

**NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM APPROVAL VISITATION
CASE STUDY COMPLIANCE REVIEW**

**NFI MIDWAY SHELTER
SUMMARY REPORT**

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Patrick Troy, Education Coordinator**

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Mary Anne Byrne

Education Consultants

Site Visit Conducted on April 12, 2012

Report Date: August 15, 2012

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I. TEAM MEMBERS

Visiting Team Members:

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE
McKenzie Harrington	NHDOE Consultant
Nancy Pierce	Special Education Coordinator
Sherry Burbank	Special Education Coordinator
Tim Goggin	English Teacher

Chairpersons:
Maryclare Heffernan
Mary Anne Byrne

Building Level Team Members from NFI Midway Shelter

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE
Jan Williamson	Regional Director
Melissa Geise	Guidance Counselor
Patrick Troy	Principal

II. INTRODUCTION

The NFI Midway Shelter is a temporary residential program in Bradford, New Hampshire that is owned and operated by NFI North, Inc. a non-profit human services agency with education and residence programs throughout the states of Maine and New Hampshire. The Shelter provides community based 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 is approved as a private special education and non-public school that serves students with Emotional Disabilities, Specific Learning Disabilities, Multiple Disabilities, Speech Language Impairments and Other Health Impairments. The youth are placed for 60 days or less while awaiting further placement, evaluation or court action. The average length of stay for residents at Midway is approximately 15 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 or a long term placement facility. NFI Midway Shelter serves an average of 167 students per year, 70 of whom are students with IEPs (43%).

NFI Midway Shelter’s mission statement is: “Be Respectful and Responsible to Myself and the Community”. The Shelter’s philosophy comes from the agency-wide Normative Approach which “is a value based approach to building communities, based on the assumption that all people have a need to belong, want to have a sense of purpose, and want to experience success...and includes:

- A normalized setting
- Emphasis on strengths
- De-emphasis of labels
- A safe environment
- Family involvement
- Open and honest communication
- Create a sense of belonging to a positive peer culture
- Provide evidence-based practice techniques.”

SCHOOL PROFILE

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS	2010-2011	2011-2012
Student Enrollment <u>as of December 1</u>	11	8
Do you accept out-of-state students? If so, list number from each state in 11-12	Yes/0	Yes/0
Number and Names of Sending New Hampshire LEAs (as of October 1, 2011)	Rochester School District-SAU 54 Hampton School District-SAU 21 Keene School District-SAU 29 Portsmouth School District-SAU 52 Farmington School District-SAU 61 Hillsborough School District-SAU 34 Henniker School District-SAU 24 Manchester School District-SAU 37 Laconia School District-SAU 30 Claremont School District-SAU 6	
# of Identified Students Suspended One or More Times	0	0
Average Length of Stay for Students	23	22
<u>STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS</u>		
Student/Teacher Ratio (as of October 1, 2011)	1:5	1:5
# of Certified Administrators	1	1
# of Certified Teachers	2	1
# of Teachers with Intern Licenses	0	0
# of Related Service Providers		
# of Paraprofessionals	2	2
# of Professional Days Made Available to Staff	10	10
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM DATA		
<u>Primary Disability Types:</u>	2010-2011	2011-2012
Autism	0	0
Deaf / Blindness	0	0
Deafness	0	0
Developmental Delay	0	0
Emotional Disturbance	22	3
Hearing Impairment	0	0
Intellectual Disability	0	0
Multiple Disabilities	0	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0
Other Health Impairment	1	0
Specific Learning Disabilities	34	4
Speech or Language Impairment	18	1
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0
Visual Impairment	0	0

III. PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE CASE STUDY COMPLIANCE REVIEW PROCESS

The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) conducted a Special Education Program Approval Visit to NFI Midway Shelter on April 12, 2012 for the purpose of reviewing the present status of programs and services made available to children and youth with educational disabilities. Program Approval Visits to shelter facilities are conducted using a modified Case Study Model that is a focused review. This focused review permits the NHDOE to leverage its impact for change and improvement within private special education schools statewide, by focusing the attention of all educators on the following three areas of critical importance in the provision of FAPE for students with disabilities:

- Access to the General Curriculum
- Transition
- Behavior Strategies and Discipline

As part of this compliance visit, student files of current and former students are randomly selected and reviewed by the NHDOE to determine compliance with state and federal special education rules and regulations.

