



MY FATHER'S ARROWS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Our Mission: Provide children who have been impacted by trauma with safety, nurturing, and stability that helps them grow into healthy, thriving adults, and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

At My Father's Arrows, we have a heart for children of trauma. Whether abused, neglected, abandoned, or struggling in the current relationships because of the trauma they have sustained, we understand that children need structure, consistency, and unconditional love. We see their brokenness, work to meet their needs, and help them to find healing. Ultimately, our goal is that children are able to have secure, healthy relationships and stability in their living situation.

We are pleased to announce that we are now receiving applications to our residential home for both boys and girls of all ages. Completed applications and/or questions can be mailed to:

My Father's Arrows
Attn: Intake
4025 County Road 178
Jay, FL 32565
or email to: intake@myfathersarrows.org

We understand that this is a significant choice for you and your family. May God give you great wisdom and peace as you seek what is the very best choice for your child.

Blessings,

Sarah

Sarah Ellis, Executive Director

STEPS TO THE ADMISSION PROCESS

1. Complete the application and submit it by mail: 4025 County Road 178, Jay, FL 32565 or by e-mail to: intake@myfathersarrows.org
2. Begin gathering necessary admission documentation: medical records and recent physical, immunization records, dental records, school records, counseling records, foster care records if applicable, adoption documents if applicable, copies of insurance cards, custody documents if applicable, **original** birth certificate, original social security card, and guardians driver's licenses.
3. After we receive your application and do an initial review, we will contact you with any further questions and give you the opportunity to ask any additional questions about our program. In the meantime, please look over our list of frequently asked questions.
4. Discuss any financial questions with our controller.
5. When we receive all documentation, we will call you to schedule your on-site interview with you and your child.
6. After the on-site interview, the admissions committee will meet to make a final decision on admission and notify you by 5pm of that day. If your child is not accepted for admission, no explanation will be given. If you decide not to proceed with admission for your child, no explanation will be expected. We want all parties to be totally peaceful in making the best decision for your child.
7. If accepted for admission, your child will be admitted at 10 am the following day.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What makes My Father's Arrows a successful therapeutic program?

Our program has a three cord approach working in unity: Therapeutic, Spiritual, and Behavioral. Each cord has its intrinsic value, but when working in unity, they create a powerful, holistic approach to healing.

What is life like at My Father's Arrows?

Situated on a 288 acre farmstead, are the administrative offices of My Father's Arrows, our children's home, our trauma-informed private school, Veritas Mission Academy, gardens, greenhouses, and pasture land. We have horses, chickens, goats, turkeys, sheep, and a therapy dog. Our working farm provides opportunities for children to learn about livestock, agriculture, and responsibility in a fun, therapeutic environment.

How can we get help affording residential care?

We understand how difficult this can be and want to help parents find funding if needed. Some families use money out of their 401K accounts or take out a home equity line of credit. Prosper HealthCare Lending, Lightstream Loans and M-lend Financial are potential loan sources.

Show Hope Ministry is another organization that will give grants for some of the services we provide, as well as requesting an increase in one's adoption stipend if your child was adopted through the foster care system. In other instances churches and family members have assisted families during this difficult time.

My child will probably refuse to go.

Your child really has nothing to base this feeling off of if he/she hasn't met the staff or toured our property yet. As a parent or guardian, it is your decision to make the best possible choice for your child. Generally, the children quickly change their mind after arriving here and realize the opportunity they have to live on a farm, make new friends, live in a healthy, loving structured environment, and grow in the Lord. The most frequent comment that we get from the children is, "I've never felt safer anywhere in my life than here".

How soon could my child be enrolled?

The admission process usually moves very quickly after your application is approved and necessary documentation is received. We do admission interviews on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday between 10pm and 2pm. If your child is accepted into the program, admission will typically be on the following day.

What happens on admission day?

