



Handbook

Last updated 10/8/09

Mission:

The goal of Footsteps Transitional Living is to help youth continue to mature and develop the skills that are necessary to live independently and become productive members of the community. This will be accomplished through a supportive environment in which adolescent males are exposed to a wide range of real-life experiences, as well as a level of structure and support as they strive to adapt to an independent living situation.

In short: *“A Path to Independence Through Experience and Support”*

Acceptance Criteria:

Footsteps is licensed by the Missouri Division of Social Services, Children’s Division to provide a range of transitional living services for young men at least 16 years of age. To be considered for placement, any possible resident will need:

1. The ability to function in a public school setting or be willing to work on his GED. In the event that he has already graduated, or completed his GED, the possibility of attending college classes will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
2. The willingness to obtain and maintain at least a part-time job while in school (if applicable); to obtain and maintain a full-time job after completion of school or during the summer, if not in summer school.
3. If residents are not able to work during the school year, or are unable to find employment, they will be required to participate in our Community Service Program.
4. The willingness to accept all rules and expectations of the program.
5. The motivation necessary to make themselves a successful part of the program and on a larger scale, successful individuals in the real world.
6. An understanding that self-sufficiency requires maturity and the ability to be responsible for their actions.
7. The willingness to sign a contract stating that they will adhere to all rules and expectations for the program, with the understanding that failure to comply with the contract results in consequences and potential removal from the program.

New Resident Evaluation Period (NREP):

During the first few weeks an individual is in residence at Footsteps, an evaluation will be conducted to determine his level of ability and specific needs. During this initial time period, the resident will be closely monitored and will have limited unsupervised free time in the community. Also during this time period it is preferred that they have minimal visits from family and friends in order to best acclimate themselves into our program. This is referred to as the "New Resident Evaluation Period."

During the first 2-4 weeks each resident will be required to complete a variety of tasks to help determine their level of maturity, experience, and knowledge. This time should be viewed as a mutual "trust building" period. For this reason we request limited visitation during the NREP period, so as to facilitate the trust building process. The current NREP checklist is as follows. Please note that this checklist is subject to change, tasks may be added or subtracted.

NREP (New Resident Evaluation Period) Checklist for Completion

Task List

- 1) Complete ACLSA (Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment)
- 2) Complete Independent Living Experience Assessment
- 3) Go on at least one shopping run with staff member
- 4) Plan and cook one meal with staff supervision
- 5) Complete one hour of community service
- 6) Ride the bus with a staff member
- 7) Complete Springfield Orientation Checklist
- 8) Learn and be able to recite the first names of all residents and staff members
- 9) Complete ISP (Individual Service Plan)
- 10) Fill out MMP paperwork with staff, if applicable
- 11) Watch Toxic Relationships video
- 12) Watch at least one of the Aging Out videos
- 13) Get finalized approval by Footsteps team members

As a part of the NREP period, each resident will also be given an opportunity to fill out an Individual Service Plan which will establish specific goals and time frames to work towards.

Staff Advocate:

Upon arrival each resident will be assigned a Staff Advocate. A Staff Advocate is a staff member who will make it a priority to interact, and make an effort to build a relationship with the resident. The Staff Advocate will serve as a role model/mentor throughout the program, but especially while in the Group Home.

The Point System:

In the point system, each staff member and each resident are required to fill out a weekly point sheet outlining the current perception of functioning in 9 different categories. The scores are based on a 4-point scale. A score of 1 is considered "Far Below Expectations," while a score of 4 indicates, "Exceeds Expectations." The categories are as follows: **Independent Living Skills, Room/Chore, Financial Responsibility, Follow Through, Hygiene, School, Job, Attitude, and Trust.** These points are then tallied and averaged to produce a weekly average. The residents are then discussed on a weekly basis during staff meeting, a staff member then sits down each week to discuss a resident's strengths, weaknesses, as well problem-solving. This enables both residents as well as staff to focus on communication skills, as well as relationship building, which ultimately lends to an increase in the amount of trust and subsequent freedom allotted to each resident.

It should also be noted that in order to gain the most amount of freedom (outside of work and/or school) each resident will need to ensure that he is working to excel in 6 of the 8 areas outlined above. The areas of Independent Living skills, Room/Chore, Financial Responsibility, Follow Through, Attitude, and Trust will be totaled each week to produce an average. This average will then determine the amount of free time the resident is allowed out in the community during a given day.

The score range and equivalent time are as follows:

Score of:	1.0-1.5 = 0 Time allowed
	1.5-2.0 = 1 Hour
	2.0-2.5 = 2 Hours
	2.5-3.0 = 4 Hours
	3.0-3.5 = 6 Hours
	3.5-4.0 = 8 Hours

Community Service Program

If a resident is unable to work during the school year, or is unable to find employment, they are required to complete Community Service Projects on a weekly basis. This will serve to build work history, resume', as well as build a work ethic and prevent depressive symptoms associated with inactivity. Some projects include: Convoy of Hope, Food Pantry, and helping the elderly.

Monthly Monitoring

Once a month each youth is specifically discussed in a staffing. During this time each resident is encouraged to attend and begin to advocate for themselves. This time

serves as an opportunity for feedback as well as an opportunity to address specific concerns or requests for the resident.

