



Methodist Children's Home

Offering Hope Since 1890



Welcome to MCH!

My MCH Contact Information

Home: _____ Phone: _____

Physical Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Case Manager's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Director of Residential Services: _____ Phone: _____

Program Administrator: Dorothy Phillips, dphillips@mch.org

Vice President for Programs: Traci Wagner, twagner@mch.org

(Updated January 2024)

Methodist Children's Home Handbook

Welcome to Methodist Children's Home (MCH)! No matter what circumstances brought you here, it is our hope that you will find MCH to be a welcoming place of healing and promise. As you settle into life at MCH, there are a few things you will want to know about us. Many of those things are addressed in the following pages, but if you have questions or concerns and you do not find the answer here, please contact your case manager.

This handbook is for both children and their caregivers, but we include a section with information specifically designed for parents, guardians and managing conservators. Please keep this book for your records and review it if you have questions along the way. We are glad you are here.

Welcome,

The staff of Methodist Children's Home

Mission Statement

We equip children, youth and families to flourish by offering hope through Christ-centered relationships, services and support.

Vision Statement

We empower all we serve to experience life to the fullest.

Core Values

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

Apply the principles of the Christian faith which serve as the foundation of this ministry.

RELATIONSHIPS

Build healthy relationships through communication, respect, trust and love.

RESPONSIBILITY

Be accountable for self and others.

GROWTH

Provide opportunities for spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

SERVICE

Show compassion through generosity and care.

HOPE

Believe in the possibilities of the future.

ONE MCH

We created a collection of strategic commitments that we call ONE MCH. We believe ONE MCH brings us together as a ministry and is vital to developing the culture needed to achieve the important outcomes contained in our strategic plan.



FIVE-STAR SERVICE

We commit to serving others at the highest level. We provide personal attention and expertise from the point of contact until the need is met – regardless of job title and role. We commit to going above and beyond to meet a family's needs. We serve others in ways that reflect how Christ models service for us.



AUTHENTIC ACCOUNTABILITY

We commit to measuring outcomes to hold ourselves accountable for identifying areas of improvement while celebrating our strengths. The MCH Core Values and Life Skills are guiding principles for our interactions with supporters, colleagues and those we serve. As a learning organization, we are committed to continuous quality improvement to achieve strategic and intentional growth.



FOCUSED AND FLEXIBLE MINISTRIES

We commit to achieving our strategic plan, guided by best practices, to ensure we remain focused on our vision and mission. While we are committed to planned change, we are blessed with expertise and resources that enable us to respond quickly to unanticipated challenges and new opportunities in communities throughout Texas and New Mexico.



CULTURE OF LEARNING

We commit to being relevant as we continually learn and collaborate to meet unique needs and challenges of families and communities in Texas and New Mexico. We seek diverse insights and opportunities to grow in our mission. There is no chain of command on ideas at MCH in order to create a free flow of learning.

Residential Program Description

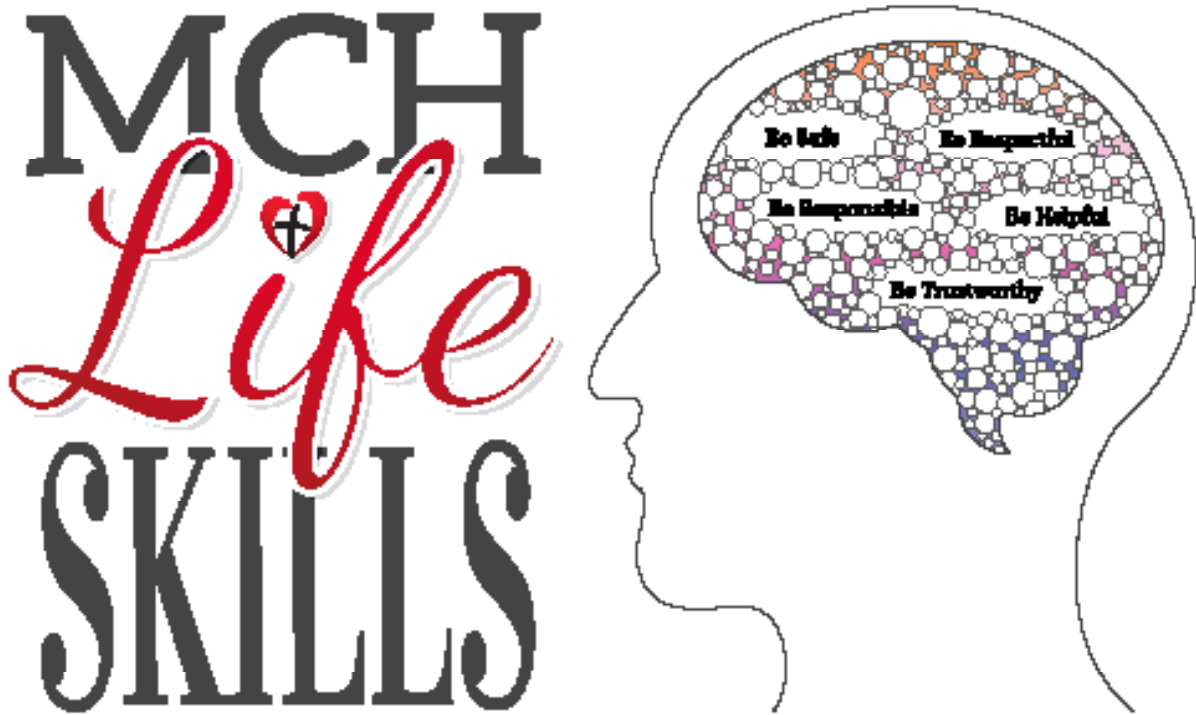
Methodist Children's Home is committed to providing you with the most nurturing home environment possible. MCH believes that you should be provided with clear expectations as well as age-appropriate privileges. These expectations and privileges are based on your developmental level, previous experiences and current behavior. Expectations and privileges are consistent with the MCH Core Values.

