

# Bay Cove Academy

*A therapeutic school for adolescents with a history of problems in their classrooms, at home or in the community*

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## Summary

Bay Cove Academy is a psychoeducational school serving adolescents, ages 12 to 21, from the greater Boston area who have a history of severe emotional, academic or behavioral difficulties. Students are referred to the Academy because their needs exceed the services that a public school can provide.

Bay Cove Academy provides a high-intensity program that addresses the individual academic, social, behavioral and career development needs of its students. The entire school serves as a therapeutic **milieu** where students focus on individual emotional development, while at the same time completing a comprehensive academic program.



*There is a fully networked computer room with up-to-date equipment.*



*The school is housed on the ground floor of a newly renovated brick building located in Brookline on a tree-lined street.*

There is also a strong emphasis on career development. Students are encouraged to gain employable skills through both classroom training and part-time work in the community.

The ultimate goal is to help each student make a successful transition from school to work.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the school relies heavily on an interdisciplinary philosophy combining the academic, clinical and career development components of the program into a cohesive whole. Staff members at the academy believe this combination is unique among public and private special education programs.

## Students

Bay Cove Academy provides education, therapy and vocational assistance for approximately forty-five male and female adolescents aged 12 - 21 with severe emotional, behavioral or learning difficulties. These students thrive in an intensive, highly structured learning environment that has been designed to help them develop new strategies in coping with academic settings. They are referred through the public school system. The majority of students are from districts in the Greater Boston area, but some students have come to the school from as far away as Framingham or Revere.

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## **Services Provided**

Students are offered a middle school or high school academic program, a career development program, and individual and group therapy. An integrated curriculum model including academic, vocational and life skill components enables the students' development of essential skills necessary to participate fully and responsibly as productive adults. The school is organized around a highly structured day with clearly designated standards and limits, which is essential in treating adolescents who are struggling with problems associated with profound emotional adjustments.

## **Academic Program**

Educational services include a full range of academics in a classroom setting with a 5:1 ratio of students to teachers, and diagnostic testing and remediation in a 2:1 (or 1:1, when needed) setting. Individual Education Plans are written by teachers in consultation with therapists and other specialists to accommodate the specific needs of each student. The objective of these highly focused educational blueprints is the development of basic academic skills as well as conceptual abilities such as problem-solving, negotiating and critical thinking strategies. Staff guides the students in their process of considering options and making decisions which advance their personal goals and minimize their reliance on others.

The academic core curriculum includes traditional academic subjects, as well as



*Educational services include diagnostic testing and remediation in a 1:1 setting when needed.*

individual tutoring, computer training, career exploration, art, physical education and various electives. Successful classroom experiences help students to build self-confidence and trust, to increase their tolerance for frustration, to enhance their risk-taking abilities, and to develop improved concentration. As an integral part of the **milieu**, the classroom is highly-structured and expectations of the students are clear and consistent.

The curriculum is designed to allow each student to progress through a sequential program of study according to his or her learning style as prescribed by that student's Individual Education Plan. Students are eligible to earn Massachusetts high school credits and a diploma.

## **Career Development Program**

A unique feature of Bay Cove Academy is its award-winning Career Development Program through which students are placed in career-oriented jobs both on and off campus. A goal of this program is to help students develop a career direction as well as important work skills. The program has received both state and national recognition as a "best practices" program.

The Bay Cove Academy career development component takes a unique and innovative approach to the transition from school to work. It is part of the Academy's mission to help students explore and experience the world of work so that when they leave Bay Cove, they have developed good work habits, have been exposed to a variety of career options and have a career direction. Each student's strengths and vocational interests are assessed, before carefully matching him or her to an appropriate job. The hierarchy of job placements starts with a task located on campus, progresses to a part-time position in the local community and eventually leads to competitive employment. Bay Cove provides students with job and career counseling, job placement, on-site supervision and coaching. Students receive academic credits for work experiences and payment for hours worked.



*A student presents her point of view at a student council meeting.*

This past year, Bay Cove students worked at twenty-three different business sites. Included in this number were:

- American Youth Hostel
- Animal Rescue League
- Artists for Humanity
- Best Western Hotels
- Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital
- BNN TV 3
- St. Elizabeth's Hospital
- Boston Children's Hospital
- Franciscan Children's Hospital
- Children's Hospital
- Boston Shirt Company
- Bread and Circus Food Stores
- Brookline Public Library
- Brigham and Women's Hospital
- The Coolidge House
- Deaconess Hospital
- Eric Flames Motion Sports
- Franklin Park Zoo
- Franklin House Day Care Center
- Ski Market
- Tobin Community Center
- YMCA's of Roxbury and Lynn

#### Clinical Program

The Academy's clinical component consists of two areas: therapy and crisis management. As soon as they are accepted into the program, students are assigned to a therapist. Clinical

services include weekly individual counseling, case management, group work, and family work. Each therapist has a caseload of approximately twelve adolescents. Specialized psychiatric and psychological services are also provided as needed.

In addition, crisis counseling and crisis management are integrated into all aspects of the program. Rules and consequences are clearly articulated and predictable and are drawn from the philosophy that students need a safe, consistent, well-organized environment. Through this model, students are exposed to a wide range of corrective social interactions throughout the school day. They benefit from on-the-spot counseling and feedback as they present issues related to their development. Daily interactions among teams of teachers, therapists and career and educational specialists ensure that growth strategies for each student are coordinated and comprehensive.

