

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**John Naimo**  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**Arlene Barrera**  
CHIEF DEPUTY

**Peter Hughes**  
ASSISTANT AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**Robert Campbell**  
DIVISION CHIEF

**OFFICE OF COUNTY INVESTIGATIONS**

**October 22, 2018**

## Children's Group Home Ombudsman Semi-Annual Report For the Period Ended June 30, 2018



### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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FIRST DISTRICT

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**Kathryn Barger**  
FIFTH DISTRICT

2018-SAGHOSR-1/2

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## FACT SHEET

### Children's Group Home Ombudsman Semi-Annual Report For the Period Ended June 30, 2018

#### Key Outcomes

During this reporting period, the Children's Group Home Ombudsman (Ombudsman) received 153 requests for assistance via the Ombudsman hotline and during outreach visits related to: Safety – 5, Personal Rights – 14, General – 82, and Information Only – 52.

The Ombudsman conducted outreach visits to 71 Group Home (GH) and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) sites operated by 40 agencies. This includes visits to five agencies, with multiple sites, in coordination with the Probation Department (Probation) Ombudsman, and visits to nine non-contracted GHs that house Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) youth. In total, 313 youth were visited and provided with information about the Ombudsman.

#### Authority

In October 1998, the Board of Supervisors established the Office of the Children's Group Home Ombudsman at the recommendation of the Civil Grand Jury and Commission for Children and Families. The Ombudsman is an independent advocate for youth placed in GHs by DCFS. To ensure its independence and the ability to address concerns, the Ombudsman resides in the Department of Auditor-Controller.

#### Functions

The Ombudsman operates a toll-free hotline and an e-mail address for DCFS youth placed in GHs/STRTPs to request assistance with issues they cannot resolve on their own. The Ombudsman's contact information is posted in every County-contracted agency.

The Ombudsman also conducts announced and unannounced visits at GHs/STRTPs to inform DCFS youth about the existence and purpose of the Ombudsman Program, to solicit their candid feedback and concerns, if any, and to ensure that youth have opportunities to utilize its services. Joint outreach visits with the Probation Ombudsman are also conducted at agencies that serve both Probation and DCFS youth. The Ombudsman also participates in the child welfare community, including attending and presenting information to the Special Audit Committee, Sybil Brand Commission, and the Commission for Children and Families, as requested.

#### FAST FACTS

*A total of 153 Requests for Assistance were received.*

*Group Home Policies/Rules (16%) were the most frequent concerns youth expressed during this reporting period.*

*In total, 71 sites were visited (operated by 40 agencies).*

*Overall, 313 children were visited.*

#### CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN

e-mail: [afriend@auditor.lacounty.gov](mailto:afriend@auditor.lacounty.gov) hotline: 888.445.1234 mail: 350 S. Figueroa St., 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
web: <http://grouphomeombudsman.lacounty.gov> Los Angeles, CA 90071

CALLERS MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS



This report is also available online at [auditor.lacounty.gov](http://auditor.lacounty.gov)

**CONTACT:** Michelle Day, Group Home Ombudsman  
[mday@auditor.lacounty.gov](mailto:mday@auditor.lacounty.gov)  
(213) 253-0117



JOHN NAIMO  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-3873  
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

October 22, 2018

TO: Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Chair  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Janice Hahn  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: John Naimo   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT –  
JANUARY 1 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018**

This report summarizes the Los Angeles County (County) Auditor-Controller's Children's Group Home Ombudsman (Ombudsman) Program activities for the period of January 1 through June 30, 2018.

## **Background**

The Ombudsman serves as an advocate for youth placed in group homes (GHs) and Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and provides a confidential and informal process to help resolve any issues within their GH/STRTP placement. The Ombudsman responds to requests for assistance (requests), which are received through a toll-free hotline, e-mail, and during site visits. The Ombudsman hotline number and e-mail address are included on posters which are displayed in every County-contracted GH/STRTP. In addition, Ombudsman staff conducts routine site visits encouraging children to discuss any concerns or call the hotline if they need assistance in resolving GH/STRTP issues.

