

Edmund L. Thomas Adolescent Center

The overall mission of the Edmund L. Thomas Adolescent Center is to provide safe, secure supervision for youth pending adjudication and disposition. The Center is the residential component of the Office of Children and Youth and is comprised of two short-term therapeutic residential programs: Secure Juvenile Detention and Dependent Shelter. ELTAC is entrusted to provide care for Court-Ordered children awaiting adjudication and/or disposition. The Court of Common Pleas and their agent are the only individuals authorized to detain children. The total bed capacity at the Center is 28: 20 secure beds and 8 staff-secure shelter beds.

Secure Detention

The Center has been providing secure residential services to at-risk youth in Erie County since 1973. The goal of the secure detention program is to act in concert with the Balanced and Restorative Justice Approach by providing community protection, accountability, and competency development. To accomplish this goal, ELTAC provides a variety of services to children who are court-ordered to secure detention.

ELTAC has a certified school staff by the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit where students earn academic credit while in residence. The Center also conducts a summer school program funded by Title One to help students improve math and reading scores. School attendance is mandatory for all residents who do not have a high school diploma.

ELTAC is licensed by DPW under the 3800 Regulation and is audited and inspected annually.

All children receive a complete health care screen and physical from the medical department including dental and eye care.

Residents are supervised 24 hours a day and must participate in a variety of programs including school, recreation, group, daily hygiene and medical evaluation. The Center also offers optional religious opportunities.

The detention program begins at 7:30 a.m. with bedtime at 9:00 p.m. for 13 and under and 9:30 p.m. for residents 14 and older. Lights out at 10:30 p.m. Residents may read prior to lights out. No music is available in detention.

All residents receive a handbook upon admission which details daily expectations, client rights, grievance procedure and consequence for non-compliance.

Dependent Shelter

The Edmund L. Thomas Dependent Shelter was opened in September 1994 to meet the needs of pre-adjudicated and adjudicated dependent children who are unable to be cared for in the home, foster care, current placement, or Mental Health Centers. The Shelter provides a Court Ordered short-term placement in a closely supervised setting pending disposition.

The ages of these children range from six (6) to eighteen (18). It is the placement of last resort for children in emergency situations, who may be potentially violent, sexually acting out, or who are emotionally disturbed. Other circumstances that lead to shelter placement include: physical or sexual abuse, neglect, truancy, or conduct disorders. Dependent Shelter provides a safe and secure environment for children and the community.

Within the last year, Shelter has begun providing services to a population whose behavior and emotional needs encompasses the MH/MR diagnoses and for whom placement in other settings jeopardizes the welfare of the child or the safety of others. To date there have been 891 youth served in the Dependent Youth Shelter. In 2003, 76 children were placed in the Shelter program.