



County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

February 18, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

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LOS ANGELES YOUTH NETWORK 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 Los Angeles Youth Network Group Home (the Group Home) in April 2015. The Group Home office is located in the Third Supervisorial District. The office provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS foster children and youth. According to the Group Home program statement, its stated mission is, "to help abused, neglected and homeless adolescents become self sufficient."

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

The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In August 2015, the OHCMD quality assurance reviewer discussed the results of the QAR with the Group Home and provided the Group Home with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Engagement.

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
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Mark Supper, Executive Director, Los Angeles Youth Network Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

**LOS ANGELES YOUTH NETWORK GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015**

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Los Angeles Youth Network Group Home (the Group Home) in April 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 children'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) and three Group Home staff members.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served eight DCFS placed children. The focus children's average number of placements was one, their overall average length of placement was 12 months and their average age was 17. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were in 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, updated case plans, and interviews with the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, 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 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 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.
Permanency - The degree to which the children are living with caregivers who are likely to remain in this role until the children reach adulthood, or the children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the children, the Group Home staff, caregivers and CSW 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, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the Group Home ensures that the children'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 settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters, and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 12 months and little likelihood of future disruption. Only age-appropriate changes are expected in school settings.
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections - Generally effective family connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
<p>Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff are working with the children, 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 children's strengths and needs.</p>	5	4	<p>Minimally Adequate to Fair Engagement Efforts - To a minimally adequate degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSW and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that minimally adequate to fair efforts are being used by the Group Home staff as necessary to find and engage the focus children, caregivers and other key people.</p>
<p>Service Needs - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the children, work toward ensuring the children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the children's unique needs.</p>	5	5	<p>Good Supports & Services - A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. A usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory.</p>
<p>Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the children and family understand the children's strengths, needs, preferences, and underlying issues, and services are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.</p>	5	6	<p>Optimal Assessment and Understanding- The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs, and preferences is continuously updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are fully recognized and well understood.</p>
<p>Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the children and family have formed a working team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.</p>	5	5	<p>Good Teamwork - The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supports. The team has formed a good dependable working system that meets, talks, and plans together. At least one face-to-face team meeting has been held to develop plans.</p>

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
<p>Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the Group Home staff who is involved with the children and family is carefully tracking the progress that the children are making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.</p>	5	5	<p>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 children's status and service results to the team are occurring. Generally successful adaptations are based on a basic knowledge of what things are working and not working for the focus children.</p>

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's safety status was optimal. While residing at the Group Home, the focus children have been free from abuse, neglect, exploitation and/or intimidation in placement. None of the focus children has shown any suicidal behavior or exhibited any self-injurious behavior during the past 30 days. The Group Home staff has been trained in recognizing problems and situations that could place a child in imminent danger. To ensure the placed children's safety, the Group Home staff has been trained in implementing a safety plan when a placed child presents a safety concern.

The focus children reported feeling safe while at the Group Home as they are supervised at all times within the Group Home and during community outings. The focus children's DCFS CSWs also reported that they have no concerns about the children's safety at the Group Home.

The Group Home complied with the procedures and protocols and reported Special Incident Reports (SIRs) in a timely manner. All SIRs were properly cross-reported. The Group Home submitted two SIRs over the last 30 days. None of the SIRs involved the focus children. The SIRs involved AWOL behavior. The first incident involved a placed child who left for school in the morning and did not return to the Group Home for over 24 hours. The second incident involved a placed child who failed to return to the Group Home from her community pass outing. The placed child called the Group Home the next day and informed staff that she would not be returning despite the Group Home staff encouraging her to return. The Group Home complied with the AWOL policies and protocols and reported the incidents to law enforcement and the Child Abuse Hotline.

According to Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section, there were no substantiated referrals or open investigations during the past 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provided substantial permanence for the focus children. The Group Home collaborates with the DCFS CSWs by ensuring the focus children's permanent plan is supported and they demonstrate efforts to assist the focus children in achieving their permanency goals. The Group Home also connects the focus children with mentors to ensure each focus child maintains an appropriate relationship with an adult who is able to provide a lifelong connection.