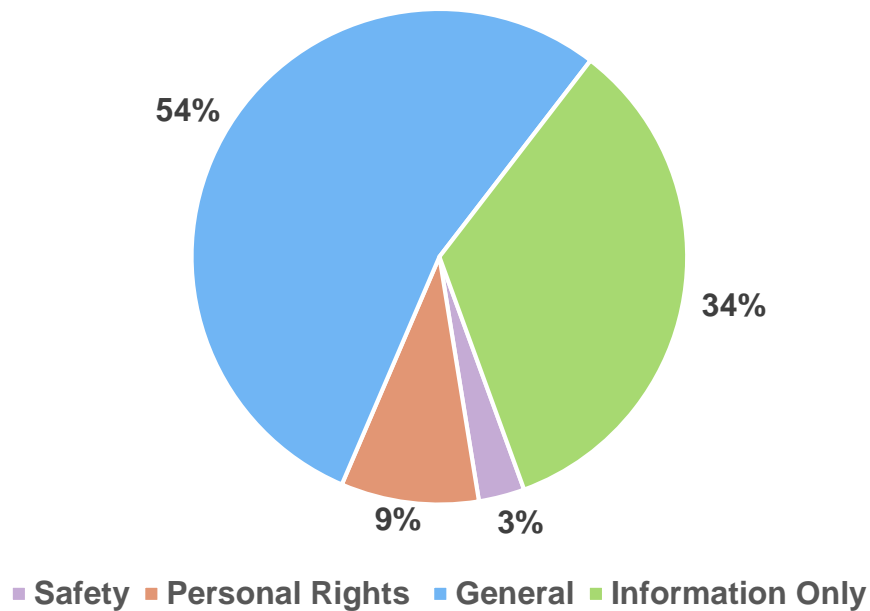
Upon receiving a request, the Ombudsman interviews the requester to understand the situation and to determine an appropriate response and/or course of action. The Ombudsman may also contact other parties, including Children's Social Workers (CSWs)/

DCFS personnel, providers, or others as needed to gather additional information, and to facilitate a reasonable solution that is within the youth's rights and established regulations.

### **Summary of Requests**

The Ombudsman received a total of 153 requests, consisting of 116 hotline calls and 37 direct requests during outreach visits. Requests are categorized based on the initial allegation as described by the youth/caller. The Ombudsman's goal is to be accessible and to assist all callers and youth during outreach visits, and accordingly, all requests are presumed to be factual until proven otherwise through follow-up.

#### **Requests for Assistance**



Details of the Requests for Assistance are as follows:

#### **Safety**

During this reporting period, there were five (3%) requests for assistance relating to personal safety/physical harm. When we receive such allegations, we immediately report them to the Child Protection Hotline (CPH), which completes an assessment. Based on the outcome of this assessment, CPH may refer the allegations to Emergency Response Children's Social Workers (ERCSWs) for follow-up, and may also contact local law

enforcement for the jurisdiction where the incident occurred, Community Care Licensing (CCL), the child's assigned CSW, and/or other appropriate agencies for investigation. The table below summarizes the five allegations and the outcomes.

Allegations	Findings
A staff member pushed the youth into a couch and attempted to put him in a choke hold.	<b>Unsubstantiated</b> – CCL reviewed video of the incident and did not see staff attempt a choke hold. However, the video showed that staff violated procedures by placing both hands on the youth who was being disruptive. The agency required the staff to attend training.
Youth was injured while being restrained.	<b>Unsubstantiated</b> – ERCSWs interviewed the staff, who denied the allegations, and the youth refused to be interviewed. The ERCSWs saw no evidence of physical injury on the youth.
Youth does not feel safe because she saw a man knock on her window and then saw him on the facility grounds.	<b>Unsubstantiated</b> – The Ombudsman interviewed the staff who supervised the youth at the time, and she stated that no one was on the facility grounds like the youth alleged. The youth's CSW stated that she spoke with the youth shortly before she reported this allegation to the Ombudsman, and that the youth did not mention this incident. The CSW also stated the youth has anxiety issues about her safety and is receiving therapy.
A group of youth felt unsafe because they waited at the group home for 30 minutes before staff unlocked the door.	<b>Unsubstantiated</b> – CCL conducted separate interviews with each boy involved and they all recanted the initial story and stated that they actually waited three to five minutes.
Youth was assaulted by another resident.	<b>Unsubstantiated</b> – CCL interviewed the staff who stated that the youth reported the alleged assault immediately after the incident, but they found no evidence of physical injury and the youth refused to go to the nurse. Staff indicated the youth often horseplay with each other and no assault was observed. CCL interviewed youth present at the home and they provided inconsistent explanations. The alleged perpetrator was subsequently moved to another placement.

