

Treatment Program overview



WHITNEY ACADEMY



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our philosophy

All individuals have the potential for learning regardless of the type or degree of impairment. Students in need of individualized, prolonged assistance require a more intensive and specialized program of skill development to attain their full potential.

The Whitney Academy's program is designed to provide quality treatment and education to meet this need. Students at Whitney are treated and taught as individuals with special consideration and respect for their uniqueness and individual differences. They learn skills that give them an opportunity to grow and enable them to become more fully functioning members of society.

the Whitney Academy's purpose is twofold

1 The provision of quality educational, residential and clinical services to its students.

2 The preparation of students for re-entry to and success in their communities of origin or new communities, utilizing humanistic treatment and environments that maximize healthy development.



■ about us

Founded by and under the direction of George and Sheila Harmon since 1986, the Whitney Academy is a unique, year-round residential treatment center. We are nationally recognized for specializing in the treatment of dually diagnosed (developmentally delayed and psychiatrically disordered) young men, ages ten to twenty-two, who present with a wide spectrum of sexualized behavior problems ranging from trauma reactive to sexually abusive. All aspects of student life at Whitney reflect the Academy's care, compassion and respect for its students as individuals, from beautiful and comfortable community residences to comprehensive clinical, medical and educational services.



Whitney's program is highly monitored and staff secure. Our treatment model provides for community safety and state of the art treatment in what we believe is the most "normal and homelike" environment possible. The care and treatment of our student population considers the whole person - each individual's specific needs, his sense of belonging, self-esteem and social skills. Treatment at Whitney encompasses much more than what is offered by many traditional programs of this type.

accreditation/licensure

Our Joint Commission accredited, Massachusetts Department of Education approved and state licensed treatment program is enhanced by:

- Board Certified Psychiatrist in Child, Adult and Forensic Psychiatry
- Masters and Doctoral Level Clinicians
- (6) Students per Therapy Group
- Group and Individual Therapy
- Certified Special Education Teachers
- Nursing Services
- Physical Education
- Speech Therapy
- Video Conferencing
- Computer Lab
- Psychometric Testing/Evaluation
- (7) Hours of Weekly Therapy
- (1) Direct Care Staff to (2) Students Ratio
- Recreation Therapy
- Whole Brain Learning Techniques
- Licensed Family Services Social Workers
- Vocational and Pre-Vocational Training
- Experienced, Compassionate and Highly Motivated Staff
- Social Service/Transportation Liaison

■ student criteria

Students served at the Whitney Academy meet the following criteria:

- Male
- Ten to twenty-two years of age
- High moderate mental retardation to low average range of intelligence (IQ approx. 50-80)
- Emotional disturbance/mental illness
- Sexual behavior problems ranging from trauma reactive to sexually abusive

Presenting problems may include, but are not limited to:

- Sexualized Behavior Problems
- Aggressive Behaviors
- Post Trauma Symptoms of Abuse
- Mild Gross Motor Deficits
- Mood Disorders
- Language Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Thought Disorders
- Attention Deficits
- Hyperactivity
- Fine Motor Deficits
- Auditory Processing Deficits

■ assessment and treatment assessment

Whitney Academy recognizes the impact of trauma, the development of sexual behavioral problems and the broad range of developmental delays as significant factors to be addressed in the successful treatment of our students. We have utilized our experience and understanding of these factors in creating an assessment protocol that can guide academic, therapeutic, and behavioral interventions, measure progress, and inform risk assessment with a primary concern for the future safety of the student and the community at large.



“Various treatment modalities are developed, implemented, and reviewed until the student succeeds”



As with other treatment models that intervene in sexual behavior problems, Whitney addresses impulsivity, anti-social attitudes, cognitive distortions, and a variety of sexual attitudes and concerns. In addition, we recognize the impact of auditory and visual processing difficulties, executive functioning problems, and ongoing trauma symptoms in effecting the student's ability to meet the demands of daily living and to learn, internalize, and effectively use new coping, behavioral, and social skills. Our assessment protocol views the student's trauma symptoms, learning style, attachment relationships, and problem solving approaches as important aspects in understanding the current behavioral difficulties and informing an effective treatment perspective.

Upon admission, each student will undergo an assessment procedure that will help the treatment team to identify the student's individual emotional, behavioral and cognitive strengths and needs. The results of this assessment will be used to develop a comprehensive individualized behavior management plan tailored to each student's particular treatment needs. Each behavior management plan is designed to inform all staff members how to best respond to a student in order to: prevent/decrease abusive and negative behavior; optimize positive social interactions and; maintain positive emotional health. Specific individualized target behaviors are identified and addressed in each student's individual behavior management plan. Student responses to their behavior management plans are monitored, documented and communicated throughout the treatment team. Individual behavior plans are continually evaluated and modified as needed.



developmentally delayed children

At Whitney Academy, all of our students have been identified as having developmental delays; however, we realize that the nature and extent of these difficulties can vary significantly from student to student. The behavioral difficulties with which our students struggle, frequently divert attention from effectively identifying and addressing their learning and processing problems. We find that these problems are often a primary contributor to the students' overall adaptive difficulties.

