



VIRGINIA
HOME FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

YOUR
handbook



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hello! :) 

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glad you are here.



Your handbook contains a lot of information which will help you live here comfortably. There is also information about rules that are important and will ensure that you stay healthy and safe.

We understand that VHBG is not your permanent home. But we are going to support your success and help you transition to the best possible home for you in the future.

While you might already know some of the things we want to teach you, there's always more to learn. Don't worry, it's not like being in school. Staff who work in each group home will be teaching you things that will

help you be successful in your future. We also want to make sure you have fun too. As we get to know you, we will be able to plan activities on and off campus that you enjoy. You may also have new experiences you didn't even know were fun before coming here.

I know we don't know each other very well yet. But we will work hard to prove we care about you and to earn your trust. All you need to do is give us a chance.

Sincerely,

Matthew Goldenson
Group Home Director

Life at

This is an example of what a daily schedule could look like.

6:30 - 7:00 AM	Wake up, check-in
7:00 - 7:45 AM	Medication, breakfast, chores, room checks, hygiene
7:45 - 8:40 AM	Youth to school (continue morning routine if later start time)
3:00 - 4:30 PM	Arrive home from school, talk about day, snack, begin study hour
BY 5:30 PM	Study hour complete; dinner prep begins
6:00 PM	Dinner
BY 7:00 PM	Evening chores complete
6:30 - 8:00 PM	Family conference, recreation, independent living class, planning outings to library, gym, etc.
8:00 PM	Medication, snack, total up time
8:00 - 9:00 PM	Free time to use privileges; if no privileges, work on skills practices or other treatment areas.
8:45 - 9:00 PM	Winding down
9:00 PM	Room time



on you.
focused

supervision

You are supervised according to your needs and the amount of freedom you've earned to be safe and responsible. It is focused on you. You are monitored inside and outside of the home. Staff need to know where you are at all times. Let staff know where you are in the home and ask permission to leave the home. You may not enter other resident's bedrooms. This allows you to have a private space when you need it. Only enter another home on campus with permission of staff in that home. You can hang out with youth from other homes in the common area with permission under staff supervision.

respectful

of each other.



appearance & dress

You may dress according to your personal taste. Please keep in mind that staff are here to help teach you in all areas of life, your appearance is one of these areas. You may be asked to change if your appearance is considered not suitable or potentially offensive to others. Your choice of clothing and makeup may limit whether you are allowed to go into the community.

THE FOLLOWING ARE GUIDELINES RELATED TO DRESS AND APPEARANCE:

- shoes or sandals are worn outside at all times in order to prevent injury
- athletic shoes are worn when playing sports
- pants are worn so that underpants/boxers are not visible
- shirts that show violence, drug or alcohol use, sexual themes or represent clearly negative messages are not to be worn.
- any jewelry or personal items that are considered a safety issue are not allowed (i.e. spiked bracelets)
- no new tattoos and body piercings will be allowed unless legal guardian and treatment team gives specific permission
- no resident may tattoo or pierce themselves or other residents

make your
room,
you
and make
your bed too?

bedroom

You share a bedroom with someone but it's a big room with a private bathroom. Because of limited storage space, you should bring only necessary items. Bedspreads, sheets, and towels are provided. You may bring a favorite blanket, stuffed animal, posters and pictures to decorate the walls of your room. You are expected to keep a neat, orderly room, closet, and bathroom. Every day each room is checked.

pets

You may own pet fish with the approval of the Group Home Director.



chores

You are responsible for washing your clothes, sheets, and towels properly on a weekly basis. VHBG provides you with a laundry basket and provides laundry detergent. Staff assist you in learning how to properly separate, wash, dry, fold and put away your clothes as needed.

You will participate in keeping the entire house clean by doing chores throughout the home. There's a cleaning day each weekend where you, your housemates, and staff complete a deep clean of your home –as the saying goes, 'many hands make light work.'

