

# 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**

**March 11, 2019**

## Children's Group Home Ombudsman Semi-Annual Report For the Period Ended December 31, 2018



### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**Hilda L. Solis**  
FIRST DISTRICT

**Mark Ridley-Thomas**  
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**Sheila Kuehl**  
THIRD DISTRICT

**Janice Hahn**  
FOURTH DISTRICT

**Kathryn Barger**  
FIFTH DISTRICT

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## FACT SHEET

### Children's Group Home Ombudsman Semi-Annual Report

For the Period Ended December 31, 2018

#### Summary

The Children's Group Home Ombudsman (Ombudsman) conducted outreach visits from July 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018 to **183** youth at **77** Group Home (GH) and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) sites operated by **30** agencies. This includes outreach visits to six sites operated by three agencies in coordination with the Probation Department (Probation) Ombudsman and visits to eleven sites operated by six non-contracted GH agencies.

The Ombudsman received **152** requests for assistance during outreach visits and via the Ombudsman hotline. The requests involved: Safety Concerns (4); Personal Rights (15); General Assistance (93); and Information Only (40).

#### Function

The Ombudsman 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. We also conduct joint outreach visits with the Probation Ombudsman at agencies that serve both Probation and DCFS youth.

The Ombudsman also operates a toll-free hotline and an e-mail address for the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) youth placed in GHs/STRTPs to request assistance with issues they cannot resolve on their own. Every County-contracted agency posts the Ombudsman's contact information inside the home.

The Ombudsman 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

We met with **183** children during the period.

We visited a total of **77** sites operated by **30** agencies.

We received a total of **152** Requests for Assistance.

Issues with Policy/Rules (14%) were the most frequent concerns youth expressed during this reporting period.

#### 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

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March 11, 2019

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

FROM: John Naimo   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT –  
JULY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2018**

This report summarizes the Los Angeles County (County) Auditor-Controller's Children's Group Home Ombudsman (Ombudsman) Program activities for the period of July 1 through December 31, 2018.

### **Summary of Activities**

The Ombudsman conducted outreach visits to 183 youth at 77 Group Home (GH) and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) sites operated by 30 agencies. The Ombudsman received 152 requests for assistance addressing youth concerns during outreach visits and via the Ombudsman hotline. The Ombudsman ensured that all requests they received were appropriately addressed, or satisfactory progress was made to address the concerns.

### **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 (CCF). The Ombudsman is an independent advocate for youth placed in GHs by Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). To ensure its independence and the ability to address concerns, the Ombudsman resides in the Department of Auditor-Controller.

## **Background**

The Ombudsman serves as an advocate for youth placed in GHs and STRTPs by DCFS and provides a confidential and informal process to help resolve any issues within their GH/STRTP placement. The Ombudsman participates in the child welfare community, including attending and presenting information to the Special Audit Committee, Sybil Brand Commission (SBC), and CCF, as requested.

### *Outreach Activities*

One of the primary Ombudsman responsibilities is to meet with DCFS children in GHs/STRTPs and discuss any concerns or unmet needs they may have. We provide DCFS children and staff with information about the Ombudsman function. We initiate conversations with youth during visits since some youth are hesitant to express their needs until we ask questions. Once they voice their needs, we share the information with the appropriate individuals and assist in developing a solution.

Ombudsman staff conducts routine site visits encouraging youth to discuss any concerns or call the hotline if they need assistance in resolving GH/STRTP issues. The Ombudsman provides every County-contracted GH/STRTP agency with posters to display in the homes. The posters include the Ombudsman's toll-free hotline number and e-mail address for youth to contact us.

We prioritize and schedule visits based on concerns reported by residents, information from recent reports, and/or concerns raised by the DCFS Special Audit Committee, CCF, and SBC. We work with the Probation Department Ombudsman (Probation Ombudsman) to coordinate visits to GHs/STRTPs that have both DCFS and Probation-placed youth. We also visit non-contracted GHs, which DCFS relies upon for hard-to-place youth or when other placement options have been exhausted. Lastly, we conduct multiple visits to some GHs/STRTPs to follow-up on concerns raised during prior visits.

### *Requests for Assistance*

The Ombudsman receives requests for assistance (requests) during site visits and through a hotline (i.e., toll-free telephone call or e-mail). 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 categorizes requests 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, presumes all requests to be factual until proven otherwise through follow-up.

