



**Tips for Residential Chairs & Team
Members**

This document contains some tips specifically for the residential team members. However, you may also find it helpful to review the [Inspire Chair and Team Handbook](#). While some of the information there will not pertain to the residential program, there are general tips that will help in relation to the timeline, the team report, etc. It will help you coordinate the time your team spends at the residential program with those visiting the school program. You can obtain the *Inspire* documents directly from [ACSI's website](#).

You may encounter a residential coordinator that is unfamiliar with accreditation. Since requiring accreditation for residential programs is new, it is possible that residential program directors may have had little or no experience with processes like this in the past. While meeting standards and holding programs accountable is of utmost importance in the areas of child safety and student care, we also understand that programs need time to learn how to complete a process well. With this understanding, it is important that our teams go the extra mile to try and understand how the residential program is working to effectively meet the needs of its students. If in fact these efforts fall short of meeting the standard of care we would expect, we still must have a growth mindset and be full of grace as we work with each program to help them improve for the sake of the students they serve.

1. You will most likely be accompanied by at least one other team member on the visit to a residential program, regardless of the size. Since this addendum is new, it is best for at least two people to collaborate and bring their experience to bear in these new settings.
2. There is a general document called the [Inspire Standards Manual](#), available on ACSI's accreditation website. In that document, you will find all the Inspire standards and indicators. That is important because the Residential Addendum was built on top of those. There is a universal rubric, on page 11, that you will need to use to evaluate the school's effectiveness in how they are meeting various indicators.
3. The school should have assembled a Residential Subcommittee for the purpose of the self-study. In the [Tips for Residential Coordinators](#), several positions were listed as ideas of who the coordinator might put on that committee. Once you know the school better, you might have additional suggestions for who you think might be an asset to the committee.
4. Also addressed in the [Tips for Residential Coordinators](#) document is an explanation of when the self-study process should start. It is hoped that schools start the self-study process 18-24 months prior to the visit. You may not be brought on that early, but as soon as you are engaged, encourage the schools to do several things:
 - a. Survey their own residential programs in light of the [Residential Addendum](#) indicators, if they have not done that already. Subsequently,

have them choose a couple of concerns identified from the survey and correct them, if there is time.

- b. Document any practices that they are doing but don't have written down.
- c. Implement any practices they have on paper but have not been doing regularly. (Training or drills often fall into this category.)
- d. Check on the [Readiness Checklist](#) that you will find on page 3 of the Residential Addendum. These are of primary importance and must be completed at least at a basic level for the visit to go forward. One of the roles of the residential member is to help with these documents, making sure that they are true in documentation and practice.

These things above will go a long way in helping the visit be a positive experience.

- 5. In the [Tips for Coordinators](#), we also explain how to evaluate evidence. We strongly suggest that you spend a session (Zoom or in-person) walking through the steps of 1) reviewing the indicators, 2) modeling how you decide what evidence is needed, 3) gathering the evidence, and then 4) rating the level of effectiveness with the universal rubric. Many first-time coordinators get this backward. They look at the indicators, rate themselves immediately, and then spend time trying to find evidence trying to justify their rating. That is completely wrong. They may actually miss their weaknesses and invalidate the entire self-assessment value of the accreditation process if they do that.
- 6. You will be working as a part of the larger visiting team, made up of school and residential members. There may be areas in which both the school and residential program need to improve. If that is the case, the chair of the entire team will decide which items become Accreditation Action Items (AAI) covering all parts of the program. There will be other areas that are specific to the residential program. Those commendations and recommendations for boarding will be written by your team and then submitted to the chair. He or she will decide if any of these raise to the level of an AAI. See the appendix on Commendations and Recommendations in the [Chair and Team Handbook](#).
- 7. For the schedule during the actual visit, you will work with the residential coordinator to create a specific schedule for a tour, interviews, and focus group meetings.
 - a. You should ask for specific people to interview and a group of residential students and parents to speak with, as well. Some programs have been able to set up a Zoom call with English speaking biological parents who live elsewhere. You can talk with your residential coordinator to let them know who you would like to speak with.

