



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Shawn Cyr, Chief Administrator
Natchaug Hospital Green Valley School

FROM: Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant *DP*
Bureau of Special Education

DATE: June 24, 2024

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION REPORT
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program

On February 1, 2024, an evaluation team visited Natchaug Hospital Green Valley School (Natchaug-Green Valley) to conduct an on-site initial program review. The team consisted of:

Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE)
Dr. Judy Benson-Clarke, Former Special Education Director
Gary Hunt, Regional Special Education Director, High Road School Programs

During a previous site visit on January 30, 2024, Dr. Papa reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your administration.

At the exit conference on February 1, 2024, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The approval process included a review of the program's:

- governance;
- administration;
- fiscal management;
- admissions;
- individual student records;
- program requirements;
- evaluation of student progress and reporting responsibilities;
- student management techniques;
- qualifications and requirements for instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
- health and safety; and
- termination of enrollment.

Commendations:

Natchaug-Green Valley is governed by the East Region Board for Hartford Healthcare and is a continuum of care within Natchaug Hospital's Behavioral Health Network. The program meets the need for addressing the academic, social, emotional, and physical development needs of the students. A highly student-centered, secure, structured, and nurturing environment supports and stimulates the development of the whole child.

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Staff views administration as highly supportive, team focused, and maintaining an open-door policy in which staff feel comfortable and valued in sharing and collaborating. The education director was described as very knowledgeable and involved in all aspects of the program, and equally committed to implementing individual student-centered programs that result in the highest level of benefit to each student.

Collaboration and communication were described as a program strength. Effective communication systems are in place for fostering a multidisciplinary approach that ensures optimal academic, social emotional outcomes for all students.

The observation team reported curriculum is relevant and rigorous. Lessons observed evidenced well-planned instruction, which appeared to be appropriate to the current level of performance of each student. Lesson content was aligned to Connecticut Core Standards and teachers had an identified goal and objectives, which were clearly stated during the lesson. Students observed were characterized as highly engaged, active learners. The educational staff demonstrates a strong set of skills in differentiating instructional content, process, and product aligned with individual student interest(s) and readiness level.

The overall climate and culture of the program was described as “very positive.” The team observed a mutually respectful atmosphere between all individuals involved within the school, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, and visitors.

Classrooms were described as “amazing spaces that are welcoming and full of relevant, highly engaging resources, spacious, clean, bright, and welcoming.”

The program has a school-wide multi-tiered positive behavioral support system that establishes a social culture and the behavior support needed to improve social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students. The program is committed to providing positive feedback to students and avoids negative consequences whenever possible. Implementation of principles of positive behavior interventions and supports are evident through visual rules and routines posted throughout the school.

Related service staff interviewed shared they are “very invested in the program and the strong supports that are in place.” Related services include assistive technology implementation, occupational therapy, speech and language evaluation services, and daily group counseling.

The program has invested in technology to support teachers in their instruction and students in their learning. Interviewees reported, “there is a lot of great technology available in the classrooms.” The classrooms are well equipped to meet the requirements of the subjects taught and provide current technology opportunities to meet the preferential learning modalities of students.

The team reported evidence of well-planned instruction, aligned with Connecticut Core Standards, which appeared to be appropriate to the current level of performance for each student. Teachers had an identified goal and objectives which were clearly stated. The classroom

observations confirmed the implementation of appropriately differentiated instruction and access to necessary accommodation(s). Students observed were characterized as highly engaged, active learners.

Standard Deficiencies:

Natchaug Green Valley must rectify the following standard deficiencies:

Standard E: Individual Student Records - A private facility shall maintain a written record for each student, which shall include administrative, treatment, and educational data from the time of admission until the time the student leaves the facility. When children placed by a local school district or other public agency are discharged from a private facility, that facility shall ensure that all records are forwarded to that public agency. A student's individual record shall contain, as a minimum:

- consent forms signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) allowing the facility to authorize all prescribed medical treatment;
- consent forms when a private facility conducts routine screenings, (i.e., hearing/vision or provides immunizations required by statute to students) must also be maintained; and
- cumulative health records.

Issue: In one (1) of five (5) student files reviewed, there was no evidence of health records.

