



abbott  
House

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A Place of Hope  
and Healing







# Healing the Trauma

Very often youth is not the time of innocence and playfulness portrayed in movies and in situation comedies. For many children and adolescents, the passage into adulthood is marked by loneliness, upheaval, and uncertainty.

Each child responds to this turmoil differently. Some blame themselves, adopting self-destructive lifestyles. For others, whose lives are complicated by circumstances beyond their control, withdrawal or aggression becomes a part of everyday life. Children learn to adapt, even at their own expense.

There are many warning signs that signal a youngster is in trouble. Warning signs can present in poor peer relationships, inadequate school performance, or difficulty functioning in their living environment. Some youngsters have problems academically because of special needs, while some youngsters may be responding to the effects of drugs and alcohol in their lives. Some youngsters attempt to control aspects of their lives with eating disorders, while others may adopt very unhealthy interpersonal relationships.

The number of children who experience sexual and/or physical abuse is startling. The continual nightmare of not knowing what to expect from the environment, settles into a child's core. It can progress into a tough outer core that protects their innermost feelings and

sense of being. The resolution of these critical issues represents a challenge for youngsters who incorporate this experience into their fabric of life. Too frequently, the result is a cycle that involves self-destructive and painful lifestyles.

Everyone agrees that these young people need a comprehensive and sensitive program. That is where Abbott House begins its healing process.

The program at Abbott House is an adaptation of current thinking and evidence based research in the ever-changing practice of residential treatment programs for youth. At its core, Abbott House has built a program using concepts grounded in trauma informed care while following a medical model. The framework focuses on meeting the child where they are. This concept begins the internal healing of the tumultuous past. Learning occurs within a strong collaboration between the clinical, residential, & education staff, and the child. This relationship promotes the teaching and practicing of healthy coping skills to start the rewriting of these children's traumatic histories. This allows for the integration of biological, psychological and interpersonal consoling of childhood trauma.

Accreditation by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services

Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility, Foster Home Services, Licensed by the Department of Social Services, Medicaid approved

Abbott House School is an attendance center of our local high school

Member of the National Fellowship of Child Care Executives

Programs are supported in part by contributions and a subsidy from the Abbott House Foundation



Families and Professionals who are interested in learning more about Abbott House programs are welcome to visit our facility or our website at [www.abbotthouse.org](http://www.abbotthouse.org)

Referrals can be made by phone and evaluated prior to the formal admission procedure.

An application for admission is available at [www.abbotthouse.org](http://www.abbotthouse.org)

Contact our Program Director at:  
PO Box 700, Mitchell, SD 57301-0700 Telephone: (605) 996-2486 ext. 115

## When Caring is Not Enough

The Abbott House environment emphasizes "felt safety" through connection, empowerment and gentle correction. These three principles allow for the building blocks of meaningful learning experiences and the opportunity to grow continuously in a supportive structured learning environment. Here, a young person can practice the skills she will need to learn how to feel safe and empowered. Helping a child regain a sense of control over decisions that affect her, empowers her. This allows the child to utilize her new skills to continue learning about herself and how to better interact with the world.

The Abbott House environment is one of acceptance, where everyone has an individualized treatment plan. Treatment planning provides a framework of skills for the child to accomplish to meet their goals. The main focus of the treatment plan is to begin and fully integrate the internal healing of trauma. This promotes an environment of action and thoughtfulness where girls learn how to become a survivor of sexual abuse, rather than a victim. Through close monitoring and continuous interaction the youth can measure their own improvement. They are able to see the benefit of that improvement in their daily life.

The girl works her program within a system of phases that progress toward her eventual completion of the program. Virtually everything that occurs within her daily schedule is based upon achieving success in making more productive decisions, as well as rewriting the unhealthy attachments of their past.



## Strengthening Youth and Families

### Community Resources

One of the responsibilities of the agency's program is an emphasis on community service projects to reinforce personal responsibility and promote good citizenship. Ongoing association with local community service groups includes, but not limited to: Meals on Wheels, Cancer Walk, and the Mitchell Park and Recreation program are integrated into the weekly programming and summer volunteer activity of Abbott House.

Volunteer activities are a clearly defined way to empower girls as contributing members of a community. In addition, these activities promote basic community and social values. This increases self-worth of the youngsters who enthusiastically participate in their community service projects.

### Special Services

Routine healthcare is provided by a full-time registered nurse. A medical assessment is conducted at the time of admission, and referrals are made to address any perceived medical implications. Emergency services and specialized care are always available through agreements with local physicians. These physicians work out of their main office, as well as during weekly on campus visits at the Abbott House. In addition, the agency utilizes contracted pharmacists, optometrists, dentists, an occupational therapist, a speech/language therapist, and local chemical dependency services.

### Transportation

The agency assists in the transportation of girls for regularly scheduled home visits during the year. Agency personnel will work with family members to arrange meeting locations to make the visit productive. Generally, the agency will provide a summary sheet that a parent or guardian is asked to complete that will inform us of the girl's progress since she was last in the home.