- b. When setting up the visiting team schedule, residential team members should be prepared to set up a schedule somewhat independent from the team members on the school side. Because so much of dormitory/homestay life occurs before and after school, the residential team will need to plan on having dinner/supper and one or two breakfast meals with dorm students and spending an hour or so each evening in the dorm(s) to see what life is like, observing dorm staff and boarding students. Be sure to watch the after-school activities and if they occur, observe any job expectations for boarding students. A meeting with a representative group of boarding students will likely take place after school or in the evening. This all means that the boarding team may have to reserve school hours for interviews and report writing with evenings set aside for observations. In a homestay situation, meetings may include a dinner in a home with the family and student who is boarding.
 - c. The residential team schedule should include a daily check-in with the team chair for updates. This is important to maintain the team function, so that both parts (the traditional school team and the residential team) share and listen to the concerns/celebrations of the other part.
 - d. The school will be responsible for determining who attends the exit report for the residential information at the end of the visit. In a fairly integrated program, the head of school may determine that academic and residential staff should hear both sides of the report. In other situations, the head of school may choose to dismiss the academic personnel and reconvene with the residential personnel for the portions specific to the residential program. The choice is up to the school leadership.
8. There are general interviewing tips in the [Chair and Team Handbook](#). However, you will need to ask questions that are unique to residential programs. Here are some ideas:
- a. When talking to the residential personnel or homestay parents, ask about how they were originally interviewed for their residential appointment, or what qualifications they were asked for. Because there are no certifications for these positions, this is an important question. Qualifications vary but options might include:
 - i. Experience with children or youth, camp work, or training in work with children.
 - ii. Biblical training. This could be formal Bible school or more informal training. These people are disciplers and mentors and need a strong grasp of God's word.

- iii. Counseling, psychology, social work. Understanding how students react to social pressures and especially to others in a group is valuable.
 - iv. Being a parent. While not all residential staff are parents, it can be valuable experience.
 - v. Personality tests. Most programs give or access personality testing.
 - vi. Recommendations and references. All programs should get several recommendations for potential staff from people who have worked with them, who have seen them work with children, etc.
- b. On site, discuss the nature of the orientation residential staff received. Many of the issues in the residential and homestay programs can be prevented by thorough orientation and ongoing professional development.
 - c. The issues of “caregiving” and “supervision” may look different from house to house, even in a homestay program. Asking how that looks in several different homes is good. Finding out if the school has examined and trained for that is even more important.
 - d. Ask students some hypothetical questions as well as real situations. (See list of potential questions.)
 - e. Since many students like to answer what they think is the “right answer,” try and ask more open-ended questions, word association, etc. so that there is a less obvious right answer. For example, say “Favorite food.” Students may reply with their own cultural food. You could then ask “Favorite food in America,” “Favorite fast food,” and/or “Favorite food in homestay.” The idea is that by this fourth question, you are probably going to see if they still answer with openness and quickly give you a food, or if they clam up and shake their head basically telling you that they don’t like any of the food at their homestay. Then chat for a minute to ask if the home has made them feel welcome by making them cultural foods, or finding out what they like to eat, etc.
 - f. Another way to get answers is to have them rate something with their thumbs...up, down, or to the side (so-so). It seems to be easier to answer truthfully if they don’t have to say it. Then you can follow up with a more specific question. This works well with those for whom English is a struggle. It also works well in a group as you can see lots of responses at once.

- g. It is great to work with a partner so that the second person can watch for non-verbal reactions, take notes, and prepare follow up questions.
- 9. The report you will write will have indicator ratings, commendations and recommendations, reflections for each domain, and a conclusion along with your overall recommendation about the status of the residential program. The recommendation will be given to the team chair, and he/she will incorporate that into the team report. The [*Chair and Team Handbook*](#) contains general formatting information and tips for writing the reflection for each domain.
- 10. In the Tips for Coordinators, a few of the more difficult areas are discussed. You should review those and be prepared to talk about those with the residential coordinator.
- 11. Also in those tips, the two appendices are explained. Be familiar with the appendices in the Addendum itself, and with the explanation in the tips document so that you can explain it in more detail to the residential coordinator.

Appendix A (from the [Residential Addendum](#) Document) – Levels of Care in the Residence

The appendix attempts to explain the dual responsibilities of “supervision” and “care” by those who care for minors in a residential program. The challenge is that with the variety of programs, there is no one approach that is right while others are wrong. There are many ways that these two functions can work well. As you evaluate your residential program, keep in mind those dual needs of the students you care for and care about. Treat them as much as possible like you would want your own children cared for if they were in boarding somewhere else in the world. Then evaluate your program as to whether it is effective, highly effective, somewhat effective, etc. That is how the visiting team will look at your program, as well.

Appendix B (from the [Residential Addendum](#) Document) – The Advocacy System

The requirement for an advocacy system sometimes raises questions from a school. They think ACSI may actually encourage complaints with this requirement. That could not be farther from the truth. This piece needs to be understood in the larger context and history of child safety and residential programs.