Corrective Action: On or before June 30, 2024, develop and submit to the BSE a check list that identifies required records/documents to be contained in each student's education file. Refer to Section R, Student Files, of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), *Application for Approval of a Private Special Education Program* (page 33, item 99b), for a list of "minimum documents" to be contained in each student's file.

Standard G: Evaluation of Student Progress and Reporting Responsibilities - The private special education program shall submit reports of each child's progress, based on the goals and objectives of the student's individualized education program (IEP), to the responsible local education agency (LEA) or sending agency and to the parents/guardians in accordance with the reporting schedule and content requirements of the child's IEP as determined by the planning and placement team (PPT). These reports must be communicated in language that is easily understood by parents/guardians. Each private facility shall notify and send written reports to parents/guardians and the sending agency regarding any disciplinary measure employed (such as in-school or out-of-school suspension that substantially removes the student from those program activities related to the child's IEP for extended periods of time).

The private facility shall provide in a timely manner and in accordance with required timelines, the following information to the CSDE and/or the responsible LEA:

- reports to the LEA, verifying the delivery of specialized instruction, supports, and services as outlined in the IEP, per contract.

Issue: In one (1) of five (5) student files reviewed, there was no evidence a progress report was provided to the student's LEA for the third quarter of 2023.

Corrective Action: On or before June 30, 2024, submit attestation to the BSE that Natchaug-Green Valley has policies and procedures in place ensuring the program submits reports of each child's progress, based on the goals and objectives of the student's IEP, to the responsible LEA or sending agency and to the parents/guardians, and surrogate if appointed, in accordance with the reporting schedule and content requirements of the child's IEP as determined by the PPT (in accordance with Standard G of the *Principles, Procedures and Standards for the Approval of Private Special Education Programs*).

Submit to the BSE, evidence that reports of each child's progress, based on the goals and objectives of the student's IEP, were submitted to the responsible LEA or sending agency and to the parents/guardians, and surrogate if appointed for the 2023-24 academic year.

Standard I: Qualifications and Requirements for Instructional, Administrative, and Support Personnel - The private facility shall maintain a permanent individual personnel file for each employee and shall ensure said file is confidentially held. The private facility shall require that prior work references be on record for all applicants. Furthermore, applicants who will work directly with students shall submit to a Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Registry records check before hire. The private facility shall obtain the information listed on the *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form from ALL the applicant's current or former employer(s) if such employer was a local or regional board of education, an approved private special education program, a governing council of a state or local charter school, an interdistrict magnet school operator, or if the employment caused the applicant to have contact with children. Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-221d.

Issue 1: In one (1) of five (5) personnel files reviewed, there was no documentation evidencing that a *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form was completed for five (5) employee(s) hired after July 1, 2016.

Corrective Action: On or before June 30, 2024, submit to the BSE attestation that a *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form will be obtained for each new employee and that upon obtaining completed forms, the program's chief administrator or education director will make appropriate contact with previous or current employers.

Submit a *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form to the BSE for all new staff hired during the 2024-25 school year.

Recommendations:

The BSE offers the following recommendations to Natchaug-Green Valley:

Maintain a balance of internal and external professional development (PD) opportunities. Increase opportunities for teachers to conduct peer-to-peer observations within the program, as well as observations in other facilities (public and private) as a means of broadening teacher perspective and providing a unique PD experience.

Ensure that all area teachers are familiar with, and well versed in, the IEP document and have a clear understanding of their role in implementing goals and objectives developed for the students in their classrooms. A teacher interviewed expressed the need for more training in the

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Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS) and IEP Quality Training, and in the use of Smart Boards.

Consider scheduling additional time for teachers to collaborate with a focus on curriculum and instructional strategies. A teacher interviewed reported they have adequate time to collaborate to discuss individual students but expressed that they would appreciate additional time to collaborate with each other to share differentiated instructional strategies.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with the report and accepts the delineated corrective action plan. Upon receipt of Natchaug Hospital Green Valley School's written agreement and acceptance of the entire report, a recommendation for program approval through June 30, 2029, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following is applicable to Natchaug Hospital Green Valley School:

Approved Ages to Serve:	5–14 years old
Approved Grades to Serve:	K–8th
Approved Enrollment Capacity:	35 students
Approval Expiration Date:	June 30, 2029

cc: Kim Bennett, Education Director