

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT  
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*"Partnering with communities and empowering  
families to raise resilient children who thrive."*

## ALBERT J. SOLNIT CHILDREN'S CENTER NORTH CAMPUS



*A Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF)*

## Program Philosophy

*Caring, Healing, and Teaching*

Partnering with children, families, and communities to build hope  
and create opportunities



Albert J. Solnit Children's Center North (Solnit North), part of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, is a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) committed to providing short-term, holistic therapeutic services to boys whose complex psychiatric and behavioral status requires an intensive environment to ensure safety and optimum functioning. Services are provided through an individualized, multi-modal, trauma-informed approach, using a variety of verbal and non-verbal therapies that are culturally sensitive and strength based.

The goal is always to re-integrate the youth back to the family or least restrictive living environment. Solnit North celebrates each adolescent's individuality and works in partnership with him and his identified family system, supporting him to become the adult he envisions himself to be. Therapeutic family visits are an essential component of this work.

## Cottage Milieu

Solnit North has a diverse and highly trained complement of milieu staff who are ready to meet the complex behavioral and emotional needs of our youth on a daily basis. From certification as a personal trainer to masters degrees in education and psychology our milieu staff have unique educational experiences that bring valuable insight and unique perspectives that benefit our youth. Milieu staff are responsible for the direct oversight and supervision of youth at all times during their treatment at Solnit North. They provide intensive coaching and support through a relational and trauma-informed approach. Milieu staff also help facilitate groups, recreational activities, and accompany youth off-campus for community activities and medical appointments. They also plan, supervise, and support our facility events such as movies, cultural events, or sports.

## Medical

The Solnit North Medical Department delivers exceptional care to all adolescent boys in our care. We provide 24-hour on-site nursing coverage and have a full-time pediatrician available around the clock. Each youth receives comprehensive medical care throughout their stay. Dental health and vision services are coordinated off-site with community providers. For more specialized medical needs, we refer to Connecticut Children's Medical Center or the University of Connecticut Health Center Specialty Departments. At Solnit North Medical Department, we are dedicated to offering quality care, utilizing best clinical practices, and showing compassion to all of our youth.

## Vision Vocational Center

The Vision Vocational Center (VVC) is a state-of-the art intervention that provides youth with the opportunity to learn positive work skills on campus. Youth are paid a "wage" for performing a variety of tasks, on and off campus. They also volunteer in the local community programs. The goal of the program is to provide youth with treatment opportunities that increase self-esteem, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, vocational skills, and a strong work ethic.

### Treatment

- Introduction to work experience and youth business opportunities
- Life skills coaching and instruction
- Opportunity to earn ServSafe and CPR/First Aid Certification
- Skill Building Programs, such as:
  - Young Chef's Program
  - Auto Detailing
  - Graphic Design
  - Broadcasting
  - Bicycle Repair
- Career and academic planning
- Partnership with community programs for life skills, vocation and career opportunities
- Identifying opportunities in communities throughout the state to facilitate post discharge success.



### Community Service

- The Shovel Brigade - Providing snow removal for our local, elderly population
- Recycle Program
- Soup Kitchen
- Environmental clean-up and improvement



## Clinical Services

The Solnit North clinical team includes two board certified child psychiatrists and independently licensed clinicians who have extensive training and experience working with a culturally diverse adolescent population with complex presentations. Clinicians work closely with the youth and family from time of admission to develop individualized treatment plans for each youth, with goals and objectives that are identified collaboratively with the youth and family. The clinicians use a flexible approach with a variety of strength-based and culturally-informed interventions (including Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Trauma Focused-CBT, and others) to help youth meet the treatment goals and objectives identified through a combination of individual and family therapies, as well as group therapy for the youth.



Clinicians maintain regular contact with families and assist in developing comprehensive discharge plans for when youth return to the community. This includes identifying and making referrals to supportive services, assisting in securing aftercare appointments, developing safety plans with the youth and family, and all aspects of preparing the youth and family for a successful transition.

## Solnit Family Center

Solnit North is committed to understanding all the elements that make up the young men who are admitted to our program. An important part of this understanding is recognizing that the majority of our boys are part of a family system whether it be biological, adoptive or a foster family. All families are expected to take part in the services provided by our clinicians including: family therapy, in-home family support, family education, multiple family groups, therapeutic visits, and our parent educational series on understanding adolescent mental health.



