



Valley Youth House  
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For Immediate Release

## *Valley Youth House Awarded DHS Contract Center Will Serve At-Risk Youth*

**September 10, 2009** – The Philadelphia Department of Human Services recently awarded Valley Youth House the contract to manage the Achieving Independence Center in Philadelphia. The AIC, as it is known, is a combination drop-in site and learning/training center for youth who are homeless or aging out of dependent care. Youth ages 16-21 work individually with their Coaches according to an individualized goal plan to improve education, employment and life skills to improve the transition to adulthood.

Valley Youth House staff at the AIC will provide life skills training, teach employment skills, assist with job placement, provide on-the-job support, and will ensure stable housing. Outside contracts are expected to be awarded to provide other services: one-on-one mentoring; education on healthy relationships, sexual behavior and family planning; and educational counseling and academic support services, including helping youth to prepare for, identify, and enroll in college or vocational training programs. Over 600 youth are currently being served annually at the AIC.

“Valley Youth House has a tremendous opportunity to impact the lives of vulnerable Philadelphia youth,” says David Gilgoff, agency President. A study of aged-out and homeless youth published recently by Philadelphia Safe and Sound found that only 29% of youth discharged from care had jobs; just 42% had finished high school, and, most alarming, only 50% had a place to live that would last six months or more.

“Our goal is significant improvement in the outcomes for these youth,” said Gilgoff. “Of youth completing Valley Youth House’s programs in Philadelphia 73% meet educational goals, 81% are employed at discharge, and 90% transition to stable housing.”

Bill Motsavage, Director of the Valley Youth House Independent Living Program describes the vision for the AIC as, “A place where youth participate in a program of guided autonomy in a college campus-like setting.” Members will participate in formal educational sessions, use computer laboratories, get individual help from staff members and peers, study in library-like spaces that contain useful independent living materials, have access to healthy physical activities and recreational spaces to provide a place to meet informally, and participate in planned activities such as open mikes, music lessons, yoga sessions and small scale performances from member groups.

The AIC is the agency’s second site in Philadelphia: a supportive housing program for homeless youth opened in November 2005.

Valley Youth House is a Lehigh Valley-based social services agency devoted to assuring that every child has the chance they deserve to develop into a healthy, productive, and responsible adult. The agency offers a range of residential, counseling, mental health, and life-skills education services in Lehigh, Northampton, Bucks, Montgomery, Carbon, Luzerne and Philadelphia Counties.

Valley Youth House has offices throughout southeastern Pennsylvania, and a full and part-time staff of 300. The agency serves 12,000 youth and their families each year.

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