

Commencement Connection



Fall 2008

Where I'm At

By: *Rob Hinzman CAC, Business Manager*

When I run into some of my old buddies from high school, some of them laugh when I tell them what I do for a living. I'm usually laughing with them considering where I came from and where I am now. I would have never have thought I would be working at an alcohol and drug treatment center. Since the first day I entered recovery, things began to change.

In 2004, I began working at AACC as a tech. I can't remember working the same job any longer than a year. As I continued to work at AACC, I began to recognize my skills with helping people just like myself. My recovery is the most important thing to me. Being able to help other people through my recovery meant I was helping myself. So why not make a career out of it and get paid for it as well?

This meant I had to become a Certified Addiction Counselor (CAC) with the state

of Georgia. The certification process takes about two years to complete. It consist of 4000 hours of supervised work experience in a treatment setting, 180 hours of education and training in Atlanta, 90 hours of clinical supervision, a written exam, case study, and finally an oral exam.

In November 3, 2007 I completed all requirements and became a Certified Addiction Counselor. This is a great accomplishment for me. My title at AACC is the Business Manager, but I am facilitating group therapy every Monday EOP group.

Therefore many people that have known me for most of life find it ironic when they hear my occupation as an alcohol and drug counselor. From a lying, stealing, cheating alcoholic bum: to an alcohol and drug counselor. What a change and transformation. I'll take this way of life any day over the past.

ATHENS AREA COMMENCEMENT CENTER

Mission

Athens Area Commencement Center strives to be an outstanding substance abuse treatment program. Based upon our understanding of addiction as a family disease, we provide holistic and preventive care that is safe, confidential and is delivered in a therapeutic environment.

Services are provided with dignity and compassion by competent, qualified staff who have the necessary skills, certifications and credentials to ensure good outcomes. Care is individualized to best treat each client's needs. Different treatment modalities are provided and include, Ambulatory Detoxification, Day/Evening Outpatient Services and Aftercare. Client care is delivered in a fiscally responsible fashion.

Our primary goal is to discharge clients who contribute to their families, communities and nation by desiring and working for life-long sobriety.

Suboxon: A good drug misused!

By: James L. Hinzman

About six (6) years ago a miracle drug called Suboxon or Buprenorphine became a wonderful drug for treatment centers to detoxify individuals addicted to opiates (pain killers). As a result, Treatment Centers could avoid costly inpatient detoxification processes and detox addicted opiate addicts in an outpatient setting.

Another positive process with using Suboxon to detox was the availability of receiving this medicine in a Physician's Office which allows more access to detoxification for individuals. However, this drug was never intended to be used without the structure and accountability of counseling and the counseling processes. Today, however, Suboxon is becoming misused and abused like other mood altering drug.

My concern is that physicians are not using counseling techniques and structure to sustain recovery. Physicians are adding another opiate based drug (Suboxon) to the addicts list of addictive drugs and addicted individuals becoming sick on much like individuals becoming addicted to Methadone from Methadone Maintenance Programs.

Anyone who understands addictions knows that detoxification off alcohol or other drugs is the first step in the process of medical stabilization but rarely sustain addicted individuals in staying off alcohol and drugs. In fact, detoxification alone enables individual's active use at a more progressed state. The best prognosis with detoxification alone without treatment to stay off drugs is at best 10% success rate. **WHAT HAVE WE FORGOTTEN ABOUT FROM THE PAST WITH DETOXIFICATION OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**, the lack of treatment, and the relapse process?

Most opiate addicts detoxing off opiates have three (profound and recognizable) withdrawal processes for three (3) to six (6) weeks:

1. Withdrawal from the opiates
2. Withdrawal from the Suboxon
3. Psychological withdrawal – the brain feels every sensation and unidentifiable doom and fear.

As a result, detoxing off opiates with suboxon alone without psychosocial counseling, treatment, and long term structure to problem solve life skills makes opiate detox alone almost impossible. Individuals become more progressive, with more negative consequences, and hopeless in their disease.

Ending with a story.

I received a call from a mother in regards to her son addicted to opiates needing detoxified the fifth (5) time and treatment to sustain recovery. The son had been to a physician four (4) times to receive a prescription of suboxon without counseling and treatment. Each time detoxified with suboxon, the son was more and more progressed into the disease. The son had gone from having his job, a wife and a baby son, to losing everything and becoming indigent and living with parents who was getting wary of the addicted son's existence. Also, by the time the addicted son accessed treatment all financial resources for treatment had been exhausted. The son had legal issues from drug possession charges. Now the son was jobless, penniless, and homeless with legal problems. **THE PROGRESSION OF THIS DISEASE NEEDS TO BE STOPPED AT THE EARLIEST TIME.** In my opinion these negative consequences could have been avoided and halted.

Summary Statement:

Detoxification of Opiates for addicts should only be done within the structure of psychosocial treatment and support systems, and not with a prescription sent home with addicts. Those of us understanding addiction needs not to forget what we know about the ongoing relapse process and long term treatment commitment of this brain disease.