Other activities related to this NHDOE Case Study Compliance Visit included the review of:

- ♦ All application materials submitted
- ♦ Status of corrective actions since the last NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Visit
- ♦ Personnel credentials for special education staff (verified by NHDOE)
- ♦ Program descriptions and NHSEIS verification reports
- ♦ All data collected during the visit
- ♦ Any new or changed special education programs seeking approval from the NHDOE. (Not applicable as no requests were made for new or changed aspects of the program)

The New Hampshire Department of Education provided a visiting team of professional educators to work collaboratively with staff in each of the schools in conducting the Case Study Compliance Review and the varied data collection activities. Throughout the entire review process, the visiting team worked in collaboration with the staff of the NFI Midway Shelter. Their professionalism, active involvement in the process and cooperation were greatly appreciated and well recognized.

Evidence of the work conducted and results related to student outcomes were gathered throughout the process, guided by the materials and templates provided by the NHDOE, Bureau of Special Education. Examples of evidence included student individual education programs (IEPs), progress reports, samples of student work, extracurricular/community involvement, permanent records, curriculum, etc. Input was gathered from key constituents, including interviews with professional staff and administrators, as well as a student focus group. In addition, classroom observations were conducted. The collective data were summarized by the visiting and building level teams. The summary, included in the following pages, outlines identified areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

IV. STATUS OF PREVIOUS NHDOE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL REPORT AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Based on review of the May 13, 2005, NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Report, the following patterns were identified as needing improvement:

Findings of Noncompliance	Status as of May 14, 2007	Status as of April 12, 2012
ED 1133.05 Equal Education Opportunities Midway Shelter will need to seek certified individuals to provide consultation to staff in the areas of Health and Library Media Services.	MET	MET

V. APRIL 12, 2012 CASE STUDY COMPLIANCE REVIEW RESULTS

Data collection is an important part of the NHDOE Special Education Case Study Compliance Review Process. In order to monitor whether or not special education programs are in compliance in the three focus areas, and determine any root causes of problems that may be identified through the case study process, it is essential that each case study team look deeply into the data that surrounds the three primary aspects of the Case Study Review. This process takes time, and the entire team must be involved in collecting and analyzing the data, as well as presenting and summarizing the data with the visiting team. As such, the NHDOE works with educational communities to prepare for the visit and to ensure that the staff and administrators take this opportunity to reflect upon and generalize their newly found knowledge of their programs, practices, policies and procedures.

In preparation for the visit, the Shelter was asked to develop a presentation describing the educational programs provided to students, with attention to the three focus areas of Access to the General Curriculum, Transition and Behavior Strategies and Discipline. In the overview, demographic information included: number of students served since July 1, number of these students with IEPs, gender, grade levels, average length of stay and school districts from which the students come. They were asked to describe the intake process, the LEA contact/request for information procedures and the communication systems in place with parents, schools, JPPOs and outside agencies.

In order to afford students access to the general education curriculum, the Shelter explained the sources of coursework, multiple supports provided to students, and their involvement in community supports and services. Transition components of the program highlighted career awareness and planning activities, goal setting, independent living activities, and information provided to the receiving placement. In presenting the behavior and discipline practices employed at the Shelter, they demonstrated the ways in which the

mission and values of the organization translated into a safe, respectful, cooperative community.

During the visit, records of current students with disabilities were randomly selected and reviewed for contact documentation, information received, evaluation/assessment results, required components of the IEPs, types of data collection activities used for progress monitoring and reporting, etc. During these reviews, guiding questions focused on how the file information translated into effective programming for the students.

LEA SURVEYS

Private schools provide necessary options to New Hampshire students with educational disabilities. Effective partnerships with LEAs are an important part of establishing and implementing successful private special education programs that improve student outcomes. By surveying LEA perceptions of current program(s), private schools can self assess these relationships and determine if there are areas in need of improvement. To this end, NFI Midway Shelter submitted the most recent results from their annual survey sent to the contact people in the thirty LEAs with the highest incidence of Shelter placement. This modified survey contained four pertinent questions:

- I am satisfied with the education program at Midway
- The Midway School provides the necessary skills for students to make progress on the IEP goals
- The Midway School measures academic growth
- The Midway School consistently follows special education rules and regulations

Of the seven LEA responses (23%), all rated the questions as Strongly Agree or Agree.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