### ***Personal Rights***

There were 14 (9%) requests relating to Personal Rights which include: Dietary Needs, Family Contact, Health/Medical and Dental Care, Allowance, and School Enrollment.

- For example, dietary needs/food is a common issue with youth. During outreach visits, we ask youth about food: what they eat, when they eat, availability of food, menu planning, if they prepare/cook meals, and if they participate in grocery shopping. Also, we ask if they have any dietary restrictions (i.e. lactose intolerant, vegetarian, vegan, allergies) and how they are accommodated and what food is provided to meet those needs. We want to ensure that meals and snacks are always available, and are provided in appropriate quantity and variety. If we have any questions or concerns, we address them immediately with the GH/STRTP staff, and when needed, we contact DCFS and/or Community Care Licensing.

### ***General***

There were 82 (54%) General requests which include: Residential Conflicts with Staff or Peers, GH Policies/Rules, Personal Care/Belongings, Independent Living Transition, CSW Contact or Concern(s), School-Related Needs, Placement Change Status, and Condition of Residence and Amenities.

- For example, a group of youth living within the same cottage called about policies that they did not like or felt were unfair, such as meal options, meal times, curfew to turn in electronics, and dress code. After receiving multiple calls from the same youth, we contacted the agency's Residential Services Director (Director). He was fully aware of the concerns and the calls made to the Ombudsman and had been addressing them almost daily with the youth.

To assess the situation and help resolve the youth's concerns, we visited the site 48 hours later for an outreach visit to speak with all the youth in the cottage, and had the Director and staff attend. The youth were open, honest, and able to express their concerns to everyone at the same time. In addition, the Director explained the rationale for rules that the youth had concerns about, to ensure they understood that the rules were designed to promote their safety and well-being. The youth made some reasonable suggestions that were already being considered by the agency's Administration. The Director also reiterated to the youth that everyone was there to support them. After the youth were dismissed, we met with the Director and staff to share our appreciation for the collaboration. We encouraged them to continue to allow the youth to call our office with any concerns, as it empowers the youth to advocate for themselves.

### ***Information Only***

There were 52 (34%) requests involving individuals seeking information (36 requests pertaining to GHs/STRTPs and 16 requests that were non-GH/STRTP related). In such cases, the Ombudsman provided an answer or directed the requester to the appropriate party.

