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February 25, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

THE DREAM CATCHER FOUNDATION, INC. GROUP HOME QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of The Dream Catcher Foundation, Inc. Group Home (the Group Home) in May 2015. The Group Home has three sites located in the Second Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its stated mission is, "to achieve a successful outcome for each youth's treatment plan and designated case goal." It further states, "The larger overall goal is twofold. First, to help youth develop skills and self-esteem; this will enable the youth to become self-sufficient and productive persons in society. Secondly, to help develop and promote a viable social support system for youth outside the foster care system."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency, and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Group Home's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

The Group Home did not require a Quality Improvement Plan, as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas of the QAR. In November 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer discussed results of the QAR with the Group Home.

If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:EM:KR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
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THE DREAM CATCHER FOUNDATION, INC. GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of The Dream Catcher Foundation, Inc. Group Home (the Group Home) in May 2015. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the Group Home's service delivery and to ensure that the Group Home is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the Group Home's service delivery during the most recent 90 day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), one Group Home child care worker and two Group Home social workers.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was five, their overall average length of placement was six months and their average age was 16. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review.

QAR SCORING

The Group Home received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, and interviews with the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
Safety - The degree to which the Group Home ensures that the child is free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6	**Optimal Safety Status** - The focus children are optimally and consistently avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and are free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement. The focus children may have had related history, diagnoses, or behavior presentations in the past, but has not presented risk behaviors at any time over the 30 days.
Permanency - The degree to which the child is living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the child reaches adulthood, or the child is in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the child, the Group Home staff, caregivers and DCFS CSW, support the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children reside in a Group Home and DCFS reunification or permanency goals are being fully supported by the Group Home.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the Group Home ensures that the child's daily living, learning, and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions and known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption.	5	5	**Good Stability** - The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting over the last 12 months with none in the past six months. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caretakers, key adult supporters, and peers in those settings. Any known risks are now well controlled.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.
Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff are working with the child, biological family, extended family and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to focus on the child's strengths and needs.	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home, DCFS CSWs, and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good consistent, efforts are being used by the Group Home staff as necessary to find and engage the focus children, caregivers and other key people.
Service Needs - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the child, work toward ensuring the child's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the child's unique needs.	5	6	**Optimal Supports and Services** - An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are substantially helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the child and family understand the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and underlying issues and services are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5	**Good Assessment and Understanding** - The focus children's functioning and support system are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs, and preferences are frequently updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring interventions and supports are substantially recognized and well understood.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the child and family have formed a working team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.	5	5	**Good Teamwork** - The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good dependable working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together; face-to-face family team meetings are held periodically and at critical points to develop plans.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the Group Home staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5	**Good Tracking and Adjustment Process** - Intervention strategies, supports, and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking, and communication of the focus children's status and service results to the team are occurring.

STATUS INDICATORS

(Measured over last 30 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Safety (6 Optimal Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The Group Home provided optimal safety for the focus children. The focus children are consistently avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and are free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement. The focus children live in a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers who protect the children well at all times. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that the focus children reside in a safe living environment.

The Group Home complied with the policies and procedures for submitting Special Incident Reports (SIRs), as SIRs were submitted timely and cross-reported to all required parties per SIR reporting guidelines. The Group Home submitted 22 SIRs via I-Track database in the last 30 days. None of the SIRs submitted posed an immediate child safety risk.

Five SIRs involved the first focus child. Four SIRs involved the focus child running away from the Group Home; however, the focus child always returned within five hours of leaving. The fifth SIR involved the focus child engaging in a physical altercation with another student at school. The Group

Home has a policy and procedure in place to address chronic runaway behaviors where the Group Home staff attempt to discourage placed children from leaving, and they discuss the dangers of running away. However, the focus child ignored the Group Home staff's efforts to deter her. The Group Home child care worker reported that when placed children run away, the Group Home follows all policy and procedures by submitting SIRs and contacting law enforcement and their DCFS CSWs. Upon the placed children's return, the Group Home staff addresses the incident in an effort to prevent future runaway behaviors. The Group Home child care worker added that the Group Home ensures they adhere to Title 22 regulations to ensure placed children remain safe.

Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) did not receive or investigate any referrals within the last 30 days.

The focus children reported feeling safe at all times and stated that staff is always available. The first focus child reported that she feels safe in the Group Home because her bedroom window has protective safety bars, which help her to feel secure. The second focus child reported that she feels safe at the Group Home because staff is always available. The DCFS CSW reported that the focus child was a chronic runaway prior to being placed at this Group Home. However, since being placed at the Group Home, the focus child has not runaway, had any truancies from school, or presented any risky behaviors. The third focus child reported that the Group Home staff's presence helps her to feel safe.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provides good permanence. The permanency goals were appropriately developed and processed in a timely manner. The Group Home demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency and ensures that the treatment team is aware of the focus children's permanency plan. The Group Home maintains constant communication with the DCFS CSWs and the focus children to ensure permanency plans are being implemented.

The first focus child's permanency plan is family reunification with the concurrent plan of Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA). The focus child wishes to reunify with her mother. The focus child visits with her birth mother weekly. The DCFS CSW's recommendation is for the focus child to reunify with her mother. The Group Home staff is supportive of the focus child reunifying with her mother. The Group Home social worker reported that the focus child's mother is making a good effort to reunify with the focus child.

The second focus child's permanency plan is also family reunification and the concurrent plan is PPLA. Although, the focus child has weekly visits with her mother, the DCFS CSW reported that the focus child's mother is not in a position to offer the focus child a stable living environment. The DCFS CSW stated that the focus child expressed that she understood and instead of reunifying with her mother, the focus child wants to graduate from high school, attend college and work. The Group Home staff is supportive of the focus child's plan, as they are aware that the focus child really wants to excel in school. The DCFS CSW further shared that termination of family reunification services will be recommended at the next court hearing. The DCFS CSW and the Group Home staff reported that they will continue supporting the focus child in maintaining a relationship with her mother while ensuring that all of her needs are being met.

The third focus child's permanency plan is family reunification and the concurrent plan is PPLA. The focus child visits with her mother and younger sibling at least twice a month. The DCFS CSW reported that the mother has complied with court orders. She also reported that although the biological father is not fully complying with the court's orders, he occasionally visits with the focus child. The DCFS CSW is recommending family reunification services to continue for the focus child.

All of the focus children are working towards their permanency goals with the assistance of the Group Home staff and their DCFS CSW.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home is providing good stability for the focus children. The focus children experience positive relationships with the Group Home staff. The focus children stated that they have established a strong bond with the Group Home staff. The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that the children are in stable living environments and are doing well.

The Group Home staff reported that the first focus child has adjusted moderately well to the Group Home. Although the focus child runs away from the Group Home for short periods, her school attendance has not been affected. She attends school regularly, and her report card reflects that she is doing well academically. The focus child gets along well with the Group Home staff, and she relates well to the other placed children. The Group Home therapist reported that they are committed to working with the focus child. The Group Home social worker reported that she and the focus child's mother have a good rapport. They are able speak regularly to ensure the focus child's placement remains stable. The focus child reported that she gets along with staff which is helping her to adjust to the Group Home.

The DCFS CSW for the second focus child reported the focus child has adjusted well to the Group Home. The DCFS CSW also reported that the focus child has run away from all of her prior placements, but she has not run away since being placed at the Group Home. The DCFS CSW reported that the focus child likes the location of the Group Home because it is in close proximity to her family. The DCFS CSW also reported that the focus child has not reported any recent mental health issues, as she had in her previous placements.

The third focus child is doing well in placement and at school. Her DCFS CSW reported that she is in constant dialogue with the Group Home staff. The DCFS CSW also reported that the focus child completed her junior year of high school with a 3.00 Grade Point Average. The focus child will be entering her senior year of high school and is looking forward to all of her senior activities. The focus child also has good relationships with her peers and Group Home staff.

