

The WILDERNESS ADVISOR

A Research Publication of RedCliff Ascent

**Does
Wilderness
Therapy
Work?**

**THE RESULTS
ARE IN**

See what a difference
our program makes





Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about RedCliff Ascent. We appreciate that you are a person who understands the value of research in making an informed decision. Whether you are a healthcare professional looking into treatment options for a client, an educational consultant working with a family in crisis, a school counselor exploring options for further emotional and behavioral support for a student, or a parent desperate to reach your struggling child, we hope that this document will provide you with the answers you are looking for.

When RedCliff Ascent opened its doors in 1993, we knew that through a guided wilderness experience, a young person could transform their life. The problem was that no one knew how or why it was such an effective intervention. The research contained in this Summary of Research and Outcomes is a small fraction of the data that has been collected over the last 15 years. It has been critical in assisting RedCliff Ascent to achieve its goal of providing the highest quality treatment and wilderness therapy experience for adolescents and their families.

At RedCliff Ascent, our purpose and mission is driven by the research we collect. It not only informs us of how we are doing right now, research guides our decisions about clinical interventions and programmatic changes.

Now, with over two decades of experience, data, and the ability to apply the data to inform treatment, we feel it important to make this information available to the public.

The following pages contain information assembled by our Director of Research, Steven M. DeMille, LCMHC. Our hope is that it will answer many questions you may have. Questions like:

- What type of population does RedCliff Ascent serve
- What is RedCliff Ascent's philosophy
- What happens to a child's physiological make-up at RedCliff Ascent
- How do we measure success
- Student and parent satisfaction

In addition to recognizing Steven DeMille for his tireless effort and enthusiasm for the research work that he does, I would be remiss if I did not also tip my hat to other members of the RedCliff Ascent team both past and present who have so diligently taken part in collecting data. From our founders to our field guides, we are proud to be part of an organization that is dedicated to providing a program and treatment delivery that results in the highest quality of care.

Scott Schill
Executive Director
RedCliff Ascent
redcliffascent.com





CONTENTS

History of Research at RedCliff Ascent

Who We Serve

Length of Stay

Philosophy and Conceptual Model

Admission

How We Measure Success

Physical Health Outcome

Mental Health

Gender Differences in Treatment

Diversity and International Clientele

Family Relationship Outcomes

Academic Outcomes

Student and Parent Satisfaction Survey

Transition and Aftercare

Conclusion

History of Research at RedCliff Ascent



RedCliff Ascent

is committed to providing the highest quality wilderness therapy treatment. One of the ways RedCliff achieves this is through constantly assessing the effectiveness of our program. Evaluating treatment effectiveness began at RedCliff over 15 years ago, which produced some of the first outcomes study on wilderness therapy. Since then, RedCliff has contributed to numerous published outcome studies which have become the foundation for the effectiveness of the field of wilderness therapy.

We have served thousands of troubled teens and their families, helping them realize their potential and rebuild their lives.

RedCliff Ascent is also a founding program of the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) Council and the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative (OBHRC), which currently sets the standards for research and wilderness therapy programming.



**A LEADER IN PROVIDING
WILDERNESS THERAPY FOR
TROUBLED TEENS**



Who Do We Serve?

WILDERNESS IS OFTEN UTILIZED AS AN INTERVENTION TO DISRUPT NEGATIVE PATTERNS THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN A YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE.

Adolescents attend wilderness for a variety of emotional, behavioral, relational, and addictive behaviors. RedCliff Ascent works to disrupt the dysfunctional patterns that have contributed to an adolescent's inability to engage in age appropriate development.

Often clients have emotional, behavioral, or substance use diagnosis which contributes to the dysfunctional behaviors or relationships. Below is a diagnostic profile of RedCliff clientele.



Often, parents experience that their child is not making age-appropriate progress towards adulthood and the ultimate goal of achieving independence. This process can become overwhelming for parents as they have exhausted emotional, familial and community resources. RedCliff is designed as an additional resource to disrupt dysfunctional behavioral patterns that are impeding healthy adolescent development and to reintegrate them into age-appropriate functioning.



Length of Stay

RedCliff Ascent is an open ended achievement based program focused on the value of mastery necessary in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. On average, treatment ranges from 60 to 90 days.