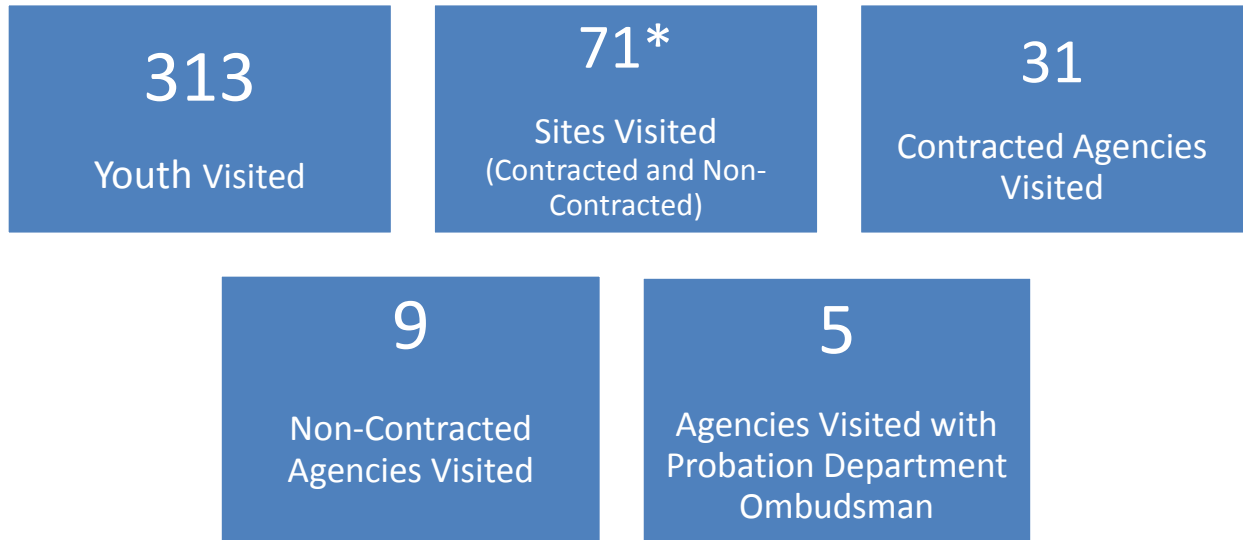
### ***Resolution***

To ensure that requests were properly addressed and resolved within the purview of the Ombudsman, we completed various communications and referrals to DCFS including but not limited to CSWs, Supervising CSWs, CPH, Out-of-Home Care Management Division, Contract Administration Division, Youth Development Services, and the Public Inquiry Unit. In addition, the Probation Department's Ombudsman, and Placement Permanency and Quality Assurance Unit were partnered with to resolve issues. Lastly, non-County entities such as the GH/STRTP staff/management, CCL, California Foster Care Ombudsman, and if needed, other counties were contacted to ensure concerns were addressed.

### ***Outreach***

One of the Ombudsman's responsibilities is to visit GHs/STRTPs and provide DCFS children and staff with information about the Ombudsman function. Visits are prioritized and scheduled based on concerns reported by residents, information from recent reports, and/or concerns raised by the DCFS Special Audit Committee, Commission for Children and Families, and the Sybil Brand Commission. Visits are conducted with the Probation Ombudsman to GHs/STRTPs that have both DCFS and Probation-placed youth. Also, non-contracted GHs are included in the visits, which are used for hard-to-place youth or when other placement options have been exhausted. Lastly, some GHs/STRTPs are visited multiple times for follow up purposes.

The following is a summary of outreach activity for this reporting period:



\* Includes all physical sites visited, announced and unannounced, even if youth were not available to meet.

### ***Index of Attachments***

- Attachment I:** Requests for Assistance Received by Type
- Attachment II:** Requests for Assistance Received by Agencies
- Attachment III:** Agencies Visited for Outreach

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me, or your staff may contact Michelle Day, Ombudsman, at (213) 253-0117 or via e-mail at [mday@auditor.lacounty.gov](mailto:mday@auditor.lacounty.gov).

JN:AB:PH:RGC:GH:md  
Attachments

- c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
- Bobby D. Cagle, Director, DCFS
- Honorable Michael Nash, Executive Director, Office of Child Protection
- Terri L. McDonald, Chief Probation Officer
- Special Audit Committee
- Children's Deputies
- Commission for Children and Families
- Contract Administration Division, DCFS
- Out-of-Home Care Management Division, DCFS
- Placement Permanency and Quality Assurance, Probation
- Probation Ombudsman
- Sybil Brand Commission
- Countywide Communications



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN  
REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE RECEIVED\*  
BY TYPE**

