

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

During Resident breaks and before coming home the teen prepares to transition out of FMRTC and back into their community. With the help of FMRTC staff and weekly meetings the family is coached through a CHC process that teaches life skills, makes clear agreements, and helps everyone understand the boundaries and consequences when coming home.

The contract is important on many levels. It begins clear communication between parents and teens about expectations, consequences, agreements, and unity.

We will be spending the next couple of weeks helping the kids prepare **their** offer for the coming home contract. This means that expectations will be clarified and agreed upon with consequences put into place if they are not followed. It is also an opportunity for teens to learn the art of negotiation, asking for what you want, giving something in return, and how contracts work. Parents are expected to create their contract ideas as well and then we all meet at the kitchen table at FMRTC and hammer out agreements.

We teach the process of contractual negotiation very seriously and you can expect your teen to use some “negotiation strategies” on you. We recommend that you sit in front of the computer and brush up on some tactics yourself. Asking for what you want and negotiating are very important life skills that can really empower these teens.

Behavior contracts have several advantages for teens and their parents. For teens, behavior contracts make both the rules and the consequences of breaking the rules clear and can help develop habits of good behavior. Parents find that behavior contracts help them to be consistent with rules and discipline, and provide an opportunity to talk straightforwardly with their teens about important subjects such as suicide, drugs and alcohol, dating, and driving.

Behavior contracts are effective with many teenagers, including those with antisocial, disruptive, or delinquent behavior. Behavior contracts are especially good for teens with past or current behavior problems, as well as for troubled teens with physical or mental disabilities. Bullies, including those who are running into trouble with law enforcement, often benefit from behavior contracts. Behavior contracts have been used successfully with teens who have problems with drug or alcohol abuse.

The most important thing you must be aware of this: Whether emotionally or physically, **your teen will relapse into old destructive patterns and habits.** Everyday since they have been here they have been working on new ways of behaving and choosing...but there is a lifetime of habits to work through. The work is not done.

It never is is it?

At the contract meeting, the teen will read through their initial offer. This is an opportunity to listen and learn what they are thinking and where their mind is at. At the first meeting DO NOT respond to any of their ideas either in a positive or a negative way. We are going to delay gratification purposefully. Contracts are not done quickly or compulsively. to do this right, we will

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

listen, then parents will go home with the rough draft containing their notes, and then at the 2nd meeting, submit their counter offer. we will continue in this manner until the contract is realistic, achievable, and agreed upon by all parties.

Remember, the teen being here is a privilege. If at any time they try to hijack the process with negative or manipulative behavior, the process ends and is begun again the next week, or ended and the parents set the rules into place without the teen's input.

Here are rules that YOU must take into consideration while working with your teen on a coming home contract.

1. Take care of yourself first, your relationships second and your teen third.
2. Plan for the worst and hope for the best.
3. They know that you are willing to take drastic measure now...utilize that leverage.
4. They will ask for things that they may want and may not need...don't say yes so they like you, see rule number one and give the answer of a responsible parent. The goal is to prepare them for adulthood...not make them happy.
5. Be prepared to walk away from the table and put YOUR contract into full force without negotiation if they become manipulative, argumentative, or immature about this experience. You taking their thoughts and offers into consideration is a privilege they have earned because of their hard work here. If the hard work vanishes, so does the privilege. Responsibility earns freedoms.
6. If YOU don't follow your agreements, you CANNOT expect them to. You can null and void this contract and must be at the top of your game.
7. Only accept offers and make agreements that you are sure can be kept. This is not a set up for failure but an experiment in WIN, WIN, WIN.

REMEMBER!

1. The contract must be in writing.
2. Changes can be made but must be made in a process similar to how the contract was created.
3. The contract negotiation process must be free of old family bickering, arguing, and conflict. You have to listen, be respectful, consider offers, and say "No" in a constructive manner providing alternatives.
4. If you are lost for an answer, don't answer. Say you will consider it and move on and then get support on your decision away from the table.
5. This is more of like a contract between and employer and an employee or an landlord and tenant..not equals in a business partnership.

