



abbott
House

Student Handbook

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Welcome to Abbott House

If you are reading this, someone obviously thinks you could benefit from our services and have a very successful future. A wide variety of kids come to Abbott House with histories that are possibly similar to yours. In spite of those sometimes difficult histories, kids have left Abbott House to go on to finish high school, some have left to go on to college, many have returned to their families, some to specially chosen foster homes, and others have gone on to live on their own as responsible, successful adults. Most importantly, kids have left Abbott House happy and convinced that they can live positive, fulfilling lives. We would like to congratulate you! You are now part of a very special group!

This Student Handbook will describe the rules and guidelines that will be a part of your life at Abbott House. It is hoped that this handbook will help to acquaint you with the rules and guidelines, and also serve as a reminder during your stay. This will make things more understandable so you will know what to expect.

As you read through this Student Handbook...

- 1) Pay attention to the details - it will make life easier;
- 2) Ask questions - no one can learn all the rules in one or two days;
- 3) Offer your opinions - no set of rules is perfect and you can make a difference;
- 4) Remember this handbook's limitations - love, self-respect and confidence come from within you and in your relationship with others.

You will come across some words that you might not understand. If this happens, just ask for an explanation. However, here are a few definitions that might help:

Who's Around to Help?

A **Youth Engagement Specialist** is a staff person who works in the units. Youth Engagement Specialists are here to help you with the daily routines of life at Abbott House. They are trained to help you learn more about your relationships and your feelings. They will also provide direction, guidance or a listening ear.

You will live on one of three units at Abbott House. Each unit has a **Unit Director** and two **Lead Youth Engagement Specialists** who have the responsibility for directing the staff within his or her unit. This means that they are staff leaders.

The **Program Manager** will oversee the day to day programming on each Unit to ensure that all of your needs are met.

The **Education Director, Teachers, and Teacher Aides** are staff personnel who are responsible for helping you find the best available school program for your needs. They will talk to you about your past school experiences and your current problems, your concerns and your interests. More importantly, however, they are available to help you on a daily basis with school.

The **Program Director** will be watching your progress both in the school and in the residential program and will be in regular contact with the Education Director, Unit Directors, Lead Youth Engagement Specialists, and the Program Manager to make sure that your program is being implemented in all parts of your life at Abbott House.

You will meet at least twice a week with your **Therapist**. Your therapist will help you develop positive & healthy coping skills as you work on overcoming your trauma. When appropriate, your therapist will also work with you and your family on rebuilding healthy relationships.

Your **Case Manager** was likely the first person you met with coming to the Abbott House. It is their job to help you transition and keep contact with your parent or guardian during your stay. They also keep contact with any referral workers. Your case manager, along with your therapist, will conduct Treatment Plan Reviews, monthly reviews, schedule family visits and assist your therapist with family sessions.

Your **Core Team** is that group of staff who work most directly with you. It will include the Youth Engagement Specialist, Unit Director & Lead Youth Engagement Specialists in your unit, Program Director, Program Manager and your Teacher, Therapist and Case Manager.

My Treatment Plan

That's right, it's your treatment plan, and you will be asked to participate in putting it together. While your therapist will actually write up the plan, you are expected to have an active part in providing ideas for this plan. After all, it is your plan, and you should have something to say about what you need to work on while at Abbott House. In addition, the Treatment Team will provide ideas for the plan based on their experiences with you during your first few weeks at Abbott House.

The Program

The environment at Abbott House is based on upon the knowledge that new choices and behaviors can be learned and old choices and behaviors can be improved.

The most important distinction is that Abbott House does not believe that your poor choices or actions mean that something is wrong with you. Rather, the staff is invested in understanding what happened to you in the past that led you to make those poor choices.

The Abbott House environment is one of acceptance, where everyone starts at their own level of ability & where better choices are taught and encouraged. It is a place of action and thoughtfulness where you can learn the reasons why healthier social skills will improve your life. Through close monitoring and continuous interactions, you can actually measure your own improvement; and you can see the benefit of that improvement in your daily life.

The program has a system of levels that progress toward your eventual completion of the program. Virtually everything that occurs within your daily schedule is based upon achieving success in making more productive decisions.

Abbott House uses a trauma informed care approach named TBRI. With this program we have created life values specific to Abbott House. These life values are meant to help all of us with bettering ourselves.

