

The Living and Learning Community At

RIGHT WAY ACADEMY

Behavior change at Right Way Academy occurs as a result of the students' complete immersion in our peer driven, adult supervised, living and learning community environment. The peer community at RWA is a 24-7 living and learning laboratory that emphasizes character development, accountability, pro-social skill development, spirituality, and service to others. At Right Way, the peer community is holistically integrated in all aspects of the students' life i.e. –school, work, recreation, family, social, and spiritual. The community, consisting of students, faculty and staff, is the primary agent of change. In contrast to other schools which may emphasize professionally structured clinical services as the primary method for creating behavior change, at Right Way the peer centered community, through its structure, hierarchy, rules and tools, functions as the vehicle to shape a students behavior and develop their character and identity. Where appropriate and needed, professional clinical services are outsourced to local providers whose philosophical approach is compatible with our therapeutic community principals and methods.

The Learning Community approach at Right Way Academy utilizes **Accountability Training®**, a proven national therapeutic change model developed by Dr. Steve Valle, one of Right Way's original founders. Accountability Training® represents an integration of theory and practice in treating addiction and other behavioral health problems. Accountability Training has developed over the last two and one half decades in which Right Way professionals have been providing addiction and behavioral health and educational services. Accountability Training® has been successfully applied in a variety of educational and therapeutic settings including classrooms, hospital based programs, partial hospitalization, free standing residential facilities, out-patient behavioral health clinics, and in prisons, jails, and community corrections settings.

Right Way Academy's learning community model represents an integration of the core elements of the traditional modified therapeutic community model (TC) described in the behavioral health literature. This includes Twelve Step self help philosophy and principles, the bio-psycho-social-spiritual emphasis of chemical dependency programs, cognitive/behavioral change strategies and the principles of Accountability Training®. The basis for Right Way Academy's model is founded upon the fundamental understanding that recovery from addiction and other dysfunctional behavioral problems is highly attainable when effective intervention and opportunities are accessed, and that it involves change - change in one's relationship to the substance/behavior that has taken control of one's life, and change in one's entire lifestyle as well. Our educational and behavior change programs represent the methodologies by which the attitudes, behaviors, and skills necessary to make such lifestyle changes are taught, become mastered, and are internalized over time.

Right Way Academy's Integrated Living and Learning Community Model

Right Way Academy's community approach recognizes that alcohol use and abuse, drug use and abuse, addiction, and related behavioral problems, often presents itself along a continuum, with many phases and stages. Meaningful interventions therefore must be matched to the needs of the student and family consistent with the presenting health and behavior symptoms exhibited. The peer therapeutic) community approach is one of the most effective behavior change methodologies to address the complexities of these behavioral health issues in young people and their families. Right Way recognizes that for students and family members suffering from moderate, or severe addiction problems, lasting recovery involves participation in an intensive

multi-dimensional intervention and re-socialization process that lasts for a considerable period of time. This change process can begin at Right Way, but for the best results to be achieved, students need to be invested in a structured and reinforcing life changing process that is up to two years in length, with continuing care and support maintained in their home and community environment. Therefore, Right Way staff will, on an individual basis, work with the student and family to structure a meaningful continuum of care plan that allows for the change and recovery process to be continued in the environment that the student returns to. For this continuum of care process to be successful, a commitment from the student and the family will be required. In most cases, this will involve an additional cost to ensure that the continuity of care needed is actually provided.

Description of the Essential Elements of Right Way Academy's Peer Community Model

The Right Way Academy living and learning community program is a peer-oriented, but staff monitored, hierarchical structure where students are expected to play an active role in changing their behavior and in learning the skills of accountability, personal and social responsibility, and self efficacy. Students are held accountable for their own success and that of other community members. The peer community is organized into levels of status that correspond to phases of the program. On the basis of their behavioral performance, students are promoted to higher levels or demoted to lower ones. Responsibilities, privileges, and expectations vary by status level. There is no fixed period of time spent at each status level as students change status when the community (students and staff) agree that they are ready. Work, conduct, and progress within the community serve as the central mechanisms in the establishment and maintenance of a status hierarchy. This allows any member starting at the bottom of the work hierarchy doing menial tasks to rise to a senior position of responsibility.

