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SEVENTH STEP FOUNDATION PROGRAM
AT THE KENTUCKY STATE REFORMATORY:
EVALUATION REPORT

AC

RECORDS

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"Seventh Step Foundation Program"

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the operation and outcome of the Seventh Step Foundation Program (7th Step) in Kentucky. Thus far, there have been three grants awarded to 7th Step: 1) 7/1/74 to 11/30/74 for \$13,333; 2) 12/1/74 to 1/31/76 for \$84,072; 3) 2/1/76 to 1/31/77 for \$85,000.

7th Step can be described as a self-help organization whose primary aim is the "remotivation" of offenders by offenders. Remotivation, a key term in 7th Step, entails the restructuring of offender attitudes through philosophical instruction and group counseling. Self-responsibility and realistic, personal goal-setting are prominent features of 7th Step philosophy. The manual, Philosophy of Man (The 7th Step Foundation, Inc., 1974), is the basic source for the remotivation lessons and provides extensive information on the 7th Step philosophy. The club motto and the seven steps, which also reflect 7th Step's orientation, can be found in the Appendix.

7th Step chapters have been introduced into five Kentucky institutions: Kentucky Correctional Institute for Women (operated for 28 months), Kentucky State Reformatory (25 months), Blackburn Correctional Complex (22 months), Federal Co-Correctional Institute (14 months), and Kentucky State Penitentiary (1 month).

The focus of this report, however, is on the operation of the Kentucky State Reformatory (KSR) chapter. The KSR Chapter was selected for several reasons: 1) it is the oldest male chapter; 2) the philosophy of 7th Step has been particularly consistent in terms of inmate selection and participation making a test case of 7th Step effectiveness particularly appropriate; 3) a number of 7th Steppers have been released from the institution, thus permitting an adequate sample for studying recidivism.

As an offender-operated organization, 7th Step asserts that its staff is uniquely suited for assisting offenders in developing acceptable social attitudes and skills. This organization believes it can provide an empathy and credibility lacking in professionally-sponsored programs since 7th Step staff have had the experience of the institution and have shared problems unique to offenders.

Emphasis on the provision of treatment by non-professionals has been noted elsewhere by researchers. On the basis of research in a Massachusetts correctional facility, Kuehn (1969) concluded that offender-run groups may prove more effective than those conducted by professionals. He found that a number of factors--distrust, differences in life experience, and fear of peer ostracism--appeared to interfere with a professional's ability to establish an effective treatment relationship. In contrast, the offender-operated rehabilitation group evoked intense involvement from inmates. Although relative effectiveness in terms of recidivism had not been determined, the staff of the institution were quite impressed. A second researcher (Enomoto, 1972) suggested that self-help groups for offenders are a practical way to counteract institutional dependency as well as to provide more relevant assistance in relation to an offender's needs. Finally, Beless, Pilcher, and Ross (1972) noted that the use of non-professionals is useful because of the shortage of professionals for treatment and because the non-professional is more likely to gain the rapport needed to be an effective change agent.

Of particular interest is that 7th Step attempts to work with the hard-core, incorrigible convict although applications are accepted from the entire prison population. At KSR, there are two kinds of in-prison programs: Regular and Community Reintegration Classes (CRE).

The Regular program accepts members according to the following criteria:

1) no homosexual is eligible, 2) no informant is eligible, and 3) the incorrigible is particularly desired. Regular members are required to attend 10 weekly classes in history and orientation (two hours each week) and parliamentary procedures (at least one hour each week) followed by 18 weekly classes in Remotivation Philosophy (two hours each week).

The second program, CRE, was initiated at KSR in November 1975. Criteria for membership in CRE are : 1) no personal restrictions and 2) any resident with 90 days or more remaining of his sentence either before his parole hearing date or before expiration of sentence. This program consists of 12 weeks (3 hours each week) instruction in the 7th Step philosophy.

7th Step operates within the communities of Louisville and Lexington as well as in the prisons. Adult offenders (such as those in the Jefferson County Jail) and ex-offenders are offered such services as : 1) weekly post-release meetings in Louisville, 2) personal counseling and assistance, and 3) employment assistance as a supplement to the Louisville Clearinghouse for Ex-Offenders.

