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June 30, 2016

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

MARY'S SHELTER 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 Mary's Shelter Group Home (the Group Home) in October 2015. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has two sites, which are located in Orange County. The Group Home provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS foster children and youth, as well as children from other counties. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide services to pregnant teenagers."

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 December 2015, the OHCMD 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 (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
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Barbara Nelson, Executive Director, Mary's Shelter Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

MARY'S SHELTER 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 Mary's Shelter Group Home (the Group Home) in October 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) and three Group Home staff members.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served 13 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 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	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	6 - Optimal Engagement Efforts	To an optimal 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 excellent 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	6 - Optimal Supports and Services	An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are substantially 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	6 - Optimal Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood. Knowledge necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is continuously 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 November 2014. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas. In February 2015, OHCMD reviewed the results of the 2014-2015 Quality Assurance Review with the Group Home. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was not requested of the Group Home. However, OHCMD Quality Assurance staff provided ongoing technical support, training and consultation to the Group Home. 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

In the area of Safety, the Group Home continues to ensure appropriate supervision of the placed children at all times and takes responsibility for their safety, as well as the safety and well-being of the placed children's non-dependent infants. Based on the interviews conducted with the focus children, DCFS CSWs and the Group Home staff, it was reported that the children experienced a highly safe environment, and the Group Home staff are reliable and competent. The Group Home staff is trained in identifying stressors and recognizing problems, such as substance abuse, runaway and harmful behavior, as well as other situations that could place a child in imminent danger. The focus children reported that the Group Home staff is always present and that staff's presence makes them feel safe and supported. The focus children also reported that the Group Home staff provides a cell phone for the placed children to use during community outings to help ensure their safety. The DCFS CSWs had no concerns regarding the Group Home and reported that the Group Home provides a safe environment for the focus children.

In the area of Permanency and Placement Stability, the Group Home provides good quality services for the focus children. The Group Home makes efforts to collaborate with the DCFS CSWs and the focus children to assist in the determination of the best permanency plan for the focus children. Two focus children are receiving Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA) services and are working on transitioning to the care of relatives or Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs). The third focus child is receiving Family Reunification services, with a concurrent plan of PPLA. The Group Home understands and fully supports the three focus children's permanency goals and works collaboratively to establish and support lifelong connections for the children. The Group Home is ensuring that the focus children maintain relationships with their family members, NREFMs and mentors so that these relationships are strengthened and are lifelong. None of the focus children have experienced any recent disruptions in placement or in the school setting. The Group Home takes responsibility in ensuring the focus children receive the necessary resources to help them achieve their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) treatment goals and to achieve stability at the Group Home, at school and in the community. Each of the focus children is placed with their infant child, and the focus children are learning to care for themselves and their children. The focus children are working toward becoming independent. The focus children reported that they enjoy positive and enduring relationships with the Group Home staff and key adult supporters. They each reported that they are benefitting from the support services they are receiving and plan to continue residing in the Group Home until they transition to the home of their relatives or NREFMs, or they become eligible for transitional housing services.

In the area of Visitation, the Group Home is supportive in the maintenance of family contact and follows the recommendations of the DCFS CSWs. The focus children's visitation plans are fully implemented, and visits are consistent for all of the focus children. The Group Home ensures that the focus children have regular contact with their DCFS CSWs, family members, NREFMs, and other team members who are involved in their lives. The first focus child has monthly visits with her siblings at her former foster parents' home; the Group Home provides transportation to and from the visits. The focus child loves spending time with her siblings and always looks forward to her visits. The second focus child has weekend overnight visits with her aunt. She is proficient at using public transportation to reach her aunt's home, and rides the bus there most weekends. The third focus child would like to have unmonitored visits with her adult sister. However, DCFS approval is pending due to her sister's criminal record history. The Group Home is working closely with the focus child, the adult sister and the focus child's DCFS CSW, pending clearance. In the meantime, the Group Home is providing monitored on-site visits for the focus child and her adult sister. In addition, the Group Home has linked the focus child with a mentor. The mentor assists the focus child with her schoolwork, and they go on off-site passes to have lunch and share a few hours of quality time. The focus child enjoys her time with her mentor. The Group Home staff shared that the mentor also enjoys the focus child's company.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