MCH Life Skills

As a child at Methodist Children's Home you are responsible for following five basic guidelines, also known as the MCH Life Skills. These should guide you in your personal behavior, relationships with your peers and relationships with your family members and other adults.

Be safe. Be respectful. Be responsible. Be helpful. Be trustworthy.

You will also be given many opportunities to learn and practice the MCH Life Skills. These life skills will empower you to have control over your own life and prepare you for success now and after you leave MCH. You will learn how to get your needs met in a socially acceptable way, how to be a good student and a good worker, and how to develop and maintain healthy relationships with others.



Lauren, a youth at MCH, illustrated the MCH Life Skills with this design which is now displayed in every MCH home.

Residential Program Description

Child Privileges

Privileges are opportunities for young people to learn appropriate boundaries with peers and adults, as well as socially acceptable behavior and self-control. Your caregivers are responsible for monitoring the appropriateness of the privileges provided to young people while at Methodist Children's Home and they will make adjustments to meet the needs of the youth when necessary.

Child privileges may be temporarily removed or limited as a consequence of misbehavior. Temporary restriction or limitations of a privilege will be documented in your file and will be consistent with the MCH discipline policy.



Serving the community



Preparing for the future

Steps to Success

The Steps to Success program is designed to help children learn to appropriately give care, receive care, develop autonomy and negotiate with others. As children move through the program, the need for direct supervision is reduced and children are given more opportunities for independent activities. The level of supervision provided at any step may be adjusted for an individual child whenever necessary.



Graduation ceremony

Residential Program Description

Located in the heart of Waco, Texas, on 130 acres of land, Methodist Children's Home Waco campus is the location where MCH began in 1890. The program is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as a General Residential Operation providing Child Care Services. MCH is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and the Coalition of Residential Excellence.

MCH offers a relationship-based model of care that provides a wealth of opportunities for children to discover and develop their talents and skills in a nurturing, Christian community. Services are designed to meet the needs of children in a family-like setting that engages and involves the parents/guardians/managing conservators in all aspects of care. MCH provides a place of safety where professional childcare staff work to prepare children for successful adult living.

Up to eight children reside in individual homes staffed by either live-in home parents or direct-care staff who work eight-hour shifts. Each child is assigned a case manager at the time of admission who ensures that the child's needs are met. The case manager is the point person for the child and the parent/guardian/managing conservator. Independent Living and after care service options are presented to older children in our residential program.

MCH uses a model of care known as Trust-Based Relational Intervention® developed by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross at the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development. TBRI® is an intervention model for a wide range of childhood behavioral problems and based on a solid foundation of research tempered by humanitarian principles. It is a caregiver-based intervention that is designed for children who have experienced relationship-based trauma.

Educational Program

Methodist Children's Home is committed to ensuring all children receive a quality education appropriate to their needs. The majority of children that reside on the Waco campus attend a charter school located on the Waco campus. The school is operated in partnership with the University of Texas–University Charter School system headquartered in Austin, Texas.

The MCH charter school is regulated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and offers small class sizes as well as tutoring and other educational supports for students. The school also offers onsite computer-based courses that can be an option for credit recovery as well as options to attend the Greater Waco Advanced Manufacturing Academy (GWAMA) and Greater Waco Advanced Health Care Academy (GWACA) dual-credit courses through McLennan Community College and Texas State Technical College. Students whose educational needs cannot be met by the charter school will be enrolled in a school in the community that meets or exceeds the educational requirements established by TEA.

