



Parent Information Packet

Heartlight Ministries Residential Counseling Center and School

Heartlight Ministries has established policies to support both the individual success of your teen and the overall well-being of every student in our care. These guidelines allow us to provide consistent, high-quality support while maintaining a structured environment where growth and change can take place.

We are committed to keeping parents fully informed about how Heartlight Ministries operates and to maintain clear, ongoing communication. Our desire is for every family to understand the purpose, strategies, and expectations that shape their teen's experience at Heartlight.

The following procedures address key areas of the Heartlight Ministries' program. Please read each section carefully and feel free to reach out with any questions.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP & EXPECTATION

Over the years, we have found that the single most important factor in a teen's success at Heartlight is parental commitment. This includes parent trust in the program's philosophy, parent support of staff decisions, and a willingness to fully partner with Heartlight Ministries program and staff. It is our hope that all parents will be "on board" and supportive of the staff. We ask parents to actively engage by:

- Seeking to understand the purpose, intent, and structure of the program
- Communicating regularly with staff
- Supporting program guidelines and expectations
- Participating in all aspects of the program
- Remaining unified with Heartlight Ministries, especially during challenging moments

A strong partnership between parents and staff is essential. When teens perceive unity, they are more likely to engage honestly and make progress. When they sense division, however, they may attempt to manipulate situations or avoid growth by exploiting inconsistencies.

A lack of alignment between parents and Heartlight staff can create tension for a teen and reduce the effectiveness of the program. For example, discussing early return home or setting

timelines not tied to graduation can shift focus away from growth and toward exiting the program.

Similarly, shielding a teen from consequences or difficult emotional work can limit progress. As Mark often says, *“conflict is a precursor to change.”* Growth frequently happens during challenging moments and attempts to “rescue” can interrupt that process.

It is also common for teens to express frustration, especially when facing consequences. While this can be difficult to hear, we encourage parents to seek understanding by communicating with staff before responding. A teen’s perspective may be incomplete or influenced by emotions, and stepping in too quickly can undermine both the process and the opportunity for growth.

Our goal is not to dismiss concerns, but to address them together with clarity and unity. We are always available to listen, provide context, and work toward solutions. When parents trust staff and remain aligned and focused on the same goal, a stable and supportive environment is created where meaningful change can take place.

PARENT & FAMILY RETREATS

Heartlight Ministries hosts a series of retreats during a teen’s stay. A total of 6 retreats will take place: 3 Parent Retreats and 3 Family Retreats.

Parent Retreats

The purpose of these retreats is to:

- Allow parent to get to know the staff
- Understand the philosophy, purpose, and intent of Heartlight
- Facilitate unity between families and staff members
- Provide tools, insight, and practical strategies for navigating challenges
- Foster a supportive community among the parents

There are 3 Parent Retreats scheduled approximately every three months. The Retreats, P1, P2, and P3, each have a specific purpose and are intended to be attended in sequence. A schedule of retreat dates will be provided, and all information will be communicated by the counseling team in advance for planning purposes.

Parent Retreats are smaller in size, generally including parents whose teens have started at Heartlight near to the same time. Each is a structured, seminar-style gathering led by Mark Gregston, Blake Nelson, and the counseling team.

Family Retreats

Additionally, Heartlight hosts 3 Family Retreats throughout the year. These are campus-wide events, involving all residents. These retreats are relaxed and relational and designed to foster connection within the family. They facilitate opportunities for parents, residents, and siblings to spend meaningful time together in a supportive and fun environment.

For both Parent and Family Retreats, residents are allowed to go off campus with parents if they are on Level 3 or higher and have approval from their counselor. For instances where a teen is not yet eligible for off-campus privileges, alternative on-campus activities/meals will be provided allowing parents the opportunity to spend time with their teen.

Experience has shown that families who actively take part in retreats are better prepared to support their teen at Heartlight and their transition home. Retreats are essential and play a significant role in overall success. As a result, **retreats are considered required**. Heartlight strongly encourages all parents to prioritize attendance and engage fully in retreats.

PARENT VISITS ---

Heartlight Ministries is committed to supporting the family as a whole and values the role of ongoing family connection during a teen's time in the program. While visits from parents and immediate family members are encouraged; they are structured to ensure they contribute positively to each teen's progress.

