

Places for Struggling Teens™

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"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

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By Lon Woodbury



One of the major strengths of our network of private parent-choice residential schools and programs for struggling teens has been its innovation, creativity and ability to rapidly apply new insights and research toward helping children. This has resulted in a wide variety of approaches to helping children, each school or program dealing with problem areas in which they are especially strong.

When parents decide their child needs residential placement, they now can choose from among many quality schools and programs to find the right match between a school or program's strengths and their child's needs. The resulting network of choices for parents and their children is vastly superior to the old hospital and RTC one-size-fits-all system that was all too common before this network came into existence.

The growth of this network has been amazing. We are currently tracking about 650 private parent-choice residential schools and programs around the country, and even with the economy being in the doldrums, there are still a significant number of new start-ups seemingly every month.

The growth of this dynamic network has been possible because in the past it has been relatively easy for a dedicated individual to open a program. In the past, all an educational visionary who wanted to establish a residential program needed to do was prepare some space and activities for the children, conform to minimal basic state licensing (perhaps just a foster home approval) and get the word out. Some very successful schools and programs started in this "bootstrap" manner allowed by open access. Essentially, anybody who had a desire could try. Deep financial pockets were helpful but not necessary.

However, the screening out process starts immediately and never ends. Those who really didn't know what they were doing rapidly learned there was much more to providing a program than just providing room and board for kids. These naïve startups consequently closed fairly rapidly, if they even ever opened. Others with no marketing contacts or knowledge never received any inquiries and gave up. Still others couldn't gain the confidence of any parents or referring professionals and rapidly closed. Then too some didn't have the monetary resources to withstand slow periods or charged too little for tuition so they also closed.

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A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die out, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.

~ Max Planck

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