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

6. YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE PROCESS. NOT THE TEEN. THEY ARE INVOLVED ONLY BECAUSE OF THEIR GOOD WORK.

Suggestions for Parents

Having done these again and again, we have found that there are some things you should consider including in the contract. These things are not for every family...make sure they work for you. Your teen will probably not think of these.

Don't give away the farm! (Also known as ETR- Earn The Right!)

These teens have worked hard here but it doesn't mean that they deserve all of their rights and privileges right away. Set up leverage to earn back some of the things they have lost. Keep the "earn back" time short and realistic, but *make them earn it!*

For example:

1. A kid leaving a program does not need their drivers license back right away, especially if they lost it through illegal means. Allow 2-5 weeks of proof that they can re-integrate successfully.
2. A kid does not get the midnight curfew on weekends right away. They can have 11 and earn a half hour extra each week that the curfew time is met. (They can also lose a half hour.)
3. A teen can't sleep over at friends houses unless the parents of the friend are in full support of your process and willing to watch them like a hawk. Sleepovers at home are fine. They can earn sleepovers at friends house when the demonstrate good grades and priorities/proper check in/etc.

Keeping them in the work when they return is imperative. They have built habits of responsibility while here at Fire Mountain...make them earn the Right!

Checking in.

Teens do not understand the power of checking in. It is so hard to convince them (and we try) that texting or phoning into the parents every 2 hours would make such a huge difference in the relationship. Teens could probably experience more freedoms by contacting you more often and taking the worry of where they are and who they are with out of your job.

We do recommend a GPS placed in their phone. you pay for it...you should know where it is. they can always get a job and pay for their own phone...right?

We suggest you use the "Who, What, When, Where, Why and How" check in system. Parent: "Every (hour, 2 hours, anytime the situation changes) I want to know-"

- Who you are with.
- What you are doing.

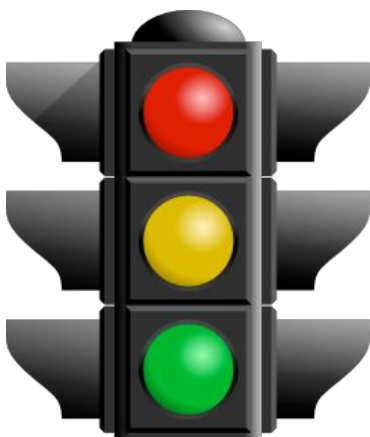
The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

- When are you doing it?
- Where are you doing this thing?
- Why?
- How are you getting there/home?

Will it feel limiting to your teen? Probably. When will this change? When you trust them again.

Red Yellow Green

Think traffic light. This is a process of everyone being able to describe WHERE people are emotionally in a very simple, easy to understand way.



Red=Crisis: Intervention needed. Parents must follow through on warning about relapse behavior and repeat offenses. Conversations and logic ineffective now. **Everything stops.**

Yellow=Caution: Time to stop now to avoid trouble. Contract has been violated. People aren't communicating well. Arguing. Failed drug test. Stop here, don't try to go through the light - it will turn red. Now is the time for re-valuation! Review the contract. Call FM. **Time for a family meeting.**

Green=Everything is good: Rules and agreements are in place. Things are working. Mistakes get made but teen takes responsibility and makes corrections. Communication is good and conflicts are avoided by conversations about feelings. **Everything is a go.**

We can use the Red, Yellow, Green verbiage in our conversations too- "I'm in the red right now...can't talk. Be back soon", or, "I'm totally yellow and need to discuss this. I'm upset and need to figure this out." "Yes you can go out tonight as long as today is totally in the green." It keeps the emotional understanding of where everyone is simple.

-Plan B-

Above all, when the contract process is being discussed, you must be clear on what Plan B is. Plan B is very simply this: If it all goes back to the way it was, what will you do? What is the Emergency Action Plan that gets activated without question if the teen has a major relapse?

Stages of Relapse

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

Any addiction treatment expert will agree with the statement “relapse is not an event, it’s a process.

In order to understand relapse prevention you have to understand the stages of relapse. Relapse starts weeks or even months before the event of physical relapse. In this page you will learn how to use specific relapse prevention techniques for each stage of relapse. There are three stages of relapse.