Visitation is determined by the teen's level within in program and requires approval from the teen's counselor. In most cases, visits are limited to once per month. This structure allows residents to remain focused on their growth while maintaining meaningful family connection. Heartlight reserves the right to adjust, postpone, or limit visitation when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the teen, the family, or the program. Factors that may influence this decision include behavioral concerns, emotional readiness, or current progress within the level system. Our goal is for each visit to be constructive, supportive, and aligned with the work being done at Heartlight. We encourage parents to view visitation as an extension of the program's goals, reinforcing growth, responsibility, and healthy relationships.

PARENT COMMUNICATION ---

Ongoing communication between parents and Heartlight Ministries' staff is a vital part of each teen's success. We are committed to providing consistent updates and maintaining open lines of communication so that parents remain informed, involved, and aligned with the program. Parents connect by phone with their teen's counselor on a bi-weekly basis to discuss progress, current challenges and areas of growth. These conversations provide valuable insight into the teen's experience and allow for collaboration in supporting their growth.

Because responsibilities are shared among staff, parents may also be directed to specific staff members for updates in particular areas. These include Residential Directors, Academic Staff, Residential Staff, etc. This ensures that parents receive the most accurate information.

Parents can expect:

- Ongoing feedback regarding their teen's emotional, behavioral, and relational progress
- Regular academic updates
- Immediate or significant concerns and celebrations

We invite parents to call should any questions, concerns, comments or needs arise. Please leave detailed voicemails or texts with staff members, if necessary. Also, please allow 24 hours for responses, as staff may not be available immediately. (An urgent on-call line is available for emergencies)

It can often be helpful, when appropriate, to prepare questions or topics of discussion in advance of scheduled calls. Written communications, such as email, can also be used to share updates or inquire of staff.

Consistent, proactive communication between parents and staff strengthens the partnership and plays a critical role in a teen's progress and success.

PLANS OF SERVICE

Within the first 40 days of a teen's enrollment, parents will receive a **Plan of Service** outlining individualized goals and areas of focus. This plan is reviewed and updated every six months. Parents and their teen will provide input as part of this process. Parent perspective is valuable, and we encourage parents to review each plan carefully, discussing any questions, concerns, or feedback with the teen's counselor and/or treatment team.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP WITH HEARTLIGHT'S LEVEL SYSTEM

Heartlight Ministries' **Level System** is designed to promote responsible thinking, healthy behavior, and meaningful personal growth. As residents demonstrate progress, they receive increased privileges that reflect their development and commitment to change. This system is a central component of the Heartlight program and plays a vital role in preparing teens for life-long success beyond their time on campus.

The **Level System** provides a structured pathway for growth by:

- Encouraging accountability and responsibility reinforcing

- Positive behaviors and decision-making gradually increasing
- Privileges as trust is earned helping residents internalize
- Healthy patterns of thinking and behavior

Completion of the **Level System** is strongly tied to a teen's success after Heartlight. Historically, residents who do not complete the program face greater challenges transitioning back home and are more likely to regress to previous behaviors.

For this reason, parental support of the **Level System** is essential. We ask that parents actively reinforce both the privileges and limitations associated with each level. This includes:

- Supporting guidelines related to communication, visits, and home breaks
- Avoiding exceptions that conflict with the resident's current level
- Encouraging progress through the **Level System** rather than seeking shortcuts

It is Heartlight's goal for every resident to complete the **Level System** and graduate from the program. For this reason, we strongly encourage families to enter the program with the intention of seeing it through to completion and graduation. Our staff will support this goal and will not make exceptions that would compromise the integrity of the **Level System** program. Families who are uncertain about committing to full completion are encouraged to carefully consider this expectation prior to enrollment.

STAYING CONNECTED

Regular communication between parents and students is important, and Heartlight Ministries provides structured opportunities for this connection.

PHONE CALLS

Parents call their teen one time per week at a pre-arranged time coordinated with the Residential Director. These calls typically begin after the teen's initial counseling session, usually within the first 7-10 days following admissions.

To ensure consistency and availability:

- Calls are scheduled in advance
- Each call is limited to 30 minutes
- Parents are responsible for initiating the call

Students are not permitted to make outgoing calls or use personal cell phones. All communication takes place through designated Heartlight land lines phone.

In order to maintain a healthy and productive environment, staff may end a call early if it becomes unproductive, disrespectful, or emotionally harmful. Our goal is for each conversation to be supportive, constructive, and aligned with the teen's progress.

MAIL

Written communication is another valuable way for families to stay connected. In most cases, residents may begin to receive mail from immediate family within the first 14 days of placement. In rare cases, Heartlight may request that mail be limited or not sent.