Students attending the charter school may participate in academic, vocational agriculture and fine art competitions with other schools as well as athletic programs in six-man football, volleyball, basketball, golf, cross country, and track and field. Athletic teams compete in the Texas Christian Athletic Fellowship (TCAF). Students will have access to both agricultural and career classes during their time at MCH.

Residential Program Description

Spiritual Development

Methodist Children's Home accepts children regardless of religious beliefs or background. While spiritual development and participation in religious services and activities is an integral part of the residential programs offered by MCH, you will not be coerced into making any religious decision.

Regular worship services are offered on the Waco campus. You are expected to attend these services. We encourage you to share about your individual spiritual preferences and needs.

A variety of voluntary spiritual development programs such as choir, summer camps and mission trips are also offered. All worship services and spiritual development activities provided by MCH are conducted in accordance with the principles and practices of our Wesleyan tradition.

Student Enrichment

MCH offers many enrichment opportunities for children, including, but not limited to, outdoor education, the Free Rein Equestrian program, athletics, cheer team, drum-line, after school clubs, recreational activities and leisure activities. Children are also involved in a wide variety of activities throughout the community.



Free Rein Program

Independent Living Skills

Children at MCH will be provided with opportunities to learn independent living skills. MCH will also help support children in the program, ages 16 and older, in obtaining their state identification or driver's license.

Children in the custody of DFPS will be required to complete Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes at the age of 16. These classes are geared to help each child prepare for independent living.

All children served at MCH will complete the Casey Life Skills assessment. This tool assesses the independent skills youth need to achieve their long-term goals and aims to guide children towards developing healthy, productive lives.



Mission Trips

Daily Living Guidelines

Clothing

Children are able to select their own clothing while living at Methodist Children's Home. While preferences in styles of dress may vary, all members of the Methodist Children's Home community are expected to dress appropriately at all times and demonstrate respect for themselves, others and MCH.

In general, MCH adheres to a more traditional and conservative form of dress. You are responsible for following the MCH dress code while in our care. A copy of the approved dress code is provided before or at the time of admission.

Physical Displays of Affection

Physical displays of affection toward others should always be respectful and appropriate to the situation. Intimate and intense physical displays of affection are not appropriate at MCH or MCH events. An example of appropriate physical displays of affection is a side hug.

Daily Schedule

At MCH, we know that routine is important. Upon arrival to your home, you will be provided with information on your general daily schedule. You will also be provided with a school schedule after attending school. At MCH, there are also recreational department schedules, sports schedules and a spiritual

development schedule. If parents/guardians/managing conservators have questions about the schedules at MCH, they can contact the child's Case Manager.

Personal Possessions

Children admitted to Methodist Children's Home residential program are allowed to bring personal possessions from home within limits and within the guidelines of the program. All personal possessions must be appropriate for shared living space. Program rules around prohibited possessions are shared with parents/guardians/managing conservators when preparing for admission.

Prohibited Items: Razors, guns, scissors, other sharp tools, or any item of potential danger (fireworks) or an item commonly used as a weapon. Excessive money or items of high monetary value (recommended to leave any valuables or large amounts of cash at home). Magazines or books with sexual content or themes that could negatively impact the program. Tobacco products/electronic cigarettes (vape pens). Any alcohol, illegal drugs or prescription drugs that are not prescribed. Toiletries and beauty products that contain alcohol. Food or beverages. Lighters, matches, candles or incense. Aerosol cans. Cleaning supplies (bleach, ammonia, etc.). Electronics (televisions, gaming consoles, etc.). Reach out to your Case Manager or a staff member with any questions or concerns.

MCH discourages children from bringing items that would be a significant loss to them if the item was damaged, lost or stolen. MCH assumes no responsibility for the return or replacement of damaged, lost or stolen items. Children are discouraged from borrowing or loaning clothing or other special personal items.

Throughout placement, children are provided with pillows/bedding, toiletries and clothing items as they are needed.



Child Rights

Admission to any MCH program is based upon the applicant's needs and the ability of MCH to meet those needs within the established program admission eligibility criteria and not based on race, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. MCH provides services in a manner that respects the personal dignity, confidentiality and privacy of those served. MCH ensures that all persons served or their legal representatives are informed of their rights and responsibilities arising from receipt of MCH services upon placement or the first face-to-face meeting. MCH recognizes the rights of all clients to question decisions made concerning services provided and to file any grievance for unfair treatment, discrimination or a violation of client rights.

Children in placement have additional rights that cover safety, normalcy, family contacts, discipline, service planning, medical care, confidentiality of records, and reporting concerns to outside authorities. These rights are cumulative of any other rights granted by law or licensing standards and include the following:

You have the right to:

1. Safety and care, including:

- (A) The right to good care and treatment that meets your needs in the most family-like setting possible;
- (B) The right to be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation;

(C) The right to fair treatment.

