

**FOREST RIDGE YOUTH SERVICES  
AUDIT FINDINGS**

**NARRATIVE:**

The PREA audit site visit at Forest Ridge Youth Services was performed on November 9-11, 2015. The tour was conducted by two of the youth residents at Forest Ridge along with Shawn Connelly, Assistant Executive Director and Chad Jacobson, Group Living Director. After the initial tour of all of the facilities and grounds, there was a brief meeting with Jen Sievert, Executive Director and the other members of the administrative staff to go over general information regarding the site visit, answer any preliminary questions, and discuss the process for interviews with staff and youth.

Interviews were conducted with 13 youth, three from the shelter program and 10 from the residential programs. The youth interviews went very well. For the most part the youth were open, very willing to share information during the interviews, were complimentary of staff, and reported feeling safe at Forest Ridge. Some youth had difficulty remembering the PREA orientation at intake, but all youth remembered seeing the video on PREA, the use of which was recently implemented.

An interview was held with Brooke Johnson, the HR Director, and ten randomly selected personnel files were reviewed. Documentation in all files was found to meet the PREA requirements. Ten additional members of staff were interviewed across various positions and shifts. All staff appeared to be well trained, knowledgeable and supportive of PREA.

**DESCRIPTION OF FACILITY CHARACTERISTICS:**

Forest Ridge was established in 1983 as a residential foster care facility for at risk youth. The program in rural northwest Gruber, Iowa has grown from 12 residential beds to 140 residential treatment and emergency shelter beds. Changes at Forest Ridge have included a residential treatment specialization to provide gender-responsive services for female at-risk youth that began in 1996. Forest Ridge has since added a school location, expanded its behavioral health intervention and therapeutic services, and partnered with local providers to meet the unique needs of the young women they serve.

Facilities include three residential cottages, a building to house youth that require emergency shelter, and an education and administration building.

**SUMMARY OF AUDIT FINDINGS:**

At the time of the audit visit, there were items that were deemed to be not in compliance. Therefore, a 180-day Corrective Action Plan was initiated. Administrative staff worked on correcting a number of items before the end of the site visit.

A telephone conversation with Misty Wolff at the Center Against Sexual Abuse and Assault (CAASA) confirmed that staff at the CAASA provides advocacy and other sexual abuse and assault support services to youth at Forest Ridge and that a written memorandum of understanding (MOU) is in the process of being developed to memorialize the relationship between Forest Ridge and the CAASA.

On January 18, 2016, the last of the documentation required, related to the Corrective Action Plan, was submitted. Ms. Sievert and all the staff at Forest Ridge maintained constant contact throughout the Corrective Action period and were quick to make additions, adjustments and provide documentation of such as requested. Forest Ridge is now considered to be in full compliance with national PREA Standards articulated under the Prison Rape Elimination Act.

**AUDITOR CERTIFICATION:**

The auditor certifies that the contents of the report are accurate to the best of his/her knowledge and no conflict of interest exists with respect to his or her ability to conduct an audit of the agency under review.



Auditor Signature

January 20, 2016

Date