Mail must include a return address to be delivered to a resident. Communication with individuals outside of immediate family is based on a resident's level in the Level System and counselor approval. Residents may send and receive mail according to level guidelines.

Mail is generally not censored. However, Heartlight reserves the right to monitor or restrict correspondence if there are concerns regarding the teen's well-being. Incoming and outgoing mail may be opened if concerns arise.

If a letter intended for a teen's friend is included with a parent's letter, parents are asked to hold that letter until they have talked to their teen's counselor for approval.

Parents may provide envelopes and stamps for their teen or arrange for these items to be purchased through the resident's expense account.

Mail should be addressed to:

P.O. Box 286

Hallsville, TX 75650

PACKAGES & GIFTS

Parents are welcome to send gifts for birthdays, holidays, and special occasions. Heartlight encourages gifts that are thoughtful, reasonable, and appropriate. Before sending any items, parents are asked to contact their teen's counselor or Resident Director for approval to ensure alignment with program guidelines.

If food or treats are included, we ask that reasonable quantities be sent but enough for an entire house. Food is generally not permitted to be kept in the resident's bedrooms and storage space is limited.

If packages are mailed through the United States Postal Service (USPS), use:

**P.O. Box 286
Hallsville, TX 75650**

If packages are sent through UPS or FedEx, use:

**7345 East Highway 80
Longview, TX 75605**

HEARTLIGHT BREAKS

Heartlight Ministries has a several scheduled breaks throughout the year. Breaks generally align with traditional school calendars, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break, and summer transitions. During these times, residents who have met appropriate requirements may have the opportunity to return home for all or part of the break.

The purpose of these breaks is to provide meaningful opportunities for family connection while maintaining consistency in each teen's progress and overall growth.

Eligibility for breaks is determined by:

- Current level in the Level System
- Behavior and restriction status
- Completion of responsibilities
- Recommendation of the treatment team/counselor
- Parental input

Each resident's situation is evaluated individually by the Heartlight treatment team to determine whether a break would best support their continued growth. If there are concerns, a teen may be asked to remain on campus during the break period. In some cases, destination rather than a home break may be suggested in order to facilitate a better break experience.

Break dates will be communicated with parents by the counseling team.

It is important to note that eligibility for break travel may change if behavioral concerns arise leading up to the scheduled break. In some cases, previously approved plans may be modified

or canceled if it is determined to be in the best interest of the teen. Parental understanding and support is essential in these instances.

Christmas Break: Heartlight Ministries closes for four days at Christmas to allow staff to enjoy the holiday with their families. It is a requirement that all residents, regardless of level or other factors, leave campus for those mandatory break days. A teen's counselor will communicate specific dates and details for this break.

Preparation for Breaks

Prior to any approved breaks, the teen's counselor will communicate with parents and the resident regarding expectations, structure, and guidelines for the visit. These expectations are based on the resident's current level. It is essential that parents cooperate with break guidelines.

During any break, if challenges arise, families are encouraged to contact Heartlight. Staff will be available to provide support, even if the teen's primary counselor is unavailable.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR BREAKS

Heartlight works closely with families to coordinate all travel plans for residents in a way that is organized and efficient.

Flying

All travel arrangements must be coordinated in advance with your teen's counselor. Counselors will provide specific travel dates and times. Once a tentative itinerary has been made, it must be submitted to the counselor for review and approval **BEFORE** any tickets are purchased or finalized. Travel booked prior to approval may require changes and result in additional fees at families expense.

After counselor approval of travel itinerary, tickets may be purchased. Ticket confirmation must be provided to Heartlight Ministries at least one week in advance of travel, although submission earlier is preferred.

Heartlight provides transportation to and from the Longview Airport (**GGG**). Travel through Shreveport (**SHV**) or Tyler (**TYR**) must be discussed and approved in advance. Transportation to or from Dallas area airports (DFW or DAL) is not provided.

Parent Pickup from Campus

Parents driving to pick up their teen from campus should coordinate date and approximate arrival and departure times with their teen's counselor in advance.

Note: Travel expenses for approved breaks are the responsibility of the parents.

LIFE AT HEARTLIGHT

COUNSELING AT HEARTLIGHT

The counseling program at Heartlight Ministries is a central component of each teen's experience and is integrated into daily life on campus. Through consistent interactions, relationship-building, and structured therapeutic support, our goal is to help each student develop greater self-awareness, emotional maturity, and personal responsibility.

