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September 7, 2004

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

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – THE SHERMAN
GROUP, INC., 30TH STREET WEST, ALMOND, AND HERMOSA
YOUTH CARE CENTERS**

We have completed a review of 30th Street West, Almond, and Hermosa Youth Care Centers Group Homes (Group Home or Agency) operated by the Sherman Group, Inc. Each Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

30th Street West Youth Care Center Group Home is a six-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 13-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, 30th Street West Youth Care Center was providing services for five DCFS children.

Almond and Hermosa Youth Care Center Group Homes are six-bed facilities, which provide care for girls ages 13-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Almond and Hermosa Youth Care Centers were each providing services for six DCFS children.

Sherman Group Inc., Group Homes are located in the Fifth District.

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

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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 two children placed in each Group Home at the time of the review. 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's Group Home facilities are not well maintained and several program areas need improvement.

30th Street West Youth Care Center Group Home

30th Street West Youth Care Center Group Home needs to make repairs to its facility; provide a computer for the residents; properly store food; create Needs and Services Plans that have measurable goals; provide documentation to show each placement worker's participation in the development and update of the Needs and Services Plans; complete quarterly reports in a timely manner; provide documentation to show that the residents receive regular individual and/or group therapy sessions; obtain and maintain each resident's school report cards/progress reports; maintain current court authorizations for psychotropic medications; provide each child with sufficient clothes to meet DCFS' clothing standards for quantity; and provide each resident with regular opportunities to maintain a life book.

Almond Youth Care Center Group Home

Almond Youth Care Center Group Home needs to make repairs to its facility; properly store food; create Needs and Services Plans that have measurable goals; obtain a current Individualized Educational Plan for each resident requiring one; inform residents of their ability to participate in self-selected recreation activities; maintain current court authorizations for psychotropic medications; properly maintain medication logs; and provide each resident with a life book.

Hermosa Youth Care Center Group Home

Hermosa Youth Care Center Group Home needs to make repairs to its facility; provide age-appropriate recreational equipment; complete Needs and Services Plans in a timely manner; create Needs and Services Plans that have measurable goals; develop comprehensive quarterly reports that focus on the actual goals of the Needs and Services Plans; maintain current court authorizations for psychotropic medications; maintain documentation of current medication reviews for each resident by the prescribing psychiatrist; and properly maintain medication distribution logs.

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 Children's Group Home Ombudsman within 15 business days from the receipt 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:dl

- c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
- David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
- Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer
- Willie R. Sherman, Chief Executive Officer, The Sherman Group, Inc.
- Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
- Public Information Office
- Audit Committee

**The Sherman Group home
30th Street West Youth Care Center
42406 30th Street West
Lancaster, CA 93536
(661) 718-2309
License No.: 197602748
Rate Classification Level: 10**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The 30th Street West Youth Care Center Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is a large facility located in a residential community. The Group Home is clean, spacious, and comfortable. The Group Home blends well with the other homes on the block. However, the front and back yards are overgrown with weeds.

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. However, there are some areas that need improvement.

The kitchen trash can does not have a proper lid.

In each bedroom, the lighting is insufficient because only a small table lamp provides lighting for the residents to read or study. In bedroom number three, the window screen and two vertical window covering slats are missing and the sliding screen door is off its track.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, an electronic game, a TV, a DVD player and a VCR. There are also books and resource materials. However, there is no computer for the residents' use.

There is a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit that is accessible. However, several items in the freezer are not appropriately dated and/or properly labeled.

Recommendations

- 1. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:**
 - a. Clear the weeds from the front and back yards.**
 - b. Provide a properly fitting lid for the kitchen trash can.**
 - c. Provide sufficient lighting in each bedroom.**
 - d. Repair the window screen, sliding screen door, and the window covering in bedroom number three.**
 - e. Provide a computer for the residents.**
 - f. Properly date and label food to help prevent contamination and spoilage.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

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.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) are current. However, the goals are not measurable. In addition there was no documentation to support the placement worker's participation in the development or update of one resident's NSP.

The quarterly report for one resident was not current. The other resident has not been in the Group Home long enough to require a quarterly report.

The residents are provided with psychological testing, and emotional and developmental counseling as required by the Program Statement. Case files do not reflect adequate documentation to show evidence of residents receiving regular individual and/or group therapy.

Recommendations

- 2. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:**
 - a. Create Needs and Services Plans that have measurable goals .**
 - b. Provide documentation to show placement workers' participation in the development or update of the Needs and Services Plans.**
 - c. Complete quarterly reports in a timely manner.**
 - d. Provide documentation to show that the residents receive regular individual and/or group therapy sessions.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Residents are attending school. One resident's record contains current semester report cards and/or progress reports. The other resident was recently placed in the Group Home and a report card or progress report has not yet been received. 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.

Residents are offered the opportunity to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

The residents are not employed.

Recommendation

- 3. The Sherman Group, Inc. management maintain school report cards/progress reports for each resident.**

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

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 planning 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 for one case file

Comments:

The resident does not have a current court authorization for psychotropic medication. Documentation confirms that the child is routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

Recommendation

- 4. The Sherman Group, Inc. management maintain current court authorizations for residents' psychotropic medications.**

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two**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 weekly 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: Two

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. However, one resident is in need of a bathrobe.

The Agency provides residents with the required minimum base allowance, which they are able to increase according to 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.

Neither resident has been provided with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life books. The Chief Regional Director stated that residents are presented a life book upon attending the Independent Living Program.