We try to keep the admission process as short as possible. We have found that if

the admission process is dragged out, the child typically will increase in anxiety and behaviors. On your scheduled admission day, we ask that you arrive at scheduled time. Please do not give your child access to the bags that you pack for them. We will talk with you and your child, give a quick tour, sign and receive any documents or crucial items, then unload the child's things, give hugs, and see the parents off.

Your child will get a tour, have a health intake exam, and then the intake and engagement counselor will work with your child to acclimate them to the surroundings and answer any questions. The first 48 hours your child will be assigned to shadow a staff counselor so that they can learn the routines and have one to one assistance in getting settled in and learning the correct procedures. We will search their bags before they receive any items, and personal items are limited until they achieve level yellow. Their other items are placed in storage for us to pull from them when they have earned them.

Where will my child attend school?

Our year round on-campus school, Veritas Mission Academy, provides individualized instruction for grades kindergarten-12th grade. We use a self-paced curriculum, Christian Light Education and Classical Conversations. VMA is a trauma-informed school which understands every child's learning needs and styles are different. School records must be sent from your child's previous school. Children are assessed upon admission, placed accordingly in each subject, and then are diligently worked with to help them reach their grade level or catch up if they are behind. Upon graduation, children receive a high school diploma. Our school is fully accredited by the National Association of Private Schools through Christian Light Education. Our student to teacher ratio will not exceed 6:1.

- Fully accredited courses
- Individually tailored education plans
- Self-paced curriculum provides ideal support for students with learning disabilities
- Students who are motivated can catch up or exceed their expected grade level
- Weekly goals are tracked with instructors on a daily basis
- Year-round school and self-paced curriculum allows enrollment at any time

What about recreation and sports?

Each day the children are involved in recreation that could include basketball, football, running, horseback riding, volleyball, and other activities.

Do My Father's Arrows staff members receive medical training?

Yes, all residential staff members are trained in First Aid, AED, Dechoker, and CPR.

Are background checks done on MFA staff members?

Yes, every staff member must submit to an extensive range of background checks before being eligible for employment.

Will My Father's Arrows accept my child?

MFA is not a treatment facility and will not accept children who currently require acute inpatient mental health care (example: active suicidal or homicidal threats), who require drug detox, who are sexually aggressive toward others, or who we believe to be a risk to the safety or health of other children in our home.

Will My Father's Arrows administer medications to my child?

Yes, our staff are trained in safe handling of medications and will administer them to your child. All medications are kept locked securely at all times and prescription medications are given as prescribed by the physician. Our pediatrician, Dr. Teresa Mahaffey, generally comes to our home to meet the children's needs. We do not routinely call parents for common childhood illnesses or med maintenance. In the event that your child needs emergency care, or has a serious illness, you will be contacted. You are also free to contact our residential director, Angela Kinder (vma@myfathersarrows.org), or our medical coordinator, Betty Melvin (med@myfathersarrows.org), for any questions/updates as you desire.

Will my insurance company pay for my child's tuition?

We do not accept insurance payments. It is your responsibility to determine whether or not you can be reimbursed by your company. We are not a treatment facility.

Does MFA use corporal punishment? No.

What type of discipline is used at MFA?

MFA uses a positive, incentive based leveling system that builds trust and connection with TBRI method parenting. In addition to natural consequences, we use blessings and corrections to respond to a child's choices. Making positive choices generates blessings and increased privileges within our program.

Is My Father's Arrows a licensed children's home?

Yes, we are a type II child-caring agency registered by The Florida Association of Christian Child Care Agencies.

Does MFA accept children through the courts or judicial system? Yes, but we are

not able to accept state or federal funding for your child's care.

How long is the program?

1 year minimum. At the end of the year, we will discuss the child's progress and home situation with the guardians to determine if it is safe, stable, and healthy for the child to return home.

Can I communicate with my child while they are there?

