

WCYSB
On-Call/ Crisis Intervention/ Shelter Policies and Procedures

QUICK FIND GUIDE

THE ON-CALL SHIFT:	pg 2
DOCUMENTATION AND FORMS	pg 2
PROCEDURES:	
• PREPARATION:	pg 3
• THE PAGER GOES OFF	pg 4
• TAKING A REFERRAL	pg 4
• TALKING TO THE CALLER	pg 4
SHELTERING A YOUTH	pg 4
• Do they really need shelter?	pg 5
• Is the youth appropriate for our shelter?	pg 5
• Shelter rules	pg 5
• Finding shelter	pg 6
• When shelter is found	pg 6
• At the youth's home	pg 6
• Medication	pg 7
• At the shelter home	pg 7
• Communication/confidentiality during shelter	pg 7
• School in the morning	pg 8
• Illnesses	pg 8
• The Next Day	pg 8
ENDING SHELTER	pg 8
• I don't want/need shelter anymore	pg 8
• Youth runs away from shelter	pg 9
• Shelter parent asks to have youth removed	pg 9
FOLLOW UP & DOCUMENTATION	pg 9
AT RISK FOR SUICIDE	pg 9-11
ABUSE	pg 11
AT THE END OF SHIFT	pg 11
MERGING CALLS	pg 12

On-Call/ Crisis Intervention/ Shelter Policies and Procedures

THE ON-CALL SHIFT:

- The on-call shift starts Friday afternoon when the phones turn over to the answering service at 5:00 PM, to the following Friday afternoon at 5:00 PM. It also includes any time the office is closed for holidays, snow days, or staff gatherings such as staff meeting. If your YSB duties or other jobs conflict or overlap with your on-call schedule please make appropriate arrangements.
- It is possible to trade or “sell” your shift to another staff member. Please make sure that this is documented on the on-call list (on the first floor bulletin board) and ensure the answering service is aware by notifying them at 229-4401.
- **COMPENSATION:** You will receive compensation for your week of on-call. You will receive \$200 for the shift. If your shift includes a holiday, you will receive an additional \$50. Following your shift, complete and submit the on-call expenditure form.

DOCUMENTATION AND FORMS

- The YSB facepage has the information you may need for being on-call <https://sites.google.com/a/wcysb.org/employee/on-call>. There is also a resource book located on top of the mailboxes in the entrance at the YSB.
1. **REFERRAL SHEETS:** For each new referral an entry in Apricot will be required. The paper referral form can be used to gather initial information prior to entering into Apricot, if needed.
 2. **SHELTER PARENT LIST:**
 - a. Here you will find an updated list of our shelter parents, their addresses and phone numbers, directions to their homes, and other information about their homes.
 - b. **Policy: Do not share shelter parent information with a youth’s family.** When sheltering, it will be necessary to let the youth know the names and location of the shelter home, though they are also expected to keep this information confidential. See section on communication/confidentiality during shelter on page 8.
 3. **STAFF DIRECTORY:**
 - a. In case you get a message for a staff member or if you need assistance from another counselor, an updated staff list is available.

- b. **Policy: Do not share staff contact information with clients or families.**
- 4. **MISCELLANEOUS:** This section holds a wealth of information that you may need including how to block caller ID from being displayed.
- 5. **OTHER RESOURCES:** This includes telephone numbers and information about other resources that may be helpful for families.
- 6. **FORMS:**
 - a. *Shelter release form:* must be signed before a youth is sheltered (An exception can be when verbal permission is granted and extreme hardship for getting the form signed, i.e. sheltering someone in the middle of the night.)
 - b. *Medical consent form/Adolescent medical history:* Especially important for youth on medication.
 - c. *Consent for release of confidential information:* It is helpful to have consent for school staff if we will be transporting a youth to/from school.
 - d. *Shelter inspection form:* Please fill out upon a youth's arrival at a shelter home

PROCEDURES:

PREPARATION:

- During your shift you will need access to the above listed resources, either electronically with the ability to print as needed, or in hard copy. Country Roads staff will put completed forms in the "Shelter" file (in the top right drawer of the file cabinet on the first floor) and the on-call worker will be notified that they are there for their reference.
- Check with the office coverage staff or a CR counselor to obtain information about any clients needing assistance during on-call. If a counselor is working on something that needs to carry over into the evening, they will let you know.
 - a. There are times when certain clients' behaviors are elevated and the client's counselor has information which would be helpful to know during your on-call shift. This information could be communicated in different forms.
 - b. A counselor will communicate directly to on-call staff about a certain situation.

