



A Guide for Families



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We Are Here to Help

We understand having your child in state custody can be scary, but please know the team at the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Youth Services (DYS) is here to make sure your child is safe and getting the best education and treatment possible while he is away from home. We believe that with the right treatment and support, your son or daughter will be able to move in the right direction. We will do everything we can to make that happen.

Our mission is to give your child personalized treatment (such as counseling) that will help him be a successful member of society and stay out of trouble once he returns home. We start with a treatment plan that is developed by a treatment team. **You, as a parent, are a critical member of that team.** Your ideas, concerns, and feedback will be valued and respected as we work together. Your support and involvement will help your child get the most out of his time with DYS.

This guide is meant to help you and your family become active partners in your child's treatment and to give you important information about your rights and responsibilities while your child is in our care.

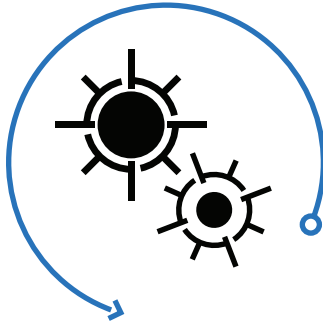


Getting to Know DYS

DYS has hired one company to run the four residential treatment centers for youth who are court-ordered into State custody. We also contract with local organizations to provide services for youth who move back home.



*All girls



How Our System Works

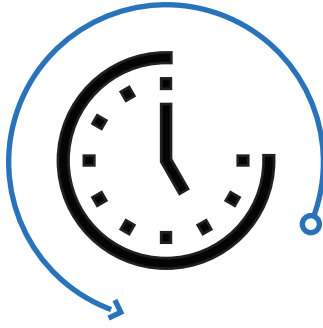
1. A judge commits your child to DYS custody.
2. Your child is driven, typically by law enforcement, to the DYS Admissions & Records unit at the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center near the city of Alexander or to an approved county-run juvenile detention facility.
3. A treatment team made up of a registered nurse, your child's case coordinator, an education liaison, behavioral modification specialist, behavioral health clinician, after care worker, and an independent living specialist works to build an individualized treatment plan for your child. The plan includes how long your son or daughter will be at one of our treatment centers, the services provided, and treatment goals. We look at several factors when deciding length of stay. Learn more in the Length of Stay with DYS section.
4. The DYS treatment team then makes a referral for the location of your child's treatment. Typically, that happens at one of the state's four juvenile treatment centers or a DYS contracted therapeutic group home. If there is a bed space available, he will be moved immediately and treatment will begin.
5. During treatment your child will work to meet the goals outlined in his treatment plan.
6. In 60 to 90 days, the treatment team will reassess his progress.
7. Once your child completes his goals and length of stay, a judge will decide when he can return home.
8. If the judge decides to send your child home, he will get what we call an aftercare plan, which outlines services he still may need.



Length of Stay with DYS

The amount of time your child stays in a DYS treatment center is based on his risk assessment, his treatment plan, and the judge's evaluation of your child's progress toward meeting his treatment goals. It is our goal that your child stays in treatment no longer than six to nine months if his risk assessment shows a moderate or high risk that he will commit another crime, and no more than three months if he is assessed as a low-risk to commit another crime.

If your child turns 18 without completing his treatment, our center is approved to keep him up to age 21, if necessary. If your child does well and completes his treatment plan, he may be released back to your custody under the supervision of an aftercare worker and with an aftercare plan. Probation, restitution owed, and other factors in your child's case also may affect his release. If your child is classified as "EJJ, Extended Juvenile Jurisdiction" the committing judge has the final say.



A Day at Our Centers

During his time with DYS, your child will go to school, work groups, therapy groups, individual counseling, community service, the dining hall, and participate in dorm activities, optional religious services, and special events planned to enhance his learning experience. A sample of your child's daily schedule is listed below:

DYS Daily Activity Schedule*

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
7:00 a.m.	Lights On	
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Hygiene/Breakfast Rotation	
8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Education	
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch/Recreation Lunch/Treatment or Skills Groups	
1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Education	
3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Town Hall Meeting/Snack	
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Recreation/Treatment Groups	
5:00 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.	Dinner/Recreation	
5:45 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner/Recreation	
6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Structured Recreation	
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Shower/Hygiene	
8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Structured Recreation	
9:00 p.m.	Lights Out	

*Please Note: This schedule can change depending on school holidays and testing schedules, the weather, special events, and the overall attitude and behavior of the residents.