Of course. After the first 30 days, the child may call or write the contacts identified by the guardians. Phone calls are only to be initiated by the parents. You may call the MFA supervisor phone at 850-860-6467 when you are available for a phone call. The length of the child's phone call is determined by their behavior level (red, yellow, green, blue, purple). At 90 days, the child may be eligible for more local visits. At 6 months, the child may be eligible for overnight or extended visitations. After a year, the child may be eligible for home visits. Visitation is discussed in more detail in the Parent and Child Handbook. Visitation is at the discretion of the director based on the child's compliance and safe behaviors. **NEVER tell your child when you schedule a visit** as we understand that flights get canceled, sickness happens, etc, that can change the plans. Our goal is to generate stability and healing for your child.

How often will I get an update on my child?

Your weekly phone calls are a great time to ask for an update on your child's week. You may also call or email our residential director, Angela Kinder, during the week for behavioral or school progress updates. For counseling specific updates, you should contact the counselor directly. For medical updates, you may contact Betty Melvin. For discussion of transition plans, you may contact Sarah Ellis. You will be provided with a written summary of care every six months, and school report cards quarterly. Our focus is very intensively focused on your child, and many parents report that they are personally dealing with secondary trauma from caring for their child, so we ask parents to reach out to us when they need more updates so that we do not add to their stress while they are working on their personal healing journey.

Will my child be provided health care?

Parents/guardians are expected to provide for the cost of health care. We will take your child to routine or emergency medical/dental/vision appointments and/or hospital as indicated for their health and wellness. Orthodontics must be removed prior to admission. We will not place a child on contraception or assist with plans for that and we will not administer vaccinations to your child. We do not handle elective medical procedures/evaluations. We leave these issues for the parent to handle and find that many of them can be addressed when a child is healthy and stable. It is the parent's responsibility to handle all insurance issues. In the event that you want to apply for your child to receive SSI or

disability, you will need to handle that paperwork, and travel here to take your child to their assessments.

Will my child receive counseling?

We provide a therapeutic environment in our residential and education programs and then children frequently participate in therapeutic groups as a part of these programs. We are not a treatment facility. Your child's stay begins with our intake and engagement counselor. After two weeks they are introduced to their primary milieu counselor, which they will meet with weekly. When they have successfully engaged to the point that they are ready, the residential director will refer them to the intensive counselor for individual trauma work. After individual counseling is completed, family counseling begins. Family counseling can be done in person or virtually as needed. Finally transitional planning will be coordinated with the intensive counselor, executive director, milieu counselor, and residential director as a multi-disciplined approach. We are unable to accommodate counseling services for other outside counselors, including telehealth.

Therapeutic modalities include:

Interpersonal solution focused therapy, mindfulness meditation, person-centered psychotherapy, EMDR, directed and non-directed play therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The children also have frequent therapeutic group activities during the week including skills development, support groups, sand table therapy, psychoeducation, milieu group, and therapeutic horse riding.

During your child's time in our program, they will be working on developing:

Felt safety, self-control, healthy relationships, submission to authority, healthy boundaries, life skills, educational confidence, understanding of choices and effects, positive character attributes, work and service projects, child-parent reconciliation, child-parent communication, and improved social skills.

Some of the things we do at My Father's Arrows to create conditions where true heart transformation can take place include:

Weekly church, Daily interactive bible study, Active Biblical Character Training, Lifeskill evaluation and training, Team building activities, Evening bible stories, Daily devotions, Scripture memorization, Therapeutic group activities, Mindfulness skills, Daily summaries, Leadership training opportunities, Off-site ministry opportunities

Is there a dress code for the children?

All children will dress in a modest fashion. Jewelry and make-up are not allowed, and a packing list of appropriate clothing will be provided. Please only send

what is on the packing list, and please label all of your child's items with their initials prior to arrival.

Do you accept boys and girls? What ages do you take?

Yes. We accept boys and girls from newborn to 17 yrs old. We operate as two programs - boys and girls programs. Boys and girls sleep in separate wings of the home, are schooled, have meals, and utilize the playgrounds at different times of the day, and are supervised at all times that they are together for any reason.

What is the meal schedule like?