Furthermore, to assist in the forming of healthy family relationships the agency provides two family suites. The suites are available to families to utilize when they are attending family sessions on site. The girls have the opportunity to stay with their families in the suite. This provides the family the opportunity to build healthy family relationships and work towards a successful discharge.



**Circle of Healing:** This group is a combination of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) concepts of Core Mindfulness and Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills and Lecture Group material. In this group, girls learn skills to improve relationships with others and how to develop positive self-respect. Communication skills are taught along with skills to gain better self-awareness.

**Voices:** This group used the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administrative (SAMHSA) Children's Program Kit: Supportive Education for Children of Addicted Parents (COAP). It also uses various devotional books published by Al-Anon. In this group, the girls learn how to define addiction, identify their feelings, discuss their trauma, identify the dysfunctional family roles, and create safety plans & find safe people.

**Outpatient Drug/Alcohol Group Therapy:** These groups are facilitated by a licensed drug & alcohol counselor, who primarily uses Motivational Interviewing and Healthy Therapy. The group participants also have the opportunity to work through the 12 steps.

#### **Sensory Programming:**

The Sensory Program is an occupational therapy based program using individual treatment, sensory diets and sensory sensitive environments including a sensory room. It is a person-centered, strength oriented, skill building model of care. Sensory strategies initially focus on essential underlying building blocks of self-awareness and self-acceptance. They then help a person move from self-awareness to self-regulation and on to self-care and eventually to self-healing.





# Abbott House school...finding innovative ways to learn

It's not unusual for the student that comes to Abbott House to be average or above average in ability. Underneath the intelligence lies layers of family stress, witness to violent acts, mental health issues, low self-esteem, and interrupted educational backgrounds. These issues hinder full potential. Abbott House School works to unlock that potential to increase the student's ability to succeed in school. For all of these reasons, the educational part of the Abbott House program is considered essential to the total treatment process.



**Girl Power:** This group helps girls develop a strong self-identity and feel empowered to become the best that they can be. This is done through six domains: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Sexual, Spiritual and Family.

**Sexual Abuse Group:** This group is for girls who have a history of sexual abuse or sexual trauma. The group focuses on education of sexual abuse/trauma, the effects of the abuse/trauma, learning to build trust with others, and finding hope that there is a brighter future for them. The group uses the *In Their Own Words: A Sexual Abuse Workbook for Teenage Girls*. For younger girls, the book, *Shining Through: Pulling it Together after Sexual Abuse* is used. The following materials are used as supplemental material for group: *Invisible Girls: The Truth About Sexual Abuse a book for teen girls, young women, and everyone who cares about them.*; *The Healing Years: A Documentary About Surviving Incest and Child Sexual Abuse* (video); and *A Teen's Guide to Overcoming Sexual Abuse: It Happened To Me*.

**Lecture Groups:** Lecture groups are psychoeducational groups utilizing evidence based theories and skill sets. Topics covered in these groups include, but are not limited to: values & morals, learning about & identifying emotions, effective communication, assertiveness versus aggressiveness, problem solving, irrational beliefs, self-esteem, empowerment, and self-identity.

**Nurture Groups:** These groups are designed to immerse the girls in a safe, playful environment where they can learn and practice new skills important for life. During Nurture Group they have a voice that is listened to and respected. They are able to use their voice to negotiate their personal needs. It is a place where girls are able to give nurturing care to others and to accept nurturing care without feeling embarrassed or ashamed. Nurture Groups teach children how to have healthy relationships.

**Anger Management:** This is a Cognitive Behavioral group based on the book *Anger Control Training: The Emotional Component of Anger Replacement Training*. The group also incorporates facets of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) that covers Core Mindfulness and Distress Tolerance. The focus of the group is to help the girls identify the physical signs and symptoms of their anger, identify past and current triggers to their anger, and create a plan of healthy coping skills to decrease and otherwise manage their anger.

**Mood Management:** The group utilizes the *Mood Management: A Cognitive Behavioral Skills-Building Program for Adolescents* workbook by Carol A. Langelier. This group also presents the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) concepts of Core Mindfulness and Emotional Regulation. In this group, the girls will learn about emotional wellness, setting personal goals, challenging their automatic thoughts, how their thoughts and emotions are connected, and ways to overcome overpowering emotions.

# Coming to Terms

Most of the girls at Abbott House experience some problems that are unique to their individual circumstances. While many of these girls have experienced sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and devastating emotional setbacks, each girl responds to her situation uniquely. Because there is no uniform response to victimization, dependency needs or emotional problems, our program contains unique individual adaptations.

## Individual/Family Therapy and Psychiatric & Psychological Services:

Each girl is assigned an individual therapist who addresses the psycho/social needs of the girls assigned to them for regular therapy. The individual therapist is an essential part of the treatment team and participates in all of the girls' planning and regular reviews.

