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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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October 24, 2016

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

CHILDREN'S HOMES OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 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 the Children's Homes of Southern California Group Home (the Group Home) in March 2016. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has five sites located in the Third Supervisorial District. The Group Home provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "First, to help youths develop the skills and self-esteem, which will enable them to become self-sufficient and productive persons in society. And second, to help develop and promote a viable social support system for youths outside the foster care system."

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

In May 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

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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
Jorge Marquez, Executive Director, Children's Homes of Southern California GH
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**CHILDREN'S HOMES OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 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 the Children's Homes of Southern California Group Home (the Group Home) in March 2016. 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, one Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Worker (CSW) and three Group Home staff members.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served 37 DCFS placed children. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 16 months and their average age was 18. 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.

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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, 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	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.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.

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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	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.

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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.

The OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the Group Home in October 2014 and noted opportunities for improvement in the focus areas of Safety and Teamwork. In May 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 to address methods for improvement in these areas. Based on the information below, it appears that the Group Home showed improvement in the areas of Safety and Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR. However, the OHCMD noted an opportunity for additional improvement in the area of Safety.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	4	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, based on the 2014-2015 QAR, the Group Home received a score of 4 due to a referral that alleged physical abuse and general neglect by a Group Home staff member. The allegation of physical abuse was deemed to be inconclusive and the allegation of general neglect was deemed to be substantiated. The Group Home had already taken action against the staff involved in the aforementioned referral at the time of the 2015-2016 QAR. It was also found that the Group Home implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the safety of the placed children by providing additional training to their staff on how to improve communication skills in managing appropriate daily interactions with all placed youth. The Group Home required all staff to complete the Annual Pro-Act training and ongoing quarterly training to address residents' personal rights. The Group Home also provides bi-annual training to reinforce staff's ability to maintain therapeutic boundaries regarding sexual identity or orientation of all placed children. The Group Home

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also started a new process in handling emergency situations related to safety; the facility manager now contacts the on-duty program manager immediately to resolve safety concerns. The focus children reported that the Group Home staff makes them feel safe and comfortable in the Group Home. For example, one focus child stated that he feels comfortable speaking to the staff and the program manager if he needs any assistance. The DCFS CSW reported that she has no safety concerns regarding the Group Home and she always communicates with the Group Home staff regarding the current status of the focus child. The DCFS CSW also speaks with the focus child privately to ensure the focus child feels safe in the Group Home. The Group Home child care workers and facility manager reported that the Group Home provides them with quarterly trainings on following the proper protocols and procedures regarding Absence Without Leaves (AWOLs), crisis, or other emergency situations, and enhancing communication skills with the placed youth.

Although the Group Home follows protocol and guidelines when reporting AWOL incidents, and protective strategies used are generally operative, there were several placed children that were involved in multiple AWOLs during the review month. Technical support was provided to the Group Home which included a discussion with Group Home representatives regarding their understanding of the underlying reasons for triggers that cause the AWOL behavior. Additionally, technical support was also provided on how the Group Home can develop safety plans for those children involved in AWOL behaviors.

In the areas of Permanency, Placement Stability, and Visitation, the Group Home provides a good quality services and stability to the focus children. The Group Home ensures the focus children are visiting with their family members/NREFMs. One focus child is receiving Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) services. The focus child reported that he prefers to remain in his current Group Home until he reaches the age of maturity. The Group Home staff are assisting him by providing independent living skills training to assist him with job searches and college preparation. The focus child also reported that he attends Independent Living Program classes twice a month to prepare him for self-sufficiency. Two of the focus children are receiving court-ordered Family Reunification services. The focus children reported that the Group Home staff gives them advice on how they can successfully reunite with their parents. The focus children reported that the coping skills training is helping them to improve their relationship with their parents.

The Group Home provides good placement stability for the focus children. The Group Home schedules meetings with the placed children to resolve concerns, such as peer conflicts. The focus children reported that they are adjusting well in the Group Home and they maintain a conflict-free relationship with other placed children. All of the focus children reported that the Group Home staff are supportive and they feel their needs are being met. They also expressed that they like the Group Home's reward system. If placed children have to transfer to a new school, the Group Home works with the new school to set up a tour of the campus for them to alleviate any anxiety they may have in attending a new school. The focus children have established positive relationships with the Group Home child care workers, facility managers, therapist, and the program manager. The Group Home establishes and maintains acceptable family connections for the focus children. The Group Home staff encourages the focus children to maintain contact with their family members/NREFMs via

