

**Portage Place Youth and Shelter Home**  
**4513 7<sup>th</sup> Ave North, Great Falls, Montana 59404**  
**(406) 761-2135**

## **YOUTH HANDOUT**

The Portage Place Youth and Shelter Home (PPYSH) is a community-based facility for youth in need of care and / or intervention. It is an alternative placement method to a more restrictive residential treatment program.

The home is designed to help youth learn new behavior patterns that will enable them to function in a society that demands accountability for their choices.

Upon entry into the Portage Place Youth and Shelter Home, youth will be given this handbook of general responsibilities. These responsibilities help youth incorporate a sense of right versus wrong into their daily living experiences. Youth will also go through an intake / orientation session which will include: the completion of paperwork, inventory of all personal items, securing of all valuable items, a walkthrough of the youth home, and an introduction to other youth and staff.

During the first 48 hours of each youth's stay, they will be placed on intake restriction. Privileges including checkouts and phone calls are permitted to caseworkers and parents only, supervised interaction with other residents, no recreational activities unless supervised by staff and you will be limited to the upstairs area of the home. This enables youth the opportunity to adapt to the youth home rules, staff and other residents.

It is the desire of the youth home to make each youth's stay rewarding and productive. Staff will work with youth to help them acquire the goals of their individualized case plan. Achieving these goals and working through the seven-level program will enable you to return to their family or to a less restrictive environment.

### **I. Major and Daily Living Rules**

#### **Major Rules:**

1. No drugs/drug paraphernalia, alcohol or tobacco possession or use. Youth who are caught with tobacco, drug, or paraphernalia (pipes, match, lighters, etc.) on youth home property will immediately lose their level. Youth may also be cited by the Great Falls Police depending on the seriousness of the offense. Youth who have positive UA" s will have two weeks of TR (total restriction) TR will be reduced to 1 week if youth admits that the UA will be dirty prior to receiving the results. Habitual offenses will result in more severe consequences.

2. NO leaving the home without staff permission.
3. NO physical or sexual contact between residents.
4. No threats, violence or any behavior intended to bully, intimidate or scare another resident or staff.
5. No damage to the home or any property of the home. You will pay for any damage you caused.

### **Daily Living Rules:**

1. You must ask permission for any and all daily activities: entering and leaving rooms, getting food and drinks, using the restroom, etc.
2. NO swearing
3. Clothing cannot show nor have words about sex, violence, drugs/alcohol or gangs.
4. Any visitors to the home or with whom you are going on outings must be approved of before you go by your PO / placement worker and staff.
5. The area behind the staff desk is off limits
6. You are to walk, take a city bus, or school bus to get to where you need to go. **You may ride your bike to school and appointments if you are on level four (4). You must wear a helmet when riding your bike.**
7. You may keep \$5.00 on your person for spending. Any additional money must be checked in and out from staff. Staff must approve all purchases over \$5.00, and you are required to bring a receipt for all purchases.
8. No food or drink is allowed beyond the kitchen / dining area.
9. You must make your bed and pick up your room every morning before you leave for school or any other activity.
10. Daily showers are required and are limited to ten (10) minutes.
11. You must eat meals that are prepared, unless we have medical documentation that you cannot eat a particular item. If you refuse the prepared meal, you will not get the next snack. If you are hungry later, staff will offer you leftovers from the meals you refused. If there are no leftovers staff will offer you a reasonable alternative. If you waste food that is served in the home, you will be fined and staff will dish your plate in the future.