The Group Home encourages relationships between the focus children, their family members or significant people in the children's life. The first focus child's permanent plan is family reunification with her mother. The Group Home supports the plan by transporting the focus child to Wraparound meetings and to her mother's home for weekend visits. The DCFS CSW indicated that the Group Home staff has been supportive in facilitating the reunification process.

The second focus child's permanent plan is family reunification with his parents. The focus child has weekly visits with his mother and maintains daily telephone contact; however, the focus child's plan is to reside with a family friend who is being assessed as a Non-Related Extended Family Member (NREFM). The DCFS CSW stated she is aware of the focus child's desire to reside with the NREFM. The Group Home staff is preparing the focus child to transition into the home of his NREFM. The focus child maintains regular contact with the family friend with whom she plans to reside.

Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA) is the permanent plan for the third focus child, as the child's family resides out of state. The child's ultimate plan is to live in DCFS transitional housing after he graduates from high school. The Group Home assists the focus child in the area of self-sufficiency by providing guidance and the opportunity to learn life skills needed to live independently.

The DCFS CSWs indicated that the Group Home provides the focus children with support necessary to ensure their permanency goals are met.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home provides substantial stability for the focus children. The Group Home staff is trained to identify the focus children's needs and assist them in establishing positive relationships with their peers and key supporters. The Group Home staff interacts with the focus children on a daily basis and has developed rapport with the focus children. The Group Home case manager provides individual counseling to the focus children to ensure they feel supported. To encourage positive behavior and maintain placement stability, the Group Home provides bi-monthly group meetings that provide a venue for the focus children to learn life skills and express their opinions and concerns.

All three focus children's placements have been stable with no placement disruptions within the past 30 days. The first focus child has been living at the Group Home for more than six months and is adapting well. The focus child was able to continue attending her school of origin and plans to remain as placed until she reunifies with her mother. The focus child has developed a very good, supportive

relationship with one of the Group Home staff and reported that she felt comfortable talking to the Group Home case manager and residential staff.

The second focus child has also been residing in the Group Home for over six months. The focus child stated that he plans to remain as placed until his NREFM's home is approved. The third focus child has only been living in the Group Home for three months and is in the process of adjusting to the Group Home structure. At times, the focus child shows challenging behaviors. The focus child feels his placement is stable and would like to remain as placed until he successfully transitions from care. He stated that he would be interested in receiving transitional housing services after he completes high school.

The DCFS CSWs for the focus children indicated that there is constant communication with the Group Home staff and that the Group Home has been a stable placement for the focus children.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home provides substantially acceptable maintenance of visitation and family connections for the focus children. The Group Home staff has been made aware of the focus children's court visitation orders and has supported the focus children in maintaining family connections through facilitating visitation with their family members. The Group Home provides support by providing community passes, by transporting the focus children, and monitoring the visits when necessary. The Group Home also arranges visitation at the Group Home for the focus children and their families.

The first focus child has unmonitored visits at her mother's home on weekends and during school breaks. The Group Home often provides transportation for the focus child's visits. The focus child reported that her family visits are good and she enjoys her visits with her mother and sibling.

The second focus child has unmonitored weekend visits with his mother. The focus child spends time with his mother engaging in activities, such as shopping. According to the focus child, his relationship with his mother has improved. The focus child also has weekly visits with his NREFM, with whom he will eventually be placed, and the focus child reported that the visits have been good.

The third focus child does not have visitation with his family as his mother resides out of state and there are no known family connections in the area. The Group Home encourages him to have regular contact with his mother by phone. The focus child reported that he communicates with his mother via Facebook. The Group Home has connected the focus child with a mentor, with whom he visits twice per month.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

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

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home provides the placed children with an array of services and extracurricular activities to help the children make progress toward their planned outcomes. Therapeutic and supportive services to address the placed children's medical, mental health, educational, social, vocational, and other needs are provided. The placed children are also provided an opportunity for a paid internship at the Group Home. All of the focus children have weekly counseling sessions and participate in life skills group meetings with the Group Home case manager.

