County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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Chief Deputy Director

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June 16, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

CASA EDITHA FOUNDATION DBA AVA LYN'S 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 Casa Editha Foundation dba Ava Lyn's Group Home (the Group Home) in August 2015. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 10 and has one site located in the Fifth Supervisorial District. The Group Home provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Regional Center clients. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "stabilizing the child within the group home setting and to establish trust and security of knowing that they are cared for unconditionally."

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.

In March 2016, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer discussed the results of the QAR with the Group Home. The Group Home did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR.

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

PLB:KR:KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Edith Avanzado, Executive Director, Casa Editha Foundation
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

CASA EDITHA FOUNDATION DBA AVA LYN'S GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Casa Editha Foundation dba Ava Lyn's Group Home (the Group Home) in August 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 QAR focuses on the focus child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR focuses on the Group Home's service delivery during the most recent 90-day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, three focus children were selected for the sample. However, they were non-verbal and therefore, could not be interviewed. Three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and three Group Home staff members were interviewed.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served four DCFS placed children. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 22 months and their average age was 16. The focus children were randomly selected. All of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 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 focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
Safety - The degree to which the Group Home staff ensures that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6 - Optimal Safety Status	The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the Group Home staff, caregivers, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, Group Home staff and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the Group Home staff ensures that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	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 past 30 days.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation and Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff working with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	5 - Good Engagement Efforts	To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable) and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.
Service Needs - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided 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 systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or 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.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are 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 is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the Group Home in October 2014 and noted the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas of the QAR. In August 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR. Based on the information below, it appears that the Group Home continues to provide quality services and supervision of the placed children, as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas of their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	5	5

The Group Home continues to provide optimal safety and supervision to placed children. The Group Home ensures the focus children are free from harm at the Group Home and in the community by providing a highly structured living environment and close supervision at all times. The Group Home staff is well trained in providing care for children with special needs and is familiar with needs of the focus children. The focus children were observed to be content, calm, clean and well-groomed. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that they had no concerns regarding the safety and well-being of the focus children.

In the areas of Permanency, Placement Stability and Visitation, the Group Home continues to provide the focus children with quality services in a supportive and stable home environment. The Group Home continues to be supportive of each focus child's permanency plan and ensures services provided correspond with each focus child's permanent plan established by the DCFS. The permanency plan for two focus children is Family Reunification. The permanency plan for the third focus child is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement with the plan of transitioning to the care of the Regional Center's adult services program when he reaches the age of majority. The Group Home continues to provide substantial stability for the focus children. There have been no placement disruptions since the focus children were placed at the Group Home. The Group Home staff plays a significant role in the care of the focus children. The Group Home staff is trained to meet the focus children's special needs and to make certain the focus children are stable in all areas, including at school and in the community. The Group Home demonstrates good efforts to support family ties by facilitating regular communication and visitation between the focus children and their family members. The Group Home has also assisted by providing a designated visitation area free from disruptions, as well as providing transportation to the children's family members' homes when needed. When visitation is not possible, as is the case of the third focus child as his mother resides out-of-state, the Group Home made good efforts to maintain family ties between the focus child and his mother by placing the telephone next to the focus child's ear so that he could hear his mother's voice during her weekly telephone calls.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home continues to make good efforts to engage with the focus children and their key adult supporters. The focus children appear to have established trust and good rapport with the Group Home staff as evidenced by their positive response to staffs directives and encouragements. The focus children were observed to smile and maintained eye contact with the Group Home staff when staff talked to them. The Group Home staff attempts to engage the focus children's family members by communicating with them during their visits at the Group Home, during telephone calls, and by inviting them to attend their annual Christmas party. The Group Home also continues to provide the appropriate services to assist the focus children to make progress toward their planned outcomes. The Group Home case manager provides weekly individualized and group therapeutic services to the focus children. The Group Home also provides one-on-one intervention for the focus children to help them manage their behavior. The Group Home staff assists the focus children with their self-care needs, such as bathing, grooming and dressing. Two of the focus children are assisted with feeding, as they are unable to use eating utensils. The Group Home continues to expose the children to various social settings by taking them on outings, such as to the mall, local parks and amusement parks. The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home is meeting the focus children's needs.

The Group Home administrator and child care workers monitor the focus children's progress, assess their needs by observing the children's overall functioning, behaviors and moods. This information is then shared with the Group Home case manager and psychiatrist, who manages the focus children's psychotropic medications. The Group Home administrator attends school meetings to ensure the focus children continue receiving school-based services through the local school district. The Group Home staff advocates for the needs of the focus children. For example, the Group Home staff observed that a focus child had outgrown his wheelchair. The Group Home was instrumental in ensuring the focus child received a new wheelchair by arranging appointments and transporting the focus child to the appointments to be fitted for the replacement wheelchair.

The Group Home continues to work as a team with the focus children and their family members, the DCFS CSWs, the Regional Center case managers, school officials and their psychiatrist to ensure needed services are being provided to the focus children. The Group Home case manager collaborates with the DCFS CSWs to develop the focus children's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The DCFS CSWs of the focus children reported meeting with the Group Home administrator during their monthly visits to the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home staff provides them with regular updates. The Group Home staff continues to provide good tracking of the focus children's progress and needs and share the information during the Group Home's weekly staff meetings. Modifications to treatment goals and services are made accordingly.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In August 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the area of Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, specifically in the timeliness in obtaining the DCFS CSW's signature authorizing the NSPs.

In March 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR. The Group Home did not require a Quality Improvement Plan, as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. However, OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation as needed to the Group Home.