2. Family contacts, including the right to maintain regular contact with your parents and siblings, unless restrictions are necessary because of your best interest, the decision of an appropriate professional, or a court order

3. Living a normal life, including:

(A) The right to be able to communicate in a language or any other means that is understandable to you at admission or within a reasonable time after and



emergency admission, if applicable, such as having a plan for an interpreter, having at least one caregiver at the operation at all times who can communicate with you in your own language, or other means to communicate with you in your own language;

(B) The right to receive educational services appropriate to your age and developmental level;

(C) The right to have your religious needs met;

(continued on following page)

Child Rights

(D) The right to participate in childhood activities, including unsupervised childhood activities away from the operation and the caregivers, that are appropriate for your age, maturity and developmental level;

(E) The right to privacy, including sending and receiving unopened mail, making and receiving phone calls, keeping a personal journal, and having visitors, unless your best interest, appropriate professionals, or court order necessitates restrictions;

(F) The right to personal care, hygiene, and grooming equipment and supplies and training in how to use them;

(G) The right to have comfortable clothing, which is suitable to your age and size and similar to the clothing of other children in the community. You should have reasonable opportunities to select the clothing;

(H) The right to clothing that protects you against the weather;

(I) The right to have personal items in your room and to get additional items within reasonable limits;

(J) The right to personal space in your bedroom to store your clothes and belongings;

(K) The right to be informed of search policies and be free of unreasonable searches and unreasonable removal of personal items;

(L) Depending on your age and maturity, the right to seek employment, keep your own money, have a bank account in your name, and get paid for any work done for



Enjoying the beautiful campus

for the operation as part of your service plan or vocational training, with the exception of assigned routine duties that relate to your living environment, such as cleaning your room, other chores or work assigned as a disciplinary measure;

(N) The right to refuse to make public statements showing gratitude to the operation;

(O) The right to not be pressured to get an abortion, give up your child for adoption, or parent your child, if applicable.

4. Discipline, including:

(A) The right to be free from any harsh, cruel, unusual, unnecessary, demeaning, or humiliating treatment or punishment. This means that you must not be:

(i) Shaken

(ii) Subjected to or threatened with corporal punishment, including spanking or hitting

(iii) Forced to do unproductive work that serves no purpose except to demean you, such as moving rocks from one pile to another or digging a hole and then filling it in

(iv) Denied food, sleep, a bathroom, mail, or family visits as punishment

Child Rights

- (v) Subjected to remarks that belittle or ridicule you or your family
- (vi) Threatened with the loss of placement or shelter as punishment and
- (vii) Subjected to demeaning behavior to embarrass, control, harm, intimidate, or isolation. "Demeaning behavior" may include using physical force, rumors, threats, or inappropriate comments

(B) The right to discipline that is appropriate to your age, maturity, and developmental level; and

(C) The right to have restrictions or disciplinary policies explained to you at admittance and when the measures are imposed.

Plans for you while in care, including:

(A) The right to have a comprehensive service plan that addresses your needs, including transitional and discharge planning; and

(B) The right to actively participate in the development of your service plan within the limits of your comprehension and ability to manage the information. You have the right to a copy or summary of the plan. A child 14 years of age or older has the right to review and sign the service plan, unless this is a reason not to provide the plan.

Medical care and records, including:

(A) The right to medical, dental, vision, and mental health care and developmental services that adequately meet your needs. The right to request that the care or services be separate from adults (other than young adults) who are receiving services;

(B) The right to be free of unnecessary or excessive medication; and

(C) The right to confidential care and treatment, including keeping medical records and operation records private and only discussing them when it is about your care; and

5. Complaints, including the right to make calls, reports, or complaints without interference, coercion, punishment, retaliation, or threats of punishment or retaliation. You may make these calls, reports, or complaints anonymously. Depending upon the nature of the complaint, you have the right to call, report, or complain to:

(a) The DFPS Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400

(b) The HHSC Ombudsman for Children and Youth Currently in Foster Care at 1-844-286-0769

(c) The DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-720-7777

(d) Disability Rights of Texas at 1-800-252-9108



Client Grievance Process

1. If a child in care believes that he/she has been abused or neglected by a caregiver or employee/volunteer of the agency, he/she should contact the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or report on line at:
<https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

2. Anytime that a child feels that his/her rights have been violated or they have a significant problem or concern that they have been unable to resolve, it is a grievance and should follow the grievance process. Examples of issues that typically lead to grievances are unfair treatment, violation of client rights, discrimination, safety, or program issues.

3. Grievances should be filed electronically by accessing the QR code available at the time of admission and in each residential home.