We ensure the children's 3 meals and a scheduled snack are nutritious and are predictably scheduled. Snacks are scheduled for every afternoon, and every child is provided a healthy snack that they carry with them throughout the day to use when they feel that they need it. We also offer a healthy evening snack if a child is hungry before bed. We understand that food anxiety is an issue many children of trauma struggle with. For this reason, we work to keep our meals consistently on a schedule, to post meal plans, and to include the children in meal preparation and selection. Unfortunately, we are not able to accommodate specific food regimens from individual families. Additionally, we are Torah observant Christians, so we try to avoid biblically "unclean" foods. In the event that your child is having severe behavioral struggles, they may be put on an alternative meal plan that is high protein, low carb, nutrient dense foods to support their brain health as we work to help them de-escalate and regulate for safe behavior.

What is a typical day like for the children?

The children are provided a daily schedule and are taught to follow it each day. They rise at 7:30am Mon-Friday to get ready for the day. After breakfast and morning assembly with bible devotion time, the children begin school and life skill training. After a snack in the after-noon, the children have outdoor play, followed by a structured extracurricular such as: art, music, theater class, life skills, spanish, agriculture, horseback riding, or character training class. After dinner and clean up, there is often additional time for free play before the children retire to their wings of the house at 7pm for bathes, group devotion, and personal time. Quiet time for the house is 9pm, and bedtimes are according to level.

What about church and spiritual growth?

We are inter-denominational Torah observant Christians. What does that mean? We are people who know that we are sinners saved by the gracious love of the Messiah, through His sacrificial death. We are whole Bible believers, and we love learning about where Jesus went, what he did, what he celebrated, etc., as we are adopted into the family of God—we want to understand the history and culture of our adoptive family. Typically, we have worship services at the

children's home on Saturday evenings. It's a special time we set aside to encourage the children to learn about and fellowship with God. We have a big meal before worship time together, talk about how God has blessed us that week, celebrate birthdays and reintegrations, welcome new staff or children, etc.

We regard Sunday for our Sabbath rest time and have gratitude that God gave us time to rest, so we allow the children to sleep in a little, play games, do crafts, go on nature walks to enjoy God's creation, and generally appreciate a slower day. Sometimes go to speak at local churches and fellowship with them. This is a great opportunity for the children to practice sitting still, and use appropriate social skills and boundaries. The children stay with us in "big church" when we go, and they always look forward to it. The children have a Bible subject in school every day. They get a morning devotion and singing to start their day, and an evening Bible story and singing to end their day. We truly believe in Deuteronomy 11:19, "and ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkers by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

What restrictions are placed on the children?

Children are not allowed to have any cell phone or internet access or electronic devices with internet access in the home. Social media is prohibited. In fact, we request that parents delete all social media accounts that the child has prior to enrolling in hopes that they can build new accounts in the future so that they can be intentional with the connections that they make. In the event a child needed access to the internet for a school project, the child would receive one on one supervision in the office during their research/internet access. Only God honoring media is allowed. For a more complete list of prohibited items, please see the "Items to bring" list. Prohibited items will be discarded. The child is responsible for the care of their property. **MFA is not responsible or liable due to loss, damage, neglect, misplacement, or theft of the child's property.** We do not recommend that you send expensive or sentimental items with your child to MFA.

What if my child tries to run away?

If a child leaves the property or leaves from an organized event without the permission of MFA staff, we will take all necessary measures including but not limited to contacting the local authorities to find them but we will not accept any responsibility for their actions. In the event that a child runs away, it will be at the sole discretion of the Director whether to accept the child back into our program.

How are children referred to MFA? What happens to them when they turn 18?

Most people hear about us through word of mouth, social media, and support

groups/entities. We usually get a call or email about a child who needs a home to care for them. They have all had some sort of trauma in their little lives through abuse, neglect, or abandonment at some point. Sometimes, a child has been adopted, and then for some reason doesn't do well in their new family, or their family has a crisis situation that necessitates an alternative placement for the child. In short, we care for children who do not currently have parents who are able to care for them in their homes. After we do an assessment to help us learn more about them, if we determine that we are a good fit for the child, then we make arrangements for the child to come. The children are with us for at least a year— some are here much longer. Not all children have long-term connections that they can return to, so if a child is with us when they turn 18, they do not “age out”. We work with the child's family to help them develop a transition plan to prepare the child for adulthood.

