



WESLEY SPECTRUM HIGHLAND SERVICES

Children and families with education, mental health and family support needs are searching for a better quality of life. Wesley Spectrum Services helps them to become independent, responsible and caring members of the community by providing an array of high quality special education, mental health and family services. These services give children and families the strength to learn, to live and to love, resulting in stronger families and stronger communities.

Philosophy and Purpose

Children experiencing serious emotional and mental disturbances can have difficulty coping with daily life, and often cannot succeed in traditional schools. These problems interfere with their ability to learn, may cause them to harm themselves or others, and prevent them from meeting their full potential.

Wesley Spectrum Highland Services incorporates both Wesley Spectrum Highland School (an Approved Private School) and Wesley Spectrum Highland Youth Services (a School-Based Partial Hospital Program.) Here, educational and clinical experts integrate special education and intensive behavioral health services to help children advance academically, socially and emotionally. Kids who face a long-term struggle need an encouraging environment like Highland, where we build resiliency and restore hope for a brighter future.

Eligibility

We serve 170 children each year from 50 different school districts in five counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania. We help children age 6 to 21 who have mental health problems, an Autism diagnosis or meet the state definition of emotional disturbance.

They may have:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.
- A tendency to exhibit inappropriate types of behavior or feelings.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Children must also:

- Meet medical necessity criteria for partial hospital program.
- Have needs that can be met at Wesley Spectrum Highland.
- Have exhausted the “less restricted” placements available through their school district.

Availability

If space is not available, we will refer a child to another program or facility that will meet his or her immediate needs. However, we remain in contact with the family, to actively consider their

application if the situation changes. All eligible children and families are treated equitably without favoritism.

Referral

The child’s application to Wesley Spectrum Highland must come through a school district. A teacher, mental health professional, doctor or a parent can recommend that the district suggest treatment. Participation is voluntary.

Intake

Our intake coordinator reviews each child’s file, conducts an assessment and consults with other team members, including the team psychiatrist. If there appears to be a potential fit, we will accept the application, and meet with family, school district representative and the student. If we determine that we can meet the child’s needs and if he or she would benefit from our services, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and treatment plan will be developed. The school must also complete an application for the state. This can take several weeks.

Funding

The school district must apply to The Pennsylvania Department of Education for funding, which will cover all fees. Clinical expenses are paid through the school district in compliance with FAPE, a federal mandate which guarantees that all disabled children receive Free and Appropriate Public Education and related services at no cost to the child or parent. Wesley Spectrum can also apply for medical coverage from families who are eligible for Medical Assistance due to their child’s disability.

Accreditation and Licensure

All our therapists and teachers maintain current credentials through professional development and licensing. We are licensed through the Department of Public Welfare and the PA Department of Education. We are also in the process of achieving accreditation through the Council On Accreditation (COA) for our school based partial hospitalization services.

Treatment Approach

Wesley Spectrum Highland achieves the best outcomes for each child by basing our decisions – every step of the way – on what is best for this individual child. We call this Kid-Centered Decision Making and it encompasses Kid-Centered Planning, Kid-Centered Environment and Kid-Centered Measurement.



Strength to learn, to live, to love

At Wesley Highland, Kid-Centered Decision Making integrates special education and mental health therapy, to offer each child what he or she needs, hour by hour, day by day. This gives each child an individualized program: a better plan, a better environment and better outcomes.

We combine therapy with special education, and fashion the child's entire daily experience – the total Milieu – as part of his or her treatment. This therapeutic Milieu is everything that's done for and with the child. Through small classes – 12:1 student/teacher ratio, 4 to 1 child/staff ratio – children learn to build relationships with caring therapists, teachers and other staff. Once a child begins to trust adults, we can help him or her cope with feelings and help change identified behaviors.

A Kid-Centered Environment is one where all children can be comfortable, secure and achieve their goals. Wesley Spectrum Highland adapts to the needs of individual children, rather than requiring the child to fit into a single approach.

Services

After admission, we use Kid-Centered Planning to develop a service plan for each child. The therapy and educational team work with the child and family to create an integrated IEP and mental health treatment plan. Recommended clinical services could include individual, group or family therapy, Milieu therapy, anger management, play therapy, cognitive behavior therapy, parent/child counseling, parent and sibling workshops, drug and alcohol assessment, adventure-based counseling, sensory interventions and developing skills for self control.

Wesley Spectrum Highland uses Kid-Centered Measurement to gauge a student's progress, documenting students' behavior and academic performance and tracking their progress toward their individual goals. Mental health therapists provide regular feedback on progress toward treatment goals.

Elementary, middle and high school units meet from 8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. during the regular school year. In addition to required academic courses, we teach character development, social skills, and community-based instruction. Wesley Spectrum Highland also offers daily living classes, speech therapy, prevocational work skills, woodshop, horticulture, art and music, computer lab, library research, reading appreciation and adapted physical education. Students are offered career counseling and work study programs starting at age 14. A school psychologist helps to assess students' education and aids teachers in providing specially designed instruction.

We help older high school students with autism or serious emotional disturbances prepare to transition to adulthood with the Wesley Spectrum Highland Bridge Program. This community-based instruction program helps young adults develop the social understanding and specific skills needed to live and work in a community and reach their own highest level of independence. It fosters real-life decision-making and

problem solving skills, and hones independence through class work and practical exercises, combined with therapeutic services.

Psychiatrists are on site daily and available for consultation to families in crisis 24 hours/ day and for consultation to staff. They provide psychiatric evaluation, medication management, consultation to the interdisciplinary treatment team and act as clinical advisors to the Highland Administrative team.

Outcomes

Desired outcomes for students in our program include achievement of academic goals and improvement of social and emotional skills necessary for success in their home, school and communities.

We use academic testing to meet state requirements and measure progress against standards, as well as standardized symptom inventories and assessments to evaluate behavioral and emotional progress. We also measure the child's social competence, hopefulness, and number and intensity of therapeutic alliances (relationships) with staff, teachers, therapists and other children.

Discharge

While some of our students complete their education here, many return to their local school districts or are enrolled in other education programs. Transition support is provided to all students who leave the Highland program. Mental health therapists continue to support the child and family to insure a smooth transition back into the community. They guide former students to connect with state and regional mental health and support services and help them transition to adult services.

Aftercare and Follow Up

Prior to discharge, an aftercare plan is developed with each student and family to identify any services that are needed post discharge. We contact our students' families eight weeks after discharge to be sure that plans for ongoing services are operational. We talk again a year after discharge to measure the child's relationships with adult authority figures, teachers, family and friends as well as the child's level of play or leisure activities. This helps us determine if the child and family have an improved quality of life as a result of our services.

Contact Information

William Alexy

Program Director
Special Education
Wesley Spectrum
Highland School
5250 Caste Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Phone: 412-885-7017

Fax: 412-885-3896

balex@wesleyspectrum.org

www.wesleyspectrum.org

Tamara Marsico

Program Director
School-Based Partial Hospitalization
Wesley Spectrum Highland
Youth Services
5250 Caste Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Phone: 412-885-7017

Youth Services Fax: 412-885-6209

tmarsico@wesleyspectrum.org