



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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May 6, 2004

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

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – VISTA DEL MAR,
MAIN CAMPUS AND EMANCIPATION HOME**

We have completed a review of the two group homes operated by Vista Del Mar, the Main Campus and Emancipation Home. Vista Del Mar contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Probation Department (Probation) and Mental Health (DMH).

Vista Del Mar Main Campus is an 88 bed facility, which provides care for girls and boy ages 6-18 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Vista Del Mar Main Campus was providing services for 27 Los Angeles County (LA County) DMH children, 23 DCFS children, three Probation children, three Ventura County children, two LA County Adoptive Assistance children, one private placement, one child from Santa Barbara County, and one child from Suffolk County (New York). Vista Del Mar Main Campus is located in the Second District.

Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home is a six-bed facility, located in the Second Supervisorial District, which provides care for boys ages 13-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home was providing services for two LA County DCFS children, two DMH children, and one Santa Barbara County child.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review was to verify that the two Agencies were providing services outlined in their Program Statements. Additionally, the reviews covered basic child safety and licensing issues, and included an evaluation of each home's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection, and interviews with four children placed with Vista Del Mar Main Campus, and two

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children placed with Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home, at the time of the review. Interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the facilities, and to ensure its adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Summary of Findings

Vista Del Mar Main Campus is providing the services outlined in its Program Statement. However, Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home needs to make substantial repairs to its facility; provide age-appropriate reading material; furnish a computer for the residents; and properly store and date food items.

Attached are detailed reports of the findings for each home.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management has agreed to provide a written corrective action plan within 15 business days from the date of this report. Because of the significance of the problems noted in the Emancipation Home, **the Agency must take action to correct the physical plant deficiencies immediately. If these deficiencies are not addressed immediately, DCFS should place the Agency on a "Do Not Use" status, and remove the children from this home.**

We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our reviews.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact DeWitt Roberts at (626) 293-1101.

JTM:DR:CC

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer
Gerald Zaslaw, Executive Director, Vista Del Mar
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**Vista Del Mar
Main Campus
3200 Motor Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90034
Phone: 310-836-1223
License No.: 191600721
Rate Classification Level: 12**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Four

Comments:

Vista Del Mar Home for Children is an 88 bed residential facility located in a residential area. The campus consists of three residential cottages, an administration building, gymnasium, cafeteria, on-grounds school, chapel/synagogue, and children's library. There was also an athletic field, indoor swimming pool, basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts.

The interior of the residential units were generally neat and clean with a home-like environment. Each cottage was individually decorated and equipped with a kitchen, laundry room, and lounge. The bedrooms were neat, nicely decorated, and personalized by the residents.

There was age-appropriate play equipment throughout the facility and each unit had a TV, VCR, and board games. Vista Del Mar provided residents with a computer room, housing several computers, and a computer instructor. In addition, the on-site school provided residents with books and resource material.

Vista Del Mar had a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit, that were 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:

Each resident met Vista Del Mar's population criteria as outlined in their program statement and they received initial diagnostic assessments.

Each resident's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) was current, specific, measurable, attainable, and time limited. The residents and their authorized representatives participated in the development and modification of the NSPs.

The Quarterly Reports were detailed, comprehensive, and addressed the residents' therapeutic, residential, educational, and social goals.

Each resident received individual and group therapy

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

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

The four residents attended Vista Del Mar's private school. Each resident required, and had a current Individualized Education Plan on file, and their records contained report cards and progress reports. The residents reported that they were provided with a sufficient amount of educational stimulation away from school on a daily basis, and felt that staff was supportive of their academic progress. Vista Del Mar also provided three full time tutors for the residents.

Development of daily living skills was part of Vista Del Mar's program. The residents were involved in the maintenance of their rooms, meal preparation, and personal hygiene care.

Age-appropriate residents were offered emancipation services and on-ground vocational training in various areas such as auto mechanics, computers, and printing.

Two of the residents worked, and were able to manage their money. All four residents were able to spend their allowances as they wanted.

