

Standards for Community Residential Centres (Voluntary Associations)

INTRODUCTION

THIS document records the views of the Voluntary Half-Way House Standards Committee in the establishment of basic standards for the operation of community residential centres in New South Wales, specifically used to assist released prisoners or prisoners allowed temporary absence from prison for compassionate or domestic reason, or for the purpose of pre-release preparation or in accord with bail conditions imposed by the court. In seeking a model for the development of standards the Committee has been impressed by the approach taken by the American Correctional Association which in co-operation with the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections, has followed an accreditation process which led to:

- (i) improved administration and operation of correctional agencies;
- (ii) ongoing revision of standards to maintain both the relevance and competence of hostel and half-way house operations.

The North American work on standards is related mainly to statutory agencies, although in its *Handbook on Standards for Adult Community Residential Services* acknowledgement is made of the work of the International Half-Way House Association and its members, who:

"provided the necessary concern, support and guidance required in such an important undertaking. They have earned the gratitude of all who strive for excellence in corrections."

It is regretted that no previous attempt has been made in Australia to establish nation-wide correctional standards. Nevertheless, the Voluntary Half-Way Houses believe that at least steps should be taken in their own field to set out the minimum standards of material and personal care to enable a more effective service to be provided.

It is also most important to ensure that funding bodies are aware of these necessary requirements and the sense of accountability felt by each voluntary organisation in the allocation of financial subsidies to its work. Our Committee also felt that a process which could lead to accreditation based on standards should not be restricted to statutory agencies, but should include also the agencies and services established by voluntary groups and individuals working in the correctional field. In Australia, these organisations have been the path-finder in the provision of welfare services to prisoners. In particular, the volunteers and voluntary groups were the first to successfully establish and demonstrate the value, in New South Wales, of community residential centres to assist released men and women.

In no sense do those voluntary agencies see themselves as subservient to government bodies nor in their work do they intend to take on an official correctional role. Their work in the correctional field is of a different order and must be so recognised. But voluntary workers and voluntary agencies are largely dependent on government funding and on the recognition by government agencies of their unique role. The growing interest in community correctional facilities to support the field work of probation and parole indicates that a definite role can be set by the Voluntary Half-Way Houses, in collaboration with statutory bodies, to achieve objectives in offender rehabilitation, which would include, in the long run, a reduction in crime.

The achievement of these objectives can be more easily accomplished when operational standards are established and resources are provided which enable a reasonable standard of assistance and care to be maintained. Such standards become an effective base line when agreed on by the agencies and practitioners in the field as a necessary step towards accreditation if such is con-

AT the Twelfth Biennial General Meeting of the Australian Crime Prevention Council held in Brisbane, it was decided to ask the New South Wales branch to establish a Committee, as the first of an envisaged series of similar Committees to be established by other branches, to enable the Council to advise Governments and voluntary organisations in Australia as to the appropriate standards for the establishment and maintenance of half-way houses and hostels.

The New South Wales branch took up the gauntlet so thrown down. A Committee was formed with Mr Frank Hayes AM as its convener. Those who served on or in other ways assisted, the Committee had experience and knowledge of such diverse organisations as Women's Emergency Shelter and Training Scheme Co-Op Limited, Glebe House Limited, Judge Rainbow Memorial Fund, Chicka Dixon Centre (for Aboriginal men), the Association of Civil Rehabilitation Committees and Tiresias House. Mrs Virginia Walker acted as Deputy Convener and Secretary of the Committee.

The Council is most grateful to the Committee for its work and has much pleasure in publishing its report for consideration and on-going discussion. The authors of the report were Mr Hayes, Mrs Walker and Miss Sandra Wilson.

sidered necessary. The Voluntary Half-Way House Standards Committee therefore draws attention to an extract from the Foreword to the American Correctional Association's booklet on *Standards for Adult Community Residential Services*:

"Standards continue to be an essential element of our progress as a profession. These standards were developed by practitioners who participated at every stage in the revision and approval process. They have defined standards of good practice for themselves and for the entire field of corrections, often recommending a higher standard than any individual agency had previously achieved in order to provide a better quality of service. All community residential agencies should measure themselves against these criteria in order to ensure meaningful improvement for the field."

