

## **Parents, Guardians, Family Members, and Friends of Prospective Students Searching Eagle Ranch Academy (ERA)**

Over the past few years, a small number of former students have found several hate websites and have chosen to spread unfounded accusations about our program.

These websites are only there to promote negative comments. Since we cannot respond directly to the websites to defend our name and reputation, we decided to respond on our ERA website to put the truth out there so parents and others searching our program can draw their own conclusions.

Parents reach out to us for a variety of reasons. Their child is spiraling out of control; nothing they are doing in the home is helping. Following are some reasons parent reach out to ERA:

- Their child may be dealing with moderate to severe mental health disorders that can make a young life feel out of control.
- Student may be failing at school, running away from home, self-harming, fighting with family, isolating from activities they used to love, blaming others for their problems.
- They may have tried to end their life, or have been hospitalized numerous times.
- The teens we work with deal with Major Depression Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Cyber addiction, Substance use and alcohol use disorders, Attachment Disorders, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- No motivation, giving up on things they once loved, destroying the dynamics in the home.
- Some students are making false allegations against their parents, knowing either CPS or the police will be involved, not caring what the consequences are of these actions.

These are just a few of the issues parents are dealing with their child. No one wants to send their child to a program, but they know the risk of not doing anything. They fear the very worst - The possibility of losing their child.

### **A DAD'S STORY:**

Our counselor received a call from a dad of a 15-year-old boy. After a few weeks of discussion and information trading, the dad was ready to enroll his son. Two days before the dad was going to bring his son to the program, he called the admissions counselor and told her that he was reconsidering. He said he read a negative review online about the program.

He told the admissions counselor that what he read was pretty outlandish, and since he knew a former student wrote it, he didn't believe it. However, it gave him pause, so he decided to keep his son at home and give him another chance. The admissions counselor called him a few weeks later to see how they were doing. The dad broke into tears and said about two weeks prior that his son had snuck out at night, stole a car with some friends, they were all drinking, and had a severe car accident. His son and one other boy died in the accident. Not sure what to say to this grieving dad; there was silence. The dad finally said, "I can only hope that other parents do not make the same mistake I made."



All students in our program are here for a reason. The parents did much research and then chose our program because it was the best fit for their child. When students go home from treatment, we are one of the few programs that continue to work with both the students and child with our strong aftercare program.

When a student is discharged from our program, the family is presented with a comprehensive aftercare treatment plan. This aftercare plan includes:

- Medication management.
- Communication skills.
- Stress management skills.
- Improved study skills for academics.
- Improved and repair family relationships. However, this does not mean their mental health diagnosis is gone or fixed.
- Participate in IOP services for a least a year after returning home.
- Weekly support group via our secure video conference application.

Suppose the family, parents, and/or former students do not engage in our aftercare program or get IOP services in their community to help deal with life after treatment. This can sometimes lead to a lot of resentment from the child towards their parents and also towards our program. That former student will then lash out in the only way they can, and that is to go online and write negative and outlandish things they accuse our program of engaging in. They are blaming others for their own failures and unhappiness.

Parents, please research before enrolling your student in our program or any program. But be careful about what you read and see on the internet.

The negative comments attempt to attack and tear down our program with absolutely no basis, other than malice, listing a slew of lies and contrived defamations without any evidence to back these claims. These harmful websites only exist to attack, troll, bully and harass residential treatment programs without grounds, backing, or evidence beyond the outlandish claims fabricated by these former students. These websites that manipulate these fragile students to help spread lies concerning our program are actually doing the abuse and mistreating of people.

Any website on the internet that claims Eagle Ranch Academy is a WWASP related program or a spin-off program is LYING. Eagle Ranch Academy has never been, is not, and never will be affiliated with any related entity. Any website or person who says ERA is a WWASP program is lying and that should call into question all information and all comments made on that website concerning our program. To state it plainly.... they are LYING and intentional spreading disinformation concerning ERA and can not be believed.

Former students and parents have commented on some of these sites supporting our program and disagreeing with the false allegations. However, if a positive comment is posted on these sites, the administrator of the website badgers and bullies the person making a comment, which prevents anyone from supporting our program. Therefore, we have advised our former students and parents not to waste their time corresponding to any negative comments on these websites.

Instead of working through their own extreme imbalances or even seeking the proper help, these students are spending time trolling ERA through any outlet possible. This, unfortunately, is a testament to mental disturbances and the manifestations they can lead to later in life if left unresolved.