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:

Vista Del Mar provided its residents with sufficient opportunities to participate in both on-site and off-site recreational activities. The residents expressed satisfaction with the quantity and variety of recreation and activities provided.

Local community organizations were utilized for recreation and program resources. The residents stated they had plenty of free time and opportunities to participate in self-selected activities.

Transportation was provided to and from activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic/Other Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

There were 61 residents placed in Vista Del Mar at the time of the review. A review of case files was conducted for the 18 Los Angeles (LA) County residents prescribed psychotropic medications.

Comments:

The LA County residents receiving psychotropic medications had current court authorizations. Documentation indicated that the residents were regularly seen by the prescribing psychiatrist for an evaluation of their medication.

Medication logs were properly maintained.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Four**Comments:**

Each resident reported satisfaction with the facility and stated that the facility was always clean, well maintained, and safe. The residents reported that they were always supervised and that staff treated them with respect and dignity.

The residents received an orientation upon placement, which included a review of the facility's policies and procedures. Vista Del Mar had an appropriate system of discipline consisting of points and levels that residents felt was fair.

Residents felt their rights were respected with regard to privacy during telephone calls or visits and the ability to contact their social workers, attorneys, and family. The residents stated that assigned chores were not too demanding.

Each resident indicated that they had religious freedom and that their health care needs were being met. Further, they felt that staff was culturally sensitive to each resident's background and ethnicity.

The residents were 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:**

Vista Del Mar provided appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and allowances to the residents.

Vista Del Mar supplied its residents with the required monthly clothing allowance in the amount of \$50, and residents were given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to the residents was of good quality and sufficient quantity.

The residents received at least the required minimum weekly allowance, and were able to increase the allowance based on the Agency's behavioral system.

Vista Del Mar provided residents with adequate personal care items and sufficient, secure space to store their personal items.

The residents had life books.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

**Vista Del Mar
Emancipation Home
8546 Keokuk Avenue
Canoga Park, CA 91306
Phone: 818-700-7964
License No.: 191290180
Rate Classification Level: 12**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home is a six-bed residential facility located in Canoga Park. The exterior of the home was in need of repairs. It had peeling paint, rotted wood trim, and holes in the side of the house. The screen door had a broken hinge and the wooden fence on the side of the house was in disrepair. The patio was cluttered with debris, the yard was overgrown with bushes, and a broken barbeque grill was full of trash.

The interior of the home was messy and disorganized. In the living room, the interior of the front door had peeling paint, the carpet was stained and worn, and a light fixture was broken. In the front closet, items were stuffed inside, the floor needed repair, and there was exposed wiring.

In the dining area, one chair was broken. In the kitchen, the oven and dishwasher needed cleaning, the kitchen cabinets needed touch up painting, and the pantry door was broken. A threshold strip in the laundry room needed to be replaced.

In the den, items were strewn on the floor and the furniture was in poor condition, including a leather sofa that had scratched wood paneling, and a broken bookcase.

In bedroom number one, the window covering was bent. In bedroom number two the acoustic ceiling needed repair, the room needed painting, and there was a hole behind the door. In bedroom number three, knobs were missing from the closet door. In bedroom number four, the closet door was broken and the room needed cleaning. In addition, bedrooms number one, two, and three did not have sufficient lighting, the carpeting needed cleaning, and several pieces of furniture needed to be repaired or replaced.

All three bathrooms needed cleaning and painting. In bathroom number one, coverings were missing from the light fixtures, one fixture had no “on/off” switch and was operated

by twisting the bulb, the toothbrush holder was broken, and there was a hole under the sink.

In bathroom number two, the shower door and shower fixtures needed repair, there was a buildup of mildew on the ceiling over the shower, and the heating unit was not working. In bathroom number three, the ceiling heater was missing the heat bulb.

There was a small back house on the property filled with old clothes, abandoned furniture pieces, a mattress, and various other items. In addition, the entry door was falling off the hinges. This was discussed with management who stated that the house was constantly being broken into. Management agreed to repair the door and secure the house immediately.

The overall condition of the home was discussed with management who agreed that the home was not clean and in poor condition.

