

**Program Description
Riverside Life Skills Center**

Welcome to the Life Skills Center,

The Life Skills Center is a highly structured and supportive therapeutic program for adolescents, ages 12-18 years, presenting with major mental health concerns and disruptions in their home, school, or community. The program offers therapeutic groups and milieu activities based on evidence-based interventions. This level of clinical support can help teens identify and gain insight into their thoughts, emotions, and behavioral patterns, thereby developing more effective ways of coping, and improving their self-esteem and social skills to be successful in their community.

The Life Skills Center is part of Riverside Community Care, a comprehensive not-for-profit organization that includes multiple therapeutic support services such as in-home services, crisis intervention, community service agencies and other community based programs. Each year, Riverside Community Care provides services to more than 40,000 adults, children and adolescents with a broad range of healthcare and human services. We are an award-winning organization offering mental healthcare, developmental and brain injury services, specialized youth and early childhood programs, trauma response, and more. We are here to make a difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities by delivering compassionate, locally-based integrated care.

The program offers a small client to staff ratio, which facilitates focus on a sense of community and well-being that is essential for effective group work. There are strong clinical and family supports as well as academic supports provided. We are open year-round Monday through Friday from 9am-3pm, and closed for major holidays.

The following pages provide information that more closely outlines the types of therapeutic groups offered and the structure of the program. Should you have further questions, please feel free to contact me at the number or e-mail listed below.

Sincerely,



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Program Description Riverside Life Skills Center

The Riverside Life Skills Center is designed to accommodate adolescents with significant mental health and learning challenges. Teens typically present with a variety of mental health issues including, but not limited to:

- Anxiety Disorders
- Major Depressive Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- PTSD
- Attention Disorders
- Dual – Diagnosis
- Mood Disorders
- Social Anxiety
- Mild Learning Disorders
- Psychotic Disorders

Through a highly structured clinical environment, teens can identify and understand their behavior patterns. Teens will learn more effective ways of coping, gain insight into their mental health issues, improve self-esteem, and increase social skills to integrate more effectively into their school and home communities.

Clinical Supports:

Each adolescent is assigned a primary, Masters-level clinician. The clinician will coordinate goals, treatment, and referral to collateral providers. Clinicians assist with client transition into the least restrictive school and community environment achievable for the adolescent. Each adolescent, and their family, will collaborate with their clinician to develop an Individualized Action Plan (IAP). The IAP outlines the course of treatment and establishing attainable and appropriate goals.

The Life Skills Center utilizes both a group and milieu therapy model, respectively, to help teens process and manage the challenges they face. Therapeutic groups are developed and facilitated utilizing the following therapeutic modalities: Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Anger Management, Social Skills Building, Expressive Therapy, Health and Wellness, and Developmental Psychology. We believe that this collection of evidence-based modalities may serve as tools to provide the flexibility necessary to provide the individualized treatment each client needs.

Family Supports:

The family is an integral component for the success of each individual. All family members are encouraged to attend and participate in family meetings. Family meetings focus on allowing the family to understand and become a part of their child's treatment goals, build communication, develop stronger family relationships, increase support, and facilitate skill building.

Academic Supports:

Many of our adolescents struggle to manage the academic and social stressors at school. Our goal is to provide each child with the academic support they need to more effectively manage these stressors and experience success in their work. We contract with each child's public school for providing up to 10 hours of academic support each week. In this way, adolescents may gain school credits, identify school related triggers, and develop healthy coping skills with support of the therapeutic environment.

Collaboration:

Our clinical staff works with a variety of community agencies such as outpatient therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, DMH, DCF, and local schools to provide continuity of care.

**Program Description
Riverside Life Skills Center**

Criteria

The Life Skills Center is a DMH funded program. Prior to admissions, a referral packet must be filled out and submitted to DMH for final approval.

Determination of eligibility is based on:

- Clinical criteria for DMH continued care services
- Individual requirement for DMH services
- Whether or not the individual has other means of obtaining needed services

Clinical Criteria:

- The applicant must have a qualifying mental health disorder as the primary disorder requiring treatment, meet illness duration criteria, and meet functional criteria.
- The applicant must be 18 years of age or younger at the time of application and have a qualifying mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder that substantially interferes with or limits his/her role or functioning in the family, school, or community activities.

Qualifying Diagnoses:

- Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Disorders (not due to medical conditions or substance-induced psychosis)
- Mood Disorders (excluding Dysthymia and mood disorders due to a medical condition)
- Anxiety Disorders (not due to a medical or substance condition)
- Dissociative Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Personality Disorders
- ADHD (excluding Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder)

Qualifying Criteria:

- Duration of qualifying disorder must have lasted for, or be expected to last for, at least one year.
- Must have demonstrated need for a DMH service and the program available.

Program Description
Riverside Life Skills Center

Rules of Group

RESPECT:

Everyone is treated with respect. This includes giving the facilitator and/or person speaking your attention. Participants may use coping skills during group as deemed appropriate by the team and facilitator. If you are unable to remain respectful, you may be asked to take space away from the group until you are able to participate more appropriately.

PARTICIPATION:

Participation in groups is key to a successful experience. Everyone has the option of “passing” when it comes to sharing personal information, but will be encouraged to take positive risks in an effort to fully benefit from the Life Skills program.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

It is essential that participants feel that they can trust others in the group. What is said in group, needs to stay in group. We want to ensure that everyone’s right to privacy is ensured.

PROCESS:

In some groups, individuals may create projects. These projects are personal and therefore, deserve to be respected. The materials allowed for self-expression should be treated with care and with the permission of staff.