4. Grievances can be written on the Special Request for Assistance Form (SRA) and can be turned in to any employee or can be placed anonymously in the boxes located on the Waco Campus at the Johnson Student Center in the main lobby, at the University of Texas University Charter School outside of the Principal's office and at the Mulkey Building and Chapel outside of the Spiritual Development offices. These boxes are checked weekly. MCH provides the form to help guide the solution-oriented process of resolving issues and listening for the solution. If a child is unable to write or does not have access to a form, any form of submission will be accepted. Examples include an electronic via QR code, phoned-in complaint, email, or verbal complaint.

5. Every child receives an explanation of the grievance process and an SRA Form at intake, initiation of services, or within their orientation packet. All grievances that include issues of safety, unfair treatment, discrimination, violation of client rights, or other program issues that rise to the importance of making a formal complaint

are considered important and will be reviewed and a response will be provided to the client.

6. Every staff member is responsible for providing access to the QR code. An investigation of the grievance is initiated and completed by the most appropriate personnel within 3 business days of receipt of the grievance and a written response is provided within 14 days to the aggrieved person. Grievances of a critical nature will be handled immediately.

7. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, there is a right to appeal the decision by submitting a written response to the Vice President for Programs who will review the decision with the appropriate personnel and respond to the appeal within 14 days.

8. If still unsatisfied with the outcome, the complainant has the right to submit another appeal in writing to the Vice President for Programs or President and CEO whose response is the final step and determination in the grievance process.

9. Client grievances are filed in the client record. A copy of all grievances is kept with the Programs Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Committee.

10. Program Administrators track the grievances and report on resulting themes to the CQI committee for performance and quality improvement planning and risk management review. The themes are included in the CQI minutes along with any action items that result from the process. The number, themes and resolution of grievances are reported to the Program Committee of the Board of Directors at each meeting and captured within the Program Committee minutes. Any type of retaliation will be addressed through disciplinary action up to, and including, termination of employment.

Parent/Guardian/Managing Conservator Grievance Process

Methodist Children's Home also provides a grievance system that allows a parent/guardian/managing conservator to question decisions made concerning their child, services provided, and/or concerns about potential violations of child rights. Parents/guardians/managing conservators have the right to appeal to the director of the child's program area and ultimately to the president of MCH if they feel treatment is unfair, discriminatory or unhelpful. Parents/guardians/managing conservators are empowered to resolve grievances prior to completing a client grievance form. When this is not possible or a resolution is unable to be made without further assistance, they are asked to describe how they feel their rights have been violated on the client grievance form. The form can be completed online and is available for easy access at all times. When filling out a client grievance form online, the director will be notified of the grievance. If concerned, parents or managing conservators may also speak directly to a case manager, director or administrator. Parents/guardians/managing conservators can also access and fill out a client grievance form by scanning the QR code provided at time of admission.

(Related: Client Grievance Policy)

Guidelines on Discipline

The goal of all discipline is to connect with the child and correct behavior, preventing the need for more restrictive measures of intervention and increasing a child's ability to make positive choices in managing their own behavior. MCH utilizes Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) as a means to help children heal, learn and grow through the provision of

nurturing relationships and structure in their daily routine. Discipline is based on investing, connecting, empowering, and correcting principles that include playful engagement, structured engagement, calming engagement, and proactive engagement in response to a child's behavior. Caregivers are supported in providing an IDEAL approach to discipline to solve behavioral challenges quickly and effectively, without breaking the connection between the caregiver and the child. The IDEAL response is:

Immediate (within seconds whenever possible); **Direct** (engages the child through eye contact, proximity and touch whenever possible); **Efficient** (maximizes playfulness when possible and uses as few words as possible);

Action-based (maximizes learning through action-based techniques); and

Leveled at the behavior (not the child).

Client Satisfaction Surveys

At MCH we want to ensure that children and parents/guardians/managing conservators are receiving quality care. Children in MCH care and parents/guardians/managing conservators will have the opportunity to complete a satisfaction survey three months after admission and then one year following the date of the first survey. Surveys are reviewed and follow ups are completed as necessary and/or if they are requested.

Emergency Behavior Intervention

We are committed to promoting an environment where conflict resolution and problem solving are taught and reinforced for children. Our program is designed to teach children alternatives to aggressive behavior and to help them learn alternate ways to manage behaviors that are unacceptable in personal relationships and society.

MCH believes that emergency behavior intervention is the last alternative when working with a child who is experiencing emotional upset and is at risk of physical harm to themselves or others. Staff are trained to respond to children in crisis and to resolve conflict using MCH-approved intervention techniques. Less restrictive behavior interventions include verbal redirection, quiet time, peer mediation, and brief personal restraint.