Certain lyrics or messages may be both offensive and inappropriate. Songs that contain excessive profanity or encourage drug use and violence are not to be played. If music is believed to have a negative influence on a particular resident, it will be handled on a case-by-case basis. That music will be sent to your guardian.

Music volume is to be kept low in the bedrooms. If music volume rules are not followed, the privilege to play music may be lost. Smaller, personal systems with head phones are encouraged.



be social.



meals

The kitchen table is where you eat but also where you plan and learn things like being accountable for your actions. This is also a place where you can talk about what bothers you or gets you upset. You're encouraged to participate in making meals and eat your meals family-style at your home's kitchen table - three meals a day plus two snacks.

tv & movies

You'll enjoy sharing the TV in the common area of your home. Watching TV is a privilege and can be limited as necessary by staff. VHBG staff are here to help guide and teach you. Specific TV programs and video games could be inappropriate for your or your peer's viewing. This decision could be based on sexual content, graphic violence, and/or too much profanity. Programs, movies, and or video games with this content will not be watched or played at VHBG. For the same reasons, we do not rent or watch R-rated movies or M-rated games even in theaters. Exceptions to this rule can be made for individual youth by their Treatment Team.

cell phones & social media

Here at VHBG cell phones are a privilege to be earned and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. By showing you are able to be responsible with cell phones (electronics) and social media you will increase your chances of earning this privilege.

relationships on campus

VHBG wants to help you develop skills that help you create healthy relationships with adults and youth your own age. Romantic and or physical relationships with an individual within or across our programs is not allowed. Such relationships are a distraction and could cause conflict for others during their stay here at VHBG. VHBG aims to nurture supportive friendships among youth your own age. Your friends can be important to you as you navigate life.



phone calls & visits

Your treatment team (that includes your legal guardian) will determine which visits are appropriate. Our family-style environment allows for flexibility with phone calls and visits. Staff will determine your use of the phone and scheduling of visits. Legal Guardians must approve on and off-campus visits. Visits are not used as consequences or rewards, and are only limited based on safety.

When you come to VHBG and throughout your stay, a list of approved contacts will be updated for you.

YOUR LEGAL GUARDIAN WILL BE MADE AWARE THAT PEOPLE APPROVED FOR VISITS WILL NEED TO FOLLOW THESE REQUIREMENTS:

1. All underage visitors (less than 18 years old) must be accompanied by an adult.
2. There are no prescribed visitation hours. However, all visitations will be planned in advance. This will assure that you are present, that there are no scheduling conflicts, and that we have appropriate staffing.
3. If there is a need for visitors to leave prematurely, all efforts will be made to reschedule.
4. Visitation to your home and/or approved location must be approved by your legal guardian in conjunction with the VHBG treatment team.
5. You may not visit the house, apartment, or living quarters of any employee of VHBG.

jobs

Learning job skills and responsibility is something you can do at VHBG. Having a part time job in the community can be rewarding and fun. Your opportunity to get a job will be considered based on your own situation. If you do get a job off-campus, your work schedule and environment will be carefully watched to help ensure your success.