Our Committee in no way measures up to the scope and breadth of interest of the American organisation. Our standards are modest. Indeed, they may appear minuscule when compared to the extensive nature and depth of the North American Standards for Community Residential Centres. Nevertheless, these standards provide in New South Wales a beginning expressed through agreement on what is needed in each house; the environment that should be provided; and the values that should underpin our work. Once these standards are recognised they could lead to accreditation as approved agencies for subsidies in collaboration with correctional authorities.

HALF-WAY HOUSE AND HOSTEL STANDARDS

PREAMBLE

Each House expresses its own approach to the problems and special needs of released men and women. The way in which this work is undertaken thus will express the beliefs and the values held by the voluntary organisation concerned.

The Standards Committee, therefore, does not see itself as trying to interfere in any way with the philosophy or the residential methods adopted. Its task has been to work for a level of assistance, both material and personal, which should be maintained as a minimum.

The physical structure of a half-way house is to provide a basis for practical services to assist released offenders to re-establish themselves within society. It is essential that each house provides personal security and a supportive atmosphere in which residents can be helped to link up with the free community in respect of employment, social and health needs, and to make

progress in overcoming difficulties arising from past personal, institutional and addictive problems. Each house must be both a home and a source of help which is not imposed but readily available for residents who seek such assistance.

A Committee or sponsoring body establishing a half-way house or hostel should ensure that a prior need exists within the prisoner community. Likewise, where special needs become evident through lack of available community services essential for the successful continuation of institutional work, as for example, prisoners released on a methadone programme.

1. Administration

- (a) Each half-way house should be controlled by a duly constituted administrative body whose executive or management board possesses an operational plan and other necessary documents in respect to its legal identity and administration.
- (b) The half-way house or residential centre is managed by an administrative officer accountable to an executive management board.
- (c) The composition of the executive or management board should be stated on an organisation chart which also makes clear to residents the authority, responsibility and accountability of all workers within the residential centre.
- (d) An operational policy should be stated which includes the aims and objectives of the house.
- (e) The rules, regulations and rights of staff and residents should be set out in a way which makes clear the responsibilities and obligations of all persons who live and work in the House.
- (f) Such organisational charts and policy statements should be placed in the House for scrutiny by any person.

2. Number of Residents

- (a) The desirable number of residents should be no more than 12.
- (b) Once numbers of residents consistently exceed this level, consideration should be given to the establishment of an additional House, taking into consideration possible fluctuations in demand for accommodation together with employment and social needs.

3. Rights of Residents

- (a) Residents to be given a copy of the house rules or guidelines, on admission.
- (b) Residents to be informed about the house philosophy and methods, including:
 - (i) storage and safekeeping of personal property;
 - (ii) the provision of access to medical care;
 - (iii) the provision of access to legal aid;
 - (iv) the procedures for the mediation of complaints against staff and/or other residents;
 - (v) the protection of the residents' right to confidentiality;
 - (vi) the need for residents to be made aware that confidential matters are restricted to staff employed in the house, and information will not be passed on to other residents;
 - (vii) the residents should have access to their own personal file and the opportunity of disagreeing with recorded information, and such disagreement to be noted on the residents' record.
- (c) During the residents' stay at the residential centre, they are entitled at all times to the preservation of their health, dignity and integrity.

4. Board Responsibility

The Board is:

- (a) to have clearly defined aims and objectives;
- (b) to be responsible for financial management and auditing procedures;
- (c) to ensure it fulfils its legal and corporate responsibilities;
- (d) to determine the method of appointment of staff;
- (e) to ensure that half-way house staff carry out their responsibilities;
- (f) to be responsible for providing an organisation chart for staff and staff procedures manual;
- (g) to be responsible for public relations matters, including all dealings with media;
- (h) to instruct the management as to the method of keeping files and records of clients;
- (i) to be responsible for mediating unresolved complaints from staff and/or residents;
- (j) to be responsible for the preservation of the personal well-being of residents within the centre;
- (k) to be responsible for the ongoing evaluation of the residential centre;
- (l) not to interfere in the day-to-day running of the house.