Regardless of the youth's availability to attend the meeting they are asked to fill out our "Past Present and Future" sheets. These sheets allow us to gain some insight into how the youth is viewing their progress as well as examining how far they have come and where they are going.

Each month our Service Coordinator sits down individually with each youth to evaluate and set long term and short term goals, which are then incorporated into the staffing and written monthly reports.

Additionally each youth is encouraged to provide input into their monthly reports in our "In My Own Words" section, where they have an opportunity to provide a statement of their current level of functioning.

Monthly summaries and progress reports will be provided to all referral sources, so that they may review the resident's progression towards independence. Referral sources will also receive an Independent Living Assessment periodically which will outline the current level of functioning as well as proficiencies and deficiencies in the area of independent living.

Independent Living Skills

Independent Living (IL) skill building will be taught in a variety of ways. Firstly and perhaps most importantly, we believe that the bulk of IL knowledge is built from everyday experiences. Attending school, looking for a job, navigating everyday social relationships (within the program and without) are all important IL skills to develop. This is why the Footsteps program centers around relationships. Checking in with residents, interacting with residents provides the impetus for social learning.

In addition to the everyday social learning, an assessment will be conducted in the area of independent living experience, basic knowledge, and community resource knowledge. From this assessment the youth will be given the moniker of Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, or Senior. This will give the level of proficiency, as well as the curriculum level for IL instruction. This assessment will also provide a ranked priority list for IL domains.

Depending on the moniker of the resident, the IL Assessment will be reevaluated on either a monthly (senior), quarterly (junior), semi-annually (sophomore), or annually (freshman) basis.

Suite

Some residents will be given the opportunity to live in their own starter apartment within the group home. This “suite,” as it is referred, consists two or three residents who are ready to begin transitioning into their own apartments. It is a transitional step between the group home and the supervised apartment program. These residents will be allowed to have their own space. Which will consist of two bedrooms, bathroom and living area. They will be responsible for the upkeep of these areas, as well as maintaining the grounds and the pantry on a daily basis.

Resident’s will be allowed more freedom to come and go, they will need to inform staff where they are going, and sign out on their own board, but do not have to ask permission, unless it is an outing that needs approval. They will also have an extended curfew.

One of the advantages for those living in the suite is that they will not be held accountable for things going on in the rest of the house, i.e. group consequences.

These residents will also be required to learn how to get up in the mornings on their own.

It is important for the residents in the suite to realize that while they are in a different part of the program they are still accountable to staff, and to each other.

Through this experience we hope that residents will grow in the following areas:

1. Budgeting
2. Time-Management
3. How to handle more freedom
4. Developing the confidence to begin living on their own
5. Learn how to ask for help when needed
6. Assume more responsibility for daily activities i.e. waking up, going to bed, studying, meal preparation, etc.
7. Learn to respect their own space as well as the space of others.

Residents will always have the opportunity to receive support from staff, and will be allowed out in the rest of the house, however, they are encouraged to remember that being in their “own space” will require them to spend some time on their own with minimal contact from other staff or residents.

It is hoped that residents who are chosen to move into the suite, will be ready to move into their own apartments within 1-5 months.

Disciplinary Policy:

Footsteps is a program based upon choices. As in life there are results for choices that are made, and they can either be positive or negative. It is our goal to equip these young men to make good choices, not only in the program, but also in life. As in life one can anticipate the responses for good decisions, as well as the responses for poor decisions. Each choice made by a resident is taken on a case-by-case basis. For good choices residents can expect fuller access to freedom in the community, progress toward graduation and living in their own apartment, as well as the satisfaction that comes from making good choices. Conversely, for those young men who decide to make poor choices they can expect responses in alignment with those choices. Outlined below is a brief list of common responses to "Poor" choices.

1. *Grounding/Restrictions*-- This is a more long-term consequence, but generally will not be longer than a week. If a resident is grounded, it is assumed that he has violated trust in some form or fashion. Depending on the manner in which trust has been violated, a resident may find himself grounded to his room, grounded from electronics, grounded to the house, early bedtime etc. The length of the grounding will be determined by the infraction or trust violation.
2. *School Restrictions*- Residents are expected to attend school each day that it is in session unless otherwise directed by staff (in the event of a doctor's appointment, court proceedings or other obligations). Residents are expected to maintain their grades while receiving no deficiencies (defined as a "D" or below). In the event of a deficiency, the resident will actively work with the Case Manager to make arrangements for grade improvements. Residents are also expected to comply with all rules and expectations of the high school and school district in which they attend.
3. *Social Restrictions*-Residents cannot have friends over, phone contact with friends or go out with friends. This will be given on the basis of inappropriate activity with friends, poor judgment and decisions when friends are in the house, lack of respect for phone rules while in the house, or violation of curfew. Social restrictions may also be given for inappropriate behavior by either a resident or his friends.
4. *Law Enforcement Involvement*- Physically assaultive behavior, threatening and/or destruction of property may result in the involvement of the police. If this is the case, the situation will also have added consequences and may result in the need for an emergency removal from the program.

