

Program Descriptions for Teens with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

Boarding Schools

Emotional Growth, Therapeutic

These schools generally provide an integrated educational milieu with an appropriate level of structure and supervision for physical, emotional, behavioral, familial, social, intellectual, and academic development. They grant high school diplomas or award credits that lead to admission to a diploma granting secondary school. Each school will vary in their approach to the emotional and behavioral needs of the child and we urge parents to review this approach with the professional that has been working with their child to ensure appropriate placement. Placement at these boarding schools can range from 12 months to two years depending on the program's therapeutic components.

Outdoor Behavioral Health

*Wilderness Programs and
Outdoor Therapeutic Programs*

Most outdoor behavioral health programs subscribe to a variety of treatment models that incorporates a blend of therapeutic modalities, but do so in the context of wilderness environments and back country travel. The approach has evolved to include client assessment, development of an individual treatment plan, the use of established psychotherapeutic practice, and the development of aftercare plans. Outdoor behavioral health programs apply wilderness therapy in the field, which contains the following key elements that distinguish it from other approaches found to be effective in working with adolescents: 1) the promotion of self-efficacy and personal autonomy through task accomplishment, 2) a restructuring of the therapist-client relationship through group and communal living facilitated by natural consequences, and 3) the promotion of a therapeutic social group that is inherent in outdoor living arrangements.

Residential Treatment Centers

The focus of these programs is behavioral support. Medication management and medical monitoring is generally available on-site. These facilities treat adolescents with serious psychological and behavior issues. Most are Joint Commission (JCAHO) accredited. These facilities provide group and individual therapy sessions. They are highly structured and offer recreational activities and academics. Specialty residential treatment centers will include psychiatric and behavioral hospitals as well as eating disorder treatment centers.

Small Residential Programs

Small residential programs are designed to serve fewer than 30 students in nurturing, often family-like settings. Small residential programs offer a holistic therapeutic milieu, which is based upon the relationships formed and the social dynamics created in small, intimate environments. They offer appropriate levels of structure and supervision for the emotional, social, and academic development of their students. These programs often incorporate life skills training, academic instruction, outdoor adventure, recreation, and family involvement into an experiential living environment. Small residential programs often maintain an area of specialty for the students they serve.

Transitional Independent Living/ Young Adult Programs

These programs are designed for young people over 18 needing a safe, supportive environment and life skills training as they transition into adulthood. Many offer access to 12-step programs and may have a psychiatric component. Generally they will offer educational programs that are linked to community colleges or universities, or provide schooling at their location. Volunteering, employment arrangements, community service, and re-integration into the community at large are general components of the programs. Many operate on a small residential model and transition to a community based, independent living apartment model.

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