

VISTA MARIA

Independent Living PLUS

STUDENT HANDBOOK





CONTENTS

Philosophy of Care	2
Core Values and Code of Ethics	2
Program Statement.....	3
Youth Served by this Program	4
Youth Eligibility	5
Supervision and Youth Contact.....	6
Person-and Family-Centered Planning	6
Living Arrangements.....	7
Services Offered	8
Health Care	8
Education.....	9
Spirituality/ Values Clarification.....	9
Hours and Cost of Services	9
Qualified Professionals	9
Disclosure of any Potential Conflict of Interest.....	10
Confidentiality, Privacy, and Human Dignity Policies	10
Rights and Responsibilities of Youth in Care	11
Grievance and Appeal Procedure	12
Truancy/Running Away from Placement/Program	12
Ways to Share your Opinion Regarding Services.....	13
Conditions that May Lead to Escalation (placement in a more restrictive program):.....	14
Behavior Management	14
Smoking/Tobacco.....	15
Alcohol and Other Drugs	15
Weapons, Drugs, and Other Dangerous and/or Illegal Behaviors	15
Curfew Hours	15
Bullying.....	15
Workshops, Groups, and Life Skills	15
Mail	16
Phone Calls.....	16
Social Media	16
Vehicle Ownership	16
Individual Plan Development	17
Program Transition and Aftercare	17
For Your Safety.....	17
Information about Outcomes and Performance	17
Follow-up Surveys	17
Vista Maria Grievance Form	18

WELCOME

MISSION:

We foster restorative relationships and deliver innovative care, treatment, and education so that vulnerable youth and families believe in their worth, heal and build the skills for success.

VISION:

All children, families and communities achieve success through continuous learning and relationships that promote personal, professional and family well-being.

CORE VALUES:

INDIVIDUAL WORTH

ONE'S OWN WORTH AS A PERSON

RECONCILIATION

RESTORATION OF RELATIONSHIPS

MERCY

LOVE THAT PARDONS

ZEAL

LOVE AND KINDNESS IN ACTION



This book is for youth entering the Independent Living Plus (ILP) Program. This book explains the rights and responsibilities of young people and the services that the Vista Maria program provides.

Our boundless belief in every person's worth propels us to action, pursuing new ways to serve our community.

Vista Maria will never stop—because every young person deserves to start.

VISTA MARIA

WELCOME



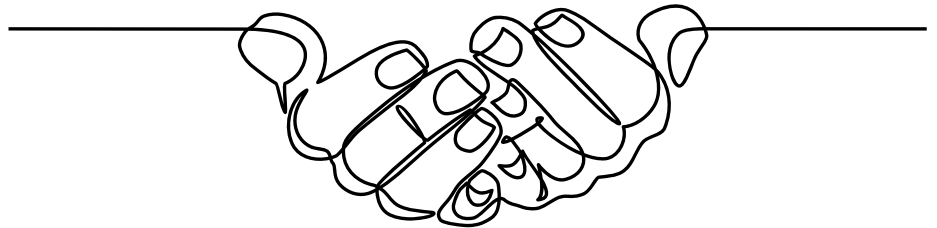
PROGRAM STATEMENT:

The ILP Program is a limited intervention designed to provide youth with the opportunity to make a successful transition from a residential placement or foster care to self-sufficiency in a community setting. ILP is a program that provides staff supported housing and services for youth ages 16 through 19 who, because of their individual needs and assessment, are not initially appropriate for General Independent Living (IL). The Department of Health and Human Services, Probate Court, Circuit Court, and other Vista Maria Programs make the majority of referrals to ILP. Many youth have little or no contact with family and have limited supports within the community. Additionally, some youth are pregnant and/or new parents. Financial support for a youth is derived from state/county monies as authorized by DHHS/CMO contract. Each youth in ILP receives money every two weeks to provide for his or her needs. All youth are expected to be gainfully employed and/or in school. The program is also designed as a post-placement resource for youth in which all of the following apply:

