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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July 12, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES 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 Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home (the Group Home) in September 2015. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 14 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 Probation youth. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to engage the families of the youth and teach these youth appropriate problem-solving and coping skills to give them the tools necessary to return to be healthy and live successfully with their family and community."

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 an opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

In February 2016, the 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 Chief Probation Officer
Joe Ford, Vice-President of Operations, Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES 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 Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home (the Group Home) in September 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 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) 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 two, their overall average length of placement was five months and their average age was 15. 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	5 - Good Safety Status	The focus children have a generally and substantially safe living situation with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children well under usual daily conditions. Protective strategies are generally 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	6 - Optimal Status	The focus children have optimal permanency. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the focus children, Group Home staff and all team members have evidence 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	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal 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 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 March 2015 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In July 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 to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below, it appears that the Group Home implemented its Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to address concerns with special incidents; however, the Group Home experienced additional challenges in the area of Safety.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

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

The focus children reported that they felt safe and comfortable in the Group Home. They reported that Group Home staff supervises them at all times and asks them if they feel safe. The DCFS CSWs reported that the focus children shared that their behavior has improved in part because they feel safe in the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs did not express any concerns regarding the focus children's safety. The Group Home staff ensures the focus children feel safe in placement by continuously addressing safety issues among team members. As per the Group Home staff, the placed children are supervised at all times within eyesight and the Group Home's program statement was approved for staff-to-child ratio of 1:3 during awake hours, instead of the minimum requirement of 1:6 staff-to-child ratio. The Group Home develops individualized safety plans for each placed child within 30 days of placement.

Although the Group Home implemented its QIP to address concerns noted in the 2014-2015 QAR, related to complying with reporting special incidents timely and cross-reporting to the

Child Protection Hotline, the Group Home continued to experience challenges in the focus area of Safety. Specifically, concerns were noted regarding the placed children bringing in contraband into the Group Home. Placed children brought contraband objects, a knife and a pair of scissors into the Group Home in two incidents. Further, the Group Home staff did not address how the children obtained the items or how the contraband was brought into the facility. Additionally, the Group Home did not address how staff would protect the other placed children from the occurrence of future incidents.

In the areas of Permanency, Placement Stability and Visitation, the Group Home scored at the optimal level. The rating in these three areas increased from a score of 5 on their last QAR to 6 on this QAR. The Group Home administrator reported that as soon as a child is placed, the Group Home staff implemented contacting the placed children's family members/NREFMs and the DCFS CSWs, to schedule a meeting to develop a permanency and concurrent plan. The Group Home's goal is always to move the placed children to a lower level of care, if reunification is not appropriate. The Group Home assists the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by providing counseling services, family therapy and maintaining family ties when the permanency goal is Family Reunification, as in the case of two focus children. The Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs and the focus children's family members work toward reunification. For the third focus child, the permanency plan is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. The Group Home along with the DCFS CSW and the focus child's family are working toward placing the focus child in a lower level of care facility. The focus children have developed positive relationships with key adult supporters such as the Group Home staff and their peers. The focus children expressed a feeling of closeness with the Group Home staff, especially to the Group Home administrator. Prior to being placed at the Group Home, the focus children had experienced multiple replacements, with one of them as many as five placements and another focus child with as many as three placements, including Rate Classification Level 14 facilities. None of the focus children have experienced any disruptions since being placed in the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that they are invited and encouraged to participate in the screening process that is in place to ensure the Group Home's program will meet the needs of the focus children. The Group Home staff completes daily behavioral logs to assess the children's adjustment to placement. When a placed child has difficulty adjusting to placement, this information is conveyed to the Group Home therapist to address in therapy. For example, if the plan is to replace a child to a lower level of care, the Group Home holds a team meeting with all of the professionals on the placed child's team to assist and prepare the placed child to transitioning and adjusting to their new placement and to avoid the likelihood of a future placement disruption. Additionally, if the plan is Family Reunification, the Group Home assists the placed children and family members/NREFMs in the adjustment and transition process as well to ensure a successful reunification.

The Group Home staff work with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children and their families to ensure compliance with visitation court orders and ensure that family ties are maintained. The Group Home has a cottage on site called the "Family Cottage", where the children's family members are allowed overnight visits with the placed children. The "Family Cottage" has been very successful and quite popular with the placed children and their families. A second cottage was built to accommodate the increased interest generated from the success of the "Family Cottage". The focus children shared that they appreciate the Group Home's

efforts to help them maintain family ties. The DCFS CSWs did not express any concerns regarding the focus children's visitation services.

