

Years of Complaints Against a Colorado Treatment Program, Yet no Consequences Given

I would love it if the SOMB would deliver consequences to providers in the field as readily as they are delivered to clients. This includes parole and probation officers, treatment providers, evaluators, polygraphers and more. The challenges in terms of keeping all of these folks in line include:

- 1) They don't all report to the same supervisory body.
- 2) The grievance forms are "hidden" somewhere on the SOMB Site, and a client has to work reasonably hard to match up their daily experiences with the above providers and the Standards and Guidelines.
- 3) Clients are nervous about challenging providers for fear they will come up with more sanctions against them.

A number of years ago, a prominent Denver treatment program which shall remain nameless, had a record of horrendous treatment of its clients, including the use of shaming, yelling, embarrassing, and yes even stretching the truth (lying) when it served the "cause" of keeping sexual offense clients under its fist. The sad story is that this program produced many broken people, some of whom were too broken to be put back together, and they committed suicide. There is an attorney who is beginning a quest into this history at the present time. Fortunately, this program is now under new management and is getting good reports.

For years now, I have received almost continuous complaints about a Colorado Springs treatment program which seems to be favored by parole. So many complaints were received that I finally decided to go meet this provider, and try to ascertain where he really stood. He and another staff person met with me, and as I brought up questions regarding treatment approaches utilized, they assured me that as complaints or concerns were brought to them, they attempted to address those. This was to my surprise, but giving him the benefit of the doubt seemed to be the thing to do.

Since that visit, reports have come my way of continued inappropriate treatment of clients in "therapy" at this program. Here are just a few of the accusations:

- 1) Clients are publicly shamed if and when they have gotten behind on their payments.
- 2) People say that the treatment provider and polygrapher are "working together" for the best return on their dollar (i.e. polygraph failures which result in having to take more classes and more polygraphs)
- 3) There is no recognition of the work that clients have done at the Colorado Department of Corrections and they are expected to start treatment at the beginning.
- 4) Classes are not always held at times that allow clients to work a full day five days a week.

I actually had a man who was receiving treatment from this program call me, and say that he was trying to set up a place where a group of men could meet with me if I would come from Denver to the Springs, so that they could find out exactly what was really going on in terms of changes to the treatment approach in Colorado and through the SOMB. They couldn't see any changes in the way treatment was being delivered, and yet they were hearing through advocacy group newsletters and through the Outside Evaluators' Reports that changes were in the wind. While this meeting has not happened, perhaps because it would be really difficult to find a place to hold it, to get permission from parole

officers to attend, and to allay the fear that clients would have that their participation in the group would get them into trouble with the system, the clients deserve such a meeting. They deserve to know what is happening on their behalf in terms of changes in the SOMB Standards and Guidelines, and they deserve to know how they should be treated, where they should start, and when they should have to take a polygraph and what questions they should have to answer and which questions go against their 5th amendment rights against self-incrimination!

The elephant in the room is the fact that while change is happening, lots of people aren't talking about it, practicing it or even believing that it should be taking place. They think if they keep on deceiving the clients they control, they will be able to continue doing things as they have always been done.

Accountability is so very important for clients. When will it become equally important for those that administer treatment, polygraphs, evaluation and supervision?