

Parent Handbook

Positive Alternatives, Inc.



www.positive-alternatives.org

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We warmly welcome you and your youth to Positive Alternatives. We believe in unconditional positive regard for all the youth we work with and treat them with dignity and respect.

We realize that by the time your child has been placed at Positive Alternatives, you and your family have probably been through a great deal of stress. We hope that the time spent at our program will help your child work through the many stressors, trauma, and issues they are currently facing.

We want to make this difficult time as easy for you as possible. Hopefully this handbook will answer many of the questions that you will initially have. You are always welcome to call the group home to ask questions or just to “check in” and see how your child is doing.

Remember, we are all here because we care very deeply about youth, their families, and the problems they face. The more we can communicate with each other, the easier and more smoothly the stay at Positive Alternatives will be for your child.

Mission Statement

Through a continuum of family and strength-based services, Positive Alternatives strives to equip at-risk youth and young adults with the social, emotional, and developmental skills needed to flourish.

Vision Statement

Positive Alternatives is an innovative resource in Wisconsin for at-risk youth, young adults, and their families by providing creative and collaborative services. Acknowledging that youth, families, and the community share the responsibility for preparing children for a successful adulthood, Positive Alternatives strives to equip at-risk youth and young adults with the social, emotional, and developmental skills needed to flourish.

We are dedicated to empowering those we serve to reach their greatest potential, creating an environment that fosters unity, pride, and resiliency, and inspires our community to embrace the strengths of youth. Our goal is to provide services that involve the family, focus on the desired outcome, and build on strengths for the purpose of allowing individuals the opportunity to enhance social, emotional and developmental skills.

Agency Values

Positive Alternatives is committed to promoting and provided positive outcomes in our communities through our mission and values. The following values are representative of our agency. These values are visible through our staff and evident within our programming.

Client Centered- Purposeful, Relationship Oriented, Empowering

Community Oriented- Meaningful Partners, Impactful, Involved

Collaborative- Transparent, Goal-driven, Team-focused

Compassionate- Empathetic, Family Oriented, Mindful

Conscientious- Ethical, Culturally Inclusive, Accountable

History and Overview of Positive Alternatives, Inc.

Positive Alternatives, Inc. has been in existence since 1974. Our goal is to continually look for innovative and creative programs to benefit youth, the community, and the counties that we service. These services are driven by our current mission statement.

The agency's services started in October 1974, when Alpha House Youth Care, Inc., a 501©3, non-profit corporation was developed. Although the agency changed the corporation's name in July 1996 to Positive Alternatives, Inc., the group home retained the program name of Alpha House. Positive Alternatives is governed by a Board of Directors with representation from each of the communities that Positive Alternatives has a location.

Positive Alternatives' group homes are licensed by the State of Wisconsin as an eight-bed group foster home for youth between the ages of 12 and 21 years old. There are five group home locations across Wisconsin; Menomonie (1974), River Falls (2006), Amery (2014), Wisconsin Rapids (2015), and Marathon County (Wausau) (2017). River Falls and Amery are all-female group homes and the other three are co-ed. The three western locations and our location in Wisconsin Rapids accept referrals from all Wisconsin counties, while Marathon County accepts only Marathon County placements. All group homes provide room and board, supervision, structure, support, and recreational opportunities for the residents.

In 2020, Positive Alternatives, Inc. became accredited through Council on Accreditation. The accreditation process provides a framework for the organization to continuously improve and offer evidence-based best practices that support our clients and communities.

In December 2021, Positive Alternatives, Inc. received certification as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) through the State of Wisconsin and the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018.

Positive Alternatives' Staff

Positive Alternatives is staffed with 24-hour supervision at a minimum ratio of 1 staff to 3 residents. Our teams are made up of the following:

Program Director and Group Home Manager:

The **Program Director** is one of the two supervisors of the group home who plays a large role in the treatment of your child. The Program Director oversees the entire program and serves as the main contact when there are any program issues, concerns, or grievances.

The **Group Home Manager** is the second supervisor of the group home. This person directly oversees day-to-day operations. The Group Home Manager may assist in case management alongside the Group Home Case Manager. In the Program Director's absence, they are available to serve as the contact for program issues, concerns, or grievances.

Group Home Case Manager:

The Group Home Case Manager is directly involved in the treatment of your child. They work collaboratively with the Group Home Manager throughout the youth's placement within the group home. The Group Home Case Manager serves as the main contact between parents, social workers, service providers, and the youth.

