

NEDS ANALYTIC SUMMARY

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Highlights

Women in NTIES showed reductions of approximately 50 percent in substance use and 80 to 90 percent in criminal involvement after treatment.

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study



NEDS Analytic Summary Series

The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) works to improve the lives of those affected by alcohol and other substance abuse, and, through treatment, to reduce the ill effects of substance abuse on individuals, families, communities, and society at large. Thus, one important CSAT mission is to expand the knowledge about effective substance abuse treatment and recovery services. In support of these efforts, CSAT established the National Evaluation Data Services (NEDS) contract to provide a wide array of secondary data analysis products to the substance abuse treatment field.

Specifically, the NEDS project is focused upon providing CSAT with an analytic capability to use existing data to address policy- and practice-relevant topics as well as future research and evaluation activities. NEDS has developed several product lines designed to provide analytic findings to substance abuse treatment policy makers, service providers, services researchers and evaluators in a format that is most useful to the end user.

The Analytic Summary is one of the NEDS product lines. The purpose of the Analytic Summary is to provide a brief summary of analyses performed under NEDS written in non-technical language. Readers who find the Analytic Summary results of interest can contact the authors for more detailed information. Through this process, the NEDS Analytic Summaries provide information to the substance abuse treatment field and promote linkages among different areas in the field.

This Analytic Summary

This Analytic Summary is based on analyses done by Dean R. Gerstein and Robert A. Johnson at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). NORC prepared the summary under Contract No. 270-97-7016 for the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Information for obtaining additional copies is provided on the last page of this summary.

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Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study

Understanding treatment issues specific to women is vital to improving treatment outcomes for this important population. This analysis describes and compares the demographic and pre-treatment characteristics of 1,374 women and 3,037 men who participated in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (NTIES). It also presents data on women's NTIES treatment experiences. The analysis provides some estimates of the effectiveness of various types of substance abuse treatment in reducing drug and alcohol use and illegal activities and increasing employment among women. Differences in treatment outcomes among women by demographic and pre-treatment characteristics are explored.

The goals of this analysis are:

- To describe and compare demographic, pre-treatment substance use, and treatment characteristics of women and men in the NTIES sample
- To provide estimates of the effectiveness of various types of substance abuse treatment in reducing substance abuse among women.

The following analysis describes the participants and outcomes of the NTIES project.

The Research Sample

This analysis is based on the 4,411 NTIES participants who had both intake and follow-up data available, along with either a treatment exit interview or a records abstraction form. Exhibit 1 compares women, who constituted 31 percent (n=1,374) of the NTIES research sample, with men, who constituted 69 percent (n=3,037). This comparison covers the following areas:

- *Demographic* characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, educational and employment status)
- *Marital and child-related characteristics* (living with spouse or partner, raising or residing with children under 18 years of age, concerns about child custody and child care practice)

- Other *pre-treatment substance use* characteristics (primary substance(s) treated,¹ number of prior treatments)
- Treatment service characteristics (type of treatment, completion of treatment).

Demographic Characteristics. Participants in the sample ranged from 13 to 70 years of age, but relatively more women (50%) than men (38%) were between the ages of 25 and 34. Proportionately fewer women than men were younger than 25 or older than 34 (see Exhibit 1). The major racial category within both gender groups was Black non-Hispanic—over half the men and nearly two-thirds of the women. This reflects the purposive sample design of NTIES and the focus of CSAT awards on serving minority populations, particularly within large inner cities. Fewer women than men graduated from high school (49% of women had graduated versus 57% of men) or were employed at the time of treatment admission (10% versus 25%).

Both men and women were employed at much lower rates than adults of the same gender in the U.S. general population.² Men and women were also married relatively less often than men and women in the U.S. general population.³ About two-thirds of both men and women (69% of men, 64% of women) were not living with a spouse or domestic partner. There were only small differences between men and women in the percentages who were currently living with a spouse (8% of men, 7% of women), married but living separately from their spouse (13% of men, 14% of women), and unmarried but living with a domestic partner (10% of men, 16% of women).