- c. When the on-call worker gets a call they can consult with a co-worker to find out more information. Again, due to our case review practice, many counselors should have information about other counselor's clients which could be helpful. Consulting other clinicians has been a long-standing practice at the Youth Service Bureau and is encouraged!

- **THE PAGER GOES OFF/A CALL COMES IN**
 - a. Call the YSB number to reach the answering service: 229-9151.
 - b. Tell them your name and that you are on-call.
 - c. They will give you a name and a number and sometimes a brief reason for the call.
 - d. If for some reason, you cannot reach the person or the person says they cannot receive phone calls the answering service can patch you through to them.

- **TAKING A REFERRAL:**
 - a. It is important to try to get all the information needed for a referral.
 - b. Please try to get an accurate spelling of the youth's name and the youth's date of birth.
 - c. Especially in crisis situations, it is important to write as much detail as possible in the "describe presenting reason" section. This helps the assigned clinician know how to respond.
 - d. In the "procedures for case manager/counselor contact" section, be as detailed as you can. Ask whom they should call and if it is okay to identify ourselves as calling from the YSB.

- **TALKING TO THE CALLER:**
 - a. Your role is to provide emergency housing, information, support, or a referral to a more appropriate service.
 - b. Sometimes a caller just needs to talk. Even though you may not consider yourself a counselor, you can listen and provide emotional support and information.
 - c. Your job is not to solve all of their issues in one phone call. If they are in crisis, your ability to remain calm can only help the situation.

SHELTERING A YOUTH

- ***Always talk to the parents and the youth.*** Generally, both the youth and parents need to agree to a plan for shelter. (In rare cases we could house a youth for one night only if the parent is unavailable to contact.)
 1. First, obtain all relevant referral information.
 2. If you are speaking to school personnel, the police, or any other third party making the referral, get as much information as you can from them as well.
 3. Describe the CR program to them. CR is a voluntary, emergency shelter program where youth (aged 12-17 with some exceptions) can stay for up to two weeks when they are unable to stay at home (the potential for sheltering a youth

up to 3 weeks exists depending on the circumstances of the youth and shelter parent availability).

4. The YSB does not take custody of kids and the parent needs to be involved in the program and available for questions at all times during the shelter stay.
5. During the time of shelter we work with the family to figure out what needs to happen for a youth to return home. (If a youth is unable to return home we will work with the family to help them come up with another alternative, though the YSB does not have access to any particular long-term program, besides TLP.)
6. *There are two, rare situations in which we could facilitate a shelter placement without parental consent:*
 - a. If the parent is unavailable (intoxicated, not returning phone calls, etc.) we could house a youth for ONE night while we continue to work on contacting the parent.
 - b. When a runaway youth is seeking shelter and the parents refuse permission for our program, the police can deliver a youth to shelter and they can remain there for up to seven days. (Refer to 33 VSA; 5301 & 5303).

▪ **Do they really need shelter?**

1. Explore with the family how necessary it is for the youth to leave the home.
2. What is happening currently?
3. Can they stay separate for the rest of the day and speak with a counselor in the morning?
4. Explore with the family if there is another safe place that the youth can stay such as a relative or a friend.

▪ **Is the youth appropriate for our shelter?**

We want to protect both the youth and the shelter parents. The youth must be screened for issues such as:

1. Uncontrolled anger/violence/destruction of property. Has the youth been violent? In what situations? Can they control their anger around others? What would they do if something upsets them in shelter?
2. Has the youth participated in self harm? Is there a history of or active suicidal ideation? Do they need to be screened by WCMH?
3. Is there a history of sexually acting out? If there is, make sure you are housing them at a shelter home without young children and that the shelter parents are aware of the behavior.
4. Will the youth follow the shelter rules?

▪ **Shelter rules:**

There are four rules that youth have to agree to in order to participate in the shelter program. These are:

1. ***Be in school or otherwise occupied during the day.*** If it is during school vacation or they are suspended, this usually means they will spend the day in the office.
2. ***No drinking or drugging while in shelter.***
3. ***Follow the rules of the shelter parent.*** These are basic rules like mealtime, curfew, phone usage etc. Youth often ask if they can spend time with friends, go to the movies, etc. This can happen with parent

permission, which the assigned counselor can discuss with them. There are no sleepovers while a youth is in shelter. Every shelter parent and youth has different expectations, so sit down with the shelter parent and the youth to talk these over.

