

PROGRAM PROFILE

Avivo, Minnesota

by Farhana Hossain

Avivo is a multiservice, nonprofit organization operating a range of programs that include substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery services, mental health services, and employment services. This profile discusses Avivo's approach to integrating employment services with its treatment and recovery services for people with SUD, along with lessons and insights shared by leaders and practitioners.

This profile was developed as part of a descriptive study of programs that offer employment services to people with SUD; the study was part of the Building Evidence on Employment Strategies (BEES) Project, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The profile draws on video and phone interviews with program administrators and selected staff members conducted during the summer of 2020. For quick facts on Avivo, see Box 1.¹

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Avivo operates three treatment and recovery programs each year for people who have been diagnosed with SUD:

- 1 A family residential program** for pregnant and parenting women with children
- 2 A family outpatient program** for pregnant and parenting women with children
- 3 An individual outpatient program** for both men and women

Both outpatient programs also provide sober housing to participants. About two-thirds of those who complete the family residential program continue their treatment and recovery in the family outpatient program. Participants in outpatient programs have access to job-readiness activities, job search assistance, and short-term occupational skills training programs.



LOCAL CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

Avivo serves the city of Minneapolis and surrounding area. While there are no income limits on the programs, staff members report that nearly all participants have incomes at the federal poverty level or lower when they enroll. Most participants have a history of using multiple substances, which most commonly include methamphetamine, heroin, crack cocaine, marijuana, or alcohol.

Avivo provides SUD assessments at its Minneapolis location, at correctional facilities, and at homeless encampments in the community, referring those who may be eligible to its SUD treatment and recovery programs. Correctional facilities, probation officers, and child welfare agencies also serve as major referral sources.² For this reason, a large share of Avivo's participants have been involved with the criminal legal system, and a majority have experienced housing and employment instability. More than 90 percent of the women served in the family residential and outpatient programs are single parents, and many come to Avivo's treatment and recovery programs to get the help they need to retain or regain custody of their children.



SUD TREATMENT AND RECOVERY SERVICES

Avivo's SUD programs integrate behavioral therapies with mental health counseling, peer support, case management, and a range of support services to help participants transition from treatment to recovery to sustained well-being in the community (see Figure 2). Avivo structures its services to take a holistic approach—focusing on the “whole person,” rather than on specific problems or just the person's substance use. Staff members also report that Avivo focuses on incorporating trauma-informed approaches and practices that are responsive to different cultures.³ (For example, Avivo uses a sobriety, recovery and wellness guide specifically designed for Native Americans to inform services to Native American participants.)

Box 1. Avivo: Quick Facts

PROGRAM:	Family residential program for pregnant and parenting women with children, family outpatient program for pregnant and parenting women with children, and individual outpatient program for both men and women
LOCATION:	Minneapolis, MN
IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION:	Avivo
PARTICIPANTS SERVED PER YEAR:	500 (roughly two-thirds of whom make use of employment services)
SERVICES:	SUD treatment along with childcare, parenting education, child-development programs, peer support, medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD), job-readiness activities, job search assistance, and access to short-term occupational skills training programs
STAFFING:	46 full-time equivalent staff members

Avivo provides medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) to family residential participants with opioid use disorder. The program has developed partnerships with community clinics that deliver MOUD doses; it also employs a nurse practitioner so it can store and administer medications at the residential treatment facility. For participants in the outpatient program, Avivo provides transportation to clinics that provide MOUD and tracks their use of medications as part of their treatment plans.



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Avivo provides employment services to participants in the outpatient programs, but not in the family residential program, where participants spend most of their time on treatment and recovery services. Employment services, including referrals to training and education programs, are tailored to the needs and interests of individuals. Participation is not required.