Trust Producing Expectations:

At Footsteps, we believe that there are three basic laws that both staff and residents are required to abide by. Each person must show “Respect for Themselves, Respect for Others, and Respect for Property.”

The following rules and expectations will apply to all individuals in residence at Footsteps, and residents of Footsteps who have graduated into the scattered-site apartments. This is not an exhaustive list of consequences or expectations, because all individuals will be dealt with on an individual basis. These are here to serve as examples. If there is a question about any policies, please consult staff rather than experiment, or going by what other residents say.

Basic Rules/Expectations

Residents in the program will not smoke on grounds, or use alcohol or illegal drugs. Residents agree to submit to random drug/alcohol screens.

1. Residents will abide by curfew set by staff. Extended curfew must be approved PRIOR to outing on a case-by-case basis.
2. Residents will not leave/sneak out of their rooms or out of the house at any time.
3. Residents will not possess a weapon or allow a visitor to enter the group home or his apartment if the visitor is carrying a weapon.
4. Residents will not be physically or verbally aggressive towards staff, peers, school personnel or other members of the community.
5. Residents are expected to be respectful toward staff and peers at all times.
6. Residents will take responsibility to ensure their medications are taken at the appropriate times during the day each day.
7. Residents will make sure that their whereabouts are known to staff at all times, including signing in and out and calling in every two hours while they are signed out (unless they are at work).

Daily Expectations

1. Residents will bathe or shower on a daily basis.
2. Residents will be responsible for their own meals.
3. All residents will be responsible for general upkeep of the facility especially in regards to cleaning up after themselves.

Chores/Room:

1. Each resident will be responsible for an individual daily chore, and continued maintenance of chore throughout the day.

2. Each resident will receive an allowance on the basis of how well they complete their chore within established guidelines.
3. Each resident will be responsible for the cleanliness of their own room.
4. Each resident will be responsible for his own laundry, and making sure it is done and put away.
5. There is to be no food taken into rooms, except in rare instances with staff approval.
6. Each resident is to ensure that his door is locked at all times when he is not in there in order to make certain nothing disappears from his belongings.
7. Each resident is required to keep his door unlocked whenever there is more than one person in a room, as well as whenever "lights out" occurs.

School/Work:

1. Each resident is responsible to either be in school or actively working on getting his GED. If a resident has already completed high school or his GED, the possibility that he may attend college classes or trade school classes will be explored.
2. Residents are expected to attend all classes they are required to. Skipping school or classes results in immediate consequences.
3. All residents are expected to have at least a part-time job or participate in the Community Service Program.
4. All residents are expected to arrange for transportation to and from work; if this is not possible, they are to arrange with staff for transportation.
5. All residents are expected to actively seek employment when they are not employed where applicable.

Reasons for Removal From the Program:

Footsteps is dedicated to providing the highest quality services for the most motivated residents who want to succeed in society. Some residents of Footsteps may not be willing or able to continue as residents here. There are several reasons why residents may be asked to leave the program or may themselves ask to leave. The following is a list, which is not exhaustive, but provides a framework for removal from the program.

1. *Drug violations.* Residents who have failed one UA are placed on probation. The second UA violation is grounds for removal from the program.
2. *Assaultive Behavior.* Serious fighting or repeatedly fighting, will be grounds for removal from the program. This includes assaultive behavior towards peers, staff, school staff or individuals in the community and also covers serious threats.
3. *Trust Violations.* Repeatedly refusing to follow the rules or adhere to the expectations of Footsteps.
4. *Verbal Violations.* Continually being verbally defiant to the point where the resident is totally non-compliant and verbally assaultive is grounds for removal. Verbally abusing staff, other residents, school personnel or community members falls into this category.

5. *Possession of Inappropriate Items.* Possession or use of drugs or other alcohol in the facility (or outside of it), possession of contraband materials on a repeated basis are grounds for removal.
6. *Effort in Working the Program.* Continued lack of effort in doing what is necessary to succeed in the program, lack of commitment in working towards goals, and showcasing enough defiance that continued stay in the program is not possible.
7. *Legal Violations.* Arrest or conviction of any felony offense is grounds for removal.
8. *Self-Harm Violations.* When a resident is a risk of inflicting self-harm to the point where Footsteps cannot guarantee his own personal safety he is meeting grounds for removal.
9. *Personal Reasons.* For whatever reason, a resident may not feel comfortable or capable of doing what he needs to do in order to succeed in this program. If this is the case, he is free to contact his worker in this regard.
10. *Program Failure.* From time to time, Footsteps may not be able to adequately provide for the resident the necessary structure, therapeutic environment or personal benefit to the resident. When this becomes the case, the Director will deal with the situation in an attempt to avoid resident removal at all costs, but not to the detriment of the program or the individual resident.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SHEET

I have read and hereby agree to the standards, and rules set forth for me to stay at Footsteps Transitional Living. I understand that to stay in this program is a privilege and an opportunity not to be taken lightly.

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE



GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SHEET

As the legal guardian of this resident I have read and hereby agree to the standards, and rules set forth in this handbook. I agree to work with Footsteps to provide the best possible path towards independence for this young man.

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