The children were allowed to personalize their bedrooms and each bed had a full complement of clean linens.

There was age-appropriate play equipment in working condition throughout the home. However, age-appropriate reading material and a computer for the residents was needed.

There was a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit. However, there were perishable food items in the refrigerator that were not properly dated and stored.

Recommendations

1. Vista Del Mar management:

- a. Repair and paint the exterior of the home.**
- b. Remove debris and broken furniture/appliances, etc., from the interior and exterior of the home, including the back house.**
- c. Remove overgrown bushes from the yard.**
- d. Repair/replace/paint the walls, doors, cabinets, and ceilings throughout the facility as needed.**
- e. Replace/repair damaged furniture throughout the facility.**
- f. Organize the front closet and repair the floor.**
- g. Make needed electrical repairs throughout the home.**

- h. Clean the carpeting throughout the home.
- i. Clean the kitchen oven and dishwasher.
- j. Replace the threshold strip in the laundry room.
- k. Provide sufficient lighting in the residents' bedrooms.
- l. Replace window covering in bedroom number one.
- m. Repair hole under the sink and toothbrush holder in bathroom number one.
- n. Repair the shower and remove the mildew in bathroom number two.
- o. Clean all bathrooms.
- p. Provide residents with age-appropriate reading material and a computer.
- q. Properly date and store all food items.

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Each resident met Vista Del Mar's population criteria as outlined in their program statement and received an initial diagnostic assessment after being admitted into the program.

Each resident had current Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) that were specific, measurable, attainable, and time limited. The residents and their authorized representatives participated in the development and modification of the NSPs.

The Quarterly Reports were detailed, comprehensive, and addressed the residents' therapeutic, residential, educational, and social goals.

Each resident received individual and group therapy.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Each resident was enrolled in public school and had a current Individualized Education Plan on file. Their records contained semester report cards and progress reports. The residents reported that they were provided with a sufficient amount of educational stimulation away from school on a daily basis, and that staff was supportive of their academic progress.

Development of daily living skills was part of the Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home's program. However, it was discussed with management that residents needed additional life skills training in the areas of hygiene and orderliness, especially in their bedrooms and bathrooms. Management stated that the matter would be addressed.

The residents stated that they were able to have jobs and manage their own money. The residents were able to spend their allowances as they wanted.

Recommendation

- 2. Vista Del Mar management provide additional life skills training to residents in the areas of hygiene and orderliness.**

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home provided its residents with sufficient opportunities to participate in both on-site and off-site recreational activities. The residents expressed satisfaction with the quantity and variety of recreation and activities provided.

Local community organizations were utilized for recreation and program resources. The residents stated they had plenty of free time and opportunities to participate in self-selected activities.

Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home provided transportation to and from activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic/Other Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

There were five residents placed in Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home. A review of case files was conducted for the three Los Angeles (LA) County residents prescribed psychotropic medications.

Comments:

The LA County residents receiving psychotropic medications had current authorizations. Documentation confirmed that the residents were routinely seen by the psychiatrist for an evaluation of their medication.

Medication logs were properly maintained.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Each resident expressed satisfaction with the home and stated that they felt safe. The residents received an orientation upon placement that included a review of the facility's policies and procedures. Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home had an appropriate system of discipline consisting of points and levels that residents felt was fair.

Residents felt their rights were respected with regard to privacy during telephone calls or visits, and the ability to contact their social workers, attorneys, and family. The residents stated that assigned chores were not too demanding.

The residents reported that they were always supervised, and that staff treated them with respect and dignity. Each resident indicated that they had religious freedom and that their health care needs were being met. Further, they felt that staff was culturally sensitive to each resident's background and ethnicity.

The residents were 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:

Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home provided appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and allowances to the residents. Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home supplied its residents with the required monthly clothing allowance in the amount of fifty dollars, and residents were given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to the residents was of good quality and sufficient quantity.

The residents were provided with at least the required minimum weekly allowance, and were able to earn an increase based on the Agency's behavioral system.

Vista Del Mar Emancipation Home provided residents with adequate personal care items, and sufficient secure space to store their personal items.

The residents had life books.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.