

SOUTHWESTERN YOUTH SERVICES (SYS)

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Southwestern Youth Services (SYS) is a non-secure residential treatment facility located in Magnolia, which is seven miles east of Luverne on I-90 in Southwestern Minnesota. SYS provides care for young people who have needs that cannot be met through traditional means. SYS strives to educate out students enabling them to make the necessary changes to become successful and productive members of society.

SYS is designed to provide supervision, education and programs to meet the needs of young people who are experiencing legal, social, educational, or behavioral problems. The team of staff at SYS is committed to helping youth entrusted to our care to make positive changes in their lives.

Program Description

The Positive Peer Culture group therapy provides the primary treatment modality at SYS. Individual counseling is also an important part of the programming.

Built around groups of 9-11 youth, under the guidance of an adult leader, Positive Peer Culture (PPC) is designed to “turn around” a negative youth subculture and mobilize power of the peer group in a productive manner. Youth in PPC groups learn how to identify problems and work toward their solution. In group sessions and in day-to-day activities, the goal is to fully involve young people in the helping process.

Positive Peer Culture does not seek to impose specific rules, but to teach basic values. PPC is not a permissive, laissez-faire approach, but places considerable demands on youth. Although adults remain in charge, young people have the responsibility of helping one another. If there were one rule, it would be that people must care for one another.

Transportation

SYS provides transportation for the initial pickup and intake of youth ordered to complete the program. Our transport staff is trained to provide safe and secure transportation services. This is our way of providing an important service and gives our staff the opportunity to observe the youth and learn more about them. In addition, the traveling time will give staff the opportunity to explain the program rules and expectations to the youth, as well as answer questions the youth may have.

SYS also provides transportation for court, eye and dental exams, and medical appointments. If necessary, SYS will transport students to outpatient services deemed appropriate by those working with the student.

Independent Living Skills

Independent Living Skills are incorporated into virtually every aspect of a student's day while in Placement at SYS. Youth are taught proper hygiene skills, as well as how to maintain clean and healthy living quarters. In our food service department, youth are taught how to cook foods and receive nutritional education. In the classroom, youth are provided with information and instruction to help them properly complete such things as job applications, resumes, maintaining bank accounts and budgeting.

Independent Living Skills are an ongoing educational experience that begins when students enter the program and continues throughout the Transitional Living Phase. Several program classes are held to increase student awareness and skills in these areas. SYS also utilizes several community resources and brings in a variety of community members to broaden the skills of our residents. They also bring new and exciting experiences into the lives of the residents.

Anger Management

SYS recognizes that anger is a major problem among young offenders. Without each student personally addressing their anger and learning productive ways to deal with the source of their anger, opportunity for positive change is unlikely.

Thus SYS offers anger management classes for all students. The classes are designed to educate students that anger is a natural humane function without more value. Anger management classes give the students a safe environment to process and express anger so that anger can become an important energy source for healthy living. Students will learn about anger, how to check for hidden anger, deal with resentments, and process their anger in a more effective and appropriate manner. Effective communications skills are also taught and will assist students when dealing with their issues and resolving conflict.

Health Services

Medical Services

SYS has on-site medical staff that handles routine medical problems, as well as initial physicals. These professionals are also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to consult and give direction to any medical concerns, which may include reporting to the agency for further medical assistance. Our medical staff also oversees all medication administration, sets all medical appointments and acts as a liaison between SYS and the medical community.

Contract services with the area physicians, dentists, therapists, optometrists, and the medical community allows Southwestern Youth Services to provide a comprehensive health care program.

If any services are needed that SYS cannot meet in-house, these services are contracted through out-side resources. SYS contracts with Southwestern Mental Health in Luverne, MN for Psychological and Psychiatric evaluations along with medication reviews, and one-on-one therapy. SYS uses Stronghold Counseling Services in Sioux Falls, SD for sex offender therapy. Although SYS is not a sexual offender treatment facility, we will accept a limited number of youth into our program and seek outpatient therapy through Stronghold Counseling Services.

Psychological Services

SYS contracts through area mental health centers to provide a variety of services in the mental health field. Services are available by request and completed upon recommendation and consent from the committing agency and/or guardian. Services may include: testing, evaluations, and individual or family therapy.

