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TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – HIGHLANDER
CHILDREN'S SERVICES GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of Highlander Children's Services Group Home (Group Home or Agency). The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Highlander Children's Services Group Home is a 30-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 14-17 who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Highlander Children's Services Group Home was providing services for 11 Los Angeles County Probation children, seven Riverside County Probation children, six San Bernardino County Probation children, and one Orange County Probation child.

Highlander Children's Services Group Home is located in Riverside County.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review was to determine whether the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covered basic child safety and licensing issues, and included an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, facility inspections, and interviews with four children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Summary of Findings

Generally, the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. However, the Agency needs to maintain current Needs and Services Plans and quarterly reports for each resident; provide residents with the minimum required allowance; and provide residents with the opportunity to maintain photo albums/life books.

Attached is a detailed report of the review findings.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management is required to provide a corrective action plan to the Probation Department within 15 business days from the postmark date of this report. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Mike Pirolo at (626) 293-1110.

JTM:MP:CC:asl

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Paul Higa, Acting Chief Probation Officer
Dr. Randy Sima, Executive Director, Highlander Children's Services
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
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**Highlander Children's Services
10001 County Farm Rd.
Riverside, Ca 92503
Phone: (951) 343-2536
License No.: 336401070
Rate Classification Level: 10**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation

Sample size for resident interviews: Four

Comments:

Highlander Children's Services Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is located in Riverside County. The Group Home is clean, spacious, and comfortable. The Group Home is well maintained, nicely landscaped, and blends well with the other homes on the block. There were no observable safety hazards.

The interior of the Group Home is generally neat and clean. The décor provides a home-like atmosphere. The common rooms are nicely decorated and maintained. The resident bedrooms are spacious, comfortable, and personalized to each child's desire with posters, pictures, and knick-knacks.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, TVs, and DVD players. There are resource materials, including computers with a variety of programs.

There is a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit. The food is accessible, appropriately dated, and properly stored.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Four

Comments:

The residents meet the Agency's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Residents received a complete initial diagnostic assessment after being admitted into the Agency's program.

Three residents have Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) that are current, realistic, measurable, and time specific. One resident does not have a current NSP. There was documentation to support the placement workers' participation in the development and update of the NSPs.

The quarterly reports for three residents are current, comprehensive, and appropriately focus on the goals of the NSPs. One resident did not have a current quarterly report.

The residents are provided with psychological testing, and emotional and developmental counseling as required by the Program Statement. Case files reflect adequate documentation to show evidence of residents receiving regular individual and/or group therapy.

Recommendations

1. **Highlander Children's Services Group Home management:**
 - a. **Maintain current Needs and Services Plans for all residents.**
 - b. **Maintain current quarterly reports for all residents.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews****Sample size for resident interviews: Four****Comments:**

Residents are attending school. Their records contain current semester report cards and/or progress reports. Residents reported that they are provided with a sufficient amount of daily educational stimulation away from school and feel that the Group Home is supportive of their academic progress.

The Agency's program includes the development of residents' daily living skills. The residents are involved in the planning and preparation phase of meals. Hygiene care is discussed as needed and employment preparation encouraged.

Residents are offered the opportunity to participate in emancipation and vocational

programs as appropriate.

Residents have the opportunity to work and manage their own money.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Four

Comments:

The Agency provides its residents opportunities to participate in recreational activities. The residents expressed satisfaction with the recreational activities and stated that the recreation schedules are followed.

The Group Home utilizes local community organizations for recreational and program resources. The residents reported that they participate in the planning of some of the activities. The residents have free time and are able to participate in self-selected activities.

Transportation is provided to and from the activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

Comments:

According to the Agency's management, there are no residents receiving psychotropic medications. This information is appropriately documented.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Four

Comments:

Residents expressed satisfaction with the Agency and its staff. Residents participate in an initial orientation and the Group Home's policies and procedures are posted. Residents reported that they feel safe in the Group Home and that there is no interference with their daily living functions.

Residents reported satisfaction with the taste of the food and with their ability to participate in menu development. They reported that there is sufficient staff supervision and expressed satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff.

Residents reported that they are assigned chores to complete on a daily basis that are reasonable and not too demanding. Residents are able to have visitors and make and receive personal telephone calls. They are permitted to contact their probation officers, attorneys, and family members as needed. Residents are able to attend religious services of their choice and feel that the Agency is respectful of their cultural lifestyles. The Agency allows the residents to celebrate holidays.

Residents reported that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Residents are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Four

Comments:

The Agency provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and allowances to the residents. The Group Home supplies its residents with the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance and the residents are given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to residents is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Agency does not provide residents with the required minimum base allowance, and they are not able to increase their allowance based on the Agency's behavioral system. Residents are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose.

The Agency provides residents with adequate personal care items and adequate storage.

Two of the four residents have not been provided with an opportunity to maintain photo albums/life books.

Recommendations

2. Highlander Children's Services management:

- a. Provide residents with the minimum required weekly allowance.**
- b. Allow residents to increase their allowance based on the Agency's behavioral system.**
- c. Provide all residents with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life books.**