Further, 7th step operates a Youth Program in Louisville for juveniles who are potential or formally labelled delinquents. Group meetings, activities, and personal assistance (such as court appearances) are provided by the 7th Step Youth Director.

7th Step appears to have frequent contact with other community service agencies within the Louisville and Lexington areas. Referrals are made and received for both their adult and juvenile programs.

Also within the community, 7th Step has maintained an active public education and public relations program. Newspapers, radio, and television

have frequently presented information on 7th Step. 7th Step also maintains an extensive, regular newsletter. Finally, 7th Step staff have given a number of presentations to civic organizations and schools in Louisville.

The administrative staff of 7th Step has grown from one director and secretary in 1974 to five directors and a secretary in 1976. Except for the secretary, the staff positions of 7th Step are filled by ex-offenders. The positions are as follows:

Executive Director
Administrative Assistant
Area Director, Louisville
Area Director, Lexington

Youth Program Director, Louisville
Typist/Receptionist, Louisville
Area Director, Eddyville (funded
separately-position filled by
former Director, Lexington)

Within the prison, there are six officers of the chapter who direct and maintain on-going chapter activities. These officers share with the administrative staff the responsibilities of program planning and presentation of classes (particularly for the CRE Program).

Specific goals and objectives for the KSR chapter were developed. These goals and objectives present the services and results that are expected. They are as follows:

Goal 1: To remotivate 158 offenders in KSR.

Objective 1: Through remotivational instruction--philosophical instruction and group interaction--twice a week to KSR offenders.

Objective 2: Through basic orientation and organized group programs four times a week to KSR offenders.

Objective 3: Through personal assistance three times a week as requested.

Goal 2: To obtain an 8 percent recidivism rate among remotivated offenders.

METHOD

Groups

The experimental groups were composed of 7th Step members of the KSR (LaGrange) chapter. A total of 156 offenders had participated in their program between its inception in September, 1974 and September, 1976. Of this number, 66 had left the institution upon receiving parole or through an expired sentence, thus forming the experimental group. There were 31 Regular 7th Step members and 35 in the CRE program. Twenty 7th Steppers had left in 1974 or 1975 and forty-six as of September 30, 1976.

A control group of 65 offenders released from KSR was selected for comparison purposes. This group was randomly selected after matching on two variables: 1) time of release (month and year) and 2) location of release.

Data Collection

Data for this study were obtained from 7th Step files, Bureau of Corrections files, and evaluation staff records. The information presented covered 7th Step activities between September, 1974 and September, 1976.

Indicators

Records from the Bureau of Corrections files supplied a variety of information about the offenders in this study. Basically, two types of data were collected: 1) criminal history information such as previous felony convictions, previous incarcerations, last offense and sentence, and 2) personal data including age, race, marital status, education, previous occupation, and employment status.

Indicators of the project's impact consisted of the number of participants involved in the program and the reincarceration rate of released offenders (rearrests have been incorporated into this recidivism data).

Comparisons of background characteristics and recidivism were made between the two 7th Step experimental groups, and between the total 7th Step group and the control group.

Implementation of the program was assessed in terms of type and number of activities projected for members versus those offered.

RESULTS

Implementation

Assessment of the implementation of 7th Step services at KSR was based upon personal observation, the 7th Step administrative staff's weekly reports, and chapter records. Several activities were projected for the KSR chapter including basic orientation, organized group meetings, remotivational instruction, and personal assistance. Reviewing the available data suggests that the projects intended for KSR have been developed and instituted essentially as planned.

Orientation sessions, remotivational instruction, and group meetings have been continuously offered, generally on a weekly basis, to the following: 1) Regular members (since September 1974), 2) the new inmate population (since September 1974), and 3) the CRE members (since September 1975). The Regular membership which has ranged in number from 21 to 41 has been required to attend at least 2 hours a week of class; the CRE's do not have mandatory attendance but are offered weekly classes in which membership has ranged from 19 to 46.

The KSR chapter also involves its members in its project operation as well as instruction. There are several committees such as the Executive Committee which meets weekly, the Screening Committee, and Ways and Means Committee (responsible for fundraising). This committee participation encourages 7th Step members to interact and take responsibility for the chapter.

