

WEST ISLAND YOUTH PROJECT

Therapeutic Services and Residence Program Information Folder

#2025 Information



AMCAL FAMILY SERVICES

Updated July 2025

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ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

AMCAL Vision and Mission

Vision

Creating a community where families are empowered with the knowledge, resources and support they need to thrive.

Mission

Healthier Families. Healthier Homes. Stronger Communities.

Our mission is to preserve and foster healthy relationships by supporting and empowering children, youth, young adults, and parents.

AMCAL Values

- **Nurturing:** AMCAL believes in persevering and fostering positive family relationships.
- **Respect:** AMCAL respects the choices of families and empowers parents to regain control of their family dynamic.
- **Support:** AMCAL recognizes that each family is unique and seeks to understand the family in achieving a healthier relationship.
- **Integrity:** AMCAL incorporates the highest levels of integrity in its governance, administration and programs.
- **Collaboration:** AMCAL believes in building collaborative relationships with other organizations, public institutions, schools and businesses to foster and enhance healthy communities.
- **Learning:** AMCAL encourages continuous learning through professional development and various collaborations, training, mentoring, evaluation, dialogue and constructive feedback.

AMCAL Operations

AMCAL Family Services operates from an integrated systemic, strengths-based, solution-focused theoretical orientation. In all its programs, services, and staff training, the agency adopts a holistic approach to its clients and a multidisciplinary approach to collaborating with other professionals and community organizations to best address the issues its clients identify.

At AMCAL, this therapeutic modality is characterized by the exploration of individual and family competencies and the development of strategies to promote positive change and healthier families. All of AMCAL's programs identify clear goals, employ parent-supportive practices, apply an intentional evaluation protocol, and function as part of a continuum of community care for families facing challenges. AMCAL's staff also engage in ongoing professional reflection.

ABOUT THIS INFORMATION FOLDER

This folder provides an overview of both our Therapeutic Services and Residence Program. While each program is distinct, they are closely intertwined, making it important for clients to have a complete and comprehensive overview of both. This document is intended to help you better understand how each program works—both individually and in relation to one another—so you can determine what may best support your family's needs.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Our Therapeutic Services (TS) offer families support, guidance, and practical strategies to navigate a wide range of challenges. The goal of the program is to help families recognize their strengths and prevent issues from escalating into more serious concerns. TS includes three core counselling services tailored to address family dynamics and interpersonal difficulties. In addition, we offer community support programs and deliver elementary school workshops in collaboration with local schools to foster early intervention and promote healthy relationships.

Core Counselling Services

Our counselling services offer short-term, solution-focused support to families navigating a variety of challenges. Programs are delivered by trained caseworkers and facilitators, and are designed to promote healthier family dynamics, effective communication, and long-term stability.

A) Outreach Family Counselling

AMCAL's Outreach Family Counselling is a short-term, solution-focused service for families with children and teens aged 5 to 17 who are experiencing challenges in their home life or relationships. The goal of the program is to help you better understand and respond to your family's needs, while encouraging positive changes and stronger connections at home.

You can choose between two formats—four or ten weekly sessions—and the service can be renewed up to three times during the school year, depending on your family's goals. You will be matched with a caseworker who usually meets with you at home once a week. Together, you'll explore practical tools and strategies to work through current challenges and build a healthier family environment.

Common areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- Improving communication
- Addressing behavioural concerns
- Supporting emotional well-being
- Building social skills
- Creating clear boundaries and routines
- Managing screen time and technology use

B) Emerging Adult Counselling

This program supports families with emerging adults aged 18 to 30 as you navigate the transition to greater independence and stability. The program consists of nine sessions, with the option for one additional session based on your family's and caseworker's needs.

Emerging Adult Counselling is a flexible Outreach Family Counselling program tailored to the unique challenges of "launching" young adults into adulthood. The sessions typically include:

- Three meetings with the emerging adult, the parents or guardians
- Three meetings with the emerging adult
- Three family meetings together

You'll decide how to use an optional tenth session based on your current needs.

