



5 Reasons To Offer Alumni Services

PM Posted by [Lorie Obernauer, PhD](#)

Posted on: 4.25.2011 12:35:49

As the Alumni Liaison at CeDAR (Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation, University of Colorado), I am charged with creating programs for our clients that support them once they leave CeDAR and help them stay connected to the recovery community. Over the past 4 years, as I've worked with our alumni who are living successfully in recovery, I've developed a firm commitment to the whole notion of "alumni services".

So I'd like to begin my tenure with the Addiction Professional blogging team with my "Top 5" list of reasons why alumni programming should be part of the continuum of services offered by treatment organizations.

1. It's The Next Right Thing. I learned in my 12 step meetings that I have to do the "next right thing". For those of us in the treatment industry, we recognize that recovery is a life-long process. Whether we provide 30 days or 90 days of treatment, is it right to send our clients out the door with no further support? We know that involvement in 12 step communities can be the "next right step" for these clients. But my experience tells me that encouraging clients to take that step on their own is not always an easy sell.

Through alumni services, we can help clients learn to live in what William White refers to as a "recovery culture". Many of our clients at CeDAR are often eager to stay connected during their early months of recovery. The support that we provide them during these early recovery days as well as the peer support that they receive, provides a pathway to success that complements 12 step programming. Alumni services can provide a transition; a bridge to the recovery world by assisting and supporting former patients as they practice skills needed for success in recovery.

2. It Generates Referrals From Former Patients and Families. Let's face it: whether our centers are "for profit" or "not for profit", we're all in business. While I pray to my higher power each morning to show me how I can be of service, and I cherish each time I "connect" with a patient and make a difference, the bottom line is simple. The more patients that come to CeDAR, the more people we will be able to serve. Good programming for alumni, that meets their need for support and opportunities to "practice" new skills learned in treatment, can create good will...and good will can create referrals. At CeDAR, alumni referrals have become our #1 referral source.

3. Referral Sources Like Alumni Programs. CeDAR is proud to be supported by so many talented and dedicated addiction treatment professionals on a local, regional and national level. One reason why these referral sources are happy to send their clients to CeDAR is because, yes....we have an active alumni program. Our referral sources are confident that they are recommending a placement that not only has a highly respected treatment program, but also provides supports after treatment is finished. Alumni program personnel can also serve as a network back to the original referral source....and isn't helping each other is what recovery is all about?

4. Alumni and Families Can Be A Source For Donations. Here I go for pragmatism: grateful alumni and families are potential donors to our organizations. Some of the biggest players in the treatment center industry can vouch for this. Giving our alumni and families opportunities to give back can be a by-product of a well established alumni program.

It's the next right thing. OK, so I'm repeating myself. But I really believe this to be true. If we're practicing what we preach, then we need to step up and do the next right thing by providing our clients with "after treatment" programming that will support them in their recovery journey. This is exactly what Alumni Services is all about!

What's your take on this? What do you do at your treatment facility to support clients after they leave?

Choopers Guide is committed to bringing you the latest articles and information on [Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Treatment](#) and [Addiction Research](#).

We would like to hear your feedback on the articles we select to post and of course are very interested in hearing your suggestions on addiction related topics and sources. [Take a moment and let us know how we are doing](#).