January 1 through June 30, 2018

<b>1. Safety</b>	<b>5</b>
Physical Harm	3
Personal Safety	2
<b>2. Personal Rights</b>	<b>14</b>
Dietary Needs	6
Family Contact	3
Health/Medical, Dental Care	3
Allowance	1
School Enrollment	1
<b>3. General</b>	<b>82</b>
Issues with Policy/Rules	24
Residential Conflict with Staff	13
Children's Social Worker (CSW) Contact	10
Personal Care/Belongings	9
Residential Conflict with Peers	8
Condition of Residence and Amenities	5
School-Related Needs	5
Independent Living Transition	4
CSW Concerns	2
Placement Change Status	2
<b>4. All Types Above - Total</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>5. Information Only</b>	<b>52</b>
Ombudsman Related	36
Non-Ombudsman Related	16
<b>6. Total Requests Received by Ombudsman</b>	<b>153</b>

*\*Requests are categorized based on the initial allegation as described by the youth/caller.*

LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN  
REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE RECEIVED\*  
BY AGENCIES

January 1 through June 30, 2018

Agency Name	Supervisory District(s) Located	Total Number of Beds	Number of Sites	Number of Requests	Types of Requests*
B & I Group Home	1st	12	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Children's Social Worker (CSW Contact)</li> <li>•Dietary Needs</li> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> </ul>
Careprovider.Org	1st, 5th	18	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•CSW Contact</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Peers</li> </ul>
Children's Homes of Southern California	3rd, 5th	42	7	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> </ul>
David and Margaret Youth and Family Services	5th	30	1	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Personal Care/Belongings (4)</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff (3)</li> <li>•CSW Concerns</li> <li>•CSW Contact</li> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> <li>•Placement Change Status</li> <li>•Personal Safety</li> </ul>
Deliaann-Lucile dba Delilu Achievement Home	2nd	8	1	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> <li>•Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> <li>•Independent Living Transition</li> </ul>
Diakonia, Inc.	San Bernardino	18	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Allowance</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> </ul>
Eggleston Youth Centers, Inc.	1st, 5th, San Bernardino	48	8	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff (3)</li> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> </ul>
Fleming & Barnes, Inc. dba Dimondale Adolescent Care	2nd, 4th, 5th	30	5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•School-Related Needs (2)</li> <li>•Family Contact</li> <li>•Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> <li>•Independent Living Transition</li> </ul>
Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services	5th	36	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> <li>•Physical Harm</li> </ul>
Heritage	1st, 4th, 5th	30	5	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules (2)</li> <li>•CSW Contact</li> </ul>
Hillsides Home for Children	5th	50	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Dietary Needs</li> </ul>
Human Services Network dba Youth Services Network	3rd, 5th	18	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Family Contact</li> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> <li>•Personal Safety</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> </ul>
Los Angeles Youth Network	3rd	12	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Personal Care/Belongings</li> </ul>
Luvlee's Residential Care dba New Dawn	1st, San Bernardino	12	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•CSW Contact</li> <li>•Dietary Needs</li> </ul>
Mary's Path	Orange	30 (plus beds for infants up to 24 months)	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Residential Conflict with Peers (3)</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> </ul>

Agency Name	Supervisory District(s) Located	Total Number of Beds	Number of Sites	Number of Requests	Types of Requests*
Maryvale	1st	85	1	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules (7)</li> <li>•CSW Contact</li> <li>•Dietary Needs</li> <li>•Physical Harm</li> <li>•Placement Change Status</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Peers</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> </ul>
McKinley Children's Center	5th	28	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•School-Related Needs</li> </ul>
Murrell's Farm and Boys Home	5th	18	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules</li> <li>•Independent Living Transition</li> </ul>
Penny Lane Centers	3rd, 5th	60	10	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> </ul>
Project Six dba The Help Group	3rd	32	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Personal Care/Belongings</li> </ul>
Rosemary Children's Services	5th	39	5	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues with Policy/Rules (7)</li> <li>•Condition of Residence/Amenities (3)</li> <li>•Personal Care/Belongings (3)</li> <li>•Dietary Needs (2)</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Peers (2)</li> <li>•CSW Contact</li> <li>•Family Contact</li> <li>•Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> <li>•Independent Living Transition</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> <li>•School Enrollment</li> <li>•School-Related Needs</li> </ul>
Turmont Home for Boys/Turmont Home for Girls	2nd, 5th	12	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Condition of Residence/Amenities</li> <li>•School-Related Needs</li> </ul>
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services	2nd	48	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Physical Harm</li> </ul>
Wayfinder Family Services	2nd	40	1	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•CSW Contact (2)</li> <li>•CSW Concerns</li> <li>•Condition of Residence/Amenities</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Peers</li> <li>•Residential Conflict with Staff</li> </ul>
West Covina Foster Family Agency dba Homes of Hope / Casa Esperanza Treatment Center	1st	6	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•CSW Contact</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>				<b>101</b>	

