

The Residential Program Student Handbook

The mission of the OSSB Residential Program is

- To provide the students with a safe and healthy living environment,
- To provide instruction in the activities of daily living to support the highest level of independence for each student,
- And to provide opportunities for recreation to build the skills for developing relationships, using leisure time wisely, and making choices that promote a healthy lifestyle.

The residential program provides students with a supportive and nurturing living environment to be their 'home away from home', while also nurturing and encouraging student participation in extracurricular and recreational activities.

The residential students arrive on campus late Sunday afternoon and stay through the week until dismissal time on Friday. The students' local school district of residence provides the weekly transportation to and from OSSB at no cost to the parents(s). The Ohio State School for the Blind follows a regular school calendar beginning late August through early June—allowing for holidays, professional days for staff, a two-week winter break and a one-week spring break.

The residential program currently consists of six (6) dorms:

- 3 dorms with fourteen (14) beds
- 3 dorms with eight (8) beds

Dorm assignments are typically determined prior to the start of the new school year after the incoming population of students can be analyzed. One of the eight bed dorms will be utilized as an "on-campus student apartment" for a simulated independent living experience for eligible students.

The purpose of the independent living experience is to assist our students in developing the skills they will need to successfully meet the challenges in an ever-changing world. They learn skills such as menu planning, shopping, cooking, time and money management, light housekeeping and community living.

Breakfasts are served family style in the school dining rooms Monday through Friday. Students, with residential staff assistance, prepare dinner in the dorms on Sundays. Monday through Thursday, dinners are prepared by our food service department and served to the students in our four dining rooms.

The residential program is staffed with experienced and knowledgeable youth leaders, one supervisor on each shift and a director to oversee the operation of the program. Youth Leaders provide supervision and guidance to the residential students. Each Youth Leader serves as the residential advocate for several students in their cottage. They administer individual residential assessments each fall and develop goals and objectives for Individualized Residential Programs—similar to IEP's—based on the

unique needs of each student. This is done in cooperation with and input from the student's parent and instructional advocate.

Residential students enjoy a wide variety of on-and off-campus recreational activities to promote healthy, active lifestyles. The many activities provide students with real-life opportunities to experience, develop and master functional life skills and to encourage the discrete levels of social interaction.

Monthly recreation calendars are developed by staff and students in each dorm and are then made available to all families via the school website. Day students are invited to participate in various on-campus activities throughout the year to promote social interaction among all students.

Residential students are provided instruction and supervision in completing their daily living skills. Student progress is tracked as it relates to their IRP goals and objectives, and progress reports are mailed home at the end of each quarter. Several students carry notebooks to facilitate communication between home, dorm and classroom. Residential news is also shared with families and other stakeholders through the school newsletter "Panther Paws"

Pets are not allowed in the residential facilities.

Please note that the school does not assume responsibility for the students' personal belongings in the case of theft or damage.

Dorm Visitation

The following should be used as a general guideline, with final authority to approve or disapprove visitations, at the discretion of the Youth Leader.

Parent Visitation

Parents are encouraged to visit their child's dorm during normal residential hours. Such visits provide parents the opportunity to observe the social and daily living skills instruction provided by the residential staff. However, please be aware that since instruction time does occur during residential hours, along with many on and off-campus residential activities, residential staff may not be available to confer with parents who stop by for unscheduled visits.

Dorm Visitation – Intra

Students often have friends residing in other dorms and wish to visit each other in their respective dorms. Girls may visit in other girls' dorms and boys may visit in other boys' dorms with the approval of the Youth Leader on duty. Boys and/or girls wishing to visit each other in their respective dorms must receive approval from the Youth Leaders on duty and are limited to the dorm living room or dorm porch areas.

Day Student/Overnight Stays

1. A day student may stay overnight on campus for specific school-related activities with parental consent and prior approval by the Youth Leader Supervisors. Permission to stay overnight should be received and approved two (2) days prior to the event.
2. A day student living in a county non-contiguous to Franklin County, and who could be a residential student under ordinary circumstances, may reside on campus for all or portion of an athletic season while participating in a particular sport.
3. A day student who resides within Franklin County or any county contiguous to Franklin County may not become a residential student for any portion of an athletic season, even though he/she is participating in a particular sport. Transportation arrangements should be made between the parent and the student's school district of residence.

Dorm Meetings

All residential students have the opportunity to participate in monthly dorm-based discussion groups to address issues and concerns regarding the residential services offered at the OSSB. Youth Leaders assigned to each dorm will assist in identifying appropriate meeting times and provide guidance as needed to facilitate orderly and meaningful discussion. This mechanism is designed to encourage student input into the planning and development of school and dorm policies and procedures and the improvement of services for all students enrolled.

Rules Regarding Off Campus Travel

Students must present their pass to the Youth Leader on duty in the dorm when checking out.

Students wishing to take another student off campus must have a pass that allows them to do so. These passes will have a identifying sticker on them.

Students must check in with the Youth Leader when they return from an off-campus trip.

If a student is expecting to be late returning to the dorm, they must call the dorm and inform the Youth Leader on duty.

