



# HOW TO MAKE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF A DYNAMIC ALUMNI PROGRAM

## OVERVIEW

Traditionally, Alumni-focused activities have included picnics, potluck get-togethers, sober fun activities, educational workshops, and support groups.

While these events are indeed important for supporting recovery, TPAS is dedicated to expanding the possibilities for even greater impact on clients and organizations through Alumni Services programs. The purpose of this report is three-fold:

- To present a summary of a recent survey to assess how participation in TPAS has impacted the field of Alumni Services
- To describe a distinctive model that fosters a unique learning environment for building community among addiction treatment service providers
- To propose suggestions for development of Alumni Services programs and a more professionalized role for Alumni Services personnel

## TPAS IMPACT

TPAS recently conducted an extensive survey of interested and relevant parties to evaluate the impact that the organization has had on addiction treatment center Alumni programs. Furthermore, information from the survey suggests future strategies for TPAS and for the field of Alumni Services as a whole.

Twenty-one active TPAS members and supportive TPAS member CEOs were interviewed and asked to reflect on how TPAS has impacted Alumni engagement and organizational growth.

### TPAS' IMPACT ON ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

**Survey respondents reported that since Alumni staff has engaged with in TPAS:**

- The frequency of activities offered to Alumni has increased
- The type of activities offered to Alumni has diversified
- Activities that pair Alumni with current center patients for sharing recovery stories has increased
- The number of Alumni returning to the center to participate in Alumni events has increased

Furthermore, over 50% of survey respondents report initiating and delivering renewal style weekends since they began engaging with TPAS. These weekends draw local Alumni as well as Alumni from great distances. Respondents report great satisfaction among renewal weekend participants and from center leaders and staff about the success of these events.

### TPAS' IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS

**Survey respondents indicated a value proposition of Alumni Services contributions not only to the mission of long term recovery for clients, but also to the revenue generation for organizations.**

- Conversations with leaders from addiction treatment centers indicate that Alumni referrals can account for as much as 50% of total referrals. TPAS members report that their overall Alumni referrals have more than doubled since staff has been involved in TPAS activities
- Survey respondents also indicated that cost per admission for an Alumni referral is substantially lower compared to traditional marketing and business development admissions:
  - *Costs per Alumni admission range from \$700 to \$1100*
  - *Costs per traditional marketing and business development activities range from \$3500 to \$5000 and even went as high as \$8000 per referral in some instances*
- There is a connection between Alumni staff members who have increased the frequency of Alumni events and Alumni referrals

## TPAS' COLLABORATIVES

### *AN INNOVATIVE MODEL FOR ALUMNI STAFF DEVELOPMENT*

Without a doubt, the singular founding activity of TPAS has been the Collaborative. Launched in 2012, the first Collaborative was designed to be distinctly different from other conferences held in the addiction treatment industry.

Using a meeting strategy called "open space technology", the agenda is created by the participants in real-time on the first morning of the event. Participants are "teachers and learners" and offer topics for discussion such as how to stay in touch with Alumni, record keeping, ideas for innovative events, and more. Additionally, activities that promote community and connection among participants creates an unequalled opportunity for the honest and open sharing of ideas.

#### **Discussions with people who attend TPAS Collaboratives reveal that participants come away with:**

- New ideas for supporting Alumni recovery efforts
- A new community of people who can provide ideas on an ongoing basis
- Tangible tools to facilitate activities at their treatment centers

Through this process, TPAS has created a new body of knowledge about Alumni Services activities and processes that has never existed. Each TPAS Collaborative has 15-18 concurrent sessions and notes from each session are recorded and distributed to all Collaborative attendees. Session notes from all Collaboratives are recorded on the TPAS website and are always available to TPAS members.

## NEXT STEPS

Engagement with TPAS has positively influenced many treatment programs since 2010. Feedback from this recent study indicates that Alumni staff members who engage with TPAS develop proficiency in building successful Alumni programs. Leaders of these organizations also report unexpected increases in Alumni referrals and admissions that contribute to greater revenue margins.

#### **Based upon these findings, TPAS proposes the following avenues for future investigation:**

- TPAS has already served as a professional development resource for Alumni program staff. Formalized training and credentialing programs can prepare Alumni staff to be a vital part of the continuum of services offered by a treatment center
- The changing landscape of addiction treatment includes increased accountability to consumers and third party payers. Alumni staff who interact regularly with Alumni, can be an integral part of a new infrastructure to collect outcomes data from Alumni
- Alumni staff can be trained as Peer Recovery Coaches, a credentialed role in many states. In the future, Peer Coaching might be a billable service offered to Alumni who want continued support

If you are interested in learning about TPAS and how to get your center involved in more target-specific Alumni engagement, we invite you to browse our website at [www.tpasrecovery.org](http://www.tpasrecovery.org), attend a Collaborative, or reach out to Lauren Kirschberg at [lauren@tpasrecovery.org](mailto:lauren@tpasrecovery.org).

Lauren will be happy to answer your questions, connect you to a TPAS Board member, or facilitate a conversation with one of the many treatment center leaders who support TPAS's mission.