



PROJECT SENTRY

“WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO”

FALL 2004 / WINTER 2005

Originally designed in the 1970's as a supervision tool for released, county jail inmates in forced treatment, the Project Sentry drug testing program has grown to become the State's largest, single point-of-service testing clinic for over ten years. The use of aggressive testing with an educated court and treatment community has demonstrated how well drug (and related) offenders can be monitored and managed with very few jail bed days. The philosophical basis for the clinic is a.) **certainty** rather than **severity** of a sanction or consequence is the most effective approach, and b.) habitual, compulsive drug use (e.g. positive specimens) **must** result in habitual, compulsive testing, supervision and punishment which does **not** abate nor diminish. If one chooses to use drugs for years, this system will sustain monitoring and consequences for years. The drug treatment community has come to use testing to a significant extent because the alternative is simply accepting an addict's or user's "word" that he/she is clean and that simply doesn't work.

The clinic was originated as a component of a three county treatment agency by a Clinical Psychologist/Toxicologist who discovered that most drug users will ultimately **not** do what society **expects** or **respects**, but rather what society **inspects**. The first group to agree with this philosophy was the successfully recovering addicts, and the last group to agree was the treatment community. Drug testing three times weekly, coupled with swift and certain sanctions, actually works in place of traditional treatment with a large portion of the clinic's clients, the total of which exceeds 3,000 annually.

The clinic collects about 1,000 specimens weekly and works closely with more than twenty (20) courts and about thirty (30) agencies (family independence offices, probation, individual treatment/supervising agencies, etc.). The clinic is open seven days a week, including all holidays, and offers early a.m. hours (5:30 a.m.) to accommodate working or school-based clients. The clinic also does alcohol testing, DNA specimen collections, and provides expert witness and legal services (Medical Review Officer) to the area to ensure that the results are interpreted and applied with integrity, caution and accuracy.

The clinic's main principle asserts that the monitoring and supervision of drug users can be accomplished very effectively from a community-based operation with a minimal use of jail time. This happens when judges, attorneys, treatment, education, probation agencies and offenders understand that illegal drug use is unacceptable. It will be fairly and honestly detected and it will be sanctioned ... a ***consequence-based*** operation, if you will. Offenders can be monitored and sanctioned without losing their jobs or their families or their final freedoms if the system is persistent and tough enough ... every bit as persistent and tough as the offender's drug use or dependence. The "fix" can be incredibly effective, successful and remarkably cost efficient when the community "players" all work in the same direction.

For the decade of the 1990's, the rate of clean drug tests at Project Sentry averaged 86% with a known, drug-using population of offenders. For the first three years of the new millennium (2000-2002), the clean rate is nearly 88%. As more courts, case managers and offender/ juvenile supervision agencies understand and apply the principles of "certainty versus severity" and sustained, long-term case maintenance, the effectiveness of the clinic can only be expected to continue improving.

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