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telephone or visitation. The Group Home staff contacts the family members/NREFMs two days before the scheduled visitation to ensure that the visit takes place. The Group Home also provides transportation for the focus children to visit their family members/NREFMs. Family members/NREFMs are encouraged to visit the placed children at the Group Home. The Group Home staff frequently asks the focus and placed children if there are any other important people in their lives so everyone important to the placed children are included in discussions or provide input. The focus children reported that they enjoy the visits with their family members/NREFMs. For example, one of the focus children reported that he enjoyed his overnight weekend visits with his father.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	4	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home provides a good quality of services and stability to the focus children. The Group Home makes consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The Group Home program manager ensures that Group Home staff utilizes telephone contact, e-mail, and face-to-face meetings to engage and build a working partnership with all key people. All of the focus children reported that they are able to discuss their issues and concerns with their family members/NREFMs, Group Home program managers, child care workers, facility managers, and DCFS CSWs. The Group Home provides good supports and services that match intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The focus children are receiving therapeutic services to address mental health needs. The focus children are also receiving emancipation planning services to improve independent living skills. The Group Home assists the focus children in job searches, completing their job application forms, and providing transportation for job interviews. The focus children are receiving in-home tutoring services three times a week to improve their grades. The Group Home also provides monthly psychiatric evaluations for placed children that are prescribed psychotropic medication. The Group Home refers placed children to a Substance Abuse Support Group when ordered by the court. The Group Home organizes activities during weekends and holidays, such as trips to Magic Mountain, museums, movies, and restaurants. The DCFS CSW reported that the Group Home provides good services, such as the individual therapy to the focus child assigned to her. Due to the services provided, the focus children have shown improvement with their coping skills. One of the focus children reported that the Group Home provides his school supplies, medical and dental checkups, in-home tutoring, individual therapy, boxing classes, and is enrolled in a driving school. All of the focus children reported that the

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services provided by the Group Home are meeting their needs and the services provided are sufficient.

The Group Home assesses the focus children's needs and provides intervention for them to function effectively in daily settings. The Group Home child care workers, facility managers, and program managers review the focus children's status on a daily basis. The services and supports are assessed and modified on an ongoing basis to ensure progress is being made toward the focus children's case plan goals. The DCFS CSW reported that she reviews the focus child's NSP, school report cards, and always communicates with his therapist and Group Home staff, in regards to the progress and adjustments for the focus child. Intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and their families are generally responsive to changing conditions. The Group Home staff monitors the focus children's progress or lack of progress in weekly meetings. They discuss concerns and the focus children's behavior to better assist with needed services. Adjustments are promptly made when the focus children are not progressing toward their case plan goals. For example, the Group Home staff tracks the focus children's school attendance and grades on the school website, and provides tutoring to assist the focus children with completion of their homework every day.

In the area of Teamwork, the Group Home implemented the 2014-2015 QIP to improve teaming efforts to include all key members in the decision making process. During the 2015-2016 review, the Group Home implemented an internal teaming process to include all key members to meet face-to-face to address the needs and services of all placed youth. The Group Home program manager utilizes the Master Needs and Services Plan (NSP) due date calendar to notify the Group Home support team to discuss the coordination of services for each placed children to set up a face-to-face meeting. The Group Home support team includes the placed youth, DCFS CSWs, Group Home facility manager, therapist, Group Home program manager, family members/NREFMs of the placed youth, and also any other significant persons in the placed youth's life. In addition, the Group Home also utilizes teamwork to address placed youth's behavior and stabilization within placement by communicating status updates of the focus children. The Group Home program manager reported that the Group Home is also utilizing a team approach to develop a contract with the placed youth to assist them in achieving their case plan goals. This teaming process is a new component that the Group Home has implemented in response to the 2014-2015 QAR. The focus children reported that they were all included in team meetings to discuss their needs and services. One of the focus children reported that he is satisfied with the way his team functions. The DCFS CSW reported that she is included in team meetings. For example, she attended a transitional meeting to discuss the provision of independent living services to assist the focus child in his daily living skills.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In December 2015, the OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements, Facility and Environment, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, and Education and Workforce Readiness. Technical

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support was provided on how the Group Home can ensure that Group Home vehicles are always in good repair; Special Incidents are properly cross-reported and allowances log are well documented; children's bedrooms are well maintained; non-perishable food are not kept past their expiration dates; NSPs are comprehensive; that youth attend school regularly, and efforts are documented regarding the placed children's academic progress.

In May 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.



22455 Victory Boulevard, West Hills, CA 91307
Telephone: (818)592-2960 Fax: (818)592-2961

June 13, 2016

Mr. Kong Ng, MSW
Children Services Administrator I
Administrative Support Bureau
Out of Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Ave, Suite # 216
El Monte, CA 91731

Dear Mr. Kong Ng:

Following is the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) regarding Quality Assurance Review Fiscal Year 2015-2016 conducted in March 2016 for Children's Homes of Southern California's five group home facilities (Licenses: #191221601, #191221595, #197601995, #191221575, #191222471).

