



Parents' Guide

Changes In Adolescent Care

(NAPSA)—Parents of an adolescent who needs some type of counseling or psychiatric care have more options now than in the past. Twenty years ago, when an adolescent had exhausted home and outpatient resources and needed care outside of the home, he or she was typically referred to a psychiatric hospital unit, military school or possibly a residential treatment center.

Today, however, a new group of programs and schools has emerged—many of which are unencumbered by managed care requirements and priced at levels far more affordable than more traditional settings.

For instance, working ranches that combine professional psychotherapy with the realities of taking care of animals and getting along with others have become popular. Also, settings that equip young people with basic independent living skills and gradually integrate adolescents into the community are seeing many successes.

Traditional treatment now includes more use of art therapy, outdoor adventure and multifamily groups. Another innovation utilizes the Internet to enhance the flow of treatment information while more readily connecting caregivers and clients.

Experts say that over the past fifteen years, outdoor behavioral health programs have added increasingly diverse and sophisticated approaches to help serve young people. Thorough psychological testing completed by psychologists now often complements programming that includes ongoing family work, individual sessions and group therapy provided by professional therapists.



Parents have new options when choosing a mental health care program for their teens.

While experts tend to agree that changes to the field of adolescent care are beneficial, the amount of growth in the field can make it difficult for parents to choose programs that are right for their children. In addition, some states do not have regulations in place for these newer systems of care.

To address these concerns, a group of programs and schools founded the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP). The group has grown to over one hundred and thirty schools and programs in 26 states. All members adhere to standards related to ethical and practice considerations. In several states members are actively helping to develop state licensing standards.

Parents and professionals alike can benefit from using the NATSAP directory which includes information about each school or program as well as an outline of ethical standards and professional groups that can help a family select resources that are effective as well as safe. The directory can be viewed or ordered online by visiting www.natsap.org or by contacting the NATSAP office at 928-443-9505.