*Resolution of Requests*

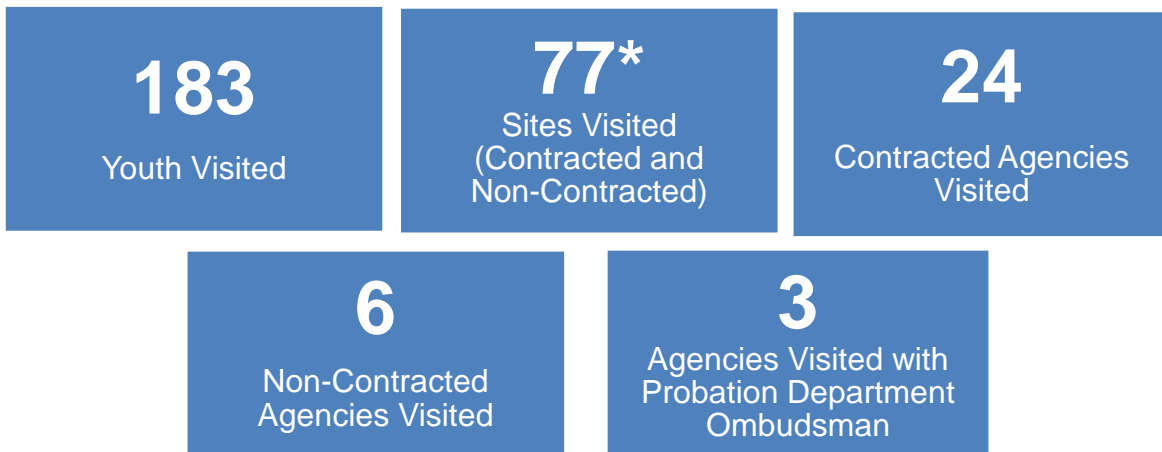
To properly address and resolve requests within the purview of the Ombudsman, we complete various communications and referrals to DCFS including but not limited to Children’s Social Workers (CSW), Supervising CSWs, Child Protection Hotline (CPH), Out-of-Home Care Management Division, Contract Administration Division, Youth Development Services, and the Public Inquiry Unit. In addition, we collaborate with the Probation Department’s Ombudsman, and Placement Permanency and Quality Assurance Unit to resolve issues. Lastly, we contact non-County entities such as the GH/STRTP staff/management, Community Care Licensing (CCL), California Foster Care Ombudsman, and if needed, other counties, to ensure youth concerns are addressed. Most importantly, we follow-up with the youth.

When we receive allegations about personal safety, we immediately report them to the CPH, which completes an assessment. Based on the outcome of this assessment, CPH may refer the allegations to Emergency Response CSWs for follow-up and may also contact local law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the incident occurred, CCL, the child’s assigned CSW, and/or other appropriate agencies for investigation.

**Detailed Activities**

***Outreach***

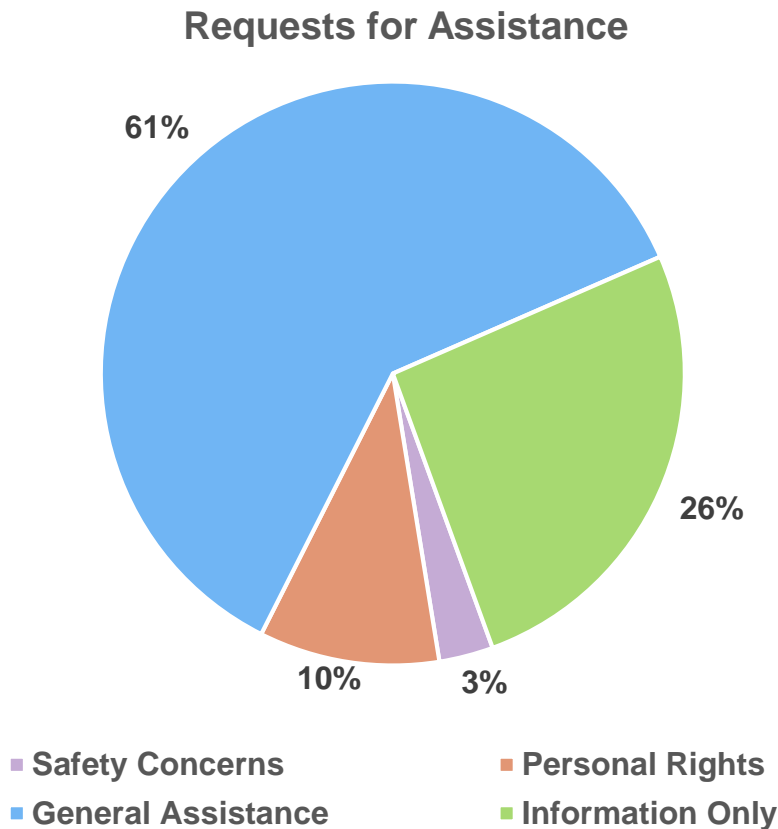
The following is a summary of outreach visits for this reporting period:



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

## Requests for Assistance

The Ombudsman received a total of 152 requests, consisting of 123 hotline calls and 29 direct requests during outreach visits.



The following is a summary of Requests for Assistance and how we resolved them:

### **Safety Concerns**

During this reporting period, we received four (3%) requests that involve safety concerns.

- Two calls involved personal safety. We immediately reported the allegations to the CPH and notified CCL, which completed investigations. The table below summarizes the two personal safety allegations, both from the same youth with the same outcome.

Allegations	Findings
Youth alleged a staff member hit him with a key chain and pulled on his arm.	<b>Unsubstantiated</b> <sup>1</sup> – CCL interviewed the youth, staff, and witnesses and they provided inconsistent statements.
Youth alleged a staff member (different from above) wrapped his hands around his neck and pushed him up against the wall in his bedroom.	

- The remaining two calls were from youth who stated they wanted to harm themselves. When we received each call, we immediately notified agency staff of the concern and instructed them to closely supervise the youth. We also notified the CSW and SCSW. We attempted to bring in, to each of the phone calls, trained professionals at the Department of Mental Health’s 24/7 Access Hotline. However, when we notified the youth of our intention, both youth requested that we simply provide them with the phone number, so they could call on their own. In both cases, we followed up with the CSW and confirmed that each youth’s therapist subsequently spoke with and assessed them in person.

**Personal Rights**

There were 15 (10%) requests relating to Personal Rights which include: Allowance, Health/Medical and Dental Care, Dietary Needs, Family Contact, and Clothing Needs. For example:

- During one outreach visit, after asking the youth typical questions about whether the agency provided their clothing allowance and the clothes they need, one youth shared that her weight had changed and she needed new clothes that fit properly. We informed the youth’s CSW and the agency Administrator about this youth’s needs. The agency subsequently provided her with money to purchase new clothes.

**General Assistance**

There were 93 (61%) requests for General Assistance which included: Issues with Policy/Rules, Residential Conflicts with Staff or Peers, 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:

- We received a call from one youth who stated that she did not receive all her personal belongings listed on her inventory sheet when she transferred from her prior placement. We helped facilitate conversations between the prior placement agency

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<sup>1</sup> According to the California Department of Social Services website (<https://secure.dss.ca.gov/CareFacilitySearch/Glossary>), an unsubstantiated complaint means that there is not a preponderance of the evidence to prove that the alleged violation occurred. They replaced the term “inconclusive with the term “unsubstantiated.”

and the youth's CSW, and the prior placement agency resolved the issue by reimbursing the youth for the missing items.

We often assist youth in navigating administrative processes, especially when they do not have time to regularly follow-up and/or they do not fully understand them. During our site visits, we encourage youth to make sure the inventory listing their personal property and belongings is kept up to date and validated by the staff in the home, in the event that some of their personal items go missing. We also advise youth of the importance of securing a written record of their possessions for their own protection.

### ***Information Only***

There were 40 (26%) requests involving individuals seeking information (33 requests pertaining to the Ombudsman and 7 requests that were non-Ombudsman related). In such cases, the Ombudsman provided an answer or directed the requester to the appropriate party.

