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July 13, 2017

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman  
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Supervisor Janice Hahn  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: *Cynthia McCay Miller*  
Brandon T. Nichols  
Acting Director

**FIELDS COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH SERVICES 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 Fields Comprehensive Youth Services Group Home (the Group Home) in January 2017. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has two sites located in San Bernardino County that provide services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide a safe, nurturing, structured living environment for adolescents in need of a group home placement."

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 nine focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In March 2017, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR. The Group Home scored at or above the acceptable minimum score in all nine focus areas; therefore, a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was not required from the Group Home.

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If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

BTN:KR  
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#### Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer  
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee  
Terri L. McDonald, Chief Probation Officer  
Arby Fields, Executive Director, Fields Comprehensive Youth Services Group Home  
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**FIELDS COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH SERVICES GROUP HOME  
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW  
FISCAL YEAR 2016-2017**

**SCOPE OF REVIEW**

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Fields Comprehensive Youth Services Group Home (the Group Home) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017 in January 2017. 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; two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) placed children and one Probation placed youth, two DCFS Children's Social Workers (CSWs), one Deputy Probation Officer (DPO), six Group Home staff members, and two service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served three DCFS placed children and one Probation placed youth; their overall average length of placement was nine months. The focus children's average number of placements was six, their overall average length of placement was 11 months, and their average age was 17. All of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) FY 2016-2017 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, interviews with the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is six in the area of Safety and five in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<p><b>Safety</b> - 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.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>6 - Optimal Safety Status</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Permanency</b> - 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, Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>5 - Good Status</p>	<p>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.</p>

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<p><b>Placement Stability</b> - 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><b>Visitation</b> - 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><b>Engagement</b> - 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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<p><b>Service Needs</b> - 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.</p>	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.
<p><b>Assessment &amp; Linkages</b> - 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.</p>	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.
<p><b>Teamwork</b> - 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.</p>	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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<b>Tracking &amp; Adjustment -</b> 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 previous QAR of the Group Home for FY 2015-2016 in March 2016, and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In April 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of that QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Safety. Based on the following information, it appears that the Group Home showed improvement in the area of Safety on their FY 2016-2017 QAR and scored at the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas.

**STATUS INDICATORS**  
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
<b>2015-2016 Scores</b>	5	5	5	5
<b>2016-2017 Scores</b>	6	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that Group Home had implemented their FY 2015-2016 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the quality of care provided to the placed children in its care. During the previous QAR, the Group Home scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety, due to child safety concerns related to the Group Home staff's inability to adequately supervise and intervene in incidents involving the placed children who used illicit substances at the Group Home or who presented a danger to self or others. To address the concerns, the Group Home provided training to its staff on appropriate supervision of the placed children and intervention in crises. The Group Home also reevaluated the placement of one placed child and discharged him to a higher level of care, as he was a danger to the other placed children in the Group Home.

During the current QAR, the OHCMD found that the Group Home staff ensures the appropriate supervision of the placed children at all times and takes responsibility for their safety. The Group Home provides weekly training to its staff on how to address crises and

on supervision to ensure the safety of the placed children. Based on the interviews conducted with the focus children, the DCFS CSWs, the DPO, and the Group Home staff, it was reported that the focus children experienced a safe living situation at the Group Home. The focus children reported they were free from harm in their daily settings, that the Group Home is a safe place to live, and a staff member with whom they could speak was always present. The focus children's DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that the Group Home staff worked very closely with them, kept them informed of the focus children's behavior and progress, and was always responsive to their request for information. According to the Group Home supervisor, the Group Home therapist is always available to the placed children when they need to meet with her to express their concerns. She is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to the Group Home staff whenever they need to consult regarding a placed child's treatment plan goals, or strategies or to assist them in ensuring the placed children's safety.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the Group Home continues to provide substantial permanence and stability for the focus children. The Group Home staff support the permanency goals that are established by the DCFS CSWs. The first focus child's permanency plan is Family Reunification with his mother and siblings. His mother is actively involved in his life and she is in close contact with the Group Home staff and his DCFS CSW. The second and third focus children are Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) placed under Extended Foster Care. The second focus child's permanency plan is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) with a plan to transition to living independently. The third focus child's permanency plan is Family Reunification with his maternal grandmother. The Group Home continues to assist the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by encouraging the focus children to participate in Independent Living Program (ILP) services and activities that promote self-sufficiency, such as shopping, meal preparation, and budgeting. The focus children have established positive relationships with family members/NREFMs, and key adult supporters, such as the Group Home staff and the Group Home therapist. The Group Home staff encourages the development of relationships between each placed child and a "primary" staff member who is responsible for ensuring each placed child has someone to provide support and assistance in addressing concerns. The first focus child stated that the Group Home is his first out-of-home placement and he feels that the Group Home provides a stable home for him. The second focus child said he considers the Group Home staff his family. He stated that the Group Home staff treats him with respect and he is happy he has the Group Home staff in his life to provide support and direction. He further shared that he had gotten into some trouble for engaging in inappropriate behavior in public that resulted in an arrest. He added that the Group Home staff attended his court hearings and the Group Home kept his bed available so he could return to the Group Home when he was released. The third focus child stated that he wants to remain at the Group Home until he reunifies with his maternal grandmother.