12. You will arise in the morning when called. If you refuse, without good reason, you will follow sick rules. Sick rules mean staying in your room all day and evening and having soup for meals.
13. You must have staff permission to have personal items in the home and all items must be inventoried. Youth's personal game systems are permitted only if a youth has earned Step 5 or better. All personal game systems are to be used on the downstairs televisions only.
14. Bedtime during the week is 10:00 pm and 10:00 pm during the weekends. Wake up is 6:00 am during the week and 10:00am on the weekends.
15. You are not allowed to answer the telephone. You must earn the privilege to call persons other than you PO, placing worker, or parents. Phone calls are limited to ten (10) minutes. You are allowed one ten (10) minute long distance phone call to an approved party per week. Phone privileges are not allowed until all other obligations are completed (chore, bedroom, homework, etc.) you are not permitted to have a cell phone in the youth home while you are a resident.
16. All activities, including but not limited to: group outing, checkouts, basketball, skate boarding, and video games are privileges that must be earned not rights.
17. Checkout privileges must be earned. Outing requests must be submitted to staff twenty-four (24) hours in advance of requested outing. You may only check out with persons approved by your PO/ placing worker and staff. You must complete the checkout sheet prior to checking out. The individual you check out with must have a valid driver's license and insurance. You may not check out until all other obligations are completed.
18. Youth are required to complete a daily chore, a weekend chore, and clean their bedroom thoroughly once per week. Youth receive between 10 cents and 50 cents for daily chores, \$1 for their weekend chore, and 80 cents for cleaning their bedrooms. If youth are asked to re-do any part of their chore, they will receive half the pay for that chore., if they have to go back a second time, they will receive no pay for the chore. Chore allowances are disbursed weekly and subject to 50% withhold for restitution obligations.
19. Youth are encouraged to seek employment in summer months, and many are permitted to work during the school year as their case plan permit. Youth will be required to allocate 70% of each paycheck towards fulfilling restitution, court obligations or house fines. Fifty percent of the remaining balance will be deposited in an external or internal savings account.

20. Visitors to the home, other than immediate family members, are prohibited. Any exception to this rule requires the prior approval of the Program Manager or his/her designee.
  21. You may not pierce/ re-pierce or tattoo any part of your body in any fashion while you are a resident in the youth home.
  22. Youth may not leave their school's campus for lunch or any other time unless they have prior approval from staff.
  23. Youth may not trade/ borrow / purchase personal items from one another. If staff discover any items have been traded/borrowed or purchased from another resident, the item will be confiscated and given back to the original owner (youth who has the item listed on their inventory sheet) at the time of their discharge from placement.
  24. Youth may not possess handled items that are capable of Wi-Fi connections, i.e. I-pod touch, I-pad, portable video games, or cell phones.
  25. Youth are NOT allowed to sit on the couches together if they are of opposite gender.
- These rules are not meant to be all inclusive. Any deviation from the rules must be approved of in advance by the Group Home Coordinator or his/ her designee.

## **II. BEHAVIORAL STEP SYSTEM**

The MRYSH behavioral system is a seven-step performance trust/point-based program. Youth enter the home on restriction and step down to numbered levels as they demonstrate an ability to follow the house rules and policies, maintain appropriate interactions with other residents and the staff, meet their individual case plan goals, demonstrate an ability to accept responsibility for their actions, and actively participate in the individual and group behavioral and life skills sessions.

### **RESTRICTION**

- Phone contact with approved family and caseworker
- Upstairs television
- Outside recreation with staff supervision
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **80** to maintain these privileges
- You must maintain this step for 2 weeks before you may apply for step 6.
- Youth may not participate in personal or youth home outings.
- Youth will earn an allowance, but are not permitted to spend the allowance on restriction.

## STEP 6

- Phone contact with approved family and caseworker
- Upstairs television
- Outside recreation with staff supervision
- One 2-hour weekday night outing with family
- You may participate in the youth home recreational outing(s)
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **85** to maintain these privileges
- You must maintain this step for 2 weeks before you may apply for step 5.

## STEP 5

- Phone contact with approved family, caseworker, and approved friends
- Upstairs television
- Outside reaction without staff supervision
- Two 2-hour weekday night outings with family
- One 3-hour weekend night outing with family
- Downstairs privileges
- You may participate in the youth home recreational outing(s)
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **90** to maintain these privileges.
- You must maintain this step for 4 weeks before you may apply for step 4

## STEP 4

- Phone contact with approved family, caseworker, and approved friends
- Upstairs television
- Outside reaction without staff supervision
- Two 2 ½-hour weekday night outings with family
- One 3 ½-hour weekend night outing with family
- One 5 ½-hour weekend afternoon outing with family
- Downstairs privileges
- You may participate in the youth home recreational outing(s)
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **93** to maintain these privileges
- You must maintain this step for 4 weeks before you may apply for step 3
- **Personal bike may be used as transportation to and from appointments and to and from school. A helmet must be worn at all times.**