Counseling

All Heartlight counselors are licensed professionals, bringing clinical training, experience, and accountability to the therapeutic process. This ensures that each resident receives care that is both relational and grounded in showed therapeutic practices.

Residents participate in:

- Weekly **individual** counseling sessions, providing focused time to address personal challenges, goals, and progress
- Small **group** therapy sessions twice per week, where students engage in guided discussions on topics such as anger, depression, abuse, self-esteem, relationships, substance abuse, manipulation, deceitfulness, divorce, peer-pressure, adoptions, and relational and social skills.

These groups settings allow teens to process experiences, receive feedback, and practice new skills in a supportive environment.

Heartlight primarily utilizes Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) as foundational approaches in working with residents, coupled with Biblical truth. These evidence-based methods help students identify unhealthy patterns of thinking and behavior, develop practical coping skills, regulate emotions, and make more constructive choices in their daily lives.

In addition to formal counseling sessions, therapeutic work continues throughout the day in residential settings. Relationships with staff create ongoing opportunities for mentorship, accountability, and growth as teens apply what they are learning in real-life situations.

Psychiatry

Heartlight works in coordination with a consulting psychiatrist who provides evaluations and prescription medication management. Appointments occur on the Heartlight campus. The teen's counselor serves as the primary point of communication between parents, the treatment team, and the psychiatrist. Please note psychiatry appointments are not included in tuition and parents will be billed directly by psychiatrist as private pay for psychiatry appointments.

SPIRITUAL LIFE AT HEARTLIGHT

Heartlight is a Christian ministry grounded in biblical truth and committed to using Scripture as a foundation for personal growth and family restoration. We believe that lasting change is closely connected to a person's understanding of their identity, purpose, and relationship with Jesus Christ.

While spiritual opportunities are a regular part of life at Heartlight, our approach is not to force or pressure residents, but to invite them into a deeper understanding of faith through experience, discussion, and relationship.

Residents participate in:

- Weekly church attendance
- Optional Bible studies, offered either within their house or in larger group settings
- Ongoing opportunities to ask questions, process thoughts, and engage in conversations with staff

Spiritual development is also integrated into daily life through residential interactions, counseling, and program activities. These moments provide opportunities for residents to reflect, ask questions, and consider how biblical principles apply to their lives. Our goal is for each resident to develop a stronger sense of identity, purpose, and direction, including the opportunity to explore a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

ACADEMICS AT HEARTLIGHT

Heartlight's academic program is designed to provide residents with a consistent and structured learning environment while they are enrolled in the program. While academics are not the primary focus of Heartlight, we recognize the importance of helping residents continue to make progress and stay on track toward graduation.

Heartlight's academic program is fully accredited through recognized educational organizations, including **AdvancED**, which is affiliated with the NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, the Northwest Accreditation Commission, and the SACS Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. This accreditation ensures that the education provided meets established standards of quality and that credits earned can be appropriately transferred.

All residents participate in an on-site academic program utilizing an online curriculum through one of two accredited providers:

- **Park City Independent** – a fully accredited online school offering a virtual classroom experience that includes video instruction, assignments, quizzes, and tests. Students work at their own pace while maintaining access to instructors. Upon completion, coursework is reflected on an official transcript, and students may earn a diploma if all graduation requirements are met.
 - **Cost:** approximately \$285 per course
- **Texas Tech University Independent School District (TTUISD)** – an accredited program recognized by the Texas Education Agency. TTUISD provides flexible educational options designed to meet state standards and prepare students for required assessments.
 - **Cost:** approximately \$225 per course

Students typically begin with two courses at a time. This approach helps prevent students from becoming overwhelmed while they adjust to Heartlight. Additional courses may be added as progress is made, with approval from the Academic Director.

Heartlight has certified teachers on staff who supervise the classroom, offer instruction, and support students in their coursework. Once students are enrolled in their selected curriculum, their progress is monitored by Heartlight staff and through the online learning platform, Edgenuity.

Parents will receive:

- Progress reports directly from the online curriculum provider
- Regular updates from the Academic Director

The Academic Director develops an individualized academic plan for each resident based on their educational history, learning needs, and graduation requirements. The Director also serves as the liaison between Heartlight and the curriculum providers, overseeing enrollment, ordering necessary curriculum, monitoring progress, and ensuring that each student is moving forward appropriately.

