

February 14, 2022

Tim Stay  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Other Side Academy  
667 E 100 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84102

RE: A Study of Student Outcomes at The Other Side Academy.

**Executive Summary: The Other Side Academy has a highly effective approach to rehabilitating criminal offenders with serious substance abuse problems.**

The training provided by The Other Side Academy (TOSA) has dramatically reduced the drug use and crimes committed by those completing the program. TOSA students enter the program with an average of 7 felony arrests and 8 misdemeanor arrests or criminal case filings. In addition, 97 percent suffer from addiction to controlled substances. A study of graduates from the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 shows that after completing the two-year program, just 22 percent reoffend. That means 78 percent of the graduates are leaving the program with no further encounters with the criminal justice system. Furthermore, TOSA's program is shown to have reduced the number of crimes committed by its students. The number of crimes committed by those completing the program dropped by 88 percent. The data show that TOSA has developed an effective program for changing the lives of those with lengthy criminal records and substance abuse problems.

**TOSA had a 78 Percent Success Rate Over Two Years**

The performance outcomes described in this letter are based on a study of recidivism by program graduates during the two years after they completed the program. The results show that TOSA's program not only helps students lead more productive and healthy lives but also is helping the community by reducing the effects of crime.

**Background.** The Other Side Academy (TOSA) is a non-profit organization that uses a therapeutic community model to help criminal offenders change their lives. Over a two-year period, students receive vocational training, peer counseling, leadership training, and work for a TOSA sponsored micro enterprise. Before enrolling in the program, an average student will have been arrested or at least cited on 16 separate occasions with 97 percent having faced drug related charges. Often, offenders are given the opportunity to enroll in TOSA as an alternative to a prison or jail sentence. One unique aspect of the program is that each of the program staff have themselves experienced the same crime and drug use which the students have experienced. This may be one explanation for the program's success.

**Study Methodology.** The rate of recidivism was the primary performance measure used to evaluate TOSA's student outcomes. The recidivism rate during a two-year period after graduation was calculated for each of 68 students who completed the program during the years 2017, 2018 and 2019. For those graduating in 2020, sufficient time had not yet passed to conduct a two-year recidivism study. For that population, a one-year recidivism study was performed.

In addition to tracking recidivism, the rate of offense was also examined. Specifically, a study was made of the number of crimes committed by students two years before and after their participation in TOSA.. Only Felonies and Misdemeanor A and Bs were counted. The online court records were used as the source of data.

**Study Results: A 78 Percent Recidivism Rate Over Two Years.** Of the 68 individuals who completed the TOSA in 2016, 2017 and 2018, 53 had no arrests or charges filed during the two years after graduation. This represents a remarkable change considering the amount of crime committed by the population before enrolling in TOSA. Prior to enrollment, the average student had been arrested or at least had charges filed on 15 separate occasions. On average, they enter the program with seven separate felony arrests on their record. A large drop in the rate of crime committed was also observed. Figure 1 below shows the number of charges filed during the two years before enrollment to the number filed during two years after graduation.

**Figure 1: Crime Committed by TOSA Students Dropped 85 Percent After Graduation**

Type of Charge	Most Common Charges in Each Category	Charges Files Two Years Prior to TOSA Enrollment	Charges Files Two Years After Graduation
Drug Related Crimes	Drug Possession/Use, Distribution.	313	26
Property Related Crimes	Shoplifting, Theft	264	37
Person Related Crimes	Assault, Child Endangerment	38	4
Weapons Related Charges	Unlawful Purchase of Weapon.	15	1
Vehicular Related Crimes	Driving on Suspended License	11	2
Other Crimes	Criminal Mischief, Criminal Trespass	57	4
<b>Sum</b>		<b>698</b>	<b>74</b>

The data show the number of charges filed declined after graduation. The number of charges dropped from 698 during the two years before enrollment to just 74 after graduation. That represents an 89 percent decline in criminal activity for the study population. Those 74 crimes were committed by just 22 percent of graduates. As mentioned, the remaining 78 percent of graduates committed no new crimes.

In view of the lengthy criminal records they have prior to enrollment, a recidivism rate of just 78 percent is remarkable. Also remarkable, is the 89 percent decline in charges filed. In sum, the data show that TOSA’s program is changing lives. It is helping people who once had a negative impact on the community are becoming employed and are having a positive impact.

