

# The Befriend Program

## Summary of Evaluation

### ***Overview***

We want to know that Befriend is making a significant difference for at-risk families. We have worked closely with a research specialist, Dr. Jamie Andersen of Auburn University, to find out if we are accomplishing our goals and making a difference. So, with the help of Dr. Andersen, we designed specific surveys for both our mentors and our mentees to conduct an evaluation of The Befriend Program. We hope the following summary clearly explains our findings.

### ***The Surveys***

The surveys used consisted of a series of likert-rated statements and open-ended questions. Program participants were asked to report on the benefits of their involvement in Befriend, the quality of their mentoring relationships, and their involvement in their communities and local churches. Specific program goals for both mentors and mentees were evaluated by their respective surveys.

### ***The Outcomes***

The following specific goals were the focus of our evaluation.

#### **For mentees**

- *Increased support through involvement in a local church*
- *Increased access to community resources*
- *Increased hope*
- *Accelerated progress in treatment goals*
- *Positive life changes*

#### **For mentors**

- *Increased volunteerism*
- *Increased people skills*
- *Increased mentoring skills*
- *Reduced mental health stigma*

### ***Respondents***

At the time we conducted this program evaluation, in September 2005, we had 8 active mentoring relationships, lasting an average of seven weeks (participation prior to the survey having ranged from 1 week to 6 months). Of those participants, 5 mentors and 4 mentees responded to our survey. Interestingly, all respondents were female and Caucasian. All but one mentee reported being involved in counseling in conjunction with their mentoring relationship, and all but two mentees reported being involved in the Family Support/Community Treatment Aid program.

### ***Mentor Results***

Mentors reported that they feel more comfortable helping others and have a better sense of how to make a difference in another person's life because of their experience in Befriend, reflecting a likely increase in their people and mentoring skills. Concerning an increase in volunteerism, the findings suggest that although mentors are likely to continue volunteering in the future, they are not likely to increase the number of activities they become involved in due to work and family responsibilities. One of our primary claims for Befriend is that we strongly believe this program has the potential to reduce the stigma associated with those who receive mental health treatment. Currently, the research supports our claim. All mentors said they believe Befriend has helped them feel more comfortable with people different from them. Interestingly, in response to open-ended questions, two mentees reported they had learned from their mentoring experience "not to worry about people who will judge you" and that "not all people judge you", which suggests Befriend may not only reduce stigma among mentors, but among mentees as well.

### ***Mentee Results***

A primary concern for mentees is increasing their support through involvement in local churches. Although only 50% of the mentees reported being involved in a local church, the respondents reported that they see church involvement benefiting their lives and they recognize people, in their churches, to whom they can turn for help. Moreover, church-involved mentees also reported that they sometimes participate in church activities with their mentors. Interestingly, some of the mentors who were surveyed indicated that they would like to encourage their mentees to attend church with them, but they were waiting for an appropriate time to ask. Mentees reported modest gains, progressing through treatment goals and increasing access to community resources. The research implies that gains in these areas were more limited due to the average brevity of the mentoring relationship, having existed for only an average of seven weeks. There may not have been enough time for significant gains to have been observed in treatment. More time also may have been needed for mentors to have effectively and appropriately referred mentees to necessary community resources. Overall, mentees reported feeling better about themselves, being more confident, and expressed having a greater sense of hope.

### ***Additional Information***

We plan to continue, expand, and follow up on our research for Befriend in 2006. If you care to receive more information about our findings, or wish to view the Summary of Befriend Evaluation, in its entirety: please submit your request to:

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