One of the defining features of effective schools is strong parent/community relations and open communication. Considering the parent perspective in the NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Process ensures broader perspectives and brings forth new ideas, enhances and strengthens the teams' presentation, and makes for stronger school/parent relationships. Due to the short term nature of court ordered placements, there is not a sufficient amount of time prior to the visit to provide notice to parents regarding surveys and interviews. As a modification to this requirement, NFI Midway Shelter submitted the most recent results from their annual Family Survey sent to thirty parents of students placed at the Shelter; seven surveys were returned (23 %). This survey asks the following pertinent questions:

- My family member received the services he most needed (72% agreed)
- I feel the program is very supportive of me and my family member (74% agreed)
- The staff treated my family member with respect (94% agreed)
- The staff treated me with respect (100% agreed)

SUMMARY FROM THE THREE FOCUS AREAS OF THE CASE STUDY COMPLIANCE REVIEW

Access to the General Curriculum

Implementation of Individual Education Programs (IEPs)

Provision of Non-Academic Services

Full Access to the District's Curriculum

Equal Education Opportunity

NFI Midway Shelter uses multiple curriculum resources and materials to provide students with access to the general education curriculum. Individual and group instruction, Computerized Learning Systems (PLATO, VLACS), GED Preparation and service learning are employed effectively. Hands-on and experiential learning are a focus in the school. Paraprofessionals and teachers provide a 1:4 teacher/student ratio which supports students' engagement in their learning. Educational progress is taken seriously at the NFI Midway Shelter.

Upon admission, students are administered the Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASI) to determine age/grade achievement levels in math, reading and writing which is used as a baseline to determine instructional levels. When work is received from the sending LEA, this determines the instructional content. If work is not provided, NFI Shelter aligns instruction to the students' grade/courses using the Shelter's curriculum. Students have access to PLATO for instruction and credit recovery. Students expressed a preference for working on assignments sent by their schools and required assurance that they are receiving credit for the work they are completing. Only about 20-30% of the LEAs provide schoolwork and it is reported that many students feel rejected when they don't get their schoolwork.

Multiple opportunities to provide community service are available to students, such as Toys for Tots, snow removal, Humane Society, Conservation Committee, Food Bank volunteering and writing letters to soldiers. Community resources are used extensively for enrichment and extracurricular activities; Pat's Peak ski program, fitness workouts, hiking, bowling, movies, AA, local police for bullying informational sessions, field trips (e.g. State House), New England College and Colby Sawyer College for guest speaking, poetry class, etc. NFI Shelter considers all of these opportunities as part of students' Learning in Field Experience (LIFE) training.

Transition

Transition Planning

Process: Provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Transition Services

The NFI Midway Shelter has a well-tuned system that effectively facilitates transitions. Immediate contact with the LEAs, ongoing communication with the families and JPPOs, and the end-of-placement reporting system all support effective transitions in and out of the Shelter.

NFI Midway Shelter tracks positive placements after exiting the Shelter.

Career counseling encourages students as they plan for their future. Plans and timelines are developed, barriers to their plans are noted and ways to overcome those barriers are identified, and post secondary options are explored.

The final report generated by the Midway Shelter provides a narrative of the students' educational and behavioral status, as well as the amount of school "seat time" to facilitate credit earnings. If PLATO was used as education software to accomplish assignments, the PLATO reports are included. Any work sent by the LEAs that was completed at the Shelter is returned for their consideration.

Behavior Strategies and Discipline

The NFI agency-wide Normative Approach, based on the premise that all people desire to belong to a group/community, wants to have a sense of purpose, and wants to experience success, provides the basis for positive behavior interventions and supports at the NFI Midway Shelter. The Shelter's mission statement, "Be Respectful and Responsible to Myself and My Community" is posted in multiple places in the school and is readily reported by students.

All staff is trained in Trauma Informed counseling skills. This and the crises prevention techniques such as de-escalation taught to staff in the Safe Alternatives for Everyone (S.A.F.E.) program, support the success of the zero restraint policy of NFI Midway Shelter. These prevention and positive supports resulted in only two restraints in the 2010 school year.

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES/NHDOE BUREAU OF SCHOOL APPROVAL/ NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL APPLICATION MATERIALS

In addition to the above noted focus areas for the case study presentations, material submitted as part of the application for program approval included: Health/Fire Facility Inspection Reports, the Private School Self Study, Special Education Policies and Procedures, Administrative Policy and Procedures, Current Program Information, Curriculum, and Personnel Roster and Consultant Roster. Review and verification of these documents found the NFI Midway Shelter School not to be in compliance with all applicable New Hampshire Rules and the Education of Students with Disabilities and requirements for Non-Public Approval in the areas of updated curriculum and employing a full complement of required content area Consultants (missing High School Math).

