

This is the world we live in.

The government wants standardized policy, procedure, and governance. I think most people would agree with that. But what does that mean to the addict?

I'll give you an example of my experiences with government funded institution. At addiction services I visited a counsellor once every two weeks and, on average, three hours a month only to leave and go back into the environment I was currently living. I was living with all the triggers and behaviors without even understanding what triggers meant to addiction.

I was given a "happiness chart" and asked on a scale of one to 10 how happy I was in certain areas of my life. I am smart enough to know that in this model there are measureable ways to improve. The chart can be a report which can be measureable, standardized and evaluated - makes sense. Do I really think that an adult coming out of detox who may have lost custody of children wants a "happiness chart" from a person who doesn't understand the first thing about addiction?

Another model is the methadone program. I have witnessed addicts lined up and sitting on the floor in the hospital waiting for their methadone. What does that say to a person? More importantly, do we ask who benefits from a methadone program? Probably the same people who diagnose a person with OCD and depression and send them on their way with three major prescriptions, after ONLY one 30 minute visit? Can you imagine -- three major prescriptions from a doctor? "The Doc must be right and this will fix me." Do you know that it is easier for some to get prescriptions for themselves than it is to get food for their families, and far less embarrassing and shameful?

The government sponsors assembly line programs where you are slotted a few hours a month, treated like a number and thrown some pills. Is this going to solve the problem of addiction? It does, however, fit their bill of governance, policy, and standardization - so congratulations. But what about dignity?

So here we have Talbot House. Ask the men, not the one or two that provided this platform which triggered this investigation, but the hundreds of men that went through the Talbot House doors. The men who are treated with dignity and given the time and space in a healthy safe environment -- expressing love and their goodness to the animals and the natural surroundings probably for the first time in a long time -- maybe ever. Sitting down and sharing meals at a table and having conversation. Doing daily chores. Working alongside other men building, creating and discovering - SMILING.

Do you know how important a genuine smile is? Ask the families of these addicts when the last time they seen a genuine smile. What about walking with your head up and making eye

contact and having a sense of pride and taking care of yourself? People understand what a good night of restful sleep means. Rest is crucial to making decisions and sound choices in your daily life. Things can go considerably wrong in the course of a day without proper rest -- now imagine that for people living with addiction whose default is to use.

These too are measurable ways but we are sorry that they are not documented in a standardized form. The Board and several Talbot House residents were in the process of working on the standards when this situation occurred.

Why wouldn't an addict, who is thrown to the side, feel worthless, with no hope or belief that they can get back to any sense of life, whose is just a number in a system continue to use? But what if you tried to instill value, respect, dignity, love, truth and acceptance -- where investing into an "individual" not a "system" means something.

Taxpayers, I am not saying that methadone doesn't have its place - but where are the supports outside of that? How is value and hope instilled into these people? AND again I cannot stress enough -- ask yourselves who is getting rich off of methadone and how the politicians consider it an answer to the taxpayers as a way in dealing with addiction. Do not let them fool you!

And for those on methadone or taking prescriptions, I am NOT saying that they do not work or they are not important to one's well-being. I am simply saying it is the first thing they throw at you, especially if you are considered an addict, and if you are someone who doesn't necessarily have the supports to weigh the pros and cons in order to make an informed decision and entirely desperate -- what would you do? It just appears that this is what you need to do to get going in the right direction.

DCS early on, once stated that "this is the perfect storm isn't it?" An allegation from a angered resident sparks the closing of Talbot House and the smearing of a man's reputation. How timely? In the wake of the latest church scandal and the recent Braemore Home concerns comes an allegation against Fr. Paul Abbass.

DCS knew this climate and took advantage of it. In my mind, ending its relationship with the church, and doing so, resulted in the closure of Talbot House. Although DCS won't admit it, and are claiming they did everything to support the men during closure, DCS and the way they handled this investigation are responsible.

The doors were opened and the men loved the place. A few months after DCS had shown its presence, the doors were closed. The investigation did not have to tie people's hands and leave no other choice but facility closure. There were other and more practical and professional ways to handle this situation.

I am truly ashamed that our government would allow and support the recent treatment of Fr. Paul Abbass and more importantly, allow the home of so many grateful men to be closed.

I am an addict who went through all the programs to find recovery. Talbot House was my last stop. I went there in 2006 and have remained close to the community and continued to volunteer up until its closing. I am forever grateful what it has given me, my family, and for all the new relationships I have to today. Mostly, I am grateful for a place filled with like-minded people who restored my faith and belief in "myself."

The men do not want the *funding* restored -- we already know who truly benefits from your programs -- we want Talbot House restored, because it is Talbot House that has given us the freedom to make choices, not tie our hands.