It is important to recognize that as residents adjust to the Heartlight environment and begin addressing personal and emotional challenges, there may be periods when academic progress slows. This is a normal part of the process. During these times, our goal is to provide encouragement and support while helping each student continue making steady progress. All course fees, materials, and any associated academic costs are the responsibility of the family and require parent approval prior to enrollment.

OFF CAMPUS OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the Heartlight Ministries program, residents regularly participate in supervised activities off campus. These off-campus experiences are an important part of the relational and developmental approach of the program, providing opportunities for growth in a variety of “real life” settings.

Off campus activities may include house outing, group activities, program events, recreational opportunities, church, and privilege-based special events.

ADMISSIONS DAY

Parents are required to be on campus for their teen’s admissions day, also called Intake Day. This is an important and structured part of the enrollment process, designed to ensure a smooth and well-supported transition to Heartlight.

During Intake Day, parents and their teen will participate in several key steps, including:

- completion and signing of all necessary documents, including medical, legal and program related forms
- financial processing, including initial tuition payment and establishing expense account
- meeting between parents and the teen’s treatment team to review program expectations, discuss initial goals, and begin building a strong partnership and communication plan
- initial individual meeting between the resident and members of the treatment team allowing staff to begin to build rapport and assessing immediate needs

Because Intake Day sets the foundation for a family’s time at Heartlight, it is essential that parents arrive prepared with all required items.

A detailed list of required items is provided in the admissions material.

LEVEL 1 (ORIENTATION)

When a teen first arrives at Heartlight Ministries, a structured transition period is essential to help in adjusting to their new environment. During this time, staff focus on helping each resident understand the expectations, routines, and core principles of the program.

This initial phase, called **Level 1** (Orientation), allows staff to observe the teen's attitude, willingness, demeanor, teachability, and understanding of their placement at Heartlight. It also provides the foundation for building trust, establishing structure, and introducing the key elements necessary for success.

Because each resident adjusts differently, progression through this phase is based on their engagement with the program, their openness to direction, and their ability to begin following guidelines.

A consistent start during this transition period is essential. When teens gain a clear understanding of expectations early on, they are better equipped to move forward productively and make the most of their time at Heartlight.

*Please see the Level System Guide for a detailed description of the Levels

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Heartlight Ministries Board of Directors approves the monthly tuition fees annually. Heartlight's tuition structure is designed to cover the comprehensive care provided to each resident, including housing, food, counseling, academic support, supervision, and program activities.

TUITION & BILLING

Monthly tuition is due by the 5th of each month and is typically billed between the 20th and 23rd of the preceding month. The initial month's tuition is collected at the time of intake and is **nonrefundable**, for any reason.

Tuition is calculated on a 30-day month basis, regardless of the actual number of days in a month. If a resident's first month does not align exactly with a calendar month, any remaining days after the initial 30-day period will be prorated accordingly.

A full month's tuition is required during any period in which a resident remains enrolled in the program, regardless of breaks, trips away from campus, or graduation.

In the event of early withdrawal, termination, dismissal, or a runaway situation, parents are responsible for **28 additional days of tuition** from the date the resident leaves the program. If tuition payments extend beyond the required period, any applicable overpayment will be refunded.

Accounts that become 60 days past due a signed promissory note for the outstanding balance will be required. Failure to bring the account current within 15 days or return the signed agreement within the specified timeframe may result in dismissal from the program.

Heartlight will provide a 60-day notice prior to any tuition increases.

INSURANCE

Heartlight Ministries does not bill insurance directly.

Upon request, Heartlight will provide itemized monthly invoices to parents that are coded for insurance purposes.

Heartlight is licensed as a General Residential Operation and not a Residential Treatment Center. Because of this distinction, most insurance providers will not cover tuition related to room, board, activities, supervision, and other program services. However, some families may be eligible for reimbursement of individual and group counseling services through out-of-network or outpatient benefits. The amount of a family's reimbursement (if any) is dependent upon insurance coverage, deductible amount, and other insurance factors. Heartlight staff is unable to provide an exact amount of any reimbursement amounts. It is the responsibility of parents to verify coverage and submit claims independently.

RESIDENT EXPENSE ACCOUNTS

Each family is required to establish a resident expense account with an initial deposit of \$400 at the time of admission. This account is used to cover personal and incidental expenses, including:

- Toiletries and personal care items
- School supplies
- Routine medical expenses
- Medications
- Approved incidental needs

A detailed statement, including receipts, will be provided monthly, and families are responsible for replenishing the account upon receipt.

