During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the face of addiction treatment services in Idaho. Clinical services and recovery housing had to decrease occupancy to maintain the safety of those they serve. This gap of services was painfully present, as we saw substance use rates rise in the United States by 55-67% (Survey, 2020). MSCL worked diligently, and as quickly as possible, to adapt to meet the needs of residents, while maintaining 6 feet distance.

For individuals with histories of substance use disorder, COVID-19 may have hit them harder than the average American. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports people with substance use disorders are at higher risk of contracting and suffering worse consequences from COVID-19 (NIDA, 2020). This put a greater need for MSCL to take precautions to keep those they serve safe. Despite the decrease in occupancy during most of the year, **MSCL had 15 men in residence**.

Through the year, **13 applications were submitted, of which 54% were accepted** (N=7) and successfully integrated into the program while 23% were rejected (N=3) and 23% (N=3) changed their mind after having gone through the admission process. Three residents were hold overs from the year prior. At the end of 2020, there were no waitlisted individuals.

As stated previously, **MSCL House had 15 men in residence** of which 87% were single, 6% were married or had partners, and 6% divorced. 13% had children. The mean age was 35 years, with the youngest being in the 18-24 age range and the oldest in the 50+ age range. The demographic was 67% white and 33% Latino. Regarding education, 13% had some high school, 66% had completed high school or obtained their GED, while 27% had some college.

**The average length of stay was 154 days or 5.1 months**, including the shortest stay of 23 days and the longest stays of 366 days. Bed night statistics show a total of **2,331 sober nights in 2020**, 211 more than 2019, with an **80% occupancy rate**.

Regarding their family substance use history, **60% of them reported they had one or more family members with alcohol abuse**, 20% had one family member with drug abuse and, 6% had more than one family member with both drug and alcohol abuse.

**Referrals by the criminal justice system equaled 40%**, followed by self, friends, and family, accounting for 33% of referrals. Referrals from Inpatient and outpatient treatment centers equaled 20%. In our 2020 report, MSCL anticipated a greater number of referrals from the criminal justice system due to residents’ ability to qualify for IDOC and BPA Funding. Because of reduced incarceration rates for 2020 based on restrictions from COVID19, referrals from the criminal justice system dropped by 13% while referrals from self, family, or friends stayed the same. **Referrals from treatment centers increased by 8%**. We expect referrals from the criminal justice to increase in 2021.

**One third of residents cited jail as their main residency**. One third stated they had rented a house or apartment as their main residency. Other residents reported living with friends and
family (N=3), in half-way houses (N=1), or were homeless (N=1). 40% reported doing more that 12 months of jail time and 46% did one to six months of jail time prior to admittance into MSCL.

**Substance abuse history indicated alcohol (53%) being the drug of choice**, followed by meth (47%), THC (47%), cocaine (20%), opiates (13%) and amphetamine (6%). The average age they began using was 16. A significant number (46%) relapsed more than three times. **67% of them had participated in treatment prior to admittance into MSCL.**

**Over half (53%) received treatment for a psychiatric condition**, a 20% increase from 2019. Only one of our residents reported contemplating suicide.

**At the time that residents joined MSCL House, 46% were employed.** Of those employed, 33% earned between $0-$800 a month, below the poverty threshold of a single person under 65 which is $11,770 annually. While 40% were unemployed primarily because of incarceration or inpatient treatment stays, 100% were able to find work within the first month of their stay at MSCL House.

Upon entering MSCL House, their top goals were personal growth (60%), to remain abstinent (53%), building savings and improving finances (40%), gainful employment (33%), continued education (33%), and complete probation/drug court (26%). Lastly, improving relationships with family came in at 12%. Other goals include starting their own business and reuniting with their children.

Of the men that exited the program, **50% exited in good standing**, 50% left without notice (AWOL). Of those who left without notice, one was re-admitted after having completed the requirements for re-entry into MSCL. That person continues to be a resident at MSCL house.

From the information obtained through continued contact with residents who have moved on from MSCL, six living in the community continue to be sober. Two former residents moved out of the area, one is sober, and one has relapsed. One former resident is currently in jail for unrelated charges (not drug or alcohol charges) which occurred prior to living in the MSCL house.

In 2020, two residents took advantage of MSCL education funds, attending a College of Southern Idaho in the Associates of Applied Science Welding Technology program. One resident is in his final year and the other resident is starting his second year. Upon graduating, one resident would like to open their own business in the trade.

During the year, MSCL residents were provided with over **20 dental visits** and **40+ hours of counseling** services, given at reduced rates by local professionals in their field.

**Five residents took part in the Matching Savings Account Program (MSA) initiated in November of 2020.** By participating in the MSA program, MSCL House residents will develop good savings habits that will help them build assets and become self-sufficient. The program encourages savings by matching deposits for up to one year $1 for $1 saved. Financial education is provided, and eligible asset goals are securing a rental home, debt reduction, post-secondary education and job training, vehicle purchase or repair and small business start-up or expansion.
In Conclusion

MSCL is doing a lot for those we serve. Studies show that maximum benefit is gained when stays are longer than 90 days minimum. MSCL House average of 154 days or 5.1 months far exceeds the recommended minimum stay. Retention of residents at the sober house is excellent.

Residents of MSCL report programs and services as ‘helpful’ with moderate attainment of goals. They stated staff as ‘compassionate and supportive’ and ‘maintained a safe, drug free home environment’. See improvements for more information.

No matter their age, legal status, recovery challenges or personal history, our residents are people with the same goals and aspirations in life. Most choose to be in sober living and are at a point in their life when they are focused on creating a positive future for themselves and their families. For people recovering from a substance use disorder, getting centered and on a healthy path takes time and attention.

MSCL continues to increase programming geared toward supporting residents to address the social determinants of health and recovery. These include financial literacy, access to legal aid, education, counseling, medical and dental services, and alternative medicine.

In 2021, MSCL aspires to educate the community on the organization, the programs and services offered, and how sober living supports a healthy community. We will do this by increasing our resident’s involvement in the community via volunteering. The community is likely to see our residents as productive and helpful members of society when involved in community efforts. We will also use social media tools to engage the public, offering education, statistics, and testimonials.

Our goals moving forward include increasing referrals from criminal justice sources, which entails educating judges, attorneys and probation departments on entrance criteria, policies and procedures, and services offered. We will do this by meeting with them personally or over the phone to intentionally cultivate positive relationships and understanding.

Re-establishing connections to inpatient and outpatient treatment centers will ensure professionals know the services we offer and our procedures for entrance into sober living. We will do this by reaching out to facilities in Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls County.

46% of applicants were either rejected or changed their mind after initial contact. By Following up on applicants MSCL may increase occupancy rates in 2021.

We need to increase our accountability and assessments of programs via exit surveys and tracking. Instruments will assess use of education funding, financial literacy skill training, Match Savings program, counseling, legal aid, medical and dental services, alternative medicine, and substance use before and after living in the sober house.
References
