Program Overview

The Seven Challenges®, developed by Dr. Robert Schwebel, is an evidence-based, SAMHSA-approved model of substance abuse treatment that helps youth make thoughtful decisions about substance abuse and their lives. The program strives to help youth open up about experiences, while always being honest with staff members about their drug use.

Features of The Seven Challenges include:

• Meeting youth where they are, which is often reluctant to stop using drugs, instead of where they are expected to be, ready and willing to commit to change.

• Avoiding the pitfall of teaching youth to be drug free before they have honestly decided to be drug free. Instead of fear and coercion, this program harnesses the enormous power of education, finesse and respectful confrontation.

• Placing a special emphasis on creating a climate of mutual respect where individuals can talk openly and honestly about themselves. The Seven Challenges encourages active thinking about the use of alcohol or other drugs and its impact. Doing this can raise consciousness, inspire hope and motivate informed, internally driven decisions to change. Once such decisions are made, youth are given tools and provided support to ensure success.

• Giving youth appropriate coping mechanisms for co-occurring problems. Individuals resort to substance abuse for a reason. Rather than acting as antagonists who want to take something away, staff motivate youth to seek healthy ways of managing emotions and function as problem-solving partners.

• Creating a developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive environment that uses personal empowerment to create lasting change.
Testimonials

Many youth in Starr’s substance abuse program have experienced tremendous personal growth using The Seven Challenges model.

"I love this program. I’ve seen a great change in my behavior and my thought process. I don’t feel any pressure to stop smoking, but now I have other means of relieving stress. This program has been a good thing for me because it makes me open my eyes and see how smart I am, and that I can be successful in life by taking things I’ve learned here and applying them on the streets and in my community. I would recommend this program to anyone trying to get off a bad pathway and onto a good one."

"What I like about The Seven Challenges is openly talking about problems and being honest. I also like being able to get things off my chest."

"The Seven Challenges helped me realize that there is more to life than just drugs. It helped me realize why I was doing drugs and what I liked about doing drugs. It helped me to be honest with myself and with others."

"What I think about The Seven Challenges is it is really helping me a lot. As you talk more and more about The Seven Challenges, it shows you why you do the things you do. I haven’t been here long, but I feel like I’m starting to be a changed man. It’s not where you’re from. It’s who you make yourself be. And being here at Starr, I have seen a bigger future for me."

For more information, contact Lyle Dorr, director of admissions and customer service, at dorrl@starr.org or 269.832.6011.