All purchases from this account are managed and approved by Heartlight staff in accordance with program guidelines. Residents do not have direct access to these funds.

The following expenses are **not covered** by the expense account and require separate payment or approval:

- clothing purchases (unless pre-approved and funds are provided in advance)
- medical expenses exceeding \$100
- academic curriculum through Park City Independent or Texas Tech
- psychiatric services

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

Parents are asked not to send money directly to their teen or allow them to carry money while enrolled in the program. All funds should be handled through Heartlight to ensure proper oversight and alignment with program expectations.

Any purchases or financial decisions related to the resident should be coordinated with Heartlight staff to ensure they are appropriate and supportive of the student's progress.

STRUCTURE & SAFETY

Heartlight is committed to providing a safe, structured, and supportive environment where residents can grow, learn, and develop healthier patterns of behavior. Clear expectations, consistent boundaries, and appropriate accountability are essential to creating an environment where meaningful change can take place.

STRUCTURE & EXPECTATIONS

Daily life at Heartlight is intentionally structured to provide stability and consistency. Residents are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the program, including counseling, academics, house responsibilities, and group activities.

This structure helps residents:

- Develop responsibility and self-discipline
- Build healthy routines and habits
- Learn to function successfully within a community
- Practice making positive choices in a consistent environment

Staff provide guidance, support, and supervision throughout the day to ensure that expectations are understood and followed.

SAFETY & SUPERVISION

The safety of each resident is a top priority. Heartlight maintains a supervised environment designed to protect both the individual teen and the broader community.

This includes:

- Ongoing staff supervision and presence
- Clear behavioral expectations and boundaries
- Intervention when behaviors present a risk to the resident or others
- Individualized responses based on each resident's needs and circumstances

RUNAWAY SITUATIONS

In the event that a resident leaves campus without permission (runs away), Heartlight Ministries will immediately notify local law enforcement and file a missing person report. Parents will be contacted promptly and kept informed.

During the first 24 hours, Heartlight staff will make all reasonable efforts to locate the teen. This may include searching the surrounding area and following up on potential leads. However, it is important to understand that Heartlight must continue to operate and provide care for all residents on campus. The safety, structure, and stability of all residents cannot be compromised by a single resident's decision to run away. As a result, some staff will remain on campus continuing programming, while others are searching.

Parents are encouraged to assist by contacting friends, checking communication channels (such as phone, email, social email), and notify Heartlight of any information. In many cases, residents attempt to make contact with family or friends, making ongoing communication between parents and staff especially important.

If a resident remains missing past 24 hours, primary responsibility for the search will rest with law enforcement. Heartlight will remain in communication with authorities and assist as appropriate but will not be able to dedicate ongoing staff resources to active search efforts. Families may also be advised to engage a private investigator at their own expense. Heartlight can provide referrals and will cooperate fully with all efforts to locate the teen.

Once a resident returns, the situation will be carefully evaluated by the treatment team to determine appropriate next steps, including any impact to placement in the program. Each situation is reviewed individually with consideration for the well-being of the resident and the overall campus community.

SELF-HARM & THREATS OF SELF-HARM

Heartlight Ministries takes all self-harm behaviors and threats very seriously. The safety and well-being of each resident is our highest priority. Self-harm may include behaviors such as intentional cutting, scratching, burning, body piercing, ingestion of harmful substances. When a resident has a history of self-harm, expresses thoughts of self-harm, or engages in self-harm behaviors while in the program, Heartlight will implement safety measures designed to protect the teen and provide appropriate care.

These measures may include:

- Increased supervision and time spent in common areas of living spaces
- Frequent staff check-ins and monitoring
- Temporary limitations on access to personal items that could be used for self-harm behaviors
- Adjustments to sleeping arrangements
- Monitoring of personal belongings and living spaces
- Temporary restriction from certain program activities, when appropriate

Each situation is evaluated individually, and interventions are based on the resident's current emotional state, past behaviors, and overall needs. If medical attention is required, or if there is a significant concern for the resident's safety, Heartlight will seek immediate care through appropriate medical or psychiatric services.

Parents will be notified if there is an incident of self-harm or if staff determine that a resident may be at risk. Ongoing communication will be maintained as decisions are made regarding care and next steps.

If at any point Heartlight determines that a resident's safety cannot be adequately maintained within the program, the resident may be referred to a higher level of care, such as a psychiatric hospital, until they are stabilized. Following stabilization, the treatment team will assess whether a return to Heartlight is appropriate.