In addition, during your admission process, you indicated your de-escalation preferences. Staff are made aware of these and are required to attempt to utilize these prior to the use of restraint.

Staff utilize personal containments in urgent situations where immediate intervention is needed and the child has not responded to verbal redirection or it has been ineffective. Urgent situations include external danger that causes imminent significant risk to the child; behavior that creates a significant disruption in the home, classroom or environment; or behavior that dangerous to the safety and wellbeing of other children.

Only staff trained in emergency behavior intervention are permitted to initiate or participate in the personal containment of a child. MCH staff only uses physical containments of children and will not use chemical or mechanical restraints on any child in care. Staff will discontinue all containments as soon as the child is no longer in danger to themselves or others, or if the child becomes physically distressed.



Lifting in the weight room

is



Chapel

If you feel that you have been contained inappropriately, you must report this immediately to the on-call worker or any staff member. After every containment, you will have the opportunity to review the events leading to the containment and to discuss the containment in private. You will have the opportunity to discuss how to implement your preferred de-escalation techniques to avoid the need for future containments, receive any care for immediate physical and emotional needs, and make a plan to return to routine activities as soon as possible.

Parents/Guardians/Managing Conservator Information

As a parent/guardian/managing conservator of a child being placed at Methodist Children's Home, you have decided to enter into a partnership with us. The primary purpose of this partnership is to aid your child and family in achieving goals, build on your child's assets and strengthen family relationships. As a partner with MCH, you will have ongoing responsibilities to both your child and us while your child is in our care.



Cheering at a game

Parent/guardian/managing conservator participation in a child's placement is vital and supports their child's short- and long-term goals. Many resources and opportunities for participation and engagement are available.

Parents/guardians/managing conservators are expected to participate actively in their child's program at MCH. This will include contacting their child by phone and/or mail, family conferences, visits to campus, overnight visits, discharge/after-care planning, and regular contact with your child and your child's case manager. MCH also provides parenting classes and enrichment opportunities which are held on an ongoing basis and are of no cost to the family. Parents/

guardians/managing conservators can reach out to their child's case manager to get connected to a class. MCH Family Outreach (through Methodist Children's Home) provides free family support services in 14 different cities in Texas and New Mexico. During or after a child's time at Methodist Children's Home, families can reach out to learn more about supportive, in-home case management, caregiver empowerment groups and parent education classes. Parents/guardians/managing conservators are encouraged to reach out to their case manager for more information.

Indian Child Welfare Act Policy

Methodist Children's Home will make every effort to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in its work with children needing out-of-home care. In cases where ICWA is applicable, MCH works collaboratively with tribal social workers in planning and providing for the child's health, safety, well-being, and permanency. MCH recognizes tribal court orders and acts and gives them full faith and credit.



Choir performance

Parents/Guardians/Managing Conservator Information

Plan of Service Meetings

Parents/guardians/managing conservators are encouraged to attend their child's preliminary plan of service which takes place within 72 hours of the admission date and usually takes place on the day of admission. Plans of services are updated within 30 days of the admission date and every 90 days thereafter. Plans of service can be reviewed more frequently as needed. Care team members, including the parent/guardian/managing conservator will be notified two weeks in advance of plan of service reviews. Parental participation in the plan of service process is essential to developing an effective plan for the child and to facilitate communication between the child, the family and/or managing conservator and MCH.

Visitation and Correspondence Guidelines

MCH encourages family contact. Parents/guardians/managing conservators are expected to maintain continued involvement while the child is in placement. Consistent and regular contact with parents/managing conservators and family members is essential to your child's well-being. You can support your child through:

Visits – Families are encouraged to visit their child often unless contact is restricted by the managing conservator or by court order. The frequency and type of visit are arranged collaboratively between the child, parent/guardian/managing conservator and MCH and should be arranged in advanced with the case manager. Any limitations on visits will be documented in the child's plan of service. In person visits and trips away from campus must be pre-approved.

Mail – Families are encouraged to maintain contact with their child through mail unless

restricted by the managing conservator or by court order. Mail should be sent to the appropriate MCH location and will be forwarded to the child through their case manager. Any child who cannot independently read will be assisted with reading their mail. Any limitations on contact will be documented in the child's plan of service.

Telephone, Electronic Mail and Electronic messages – Families are encouraged to maintain contact with their child through telephone contact, email and electronic messages unless restricted by the parent/guardian/managing conservator or by court order. The location and schedule for phone contact will be arranged collaboratively between the child, parent/guardian/managing conservator and MCH when the child is using an MCH home phone. All contact between parents/guardians/managing conservators is arranged through and approved by the case manager. Any limitations on contact will be documented in the child's plan of service.

