

***FINDING STABILITY:
AN EVALUATION OF GRADUATES OF
CHICAGO CHRISTIAN INDUSTRIAL LEAGUE'S
SINGLE ADULT PROGRAM***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**PREPARED BY:
CENTER FOR URBAN RESEARCH AND LEARNING
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The Chicago Christian Industrial League is a not-for-profit Christian social service agency called to serve homeless men, women, and children of all races and religions on behalf of the community of metropolitan Chicago.

Founded in 1909, CCIL provides food, clothing, shelter, counseling, training experiences, affordable housing, and spiritual assistance for those who seek it. All services are provided by professional staff in a healing and supportive environment.

In partnership with the people of the Chicagoland area, on whose gifts and services it relies, CCIL offers encouragement to the poor by providing a path from alienation to reconciliation, and hope to the community by demonstrating that determined persons of faith and good will can challenge the effects of poverty.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chicago Christian Industrial League (CCIL or the League) is a long-standing social service agency located on the West Side of Chicago. CCIL strives to challenge the effects of poverty in Chicago through its residential programs for formerly homeless single males and families. CCIL's residential programs consist of classes, programs, and services such as employment, housing, education, and life skills training in order for residents to gain skills for future self-sufficiency and independence.

Evaluation Process

CCIL partnered with the Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) at Loyola University Chicago to conduct an evaluation of CCIL's 18-month residential program. Using a collaborative approach, CCIL and CURL conducted a participatory evaluation to assess how former residents of CCIL's 18-month single male program experience stability after their departure from CCIL. The evaluation team defined "stability" as the maintenance of the skills and gains an individual achieved at the League. Stability was conceptualized on a continuum, with varying indicators of stability including housing, employment, physical and mental health, sobriety, and social support. These various indicators of stability should be thought of as a *process* rather than an *outcome*.

The evaluation team consisted of various stakeholders, including CCIL staff, CCIL alumni and CURL staff and fellows. Groups of CCIL alumni and CCIL residents advised the evaluation team in the design of pre-departure and post-departure interview

instruments. Their contribution helped to ensure that the pre-departure and post-departure interviews were pertinent to the experiences of CCIL residents and alumni.

Research Questions

The evaluation team designed the evaluation to answer the following research questions:

- How do graduates of CCIL's single adult program obtain and employ the self-sufficiency skills needed to maintain stability upon leaving the program?
- What do the skills needed for stability look like?
- What are some of the barriers that graduates encountered while attempting to maintain stability?

Evaluation Goals:

The evaluation team created the following evaluation research goals:

- Provide CCIL with critical information regarding outcomes of program residents post-departure that relate to specific indicators of stability, including housing, employment, physical and mental health, sobriety, and social support.
- Illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of CCIL's current mix of services and provide recommendations for program improvement.
- Develop a measure that assesses the alumni experience after they have left the League's program. This will also provide the League with the tools necessary to conduct long-term tracking of clients.
- Develop an alumni cohort (i.e. alumni mentors, etc) enabling CCIL to better track alumni and to allow for mentoring opportunities for alumni and ongoing outcome-based evaluations.
- Establish an ongoing evaluation protocol and internal capacity to conduct continual evaluation and research.

Data Sources

The research team utilized a mixed methodological approach analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data sources to answer the above research questions. Data sources included:

- Pre-departure interviews with CCIL residents (N=21).
- Post-departure interviews with CCIL alumni (N=12).

- Aggregate data of CCIL residential population from CCIL's Client Tracking Information System Database (CTIS) (N=1,213). These data include residents who departed between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006. These data are collected by and housed at CCIL.³

Findings

Interviews with League residents were conducted to understand their experiences in CCIL's 18-month residential program. Post-departure interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of how alumni experience life and stability post-League and also to identify barriers to stability. Another purpose was to identify which skills gained at the League have been useful in maintaining stability. Aggregate data were analyzed to get a fuller picture of experiences for League residents.

The evaluation highlights several findings that are useful to understanding how the CCIL population experiences life and their constant struggle to maintain stability. The evaluation findings are portrayed through a "Roadmap to Stability" framework, which consists of three components: entrance to CCIL, experience in the CCIL program, and post-departure experiences.⁴ A selection of the main findings is stated in brief below.

Pre-CCIL Challenges of Substance Abuse: Sobriety is a major challenge among the CCIL residential population. During pre-departure interviews, 67% of residents said that they were clients at a drug treatment or recovery program prior to coming to CCIL. Among those who departed between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006, 78% have a drug "special need"⁵ and 56% have an alcohol special need.

³ The detailed Methodology section is located in the full evaluation report.

