



Residential Treatment Programs: Choosing the Right One for Your Child

The decision to place your child in a residential treatment program can be difficult. If you are considering placement for your child in a residential treatment program, it is important that you have all the information you need to make an informed decision about which residential treatment program is right for your child. Your family's culture and your child's unique needs should be a major consideration when you determine the best placement.

Here are some suggestions about how to select the right program.

Gather general information about the program

Schedule a tour of the residential program and talk with program staff. Obtain a feeling for how staff interact with families and with children. Before or during your visit, there are some questions that you will want to ask program staff.

Gather specific information about the program

- Who refers children to this program?
- What are the ages and genders of the children in the program?
- What is the process to have my child admitted to your program?

Learn about the program's treatment options

- What types of therapeutic services are offered?
- Is staff trained in trauma-informed care?
- What are your program's practices for medication management?
- How can we keep our child's outpatient providers informed of our child's progress in the program?

Ask about the program's approach to behavior

- How does staff manage problem behavior?
- What is the treatment program's philosophy of positive behavior interventions?
- Is there a facility-wide behavior plan?
- Will my child's behavior plan be individualized?
- How does your program handle crisis situations?

Understand family involvement in the treatment program

- How are parents involved in the program plan?
- How will we be kept informed about our child's progress?
- What are your visitation policies?
- How often can parents call or contact their child?
- Can my child come home on holidays and weekends?

Ask about your child's education during treatment

- How are education services provided?
- Does the curriculum offered meet the state academic standards for my child's grade level?
- Does education continue during the summer?
- Can my child be evaluated for a 504 Plan during their stay?
- Can my child be evaluated or re-evaluated for special education during their stay?
- Will my child receive all of the special education services he or she needs for his or her disability (e.g., learning disability), including during summer school?

Learn about financial considerations

- How will your residential treatment program be paid? (For example: private insurance, medical assistance, county, court-ordered and funded, public school as a special education service?)
- What services are covered by my child's health insurance plan?
- What is your experience working with our health plan during the treatment stay?
- What is your experience working with our county during the treatment stay?
- Are there limitations to what is covered under my child's health insurance plan?
- Are there any out-of-pocket expenses for parents?

Ask about how the program prepares and plans for discharge*

- What is the average length of treatment for children in your program?
- How does your program decide when a child is ready to be discharged?
- What are your requirements for my child to move back to the community?
- What is the transition process to help ensure success when my child does return to the community?
- What kinds of follow-up care will be provided?

Your rights as a parent under voluntary residential placement

You have the right to be involved throughout the duration of your child's stay in a residential treatment program, unless parental rights have been terminated through the court. You have the right to:

- ✓ Be informed about services your child is receiving
- ✓ Be included in the development of your child's treatment plan
- ✓ Attend planning meetings and IEP meetings (if program provides educational services)
- ✓ Receive copies of your child's records
- ✓ Disagree with the placement unless it has been court-ordered
- ✓ Participate in discharge planning*

PACER resources

For additional information related to residential treatment PACER offers the following resources:

Residential Treatment Programs for Children: What Parents Should Consider

[PACER.org/parent/php/PHP-c85a.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c85a.pdf)

Planning for Your Child's Discharge from a Mental Health Treatment Program: School Checklist

[PACER.org/parent/php/PHP-c284c.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c284c.pdf)

*Planning for Your Child's Discharge from a Mental Health Treatment Program: Home Checklist

[PACER.org/parent/php/PHP-c284b.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c284b.pdf)

Overview of Mental Health Care and Treatment Options for Children and Youth

[PACER.org/parent/php/PHP-c284a.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c284a.pdf)