Gifts – Children may give and receive gifts from family and friends unless restricted by the managing conservator or court order. Children may give and receive gifts from other children in care, but gifts of a significant monetary value are discouraged. Children may receive gifts from the agency. Gifts become the personal property of the child. Gifts should be limited in size and value in consideration of the program rules and the space constraints in the home. Gifts from children in care to employees are not expected and should be of a sentimental nature only.

Cell Phone Guidelines

Children may have a cell phone at their own expense. Children should understand that they are responsible for their cell phones and searches or investigations if they are lost or

Parents/Guardians/Managing Conservator Information

stolen. They should refrain from loaning out or allowing other children to borrow cell phones. Inappropriate use of cell phones will be discussed by the child's interdisciplinary team and may result in the loss of this privilege.

Guidelines:

- All children complete the required cell phone/social media safety course.
- The cell phone contract is signed by the parent/guardian/managing conservator and child at the time of admissions or when phone is provided.
- MCH may search the phone and social media when determined necessary to maintain safety of the child or community.
- Cell phones are not allowed during group, school, dinner, church and other activities such as mentor activities.

Phones are charged and locked in the computer closet at 10 p.m. each night for children under 13. Children are expected to shut their phones off at bedtime each night to promote adequate sleep and rest. If cell phone usage becomes a problem for children appropriate plans will be discussed by the care team in conjunction with a plan of service review.

Internet and Social Media Guidelines

Methodist Children's Home recognizes the importance of the internet and is committed to supporting appropriate and safe internet use by the children in our care. MCH is committed to internet safety and staff make every effort to educate children on the importance of confidentiality and privacy regarding participation in communication on social media/networking sites. Incidents of inappropriate use will be addressed by MCH staff when applicable.

Guidelines for Financial Participation

Methodist Children's Home provides services to children regardless of the parent/guardian/managing conservator's ability to pay for services and has established a sliding fee scale to ensure services are accessible to all families. No child will be refused services based on their parent/guardian/managing conservator's inability to pay for services. MCH asks that parents/guardians/managing conservators keep MCH fully informed of any changes in their financial circumstances which influence their ability to maintain such support.

MCH provides an allowance for all children. Parents/guardians/managing conservators may wish to send additional money for the child's use. Arrangements should be made with the child's case manager regarding how money is sent to the child.

Tobacco, E-Cigarette, Alcohol and Illegal Substance Use

Residents are not allowed to use, consume or possess tobacco products, e-cigarettes, alcohol or illegal substances while in the care of Methodist Children's Home. If there is suspicion of use, consumption or possession, MCH will take steps to ensure the safety of the child and others.

Parents/Guardians/Managing Conservator Information

Unplanned Discharges

Methodist Children's Home is committed to working with children and youth through issues that arise during placement. However, discharge from an MCH facility may be necessary in the following circumstances:

- The child becomes a danger to self or others.
- The child requires treatment for chemical dependency.
- The child's need for structure and support services exceeds the capacity of the program.
- The child is on runaway status.

Parental Notification

MCH staff is responsible for notifying the parents/guardians/managing conservators of the following:

Involvement in serious incidents – MCH staff will notify the parent/guardian/managing conservator of all serious incidents where licensing standards require parental notification.

Plan of Service Meetings – MCH will notify the parent/guardian/managing conservator at least two weeks prior to a scheduled plan of service meeting for their child.

Prescription for psychotropic medication – MCH will notify the parent/guardian/managing conservator prior to the administration of any prescribed psychotropic medication to a child in care. In cases where parental notification is not possible, medication will not be administered without approval by a licensed childcare administrator.

Involvement in personal containment

– MCH will notify the parent/guardian/managing conservator of any incident in which MCH staff uses a personal containment to manage their child's behavior.

Legal Proceedings or Grievances – MCH will notify the parent/guardian/managing conservator of any legal proceedings or grievances concerning their child.

Reports – MCH will communicate progress, significant events and achievements with the parent/guardian/managing conservator. This communication will be documented in the client record.

Confidentiality, Privacy Protection and Publicity

Methodist Children's Home, in accordance with state licensing and national accreditation standards, prohibits the participation of any child in public performances that represent MCH without informed consent of the child, parent/guardian/managing conservator. MCH does not require children to make any public statements expressing gratitude to the organization, photographs, video, audio interviews, artwork, or creative writing for



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public relations or fundraising purposes without the informed, written consent of the child or parent/guardian/managing conservator. MCH will maintain updated operational procedures regarding materials to be purged, accessed, disclosed, and retained. MCH will attempt to comply with all state and federal laws, rules and regulations relating to confidentiality, access, disclosure, and retention of client records. MCH does not conduct research with children.



