



# Points for Parents

## When Considering Out of Home Options for Your Child or Adolescent

If you are considering out-of-home care for your child or teenager, your family is under a lot of stress. Your child's symptoms may have created difficulty at home or in the family. There may be trouble at school or problems in the community such as involvement with the police or child welfare.

Friends and family members may not know how to support you and your child. Your child's brothers or sisters may feel fearful or unimportant. Your own relationships may be affected as you try to meet all of your child's demands each day. You are under pressure to find answers.

Your child's providers may also feel pressure to get help for your child quickly. This pressure can lead anyone to overlook options or to settle for choices that may not fit their needs. It is even more likely to happen for people who already have a lot of stress.

You may feel like this pressure is leading you to make fast decisions about out of home options for your child. **Please take a moment to consider the information below before making a choice about out of home services.**

### Look at community-based options

Know what kind of support your child needs to be successful. A child's actions are the result of needs. What service will meet those needs?

For example, if your child is having a problem getting to school:

- Does he or she need help with getting a ride to school?
- Is medication making him or her too tired?
- Is he or she having problems learning? And is he or she trying to avoid failure?
- Is he or she afraid of someone at the bus stop?
- Is he or she trying to avoid trouble?

The solution may be different for each question. *Try to think of needs and services.* What does your child need in order to live at home? To achieve in school? To be part of the community? Talk with your child's providers to learn what services and supports are available. Ask the treatment team to help you identify natural supports that can help your family.

In Wyoming, High Fidelity Wraparound (HFWA) is a community-based program that can be used as a diversion for higher levels of care. The goal of the program is to keep kids at home, in school and out of trouble. HFWA builds a Child and Family team that work with youth and their families and together they seek positive health outcomes for youth as well as help families achieve their hopes and dreams.

Learn more about this community-based program at [www.MagellanofWyoming.com](http://www.MagellanofWyoming.com).

### Connect with other parents

Your problems are unique. *But you are not alone.* Other children and families have had similar experiences. They can help you look at your choices even if their decisions are not right for your

child. They can share information with you about what has happened to them. They can help you think creatively about what might work for your child.

If you are involved with HFWA, contact us to learn more about the Family Support Partner service. We can also help connect you to other parents, family support programs and resources in your community. You can also work with your Child and Family team directly to find local resources and supports.

You can also visit [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org) to find a list of organizations that can support you. In Wyoming, the local family-run organization is [Uplift](#).

*Other parents and caregivers can give you information and support that no one else can.*

### **Find out what your child thinks**

Make every effort to involve youth in making decisions about their care. They may need support in order to be involved. Helping them share their own ideas and experiences is everyone's responsibility. Listen to what they say will work best for them and ask them to help develop solutions when you don't agree.

### **If residential care is the best option<sup>1</sup>**

You may want to find residential care for your child or teen when you have tried all community-based services without success. This should be considered a short-term approach. The treatment should focus on specific goals. But you may feel pressure to make quick decisions. This pressure increases if you hear things like, "if a bed is available," or "as soon as we can get a bed" or "the facility has saved a bed for your child." This decision is not about a 'bed', it is about your child's life and about making a decision that will result in positive outcomes for your child.

We encourage you make an informed decision when selecting an out of home service. You need to know what this will mean for your child and family. Answers to the following questions can help guide your choice.

- ***Is the facility close to where you live?***
- ***Will the program be specific for your child?***
- ***Does the staff welcome your visit and answer your questions so you can make an informed decision?***
- ***How will the facility handle your child's education?***
- ***Does the staff respect you and your child?***
- ***Does the program allow your child to develop skills that can be used at home, in the community and in life?***
- ***Does the program respect and promote the rights of youth and families?***
- ***How will the current plan fit?***
- ***How does the program meet your child's health needs?***
- ***How does the program meet your child's safety needs?***

Choosing a service and being comfortable with your choice is not easy. Involve your child in making the choice. The decision will affect him or her more than anyone else *and the choice will last a lifetime.*

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<sup>1</sup>Some items in this section have been adapted from the Magellan whitepaper, *Perspectives on Residential and Community-Based Treatment for Youth & Families: Building Bridges Joint Resolution* (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration); and A START (Alliance for the Safe, Therapeutic and Appropriate Use of Residential Treatment – USF).