



# Student Handbook

This book belongs to \_\_\_\_\_

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## BRIDGES STAFF



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## WHAT IS BRIDGES AND WHO QUALIFIES

Bridges is a program that provides assistance and support to high school student who are living on their own. ***It is not a program for students who just want to live on their own or don't get along with their parents, but are on their own due to reasons beyond their control.***

In addition to living on their own, to qualify a student must:

- Be enrolled in at Norman North, Norman High or Dimensions.
- Have good attendance and passing grades.
- Have a job or a provable steady source of income if they are requesting housing.
- Agree to the requirements of the program.

Bridges offers lots of support to its students One of the things we offer is housing. Students do not have to live at Bridges to be in the program. However, for those that need a place to live we have one bedroom apartments available. The rent is based on the student's income

For those that participate, Bridges is a great opportunity. Our goal is to help our students complete high school successfully and move on to the next stage in their life, be it higher education or a career.

This book contains the expectations, responsibilities and rules that our students are expected to follow. We suggest that all students considering the program carefully read over this handbook and then decide if Bridges is something they are willing to commit to before joining. If you have any questions please feel free to contact a Bridges Staff member at 579-9280.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Turn in a completed application. Applications can be obtained from a high school counselor, from the Bridges website [bridgesnorman.org](http://bridgesnorman.org) or the Bridges office at 1670 N. Stubbeman.
2. An interview will be scheduled. This interview usually takes about an hour.
3. The student's application and interview are processed and a decision is made whether they will be accepted or not.
4. If the student is not accepted they will be notified via phone, or a letter mailed or delivered at school.
5. If the student is accepted, another meeting will be scheduled to go over this handbook and sign paperwork. If the student is requesting housing, that application will be filled out at this meeting.
6. Student will need to provide the following to apply for housing
  - a. Social Security Card (photocopy is fine)
  - b. Birth certificate (photocopy is fine)
  - c. Photo ID (school ID is fine)
  - d. Bank statements if you have a bank account
  - e. Employment letter on the company's letterhead or attached to a business card stating:
    1. How many hours the student averages a week
    2. How much the student makes per hour

7. A Psychological Evaluation is scheduled and must be completed before the student can be accepted for housing.
8. Back ground checks are run and rent is calculated based on the employment letter
9. A lease in (move in) date is scheduled with the student
10. At the lease in appointment the student will bring their deposit and prorated rent. They will sign a lease and be given a key to their apartment.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF A BRIDGES STUDENT**

1. Students are required to get themselves up and go to school every day. Good attendance is a requirement to be in the program. If credit is lost due to absences or tardies, the student will be asked to leave the program.
2. Students are expected to make passing grades. This means doing homework, projects, papers, and asking for a tutor if needed.
3. Students are required to attend the Life Skills Meetings every Tuesday from 4:30pm to 5:30pm.
4. Students are required to participate in the Career Coaching/Mentoring aspect of the program by attending events, activities and appointments.
5. Students are expected to respect the Bridges property, including the Student Center, by cleaning up after themselves and following the Student Center Rules.
6. Students are expected to return calls or messages from the Bridges staff and Career Coach, and show up for all appointments and meetings.
7. All students are expected to know and follow the policies, procedures, rules and expectations provided in this handbook.
8. NPS considers Bridges students independent, which means if they are sick the students has to call in for themselves and notify the school that they will not be there.

## **ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RESIDENTS**

1. All residents are required to pay rent (30% of income) and electric bill on time
2. All residents must keep a job or have a steady *provable* source of income sufficient to support themselves.
3. Residents are required to keep their apartment and the area around it clean. Apartments are inspected once a week.
4. Residents will be required to turn in a progress report signed by their teachers once a week.
5. Residents under 17, and others as needed will be required to attend weekly counseling.
6. Residents should let the Bridges staff know if something in the apartment is broken and needs fixing.
7. All residents are required by Section 8 to leave their smoke detector up and in working order.

## **SECTION 8 APPOINTMENTS and RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **HQS INSPECTION**  
This is an inspection done by the Norman Housing Authority once a year. The resident is required to be there for this.
2. **ANNUAL RE-EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT**  
This appointment is to go over your income and make sure you are paying the correct amount in rent each month. This appointment will be at the Bridges office.
3. **CHANGE OF INCOME**  
Section 8 requires that residents report any change of income within 10 days so rent can be recalculated.