Lead Staff:

There is a Lead Staff on each shift within the group home. They also play a role in the treatment of your child. The Lead Staff is responsible for the everyday needs of your child including school, hygiene, and transports. The Lead Staff works directly with the youth daily. They are responsible for structuring their shifts, collaborating with Resident Counselors, meals, recreation, community service, and constructive homework time.

Resident Counselors:

Resident Counselors play a large supporting role among our staff. They are responsible for the everyday needs of your child alongside a Lead staff. They staff the group home on nights, weekends, holidays, and any time needed. They may also be a primary to your child where they were identified as a support staff and meet 1:1 once a week for approximately one hour.

Family Involvement

Family contact is encouraged and leads towards a successful placement for your child. We require that you maintain a consistent routine of communication with your child through visits, phone calls, and mail. This should be something that we can count on as well as your child.

Additionally, it is vital that the family members are supportive of the child's treatment plan and simultaneously demonstrate their commitment through contact and participation.

Questions or differences that family members have with the agency practice or policy should be directly communicated with the Program Director, rather than involving the child.

Positive Alternatives respects the family's rights and responsibility to assure that their child receives optimum care and treatment.

To positively affect change, everyone needs to be involved. Please feel free to call and communicate with your youth's case manager at any time if you would like to check-in more frequently or have questions regarding any part of our youth's placement. Positive Alternatives' staff call treatment team members of each youth placed with us to provide updates on behaviors, and we encourage parents/legal guardians to do the same.

Client Rights

Treatment Rights

1. A treatment plan you understand and that meets your child's needs.
2. Care and treatment provided by qualified staff.
3. Prompt, proper, and adequate health care for your child.
4. Your child has the right to be protected from cruel, embarrassing, or abusive punishment.
5. You and your child have the right to be treated equally regarding age, religion, race, sex, or disability.
6. Strict maintenance of confidentiality by Positive Alternatives' staff concerning information related to you and your child.
7. Your child's right to private visits, mail, and phone calls. You have the right to an explanation if restricted.
8. Your child's right to privacy, consistent with safe supervision, during day-to-day life.
9. You and your child have the right to make a complaint or file a grievance if you feel your rights are not respected.
10. In special circumstances, Positive Alternatives may limit the rights that are outlined above. For example, telephone calls may be monitored or limited if the calls are extremely upsetting to a child. The agency may not of its own accord, prevent you from visiting your son or daughter as long as the visit is set up according to our policy.

Confidentiality and Release of Information

Confidentiality

Respecting the privacy of the youth and their families is a priority of Positive Alternatives. Personal information is confidential and will not be disclosed or discussed with anyone, without appropriate authorization to do so.

Release of Information

The Release of Information document has been or will be provided for you to complete at the time of your child's placement within the group home. The intent of this disclosure is to authorize the release and exchange of information for the purpose of Positive Alternatives providing the proper care and service to your youth.

Grievance Procedure

Positive Alternatives, Inc. supports the protection of your child's rights as guaranteed by the United States Government for its citizens. Clients, parents or legal guardians, and any other stakeholders have the right to file a grievance without interference or retaliation. The following are steps to take if you would like to file a grievance with the group home:

1. Inform the Program Director of the intent to and the nature of grievance. If the Program Director is unacceptable (due to involvement in the grievance) or unavailable, the grievance should be referred to the President/CEO or Vice President/COO. The Program Director will assist, as needed, in getting the grievance documented and keep you up to date on resolving the grievance.
2. The documented grievance will be reviewed and the Program Director will provide the complainant with a written resolution within 72 hours. Following the resolution of grievances, the President/CEO or Vice President/COO shall be notified of the grievance and resolution.
3. In the event that your child wishes to lodge a grievance, your child should inform the Program Director.
4. You may also file a grievance online by visiting our website.

Permitted and Prohibited Personal Belongings

Permitted Personal Belongings

Positive Alternatives understands the importance of creating a home-like environment where the youth can feel safe, both physically and psychologically. The group home promotes this by allowing the youth to possess personal items throughout their placement. Items not listed below may be considered by the Program Director or Group Home Manager.