Personal assistance has not been specifically documented for the institutional members but, from administrative staff reports, assistance and counseling is frequently given as often as 3 times a week as suggested in Objective 3. This assistance occurs through personal contacts and through intervention with agencies and families outside the institution.

In addition to the above described specified services, the KSR chapter has been actively involved in public relations and public education activities. Speeches have been delivered at several civic organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, and to professional meetings such as the Kentucky Council on Crime and Delinquency. The institutional members have submitted articles to the Inner-Prison Press on an almost monthly basis. In addition there has been coverage in Louisville and Lexington newspapers, television and radio shows.

In summary, it appears that the 7th Step basic programs have been implemented and that the staff has been actively involved in expanding their influence within KSR. Therefore, the grant application objective for instruction and assistance appeared to have been fulfilled by both the administrative and institutional staff. In addition, there has been a continuous effort to involve their members in productive and administrative activities (through various committees) and to publicize the 7th Step philosophy within and outside the institution.

Outcome

Data pertaining to socio-demographic, criminal history, and recidivism information of 7th Step members (experimental groups) and a comparison group of non-members (control group) are presented below. Tables 1 and 2

TABLE 1
Socio-Demographic and Criminal History
for 7th Step and Control Groups

Socio-demographic variables	Regular 7th Step N=31	CRE 7th Step N=35	Total 7th Step N=66	Control N=65
Age:				
18-20	%	9%	5%	5%
20-29	45	69	58	69
30-39	29	14	21	17
40-49	19	9	14	6
50-59	6		3	2
60-65				2
Race:				
White	74	57	65	72
Black	26	43	35	28
Education:				
8 or below	16	14	15	23
9-11	48	51	50	57
12	32	29	30	18
Some college	3	6	5	2
Previous Occupation				
None		6	3	5
Professional		3	2	
Clerical	3		2	1
Sales	6	9	8	5
Service	6	6	6	1
Skilled	19	11	15	8
Semi-skilled	23	26	24	32
Unskilled	42	40	41	48
Previous Employment:				
Employed	48	43	45	42
Unemployed	52	57	55	58

TABLE 1 - (Cont.)
Socio-Demographic and Criminal History --
for 7th Step and Control Groups

Criminal History Variables	Regular 7th Step N=31	CRE 7th Step N=35	Total 7th Step N=66	Control N=65
Number Previous Felony Convictions:				
0	26%	63%	45%	58%
1	23	20	21	25
2	19		9	8
3	6	11	9	5
4 or more	26	6	15	5
Number Previous Incarcerations:				
0	32	77	56	69
1	35	11	23	26
2	19	3	11	3
3-9	13	9	11	2
Last Offense:				
Personal	35	23	29	17
Property	23	34	29	43
Fraud/Forgery	13	9	11	6
Drug	6	6	6	14
Sex		6	3	5
Mixed	23	23	23	15
Length of Last Sentence:				
1-2 years	13	14	14	35
3-5 years	35	31	33	40
6-9 years	6	11	9	2
10-Life	45	43	44	24

TABLE 2
Recidivism: Reincarceration Offenses
for 7th Step and Control Groups

Reincarceration Offenses	Regular 7th Step N=31	CRE 7th Step N=35	Total 7th Step N=66	Control N=65
None	81%	91%	86%	78%
Pending	6	9	8	14
Technical Violation				3
Technical Violation and Misdemeanor	3		2	2
Personal				
Property	3		2	2
Fraud/Forgery	6		3	
Drug				2
Sex				
Felony Mixed				

Table 3
Summary of Socio-demographic, Criminal History,
and Recidivism Data for 7th Step and Control Groups

	Regular 7th Step N=31	CRE 7th Step N=35	Total 7th Step N=66	Control N=65
<u>Socio-demographic</u>				
Age	twenties	twenties	twenties	twenties
Race	white	white	white	white
Education	some H. S.	some H. S.	some H. S.	some H. S.
Previous Occupation	unskilled	unskilled	unskilled	unskilled
Previous Employment	half unempl	half unempl	half unempl	half unempl
<u>Criminal History</u>				
Number Previous Felony Convictions	one or more	none	none	none
Last Offense	personal, property, or mixed	personal, property, or mixed	personal, property, or mixed	property
Last Sentence	10-life	10-life	10-life	3-5 years
<u>Recidivism</u>				
Total Recidivated*	19%	9%	14%	22%
Reincarcerated	12	7	7	9
Pending	6	9	8	14