1. While many boarding schools were originally created to keep children in the country or at best on the continent close to their parents’ work overseas, the role of boarding parents was generally not seen as a professional calling and occasionally attracted unqualified people. The job was 24 hours a day, the number of students was overwhelming, and the pressure was relentless. Abuse occurred. Thankfully, those situations have come to light and much work has been done in this area. Accreditation for boarding programs was started largely because of the need for standards to prevent such abuses and in general, improve the level of care.
2. Fast forward to today’s programs. To decrease the likelihood of abuse occurring, child safety standards have been defined and training programs instituted. Residential personnel are recruited and trained with an eye to their ability to care for and nurture students. Ratios of caregivers to students have been reduced to allow for personal relationships rather than systems where rules and demerits are used to manage children. However, even with all these changes, it is impossible to prevent all possibility of negative behavior by those in authority over children. Minors living outside their home cultures are vulnerable, and there are those who would prey upon that vulnerability. Students in a regular day program have their parents to fall back on. Students in a residence other than their parents’ home need a safety net.

3. The Advocacy System was created by child safety advocates as a back-up system for schools and residential programs to ensure that children are heard when they use their school's reporting system. Statistics tell us that abusers are too often in the mainstream of a school, residential, or even church structure and have been able to deceive those around them for years. When a student reports abuse, sometimes the authorities do not take the report seriously nor investigate it because they believe they know the adult in question, and he or she "simply would not do such a thing." The Advocacy System gives the student someone to talk with should they not hear that any action has been taken regarding their report. That advocate's role is to ask leadership about the follow-up and their role ends when they are convinced that the program is pursuing its own policies appropriately.

Appendix C – Developing Your Philosophy and Expected Student Outcomes for Boarding

Many schools with residential programs originally offered a residential solution as a way to meet the obvious need for students to be housed near the school while away from their biological family. The Residential Addendum for *Inspire* requires schools with a residential program (homestay or dormitory style) to think more deeply about why they offer a residential option, beyond the obvious housing need, to consider the outcomes of the residential experience for the students involved as well as those who care for those students.

All accredited schools have written philosophy statements that undergird their programming. *Inspire* asks that each school with a residential program also have written statements of philosophy, beliefs, and essential expected student outcomes for their residential program. It is important that these statements are distinct from similar statements for the school, well-defined for a residential program, and systematically reviewed. These statements should reflect a Christian perspective on the care and nurture of residential students, an understanding of the special needs of residential students at various age levels, a recognition of the relationship of the residential program to the parents of the students and the school, and an appreciation of cultural differences.

In determining philosophy statements for a residential program, it is helpful to begin to by asking these questions:

- Why does our residential program exist?
- What do we believe about a residential program from a biblical perspective, and what are the biblical implications for the role of biological parents?
- What do we believe about the structure and environment of the residential home/unit?

- What do we believe about the role and responsibility of the residential home/unit staff?
- What do we believe about the relationships of the residential home/unit to the residential students, their parents, siblings, and others in the community?
- What do we believe about the relationships among the residential students, the boarding staff, the administration, and the school administration and faculty?
- What do we believe about student discipline, restoration, and the maturing process in the residential context?
- What do we believe about nurturing the physical, spiritual, emotional, and social development of the residential student? Is our program developmentally appropriate for the ages we serve?
- What are the distinctives that set us apart from other programs?

*See samples provided

Determining expected student outcomes for boarding

The residential program's expected student outcomes refer to the statements of what it intends for all residential students to know, believe, understand, and to be able to do after participating in the program. The expected student outcomes statements are the outworking of the residential program's philosophy in the lives of students.

In determining expected student outcomes in the residential program, the staff can begin by asking these questions:

- What do we hope to see in the lives of the students because they were in our residential program?
- How would these outcomes continue to develop if students were in the program for multiple years?
- Would parents share these desired outcomes and how would they see them lived out when the students return home?

It has been helpful for some residential programs when developing their expected student outcomes to think of themselves as something akin to a school. A school has a well-defined curriculum delivered through an instructional program with ideal stated outcomes that eventually result in a diploma awarded to students who meet those predetermined outcomes. A residential program, implicitly, also has a curriculum, goals, and planned activities for the students in its care. That curriculum in a residential program may be unwritten, but there are values the residential program is seeking to inculcate in each student. Examples of those outcomes are being able to independently do chores, do laundry, eat well, maintain a healthy lifestyle, complete homework, share resources, get along with roommates and housemates, work through conflict, receive

and offer forgiveness, and deepen their walk with God in close community with others. Each program will have unique aspects that only it offers.

