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Guidelines For Choosing A Treatment Program For A Teen With Add Or Adhd

By Russ Bundy

Many adolescents who have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention

Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) experience a number of behavioral and academic problems that can limit their success in interpersonal relationships, school, and individual achievement. These adolescents may lack self-control, have greater difficulty making friends and finding acceptance, be more likely to abuse substances, become involved in delinquency, or experience anxiety, mood, and behavioral disorders.

Most health care and psychological professionals agree that the best way to treat ADD/ADHD is with the use of both medication and behavioral modification techniques. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) recently conducted a study that found that children with ADD/ADHD who received both behavioral treatment and individually tailored medication had the greatest improvement in oppositional behavior academic outcomes.

Upon diagnosis, many children and adolescents with this disorder are prescribed medication as a first attempt to control the symptoms. However, many youth do not respond well to medication alone and the symptoms of the disorder may be quite pronounced or serious even with medication. If you have reached the conclusion that you can no longer deal with the symptoms of your child's disorder effectively in your own home due to excessive behavioral and academic problems, you may want to consider a program that offers a specialized academic program and behavior modification therapy. As you research treatment options that can mitigate the effects of ADD/ADHD, look for schools and programs that possess the following characteristics:

1) Choose a treatment program that offers a significant amount of structure. Adolescents with ADD/ADHD typically struggle to use large segments of free time productively but tend to thrive in environments that provide limits and teach self-discipline. A structured program should include a rigorous daily schedule and a well-defined set of rules. Adherence to a routine while acquiring of productive habits can greatly counteract common symptoms of the disorder.

2) Choose a treatment program that fosters and encourages individual accountability. Such a program will enforce consequences for inappropriate behavior and affirmative reinforcement for positive

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behavior. This type of a setting shows teenagers what types of behavior are acceptable and also helps them to experience the rewards of acting in socially appropriate ways.

3) Choose a program that offers an engaging and individualized education component. Many teens with ADD/ADHD struggle to adapt to large classrooms and traditional lecture–style instruction. Academic settings that make use of hands–on learning, multimedia presentations, and other diversified, interesting instructional methods are more likely to hold students' attention. Even with the right kind of instruction, teens with ADD/ADHD may not learn at the same pace as other students. An effective academic setting will acknowledge the need for flexibility by maximizing accountability while allowing for differences in the speed of learning.

4) Choose a treatment program with a low youth to staff ratio. Children with ADD/ADHD often require greater amounts of attention from adults and tend to act out more when they don't receive it. Oppositional behavior resulting from insufficient amounts of attention can be diminished when there is

enough adult supervision to go around. Remember, however, that the lower the student–to–staff ratio, the higher the cost, so this factor must be balanced with financial considerations.

5) Choose a treatment program that minimizes distractions. Many adolescents with ADD/ADHD have difficulty focusing on priorities which can result in many partially completed projects and goals and few accomplishments. The fewer the distractions and the greater the expectation for accountability, the more likely a teen is to make substantial strides in personal growth and achievement. Common distractions include but are not limited to excessive access to members of the opposite sex, unnecessary activities or activities that are overwhelming, and large student populations.

6) Choose a treatment program that teaches skills for improving interpersonal relationships. Many adolescents with ADD/ADHD lack the skills needed for building and maintaining positive relationships. Look for a program that provides opportunities for teens to improve their communication, especially with respect to giving and receiving feedback and communicating honestly. Additional social skills that should be emphasized include appropriate anger management, impulse control, and delaying gratification. Mastering these skills will ensure that youth will have greater success making and maintaining healthy relationships in real life situations.

7) Choose a treatment program that has a systematic way of developing self–esteem. Teens with ADD/ADHD may have formed a negative self–image due to the amount of negative feedback their behavior elicits from others and their self–perceived lack of competence in academics, interpersonal relationships, etc. Programs with a strong self–esteem component should foster identity development and encourage teenagers to drop self–imposed labels and limitations and put away image pretenses that some youth use to protect their own vulnerabilities.

8) Choose a treatment program that allows for increased independence and leadership as behavior improves. Such a program will recognize the need adolescents with ADD/ADHD have for autonomy by gradually increasing self–monitoring and personal responsibility over time.

9) Choose a treatment program that is able to regulate and monitor medications. The successful

program should be able to safely store, administer and adjust medications as needed.

Russ Bundy is the owner of Troubled Teen Programs website, visit

<http://www.troubledteenprograms.org>

for more information.

Understanding ADHD

By News Canada

(NC)—The behavioural disorder Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been recognized and treated since 1902. However, it is only in the last 20 years or so that research has demonstrated that it is a neurobiological disorder with far-reaching impact on children.

Originally it was believed that ADHD was a condition that children would eventually outgrow. We now understand that ADHD is not caused by poor parenting, poor teachers or schools, or family problems, but due to chemical differences in the brain. It is not surprising, therefore that as many as 60 per cent of children diagnosed with ADHD will continue to have symptoms into adulthood if not properly treated.

Despite increased awareness and identification of the disorder, many children are not provided with optimal treatment that provides continuous symptom relief. It is important to remember that ADHD is a disorder requiring treatment, not a set of behaviours requiring controls. Sub-optimal treatment can have serious consequences for children such as a lack of friends, accidental death, injury, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, criminal activity, and causing marital difficulties for their parents.

Research indicates the greatest improvement in symptoms is seen with a combination of counselling and medical treatment. For many children and their families, ADHD diagnosis provides a welcome explanation for their difficulties and leads to appropriate treatment.

All medications currently approved to treat ADHD belong to a class called stimulants. A number of new investigational ADHD treatments offer great promise and in the future Canadians will have more choice in ADHD treatment.

For more information on ADHD it's important to speak with your doctor.

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