4. Participation in family counseling. If the youth is the one seeking shelter and the parents won't consent to family counseling, then we may house the youth anyway to give her/him a break. We may see the youth individually in that situation during the time of shelter. If the family is seeing another practitioner the clinician assigned can help them figure out what participation will be helpful or necessary.

- **Finding shelter:** Let the caller know that you will try to find shelter and you will call them back to let them know either the status of your process or that we have found shelter.
- **Where to look:**
 - a. Look at the Shelter Parent List and start calling shelter parents.
 - b. Start with shelter parents in the same school district as the youth so that getting them to school will be easier.
 - c. Over the weekend or during school vacation it is less important to house them near their school and we may house them far away until something else becomes available. When possible, we try to keep them in one shelter home.
 - d. Keep calling shelter parents until you hear back from them. We never pressure our shelter parents into taking a youth. If they say no, just thank them and move on.
 - e. At some point it may be necessary to process with the family what they are going to do if you can't find shelter. They may agree to go to separate corners of the house for the night or to let the youth stay with a friend or family member. Try to problem solve with them.
- **When shelter is found:**
 - a. Let the shelter parent know anything you know about the youth. For instance, the youth has stolen money from her/his Mom's purse. The youth agrees not to steal at the shelter home and he doesn't have a history of stealing in other places, so you decide he is appropriate for shelter.
 - b. Let the shelter parent have this information even though you do not think it will be a problem during shelter.
 - c. Ask the shelter parent when you can bring the youth over/tell them when you think you'll be there.
 - d. Call the youth and family and make arrangement to pick the youth up.
 - e. Instruct them to pack clothes, toiletries, medication, school supplies and anything they may need during the next two weeks.
 - f. ***All medication needs to be in the original prescription bottle and handled by the on-call/CR staff member and the shelter parent.*** A medical consent form should accompany any medication.
- **At the youth's home:**
 - a. Only go to the youth's home if it is safe.

- b. If there is any question, either call another staff member to go with you or call the police to see if they will meet you there. It is also possible to meet them in a public place such as a grocery store parking lot.
 - c. **At the youth's home complete the shelter release form, the medical consent form, and any releases of confidential information which may be necessary.**
 - d. Ask what their normal routine is: What time do they go to/get out of school? What do they usually do after school? Is there anything else we should know?
 - e. Shelter is not a reward or a punishment. We will not agree to isolate a child during shelter, nor will they be allowed to stay out until 11 PM every night.
 - f. If there is something questionable that the parent is asking us to do (ie. not allowing phone contact with another parent) refer them to speak with the CR counselor the next day.
- **Medication:**
 - a. If the youth is taking any prescription or non-prescription medication a medical consent form must be filled out and signed by the legal guardian.
 - b. **Policy:** All medications must be in their original packages and handled by appropriate YSB staff and shelter parents only.
 - c. The shelter parents will/should be instructed to contact the appropriate YSB staff if any over the counter medications/remedies are requested or needed (with the exception of general pain medication such as Tylenol).
- **At the shelter home:**
 - a. Introduce the youth to the shelter parent, have the shelter parent show the youth the room and let them bring their things in there.
 - b. Next, sit with the youth and the shelter parent and go over the expectations, at least for the next few days.
 - c. Discuss any other situations that the shelter parent needs to know (ie. about their medication or a school event that is happening the next day).
 - d. Conduct a brief shelter home inspection (working smoke detectors, locked weapons, medications out of youth access).
 - e. **Fill out the shelter home inspection form** and place it in the CR Coordinator's mailbox on the next business day.
- **Communication/confidentiality during shelter:**
 - a. Parents and youth should be informed about how to communicate with each other during shelter: Parents will call YSB staff to get in touch with youth; youth can call parents directly from the shelter home with shelter parent permission.
 - b. It is expected that parents/guardians will be available to YSB staff while a youth is in shelter.
 - c. Parents/guardians should communicate any instances when they will be unavailable (ie. working out of town) and provide someone to contact in case communication is necessary.
 - d. If parents or emergency contact person are found unavailable for an extended period of time (ie. 24-48 hours) CR staff will contact the necessary authorities.