Our approach focuses first on **ensuring safety**, and then on helping the resident develop healthier coping strategies and alternative ways to manage difficult emotions.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline at Heartlight is intended to be purposeful and growth oriented. Rather than focusing solely on consequences, our approach is designed to help teens understand their behavior, take responsibility, and develop healthier alternatives.

Discipline is:

- Consistent and fair
- Appropriate to the situation and individual
- Focused on learning and growth
- Administered with respect and care

Heartlight does not use any form of discipline that is physically or emotionally harmful. **No form of corporal punishment is ever utilized.** There are no harsh, cruel, or unnecessary punishments, and hazing is strictly prohibited. Discipline will never include actions or language that demean a resident's character or diminish their sense of worth. At all times, residents will be treated with dignity and respect, and will never be shamed.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Heartlight places a strong emphasis on recognizing and reinforcing positive growth.

Encouragement and acknowledgement are important components of helping teens develop confidence, responsibility and healthy patterns of behavior.

Progress is evaluated in several key areas:

Academic Progress

Residents who meet academic expectations receive consistent encouragement and recognition from academic staff. Progress in this area also supports continued advancement through the Level System.

Family Relationships

Residents who demonstrate growth in their family relationships, take responsibility for past behaviors, and show a willingness to improve communication may be given increased opportunities for family interaction. This may include additional visits, time at home, or other relational privileges.

Daily Living & Behavior

Residents who consistently demonstrate honesty, responsibility, and respect toward staff and peers are recognized through advancement in the Level System, resulting in increased privileges and opportunities.

In addition, residents who are progressing well may be offered special opportunities such as outings, recognition events, or other program-based rewards.

Heartlight is committed to using encouragement, praise, and positive reinforcement alongside discipline. Our goal is to help residents build self-esteem, develop self-control, and learn to make positive choices by reinforcing growth whenever possible.

RESTRICTION STATUS

At times, a resident's behavior or attitude may indicate a need for increased structure, accountability, and support beyond standard disciplinary measures. In these situations, Heartlight may implement a **Restriction Status**.

Restriction Status is designed to:

- Provide a more structured environment
- Address patterns of behavior that are not improving through normal discipline
- Help the resident refocus, stabilize, and re-engage in the program

Placement on a restriction level is determined by staff based on the resident's behavior, responsiveness to previous interventions, and overall impact on themselves and the community. Each level of restriction includes clearly defined expectations, limitations, and opportunities for progress. Movement between levels is based on demonstrated improvement in attitude, behavior, and engagement.

The following outlines the two levels of restrictions at Heartlight.

	Restriction 1	Restriction 2
Purpose	To address declining behavior when standard discipline is no longer effective	To address more serious or persistent behavior when prior interventions have not been successful
When Used	• Repeated or escalating behavioral concerns • Disregard for expectations • Early signs of disengagement • Runaway situations*	• Continued lack of progress after Restriction 1 • Major behavioral concerns (substance use, extreme disrespect, etc) • Runaway situations*
Structure	Increased structure with daily accountability & expectations for participation	Highly structured environment with limited participation in regular program activities
School	May continue attending school, unless otherwise determined	Removed from school during Restriction 2 which may result in credit loss
Work Projects	Daily work projects when not in school	Full-day work projects
Privileges	Reduced privileges in line with Level 2 status	Minimal privileges in line with Level 1 status
Participation	Limited participation in activities (Masters, Q&A, etc.)	No participation in activities (Masters, Q&A, etc)
Counseling	Continued participation	Continued participation, as determined by staff
Duration	Evaluation every 5-10 days	Evaluations every 5-10 days
Progression	• Improvement leads to return to regular program structure	• Improvement may result in step-down to Restriction 1 • Lack of progress leads to further evaluation.

Runaway situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Cases of substance use (drug, alcohol, nicotine, etc.) are evaluated individually.

DISMISSAL FROM HEARTLIGHT

Heartlight Ministries' goal is to see each teen successfully complete the Level System, graduate the program, and experience meaningful, lasting change. While outcomes cannot be guaranteed, Heartlight remains committed to faithfully providing guidance, structure, relationship, and support throughout each teen's time in the program. Lasting progress is most often achieved when a teen engages with the process and works through challenges alongside staff.

In some cases, even with the thorough admissions process, it may become apparent that a teen's needs extend beyond the scope of what Heartlight is able to provide. If this occurs, staff will assist families in identifying appropriate next steps, when possible, in these situations.