Students wishing to go on special outside activities (i.e. out to dinner with a relative or off-campus friend) must have it cleared (appropriate notes/permission) with the Youth Leaders and Residential Services office.

Youth Leaders will enforce the restrictions, as stated on the pass, including that students must take their canes, prescription spectacles, and any other optical aids as indicated on the Mobility Pass.

Each must ask permission from Youth Leader staff for off- campus travel.

Students traveling off campus must travel in pairs, or with a larger group of students. This rule is enforced for safety reasons.

Students may go off campus with persons other than parents or those associated with the school, if written permission of the parents or legal guardian is submitted to the Youth Leader Supervisors or such person is identified on the Visitor Roster.

Decisions regarding off campus travel will be based on the best interest of the student's health, safety, and welfare.

Recreation

Recreation and leisure activities are vital elements of an individual's daily life. Leisure time activities provide opportunities for developing skills, as well as the enjoyment of free time.

Recreation/leisure activities on- and off- campus, provide students with a wide variety of experiences. On-campus activities such as swimming, karaoke, and open recreation in the gymnasium are enjoyed; while off- campus activities may include, trips to movies, roller- skating, restaurants, shopping, plays, and other local attractions. Safety is a priority in all recreational events. Rules to ensure safety are strictly enforced by all staff.

Room Management

It is very important that persons with visual disabilities be organized. Rooms are checked daily. The following procedures should be followed:

- Hanging clothes should be placed in the wardrobe.
- Drawers should be well organized.
- Soiled clothing is kept in a laundry bag, laundry basket or designated area in the bedroom.
- Beds are made each morning before school. Rooms should be left in an orderly state.
- Desks or study tables should be cleared, or well organized. School materials should be properly stored when they are not in use.
- Wastebaskets should be emptied daily.
- No food is permitted in students' rooms. Storage of food items and preparation of food should be done in the dorm kitchenette. Anyone using the kitchenette should wash their own dishes and clean up after use.

- Students may decorate their rooms by hanging posters, etc., however, nails should not be driven into walls. No one should paint pictures, designs, etc. on the walls.
- Games, toys and recreational equipment are placed in the dorm for the students' benefit and use during leisure time. Proper care and use of these items are important so that others may also enjoy them.

Bedtimes

The bedtimes listed are a general 'rule of thumb' for Sunday through Thursday. Actual bedtimes may vary according to individual student needs.

Social Behavior and Interpersonal Relationships

Residential living often presents situations that may create conflict among students. We ask that all students make a special effort to respect the other person's right to:

- Privacy
- Diverse interests
- Confidentiality

Additionally, each student at OSSB is asked to:

- Demonstrate careful use of others' personal and school property
- Resolve personal differences through the use of respectful communication
- Show respect for each other

All OSSB students and visitors to OSSB have the right to be physically and emotionally free from disrespectful, intimidating, and threatening behavior.

Students are required to demonstrate proper respect to fellow students, staff and visitors at OSSB and OSSB sponsored activities.

The age at which "dating" is allowed is generally at the parent's or legal guardian's discretion. It is difficult to establish a specific age or grade level for dating purposes. The students' emotional and social maturity and judgment are important considerations. Adult students (18 years and older) need to be aware of the potential problems in their interpersonal relationships with students under the age of 18. Interactions between students should reflect a respect for others' body space.

Anti-Hazing Policy

It is the policy of the Ohio State School for the Blind that hazing activities of any types are inconsistent with the educational process and shall be prohibited at all times. No administrator, faculty member, or other employee of the OSSB shall encourage, permit, condone, or tolerate any hazing activities. No student, including leaders of student organizations, shall plan, encourage, or engage in any hazing.

Hazing is defined as doing any act or coercing another, including the victim, to do any act of initiation to any student or organization that causes or creates a substantial risk of causing mental or physical harm to any person. Permission, consent, or assumption of risk by any individual subjected to hazing does not lessen the prohibition contained in this policy.

Students who fail to abide by this policy will be subject to disciplinary action under this behavior code and may be liable for civil and criminal penalties in accordance with Ohio law.

Dangerous Items and Materials

Dangerous items have no place in the school environment and should not be brought to OSSB for any reason.

Dangerous items include, but are not limited to, firearms, knives including pocketknives, marital arts devices, fireworks, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, and alcohol. If you are in doubt about the danger of something, ask before you bring it to school.

Energy Drinks

All brands and types of energy drinks are prohibited from being stored or consumed by students inside of the residential facilities at The Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB). They are not permitted to be stored or consumed by students on or in any facility on the campus of OSSB.

For the purpose of the rule, energy drinks are “any beverage containing stimulant drugs, particularly, excess amounts of caffeine that serve the intended purpose of providing mental or physical stimulation”.

Bullying

The Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB) strictly prohibits all forms of harassment and bullying on school grounds, school busses, and at all school-sponsored programs, activities, and events, including those that take place at locations outside of OSSB.

Discipline

Negative consequences imposed on students should match the offense as closely as possible. The entire incident from infraction to disciplinary action will be documented in the dorm log. Any discipline that involves room or dorm restriction will be approved by the Residential Supervisor prior to implementation. Any excessive negative behavior can result in temporary, or permanent, removal from the Residential Program.