

## NATSAP and the Importance of Oversight

NATSAP is the largest not-for-profit membership association dedicated to residential treatment centers, therapeutic boarding schools, and wilderness therapy programs. Our member programs are devoted to providing effective care to thousands of individuals experiencing a wide range of mental and behavioral difficulties. That care is given under the watchful eye of state licensing departments and national accrediting bodies. NATSAP requires the members of our organization to be licensed by the appropriate state agency authorized to set and oversee standards of therapeutic and/or behavioral healthcare for youth and adolescents or accredited by a nationally recognized behavioral health accreditation agency and to have therapeutic services with oversight by a qualified clinician.

To maintain state licensure or national accreditation, a program is required to meet approved standards of care, report incidents, and be subject to periodic (often unannounced) on-site reviews and audits. Many of the accreditation requirements of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Organizations for residential care of adolescents served as a foundation for the development of NATSAP's Principles of Good Practice (all NATSAP members must agree to abide by those principles before becoming a member). Requiring that therapeutic services be overseen by a qualified clinician is another piece in the oversight puzzle. Independent licensure requires education, training, supervision, and verification of competency. Thus, the employment of licensed therapists and medical professionals provides programs with an additional level of accountability.

NATSAP's position has been that we support state oversight and regulations of therapeutic programs. We have been (and continue to be) an advocate for proper care and protection. Not only have we developed and widely promoted the value and importance of principles of good practice for clinical treatment, but we have called for state and local licensing boards and legislative bodies to develop, implement, and enforce standards of care to guide programs toward excellence, and to protect our youth in treatment. NATSAP and our Member Programs have been a driving force, for instance, in helping Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Utah state licensing officials determine regulations and guidelines for licensure for therapeutic programs in those states.

The common mission of NATSAP members is to promote the healthy growth, learning, motivation, and personal well-being of program participants. The objective of member therapeutic and educational programs is to provide excellent treatment for program participants; treatment that is rooted in deep-seated concern for their well-being and growth; respect for them as human beings; and sensitivity to their individual needs and integrity.