## ***Index of Attachments***

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

### **Acknowledgement**

We thank management and staff at all GH and STRTP facilities, as well as DCFS management and staff for their cooperation and assistance while we carried out our responsibilities as the Ombudsman. If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me, or your staff may contact Michelle Day, Children's Group Home 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  
Public Information Office  
Sybil Brand Commission

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN  
AGENCIES VISITED FOR OUTREACH  
July 1 through December 31, 2018**

Agencies Visited by Supervisorial District	NC	JO	Sites Visited
<b>1st District</b>			<b>9 Sites</b>
Anka Behavioral Health, Inc.	X		•Montebello •Pomona
Careprovider.Org			•Pomona •West Covina
Garces Residential Care Services			•Claremont
Hope House	X		•El Monte
San Gabriel Children's Center, Inc.		X	•Azusa (2)
West Covina Foster Family Agency dba Homes of Hope aka Casa Esperanza Treatment Center			•Pomona
<b>2nd District</b>			<b>21 Sites</b>
Deliaann-Lucile Corporation dba Delilu Achievement Home			•Los Angeles
Dream Home Care, Inc.			•Carson •Torrance
Fleming & Barnes, Inc. dba Dimondale Adolescent Care			•Carson •Gardena •Hawthorne
Fred Jefferson Memorial Home for Boys			•Compton (2)
Humanistic Foundation, Inc. dba New Concept			•Los Angeles
Orange County Children's Foundation			•Carson
T&T Home for Boys			•Carson
The Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems			•Los Angeles (3)
The Dream Catcher Foundation, Inc.			•Los Angeles (4)
Wayfinder Family Services	X		•Los Angeles (3)
<b>3rd District</b>			<b>15 Sites</b>
Children's Homes of Southern California			•West Hills (3) •Van Nuys (2) •Reseda
Human Services Network dba Youth Services Network			•North Hills
Penny Lane Centers			•North Hills (5) •Arleta •North Hollywood •Northridge
<b>4th District</b>			<b>4 Sites</b>
Dream Home Care, Inc.			•Long Beach (2)
Fleming & Barnes, Inc. dba Dimondale Adolescent Care			•Long Beach
Orange County Children's Foundation			•Torrance

Agencies Visited by Supervisorial District	NC	JO	Sites Visited
<b>5th District</b>			<b>19 Sites</b>
Bourne Incorporated			•Altadena (2)
Careprovider.Org			•Covina
Casa Editha Foundation dba Ava-Lyn's Group Home			•Pasadena
Children's Homes of Southern California			•West Hills
Fleming and Barnes, Inc. dba Dimondale Adolescent Care			•Lancaster
Heritage			•La Verne
Human Services Network dba Youth Services Network			•Granada Hills •Valencia
Murrell's Farm and Boys' Home			•Lancaster (3)
Penny Lane Centers			•Burbank •Granada Hills
Ternus Group Home	X		•Palmdale
Victor Treatment Centers (formerly Rosemary Children's Services)		X	•Pasadena (2) •South Pasadena
White Family Care Services, Inc.	X		•San Dimas
<b>Out of County</b>			<b>9 Sites</b>
	<b>Location</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>JO</b>
Childhelp	Orange		
Fields Comprehensive Youth Services, Inc.	San Bernardino		
Florence Crittenton Services of Orange County, Inc. dba Crittenton Services for Children and Families	Orange		X
Guiding Our Youth	Ventura	X	
<b>Total</b>			<b>77 Sites</b>

NC=Non-Contracted Group Home Agency

JO=Joint Outreach Visit with the Probation Department Ombudsman

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

July 1 through December 31, 2018

<b>1. Safety Concerns</b>	<b>4</b>
Personal Safety	2
Risk of Self-Harm	2
<b>2. Personal Rights</b>	<b>15</b>
Allowance	5
Health/Medical, Dental Care	5
Dietary Needs	2
Family Contact	2
Clothing Needs	1
<b>3. General Assistance</b>	<b>93</b>
Issues with Policy/Rules	22
Residential Conflict with Staff	16
Independent Living Transition	11
Children's Social Worker (CSW) Contact	9
Personal Care/Belongings	7
Placement Change Status	7
Residential Conflict with Peers	6
Condition of Residence and Amenities	5
CSW Concerns	5
School-Related Needs	5
<b>4. All Types Above - Total</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>5. Information Only</b>	<b>40</b>
Ombudsman Related	33
Non-Ombudsman Related	7
<b>6. Total Requests Received by Ombudsman</b>	<b>152</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**