Whitney Academy's philosophy of treatment seeks to understand the student's presenting behavioral problems in the context of the "whole child". This means that in order to address the presenting issues we must understand how the student experiences and understands their social, relational, and physical environment. We remain conscious of the way in which past traumatic experiences can shape or distort the student's interactions with others and how developmental delays can create significant obstacles in learning and utilizing new ways of coping with the world and meeting personal needs.

Our milieu is adapted to assist our students with information processing disorders including auditory processing, learning disabilities and sensorimotor problems. The treatment protocol at Whitney is increasingly expanding to address student's difficulties with visual-spatial skills, sensory integration and auditory processing. Treatments utilized combine whole brain learning techniques and strategies borrowed from

a variety of other disciplines including Occupational Therapy. Modifications are made to the physical environment, educational materials and presentation to better accommodate student learning styles. Strategies are employed with the goal of assisting our students' ability to self regulate, process sensory information and to modify their environment to better organize and structure their daily life to optimize independence and social success.



“A student's lack of **progress** is not viewed as student failure, but rather as a failure of the **treatment process**”

treatment approaches

Whitney utilizes a developmental treatment model, which seeks to address a student's behavioral and emotional difficulties within the broader context of normative child development. Developmental domains which are identified as a focus for treatment include: Self-Regulation, Attachment, Social Skills, Cognitive Skills, Independent Living, and Healthy Sexuality. Goals and progress in each of these domains are identified and integrated throughout the entire program.

Treatment progress is enhanced by:

1 The use of multi-modal treatment interventions that seek to help students learn and integrate information through a variety of learning pathways which may include:

- Experiential Therapies
- Drama Therapy
- Role Play
- Movement Exercises
- Play Therapy
- EMDR
- Biofeedback
- Whole Brain Learning Techniques
- Strategies Borrowed from the Occupational Therapy Discipline

2 A focus on helping students identify and modulate high autonomic arousal through relaxation techniques and biofeedback interventions as the basis for developing other prevention strategies.

3 An emphasis on facilitating positive attachment relationships through structure, attunement to the student's needs, consistent staff availability, and a high level of staff engagement.

4 Highlighting positive social skills, mutual relationships, acceptance of differences, personal responsibility, and healthy sexuality as essential elements of meeting emotional and social needs in a non-abusive manner.

Use of Accelerated learning techniques – These techniques present information in a way that involves both the left and right sides of the brain simultaneously and takes into consideration the fact that people vary in their learning styles and aptitudes. This well documented teaching technique enhances verbal instruction to become much more effective for students of all learning styles. Teachers, clinicians, and residential staff are trained to design and implement whole brain learning procedures in Whitney's educational, clinical and residential settings.





■ clinical services

psychology services

Upon admission to Whitney, the student is assigned to a Staff Therapist. This individual is a Masters or Doctoral level clinician who, in addition to providing direct clinical services, supervises and coordinates all case management and therapy functions for his or her caseload.

Staff Therapists provide individual and group therapy to a caseload of (12) students. Groups are comprised of not more than (6) students. We feel that a small group size geared to the individual student's cognitive level optimizes potential growth and learning. Students also participate in a twice-weekly Social Skills group that addresses issues such as anger management, sexuality, relationships, dating and life after Whitney.

family services

Services are provided by the Academy's licensed Social Workers to complement those already in place by referring or community agencies. Family Service Social Workers function as the main contact person between Whitney and involved individuals and service systems. The identified Social Worker facilitates ongoing contact through telephone and mail communication, on-grounds visits and, as appropriate, planned off-grounds and home visits.

An initial family assessment is completed when a student is admitted. Following the assessment, a plan is formulated which may include the following:

- Education for the family regarding placement and treatment concerns
- Coordination and evaluation of visitation and family contact
- Coordination of services with other agencies in order to meet families' needs relative to student treatment
- Supportive services to families regarding reunification or alternative planning

■ health and medical services

psychiatry services

Whitney's Psychiatrist is board certified in child, adult and forensic psychiatry. The Psychiatrist functions as the Medical Director for the agency and is on-call twenty-four hours a day. The psychiatrist meets weekly with nursing, residential, educational and clinical staff, as well as with students to evaluate treatment plans and address ongoing psychiatric concerns and psychopharmacological needs.

nursing services

Health and medical services are coordinated by the Academy's Nursing Department. Services include routine physical check-ups, neurology, dental/vision/hearing screenings and follow-ups, recommended lab testing and other physician-prescribed evaluations. These services are provided directly through physicians' office visits. The Director of Nursing oversees routine medical care for rashes, minor injuries and health complaints. Emergency medical services are accessed through local hospitals/E.M.T. services.

The Academy does not offer 24-hour nursing/medical services and is not able to meet the needs of students with uncontrolled medical conditions or intensive medical monitoring requirements. The Academy's nurses also work closely with the Psychiatrist in monitoring the administration and efficacy of prescribed medications and in communicating treatment changes to staff, families and involved agencies. Issues of personal hygiene, nutrition and healthy living are addressed by both Medical and Residential staff.

