



History of Gaudenzia

In 1968, a group of distinguished business, political and community leaders recognized a serious problem for the City of Philadelphia — a growing number of people suffering from addiction were unable to find help. Determined to address the problem, these leaders invited a small group of substance abuse treatment professionals to create a residential treatment program that would save the lives of individuals otherwise doomed by their drug and alcohol addictions.

A cadre of willing supporters, which included Howard Adelstein, Dr. Griffin Bates, Michael Baylson, Victor Biondo, Dr. Irwin Breslow, Judge Paul Dandridge, Raymond Denworth, Esq., James Germano, James Giles, Esq., Thomas Gilhool, Esq., Dr. Frederick Glaser, Michael Gold, Congressman William Green, Peter Hearn, Esq., Joseph Jacovini, Esq., Jerome Kohn, D.O., Judge Edmund Speath, Joan Specter, Aurelia Waters, Mr. & Mrs. William Wilcox, Edwin Wolf, Esq., and Elias Wolf helped to establish Gaudenzia's first program and Board of Directors.

Thus, community volunteers gave birth to Gaudenzia's first residential substance abuse treatment program in a dilapidated North Philadelphia rowhouse. The program took in addicted men and women – mostly heroin addicts at the time – and provided the shelter, sustenance and support they needed to join the rest of the "family" in living free from drugs and alcohol. Most of these people had no ability to pay for treatment, and maintenance of the program depended on day-to-day contributions of food, clothing and furniture from the community.

Gaudenzia began as a mutual support community – a group of people who, through the basic assumption that sticking together would give them the strength and resolve to stop using drugs, were trying to recover from addiction through their unity and support of one another. Back then, there was little distinction between staff and residents. The senior residents ran the program – they were the people who had been around long enough to feel secure in their own recoveries and had gained enough knowledge to manage the facility.

Gaudenzia gradually gained acceptance due to its effectiveness. Gaudenzia expanded its programs steadily throughout the 70's, 80's, 90's and 2000's and now has a network of services so diverse, virtually anyone in need can receive help for their individual substance abuse problems.

The community responded enthusiastically and today Gaudenzia operates over 100 programs throughout the system. Gaudenzia offers comprehensive outpatient and residential programs that address the specialized substance abuse treatment, prevention and education needs

of men, women and children.

Gaudenzia's specialized programs meet the needs of adolescents, pregnant/parenting women, dually diagnosed individuals (mentally ill and substance abusing), HIV/AIDS symptomatic individuals and homeless individuals. In addition, Gaudenzia administers the substance abuse treatment program at the State Correctional Institute in Chester, which is the first correctional facility in Pennsylvania dedicated entirely to the treatment of addicted inmates. Gaudenzia also offers transitional living services for men and women who complete our residential treatment programs. Gaudenzia's ACCESS program offers private industry, labor union and other organizations employee assistance program services to address individual and organizational substance abuse treatment needs.

Gaudenzia's mission is to help people affected by chemical dependency, mental illness and related conditions to achieve a better quality of life – allowing them to live as productive and accountable individuals.

Gaudenzia also conducts research and educates the community on the causes, treatment and prevention of addictions, mental illness and related conditions.

Gaudenzia views substance abuse as a complex biopsychosocial problem that must be addressed on all levels. Individuals must make significant lifestyle changes in order for recovery to be successful and long lasting. Gaudenzia adheres to the holistic principles of the Therapeutic Community that encourages individuals to take part in the treatment process as full partners, not as objects or patients. Individuals admitted to Gaudenzia encounter a highly structured family environment in which honesty, trust and mutual self-help are the foundation of the treatment process. In addition, daily seminars, group counseling and individual activities are offered to all clients. Work responsibilities are assigned that teach basic cooperation, respect and discipline.

Since 1968, the support of our communities has enabled Gaudenzia to develop a network of services so diverse that virtually anyone in need can be helped by Gaudenzia's programs. Gaudenzia pioneered many programs for specialized populations and has earned national attention for innovative approaches to substance abuse treatment.