Medical visits are scheduled during the day. A consulting psychiatrist will see your child if he requires psychiatric services and is scheduled to receive medication management on a monthly basis, or as needed.



Education

School is open year-round at our treatment centers. All students learn using an online system called Virtual Arkansas. School districts across the state use the same online system, which makes it easier for your child to transition back home. Your child will earn credits towards his high school diploma in the four core subject areas: Math, English, Science, and Social Studies. Each semester is made up of two, 9-week grading periods called quarters. Credits are awarded at the end of each semester. Each class completed is worth a half (0.5) credit each semester. Students earn credits by getting a passing semester grade (A, B, C, D) in a credit-earning class. An "F," or failing grade, results in no credit earned. Students have the potential to earn 3 to 3.5 credits per semester; therefore, 7 credits can be earned in a school year.

Electives

Most of our treatment centers offer career and vocational classes. Electives include auto mechanics, culinary arts, woodwork, and landscaping.

Summer School

DYS is required by the State Legislature to provide summer school to all students with us during those months. There are two summer school sessions. Each session lasts 20 days. Students participate in a variety of classes that will assist them in getting additional credits for graduation. A student can earn up to **2 credits** during one summer school session. Summer school also is designed as a credit recovery program in which students can make-up credits they have missed at school back home. Courses offered are **generally** in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and a few electives.

Adult Education

DYS also offers qualified students the opportunity to test for the General Education Diploma or GED. The GED is divided into four individual subject areas: Reasoning through Language Arts; Social Studies; Science; and Math Reasoning. The total length of time for the test to be administered is about 7.5 hours. The following guidelines are used to determine eligibility:

- Not currently enrolled in high school
- Does not have a high school diploma
- At least 16 years old
- Legal resident of Arkansas
- Complete and pass the official GED practice test, which can be done at our centers

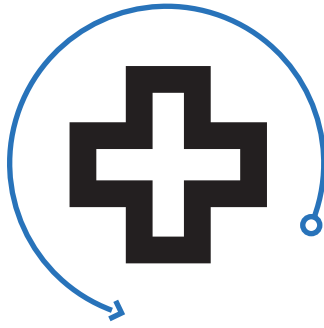
Career/Vocational Educational

Career and technical education programs assist students in apprentice work and study programs in their areas of interest and in hopes that they can get a job as they transition from the treatment program. Career education programs include:

- Forklift certification
- Certified Nursing Assistant education

Post-Secondary Education

College level courses are offered only at the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center through Shorter College in North Little Rock. Students can earn their associate degree, or they can complete their work upon release. The work that students complete at Shorter College can be transferred to any public college or university in Arkansas.



Wellness

Your child has the right to get needed medical and dental treatment while staying with us. Each of our treatment centers has trained health care professionals on staff. Your child can request medical attention for non-emergency issues by filling out a request form. Forms are available in every dorm and classroom. The medical professionals on staff will either see your child in person or provide treatment based on information in the request form. Staff are trained to handle basic medical situations and to call 911 when necessary.

If your child has a complaint about his medical care, he can file a grievance as outlined in the student handbook (see page 12).

Mental Health

Mental health counseling is available for all youth. Family counseling is held on site or via phone and everyone is expected to participate.

Drug and Alcohol Treatment

We offer drug and alcohol treatment for youth who need it. Substance abuse is a pattern of drug or alcohol use that interferes with daily functioning. Your son will be assessed to see if he needs treatment. Our therapists offer weekly sessions and provide individual counseling. We also offer group therapy sessions and family therapy. Youth may be drug tested.

Special Diets

If your child has a special diet due to a medical or dental issue or religious beliefs, please let his case manager know. The center's nutritionist will ensure your child gets an appropriate meal plan.

Clothing

Youth at our treatment centers wear school-style uniforms. We provide everything your child will wear while at the center including:

Pants

Shoes

T-Shirts

Underwear

Polo Shirts

Sleep Shorts

Socks

Hygiene Supplies

Cold Weather Gear (Coats, Hats, Gloves)

All personal items, including the clothes worn when your child arrives on campus, will be mailed home upon admission to a treatment center. Your child's case manager will assist him in packing, labeling, and listing his items in a personal property log.

All clothes must be worn as outlined below or outlined by the staff. There are no exceptions.