- Emotional relapse
- Mental relapse
- Physical relapse

Emotional Relapse

In emotional relapse, you're not thinking about using. But many emotions and behaviors are setting the addict up for a possible relapse in the future. The signs of emotional relapse are:

- Anxiety
- Intolerance
- Anger

The signs of emotional relapse are also the symptoms of post-acute withdrawal.

Post-acute withdrawal usually lasts for 2 years. (This is important to remember).

Post-acute withdrawal can be a trigger for relapse. You'll go for weeks without any withdrawal symptoms, and then one day you'll wake up and your withdrawal will hit you like a ton of bricks. You'll have slept badly. You'll be in a bad mood. Your energy will be low.

Signs of post-acute withdrawal are thinking difficulties, emotional overreaction problems, sleep disturbances, memory difficulties, becoming accident prone, and/or starting to experience a serious sensitivity to stress.

Mental Relapse

In mental relapse there's a war going on in your mind. It usually starts as a passing thought, but progresses to a constant hum of thoughts centered on using again.

The signs of mental relapse are:

- Thinking about people, places, and things from the past
- Glamorizing past use
- Lying
- Hanging out with old using friends
- Fantasizing about using
- Planning the relapse around other people's schedules

It gets harder to make the right choices as the pull of addiction gets stronger. If the

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

addict can recognize the early warning signs of relapse, and understand the symptoms of post-acute withdrawal, then they will be able to catch themselves before it's too late. Physical relapse begins the addiction soon after mental relapse. I have had many of my clients say that the first high after prolonged sobriety is never the same for them. "It's not as fun". This is especially true if they have been through a 12-step program.

What are some of the dangers that can trigger a relapse episode? Triggers can be a person, place, thing, or even a smell that reminds the addict of their previous habit. Many of the things can be avoided if the addict takes a personal inventory in the morning and then again in the evening to see how they are doing internally.

THE MOST COMMON RELAPSE TRIGGERS

- Being in the presence of drugs or alcohol, drug or alcohol users, or places where you used or bought chemicals.
- Feelings we perceive as negative, particularly anger; also sadness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and anxiety.
- Positive feelings that make you want to celebrate.
- Boredom.
- Getting high on any drug.
- Physical pain.
- Listening to war stories and just dwelling on getting high.
- Suddenly having a lot of cash.

In early recovery, drinking or drugging dreams are not uncommon. It helps to remind ourselves that the reality of drinking and using has caused many problems in our lives. That no matter how bad things get, the benefits of staying abstinent will far outweigh any short term relief that might be found in drugs or alcohol. Recovery takes time. One day at a time.

The P.L.A.N.

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

This is for Plan A. This acronym is to give you more support in writing a contract with your teen.

Prepared

- Answer the questions now, not after the teen arrives- **you** have to think of the problems first.
- Line by line understanding- total clarity with everything written and agreed upon by all parties involved creates a bigger chance for success
- Agreed upon and signed- Every agrees or the negotiations continue.
 - multiple drafts- plan on a few meetings and a few drafts till we get it right...it's worth it.

Leverage

- YOU must be in charge of:
 - the contract
 - the home
 - the items of consequence (phones, computers, etc)
 - anything YOU pay for or spend time on
- You must be the battery of the contract and the one who makes sure it is followed- if you don't follow it, it is null and void
- The consequences must matter to the teen. It must be felt and understood. It must worry them and be large enough for them to consider when they are faced with a destructive choice. (FRIENDLY HINT: What you used to do doesn't work.?)
- Write into the contract so that you may take time to get counseling/ seek advise on consequences (Delay the consequence!)
- Therapy and counseling is not a consequence- Never use getting help as a punishment for anyone.

Actionable

- Can you put these steps into action?
- Do they ALL look like taking care of yourself?
- Is EVERYONE behind the contract 100%? (Not including kid)
- Set up for failure or truly actionable?
- What needs to be in place NOW so the contract is effortless?