The goal is to work with you and your family to develop a long-term plan that addresses the concerns and goals of both parents and emerging adults. The program focuses on:

- Helping parents/guardians find a healthy balance between support and accountability

- Supporting the emerging adult's growth toward autonomy and independence
- Creating a clear plan and developing skills to move forward
- Establishing a new balance in the relationship between parents/guardians and emerging adult

C) Parental Counselling

The Parental Counselling program supports you as a parent or guardian who wants to build your parenting skills and work toward a consistent, united approach in raising your children, teens, or young adults. This program is available as a series of ten weekly sessions, with the option for one renewal based on your family's needs and your caseworker's recommendation.

The program is open to parents and guardians at all stages, including:

- Preparing to become parents (pre-parental)
- New parents (post-delivery)
- Parenting school-aged children
- Parenting teenagers
- Supporting young adults

The term "parents/guardians" include two or more individuals involved in parenting, such as separated or divorced parents, blended families, or married couples.

Together with your caseworker, you'll explore how your personal history and family patterns (often gathered through tools like a genogram) influence the choices you make in your relationship and parenting. The program will help you:

- Understand how these patterns affect your family relationships and your connection with your children
- Create a clear plan and develop skills to support positive changes
- Work toward a new balance and harmony in your parenting relationship

Community Support Programs

Our community-based support groups are facilitated by trained professionals and designed to address the emotional well-being of parents and youth. They offer a space to share, learn, and receive support.

A) "YOU ARE NOT ALONE" – A guide to emotional well-being

This community support program is designed to help teens navigate the stresses of adolescence and build emotional resilience. Over eight one-hour sessions, you'll explore common challenges and learn effective tools to manage your feelings and everyday pressures.

Through engaging discussions and practical activities, teens will cover important topics such as:

- Thinking before acting
- Understanding the role of anger and different anger styles
- Improving communication skills
- Expressing your needs and getting what you want
- Building self-worth
- Recognizing the importance of perception
- Setting and working toward your personal goals

This program provides a safe space where teens can find support, build confidence, and develop skills to thrive emotionally during this important stage of life.

RESIDENCE PROGRAM

The Residence Program is a 14-week therapeutic intervention for families experiencing ongoing challenges with their adolescent (ages 12 to 17). This voluntary program combines structured weekday residential care with family counselling and weekly support for parents or guardians.

During the week, teens live at the residence from Monday to Friday, returning home on weekends to maintain family connection and apply the strategies they're learning. While in residence, teens continue to attend school during the day and follow a structured routine in the evening that includes homework, meals, therapeutic group sessions, and daily responsibilities like chores.

The Residence Program provides a safe, consistent environment to help teens gain new skills in communication, emotional regulation, and accountability. At the same time, the program supports parents and guardians in strengthening their parenting strategies and rebuilding connection with their teen.

The program is not a punishment, but rather a structured pause—giving families space to reset and move forward with a clearer sense of direction and shared goals.

Key Components

- **Residential Respite Care** (Monday to Friday): Teens stay at AMCAL during the week and return home Friday evenings for the weekend. Weekday routines are structured and supervised.
- **Family Counselling:** Families participate in weekly counselling sessions (14 total), led by a caseworker. Sessions include at least one home visit, one all-party meeting, and one school-based meeting. Others may take place at AMCAL or online.
- **Parent Support Group:** Parents/guardians attend a weekly evening support group to share experiences, receive guidance, and connect with others.
- **Daily Group Programming:** Teens take part in evening psycho-educational groups that support their social, emotional, and behavioral growth.
- **School Accountability:** Teens attend their regular school while in the program. Daily tracer sheets must be signed by teachers. Homework time is supervised each evening.
- **Structure and Responsibility:** Teens are responsible for maintaining their rooms, completing daily chores, making their lunches, and participating in household routines. Phones and internet access are limited and monitored.
- **Expectations and Boundaries:** Clear behavioral expectations and program rules are reviewed with each family at intake. Consistent structure and natural consequences help teens develop self-discipline and respect for others.
- **Weekend Reintegration:** Returning home each weekend gives families the chance to apply what they're learning and prepare for long-term change after the program.

