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July 13, 2017

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

From: *for Cynthia McCoy Nalle*  
Brandon T. Nichols  
Acting Director

**PENNY LANE 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 Penny Lane Group Home (the Group Home) in January 2017. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has nine sites located in the Third Supervisorial District and two sites in the Fifth Supervisorial District 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 each child with an individualized treatment needs and services plan that will address and successfully treat a child's presenting problems and ensure the child's safety, permanency and well-being."

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.

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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  
Ivelise Markovits, Executive Director, Penny Lane Group Home  
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**PENNY LANE 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 Penny Lane 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 two DCFS placed children and one Probation placed youth, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), one Deputy Probation Officer (DPO), one service provider, and three Group Home staff members.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served 31 DCFS placed children and 47 Probation placed youth; their overall average length of placement was three months. The focus children's average number of placements was five, their overall average length of placement was nine months, and their average age was 16. 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) FY 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, 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>	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.
<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>	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.

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 April 2016, and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In July 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 this area. Based on the following information, it appears that the Group Home showed improvement in the area of Safety, and the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine areas of their FY 2016-2017 QAR.

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

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
<b>2015-2016 Scores</b>	4	5	5	5
<b>2016-2017 Scores</b>	6	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that the Group Home had implemented the FY 2015-2016 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the quality of care provided to the placed children in its care. During the last QAR, the Group Home scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety due to increased reports of substance abuse-related incidents and an open Child Abuse/Neglect referral in which a placed child reported that some of the placed children were possibly dealing drugs at the Group Home. To address the concerns, the Group Home began to work closely with substance abuse rehabilitation programs to provide the placed children with timely services to address issues of illicit substance use and consumption at the Group Home.

As part of the Group Home's focus on Safety, the Group Home trained its staff in recognizing harmful behaviors such as, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, Absence Without Leave (AWOL), and other situations that could place the children at risk. For

example, the Group Home administrator reported that they assess each placed child's maturity level and their ability to manage electronics, including internet access, on a monthly basis for safety concerns or the need to remove internet/phone access. The Group Home provides a supporting and caring environment and encourages the placed children to communicate freely with the Group Home staff and with their Group Home therapists. The focus children concurred that the Group Home staff make them feel safe and comfortable. The Group Home staff reported that they are provided with ongoing training on following child safety-related protocols and procedures. The DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported no child safety concerns, adding that the Group Home staff communicates with them quickly and consistently shares information regarding the focus children.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the Group Home continues to provide good quality services and stability to the focus children. The Group Home continues to assist the placed children in reaching their permanency goals by providing therapeutic services. For the first focus child, whose permanency plan is Family Reunification (FR), the focus child reported participating in individual and conjoint therapeutic services with his family members/NREFMs. The Group Home supports the focus children in reaching their permanency goals of Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) by preparing them for independence through life skills training, including personal care and grooming, cooking, money management, and additional independent living skills-building programs. The second and third focus children, whose permanency plan is PPLA, reported that they are benefiting from the independent living skills they are learning and that they feel better equipped to handle life's challenges. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters, such as family members/NREFMs, the Group Home staff, and the Group Home therapist. The DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that the Group Home staff immediately addresses their respective focus children's behavioral issues and needs, therefore contributing greatly to the focus children's placement stability.

**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 OHCMD found that the Group Home continues making good efforts to establish a rapport between the focus children, family members/NREFMs, and service providers. The Group Home administrator reported that they provide a caring and supportive atmosphere to ensure that the focus children feel heard and respected. Additionally, the Group Home staff provides a venue for the focus children to express their opinions and needs during their weekly Group Home team meetings with the Group Home staff and the Group Home administrators. The focus children agreed that the Group Home



staff are approachable and make them feel comfortable. The DCFS CSWs and the DPO for the focus children reported that the Group Home staff continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in the decision-making process.

In the areas of Service Needs and Assessment & Linkages, the Group Home continues to make good efforts to identify the focus children's service needs and match them with pertinent services. For example, the first focus child, whose permanency goal is FR, had been participating in individual therapy twice a week and group therapy once a week. The Group Home held conjoint family therapy sessions once a month and provided an avenue for this placed child and his family members/NREFMs to express their feelings and reach an understanding. In February 2017, the focus child reunified with his family. For the second and third focus children, whose permanency plan is PPLA, the Group Home provides them with individual and group therapy, psychiatric services and medication monitoring, and substance abuse diversion programs. Additionally, the focus children participate in programs that will teach them self-care and independent living skills. The Group Home administrator reported that the Group Home staff members are committed to working with the focus children to help them improve their behavior and achieve their treatment plan goals.

In the area of Teamwork, the focus children meet regularly with their therapists, and participate in team meetings to assist in the development of their treatment plans and to evaluate their progress towards meeting their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The Group Home therapists reported that they collaborate with the DCFS CSWs and DPO, the focus children, the children's family members/NREFMs, and their respective service providers to develop the NSPs for the focus children, assess the focus children's needs through a review of case plans and school reports, and to determine the best interventions available to assist the focus children to function effectively in their daily settings.

In the area of Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home staff monitors and tracks the focus children's progress. The focus children are assessed weekly and linked to appropriate services by their respective Group Home therapists. The Group Home staff members contribute to the assessment of the focus children's needs by sharing their daily observations and reports. The Group Home staff expressed having clear understanding of the focus children's strengths and needs and committed their efforts to help the focus children progress and succeed at the Group Home. Additionally, adjustments and modifications are made to the children's case plan and treatment plan goals when it is determined that adjustments to the proposed plans could better benefit the focus children.

## **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. The OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support on how the Group Home can prevent or lower the likelihood of Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) citations.

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.