The Academy encourages each student to achieve the most sophisticated level of independent living, with an emphasis on making positive and productive adult decisions.

#### Schedule

Bay Cove Academy is in session for 220 days a year. This includes a six-week summer program. All teachers and therapists work from 7:30am–3:30pm from Monday through Friday. Students arrive at the school around 8:00am and after a short breakfast and break time, they begin classes at 8:20am. There are seven classes in the school



*Acquiring basic reading skills is very important for a student's lifelong success.*

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*Each student's strengths and vocational interests are assessed, before carefully matching him or her to an appropriate job.*

day. Students are dismissed at 2:20pm. The Career Development Program is integrated into school hours for most students, whereas, for a few, the work day may extend past school hours.

### **Vacations and Holidays**

Following the six-week summer program, the school closes for a three-week vacation in August. Other holidays that are observed vary annually in accordance with a public school calendar.

### **Admissions Process**

Students at the Academy are referred by public school systems in the Greater Boston Area and must qualify for special education services under Chapter 766 regulations. This determination is made by the school system and not by the Academy. Bay Cove Academy is officially designated as a "502.5 day program." Referrals may be made from any community within commuting distance. A student who is appropriate for the Academy program has a wide range of serious emotional, behavioral and academic problems but does not have an acute psychotic illness, mental retardation, and behaviors or disorders which would prove unmanageable in an open, non-secure setting.

If the basic criteria are met for admission to Bay Cove Academy, then the Principal and Clinical

Director will schedule an intake interview with the parents, student and other appropriate agency officials. A standard intake interview includes a detailed presentation of the school's program including the educational, clinical and vocational services available, the school calendar, general school rules, behavior management and disciplinary practices of the program, and admission and termination procedures. At the conclusion of the interview, a tour of the school is generally conducted.

In addition to the initial intake interview, the student may be asked to return again for a half day visit. During the visit the student will attend a few classes and may participate in further educational assessments.

The Principal and Clinical Director make the final decision regarding the acceptance of a student into the program. This decision is based upon the information derived from the referral materials, the intake interview, and other observations made by staff during any class visits. As soon as a decision has been made, the student, parent and all concerned parties are contacted.

If a student is accepted by Bay Cove Academy and this placement is approved by the student's referring school district, then the student is gradually transitioned into the program during the first week following admission. Prior to entry into the program, the student's parent or legal guardian is required to complete admissions



*Volleyball is a popular sport at the school.*

paperwork and to meet with the student's assigned therapist.

### **Building and Location**

The school is housed on the ground floor of a newly renovated brick building located on a tree-lined street in a Brookline residential neighborhood. Across the street is a park and to the left of the building is a city basketball court.



*Academy students thrive in an intensive, highly structured learning environment that has been designed to help them develop new strategies in coping with academic settings.*

Public transportation (both the MBTA Green Line and several busses) is within easy walking distance.

The school building consists of seven classrooms, a library, several group rooms for meetings between counselors and students, and a large eating area and kitchen. There is also a fully networked computer room with up-to-date equipment. The art gallery is filled with many creative projects such as student paintings and sculptural works. Gym space is rented at West End House, which is located close to the school.



*Making creative decorations for pumpkins at Halloween time provides a positive emotional outlet for these students..*

### **Outstanding Features of the Bay Cove Academy Program**

- All students participate in an award winning year round Career Development Program – Recognized in the State and Nation for Best Practices in the areas of: Organization and Management, Youth Development, and Workforce Development.
- Bay Cove Academy relates academic learning to real-life work issues and situations and stresses active learning.
- A unique summer program extends the academic year to forty-nine weeks.
- The comprehensive clinical program is staffed with seasoned Master's level clinicians. Interns are not used to staff the this program.



*Judy Gelfand, School Principal, presides over her 25th graduation ceremony at Bay Cove Academy.*

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- Group therapy is provided weekly, targeting identified areas such as social skills, issues unique to 17-18 year olds, co-ed interactions, young men's and young women's groups.
- The school operates with a strong **milieu** based philosophy, where all staff is a part of the whole, creating a culture of predictability, clarity, consistency and constancy.
- The Academy has been successful at preparing students with learning disabilities to take the MCAS test.
- A Transition Team develops individualized long and short term goals for students in the areas of school, employment and community.
- The school holds an Annual College Fair at the school and college tours, and an Annual Career Fair.
- Students are enrolled in afterschool work or programs such as the Wang Center Young Arts Program, Artists for Humanity, and Bikes Not Bombs.
- Electives are offered in special topic areas: Violence Prevention, Independent Living Skills, Art Portfolio, Adobe Illustrator, Workforce Entry Skills, Ethics, Communication Skills, Sr. Research Project, Web Design, Keyboarding.



*Successful classroom experiences help students to build self-confidence and trust, to increase their tolerance for frustration, and to develop improved concentration.*

- There is individual weekly supervision of all staff and weekly professional development opportunities including department meetings, case conferences, team meetings and other special topics.
- A School store offers an effective incentive program.
- Monthly field trips are provided.



*Working in front of the class at the white board is one way of figuring out complicated statistical problems.*

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