⁴ In addition to the complete research report, this report was broken down into three separate reports which reflect the three components of the "Roadmap to Stability."

⁵ At intake, each resident works with CCIL staff to identify any "special needs" which require additional attention and programming at CCIL.

Pre-CCIL Challenges of Low-Incomes: Coupled with the challenges of substance abuse, little or no income was a challenge for much of the CCIL residential population. Among those who departed from CCIL between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006, 85% of the residential population reported having no monthly income. The remaining proportion of this population reported earning the following monthly income:

- 1% earned \$1 – 250
- 2% earned \$1001 – 1500
- 3% earned \$251 – 500
- 0.6% earned \$1500 +
- 8% earned \$501 – 1000

CCIL a “Turning Point:” The 18-month program at CCIL was a defining point in the lives of many respondents. Through the program, they acquired skills and tools to help them change negative patterns in their lives. Residents described a transforming effect on their thinking patterns, self-perception, communication patterns, and relationships with others as a result of their time at CCIL.

Improving Mental Health: Identification of personal problems and coming to terms with negative past and present issues was critical for residents’ future growth and stability. Residents cited the benefits of CCIL’s therapeutic programming, which includes one-on-one therapy sessions, group meetings with residents to discuss pertinent issues in their lives, Life Skills class and the Core Classes.

Gaining Coping Skills through Therapeutic Programming: Through the therapeutic programming, residents gained skills and tools including self-confidence, self-efficacy, anger management skills, and methods for improved communication. The skills and encouragement from CCIL staff helped to prepare residents for future stability in terms of employment, housing, sobriety, and relationships with family and friends.

Case Management as Support for Future Stability: Almost the entire residential population – 92% of residents who departed between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006 –received Case Management Supportive Services. Facilitators were described as knowledgeable and remarkable sources of information and resources. Also, CCIL creates a supportive, family-like environment, largely due to relationships with facilitators and other staff who provide positive reinforcement and motivation for residents.

Education Programming: A Vital Building-Block to Achieve Stability: CCIL offers a range of educational resources. Among the CCIL population who departed between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006, 61% received Education Supportive Services. One component of CCIL’s education programming is a GED preparation class. The instructor was described as especially skilled, facilitating the learning and understanding of the course material and the encouragement that the GED instructor provided was valuable in helping residents stay motivated. The computer lab is another component of CCIL’s education programming. This was described as useful because residents gained skills to aid their search for employment. Respondents suggested that computer training and usage should be a required element of CCIL’s program mix because, like basic reading and math skills, computer literacy is becoming essential for employment.

Employment Training and Assistance to Become More “Employable:” CCIL offers a range of resources to improve employment opportunities. Approximately half of the resident population (53%) who departed between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006 received Employment Assistance at CCIL. The Pre-Employment class is a valuable

resource, providing residents with resources and skills-training to become more “employable.” Residents gained skills including: creating their resume, completing job applications effectively, conducting their behavior during interviews, and identifying employment barriers and developing coping techniques to manage them. Additionally, job placement assistance is a crucial component of CCIL’s employment programming since many CCIL residents are ex-offenders and other hard-to-employ populations. Respondents felt that the job placement component at CCIL needed to be expanded.

Housing Supportive Services: Post-League housing was one of the most critical issues discussed during interviews. CCIL provides Housing Placement Assistance, a service which 30% of residents who departed between January 1, 2004 and October 30, 2006 received. Among this population, 42% departed from CCIL into a Permanent Housing destination⁶. The most common departure was “Moved in with Family and Friends,” with 22% of the residential population in this category. Respondents suggested that CCIL hire a facilitator that works exclusively to assist residents in locating post-program housing.

Work Details: Experiences working in CCIL’s various work details were positive as the experience acted as job preparation with residents gaining skills such as punctuality and reliability. However, residents did express some concerns about the details, particularly about the length of time they were required to commit to the details. They expressed some anxiety, suggesting that they should be spending that time to secure

⁶ CCIL records housing destination through the categories classified as “Permanent” and “Non-Permanent.” These two categories are not mutually exclusive as some housing destinations (i.e., Moved in with Family/Friends) are present in both. Some housing destinations are classified as “permanent” only. These include: rental housing or apartment (unsubsidized and subsidized), Section 8, public housing, and homeownership.

employment and housing. Respondents suggested that CCIL improve the details in two ways: to take residents' employment interests and preferences into consideration when assigning details, and by incentivizing residents' work in the details through night/weekend passes, transit passes, or other incentives.