Marital and Child-Related Characteristics. Women in the sample were involved with children at a much higher rate than were men. Women were about three times as likely as men to be residing with their children (37% versus 13%) and about twice as likely to be raising children (39% versus 20%), to express concerns about gaining or losing custody of children (36% versus 15%), and to say that counseling about child care was

1 "Primary substance" is based on the substance(s) reported as "reasons the participant entered treatment"—alcohol (16% of the total sample), marijuana with or without alcohol (8%), heroin alone (9%), heroin with other drugs (12%), cocaine powder with or without other drugs excluding heroin and crack (20%), crack cocaine with or without other drugs excluding heroin (24%), and other drugs and combinations, including hallucinogens and inhalants (11%).

2 See, e.g., Wetzell, James R., "Labor force, unemployment, and earnings," pp. 59-105 in Farley, R., ed., *State of the Union: America in the 1990s, Vol. 1*, New York: Russell Sage, 1995.

3 See, e.g., U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March, 1993*. Current Population Reports, Series P20-478, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

Exhibit 1
Admission Profiles of Women and Men in NTIES*

Number of Cases	Women 1,374	Men 3,037
Age		
Less than 25 years	16%	22%
25-34 years	50%	38%
35 years or more	34%	41%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic	13%	16%
Black non-Hispanic	64%	52%
White or other non-Hispanic	23%	32%
HS Diploma	49%	57%
Current employed	10%	25%
Living arrangement		
Married, residing with spouse	7%	8%
Married, not with spouse	14%	13%
Residing with domestic partner	16%	10%
Unmarried/no partner	63%	69%
Residing with minor children	37%	13%
Raising minor children	39%	20%
In treatment to regain custody	30%	12%

Number of Cases	Women 1,374	Men 3,037
In treatment to protect custody	12%	4%
Concerned about custody	36%	15%
Child care counseling very important	43%	23%
Primary substance used**		
Alcohol only	11%	19%
Marijuana only or with alcohol	34%	10%
Heroin	21%	21%
Crack or cocaine	54%	40%
All other substances	11%	10%
Prior treatments		
None	37%	40%
One	25%	24%
Two or more	38%	36%
Type of treatment		
Methadone	10%	10%
Non-methadone outpatient	32%	37%
Short-term residential	20%	20%
Long-term residential	31%	14%
Correctional	7%	20%

* Since the percentages in this exhibit have been rounded, they may not sum to exactly 100 percent.

** "Primary substance used" is based on substance(s) reported as "reason the participant entered treatment."

important (43% versus 23%). Nevertheless, the majorities of both women and men were not involved with children at the time of treatment. Given the larger number of men in the study, approximately the same number of children were potentially affected by treating men as treating women.

Substance Use Patterns. The primary substance cited most frequently by participants for seeking treatment was cocaine (including crack as well as cocaine powder). More than half (54%) of the women and 40 percent of the men cited crack or cocaine use as a major problem. Heroin was cited second most often by both groups (21%). Women cited alcohol or marijuana, alone or in combination, about half as often as men (14% versus 29%). Men and women reported similar numbers of prior substance abuse treatment episodes. More than one-third of all participants had no prior treatment episodes, and more than one-third had at least two prior episodes.

Treatment Service Characteristics. Similar proportions of women and men entered the methadone, non-methadone outpatient, and short-term residential programs studied in NTIES. However, relatively more

women than men were in long-term residential treatment (31% versus 14%) and relatively fewer were in correctional facilities (7% versus 20%).

Profile of Women Clients Across Treatment Modalities

Exhibit 2 presents a breakdown of women clients across five treatment modalities. Comparisons of women in non-methadone, short-term residential, and long-term residential treatment modalities revealed no major differences in demographics, domestic arrangements, involvement with children, or primary substance(s). The relatively small numbers of women in methadone and correctional facilities differed somewhat from women in non-methadone and residential programs.

