

# Uta Halee Academy

## Program Description



Uta Halee Academy is a female-specific, residential program that offers young women opportunities to build productive and meaningful futures for themselves and their communities. Since it began operations in 2013, Uta Halee has evolved and grown, incorporating the latest research and evidence into our program model. Our understanding of the populations that we serve has helped us to develop an evidence-based and trauma-responsive program that helps our young women attain their goals.

### Ownership

Uta Halee Academy is owned and operated by Rite of Passage, a leading national provider of evidence-based therapeutic and educational programs for youth. Rite of Passage is a for-profit corporation that is licensed and operates in Good Standing in the State of Nebraska. This agency provides female-specific residential treatment, shelter services, therapeutic services, case management, accredited education, career and technical education, routine medical care, family and community involvement, recreational opportunities, and discharge planning.

### Our Mission and Goals

For over 40 years, Rite of Passage has been improving the lives of youth. Through its work at Uta Halee Academy and other academy programs, Rite of Passage has developed the Integrated Care Model framework to articulate its program philosophy, methodology, and specific evidence-based practices.

Through our safe and nurturing program that focuses on targeted interventions and treatment goals, the objective of UHA is to provide young women with skills and competencies that translate to their success within the community, their families and within their own lives. Through a child-centered focus, we assist youth in identifying and nurturing their unique strengths while addressing past trauma to promote their sense of well-being and chances of success.

## Children Served

Uta Halee Academy serves adolescent females aged 13 to 19 who exhibit conduct disorders, oppositional defiance, or disruptive behavior as primary diagnoses. The program is designed to address the needs of youth with a history of violent offenses, antisocial behaviors, mild behavioral health issues, substance use concerns, and attention-related disorders like ADD and ADHD. The youth typically come from Omaha and surrounding counties, referred through juvenile justice systems, probation services, or child welfare agencies. Many of the youth served have experienced unstable home environments or prior placements and require structured therapeutic programming to address chronic offending patterns and behavioral challenges. Exclusionary criteria include IQ below 70, active psychosis, chronic fire setting, significant medical conditions, recent suicidal behavior or self-harm, ongoing violent aggression, and high runaway risks. Uta Halee emphasizes culturally responsive care, recognizing the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the youth they serve.

## Our Staff: Qualifications and Job Responsibilities

Our dedicated team consists of highly trained professionals who undergo thorough background checks and screening. Each staff member channels their passion for helping youth into creating a nurturing environment focused on positive growth and development. With a commitment to continuous learning, our qualified personnel stay up-to-date on the latest evidence-based approaches. Our leadership team and the team of staff who primarily work with youth includes:

**Executive Director** provides overall leadership and strategic planning for Uta Halee Academy.

**Qualifications:** The executive director must meet one of the following education and experience requirements: (i) Have a master's degree in social work, counseling, business, public administration, education, or a related human service; or (ii) Have a bachelor's degree and five years of experience in social work, counseling, business, public administration, education, or a related human service.

**Program Director** is responsible for the quality delivery and oversight of treatment, educational, vocational and student health and welfare.

**Qualifications:** The Program Director qualifications include (i) a master's degree in social work, counseling, business, public administration, education, or a related human service; or (ii) a bachelor's degree and three years of experience in social work, counseling, business, public administration, education, or a related human service.

**Direct Care Staff Supervisor** is responsible for the supervision, mentoring, training and evaluation of direct care staff and overseeing the supervision of students.

**Qualifications:** A direct care staff supervisor, if other than the executive director or program director, must: (i) Have a master's degree in social work, counseling, or a related human service; or (ii) Have a bachelor's degree in social work, counseling, or a related human service with two years of experience in a human service related field.

**Direct Care Staff** is a person who has been hired or approved by the licensee and is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of children in their care, includes both day staff (Group Living Counselors) and night staff (Awake Night staff).

**Qualifications:** Each direct care staff must: (i) Be at least 21 years of age; and (ii) Have a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma.

**Case Manager** coordinate treatment plans and monitor youth progress.

**Qualifications:** Case Managers must hold a bachelor's degree in social work, counseling, psychology, or a related field.

**Principal** oversees the educational program and compliance with standards.

**Qualifications:** The Principal must (i) hold a valid state administrative credential; (ii) have a master's degree in education or a related field; and (iii) possess at least five years of experience in educational administration.

**Teachers** provide academic instruction and classroom support for youth.

**Qualifications:** Teachers must (i) hold a bachelor's degree in education or a related field; (ii) possess a valid state teaching license; and (iii) have 3 years of experience.

**Nurse** manages healthcare services for students and ensures wellness.

**Qualifications:** The Nurse must (i) hold a valid registered nursing (RN) license; (ii) have a bachelor's degree in nursing (preferred); and (iii) possess at least two years of experience.