Philosophy and Conceptual Model

Treatment at RedCliff Ascent is evidence-informed and based on an Integrative Care model. This model includes focus on a client's general health, mental health, interpersonal relations (including family relationship) and addictive behaviors. Treatment goals are achieved through the intentional use of evidenced

based therapeutic modalities, wilderness living, interpersonal relationships, a robust curriculum, along with a healthy lifestyle (i.e. healthy diet, sleep habits, work and exercise). The therapeutic interventions used at RedCliff Ascent are developmentally appropriate, designed to foster resilience and are strength based, improving a client's movement through the developmental tasks of adolescence.



Admissions

Families, Educational Consultants, School Counselors, and Professionals seeking additional information about treatment at RedCliff Ascent may contact our **Director of Admissions, Chad Balagna.**

He can be reached 24/7 via phone or text at **801-318-5951** or emailed at **chadb@redcliffascent.com**

For International callers can use the toll free number: **1-800-898-1244**



HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

One of the most frequently asked questions when people inquire about wilderness therapy is *“does it work?”*

RedCliff Ascent defines a successful wilderness treatment experience as:

1. Re-engagement in the developmental progress of the client
2. Improvements in a client's physical well being, emotional health, interpersonal relationships and social engagement
3. Completion of the wilderness-based curriculum
4. Alignment with an appropriate level of aftercare

As an Integrated Care approach we measure success by tracking the overall health and functioning of a client. This is achieved through use of the widely accepted assessment, the *Youth Outcome Questionnaire*, to track actual change in a clients overall functioning. This monitor improvements in a client's:

- Intra-personal Distress
- Somatic symptoms
- Interpersonal relations
- Social Problems
- Behavioral Dysfunctions



THEY SAID IT

“I left with a child more prepared to handle his addictions and future challenges in life.”

“What made his experience at Redcliff Ascent so unique was the expertise – and sensitivity – of a staff that is so adept at working with these young adults.”

“They are truly a team of miracle workers who helped our son pull himself out of a dark place.”

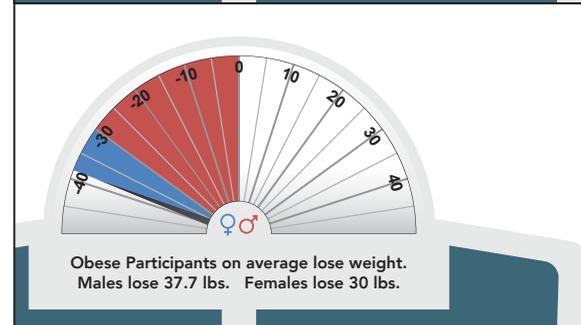
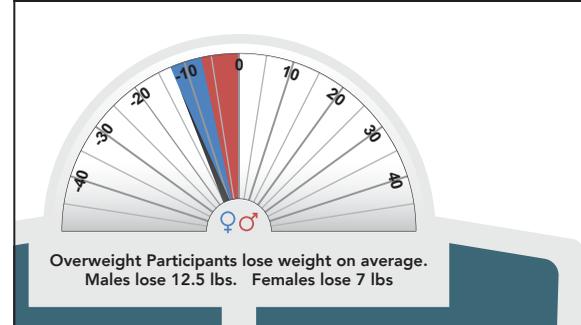
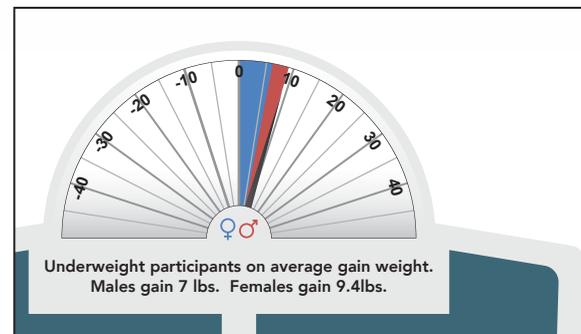
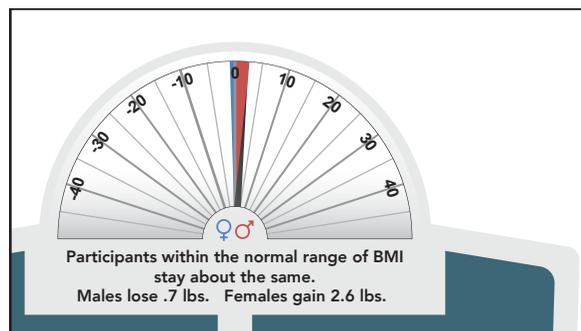
- Parents of teens in program