- **School in the morning:**
 - a. It is the on-call workers responsibility for getting the youth to school the next day.
 - b. Sometimes a shelter parent is willing to transport the youth to school in the morning. If not, make arrangement for time of pick-up.
 - c. Also, arrange with the youth a meeting place for their ride after school (usually the guidance or main office).
 - d. Once a clinician is assigned the clinician will coordinate this, but transportation may fall to the on-call worker for the duration of shelter.

- **Illnesses:**
 - a. If a youth reports feeling ill to you or to a shelter parent, immediately call their parent to begin a decision making process for how to handle the complaint.
 - b. It is appropriate to bring a youth to their doctor or to the emergency room when necessary.
 - c. When you have a question, consult with the youth's parents, the Country Roads Coordinator or staff and a supervisor.

- **The Next Day:**
 - a. **E-mail CR Team advising of shelter ASAP.**
 - b. **BRING ANY COMPLETED FORMS WITH IT INTO THE OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE NEXT DAY.** They can be placed in the shelter folder in the locked cabinet.
 - c. It is really important that if a parent or another agency calls us early the next morning that we have the information to speak with them, even if the youth was not sheltered.
 - d. There may be transportation that needs to be done at 5:00 or later the next day. Check with the CR counselor to get information.
 - e. **Do not leave on-call referrals or other confidential information in a counselor/staff member's mailbox.**

ENDING SHELTER

- **I don't want/need shelter anymore**
 - a. Sometimes a youth, the family of a youth, or the shelter parent wants shelter to end.
 - b. If a call comes in from the youth requesting to leave shelter, call the parents and try to work something out with them. This is a voluntary program and we cannot force the youth to stay.
 - c. If the parents refuse to take the youth back, the youth refuses to stay, and no other alternative can be found, let the parents know that you will be taking the youth to the police department (in the youth's town of residence) because they are refusing to stay in our shelter. Explain that we cannot just let the youth go and have to release them into the custody of someone.
 - d. If the family calls and wants the youth out of shelter, we have to honor the request. If the youth refuses, call the parent back and try to work collaboratively with the parent/guardian on how best to remedy the situation.

If the parents insist and the youth continues to refuse, you can take the youth to the police department.

- **Youth runs away from shelter**
 - a. If a youth runs away from shelter, breaks curfew, or is late call the parents and let them know.
 - b. They can call the police and report the youth as a runaway or wait a few hours to see if the youth returns home or to the shelter home.
- **Shelter parent asks to have youth removed**
 - a. If a shelter parent asks us to remove the youth from shelter find out what happened, but do not try to convince the shelter parent to keep the youth.
 - b. Call the parents and let them know, then go and get the youth.
 - c. In some situations we may try to house the youth somewhere else.
 - d. Contact the youth's CR counselor or another staff member for assistance.

FOLLOW-UP & DOCUMENTATION

1. A CR counselor should be alerted verbally, by voice mail, or email that a referral was completed or that a youth was sheltered first thing the following morning.
 2. **Apricot Referral Entries:** For each call that results in a full referral to Country Roads or another YSB program, an electronic entry in Apricot must be completed.
 - a. Start by searching Apricot for the youth's name. If the youth has not been served at YSB previously, enter a new "#1 Youth Profile" and then open a new referral.
 - b. For existing YSB clients, open a new referral for services.
- **AT RISK FOR SUICIDE:**
 - a. **Policy:** The YSB refers callers who are suicidal. Any call such as that should be referred to the Washington County Mental Health (WCMH) screeners at 229-0591.
 - b. If it is more urgent (the caller has a loaded gun, has already taken pills, etc.) call 911, then the screeners.
 - c. Any action taken regarding possible suicidality/self harm requires notification of the staff's immediate supervisor within 24-hours.
 - d. If a clinical decision is made to complete a suicide screen with a client, in tandem with contacting WCMH screeners or independent of that, complete a Suicide Screen and Safety Plan note in Apricot.

Please refer to the following two types of calls we generally receive regarding suicide.

1. **If the caller is someone calling on behalf of a suicidal youth:**
 - a. Ask them to call the screeners or 911.
 - b. Follow up with the caller to make sure they got through to someone
 - c. Inform your supervisor (or Country Roads staff) of the action taken.

