negotiated with MORAD, the Advisory Board will recommend that he (she) be placed back in the home community. The house parents and project director determine whether the contract has been fulfilled by reviewing the contract, school reports on the youth, and Project MORAD's daily log of the behavior of each client.

Although no clients have completed residency, Project MORAD plans to maintain contacts with each client for up to three years. Morrison County citizens are being sought to act as volunteer "big brothers" or "big sisters" for each client following residency. Project MORAD will act as a counseling center and referral source for its former clients throughout the three year follow-up period.

II. SUMMARY

Project MORAD has not been in operation long enough for an evaluation of its efforts and effects. However, we can review the objectives of its first year of operation. Project MORAD has begun accepting youth from juvenile court. These youth have been referred to Project MORAD as an alternative to commitment to a state institution. Thus, MORAD is now an alternative to probation or YCG commitment for Morrison County youth in accord with Objective (1). The group home is structured as a family-style home with house parents who live with the clients in accord with Objective (2). As was seen in the program description above, the MORAD program of counseling, training, education and behavior modification was developed to implement Objectives (3) and (4). In accord with Objective (6), the Advisory Board of Project MORAD serves as a focus for coordinating service agencies' efforts to deal with Morrison County youth. At the time this report is being written, MORAD has not accepted any youth on a re-entry basis, so Objective (5) has not been fulfilled. However, MORAD is ready to accept such clients when the opportunity arises. Objective (7) has not been fulfilled because none of the youth in the group home has completed residency. As was noted above, preparations for the follow-up period are now being made and will be ready when clients complete the residential phase of the project.

While it is too early in the project's existence to judge whether it can or will accomplish its goals, we can say that the objectives of the project have been fulfilled to the extent possible at this time. Project MORAD, therefore, has been working toward its goals, it has developed and implemented a program which should attain these goals, and it has begun to provide services to Morrison County youth.

END