Respect and Kindness

Negotiate and Compromise

Focus and Finish Work

Work and Stick together

Build Trusting Healthy Relationships

Accept Outcomes of Your Decisions

Accept Decisions of Authorities

Use Good Words to Communicate

Listen and Learn

Do No Harm

The program is based on skill building, such as:

1. Learning skills & then combining skills to successfully deal with other situations.
2. Taking a learned skill and using it in the community.
3. Applying skills learned for one reason to another set of circumstances.
4. Helpful encouragement to use a skill better & praise when used appropriately.

You will also have the opportunity to attend a variety of groups led by therapists such as:

VOICES (Children of Addicted Parents), Play Therapy, Anger Management, Sexual Abuse, Grief & Loss, Mood Management, Circle of Healing, Cultural Group and Mindfulness Matters group. We contract with a provider for Outpatient Drug and Alcohol and Moral Reconciliation Therapy.

Life at Abbott House

Getting clothing

Yes, you certainly may wear your own clothes! At the Abbott House we believe you have the right to an adequate supply of clothes which are neat and stylish.

In order to help ensure your rights to adequate clothes, an inventory will be done on what you bring with you. At that time we will see which items you need to have an adequate supply. Within a day or so of your arrival a staff member will help you get the clothes you need. You will have a lot of choice, as long as your choices meet the requirements of the Dress Code (see below).

As you need new clothes you will work with your staff who will assist you in getting the clothing that you need. Also our staff is putting together a packing list for new arrivals to help you and your family decide what to bring. Ask your Case Manager for more details.

The Dress Code

It is common for adults and kids to disagree about acceptable ways of dressing, and no dress code will ever satisfy everyone. While it is desirable to allow for a wide range of choice and expression, it is necessary to realize that we live in groups. This means that we always have responsibilities along with our freedoms.

We will limit your freedom of expression if it overlooks your responsibility to others. You will not be allowed to wear clothes which are embarrassing, unpleasant, or offensive to others. This includes

leggings or stretchy pants, thin-strapped tops and dresses. You cannot wear clothing with rude or offensive symbols or writing on it, nor will you be allowed to wear clothing that is provocative or sexually suggestive. You should be prepared for disagreement with others on this code. After all, we all have different ideas on what is rude, provocative, or offensive. For safety reasons, we require girls to use 100% cotton underwear, ankle socks, and shoes without strings. Strings in pants or tops will be removed in order for you to have these items with you. Finally, jeans and shirts cannot have gemstones on them.

Wearing Jewelry

The staff recognizes self-expression as a normal and appropriate part of growth and development, and it is our hope that this jewelry policy will not infringe upon your needs in this area. While in the intake unit you will not be allowed to have jewelry. Once, you move out of the intake unit, you will be allowed to have studded earrings, rings, bracelets, and a non-metal watch. You are allowed to wear any jewelry or accessories that are in the judgment of the Core Team and are both non-hazardous and within the limits of social acceptability. We ask that any jewelry with sentimental or monetary value be left at home.

Some examples of jewelry you cannot wear are necklaces, anything with elastic, facial piercings or other body piercings. Because of the requirement to remove jewelry if the Calming Down Room is used, users of this room may be given jewelry restriction. We also restrict jewelry when it is used to harm yourself or others. If you receive jewelry restrictions, you will not be allowed to wear or have any jewelry or accessories deemed potentially dangerous or difficult to remove.

Household Chores

Just like any other home, the Abbott House needs regular maintenance and upkeep in order to stay in clean and pleasant condition. While major repairs and maintenance will be performed by Abbott House staff and professional contractors, you should expect to participate on a daily basis in the regular daily aspects of keeping a home clean.

As part of your morning routine, you will be asked to complete your household chores. This would include making your bed, picking up your room, vacuuming, dusting, and taking care of dirty laundry on your designated laundry day. In addition, all of the residents in your unit share the responsibility of keeping the common areas of the unit clean.

On Saturday or Sunday you will also be asked to participate in Deep Clean-up. This is time set aside for you to get to all the corners of the unit and your room that gets overlooked during the busy schedules of the weekdays.

Restitution

If you damage another person's property or Abbott House property in some way on purpose or because of rough housing or your carelessness causes something to be broken, you will be expected to pay for the damages you caused.

Aggressive Behaviors

Aggressive behavior is treated seriously everywhere. The Abbott House is no exception. Not only does this kind of behavior threaten the physical well-being of others, but it often causes others within the group to retaliate or feel unsafe. When this happens, a cycle of violence becomes established which threatens everyone's safety and well-being. This unsafe environment is not what you or we want where we live.