Families are involved in their child's recovery through family therapy, which is crucial for each child. Family therapy is facilitated by the girl's therapist. Three months prior to dismissal, the girl, family and clinical team develop a specific transition plan to prepare her to leave Abbott House.

In addition, a psychiatrist is utilized to assist in patient follow-up and regular medication reviews. A psychologist is available to administer a battery of assessments, provide clinical interpretation and consultation for staff.

Abbott House will then continue to follow up with each girl and family for 12 months post discharge to assist in the transition home.

## Group Therapy:

**Circle of Courage:** Circle of Courage is a culturally based group that takes its name from the Reclaiming Youth Philosophy of approaching work with troubled youth. This viewpoint is based on fostering the four significant values which are: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

**Independent Living Skills:** This group allows education for those in transition to independent living. Social skills training, meal planning and preparing, mock interviewing and job searching, and budgeting are all a part of this group. To help identify individual needs, the Ansel Casey Life Skills Assessment is administered to all girls 14 and older.

**Grief and Loss:** The focus of this group is to help the girls understand the many different types of loss they have experienced beyond the death of a loved one. The Stages of Grief are taught and the girls learn to identify the stage in which they are living. They also learn steps to overcoming their grief. They learn to find Hope in the midst of their loss and trauma.

The classroom environment is one that consists of 6 to 14 students with a teacher and aides to help provide individual attention. Individualized attention is taken seriously in the Abbott House School, and students frequently work one-on-one with teachers and aides. Our teachers either have special education endorsements or credentials as classroom teachers. In addition, the school year at Abbott House is 250 days in comparison to the 176 day public school year. This provides ample opportunities to accelerate the student's academic placement.

Our academic approach is to provide a special education school that meets all the standards for students with special needs because of emotional or behavioral adjustment problems. After thorough assessment, each student who attends the Abbott House School is placed on her own Individual Education Focus Plan. The assessments used include the following: achievement testing, classroom observations, psychological testing, personal interviews, and a past history analysis. A team consisting of the parents, the student, education director, residential staff, social workers and our teachers review the assessment information to create a plan that addresses the student's specific needs. The framework for the school affords some students the opportunity to make up credits towards graduation and perhaps graduate with children their age even though they had fallen far behind.

Some of our students are integrated into some classes at the Mitchell High School system before they leave Abbott House. Girls that achieve all their credits for graduation at Abbott House will receive their diploma from Mitchell High School.

If the student is unlikely to graduate from high school with a traditional diploma, the Abbott House School collaborates with community resources to help prepare her for the GED.





## A Living and Learning Place...

The model for the environment at Abbott House is based upon a balance of empowerment and responsibility. Historically, traditional trauma models assume a mind/body split. That is, these theories assume that biological and psychological problems have different origins and are loosely unrelated. Abbott House has adopted a trauma informed care model that focuses on the experience of the individual - not their diagnosis. Abbott House focuses on the symptoms and adaptations. We review how trauma shapes the survivors basic beliefs about identity, world view, and spirituality. Abbott House studies the effects of trauma; and how it can be addressed within mental health and substance abuse issues. Abbott House concentrates on how the treator (staff), and client, share a trauma experience. This produces a relationship of collaboration. Abbott House works from the basic need of offering respect, information, connection, and hope to the clients through in-house trainings for professional development. Abbott House staff support one another through clinical meetings to instill respect and ideas, as well as provide outlets for staff to learn new resources to better themselves. This collaboration allows us to increase the level of care we provide. The girls are not viewed in terms of their behavioral problems or emotional problems. Instead, problematic behavior is viewed as a manifestation of their past trauma. Rather than asking the question, "what is wrong with you," Abbott House staff asks, "what happened to you." Through collaboration with the clinical team (therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists) and the residential staff, girls at Abbott House have the opportunity to simultaneously learn new and healthy coping skills while addressing their past trauma.



# Living

We emphasize the importance of teaching at every opportunity with a child. We work from the framework of respect of the mind and body of the individual, versus the diagnosed behavior that is visible. Abbott House works to rewrite the stories for these young adolescents. By seeking first to understand, we have to understand the crisis that we are solving to alleviate the learned response. We work to understand the child's developmental level and cognitive abilities. What is lacking we teach, to allow the girls to feel empowered. Abbott House teaches the child proactive versus reactive skills to their behavior. The framework is based on the concept of Trauma Informed Care. This paves the way for constructive feedback and instills a sense of safety, a basic need most of these children have been denied.

The attraction of this program is its overriding outcomes...

1. There is no punishment associated with this approach
2. Outcomes are clearly measurable and sustainable
3. Reduces the incidences of restraint and seclusion
4. Allows for collaboration rooted in respect for the individual's trauma
5. Framework allows for all children, as well as staff, to continue to learn
6. Individualized Treatment Plans are checked and used every day
7. A natural and logical approach to learning new skills
8. To assess the three self-capacities: feeling management skills, inner connection to others, and overall sense of self-worth
9. Staff and individual work together to solve the problem in a more constructive way
10. Help the client exercise control and choice