Time: A Resource Provided at CCIL: "Use of time" was a major theme that emerged during interviews. Residents felt that they finally had time at CCIL, a resource which they lacked before coming to CCIL. For many, this resource allowed them to work on goals which were often put on hold because of immediate needs. In addition to time, respondents said they had a degree of independence and freedom to determine how they were going to utilize their time at CCIL. Respondents described a level of flexibility as well at CCIL. Several residents and alumni said there were both advantages and drawbacks to this flexibility. For some, the flexibility was positive as residents utilized their time to accomplish goals, but others did not use their time productively. With the combination of flexible programming and the resource of time, respondents explained that personal initiative and responsibility were key to success at CCIL.

Foundational Elements to Remain on the Road to Stability: Foundational factors, both internal and external, are necessary to continue on the Roadmap to Stability according to CCIL alumni. Particular traits and certain foundational elements are necessary for alumni to maintain stability. These factors were described as a prerequisite to achieving their goals and maintaining their gains from CCIL. These include:

- **Continuity:** Many explained that to be stable, the challenge was to be persistent and keep striving. For example, it wasn't enough to *get a job*; the struggle was to *keep* a job.

- **Personal Traits and Characteristics:** Many respondents said that personal attributes and qualities such as self esteem, responsibility, punctuality, patience, and self-respect were necessary to maintain stability. These attributes were acquired or reinforced while at the League. The first two foundational elements, persistence and personal attributes, are largely internal to individuals, where they need the will to strive.
- **Structure and Routine:** Several alumni respondents described that they needed to have “order,” “structure,” and “routine” in their daily lives to maintain stability. Establishing routine and structure is largely affected by outside factors including the availability of jobs and housing, meeting schedules and other personal and societal issues.

Factors that Facilitate and Limit Progression on the Road to Stability:

Concrete factors, which facilitate post-League stability, were discussed. Also, these same indicators were discussed as barriers to stability when they are absent. Alumni explained that the factors for stability are interrelated, that positive or negative experiences in regards to one factor often affect others.

- **Housing:** Housing was discussed as an essential factor for post-League stability. 75% of alumni respondents were residing in SRO or apartments (both subsidized and unsubsidized). Among these, more than half (58%) received Housing Placement assistance at CCIL. The alumni respondents who did not have independent housing expressed anxiety about their housing situation and indicated that their living situation was temporary.

- **Employment and Income:** Money management skills, as well as full-time work with long-term prospects, were essential to maintain stability on a consistent basis. Challenges with employment created economic struggles for many alumni. None of them held a full-time position. Part-time work was the most common form of employment. Saving money is a major challenge post-League, as many alumni are struggling to live with minimal income and financial resources. Felony convictions were discussed as another major barrier to employment and income stability.
- **Sobriety:** For many respondents, stability was contingent on staying sober. Maintaining sobriety is more complex than simply abstaining from drugs and alcohol; it requires a comprehensive approach including mental clarity, social support, and adequate income. Attendance at 12-step support meetings was critical to their struggle for sobriety. A point stressed at CCIL was that relapse prevention requires commitment in all areas of life and alumni must have the foresight to “*recognize the traps*” that could lead to relapse.
- **Physical Health:** Overall, alumni described positive physical health situations, as 83% of alumni said that their physical health was not a barrier to their stability and 58% described their physical health to be “good” or “very good.” However, one respondent said that there was always the potential for physical health to become a barrier to stability due to the nature of the jobs that many alumni work, which lack healthcare benefits, paid vacation, or sick time.
- **Mental Health:** All alumni respondents except one (91%) described their current mental health as “good” or “very good.” All of the alumni respondents said that

their mental health was “better” than it was two years prior. Alumni attributed improvements in their mental health to the therapeutic programming at CCIL. They said that CCIL health services functioned to challenge both the physical and mental health barriers to stability.

- **Social Support:** An important component of stability described by alumni respondents was the support they received from family and friends. Of those interviewed, 67% said that they received support from family. Emotional support was the most typical support described. All alumni said that they received support from friends in their struggles to maintain stability. Support of friends from CCIL and 12-step meetings was important to maintain their sobriety and stability. Not all respondents, however, said they received positive support from family and friends. Several alumni respondents related that they had to detach from certain family members or friends who could potentially put their stability at risk.
- **Maintaining Stability through Alumni Programming:** All alumni expressed interest in having a continuing relationship with CCIL in capacities such as support services for alumni and programs to interact with League residents and alumni. Programming could benefit both CCIL residents and alumni. Alumni respondents felt that a continued relationship with CCIL could benefit League residents struggling to improve their lives. Likewise, they stated that relationships with fellow alumni is a crucial source of support and important to stability. Respondents recommended program components such as a mentorship program with alumni mentors and resident mentees, and “reunions” for alumni to share life updates and “success stories” and reconnect with others.