2. **If the actual caller is suicidal** it may be necessary to help them with the referral. Each situation will be different. Here are some general guidelines.
3. Find out where they are (address/location) and if there is anyone else with them.
 - a. If there is someone else in the home talk to that person and let them know what is happening.
 - i. Ask the other person in the house to call the screeners. If the other person in the house is not an adult, call the screeners yourself.
 - ii. Follow up with the caller to make sure they got in touch with the screeners.
 - iii. Inform your supervisor of the action taken.
4. If there is not anyone else in the house, tell the caller that you will call the screeners (you may choose to use another phone or merge calls* so that you can remain on the phone with the caller).
 - a. You could also ask them if there is a nearby neighbor or relative you or they could contact.
 - b. Call the screeners and ask them to notify you if there is more that you could do (ex. Referral for counseling).
 - c. If the screeners are unresponsive or you believe immediate action is necessary, call the police to ask for a welfare check.
 - d. Notify your supervisor of the action taken.
5. If there is nobody else in the house and the caller says they do not want you to call the screeners, ask them how they would like you to be helpful ("I hear that you are not feeling safe. How can I be helpful to you right now?")
 - a. Listen to them and be clear with yourself and the caller, that ultimately, you will be notifying the police or the screeners if they are at risk of hurting themselves.
6. **If the caller is not clear about how they are feeling** (they may talk about feeling down, blue, or make remarks that are unsettling.)
 - a. If, as the counselor, you are left with the question, "What are they trying to tell me?"...ASK MORE QUESTIONS.
 - b. Consider using the Apricot based Suicide Screen at this time.
 - c. See the next section (number 7) for examples of ways to clarify and get more information.
7. ***There may be times when it would be helpful to distinguish between a person who is just expressing their feelings and someone who is at risk for hurting themselves. Here are some assessment questions that could help:***
 - Are you thinking of hurting or killing yourself?
 - When did you first notice such thoughts?
 - What led up to the thoughts (including real or imagined losses, mood changes, hopelessness, anxiety, anger)?
 - How often have those thoughts occurred, including frequency, controllability?
 - How close have you come to acting on those thoughts?

- How likely do you think it is that you will act on them in the future?
- Have you made a specific plan to harm or kill yourself (If so, what does this plan include?)
- Do you have guns or other weapons available to you?
- Have you made any particular preparations (eg. Purchasing specific items, writing a note or a will, rehearsing the plan)?
- Have you spoken to anyone about your plan?
- How does the future look to you?
- What things would lead you to feel more (or less) hopeful about the future (eg. treatment, reconciliation of relationship, resolution of stressors)?
- What things in your life would lead you to want to escape from life or be dead?
- What things in your life make you want to go on living?
- If you began to have thoughts of harming or killing yourself again, what would you do?

Do not hesitate to call the screeners for a second opinion if you are feeling uncertain about a call. Also, always notify your supervisor of any situation involving suicidality/self-harm.

- **ABUSE:**
 - a. Assess the immediate safety of the caller. (Is the abuser present? Does the youth feel safe?)
 - b. Do not ever put yourself in a situation that is potentially harmful. Again, if the youth is not safe contact another staff member for consultation and possibly contact the police.
 - c. **Policy: If you hear that a youth, elderly or disabled person is being abused in any way, you must make a report within 72 hours. Please notify your supervisor of the situation within 24-hours and call and send a written report to Department of Children and Families.**

- **KNOW YOUR LIMITS AND THE LIMITS OF THE AGENCY:** We provide certain services in the community. Explain the services that we offer and assist the caller in deciding if these services will be helpful to them.

- **QUESTIONS:** If you are faced with a situation that you are not sure how to handle call another staff member for assistance. Let the caller know you will call them back shortly. For example, say “I would like to consult with another staff member on the situation you’re presenting. Would it be okay to call you back in about 10 minutes?”

- **UNUSUAL/NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH OTHER AGENCY STAFF:** **Policy: Please contact the CR Coordinator to inform them of any interactions which were negative, unusual or that may need to be followed up, including interactions with the answering service staff.**

- **AT THE END OF SHIFT:**
 - a. Please make sure that all paperwork is complete, that all contacts have been documented in Apricot (including notes for transporting clients).

*To merge calls on an iPhone or Android:

1. From the in-**call** menu, tap Add **Call**. While you dial the second number, the first **call** will be placed on hold.
2. Once you have the other person on the line, tap **Merge Calls** to connect everyone.