

QUESTIONS TO ASK PRIOR TO RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT, ASSEMBLED BY RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT EXPERTS

1. Visit the facility and see where the youth sleep, eat and go to school. Be sure to visit the facility where your child will actually be placed, as some providers have multiple similar facilities. View bathrooms and showers — seeing how the facility treats personal hygiene and cleanliness can be a tell for general facility conditions.
2. Trust your own instincts. If something seems off, follow up.
3. Do your own research: Read reviews from a variety of sources and do a scan of media articles about the facility and provider chain, especially those related to escapes, police interventions, injuries or other concerns. Go beyond what the facility's operator or your referral source tells you.
4. How is the facility licensed/regulated (i.e. what they hold themselves out to be, and what the states regulate them as, are sometimes different).
5. Read state licensing reports for the facility if the facility is licensed. They can generally be found on the state's website (e.g. "Children's Licensing and Investigation Services"). If the facility is not licensed, what oversight do they receive other than that offered by the provider itself?
6. How would a youth get help if they were concerned for their safety, and how would they file a complaint or grievance if the conditions were unsafe?
7. How are youth transported to the facility if they don't agree to go willingly?
8. Ask the facility staff specifically how the following are used:
 - OC/pepper spray.
 - Physical restraint.
 - Pharmacological restraint, such as the use of psychiatric medication to control the youth, when the youth is upset or out of control.
 - Isolation, such as placing the youth in a room they cannot leave.
 - Mechanical restraints, such as handcuffs or shackles.
9. How does the facility define "serious incidents," or whatever term is used in their jurisdiction? These are incidents that are sufficiently serious that they need to be reported to the state.
10. What is the protocol for notifying parents/guardians when a serious incident takes place?