Focus Area I:

- **Safety, (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. Although the Group Home follows protocol and guidelines when reporting AWOL incidents, and protective strategies used are generally operative, there were *several placed children* that were involved in *multiple AWOLs* during the review month.

Safety Correction:

To ensure that Children's Homes (CHSC) maintains a high degree of Resident Safety, Health, and Personal Rights in accordance with Department of Children and Family Services policies, LA County Contract, and Title XXII Regulations for the focus area above of multiple AWOLs by several children, the following Improvement plan has been implemented:

- In accordance with established Children's Homes of Southern California hiring and training policies, all Employees will read, review, and receive a personal copy of the Personal Rights for Children's Residential Facilities (LIC 613B) contained in the California Code of Regulations, Title XXII.

- In addition, all Employees will read, review, and receive an updated copy of the Job Description for Child Care Work/Facility Manager I which indicates the responsibilities to "observe each placed resident's behavior, assist in identification of any triggers, and communicate such observations". [Enclosed copy of Job Description, note: Item #5]
- All Children's Homes (CHSC) Employees will also be required to complete Annual Pro-Act Training in accordance with Title XXII Regulations, Section 843645 (d)(B) which includes but not limited to topics of: Maintaining Supervision & Care of Residents, Addressing Conflicts, Utilizing Appropriate Crisis Communication Skills, & Identifying Underlying Triggers & Alternative Behavior Strategies. In addition, this will assist group home staff in preventing **multiple AWOLs** of identified youth who engage in specified behavior to help maintain the Safety of placed youth.
- At the onset of each *weekly* Agency Program Meeting, the Program Administration will review and identify placed residents who have been reported to engage in multiple AWOLing behaviors over the course of the previous week utilizing Special Incident Reports. Multiple AWOLs will be defined as placed residents who have three (3) or more per week. This information will be documented on a spreadsheet for review accordingly.
 - Identification of placed youth who engage in multiple AWOLs will allow the Agency to *implement child specific treatment planning options* to decrease and/or eliminate such behaviors.
- At the identification of multiple AWOLs by a placed resident, the Program Administration will identify any underlying triggers to a placed resident's behaviors, and develop weekly treatment options and interventions, including but not limited to the following:
 - Increase opportunities for communication with placed resident with increase supervisory contact weekly and/or daily, i.e. verbal appeals regarding current AWOLing behaviors.
 - Schedule *increased* face-to-face meetings with placed youth, CSW, House Manager, & Program Manager (STFFM) to develop interventions and increase placed youth's stability within the agency therapeutic program.
 - Develop weekly child specific behavioral incentives with placed youth including but not limited to: monetary incentives including gift cards, community passes & extended walk-offs, enrollment in physical/enrichment activities such as martial arts, YMCA, etc. in

accordance with youth's treatment team.

- Encourage and provide increased family support/contact (if available) in accordance with youth's treatment team.
- Evaluate placed youth's relationships with peers in the group home setting and consider alternative group home placement within the agency, as needed, to provide the youth with increased opportunity to develop new relationships and promote resident placement stability.
- Increase weekly therapeutic support as identified by therapist and placed youth.
- Develop Written Specialized Safety Plan & Statement of Expectations for placed youth with all those involved in treatment team.
- Evaluate placed resident's response & treatment team feedback during weekly Agency Program Meeting.
- Lastly, at the identification of multiple AWOLs by a placed resident, the *House Treatment Team will also meet weekly to identify & communicate to the Program Manager current progress on established therapeutic and program interventions regarding the resident's multiple AWOLing behaviors*. As a result, the placed resident's treatment team will adapt, review, and implement interventions to meet the underlying needs of the youth while in current placement.

In Summary, Employees will have Initial and On-Going Knowledge of Child Care Worker Responsibilities as well as maintain an active role in the care and supervision of all placed youth with their feedback and involvement in each placed youth's treatment team and interventions. This will ensure the ongoing safety of placed residents, decrease residents' multiple AWOLing behaviors as well as assist in meeting the underlying needs for youth who are placed with Children's Homes of Southern California.

Lastly, if any emergency arises regarding the continuity of a Resident's Placement due to safety concerns as a result of continued AWOLing behaviors, the Facility Manager will contact the On-Duty Program Manager immediately and inform them of any changes. The Program Manager



will then resolve the issue/concern in accordance with the Agency Administration.

Thank you for your attention in this matter and consideration of the above plan. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 818-592-2960.

Sincerely,



Michelle Villacorta, MA
Program Director
Children's Homes of Southern California

Enclosures: [Agency Job Description CCW/FMI](#)