## STEP 3

- Phone contact with approved family, caseworker, and approved friends
- Upstairs television
- Outside reaction without staff supervision
- Two 2 ½-hour weekday night outings with family
- One 4-hour weekend night outing with family
- One 5 ½-hour weekend afternoon outing with family

- One overnight visit with family per month subject to caseworker and staff approval
- Youth may now take outings by themselves subject to caseworker and staff approval (mall, movies, park, etc.)
- Downstairs privileges
- You may participate in the youth home recreational outing(s)
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **95** to maintain these privileges
- You must maintain this step for 4 weeks before you may apply for step 2
- **Personal bike may be used as transportation to and from appointments and to and from school. A helmet must be worn at all times.**

## STEP 2

- Phone contact with approved family, caseworker, and approved friends
- Upstairs television
- Outside reaction without staff supervision
- Two 2 ½-hour weekday night outings with family
- One 4-hours weekend night outing with family
- One 5 ½-hour weekend afternoon outing with family
- One full weekend visit with family per month subject to caseworker and staff approval (Friday 5 pm through Sunday 4 pm)
- Youth may now take outings by themselves subject to caseworker and staff approval (mall, movies, park, etc.)
- Outings may now be taken with approved friends. You may not ride in a vehicle of a friend under 18.
- Downstairs privileges
- You may participate in the youth home recreational outing(s)
- You no longer need to request permission for daily household activities, but must inform staff
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **97** to maintain these privileges
- You must maintain this step for 4 weeks before you may apply for step 1.
- **Personal bike may be used as transportation to and from appointments and to and from school. A helmet must be worn at all times.**

## STEP 1

- Phone contact with approved family, caseworker, and approved friends
- Upstairs television
- Outside reaction without staff supervision
- Two 2 ½-hour weekday night outings with family
- Two 4-hours weekend night outing with family
- One 5 ½-hour weekend afternoon outing with family
- One full weekend visit with family per month subject to caseworker and staff approval (Friday 5 pm through Sunday 4 pm)

- Youth may now take outings by themselves subject to caseworker and staff approval (mall, movies, park, etc.)
- One overnight visit with a friend per month, with adult chaperone, subject to caseworker and staff approval
- Outings may now be taken with approved friends. You may not ride in a vehicle of a friend under 18.
- Downstairs privileges
- You may participate in the youth home recreational outing(s)
- You no longer need to request permission for daily household activities, but must inform staff
- You must maintain the minimum percentage of **99** to maintain these privileges
- **Personal bike may be used as transportation to and from appointments and to and from school. A helmet must be worn at all times.**

### **Requirement for applying for a step are as follows:**

1. No **TR**, **GR**, or **SS** for one complete week prior to step application
2. Youth knows the house rules
3. You are familiar with your case plans and working to complete them
4. You have completed the step request form in a complete and thoughtful manner
5. Your attitude in the home is positive and not undermining of the program of staff or peers.
6. Weekly point averages.
7. No F's on most recent progress report

### **Checkouts**

- No checkouts unless approved by caseworker and staff. All Missouri River Youth and Shelter Home obligations must be complete before youth leaves on checkout. Checkout times are firm, and any exceptions must be made by program manager.

### **Phone Calls ~ Limited to 10 minutes**

All phone contacts must be approved by youth home staff and youth's caseworker. All MRYSH obligations must be complete before phone calls can be made or received. Phone calls, other than friends will only be monitored upon the placing worker's request. Staff may terminate any phone call that is inappropriate in nature. Youth may make one 10 – minute long distance telephone call per week. Youth may purchase phone cards to make additional phone calls.

### **Visiting**

All visitors to the youth home must be approved by youth home staff and youth's caseworker. All MRYSH obligations must be completed before youth will be allowed to visit. Visits are generally limited to immediate family of youth; any exception will be made by the program manger or his/her designee. Visits must be set up in advance to prevent schedule conflicts.