Compared with women in non-methadone and residential programs, women in methadone treatment were virtually all primary heroin users, older (more than half rather than one-third were 35 years or older), less often black non-Hispanic (fewer than half rather than two-thirds), and about twice as likely to live with a spouse or domestic partner (nearly half did). Relatively more resided with children (49% of women in methadone

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

Exhibit 2
Characteristics of Women by Mode of Treatment*

	All Women	Methadone	Non-Methadone Outpatient	Short-Term Residential	Long-Term Residential	Correctional Facilities
Number of Cases	1,374	136	444	277	424	92
Age						
Less than 25 years	16%	6%	18%	17%	16%	19%
25-34 years	50%	39%	48%	54%	53%	48%
35 years or more	34%	55%	34%	29%	31%	34%
Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic	13%	21%	13%	9%	12%	19%
Black non-Hispanic	64%	47%	67%	65%	72%	29%
White or other non-Hispanic	23%	31%	20%	26%	15%	51%
Currently employed	11%	10%	16%	8%	6%	N/A
Living arrangement						
Married, residing with spouse	7%	15%	6%	10%	5%	N/A
Married, not with spouse	14%	9%	12%	15%	14%	N/A
Residing with domestic partner	16%	34%	17%	12%	14%	N/A
Unmarried/no partner	63%	41%	64%	63%	66%	N/A
Residing with minor children	37%	49%	40%	35%	38%	N/A
Raising minor children	39%	49%	40%	35%	38%	47%
In treatment to regain custody	30%	21%	32%	25%	30%	34%
Afraid of losing custody	12%	10%	9%	12%	13%	19%
Concerned about custody	36%	28%	38%	31%	39%	44%
Child care counseling very important	43%	35%	44%	39%	47%	47%
Primary Substances						
Alcohol only	11%	0%	23%	8%	5%	4%
Marijuana only or with alcohol	3%	0%	6%	2%	2%	7%
Heroin	21%	96%	6%	20%	8%	38%
Crack or cocaine (no heroin)	54%	3%	54%	53%	75%	40%
All other substances	11%	0%	12%	16%	11%	11%
Completed Treatment						
Still in treatment	7%	4%	12%	5%	4%	1%
Completed treatment	34%	38%	13%	67%	32%	40%
Treatment not completed	53%	54%	67%	24%	58%	44%
Completion status	7%	4%	8%	4%	6%	15%

* Since the percentages in this exhibit have been rounded, they may not sum to exactly 100 percent.

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

versus 37% of total NTIES women) and relatively fewer had concerns about loss of custody (28% versus 36%). Women in correctional facilities were predominantly white non-Hispanic (51%) and about as likely to have entered treatment for heroin as for cocaine or crack (38% and 40%). Women in short-term residential treatment completed treatment at the highest rate (67% versus 34% of the total), and women in non-methadone outpatient completed treatment at the lowest rate (13%).⁴

The Effectiveness of Treatment

The effectiveness of treatment for the 1,374 women NTIES clients is assessed through the use of 19 before/after outcome measures. Exhibit 3 depicts the pre-to-post treatment changes in the domains of sub-

stance abuse (including alcohol use), criminal involvement, and employment.

Substance Abuse Outcomes. All substance abuse measures are based on whether participants reported using each type of substance five or more times during a year prior to treatment or after treatment exit. The exhibit includes single measures for the four most common illicit substances—crack, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana—and three constructed measures: use of any illicit substance; use of any primary illicit substance(s) (cited as a reason for entering treatment); and use of any primary substance including alcohol. On every substance abuse measure, women reported reductions of about one-half from before treatment to after treatment. As expected, the reductions were somewhat lower for

Exhibit 3
Outcomes of Treatment for Women in NTIES (N=1,374)¹

Measure	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment	Percent Change
Used 5 times or more in the past year			
Marijuana	50%	23%	-53%*
Cocaine	38%	18%	-53%*
Crack	61%	30%	-50%*
Heroin	24%	13%	-45%*
Any illicit substance	91%	52%	-43%*
Primary substance (except alcohol)	81%	40%	-50%*
Primary Substance (including alcohol)	94%	55%	-42%*
Drunk in the past month	26%	17%	-36%*
Troubled by own alcohol use	19%	7%	-65%*
Drug expenditures in past month	\$428	\$142	-67%*
Illegal activities during past year			
Sold drugs	31%	12%	-63%*
Shoplifted	32%	11%	-64%*
Beat someone up	21%	6%	-69%*
Any arrests	38%	11%	-71%*
Arrests for drug possession	11%	5%	-58%*
Supported mostly by illegal activities	19%	9%	-54%*
Employed during past year	36%	45%	27%*
Annual income (if employed)	\$6,356	\$6,739	6%*
On welfare during past year	62%	57%	-8%*

* Statistically significant pre-/post-treatment change based on two-tail paired t-test, $\alpha = .05$.