■ educational services

The Academy provides structured classroom instruction 5 1/2 hours daily, Monday-Friday, ranging from 5th through 12th grade academic levels. Classes are small (1:3 teaching staff/student ratio) and individualized instruction is provided by our certified Special Education Teachers and Aides. Our teaching staff receives regular professional development training that specifically targets our dually diagnosed student population. Traditional areas of Reading, Spelling, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies are taught, as well as life skills such as money management, safety and survival, sign identification and job search skills. Computer enhanced learning is part of the curriculum and educational field trips occur regularly.

Our educational curriculum is aligned with national standards and is enhanced by special classes conducted by the school nurse (weekly Health Class) and speech pathologist (weekly Language-based Class). Individual and group speech therapy is available based on student need. Each classroom is equipped with high-speed Internet access and cable television, utilizing educational web sites and programming. Physical Education classes are also incorporated into the school week.

Vocational readiness skills are addressed within the school curriculum. Pre-vocational training in the school setting focuses on development of skills and aptitudes in a variety of areas. All students participate in one of six different vocational readiness programs. Selected students are offered the unique opportunity to attend an off-campus vocational training program contracted with a local vocational technical high school. Hands-on trade skills in the areas of carpentry and culinary arts are introduced with future competitive employment as the goal.





educational services *continued*

School is held for 225 days per year with the following holidays off : New Year's Day; Marin Luther King Day; Washington's Birthday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veteran's Day; Thanksgiving and the Following Day and; Christmas Day. Students also have the following weeks off: week in mid-April (Spring Break); one week in July and one week in August (Summer Breaks); Week of Christmas Day through New Year's Day (Christmas Break). Residential facilities are in full operation during all school vacations.

■ residential services

All of our Community-based residences are beautiful and spacious colonial New England homes located in country settings. Residential life at Whitney Academy offers each student the opportunity to develop skills in the areas of social and community integration, life skills, and nutrition/physical fitness in an atmosphere emphasizing mutual respect, relationship building and cooperation.

The physical environment of the Academy's residences offers students multiple living areas for group activities, music and solitude. Sleeping areas are shared by students and are based on age, personal preferences and peer relationships. Our comfortable and home-like residences mirror healthy family living as much as possible.

Students are actively involved in all aspects of home life such as laundry, meal planning, grocery shopping and meal preparation. Students are also assisted in purchasing clothing and personal need items, all of which are necessary in the understanding of monetary values and development of money management skills. To aid students in the introduction to Whitney Academy as well as to help them with ongoing needs, we have developed the role of "Primary Advocate". A "Primary" is selected from the residential staff to serve as a mentor and advocate for his or her designated student.

Whitney Academy promotes social interaction within the community. Recreational activities such as roller skating, bowling, movies and mall trips are accessed through local facilities and are scheduled on a weekly basis. Health and physical fitness are a major focus in providing a well-rounded program. Students participate in a recreation therapy program promoting exercise, sportsmanship and a sense of self-improvement. Students are instructed in healthy eating habits and the benefits of the major food groups under the supervision of a registered nutritionist.

Whitney Academy maintains a one staff to two-student ratio to assist in the comprehensive residential program, as well as to address individual student needs and monitoring. A one staff to four-student ratio is maintained throughout third shift to ensure continuous student supervision. All positions are awake to meet the students' need for a safe and secure environment. Vigilant staff monitoring is augmented by the use of electronic surveillance cameras in the bedrooms.

■ referrals and admissions

Referrals to the Whitney Academy are received from in-state school systems and agencies, private persons and out-of-state medical, mental health and social service agencies. Upon receipt of a student referral packet, the Academy's Admission Screening Team initially determines the candidate's eligibility for admission through review of written information and telephone interviews with relevant individuals and agencies. If the initial screening is positive, a visit to the candidate's current placement will be scheduled to interview him along with family and/or service providers. A day or overnight visit to the Academy may also be scheduled. A final admission decision is made following this process. Alternate screening arrangements may be made, based on geographic distance and individual considerations.

To facilitate the screening process, referral sources are asked to provide the following written information as part of the initial referral packet:

- Guardianship/Custody Status
- Psychiatric Assessments
- Behavioral Data
- Social/Family History
- Police/Court Reports (if applicable)
- Psychosexual Evaluations
- Medical and Medication History/Status
- Psychological Evaluations
- Current Academic Level/IEP
- Responsible Agencies re: Tuition Payments
- Trauma Assessments
- Neurological Evaluations (if applicable)

Referrals may be sent to:

Ben Allen
Director of Admissions
The Whitney Academy, Inc.
PO Box 619
East Freetown, MA 02717

For further information:

phone [508] 763-3737 ext 223
fax [508] 763-5300
email ballen@whitneyacademy.org
website www.whitneyacademy.org

■ location



Whitney Academy is conveniently located in rural Southeastern Massachusetts in close proximity to Boston, Cape Cod, Providence and Newport, RI. The area is serviced by Logan International and T.F. Green Airports.





WHITNEY ACADEMY

www.whitneyacademy.org

