



## Questions to ask before making a final placement selection

You will probably never have to make a more important decision in your life than placing your child in a residential treatment facility, whether it is a therapeutic boarding school, a wilderness/outdoor behavioral program or a residential treatment center. As we have indicated in previous sections of our website and provided in many of our articles, we presume you have explored all options before deciding to send your child to a residential program. By now, you have selected 1 or more that you believe will best serve your child. Before making that final decision, we highly recommend that you take the time to explore the following very important areas concerning your child's care in the facility. We urge you not to make a decision until you have explored all of these factors.

### Admissions

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- What are your admission criteria?
- Who reviews my child's application? What are their credentials?
- What are the costs? What does this cost cover?
- Are there additional costs? If so, what are they?
- How long will the admissions process take?
- Who will I be meeting during the admissions process?
- Will I be able to say goodbye to my child after the admissions process is complete?

### Licensing and Accreditation

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- Are you licensed by the State? What type of license is it? What State office issued the license?
- Are you accredited by a mental health agency, such as Joint Commission (JCAHO), Council on Accreditation (COA), Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)
- Do you have a Clinical Director? What are his/her credentials? May I meet him/her?
- What are the credentials of the staff that will be working with my child? Specifically the credentials of the counselors and/or therapists. Are they certified? Licensed within your State?
- What organizations are you affiliated with?

### Therapeutic Model/Clinical

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- Will my child be receiving clinical therapy? How often?
- What will be expected of the parents during the program?
- Do you provide family therapy?
- Do you provide group therapy? If so, who facilitates it? Are there specific group therapies offered? (i.e. adoption issues, drug/alcohol abuse, etc.)
- How is my child's progress judged? Who participates in determining my child's progress?

### Academics

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- Do you provide an academic curriculum?
- If so, what is the core curriculum?
- Are you accredited by a national or regional accrediting agency? Is this accreditation through a 3rd party? If so, what is their name?
- Do you have teachers? If so, are they certified or licensed within your State?
- How many students are in a class?
- Is your academic curriculum internet/computer based?
- Do you offer high school credits that can be transferred to other educational institutions?
- Do you award high school diplomas?

## Medication

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- Can my child be on medication while at your facility?
- Who is responsible for the medication management? His/her credentials?
- Where is the medication stored? Who has access to the medication?
- Who administers the medication? What is their training?

## Direct Care Staff

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- What type of training is provided to your direct care staff?
- What are their duties and qualifications?
- Do you perform background checks? Who does the background check? How extensive is it?
- Do you provide on-going training for your staff?

## Risk Management

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- What measures do you have in place to keep my child safe?
- What are your discipline procedures with resistant students?
- How do you deal with risk-taking behaviors? (i.e. running away, self-harm, etc.)
- Will my child be exposed to other students that have more negative behaviors?
- What if my child becomes ill? Do you have a nurse on staff? Will you transport my child to medical facilities?

## Questions for Specific Program Types

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- Short Term Outdoor/Wilderness Program
- How do you handle severe weather?
- How do you handle emergencies?
- What type of food do you provide?
- How do you manage personal hygiene?
- Long Term Residential Specific
- Are you a locked facility?
- Is there 24-hour awake staff supervision?
- How often will I see my child?
- Will I be able to speak with my child on the telephone?
- Will I be able to write and receive letters?

## Success Rate / Outcomes

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- What is your success rate?
- Do you administer an outcome study? If so, what is that data?
- Do you have students return to your program?

## Transition / Next Step

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- How many of your students return home after the program? If they don't return home, where do they go?
- Will your program help us assess what is the next best step?
- Will I need an educational consultant to plan a next step? Do you compensate an educational consultant for any reason?
- Do you provide aftercare?