If your child is unable or unwilling to control their destructive behavior, they are far safer in a program than they would be at home. Students in our program learn to take ownership of their choices and recognize those choices affect more than themselves. We help them to want to change and we give them tools to do so. As one 16-year-old former student said, Eagle Ranch didn't change who I am; Eagle Ranch changed how I think."

Now a little about reviews you see on Yelp. ERA has over 20 positive 5-star reviews in the queue; however, Yelp is requesting that ERA pay a monthly "marketing" fee for the opportunity to have these positive reviews posted on their website. This website makes its revenue because it "strongly" encourages businesses to enroll in their "marketing" program for a monthly fee. Yelp will promote negative reviews and then ask companies to enroll in their program, which in turn they will allow positive reviews to be posted and seen.

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There are literally hundreds of success stories from parents and their teenagers that have been enrolled in treatment programs. Success? You be the judge.

"If I would not have attended your program, I would not be the person I am today. I reflect on my experiences there and smile. I believed then that my parents were taking away everything. They were uncertain if what they were doing was too much. Looking back, they did not take... they gave me everything."

"It made me a better person, and I wouldn't be in the great place I am with my life if I hadn't have learned the things I did there. I got in a lot of trouble there, hurt quite a few people who didn't deserve it, but also made some lifetime bonds. I love my family there and always will."

" When I enrolled my daughter into your program - Wow...that was hard! But today I write to you as our family has reunited and are enjoying being together. We had such a great time as we said our goodbyes to everyone, and I am so thankful for all of you guys and you faithfully praying for us as we went through this valley. As I was going through our papers, I am happy to let you all know that our goals were met, and I am so thankful for this second chance with my daughter. She has grown so much, and I am no longer afraid of what she might do. She is busy looking for an apartment and will try to see if she can swing that. If not, she will be living here until she can swing it. She will be attending Community College in the fall. She is happy that she graduated from the program... She said she never would think that she would admit to that. She has made some lifelong friends!!"

“What a gift God has given us in having found your program for our daughter. She is doing great! We are so thankful. One of the things that were so evident to my husband and me is the love and dedication all the staff has for all the kids. The “BIGS” are there in the trenches, as one parent put it. I know all the staff would appreciate hearing from us, but the BIGS live life with the kids 24/7, as do the other staff. The girls shared their love and appreciation for the staff over and over again during our family sharing time. It was also cool to hear them share their love and appreciation for one another.”

"I will never forget the hardships and great times that I had spent at your program. It helped me turn my life in the right direction surrounding me with great people and great counseling. Thanks."

“Eight years ago today, I returned home from your program. As hard as it is to admit, it truly did make me who I am today. It probably took all eight years for me to give you guys credit, but looking back, it wasn’t so bad. You guys run a great program. Keep up the good work.”

"I am a former student from early 2008. I want to say that your program made a huge difference in my life. I kept meaning to write over the last few or so years, but you know how time flies and seems to get away from you, especially given the occupation I had a few years ago. See a few years after graduating, I started a family of my own and was inspired to do the right thing in my life and for my family, so I joined the United States Marine Corps. I believed and still believe that was the calling God had for me. Unfortunately, I was wounded and disabled in Iraq and was medically retired from the military. I had many hardships because of this, but I still believe this was God's will, and without the tools learned at a young age, it would have been a nearly impossible mountain to overcome.

"After seeking help from numerous other sources, we sent our son to your program. He was there for 9 months, and then he was pulled out. It was too soon! He has since spent several months in the juvenile justice system, but he is finally on a good path. He acknowledges now that he wishes he could have stayed at your program and finished the program. Looking back, he can now see its benefits. I know it's not an easy decision, but we would do the same thing and enroll him again."

"I believe that the sooner you intervene, the better it will be for both your family's sake and your son's. It will be a roller coaster ride, but you support other parents who will encourage you and pray with you through the process. Our daughter is still at your program, but we continue to hang in there. We believe it is the best thing we're doing for her."

"Your program did not perform any miracles with our daughter, but it did provide a place when we had nowhere else to turn. She was kept safe. Her self-esteem was nurtured. And, she was able to achieve a diploma, which she had to have to gain entrance to the University of Colorado."

"Your program provided support when we needed it most. I've been an educator for almost 40 years, including 10 years in various principal positions, and been a school superintendent for 23

years. I'm well acquainted with the challenges (and benefits) of leading organizations that work with young people. All that to say that my appreciation is knowledgeable and deep."