- *Youth leaving residential who cannot return home*
- *Youth who cannot be placed into a family foster home*
- *Youth for whom adoption is not planned*
- *Youth who have demonstrated a capacity for and willingness to learn independent living skills in a supervised, structured ILP Program prior to transitioning into an IL placement*



ILP cannot be used as a long-term placement option, but should be a transitional, temporary intervention. ILP serves to meet the youth's specific independent living needs and goals until he/she is able to step down to IL. The duration of the ILP Program will vary as determined by the youth's assessment of needs and strengths. The ILP placement will not last longer than twelve months of initial intake without an approved exception request from the referral source, (i.e. DHHS/CMO), and cannot extend past the youth's twentieth birthday.



VISTA MARIA



WELCOME

YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED BY THIS PROGRAM:

ILP is a program where older teens and young adults live in the home of a Host Home Provider or in Staff Supported Housing. The ILP Caseworker helps the youth develop goals, life skills, and make positive adjustments to school and/or employment



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PROGRAMS

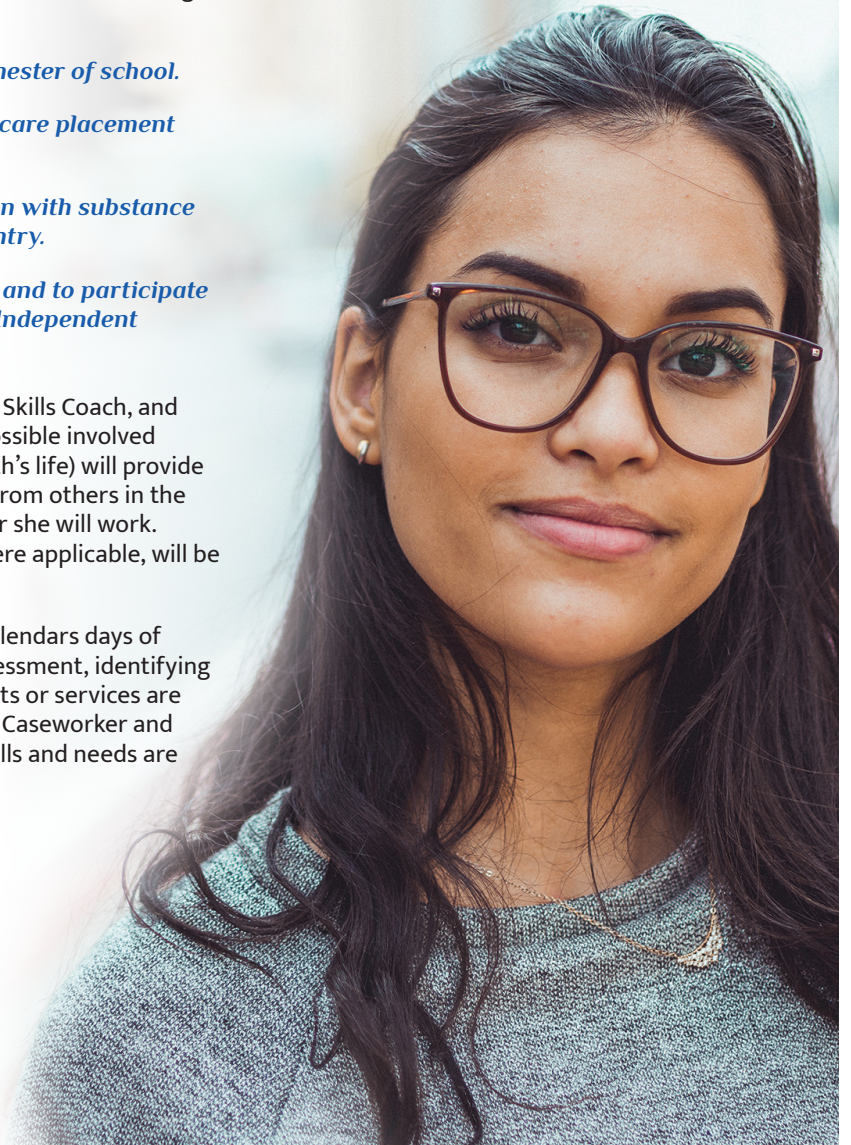
CLIENT ELIGIBILITY:

ILP accepts referrals for youth interested in entering a community-based living arrangement and developing important life skills. In addition, these youth have been assessed as needing increased supervision. The youth will need to participate in an interview prior to acceptance into the ILP Program to determine the youth's willingness to commit to the program. The youth must be motivated to become independent and have demonstrated the following prior to acceptance into ILP:

- A. Regular attendance during the most recent semester of school.*
- B. Positive adjustment to the residential or foster care placement for the previous six months.*
- C. No active use of drugs or alcohol. Young person with substance abuse histories must be substance free upon entry.*
- D. Willingness to abide by rules of the IL program and to participate actively in developing a mutually agreed upon Independent Living Contract.*

Soon after the youth enters care, the ILP Caseworker, Life Skills Coach, and treatment team (including the youth, referring worker, possible involved family members, and other significant persons in the youth's life) will provide input to develop a treatment plan. The youth (with input from others in the treatment team) will identify the goals toward which he or she will work. Specific action steps and target dates for completion, where applicable, will be identified for each goal.

As part of the overall assessment process, within thirty calendars days of intake, youths are assessed using the Casey Life Skills Assessment, identifying their current independent living skills. If other assessments or services are needed, this will be discussed with each youth so that the Caseworker and assigned Life Skills Coach can ensure the necessary life skills and needs are being addressed.



PROGRAMS

SUPERVISION & YOUTH CONTACT:

Supervision of youth in both types of placement settings consists of a minimum of four monthly contacts with the youth. This will consist of at least two face-to-face contacts, one of which will be in the youth's residence. Each face-to-face contact shall be a minimum of one hour. Remaining required contacts may be conducted in person or via telephone conversation for any length of time. Phone messages, texts, e-mails, or social media contacts do not replace a required contact, but can be used. During these visits, the staff ensures that the youth is fulfilling the educational and employment requirements of the ILP program.

Staff teaches the youth life skills (i.e., budgeting, banking, employment, shopping skills, etc...) for a minimum of 4 hours per week. Staff also makes contact with employers. The ILP Caseworker will ask about the youth's health and safety, and make sure the place where the youth is living is healthy and safe. Each youth has access to an on-call worker twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Each youth will be provided with important contact names and numbers of Vista Maria staff.

PERSON & FAMILY CENTERED PLANNING:

Vista Maria uses a service model found to be effective for youth and families. This focuses on building relationships based on these values. It also includes building skills for coping and successful living.

Each youth will have a tailored person-centered plan that is specific to their needs. Each plan is based on the goals that the youth will set.

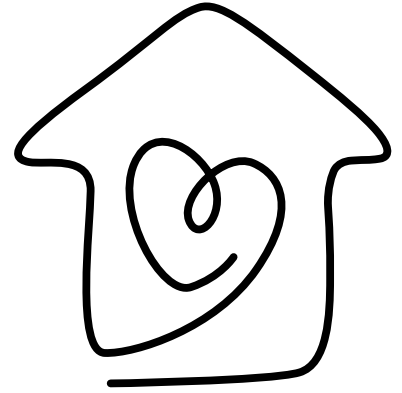
Relationships are a key to improving family and youth well-being. Learning skills to improve communication and cooperation helps build strong relationships. Varieties of structured models are used in order to aid in the facilitation of relationship building.

Your ILP Caseworker will talk more with you about how these can benefit you.

The use of physical discipline and punitive measures towards the youth are prohibited. Any behavior concerns should be reported to the ILP Case Worker or Supervisor.



PROGRAMS



LIVING ARRANGEMENTS:

The ILP Program offers two placement types, one of which is Staff Supported Housing and the other is with a Host Home Provider.

