



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Purpose 12-1-79

The primary purpose of any residential treatment program is to provide care and treatment for those children whose social, educational, emotional, physical, or mental handicaps interfere with normal functioning and make it impossible for them to remain in a family or in the community, or to respond to treatment while living there. Such care is geared to children whose normal growth and emotional development are hampered by poor adult relationships or interference from negative parental or community attitudes.

The facility attempts to enable the child to experience new kinds of relationships in a therapeutically focused, nonpunitive, structured setting. The child is expected to gain in self esteem as well as modify his behavior.

Values of Residential Care 12-1-79

Integration in Treatment Plan 12-1-79

As a total and well-formulated service, residential treatment of the child is designed to overcome personal difficulties and handicapping conditions which interfere with normal functioning so that the child can return to his own family, be placed in a foster home, or adoptive family, or function independently.

The experiences of group living, relationships with staff and other children, daily activities, and the collaborative efforts of social worker, psychiatrist, psychologist, special education teachers, and other staff are used selectively. Individualized services are integrated in a treatment plan carried out 24 hours a day through the facility's structured approach.

Adaptive Environment 12-1-79

The program can be selectively adapted to the individual and group needs of the children and thereby offers day by day experiences on the basis of the plan formulated for each child.

Group Living Experience

In an attempt to strengthen the child's feelings of confidence in handling life situations, group living experiences include activities promoting development of skills, continuing relationships with adults and children, and spontaneous group experiences.

Routines

Well structured routines and clear expectations, are basic to group living and required for daily living, and are used to help the child. Such a frame-work offers the child regularity, continuity, and stability; controls as well as stimulation; opportunity to learn acceptable habits and standards, and the reasons for them; opportunity to learn skills and have some demands made on him, opportunity to find out what is involved in living together; and opportunity to learn to take responsibility for his own behavior.

Atmosphere of Acceptance 12-1-79

To be effective, the therapeutic environment which the treatment facility offers to the child must operate within an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance by the adults whose attitudes and behavior convey a sense of security and stability.

Child-Adult Relationships

Within a residential program, the different staff members offer the child the possibility of a variety of interpersonal relationships. Through these he can learn at his own pace to trust and to select adult models with whom he can identify.

Tolerance of Deviant Behavior

The climate of the facility, often unlike the family or community, will tolerate to a greater extent the impact of the expression of disturbed feelings and of acting out behavior. The expression of such deviant behavior enables the staff to observe and understand what is going on, and to help the child to become aware of his feelings and redirect his behavior. The peer group can have an effect in controlling behavior which it cannot tolerate, and in helping the child become aware of behavior that is unacceptable.

Components of Residential Care 12-1-79

No facility can serve all types of children. Each must develop a program and atmosphere suited to the needs of certain types of children. Various treatment components may be combined to develop a treatment plan directed toward the needs of the individual child.

Mental Health Services 12-1-79

Social work, group work, psychological and psychiatric services are available for diagnosis and treatment of children with emotional problems which interfere with their healthy development and functioning.

Social work services are made available to further the efforts of the facility to provide care and treatment based on an individualized plan for each child with the opportunity of experiencing a one to one relationship.

Group work as an integral part of the service to children living in groups, enhances for the individual child the benefits of group living and group activities.

Psychological and psychiatric services involve the child in individual and group treatment with the goal of bringing about changes in the child's emotional and intellectual adjustment.

In addition to the direct treatment service to each child, the professional staff is responsible for consultation and individual conferences with the residential staff in the formulation of the treatment plan for each child and participation in ongoing and aftercare planning.

Child Care Staff 12-1-79

The child care staff is a vital program component in any facility for children. They offer 24 hour a day care and supervision of the children, individually in their living groups.

Child care staff service includes the responsibilities of child rearing e.g., the child's physical care, care of clothing, help with school work, assignments of daily chores and development of ethical values. The responsibility of disciplining the child when necessary is also included. The latter is carried out in accordance with an administrative framework which specifies acceptable and unacceptable methods of discipline of children as determined by the facility and approved by CP&P.

As an integral part of the total residential treatment service to children, the child care staff also shares responsibility with the Worker, group worker, teacher and other staff in planning for various activities and in carrying out the treatment plan prescribed for the child.

Group Living 12-1-79

Treatment is facilitated through group living. Each child has an opportunity to participate in a variety of groups in the facility, school, and in the community. As part of the treatment program for each child, planned use is made by staff of the relationships and interaction in the groups of which he is a member.

Each child is assigned to a small living group whose composition is purposefully planned, periodically evaluated, and determined by the nature and extent of the problems and strengths of the children.

The living group is an important part of the treatment program, affording each child maximum opportunity for being treated as an individual; having meaningful associations with other members of his group; resolving individual and social conflicts at his own pace; being observed and understood as a basis for continuing and flexible planning.

Activity groups are used to broaden and enhance the experiences of the children in the small living groups. They provide the child with an opportunity to associate with other children and adults outside his small living group and thereby give him some freedom of choice of friends. The child is thus provided with a variety of relationships with both men and women of different ages, personalities and skills.

Limitations of Residential Care 12-1-79

Although facilities for child care provide specialized services to children whose needs can be met more effectively in a group setting than in a family home, residential care, no matter how carefully programmed, is not an ideal placement.

Group living is not the most normal life for any child and many of the features that go into normal development are in danger of being lost in the process of congregate living. It often implies confinement, restricts freedom and privileges ordinarily available to children and may lack factors important to the healthy development of a child.

Some potential limitations in group living which must be recognized and adequately controlled include:

- lack of individualization,
- impersonal atmosphere,
- need to share adults with many other children,
- insufficient opportunities to make decisions,
- lack of privacy,
- deprivation in one form or another, e.g., family life experiences, feelings of belonging,
- restriction of normal interactions with community and peers, and
- the stigma associated with placement in a residential setting.