NEW PROGRAMS SEEKING APPROVAL FROM THE NHDOE, BUREAU OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

At the time of the April 12, 2012 visit to NFI Midway Shelter, the facility was not seeking approval for any new programs.

The commendations below are a result of the visitors' observations, student and leadership interviews, record reviews and the presentation given to the visitors.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The visitors noted and students expressed that the staff commitment to students is clear and consistent.
2. Given the challenges of short term placements and the unique student needs that the NFI Midway Shelter faces, they have been successful in attracting and hiring certified and capable staff.
3. The anticipated adoption of the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress will serve to enhance the academic assessment and progress monitoring of all students.
4. The involvement in the State's Family Connections/Family Voices project and the subsequent increase in supports to families (e.g. transportation to the Shelter, involvement of families in field trips, etc.) demonstrate the Shelter's commitment to engage families in their children's success in the placement, and in the transitions to the next.
5. NFI Midway Shelter gathers extensive data to assess program effectiveness and plan improvements. The data reflecting that 84% of the students moved on to positive placements is notable.
6. Extensive opportunities are afforded students for career planning and exploration, such as career interest inventories, job shadowing, career counseling, assistance with paperwork completion, etc.
7. Students indicated that they felt safe and secure in the school and that the opportunity to learn was provided to them. They also appreciate the wide range of community experiences made available to them.

**FINDINGS OF NONCOMPLIANCE IDENTIFIED AS A RESULT OF THE
APRIL 12, 2012 CASE STUDY COMPLIANCE REVIEW**

Findings of noncompliance are defined as deficiencies that have been identified through the Case Study Compliance Review Process, which are in violation of state and federal special education rules and regulations. Findings of noncompliance may result from review of policies and procedures and related application materials, case study presentations, review of student records or any other program approval activity related to the visit. **It is important to note that all findings of noncompliance listed below must be addressed in a corrective action plan and resolved within one year of this report. A template and instructions for such planning will be provided.**

Child Specific Findings of Noncompliance to be Addressed by Both the LEA and Private School

Setting: *Please Note: The NH Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education requires that Child Specific Findings of Noncompliance be addressed and resolved within 45 days of notification.*

There were no child specific findings of noncompliance noted during this visit.

Systemic Findings of Noncompliance to Be Addressed by the Private School Setting

Please Note: *The NH Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education requires that Systemic Findings of Noncompliance be addressed in a corrective action plan and met within one year of the date of the report; a template and instructions for such planning will be provided.*

Ed. 1119.03 Full Access to the General Education Curriculum – The Midway Shelter has worked with the other NFI schools to develop a universal list of consultants in various subject matters. All but a consultant in High School Math are in place.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM-WIDE IMPROVEMENT

Suggestions for improvement, simply stated, are recommendations provided by the visiting team that are intended to strengthen and enhance programs, services, instruction and professional development, and the NHDOE strongly encourages that serious consideration be given to the suggestions. However, discretion may be used in this area; suggestions for improvement are not considered to be required corrective actions and you may determine which suggestions most warrant follow up and address those in your corrective action plan. **System wide suggestions for improvement are listed below.** It should be noted that, in the Building Level Data Summary Report on the following pages, any suggestion made by a visiting team member that is actually a finding of noncompliance, has an asterisk (*) before it, and it is also listed above with the findings of noncompliance.

1. Increase technology purchases to be used to enhance instruction. (E.g. An effective tool is the iPad which includes a universal design feature with adaptive and assistive technology built into the unit to meet most learner needs.)
2. Post class schedule and learning expectations clearly and consistently in the classroom to link Midway instruction with state learning standards and identify the learning outcome for the students and faculty.
3. Continue to review and revise the school's curriculum to reflect the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
4. Explore methods to increase responses from sending LEAs; for example, send emails with read receipt requests when requesting records for new students.
5. Report "seat time" in the final "transcript" by the specific courses in which the students are currently enrolled. Work with guidance counselors in particular to assure students are receiving appropriate credit for the work they do. Also consider development of competencies so that students can achieve the specific competencies needed for any course requirement in a short time.
6. Develop Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) as a formalized way of providing students with opportunities to gain credits in real life experiences and community settings.
7. Report progress on IEP goals using a rubric based on the current point system that is in place.
8. Consider professional development for staff to increase awareness and facilitate the development of transition plans as they relate to Indicator 13.

