

Effects of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy on client discharge status.

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Abstract

Equine assisted psychotherapy is a therapeutic approach that is being used in a variety of physical and mental health settings. The main issue that has kept this therapeutic approach from being more widely accepted is the fact that it has relatively little research to substantiate its effectiveness. Recently researchers and professionals have been conducting research with various populations involved with equine therapy to give credibility to this intervention. There are many different qualitative studies giving narrative examples of the effects of equine assisted therapy. There continues to be a pronounced lack of quantitative research around this area. This study attempts to help fill the existing gap in the knowledge base surrounding this intervention. This study looks at the effect that equine facilitated psychotherapy has on the discharge status of clients from a residential treatment facility for adolescent males in the western United States. The question that is being explored is this: Does number of equine assisted psychotherapy sessions have an effect on status of discharge?

This study was initiated so that the program could see if equine assisted psychotherapy has a positive effect on clients in treatment as they and other programs claim. The equine program is an integral part of treatment for residents at this residential treatment facility and is used on a regular basis by the therapists for individual and group sessions. The young men have classes about horsemanship, equine anatomy, and equine care in addition to individual and group therapy sessions. It is essential for the equine program to identify that equine facilitated therapy is beneficial, so their funding agencies are confident that their financial support is being utilized in an effective manner. In addition, this information will support the equine program in its efforts to provide services to other outside groups.