

New Way Youth Services



Transitional Living Program

(Formerly New Way Youth Services Residential Group Home)

“Over 30% of foster care adolescents have a history of running away from home or care. When surveyed why they ran, a majority of adolescent females responded, “Caseworkers don’t provide the support I need.” (national Journal of Public Health, 2013)

INTRODUCTION

It has always been at the heart of New Way Youth Service (NWYS) to help prevent and eventually eradicate youth homelessness. Youth homeless continues to be a prevailing problem in American culture. Of the 1.6-2.8 million homeless youth in our country, 47% reports problems in their natural home or placement care setting. It is this problem that causes such a large proportion of youths in placement to run away. 80% of females who run from placement reports a history of sexual and/or physical abuse while 43% report physical abuse.¹

The number one problem facing female homeless youth is sex trafficking or the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). Victims of CSEC are often known to have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse problems, truancy problems and conduct disorders- all which manifested from being unsuccessful in traditional foster care settings or residential placement facilities. A study by the Institute of Medicine in 2013 found homelessness the largest risk factor of CSEC and sex trafficking activity among female minors.² Sadly, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 48% of runaway and homeless youth who willingly engage in CSEC activity stated they did so because, “I didn’t have a safe place to stay.”

The Eastern PA CoC identifies youth as an important subdivision for preventative services and agrees the impact of children leaving placement without housing prioritized in the discharge plan are at greatest risk for homelessness. The goal of New Way Youth Services has not changed although our methodology to reach those in need has. The implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act bill, “...seeks to improve the well-being of children already in foster care by incentivizing states to reduce placement of children in congregate care.”³ to this end, our initial determination to reduce homelessness through the establishment of quality group homes had to be reconsidered. By reassessing community needs, New Way Youth Services has learned

¹ <https://www.1800runaway.org/runawaystatistics/third-party-statistics/>

² <https://www.1800runaway.org/runawaystatistics/third-party-statistics/>

³ <https://www.firstfocus.org>

that to serve in this mission, we must focus our program towards the implementation of evidence based and trauma focused preventive services aligning with the objectives in transitional care.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

New Way Youth Services is a Christian operated, private, 3800 licensed Transitional Living Program aimed at offering extended residential shelter to older youths ages 15-18 (up to 21 if approved by Children and Youth) who are transitioning from a secured setting to a supervised setting in preparation for independent living. It is our aim to provide youths who are at higher risk of homelessness with the tools and support needed to become successful adults. We prioritize those in care who have been deemed inappropriate for foster care and/or adoption typically due to their age and past mental health history, but who longs for a life lived outside of chronic residential treatment facility or shelter placement. **New Way Youth Services is a transitional, step-down from residential care that prepares youth for independent living.**

New Way Youth Services is unique in its desire to go above and beyond the scope of mandated services to reach into the hearts of the population we serve. To this end our agency not only offer a tranquil, home in Pennsylvania, intake, case management, and life skills training but we further partner with community resources to provide each transitioning youth- job readiness, educational resources and/or vocational training, mental and physical health care, and money management. Exclusive to New Way Youth Services is our positive youth development through our Youth Empowerment Seminars (YES!), and the option for spiritual growth.

LEVEL OF CARE

New Way Youth Services is equipped to handle youth who are currently diagnosed with specified and non-specified mental health disorders which include but are not limited to: Depressive Disorders, Anxiety and Panic Disorders, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD), Generalized Anxiety and Social Disorders, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Conduct Disorder including Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), and Disruptive Behavior Disorders NOS. New Way YS is an excellent option for the youth who have struggled to acclimate to previous foster care and/or residential care settings, are

being stepped down from a residential treatment facility setting, or who are leaving the juvenile probation setting and are having difficulties securing a home setting due to their previous record(s) or termination of parental rights.

New Way Youth Services **cannot accept clients** who have violent criminal records, a history of committing or been victimized by violent sex crimes, or those who require specialized medical supports such as drug and/or alcohol inpatient treatment, as well those who are deemed pyromaniacs. New Way YS is not the appropriate setting for teen-aged youths who are currently pregnant or parenting and for those who have adapted to the lifestyle offered by traffickers and have not had (or are actively involved in) at minimum thirty days of intensive treatment to assess for mental health implications of sex abuse such as Stockholm Syndrome.

TOLERANCE POLICY

This program operates in cooperation with County Children and Youth Offices which means that the placement of children in our facility needs to meet our level of care and capability. To this end, the tolerance for elopement and aggressive behaviors while in program must remain at an all time low as these behaviors serves as an indicator that the placement is not an inappropriate match. Children who chronically elope and/or are assaultive in behavior (fighting residents or community members, hitting staff, destroying program property, etc.) utilize the time and service of our Regional Police and State Troopers. These behaviors impact the safety of other residents, staff, and community members and places the resident at risk of termination from the program.