*Percent figures for the sub-categories are not precisely additive due to decimal rounding.

contain the above information in detail for four groupings: 1) Regular 7th Step members, 2) CRE 7th Step members, 3) composite of 7th Step members, and 4) control group.. To facilitate the essential comparisons of these four groups, Table 3 contains this outcome data in summary form. In this table, the socio-demographic/criminal history description is represented by the modal category for each variable (the category in which most persons fall). For example, in the upper left-hand corner, this table indicates that more of the Regular 7th Step members are in their twenties than any other age group. The recidivism data are summarized by indicating the percent of each group who have been reincarcerated or who have rearrest cases pending. The following group comparisons are based on summarized material in Table 3.

The primary interest of this report concerns effectiveness of 7th Step in rehabilitating felony offenders and especially the hard-core offender.

Regular-CRE group comparisons. These groups are similar on the socio-demographic variables. There is, however, a considerable difference in the criminal history--the Regular members may be characterized generally as repeaters whereas CRE members are generally first-offenders. These groups also differ in reincarceration rate following 7th Step participation--12 percent of the Regular members have been reincarcerated whereas none of the CRE members have been although there are a few cases pending in the CRE group. Although we are dealing with small numbers, the greater reincarceration rate for the Regular group may be related to criminal history status--three out of the four Regular members reincarcerated were repeaters before this 7th Step involvement.

?

Combined 7th Step-Control group comparisons. These groups are similar on the socio-demographic variables. There are, however, differences in the criminal history--7th Step members had greater involvement with personal offenses and their sentences were longer than the Control group. Reincarceration rates for the 7th Step and Control groups are similar, 7% and 9% respectively. Again, we are dealing with small numbers, but it may be noted that most of those reincarcerated in both groups were repeaters.

DISCUSSION

Implementation

A number of services were projected for KSR offenders by the 7th Step program from September 1974 to September 1976. In accordance with their objectives, basic orientation classes have been offered to the general KSR population since 1974; remotivational philosophy programs were developed for the Regulars in 1974 and for the general inmate population (CRE) in 1975; and personal counseling and assistance services such as employment and family guidance have been regularly delivered. In addition, the 7th Step chapter actively publicized their remotivation efforts to both the inmate population and the general public.

On the basis of the data collected, it was concluded that the intended activities have been fully implemented by the 7th Step administrative and inmate staff during the past two years.

Outcome

An additional reference point for evaluation of the KSR chapter operations consists of two goals of the project that pertain to this chapter.

The first goal stated that 7th Step proposed to remotivate 158 offenders at KSR: the KSR chapter documents the membership of 156 offenders in their Regular and CRE programs. Therefore, this goal was adequately attained by the end of the study period. This entire group of 156 was not included in the recidivism study since only half had been released and several members had resigned or were expelled.

The second goal proposed by 7th Step was an 8% reincarceration rate for its remotivated members. For the 65 7th Steppers released from KSR, a 7% reincarceration rate was found with an additional 8% disposition pending. Thus, the reincarceration rate set by 7th Step was attained although the number pending may eventually increase the recidivism rate beyond the projected figure.

In relation to their goals as well as their objectives, the data indicate that 7th Step had adequately implemented the services specified and achieved the desired impact as of September, 1976.

Of further interest was the recidivism of 7th Steppers when compared to the Control group and the type of offender served by 7th Step.

In terms of recidivism, the CRE - 7th Step group had the lowest reincarceration rate of the three groups. Regarding background data of these groups, the essential difference is that the CRE group had the largest proportion of first offenders. Reincarceration rates for the remaining two groups, Regular 7th Step and Control, were essentially no different, 12% and 9% respectively. Background differences between these two groups indicate that Regular 7th Step members were more hard-core offenders, i.e., more of these offenders were repeaters and involved with crimes against the person.

Reincarceration rates for the combined 7th Step and Control groups were essentially no different, 7% and 9% respectively. Background differences between these two groups indicate that the 7th Step members were more hard-core offenders, i.e., more of these offenders were repeaters and involved with crimes against the person.

It should be noted that these reincarceration/recidivism rates may change somewhat due to number of cases pending in each group: 6% Regular, 9% CRE, and 14% Control.

