Student Opportunity for Achieving Results (SOAR)

Student Opportunity for Achieving Results (SOAR), is an intensive and collaborative 12 week treatment and employment program designed for drug addicted persons returning to the Marion County community from incarceration with high criminogenic needs. This cognitive based program offers a variety of services including enhanced supervision, cognitive programming, parenting classes, mentoring, housing, employment services, and addiction treatment.

SOAR is delivered on the Chemeketa Community College Campus (Salem, Oregon) and serves up to 30 participants at a time but the group is split into two classes at any given time to ensure that class size is within recommended guidelines. Interventions are delivered in a group setting. Two parole and probation deputies are assigned to work with all SOAR participants. Because of restrictions on funding, all participants in SOAR must have a current property crime charge or a history of property crimes. SOAR programming includes both professional and volunteer mentors designed to provide pro-social support. There is also an in-house mental health specialist that is able to connect individuals to needed mental health services. SOAR includes an educational component and a pro-social activities group, which is facilitated by the parole and probation deputies which meets every Wednesday. The group participates in a variety of activities including fishing, cookouts and other group recreational activities. A pre-SOAR component, which uses the Getting it Right curriculum from Multicultural Counseling Services, Ltd serves those that are on the waiting list to get into SOAR and those whose release does not coincide with the start of the SOAR program. A post-SOAR maintenance program/alumni group also meets two times per week. This collaborative endeavor was implemented with the assistance and cooperation several local government and private non-profit agencies including the Marion County Health Department, Mid-Valley Mentors, Pathfinders of Oregon, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, Chemeketa Community College and the Parole & Probation Division of the Marion County Sheriff’s Office.

The early results of SOAR are impressive. A recent evaluation (December 2010) of the program utilizing the Correctional Program Checklist rated SOAR as “Very Satisfactory”. To date, four classes have graduated from SOAR, with 66% of the referrals graduating. Additionally, the recidivism rate for SOAR graduates is only 5% (compared to 26% of the general population) and an employment/school enrollment rate of 65% (compared to 60% of our general population that is unemployed).

1 [http://www.multiculturalcounselingservices.org/Curriculum.html]