The first focus child participates in weekly individual therapy and Wraparound services with her family. The Group Home case manager participated in the first focus child's Wraparound team meeting and Resource Management Program meeting, which addressed the focus child's reunification plan with her family. The Wraparound therapist reports that the child is actively participating in therapy and Wraparound team meetings. During her therapy sessions, the focus child is prepared for reunification with her family. The focus child also received tutoring from the Group Home educational specialist due to having poor grades. However, the focus child reported that her grades have improved and she no longer needs tutoring.

The second focus child receives psychiatric and medical services off-site. The focus child has recently completed high school and is being assisted in applying for college. The focus child is also enrolled in the Individualized Transitional Skills Program (ITSP) and meets with his mentor twice a month. The Group Home case manager also participated in a team meeting for the second focus child. The focus child reported that the resources available meet his needs.

The third focus child's goal is to live independently upon graduation from high school. The Group Home's vocational specialist provides guidance and opportunity for the focus child to learn vocational skills. The focus child previously participated in the Group Home's paid internship program and is currently holding a part-time job at a shop nearby. The focus child also participates in Youth Development Services (YDS). The focus child reported that the Group Home meets his basic needs; however, he felt that he needed more fun activities.

The DCFS CSWs of the focus children reported the Group Home provides the services that the focus children need and the Group Home case manager keeps them updated on the children's progress.

Assessment & Linkages (6 Optimal Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home comprehensively understands the focus children's functioning and their needs for support systems. The Group Home staff utilizes daily observation, communication with the focus children, and reports from the Group Home residential staff and other key supporters to gain a clear picture of the focus children's strengths and needs. Depending on the children's individual needs and interests, the Group Home makes efforts to link the focus children with available services in the community.

The first focus child loves to sing, so the Group Home connected her with a program which provides voice lessons and a vocal coach. The second focus child has been connected with a program for transgender children and he currently participates in activities provided by the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) community. The child is actively attending their support and empowerment-focused meetings. The third focus child is receiving support from the Group Home job specialist and currently has a part-time job. The Group Home also selected the third focus child as the Group Home's representative for the California Coalition Youth Conference in Sacramento and advocated for him to receive approval from his DCFS CSW.

The DCFS CSWs report that the Group Home assesses the children's needs and provides them with the NSPs and quarterly reports whereby the children's progress and goals are reported.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home ensures that most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives are involved as a part of the team. The focus children's team has formed a good working system and consists of the focus children, their family members, DCFS CSWs, the Group Home case manager, the Group Home residential staff, the educational specialist and the Wraparound team. The Group Home residential staff and the case manager communicate daily and share information regarding the focus children's daily activities and progress. The Group Home has regular staff meetings and communicates with all the key adult supporters to ensure uniformity, clarity, and understanding of the focus children's needs and strengths.

The Group Home case manager maintains regular communication with the DCFS CSWs and updates them on the children's progress. The Group Home case manager also extends invitations to the DCFS CSWs to participate in the development of the focus children's NSPs.

Each of the focus children have met together with the Group Home case manager and their respective DCFS CSW to discuss their progress and they reported that the Group Home and their DCFS CSWs work as a team. The DCFS CSWs reported receiving needed information from the Group Home staff. They also stated that they work as a team with the Group Home case manager to ensure the focus children's needs are met.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and their families generally reflected the focus children's needs. The Group Home residential staff documents the focus children's progress and behavior and communicates with the Group Home case manager to update the focus children's status daily. The Group Home case manager receives feedback from other key supporters, such as the educational specialist, job specialist, and therapist regularly. The Group Home case manager meets with the focus children on a weekly basis and discusses their progress toward meeting their case plan goals. Adjustments to their NSPs are made by the Group Home case manager when it is determined that specific services are not producing the desired results.