## **Point Earning Guidelines**

Youth have the opportunity to earn positive points in specific areas each day on each staff's shift. The youth are praised and positively reinforced on an intermittent basis when they earn points in these areas. The points are totaled on each shift, and the youth gets daily point percentage. This percentage enables youth to apply for steps, earn extra privileges and recognize areas in which they excel or may need additional focus or redirection. Many of the positive points correlate directly with youth home rules outlined above.

## **Point earning categories**

- Daily room maintenance: bed made, floor cleaned, personal items orderly
- Arising and retiring to bed at specified times
- Completing daily and weekend chore promptly and thoroughly
- Completing shower as requested
- Interacting with staff in appropriate and respectful manner
- Asking permission for all activities
- Appropriate behavior in school, attendance in all classes
- Showing respect for peers in the home
- Using socially acceptable language
- Owning all actions and attitudes
- Setting a positive example with actions and attitude
- Appropriate behavior during youth home and personal outings
- Working to attain individualized case plan goals
- Appropriate manners
- Time accountability

## **Consequences / Restrictions**

Below are the commonly used restrictions and consequences in the day to day operation of the home.

### **TOTAL RESTRICTION (TR)**

- Loss of all checkout privileges (both youth home and family)
- Loss of phone privileges except to caseworker and parents to inform them of the restriction
- Loss of all outside privileges (basketball, etc.)
- No downstairs privileges unless showering or sleeping
- Restricted contact with other youth
- No recreational activities (video games, etc.)
- Only upstairs television privileges



- Must shadow staff

### **How youth can earn a week of TR**

- Breaking the law, and /or being ticketed for an offense
- Leaving the property without staff permission (RUN)
- Habitual and assaultive physical contact
- Habitual verbal intimidation of threats to peers
- OSS
- **Positive UA = 2 weeks of TR. If youth admits the UA will be positive prior to receiving the results TR will be reduced to 1 week.**

### **How to lose a step in the youth home**

- An arrest or ticket for criminal offense
- Run from the home
- Not maintaining the correct point average
- **Smoking in the home or being caught with drug/cigarettes or any related paraphernalia.**

\*\* These offences may also result in your termination of the placement in the youth home\*\*

### **Step Suspension (SS)**

- Loss of step privileges for the period of time youth is on step suspension
- Youth are placed on step suspension if they do not maintain the minimum daily percentage that is required for the level, they are on in the home.
- Youth who have step suspension three times in one week will lose their step, and must wait until the following week to reapply.
- Youth who have step suspension two days in a row will automatically lose their level.

### **General Restrictions (GR)**

- Loss of all youth home checkouts and checkouts according to level you are in the youth home.

Other natural consequences will be used in other instances. These consequences will vary on a case by case basis, and will be more severe for habitual offenses. These consequences include, but are not limited to: off contact for periods of time (off-contact "OC" is the removal of youth from peers, youth may be sent to his room or may be asked to stay in a specific area as requested by staff), early bedtime, loss of an outing or checkout privileges, loss of personal items, loss of outdoor privileges, loss of television, writing apology letters to other youth, staff or

parents, etc. These restrictions and consequence will be used at staff's discretion and in a case by case basis.

## **School Rules and Consequences**

All youth attending school will work productively in tutor time afterschool for a minimum of one hour. They will be expected to attend school all day unless excused by youth home staff. All school related infractions will directly relate to consequences and loss of privileges in the youth home.

### **CONSEQUENCES FOR SCHOOL INFRACTIONS:**

- **Detention:** loss of TV privileges for the evening and no checkout that evening
- **ISS:** general restrictions for the period of ISS and step suspension for the period of ISS, and one week of extra chores without pay.
- **OSS:** one week of Total restrictions and extra chores without pay. Youth will work on schoolwork during school hours and complete extra chores at staff's request.
- **PAR:** consequences will vary depending on severity and habitual nature of offense.
- **Truancy:** Youth will lose outings according to their level, to be determined by Program Manager in consultation with direct care staff.
- **"F's":** on tutor report or report card: youth will spend 2 hours in tutor time and will not be allowed to apply for their next level until the F is up.
- **Homework not turned in/ Missing work:** youth will spend 2 hours in tutor time daily until missing homework is complete.,