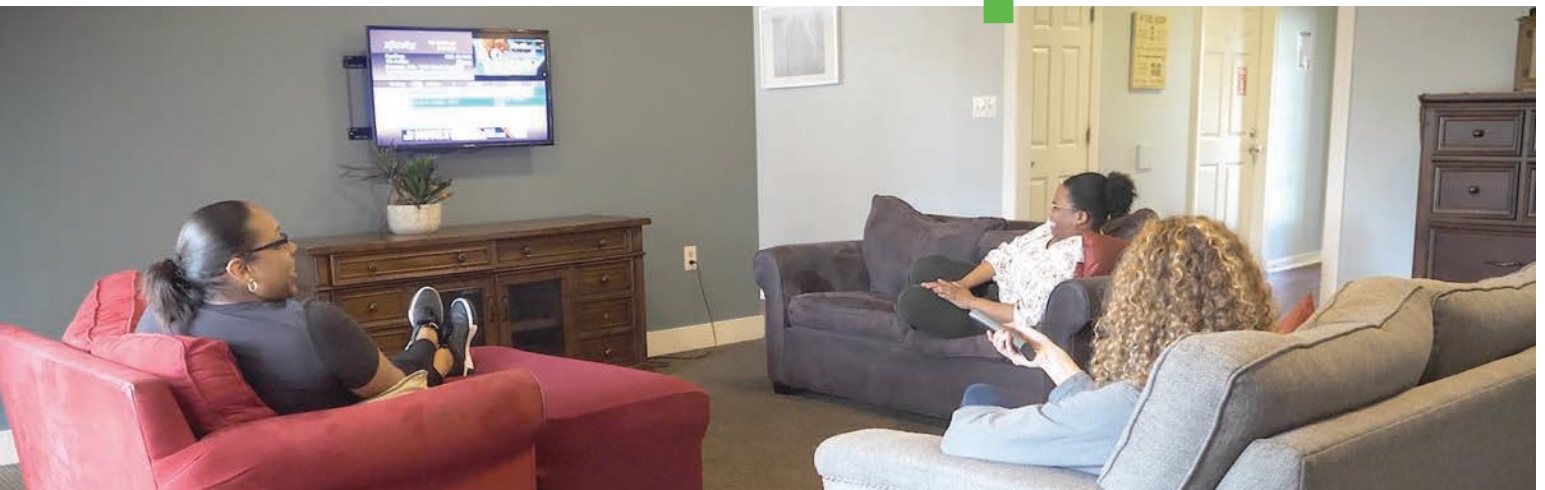
spiritual life

You have the right to continue your religious or spiritual beliefs that don't interfere with the health and safety of others. All possible efforts will be made so that you may continue individual participation in religious/spiritual activities.

shop

Thanks to donations and help from volunteers, VHBG has a campus store located in House 1. Items in the store are new or gently used. This includes clothes, shoes, games/puzzles, stuffed animals, toiletries, linens, pillows, art/school supplies and more. You can shop for yourself or for items to give as gifts. No money is exchanged in the store. All items are free. You shop only when accompanied by staff. Staff will approve the items and amount of the items you leave with. You are expected to help keep the store tidy by placing items back in their place after inspecting them. Do not bring a backpack with you to the store. Preparing a list before shopping is recommended.

explore.





school

Education is an important part of our program. You might attend private school on our campus called John G. Wood School. Or, you might attend public school. In all cases, summer school might also be an option for you to help catch up.

If you are at home during a school day because of a suspension, you're supervised the same as mentioned already and you'll be expected to continue with your school work as if you were on your school's regular time schedule with a break for lunch.





go
outside.





outdoor recreation

Physical activity is important to helping you feel better. Our campus has more than 30 acres so there's plenty of room to get outside and enjoy fresh air.

Bike Riding & Skateboarding - Bikes, skateboards, and helmets are donated to VHBG for our youth to enjoy. You must wear a helmet when biking or skateboarding. You may ride on VHBG's campus with permission from staff. If you are given a bike, you are expected to park it when not using it to ensure that it doesn't get damaged.

Swimming - You'll enjoy our campus pool during the hot summer months. It's just a short walk from your group home. You'll go to the pool with staff and other youth. A lifeguard will be on duty when you're at the pool and will enforce the pool rules that are posted. You must wear an appropriate bathing suit and apply sun screen as recommended by staff.

Gym - We have a full-size gym on campus where you can play basketball and other indoor sports when accompanied by staff.

Tennis Court - You can play many types of games on our tennis court. Somebody even learned to ride a bike on our tennis court once.

Gardening - can be relaxing and rewarding. Anyone who is interested can grow vegetables and flowers in our campus garden.

Off-Campus Outings - Trips to the mountains, beach, museums, shopping centers, restaurants, sports games and more take place as a group using your group home's van.