The Group Home case manager communicates with the focus children's DCFS CSWs regularly regarding the children's progress through face-to-face meetings, by phone or e-mails. The Group Home case manager also completes NSPs every quarter that document each focus child's progress

toward their treatment goals. The DCFS CSWs of the focus children expressed good communication and responsiveness by the Group Home.

What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement)

Engagement (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The Group Home has made minimally adequate engagement efforts with the focus children and key parties. Although the Group Home has made efforts to develop a rapport among DCFS CSWs, focus children, family, extended family members, and other key supporters, and has encouraged the focus children to share concerns, make recommendations, contribute ideas, and express their needs, two of the focus children do not feel comfortable engaging with the Group Home residential staff.

The first focus child reported that she has established good rapport with the Group Home staff and is able to discuss her issues and concerns with her case manager, therapists, and the Group Home residential staff. According to the focus child, the Group Home staff supports her and provides her with advice when needed. However, the second and the third focus children reported that although they have developed a relationship with the Group Home case manager and some of the Group Home residential staff, they felt that some residential staff display favoritism among the residents and at times communicate in an unprofessional manner. Further, the focus children reported that the Group Home residential staff do not implement the Group Home rules consistently as some staff do not enforce the rules while others are very strict. In addition, the focus children stated that some of the Group Home residential staff do not listen to their concerns. In an effort to address the focus children's concerns, the Group Home is implementing a Client Satisfaction Survey that will be collected each month and reviewed by the Group Home's executive staff. Comments and recommendations from the survey will be considered for program planning and staff training.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In August 2015, the OHCMD quality assurance reviewer discussed the results of the QAR and provided the Group Home with technical support to address methods on improving in the area of Engagement. The Group Home submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.

The 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review finding indicated deficiencies in the area of Personnel Records. The Group Home submitted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to ensure compliance. The OHCMD reviewer will provide ongoing technical support to the Group Home to assist them in implementing their CAP and QIP.



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP)
DCFS Quality Assurance Annual Monitoring Review- 2015
Los Angeles Youth Network
Beachwood Group Home

January 7, 2016

The following quality improvement plan is based on the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out of Home Care (OHC) Management Division's Quality Assurance Review of the Los Angeles Youth Network Beachwood Group Home held in April 2015. The following deficiencies/recommendations were noted:

Engagement (4- Minimally Adequate to Fair Good Engagements Efforts):

Recommendation Statement- *"The second and the third focus children reported that although they have developed a relationship with the Group Home case manager and some of the Group Home residential staff, they felt that some residential staff display favoritism among the residents and at times communicate in an unprofessional manner. Further, the focus children reported that the Group Home residential staff do not implement the Group Home rules consistently as some staff do not enforce the rules while others are very strict. In addition, the focus children stated that some of the Group Home residential staff do not listen to their concerns."*

Quality Improvement Plan: In order to rectify the concerns listed in the "Engagement" recommendation area of this report, LAYN instituted the Director of Youth Development position on May 26, 2015 that focuses on youth development and client satisfaction within the group home setting. The Director of Youth Development serves as an advocate to the placed children, and if such issues should arise, also as a liaison between the placed children and the staff to achieve optimal client satisfaction with program functioning. LAYN holds monthly mandatory staff trainings for direct care staff that focus on trauma informed care approaches for placed child care in relation to daily group home functioning and procedures and to improve placed child engagement with staff. LAYN plans to hold a group home staff training on January 19, 2016 to address training topics such as appropriate placed child/staff boundaries, avoiding the appearance of favoritism among placed children, consistency with upholding group home policies and procedures and an interactive module that will allow staff to role play scenarios where staff can exercise various situations in interacting with placed children in a consistent and professional manner. This training will be led by the Director of Youth Development, the Clinical Director and the Director of Case Management. LAYN will implement this training topic into its annual mandatory training rotation for all staff members.

This report has been completed in its entirety by the Los Angeles Youth Network's Senior Compliance Director and has been approved by the Executive Director.

Respectfully,


Mark Supper
Executive Director