

Principles of Good Practice

The Principles of Good Practice have been unanimously adopted by the board of directors and membership of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs as basic principles of practice ascribed to by member programs and schools. Full members certify compliance with the practice principles while associate members aspire to these principles, but are not yet in full compliance. The intent of this statement of practice principles is to raise the general level of operating practice within therapeutic programs and schools.

These guidelines refer to therapeutic programs and emotional growth schools as “program/schools” and refer to client/students as “program participants”.

1.0 ADHERENCE TO STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS

The program/school shall adhere to all applicable state and federal laws in conducting the operation, including administration, hiring and employee practices, observance of safety regulations, and the care of program participants.

2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

The program/school has a responsibility and duty to strive to provide its program participants with appropriate ethical and professional service in all areas of operations.

- 2.1 The program/school will have a written plan for governance, program administration, and professional services. The Plan includes the following elements.
 - 2.1.1 Introduction and history of the program/school.
 - 2.1.2 A delineation of the responsibility of the governing body including, policy development, responsibility for implementation, compliance, amendment, and oversight of the policies.
 - 2.1.2.1 The program/school has a governing body of appropriate size, structure, and composition to make policy, structure, and composition to make policy, to hold the school's mission in trust, and to monitor the school's activity and programs.
 - 2.1.2.2 The program/school's governing body provides fiduciary oversight and resources adequate to support the realization of the school's mission and program.
 - 2.1.2.3 The governing body has an approved strategic plan that is supported by a financial plan.
 - 2.1.2.4 The governing body regularly evaluates its effectiveness.
 - 2.1.3 Mission Statement.
 - 2.1.4 Philosophy of the program/school.
 - 2.1.5 Description of the population the program/school serves, including admission, non-admission and discharge criteria.
 - 2.1.6 Description of services provided.
 - 2.1.7 Organizational Structure including an organizational chart.
 - 2.1.8 Tuition / Fee statement including all ancillary cost, and refund policy.
 - 2.1.9 A plan for self-evaluation and program/school improvement.

- 2.2 The program/school shall have proof of general liability, professional liability, fire, and vehicle insurance coverage as appropriate.

- 2.3 The program/school will follow accepted accounting practices.

- 2.4 Members school/programs will:
 - 2.4.1 Not offer or accept payment for referrals
 - 2.4.2 Represent fact truthfully to program participants and third-party payers.
 - 2.4.3 Disclose fully all costs and fees for service.
 - 2.4.4 Respect copyrights, trade authorship, and proprietary information, and will not plagiarize or use materials, documents, or resources from other sources or programs without permission.
 - 2.4.5 Not use a name or marketing strategy that misleads the public or make guarantees of outcome to consumers.
 - 2.4.6 Disclose fully all ownership and financial relationships between associated programs, services, and professionals where there is a potential for a conflict of interest.
 - 2.4.7 Disclose fully in the membership application process any past sanctions, licensure/accreditation revocation, and criminal conviction against any school, program/owner, and board of directors or executive officer.

3.0 EMPLOYEE PRACTICES

The program/school will only provide services (including assessment services), that lie within the scope of the service and the training and qualifications of its staff. The program/school will accurately and factually represent the competence, education, training, certification and experience of its employees. NATSAP members will not discriminate on the basis or race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

3.1 Hiring Practices

- 3.1.1 Applicants are required to complete an Application for Employment. The application form must include the following:
 - 3.1.1.1 Previous place(s) of employment.
 - 3.1.1.2 Relevant education and experiences
 - 3.1.1.3 Signature, verifying that all information is correct and factual.
- 3.1.2 Upon extending an offer for employment, the program/school will obtain:
 - 3.1.2.1 A criminal background check including driving history.
 - 3.1.2.2 A minimum of two professional references (written or verbal).
 - 3.1.2.3 Proof of professional credentials.
 - 3.1.2.4 A medical examination or statement signed by the employee assuring fitness to execute the physical and mental requirements delineated in the job description.
 - 3.1.2.5 If the employee is required to drive a company vehicle, or is asked to transport program participants in his/her own car, the Department of Motor Vehicle will be contacted to determine that the respective employee has a valid driver's license.
- 3.1.3 The program/school will have a process to describe the qualifications for all program/school staff, employees and faculty as appropriate to its mission and goals.

