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June 21, 2016

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

VISTA DEL MAR 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 Vista Del Mar Group Home (the Group Home) in July 2015. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has one site located in the Third Supervisorial District. The Group Home provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide services to court dependent, emotionally disturbed, abused and neglected children."

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 8 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

In October 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Safety. The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report.

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
Calvin C. Remington, Interim Probation Chief
Louis Josephson, Ph.D., President/Chief Executive Officer, Vista Del Mar GH
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

VISTA DEL MAR GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Vista Del Mar Group Home (the Group Home) in July 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, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three Group Home staff members and two Group Home therapists.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served 17 DCFS placed children and three Probation youth. The focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was ten months and their average age was 17. The focus children were randomly selected. None 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	4 - Fair Safety Status	The focus children have a minimally safe living arrangement with the present caregivers. Protective strategies are at least minimally adequate in reducing risks of harm. The focus children are at least minimally free from danger in other settings.
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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
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.
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	6 - Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections	Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained 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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
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.
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	6 - Optimal Teamwork	The team contains all of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed an excellent, consistent working system that meets, talks and/or plans together.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
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. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas and did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). In May 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR. Based on the information below, OHCMD noted opportunity for improved performance in the area of Safety on 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	4	5	5	6

The focus children reported feeling safe at all times while at the Group Home and always supervised by staff. The focus children shared that if they had any safety concerns they could go to staff at the Group Home who they could count on for assistance. The DCFS CSWs did not report any child safety concerns regarding the focus children or the Group Home. However, the Group Home scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety due to concerns related to supervision of the placed children. The incident involved two placed children who were missing from the Group Home's group rehabilitation program. When the Group Home staff eventually noticed that the children were missing, they proceeded to look for them and found them in one of the Group Home's restrooms. The placed children smelled of marijuana and admitted to smoking it. The children also admitted to having contraband in their possession, including lighters and a homemade pipe. Further, the incident report did not provide an accurate account of the incident.

The Group Home continues to make good efforts in the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability. The Group Home is supportive of the permanency plans of the focus children. The

Group Home is providing Family Reunification services to one focus child and Permanent Planned Living Arrangement services for two focus children. The focus children reported that they are stable at the Group Home, as the Group Home meets their needs and provides them with the services needed to work towards Family Reunification or towards improving their behavior to help them graduate from high school and transition out of care and into Transitional Housing. The focus children reported establishing positive relationships with key adult supporters, such as the Group Home staff, Group Home therapist, and the Group Home Director.

The Group Home demonstrated increased performance in the area of Visitation. Currently, only one of the focus children has family involvement. The Group Home arranges visitation that is convenient for the focus child's family members. They transport and monitor the focus child's visits, when needed. The focus child's DCFS CSW reported that the focus child's family members are very happy with the Group Home's efforts to maintain family visitation. Further, the Group Home has ensured that the two focus children who do not have family involvement are connected with positive role models and has linked one focus child to a Peer Advocate. The focus child also has a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and a Family Finding Worker with whom she visits monthly. The other focus child had a CASA, but the CASA resigned, and the Group Home is linking her with a mentor. The Group Home staff reported that the Group Home has its own mentoring program, which facilitates linking placed children with a mentor. The Group Home therapist reported that video-conferencing is also utilized to assist in maintaining communication with family, especially for family members of placed children who reside out-of-state.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	6	6	6	6
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	6	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for the focus children as well as ensure that the focus children are receiving appropriate services. The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported having great rapport and working relationships with the Group Home staff and the Group Home therapist. The Group Home staff reported that they communicate with one another as well as with the DCFS CSWs and the placed children's family members, when appropriate, to best meet the needs of the placed children. Implementation of strategies, supports, and services are tracked by progress notes as well as communicated with the focus children and their respective DCFS CSWs. Based on Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and interviews conducted with the focus children and their respective DCFS CSWs, services in place are addressing the focus children's needs and substantially helping

them make progress toward their planned goals. The focus children are receiving weekly individual and group therapy, monthly psychiatric treatment, and medication monitoring. Additionally, two of the focus children are receiving anger management, conflict resolution classes and substance abuse treatment services. The Group Home also provides family therapy, if appropriate, to assist with Family Reunification services. The DCFS CSWs reported that they are very impressed with the Group Home and the services it provides to the focus children. The Group Home continually assesses the focus children's needs and provides intervention services to assist the focus children in their daily functioning and settings. The services and supports are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is being made to meet their case plan goals. The DCFS CSWs reported that they maintain contact with the Group Home therapist in regards to the treatment goals, and modifications are made, if needed.

The Group Home continues to maintain an excellent and consistent working relationship with all team members and involves the children in the decision-making process. The Group Home conducts regular meetings with all the key parties for the focus children, which includes the Group Home therapist, psychiatrist, Group Home staff, Group Home supervisors, DCFS CSWs, the focus children, and family members/NREFMs, if appropriate. Team meetings are consistently held. The three focus children all reported knowing who their team members were, that they are included in the team and are participating in team meetings. The focus children further shared that their therapist informs them of when the meetings will occur. The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home therapist keeps them informed of the focus children's progress and they work together for the best interests of the focus children.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, Personal Rights and Social/Emotional Well-Being and Personal Needs/Survival and Economic Well-Being. Technical support was provided on how the Group Home can ensure that NSPs are comprehensive and signed timely by the DCFS CSW, authorizing implementation of the NSPs, the Group Home's rewards and discipline systems in place are fair, placed children are provided with adequate personal care items, and placed children are encouraged in creating and updating life books or photo albums.

In October 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support addressing methods on improving in the area of Safety. The Group Home submitted the attached QIP. OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.