- Every student wears the same thing: only clothes we issue.
- Pants cannot sag.
- Shoes will always be worn when outside of the dormitory.
- Bedroom slippers, flip-flops, etc. may be worn in the dorm but will not be worn outside of the dorm.
- Shoes must be tied, and straps must be intact. Shoe flaps must be fastened.
- No youth can pierce his ears or other body parts while with DYS.
- Youth are not allowed to wear straws in their ear or any other type of adornment, paper clip, or staples. No jewelry or earrings of any kind.

Personal Hygiene

Your child will be given soap, shampoo, and other personal hygiene items. He will be allowed to shave and can get a haircut on campus twice a month. Culturally appropriate hair care services are available to all youth. Youth are expected to:

- Always keep their hair clean and groomed (only girls can have braids).
- Keep combs and brushes in their living units.
- Not possess tattoo supplies or equipment.

Sleeping

We understand that your child needs privacy and a space to call his own while in our custody. All sleeping areas and bathrooms have doors. There could be certain mental health situations that require our staff to remove a door for the safety of the child. If that happens, you will be told. Your child's room will have basic furniture and a locked place to keep his belongings.

Recreation

Exercise and time outside are important for your child's mental and physical health. Every day, your child can participate in at least one hour of planned recreational activities, including:

- Basketball
- Aerobic exercise
- Volleyball
- Board games, cards, pool, or table tennis.

A schedule of activities will be posted in classrooms, dorms, and the dining hall.

Volunteers

In addition to staff-led activities, we are lucky to have volunteers from the community who care about the youth at our centers and who have stepped up to help them. These volunteers help staff, serve as unofficial mentors for youth, and host activities, including motivational speakers, Sunday school, Bible study, recreation programs, and other special activities.



Rights & Responsibilities

Grievance

We care about your child. It is important that he feel comfortable telling us when something is wrong or unfair so that we can investigate. **We promise you that you don't have to worry about anyone trying to get even with or pay your child back for filing a complaint.** We call these grievances.

Your child can file a grievance at any time, about any action, condition, or circumstance he considers unjust. This includes placement, length-of-stay, medical care, education, disciplinary actions, quality of life, or any injury caused by a DYS staff, contractor, volunteer, or other youth. All grievances must be answered within 3 days/72 hours.

We ask that youth file written grievances. Grievance forms can be found in classrooms, dining halls, visitation areas, and administrative offices. Staff can tell your child where to find grievance forms and can assist him in fill it out, if needed. To do so:

- a. Students should place the completed form in a designated grievance box. All boxes are checked daily.
- b. A member of the center's administrative team will respond to and investigate the grievance within 24 hours.
- c. If a student has a grievance they would like to file against a staff and do not feel comfortable submitting the form in one of the boxes, he can give it to the Program Administrator.
- d. The Program Administrator will speak to your child and try to resolve the matter.
- e. If your child is not pleased with the response, an appeal can be filed with the program director. The program director will respond within five days.
- f. A copy of all written grievances will be placed in a grievance log book, and a copy will be given to your child.

- g. After appealing, if your child believes his civil rights have been violated and are in jeopardy, he will not be prevented from calling his probation officer or attorney.

Staff are not allowed to prevent your child from filing a grievance.

Authorized family members, attorneys, advocates, and other representatives may submit grievances on behalf of youth who lack capacity to submit on their own behalf.

Visitation

We strongly encourage you and your family to visit your child often because it helps keep the bond between you strong while he or she is in our care. Every child has a right to visit his family and to refuse a visit. Our visitation policy allows youths to visit family under the following rules:

- No more than four (4) people may visit (children under 12 do not count as one).
- Visitors must be immediate family: mother, father, sister and/or brother, step families, and legal guardians.
Absolutely no girlfriends, boyfriends, or friends of the family are allowed.
- Visitation is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays for two hours starting at 8 a.m. through noon, or from 1 to 5 p.m.
- If you need to see your child another day or cannot attend during normal visitation times, please call your child's case manager. He or she can schedule a visit for you on another day.
- Your child cannot schedule a visit for you.
- You cannot give your child anything during a visit. That means no stamps, batteries, phone cards, magazines, pictures, letters, or other items.
- Your child's pastor or clergy may visit any day of the week.