Reaching a healthy BMI

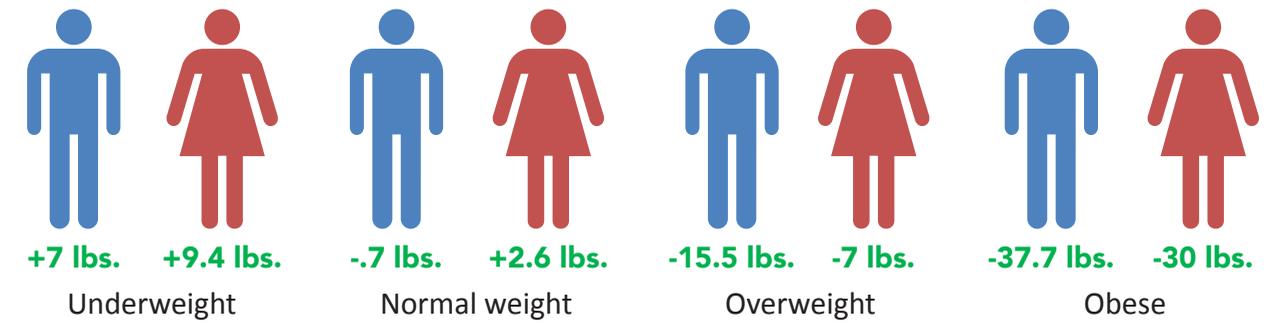
Physical Health Outcomes

As an Integrated Care program, RedCliff strives to improve the overall well-being of clients. This includes social, emotional, interpersonal, academic, and physical well-being. RedCliff published the first study in 2014 on the physical outcomes of being treated in a wilderness therapy program. The research found that they provided participants with a healthy balance of nutrition and exercise, regardless of the state of your physical health before treatment. Our research shows students at RedCliff Ascent move towards a healthy BMI and body composition, regardless of their initial BMI and body composition.

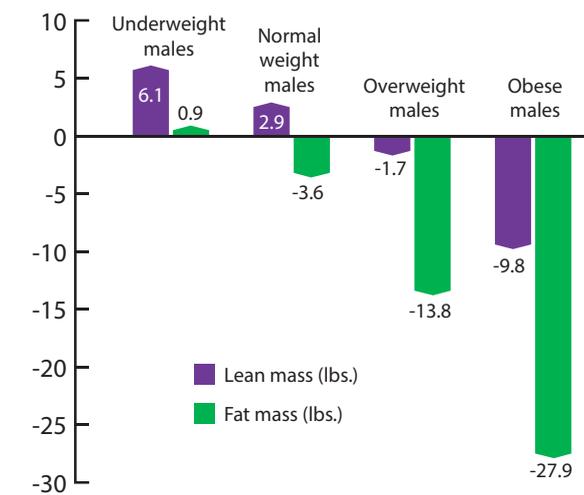


On average, clients in wilderness therapy lose fat mass while gaining lean or muscle mass.

