



Tips for Residential Coordinators

This document contains some tips specifically for the school's residential program coordinator for the Residential Addendum. You will also find a wealth of additional information in the [Inspire School Coordinator Handbook](#). While some of the information there will not pertain to the residential program, there are general tips that will help in relation to gathering and organizing evidence, knowing how to host the team during their visit, etc. It will help you coordinate the time spent by visitors focusing on the residential program with those visiting the school. Be sure to obtain that document from the school or directly from [ACSI's website](#). Two other documents will be helpful: [Inspire Standards Manual](#), and [Inspire Chair and Team Handbook](#).

1. The process of assessing your residential program and reviewing evidence is called the "Self-Study." You can read more about that in the [Inspire School Coordinator Handbook](#). As the coordinator for the residential program, you will probably be asked to create a separate self-assessment for the indicators included in the [Residential Addendum](#).
2. In the [Inspire Standards Manual](#), 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 that you will need to use to evaluate your evidence for the self-study.
3. Assembling a Residential Subcommittee – As you develop your committee to study the residential program, assemble a good cross section of staff that touch the residential program. The subcommittee could include:
 - a. Residential Program Director
 - b. Admissions support (residential applicants)
 - c. Guidance counselor who works with residential or international students
 - d. Other assistants in these areas
 - e. Dorm parents or homestay parents
 - f. Resident Assistants (if applicable)
 - g. Dormitory subs (if applicable)
 - h. A board member who has been interested in the residential or international program
 - i. Head of School or his/her designee

However, it may be helpful to include others that you might not think of immediately. Those people might see residential or international students every day and have a more informal relationship with them:

- A coach or club sponsor who works with many of the international students
 - A teacher who they all seem to have and like (art, math, etc.)
 - A resource teacher or librarian who supports them regularly
 - Pastor or youth group sponsor of a church who regularly interacts with these students
 - A parent of boarding students or even a boarding student representative
4. This process of accreditation often starts 18-24 months prior to the actual visit. Sometimes the subcommittee finds that they are expected to have documentation or a plan for something that has only been occurring in practice. If that is the case, take time to write it up and create the documentation. On the other hand, if you have written policies that have not been put into regular practice, you can start that immediately. Another example might be administering surveys. If you have never done that, start right

away. Even a simple survey based on Residential Addendum indicators will typically yield some actionable information and help you make some improvements based on input. You have time to address items that you don't feel are fully effective if all they require is documentation or implementation. Starting early will allow you time to address some of the issues that can be attended to before the team comes.

5. On page 3 of the Addendum, there is a list of items included in the [Readiness Check](#). These are especially important to focus on early. These should be in place at least at a basic level so that the visit can go forward. For example, the residential program needs its own security and crisis management plan. If the school has a dormitory, the plan must be specific for that building and the staff that work there. If the school only has a homestay program, safety will be evaluated from the perspective of evaluations of the homes and training the homestay parents receive.
6. This process is designed to ask yourselves "How are we effective in light of this standard/indicator?" To answer that, you must have evidence to evaluate. The first few meetings for the subcommittee should consist of reviewing the standards/indicators and deciding what evidence you need to collect to make a determination. Then collect that evidence and reconvene. Many schools make the mistake of deciding what their rating should be and then trying to find evidence to support their rating. That means that they will overlook evidence, even lots of evidence, trying to find the few pieces that justify the rating they want to have. The best method is to determine what should be reviewed, review it, and then determine the indicator rating, using the universal rubric, based on what the evidence tells you.
7. Once you start the self-assessment, you will be evaluating evidence. Some evidence is hard to come by. For example, when looking at Indicators 1.2 and 1.4, it is often hard to determine what evidence could be gathered to document that the school's mission is evident throughout the residential program, or if the expected student outcomes for the residential program drive decisions. If you are reading this 18 months or more prior to the accreditation visit, you have time to start some new habits. Here are some examples:
 - a. At your monthly meetings with the leadership team that includes the residential program, take a few minutes and ask those two questions. 1) Are we achieving our mission through our residential program? 2) How are we accomplishing our expected student outcomes through our residential program? 3) How could we improve on either of these this coming month?
 - b. Another approach is to do a debrief after major events involving boarding. For example, after orientation or a major residential outing, ask your team the same questions.
 - c. A third way to create this type of information comes from one-on-one meetings between leaders and residential staff or homestay parents. In every meeting, choose at least one question that reflects one of the indicators that you want to target, such as 2.2 (mentoring, discipleship, and spiritual formation) and ask how that is happening in their dorm or home environment.

Notes from those regular meetings become the evidence you will examine for the indicators mentioned. The feedback you discuss yields items to celebrate as strengths and areas to improve upon.

8. The report that you write will require indicator effectiveness ratings, strengths, areas for improvement, and a narrative reflection for each domain. General self-study information is found in the [School Coordinator Handbook](#).
9. Thinking about “Additional Indicators” – Residential programs come in all shapes and sizes. Some have extensive boarding programs and an actual dormitory, while others consist of private homestays. The indicators in the residential addendum were written to encompass programs across the spectrum. When you read these, an indicator might sound like it is targeting a service that you do not have. Stop and re-read it with your situation in mind. Ask yourself how you meet your students' needs in this area. Then locate evidence that you can show the visiting team that demonstrates that. Next, evaluate whether it is effective, highly effective, etc. We encourage you to think creatively of alternatives that might not be typical solutions.
 - a. For example, some schools have told us that they have no responsibility to monitor the home environment of a homestay student if an outside agency found that student's placement (Indicator 20.5). While this is how the homestay was selected, we believe that it is the school's responsibility to know that the student is safe, cared for socially and emotionally, and is committed to following the school's rules, even when not on campus. There are ways the school can monitor those students' living conditions. That might be through monthly meetings on campus or it could be through occasional visits to the home. It might be through the use of a third party person employed to visit all students living in non-school selected housing. Schools have addressed this in many ways. If this is a difficult area for your program, talk with the residential team member coming to visit your school. They may be able to work with you to develop a plan that will help you meet this indicator over time.
 - b. Another example might be access to healthcare (Indicator 18.5). Some schools do not want to deal with this and let students have whatever coverage their parents send with them. Our indicator states that students will have access to 24-hour healthcare and that it is clear where they should go with their particular policies. Rather than creating a situation where costs fall on the homestay/boarding parents or that homestay parents were not prepared for certain types of emergencies, this should be dealt with before students come. It may be that schools will have to set some minimum standards for sending parents and what they provide for their students while in boarding.
10. For the schedule during the actual visit, you will work with the residential team members to create a specific schedule for a tour, interviews, and group focus meetings.
 - a. The team will 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 team members to let them know if this is possible.
 - b. When setting up the visiting team schedule, residential team members will need a schedule somewhat independent from the members on the school

side. Because so much of dormitory/homestay life occurs before and after school, the residential team will need to join the residential students for dinner/supper, perhaps one or two breakfast meals, and an hour or so each evening to see what life is like, observing dorm staff and boarding students. They will need to observe 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. The residential team members 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.

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.