3.2 On-Going Employee Practices

- 3.2.1 Each employee will have a written job description. The job description will include the following:
 - 3.2.1.1 Job title.
 - 3.2.1.2 Duties and responsibilities.
 - 3.2.1.3 Minimum level of education, training and work experience required for the position.
 - 3.2.1.4 Physical demands of the position.
 - 3.2.1.5 Lines of authority. (Delineation of supervisory responsibility).
- 3.2.2 The program/school shall have written Employee Policies and Procedures that will include policies on:
 - 3.2.2.1 New Employee orientation procedures include:
 - 3.2.2.1.1 Orientation in philosophy, objectives and services.
 - 3.2.2.1.2 Emergency procedures (Fire, Disaster, etc.).
 - 3.2.2.1.3 Current program/school policy and procedures including behavior management.
 - 3.2.2.1.4 First aid and CPR training.
 - 3.2.2.1.5 Statutory responsibilities, including those covered by state and federal laws.
 - 3.2.2.2 Continuing staff training and development.
 - 3.2.2.3 Performance appraisals.
 - 3.2.2.4 Methods for filing and addressing employee grievances.
 - 3.2.2.5 Disciplinary actions, termination, and discharge practices.
 - 3.2.2.6 Sexual and other forms of harassment or misconduct.
 - 3.2.2.7 Abuse reporting laws
 - 3.2.2.8 Vacations, holidays, illness, extended leave, military leave, and jury duty.
 - 3.2.2.9 Volunteers, interns, and contact personnel if applicable.
 - 3.2.2.10 Confidentiality and information disclosure within the limits recognized by appropriate professional principles, including state and federal regulation.
 - 3.2.2.11 Transporting program participants and their parents/guardians.

- 3.2.2.12 Prevention and investigation of allegations levied by program participants regarding employee misconduct.
- 3.2.2.13 The program/school will describe employee benefits.
- 3.2.2.14 The program/school will obtain a criminal background check including a driving history for all employees, and a criminal background check including a driving history for all volunteers and contract employees who have unsupervised direct contact with the students.

3.3 Personnel File

- 3.3.1 The program/school will maintain a personnel file on each employee that includes:
 - 3.3.1.1 Application and/or resume
 - 3.3.1.2 Background clearance.
 - 3.3.1.3 Proof of credentials including education, licensure, certifications, etc. as applicable.
 - 3.3.1.4 Proof of medical examination or statement of ability to perform duties.
 - 3.3.1.5 Signed job description.
 - 3.3.1.6 Documentation of new employee orientation and ongoing staff development training.
 - 3.3.1.7 Performance evaluation(s).
 - 3.3.1.8 Emergency contact information.
 - 3.3.1.9 Documentation of disciplinary actions termination or discharge
 - 3.3.1.10 Signed confidential agreement regarding the exchange of information concerning program participants, their families, and fellow workers.
 - 3.3.1.11 Copy of driver's license (if employee is required to drive a company vehicle as part of the job).
 - 3.3.1.12 Documentation of employment status e.g. hourly, salary, part-time, full time, exempt, non-exempt, etc.

4.0 ADMISSION/DISCHARGE POLICY

The program/school will have a written Admission Policy which defines the enrollment criteria and delineates inclusion and exclusion criteria. Such criteria will be consistent with the mission of the program/school. Admission forms will provide pertinent history including family, medical, psychiatric, developmental, and educational background information.

- 4.1 The Admissions screening process will examine the physical, emotional, behavioral, and academic history, in order to determine whether the program is appropriate in light of the respective participant's needs and limitations.
- 4.2 The program/school will provide program participants, parents, legal guardians, or other pertinent parties with a clear and informed statement of the nature of the services that will be provided including, risks associated with these services.
- 4.3 Upon admission, a file will be created for each program participant, containing the following:
 - 4.3.1 Demographic information including emergency contact information.
 - 4.3.2 Basic medical, family, behavioral, legal, educational, information including past and current assessments.
 - 4.3.3 A signed statement indicating receipt of a copy of the student handbook or statement of Participants Rights and Responsibilities, or a witness attesting to the participant's refusal to sign. (For details see principle 6.0).
 - 4.3.4 Contract, release and consent forms.
 - 4.3.5 Documentation of communication with parents, legal guardians, payer sources and other parties.
 - 4.3.6 Photograph.
 - 4.3.7 Copy of any grievance filings and action taken.
 - 4.3.8 Documentation of services rendered

- 4.4 The program/school will conduct ongoing assessment to determine appropriateness of continued placement.
- 4.5 Upon termination or discharge of a program participant, the program/school will make appropriate recommendations for continuing care and/or education.

5.0 BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 5.1 The program/school shall have a written Behavior Management Plan which describes:
 - 5.1.1 How human dignity and rights will be respected in the application of behavior management practices.
 - 5.1.2 Special treatment/intervention processes including such techniques as: seclusion, restraint, therapeutic holding, passive holding.
 - 5.1.3 Procedures for handling emergency situations such as suicidality, abuse, assault, and runaway.
 - 5.1.4 Acceptable and non-acceptable consequences.
 - 5.1.5 On going training procedures for employees.

