

# THE VENTURE CLINICAL PROGRAM

**T**he Venture Program educates students in grades 7 through 12 who have recently been discharged from a psychiatric hospital or are currently exhibiting serious psychiatric symptoms. The Program provides each student with a multidisciplinary team consisting of a teacher, paraeducator, a licensed clinical social worker, a crisis counselor, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, a LDT/C, and a Case Manager. The treatment team includes the Bergen County Division of Family Guidance (DFG) and Bergen County Special Services staff who collaboratively address student issues and work together to establish and implement family and student treatment plans.

## Therapeutic Services

**ART THERAPY**—Every Venture student attends group art therapy once a week with a licensed art therapist. Individual art therapy sessions are assigned on an as-needed basis.

**COMMUNITY MEETING**—Students meet every morning with the entire Venture Community to discuss different topics of interest. The meeting is also used as a time to make announcements about trips, new students, and other important information.

**CRISIS COUNSELING**—Full-time crisis counselors are available for counseling during the school day.

**GROUP THERAPY**—Venture students attend weekly group therapy sessions.

**PSYCHOTHERAPY**—Students are assigned a licensed clinical social worker for individual psychotherapy twice weekly.

**MEDICATION MANAGEMENT**—The prescribing clinician is in residence for consistent observations, consultation, and effective medication management.

## Program Components

- An academic departmentalized program to meet IEP goals aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards;
- State-of-the-art Assistive Technology supports;
- A full array of psychiatric services including diagnosis, evaluations, and treatment recommendation. Medication management and monitoring provided by DFG, which includes the provision of prescriptions;
- Therapeutic services, including Crisis Counseling, Psychotherapy, Group Therapy, Art Therapy, and Daily Community Meeting;
- Family support including periodic parent meetings, and linkages to DFG support services including family therapy;
- 180-Day school year, with program and services continuation during holiday breaks and summer breaks provided by DFG. Our school day hours are from 9 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with a maximum of 10 students per class with one teacher and one teacher assistant.
- The Venture Program also offers a six-week Summer Program from 8:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. from July through mid-August.
- Comprehensive and intensive transition/discharge plans and supports to a new school or to adult life, and continued care in the student's community;
- Postsecondary Transition Planning, if applicable.

## Population

Venture students have a DSM-V classification and are eligible for Special Education and Related Services. They have a prior history of, or are at-risk for, hospitalizations and exhibit major psychiatric symptoms. Students in need of this type of program are vulnerable to substance abuse, suicidal ideations, school refusal, and self-destructive and compulsive behaviors.

## Academics

Venture provides basic education aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The curricula is identical to that used in other BCSS behavior management programs. An academic remediation component offers the support of various professionals and a wide array of teaching strategies including experiential learning. Electives include Art, Music, and Photography. Internships and externships are provided with job coaching and transition services.

## The Intake Process

A multidisciplinary team consisting of mental health and educational professionals reviews records to identify appropriate candidates. Orientation for each new participant involves a fifteen- to thirty-day period of ongoing assessment. Clinical social workers conduct an evaluation of both student and family, and the program APN completes a psychiatric evaluation. The family, student, and multidisciplinary team collaboratively develop an academic and treatment plan for continuation in the program.

## Step Down

The BCSS Inclusion Specialists actively work with Venture students to ensure their successful transition to a more traditional and/or less restrictive educational environment, or to adult life.

## AN OVERVIEW

The Venture Program is designed to address the therapeutic, psychiatric and educational needs of students in grades 7 through 12 who have recently been discharged from a psychiatric hospital or residential treatment program, or are exhibiting serious psychiatric symptoms. This program is a collaborative effort between Bergen County Special Services and Bergen County Division of Family Guidance (DFG), the latter providing a full array of psychiatric and therapeutic services. Psychiatric services include, evaluation, diagnosis, provision of prescriptions and the management and monitoring of psychiatric medications. Therapeutic services include: group therapy largely focused on mindfulness practice to facilitate the self-regulation of emotions and behaviors, individual psychotherapy with LCSW's and group Art Therapy run by a licensed Art Therapist.

Crisis Counselors are available at all times to all students. DFG provides psycho-educational services to staff, students and families. Family therapy is offered evenings at their main office. Clinical Staff will maintain contact with students' outside psychiatrist, therapists and agencies when applicable.

Venture has a strong academic program for grades 7 to 12 to meet Individual Education Plans aligned with NJSLS and AES. Venture also offers State Testing for those students participating in NJSL Assessments in ELA, Mathematics, and Science.

Progress reporting and grades occurs four times a year; parent conferences as needed and IEP annual reviews are part of the academic program. State-of-the-art technology is implemented to enhance the Venture Program's academic curriculum. Students are also offered career education classes and hands-on, community-based instruction. This includes simulated work training opportunities, job training, internships, and travel training.



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**Bergen County Special Services (BCSS) is a unique county-wide public school district that offers a broad spectrum of special education programs and services for children and adults with disabilities. BCSS offers local school districts a wide range of programs, in the least restrictive environment, incorporating the most up-to-date technology to meet the requirements of students with diverse learning needs.**



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