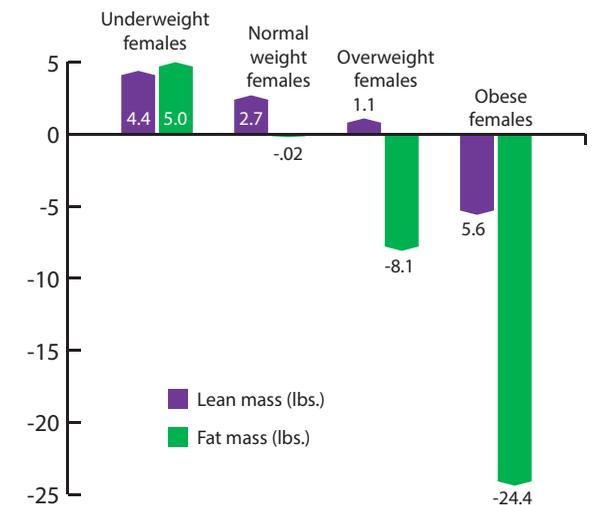
Change in Weight by Initial BMI



MALE Changes in Lean and Fat Mass



FEMALE Changes in Lean and Fat Mass

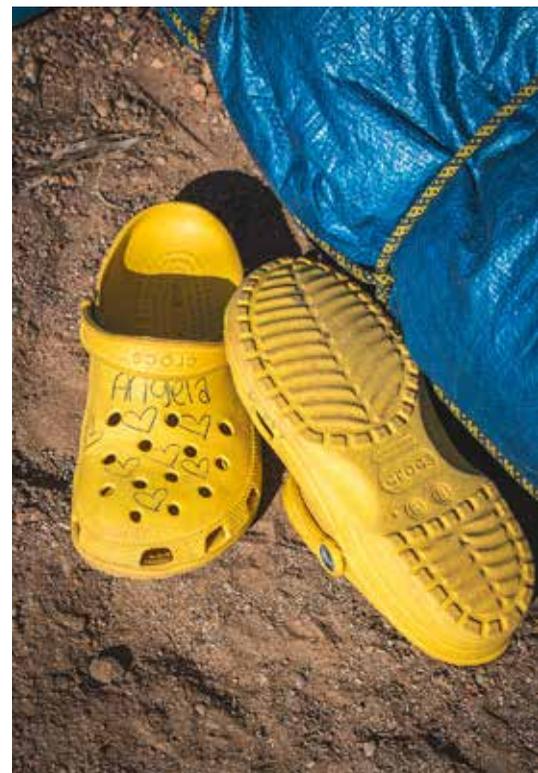


Mental Health

RedCliff uses the Youth Outcome Questionnaires as one of the ways we track improvements in a client's mental health. The Youth Outcome Questionnaire is a normed and validated instrument to assess a client's overall functioning as well as functioning in the following areas:

- ➔ Intra-personal Distress
- ➔ Somatic symptoms
- ➔ Interpersonal relations
- ➔ Social Problems
- ➔ Behavioral Dysfunctions
- ➔ Critical Items of Mental Health (i.e. psychotic symptoms, suicidal thoughts, etc.)

RedCliff Ascent monitors the overall mental health of their participants during treatment but they also follow participants once they leave treatment as well.



Description of Data

Data was gathered at admission, discharge, 6 months and 1 year post-discharge from parents and adolescents. Data was also gathered from adolescents once they completed their school curriculum at RedCliff.

Y-OQ 2.01 and the Y-OQ SR 2.0 was used to gather data.

Self Report: Intake (n = 322), Curriculum (n = 207), Discharge (n = 254), 6 months (n = 68), and 1 year (n = 46) post-discharge.

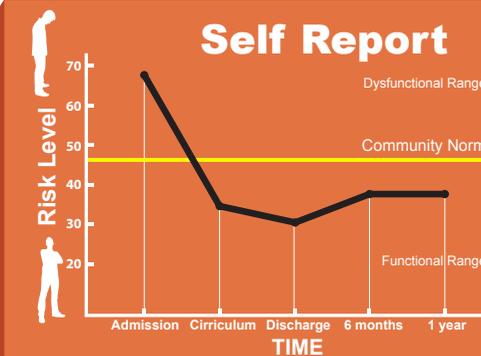
Parent Report, Intake (n = 265), Discharge (n = 167), 6 months Post-discharge (n = 138), 12 months Post-discharge (n = 104).

RedCliff works with both male and female clients and found that both genders demonstrated similar improvements as a result of treatment and that treatment gains are maintained at 6 and 12 months.

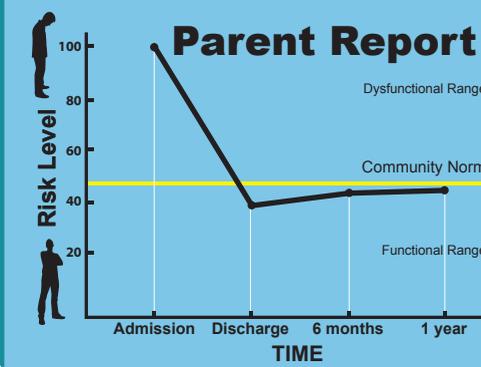
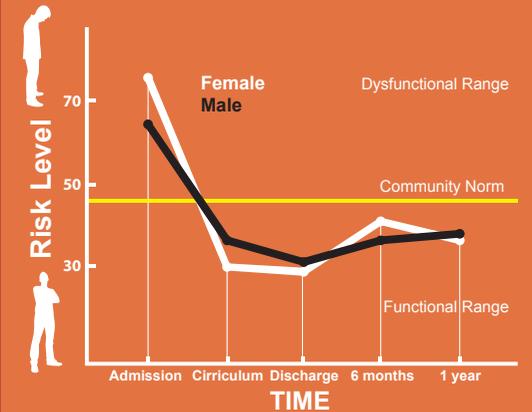
Gender Differences in Treatment

Results of the inquiry found that clients improve overall and in all of the subscales from admissions to discharge and the improvements are maintained at 6 and 12 months after treatment.

