



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

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

September 19, 2005

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 – THE
SYCAMORES, THE SYCAMORES EL NIDO GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of The Sycamores El Nido Group Home (Group Home or Agency) operated by The Sycamores, Incorporated. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

The Group Home is an eighty-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 6-14 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, the Group Home was providing services for nineteen Los Angeles County DCFS children, and twenty-nine Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health children.

The Group Home is located in the Fifth District.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covers basic child safety and licensing issues, and includes an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection, and interviews with children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with children are designed to obtain their perspectives on the program

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services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Summary of Findings

Generally, the Agency is providing the treatment services as outlined in their Program Statement. However, the Agency needs to paint the exterior of Hutter Cottage, the clinical building, classroom four, and the computer building; remove the leaves from the roof of Swartzott cottage; repair the tree planters throughout the campus; remove the mildew from the bathroom in Baldwin Cottage; paint the interior of the facility as needed; provide additional lighting throughout the facility as needed; clean or replace the carpeting/flooring throughout the facility as needed; remove the smell, and replace the worn mirror in the bathroom in Swartzott Cottage; replace the broken handle on the refrigerator, and the missing window screen in the dining room in Hunter Cottage; repair the exterior door, and clean the bathrooms in the main room and hallway of the recreation hall; clean the sofas in therapy room one; replace the light covering and the door/frame in the program support building; and repair the wall paneling, and replace the window screens in the program support building.

Attached is a detailed report of the review.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Agency's management completed a corrective action plan (attached) which we approved. 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:cr

http://auditor.co.la.ca.us/group_home.asp

Attachments

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Paul Higa, Chief Probation Officer
Dan Braun, Executive Director, The Sycamores Group Home
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

The Sycamores
The Sycamores El Nido Group Home
2933 North El Nido Drive
Altadena, California 91001
Phone: (626) 395-7100
License Number: 191200662
Rate Classification Level: 14

I. Facility and Environment

Method of assessment – Observation

Comments:

The Group Home is located in a residential community. The front and back yards are clean, and adequately landscaped. However, the exterior of the Group Home is not well maintained. The exterior walls of the clinical building, Hutter Cottage, classroom four, and the computer building have paint that is peeling, patched, and chipped. There is a buildup of leaves covering the roof of Swartzott Cottage. Brick tree planters throughout the campus are missing bricks and are coming apart.

The common quarters of the Group Home are neat, and the Group Home provides a home-like environment; however, each cottage has areas that need improvement. In Baldwin Cottage, there is mildew around the tub in the children's bathroom; and in bedrooms one, two, and three the lighting is inadequate. In Swartzott Cottage, the bathroom attached to bedroom one has an odor. In Hutter and Rowland Cottages, lighting in the living room and all the children's bedrooms is inadequate. In Hunter Cottage there is a broken handle on the refrigerator. In the laundry room and kitchen walkway, the walls are marked with unfinished patching, and the dining room window is missing a screen.

In classrooms one, two, three, four, and six the carpet is stained, and torn. The bathrooms in classrooms one and two have worn floors; and in classrooms three and eight the lighting is inadequate. The main recreation hall has a broken exterior door, the walls have unfinished patch work, and the lighting is inadequate. The bathrooms in the recreation hall need cleaning, and the walls of the hallway are dirty and have unfinished patch work.

The carpet and sofas are stained, and the furniture is scratched in therapy room one. In therapy room two, a table is damaged and the lighting is inadequate. In therapy room three, the lighting is inadequate.

In the program support building, the timeout room has a broken door and a broken frame, the light covering is dirty, the floor is stained with paint; the walls are dirty, and there is unfinished patch work throughout. Throughout the program support building, the side paneling is coming off the wall, the lighting is inadequate, and the window

screens are missing. The carpet in the cafeteria is stained and the walls of the main dining room have areas of unfinished patch work.

Children's bedrooms are well maintained. The rooms are clean and orderly, and have age-appropriate personalized decorations. There is adequate furniture, and storage space. Window coverings and window screens are in good repair. The mattresses are comfortable, and the beds all have a full complement of linens. Children's sleeping arrangements are appropriate.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, TV's, and DVD players. Books and resource materials, including a computer room with a variety of programs, are also available.

The Group Home maintains a sufficient supply of perishable and non perishable foods.

Recommendations

1. The Sycamores management:

- a. Paint the exterior of Hutter Cottage, the clinical building, classroom four, and the computer building.**
- b. Remove the leaves from the roof of Swartzott cottage.**
- c. Repair the tree planters throughout the campus.**
- d. Remove the mildew from the bathroom in Baldwin Cottage.**
- e. Paint the interior of the facility as needed.**
- f. Provide additional lighting throughout the facility as needed.**
- g. Clean or replace the carpeting/flooring throughout the facility as needed.**
- h. Remove the smell, and replace the worn mirror in the bathroom in Swartzott Cottage.**
- i. Replace the broken handle on the refrigerator, and the missing window screen in the dining room in Hunter Cottage.**
- j. Repair the exterior door, and clean the bathrooms in the main room and hallway of the recreation hall.**
- k. Clean the sofas in therapy room one.**

- I. Replace the light covering and the door/frame in the program support building.**

- m. Repair the wall paneling, and replace the window screens in the program support building.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Four

Comments:

Children meet the Group Home’s population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Children are assessed for needed services within thirty days of placement.