If you are involved in an assault of anyone while you are at the Abbott House you should expect several things to occur. First, you may be placed on restrictions which will limit activities that you can be involved in. Second, you will be required to complete assignments. These will challenge you to look at the events which led to the aggression. You will also be asked to come up with better ways of handling your feelings or problems. Third, you will be asked to meet with the victim of your aggression and make any necessary apologies or restitution. Finally, you should keep in mind that anyone has the right to file charges against you if you are involved in an assault.

Student Council

The Student Council is a group of students with special responsibilities at the Abbott House. The members of this council meet twice monthly to discuss such things as rules and guidelines, problems and concerns, and the quality of life at the Abbott House. The ideas and recommendations of the Student Council are an important part of the way decisions are made at the Abbott House. While the Council does not have the power to make the final decisions or rules, it has a large influence on those decisions.

The kids who serve on the Student Council should have special qualities: First of all, they should have the capacity to genuinely care about others. This means that they should be able to look beyond just their own interests and problems. Secondly, they should be responsible and exercise good judgment in their own lives. Finally, people on the Council should be those who are willing to openly and respectfully discuss and debate various topics and problems.

Students are elected to the Council in the following manner:

- 1) The student is recommended for a position on the Council by the students in her Unit.
- 2) The recommendation goes to the Core Team Meeting. The Team reviews the recommendation and, if approved, passes the recommendation on to the Student Council.
- 3) The Student Council then meets with the student who has been recommended for an interview. If the Council feels that the student meets the qualifications for the position, the student becomes a Council member.

There is no set term of office for Council members. Council members can resign at any time. Council members can also be removed if the students whom she represents request a removal, and the Council agrees with this recommendation. Council members can also be removed from office if the Core Team feels it is clearly not in the best interest of the student or the program. This would usually be the result of significant problems such as fighting, running away or hurting oneself. Decisions on recommendations by the Council are reached through discussion and compromise. There is no vote taken on specific issues or questions; Council members must learn to convince the entire Council of the logic or wisdom of their point of view. They must also learn to understand another person's position and be willing to adjust and compromise when necessary.

Your Education

For many students coming to the Abbott House, school has been a place of disappointment and frustration. Like all of our program components, the Abbott House educational program offers you an opportunity to experience success regardless of your past school experiences. However, again, like all other program components, this will require your cooperation, your honesty, and your trust in your Core Team.

While in the Abbott House school, your school performance and behavior will be monitored by your Teacher. You will have input into your class schedule, including planning for college or a trade. If you fail to provide input, decisions will be made for you. In other words, to get what you want and need, you must speak up.

The Abbott House School

The purpose of the Abbott House School is to identify your educational needs and find the most appropriate academic program for you.

Therefore, you can expect to take some tests during your first few days. Once you begin regular classes, your studies will be based upon your individual needs. School at Abbott House is also year round.

While attending school at Abbott House, you have the opportunity to catchup on any missed school work or credits so that when you return to your home school you are on track with your schoolmates.

Independent Living

For those older adolescents for whom family reunification, placement with previous caretakers or adoption have been found to be difficult, the agency provides service components that are designed to help the client to successfully prepare for and make the transition to independence.

If you are 14 years of age or older, you may also attend workshops on independent living topics throughout the year. This is available for DSS, DOC, and tribal placements.

Assessment

Each girl is assessed as to the need for independent living skills training. The first criteria or assessment is age. Any resident 14 years old or older is given the Caseys Life Skills Assessment. You're asked to rate your skills and experiences in the following categories: money & food management, personal appearance, health, housekeeping, transportation, educational planning, job seeking & maintenance skills, emergency and safety skills, community resources, interpersonal skills, legal skills, and housing.

Practical Experiences

Abbott House offers several practical living experiences for the girls. The residents are responsible for doing their laundry, housekeeping in their living area, meal setup and cleanup. Girls also help whenever possible with cooking, outside grounds keeping and intensive cleaning.

Behavior Problems

Girls who show unsafe behavior such as self-harming, running away or suicidal ideations, urges or attempts will be placed on precautions. Precautions could include not being able to sleep in their bedroom, having staff in the bathroom when it is used, not being able to wear long sleeves or long pants or other precautions that will help staff keep them safe. We will always err on the side of caution in order to keep our girls safe.

Self-harm checks will be completed with any girl who is on precautions for self-harm. This means that they will be asked to change into a

medical gown, leaving only underclothing on, and the nurses will do a body check, looking for new self-harm and checking on the healing of previous self-harm.

