

# **The Collier House Resident Handbook**

Updated: 4/2009

## **Welcome**

Welcome to the Collier House! Your acceptance into our program conveys our belief in you. The Collier House firmly believes that you are ready to take responsibility for your own life and to work diligently on your personal goals. The Collier House Staff welcomes you whole-heartedly into the program and wishes you great success!

The Collier House Program was designed to promote individual growth and life skills, which will cultivate a successful, independent future. The program will help sharpen your skills in:

- Life Skill Development
- Educational/Vocational Training and Employment
- Securing Future Permanent Housing
- Restoring Connections with Family and/or Caring Adults in the Community
- Mentoring

The Collier House Staff will commit themselves to supporting you through this journey.

## **Statement**

The Collier House Program is meant to help prepare you for a smooth transition into early adulthood. The program was designed to assist you in developing the life skills necessary to lead self-sufficient and productive lives.

Each resident is expected to maintain employment and/or further their education. This will help foster the life skills needed for a successful future. The Collier House will aid each young woman toward finding permanent housing before discharge.

During your stay at the Collier House, you will meet with the Program Manager to develop an Individual Transition Plan. This plan will help identify educational/vocational, housing, mental health, health and independent living goals and the steps necessary to achieve them. This plan will be modified throughout your stay.

Once you have chosen a discharge date, the Collier Staff will help you find and secure permanent housing. They will cover topics such as: Where you will live, how you will support yourself, what type of medical coverage/health insurance you will have, etc. The Collier Staff dedicates themselves to helping you through this transition.

If there are any damages reported, the appropriate amount of money will be deducted from the program fee before it is returned back to you. This money will help you pay for the security deposit and first month's rent for your new apartment!

Good luck! We look forward to working with you!  
The Collier House Staff

### **Collier's Mission Statement**

The mission of Collier Services is based on one philosophy of deep respect for the inherent worth of each individual, of regard for the environment and belief in the capacity for personal change. In each program, Collier Services strives to provide a place where these sacred beliefs are honored. Collier commits itself to form relationships with people so that each person may experience a sense of belonging, dignity and hope.

Conscious that no one program addresses the needs of all, Collier positions itself to respond creatively to human needs which are consistent with the ministry of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The mission of Collier Services is open to all who embrace this philosophy of personal empowerment.

### **Residents Rights**

1. Each Resident will receive prompt medical treatment;
2. Have access to an appropriate education;
3. Live in a safe, clean, healthy environment;
4. Be free of physical or sexual harassment or abuse and corporal punishment
5. Attend religious services of their choice; and
6. Have unimpeded communication to the Division.

### **House Rules and Guidelines**

The Collier House is a transitional living program for young women. The Program provides a safe, attractive and stable environment, with staff present 24 hours per day. The staff offers the residents a supportive and encouraging environment. The program helps young women develop the skills they need to live healthy, self-sufficient and productive lives.

**Grounding** is defined as a restriction of community access. Each resident is allowed to attend work and school if they are grounded.

### **Restrictive Behavior Management Practices**

The Collier House does not use physical contact restraining techniques. In matters of emergency (physical aggression or out-of-control behavior) the local police will be notified.

### **Rules Regarding Spending Nights Outside the Program**

Residents may spend four nights per month outside the Collier Home. All overnight visits must be pre-approved by the Program Manager. A resident who wishes to sleep outside the Collier Home for **more than four nights per month** must submit a written request to the Program Manager, who will then request final authorization from the Program Director. If a pre-approval is not obtained before the overnight the resident will receive two weeks grounding. Each resident must call to check in before going to bed each night they are out. Failure to call in will result in two days grounding.

If a resident is not sleeping out however is out for the day, they must also call to check in every four hours. Failure to call the entire day will require the resident to come home 3 hours before their curfew the next time they go out.

### **Search and Seizure Policy**

We believe that every child is entitled to a safe and secure environment. This requires that we ensure our home free of illegal drugs, weapons and contraband. Contraband is defined by the DCF Manual of Requirements as: illegal drugs, unauthorized property, stolen property, or items otherwise obtained illegally. Room searches are **not** routinely conducted. This is done only if we have reason to suspect a resident has possession of the above-stated items. If a resident is available at the time of the search, she will be given the opportunity to observe the search. However, if the resident(s) is unavailable for an extended period of time, or it is an emergency that cannot wait for the resident to be present, than a search may be conducted without the presence of the resident(s). The search will be conducted in the presence of two staff members, one of whom is a supervisor. If, two staff members are not available, the staff member working will notify the police and wait for their arrival. The staff will verify which resident is responsible for any weapon or contraband brought into the home before imposing a consequence on the resident(s).