\*Requests are categorized based on the initial allegation as described by the youth/caller.

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN  
AGENCIES VISITED FOR OUTREACH**

January 1 through June 30, 2018

Agencies Visited by Supervisorial District	NC	JO	Sites Visited
<b>1st District</b>			<b>18 Sites</b>
B & I Group Home			•Pomona (2)
Barbara Lane Home	X		•Pomona
Careprovider.Org			•Pomona •West Covina
Eggleston Youth Centers, Inc.		X	•Baldwin Park (2) •West Covina
Garces Residential Care Services			•Claremont
Heritage			•Phillips Ranch •Valinda •West Covina
Hope House	X		•El Monte
Inclusion Specialized Programs	X		•La Puente •Walnut
Luvlee's Residential Care dba New Dawn			•Walnut
Maryvale			•Rosemead
West Covina Foster Family Agency dba Homes of Hope / Casa Esperanza Treatment Center			•Pomona
<b>2nd District</b>			<b>9 Sites</b>
Deliann-Lucile dba Delilu Achievement Home			•Los Angeles
Dream Home Care			•Carson
Fred Jefferson Memorial Home for Boys			•Compton (2)
Humanistic Foundation dba New Concept			•Los Angeles
I Am Safe, Inc.	X		•Los Angeles (2)
Signs of Life	X		•Los Angeles
Wayfinder Family Services			•Los Angeles
<b>3rd District</b>			<b>6 Sites</b>
Children's Homes of Southern California			•West Hills (2) •Reseda •Van Nuys
Human Services Network dba Youth Services Network			•North Hills
Los Angeles Youth Network			•Los Angeles
<b>4th District</b>			<b>2 Sites</b>
Heritage			•Whittier
Mosaic of Friends	X		•Los Angeles

Agencies Visited by Supervisorial District	NC	JO	Sites Visited
<b>5th District</b>			<b>24 Sites</b>
Bourne Incorporated			•Altadena (2)
Children's Homes of Southern California			•West Hills
David and Margaret Youth and Family Services		X	•La Verne
Dyer Group Home	X		•Palmdale
Careprovider.Org			•Covina
Five Acres			•Pasadena
Fleming and Barnes dba Dimondale Adolescent Care			•Lancaster
Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services		X	•Altadena
Haynes Family of Programs			•La Verne
Heritage			•La Verne
Hillsides Home for Children			•Pasadena
Human Services Network dba Youth Services Network			•Granada Hills •Valencia
McKinley Children's Center			•San Dimas
Murrell's Farm and Boys Home			•Lancaster (3)
Rosemary Children's Services		X	•Pasadena (3) •South Pasadena
Ternus Group Home	X		•Palmdale
Turmont Home for Girls			•Lancaster
<b>Out of County</b>			<b>12 Sites</b>
Luvlee's Residential Care dba New Dawn	San Bernardino		•Chino
Eggleston Youth Centers, Inc.	San Bernardino		X •Ontario •Upland
Mary's Path	Orange		•Santa Ana (2)
South Coast Children's Society	Orange		•Costa Mesa (2) •Fountain Valley (2)
Blissful Living Group Home, Inc.	San Bernardino	X	•Upland
Starshine Treatment Center	San Bernardino		X •San Bernardino
West Covina Group Corporation	San Bernardino		•Chino
<b>Total</b>			<b>71 Sites</b>

NC=Non-Contracted Group Home Agency

JO=Joint Outreach Visit with the Probation Department Ombudsman