Staff Supported Housing:

This type of living arrangement is primarily a dorm-style setting where there is staff on site for designated hours to provide supervision and to assist with life skill development. The youth will be provided with furnishings for the placement, which may be new or used, but must be in good working condition and must include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *A stove, microwave, and refrigerator*
- *A dining table and chairs*
- *A telephone (landline or cellular)*
- *Living room furniture*

In addition, the youth will be provided with their own room that will include a bed with linens and pillow, desk or table with a chair and dresser. The youth will be issued a stipend and is responsible for paying rent, purchasing their own food and their own daily living expenses.

Host Home:

Host Homes can be used when a staff based housing option is unavailable. Host Home Providers are responsible members of the community who have limited supervisory responsibility and provide housing for the youth. Host Home Providers provide an atmosphere where ILP learning can take place. Host Home Providers display positive role modeling behaviors and utilize teachable moments that provide the youth opportunities to engage in. Host Home Providers are required to provide supervision for designated hours. In addition, they will be available by phone during designated hours. The youth will be issued a stipend and is responsible for paying rent, purchasing and preparing their own food, in addition to paying for their own daily living expenses.

The home will be furnished with the following items, which may be new or used, but must be in good working condition and must include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *A stove, microwave, and refrigerator*
- *Kitchen furnishings (pots, pans, cooking utensils and eating utensils)*
- *A dining table and chairs*
- *A telephone (landline or cellular)*
- *Living room furniture*

In addition, the youth will be provided with their own room that will include a bed with linens and pillow, desk or table with a chair, and dresser.

Host Home Providers establish and enforce house rules, which are a part of the contract signed by the youth, Host Home Provider, and the ILP Caseworker. In the event that the youth is noncompliant with house rules, the ILP Program encourages the Host Home Provider to contact the ILP Caseworker regarding the situation. A resolution with the Host Home Provider and the youth will be attempted.



SERVICES

SERVICES OFFERED:

Important parts of community-based services include individual work and case management services.

Individual work is a very important part of the program. A skilled and qualified professional is available to help the youth work through issues related to stress, emotional and mental health, behavior, life skills development, and follow-up on any matters requiring one-on-one support.

Youth will make the most progress with the help of their family and other adults who are important to them.

Case Management Services are available to youth in community-based programs. Staff will work with the youth to assess and develop life skills. The ILP Caseworker is responsible for service coordination with schools and other community resources.

Mental health service referrals are made in the community.

HEALTH CARE:

Each youth will have physical and dental examinations and treatments as needed while receiving services from Vista Maria. If we do not get a copy of a recent physical or dental examination, a physical or dental exam will be scheduled and completed. The ILP Caseworker will work with the youth in gathering information about their health conditions and any medications or treatments that are recommended and/or provided.

Please Communicate Your Medical Conditions & Needs:

During the course of a youth's stay, he or she may become ill or suffer an injury, and if this occurs, the youth should tell a responsible adult in the program right away.

The youth should notify their ILP Caseworker of any needed medical care that is not serious to warrant urgent, emergency room or ambulance response, but requires care. Calls to the ILP Caseworker about emergency and urgent medical care should be made no matter what time or day of the week.

Any youth who are experiencing medical issues and feel as though their medical need should be addressed immediately should contact their ILP Caseworker for guidance and if an emergency, contact 911.



SERVICES



EDUCATION:

Educational achievement is an important part of development. All youth who have not earned a high school diploma or GED will be expected to be enrolled and attend during the academic year in an appropriate educational or vocational/technical program.

SPIRITUALITY/ VALUES CLARIFICATION:

Religious preference and the decision to worship shall be up to the individual youth. The Vista Maria ILP Program will support each youth in their chosen religious expression and practice.

Hours & Cost of Services:

ILP Program staff are available on a flexible schedule. Each youth will have access to someone in the program 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for crises or other emergencies. Important contact names and numbers are provided.

Most services that the youth will receive will be paid for by the agency that made the referral to our ILP Program. If the youth or their family is going to need to pay for any services provided, this information will be given to you in writing before admission.

QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS:

All professionals providing treatment services meet the educational and experience requirements set by the Vista Maria Human Resource Department, Wayne County CMO and State of Michigan licensing regulations. All professionals delivering services are expected to show respect and understanding of culture, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation and religious preferences.



VISTA MARIA

POLICY

DISCLOSURE OF ANY POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

All Vista Maria personnel are expected to be alert to and to avoid conflicts of interest that put the persons served at risk or that interfere with services (for example, a worker knew a youth personally prior to placement).

Vista Maria works very hard to reduce conflicts and uncomfortable feelings during your time with us. We strive to develop and maintain open lines of communication and trusting relationships with all clients. If for any reason you feel there is a conflict of interest with one of our staff, please notify your IL Caseworker, or their manager/supervisor. You are encouraged to communicate concerns and suggestions, and doing this will be welcomed, never responded to with any retaliation.

CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY, & HUMAN DIGNITY POLICIES:

Vista Maria shall protect the youth and their family's privacy and confidentiality, and shall protect residents and their families from exploitation or any maltreatment. In the course of treatment and services, issues that are discussed are held in a confidential manner. By this, we mean that the treatment team and supervisors are aware of the information, and this information is not shared beyond the team. Information needed for our research to evaluate programs, and billing is communicated in established and legally approved ways. We also have managers and staff who read records and interview youth and families to make sure we are following all required standards, our policies, and quality services are being provided.

Vista Maria is bound by federal and state laws that govern confidentiality. First, we MUST report, under the Child Protection Law, any suspicion, allegation, or knowledge that a youth is being or has been abused or neglected, or is in danger of being abused or neglected.

Secondly, we are obligated to report, under the Duty to Warn Laws, any specific plan or threat to harm another person. Serious criminal behaviors committed while in the program may also be reported to law enforcement.

During the course of treatment, youth and family members will be encouraged to take necessary steps to take responsibility for past actions. This may include you being supported in communicating this to the proper authorities.





POLICY

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH YOUNG PERSON WHILE PLACED IN CARE:



1. To know your rights and to know how to file a complaint if your rights are being violated.
2. To have your privacy protected. You can expect confidentiality from the adults involved in your case.
3. To be told why you are in placement and future planning.
4. To participate in programs of education, social development, recreation, and religious observance, as fitting.
5. To receive medical, dental, vision and mental health services.
6. To participate and give input into the development of your case plan and to challenge any of the provisions of the case plan during case reviews, court hearings and case planning conferences.
7. To attend court and speak to a referee or judge about what you want to have happen in your case.
8. To have freedom from the following: physical, sexual, and verbal abuse; ill treatment; neglect; retaliation; financial abuse; shame or embarrassment; or other mistreatment or abuse. If a youth believes that such has happened, he/she should report it right away to one of the program workers or supervisor.
9. To send and receive mail to anyone (unless limited by the court or referring worker). If exceptions are necessary, the reason shall be documented in the youth's record and shared with the referring agency and the family, if applicable.
10. To have a plan for your future, including a plan for leaving the foster care system, and to be given services to help you prepare to become a successful adult.
11. To live in a nurturing/caring, safe environment including the right to adequate food, housing, clothing, medical care, a place to keep your things and receive treatment services.
12. To live with caring adults who are properly trained, have received background checks and screening.



POLICY

GRIEVANCE & APPEAL PROCEDURE:

You can be expected to receive services delivered with dignity and respect. At any time you believe Vista Maria staff is not treating you with dignity, respect or meeting your needs, please let us know! We believe the best and quickest way to resolve your concern is by a discussion or conversation. A referring agency, parent or young person always has the option of submitting a formal grievance. You will not be punished or get in trouble for exercising your right to submit a formal grievance. We call this “no retaliation”.