If weapons and/or contraband are believed to be either in the resident's car, purse, garment or other immediate possession, the resident will be asked to empty them voluntarily. If she refuses, we will **not** conduct the search ourselves. The police will be notified and they will conduct a lawful search of the resident's immediate possessions. The resident will be placed with one-on-one supervision until the police arrive.

### **Collier House Fair Appeal Procedure**

If a resident disagrees with the decision of the Program Manager to terminate her placement, she may discuss the situation with our Director of Residential Programs. If still not resolved, the resident may appeal to the Executive Director of Collier Services.

### **Religious Policy**

Although, Collier Services is a Catholic Organization, services are provided on a non-denominational basis. Each resident has the right to practice and attend the religious services of her choice. The Collier House will neither coerce nor require participation in religious activities. The Collier House does not punish or reward residents for participating in religious activities.

### **Substance Abuse**

Absolutely no alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and/or non-prescription drugs are permitted on the premises. This includes possession, buying, or selling of drugs and/or alcohol in the Collier House and/or outside of the House is strictly prohibited.

If it is determined that a young person is abusing drugs or alcohol at any level, she will be required to participate in substance abuse treatment as a condition to remaining within the Program. The resident will go for an evaluation by an outpatient community based program that specializes in substance abuse issues. Consequence for the abuse of drugs or alcohol as well as suspicion of possession or use is two weeks grounding.

#### **Fire Escape Plan**

If a fire occurs at the Collier House all girls must exit the premises immediately and safely. All girls are to meet in front of St. Joseph's church by the Yellow Sign. Please exit the house as promptly and quietly as possible.

#### **Drug Screening**

Before we conduct a blood or urine screening on a child to determine substance abuse, we **must** ensure that:

Substance abuse screenings are conducted only the following limited circumstances:

- a. when screening is ordered by the court
- b. when the home is specifically designated as a drug treatment facility
- c. when ordered by a physician who has determined that such screening is necessary

The home will file an incident report for every instance involving a frisk search, general practice search when illegal drugs or other contraband are discovered, a staff member's request for a child to empty a possession within a child's immediate control, a room search resulting in the discovery of weapons, illegal drugs or other contraband, and a blood or urine screening.

#### **Grievances/Problems**

If the resident has a grievance or problem, she is able to speak with either the Youth Counselors or the Program Manager. Grievances are usually settled at this point. At times, the Collier House Staff may want to include the resident's DCF, YCM or CMO worker for assistance; the resident may request to speak with him/her.

There is a staff on duty at all times of the day and a resident may speak freely with whomever is working. Speaking with staff regarding grievances/problems does not necessarily mean that the resident will receive her desired outcome. The Collier House Staff's main concern is that the young women have a fair opportunity for input and receive a fair settlement.

If a young woman's grievance involves the other residents, she may call a house meeting. She would inform the Youth Counselor on duty. The staff member will be present. The staff member may also call a house meeting to help solve grievances, if necessary.

#### **Mail**

Residents are permitted to open all letters and packages unattended. If a staff member suspects that a package contains contraband, the resident will be asked to open the package in front of two staff members.

### **Meals**

Each week, a resident will be assigned an evening to prepare and cook dinner for the house (Sunday through Thursday). Dinner must be cleaned up by the designated resident immediately following the meal. The Collier House Staff encourages all residents to try to be present for the dinner hour. If a resident is unable to attend dinner due to their school or work schedule, the staff on duty should be notified. If a resident misses a cook night and fails to find coverage by another resident, they will receive an extra cook night for the following week. Each resident is responsible for clean up on their cook night. Failure to do so will require them to clean up after dinner the following night.

Cell phones and radios must be turned off during dinner. Food is not to be left unattended on the stove or in the oven. Eating is only allowed in the kitchen and dining areas. If a resident eats in any other area of the house they will receive one day grounding.

### **Household Responsibilities**

Every resident will have a daily chore to complete. The chores rotate on a weekly basis. Chores should be completed before leaving the house. If this is not a possibility, it should be completed as soon as the resident returns. The Youth Counselor will check chores daily. If the chore is not completed correctly, you may be asked to redo the chore. Failure to complete your chore will result in one day grounding.

As well as daily chores, all residents are required to maintain an organized and clean room. All rooms are checked daily at noon and all beds must be made and rooms clean before residents leave the house. Failure to do so will result in one day grounding for that day.

### **Guests**

The Staff must be notified in advance if a resident is expecting a guest. Residents are not allowed to have Guests of the opposite sex in their bedrooms or anywhere on the second floor. Guests are **only allowed** in the designated areas, ie: living room, front porch and back patio. Guests may visit from 9 am - 12am, weekdays. 10am - 1am, weekends. Every resident is responsible for the actions of their guests and guests may not interfere and must show respect to the other residents. If a resident show disrespect towards any of the staff or other residents they will be asked by the counselor to leave. It is up to the staff to determine if the guest will be allowed to return.

