



## CHARLES HALL YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

Creating Connection. Building Hope.



# 2021: A Time to Pivot AND Begin a New Chapter IN THE Life and Legacy of Charles Hall

### CASE STATEMENT SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic took its toll on Charles Hall's Qualified Residential Treatment Program in the final quarter of 2020, as staff and staff family members began to experience COVID-19 directly. The end of October, the agency had to cease its residential program and find placements for youth in current care. It was a difficult and sad time for all, but it was a decision that had to be made at that time.

Today, Charles Hall Youth and Family Services is still operating with five staff persons (full-time and part-time) and our agency's board of directors. Our 501(c) 3 status remains active. Charitable gifts continue to be requested and are received for donors' tax purposes.

Controlled liquidation of items that are no longer needed is well underway. Liquidation of selected assets will assist the agency in meeting its remaining financial obligations related to residential treatment program operations. Additional funding support is available through federal PPP (SBA dollars) that would offer up to 24 weeks of general operations underwriting support through mid-July 2021. Donor gifts, PPP funding, and eventually major grant funding can be foundational as the agency transitions from its roots in residential care into the future.

### Potential New Strategies for Serving At-Risk Children and Families

Agency leadership staff is in the process of looking at a new focus that builds on the most recent history of the past 16 years, along with the organization's longer-term history of almost six decades of service to at-risk children.

With renewed focus, the directors are considering strategic new ways to reach children with effective, deliverable programming based on Charles Hall's well-tested and research-based approach to self-esteem and moral development. Strengthening emotional resiliency and psychological security for all children, especially for those children facing challenges created by abuse, neglect, and complex trauma remains core to the work.

The agency would remain dedicated to the development and dissemination of programming in the affective domain—specifically, instructional programming to equip children and adolescents with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to ensure emotional stability and psychological security. During the past 16 years, Charles Hall has been committed to strength-based and trauma-informed practices as the organization designed unique programming to support youths' moral development, their development of integrity and character, emotional intelligence, and the psychological construct of self-esteem. Not only did Charles Hall design and implement new programming, but also agency staff evaluated it for efficacy and impact, and published findings following two years of research and data collection.



Moving forward, the co-executive directors propose that the organization pivot to continue these efforts and reach beyond residential foster care to assist children and families in new venues using different methods (e.g., technology) and building expanded partnerships. North Dakota educational institutions that have expressed solid interest in working with Charles Hall in 2021 include Fargo Public Schools, United Tribes Technical College, and Bismarck State College.

## Charles Hall History

It is important to remember those individuals who set the course for Charles Hall almost six decades ago (see agency history). The boarding home's mission (1966) of serving youth from the Three Affiliated Tribes from Ft. Berthold evolved to the agency serving youth from all backgrounds within foster care by the early 1970s. The initial Hall Home saw a second home added in the 1970s and a third home added in the 1980s. In the early years, the organization served only boys, then services expanded to serve female youth.

In 2005, Charles Hall's program advanced to be strength-based and trauma-informed before any other residential foster care program in North Dakota. Program and training partnerships expanded to some of the best – with national entities like the American ReEDucation Association, Reclaiming Youth International, the Search Institute, and the ChildTrauma Academy and the Traumatic Stress Institute. In 2007/2008, the agency received the first ever Diversity Award from Missouri Slope Areawide United Way.

In the past decade, Charles Hall expanded to include DRUMBEAT®, therapeutic harp, equine-assisted trauma work, a community mentor program, recreation/health/fitness, and a licensed addiction program in 2014. Also that year, Charles Hall was named a Caring Community and was one of five agencies statewide first recognized with the award by Prevent Child Abuse ND and the state's Governor's Office.

In 2019, Charles Hall became nationally accredited and a Qualified Residential Treatment Program with the Family First Prevention Services Act. An achievement for which the staff team is proud is that the agency was recognized with a small number of first-time organizations pursuing accreditation who were accredited with no noted deficiencies or tasks to be redone or completed. Accreditation was completed in a record five months.

## Current State of Foster Care in North Dakota

During the past three years, foster care in North Dakota has experienced great change. With this change, residential programming, except for psychiatric treatment facilities, is limited and no longer a significant part of the continuum of care for high risk youth in the state's foster care system. In addition, funding streams have changed greatly with the majority of dollars now allocated to "zones" in place of North Dakota's former county system.

The Division of Children and Family Services now is focused on foster families as the main support and provider for children who enter care. Residential treatment programs (QRTPs) now include only two organizations as of January 2021. In 2019, there were nine agencies serving the entire state. With the closure of Lutheran Social Services ND the end of January 2021, there are now only two agencies providing residential psychiatric treatment (Ruth Meiers in Grand Forks and Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch in Fargo, Bismarck and Minot). The state's continuum of care for foster care children and their families is fractured, limited, and under stress. For Charles Hall Youth and Family Services, residential care is no longer a sustainable option with the direction of Children and Family Services and less than adequate financial support from North Dakota's Department of Human Services.

## Next Steps

Now it is 2021. Charles Hall has a unique and influential history. Those who have gone before us have left us with a legacy that leadership staff is confident can continue.

With the next six months, the agency will continue to face uncertainties with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with controlled liquidation, securing underwriting to address current financial obligations (e.g., PPP funding and charitable support from committed donors), and intentional inquiry and strategic planning, the co-executive directors are confident that the agency will see clearly a path to an expanded future or how the agency will bring its work to an ultimate close.

The directors remain committed to Charles Hall Youth and Family Services and the Charles Hall Foundation. With faith and trust in God, as well as a great deal of hard work and continued commitment, Charles Hall can move forward to do great things.

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