

Building Bridges Initiative: Your Life – Your Future

Inside Info on the Residential Programs from Youth Who Have Been There

Starting residential treatment can be hard, so knowing what to expect can help. You might feel alone or angry or scared, and you may be concerned that no one will listen to you and your concerns. We have been right where you are now. We put this information together to help you benefit from our experience.

Going into a residential program is a big change for anyone. When you know what to expect, it can be a lot less scary and you will be able to benefit more from your experience. Don't be afraid to ask questions and take care of yourself. You deserve the best!

The questions below can help you understand what to expect and help you talk about issues with your program, so that you can successfully take charge of your recovery.

Questions You Might Want to Ask Yourself and Others

- How is this program going to **help me**?
- What factors determine **how long** I'm going to stay here?
- What **goals** do I have for myself? **Is this the best place** to help me reach my goals?
- How can I be **involved in decisions** about my treatment?
- **What can I do** to make the most of my time here?
- How can my emotional and physical needs be met so I feel **safe and comfortable**?
- What are the **rules of this program**? Who makes the decisions about the rules? Do I have a role in making the rules?
- How does this program **discipline** youth? How will the staff help me to do my best?
- What kinds of **choices** do I have? Does this program support youth in making their own choices?

- How will I be **educated** while I'm in this program? Will you ensure that my credits transfer to my school, so that I don't fall behind in my educational progress?
- How will you make sure that I can stay in touch with my **parents, siblings, friends** and other important people in my life? How will they fit in to what goes on here (e.g., policies, spending meaningful time with my family, decision-making)? What if there are people I don't want to see?
- What **therapies and medications** will I receive and what are they for? What choices do I have about my therapies and medications?
- How will this program respect **my culture, my beliefs, my sexual orientation and my gender identity**?
- What do I do if I feel I am being **treated unfairly** by staff or if I have other problems with this program?
- Does this program use **seclusion (isolation) or restraint**? If so, what is done to prevent their use?
- What if I find a particular therapy to be too painful or unhelpful? Whom should I approach with **my concerns**?
- How will this program **help prepare me** to go back to my school, to college, to work, or to live on my own and handle finances?
- How can I maintain the connections I make with particular staff?
- If I think my program is **not** right for me, whom can I talk to and how can I advocate for myself? **Who is here to help me if I have a problem?**

For Help and Additional Information

If you have safety concerns, call your state's child abuse hotline or dial 911.

For more information on youth leadership and advocacy, you can contact:

[National Disability Rights Network](#)

[Foster Club](#)

[Community Alliance for the Ethical Treatment of Youth](#)

This Tip Sheet was written by the Building Bridges Youth Advisory Group.

Visit the [Building Bridges Initiative website](#) where you will find more resources.