The Group Home appears to be a stable and appropriate living environment and placement for the focus children. The Group Home staff are committed to the focus children. The Group Home staff consistently work with the focus children, their DCFS CSWs, and family members to reduce the probability of a placement disruption. The Group Home social worker added that the regular discussions with the biological families of the focus children helps keep everyone informed and prepared to address any issues that may arise.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home is generally effective in maintaining family contact and follows the visitation orders. The Group Home is committed to ensuring placed children visit with their families and monitor visits when necessary. The Group Home staff consistently communicates with the DCFS CSWs and follows the focus children's visitation plans. The DCFS CSWs and the Group Home staff ensure that visitation plans are adhered to and that the outcomes of the visits are shared among the key players for the focus children. Family members and approved visitors are encouraged to visit and maintain contact with the focus children.

The first focus child has weekend overnight visits with her mother and younger sibling. Her mother picks her up from the Group Home. The focus child reported she enjoys her visits with her mother and brother and wishes to return home soon. All team members are aware of and support the visitation plan for the focus child.

The second focus child has weekend overnight visits with her mother and sister at her adult sibling's home. The family usually spends time shopping and going out to eat. The focus child enjoys the visits with her family.

The third focus child has regular unmonitored visits with her mother and monitored visits with her father at the Group Home. The focus child reported that she was able to have her visit with her mother and her younger sibling and she felt good about the visit. The Group Home staff will continue to support the focus child's visitation plan with her family.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: Written documentation and interviews with key parties indicate that good efforts are being used by the Group Home to engage the focus children, the Group Home staff caring for placed children, the focus children's family members, and their DCFS CSWs. Each of the focus children reported there was at least one person at the Group Home who they could count on. All of the DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home staff is good at assisting, supporting and engaging them when necessary.

The Group Home is accommodating as to scheduling meetings and communicating with the DCFS CSWs and other key adult supporters in the focus children's lives. The Group Home is dedicated to providing the focus children with whatever is needed to assist them in progressing towards their case plan goals. The focus children are encouraged to contact any staff member, their DCFS CSWs and team members, as they desire. The Group Home is in constant contact with the team members of the focus children, by phone, fax, via e-mail, face-to-face and at various team meetings. In addition, good rapport has been commented on by the DCFS CSWs in their ease in contacting Group Home staff when needed. The Group Home has made good efforts in engaging all team members regarding the focus children. The focus children reported that they feel heard and respected.

Service Needs (6 Optimal Supports and Services)

Service Needs Overview: An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services being provided are substantially helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. Through collaboration with the key members for each of the focus children, observations by the Group Home staff, and input from the focus children, the Group Home ensures services are provided to meet the needs of the focus children. The Group Home ensures all medical and dental appointments are arranged timely for the focus children. The Group Home provides therapy weekly. The Group Home staff encourages participation and provides transportation to the Group Home's planned activities such as going to the movies, shopping, exercising, bowling, roller skating, go-kart riding, church, miniature golf and going to the museum.

The Group Home has an Educational Liaison on staff to ensure that placed children's educational needs and concerns are addressed. The Educational Liaison also works closely with schools to ensure that the focus children receive the necessary educational supportive services and tutoring. The focus children have made progress in school, and have demonstrated academic improvement, as well as improved attendance.

The Group Home has an Independent Living Skills Liaison on staff who teaches independent living skills to the focus children, such as good hygiene and money management, and the liaison also provides employment preparation assistance to ensure that each placed child is preparing for the future.

The first focus child participates in the Group Home's Independent Living Skills program and enjoys performing her chores, as she is working on developing necessary independent living skills. She has made progress and is benefiting from services being provided. Per the focus child's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) she feels less anxious in a structured environment that has boundaries and consequences for acting out behavior.

The second focus child also participates in the Group Home's Independent Living Skills program. She also shares in her responsibilities of performing her chores at the Group Home. The focus child recently began participating in the DCFS Teen Club program.

The third focus child has also demonstrated progress as a result of the services and consistency provided by the Group Home. Her NSP reports that the focus child is able to manage her self-care and grooming. She participates in the Group Home's extracurricular activities and chores. Although the court ordered the focus child and her family to participate in conjoint therapy, the focus child reported she is not ready to begin counseling with her parents.

The Group Home is ensuring that each focus child is learning responsibility, and the focus children are being prepared for living independently. The focus children shared that they are being taught independent living skills and they are learning to be more responsible and to care for themselves. One focus child reported that she sometimes gets frustrated because she has to attend the Independent Living Program classes, but she reports she understands that it is for her own good. The other two focus children stated that they are learning a lot about becoming responsible adults.