Recommendations

5. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:

- a. Provide each child with sufficient clothes to meet DCFS' clothing standards for quantity.**
- b. Provide each resident with regular opportunities to maintain a life book.**

**The Sherman Group, Inc.
Almond Youth Care Center
41540 Almond Avenue
Palmdale, CA 93551
(661) 943-7475
License No.: 197602747
Rate Classification Level: 10**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The Almond Youth Care Center Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is a large facility located in a residential community. 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. However, there are areas that need improvement.

The kitchen trash can does not have a properly fitting lid. In bedroom number two, the carpet has several scorch and burn marks and the ceiling fan lighting fixture is missing a light bulb and lens.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, an electronic game, a TV, and a VCR. There are books and resource materials, including a computer with a variety of programs.

There is a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit that is accessible. However, several items in the freezer are not properly labeled.

Recommendations

- 1. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:**
 - a. Provide a properly fitting lid for the kitchen trash can.**
 - b. Repair/replace the carpet in bedroom number two.**

- c. **Replace the missing light bulb and lens on the ceiling fan light fixture in bedroom number two.**
- d. **Properly label food to help prevent contamination and spoilage.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

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.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) are current. However, the goals are not measurable. There was appropriate documentation to support the placement workers' participation in the development or update of the NSPs.

The residents have not been in the Group Home long enough to require a quarterly report.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show evidence of residents receiving regular individual and/or group therapy.

Recommendation

- 2. The Sherman Group, Inc. management create Needs and Services Plans that have measurable goals.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Residents are attending school. One resident does not have a current Individualized Education Plan as required. The records for both residents 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 Agency 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.

Residents are offered the opportunity to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

The residents are not employed.

Recommendation

- 3. The Sherman Group, Inc. management obtain a current Individualized Education Plan for each resident requiring one.**

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

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 planning some of the activities and that they have free time. However, both residents were unaware of their ability to participate in self-selected activities.

Transportation is provided to and from the activities.

Recommendation

- 4. The Sherman Group, Inc. management inform residents of their ability to participate in self-selected activities.**

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents for one case file

Comments:

The resident does not have a current court authorization for one of the psychotropic medications being taken. Documentation confirms that the child is routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication distribution logs do not reflect all of the required information and do not provide explanations for gaps in the logging. We discussed these issues with Agency staff who properly updated the logs.

Recommendations

5. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:

- a. **Obtain current court authorizations for residents receiving psychotropic medications.**
- b. **Properly maintain medication distribution logs.**

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Both 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 weekly 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: Two

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 provides residents with the required minimum base allowance, which they are able to increase according to 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.

Neither resident has been provided with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life book. The Chief Regional Director stated that residents are presented a life book upon attending the Independent Living Program.

Recommendation

- 6. The Sherman Group, Inc. management provide each resident with a life book in a timely manner.**

**The Sherman Group, Inc.
Hermosa Youth Care Center
6354 Hermosa Court
Palmdale, CA 93551
(661) 943-8138
License No.: 197602490
Rate Classification Level: 10**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The Hermosa Youth Care Center Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is a large facility located in a residential community. 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. However, there are areas that need improvement.

In the kitchen, the trash can does not have a proper lid, the left rear burner on the kitchen stove will not light, the control knobs for the burners are scorched , and the refrigerator light is not working. In the dining room, one of the oak dining chairs is broken.

A lens is missing from the ceiling fan light fixture in bedroom number one and three light bulbs are not working in bedroom number three.

The Group Home does not maintain age appropriate and accessible outdoor recreational equipment. There are board games, a TV, an electronic game, a DVD player and a VCR. There are books and resource materials, however the residents' computer is not working.

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

Recommendations

- 1. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:**
 - a. Provide a properly fitting lid for the kitchen trash can.**
 - b. Repair/replace the left rear burner and control knobs on the kitchen stove.**
 - c. Replace the refrigerator light in the kitchen.**
 - d. Repair/replace the broken dining chair.**
 - e. Replace the missing lens in bedroom number one and the burned out light bulbs in bedroom number three.**
 - f. Provide age-appropriate outdoor recreational equipment for residents.**
 - g. Provide a computer for the residents.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

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.

One resident’s Needs and Services Plan (NSP) is current however, the goals are not measurable. There is documentation to support the placement worker’s participation in the development and update of the NSP. The other resident’s NSP is not current.

One quarterly report is not comprehensive as it could not address specific goals that should have been stated in the NSP. The quarterly report for the other resident is not comprehensive as it could not address specific goals that should have been stated in the current NSP.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show evidence of residents receiving regular individual and/or group therapy as required by the Program Statement.

Recommendations

- 2. The Sherman Group, Inc. management:**
 - a. Develop Needs and Services Plans that have measurable goals.**
 - b. Maintain current Needs and Services Plans for each resident.**
 - c. Develop comprehensive quarterly reports that address the goals stated in the residents' Needs and Services Plans.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Residents are attending school. One resident requires and has a current Individualized Education Plan. Both records contain current semester report cards and/or progress reports for the residents. 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.

Residents are offered the opportunity to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

The residents are not employed.

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: Two

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 planning 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 for three case files

Comments:

Two of the three residents do not have current court authorizations for psychotropic medication. Documentation confirms that only one of the three residents is routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication distribution logs are not properly maintained for two of the three residents.

Recommendations

- 3. The Sherman Group Home, Inc. management:**
 - a. Maintain current court authorizations for all residents receiving psychotropic medication.**
 - b. Maintain documentation of current medication reviews for each resident by the prescribing psychiatrist.**

- c. **Properly maintain medication distribution logs.**

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

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 weekly 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: Two

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 provides residents with the required minimum base allowance, which they are able to increase according to 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.

Residents are provided with an opportunity to maintain photo albums/life books.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.