



**Eliminating Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment
in Howard Center's Park Street and
Transition House Programs**

January 2025 – December 2025

About Howard Center

We help people and communities thrive by providing supports and services to address mental health, substance use, and developmental needs.

We serve children, adults, families and communities as the designated provider for mental health and developmental disability services and the preferred provider for substance use services in Chittenden County.

Howard Center was founded in 1865 as an agency to serve the widows and orphans of the civil war at the Home for Destitute Children. Since then, Howard Center has been a trusted provider in our community for more than 150 years, offering progressive, compassionate, high-quality care and treatment for those members of our community in need.

Today, our staff of 1,300 support workers, clinicians, nurses, teachers, case managers, psychiatrists, and others provide help and support to more than 19,000 people each year in over 60 locations throughout Vermont. We serve children, adults, families, and communities in a range of settings with a broad array of services for mental health, developmental, and substance use needs.

PREA's Applicability

Howard Center's Park Street and Transition House programs provide residential placement and treatment services under contract with Vermont's Department of Children and Families' Family Services Division – Youth Justice. As a result of this relationship, these programs must comply with the standards in accordance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). To that end, Howard Center has updated and developed policies and procedures to address resident safety in these programs.

Howard Center has a zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse and sexual harassment of individuals. This prohibition is supported by the agency's Code of Ethics, the Policy Prohibiting Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment of Clients and the Policies and Procedures Addressing the Prison Rape Elimination Act in our Operations Manual as well as the Violence Prevention and Weapons-Free Workplace Policy in the Personnel Manual. All staff members, contractors, interns, or volunteers working at Park Street or Transition House facilities or having direct contact with residents of those facilities are required to sign a form stating they understand the zero-tolerance policy and their role as a mandatory reporter.

About Park Street and Transition House Programs

Park Street is a community-based residential program providing treatment to families and adolescent males, ages 12-17 with sexual harming behaviors. Through the use of a cognitive behavioral based model with the Good Lives Model concepts and trauma-informed approach, Park Street works collaboratively with youth, their families and referring agencies to modify inappropriate sexual behavior through a strengths-based skill building focus. The goal is to inspire personal change that will promote youth to care about themselves and others and to be responsible for their own behaviors. Residents attend the onsite Fay Honey Knopp School, a licensed school that provides a supportive, therapeutic and safe educational environment.

Transition House is a residential home for youth ages 16-22 who have been in long-term residential programming and are continuing treatment in a less restrictive, transitional setting. The program helps youth with complex behavioral, mental health, and substance use needs by offering individual and family therapy, vocational/educational support, and service coordination for each resident.

PREA Compliance Activities

Throughout the year, the agency continued its efforts to meet the requirements of PREA.

- All Park Street and Transition House staff, including agency staff with supervision and oversight responsibilities, as well as contractors and volunteers, complete the PREA training annually.
- PREA information is provided to all new program residents and their guardians, and information is readily available to them at each site. Information is also available on Howard Center’s Safe Environment Standards webpage.
- All allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment are thoroughly investigated, and the resulting findings and plans are shared with all staff at the site, guardians and the Vermont Department for Children and Families Residential Licensing & Special Investigations Unit to ensure the safety of the residents.
- On an annual basis, each program has a meeting to address any areas of concern, to review protective factors that are in place to prevent incidents and to make any recommendations to further enhance the safety of the program.
- Both programs continue to conduct the monthly unannounced rounds across the 24-hour time span.
- Per direction from the State of Vermont, the Policies and Procedures Addressing the Prison Rape Elimination Act has been revised to clarify that all allegations of sexual harassment must be reported the DCF Centralized Intake and Emergency Services and DCF Residential Licensing and Special Investigations.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations Data for 2025

Program	Youth on Youth Sexual Abuse	Staff on Youth Sexual Abuse	Youth on Youth Sexual Harassment	Staff on Youth Sexual Harassment
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	0	2	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
<u>Previous Years Data</u>				
2024 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	1	1	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2023 Data				

<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2022 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2021 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	0	2	0
<i>Transition House</i>	2	0	2	0
2020 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	1	0	4	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2019 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2018 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	1	5	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2017 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	2	0	2	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	1	0
2016 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	1	0	6	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0

Park Street

There were 5 youths admitted to Park Street in 2025 and only one youth is adjudicated. Four of the cases are youth in the custody of their families with DMH oversight, one in DCF custody and the one who is adjudicated is parents' custody with an open case with DCF.

In 2025 Park Street provided services to 10 youth and there were two reported cases of youth-on-youth sexual harassment.

The alleged incidents of youth-on-youth sexual harassment reportedly took place in the shared common spaces of the residence. The reported incidents involved one youth alleging that another youth had written on a shared bathroom mirror that the youth was gay. The other incident involved a youth alleging that another youth was making a sexualized gesture directed at him and did not stop after being asked to do so. The first incident was unfounded due to the alleged youth being uncooperative with the investigation and being discharged from the program and the other incident was substantiated due to staff witnessing the behavior. The perpetrator of the incident was kept separate from his peers and staffed 1:1 while additional clinical work was done with the youth to make safer choices in his interactions with peers.

The significance of lived trauma and the acuity of care for youth that are not successful in other residential programming has been a shift in referrals for programming at Park Street, thus the need for greater awareness and intervention to maintain the safety for all who live or work in this environment. Decisions to offer services to less kids and to ensure that adequate, qualified staffing is available to meet the intensity of need for youth being referred to Park Street is in place to help reduce the risk of aggressive and sexually harmful behavior on campus. Training, clinical services to address sexually problematic behaviors and the ongoing use of the video surveillance system all help to support a safer environment for all as well.

Transition House

From January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, Transition House served a total of 6 clients. Of these, four clients were admitted to the house, while five clients were discharged from care. Two youth admitted in 2025 were adjudicated and could be considered delinquent, though the same clients were discharged from the program in the same year.

There were no allegations or instances of sexual abuse or harassment at Transition House for the year 2025. The Transition House continues to train staff and comply with all PREA regulations. Residents are given ongoing education regarding the program's Zero Tolerance policy for sexual abuse and harassment.

Conclusion

The number of sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations continue to remain low. This is a testament to the programs' staff and their continuing efforts to ensure the safety of residents.

The activities noted above enhance the safety of the programs' residents.

Staff at both programs will continue to be vigilant in their efforts to protect youth in our facilities and ensure compliance with PREA.

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