



# walden street

HANDBOOK



# welcome.

We are excited to have you join the Walden community. I hope that you find the staff and students helpful as you get used to a new place. We value respect, teamwork, and teachable moments as part of everyday. Most students who come here have enough stress that they are dealing with that it is important to make Walden as supportive of a place as possible while students work on themselves!

While moving to a new place is hard, we know you'll come to enjoy Walden as much as we do.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Vaughan". The signature is written in a dark ink on a light background.

Michelle Vaughan  
Program Director



# Philosophy

Students at Walden come hoping to improve something in their life. Generally they are coming because an aspect of their life has not been going the way they would like it to. We know this and expect that students may at times have difficulty improving in this area. One of our core values is **Teachable Moments** - when something is not going well, staff are trained to intervene in the moment, label that for the student, and help them to identify and use an adaptive strategy. We believe that everyone needs the opportunity to have support in changing their habits as it can be a challenging thing to do!

At Walden every member of the program, staff and students, is included and treated with respect. It is important to be part of something bigger than ourselves so that we maintain perspective on life as we address our challenges. This community of **Acceptance** has helped many students to settle in and feel **Empowerment** to move forward in their treatment. Every student is here for different reasons and has a different goal so our focus is **Individual Success** through student specific plans. With a culture of accountability and support, we strive to help all students work towards the best version of themselves! Whatever goal students set for themselves we work to help you see that “you CAN do it”.

# House Rules

- 1 Respect towards others
- 2 Teachable Moments (for yourself and others)
- 3 Respect for our shared space
- 4 Work to stay safe
- 5 No talking about people who are not present

# ARC Model

## ARC stands for Attachment, Regulation and Competency.

This framework was developed as a lens to view the problems that people who have experienced trauma deal with and how that is impacting their current functioning. People acquire strategies to cope under extreme stress that are often ineffective or maladaptive once that extreme stress has been removed.

In thinking about **Attachment** we focus on helping individuals learn about their relationship patterns and learn strategies to be more effective in navigating the interpersonal world.

*“The ARC framework employed at the Walden Street School has given our daughter a safe, structured environment where she has learned and practiced more effective emotional regulation and behavioral management skills. Through our participation in family therapy sessions we have gained valuable knowledge and perspective that enables us to understand her challenges and more effectively support her in the future.” - Pat and Laurie C.*

Many students who come to Walden experience their emotions with an intensity that is difficult to manage or soothe. Our goal is to explore as many strategies for self **Regulation** as possible to help students find what works for them. The clinical team also works to help students expand their window of tolerance for stress and emotion so that when those feelings come up, it is not so disruptive to functioning.

In order to grow and feel better about themselves it is critical that they have parts of their week dedicated to a talent or interest. This builds **Competency** that assists them in pushing forward in other areas of treatment.



# Clinical Work

Every student is assigned a clinician who will support them in their individual work and help them to figure out what will be most helpful as they move forward.

The clinicians work with the team to coordinate meetings and visits. Visit length and frequency is planned based on how things are going with family and how well treatment is going.

As visits are occurring, it is important to translate the students' growth at the program to the family environment. This is done through regular family therapy. We expect families participate in this as a critical component of the treatment progression.

Students participate in group therapy two times per week in a range of topics including social skills, problem solving, art therapy, distress tolerance, and trauma recovery.

Therapy is an important part of being here and being engaged and at least trying are important to us. For this reason- many decisions about what students do are based on their level of engagement in treatment!

# Individualized Programming

No two students at the Walden Street School are the same. For this reason their plans and privileges are not the same. Students participate in IP meeting (individualized planning) once per month. This team is comprised of the Clinician, Residential Director, Director of Student Services, and Clinical Director. In this meeting the students discuss what has gone well, what has been a challenge, and what they feel is an appropriate goal for the coming month. These monthly goals are posted in the residence so that staff and students can remain active in working on them. Students' ability to put forth effort working on these monthly goals, follow House Rules, and function daily determines whether they will be granted privileges they ask for.