VI. BUILDING LEVEL SUMMARY REPORTS

USING COMPLIANCE DATA FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

BUILDING LEVEL CASE STUDY DATA SUMMARY

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL AND IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

School: NFI Midway Shelter	Date: 4/12/12	Number of Cases Reviewed:
Programs:	How many of the reviewed students are age 16+? 1	How many are noncompliant for Indicator 13? 0
Recorder/Summarizer: Nancy Pierce		
Name: Melissa Geise	Building Level	
Name: Jan Williamson	Building Level	
Name: Patrick Troy	Building Level	
Name: Nancy Pierce	Visiting	
Name: Maryclare Heffernan	Visiting	
Name: Tim Goggin	Visiting	
Name: Sherry Burbank	Visiting	
Name: Mary Anne Byrne	Visiting	
Name: McKenzie Harrington	Visiting	

Based on data collected from the Data Collection Forms, Interview Forms, Classroom Observations, etc. the following summary is intended to provide a “snapshot” of the quality of services and programs in the school in the areas of: **Access to the General Curriculum, Transition and Behavior Strategies and Discipline.**

SUMMARY OF BUILDING LEVEL DATA

Access Strengths	Access Suggestions for Improvement
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The classroom teacher and paraprofessionals are focused, hardworking and very professional.2. Because of the way the Shelter is organized, students understand the structure and expectations on day one.3. Multiple assessments are done at admission to quickly determine the education level of students.4. The Shelter provides a variety of ways to access the general education curriculum: online, via tutorials, in group instruction and through experiences.5. The Shelter uses community resources extensively, e.g. woodworking in a community shop, the Humane Society, a local veterinarian, etc.6. There is a wealth of instructional resources available to the teachers.7. The flexibility of the teaching staff at Contocook, Bradford and Midway allows sharing of expertise across settings.8. The students are encouraged to accept personal responsibility and to take risks.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider looking at Apple for education programs.2. Offer VLACs and Plato courses in the summer for credit recovery.3. Add descriptions (by subject) of what was taught so schools are more likely to award credits.4. Create team taught interdisciplinary units.

Transition Strengths	Transition Suggestions for Improvement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Midway goes to great effort to contact the LEA and obtain necessary documents. A great deal of valuable information is gathered and included in the discharge packet which is sent to sent to the JPPO, parents, districts, and the new education placement., if applicable. 2. There is a good intake/transition process that takes the time to bring the student into the culture. 3. Many career services are offered to promote future planning such as job shadowing, career interest inventories, career counseling, job and financial aid applications guidance, etc. 4. There is a certified guidance councilor on staff. The entire staff is trained in counseling. 5. Life skills experiences focus on daily living skills and chores to promote independence. 6. Midway has made a strong commitment to facilitate family involvement including providing regular visiting times and transportation to and from shelter. 7. Staff spends time with the students preparing them for a successful court appearance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to assure email correspondences are received and read, send emails with read receipts to districts when requesting records for new students. 2. Report on IEP goals progress using a rubric based on the existing point system.

Behavior Strategy Strengths	Behavior Strategy Suggestions for Improvement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The agency-wide Normative Approach has a strong influence on the behavior systems that are in place. 2. The mission, “Be Respectful and Responsible to Myself and the Community” is embedded in the day-to-day behavior of students; they strive to “live” the mission. 3. The behavioral expectations of students are clear and high. 4. Midway has a points system, the data from which is used well to award positive behavior and refine the responses when needed. 5. The wide variety of physical activities offer a great outlet, e.g. basketball, bowling, hiking, fitness groups. 6. The philosophy and staff training has resulted in a lack of a need for restraints. 7. The focus of the program is to stay positive in a positive environment. 8. The students are very respectful to guests. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was suggested the teacher find alternative spaces for disruptive students so as not to interfere with ongoing learning.

Summary of Building Level Strengths and Suggestions

Strengths	Suggestions for Improvement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The NFI agency is about to adopt the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress as a universal academic assessment, the data from which will be used in student progress monitoring and program evaluation. 2. All schools employ the NFI agencies Normative Approach. 3. Teachers have many opportunities for professional development and training. 4. In spite of the challenges that present themselves in a shelter, Midway manages to attract and hire high quality staff. 5. The commitment to students is evident and consistent, and the students report that they feel it. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact the NHDOE to bring in technical consultants to do trainings for educational staff, e.g. Transition Planning. 2. Increase the use of technology for instruction, including iPads. 3. Assure the objectives of lessons are clearly stated; post instructional targets and schedule of activities in the classrooms. 4. Consider where students are sitting in the large classroom when working on different topics.