Telephone Calls

Your child has the right to call you or other family members. He can:

1. Make and complete a call to his legal guardian or approved immediate family member within 24 hours of arriving at the center.
2. Make one phone call a week. Calls are made throughout the week from their Case Manager's Office. We will talk with you about the time of calls to ensure you are there to get the call. Your child may call only immediate family members who are on their approved phone log. This log is created and approved by DYS staff during intake and in consultation with your child.
3. If there is an emergency at home and you need to contact your child, we will do everything possible to allow them to call you back immediately. Parents may call their child's case manager anytime during regular business hours (8:00a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) to ask about your child, check on your child's progress, or to simply leave your child a message.

Mail

Your child has the right to send and get mail, unless the letters are harmful to his well-being or treatment or threatens the safety of the center. We give your child enough postage, paper, and envelopes for a maximum of three letters each week.

All letters are given to youth with 24 hours of arriving at the center so that staff have time to inspect for contraband. Staff are not allowed to read letters unless there is clear and convincing evidence that they are harmful or a security risk. Your child has the right to write his attorney or the court at any time, and the center will pay for the cost of the letter. While in DYS custody, juveniles will not have access to email, social media, or other forms of electronic communication.

Letters and packages must:

- Include full name of the sender and the receiver
- Include the name and address in the proper places on the envelope (please see example below)
- Not include drawings, markings, ink stamps, and/or stickers on the envelope.

Sample of an addressed envelope:

James Doe 700 North 700 Main Somewhere, AR 77777	Postage Stamp
Jackie Doe Facility Mailing Address Somewhere, AR 77777	

Youth Bill of Rights

1. I have a right to be viewed and treated as a person deserving dignity and respect, and capable of changing, growing, and becoming positively connected to my community.
2. I have a right to experience success, to help define success for myself, and to have support connecting previous successes to future goals.
3. I have a right to select and receive fair and equal access to treatment, placement, care, and services that build on my strengths.
4. I have a right to have my culture included as a strength and get services that honor and respect my cultural beliefs.
5. I have a right to a program that provides developmentally and age-appropriate education that meets the requirements of the law.
6. I have a right to receive adequate, appropriate, and accessible necessities, including:
 - Food that is nutritious and healthy for me;
 - Housing and shelter that is clean and safe;
 - Clothing that is clean, weather-appropriate, and in good condition;
 - Time set aside every day for sleep, exercise, and personal care and hygiene;
 - Personal hygiene products and facilities that offer reasonable privacy;
 - Necessary dental, vision, and medical services including preventative services and services for chronic conditions;
 - Mental health services that address diagnosed emotional, psychiatric, psychological, and developmental needs;

7. I have the right to feel safe and to be free from
 - Abuse or neglect;
 - Arbitrary or unreasonable punishment or discipline, including the denial of any of the rights listed here as a form of discipline;
 - Discrimination or harassment by any person based on my or my family's actual or perceived sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, skin color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or HIV status.

8. I have the right to communicate through visits, telephone calls, and mail with:
 - Parents and guardians;
 - Biological children;
 - Attorneys;
 - Advocates appointed by law or by myself or my legal guardian;
 - Other adults with whom I have a familial or mentoring relationship, including clergy, caseworkers, teachers, and others approved by the court or DYS.

9. I have the right to communicate confidentially with my attorneys and their staff, members of the clergy, my DCFS caseworker, the Juvenile Ombudsman, and representatives of Disability Rights Arkansas or other state-designated protection and advocacy organizations.

10. I have the right to feel hopeful about my situation, to feel seen as an individual, and to understand every day what I must do to succeed.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents must give DYS a current address and tell us if they have a:

- Change of address
- Change of phone number
- Change in marital status
- Proof of Guardianship if they are not the biological parent
- List custodial parent if there is a divorce decree in place
- Court order deeming who has guardianship or if there are any no contact restrictions

Family Bill of Rights

- I. You have the right to be treated fairly, regardless of your or your child's actual or perceived sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, skin color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, or HIV status.
- II. You have the right to know the status of the safety, health, and welfare of your child.
- III. You have the right to regularly communicate with your child through scheduled face-to-face visitation, telephone calls, and letters. No electronic communication is allowed.
- IV. You have the right to see and request your child's medical, health, and education records. Once your child reaches the age of 18, only he can see and request those records unless he has an intellectual disability that prevents him from functioning independently.
- V. You have the right to advocate for the best interest of your child.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Contact Information

Program Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Therapist: _____

Case Manager: _____

DYS Case Coordinator: _____

Phone: _____

Judge: _____