¹ Since the pre-/post-treatment percentages in this exhibit have been rounded, the percent change in the last column may not exactly equal $100 \times (\text{post-treatment \% (not shown)} - \text{pre-treatment \%}) / \text{pre-treatment \%}$.

⁴ The differences among treatment types may reflect differences in the median length of stay. The median length of stay equals about 7 months in methadone facilities, 3 months in nonmethadone outpatient facilities, 1 month in short-term residential facilities, 2 months in long-term residential facilities, and 2 months in correctional facilities. Short-term residential facilities are defined as those with typical treatment plans of less than 2 months. Long-term residential facilities are those with typical treatment plans of 2 months or longer.

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

"any substance use" and "any primary drug excluding alcohol" than for the single-item measures.

Two measures of alcohol abuse were self-reports of "getting drunk within the past 30 days" and "feeling troubled about one's drinking." Both measures showed reductions after treatment. The former measure declined by about 36 percent after treatment, while the latter measure declined by about 65 percent. Another measure of substance abuse is the amount of money spent on drugs during the previous month. This measure declined by two-thirds after treatment, possibly reflecting not only discontinuation of substance abuse but also less frequent use or switching to less expensive substance among those continuing to use substances.

Criminal Involvement Outcomes. All measures of criminal involvement declined after treatment. Single items, such as selling drugs in the past year, shoplifting in the past year, and beating someone up (the three most common illegal activities among women in the sample, with before-treatment rates of 50% or greater) yielded reported reductions of 80 to 90 percent. Reported arrests, including specifically arrests for drug possession, declined by about two-thirds, while the percentage of individuals who supported themselves mostly by illegal activities during the past year declined by more than half.

Employment Outcomes. The percentage of women who were employed at any time during the past 12 months rose from about 36 percent in the year before treatment to 45 percent in the year after treatment, about one-fourth higher. The total wage income for those who did work rose by only about 6 percent, suggesting that what changed was basic employability, rather than skills or qualifications. The percentage receiving welfare during the past year declined only modestly, by about 8 percent.

Detailed Analyses of Women's Outcomes. Exhibit 4 presents detailed analyses of four outcome measures that changed substantially from pre- to post-treatment among women. The four measures are crack use (percentage change = -50% among all women), drug expenditures (-66%), any arrest (-67%), and employment (+26%). Exhibit 4 compares changes in these four measures across subgroups of women using demographic, pre-treatment, and services-related characteristics.

The important conclusions of Exhibit 4 are as follows:

- **Age.** Women younger than 25 had a smaller percent decline post-treatment in use of crack and in drug expenditures than older women, but they had a larger percent increase in employment status.
- **Race/ethnicity.** Black non-Hispanic women had higher initial rates of crack use and lower initial rates of drug expenditures, arrests, and employment than Hispanic and white non-Hispanic women. Their percentage changes after treatment fell between those of Hispanic and non-Hispanic white women on three of the four measures.
- **Treatment type** (shown in Exhibit 4 for the three largest treatment groups). This variable had inconsistent effects on treatment effectiveness. For crack use, there were only small differences among types. For employment, the percent increase after treatment was about twice as large in non-methadone as in long-term residential treatment.
- **Number of prior treatment episodes.** Women with no prior treatment episodes appeared to have somewhat greater rates of improvement on each outcome measure than women with one or more prior treatment episodes. This pattern may result from a filtering process whereby women who can be treated more satisfactorily using available treatment methods are less likely to relapse and return to treatment, leaving a pool of progressively harder-to-treat participants at each successive round of treatment.
- **Length of Stay in Treatment.** A general finding in the substance abuse treatment literature is that longer length of stay (LOS) is associated with more positive outcomes (other factors being constant). Our between-group comparison, which employed a "median-split" approach to operationalize the LOS variable, revealed only modest improvements on each of the four outcome measures for the group which remained in treatment longer. However, dichotomization of the LOS variable may have reduced the sensitivity of our analyses to detect true changes associated with this factor.