The treatment team develops and implements the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) with input from the child. The NSPs are current, comprehensive, and include long and short-term goals.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show that children are receiving treatment services as identified in their NSPs.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Four

Comments:

Children are attending school. Children are provided with educational support and resources to meet their educational needs, and are progressing satisfactorily in school. The Group Home’s program includes the development of children’s daily living, self-help, and survival skills.

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Four

Comments:

The Group Home provides children with sufficient recreational activities, and leisure time. Children are given opportunities to participate in planning activities.

Children are allowed to participate in extra-curricular, enrichment, and social activities in which they have an interest.

The Group Home provides transportation to and from the activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

Comments:

Children have current court authorizations for psychotropic medication. Documentation confirms that children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Children are informed about their psychotropic medication, and are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment –Interviews with children

Sample size for interviews: Four

Comments:

Children are informed about the Group Home’s policies and procedures. Children report that they feel safe in the Group Home, and are provided with appropriate staff supervision. Children express satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff, and report that staff treats them with respect and dignity.

Children report that they are assigned chores that are reasonable and not too demanding. Children are allowed to have private visitors, to make and receive personal telephone calls, and to send and receive unopened correspondence and mail. Children are able to attend religious services of their choice.

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

Children report satisfaction with meals and snacks.

Children receive voluntary medical, dental, and psychiatric care.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Four

Comments:

The Group Home provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance to children. Children are given opportunities to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to children is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Group Home provides children with the required minimum base allowance. Children are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose.

The Group Home provides children with adequate personal care items.

Children are encouraged and assisted in creating and maintaining photo albums/life books.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.



Ms. Carla Carr
Group Home Ombudsman
500 West Temple Street, Room 515-A
Los Angeles, California 90012-2766

July 5, 2005

Dear Ms. Carr,

This letter is written as a follow up to a visit and review of **The Sycamores El Nido Group Home**, license # 191200662, conducted by auditor Candace Rhuc. The visit took place on June 8, 2005. The report indicates that there is one area that requires corrective action. The area is:

1) Facility and Environment

Response and Corrective Action Plan to Group Home Monitoring Review:

I. Facility and Environment:

- a. Paint the exterior of Hutter Cottage, the clinical building, classroom four, and the computer building.
- b. Remove the leaves from the roof of Swartzott Cottage.
- c. Repair the tree planters throughout the campus.
- d. Remove the mildew from the bathroom, and provide additional lighting to the bedrooms in Baldwin Cottage.
- e. Remove the smell, and replace the worn mirror in the bathroom in Swartzott Cottage.
- f. Provide additional lighting in the living room and the children's bedrooms in Hutter Cottage.
- g. Provide additional lighting in the living room entrance in Rowland Cottage.
- h. Replace the broken handle on the refrigerator, paint the laundry room and kitchen walk thru, and replace the missing window screen in the dining room in Hunter Cottage.
- i. Replace the carpet in classrooms one, two, three, four, and six.
- j. Replace the floor in classroom bathrooms one and two.
- k. Provide additional lighting for classrooms three and eight.
- l. Repair the exterior door, provide additional lighting, clean the bathrooms, and paint the main room and hallway of the recreation hall.
- m. Remove the stains from the carpet and sofas in therapy room one.
- n. Provide additional lighting in therapy rooms two and three.
- o. In the time out room replace the light covering, replace the door/frame, remove the paint stains from floor, and paint the walls.
- p. Paint the walls, provide additional lighting, repair the wall paneling and replace the window screens in the program support building.
- q. Remove the stains from the carpet in the main hallway of cafeteria building.
- r. Paint the walls of the main dining room.

All of the above mentioned areas requiring repairs, replacement and cleaning will be addressed and completed by October 10, 2005.

It is our policy and practice to make sure that we are in compliance with our contract, DCFS, Probation, and Title 22 requirements. We will continue to monitor ourselves to ensure that we are in compliance.

The people responsible to ensure that we are in compliance with our contract at The Sycamores are individual Unit Supervisors. It is their responsibility to do weekly inspections to ensure that the cottages are maintained appropriately, and in compliance.

Maintenance issues are brought to the attention of the Director of Plant Operations. It is then his responsibility to ensure that the issues are addressed.

It is the role of our Quality Assurance Committee, our Safety Committee and the Residential Assistant Director to ensure that there is follow-up and completion of any corrective action plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Shelly Knowles
Assistant Director of Residential Services