There are also situations in which a resident's behavior, attitude, or lack of engagement limits the effectiveness of the program or negatively impacts other teens' progress. Because Heartlight serves a community of teens, it is essential that each resident demonstrate a basic level of respect, cooperation, and willingness to participate in the process.

A resident may be considered for dismissal if:

- there is a **consistent** lack of progress or refusal to engage in the program
- behavior becomes disruptive or negatively influences other residents
- there is **ongoing** disrespect toward staff, peers, or program expectations
- safety concerns arise for the resident or others
- **repeated** violations of program policies occur despite intervention a **persistent** unwillingness to participate in counseling

In certain situations, more serious behaviors, such as substance use, threats of harm, repeated runaway attempts, or significant rule violations may result in immediate review and potential dismissal.

Parents are notified as soon as concerns arise regarding a teen's continued placement. In many cases, Heartlight will work with families to allow time for transition planning and placement in another program. However, there are situations where immediate discharge may be necessary in order to protect the safety and well-being of the teen or others. In such cases, parents may be required to arrange for their teen's departure with a short timeframe.

All decisions regarding dismissal are made with careful consideration of both the teen and the Heartlight community as a whole.

ITEMS REQUIRED FOR INTAKE DAY

To ensure a smooth and efficient Intake Day, families are required to bring all necessary documentation and personal items at the time of placement. Arriving fully prepared allows the admissions process to proceed without delay and helps your teen transition more comfortably into Heartlight.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Please bring copies of the following:

- Birth certificate
- Social Security card
- Valid photo ID (2 copies, required for travel and records)
- Divorce, custody, or guardianship documentation (if applicable) Any court or probation-related paperwork

MEDICAL INFORMATION & MEDICATION

- Previous placement or treatment/counseling reports
- Completed Medical History Form (if not already submitted)
- Current immunization records
- Signed medical exam performed by a physician within 1 year of admissions
- Dental records or confirmation of dental exam within 1 year of admissions
- Copies of medical and dental insurance cards
- Copies of any health cards
- Minimum 45-day supply of all prescribed medications

ACADEMIC RECORDS

- Academic transcripts
- Educational history and any testing or learning assessments
- Current graduation requirements from your teen's school (or intended school upon return)
-

FINANCIAL PAYMENTS

- First month's tuition payment
- Initial \$400 expense account deposit

PERSONAL ITEMS

- See following "Resident Packing List"

RESIDENT PACKING LIST

- Toiletries (non-aerosol)
- Bedding for a twin bed (sheets, blankets, pillows)
- Towels and washcloths (3 of each, white in color)
- Battery operated alarm clock (cannot have radio or CD/tape player)
- Athletic & musical equipment, as approved by staff
- Pictures, posters, books, knick-knacks (limited space available)
- Electric razor (no standard razors allowed)

GIRL'S CLOTHING ITEMS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Jeans – 3 pairs | • Tennis shoes – 1 pair |
| • Shorts – 5 pairs | • Dress shoes – 1 pair |
| • T-shirts – 7 | • Boots – 1 pair |
| • Sweatshirts – 2 | • Flip-flops or sandals – 1 pair |
| • Sweatpants – 1 pair | • Belt - 1 |
| • Church-appropriate outfits – 2-3 | • Pajamas – 2-3 pairs |
| • Underwear – 9 pairs | • Jacket/coat – 1 |
| • Socks – 9 pairs | • Swimsuits – 1-2 (1 -one-piece) |
| • Bras/sports bras – 7 | |

BOY'S CLOTHING ITEMS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Jeans – 3 pairs | • Tennis shoes – 1 pair |
| • Shorts – 5 pairs | • Dress shoes – 1 pair |
| • T-shirts – 7 | • Boots – 1 pair |
| • Sweatshirts – 2 | • Flip-flops or sandals – 1 pair |
| • Sweatpants – 1 pair | • Belt - 1 |
| • Khaki/dress pants – 2 pairs | • Pajamas – 2-3 pairs |
| • Button down/polos - 2 | • Jacket/coat – 1 |
| • Underwear – 9 pairs | • Swimsuits – 1 |
| • Socks – 9 pairs | |

All clothing should be respectful. No items that show girl's midriff, bum, breasts and no loose-hanging pants for boys that would show bum. No spaghetti strap clothing. No items should contain inappropriate language, beer/alcohol/drug advertisements.