**Graduates in 2020 are On Track to Achieve Even Better Results Than in Prior Years**

Insufficient data is available to perform a two-year recidivism study for the 30 individuals who completed TOSA’s program in 2020. Although it is not an ideal length of time to study recidivism, a one-year recidivism study was performed for this group. Of the 30 graduates, not one committed a new offense during the year after their graduation date. There were, however, four who committed new crimes during the beginning of the second year after graduation. All were misdemeanor offenses. As shown in Figure 2, these included 5 drug related charges and 2 property crimes.

**Figure 2: Crime Committed Before and After TOSA by 30 Graduates from 2020**

Type of Charge	Most Common Charges in Each Category	Charges Files Two Years Prior to TOSA Enrollment	Charges Files After TOSA Graduation
Drug Related Crimes	Drug Possession/Use, Distribution.	123	5
Property Related Crimes	Shoplifting, Theft	81	2
Person Related Crimes	Assault, Child Endangerment	3	0
Weapons Related Charges	Unlawful Purchase of Weapon.	5	0
Vehicular Related Crimes	Driving on Suspended License	9	0
Other Crimes	Criminal Mischief, Criminal Trespass	33	1
<b>Sum</b>		<b>254</b>	<b>8</b>

The results shown above suggest that those graduating in 2020 are on track to achieve better results than those who graduated in the prior years.

**No TOSA Students were Homeless After Graduation**

Some have suggested that TOSA should also be promoted as a solution to homelessness. However, only one third of students have prior experience with the homeless services system. For all but one or two, their involvement with the homeless services system was brief. After graduation, no students were found to have returned for homeless services.

**Methodology.** Records from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) were used to identify whether TOSA graduates ever received services from Utah’s homeless services system. I was able to access these records while still employed by the Office of the Legislative Auditor General. The HMIS records held by that office only identified services provided through January 2021. Therefore, it is feasible that a graduate could have received homeless services after that time. In addition, many TOSA students report that they experienced homeless but did not obtain services from Utah’s Homeless Services System. Some report living on the street or with friends and family but, presumably due to their drug use, avoided entering the emergency shelters where drugs are prohibited or were afraid of being tracked because of their illegal activities.

**Study Results.** Of the 125 students who completed TOSA’s program, 43 had received services from Utah’s homeless services system. Twelve spent more than 30 days in a homeless shelter or other residential program for the homeless. Only one student had been homeless for one year and could be considered chronically homeless. None received services from the homeless services system after graduation.

**Conclusion.** While many TOSA students have been homeless, the program is having a greater impact on Utah’s criminal justice system than it is on its homeless services system.

**Concerns for the Lack of Accountability for Those who Drop Out of TOSA’s Program**

While most of those who complete TOSA’s program are having success in avoiding new crime, the same cannot be said for those who leave the program early. Roughly half who enroll in TOSA are leaving within the first month. Although some quickly re-enroll in another drug treatment program, most early leavers do not enroll in another program. Furthermore, they have a high rate of recidivism. Of the 119 who enrolled in TOSA during the year 2019, 46 individuals left the program within 30 days. Of those, 74 percent committed new crimes. Some early leavers even had multiple felony arrests. This raises concern about the level of accountability to which this client population is held by the courts, probation officers

and prosecutors. Policy makers should consider whether that a greater effort should be made to ensure that offenders are held accountable to completing their court mandated drug treatment programs.

### **Those Who Leave After One Year in the Program Also Have High Recidivism Rates.**

A recidivism study was also performed on early leavers who left the program after one year. It was assumed that this group of “late leavers” may have recidivism rates similar to those achieved by graduates of the program. Unfortunately, the data show that those who left TOSA after one year also had a high rate of recidivism. During 2019 and 2020 there were 11 individuals who left the program after one year. Of those, 64 percent committed a new crime sometime after graduation. While this rate is lower than the 74 percent recidivism rate for those who left TOSA within 30 days, it is far from the 22 percent rate achieved by those who graduated.

This test suggests that successful outcomes are most likely to be achieved by those who complete the full two-year program. Perhaps the courts, prosecutors, and probation officers should be notified of the importance of completing the program.

Thanks for letting me become more acquainted with your program. If you have further questions or want to examine the supporting details, please call.

James Behunin  
801 560-3944  
[jbehunin@gmail.com](mailto:jbehunin@gmail.com)