

## December 2014 Youth Take Advantage of Tattoo Removal Program to Enhance Future Opportunities

Youth from the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility (ChJCF) made the decision to leave their pasts behind, move forward, and have hindering tattoos removed. A program available to youth in DYS makes it possible to have face, neck and hand tattoos removed in order for youth to enhance their chances of success when they return to their communities.

"It's time to grow up," explained one youth, a 20-year-old from Cleveland, as his reason for removing the tattoos from his hand and neck. "I want to have opportunities when I leave (DYS)," he added.



*A patient of Dr. Gregory Hall shows how his tattoo has diminished after laser treatments. This is not a DYS youth.*

He is interested in joining the Army and is certain that removing the tattoos will improve his chances of getting accepted into the military. For other youth, removing the tattoos is the means to employment opportunities and advancement, easing their transition back into the community.

After just one treatment, "you can see it starting to fade," said another ChJCF youth, an 18-year-old from Lorain. The process takes about six visits before tattoos are no longer visible. When he told his mother that he was removing the tattoos, he said she was "shocked."

Currently, a total of five ChJCF youth are undergoing monthly treatments to remove their tattoos by Dr. Gregory Hall, a Cleveland physician and author of "Teens, Tattoos and Piercings."

In the book, Dr. Hall points out that tattoos can lead to many social issues, such as fewer job prospects, and many health risks, including Hepatitis C.

Information about Integrated Clinical Resources, Inc. and Dr. Hall is available at <http://www.teenstattoosandpiercings.com/gregory-l-hall-md/>.

Youth agree upfront to demonstrate commitment throughout the process. For youth to be eligible, they must be 18-years-old and sign a contract stating that they will not get another tattoo within the next two years. They are also required to perform 30 hours of community service, beyond the number of hours mandated by the court, to demonstrate that they are willing to give back in return for receiving the service.

"It's great to see these youth take advantage of this opportunity," said James Jackson, Parole Services Liaison at the Cleveland Region, who is overseeing the program.

Thanks to a federal grant, this is the first time a tattoo removal program is available to youth at ChJCF, Indian River JCF and to those on parole. Jackson is hopeful that youth at Circleville JCF will soon be able to take advantage of it also.

"This program has been very positive," Jackson said in reference to the reaction he has received from youth in facilities. "Respected youth are getting this done and so other youth are now considering removing their tattoos."