In an effort to provide a more consistent and accepted definition of the Therapeutic Community modality and the codification of the approach and services it provides, the Center for Therapeutic Community Research recently published a paper on the Essential Elements of Therapeutic Community for Drug Abuse (Melnick, DeLeon, Zingaro; 1993). Because this organization of essential Therapeutic Community elements represents the most comprehensive approach to date to codify the services inherent in a therapeutic community program, Right Way Academy's Living and Learning Community will be described in terms of these essential elements.

Element I. Perspective

A Therapeutic Community can be distinguished from other programs by the overall perspective it shares on the relevant dimensions of its view of the addictive disorders, its view of the addict, its view of recovery and its view of right living.

View of the Addictive Disorders

Right Way Academy views substance abuse and addictive disorders as both illnesses and lifestyle disorders that occur along a continuum, and which affect the whole person - physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social. Addressing the substance of choice, or behavior, is essential, but is only the first step in the recovery process. Thus, Right Way Academy believes that abstinence is an essential first step to build a base from which to address the entire range of attitudes, cognitions, feelings, and behaviors that need to be changed in order to master an alcohol and drug free lifestyle of personal mastery. This applies to other emotional and behavioral addictive processes as well that may be controlling or negatively impacting the student's life

View of the Addicted Person

Right Way Academy views the student with a substance abuse problem or addiction as a person who's addictive or problem behaviors has resulted in him/her living a life far below their potential. This may be characterized by poor decision making, limited impulse control, impaired emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning, underachievement, and a diminished sense of worth and values. Right Way Academy views the substance abuser or person with an addiction

related problem as fully capable of change in all of these areas if involved in a structured and continuous educational and therapeutic program of recovery. Involvement in such a recovery process teaches the skills and values of community living and personal accountability. The psychological and behavioral disorders experienced by the student with an alcohol/drug or related problem are often the result of being trapped in an addictive and/or negative lifestyle. Once the primary addiction is stabilized, many of the emotional and negative behavior previously seen, become diminished. The therapeutic community, in such instances, becomes the primary source for changing these other emotional and behavioral problems as well. We recognize that some students will still have persistent and continuing emotional and behavioral issues even when recovery is established. In such instances, involvement with the appropriate professional resource can be facilitated by Right Way staff.

View of Recovery

Right Way Academy considers abstinence from all psychoactive drugs not prescribed and supervised by a physician as a prerequisite for sustained recovery and meaningful behavioral change. Recovery involves rehabilitation for some with addiction problems, but for most substance abusers, recovery involves habilitation. This is often a result of the impaired lifestyle and peer environment that precluded many from initially learning and mastering the basic life management skills necessary for effective social living. This often applies to young people irrespective of the economic position or social standing of the family. Recovery involves changing of one's lifestyle, including one's conduct, thinking, attitudes, belief systems, and values. Recovery from addiction and related behavioral health problems is a life-long process that involves continual involvement in supportive networks and fellowships of people and groups that reinforce recovery and pro social living.

View of Right Living

In Right Way Academy's peer community model, one of the outcomes of participation in the program is a change in how one views and lives their life in relation to themselves, God, family, friends, and their community. Groups and activities are structured to facilitate spiritual growth and to assist students in developing their character and their spirituality.

One of the goals of Right Way Academy's behavior change programs is to let go of a victim mentality and adopt an accountability framework whereby one learns to evaluate their behavior first in terms of its impact on others, and secondly, in terms of its impact upon oneself. At Right Way Academy, emphasis is on putting "we" before "me" and learning that the greater good of the group takes precedent over the needs and wants of the individual.

Right Way Academy stresses positive social values, such as the work ethic, social productivity, accountability, spirituality, and community responsibility. "Right Living" attributes are taught that reflect personal values such as honesty, interdependence, resiliency, responsibility to self and others, respect for authority, accountability, common courtesy, thoughtfulness, kindness, and politeness. In contrast to the self-centeredness and narcissistic view of the world characteristic of an addictive lifestyle, the Right Way Academy teaches students that successful recovery involves thinking of others, practicing pro-social values, and placing the community before the individual.