Privileges are asked for during IP meeting and students are pushed to practice advocating for themselves as a way of increasing empowerment and positive feelings about their own capability. There is no set list of privileges, rather students can ask for anything that is important to them and the IP team will work with the family/team to determine which privileges seem appropriate for each student.

# Daily Schedule

**8:05** Breakfast

**8:30** School - 1st period 8:30 - 9:37  
2nd period 9:37 - 10:34  
3rd period 10:34 - 11:31  
4th period 11:31 - 12:48  
5th period 12:48 - 1:45  
6th period 1:45 - 3:00

**3:00** Return to rooms for downtime

**3:45** Transition group - 2nd shift supervisor briefs about the night

**4:00** Activity

**5:00** Dinner and Chores

**6:00** Quiet Time

**7:00** Activity

**8:30** Meds

**8:45** Begin Bed time routines

**9:00** First Bedtime  
students can receive later bed times through IP meeting



## Bridge

As students' progress in their treatment and show an increase in functioning and ability to maintain safety, their team may recommend that they transition to our Bridge house. Bridge is Walden's satellite house and is located about 3 miles away. Students at Bridge receive all the same programming and treatment as students at the main house, however there is a greater emphasis on them applying what they have learned more independently.

At Bridge students cook all meals, plan the menu, grocery shop, do laundry, etc. They take a van to school each day. The goal is that this step feels more like a home environment than a program. That feeling will allow the students to begin practicing what they have learned in an environment that requires more of them so the skills that help them become more solidly internalized.

## Self Identity

Many students come to Walden after a period of time where the main focus in life has been the struggles they are having. This can result in students not knowing what they enjoy or not having been able to dedicate much time to extracurricular activities. We believe it is crucial for students to explore their talents and interests and find something they truly enjoy and are good at. Finding a niche you have passion for is an important part of growing as a young adult.

At Walden we offer a variety of activities and clubs that we look to match students with. This includes dance team, sports team, karate, cake decorating, photography club, student council, yoga, video club, music lessons, etc. If a student has a particular interest that we do not already have a resource for then we will find it!

The important thing about finding an activity you have excitement for is that it can help you to feel better about yourself and your abilities. As that feeling grows it can help you to feel more capable in tackling other parts of your life where you feel less capable. We strive to have every student involved in a competency commitment and have an entire team of people working under the Director of Student Services to ensure this happens.

# Community Involvement

While Walden may be a Residential program, we are not your typical Residential environment. There is a large emphasis on students beginning to have commitments in the community. It is great when a student does well at the program, but the true success is when they can go into the greater community and be successful. We believe that as a student makes progress in treatment, starting to go out into the community will give them opportunities to practice what they have learned more independently. This independent practice will help to anchor the new skills they have learned so that they maintain them post discharge.

At Walden students go into the community in variety of ways. Some volunteer at a food pantry, household donation center, daycare, and Meals on Wheels. Others get jobs working at the grocery store, pizza place, or local business. Some students prefer to take a class in art, music, or dance. Which outlet is most appropriate for each student is determined and we ensure that steps are taken to get them ready for these opportunities before they begin.

## FAQ's

### Is there psychiatry at Walden?

Yes! We have a psychiatrist who is on site 2 days per week. She works with the team here and sees the students individually. We can also schedule calls/meetings for parents to have contact with her.

### Is technology allowed?

We do allow iPod's for students. As far as cell phones and laptops those are considered a privilege that can be earned through IP meeting and with consent from the student's team. Access to the internet is also something that can be earned for students who are willing to discuss social media use with their clinician.

### Can I visit my student?

Of course! Visitation and phone contact are an important part of the treatment process. We will always tell you our recommendation for visitation so that it correlates to where the student and family are at in treatment and hope this to be a collaborative process.

### Do students go off grounds?

Students go off grounds for commitments in the community or just for fun with staff. We do a variety of activities off grounds- swimming, bowling, rollerskating and always take suggestions that students have.