However, medical stabilization (detoxification), psychosocial treatment for abstinence, and long term follow up in an organized aftercare program statistically yields 80% recovery outcome. **TREATMENT WORKS!!!**

It Works, if you work it
By: Karen Skinner

“It”, being the program of recovery

I had the privilege of hearing Vivian M speak at the Alumni Meetings’, Sunday night speaker meeting, a few weeks ago. For those of you who do not recognize the name, Vivian was the first Aftercare Coordinator at the Commencement Center. She read the morning devotions to clients as they came down for breakfast when she was volunteering for the Center when it was an inpatient facility. She finally convinced them to start an Aftercare program and the rest is history. Vivian knows a LOT of people.

Present that night to hear her talk were a bunch of alcoholics in recovery! Some of the recovering audience knew her from their time in treatment as many as twenty plus years ago. Others knew her from their time in treatment twenty plus years ago!! That’s what it says, the same sentence twice. Past clients that had attended Aftercare with Vivian and are still coming to meetings and there were others that had been in Aftercare with Vivian who had gone out for more “research” and were back in recovery again.

Aside from the fact that Vivian’s story is engaging, heart wrenching and totally a joy to hear—I was struck by the things people said to her after her talk. They reflected on how continuing Aftercare had been an important part of their process in learning how to live sober. They felt the transition from early recovery to advanced recovery had been made easier by Aftercare and that it had helped them get on solid ground with this new lifestyle called recovery. I could see the bond between those clients.

Vivian also called this the greatest job on earth, and I must admit, I agree. As I have been writing the article I have reflected on some of the calls and e-mails I have received recently from prior clients, just touching base or dropping by to say hello. It is so great to hear from you and know it is still working in your lives.

One client has a child and a home, already had the husband! For another client it took jail to get sober. Others are in the job of their dreams and some just are happy as punch because they can drive again!! What ever the situation they all agree on one thing, **“It works if you work it!”**

**Athens Area
Commencement Center
Staff are Certified or
Licensed to treat
Addictions**

All our staff is qualified to treat the brain disease of addiction.

Each one of our staff demonstrates the knowledge to treat clients with the diagnosis of Alcohol/Drug Dependence.

Most recently Robert Hinzman received his Certification (CACI) from Georgia Addiction Counselor Association. Congratulations Rob.

Reminder!!!

Athens Area Commencement Center will host the Annual Christmas Party, December 11 from 6-8pm. Good food, good music, and great fellowship. Please plan to attend.

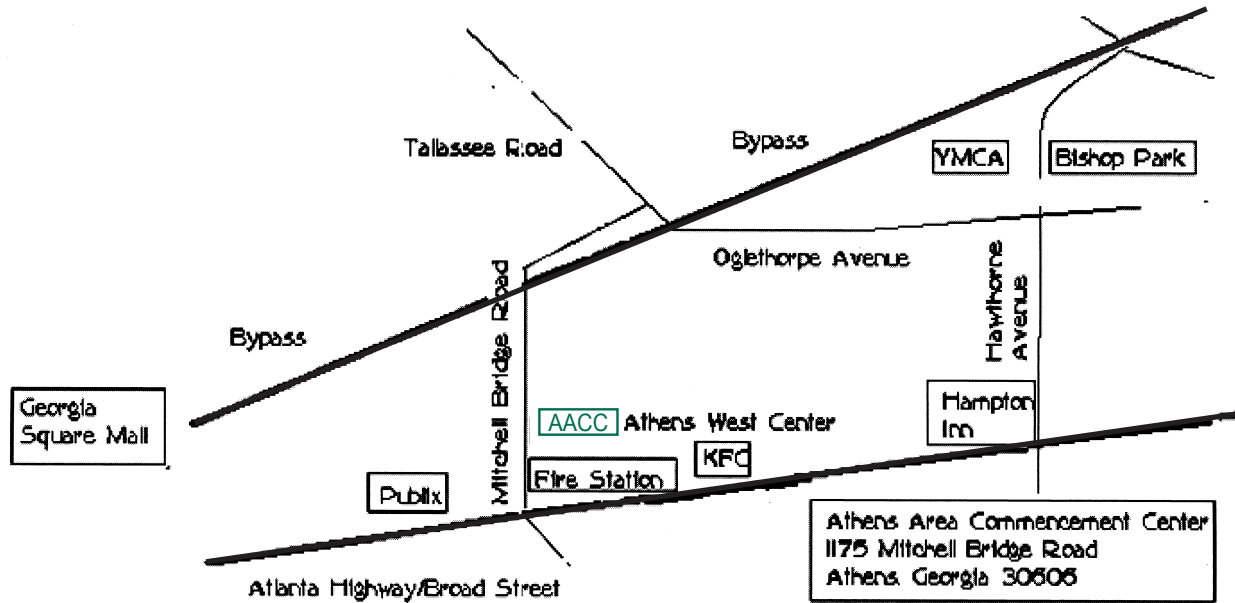
**ATHENS AREA
COMMENCEMENT CENTER**



A Place of Healing...

**Alcohol and Drug Treatment for
Over 25 Years.**

Athens Area Commencement Center is located near the intersection of the Atlanta Highway (Broad Street) and Mitchell Bridge Road.



*"We can't make quitting easy
but we can make it possible"*

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