New Way Youth Services operates a zero tolerance policy for behaviors which are considered discriminatory and dangerous such as harassment, physical and/ or emotional abuses towards race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender, acts of terrorism or threats of harm requiring a PFA. Threats of harm requiring a PFA may include but are not limited to: weapon creation, bomb threats, threats to burn down the facility, threats of violence including murder against any staff

member or household resident, gun or weapon possession. These behaviors are grounds for immediate termination from the program.

LENGTH OF STAY

Consistent change doesn't happen overnight and we believe that just as exposure to negative habits and behaviors yields negative outcomes so too can consistent exposure to positive habits and behaviors yield positive outcomes! New Way Youth Services Transitional Living Program is set up as a long term residential option for children in care. Although it is always our goal and hope for family reunification whenever possible and appropriate, we know that this is not always possible. We are here to support the children who do not have the option to return home. We are here as a transitional, step down from a more restrictive setting to give children the independent living skills every child needs to develop autonomy.

The length of stay in a transitional living program varies from person to person. The average stay in a transitional living program is between 540 day and in exceptional cases can range up to 635 days. For youth who are under 18 years old, the stay may last until their 18th birthday and beyond that date if approved by their custodial County Children and Youth. ⁴

New Way Youth Services knows consistency is imperative for children to create healthy routines and make appropriate behaviors a habit. Progresses as well as setbacks which may require a change in the service plan or goals will be discussed with all service provider members working with the adolescent in care through a monthly report at which time it can be determined if a scheduled meeting is needed. In the event it is determined to be in the best interest of the child to discontinue placement with New Way Youth Services, a meeting that includes a county representative will be scheduled to discuss with New Way Youth Services the reason for the removal from the program. It is understood that Children and Youth agencies, in conjunction with the County Courts have the right to remove youth from a facility they deem to be inappropriate for meeting the needs of the youth, or if the program is determined to be an unsafe placement for the child.

⁴ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/tlp-fact-sheet>

PROGRAM SERVICES

Developing independent living skills is a primary goal of this program and essential in transitioning from supportive living to independent living. Client responsibility and accountability are terms intertwined in to our program agenda. The Transitional Living Program is a supervised program in which residents are given freedoms appropriate to their level of maturity, mental, and physical abilities. Residents are responsible to utilize opportunities and provisions for growth offered to them to promote self-sufficiency. Service provision in addition to extended housing includes: basic life skills, resource referrals, and counseling services.

Positive youth development is offered through seminars that promote excellence, perseverance, and character. By offering emotional support in conjunction with building targeted skills, and access to community resources, youth who are in placement without the option of returning home are free to focus on their future instead of their obstacles.

New Way Youth Services implements Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards (RPPS) so that residents can experience normalcy by participating in age and level appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, social and cultural activities. Residents are involved in their case planning and have the freedom to express their interest, wants and needs. By participating in activities in school and in the community, residents are developing in their daily living skills by engaging in peer relationships as well as bonding with adults who are invested in their success. Activities that youth may engage in when age and level appropriate may include school sports, field trips, choir, and spending time with friends.

New Way Youth Services Transitional Program is a home that is not intended to be comparable to placements such as Juvenile Detention Facilities or restrictive Residential Treatment Facilities.

New Way is a step down, transitional home designed to teach, refer, and exemplify the tools needed to successfully transition from a restrictive to least restrictive setting in preparation for autonomous living. As an extended placement option, our goal is to be the most comfortable, home environment possible for the residents as well as for the service providers that will also

utilize our space for cooperative case management. Bedrooms for our residents are decorated in soothing colors of teal, pinks and grey with bold statements of positive affirmations on each wall. Youths in the Transitional Living Program are integrated into both home and community. They will see the same staff daily and will come to feel as if they are not in a placement setting at all.

Upon arrival each child is assessed for need, an individualized service plan is created in which realistic long and short term goals are established, strengths and weaknesses are acknowledged, community resources are secured (including medical and dental health), and program effectiveness is tracked. New Way Youth Services is located in the Pocono Mountain East School District and each school aged resident is registered for school and placed as their individual academic level and need requires. Each resident will have a designated schedule for the week of chores to help with household maintenances including doing laundry, cleaning the kitchen, sweeping the floors, cleaning the bedrooms and keeping bathrooms sanitary. Residents engage in daily activities such as meal planning, meal preparation, and grocery shopping.