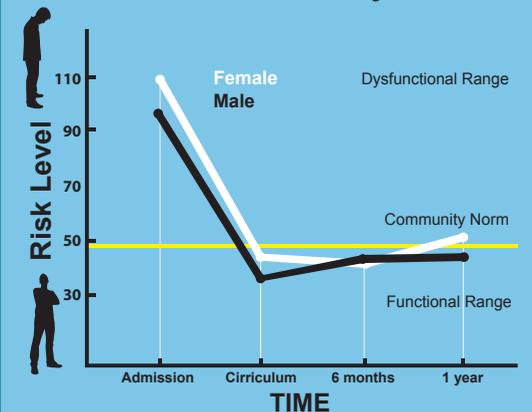
Overall Results



Y-OQ SR Total Score by Gender



Y-OQ 2.01 Total Score by Gender



The only statistically significant difference in outcome is that female clients often rate themselves as experiencing greater levels of distress at intake. The differences disappear after treatment, with male and females reporting similar levels of functioning.

Results show that youth have a lower risk level after going through the Red Cliff Wilderness Therapy program.

DIVERSITY & International Clientele

RedCliff Ascent works with clients from various backgrounds and cultures. RedCliff has effectively worked with clients from around the world. With around 15% of RedCliff's clientele coming from outside the United States representing over 35 different countries.

Wilderness Therapy has international appeal as a treatment approach because most cultures have used or continue to use the outdoors/wilderness as a stage for change and personal growth.

International clients have reported similar treatment improvements as clients from within the United States.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP OUTCOMES

A major part of assisting an adolescent in their change and personal growth is also disrupting any dysfunctional family patterns and interpersonal patterns that enable an adolescent's developmental delay.

RedCliff Ascent uses a Narrative Family therapy approach to work with families and their adolescents. A narrative approach allows families to look at family dynamics and connect with their child in a safe but powerful way.

Both parent and child report significant improvement in interpersonal relationships which is maintained at 6 and 12 months after treatment.

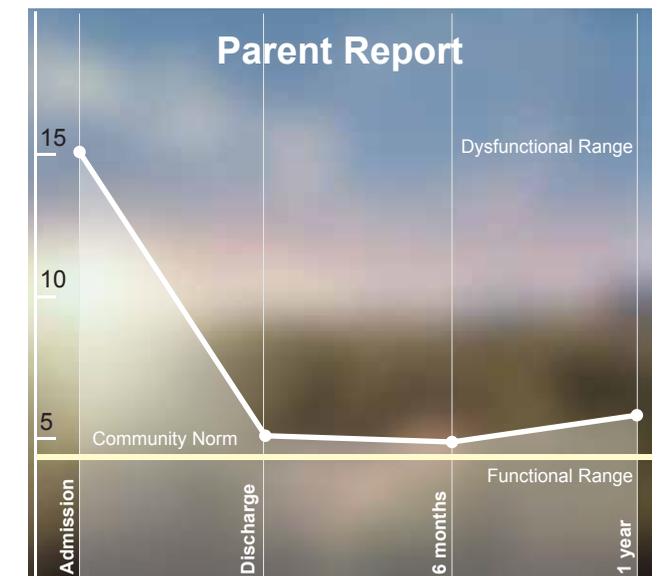
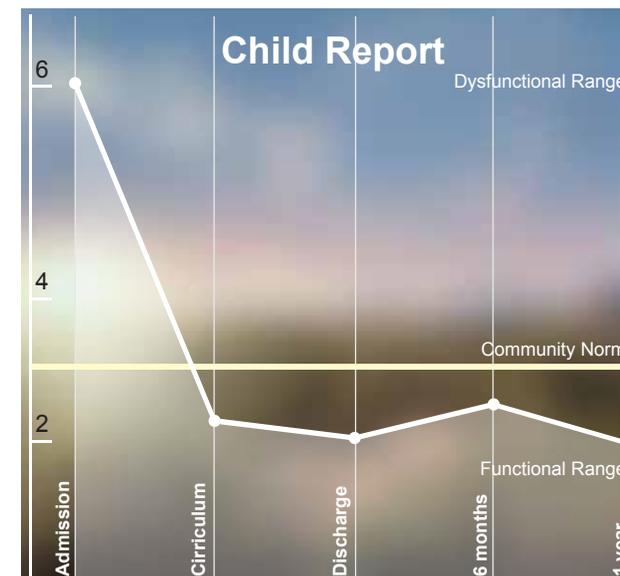
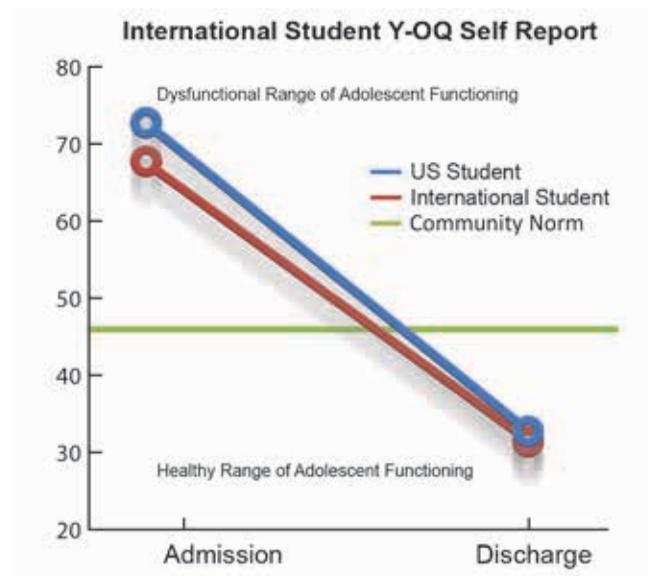
"Wilderness brings young man to real life without any illusions"
- Russian Father

