

Therapeutic Alternative Shelter Care

The Harford County Public School System is partnering with Catholic Charities Center for Family Services and the Harford County Juvenile Justice Council to bring Therapeutic Alternative Shelter Care (TASC) to Harford County.

TASC is a cutting edge, one-of-a-kind program in Maryland that was developed out of a need identified by the Harford County Juvenile Courts. Started in 2001 in Harford County, this 30 to 90 day program uses specially trained foster parents and social workers to help troubled youth 12 - 21 years old and their families.

TASC is an alternative to Juvenile Services placement. Instead of being placed in a group home, detention, or a shelter, children are placed in foster homes in an effort to avoid removing the child from his or her community. The mission of TASC is to provide a safe and secure placement for juveniles who have a non-violent history in the least restrictive, most appropriate manner possible.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a TASC parent and would like more information about this program, contact Tia Dickson at 410-685-2363 or e-mail at tdickson@cc-md.org.

Success Story~ *names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

TASC Stories

Sixteen-year-old Bobby* came to the TASC program after he and his mother were evicted from their home as a result of Bobby's actions in the community where they lived. Bobby's mother stated that she was going to have to live with her mother, and that her mother would not allow Bobby to live in her home due to his past actions, specifically, stealing his mother's bank card. When he was referred to TASC, Bobby was not working and had not yet begun to attend a GED preparation course, as he was court ordered to do. He was, however, scheduled to begin a GED course about six weeks after his arrival in TASC. Within the first week of his placement, Bobby had obtained a well paying job at a warehouse near the foster family's home. Bobby began working about two weeks after securing the job, but was fired on the second day of work. Bobby initially reported that he was fired for his job performance, but it was later revealed that his firing was due to a failed drug test. The foster parent had allowed Bobby to visit with a friend about a week prior to his starting his job and Bobby admitted that he had smoked marijuana during this visit. Despite this setback, Bobby quickly rebounded, obtaining employment at a nearby sub shop. He also began attending his GED course. While Bobby was doing very well, his mother was having a difficult time securing housing and avoided meeting with the TASC team. Bobby's hopes of returning home seemed to be diminishing. He was also unable to get a substance abuse assessment due to his lack of medical insurance. His mother had failed to apply for medical assistance for

Bobby, despite repeated requests from TASC and DJS. A family friend had been identified as a possible resource for Bobby, but this did not work out due to this family's own housing struggles. Bobby's case was referred to DSS and it appeared that he would end up in a long term foster care placement. Bobby was very disappointed at this development and that his mother didn't seem interested in having him at home. Despite this disappointment, Bobby continued to do well in the program, maintaining his job, paying off his restitution, and attending his GED Prep course. As he continued to do well, a plan was made that he would be stepped down to a treatment foster care placement and a family was identified. At Bobby's final court hearing, it was expected that his probation would be terminated, as he had met all of the requirements of the court, and that he would be placed with the identified foster family. However, at this hearing, Bobby's mother and grandmother attended. Bobby's grandmother told the Court that she was pleased with Bobby's progress in the program and that she was prepared to allow him to stay in her home. Bobby was able to return to his mother's care while being free from probation.

This information is directly from the TASC brochure...

Started in 2001, TASC (Therapeutic Alternative Shelter Care) is 30-90 day program that uses specially trained treatment foster parents and social workers to help troubled youth 12-21 years old and their families.

TASC currently serves Harford and Eastern Baltimore County and Carroll County. TASC accepts difficult to place youth that would otherwise be detained or be placed in a more restrictive level of care than needed. While most applicants are accepted into the program, a community and family safety evaluation is conducted prior to admission. **To date, there have been zero incidents of family or community violence by any youth while in the program.**

The ultimate goal of TASC is provide the placing jurisdiction with a recommendation of next placement for the youth. Reunification with family is the most desired outcome. **To date, TASC has served 119 youths with a family reunification rate of approximately 56%.**

Treatment foster parents in the TASC Program are thought of as specially trained professional parents. TASC parents like working with teens, avoid power struggles, like helping to reunite families by communicating well with the youth's parents, and enjoy the support of a social work staff with a low caseload of two to four clients.

This low caseload allows for intensive services to the client, his or her family, and treatment foster parents.

This close monitoring and daily communication help youths in TASC feel safe in a structured environment that usually helps a TASC youth to begin making good life decisions and resolve current family issues.

TASC treatment foster parents receive a **competitive stipend** for the intensive services provided in their homes. If you are interested in becoming a TASC treatment foster parent and you would like more information about this program, please call Lisa Miller, LCSW-C at 410-538-3388.