# School

We know that school has not always been an area of success for the students coming to Walden and we hope to change that for each of them. Depending on the students needs we work to assess what will help them to be most successful in school- modified day, extra help in certain subjects, scheduled therapeutic breaks, etc. The goal is for each student to be in school daily, feeling confident in their ability, and knowing that their effort is the only thing that matters. Most important to us is that the school environment here be as low stress and judgement free as possible so students can feel comfortable as they push themselves.

Our students have a wide range of academic goals, some wanting to go on to college and some desiring more vocational training. At Walden it's important that each student gets the preparation for either path they choose. We offer SAT prep, supported work placements, vocational exploration, and career exposure/exploration. We also have many students who benefit from MCAS prep supports.

# Belongings

Each students room has an armoire, dresser, and bed. We value clean bedrooms as we believe in the saying “messy bed, messy head”. We all feel better when our lives are clean and organized and those can be hard habits to maintain. Staff work to assist students in learning the best strategies for them.

While there is a decent amount of storage in the bedrooms, it generally cannot hold all of a students belongings. We have storage bins for each student to use for overflow- whether this be prized possessions, or seasonal clothing. We encourage students to keep any unnecessary clutter in their bin! Additionally if a student is ever presenting with a safety concern, the bins may be used for safe keeping of their belongings for short periods of time.

Each student has a bulletin board to decorate and we really want students to find things that are pleasing to them to put on their bulletin board. It's important to us that students make the space their own and also can be part of the process of identifying who they are and their likes/dislikes!



# Follow Along

*“For our family, the Follow Along program was a tremendous help in adjusting to “real world” living. We were all able to navigate life outside Walden, more successfully, because we could utilize our familiar supports while we transitioned to living as a family again.” - Lynn I.*

Once a student is nearing the end of treatment at the Walden Street School, the team here may recommend Follow Along as a discharge service. Follow Along means that Walden will remain involved with the student for 3-6 months post discharge to help the student and family acclimate to the big change of moving home, ensure that skills learned in treatment remain utilized, and assist in setting up any long term providers that may be needed. This can be extremely helpful as the change to living at home full time is a big adjustment and having providers who already know you well makes that a lot easier!

This service includes 24 hour phone support, option for respite, and an in home team. The in home team is selected based on the student and who they have worked well with. The team is comprised of the student's clinician and 1-2 staff. The clinician continues individual and family therapy through the transition period. The other staff on the team work on goals that are identified by the team. This can include finding a job, finding social outlets, practicing being in the community, practical implementation of skills in the home, and much more! The purpose of Follow Along is that it is designed around the needs of the student and so is very flexible.



## Medical Care

Students need to maintain up to date physical, dental, and eye care while at the Walden Street School. Parents may choose to maintain providers in their home community. If a parent chooses this we ask that they then provide the transportation for these appointments.

If it is determined that the student will use Walden's providers, then the nursing department will track, schedule, and transport students to these appointments, providing the guardian with regular updates. We utilize Acton Medical Associates for PCP care. The doctors we work with are familiar with our program and the impact of trauma and can accommodate our students sensitively. We use a mobile dentist for basic cleanings and mobile eye for annual exams.

The nursing department also facilitates any medication changes prescribed by the psychiatrist. They will call guardians for consent and to give updates on the psychiatrist's recommendations. We have a pharmacy that works with us to provide these medications efficiently.

# Who's Who?

**Director Michelle Vaughan, LICSW**

mvaughan@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x209

**Assistant Director James Falvey**

jfalvey@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x224

**Residential Director Ashlyn Kapetanakis**

akapetanakis@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x.244

**Clinical Director Valerie Villano, LICSW**

villano@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x214

**Nursing Director, Sarah Creamer, RN**

screamer@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x.216

**Education Director Dennis Larocque MEd**

dlarocque@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x206

**Director of Student Services**

**Stephanie Sotis, LICSW**

ssotis@jri.org, 978-369-7611 x202



She turned her  
cant's into cans and  
her dreams into plans

“From the moment our daughter entered the program at Walden, we knew we made the right choice. The compassion and understanding of the staff is astounding.” - Parent

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**160 WALDEN STREET    CONCORD, MA 01742**  
**(978) 369-7611    WWW.JRI.ORG**