PROGRAM FUNCTION

- Each child will enter our home under the guidance of the Director, Nidicka Frederick who is a previous Child Protective Specialist (CPS) who is able to address difficult questions and allow the child to express their individual fears, insecurities, plans and desired outcomes from the start.
- The resident, Program Director, County C&Y worker, and all applicable service providers will correspond to create the residents Transitional Service Plan (TSP).
- Residents are registered into the Pocono Mountain School District and scheduled for an IEP meeting when applicable.
- The resident will be introduced to therapy methods and included in addressing all of their mental and/or spiritual health needs. Therapy offered by New Way Transitional Living Program is offered at 1 hour per week (individual) and 1 hour (group) per week by Director, Nidicka Frederick who is a Master's level therapist. Clinical services, including

medication management and review are referred to Pyramid Healthcare. Crisis interventions are partnered through New Perspectives and Kidspace.

- Tutorial (homework and literary) assistance is an important part of the programs agenda. New Way understands that education is key in preventing future homelessness and will work in cooperation with the teachers at PMSD to create homework assistance services including the residents participation in after school tutoring offered by the individual junior and senior high schools.
- Residents are immediately encouraged to explore after school sports, clubs and activities as appropriate
- Residence are assisted with job readiness including interviewing techniques, resume building, accessing working papers, and finding a job.
- Residents are immediately offered access to church, synagogue, mass, Kingdom Hall, or mosque as their family faith dictates. Residents who do not operate in any denomination of faith are welcome to reside at New Way Transitional Living Program and is not required to participate in faith based activities.
- As part of the program eligibility requirements, residents are expected to participate in activities relating to developing in daily living skills which prepares for independent living such as preparing grocery list, cooking, cleaning, and learning money management skills. Residents are further given the opportunity to develop in character and faith by participating in the non-mandatory services offered such as youth YES! Youth Empowerment Seminars and youth fellowship offered through PCC (Pocono Community Church).
- New Way is distinguished from other Transitional Living Programs by operating as a Christian entity which follows a Servant-leader model of care. The Servant-leader model of care adheres to the philosophy that leaders are servants first. The primary goal of the servant-leader is to enhance the lives of individuals and strive to build stronger communities that can bring forth a more caring world. “The Servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps others to perform as highly as possible.”⁵

⁵ www.greenleaf.org

LIFE SKILLS

Youth who are in placement have experienced various difficulties and traumas in life that impact their transition into adulthood. These challenges may include abuse and /or neglect, separation from parents and siblings, removal from their home and community, no continuity at school, unanswered questions about their future, and various foster care placements. This is why New Way Youth Services believes that it is imperative for children in care who are transitioning into young adulthood to have the tools, support, resources and services necessary to succeed. Without such supports, youth in placement are at greater risk for emotional instability and lacks in confidence that can lead to problems like low employability, mental illness, and drug/alcohol abuse.

New Way Youth Services promotes independent living skills from the time a resident is accepted into our program until the time they leave. The goal is to build up each resident's self-esteem and equip them to manage relationships in various contexts such as at school and work as well as with friends and family. New Way Youth Services works in cooperation with community resources to promote the following life skills:

- Personal Hygiene
- Household Management Skills (including cooking, laundry, and cleaning)
- Goal Setting (with emphasis on the importance of education and employment training)
- Effective Communication Skills (with emphasis on appropriate use of communication devices)
- Social Skills (with emphasis on interpersonal relationships)
- Self Awareness (with emphasis on accountability and responsibility for choices and behaviors)
- Organizational skills (with emphasis on neatness and time management)

- Crisis Management (with emphasis on behavior modification and decision making)
- Money Management (with emphasis on savings programs and utilizing the bank)
- Spiritual development- emphasizing the freedom to engage in and express your faith

COUNSELING

Counseling sessions are offered at one-hour individual sessions and one-hour group session per week for each resident in the program. A weekend group activity such as art therapy will count as a group session. New Way Youth Services will work in cooperation with the client's family (when appropriate), county case manager, and other service providers to create a transitional service plans with goals most appropriate for each client's needs. Children requiring therapy beyond the scope of New Way's therapeutic services, will utilize Pyramid Mental Health Services.

Each client in our Transitional Living Program who is on psychotropic medications will be scheduled in groups to receive monthly psychiatric evaluations after an initial review and counseling through Pyramid Mental Health Services. Specialized adolescent group sessions offered through Kidspace are also utilized by our program. New Way Direct Care staff keeps all psychotropic medications under lock and key and will administer medications to each resident based on their prescribed medication schedule. New Way Youth Services adheres to the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare Medication Administration Policies and Practices.

