

FACTS *for* FAMILIES

Residential Treatment Programs

Residential Treatment Programs

No. 97; September 2016

Residential treatment programs provide intensive help for youth with serious emotional and behavior problems. While receiving residential treatment, children temporarily live outside of their homes and in a facility where they can be supervised and monitored by trained staff.

Residential treatment can help children and adolescents whose health is at risk while living in their community. For example, the programs are helpful for those who have not responded to outpatient treatments, who have education needs that cannot be met in less restrictive settings at their local schools, or who are in need of further intensive treatment following inpatient psychiatric care.

Effective residential treatment programs provide:

- A comprehensive evaluation to assess emotional, behavioral, medical, educational, and social needs, and support these needs safely.
- An Individualized Treatment Plan that puts into place interventions that help the child or adolescent attain these goals.
- Individual and group therapy.
- Psychiatric care coordinated by a child and adolescent psychiatrist or psychiatric prescriber.
- Involvement of the child's family or support system. Model residential programs encourage and provide opportunities for family therapy and contact through on-site visits, home passes, telephone calls and other modes of communication.
- Nonviolent and predictable ways to help youth with emotional and behavioral issues. The use of physical punishment, manipulation or intimidation should not occur in any residential treatment program.

Figuring out which residential treatment program is the best fit for your child and for your family can be challenging. The following are tips for evaluating residential treatment programs:

- Find and research the programs that are licensed to provide care. States differ in how they license programs, and some programs are accredited by national agencies.
- Check online and with the program to hear about families' and youths' experiences with the program and if possible, speak to a family whose child completed the program. If the program has been reported to state authorities, find out why, and ask about the outcomes of any investigations.
- Seek out programs that are close to home to provide appropriate care for your child if possible. If the program is far from home, be sure that there is a plan for intensive family and community

involvement. Be wary of programs that withhold family contact.

- Be sure that the residential program has a method of maintaining safe behaviors, promoting positive behaviors, and preventing aggression. Make sure that punishments and verbal intimidations are prohibited.
- Look for programs experienced in helping youth with similar issues. Also make sure that their treatments are based on therapies that have proven helpful for those with similar issues to those of your child.
- Ask questions of the staff at the program. If staff is unable to answer your questions, they should refer you to someone at the program who can. In addition, be sure to ask how you can monitor your child's progress. You should be able to find out about how your child is doing at any time.
- Ask the therapist or psychiatrist who works with your child in your community for his or her view on potential programs, and to help you obtain more information.

For additional information see:

ODD: A Guide for Families by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW ■ Washington, DC 20016-3007 ■ 202.966.7300 ■ (FAX) 202.966.2891
<http://www.aacap.org>