Bedding and pillows, although these items are provided

Clothes and shoes

Comfort items such as blankets, stuffed animals, or sensory items

Pictures, letters, and other personal reminders of family and friends

Reading, writing, and art materials

Some personal electronics, such as MP3 Player or iPod

Jewelry and other accessories

Personal hygiene items

Fidgets, stress balls, or other items promoting healthy coping

Favorite snack and drinks

Prohibited Personal Belongings

Prohibited items from the group home may include the following and is not an exhausted list (Exceptions may apply):

Posters, clothing, paraphernalia, movies/video games, and/or other items which exhibit and/or imply gangs, abuse, sex, nudity, drugs and alcohol, or are offensive to others

Larger electronics, including televisions and stereo systems or speakers

Cell phones and any device that has Wi-Fi capabilities and cameras installed

Knives/blades or other items identified as weapons

Candles or flammable items (matches, lighters, etc.)

Alcoholic beverages

Tobacco products, paraphernalia, controlled substances

Frequently Asked Questions:

Can I visit my child and how do I go about setting this up?

Yes, of course you can visit your child. Regular family contact and visits are expected in-person, by phone, and/or virtually. Your child may be allowed on-grounds or off-grounds visits with people on the approved contact list. All visits must be approved by the Program Director or Case Manager during business hours 9:00a-4:00p, Monday through Friday. Weekend visits must be approved by the Program Director or Case Manager by Friday at 4:00p. Off-grounds visits are subject to approval by a social worker before approving.

What supplies does my child need? Do they need money?

Your child is supplied with everything they will need besides clothing and prescription medication. These items need to be provided by you. Long term residents may receive a small clothing allowance if needed. Your child also receives a weekly allowance and does not need money or treats from you. We discourage this as our allowance scale provides motivation in your child's treatment plan and is enough money for the treats they need.

Who should I contact regarding my child?

You can call the group home at any time to ask the staff questions about your child. If you reach a Resident Counselor, they will be able to answer any questions you have that relate to how your child is doing at that time. They may not, however, know all the answers to questions about your child's treatment or upcoming/past activities. They will direct you to either the Program Director, Group Home Manager, or Group Home Case Manager to get these questions answered. These staff can be contacted Monday-Friday (8am-4pm).

What type of education will my child receive?

If your child is here long term, he or she will be enrolled in the local school district. He or she may also attend day treatment. We have consistent contact with the schools and will ensure that if there are any behavioral problems, they will also be subject to consequence here. Each resident is expected complete at least two hours of study/constructive time daily.

What type of recreation will my child be doing?

Your child will be participating in recreation. The type of recreation will depend on their current behaviors. Recreation may be off grounds and include going to movies, swimming, roller skating, hiking, and fishing. On grounds recreation events are available to everyone. These events may include basketball, arts & crafts, board games, video games, and cards. Your child always has the right to recreation; however, based upon behaviors, the recreation may be limited.

Who can call my child? Your child is allowed to make and receive phone calls each day to or from someone on their approved contact list, which is developed by you, your child, the case manager, and social worker. Each program has slightly different rules when it comes to phone calls, so please familiarize yourself with phone call rules and expectations by talking with the Program Director or Case Manager of the house your child resides in. Exceptions to certain phone call rules are made in emergency situations.

How does my child earn privileges and what is a treatment plan? Your child earns privileges based on their behavior and involvement in treatment and programming. A child who is here for longer than 30 days has a Treatment Plan. This is developed by the goals of the youth, parents, social worker, and your child's case manager.

What is Transitioning and Aftercare Services? Aftercare Services is a collaborative partnership between the youth, parent/legal guardians, social workers, group home case manager, and other treatment team members. Positive Alternatives provides Aftercare to youth to offer support and referral services leading up to their discharge and after. Aftercare aims to link your child with appropriate services before and after they leave the group home. Areas the case manager can assist in include: financial planning, affordable health care, counseling/mentoring, safe and stable housing, mental health services, educational planning, employment, general independent living skills, and spiritual support.

Locations

Menomonie Group Home (715-235-9552)

603 Terrill Road
Menomonie, WI 54751

River Falls Group Home (715-426-2224)

2860 Williams Avenue
River Falls, WI 54022

Amery Group Home (715-268-7997)

1370 60th Avenue
Amery, WI 54001

Wis. Rapids Group Home (715-712-1617)

110 24th Street S. Ste. B
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

Marathon Co. Group Home (715-298-3134)

5475 N. 28th Avenue
Wausau, WI 54401



At Positive Alternatives, our values are visible through our staff and evident within our programming.
We are **Client Centered, Community Oriented, Collaborative, Compassionate, and Conscientious.**