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	6	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home continues to maintain good efforts in including the focus children and key parties in decisions that are being made on their behalf, as well as ensuring the focus children's needs are met. The Group Home makes certain that a rapport is developed among the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, the focus children's family members/NREFMs and the focus children. The Group Home's administrator reported that she requires the Group Home staff to meet the DCFS CSWs to establish a working relationship. The Group Home facilitator coordinates the communication among team members and develops the placed children's Needs and Services Plans (NSPs). All three focus children receive weekly individual therapy, group therapy, monthly psychiatric consultation, tutoring and Youth Development Services (YDS) for older placed children. The YDS component of the Group Home's program is geared toward assisting older placed children in becoming self-sufficient by providing independent living skills such as budgeting and maintaining personal hygiene. The focus children reported that their concerns were heard and respected by the Group Home staff, as they are people they could count on. The focus children reported that they are able to discuss their issues and concerns with their family members and with the Group Home staff. The Group Home staff stated that the needs of the placed children are assessed individually by the Group Home clinician. The Group Home staff meets on a regular basis to discuss the appropriateness of services being provided to the focus children. The Group Home staff also provide the DCFS CSWs with a monthly progress report on the focus children's status. The Group Home facilitator tracks intervention strategies, supports and services provided to the focus children and the Group Home youth specialist documents daily progress notes of the focus children's behavior. The information is then shared with the focus children's team members.

In the area of Teamwork, the Group Home scored at the optimal level. Each focus child's team consists of the focus child and their family members, the Group Home youth specialist, behavioral specialist, facilitator, clinician, therapist, psychiatrist, the Group Home administrator, the Group Home's Vice-President of Operations and their DCFS CSWs. The Group Home meets once a week and in some instances more often, if needed. The purpose of the Group Home team meetings is to discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications to their treatment plans or strategies to assist them in achieving their case plan goals. The focus children reported being satisfied with their teams and their team's

functioning. The focus children stated that it is important to them to have all key parties present during the team meetings, especially their family members. The focus children reported that they feel they are included in the team and feel respected when they are permitted to make their own choices regarding visitation or contact with their family members. The DCFS CSWs reported that team meetings to develop the focus children's NSPs are very helpful to them as the information obtained regarding the focus children's progress and the services they receive are sent to Dependency Court.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In August 2015, the 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. Technical support was provided to assist the Group Home in developing ways it can ensure the Group Home staff has monthly contact with the DCFS CSWs and ensuring contacts are appropriately documented in the NSPs.

In February 2016, 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 approved QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.

Department of Children and Family Services
Out-of-Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Avenue, Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731

March 21, 2016

Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home is submitting a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) at the request of Out- of- Home Quality Assurance Division, Quality Assurance Review Section regarding 2015 -2016 fiscal review.
The Out-of- Home Quality Assurance Division noted a concern in the area of Safety, which was rated 5.

The Plan for Improvements is as follows:

It was brought to Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home attention that two SIR's stated that contraband was brought back to the group home and there was no follow up plan as to how to ensure the safety of the other residents.

On March 21, 2016, the Director of Residential Program met with the Lead Youth Specialist, Program Manager, and Program Supervisor to put a plan in place when Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home suspects a youth is bringing contraband onto campus. To increase the safety of the campus, the following items are considered to be contraband and will be confiscated and inventoried or destroyed if found on the youth. In addition, the following items are not allowed on the campus or in vehicles transporting youths. Contraband consists of; alcohol, drugs, drug paraphernalia, matches, lighters, cigarettes/tobacco and weapons. On March 23, 2016 the Program Supervisor trained the Facility Managers on how to identify when a youth is under the influence of a substance and the protocol for searching the youth.

This process is done as follows: Once there is suspicion (red eye, slurred speech, scent of alcohol on the breath or scent of marijuana) of a youth returning back to campus under the influence of any substance (alcohol and/or drug) or in possession of any contraband an immediate search of the youth and his personal belongings will be done by the Facility Managers to ensure the safety of all other residents. The Facility Manager will confiscate and call our local law enforcement to destroy any contraband that was found on the youth or in their belongings. A SIR will be written to document the findings. In addition to personal belonging searches, a room search will be conducted to assure the safety and of youths when there is suspicion of contraband in the living unit. Youths are to be present during room searches.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mia Williams
Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services
Director of Residential Programs