### **Reporting Allegations of Abuse/Neglect**

If a young women reports allegations of abuse/neglect: It is mandatory that you follow these steps:

1. Immediately call: 877-NJ-ABUSE whenever there is reasonable cause to believe that a child had been or is being abused and/or neglected.
2. Call Program Manager and/or Director

All other reporting requirements:

The home or the agency will notify the office of licensing verbally of any of the following changes or events by the next working day after the home or agency learns of the occurrence, to be followed by a written notification to the Office within 5 working days.

1. Injury, accident or illness that results in admittance into the hospital
2. The death of a child while the child was on the premises of the home or in the care of a staff member or volunteer
3. Temporary or permanent closing of a home or agency
4. Any convictions or guilty pleas of any agency or home staff members that involve or affect any child or the operation of the home or agency.

### **Curfew**

Each young women must be in the house on time according to her level. If the young lady is above 18 years of age, her curfew is:

Level 1- 12 am

Level 2- 1 am

Level 3- 2 am

If a resident is 17 years of age, the curfew according to the town of Keyport is 11pm.

The level's are as follows:

Level 1: 9pm

Level 2: 10pm

Level 3: 11pm

Weekday Curfew:

Level 1: 8:30pm

Level 2: 9pm

Level 3: 9:30pm

Keyport town's curfew for under 17 years of age is 9pm. No matter what level the resident is on we cannot extend her curfew past 9pm if she is 16 years of age.

It is the resident's responsibility to inform the Staff of their whereabouts. If a young woman needs an extension on her curfew, she must request approval at least 24 hours in advance from either the Program Manager or the Director.

### **Nighttime House rules- After 12 AM.**

Talking on cell phones is restricted to downstairs (texting is fine as long as phone is on silent or vibrate).

No showers upstairs after 1am.

If you are awake and want to talk and relax with your roommates, please do so downstairs.



Music must be played on headphones or at a very low volume upstairs.

Computers should be set on silent when on aim, myspace, facebook, or any other type of website that graces us with sound.

Lastly, please be respectful when asking someone to keep it down, and please respect someone's wish for a little quiet when she is trying to sleep, study, etc.

### **Phone Privileges**

Each resident has the right to use the staff phone to call any family member, caseworker, friends at any time.

The residents must sign out each phone call stating:

The time (they began the phone call and ended)

The date

The phone number dialed

Their relation

The Collier House has two phone lines, so it is important that a phone line is available for other incoming calls and/or emergencies. If, it is a special circumstance the resident is expected to inform the staff member and more time will be granted, if deemed appropriate.

### **Valuables**

The Collier House is not responsible for any valuables you lose and/or misplace. If you have things of value, give them to a staff member for safekeeping. If a resident is found to be stealing they will receive two weeks grounding as well as a loss of level.

### **Employment**

Each resident is required to work a minimum of 30 hours per week in order to remain in the Program. If, the resident is attending school full time, then they must secure a part-time job of at least 15 hours per week. Each resident will not have use of a personal laptop until they have secured employment and have received their first paycheck. If the resident does not obtain a job within 30 days, two sleep nights a month will be revoked.

They will have the option to do extra chores around the house for which they will receive \$5 an hour, which will also be split with the house.

### **Program Fee**

Each young lady is expected to pay a program fee each month. This is 50% of their monthly earnings. The fee serves to prepare residents for budgeting and paying rent once in permanent housing of their own. This program fee will be held in a separate savings account and returned to the young woman when she leaves the program. With hopes that this will be used for security deposit, first month's rent and other start-up costs. Failure to give half of their earnings will result in a weeks grounding.

### **Life Skills Program**

Upon entrance into the Program, each young lady will be required to complete a life skills assessment and the Ansel-Casey Assessment. This information will be used to help prepare her for the life of an independent adult. Some areas of the life skills program include:

- Money Management
- Food Preparation
- Personal Hygiene
- Medical/Health Care
- Interpersonal Skills
- Parenting
- Search for Permanent Housing
- Permanent Employment
- Educational Planning
- Use of community Resources
- Legal Skills
- Consumer Skills

After completion of the both the Life Skills Assessment and the Ansel-Casey Assessment, the resident will meet with the Program Manager to construct individualized personal goals. The resident is expected to work on these goals daily. The staff is available at any time to assist the resident.

Each resident is to attend a weekly life skills session in which the above topics will be discussed. If a resident is late for these sessions they will be required to complete an extra chore. If the resident does not attend the session at all they will receive grounding for one day.

### **In-House Rules**

No stereos, radios, etc. are to be heard outside of the house. They must be lowered at bedtime according to staff approval. They must not be left on in a room when no one is present. Failure to do so will result in the resident's radio being taken away for one day.

Drug and/or alcohol paraphernalia is strictly prohibited for the Collier House. It cannot be displayed. This includes clothing, writing, etc.