5. Facilities required in houses

- (a) single accommodation is the ideal provision. One key to each bedroom door; master keys to be held by staff only;
- (b) when shared accommodation is provided, such accommodation should be related to the needs of the resident to allow for privacy and the security of the persons concerned;
- (c) these standards are based on the principle that a half-way house is not simply a low cost boarding or lodging house. It embodies a transition process aimed at raising self-esteem and personal confidence directed essentially towards living a law-abiding life and the reduction of personal difficulties.

5.1 Bedrooms — minimum requirements

- (a) Each bedroom must have an atmosphere of brightness and vitality, and include curtains, prints and other furnishing objects wished by residents, such as plants. These furnishings need not be lavish but should provide in each bedroom the following functional items:
 - bed;
 - individual wardrobe;
 - dressing table;
 - chair;
 - small table/desk (if space allows);
 - bedside table (with reading lamp);
 - commercial carpet (of a type which can be easily cleaned);
 - controlled overhead heating and ceiling fans.

5.2 Other facilities within the house

- (a) **Kitchen**
 - normal outfitting, including a stove, sinks, sufficient crockery, saucepans, cutlery and kitchen utensils;
 - minimum of two fridges, one for private use and one for communal use;
 - freezer or cool room;
 - lockable store-cupboard/pantry.
- (b) **Laundry**
 - coin-operated washing machine and dryer.
- (c) **Diningroom/sitting room**
 - comfortable chairs (usual type);

- dining table and chairs;
 - secured colour TV.
- (d) **Bathrooms (for houses with a desirable level of 12 residents)**
- two bathrooms;
 - two separate toilets.
- (e) **Staff-room/office**
- bed (for staff member on duty);
 - small wardrobe with drawers;
 - chairs;
 - desk (lockable);
 - filing cabinet;
 - lockable safe (for safe-keeping of wages, petty cash, medication, and valuables belonging to residents);
 - sewing machine for residents and staff.
- (f) **Garden**
- recreation furniture;
 - barbecue;
 - garden beds (to give an opportunity to residents to grow vegetables, herbs, etc).
- (g) **Storage**
- separate room or facility for secure storage of residents' luggage and effects.
- (h) **Entertainment facilities (Desirable only)**
- billiard/pool table;
 - workshop/occupational facility (for carrying out of hobbies);
 - mini-bus to provide for residents' outings, collection of residents' belongings, contact with court, prisons, etc.

5.3 Fire prevention facilities

- (a) Each house must have adequate fire protection equipment suitable for the size and layout of the particular house, meeting the Local Government and Board of Fire Commissioners' recommendations and regulations.
- (b) The Committee or sponsoring body of the half-way house to ensure that the least flammable materials are used. A representative of the Board of Fire Commissioners to be required to make an assessment of, and report on, the premises to be utilised, prior to occupation.

5.4 Smaller half-way houses

In smaller houses, facilities can be reduced proportionally in respect of physical facilities. Nevertheless, the level of personal care must be maintained. Such care and support as has been stressed already in this document should be given without paternalism or imposition.

5.5 Unsupervised houses — three-quarter-way houses

- (a) These facilities should be on an outreach basis from the main half-way houses. They represent a form of independent living in which support is available for residents but an emphasis is placed on movement towards independence and self-reliance, while maintaining care and support as required.
- (b) A separate document will be prepared for this form of extended transitional support.

6. Staffing

- (a) Each organisation should provide suitable, experienced staff with the personal qualities necessary to offer the appropriate services required in a residential centre of

this type. Houses should be maintained with acceptable staffing levels agreed to by staff and management.

- (b) All salaries to be paid on the same basis as presently for staff funded by the State and Commonwealth Departments in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme. This current programme in time will be changed but it is essential nevertheless, that Voluntary Half-Way Houses establish their staffing and structure on an appropriate statutory programme for the homeless.

6.1 Staff Conditions

- (a) Relief staff and recuperation periods to be provided, in order to prevent burnout and excessive personal stress;
- (b) in-service and external training courses should be provided;
- (c) regular communication with management as a basis for a good working relationship;
- (d) staff meetings to be held on a regular weekly basis;
- (e) job description and contract of terms of employment to be provided to all staff, and to include:
- provision for staff to be in attendance on a roster basis enabling a 24-hour day cover for the House;
 - the establishment of an equitable salary level be established which would take into consideration staff experience and responsibility;
 - staff to be provided with a statement of conditions of employment;
 - rights of staff and appeal provisions to be clearly set out;
 - adherence to relevant industrial awards and agreements is essential;
- (f) access to Departmental institutions by accredited half-way houses staff (at least one person to be accredited).