The Family Center has three family therapy rooms and a family conference room that are used for treatment team meetings, therapy, parent conferences, and admission interviews. It also has a family room for multiple family group meetings and the educational series. The Family Center offers a calming atmosphere for relationship building which is an integral part of the treatment process at Solnit North.

## Psychological Services

The Psychology Department is comprised of doctoral level, licensed psychologists, and psychology graduate level trainees. During admission, youth are referred for psychological testing to assess the presence and severity of mental health disorders and challenges, including, but not limited to, complex trauma, mood disorders, cognitive and adaptive functioning, psychotic disorders, and personality formation. Data from the formal evaluation is utilized to comprise a strength-based and culturally informed perspective of the youth's symptoms, interpersonal functioning, coping style, adaptive/maladaptive behaviors, and worldview. This new insight is shared with the youth, treatment providers, families, and stakeholders to assist with diagnostic clarification and personalized treatment planning.

During admission, youth aged fifteen and older also participate in a Pathways Assessment. The Pathways Assessment is an individualized and strength-based evaluation of a youth's career interests and preferences as well as level of grit and perseverance. Resources are provided to assist with career exploration and goal setting, as well as life, vocational, and therapeutic development.



## Education

Solnit North has a fully-accredited school program that serves both special education and regular education youth and is operated year-round. Youth have access to traditional classroom teaching as well as virtual (computer-based) instruction. Because of the low student-to-staff ratio, youth are able to receive individual attention as they continue with their current courses and classes from their previous school. Youth also have opportunities to recover lost credits as well as earn additional credits and certifications through the Virtual Academy Program. A Social Emotional Learning Curriculum (MAAX Program) is utilized within school programming.





# Rehabilitation Therapy

The Solnit North Rehabilitation Therapy Department promotes physical, social, and emotional development through therapeutic recreation opportunities, music therapy, occupational therapy, and sensory interventions. The Rehabilitation Therapy program offers youth the chance to explore their interests and talents while engaging in enjoyable activities and developing lifelong competencies. The campus has an in-ground swimming pool for summer activities and swim lessons, an indoor challenge course, several outdoor sports fields, a fitness center, a state of the art gymnasium, a dojo for martial arts, a music therapy room, an art therapy room, and much more! The DCF Wilderness School is an additional resource that supports seasonal day trip activities for youth in Solnit care.

## Therapeutic Recreation

Our Therapeutic Recreation specialists provide youth opportunities to engage in individualized and group-based activities to address treatment goals. Youth learn how to improve their psychological and physical health, coping and social skills, and level of self-esteem through programs such as cycling, horticulture, traditional sports, passive indoor games, and more.



# Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy aims to help youth increase their level of participation and independence in all areas of life through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. Each youth receives a comprehensive evaluation including sensory assessments that help determine the best approach for self-regulation strategies and optimal engagement in daily tasks.

## Music Therapy

Music Therapy at Solnit North is a space where youth can use music to express, connect, and explore. A variety of instruments and methods are utilized.



The Solnit North Sensory Immersion Room (SIR) is a state of the art sensory space that provides evidence based interventions to improve youth and family treatment outcomes. The SIR is equipped with cutting edge sensory and virtual reality equipment that provides the ultimate regulatory experience for youth with a variety of presentations, interests, and sensory needs.



## Religious and/or Spiritual Opportunities



Research confirms that individuals engaged with spiritual or religious beliefs stabilize more quickly. In support of this, Solnit North has a part-time chaplain and a Spiritual Life Center. Involvement is individualized for each youth and voluntary. Activities include, e.g.: meditation, Bible study, and attendance to houses of worship off campus.

## Life After Solnit

The goal for all youth is continuing gains made at Solnit once back in the community. The Solnit team attempts to link each youth with resources and services that meet his particular interests and/or needs. Clinical services might include: medication management; individual and family therapy; in-home services; clinical day school; NA and other 12-step groups; and more. The DCF Transitional Supports and Success Division provides services to youth and families following discharge, as well. Rehabilitation and Vocational therapies link youth with community opportunities to promote optimal success. Programs include but are not limited to, e.g.: Boys and Girls Clubs; art and music programs; mentors; martial arts or boxing programs; Job Corp; DCF Wilderness School excursions; summer employment programs.



Website: [www.ct.gov/dcf](http://www.ct.gov/dcf)



Check out our youth-run  
maple syrup business!



## Contact Information

For more information about Solnit North,  
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