"At last [our daughter] has been able to open up with us"
-British mother

"The Parent narratives really made us think about our family history and how we got into our situation. They also helped us reconnect with our son."
- Kenyon Parents

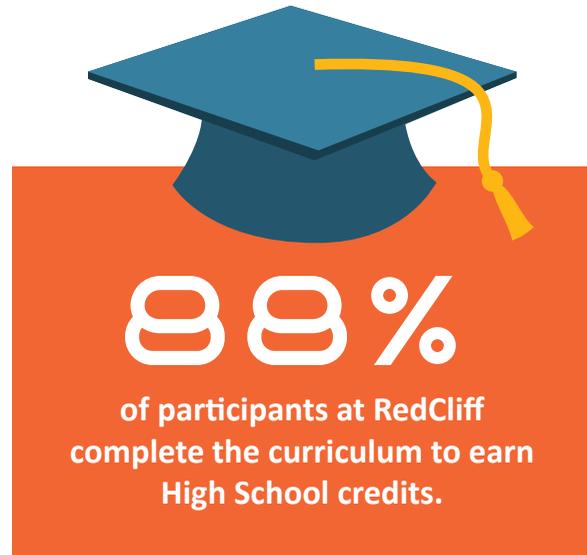
"I believe this experience has allowed my child to grow and mature."
- Bermudian mother

"This place gave me a whole new perspective. I felt safe from outside distractions, and I feel like a very different person."
- Persian adolescent



ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

In addition to the physical and mental health, RedCliff strives to promote academic success and competence. As part of the treatment milieu, participants take part in a value-based academic program. As a result they can earn 3 semester credits in various academic course.