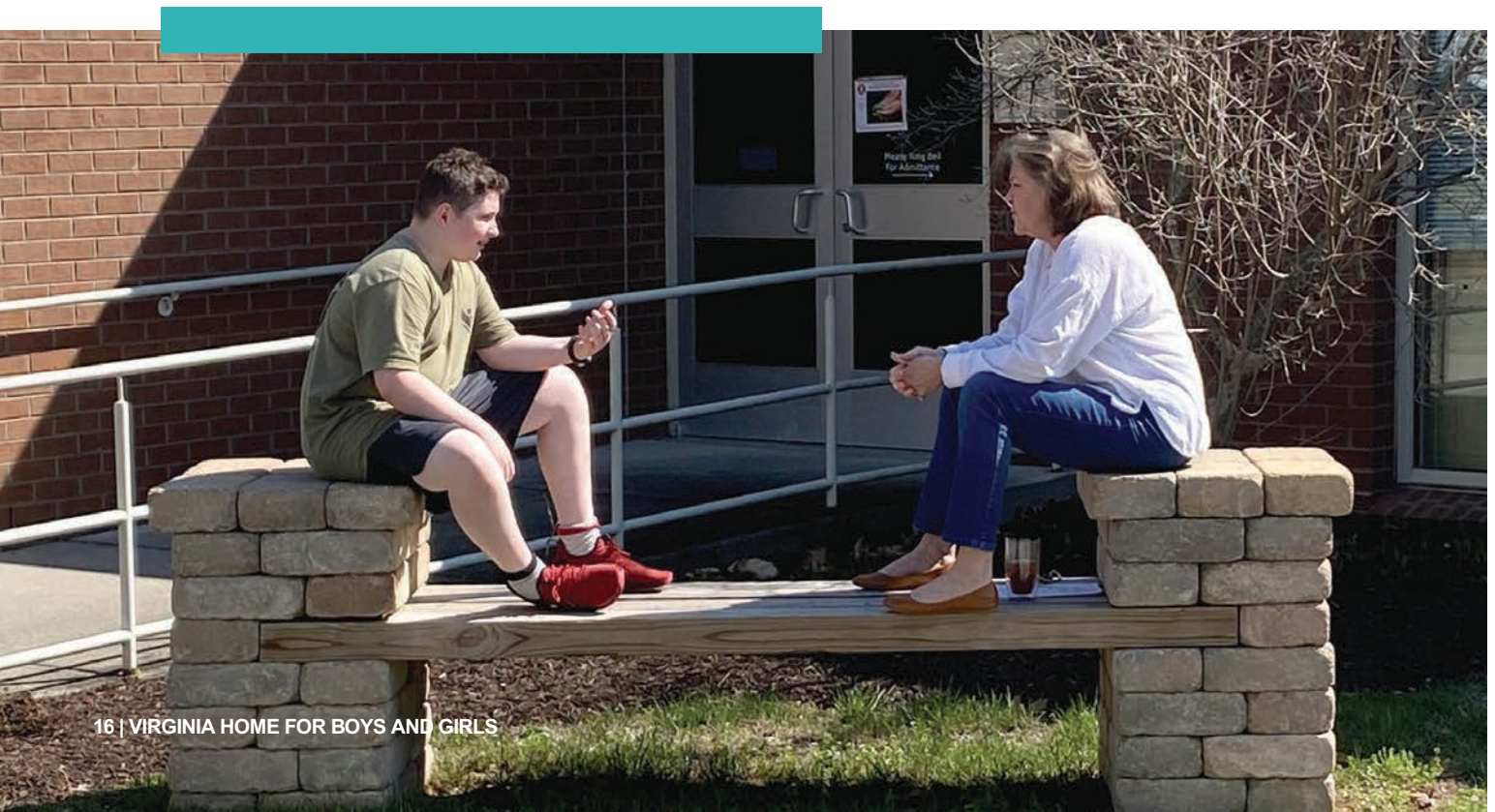
medical & counseling needs

We have a Therapeutic Resource Center on campus just steps away from our group homes. Here is where you can get counseling and therapy. All medications, including prescription and over the counter medications that are administered by VHBG staff, must be prescribed by a physician. VHBG coordinates all of your medical care and we have a nurse in our clinic. At your guardian's request, all efforts will be made to keep you in the care of your current health care providers.



get

support.



know your rights.

