

Reflections of a juvenile rehabilitation program

I recently got the opportunity to attend the AACAP annual meeting 2018 in Seattle. The program committee had arranged Clinical practicum visit to the Echo Glen Children's Center, which was of special interest to me amongst plethora of sessions, symposiums and workshops. The Children's center is unique as it is a model juvenile rehabilitation facility even though it is a high security facility where children are sent by courts. As Shakespeare once said "What's in a name? ", but the uniqueness of Echo Glen Children's center starts right from the name. By classifying itself as juvenile rehabilitation program, the Echo Glen Children's center tries to carve out its space in the intersecting worlds of mental health, social services and the judicial system. The visit to the Echo Glen Children's center involved a series of presentations from different staff members, visitation to flagship programs of the center namely "Success café" and "Canine connection", interaction with a panel of children who were currently in the center and visit to the different "cottages". During the presentation, staff emphasized the difference between juvenile rehabilitation and juvenile justice, how the children end up at the center, importance of implementing DBT program in the treatment regimen to reduce self-harm and aggression, quality assurance program which monitors the fidelity of DBT training and assessing DBT implementation in the milieu. There were many components of the program which were unique, but I am going to focus on the DBT part of the treatment program. The integration of DBT model in the treatment regimen has led to significant decline in use of restraints, medications and improved the compliance with the treatment. The DBT treatment is comprised of one to one session with the counselors (who are trained by skilled DBT clinicians), skills group and Milieu management. The staff has weekly consultation meeting, where all the staff members come together to discuss various concerns and continue further training in DBT. During the whole treatment, there is focus on not forcing the children to participate but to make the groups and skills session fun so that children participate on their own. The staff works with each child to come up with their own treatment goals and target symptoms to work with. Then these goals and target symptoms are posted on the wall in child's room so that the rotating staff is aware and the child is not able to split the staff. Sharing one of the many success stories, one of the presenters shared a story of an adolescence girl who was very aggressive, to the extent that she had to be shifted to the adult state mental health facility as she had hurt several staff members at the child state mental health facility. But everyone was so afraid of her even in the adult state

mental health facility that the state petitioned the court to fast track her transfer to Echo Glen children's center as her aggression was uncontrollable. To everyone's surprise, not only she completed the rehabilitation program and transitioned to group home, but also went on to work with a managed care company. Not to mention that during the whole time she only had to be put in physical restraint once, that too in the initial stages of her stay at the program.

I am not going to discuss the factual details about the facility, as it is easily accessible on the internet but what I feel is really important for me to convey to the readers of this newsletter is how it felt when I listened to the experiences of these children. They had undergone through so many traumas in their life and yet showed incredible resiliency in bouncing back from those circumstances. The staff at the Echo Glen deserves equal accolades for working with the children to help them integrate back to the community. The visit to the Children's center left me with a sense of determination, hope, and that things can change with the right interventions.