



Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative

Providing Research and Evaluation for
Wilderness & Adventure Therapy Programs since 1999



OUTDOOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE RESEARCH COOPERATIVE

Department of Kinesiology
University of New Hampshire
www.obhrc.org

Introduction and Overview

Outdoor behavioral healthcare treatment (OBH) evolved from outdoor- and wilderness-based treatment programs that have been in existence for over 50 years, with strong influences found in the therapeutic camping, established in 1946 with programs like the Dallas Salesmanship Club and the Outward Bound wilderness challenge model brought to the U.S. in the early 1960s. Most OBH programs subscribe to an eclectic treatment model that incorporates a blend of therapeutic modalities, but do so in the context of wilderness environments and backcountry travel. The approach has evolved to include client assessment, development of an individual treatment plan, the use of established psychotherapeutic practice, and the development of aftercare plans. OBH programs apply wilderness therapy in the field, which contains the following key elements that distinguish it from other approaches found to be effective in working with adolescents: 1) the promotion of self-efficacy and personal autonomy through task accomplishment, 2) a restructuring of the therapist-client relationship through group and communal living facilitated by natural consequences, and 3) the promotion of a therapeutic social group that is inherent in outdoor living arrangements (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994a; Kimball, 1983; Russell, 2001). The OBH definition presented here was developed by program practitioners who coined the phrase to more accurately describe a clinical treatment approach that is integrated with a wilderness expedition to help effectuate change in adolescents seeking alternative treatment choices.

Purpose and Goals of OBHRC

The purpose of the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative [OBHRC] is to *carry out a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation program to help individual program members examine the process and outcomes of the outdoor behavioral healthcare (OBH) industry*. The goal of such an endeavor is to provide objective information to program members and other interested parties to stimulate discussion as to standards of best practice and theoretical frameworks guiding the treatment process, as well as appropriate research designs, data collection and analysis protocol to conduct research on program safety and effectiveness. In this way, researchers, practitioners, parents, and other interested entities can be informed as to what OBH is, and how research is informing its' practice and outcome.

The OBHRC is guided by a "steering committee" of representatives from OBHIC member programs and scholars in the areas of adventure education, counseling and psychology, and related fields. The OBHRC Steering Committee meets regularly to hear progress reports and provide additional feedback and guidance as needed. All research and publications are reviewed by the OBHRC Peer Review Committee.

Steering Committee and Program Membership

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Current OBHRC Steering Committee

- Rob Cooley, Ph.D., Catherine Freer Wilderness Therapy Albany, Oregon
- Thomas J. Doherty, Psy.D., Sustainable Self and Managing Editor, Ecopsychology, Portland, Oregon
- Alan Ewert, Ph.D., Professor, Patricia and Joel Meier Outdoor Leadership Chair, Department of Parks and Recreation Administration, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
- Michael Gass, Ph.D., Professor, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire
- H. Lee Gillis, Ph.D., Professor, Georgia College and State University, Milledgeville, GA
- Mike Merchant, Chief Operating Officer, Anasazi Foundation, Mesa, Arizona
- Sandy Newes, Psy.D., Clearview Psychological Services, Asheville, North Carolina

Founding OBHRC Member Programs

Anasazi Foundation, Mesa, Arizona 1999-Present
Aspen Achievement Academy, Loa, Utah 1999-Present
Catherine Freer Wilderness Therapy, Albany, Oregon 1999-Present
Redcliff Ascent, Springville, Utah 1999-Present
SUWS, Shoshone, Idaho 1999-Present

Recent OBHRC Member Programs

Mountain Homes Youth Ranch, Vernal, Utah 2004-Present
OMNI Youth Services, Buffalo Grove, Illinois 2002-Present
Wendigo Lake Expeditions, Ontario, Canada 2002-Present