Residential programs do not award a diploma like schools do, but it might be helpful to ask a question similar to what a school often asks...“What should the profile of a graduate from our (residential) program look like?” Can you identify the most important things your residential students should have learned by the time they leave your program?

Thinking through these expected outcomes helps to identify the real and deep benefits of learning and growing that takes place in your residential program. Clearly articulating those outcomes will help you with decisions in hiring, program planning, budgeting, and even choosing what activities to include during those free hours after school and on weekends. Those outcomes will mean a great deal not only to the students who experience them, but to the parents who trust their children into the care of the residential program, and to those caregivers who implement the residential program philosophy day-by-day in community.

Appendix D – Sample Questions

The following questions are suggestions for chairs and teams as they examine a residential program. It is also important to keep in mind the general tips covered on Page 3 of the [*Tips for Chairs and Team Members*](#) – *Residential Addendum*.

More important than asking these suggested questions is asking follow-up questions once you have read the self-study the residential staff have completed. In many cases, your best questions will come from areas that need clarification or additional information. Once you have read the self-study and reviewed the evidence, you may want to follow-up with questions like: 1) *How does the evidence presented demonstrate that you are effective in this particular indicator?* Or 2) *What did you learn from the policy and implementation that was represented by the piece of evidence you provided?*

Tailoring your questions to any missing pieces or incomplete understanding you might have from the specific program you are reviewing is always going to be more valuable than simply covering all the questions listed below. Notice that the questions below are open-ended with the main purpose to encourage conversation. Feel free to adapt them as needed. (Be sure to use words that communicate well with the group you are interviewing. For example, if “boarding” or “residential” are not as appropriate as “homestay” in their situation, be sure to adjust.)

Suggested questions for **residential staff** (dorm parents, residence assistants, homestay parents, etc., but NOT the head of the residential program):

1. Find out about the group. Names, years of service, role, grade levels?
2. What are your specific responsibilities with the boarding students?

3. What do you like best about the residential program?
4. What could be improved?
5. Is there anything you do to make the students feel “at home?”
6. Tell us about the weekends. Would you say students are bored, or busy, or have a good mix of free time and activity?
7. When students feel bullied, abused, threatened, lost, or sick, who do they talk to?
8. Was there any orientation that helped you understand your responsibilities and how to achieve those to the best of your ability?
9. Are you provided with ongoing professional development or training to help you do your job?
10. Who and what is your support system?
11. Who evaluates you and what does that process look like?
12. Do you ever get a break, and how does that work? How often?
13. How do you ensure that the written safety plan is working, is known to all staff and students, etc.?
14. What are some of the effective ways you discipline students in your residential situation?
15. How do you make sure a student knows they are loved and cared for, rather than just supervised or monitored in your residential setting?
16. Anything else we should know about the boarding program from your perspective?

Additional questions for the **Head of the Residential Program**:

1. Are you included in meetings where major ideas that affect the boarding program are discussed, like the vision of the school? Provide some examples.
2. What is the reporting structure for the residential staff? Do you have regular access to those in authority over you?
3. Who evaluates you? What is the process like? Is it helpful to you?
4. How do you access financial resources that relate to the residential program or facilities that your program regularly accesses? Are they adequate? What does the budgeting process look like?

5. How are decisions made that affect boarding students such as calendar, activities, admissions, etc.? Do you have the input you need?
6. Do you have the support you need regarding boarding decisions, discipline, policies? Provide examples.
7. What type(s) of professional development or training do you provide for your boarding staff? What are some other ways you support them?
8. How do you evaluate the members of your boarding staff team?
9. Describe the effectiveness/implementation of the advocate program or system.
10. Anything else we should know about the boarding program from your perspective?

Suggested questions for **students**:

1. If in a group, find out about the students. Names, grades, years in boarding. If mixed situations, dorms/homestays?
2. What is a typical day like in the dorm or homestay?
3. What do you like best about the residential part of your day?
4. What could be improved?
5. Other than mom and dad, what do you miss most about “being home?”
6. Tell us about the weekends. Are they boring, busy, a good mix of free time and activity?
7. What would happen if you felt bullied, abused, threatened, lost, sick, etc.? Have any of you ever had one of those situations, and if so (don’t have to give any details) was there someone to talk to?
8. (Place your hands wide apart) “If there were two extremes, one end is “monitored” and the other end is “loved and cared for” how would you describe your current experience? Are you closer to one of those than the other? Give some examples.
9. Was there any orientation that helped you understand how to get along in the dorm or homestay and how to make it work well for you?
10. Explore the effectiveness/implementation of the advocate program. Are they aware of it and know who to go to?
11. Do you know what to do in case of an emergency? (Specific to their residential situation)