- 1. The concerned person(s) lets the appropriate staff person know of the problem (Caseworker) within 5 working days of its happening.*
- 2. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached or the appropriate staff person cannot be determined, the concerned party presents the problem to the ILP Supervisor or Director within an additional 5 working days.*
- 3. If a satisfactory resolution is still not reached, the concerned party should contact the Vice-President within an additional 5 working days. The Vice-President will reply in writing within 5 working days.*

If you still believe that your complaint has not been answered with a satisfactory response or solution, you can complain outside of Vista Maria. You may contact the Michigan Ombudsman (om-buds-man) Office, an independent state agency established by Public Act 207 of 1994. The Ombudsman investigates citizen complaints, reports findings, and helps find solutions. Contact the Office of Children's Ombudsman at (800) 642-4326 (MICH-FAM) or (517) 373-3077.

The Ombudsman Intake Investigator will need the following information:

- *Your name, address and phone number*
- *Child(ren)'s name and date of birth*
- *Child(ren)'s county of residence*
- *Parents' names and dates of birth*
- *Caseworker's name(s)*
- *Names of other agency officials you have spoken to*
- *Brief description of the problem*
- *Action(s) you are requesting from Office of Children's Ombudsman*

The Ombudsman will determine if their office has the power or right to look into your specific complaint. You will receive an acknowledgment letter from the Ombudsman providing referral information to help you in resolving your problem or a notice that your case will be looked into.

TRUANCY/RUNNING AWAY FROM PLACEMENT/ PROGRAM:

You are considered truant or AWOL when you do not spend the night at your placement and you have not received approval from your ILP Caseworker in advance to spend the night somewhere else. If you are AWOL, you will still be in the program until your case is closed by the referring worker. If you are AWOL because you have been arrested, you need to call your Vista Maria ILP Caseworker and Host Home Provider, as applicable. Being arrested does not necessarily terminate you from the program.

If a youth truants (runs away) from the program, a Vista Maria staff will telephone your parent or legal guardian, if applicable, as well as contact the police and the referring worker. At these times, we are most concerned with the youth's safety and return to the program as soon as possible.



POLICY

WAYS TO SHARE YOUR OPINION REGARDING SERVICES:

You are important to us. Please let us know how we are doing regarding the quality of services you are receiving at any time. We constantly work to improve our programs. We are very interested in your opinion on progress toward your goals. We are also very interested in feedback from referral agencies and parents. At any time, you can request a meeting or conference with the program supervisor. You can respond to our satisfaction surveys and program follow up calls. You can contact others at Vista Maria by using the agency website www.vistamaria.org.

We will also contact you after you leave our programs to ask you to provide feedback on how you are doing and your suggestions for how we can improve services. If you do not want to give feedback when you are contacted for follow-up, let us know when we contact you or notify us ahead of time in writing.



POLICY

CONDITIONS THAT MAY LEAD TO ESCALATION (PLACEMENT IN A MORE RESTRICTIVE PROGRAM):

- *Assaultive behavior toward another person, including another young person, adult or staff member*
- *Attempts to harm self*
- *Theft and/or destruction of property owned by others*
- *Possession of illegal substances*
- *Possession of weapons*
- *Continued refusal to accept help toward treatment goals and/or disrupting the treatment of other clients.*

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT:

The Agency believes that discipline and behavior management are an educational process of establishing and teaching an orderly way of life. It does not include any form of physical discipline, and does not limit a youth from contact or visitation with approved family members/ significant others. Community-based programs such as ILP do NOT use physical restraints or seclusion.

If a youth is experiencing emotional stress, and is thinking about or doing any actions that are seriously disruptive, or could harm anyone, our goal is for us to be able to talk about the situation, and find solutions.

We are also here to provide support and help youth learn and strengthen coping skills.



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POLICY

SMOKING/TOBACCO:

Vista Maria is a tobacco-free campus in order to promote a healthy environment for youth, visitors, and staff. The use of all tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, pipes and chewing tobacco) are not allowed on the property of Vista Maria. If you are a current smoker and wish to quit, we will assist you in finding resources. Youth aged 18 and over may smoke in the designated area outside the Vista Maria campus and outside of the Host Home.

ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED:

This includes “street drugs” or prescription medications not prescribed to the person who possesses them. The production, distribution, selling, supplying, possession, and/or use of a controlled substance are unlawful and not allowed under any circumstances. All persons on Vista Maria property or doing business with Vista Maria are expected to be sober and not under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, other than medicines prescribed by a licensed medical professional and taken following prescribed instructions. Visitors for young people considered being under the influence of alcohol or any other illicit drug may be asked to leave the facility or the grounds. An Incident Report will be completed for all such incidents and will be shared with the referring worker and family. This may be shared with law enforcement, as applicable.

WEAPONS, OTHER DANGEROUS AND/OR ILLEGAL BEHAVIORS:

Vista Maria prohibits the possession of a firearm or any other object to be used as a weapon by young people receiving Vista Maria services. Youth who wish to hunt must obtain specific permission to participate in hunting activities from their Vista Maria workers before participation.

It is expected that young people will follow the laws of their community, and not associate with dangerous persons or people involved in illegal behaviors. If you as a young person have a situation like this, immediately talk to your worker so they can help you find a solution to the problem.

Violations of these standards can lead to any of the following:

- 1. A Behavioral Contract agreed upon and signed by the IL Caseworker and the youth, describing the violation(s) of the program expectations and a specific plan to correct behaviors so that the expectation is followed.*
- 2. Report of the incident to the young person's family, referring worker, and/or police.*
- 3. A case conference with the referring worker for the purpose of identifying a more appropriate treatment facility and termination from the program.*

CURFEW HOURS:

Monday-Thursday

Based on Employment, 8 pm or 10 pm

Friday & Saturday

Based on Employment, 9 pm or 10 pm

BULLYING:

Please note that this is a Bully Free environment and will not be tolerated. If there are any issues between tenants or between tenants and staff that cannot be resolved respectfully between each other then please inform staff to conduct a mediation session with you and your fellow peer to resolve it.

WORKSHOPS, GROUPS, & LIFE SKILLS:

Life Skill sessions are held with the youth and their caseworker. Host Home Providers are expected to assist youth with basic living skills such as cooking and cleaning. Program workshops, groups, and life skills activities are required. If you are employed, your caseworker will be flexible and provide life skill activities around your work schedule.



POLICY

MAIL:

All youth within the program are able to send and receive mail. Vista Maria/Host Home Provider will not get in the way of this personal right, or read a youth's mail. If the Host Home Provider suspects something suspicious, the ILP Caseworker should be notified. The caseworker will be present when said mail is opened.

This exception will be explained to the youth, the referring worker, and family, as applicable, and documented in the youth's file. A letter or package may be opened in front of an ILP Program staff if there is a suspicion of contraband.

PHONE CALLS:

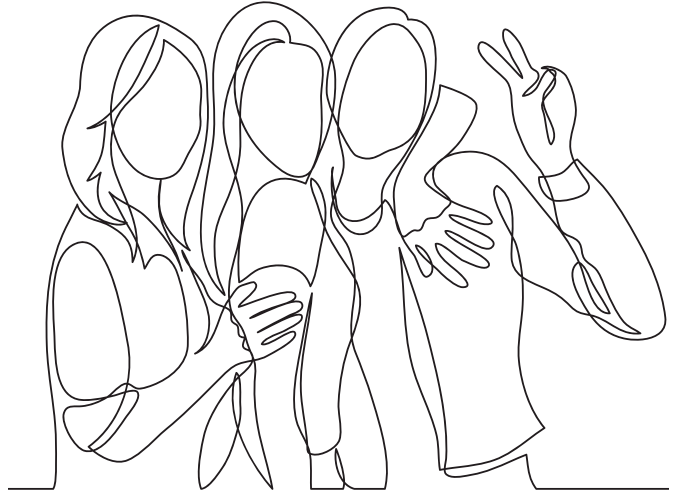
Telephone use to speak with the family or significant others will not be prevented unless there are specific rules or exceptions by the Court, DHHS/CMO, or documented in the Treatment Plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Residents/Tenants are not allowed to share any other resident/tenant or staff's information or personal messages or to record audio/video of any other resident/tenant or staff. Residents/Tenants are not allowed to video call (FaceTime, Google Hangouts, etc.) a resident or staff when talking with an off-campus individual. All forms of electronic communication (social networking, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking sites, etc.) involving a resident/tenant are not allowed.