COUNSELING PHILOSOPHY AND THERAPY MODELS

We believe that the more involved residents are with their own therapeutic process, the more likely they are to get involved, stay involved and benefit from their therapy sessions. This is why New Way Youth Services offers a variety of therapy mediums residents are free to choose from for individual and group sessions. There is nothing worse than dreading a part of your day, especially when it's required. Therapy is a lot like exercise- if you dread it, it's very likely that you will quit and never see the results you hoped for. To this end, we have taken therapy outside of its traditional box and attached the concept of self-discovery to familiar artistic expressions.

At New Way, therapy is incorporated into aspects of daily living. Therapy mediums utilized at New Way include but is not limited to:

- ★ ***Learning through Lyrics***- Learning through lyrics is a wonderful way to express feelings and relate to various situations that are presented in songs. Songs has historically been associated with free expression, social commentary, exploration of the soul, and human connection. Whether in group or individual therapy, music is a medium that helps us to connect with ourselves, each other and with the world as a whole.
- ★ ***Art Workshops***- Art therapy is a proven therapeutic module that has helped countless individuals articulate through creation what they cannot yet express in words. Art is known to de-escalate aggression, increase concentration and to foster creativity and relaxation. Art mediums such as drawing, painting, pastels, molding, and crocheting are just a few of the arts and crafts techniques that are employed in our individual and group therapy sessions.
- ★ ***Cinema Therapy***- There are a plethora of cinematic stories and documentaries that evoke consciousness, challenges behaviors, shows consequences, and speaks of triumphs over unbelievable odds! These stories inspire us to see our own lives and circumstances through new lenses. Not every hero comes from a comic book and movies are a wonderful way to open dialogue, challenge our opinions and responses, visualize possible outcomes, and learn from those who have trailblazed before us.
- ★ ***Poetry in the Park***- Two incredibly underutilized therapeutic devices are nature and poetry. Putting these two together is a powerful way to grow in appreciation of things we often take for granted like-fresh air and a mountain view. Poetry is a wonderful way to develop in the articulation of thoughts and ideas, to relate to other people's sufferings and triumphs, and to boost memorization skills by reciting favorite poetic verses.
- ★ ***Literature that Matters***- A favorite group therapy activity is engaging in book club. Choosing a book of relevant social, political, emotional and/or spiritual content can open up important dialogue, encourage new ways of solving problems, offer a historical

perspective to contemporary problems and prove that positive outcomes can and do occur under the most traumatic experiences.

- ★ ***Dance Therapy***- Sometimes in life you just need to burn some energy and to do so as if nobody's watching! That is one of the many benefits of dance therapy. Dance therapy is a fun, energizing, cooperative and/ or individual way to burn stress while getting fit. It is a known fact that dance (exercise in general) increases endorphins which reduces stress. By participating in dance and exercise on a regular basis, the body learns to constantly produce stress reducing endorphins. This is why exercise is a major part of the daily activities at New Way Youth Services and why we can't get enough of dance therapy.
- ★ ***Journaling***- Proper journaling is one of the most effective ways to track emotional and spiritual development. Journaling shows you exactly where you currently are and contrasts it with where you want to be, allowing individuals to see themselves in a clear but non punitive light. Journaling is an individualized means of expression through guided discourse and is never meant to be a book of grief and hardships but is used as a tool to chronicalize your journey, set goals, track progress, identify strongholds, and track setbacks in a safe, private, non-judgmental space.

It is important to note that each resident is given a journal and expected to participate in journaling as it quantifies our experience together and tracks areas of strengths and weakness. Each resident is given the opportunity to individualize their journey and openly express their own personal needs, goals, and outcomes. Each journal becomes a resource they can turn back to and utilize for years to come.

ACTIVITIES

We believe that boredom is a gateway to mischief, so we have created activities in the home and in community to activate minds and stimulate imaginations. Group home activities include but are not limited to: art, arts and crafts, crocheting, dance/exercise, board games, cooking activities (baking), educational computer usage, book club, and creative writing. Community activities include the utilization of the Poconos with engagements in weather appropriate activities such

as- horseback riding, swimming, snow-tubing, movie nights, roller-skating, eating out in a family style restaurant, and bowling. New Way Youth Services enjoys the various family centered activities offered through Pocono Community Church and offers the option for residents to participate in youth fellowship, as well as seasonal events such as apple and pumpkin picking, the harvest festival, and the community Christmas tree lighting. **Youth always have the option to not participate in church or faith based activities as these are supplemental and not requirements for program eligibility.**