Summary of recidivism comparisons. At first glance, it might appear that 7th Step is no more effective than routine correctional procedures in rehabilitating felony offenders. This quite possibly is not the case since 7th Step has been working with a selective group of offenders--those that are more hard-core than the average and those for which a higher recidivism rate might be expected.

SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this report was to evaluate effectiveness of the 7th Step program in rehabilitating felony offenders.

7th Step is an offender-operated rehabilitation program that presently functions in five of Kentucky's correctional institutions. This program attempts to restructure offender attitudes in socially accepted directions through philosophical instruction and group support. 7th Step staff believes, along with other writers such as Kuehn (1969) and Beless (1972), that an offender-directed program can achieve more rapport and impact than programs directed by professional persons who have not shared offender problems.

7th Step is particularly oriented toward dealing with the hard-core, incorrigible offender and their Regular program was developed to handle this type of offender. In addition, 7th Step initiated the Community Reintegration Education Program (CRE), which is open to the general inmate population.

In this study, the socio-demographic characteristics and recidivism of members of these two 7th Step groups were reviewed and compared to a group of KSR offenders who had not participated in 7th Step.

Method

This study examined the number and type of services offered by 7th Step at KSR - LaGrange and the outcomes of these services in terms of recidivism of the 7th Steppers.

Criminal history information, socio-demographic background data, and recidivism measures were collected on 31 Regular and 35 CRE 7th Step members. In addition, a Control group of 65 KSR offenders, non-7th Steppers, was selected for comparison purposes.

Information on the 7th Step members and Control group was collected from 7th Step records, Bureau of Corrections files, and evaluation staff records for 7th Step activities reported from September 1974 to September 1976.

Results

The 7th Step administrative staff and inmate leaders have developed and instituted the programs specified in their grant for the KSR chapter. The general offender population and particularly offenders that can be characterized as incorrigible were provided services including basic orientation and remotivational philosophy sessions along with personal counseling and assistance.

The KSR chapter adequately met its goal in terms of number of offenders to be served. There were 156 members, Regular and CRE, as well as additional numbers (undocumented) who have attended 7th Step classes and received assistance.

For effectiveness of 7th Step regarding recidivism, there are two standards for comparison: 1) reincarceration rate projected in the grant application and 2) reincarceration rate of a Control group of offenders. The obtained reincarceration rate of 7% for the combined group of 7th Step members compares favorably with the projected rate of 8%. Comparison of the 7th Step rate with that of the Control group indicates no difference, 7% and 9% respectively. Related to this last point is the evidence in this report that 7th Step has worked with a more hard-core group and thus a higher recidivism rate would have been expected. On this basis, 7th Step should be considered effective in rehabilitating the hard-core offender.

In conclusion, the 7th Step project at KSR appears to be having impact. Regarding implementation of the project within the institution, 7th Step activities have been aimed at a large proportion of the KSR inmates and have apparently elicited active participation from the chapter membership. Regarding the project outcome of rehabilitation of offenders following discharge, reincarceration data indicate that 7th Step appears to have been effective, especially with the hard-core offender. Thus, it appears that the 7th Step program has delivered the services and has achieved a positive impact.

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APPENDIX

THE SEVEN STEPS TO FREEDOM

Facing the Truth about ourselves and the world around us, we decided we needed to change.

Realizing that there is a power from which we can gain strength, we decided to use that Power.

Evaluating ourselves by taking an honest self-appraisal we examined both our strengths and our weaknesses.

Endeavoring to help ourselves overcome our weaknesses we enlisted the aid of that Power to help us concentrate on our strenghts.

Deciding that our FREEDOM is worth more than our resentments, we are using that Power to help free us from those resentments.

Observing that daily progress is necessary, we set an attainable goal towards wich we can work each day.

Maintaining our own FREEDOM, we pledge ourselves to help other as we have been helped

THE 7TH STEP PLEDGE

Knowing that my FREEDOM depends on my thoughts and actions,
I hereby pledge:

To face and accept the truth about myself.

To maintain my FREEDOM.

To become a useful member of society.

To help othes as I am now being helped

THE SEVEN STEP MOTTO

If the outside world only matched our inside dreams then not one of us would ever return to prison.

END

7 tables/minutes