"I graduated from your program back in 2006. I was 14 and extremely angry. Today, I am 24 and am living life. Thanks to my big Sis at your program. I am a changed person. It was a long 11 months that I spent, but I think it was very well spent. I'm not sure where I would be today if it had not been for my experience. The relationships that I developed that year have lasted and will last a lifetime."

"I graduated from your program in '09 and am a better woman thanks to all the caring people there! Thank God for this place!"

"Despite this painful period, we would make the same decision again because not only has our son benefitted, but each one of us has grown as a result of participating in the process. We are, without a doubt, a better, happier family."

"Hi, it's Lisa, 2012. I have meant to write you for a long time but time slipped by. I am married but no kids yet. I have always wanted to say Thank you for what you did for me. When I first came to your program, I was really shy and did not express myself. I have many fond memories of the people I meet while I was there. It turned me into a great person. ...the program really helped me. I know this is 7 years late in saying thank you, and I am glad to hear that it is still helping troubled kids out! Thanks again!"

"Your program saved our daughter's life, gave her back to us renewed."

"Without your program, I am not sure that I would be alive today."

"To be honest, I thought that I didn't like the place, but now that I'm gone, I can't believe how much I learned and the friendships I made with the other kids... unfortunately, I didn't get to finish the program...but I still think it's a great place for guys and girls to get our acts together."

"Teenagers are not especially well-behaved when they are not getting what they want, and I was no exception. I was an abrasive and dishonest teenager who stopped at nothing to get what I wanted. I wanted to graduate with my class, be in the senior theater production, call my best friend, and none of those plans included a flight to your program. However, my parents knew what I needed, and I thank them every day for providing me with it despite my efforts to make them miserable in their decisions. I wonder now how long I would have lasted without their guidance. (Not very long.) I will always aspire to show love as they did, and I can only hope that I can reciprocate the incredible caring that I found there, even when I least appreciated it. I only wish I could give the "If I knew then what I know now..." speech to every struggling teenager I see. Your program has given many teens an amazing opportunity to learn these life lessons in a safe environment instead of learning the hard way in their adult life. While this seems like a hard decision in high school, it has the potential to save so much pain and heartache. I cannot tell you how much I love and respect my parents for making the hard choice to put me on that plane. (Really, I promise.)

"God has blessed my life now with incredible healing that I could never imagine nor deserve. I love telling people about how my life has changed since leaving. I graduate college next year, and I can't wait to work as a therapist and change lives to the extent that mine has been changed."

"Our son's time at your program left an indelible memory and improved his career trajectory. He went on to earn his BA in Sociology from the University of Oregon, worked for Big Brothers Big Sisters, and is now in a dual program studying to earn a Master of Public Health (MPH) and Master of Business (MBA)."

"I can testify that there is an enormous need for programs like yours and a need for public understanding of their benefits. Being placed at your program gave me tremendous opportunities. I lived in a stable environment where there were three meals every day, household chores to teach me responsibility, and staff that consistently showed me they loved me. I earned my HS diploma, took the SAT, and even got accepted into a university. I lived in a safe environment without fear of verbal, physical, or emotional abuse."

"Having my son go through your program, I learned invaluable parenting skills. My son has never been hungry, unloved, unwanted, nor has he doubted that he could fulfill his dreams because of a limited education level. Because I have cared for my son has what it takes to make his dreams become a reality. Residential education programs may not always produce CEO's, but they do produce happier families. From those families come even more successful individuals, like my son."

"I remember when I first arrived at your program – this came after my stay at the emergency behavioral hospital the summer before my junior year of high school. It took me a while to adjust to this new environment and realize that I could trust the people who would become my new family. I was surrounded by staff who taught me how to be cared for and care for others. Having never lived in a functional family environment, I needed to experience a healthy family life. While we received unconditional love, we were also taught discipline. This had a huge impact on me as I had never experienced a form of discipline that was consistent, predictable, and done in love. As far as my education, I received individual attention that later helped me attain my college diploma."

"I currently am finishing my freshman year where I am studying international affairs. I would not be where I am today without the help and influence of the caring staff. What is so amazing is that there are roadblocks to the things I have done and want to do for any other person. For me, these roadblocks just disappeared, and I am free to go where I want to go. It gave me these opportunities."