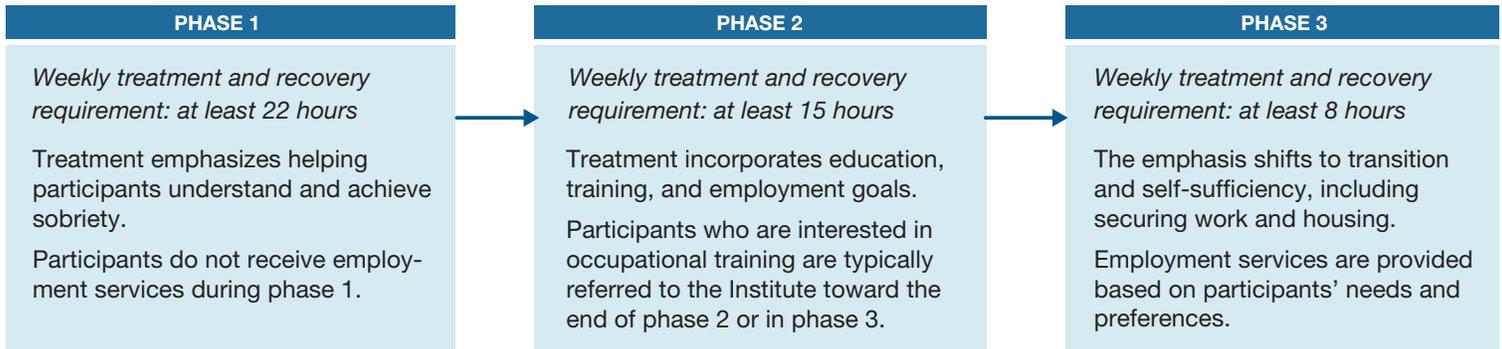
Avivo uses a phased approach to providing employment services for outpatient participants, gradually shifting time and emphasis from treatment and recovery to community transition (see Figure 1). During phase one, Avivo services primarily focus on treatment and recovery, helping participants navigate pressing challenges and gain more stability in their lives (for example, by dealing with requirements related to child custody). During phase two, participants begin formulating employment-related goals. At the end of phase two and in phase three, they focus on reaching these employment-related goals. The time spent on each phase varies by participant and depends on the person's progress in reaching milestones related to treatment and recovery.

Avivo provides a range of employment services that are tailored to participants' needs:

- **Job-readiness services and job search assistance.** Avivo provides job-readiness services that include coaching participants on workplace behavior and helping them with job applications, résumés, and interviews. Participants have access

Figure 1. Avivo Outpatient Program Phases

As participants progress through three phases, the focus of the program shifts from treatment to recovery to sustained well-being in the community, which includes employment. The time spent on each phase varies depending on the participants and their needs.



to a virtual career center that has job listings from employer partners and external job boards, interest assessments, and information about career pathways. Staff members reported that employers and other stakeholders in the community often reach out to them with opportunities (for example, a local carpenter's union recruited some participants for an apprenticeship program in 2020). Staff members also said that many participants find work through their peers in the program. Many participants get jobs in restaurants, retail, and service industries.

- Occupational training.** Staff members reported that about a quarter of the outpatient participants receive occupational skills training and seek certifications offered internally through flexible state funding to provide employment and training to people who do not meet the eligibility criteria for workforce-system funding. While the training changes from year to year to reflect local labor market demands, it includes a series of "first-step" training offerings designed for entry-level jobs with fewer educational requirements, such as custodial maintenance and warehouse occupations. Participants who engage in a training program receive job-readiness and job search services, and job-retention support for up to six months after placement.
- High school equivalency programs.** If participants seek to advance their education or pursue training for specific occupations, Avivo helps them explore their options in the community and makes referrals to providers. Most of the participants in the family programs do not have their high school credentials, and many are referred to community providers who offer high school equivalency test preparation and adult basic education.

Avivo has an advisory council of local employers to inform its training menu and curricula and to aid in job-readiness activities

(for example, employer representatives volunteer time to participate in mock interviews with participants of training programs). In addition, staff members actively engage local employers to identify opportunities and place participants in jobs.



SUPPORT SERVICES

Staff members connect participants to resources in the community (such as clothing and diapers for children), drive them to appointments or help them make use of other transportation options (such as medical transportation offered through Medicaid), provide coaching and guidance on life skills and parenting, and assist with their transition out of the program (by helping with searches for housing and employment, for example).

Avivo provides meals in the family residential and individual outpatient programs. In the family outpatient program, participants buy their own groceries, and Avivo helps them apply for public benefits for food and cash assistance that they may be eligible for.

Since the family residential and outpatient programs serve single mothers, Avivo provides a range of services focused on parenting and child development, including on-site childcare when participants are attending treatment services. For most of these mothers, SUD has affected their relationships with their children, as well as the health and development of the children, and a large share of participants are working to regain custody of their children. Avivo coordinates with child welfare services to help mothers reach milestones toward reunification with their children. In addition, a family case manager works with mothers on parenting goals and

skills, and a small child development team works with the children on their developmental and educational progress.