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

Exhibit 4
Selected Outcomes of Treatment of Women by Variety
of Pre-treatment and Service Characteristics
(N=1,374)

	Crack Use		Drug Expenditures		Any Arrest		Employment	
	Pre-Tx	Change ¹	Pre-Tx	Change	Pre-Tx	Change	Pre-Tx	Change
All Women	61%	-50%*	\$428	-66%*	37%	67%*	36%	26%*
Age								
< 25 years	44%	-43%*	\$305	-42%*	49%	-62%*	48%	31%*
25-34 years	69%	-51%*	\$461	-66%*	37%	-72%	37%	27%*
> 34 years	57%	-59%*	\$437	-75%*	30%	-59%	33%	23%*
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	32%	-59%*	\$533	-76%*	52%	-70%	47%	18%
White	35%	-42%*	\$562	-66%*	51%	-63%	43%	32%*
Black	76%	-50%*	\$378	-64%*	28%	-66%	33%	27%*
Prior Treatment								
None	54%	-60%*	\$349	-72%*	38%	-74%	36%	33%*
One	64%	-50%*	\$342	-57%*	32%	-63%	41%	18%*
Two or more	65%	-41%*	\$562	-67%*	38%	-61%	32%	27%*
Criminal Justice pressure								
No	66%	-49%*	\$465	-67%*	30%	-64%	35%	28%*
Yes	36%	-57%*	\$258	-56%*	70%	-71%	40%	22%*
Primary substance²								
Alcohol only	7%	-45%	\$28	-79%*	38%	-65%	41%	19%
Heroin and other	54%	-41%*	\$823	-59%*	47%	-56%	30%	27%*
Cocaine only	59%	-40%*	\$398	-67%*	38%	-64%	39%	18%
Crack only	97%	-56%*	\$437	-70%*	27%	-70%	35%	27%*
Treatment type								
Non-methadone Outpatient	52%	-57%*	\$169	-54%*	28%	-60%	35%	41%*
Short-term residential	67%	-50%*	\$587	-76%*	36%	-75%	42%	29%*
Long-term residential	76%	-53%*	\$440	-72%*	33%	-65%	37%	20%*
Length of stay³								
Above or at median	57%	-59%*	\$420	-71%*	35%	-71%	32%	39%*
Below median	64%	-43%*	\$435	-63%*	37%	-65%	39%	17%*
Intensity								
Once/week or less	55%	-48%*	\$434	-62%*	35%	-64%	32%	30%*
More than once/week	65%	-51%*	\$421	-70%*	39%	-68%	40%	24%*
Completion								
Completed treatment	60%	-49%*	\$499	-76%*	39%	-70%	41%	25%*
Did not complete	62%	-47%*	\$391	-55%*	35%	-61%	32%	27%*

*Statistically significant pre-to-post-treatment change based on two-tail paired t-test, $\alpha = .05$.

¹ Change % was defined as $100 \times (\text{post-treatment \% (not shown)} - \text{pre-treatment \%}) / \text{pre-treatment \%}$.

² "Primary substance" is based on substance(s) reported as "reasons the participant entered treatment"—alcohol (16% of the total sample), marijuana with or without alcohol (8%), heroin alone (9%), heroin with other drugs (12%), cocaine powder with or without other drugs except heroin and crack (20%), crack cocaine with or without other drugs except heroin (24%), and other drug combinations (11%).

³ The overall median length of stay in the sample equals about 2 months. The median length of stay equals about 7 months in methadone programs, 3 months in non-methadone outpatient programs, 1 month in short-term residential programs, 2 months in long-term residential programs, and 2 months in correctional programs.