12. Anything else we should know about the boarding program that we haven't asked, and should know?

Suggested questions for **biological parents/guardians** (probably by Zoom or phone call):

1. Tell us about your student. Boy/girl? Grade? Years in boarding? Dorm or homestay?
2. What are some of the reasons you chose this school, one that required boarding?
3. Overall experience with boarding? All positive? Some negative? Mixed over the years (if multiple experiences)? Any specifics?
4. What are a few things the residential program is doing well this year?
5. What is something that you would suggest they improve on?
6. How has the communication been, to you, as parents, from the residence personnel?
7. How would you reflect on the way the residential staff disciplines or mentors your student? (For non-Christian parents, you may have to follow-up with "builds relationship" or "builds character.")
8. Do you get a chance to evaluate the boarding program, or otherwise give input or feedback?
9. What do you know about the advocate program at the school? Do you think your son/daughter would know who to go to if they were feeling bullied or unsafe in the boarding environment?
10. Anything else we should know about the boarding program, from your perspective?

Other groups or individuals may also have pertinent information for the visiting team. Depending on the situation, you may want to arrange individual interviews with the people responsible for admissions, building maintenance, guidance, health care, food service, spiritual formation, etc. Hopefully, you will also have an opportunity to talk to those in leadership such as members of the board, Head of School, a building principal, athletic/activities director, etc., if they have direct contact or decision-making authority over the residential students. In those cases, you will want to collect questions that pertain to their areas of responsibility after reading the residential self-study. Their answers to your specific questions may help you clarify something or provide missing evidence.

Appendix E - Sample Residential Visit Schedule

ABC ACADEMY

Sample Residential Team Schedule

Days/Month/Year

(Be sure to work with the visiting team chair in the setup of the residential schedule so that there is coordination in touchpoints and outcomes.)

| Sunday | |
|--------|---|
| | Arrivals |
| 2:00 | School and Residence team meeting (location) |
| 4:00 | Dorms and School Tour for All. R Team might be able to visit a homestay |
| 5:30 | Dinner with School Leadership (location) |
| 7:30 | Team Meetings. Residential Team and School Team meet separately. |

| Monday | |
|-----------|--|
| 6:30-7:00 | Breakfast |
| 8:00 | R Team update with visiting team Chair |
| 8:30 | Meeting with Director of Boarding Services and Homestay Coordinator (location) |
| 9:30 | Meeting with Dorm/Homestay staff - explain purpose of the visit (location) |
| 10:00 | Meet with Dorm Parents - A (location) |
| 10:30 | Meet with Dorm Parents - B (schedule more if needed) (location) |
| | R Team discussion/writing |
| 12:00 | Lunch in dining hall with various residential students |
| 1:00 | Meet with representative group of parents or homestay students (location) |
| 2:00 | Video interview with parents of boarding students (may have to be virtual) |
| 3:00 | Other interviews or report writing |
| 4:00 | Observe after school life in dorms, homestay |
| 5:30 | Dinner in various dorms (or school dining hall) or homestays |
| 7:00 | Observe in the dorms and then meet with representative group of boarding or homestay students (location) |

| Tuesday | |
|-----------|--|
| 6:30-7:00 | Breakfast |
| 8:30 | R Team update with visiting team Chair |
| 9:00 | Meet with Head of School (location) |
| 10:00 | Meet with HS Principal (location) |
| 11:00 | Meet with Counselor (location) |
| 12:00 | Lunch in dining hall |
| 1:00 | Meet with Board Chair and/or Board member (location) |
| 2:00 | Meet with Facility Manager (location) |
| 2:30 | If the visit is concurrent with the <i>Inspire</i> visit, it may be appropriate for the residential team leader to participate in the Collaborative Goals Meeting with the chair of the team |
| 3:00 | Meet with Dorm Assistants/Dorm Subs/homestay parents (location) |
| 4:00 | R Team members meeting with Chair for update |
| 5:45 | Dinner in various dorms (or school dining hall) or homestays |
| 6:30 | Dorm Observation/Report Writing |
| 8:00 | Report writing |

| Wednesday | |
|-----------|--|
| 6:30-7:00 | Breakfast |
| 8:00 | Other last meetings if necessary |
| 9:00 | R Team meeting to finalize residential report |
| 11:00 | Lunch in cafeteria |
| 12:30 | Meeting with head of boarding and head of school and team chair for pre-read (location) |
| 2:00 | Residential visiting team exit report (dorm staff can attend this) |
| 3:30 | School visiting team exit report |