6.0 PARTICIPANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 The program/school will have a written Student Handbook or statement of Program Participant Rights and Responsibilities as appropriate to the setting, purpose, and pertinent state and federal law. Such manual or statement will include statements regarding the following rights:
 - 6.1.1 To receive care or services within the program's capability, mission, and applicable law and regulations.
 - 6.1.2 Freedom from discrimination.
 - 6.1.3 The expectation of a safe environment with respect of human dignity.
 - 6.1.4 Respect for privacy of information and records of each individual and family served.
 - 6.1.5 A description of any restrictions in communication or visitation.
 - 6.1.6 A description of privileges and limitations for participants.
 - 6.1.7 A description of access to religious services and practices.
 - 6.1.8 A statement indicating that the program/school retains the right to maintain a contraband free environment and will make known any search or testing procedures used in this effort.
 - 6.1.9 Procedures for student/participant grievance and complaint will be clearly outlined along with a statement guaranteeing freedom from retaliation for making complaints.
 - 6.1.10 A diet that is nutritionally sufficient for age and activity level.

7.0 HEALTH CARE ACCESS

- 7.1 The program/school will have a policy on health care that addresses the following issues:
 - 7.1.1 Access to appropriate medical care.
 - 7.1.1.1 Participant access to first aid and CPR
 - 7.1.2 Delineation of whom is authorized to dispense medications.
 - 7.1.3 A policy on storing, accounting, and security of medication.

8.0 SAFETY

- 8.1 The program/school shall have Plant, Technology and Safety Policies and Procedures containing the following:
 - 8.1.1 A fire and disaster plan which includes the following:
 - 8.1.1.1 Delineating responsibility of all employees in the event of fire or other disasters.
 - 8.1.1.2 A description of available emergency services, escape routes, relocation plans, and other contingency plans.
 - 8.1.1.3 Documentation of all fire and emergency drills.
 - 8.1.2 Policies concerning staff training for emergencies and access to emergency medical care

- 8.1.3 A safety committee who be responsible for risk management as well as training and implementation of emergent procedures
- 8.1.4 A policy or procedure for equipment maintenance and repair.
- 8.1.5 An infectious disease control policy.
- 8.1.6 A policy on the transportation of participants that addresses risk management,

9.0 INCIDENT REPORTING

- 9.1 The program/school will have an Incident Reporting policy and procedures, including a reporting mechanism to the governing body.

10.0 PHYSICAL PLANT

The program/school will have facilities of a sufficient size, space, configuration, and condition to support the balanced integration of its programs and services, and manages its physical plant to keep risk within acceptable parameters for the participants as appropriate to the program/school's mission and goals.

11.0 EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Educational services will be consistent with the mission of the program/school and may include: fully developed college preparatory academic programs leading to a diploma, individual courses offered for credit, services such as academic packets or online courses offered for credit through materials developed or administered by third party providers, and academic support and skills development offered for no credit. Some programs may choose to outsource academic services to private contractors or public school districts.

The scope, extent, and instructional methodology of the educational services including, whether the services are provided in house or out sourced, will be fully disclosed by NATSAP members to any interested party, program participants, families, referring professionals, and school, college and university admission's offices. All programs/schools that offer academic credit to program participants as a part of their in house services shall:

- 11.1 Maintain an academic transcript for each program participant in his or her permanent file that is current and up-to-date.
 - 11.1.1 Required information at a minimum includes:
 - 11.1.1.1 Program/school name, address, phone number, and date prepared
 - 11.1.1.2 Student name, address, and DOB
 - 11.1.1.3 Admission date, emission date,
 - 11.1.1.4 Grading scale
 - 11.1.1.5 List of individual classes, with grades and credit earned, and GPA
 - 11.1.2 Program/schools that grant diplomas and advertise as a school, or as providing academic or educational services comparable to a school will include the additional information on the transcript:
 - 11.1.2.1 If applicable, diploma earned and graduation date.
 - 11.1.2.2 Accrediting body and the program/school's accreditation status
 - 11.1.3 Program/schools that provide academic or educational services may include the following additional information on the transcript:
 - 11.1.3.1 Standardized test scores (PSAT, SAT, ACT, ITBS, etc.)
 - 11.1.3.2 Immunization records
 - 11.1.3.3 Class rank
- 11.2 Provide a written description of educational services that includes:
 - 11.2.1 A profile of educational services with descriptions of: Ages and grades taught
 - 11.2.1.1 Educational philosophy
 - 11.2.1.2 Graduation requirements leading to a diploma
 - 11.2.1.3 Policy delineating how credit is earned and assigned

- 11.2.1.4 School calendar
 - 11.2.1.5 Policy describing curriculum oversight and quality assurance
 - 11.2.1.6 Official school contact for questions about the educational program
 - 11.2.2 A curriculum catalog with:
 - 11.2.2.1 Course descriptions
 - 11.2.2.2 Scope and sequence
 - 11.2.2.3 Goals and objectives
 - 11.2.2.4 Method of instruction
 - 11.2.2.5 Evaluation and assessment
 - 11.2.3 A student profile
 - 11.2.4 Teacher qualifications including education, experience, and/or certification.
- 11.3 Any diploma granting program/school that represents itself as a school will abide by the NATSAP Supplemental Standards for Therapeutic Boarding Schools