NUTRITION

At New Way Youth Services, each resident participates in the creation of the monthly menu including breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner, and dessert. Residents are encouraged to participate in the preparation of the meals (when appropriate) because youths are more likely to consume food they helped to prepare. Residents will be given the opportunity to explore a variety of ethnic foods including Caribbean and Latin flavors. Part of the daily living skills taught includes weekly coupon clipping, creating a healthy balanced grocery list, and biweekly grocery shopping. New Way post all food allergies of staff and residents in a visible location on the refrigerator, in the kitchen. Furthermore, fruits, vegetables, and wholesome snacks such as granola bars, celery sticks, peanut butter and jelly on wheat, and yogurts are always an option for a balanced snack at any time throughout the day. It is our hope to help eradicate hunger in children and to promote healthier eating options for children in care.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES AND TRAININGS

We want to be held accountable for each child's well-being and progress from the moment they arrive to the moment they are discharged from care. Our team will work with other community service agencies to assure that the process of transitional living is holistic. By adhering to a servant-leadership model, all hands are on deck in the daily running of the program and everyone from the Director to Direct Care Staff (DCS) will be considered an integral part of programs integrity and success.

We believe we are “Better together” and utilize community services and resources as an integral part of our service commitment. Services offered by agencies such as New Perspective for mobile crisis and emergency medication management, Kidspace Teen Central, and Pyramid Mental Health program which offers adolescent drug and alcohol screening are invaluable service members who assist our program in making sure all needs, including crisis, can be addressed as swiftly and as delicately as possible.

We believe that ongoing training offers our staff an opportunity to grow as service providers. Therefore we utilize the trainings provided through Carbon-Monroe-Pike MH/DS, Kidspace, as well as accredited online courses to stay current in the latest methodology of care and service provision. New Way Youth Services stays connected in the service provider community by participating in the monthly Interagency Council Meeting (IAC), monthly Homeless Advisory Board Meeting (HAB), and quarterly Crisis Intervention Services Meeting (CIS). We also believe that residents have a right to deepen in knowledge in areas concerning their life and offers our residents courses in areas such as internet safety, effective communication, fire and home safety, and money management.

AGENCY GOALS

- ✓ It is the goal of our agency to provide a clean, safe home setting for each child with shared bedrooms, baths, living and common areas, a full kitchen, dining area and outdoor yard space.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to offer targeted case management to each child in the program so that their individualized needs pertaining to their transitional living goals are fully established.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to offer at minimum 1 hour of individual and 1 hour of group therapy per week.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to offer at minimum three nutritious meals daily (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and snacks as requested.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to foster family bonds by working with CYFS and other youth advocacy agencies to maintain family ties whenever possible and appropriate.

- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to assist each child in getting in to the appropriate school setting, and to advocate mainstreamed education when appropriate.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to offer homework assistance, reading enhancement and general tutoring.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to assist each resident in developing daily living skills, including but not limited to: personal hygiene, cooking, cleaning, employment readiness, and banking.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to promote a healthy, active lifestyle by engaging residents in weather appropriate exercise regimens such as aerobics, sports, bike riding, swimming, and hiking.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to foster spiritual development by sharing the Christian principles of love, faith, patience, tolerance, and fellowship daily.
- ✓ It is the goal of this agency to make Bible study and Leadership development available to each resident.
- ✓ It is be the goal of this agency to operate under a zero-tolerance policy against any form of discrimination, crime, racism, intolerance or behaviors which works in opposition of our agency ethical and moral standards.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS & RESOURCES

New Way Youth Services is proud to work alongside, but not limited to, the following agencies and service providers:

Pocono Mountain School District
 Colonial IU 20
 Monroe County Career and Technical Institute
 PA Careerlinks
 Office of Vocational Training
 Dr. Uchenna and Solibe Ufondu
 ACE Dental
 Pyramid Mental Health Service
 Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Services
 Kidspace

New Perspectives Mobile Crisis Services

Pocono Community Church

Equip Ministries

Let's Talk Christian Ministries

AWSOM

United Way

Second Harvest Food Bank

The Salvation Army

NEPA Federal Credit Union

Carbon-Monroe-Pike Mental Health and Developmental Services

Lehigh Valley Physicians Group

Integra Home Counseling, Inc.

Human Resource Center

US Armed Forces

Department of Human Services

Children and Youth

Red Cross

Stroud Regional Police

PA State Troopers

CASA

Juvenile Law Center

Juvenile Probation Office

Department of Parks and Recreation

Representative Maureen Madden

Senator Mario Scavello