**Program Description
Riverside Life Skills Center**

General Expectations and Rules for the Program

Refocusing Time:

Time to refocus can be an effective coping strategy when becoming overwhelmed, frustrated, or generally unable to focus appropriately. We encourage adolescents to seek out staff to request time to refocus when needed. A staff member may also encourage or request that an adolescent take some time away from the group to refocus due to either disruptive behaviors or becoming overwhelmed. All adolescents are encouraged to process with staff before returning to activities.

Other Coping Strategies:

Adolescents will explore in group, as well as with their individual clinician, other healthy coping strategies that work for them. These strategies will be implemented on an individual basis as needed.

Break Time:

During scheduled breaks, adolescents will be encouraged to engage in constructive activities such as modeling appropriate conversations with peers, engaging in cooperative games, or utilizing relaxation techniques.

Use of Appropriate Language:

Maintaining a safe and healthy environment is crucial to the community at Life Skills. The use of appropriate language should be observed at all times. Language should be respectful to all members of the community.

Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Keeping respectful and positive conversations as well as personal boundaries should be observed at all times.

Contact with Peers outside of the Program:

Contact with peers outside of the program is discouraged. Adolescents involved in the Life Skills Program are here to work and focus on their own personal issues. Therefore, issues of confidentiality should be observed and respected at all times.

Attendance:

Attendance is important to best benefit from the experiences and to continue work on individual goals. Any excused absences should be reported to the program either prior to the absence, or as soon as possible. Extended absences may jeopardize the standing in the program; 5 consecutive unexcused absences will result in discharge from the program.

Drugs/Contraband

Use of cell phones is prohibited during the program's operational hours. All adolescents must turn in cell phones for storage for the day. In the case of emergency, use of a phone will be provided.

Use of drugs or cigarettes will not be tolerated. Possession of any weapon or item intended for use as a weapon will not be tolerated and will result in discharge from the program.

**Program Description
Riverside Life Skills Center**

Sample Therapeutic Group Offerings

Category	Group
DBT/CBT	Coping with Conflict: This group addresses the causes, management, and resolution skills of both internal and external forces. Written materials, scenarios, role-play, and problem solving tasks are presented and explored.
	Stress Less: Adolescents discuss their levels of stress and identify positive ways of managing it. They participate in management and relaxation exercises, explore various coping strategies and discuss the usefulness in managing their Stress.
Emotion Management	Family Matters: This discussion-oriented group will highlight strengths of healthy family functioning as well as stressors encountered. The nature of changing family dynamics during adolescence is also discussed.
	Symptom Survival: This group uses the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V to focus on psycho-education around diagnostic criteria. Adolescents are encouraged to share their personal experiences with mental illness while relating symptoms to applicable mental health categories.
	Art of Healing: This group focuses on adolescents' experiences of grief and loss within their families, peer group, and communities as well as the loss that they experience with mental illness including loss of abilities, skills, relationships, interests, and hope.
	Moving On: This group focuses on transitions for past, present, and future. Treatment goals are reviewed and future plans are discussed to help adolescents make a smooth transition from week to week or from program to next steps.
Social Skill Building	Team Building/Cooperative Games: Teamwork, cooperation and social interactions are the focus through a variety of activities. Focus is on stimulating problem-solving skills to work effectively as a group.
	Gender Groups: These groups allow adolescents who identify with male, female, and/or non-binary genders to meet with similarly identified youth to focus on issues relevant to their lives and how these issues affect them.
	Community Meeting: This group is dedicated to fostering a sense of community. Adolescents collectively process the previous week's events and address and issues that have been challenging. They will also explore upcoming events and expectations.
	Social Issues /Teen Talk: This group encourages social interactions through open-ended discussions about social issues as a whole. Adolescents may engage in team building activities.

**Program Description
Riverside Life Skills Center**

Expressive Therapy	<p>Creative Arts/Express Yourself: These groups use a variety of activities as a means of communication and self-expression. Groups may focus on art, poetry, music, and creative writing as therapeutic techniques to enhance personal growth and self-awareness.</p>
	<p>Moods and Media Teens develop analytical skills related to increased awareness and perspective around topics of self-image, violence, advertising, bullying, peer pressure, and relationship building through observing examples drawn from various media sources.</p>
	<p>Behind the Lens: This expressive arts group focuses on filmmaking with the goal of increasing self-expression, developing social skills, insight, and emotional management while building self-esteem and feelings of self-efficacy.</p>
Health and Wellness	<p>Healthy Living: This group focuses on education and discussion around health issues, nutrition, physical fitness, and other teen topics. Groups focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle.</p>
	<p>Fitness: This group focuses on activities specifically designed to promote health and exercise. Connections are made to a healthy life, stress relief, and community.</p>
	<p>Self Esteem: This group focuses on each adolescent’s individual strengths and explores different ways to increase self-esteem. Adolescents are encouraged to increase self-expression and self-awareness through analyzing individual interests, likes/dislikes, personal relationships, and creating personalized positive affirmations.</p>
Growth and Development	<p>Independent Living Skills: This group focuses on basic life skills necessary for successful transition into the community. Topics may include budgeting, prioritizing, job skills, drivers’ education, community resources, independent living, and planning for college or work.</p>
	<p>Cooking Club: This group teaches proper nutrition, food preparation, and basic culinary arts. Adolescents learn, practical measurement skills, how to read and interpret food labels, plan and prepare healthy meals, practice etiquette skills, and engage in pro-social interactions.</p>
	<p>Critical Thinking: Given factual or hypothetical situations, adolescents engage in observation, draw from experience, and engage in discussion and written activities to share views and receive feedback. Teens work collaboratively within the group setting to find viable solutions to presented problems.</p>