Baldwin County
Girls’ Residential Wilderness Program
Handbook

General Guidelines and Procedures
August 2008

P.O Box 219
Bay Minette, AL 36507
235750 Ewing Farm Road
Atmore, AL 36502
Girls’ Residential Wilderness Program

INTRODUCTION

Purpose – Collaborative residential facility among Baldwin County Commission, Department of Youth Services and Baldwin County Schools. A therapeutic wilderness program for behavioral change which will provide a structured system of levels based on life in the real world. This program teaches skills that help students successfully transition back to the base schools.

- Program located in Lottie, AL
- Girls adjudicated from juvenile court system
- One full time teacher, one part time special education teacher and one paraprofessional
- Students in grades 8-12
- Instruction is computer-assisted and/or textbooks.
- Return to base school or home upon successful completion of the sixteen week program.

The Baldwin County Girls’ Residential Wilderness Program, referred to as Camp Horizon, is a program based largely on the philosophy of wilderness therapy. The emphasis of this program and other therapeutic wilderness programs is behavioral change through well established techniques. Wilderness camps, such as Camp Horizon, specialize in teaching troubled youth cooperation, self-reliance, and responsibility for personal behavior. Residents of the program learn how to work within a group and respond to positive peer pressure from other residents in the group who have already experienced the first few levels or phases of the process. Through the use of introspective group discussions, the building of primitive skills, and outdoors adventure, residents begin to understand and demonstrate the skills and behaviors that are necessary to lead productive lives in society through metaphor.

Residents quickly learn how cooperation, responsibility for behaviors, and a strong work ethic can create a positive group environment where they can develop self-esteem and obtain greater self-knowledge. By removing a delinquent youth from the home environment and the influences of modern culture, such as parties, boyfriends, and negative peer pressure, the teen can explore the motives, behaviors and attitudes that have been self-defeating. Teenagers with behavioral and emotional problems begin to explore their relationships with others and their issues with authority, peers, and family members. Positive peer pressure replaces negative peer pressure. The group encourages defiant
individual teens to participate in the necessary activities for an outdoor wilderness experience.

Camp Horizon has developed a structured system of levels that operate as metaphors for life in the real world. These metaphors relate to time-honored systems of initiation for young people. For example, a resident might progress from the Sunrise Cottage to the Sunset Cottage in preparation for reintegration into her home environment. Such rites of initiation have all but disappeared, or have been replaced by dangerous, self-imposed initiation such as drug and alcohol experimentation, sexual promiscuity, and dangerous thrill-seeking activities in today’s society. The staff at Camp Horizon is continually seeking to reinstate these lost traditions in the daily activities and progression of the residents.

By providing a safe, yet dramatic environment within which to effect positive behavioral changes, the wilderness experience accelerates the therapeutic process and gives residents a powerful foundation on which to build a more positive, productive life.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE WILDERNESS PROGRAM**

1. Provide a secure, positive learning environment for all girls in the program.
2. Provide an alternative educational opportunity for girls who have been removed from their base schools.
3. Provide a structured environment that encourages positive behavior.
4. Provide girls the opportunity to return to their base school upon successful completion of the sixteen week program.

**PLACEMENT**

Girls are placed at the Wilderness Program through adjudication by the juvenile judge.

**Base School Responsibilities**

_____ 1. Upon request, send all documentation to the attention of the teacher at the Wilderness Center.

_____ 2. Upon receipt of grades and attendance, promptly record information. Send grade report to the individual teacher for each content area for the base teacher to average in the grades from the Wilderness Center according to the county procedure for off site grades.

_____ 3. Counselors should work with Wilderness Center teacher during any testing times such as ARMT or AHSGE to keep her informed of any student who needs testing.
Parent Responsibilities

1. Attend the placement meeting at the Wilderness Center.
2. Clear books and pay fees at base school.

Teacher Responsibilities

1. Compile information from base school.
2. Ensure that student is scheduled into appropriate courses.
3. Notify the base school of the impending return of the student approximately ten days before the student exits Wilderness Program.
4. Send weekly attendance reports to the base school. (See Appendix)
5. Ensure that the grade report is sent to the base school. (See Appendix)
6. Provide instruction through computer-assisted software of core content according to each girls’ schedule from the base school.

LENGTH OF ASSIGNMENT

1. Assignment to the Wilderness Program shall be a minimum of 16 weeks.
2. Dismissal from the program:
   (a) Girls will be dismissed upon successful demonstration of appropriate behavior, as indicated by completion of the point level system.
   (b) Girls may be removed from the program by the juvenile judge and placed in other facilities if the program does not seem to be working for the girls.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

1. Instructional materials, including textbooks and software, will be provided for each student and will be the responsibility of the Wilderness Program teacher for inventory and student assignment purposes.
2. Equipment necessary to provide a free and appropriate education will be available to all students.
3. Basic library resources such as encyclopedias, thesauruses, and dictionaries will be provided.
4. Sixteen computer workstations, two printers, a server and two teacher works stations will be provided in a lab setting.
DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

1. The principal/designee will be responsible for handling discipline.
2. The following sequence will be used:
   a) Classroom intervention.
   b) Principal/student/counselor/teacher conference or office referral.
   c) Point level system progression penalized.
   d) Isolation from general class population with work assignments in addition to regular classroom obligations.
   e) Removal from program.

EXIT CRITERIA

Students are promoted through the Point Level System. They remain in the Wilderness Program for a minimum of 16 weeks.

AFTERCARE

Upon completion of the Wilderness Program, it is required that the parent/guardian and student schedule an appointment with the base school personnel for re-entry. Follow-up counseling is deemed an integral part of a student’s re-entry. Currently, Mr. Sam Jenkins, works with the girls to follow-up at their base school by contacting counselors and parents about grades, attendance, etc.