The Group Home seeks to ensure as much individualized attention and support for the placed children. The Group Home has three sites, and each site has a Group Home social worker.

The Group Home was proud to share that it had recently received a letter of acknowledgement from the County of Los Angeles Sybil Brand Commission for Institutional Inspections. The Commissioners reported that they had visited the Group Home to inspect and review the records of the children's extracurricular activities as well as the NSPs. The Commissioners reported that they found the work of the Group Home to be excellent.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessment and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home provides good assessments for each of the focus children. The Group Home staff meets monthly to discuss the focus children, their progress and evaluate their needs. The Group Home social workers meet with each of the focus children to identify their strengths and needs.

The Group Home staff is supportive of the focus children's interests. The Group Home ensures that the focus children have an opportunity to participate in activities within the community and assists the focus children with enrollment. Each of the focus children expressed that they are offered the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. Two DCFS CSWs report that the focus children are participating in the required services and extracurricular activities. One focus child is playing soccer on her school team and another focus child is on the school's cross-country team. The third focus child is interested in fashion and modeling. She is planning to participate in a community pageant.

The focus children meet with their therapist weekly to assess their progress and evaluate their needs. The Group Home is providing appropriate services and interventions to address the focus children's needs to assist them in improving their behaviors and functioning. Collaboration and communication is occurring among the Group Home staff, the DCFS CSW and the focus children. The DCFS CSW reported that services and supports are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home provides good teamwork. The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks, and plans together. Face-to-face team meetings were held for the first and third focus child. The second focus child had not participated in a team meeting in which all team members were present.

The Group Home staff has monthly team meetings, known as Focus Group Meetings, to discuss the focus children. The participants include the Group Home administrators, the Group Home child care supervisors, and the focus children. There are open lines of communication, and information from these meetings is shared with other team members, such as the DCFS CSWs, the Group Home child care workers, and the children's parents, when appropriate. The Group Home also holds weekly meetings in which the Group Home's Executive Director, administrators, child care supervisors, Educational Liaison and the intake social worker discuss placed children's placement needs and services. Conversations with the focus children occur regularly, and the focus children are often

included in discussions regarding their placement needs and services. The administrators and child care supervisors contribute important information regarding the needs and strengths for each focus child. The Group Home administrators and the child care supervisors reported that team planning services and evaluation results are reflected in a coordination of services for the focus children. The Group Home's therapist and child care supervisors contribute to the development of the focus children's case plans. Each focus child was able to identify the members of their team. All of the focus children are substantially involved in their team. The Group Home staff respects the focus children and listens to their concerns. One DCFS CSW reported that he has worked with this Group Home for over three years and feels that all parties are working together in the best interest of the children.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: Intervention strategies, supports, and services are being provided to the focus children by the Group Home. The Group Home staff provides monitoring, tracking, and communication of the focus children's status and service results, and convey to other team members, including the DCFS CSW, the teachers, and the focus children. Implementation of strategies, supports and services are tracked by progress notes, case plans, NSPs, and dialogue with the focus children. Tracking of the focus children's progress occurs weekly. The Group Home's social worker adjusts the focus children's treatment goals to meet their needs or when services being provided do not produce desired results. The Group Home ensures appropriate modifications are made to ensure that issues do not become barriers to achieving goals. An example of the Group Home's adjustment process occurred when a focus child was not happy with her therapist. After the Group Home's consultation with all team members, the focus child's therapist was changed.

The focus children's progress, case plans and treatment goals are discussed amongst the Group Home staff, the focus children, and other key parties involved. Phone contact, faxes, and e-mails are usually used among the key parties. DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that they are made aware of the children's progress, and that the Group Home maintains regular contact with them via phone contact, fax, or e-mails. The focus children have contact information for all the team members and have access to call them as needed.

All of the DCFS CSWs expressed great responsiveness by the Group Home staff. The conveying of information occurs often and provides a good avenue to share information.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In April 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review, which consisted of the following: Licensure/Contract Requirements and Maintenance of Required Documentation.

In November 2015, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss results of the QAR. The Group Home did not need to submit a Quality Improvement Plan as they scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas. OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the Group Home as needed.