What kinds of things do the children do to become more healthy?

Every child participates in daily physical activities to relieve stress, depression, teach a healthy outlet to cope with anger and aggression, and ensure the beginning of physical fitness. We challenge them to learn to take responsibility for their health. We learn a new child-friendly callisthenic every week because we know the regulating power of exercise in reducing cortisol and adrenaline levels, thereby lessening anxiety and resulting in increased dopamine and other endorphins. Our goal is to improve the overall health of the children and improve their ability to emotionally self-regulate. Screen time is limited and children are encouraged to engage in daily activities. Children have the privilege of helping to care for and engage with the animals on the farm, and enjoy nature, gardening, and free play all while enjoying the Florida sunshine.

What can I expect when my child is discharged?

We assist parents in planning for reintegration as they consider setting boundaries, establishing rules with consequences that line up with your family's values routines, planning chore schedules, selecting the child's school and extracurricular activities, and transitioning to new counseling services. We provide 1 Full Year of Aftercare Services for free to assist parents in their child's transitions. No parent is perfect, so there is always room for growth! Healing your home comes from the full years' worth of after-care for you and your family, provided by My Father's Arrows to you at no additional charge. Once your child leaves, your financial commitment is complete, but our commitment to your success goes on! Healing your family may look like your child suggesting, and the entire family going, to minister to the elderly at a nursing home, or to support a local foster family. It may look like offering to serve together at a local home- less shelter once a month, doing some yard work for a widow or elderly neighbor, or it could be something as simple as having a family Bible time at the end of each day. No matter what form it comes in, when your family has

reached total healing and is able to serve others, your family will feel whole again.

A critical part of a child's success when he/she goes home is the changing of their environment. When a child comes to MFA, all of his/her patterns are disrupted by the change in environment and by the way staff handles situations like lying, triangulation, and manipulation. When he/she goes home, if the environment has not changed, it is easy for them to fall back into old behavioral patterns and regress. One of the factors that must change is the way you, as the guardians, handle situations with your child. We can make recommendations to help you with that process of learning new ways of parenting your child.

What happens if my child is dismissed from MFA and I am not ready to bring them back into my home?

It is very rare for a child to be dismissed from MFA. It is very important that you are transparent and honest in your admission application for your child so that we can determine if we are a good fit for you and your family. MFA can not accommodate children who are: sexually aggressive (getting into other children's beds, forcing themselves on other children or forcing other children to touch them sexually, being sexually coercive or threatening, actively homicidal or suicidal, or requiring active drug detoxification.

We do understand that new behaviors can surface as a child processes their trauma, and sometimes there are things that you are unaware of. In the event that we determine we can not meet your child's needs (we are not a treatment facility), or we can not keep your child safe from themselves or keep other children safe from your child (we are not a lockdown facility), you will be notified immediately so a higher, more appropriate level of care can be secured for your child.

In the event that your child is dismissed or discharged, please note that tuition fees are not refundable. We generally expect that you will pick your child up within 24 hrs, but we occasionally make exceptions due to extenuating circumstances like travel distances and time to make accommodations for a higher level of care. If you do not pick up your child within the designated time, a FL DCF report of abandonment will be filed. If you are from out of state and do not pick up your child within the designated time, a FL DCF report of abandonment and a child welfare report of abandonment for your home state will be filed and your child will be transported to your home residence at your expense. In short, our local child welfare system is already very taxed, and in the event that you need the state child welfare system to assist with placement or care of your child, you will need to navigate that in your home state. Abandoning them to the state of Florida is inappropriate and will not be

tolerated as it delays the appropriate higher level care for your child and negatively reflects on our ministry and it delays the appropriate higher level of care for your child.