If you are not able to control your behavior and you are disrupting others, or staff believe you may hurt someone or something, then they may do the following:

- Use problem solving to help you.
- Separate you from others in your unit with a “15 second rule”.
- Request that you take calming down time in a location you may be asked to use.
- You may be escorted to a calming down room to keep you from physically hurting yourself or others, if you are unwilling to walk yourself or an immediate need for safety. You will be closely watched if the door is locked.
- You may be physically restrained as a last resort to keep you from physically hurting yourself or others. This therapeutic hold is meant to hold you for as much time as you need to gain control of your own behavior.
- Whenever you are placed in a locked room or if you need to be physically held we need to tell the significant adults in your life and we want you to share your concerns about these things with staff.

Your responsibilities

You have most of the same rights, benefits and privileges here as you do anywhere. You also have the same responsibilities. A resident cannot interfere with the care and treatment of others.

You may be held legally responsible for breaking the law or may be civil and/or criminally liable if you...

- deliberately hurt another student, an employee or any other person;
- destroy or steal property
- Pull fire alarm
- Run away

You may keep personal property, but you are responsible for taking care of it and for protecting it from theft or loss. If you bring value items, we will send them with your family or worker.

Rules regarding personal space

- Electrical — All items must be checked by the maintenance person to insure they are safe. No electrical items or extension cords are allowed.

- Sharp/Glass Objects — No glass items, razors, scissors, or breakable objects will be allowed. They may be labeled and placed in storage until you leave or they will be sent home.
- Pictures — Pictures are kept in rooms on a poster board or in your lock box.
- Aerosol Cans — Aerosol cans of hair spray, deodorant, etc. are not allowed.
- Food and drinks — No food or drinks may be kept in your room or storage.
- Posters/wall hangings — Upon staff approval, posters and wall hangings may be hung by approved means. Posters may not include themes of Satanism, drugs, alcohol, violence, or sexual material.
- Valuables — Items of value should not be brought to the facility. Abbott House will not be responsible for lost or stolen valuables. As you advance in your program, you are allowed to keep \$10 in your lockbox. The remaining money will be kept in a checking account.
- Books and Movies — No horror books are allowed. No personal movies will be allowed.

Call Home!

Telephone calls

Telephone calls are not a right but a part of your treatment program. The calls are intended to help you maintain contact with family and to continue to work on problems together. A schedule for telephone calls will be worked out for you and your family. Calls can last 10 minutes and only be made during your group's telephone time. You may make calls and receive calls from only the individuals listed on your contact list. Since it may not be convenient for the staff to be available at all times to monitor the calls you receive, people may be asked to call back at a later time or will need to be called at a more convenient time. If you have not completed homework and are placed on the late work list, you will not be able to receive calls. Pending what is recorded on your contact list, your calls may be monitored. If you have conflicts during a telephone call or you are talking about inappropriate topics, the call may be ended.

Mail

Your incoming and outgoing mail may be monitored and can be restricted. Generally, mail to/from institutions, jails, or group homes will need to be approved by parent or worker and monitored by your therapist or case manager. You may be required to open mail in the presence of staff, separate the pages, and return the envelope to staff. The number of letters mailed for you will be limited to seven per week.

Internet

As you advance in the program you may have internet privileges in the school if you have consent from your parents and/or guardian but only if it does not cause a problem for you. You will not be allowed to communicate by email on the internet while at Abbott House. Absolutely no social media will be allowed while at the Abbott House.

Controlled Substances

- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages, inhalants, non-prescription drugs or legally controlled drugs is strictly forbidden, the violation of this rule may result in consequences.
- All drugs, whether prescribed or over-the-counter (including aspirin, Tylenol, etc.) will be turned in to the staff at the time of admission. All medications must be prescribed by an approved physician and dispensed by Abbott House staff. There will be no exceptions.

Your Rights

You are here because your parents, guardian, or someone acting as a parent signed an application for your treatment here. Even if you did not make a decision about coming to Abbott House we believe that every child should have the following rights while in care in our program:

- 1) Every child has the right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.
- 2) Every child has the right to as much privacy as they can handle and is reasonable in a residential treatment program.
- 3) Every child has the right to have her opinion heard and to be included to the greatest extent possible when any decision is made affecting her life.
- 4) Every child has the right to receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support, and supervision.
- 5) Every child has the right to be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment: every child has the right to be protected from any form of sexual exploitation.
- 6) Every child has the right to receive adequate and appropriate food.
- 7) Every child has the right to receive adequate and appropriate medical care.
- 8) Every child has the right to clean, safe, and sanitary surroundings.
- 9) Every child has the right to receive an educational program which will maximize her potential.
- 10) Every child has the right to refuse treatment and can follow the children's grievance procedures.