## SERVICES AND BENEFITS

- Help paying for most school related expenses, including graduation expenses
- Tutoring
- Computer Lab with wireless internet and printer
- The Bootstrap Scholarship to those who qualify
- Fully furnished apartments for those who qualify
- A pantry with toiletries, food and household items
- Help accessing other community resources such as food pantries, DHS services, bus passes, utility assistance, etc.
- Counseling
- No-interest loans for emergencies
- Social activities and parties
- Life Skills Classes
- Career Coach/Mentor
- Incentive based savings account
- The Student Center with cable on the big screen
- Gift cards for emergency needs
- Help acquiring medical care
- Laundry room, laundry soap, and laundry money (residents only)

## GOOD STANDING POLICY

Bridges students are in good standing if they are keeping up with all of their responsibilities without constant reminders from the staff. Failing to meet their responsibilities or breaking one of the rules/policies listed in this handbook will put them in poor standing.

Bridges operates on the three strikes you're out policy. When a student does something that puts them in poor standing they are given a written warning. After three written warnings (does not have to be for the same offense) a meeting is held with the student to decide if they should continue to be in the program.

However, breaking one of the "Basic Rules" will result in an automatic written warning.

Very serious offences such as drugs and alcohol, violence towards yourself or anyone else, illegal activity, dismissal from school, or destruction of Bridges' property may result in termination from the program without a written warning.

## LIFE SKILLS CLASSES

Life Skills classes are held every Tuesday from 4:50pm to 5:30pm. They are mandatory for all Bridges students, both residents and nonresidents.

Dinner is served after each class but is not mandatory.

If a student has to miss a class they are expected to call ahead of time and let the staff know they will not be there and why.

After five missed classes, **no matter what the excuse**, the student will no longer be eligible for the Absher Savings Account. After 8 missed classes the student may be asked to leave the program for nonparticipation.

## CAREER COACHING

Career Coaching is much like a mentor program. All Bridges students will be matched with a volunteer local professional who is interested in helping them navigate their way through high school and beyond. The relationship can be as simple as purely educational, focusing only on job shadowing and college applications. Students can also choose to expand their relationship into something much more which includes phone calls, texts, lunches, dinners, movies, hanging out, and just being friends. This relationship can be whatever the student chooses for it to be.

There are a few requirements of the career coaching program, all of which will be explained in a contract which the student and career coach will be asked to sign. Basic responsibilities of the student are:

- Return phone calls, emails and texts that are sent by the coach
- Do at least two job shadows that they and their coach agree upon
- Fill out all paperwork for each job shadow
- Attend all career coaching activities (approximately 4 per year)
- Keep Kirsten, the Career Coach Coordinator, informed of your activities
- After the job shadows are completed, meet with Kirsten to put an action plan on paper and into action.

## ABSHER SAVINGS ACCOUNT

This is an incentive based savings program. Students are paid for steps they are take to better themselves. This money is put into an account and upon graduating the student is written a check for the amount they have earned.

- The money earned cannot be taken out early or borrowed. It is only available once the student graduates.
- If the student misses more than five Life Skills Classes the Absher Account is no longer available.
- If the student has any outstanding debt with Bridges at the time of graduation it will be deducted from their Absher Account

\$5.00 for each week of perfect attendance

\$15.00 for each grade you earn that is a C or higher, each nine weeks

\$5.00 per month for each school sanctioned club, committee, organization, etc. that you participate in. You can earn extra for holding an office in one of these organizations

\$10.00 for each Advanced Placement test you take

\$10.00 per month if you pass all your apartment inspections

\$25.00 for taking the ACT or SAT (three times only)

\$50.00 when you bring your scores to us (one time only)

\$5.00 for each Life Skills Class attended

Plus additional money for awards, Career Coaching, and special recognitions or accomplishments

## **BOOTSTRAP SCHOLARSHIP**

The Bootstrap Scholarship is a \$2000 scholarship awarded to qualifying Bridges students who are planning on attending some form of higher education after they graduate. Eligibility is not based on grades alone but on the effort students have put into their own success while at Bridges. Only those going on to school after graduation are considered. Many factors are considered when deciding who will be awarded the scholarship. Some of these are:

- Participation in activities at Bridges
- Improvement you have made since being accepted into the program
- School attendance
- Grades
- Community and School involvement

If a student is awarded the Bootstrap Scholarship the money will be sent directly to the school they are attending after high school or it can be used for a school related expense.

