

Residential Care Advocacy Tip Sheet

Before you visit

- What are your child's needs? Why was this residential facility chosen for your child's particular needs?
- Ask for written information about the residential rules and procedures regarding visits, phone calls, meals, behavior management, crisis intervention, physical restraints, seclusion, safety, participation in religious services, activities after school or evenings, medical and therapeutic services.
- Does the residential have an on-site campus school or do children in the residential go to public school? If there is an on-site campus school, can children, if it is in their educational best interests, attend a public school?
- Review the residential website for information

About the Facility

- Ask how many children are currently in the facility? What is the total number of children that can legally reside in the facility?
- What are the training and credentials of the staff?
- What is the turnover of staff?
- Is there a residential person(s) to contact for treatment, educational, financial, or administrative questions?
- If your child has allergies or other serious medical issues, what precautions or accommodations will be made?
- How are medical emergencies handled?
- Does the facility provide trauma informed care?

About Treatment

- What is the model of treatment?
- What is the typical length of treatment at this facility?
- What therapy services are provided?
- How will you be able to talk to your child's treatment team? And receive reports about treatment?
- What does a child's daily schedule look like?
- What life skills are taught and how? For example, if the youth is older, will he or she learn to do his or her laundry, budget money, participate in Chafee classes, etc?

Contact with child

- Will you be allowed to make unannounced visits?
- How can you contact by phone? Email? In person?
- How will school and residential staff communicate with you?
- How are parents, siblings involved? Are visits allowed with family members, siblings?
- How does the residential support a child's participation in court reviews and permanency planning?
- Can you volunteer to help your child or assist in other ways?

During your visit

- Try to visit when children and youth are at the residential and engaged in their typical routines. Observe interactions between the staff and children.
- Ask for a tour of the building or unit where your child would most likely reside.
- Talk to a staff member who regularly works in that residence.

Behavioral and crisis management

- Residential's are required to develop an individual treatment plan that details the child's goals, progress and how crisis and problems will be handled.
- Ask to review your child's individual treatment plan.
- Ask how your child's plan will be individualized and what behavior reinforcements and age-appropriate consequences might be used.
- Ask about physical restraint and seclusion policies.
- Ask if you will be informed if physical restraint or seclusion is used with your child.
- How are disagreements or problems (grievances) between youth and staff handled? What is the grievance procedure if youths have a complaint?

Education

- Where will your child attend school?
- Is the school able to provide the educational services that are prescribed by your child's IEP?
- If your child has an IEP how you are notified?
- How do the school staff and residential staff communicate, and how often? Are there regular meetings to share information?
- If youth is older, ask that he or she be prepared to pursue his or her goals, such as college or technical school?

After your visit?

- Document your visit.
- Review any reports or written materials you collected.
- Ask yourself, if you feel your child is making progress?
- Document any concerns. Address concerns.
- Talk with others on the child's case and share pertinent information.

It is important to stay engaged with the residential staff about your child or youth. Do not hesitate to ask questions.

**Adapted from the Texas CASA Residential Treatment Center (RTC)
Manual**