

## Residential Services FAQs

### Q. What are the different types of residential commitment programs?

A. There are four levels of residential commitment programs that all incorporate special behavioral skills training to help your child:

1. **Low-risk Residential:** A youth who is sent to a low-risk residential commitment program by a judge will stay in that program from 4 to 6 months. If your child is adjudicated to a low-risk program, he has been assessed as “low risk” to public safety yet he requires 24-hour supervision and monitoring.
  - With the court’s permission for your child, the low-risk program allows supervised and unsupervised access to the community contingent upon your child’s assessed risk to the public and his positive behavior while in the program.
2. **Moderate-risk Residential:** A youth who is sent to a moderate-risk residential commitment program by a judge will stay in the program from 6 to 9 months. If your child is adjudicated to a moderate-risk program, he has been assessed as a moderate risk to public safety. He will be supervised 24 hours a day by trained staff members who are awake even when your child sleeps. Moderate-risk facilities are staff-secure, environmentally-secure, or hardware-secure with walls, fencing or locking doors. Moderate-risk programs, with the court’s permission for your child, allow supervised and unsupervised access to the community contingent upon your child’s assessed risk to the public and his positive behavior while in the program.
3. **High-risk Residential:** A youth who is sent to a high-risk residential commitment program by a judge will stay in the program from 9 to 12 months. If your child is adjudicated to a high-risk program, he has been assessed as a high risk to public safety and requires close supervision in a structured residential setting that provides 24-hour secure custody and care. Placement in a high-risk program is prompted by a concern for public safety that outweighs placement in a program at a lower restrictiveness level. High-risk facilities are hardware-secure with perimeter fencing and locking doors.
  - If your child is placed in a high-risk residential commitment program, his access to the community is restricted to necessary off-site activities such as court appearances and health-related events.
  - However, with the court’s permission, your child may have unsupervised home visits as his program completion date nears to help him transition from the structured environment of the program to the home environment.
  - Unsupervised home visits may be granted only if your child is assessed as a minimum risk to the community and has demonstrated positive behavior while in the program.
4. **Maximum-risk Residential:** A youth who is sent to a maximum-risk residential commitment program by a judge will stay in the program from 18 to 36 months. If your child is adjudicated to a high-risk program, he has been assessed as a serious risk to public safety and requires 24-hour custody, care and close supervision in a maximum-security setting. Placement in a maximum-risk program is prompted by a demonstrated need to protect the public. Therefore, maximum-risk facilities are hardware-secure with perimeter security fencing and locking doors.
  - These programs feature single-person cells for sleeping arrangements except that youth may be housed together during the pre-release, transitional phase.
  - Except for necessary off-site, supervised activities—such as court appearances and health-related events—youth in maximum-risk programs are prohibited from having access to the community.

**Q. Whom do I contact to find out when my child will go to a residential program?**

**A.** After the judge of the Juvenile Court hears your child's case and makes a ruling for commitment (adjudication), you may contact your child's JPO and request information about your child's anticipated placement. Sometimes, a youth may have to wait before there is a vacancy in a residential program that can adequately address his unique needs.

**Q. How is a residential program supposed to help my child?**

**A.** A multi-disciplinary treatment team—which includes a social worker, therapist, health care and mental health care professionals, and educators—plans and oversees your child's treatment in the residential program.

- Your child is a member of this treatment team, as well as program staff and other service providers involved in his care and treatment.
- The program will notify you when treatment team meetings are scheduled and you are encouraged to participate. The treatment team values your involvement and input.
- Based on an assessment of your child's prioritized needs, the treatment team develops an individualized performance plan with goals and objectives for your child to complete before being released from the program.
- Completion of these goals increases your child's chances for success and decreases the likelihood that he or she will commit a new crime.

**Q. How long will my child stay in a residential program?**

**A.** The length of time a youth stays in a residential program depends on the type of program or risk level and his performance in the program. A program's services are designed and delivered based on how long most youth take to successfully complete the program.

- Release from the program is based on your child's completion of the goals and objectives in his/her individualized treatment plan.
- The program will involve you in the development of this plan within 30 days of his/her admission to the residential commitment program.
- The program will communicate with you about your child's progress in the program, as well as his anticipated release from the program. At least every 90 days, you will receive a performance summary that documents your child's progress in each area of the plan.
- A youth may not be released from a residential program without the approval of the committing court.
- A youth cannot be held in a residential program longer than he would be imprisoned for an offense if he was an adult.

**Q. Where can I find information on a specific residential program?**

**A.** A written description of each program, its services, a map and directions, and contact information can be found on the DJJ website at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/facilities/residential-facilities>.

**Q. What can my child take to a residential program?**

**A.** Although a residential program provides most or all of what a youth needs, each program is slightly different. Some programs may allow your child to have more personal items than others would. Typically, the program includes this information in a letter sent to you shortly after your child's admission to the program. However, you may contact the program to ask about personal items your child is permitted to have while in the program.

**Q. How will I know that my child has arrived safely at the residential program?**

**A.** Within 24 hours of admission to the program, you will be contacted by telephone of your child's arrival. Please keep in mind that transportation of youth to DJJ programs is provided through a transportation system, using transportation hubs for all youth who need it throughout the state. Therefore, it may take a day or two for your child to arrive at the residential program.

**Q. Can I visit my child while he or she is in the residential program?**

**A.** Yes. Each residential program has scheduled visitation days and times. The program will notify you of its visitation schedule. If you're not able to visit during the scheduled days and times, contact your child's social worker in the program to make other arrangements.

**Q. Is there someone in the program I can talk to about my child?**

**A.** Yes. The residential program should give you the name, telephone number and e-mail address of the person to contact about your child when you need information or when you have questions or concerns.

**Q. How can I be involved with my child while he or she is in the residential program?**

**A.** While in a residential program, your involvement with your child is encouraged and valued. Shortly after your child is admitted to the residential program, you will receive a letter about the procedures for you to telephone, write and visit your child.

- In addition, your child's basic rights include at least one telephone call per week for 10 minutes.
- He also has the right to write at least two letters per week, at the expense of the program, no matter what level of restrictiveness your child is in.
- You can learn about your child's treatment and progress by carefully reviewing the goals (performance plan) and progress reports (performance summaries) that the program sends to you.
- The program will notify you of scheduled treatment team meetings and encourage you to give your input, either in-person or by telephone.

**Q. Will my child go to school while he is in the residential program? Will he earn credits? Who keeps track of his school records?**

- A.** Yes. All residential programs provide educational services. Your child can earn credits based on his performance in an on-site classroom that provides a credit-earning curriculum. Your child's former school records will be included in the planning of his treatment goals and objectives while he is in the residential program. While your child attends on-site classes, his educational records are maintained in the residential program. Educational transcripts are forwarded to the home school district when your child is released from the program.
- If your child already has a high school diploma or GED®, the residential program will involve your child in other constructive activities, including online college courses and vocational education if your child is interested in those opportunities and meets the requirements.

**Q. What types of activities will the program offer my child?**

- A.** In general, residential programs provide school, group sessions and other activities to help your child develop social and life skills, academic skills, employability skills and pre-vocational or vocational skills. Treatment services are provided as needed, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, health services, special education, and physical fitness.