Eligibility and Admission

- Teens must be between 12 and 17 years old and enrolled full-time in high school.
- Both the teen and parent(s)/guardian(s) must consent to the program.
- If the family lives in an area without public transportation, the parent/guardian is responsible for getting the teen to and from school during the week.

Program Closures and Summer

The Residence is closed for one week during Spring Break and for the full month of August. A structured Summer Program is available in July for teens currently enrolled in the Residence Program.

Program Guidelines

The Residence Program is built on structure, respect, and mutual accountability. These guidelines help ensure a safe, supportive, and consistent environment for everyone involved.

General Expectations

- Show respect to all peers, staff, and property.
- Participate fully in groups, chores, and counselling sessions.
- Keep personal space clean and follow hygiene routines.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality — no entering each other's rooms or sharing personal information.

School & Homework

- Return to AMCAL immediately after school unless other arrangements are approved.
- Tracer sheets must be signed by teachers every day.
- Homework time is supervised from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.
- If no homework is assigned, alternate educational work will be provided.

Chores & Hygiene

- Daily chores and shared responsibilities must be completed as assigned.
- Rooms must be kept tidy. Beds are made each morning, and personal hygiene is expected daily.
- Teens must always wear appropriate clothing, including pajamas for bed.

Technology & Communication

- Cellphones are stored in the office and returned in the morning.
- Phone calls are limited to 10 minutes and scheduled outside of key program times.
- Internet is used for schoolwork only, with staff supervision.
- No social media connections between teens in the program are permitted.

Behaviour & Consequences

- Natural consequences may include early bedtime, extra chores, or loss of privileges.
- Repeated rule-breaking may lead to reflection time or review of participation in the program.
- Aggressive behaviour, bullying, and possession of drugs or alcohol may lead to suspension or police involvement.
- Teens are not permitted to arrive under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Health & Safety

- Smoking and vaping are not allowed on the premises.
- Prescription medications are stored and administered by staff.
- Teens who are sick may be asked to stay home until fully recovered.

Weekends at Home

- Teens go home each weekend to apply what they're learning in the program.
- Parents must confirm a teen's health before their return on Monday.

Weekday Program Overview

While living in the residence from Monday to Friday, teens follow a structured weekday routine that encourages responsibility, personal growth, and stability. Here's an overview of the typical weekday schedule:

Time	Activity
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Snack & downtime (no use of stove)
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.	Supervised homework time
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Supper
7:00 – 7:30 p.m.	Clean-up and one-on-one check-ins with staff
8:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Group time (therapeutic programming)
9:00 – 9:15 p.m.	Evening snack and kitchen cleanup
9:15 – 9:30 p.m.	Quiet social time (ages 12–13)
9:30 – 10:00 p.m.	Quiet social time (ages 14+)
10:00 p.m.	Lights out (ages 13 and under)
10:30 p.m.	Lights out (ages 14+)

Additional Daily Expectations

- **Lunch Prep:** Teens are expected to make their lunch each evening upon returning from school.
- **Search Procedure:** Upon return from school or outings, all teens are respectfully searched by staff. School bags, clothing, and other belongings are checked. Personal items are stored in the office unless required for hygiene or schoolwork.
- **Personal Belongings:** Teens are responsible for their own belongings. AMCAL is not responsible for loss or theft. Valuable items are kept in the office. Teens may not borrow or lend items.

Special Situations

- **Suspensions:** If suspended from school, teens spend the first day in reflection and do not participate in evening activities. Continued suspension days are spent doing schoolwork until 3:00 p.m. A suspension essay is required before rejoining full programming. In some cases, parents may be asked to supervise at home.
- **Sick Days:** If a teen is ill, they are to remain in their room (except for meals) until supper. Contagious illnesses may require the teen to stay home. A doctor's note may be needed for re-entry. Parents must verbally confirm that their child is well enough to return to AMCAL after illness.
- **Pedagogical ("Ped") Days:** Teens may have a slightly more relaxed routine. However, chores and schoolwork are still expected to be completed.