VEHICLE OWNERSHIP:

Licensed drivers, with permission of their referring and Vista Maria workers, may purchase and maintain vehicles. All vehicles must be properly registered, have license plates and be insured. Vista Maria employees will not co-sign a loan.



REPORTING

INDIVIDUAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT:

There will be reports written by an ILP Caseworker regarding each youth in care. We cannot write these reports without gathering enough information. The ILP Caseworker will gather information by speaking with and involving people such as the youth; referring worker; family, if applicable; the significant people you have had contact with; and reviewing information that has been written by other professionals. Each youth's strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences shall be assessed and identified.

The reports will be an Assessment, Service Plans and a Discharge Reports. The youth and his or her parent/guardians (if applicable) will have input into, read, sign and receive copies of all treatment plans.

The Assessment will be used to help you, your family and others, as applicable, and the ILP Caseworker to work together to develop a Treatment/Service Plan that identifies goals and action steps. This is to work toward you reaching those goals and no longer needing the services of Vista Maria.

The ILP Caseworker will assist you in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services and aftercare when necessary. We will work with you to coordinate care with other professionals. The Treatment/Service Plan shall be updated, based upon progress toward goals every 90 days.

While participating in services, you may have scheduled court hearings. These will be times that updates are given to your Referee/Judge regarding the progress of you and your family, as applicable. You will be informed of the court date and be expected to attend with someone from the ILP program.

At the end of services, the ILP Caseworker will complete one or more Discharge Reports. This includes the reason for discharge, summary of your treatment and progress at discharge, and instructions given to you about any necessary follow up, aftercare and/or community resources.

While participating in services, you may have scheduled court hearings. These will be times that updates are given to your Referee/Judge regarding the progress of you and your family, as applicable. You will be informed of the court date and expected to attend with someone from the program.

At the end of services, the IL Caseworker will complete a report called a Discharge Summary (Action Summary). This includes the reason for discharge, summary of your treatment and progress at discharge, and instructions given to you about aftercare and/or community resources.

PROGRAM TRANSITION & AFTERCARE:

Program completion typically occurs when youth and/or family has completed most or all of the goals developed in the Treatment Plan. There are times when it is determined that this program is not the proper match for the needs of the youth and leaving the program happens earlier than planned. You will be informed of treatment recommendations to meet your needs, as well as information about your progress and other services.

FOR YOUR SAFETY:

If you are in the office/facility with an ILP Caseworker during an emergency, for your safety and the safety of others, please follow the Vista Maria worker's instructions.

While in your Host Home placement, a responsible adult (Staff, Host Home Provider, Caseworker, etc.) will familiarize you with what to do and where to go during an emergency or evacuation of the house or apartment.

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE:

We want you to be successful in reaching your goals. Vista Maria tracks how successful you are in reaching your goals and how successful we are in helping you do this. You may be asked to complete a survey. This survey helps our agency to improve our work with those for whom we are here to serve.

FOLLOW UP SURVEYS:

After you leave our services, we may contact you to ask how you are doing, and ask about satisfaction with the service we provided. If you do not want to answer these questions, let the person who contacts you know that. If you are interested in seeing a copy of our evaluation results, it will be provided to you.



VISTA MARIA GRIEVANCE FORM

I, _____ believe my rights have been violated
(Name)
and I want to share my concern.

What happened? (Please try to be as specific and detailed as possible).

When did it happen? (Date and Time).

Who else witnessed what happened? (First and last name).

Please describe what you want to see happen to correct this situation:

Grievance formed received by _____ Grievance formed received on _____
Date

Outcome of grievance: _____ resolved satisfactorily
_____ young person and/or parent reports that grievance was not resolved satisfactorily