## **HOUSING**

Bridges has 19, one bedroom apartments available to those who qualify.

Bridges partners with the Norman Housing Authority which allows our students to be on Section 8 before they are 18 and without having to be on the waiting list. This means that residents must also follow all section 8 rules and procedures.

Each apartment has one bedroom, one bathroom apartment, three closets, a kitchen with a small dining area, and a living room. The apartments are fully furnished. This means they have furniture, bedding, dishes, and small appliances already in them. Of course you are allowed to bring whatever furniture and household items you want with you.

When you graduate and move out the small appliances, bedding and dishes are yours to take with you and you will be given the opportunity to purchase the furniture from Bridges for a very low price. However, if you leave before you graduate or leave the program in poor standing you will not get to take any of the items with you.

## **MOVE IN COSTS**

**DEPOSIT:** There is a \$155 refundable deposit due before the student can move in.

**PRORATED RENT:** Before the student can move in they are required to pay the prorated rent for the current month.

## **BILLS**

Not paying bills or habitually paying them late will put the student in poor standing with Bridges and under consideration for lease termination.

RENT: All residents pay rent. Rent will be 30% of their income before taxes. Rent is due on the 9<sup>th</sup> of each month by 5pm.

ELECTRIC BILL: All residents pay their own electric bill. It usually ranges from \$30 to \$75 depending on usage. There is a \$75 refundable deposit that is broken up into three \$25 payments which are added to the resident's bill for the first three months. Electric bills are due by 5pm on the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month.

## **RESIDENT ADVISORS**

There are two Resident Advisors that live on the Bridges property. They are responsible for all after hour emergencies and issues. They can be reached 24 hours a day via the afterhours phone number, 405-464-5669, which is posted on the door of the Student Center. They also conduct apartment checks each night around curfew to make sure all guests have left and rules are being followed.

## **STUDENT ADVISOR**

Each year two students are elected to be Student Advisors. These students represent all Bridges students at the monthly board meetings and help facilitate Resident Meetings. They receive \$5 in their Absher accounts for each meeting and make invaluable connections with board members that can help them in their education and careers. Elections are held at the first Life Skills meeting of the school year.

## **THE BASIC RULES**

Violations of these rules will result in a written warning without any verbal warnings beforehand.

1. No Pets in the apartments or on the property
2. No firearms or other deadly weapons, purchased or homemade

3. No gasoline or other explosives or hazardous materials in or around the unit
4. No damage to property
5. No overnight guests. Any guest on the property between the hours of curfew and 9am will be considered an overnight guest.
6. No guests that are skipping school
7. No guests in the Student Center unless accompanied by a resident
8. No guests are allowed in an apartment if the resident is not home
9. No sharing of Student Center codes
10. No guests that are reported as a runaway

## **CURFEW**

The term curfew at Bridges is backwards. Curfew does not mean residents have to be in their apartment, it means all nonresidents have to leave the property.

Curfew is 10:30 pm, Sunday thru Thursday during the school year. During the summer, on holidays and on weekends it is midnight.

All guests must leave at curfew and should not return before 9am the next morning. Anyone on the property before 9am will be considered an overnight guest.

The Student Center also closes at curfew each night

## **INSPECTIONS**

Inspections are done weekly or biweekly depending on the level. Bridges staff will also enter an apartment if illegal activity or someone's safety is suspected.

Residents do not have to be present for an inspection but will always know when inspections are.

During an inspection we check to see if dishes are washed, trash is taken out, the floors are clean, the tub, toilet and sink in the bathroom are clean, clothes are picked up, etc. We will also be checking to see if there has been smoking in the apartment or if there is evidence of drug or alcohol use.

## **THE LEVEL SYSTEM**

LEVEL ONE: 60 days from move in

- Student is on probation and may receive a 24 hour lease termination at any time.
- Apartment will be checked each evening/night by Resident Advisors.
- Apartment will be inspected by Bridges' staff once a week.
- Student will turn in progress reports to the Social Services Coordinator each week.
- Student will meet with Social Services Coordinator at a scheduled time each week.
- At the end of 60 days Bridges' staff will meet and decide if the student has met the requirements to advance to level two. Student will be notified by letter or told in person.