Non-negotiables

- What is the behavior that will never be tolerated ever again for any reason
- What is the Relapse Response? Since we expect the kid to relapse, the questions become WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN THE KID RELAPSES?
- What is the Arrest Response? WHAT WILL YOU DO IF THE KID GETS ARRESTED?
- Worst case scenario, cut bait, done deal items that DO NOT BUDGE (see actionable)

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

SAMPLE CONTRACT

1. Teen will not use any alcohol or drugs.

Consequence: Teen will be grounded for one week. Grounding consists of: staying home, no friends as guests, no phone calls, etc. etc.)

Punishment will increase one week for each subsequent offense (i.e., if teen is caught using substances a second time, punishment will be for two weeks, etc.)

Note: It is VERY important to clearly state what being grounded consists of so that there are no avenues for manipulation by the teen to get out of the punishment.

- Privilege: Teen will be allowed to continue going out with friends and may have continued use of the car.

2. Teen is expected to return home immediately after school except if prior arrangements are made with parents. Teen will inform parents where he/she is going and will be home by 8:00 p.m. on school nights and 11:00 p.m. on non-school nights.

Consequence: Teen will be expected to come home twice as early as he was late for one week. (e.g., if 30 minutes late, then curfew will be one hour earlier for the next week).

Privilege: Teen will maintain current curfew and gain trust

Note: some parents may want to allow their teen to work his/her way up to a later curfew by proving himself or herself, but parents should never set a curfew later than the legal curfew in their area.

3. Teen will perform all assigned chores in a satisfactory manner, according to the standards set by parents.

It is helpful to provide a written list of daily chores so there is no misunderstanding - a dry-erase marker board hung in the kitchen or other family area works great for this purpose.

Consequence: Teen will not be allowed any privileges until required chores are completed, including TV, radio, computer, having friends visit or going out with friends.

Privilege: Teen will maintain access to all privileges of the house, including watching TV, using the computer, having friends visit, and going out with friends.

4. Teen will be allowed to socialize with parentally approved friends under supervision after 4 days of excellent behavior. Your teen does not need to be

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

perfect; for example, if they don't do their dishes, they can redeem themselves by fulfilling the "dishes aren't cleaned" consequence and don't need an extra consequence of losing the social privileges.

Consequence: Teen will not be allowed to socialize if the parents feel the first four days were not satisfactory.

Privilege: Teen will be allowed to hang out with approved friends if he or she earns this privilege

Sample Items to be addressed in contract-

- Curfew
- Chores
- School behavior and grades
- Smoking
- Telephone use
- Computer use
- Use of the car
- Alcohol/drug use
- Expression of anger or violence, including profanity
- Conflict resolution (helpful when two siblings are at each other's throats)
- Running away
- Medication issues and compliance (for those who take regular medicines, such as Ritalin)
- Attendance at therapy sessions

Behavior contracts need several components:

- A clear description of the good behavior expected from the teen
- What the positive consequences of the behavior will be
- What the negative consequences of not performing the specific behavior will be
- What the adults involved are expected to do
- A clear plan to help the teen achieve the good behavior
- A place for the signatures of the teen and adults involved

Some areas that may be covered by teen behavior contracts include:

- Performance or behavior at school
- Behavior at home, including treatment of other family members, language, or doing chores
- Curfews
- Driving privileges
- Dating

The CHC - The Coming Home Contract

- Clothing, tattoos, piercings, and other appearance issues
- Cell phone use or bill payment
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol
- UA's. Set them for random times. ("How long? Till I feel like I can trust you not to use again.")
- Extracurricular activities or how free time is spent

Consequences

Consequences of breaking the conditions of the behavior contract should be clearly stated in the contract, and should be appropriate to the situation. Parents must be consistent in enforcing consequences or behavior contracts are ineffective.

Consequences could include one or more of the following:

- UA's. Set them for random times. ("How long? Till I feel like I can trust you not to use again.")
- No driving
- No dating or free time with friends
- No cell phone or phone privileges
- No television or computer
- Loss of allowance
- Writing an apology
- Writing a report about the rule that was broken and why it is important

Parents can make their own teen behavior contracts, get one from a teacher or counselor, or buy them from companies that provide contracts. There are a few sites that have very simple outlines (you do most of the writing) that you can download for free, or some that are complete with minimal fill in the blanks.