In an effort to ensure your safe and effective care, all VHBG employees are responsible for protecting your rights:

1. to a safe environment, good food, clothing, medical care, housing, and humane treatment.
2. to participate in school, recreation programs, and community programs.
3. to be involved in a local religious program of your choice.
4. to have a written treatment plan and to be made aware of specifics of that plan. Your participation is important in helping to secure your future goals. We will provide you with all necessary information to participate and make decisions in your plan.
5. to communicate with your case worker, probation officer, family members (as noted), or school personnel.
6. to be treated with dignity and respect. You have a right to freedom from physical and/or verbal abuse.
7. to have your personal information kept confidential.
8. to have a reasonable amount of privacy. You have a right to your personal space and privacy.
9. to keep your personal belongings as allowed by Virginia Home for Boys and Girls.
10. to send and receive mail without being read by someone else, unless there is reason to believe that it contains something that might hurt you.
11. to have the program rules explained to you.
12. to have family visit you on campus and for you to visit with family and friends off-campus as allowed by your treatment plan, privileges, and legal guardian.
13. to have adult guidance and supervision.
14. to have an adult assigned to you as a confidant, someone you can talk to about your problems.
15. to have a written and verbal explanation of VHBG's rules, an understanding of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors and an understanding of consequences for unacceptable behaviors.
16. to receive equal attention regardless of your age, race, religion, gender, nationality, or handicap.
17. to be free of financial or other exploitation.
18. to communicate problems if you feel you are not receiving appropriate treatment. to communicate that your rights are not being respected.
19. to be free of retaliation in the event that you report problems

If you feel any of these rights have been violated, you may speak with a Youth Counselor, Staff Supervisor, Group Home Manager, or Group Home Director.

If you'd like to make a formal complaint, follow the process posted in the conference room of your home.

Trips like rafting on the James River help build relationships and practice teamwork.

confidentiality

You have the right to the privacy of your placement and treatment concerns. It is the responsibility of you and the staff to maintain confidentiality while in the home, on the phone, and in the community unless consent by your guardian has been obtained.

your input
matters.

VHBG believes that you, your family, and/or case worker (your treatment team) are core team members and must be included in decisions that affect your life. Every effort is made for us all to work together when making decisions regarding your treatment.

We will work together in face-to-face meetings, phone calls, email and texts. Group Home Managers are sensitive and responsive to your preferred communication style.

Your Group Home Manager will provide information to you and your treatment team in a manner that is timely and clear. Sometimes words can be complicated, so your Group Home Manager will make sure you understand terms and will describe the process as needed. Your Group Home Manager will check for understanding from you and your treatment team.



request book.

Write your questions, suggestions, complaints, or requests in the Request Book located in your group home. The Request Book is reviewed weekly during your treatment team meeting with answers to concerns and requests usually given the same day. If you need help writing in the book, staff are available to assist.

If you feel your issue is too personal to write in the book, feel free to go directly to staff.

Putting your requests in the Request Book is the primary way that you receive permission to go on all-day or overnight passes and access money from your account. If you do not get a specific request submitted prior to your treatment team meeting, you may have to wait until the team meets again to have your request considered. Use of the Request Book is a simple and easy way to make sure your concerns and needs are considered and attended to promptly by staff.

family conference.



Family Conference is a meeting of all the staff and youth in your group home. This meeting can last from 10-20 minutes and can take place 4-7 days a week at a scheduled time. You'll be glad to know that the meeting is conducted by the youth. Staff provide support and teaching. The agenda varies and is driven by the needs of the youth and the problems in your home.