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

- **Treatment intensity.** Measured here as more than one counseling session per week, higher treatment intensity seems to improve treatment effectiveness, though only to a limited degree. Our use of one session per week as the cut-off in distinguishing higher from lower treatment intensity may affect this result to some extent.
- **Completion of treatment plan.** Completers showed somewhat more improvement on the arrest and drug expenditure measures but were similar to non-completers with respect to improvement in crack use and employment.
- **Gender differences in treatment effectiveness.** In parallel analyses conducted using men, we found few indications that treatment effectiveness differed substantially between women and men, after controlling for gender differences in demographic, pre-treatment, and service-related characteristics (see Exhibit 1). One exception is employment, where women experienced larger before-after percent increases than men (27% versus 17%). This gender difference appears especially marked among white non-Hispanics (32% versus 19%), among participants in methadone programs (19% versus 2%) and non-methadone outpatient programs (41% versus 12%), and among participants who stayed in treatment for longer than the median duration of treatment, controlling for treatment type (39% versus 20%).

We believe that the NTIES clients sampled from CSAT service delivery units are fundamentally representative of the public sector treatment population. Results from NTIES are therefore generalizable to this segment of the treatment population. However, this sample may not be fully representative of all treatment services and clients in the United States. Therefore, formal statistical inferences to the wider treatment population should not be drawn due to the non-probability nature of the sample. Other possible sources of bias in the results include

non-response and measurement errors. However, response rates are appreciably higher than in other comparable evaluations and well above the typical threshold of concern in longitudinal studies; we have been able to perform some key tests of validity and reliability that reduce concern on these dimensions.

Conclusions

Women in the NTIES research sample demonstrated substantial benefits from treatment on virtually all outcome measures. Women reported reductions of roughly 50 percent for all substance abuse outcome measures. Drug expenditures were reduced by over 65 percent across all women sampled. Two measures of alcohol abuse showed significant reductions after treatment.

All measures of criminal involvement declined after treatment. Behaviors such as selling drugs in the past year, shoplifting in the past year, and assaults showed reductions of 80 to 90 percent.

Employment outcomes for women clients showed modest, but significant, improvements following treatment. The percentage of women who were employed at any time during the past 12 months rose from about 36 percent in the year before treatment to 45 percent in the year after treatment, about one-fourth higher. However, total wage income for working women rose by only about 6 percent, indicating that job-marketable skills may have remained fairly constant.

Client demographic and treatment services differed between male and female clients. The majority of women in the research sample were black, in their twenties or thirties, unemployed, and single, and in treatment primarily for crack or powder cocaine. A large minority of the women (39%) were raising children, and protecting or regaining the custody of their children was a major concern and reason for treatment. Women were treated mostly in outpatient non-methadone, long-term

Women in the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (cont.)

residential, and short-term residential facilities, and two-thirds were on a second or later admission to treatment.

Selected socio-demographic and other pre-treatment characteristics were only modestly associated with variations in treatment effectiveness. Treatment completion, as reflected by length of stay and a minimal measure of effects on treatment intensity, had inconsistent effects on variation in outcomes. Parallel analyses conducted using the male-sub-sample suggested minimal differences in treatment effectiveness between men and women, except that women's chances of employment appeared to benefit somewhat more from treatment. Although the positive effects of treatment for women would be well-founded, further analysis would be needed to identify the most effective treatment services for women.

For more information, please contact the National Evaluation Data Services analysis team at (703) 385-3200, or visit the NEDS Web site.

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The authors of this Analytic Summary are Dean R. Gerstein and Robert A. Johnson of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC).

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National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (NTIES)

This analysis was performed on data derived from the National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (NTIES). The NTIES was a national treatment services evaluation of the effectiveness of substance abuse treatment services delivered in comprehensive treatment demonstration programs supported by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT).

The NTIES project collected longitudinal data between FY 1992 and FY 1995 on a purposive sample of clients in treatment programs receiving demonstration grant funding from CSAT. Data were derived from client interviews conducted at three points in time: at treatment intake, at treatment exit, and 12 months after treatment exit.

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