LEVEL TWO: 45 days

- Student is no longer on probation.

- Apartment will be randomly checked at least two times a week in the evening/night by Resident Advisors.
- Apartment will be inspected once a week by Bridges' staff.
- Student will turn in progress reports every two weeks to the Social Services Coordinator.
- Student will meet with the Social Services Coordinator at a scheduled time every two weeks.
- At the end of 45 days Bridges' staff will meet and decide if the student has met the requirements to advance to level three. Student will be notified by letter.
- If a violation of Bridges' rules is found, the student will be demoted to level one for a minimum of three weeks before starting level two again.

### LEVEL THREE:

- Apartment will be inspected by Bridges staff every two weeks.
- Apartment will be randomly checked at least once a week in the evening/night by Resident Advisors.
- Student will meet with Social Services Coordinator at least once a month.
- If a violation of Bridges rules is found, the student will be demoted to level two for a minimum of three weeks before starting level three again.
- If the violation is deemed serious, the student will be demoted to level one for a minimum of three weeks, and will then advance to level two again.

## **PARKING**

Residents with cars will be given a parking decal. Cars that are not registered with Bridges and are here after curfew are subject to towing at the owner's expense.

Non-Bridges students are not allowed to park here during the school day. They must purchase a permit and park at the school.

## **KEYS**

Each resident is given one key. The key is not allowed to be duplicated. If a resident loses their key they will need to contact the Bridges staff to get a replacement. There is a \$10 fee for each replacement.

## **THE LAUNDRY ROOM**

The laundry room is available to residents 24 hours a day. Each resident is given enough money to do two loads per week. Laundry soap is provided as well.

## **THE STUDENT CENTER**

The Student Center is open to all Bridges students from 9am to 5pm and during Bridges events. It is open to residents from 9am to curfew. The doors automatically lock at 5pm. Each resident is given a code used to enter the building after 5pm. This code is NOT to be given out to anyone, friends, family, or even other residents.

Residents who have called in sick are not allowed to hang out in the Student Center.

The Student Center has:

- A computer lab
- Cable TV on the big screen
- Couches for hanging out
- Pool table
- Laundry room
- Pantry with toiletries, food, and household items
- A kitchen
- A gym
- Ping pong table
- Patio for hanging out

## LEASE TERMINATIONS

A lease termination means the student has done something to break the contract signed with Bridges or Section 8 and is being asked to leave the apartment and the program within 24 hours.

This is not a reversible decision and it will usually be made after three written warnings

**Very serious offenses such as drug and alcohol related offenses, violence towards yourself or anyone else, illegal activity or destruction of Bridges' property may result in a lease termination without warnings.**

A lease termination will also make the resident ineligible to apply for Section 8 again for three years.

## TORNADO PROCEDURE

If the tornado sirens go off, seek shelter in your bathtub. Cover yourself with pillows or a mattress if possible.

Or, go to the student center bathroom. The RA on duty will be there or call the RA number at 464-5669.

Call 460-4444 for current weather conditions/information.

If a tornado **"watch"** is issued for your area, it means that a tornado is "possible." You do not need to take shelter yet.

If a tornado **"warning"** is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been spotted, or is strongly indicated on radar, and it is time to go to a safe shelter immediately.

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY**

All Bridges residents are subject to random drug testing.

**DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ARE NOT PERMITTED ON THE BRIDGES PROPERTY OR AT BRIDGES FUNCTIONS!** Each resident is responsible for what their friends and guests do and will be held accountable if they bring drugs or alcohol on the property

If the resident is found with drugs or alcohol, they will be given two choices: receive a 24-hour lease termination or apply to our probation program. Acceptance into the probation program is based on the following criteria:

- The student has made it past level one
- The student has kept up with paying their rent and OG&E bills
- The student, or student's friends, have not damaged the apartment or other Bridges' property
- The student has no outstanding (this means you are not making payments) balance on a loan
- The student has demonstrated the ability to live independently
- The student has regular attendance at school
- The student is passing all classes

If the student is accepted into the probation program it is their last chance and any further problems related to drugs or alcohol will result in a 24 hour lease termination. If the student does not qualify, if they do not complete the probation, they miss or reschedule an appointment, or if drugs or alcohol are found again, they will receive a 24 hour lease termination.