6.2 Staffing for up to 12 residents

- (a) **Administrator**
- be responsible for all administrative tasks, which includes delegation of work and management of the centre;
- (b) **Assistant administrators (2)**
- to carry out tasks as required by the sponsoring body and/or Administrator in his/her absence, and with relief to provide extended 24-hour per day supervision;
- (c) **Welfare Worker**
- to provide appropriate welfare services and referrals for residents on intake;
 - to carry out interviews in institutions prior to release;
 - to undertake court work;
 - and assist residents with personal, family and resettlement problems.
- (d) **Drug and Alcohol Counsellor**
- to be responsible for specialist assistance and counselling to residents with a focus on community resettlement;
 - provide group leadership and individual counselling on problems of addiction;
 - to collaborate with welfare worker on appropriate follow-up of former residents who wish to remain in contact with the centre.
- (e) **Relief Staff**
- to be provided for persons on sick leave, annual leave, etc.
- (f) **Cooks/Cleaners**
- where considered necessary (in some houses residents undertake cooking and cleaning. This should be determined by local administration).

7. **Autonomy of houses**
 (a) Boards/Committees/sponsoring bodies must retain their autonomy, having the power to implement their policies rather than to be directed by any Government Department or authority;
 (b) There should be co-operation between different houses.
8. **Location of houses**
 Committees and sponsoring bodies when deciding upon the location of the half-way house should take into consideration the following criteria:
- 8.1 **City houses**
 (a) Suitable location determined primarily on the needs of released men and women;
 (b) This would include proximity to the following:
 — public transport;
 — employment opportunities;
 — recreational facilities;
 — shopping.
- 8.2 **Country and outer suburban houses providing alternatives**
 (a) Suitable location for clients and their needs, as set out in 8.1, above;
 (b) proximity to recreational facilities;
 (c) provision of transport, such as own mini-bus, station waggon or truck in lieu of public transport.
- In both 8.1 and 8.2 Council and Shire permission to operate should be sought.
9. **Half-way house and hostel programmes**
 (a) Programmes must be direct, practical and feasible, involving wherever possible ex-prisoners in the arrangement and carrying out of relevant programmes.
 (b) Programmes are to provide counselling, recreational, after-care and follow-up services, medical, legal and

- future accommodation referrals, as well as crisis intervention support.
- (c) All programmes should be based on a belief in self-sufficiency and eventual independence rather than encouraging dependency on any welfare system.
- (d) Programmes where appropriate must have an orientation towards freedom from addictive living.
- (e) If possible programmes should encourage community participation and understanding, and involve service to the local community.

Annexure

**FUNDING OF STAFF
 PROPOSED PATTERN OF FUNDING**

Position	Funding Body
Administrator	Fully-funded by the Department of Corrective Services
Assistant Administrator (relief)	Fully-funded by the Department of Corrective Services
Welfare Worker	Fully-funded by the Department of Youth and Community Services under the SAAP Scheme
Drug and Alcohol Counsellor	Half-funded by the Drug and Alcohol Authority and half-funded by the Department of Corrective Services
Cook/Cleaner	Half-funded by the Department of Youth and Community Services under SAAP Scheme and half-funded by the Department of Corrective Services

Annexure

Counselling	Individual Counselling; Group Counselling; Court and institutional; Therapeutic-type Community; Establishing traditional group links: AA, NA, Al-Anon.	Drug and Alcohol Support for Drug-affected ex-prisoners Collaboration with Government and Drug and Alcohol Agencies Involvement of service clubs (Rotary, Apex, etc.)
Recreational		
After-care	Employment; Legal; Medical; Accommodation	Collaboration with Government and Non-Agencies, private facilities

Crisis Intervention

Advocacy Role

Bail

Referral

Pre-release day leave

Pre-release (including Section 29)

Post-release

Preparation for independent community living

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