PARTNERS

Participants have access to a virtual career center that has job listings from employer partners and external job boards, interest assessments, and information about career pathways. Staff members reported that employers and other stakeholders in the community often reach out to Avivo with job opportunities for participants. The program has also developed partnerships with community clinics for MOUD provision.

FUNDING SOURCES

The residential and outpatient SUD treatment and recovery programs at Avivo are primarily funded through fee-for-service Medicaid; employment services and most of the supportive services for SUD participants are funded through public and private grants, and are adapted as funding availability changes.



STAFF REFLECTIONS

Avivo's leaders say that the limited availability of multiyear funding is the biggest challenge to bringing training and employment services to people in SUD programs. Staff members noted that the people Avivo serves—most of whom have multiple additional barriers to employment, such as criminal records, housing instability, limited education, and parenting challenges—need long-term support if they are to achieve sustained labor market success. Avivo has made some progress in this area, securing a grant in 2020 to launch a follow-up program for women in residential treatment who do not continue to the outpatient program. Avivo will follow up with the women for a year to provide different types of support, including employment-related services.

In reflecting on their efforts to integrate education and employment services into SUD programs, Avivo's leaders and staff members highlighted the importance of:

- **Getting everyone to agree on shared goals.** Staff members in different roles often have different goals for their work with participants (for example, treatment staff members tend to emphasize recovery before employment). Avivo is working to develop a set of shared goals that make employment-related

outcomes an explicit priority for SUD program participants, and to get more of the staff in agreement about how employment services should be integrated with treatment and recovery services.

- **Creating organizational practices to strengthen collaboration and service integration.** Such practices include training events and forums for learning and communication among staff members in treatment and employment roles. They also involve setting expectations and processes for service coordination at important points in the process (such as intake or treatment-plan development).
- **Hiring dedicated staff members with experience in job development and employment services.**⁴ Treatment-focused staff members acknowledged their limitations in delivering employment services to participants. Avivo has employed a dedicated career counselor for its SUD programs in the past when funding was available. It did not have one at the time of the interview, but was planning to hire one again.
- **Meeting participants where they are.** Staff members at Avivo seek to empower participants to make choices that advance their recovery by providing them with skills, information, and guidance, as opposed to making choices for them. Staff members added that listening to what participants want increases their chances of success in treatment and recovery and in employment.

SNAPSHOT GRAPHIC

Figure 2 summarizes Avivo's services.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Box 1 gives staff sizes in full-time equivalents. Full-time equivalents indicate the number of full-time employees at an organization plus the number of part-time employees, standardized to a full-time basis. For example, an organization with 4 full-time and 3 half-time employees would have 5.5 full-time equivalents.
- 2 The child welfare system responds in cases of alleged child abuse and neglect.
- 3 Trauma-informed approaches train staff members to recognize the symptoms of trauma and to understand its effects on behavior.
- 4 Job developers focus on moving people into employment by working with employers to identify their needs.

Figure 2. Snapshot of Services in Avivo’s Treatment and Recovery Programs

	Residential	Outpatient with supportive housing	
TARGET LENGTH OF STAY	90 days	Up to a year	90 to 120 days
TARGET POPULATION	Pregnant women/women with children under 18	Anyone	
TREATMENT AND RECOVERY SERVICES 	At least 30 hours of services each week	Graduated amounts of services, starting with at least 22 hours/week and ending with about 10 hours/week	
	Individual and group counseling from licensed alcohol and drug counselors		
	Mental health counseling from licensed therapists		
	Customized support from peer recovery specialists		
	Medication for opioid use disorder		
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES 	<i>Not provided.</i> <i>About two-thirds of those who complete the residential program continue to the family outpatient program, where they can receive employment services.</i>	Job-readiness support, job search assistance, and referrals for education and training services, based on participants’ needs and preferences	
	Option to engage in short-term occupational training courses offered by the Avivo Institute of Career and Technical Education, which also provides job-readiness training and assistance with credential attainment, job development, and job retention		
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES 	Case management and service coordination		
	Parenting support and coaching, on-site childcare		
	Child development program working with children on their developmental and educational progress		
	Meals	Meals	
	Transportation for medical and court appointments, housing, and job search, etc.		
	Help navigating requirements of the criminal justice and child welfare systems		
	Assistance with acquiring public benefits and with housing after the program		
	External referrals for various needs, such as wellness checks for children		

SOURCE: Interviews with Avivo leaders and staff members conducted between June and August of 2020.

NOTE: Different participants may stay in the program different amounts of time.