

Determining treatment effectiveness is a complex endeavor that hinges on the interplay among many client, program, and environmental factors. After more than 25 years of evaluations of various types of treatment programs, there are surprisingly few national longitudinal or multisite studies that offer universal, definitive "truths."

There have been four large longitudinal studies of substance abuse treatment

- Drug Abuse Reporting Program (DARP)
- Treatment Outcome Prospective Study (TOPS)
- Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Study (DATOS)
- California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment (CALDATA)

These studies compared treatment outcomes over time and by level of care (treatment modality).

Please note that the residential treatment provided in these studies listed above was typically long term residential care which is up to six months. Current residential treatment in Vermont is typically less than 20 days at a cost of approximately \$5,900 per person. Residential care in Vermont is more equivalent to the "detoxification" level of care included in the studies.

Primary findings

- The DATOS findings illustrate consistent behavioral and psychological improvements for adults and adolescents during residential and outpatient treatments and following discharge across the domains of alcohol and drug use, criminality, social performance, and psychological functioning.¹
- The three major modalities -- outpatient drug-free, methadone maintenance, and therapeutic communities -- produced an equal level of positive outcomes²
- Clients in detoxification (i.e., residential) programs or those who dropped out of treatment within 3 months did not demonstrate positive outcomes²
- Each dollar spent for treatment saved taxpayers approximately \$7, mostly due to reductions in crime²
- 95 percent of individuals in residential treatment and 80 percent of individuals in methadone programs reported more than minimal drug use before entering treatment and a substantial reduction in use after 3 months of treatment²
- Furthermore, more than one-third of clients (across OP, residential and methadone programs) reported total abstinence from their primary drug during the follow up period²
- A 50- to 57-percent decrease in indicators of depression was found in clients across all treatment modalities²

¹ Simpson, D. D., & Flynn, P. M. (2008). Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Studies (DATOS): A national evaluation of treatment effectiveness. In G. Fisher & N. Roget, (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery* (pp. 303-307). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
²<https://www.ncjrs.gov/ondcppubs/publications/treat/trmtprot.html>

- Treatment effectiveness is related to patient motivation and problem severity, therapeutic engagement and intensity of services, as well as linkages to community-based social supports³
- Poorer five year post treatment outcomes were associated with lack of engagement in treatment and inadequate retention, especially for clients reporting more serious drug use histories and related problems at admission⁴

For additional information, please refer to:

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/ondcppubs/publications/treat/trmtprot.html>

<http://www.datos.org/default.htm>

³ Simpson, D. D. (2003). Introduction to 5-year follow up treatment outcome studies. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 25(3), 123-124

⁴ Simpson, D. D., & Flynn, P. M. (2008). Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Studies (DATOS): A national evaluation of treatment effectiveness. In G. Fisher & N. Roget, (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery* (pp. 303-307). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.