

IT'S YOUR HEALTH

Site organizes addiction recovery at home

Advocates say 'conciierge' option appeals to high-profile people who can't devote time to rehab.

The post-holiday period, right after many of us have drunk ourselves nearly into oblivion, provides a good wakeup time for those who may have a problem with drinking or drugs.

This is not a problem you put on your New Year's resolution list; it's far more serious than that.

While there are many fine facilities that help addicts get straight — and they're rarely cheap, of course — one service is starting up in our area whose staff thinks it offers great appeal to high-profile residents in Palm Beach and elsewhere who may not want to take time off for recovery.

Sue Merklin calls it "conciierge" home addiction recovery. (See the Web site, addictionreach.com) While it may be hard to believe that a person who is deep into alcohol or drugs can be helped while remaining at home, Merklin says this is

not only possible, but often preferable when an addict can't or won't devote a few months to rehab outside the home, or fears a "disappearing" act will raise questions among acquaintances.

"The people we're attracting won't go to rehab; they're high profile and they can't leave their jobs," Merklin says. "We'll work along with their schedules. If they're not good and can't be committed, we refer them out to other services."

This new business is in the process of making connections in the area, which they began at a recent conference at The Breakers. Merklin said they have doctors signed up to provide in-home services who have been practicing for 25 years or more and are listed on the Addiction Reach Web page.

At-home services listed on the site include everything from medical detoxification to mental health counseling to massage therapy, hypnosis, acupuncture and nutrition guidance. Clients, she says, pick the services they want. I'm assuming they have to get detox services and maybe mental health counseling if they haven't

had it elsewhere. Otherwise, what would stop me from ordering up a nice massage and nothing more?

The Web site seems to verify this. It says, "both conventional and in-home treatment includes a medical and mental health component and experienced, well-educated clinicians."

Merklin said Addiction Reach Home has all the necessary licensing that is required and can provide services from Palm Beach, to Wellington, to Boca, and to Jupiter.

Since it's been launched only a couple months ago, Merklin doesn't have statistics about how successful the program is in preventing recurrences. But national stats are plentiful on recidivism and the many types of addictive behaviors among different age groups and ethnicities.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, a division of the National Institutes of Health, posts on its Web site — drugabuse.gov — that addiction can be successfully treated and even cured. "Addiction need not be a life sentence," the page says. "Like other chronic

diseases, addiction can be managed successfully ... People can regain control of their lives."

And relapse doesn't mean treatment failure, the page says. It just means that treatment needs to be adjusted, reinstated, or that alternate treatment is needed. Aside from saying that effective addiction treatment should combine medications with behavioral therapy, NIDA concludes simply that treatment has to be tailored to each patient.

Addiction Reach Home preaches treatment that isn't a "punishment or a series of limitations. ... Instead, it should be a positive experience." That sounds very New Age and clashes sharply with perceptions of people going cold turkey or attempting other forms of recovery that may not work.

But Merklin says they can give prospective patients an in-home visit to help them make a decision. Personally, I think anything that an addict will agree to and can pay for is a good path to take. But, keeping someone in the environment that may have led to addiction in the first place, sounds risky.



Carolyn Susman



Merklin Services provided throughout county.