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

In the areas of Engagement, Services Needs and Assessment & Linkages, the Group Home continues to make excellent efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for them. The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home Social Workers keeps them informed of how the focus children are doing on a monthly basis, or more often if needed. Based on the interviews, it appears the Group Home maintains very good communication with DCFS CSWs and key people in the focus children's lives, including family members, relatives and teachers, as well as with all Group Home staff members. The focus children, their DCFS CSWs and the Group Home staff reported having a good working relationship and that they feel heard and respected. One focus child reported that prior to her placement at the Group Home she felt she was on her own, without anyone's support. Now, with the Group Home and her DCFS CSW's support, she and her adult sister are working on strengthening their relationship.

The Group Home is providing an excellent array of supports and services to meet the needs and ensure the well-being of the placed children and their infants. These services include an on-grounds school, childcare services, parenting classes, postpartum wellness program, mentoring services, Head Start program, Independent Living Program classes and

emancipation preparation services. The Group Home is in constant contact with service providers in the community to determine availability of services and to monitor the progress of the placed children receiving services. The focus children stated they are benefitting from the services they are receiving. For example, one focus child reported since being placed at the Group Home, she has become involved in various community programs that are helping her improve herself, such as utilizing childcare services, participating in parenting class and attending a Special Day class at the local high school. This focus child also reported that through the Group Home's assistance and resource connections, she has not only completed her domestic violence classes, but she has complied with her court orders and successfully had her daughter's dependency case closed.

The Group Home fully understands each focus child's functioning and support systems. The focus children meet with the Group Home Social Workers at least once per week to assess their progress and to evaluate their needs. The services provided are geared to meet the focus children's and their infants' unique needs. One focus child reported that she feels supported by the Group Home and is happy to have staff members involved in her life. She reported that she only speaks Spanish; the Group Home pairs her with Spanish-speaking staff to assist with all her needs.

In the area of Teamwork, the Group Home involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the placed children's lives. The team consisting of the DCFS CSWs, Group Home Program Director, Group Home Social Workers, Case Managers, parenting coordinator, medical coordinator, the placed children, and Group Home childcare workers, has formed a good, dependable working system that has ongoing discussions and works collaboratively in case planning. The Group Home Social Workers maintain regular contact with the children's DCFS CSWs, whether it is face-to-face, by telephone or via e-mail. All of the DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home Social Workers and Case Manager always contact them at least once a month to update them on the focus children's progress and discuss their needs and concerns, as well as to invite them to the NSP development meetings. The DCFS CSWs shared that there is a collaborative working relationship and the Group Home is very good about including the focus children in their treatment planning. The focus children reported that they are satisfied with the teamwork and felt respected when they were permitted to make their own choices regarding placement, visitation or contact with their family members.

In the area of Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home's intervention strategies, supports and services provided to the focus children and their families are generally responsive to changing conditions. The Group Home tracks the placed children's progress, adjustments to interventions and services through daily notes and communication with staff, Special Incident Reports, Needs and Services Plans and weekly treatment team meetings. The Group Home assesses each placed child's needs and responds appropriately. For example, one focus child had a treatment goal of improving her relationship with her adult sister. The Group Home encouraged the adult sister to visit the focus child as much as possible. The focus child wanted to visit her brother's gravesite to hold a prayer vigil with her adult sister. The Group Home worked with the focus child's DCFS CSW to obtain approval for her to attend. However, on the day of the vigil, the adult sister informed the focus child that she would probably not be able to pick her up. The focus child became very upset upon hearing the

news. Staff immediately intervened, as the focus child had previously informed staff that she would AWOL if she was unable to go. To prevent the focus child from AWOLing, staff was able to obtain permission to transport the focus child to the cemetery to pay her respects and then brought her back to the Group Home. The focus child shared that she feels cared for and loved by the Group Home staff. The focus child also shared that because of the Group Home staff's interventions, she remained stable in placement and focused on making progress toward achieving her treatment goals.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In March 2016, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Facility and Environment and Health and Medical Needs. Technical support was provided on how the Group Home can ensure that common areas of the Group Home are free of hazards and that all placed children receive timely initial dental services.

In December 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas. A QIP was not requested of the Group Home. However, OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to the Group Home.