

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM APPROVAL AND IMPROVEMENT PROCESS
SHELTER CARE FACILITY
PROGRAM APPROVAL VISIT

NFI Midway Shelter
136 Lowell Street
Manchester, NH 03104-6119

Date of Visit: March 31, 2005

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I. INTRODUCTION

A New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Program Approval Visit was conducted at the NFI Midway Shelter on March 31, 2005. The purpose of the visit was to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students. In addition, during the visit, the NHDOE reviewed the NFI Midway Shelter corrective action plan, submitted on June 18, 2004 to determine the status of the goals outlined.

Activities related to this program approval visit included a check of staff credentials (including consultants), interviews with the education director, the program director, and other agency administrators. In addition, there were informal interviews with teaching staff and several of the students enrolled in the program. A review of two student files was conducted, and program demographics reviewed. Throughout the visit, there was full cooperation from the staff at the NFI Midway Shelter, which was greatly appreciated.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The NFI Midway Shelter is a temporary residential program that provides residential and educational services to adolescent males, ages 11-17, in grades 5-12. The program has been in operation since 1992, and is a community based "secure" facility, meaning that staff must supervise residents at all times. The facility is a licensed childcare facility and provides a NHDOE Special Education approved program for residents, should they need special education services. The program is intended to serve children for a maximum of 60 days, however should an extension be necessary; DCYF and/or DJJS may grant an extension. The average length of stay for residents at Midway is approximately 26 days, and upon release from the facility some children return home to their families, while others move on to another placement such as a foster or group home, assessment center or other long term placement facility.

Educational disabilities served at the school within NFI Midway during the 2004-05 school year have included students with emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, other health impairments, and speech and language disabilities. At the time of the March 2005 visit, NFI Midway had served 115 students in grades 6-12, of which 53 were students with educational disabilities (46%).

III. STATUS OF 2004 CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

ED 1133.05 (k) Program Requirements

CFR 300.23 Qualified Personnel

ED 1133.08 Qualifications and Requirements for Instructional, Administrative and Support Personnel

Status: Partially Met

NFI Midway has made significant progress in addressing this citation. Certified educators have filled most all of the teaching positions, and a new position of principal has created. The principal is responsible for the oversight and supervision of all the NFI education programs. The position of education coordinator has been filled; this individual is certified in general and special education, which has resulted in a marked improvement in the documentation and

delivery of special education programming. Currently one teacher hired is pursuing certification as a general special educator and has received a letter of eligibility for this. Both paraprofessionals are also pursuing teacher certification. In addition, most all consultant positions have been filled, (with the exception of science, however the shelter continues to actively seek an individual to fill this role.)

ED 1133.05 Program Requirements, Equal Educational Opportunities

Status: Partially Addressed

NFI Midway Shelter has a curriculum that is aligned with the NH Curriculum Frameworks, and some students enrolled at the Midway Shelter continue with the curriculum offerings from their home school district. The staff have access to a consultants certified in the academic content areas, and each classroom has technology that allows for Internet access. At the time of the visit, it became clear that when students are placed at the NFI Midway Shelter they do not always have the opportunity to continue with course work that they were enrolled in prior to placement at NFI. Course work such as vocational education is not available to students.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE MARCH 31, 2005 NHDOE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL VISIT

As a result of the NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Visit, the team was impressed with the educational services being provided to students placed at the NFI Midway Shelter. It was evident that the staff and administration have taken measures to address citations outlined in the 2004 NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Report, and progress has been made in all areas. The staff at NFI Midway Shelter can be described as skilled, dedicated, caring and committed to the teaching and learning process. It is evident that staff works hard to establish strong relationships with a very challenging student population, in an atmosphere that is safe and nurturing. The young men who enter the Midway Shelter present complex and challenging educational and emotional disabilities and staff place much emphasis on addressing the behavioral and social needs of the students.

COMMENDATIONS:

- The facility is clean and well maintained.
- At NFI Midway Shelter there is a strong sense of community and respect for all students.
- The staff and administration were consistently described as dedicated, child centered and open to professional development opportunities.
- The atmosphere within the NFI North Country Shelter is warm, welcoming and nurturing.
- Within the facility there is a true sense of teamwork and collaboration among all staff.
- The staff has worked hard to address citations of non-compliance outlined in the 2004 NHDOE Special Education Summary Report.

CITATIONS OF NON-COMPLIANCE: REQUIRED ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

All the citations listed in Section III of this report that are not met, or are only partially met, will remain as citations that still need to be resolved and included in a corrective action plan. In addition to Section III, the following additional citations were identified during the March 2005 visit to NFI Midway Shelter:

ED 1107.05 Evaluation Report

ED 1107.06 Evaluation Requirements for Students with Learning Disabilities

Of the two student records reviewed, both lacked evidence of evaluation team summary reports and evaluation requirements for students with specific learning disabilities.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

1. If NFI Midway Shelter is not successful in obtaining the necessary special education documents from sending schools, it is suggested that a certified letter be mailed to the Special Education Director of the sending school district, with a copy sent to the NHDOE.
2. The NFI Midway Shelter should consider exploring alternative strategies for the delivery of programs/courses in such areas as vocational education, and career exploration, as well as academic content currently not available to students. It is strongly suggested that NFI Midway Shelter look into software programs and distance learning opportunities that will enable students to continue with course work that they were enrolled in at their home schools.
3. NFI Midway Shelter should give serious consideration to revision of the transcript document currently being used to ensure that all necessary information is provided to the sending school. In addition, it is suggested that all the NFI education programs consider the development of a template/process for documenting completion of student course work and recommended credits earned.
4. It is suggested that NFI Midway work with other NFI programs to develop a documentation process/template that clearly outlines how student transcripts are maintained. This will provide LEAs with seat time for course work, "recommended credits" earned, etc.

V. SUMMARY

Upon reviewing the education program at NFI Midway, the visiting team determined that the agency has pursued ongoing program improvements in many areas. Professional development opportunities for educators are ongoing and encouraged by the administration, and all of the staff can be described as skilled, caring, child centered and knowledgeable of the developmental needs to the students placed at the shelter. Curriculum development is ongoing, and there is evidence of use of technology in each classroom. There is an impressive level of professionalism from staff and a true respect for the very challenging student population that is placed at the NFI Midway Shelter.