



ASSESSING THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Routine assessment of treatment outcomes is the only way to learn what treatments work, for whom, and under what conditions. The evidence collected is vital to guide improvement in programs and to assist those who use and pay for services to understand the value of these programs.

Assessments such as these are rare. Most organizations do not assess outcomes after clients leave residential treatment programs.

Homewood Research Institute and Homewood Health Centre are stepping up to the plate to set a new standard in post-discharge assessment. We have developed a system for following people for one year after they leave the Health Centre.

We have started with Homewood's Addiction Medicine Service. We gather information about how people are doing when they enter the program, when they leave, and over the course of a year post-discharge (at 1-,3-,6-, and 12-months).

The first step in developing the Post-Discharge Outcomes (PDO) Monitoring System was to learn from others. Homewood clinicians told us the types of outcomes that should be assessed to ensure the system would guide practice improvement.

We then consulted with Dr. Val Slaymaker, from Hazelden-Betty Ford, a US addiction treatment organization and the only agency we found that routinely assesses post-discharge outcomes. We also engaged Dr. Brian Rush, a Canadian and international leader in outcome evaluation. The aim was to build on what others had done to ensure that our work benefited others as much as possible.

The final major step was to talk with people who received treatment for addictions and mental health. We needed to make sure we assessed the kinds of outcomes that were most meaningful to them.

The evaluation project has been underway for just over a year. The first cohort of people involved in the project are now at the 12-month follow-up time point.

At present, we are working with the Homewood Health Centre to ensure that evidence from the assessment will be used to improve programs and outcomes for the people served by Homewood. Eventually, similar systems will be implemented across other Homewood programs. Down the road, we plan to share our work with other organizations in order to promote this approach to improving care.