



## ARKANSAS DIVISION of YOUTH SERVICES

### **Family Engagement Plan**

2023-2024 School Year

The Division of Youth Services has entered into a contractual agreement with Rite of Passage (ROP). Rite of Passage currently manages four facilities: the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center (AJATC), Dermott Juvenile Treatment Center (DJTC), Harrisburg Juvenile Treatment Center (HJTC), and the Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC). The Civilian Student Training Program (CSTP) is managed by DYS. DYS and ROP have established expectations and objectives regarding parental involvement. Every effort has been made to ensure that ROP and DYS work cooperatively with parents, guardians, and family members to help maintain a connection while students are in DYS custody. Both ROP and DYS have websites that are available to the public and can easily be accessed online. ROP and CSTP have student handbooks which are posted online as a part of either the district's website, or the AJATC Website. Important documents can be found under "State Required Information." Copies of the ROP Student Handbook are in both English and Spanish. If an interpreter is needed at any time, ROP has established a working relationship with a company that is always ready to translate conversations as needed so that parents/guardians have access to all information needed to help their child/youth experience success while undergoing treatment at DYS/ROP facilities.

Each facility conducts four parent/teacher conferences per year, which may be in-person or online (Teams/Zoom). The conferences are intended to provide parents/guardians with a chance to meet teachers and school staff, learn about their child's academic performance, and discuss strengths and areas of concern that will be addressed and reinforced until their child reaches mastery of a particular skill or a series of skills. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact facility staff at any time to check on their youth's academic progress and current grades.

Every youth remanded to the custody of DYS must be afforded the opportunity to communicate via phone or computer with the youth's parents/guardians, immediate family members, and other positive individuals in the youth's life.

During the intake and assessment process, the youth's approved telephone list shall be compiled by a DYS Services Coordinator. Changes made to the approved telephone list shall be completed by the youth's case manager/tracker. Youth shall be made aware of telephone communication procedures as outlined in the ROP Student Handbook. Each facility, or program, shall allow a youth to make two telephone calls per week to his/her immediate family, or any other approved person. The opportunity to make additional calls shall be afforded as a privilege in the behavior management system. Youth shall not be permitted to speak with incoming callers until the caller's identity has been authenticated. Under no circumstances shall a youth be denied the opportunity to communicate with his/her attorneys, or the courts. Calls to attorneys or courts shall not be monitored. Facility staff shall maintain a telephone call log sheet for all incoming and outgoing telephone calls youth make.

Families are involved from the beginning of the process, starting with intake. A family member, or legal guardian is present on-line or on the telephone during the initial Treatment Team meeting. During this meeting critical goals are established and after the student exits the conference, a panel of professionals decides which facility best suits the client's needs. The client's length of stay is also determined. Every 90 days, parents/guardians are invited and encouraged to participate in Treatment Team Reviews (TTRs) in which progress toward set goals is discussed. Parents/guardians, school staff, and DYS personnel collaborate in efforts to make the transition back to home, school, and community as seamless and smooth as possible.

Every youth remanded to the custody of DYS must be afforded the opportunity to receive visits from their parents/guardians, immediate family members, and/or other positive individuals in the youth's life. Youth may refuse to receive visitors. Visitors shall be required to abide by established rules and regulations governing visitation to ensure safety.

Normal visitation days are Saturday, Sunday, and major holidays. The facility or program shall provide two eight-hour visitation days per week. Visitation for youth is up to two hours per each visitation. Special visitation may be provided to accommodate visitors with special circumstances, including without limitation: long-distance requirements, parent work schedules that preclude visiting during normal hours, and/or bereavement. Visitations are limited to four guests; however, for large families, and/or stepfamilies, an exception may be made on a case-by-case basis. If there is a compelling risk, visitation may be denied or terminated. This may include circumstances in which the youth is exhibiting out-of-control behavior, engaging in violent or threatening conduct, or is engaging in misconduct during visitations. Parent/guardians shall be notified prior to a visitation if it has been determined that a youth will not be allowed to participate in a normal visitation schedule. An alternate location and time will be provided to parents/guardians to allow them the opportunity to visit.

The facility shall post visitation rules and procedures on a central bulletin board in the visitation area and have copies available in both English and Spanish. Facility staff shall assist non-English speaking individuals to understand posted rules, as needed. The visitation rules shall address all pertinent issues, including without limitation to visitation days and hours, required identification, visitor dress code, prohibited contraband, items authorized in visitation areas, and expected demeanor of visitors. These notifications are sent with an admission's letter each parent/guardian receives and includes the grievance process. Adequate space shall be provided for visitation. Outdoor visitation may be allowed if safety and weather permit.

DYS receives Title 1 N&D (Neglected and Delinquent) federal funding. At least 15% of the total funding must be allocated to transitions. Each facility partners with local businesses to provide students with mentors, connections, opportunities, and resources. These funds go toward materials and programs intended to directly impact and improve student academic performance.