Probation Program

- The student will be put on level one and remain on level one until they complete the program and meet with the Bridges staff
  - The student will attend and complete the NAIC program within the allotted time
  - There are **no excuses** for not completing the NAIC program within the allotted time. If they do not, they will be given a 24 hour lease termination. There is no rescheduling of appointments.
11. Do not smoke in your apartment. If you are 18 or older you are welcome to smoke on your porch as long as you don't throw the butts on the ground.
  12. No criminal activity of any kind is allowed on the property or at Bridges' functions
  13. No physical aggression or threats against yourself or anyone else
  14. No unsafe behavior that endangers you or anyone else

## HEATH AND MEDICAL RESOURCES

Bridges has recourses to help students access and sometimes pay for medical and dental care. Some of the facilities we use are:

### Cleveland County Health Dept

405-321-4048

250 12th Ave NE, Norman

Free, but you'll have to wait a long time

### Planned Parenthood

405-360-1556

2100 W Lindsey St # B

Norman, OK 73069-4108

Accepts Medicaid/Sooner Care

### Affordable Quality Care

405-217-9997

1139 36<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW suite 100

Accepts Medicaid/Sooner Care and is cheap if you don't have insurance

# Need a phone?

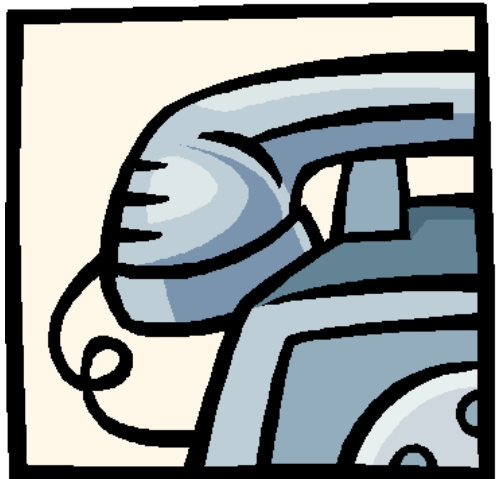
If you are 18 or older Life Tel has a program that can get you a home phone for \$1.00 a month.

- ☎ Prepare for a hard sell. They also offer dial-up internet for \$14.99 and long distance plans **if you need them.** Don't get pressured into getting things you don't need!
- ☎ There is a \$30.00 deposit but it is broken up into three payments over the first three months. (This means that for the first three months your bill will be \$10.00)
- ☎ It will take about 3 to 5 business days to get turned on
- ☎ Call 1-877-273-8500 to get it set up. You can do it all over the phone

## Requirements

To qualify you must be on some form of government assistance such as Section 8 housing, Food stamps, or Medicaid. Living at Bridges qualifies you

You must also be 18 years old or older.



## DHS SERVICES

The most common services that Bridges students use are:

- Food Stamps (SNAPS)
- Sooner Care Health Insurance (Medicaid)
- Emergency Utility Assistance

For those of you who are parents they also offer:

- Daycare assistance
- TANF

### **Food Stamps**

1. Get an application from Bridges and turn it in to Bridges
2. Attend the appointment that is set up for you and bring:
  - a. Photo ID
  - b. Pay stubs for the last 30days
  - c. Copy of your social security card
  - d. Copy of your birth certificate
3. Follow any instructions that are given to you by the caseworker

### **Sooner Care/Medicaid**

Sooner Care and Medicaid are the same thing. It is health insurance that last until you are 19 and or out of high school.

1. Get an application from Bridges and turn it in to Bridges with:
  - a. Pay stubs for the last 30 days
  - b. Copy of your social security card
  - c. Copy of your birth certificate
  - d. Copy of your photo ID
2. You will receive your card in the mail. If you do not get it within a few weeks, call 1-800-987-7767 and ask them if your Medicaid has been activated and if they will resend the card.

# NOTES

## NOTES

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

After Hours Ph	405-464-5669
Bridges Office	405-579-9280
Bridges Fax	405-360-0535
Norman North	405-366-5954
Norman High	405-366-5812
Dimensions	405-579-1880
DHS	405-573-8300

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