Grievance Procedures

In the event that a resident of Abbott House feels that they have been mistreated or the rules have been applied unfairly by a staff member the child will be allowed to raise criticism or complaints without fear or retaliation. Abbott House staff are to explain to a resident that the following procedures exist and they are to adhere to the following steps in the grievance process:

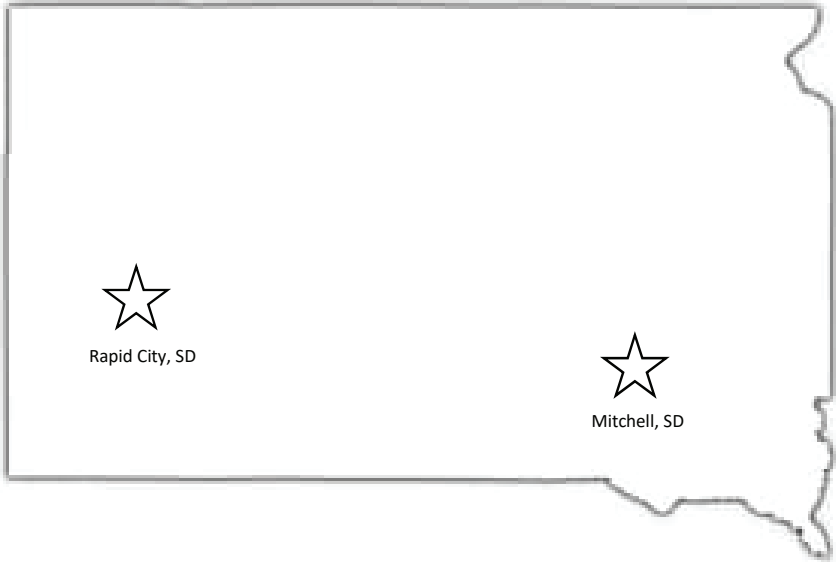
- 1) If you have a concern regarding a staff member, you should first attempt to talk to the staff member that you have a complaint against to see if the problem can be resolved between the two of you, or
- 2) If you feel that the program is applied unfairly toward you, you should talk to your pod staff regarding this concern. If you are not satisfied with the answer, then,
- 3) Verbal complaint to the Unit Director, Education Director or Case Manager. If you are not satisfied with that answer, then,
- 4) Written complaint to the Program Director. And if you are still not satisfied, then,
- 5) Request that a committee consisting of one neutral staff member and one neutral program resident selected by the Executive Director meet with the Program Director and hear the written or verbal views expressed by the resident. The committee will have no power to overturn any decision that was made by the staff member but instead the grievance committee will determine whether the resident's complaint is valid and if it should be pursued further by the Program Director.
- 6) The Program Director may, in consultation with the Executive Director, overturn an inappropriate decision made by one or more of the staff.
- 7) You will be allowed to call the Guardian ad Litem or referring worker to discuss the grievance. The Guardian ad Litem or referral worker is allowed to visit with the child at any time in the Abbott House, if they feel that the problem warrants immediate attention.
- 8) The decision by the Abbott House and/or referring agency is final.
- 9) You will be informed that you have the right to consult with an attorney.

Parents' grievance procedures

In the event that the parents of a resident at Abbott House have a disagreement or problem with the agency, the parents will have the following process available to them:

- 1) They should contact the child's assigned Abbott House Case Manager or Therapist and attempt to resolve the difficulty.
- 2) They may make a verbal complaint to the Abbott House Program Director.
- 3) They may provide a written grievance to the agency's Program Director or Executive Director. The Program Director shall respond in writing within five (5) work days with a copy to the Executive Director.
- 4) The parents may make a written grievance to the agency's Executive Director who shall respond by either telephone and/or in writing within fifteen (15) work days.
- 5) The parents may request a meeting with all parties to attempt to resolve the difficulty through consensual agreements.
- 6) The parents may notify the referring agency worker or request that the Abbott House notify the referring worker of the problems and, if possible, request their assistance in its resolution.
- 7) A disinterested third party, acceptable to all parties, may be obtained to hear the grievance. After collecting and evaluating all available data and information, the decision of the neutral third party will be final.

MAP



Abbott House has facilities in Mitchell and Rapid City, South Dakota. We have been serving children statewide since 1939 with facilities in Rapid City recently opening in 2016. The current facilities are listed below.

- Abbott House – PRTF – Mitchell
- Bridges Foster Homes – Mitchell
- Bridges Foster Homes – Rapid City
- Bridges Independent Living Apartments – Mitchell
- Bridges Independent Living Apartments – Rapid City



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CALL OR WRITE

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