Recreation Programming

SYS recognizes the importance of physical exercise, recreational activities and leisure skills development for young people. Participation by all residents is a requirement at SYS and is part of the daily routine. This participation serves to encourage competition, teamwork, and communication. In addition, recreation is a powerful tension reducer, promotes a healthy lifestyle, and helps establish social relationships through shared experiences, all of which are crucial to a young person's development.

SYS offers a variety of structured recreational activities inside and outside of the facility. Learning how to interact and have fun together is of the utmost importance and is a priority in all recreational and leisure events. In addition to sport and leisure activities, SYS also incorporates recreational therapy into the daily programming.

Educational Services

SYS is committed to ensuring that youth entrusted to our care receive quality educational services. The educational program is a year-round program that employs highly qualified teachers who are licensed by the state of Minnesota and are committed to the educational needs of the students.

Our association with the Southwest/West Central Educational Cooperative provides SYS the assistance necessary to offer a full array of educational services. SYS also employs a professional consultant to oversee our educational programming and to assist the teaching staff in classroom structure, lesson plans, curriculum modifications, Minnesota Graduation Standards, as well as the implementation of individualized and group teaching methods.

SYS also has on staff a Speech and Language Therapist, School Psychologist and a certified Special Education Teacher. These professionals work closely with the teaching department and the student's interdisciplinary team to provide testing and individualized educational plan development.

A structured environment provides youth with the individualized attention needed to help them succeed. This system also serves to prepare them to reenter the mainstream school system or pursue an appropriate alternative route. SYS strives to continually upgrade its educational services and diligently adheres to all relevant guidelines established by the Minnesota Center for Children, Families and Learning.

Community Service

SYS believes that community service projects are a very important part of effective programming. Through various projects and opportunities, students learn the importance of giving back to society. At the same time, students learn new skills, their work ethic is increased, and an improvement is seen in each student's self-esteem. SYS is dedicated to helping young people learn new and better social skills and how to use the community as a positive resource.

Community Service

Students who enter the program are given the opportunity to give back to the community in a variety of ways. Many students today enter placement with court ordered community service. SYS recognized the importance of this and works closely with the student and the community to complete the designated hours. Therefore, if warranted, community service becomes a part of the students individualized Case Service Plan.

Volunteering

In keeping with SYS dedication to improving student's self-esteem and work ethic, a variety of opportunities exist for students to offer their assistance to individuals within the community. Whether as a group or on an individual basis, students are given the opportunity to give back to society and show they can be a positive and productive member of the community.

Employment

Students who display a positive attitude, a good work ethic and progress throughout the program are given the opportunity to obtain paid employment. This privilege is granted only to those students who have earned the trust of their staff and can handle the responsibility. Opportunities exist for paid employment both on an off campus. Many students enjoy earning money so that they are able to access their account while in placement, have money to take with them upon discharge and/or be able to repay restitution.

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Community service, volunteering and employment may consist of a variety of work opportunities. These may include: assisting the local school districts, working for the City of Luverne, helping local farmers, Adopt-A-Highway program, working in the campus cafeteria, spending time at area community centers, volunteering at the Mary Jane Good Samaritan Center, along with employment opportunities with local businesses.

Chemical Dependency

SYS understands the growing need for more comprehensive programming related to chemical dependency. With the growing number of students in placement requiring in-depth education and therapy regarding the use of drugs and alcohol, SYS has and continues to expand the scope and quality of services available to those placed in the program. Through these services, residents placed with or without a chemical dependency problem will be able to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to address these issues, make informed decisions and become successful.

Chemical Dependency Education Class

The Chemical Dependency Education Class is required for all students in the residential phase at SYS. The class meets for one hour each week and covers curriculum on the history of drug abuse, as well as, information on different drug types, their effects and dangers.

Students participate in group discussion and activities that encourage them to explore their own attitudes and beliefs about alcohol and other drugs.

Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous

Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings are held on Monday and Thursday evenings. These meetings are open to any student who wishes to attend and focus on incorporating the Twelve Step Program into one's daily lifestyle. Recovering addicts from the surrounding community who have reached a level in their own recovery process conduct the meetings. Their experiences allow them to connect with the students at a personal level and offer them tools to understand and fight their addiction.