Appropriate clothing is required at all times throughout the house. If you fail to change after a staff's request you will lose the privilege of the computer.

All residents are provided with a personal laptop while they reside at the Collier House. Laptops may be used at anytime throughout the day or night. However, the Internet is restricted from 4am – 8am daily.

The residents may call the house collect **only** in emergencies.

No eating, drinking or smoking in the Collier House Van.

Cursing is not allowed whether towards staff or other residents. Consequences for disrespectful behavior will be left to staff's discretion up to two weeks grounding.

All hot hair devices will be stored in a safe place. After each use the curling iron, hair straighteners, or hair dryer must be unplugged and stored in a safe place away from all bedding, plastic containers or anything else flammable. All hot objects will be placed in a glass container. If a staff member finds a curling iron that is not stored appropriately, the hot hair device will be confiscated.

### **Consequences**

The Collier House firmly believes in taking responsibility for your actions. It is most important to be truthful. Taking ownership for a mistake is a vital aspect of learning. The Collier House Staff expects that each young woman to work with staff and to design their own processes to deal with conflicts and other infringements of minor rules.

### **Discipline**

The Collier House utilizes a three-stage model approach to responding to minor infringements of the house rules: verbal warning on the first occasion, written warning on the second, and ultimate sanction on the third. Sanctions will be immediate, fair and consistent.

### **Restraints**

Under no circumstances will the Collier House Staff use physical restraints. If, the resident is unable to gain control, the staff member will call the police or 911.

### **Vehicles**

The Collier House encourages each resident to obtain their license and a vehicle.

After obtaining a license, each resident must follow the provisional license rules, such as:

- Can only operate a vehicle between the hours of 5 am- 12am
- The driver and all passengers must wear a seat belt
- The driver can not operate a vehicle and cell phone at the same time
- The driver can only have one other person in their vehicle that is not registered to the same address

The owner of the vehicle is the **only** person that can operate their vehicle.

At the time of the resident's curfew, they hand in the keys to the staff member on duty.

The Collier House needs a copy of their current insurance card, registration and license in order for the vehicle to be operated. If we do not have the current paperwork, the staff members will revoke the privilege of driving until all the paperwork is current.

If a staff member believes that the vehicle contains contraband, they will follow the above written policy of search and seizure.

### **Staff Use of Personal Vehicles**

The Collier House staff will not use their personal vehicle to drive the residents anywhere.

### **Discharge**

Each resident must give the Collier House 1 month notice of discharge. If the resident fails to comply, a penalty will be deducted from their personal escrow account. This allows the residents to formulize a realistic independent living plan.

### **Information to Parents and Staff Members**

The Collier House is required by the Division of Children and Families to:

1. Secure a certificate of approval to operate from the Office of Licensing;
2. Comply with all applicable provisions of the manual;
3. Retain a current copy of the manual and make it available for review by parents of resident children;
4. Indicate how parents may secure a copy of the manual by contacting the Office of Licensing, Department of Human Services, PO Box 707, Trenton, NJ 08625-0707;
5. Afford parents the opportunity and time to review and discuss with the agency's director any questions or concerns about policies, requirements, provisions, or alleged violations of the manual;
6. Advise parents that if they believe or suspect that the home is in violation of any provision of the manual, they may report such alleged allegations to the Office of Licensing;
7. The home will make available upon request for the parents' review of the Office's Inspection/Violation and Complaint Reports on the home or agency, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the home during the current certificate of approval period;
8. Inform parents that they may request a copy of the home's behavior management policy, including policy of searches, as specified in N.J.A.C. 10:128-6.13, 6.14, and 6.15;
9. Inform the parents that they home or agency is required to provide the child's parents with copies of the home's visitation and communication policies, a copy of the procedure for expressing concern or registering complaints regarding their child's placement, and a description of its religious policies, including a statement that the child has a right to practice her religion;
10. If anyone believes that their child or resident is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment, or any other kind of abuse, neglect or exploitation by any person, whether working at the home or not, it is **required by State Law** to report such allegations to the Department's State Central Registry at **877-NJ-ABUSE IMMEDIATELY**. All reports can be made anonymously;

11. You may secure information about the prevention and reporting of child abuse and neglect by contacting the Division of Youth and Family Services, Community Education Office, PO Box 717, Trenton, NJ 08625-0717;
12. The home **must** secure a written consent from the child's parents before the home or agency may involve the child in fund-raising, publicity, or audiovisual activities related to the home or agency;
13. The home's visitation schedule for the parents and children as specified in the N.J.A.C. 10:128-6.6, 9.19 and 10.13;
14. The home will comply with the requirements specified in above by:
  - a. securing the parent's or staff member's signature on a record attesting to receipt of the document
  - b. maintaining a record on file; or
  - c. documenting in the record the attempts made to secure the parent's signature