There are reasons for having Family Conferences. This meeting includes allowing you to give input into your home, share your opinion, and learn problem solving and other skills. You can use Family Conference time to make decisions about events and rules that affect the majority of the youth. Family Conference is also an ideal time to solve other problems that affect your home. Staff may use Family Conference to make announcements and teach new skills.



money

You will receive a weekly allowance in order to allow you to learn how to manage and spend money. Allowances are given each Friday and are determined by a reward system. This privilege is also based on behaviors, actions, and responsibilities during each week (ex. completing chores, room check list). You will be asked to sign an allowance receipt for records that you received your money.

If you have any sizable amount of money (over \$10.00), you are encouraged to keep it in a locked area. Your money will be given to you when you ask and a record will be kept of it. This is to ensure safety and accountability.

belongings

Lending, trading, borrowing or buying clothing or personal belongings from other youth is only allowed if approved by the Group Home Manager.

While VHBG is not responsible for personal belongings, we make every reasonable effort to ensure that your personal property is not damaged. We make every attempt to resolve any incidents resulting in theft or damage to your property. You can take personal belongings with you upon leaving from the program. If you fail to take all of your belongings with you upon leaving, they will be shipped to your legal guardian. Every effort will be made to return your items to you.

material
matters.

basic house rules.

VHBG employees hope to teach you skills and behaviors for success in your home, school, and community.

GENERALLY, YOU ARE EXPECTED TO:

- follow the daily routine
- participate in school and therapy
- treat others with respect and safety
- report your whereabouts within the home
- ask permission to leave the home
- participate in your individual plan for services and target skills



point system

VHBG uses a daily point system to encourage learning and using skills during your stay. Points are both earned and lost. Specific behaviors are defined so that you are aware of what is expected.

As you build more skills, you will get more freedom appropriate for your age and individual situation.

Our goal is to teach you skills that will help you regain and keep your privileges and freedoms. Physical restraint techniques will be used when all other interventions have been deemed ineffective and safety is at stake.

FREEDOM MAY BE RESTRICTED IN THE EVENT OF UNSAFE OR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR SUCH AS:

- not following instructions
- conflicts with peers
- running away
- yelling or cursing
- destroying property
- not going to school
- not following the routine and schedule of the home
- not participating in the activities that are planned for you
- having items that are prohibited



prohibited items on campus

YOU, OR ANY OF YOUR VISITORS, ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BRING THE FOLLOWING ON TO VHBG'S CAMPUS:

- weapons (pocket knives, box razors, handguns, rifles, projectiles)
- illegal drugs
- legal drugs (unless prescribed for a particular client)
- tobacco products
- alcohol
- matches/lighters
- photos/graphics or writings not age appropriate
- Vapes of any kind

If discovered in the home, these items are taken by staff who secures the items and notifies the Group Home Manager. The Group Home Manager works with the Group Home Director to determine the next steps.

VHBG does not provide power tools for the use of residents. If a staff wants to use power tools with you, s/he must have the permission of the Group Home Director including an approved plan for educating you about safe use of the equipment.

searches

VHBG reserves the right to search your bedroom, property, and/or you, if warranted. Searches are conducted to protect your safety and the safety of other residents, staff, school, and the community.

In conducting searches of personal belongings or the building, every effort will be made to maintain respect for your personal property. We will also strive to reduce the potential of embarrassment to both you and staff.

We will not conduct body cavity, pat downs, and strip searches. However, if there is a reason to believe that you are concealing illegal or unauthorized items, staff may request that you:

- empty your pockets
- remove your shoes & socks
- turn out your waistband
- take off your hat



drug & alcohol policy

5-second rule

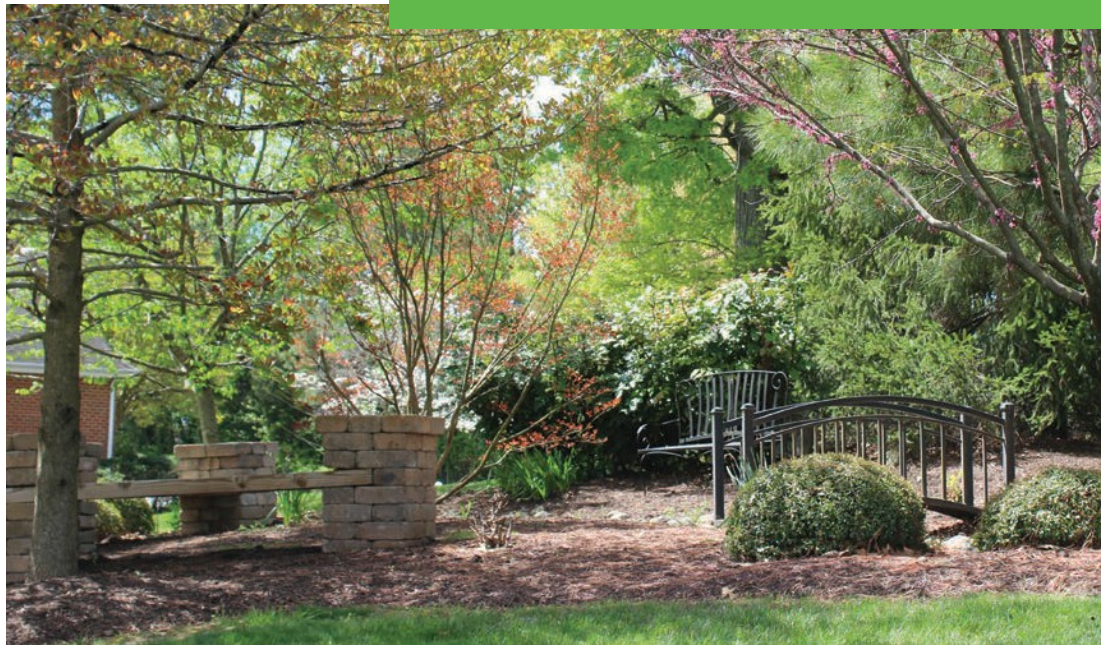
You may be selected for a urine drug or alcohol screen either at random or as the result of suspicion. Urine donation for drug and alcohol screens will be given under observation, either by a staff member or by a staff member of the laboratory facility. If your urine tests positive for drugs or alcohol, you will receive consequences which may affect employment, off-campus time, and privileges. The situation may be reported to the police.

If you participate in a substance abuse program, you agree to have all drug and alcohol test results reported to VHBG.

A copy of the written results of each drug screen and notification of any positive alcohol testing will be shared with your treatment team.

We want to keep a safe and peaceful environment in your home. But sometimes, there may be a serious incident occurring. If a staff person says **“Five Second Rule,”** it means you have five seconds to move toward your bedroom or another space in the home. You will stay there temporarily until a staff person lets you know that it’s safe to come out.

This helps keep you and others safe and allows the staff to focus on a youth who may need special attention.



length of stay & discharge planning

Length of stay is determined by your needs. Planned discharges may occur in the following situations:

- a.** successful completion of service goals and/or objectives
- b.** documented inability to meet your needs based on mental status and/or your behaviors
- c.** repeated, violent behavior that threatens the safety and well-being of the other youth and staff

Unplanned discharges may occur in the following situations:

- a.** if you do not return after running away
- b.** at the request of your guardian
- c.** act of court
- d.** discovery of medical condition(s) not able to be served by the program

Immediate discharges may occur for the following situations:

- a.** repeated behavior that threatens the safety and well-being of other youth and staff
- b.** repeated and escalating behaviors (such as running away)



a final note.



If you have any questions, or even suggestions, let staff know.

Look at the rules as tools meant to ensure your safety. And, we want you to feel supported in a caring and loving home.

Although we ask that you follow the house rules, we do not expect you to be perfect. So relax, do your best, and ask for help if you need it.

Your successful stay at VHBG is up to you. But each and every person on the VHBG campus is here to support your success.

Remember, you got this.



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