July 1 through December 31, 2018

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Supervisorial District(s) Located</b>	<b>Total Number of Beds</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Number of Requests</b>	<b>Types of Requests*</b>
Careprovider.Org	1st, 5th	18	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowance</li> <li>• Clothing Needs</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Peers</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Staff</li> </ul>
Childhelp	Riverside and Orange Counties	102	4	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> <li>• Personal Care/Belongings</li> </ul>
Children's Homes of Southern California	3rd, 5th	42	7	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Social Worker (CSW) Contact</li> <li>• Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> <li>• Issues with Policy/Rules</li> <li>• Placement Change Status</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Staff</li> <li>• School-Related Needs</li> </ul>
David and Margaret Youth and Family Services	5th	30	1	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSW Concerns (3)</li> <li>• Personal Care/Belongings (2)</li> <li>• CSW Contact</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Staff</li> <li>• School-Related Needs</li> </ul>
Deliaann-Lucile Corporation dba Delilu Achievement Home	2nd	14	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSW Contact</li> </ul>
The Dream Catcher Foundation, Inc.	2nd	24	4	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Living Transition (2)</li> <li>• Condition of Residence and Amenities</li> </ul>
Dream Home Care, Inc.	2nd, 4th	24	4	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSW Contact (2)</li> <li>• Condition of Residence and Amenities</li> </ul>
Eggleston Youth Centers, Inc.	1st, 5th, San Bernardino County	48	8	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with Policy/Rules</li> </ul>
Five Acres - The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los Angeles	5th	56	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with Policy/Rules (3)</li> <li>• Placement Change Status</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Peers</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Staff</li> </ul>
Fleming & Barnes, Inc. dba Dimondale Adolescent Care	2nd, 4th, 5th	30	5	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Living Transition (2)</li> <li>• CSW Contact</li> <li>• Issues with Policy/Rules</li> </ul>
Florence Crittenton Services of Orange County, Inc. dba Crittenton Services for Children and Families	Orange County	54 (plus 37 beds for children from birth to age 4)	1	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Living Transition (6)</li> <li>• Issues with Policy/Rules (3)</li> <li>• Allowance</li> <li>• Family Contact</li> <li>• Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> <li>• Placement Change Status</li> <li>• Residential Conflict(s) with Staff</li> <li>• School-Related Needs</li> </ul>
Fred Jefferson Memorial Home for Boys	2nd	12	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health/Medical, Dental Care</li> </ul>
Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services	5th	36	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowance</li> </ul>
Human Services Network dba Youth Services Network	3rd, 5th	18	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dietary Needs</li> <li>• Issues with Policy/Rules</li> </ul>

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Supervisorial District(s) Located</b>	<b>Total Number of Beds</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Number of Requests</b>	<b>Types of Requests*</b>
Luvlee's Residential Care, Inc. dba New Dawn	1st, San Bernardino County	12	2	1	•Allowance
Mary's Path	Orange County	30 (plus beds for infants up to 24 months)	2	6	•Residential Conflict(s) with Staff (2) •Condition of Residence and Amenities •Dietary Needs •Issues with Policy/Rules •Residential Conflict(s) with Peers
Maryvale	1st	85	1	16	•Residential Conflict(s) with Staff (6) •Issues with Policy/Rules (5) •Personal Care/Belongings (3) •CSW Concerns •Family Contact
Penny Lane Centers	3rd, 5th	60	10	1	•Independent Living Transition
Project Six dba The Help Group	3rd	32	1	2	•Issues with Policy/Rules •Residential Conflict(s) with Peers
St. Anne's Maternity Home	1st	32 (plus 18 beds for children under age 3)	1	1	•CSW Concerns
Star View Adolescent Center Community Treatment Facility	4th	40	1	9	•Placement Change Status (3) •Personal Safety (2) •Issues with Policy/Rules •Health/Medical, Dental Care •Residential Conflict(s) with Peers •Risk of Self-Harm
Trinity Youth Services	1st, San Bernardino County	135	3	2	•Residential Conflict(s) with Staff (2)
Victor Treatment Centers (formerly Rosemary Children's Services)	5th	39	5	8	•Children's Social Worker Contact (3) •School-Related Needs (2) •Condition of Residence and Amenities •Personal Care/Belongings •Issues with Policy/Rules
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services (includes Community Treatment Facility)	2nd	48	2	6	•Issues with Policy/Rules (2) •Condition of Residence and Amenities •Placement Change Status •Residential Conflict(s) with Peers •Risk of Self-Harm
Wayfinder Family Services	2nd	40	1	2	•Allowance •Residential Conflict(s) with Staff
West Covina Foster Family Agency dba Homes of Hope aka Casa Esperanza Treatment Center	1st	6	1	1	•Issues with Policy/Rules
<b>Total</b>				<b>112</b>	

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