Football practice

Overnight and Offsite Activities

MCH strives to provide normalcy for children by allowing them to engage in childhood activities that are suitable for children of the same age, level of maturity, and developmental level as determined by a reasonable and prudent parent standard. Overnight and offsite events with staff would be connected to MCH approved activities, such as, home outings, spiritual development outings, athletic events, school-related trips, summer camps, mission trips, camping trips, hunting trips, and fishing trips.

Parental/guardian/managing conservator consent will be obtained along with approval from the MCH leadership team prior to the child participating in an overnight activity. MCH is responsible for ensuring the child's needs and safety are met when participating in an offsite or overnight activity. The staff member responsible for the child on the activity will have a copy of the authorization to obtain medical care for the child.

Volunteer and Mentor Program

Children residing at MCH facilities may participate in our volunteer and mentor program. Parents/guardians/managing conservators must provide permission for their child to participate in this program. All volunteers and mentors must meet minimum standards outlined by the Department of Family and Protective Services. A review of volunteer and mentor goals and activities will be reviewed in plan of service meetings with the child and their care team.

All efforts are made to match volunteers with children based on preferences, strengths and areas of interest. The child's case manager is responsible for monitoring and establishing goals for the volunteer/mentor relationship.



School Awards ceremony

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Healthcare

Methodist Children's Home is committed to promoting the health and safety of children served. Children admitted to MCH are provided immediate access to medical and dental care upon admission. Individualized plans to meet routine medical and dental needs are created and reviewed as part of the child's Plan of Service. Routine medical and dental care is provided by licensed health care treatment providers, physicians and dentists. Emergency medical and dental care is available at all times.

Parents/guardians/managing conservators with healthcare insurance benefits for their child are expected to maintain these benefits during the child's placement. Conservators are financially responsible for medical and dental expenses that are billed through their healthcare insurance. MCH will attempt to qualify all children in care for Medicaid coverage.

MCH does not admit children that are pregnant. However, should a child in care become pregnant, measures to provide appropriate health and medical care will be taken in accordance with the Minimum Standards for General Residential Operations. An individualized plan to transition the child to a more appropriate placement is developed. This plan includes

how MCH will meet the child's need for specialized medical care while the child is in MCH care.

Behavioral Healthcare

Methodist Children's Home is committed to providing behavioral healthcare to meet the emotional needs of the children served at MCH. Behavioral healthcare services are provided within MCH and through community providers. Each child will be offered individual therapy as needed and when agreed to by the parent/guardian/managing conservator and child. Other types of therapy services can and will be sought out if the child needs a specific type of therapy. Each child will participate in weekly nurture groups. These groups have the goal of teaching relational and regulation skills through play and provide an opportunity to build connection between children and staff. Medication reviews are required for children that are prescribed psychotropic medication. These medication reviews are completed at least every 90 days by the child's designated physician/psychiatrist.

Children in the custody of DFPS care are required to participate in a Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS). The CANS assessment gathers information about the strengths and needs of a child to plan for services that will help the child and parent/guardian/managing conservator reach their goals. MCH follows the CANS assessment recommendations when providing services and/or setting up



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services for children in our care. These services are reviewed and documented in the child's plan of service meetings.

Children are provided specialized testing services, such as a psychological evaluation, as recommended.

Columbia Suicide Severity Risk Scale

The Columbia Suicide Severity Risk Scale (C-SSRS) is the suicide risk screening tool that MCH administers to children in MCH residential program. The C-SSRS is supported by evidenced-based research that has deemed this tool as a reliable screening tool. All staff who administer this screening tool will receive the required training prior to use.

At admission to the residential program at MCH, each child 10 years of age and older will be screened by an MCH staff member for suicide risk using the C-SSRS. Children younger than the age of 10 will be screened for suicide risk if any of the following apply:

1. the information provided at the time of admission indicates the child has a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts; or
2. the parent/guardian/managing conservator requests that a screening be administered due to the child's risk factors or warning signs of suicide.

The C-SSRS will then be administered by an MCH staff member every 90 days for children 10 years of age or older and immediately when any child exhibits warning signs of suicide that necessitate a suicide screening be conducted. The screening will be conducted in a way that protects the child's privacy and it will be uploaded into the child's record. Any risk will also be noted in the child's admission assessment and plan of service. If the C-SSRS finds the child to show a risk of suicide, MCH staff will complete any additional risk assessments that are needed, determine the need for a safety plan, and connect the child to acute mental healthcare if needed.



Policy Changes

Methodist Children's Home reserves the right to change policies and procedures at any time. All changes will be made in accordance with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' minimum standards. All changes in policy are reviewed by the MCH Board of Directors before implementation. Changes in policies and procedures will apply to both prospective children and those already enrolled. This handbook includes general information only, and it is not intended to, nor does it, contain all regulations that relate to children residing at MCH facilities.

Residential Campus Map