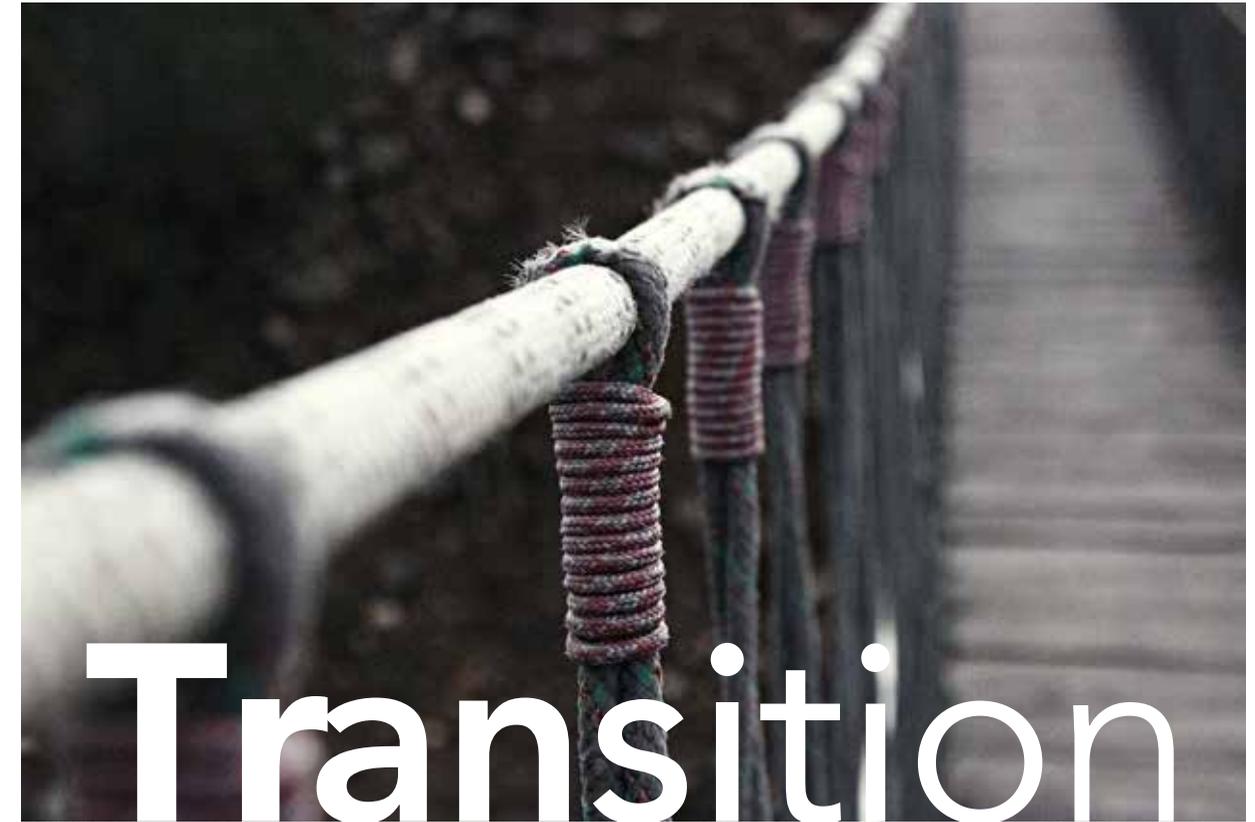
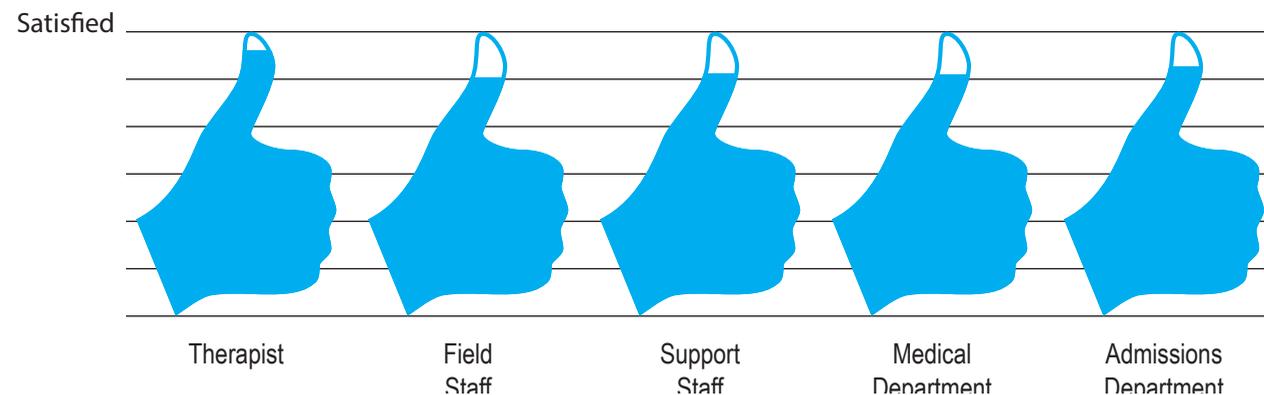


Student and Parent Satisfaction Survey

Wilderness therapy is a dynamic treatment approach with various contributing factors.