In the area of Visitation, the Group Home supports the maintenance of important connections for the placed children and that the placed children are visiting with family members/NREFMs and other key people in their lives. The Group Home staff is aware of the focus children's court visitation orders and supports their visitation plans. All three focus children have regular visits with their family members/NREFMs. The Group Home staff transports the first focus child to his mother's home and monitors the visits. The focus child also has regular



phone contact with his mother and siblings. The second focus child has unmonitored weekend visits with his mother and maternal grandmother at their residence. The focus child and the Group Home supervisor reported that this focus child recently initiated contact with his biological father and his half-siblings and has maintained regular telephone contact with them. The third focus child has weekend visits with his maternal grandmother at her home. Although the focus children are provided with bus passes, the Group Home provides transportation for them for visitation with their family members/NREFMs, as needed. The focus children reported that their visits are going well and that they look forward to the visits with their family members/NREFMs.

**PRACTICE INDICATORS**  
*(Measured over last 90 days)*

<b>Practice Indicators</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Service Needs</b>	<b>Assessment &amp; Linkages</b>	<b>Teamwork</b>	<b>Tracking &amp; Adjustment</b>
<b>2015-2016 Scores</b>	5	5	5	5	5
<b>2016-2017 Scores</b>	5	5	5	5	5

In the area of Engagement, the Group Home continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in making decisions. The Group Home staff maintains contact with the focus children’s family members/NREFMs and includes them in discussions and meetings regarding the focus children’s status and progress at the Group Home. The Group Home supervisor and the Group Home facility managers reported that they are in constant contact with the DCFS CSWs and the DPO and provide updates regarding progress the focus children are making toward achieving their treatment plan goals. The Group Home staff members hold daily group meetings with the placed children and include the placed children in the planning of weekly outings, recreational events, and other activities to improve the placed children’s lives at the Group Home. The first focus child reported that he speaks with the Group Home therapist any time he needs to and she willingly listens to his concerns and gives him positive feedback. The second focus child reported that he appreciates that a Group Home staff attends his court hearings with him and he is happy that he resides at the Group Home. The third focus child’s DPO reported that the Group Home staff members are always very responsive when she needs to obtain information regarding the focus child’s progress and conduct. The third focus child reported that the Group Home staff treats him fairly and he gets along well with them.

In the areas of Service Needs and Assessment & Linkages, there continues to be a good array of services available to the focus children. The focus children participate in a community program called Children Helping Each Other Learn and Achieve (CHELA) Project. This program is geared toward developing children’s social skills through participation in community projects. The focus children also receive independent living services through the CHELA Project. The focus children are assessed weekly and linked to appropriate services to address their behavioral and mental health needs. The Group Home therapist meets with each focus child individually on a weekly basis. All three focus children are enrolled in the

local fitness gym. The first focus child is receiving family therapy at the Group Home; he is working on strengthening his relationship with his biological mother and siblings. He is a very skilled artist; he likes to draw and the Group Home has enrolled him in a local art class. The second focus child is on the Board of Directors of the CHELA Project. He is also enrolled in a treatment program in the community city to assist him in addressing behavioral issues and to work toward transitioning to living independently. According to his DCFS CSW, the Group Home manager is assisting her in enrolling the focus child in Job Corp. prior to his discharge from the Group Home. The third focus child is on probation and is currently enrolled in an off-grounds treatment program to address behavior concerns. The third focus child reported that he plays basketball and soccer at the local YMCA.

In the area of Teamwork, the Group Home staff makes substantial efforts to work as a team with the focus children, their DCFS CSWs, DPO, family members/NREFMs, and other community service providers. The Group Home staff holds regular team meetings to discuss the focus children's treatment plan goals, progress, behaviors, quality of family visits, their daily routines, completion of chores, off-ground outings, as well as other concerns the placed children may have. The first focus child shared that team meetings, which are geared toward strengthening his relationship with his biological mother, have included his biological mother, his DCFS CSW, the Group Home therapist, and the Group Home facility manager. According to his DCFS CSW, the meetings are beneficial and she has seen progress made toward Family Reunification. The second focus child's DCFS CSW reported that she usually sets up the team meetings, which include herself, the Group Home therapist, the Group Home facility manager, family members/NREFMs, and the focus child. The focus of these team meetings is to address behavioral concerns and preparing the second focus child to transition out of care. The third focus child's DPO reported that she and the Group Home facility manager work collaboratively to schedule the team meetings to address the focus child's progress, behavioral concerns, and Family Reunification with his grandmother.

In the area of Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home tracks the focus children's progress to ensure that services and support provided reflect the focus children's needs. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the Group Home staff and the DCFS CSWs or the DPO. The Group Home continues to develop the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) goals, which are tracked and modified when needed by the Group Home therapist, in collaboration with the Group Home staff, the DCFS CSWs or the DPO. In addition, the Group Home therapist maintains a log in which she tracks the placed children's progress, concerns, and goals. The Group Home staff can refer to the therapist's log to help them to better understand the placed children's behaviors. The focus children reported that the Group Home staff discuss their case plan goals with them and give them the opportunity to provide input. The DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that the Group Home therapist contacts them regularly for their input when the focus children's treatment plan goals require modification.

## **NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES**

In March 2017, the OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the CAD's FY 2016-2017 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service

Delivery, Personal Needs/Survival and Economic Well-Being, and Discharged Children. Technical support addressed ensuring Special Incident Reports (SIRs) are documented in the placed children's NSPs, case files are properly reported via the I-Track system, and that Initial and Updated NSPs are developed timely and accurately. Additionally, technical support addressed ensuring that the placed children are provided with their own personal hygiene items, have adequate clothing, and are discharged in accordance with their NSP permanency plan or to a lower level of care.

In March 2017, 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 nine focus areas; therefore, a QIP was not required of the Group Home. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to the Group Home, as needed.