

MONTGOMERY COUNTY YOUTH CENTER

The Montgomery County Youth Center is a 48-bed short-term co-ed residential facility located in southeastern Pennsylvania at 540 – 550 Port Indian Road, Norristown, PA 19403. The Youth Center is under the direction of Executive Director Maureen Raquet. The Youth Center operates two separate and independent programs: a 36-bed Secure Detention program and a 12-bed Shelter program.

The mission of the Montgomery County Youth Center is to provide a safe and secure environment for the residents in our care while ensuring the protection of the community. The needs of the residents are met by an array of individualized services that are provided in a climate of dignity and respect.

The Montgomery County Youth Center provides a highly structured environment for the resident's daily activities from year-round schooling to religious services.

The average length of stay at the Youth Center as of July 2010 is about 11 days and within this time frame, the Office of Children and Youth (OCY), Juvenile Probation and staff provide the necessary services to meet the needs of the resident.

Juveniles in our custody are provided with 24-hour direct supervision by Secure Detention Counselors (detention staff) or Youth and Family Advocates (shelter staff).

The Youth Center is licensed by the Department of Public Welfare. The Youth Center is a member of the Juvenile Detention Centers Association of Pennsylvania (JDCAP) and the National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA).

DETENTION PROGRAM

The Youth Center maintains a thirty six-bed secure detention program. The basic purpose of the detention program is to provide secure short-term protective care and custody of juveniles ages 10 to 18 who have allegedly violated the law or have been adjudicated delinquent for a criminal offense and have met the criteria for Secure Detention.

Any child who is referred for admission to the Secure Detention Program must be approved by the Montgomery County Juvenile Probation Department before the can be admitted to the program.

The Detention Program has four basic objectives:

1. Community Protection.
2. To provide a safe and staff secure environment for the youth.
3. To provide Juvenile Court with a full psychosocial evaluation for all residents.
4. To initiate services to remediate problems identified during the youth's detention.

SHELTER PROGRAM

The Youth Center maintains a twelve-bed non-secure shelter program.

The basic purpose of the Shelter Program is provide short-term emergency care for children ages 12 to 18 with dependency issues such as homelessness, runaway, ungovernable or truant behavior. The shelter program also accepts juveniles charged with minor delinquent acts, who do not meet the criteria for Secure Detention.

The Shelter serves as a haven for those teenagers who have been physically or sexually abused and are in need of a safe place to stay when foster care is not immediately available

Any resident referred to the Shelter Program for admission must be approved by either the Montgomery County Juvenile Probation Department or the Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth before they can be admitted to the program.

The Shelter Program has three basic objectives:

1. To provide reunification of the youth to a safe and stable home life by stressing programs and services which involve a family based service approach.
2. To develop a full range of evaluation services (observational, social, educational and clinical) which focuses on short-term crisis intervention and long-term family counseling services to alleviate or resolve the problems that led to the placement.
3. To minimize the length of stay in placement for a youth in crisis.

The Youth Center provides the following services:

SERVICES

The Youth Center provides a full psychosocial evaluation for all the residents admitted to the Youth Center. This evaluation will be used at the time of resident's disposition. An educational assessment and behavioral report are completed on all residents. Most residents receive a psychological evaluation and many receive a psychiatric evaluation. These reports and evaluations are provided to the Judge for final disposition.

The Youth Center provides the information needed to initiate relevant and appropriate services that are necessary to ensure the safety and well being of the juveniles during their stay in the Center. Our hope is to provide every juvenile with a positive and helpful experience designed to enable the child to return to the community or prepare him or her for possible residential placement for the next several months.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Each resident at the Youth Center is assigned a caseworker. The caseworker serves as liaison between the child, the Juvenile Probation Department, the Office of Children and Youth, the parents and his or her attorney. The caseworker meets regularly with each resident to discuss their issues and concerns, their adjustment to the program and any behavioral difficulties the child may be exhibiting at the Youth Center. The caseworker also keeps the resident abreast of the juvenile court process. A mental health caseworker is available for those residents identified as needing further assessment. There is a master's level social worker on staff who conducts individual and group meetings. AA and NA meetings are also made available to all residents.

The caseworker maintains contact with all significant parties and is responsible for writing a report concerning the child's behavior while at the Youth Center and makes a recommendation to the Juvenile Court regarding disposition.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Residents are required in both detention and shelter programs to attend and participate in our educational program. Certified teachers from the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit provide classes in secure detention. Certified teachers under the supervision of the Norristown Area School District provide classes for Shelter residents at our Shelter School. Instruction is provided in Math, Reading, English, Science, Social Studies and Art. As part of a well-rounded educational program, we provide life

skills training, physical education, and other special areas of study in the standard curriculum. The teachers perform an educational assessment on all students and provide a copy of the report to the Juvenile Court Judge. If desired, students may receive schoolwork from their home school district, but parents must bring their child's books and assignments to the Youth Center. Our teachers will assist any child that needs help with his or her schoolwork.

During the evening, residents are given the opportunity to attend Title I tutoring. The teachers generally choose residents who are in need of more individual attention. Students expressing interest in the program may also participate.

MEDICAL SERVICES

All residents admitted to the Youth Center are seen by the nurse and given a physical exam by a licensed physician. The doctor visits the Center at least twice a week and the nurses are available everyday during waking hours. If residents feel sick, they simply need to report this to a staff person who will make arrangements for the child to see the nurse, or doctor if necessary. The nurse distributes all prescription medication at regular time intervals. Residents are not permitted to have any medication, prescription or non-prescription, in their rooms or on their person. If emergency medical care becomes necessary, immediate arrangements are made to transport the child to the emergency room at Montgomery Hospital. Parents would immediately be notified regarding any emergency that might occur.

All residents remaining beyond thirty days in either Shelter or Detention receive a dental exam and cleaning. Emergency dental care is provided for those residents in need.

RECREATION

The residents have access to recreational activities. The Youth Center has a gymnasium, a weight room and a courtyard area. The residents exercise, play basketball, volleyball, mat ball and many other activities. Residents have mandatory gym time during the week.

RELIGION

Church groups visit the Youth Center regularly on Sunday evenings. Residents may attend services if they wish. A special visit can also be arranged with clergy. They may visit during the regular scheduled visiting hours, or they can call a child's caseworker to set up a special visiting time.