Each day and over the week a student and family interface with various individuals as part of the whole wilderness experience. RedCliff is aware of the value of all the factors that contribute to a satisfying wilderness experience. Not only

do we want our students and families to reach their treatment goals but we want them to have an overall positive and satisfying wilderness experience. To do this RedCliff evaluates various component of its program to look for areas it can improve.

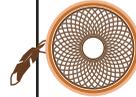


Transition and Aftercare

Transition and aftercare is tailored to the individual needs of each client. Throughout the wilderness experience, therapists assess a client's need for future care and continued support. Aftercare can take many forms including residential treatment, therapeutic boarding school, or in home care. Therapist work with the client's support team to determine

RedCliff strives to match the appropriate level of support to the specific needs of each student who participates in treatment.

the appropriate level of continued care. A successful transition occurs when the personal, social, familial, and academic needs of a client is matched with the necessary structure and support to maintain the overall treatment gains. Providing too little or too much support or structure can be detrimental to the growth and development of a client.

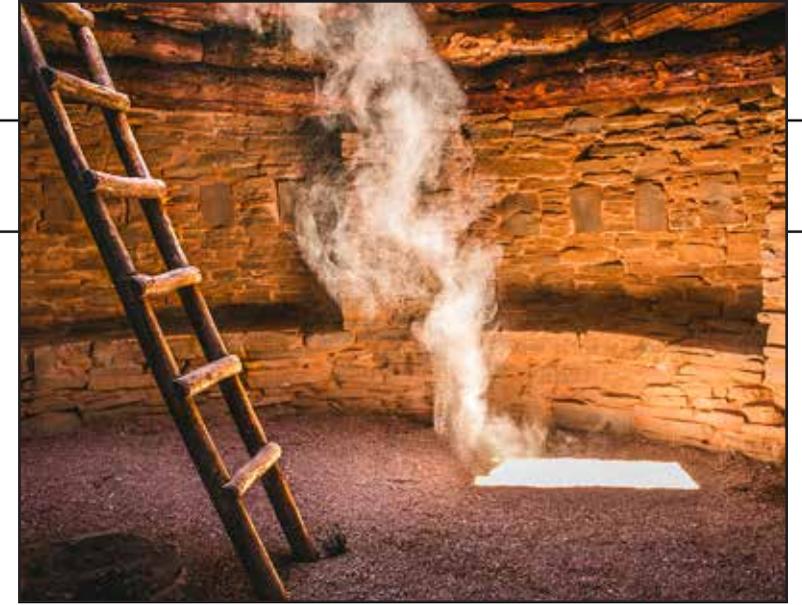


In Conclusion...

We hope this information has provided the answers you have been looking for to make the most informed decision regarding your client's treatment. Above all, RedCliff Ascent is committed to providing the highest quality of Outdoor Behavioral Health treatment.

We believe strongly in this commitment and work to achieve this through a dedication to research, consistent program evaluation and hiring and training only the most qualified people. From the top of our administration team to the newest of field staff, we all have a passion about being in the outdoors and more importantly using the intangible components of relationship, and effective interventions to create change.

Our clinical team consists of some of the most experienced and respected Outdoor Behavioral Health experts. Licensed as Ph.D's or Master's level clinicians, they are experts in not only utilizing the outdoor experience, but interpreting the client's experience and translating that into real change. Field staff are carefully screened and thoroughly trained. Most are



college graduates and are trained as wilderness first responders and outdoor skill sets.

Whether it's busting their first fire, pushing through a tough hike, processing difficult emotions or leading their own group session, all these experiences lead to a RedCliff client developing real competencies.

Although the structure does not change, therapy itself is individualized to meet each client's needs. What we offer at RedCliff Ascent goes beyond an outdoor

experience and is an all encompassing, clinically sophisticated, and research supported approach to Outdoor Behavioral Health Care. We appreciate you taking the time to do your due diligence and educate yourself about to the integrated approach RedCliff takes to Outdoor Health Care.

RedCliff offers a consistent, unvarying expectation of each student that does not vary from therapist to therapist or staff to staff.

Should you have further questions, please reach out to our Admissions Director, Chad Balagna, who can be reached at 801-318-5951 or via email at chadb@redcliffascent.com.



Eric C. Fawson MSW LCSW
Clinical Director
RedCliff Ascent and Medicine Wheel
ericf@redcliffascent.com



709 East Main Street, P.O. Box 1027
Enterprise, UT 84725 (435) 414-6222
www.redcliffascent.com