## **Our Behavior Management System**

Uta Halee Academy promotes a safe environment with established rules designed to protect students and staff. At admission, students receive a full code of conduct in writing, which is thoroughly explained and may also be accessed through the student handbook, case managers, or within the living unit. Students are informed about the program rules and the consequences of not meeting them, with violations classified as Class A, B, or C based on severity. Students progress through status levels—Orientation, Novice, Intern, Contributor, and Mentor—by demonstrating positive behaviors. Higher status levels are rewarded with increased privileges and responsibilities, such as off-campus outings, extended bedtimes, special meals, and leadership opportunities. This structured system emphasizes accountability and motivates personal growth by reinforcing constructive choices through positive incentives.

Restorative Justice is intertwined in all aspects of Uta Halee Academy. Any time a student's actions has negatively impacted the Uta Halee community, they will be expected to restore positive relations with the community around them. This could include completing the problem resolution process (PRP), an apology letter, a community group, or identifying a way they can help their cottage in a healthy way. Restorative Justice is a vital part of living in a community, and it is performed to ensure a healthy living environment for all students at Uta Halee

## **Our Services**

At Uta Halee Academy, the Integrated Care Model is our current framework for operating quality student programming that combines the best elements of our continuous evolution. The Integrated Care Model is trauma informed, emphasizes safety, and describes how staff provide individualized services to student that support healing, skill development and goal attainment.

**Female Responsive Programming.** The Clinical Services, Health and Wellness, Academic and Vocation programs at Uta Halee Academy are based on a Female Responsive Model. This model includes skill development, self-esteem building, identity building, empowerment and relationships. Given that relationships are central to female development, the Uta Halee staff utilize the primary relationships with students for facilitation and enhancement of their treatment. Our services include skill development, self-esteem building, identity building, empowerment and relationships. The daily community schedule includes activities that utilize strengths and interests (e.g. journaling, physical exercise, and verbal abilities) typically found in females. A variety of therapeutic approaches will allow feminine expression of other abilities as well.

**Education.** The Uta Halee Academy Program has an on-site Rule 18 School that has been approved by the Nebraska Department of Education. Many students enter the program behind educationally but because

we are a year-round school with an extended school day, students may earn credits faster than at most schools. Career and Technical education opportunities are available for youth in the afternoons.

**Library.** The library is a learning and recreation center with multimedia resources to access all kinds of information in individual and small group settings. Books, newspapers and periodical resources support academic and vocational programs as well as meeting the religious, cultural, hobby, and leisure needs of youth. Students will have access to the library on a weekly basis during activities block. In addition, youth may check out books to read in their cottages.

**Therapeutic Services.** Uta Halee Academy uses a cognitive behavioral model to assist students in identifying negative thought patterns that lead to problematic behaviors and adverse outcomes. As students meet their individual goals in the program, they earn additional privileges and responsibilities throughout the program. A student's graduation date is dependent on the student's ability to maintain safety, ability to show marked improvements, successful completion of their therapeutic goals, progress in their educational endeavors and positive engagement in home passes.

**Case Management.** While at Uta Halee Academy, students are assigned a Case Manager (CM) who will be responsible for their individual case plan and in coordination with your multidisciplinary team, will provide one-on-one check-ins, family support and transitional planning services.

**Cultural/Spiritual Diversity.** Uta Halee Academy and its staff value cultural and spiritual diversity. Activities include art, music, food, literature, and multi-cultural celebrations (e.g. Black History Month). Religious activities are available to young women on a weekly basis. Participation in these activities is optional and a matter of the youth's personal choice. Upon intake, UHA staff administer a questionnaire to assess each youth's cultural backgrounds, spiritual/religious affiliations, and related observances or dietary needs in order to respect and accommodate their cultural and spiritual identities during their stay.

**Integrated Fitness and Health Education.** Physical and medical needs specific to females are addressed through medical nursing services and a health curriculum in the program. Education related to pregnancy and family planning are addressed through academic, life skills, and visitation programs.

**Money Management/Lifeskills.** At Uta Halee Academy, developing proper money management skills is an important part of the life skill development for our students. Case Managers work closely with youth on their caseloads, guiding them through lessons in budgeting, saving, banking, and making responsible financial decisions. These discussions and experiences help cultivate financial literacy and independence as they transition into the community.

**Wellness/Nutrition Education.** Uta Halee Academy prioritizes wellness and nutrition education to promote healthy lifestyles for our youth. Through our health class curriculum, daily wellness activities, and life skills instruction, students gain valuable knowledge about proper nutrition, balanced diets, and making mindful food choices. Our unique culinary arts program allows hands-on learning about meal preparation using wholesome ingredients. Additionally, nursing staff provides seminars, when requested, regarding nutritional topics based on student needs.

**Community Contacts.** Uta Halee Academy actively engages students in structured community service as an important component of their individualized treatment plans, aiming to rebuild connections with the community and foster personal growth. Students volunteer with local organizations such as Heartland Equine Therapy Riding Academy, Nebraska Methodist College, and Open Door Mission, gaining practical

experience and contributing positively to society. In addition, Uta Halee Academy students participate in several different activities throughout the year with the YMCA such as Volleyball and Basketball. Students at Uta Halee Academy also have the opportunity to participate in Girl Scouts and AA/NA Meetings on site. These partnerships provide avenues for students to develop essential life skills, build a sense of responsibility, and establish meaningful relationships within the community.