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September 11, 2017

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
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From: *for Cynthia McCoy Miller*
Brandon T. Nichols
Acting Director

MARYVALE 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 Maryvale Group Home (the Group Home) in August 2016. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has one site located in the First Supervisorial District that provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to create a healthy, therapeutic milieu in which each individual child is able to grow physically, emotionally, educationally and spiritually."

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 October 2016, 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 nine focus areas of the QAR.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

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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
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Terri L. McDonald, Chief Probation Officer
Steven Gunther, Executive Director, Maryvale Group Home
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**MARYVALE 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 Maryvale Group Home (the Group Home) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017 in August 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, (two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) placed children, and one Probation youth), two DCFS Children's Social Workers (CSWs), one Los Angeles County Probation Department Deputy Probation Officer (DPO), four Group Home staff members, and one service provider.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served 34 DCFS placed children and three Probation children; their overall average length of placement was 27 months. The focus children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was two years 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 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>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.</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>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.</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.
<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.

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

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<p>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.</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>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.</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.
<p>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.</p>	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 August 2015, and noted that the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas. In December 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss that QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support to address methods for maintaining their level of service. Based on the following information, it appears that the Group Home maintained an acceptable level of service in all nine focus areas of their FY 2016-2017 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	5	5
2016-2017 Scores	6	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that the Group Home continues to score at the optimal level. None of the focus children have shown any suicidal behaviors, or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors in the last 30 days. The Group Home staff reported that they are provided with monthly training on a variety of topics, such as trauma focused healing, child safety, conflict resolution, communication, and suicidal ideation. The focus children's DCFS CSWs and DPO reported that they have no concerns regarding the focus children's safety at the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs and DPO also reported that the Group Home Case Manager follows procedures and protocols related to reporting special incidents appropriately to all required parties to ensure child safety. The first focus child reported that she has resided in the Group Home for almost four years and that the Group Home staff, who helped raise her, make her feel safe. The second and third focus children reported feeling safe in the Group Home.

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 staff develop goals and services that correspond to the identified DCFS case plan for each of the focus children. The Group Home residential counselor reported that whether the permanency plan is Family Reunification or not, they will make efforts toward maintaining permanent family connections by encouraging telephone contact with family members/NREFMs when possible. The first focus child's permanency goal is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA). The Group Home staff supports her in reaching her permanency goal of PPLA in preparing her for self-sufficiency by offering Life Skills classes. The Life Skills classes include teaching her and all the placed children how to do their laundry and how to cook for themselves. The second focus child is receiving Family Reunification services with her biological mother. The Group Home staff encourage her to have weekly telephone contact with her mother in an effort to improve their relationship. The third focus child's permanency goal is PPLA and Legal Guardianship with her former teacher is being explored. None of the focus children have experienced any placement disruptions since being placed at the Group Home. The focus children report that they have established positive relationships with the Group Home staff and their Special Friends. Special Friends are Group Home volunteers that visit and mentor the placed children.

In the area of Visitation, the OHCMD found that the Group Home continues to ensure that the placed children maintain contact with their family members/NREFMs. Specifically, the Group Home Case Manager coordinates with the DCFS CSWs and DPO to ensure that the visitation orders with family members/NREFMs are met and to ensure that visits occur in accordance with everyone's schedules. The Group Home staff reported that they transport and monitor visitation for all placed children. The Group Home also utilizes "Pinks", a transportation company, to transport the placed children's parents to the Group Home for visitation. If the visits are unexpectedly canceled, the Group Home Case Manager and/or the

Group Home therapist discuss the missed visit with the placed child and allow them to express their feelings. The first focus child's mother is deceased, and her father resides out-of-state; therefore, she does not have any visits with her biological parents. However, she has an adult sister that visits her sporadically at the Group Home. As a result, the Group Home Case Manager arranged for a Special Friend to visit and mentor her. The second focus child also reported she enjoys her bi-monthly visits with her Special Friend. The third focus child reported that the Group Home staff facilitates weekend visits with her brother, former teacher, and former foster mother by providing her with transportation, tokens and/or cash for public transportation, or taxi coupons.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2016-2017 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the area of Engagement, the OHCMD found that the Group Home staff continue to maintain regular contact with the DCFS CSWs and the placed children's family members/NREFMs. The Group Home staff encourage the DCFS CSWs to phone in during monthly team meetings if they are unable to be present. All of the focus children reported that they consider the Group Home staff and Special Friends their mentors and people they can count on. The Group Home Residential Case Manager stated that the placed children identify their respective key people in order to begin the engagement process. The Group Home Supervisor stated that communication between the placed child, DCFS CSW, DPO and the Group Home staff promotes the engagement process. The Senior Director of Residential Services stated that the annual "Friends and Family" picnic is one means through which the Group Home develops outreach and engagement strategies to build a working partnership with the placed children and their respective DCFS CSWs or DPO. This event is an opportunity to build a working partnership between the placed children, the community and the Group Home staff.

In the area of Service Needs, the OHCMD found that the Group Home intervention strategies identified in the Case Plan and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) match the services that are being provided to the focus children. The DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that NSPs and all monthly, quarterly, and annual reports are updated and shared with all parties in a timely manner. The focus children report that they meet with their therapist on a weekly basis and that they are also able to meet with their respective therapist whenever additional therapeutic support is needed. The focus children report that they are provided with personal care supplies at intake, on a monthly basis thereafter and then upon request. The first focus child reported that the Group Home staff provide her with all her needs, including: educational, special care, treatment, health, dental, and mental health services. The second focus child reported that the Group Home assists her in reaching her academic goals by providing

weekly tutoring. The third focus child reported that the Group Home Dependency Counselor supports her by providing her with weekly drug testing and counseling.

In the area of Assessment & Linkages, the OHCMD found that the Group Home has a good understanding of the placed children's functioning and their need for support systems. Depending on the children's individual needs and interests, the Group Home staff make efforts to link the focus children to available services in the community. The Group Home Senior Director of Residential Services stated that the residential counselors observe and assess the placed children daily to determine their strengths and needs. The Residential Counselor stated that knowing and understanding the placed children strengths, needs and preferences facilitates a bonding relationship. All of the focus children reported that they are allowed to participate in extracurricular activities of their choice. For example, the second focus child's DPO reported that she worked with the Group Home staff to enroll the focus child in a school within her district, but not her home school, so that she could participate in a competitive basketball team.

In the areas of Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for them. The focus children reported they are comfortable requesting team meetings and voicing dissatisfaction with their progress. The focus children also reported that their family members/NREFMs are encouraged to participate in their team meetings and self-sufficiency meetings. The Group Home's Group Supervisor reported that she surveys the placed children anonymously in order to determine if they are satisfied with their team's functioning. The Group Home therapist reported that she communicates and collaborates with the Group Home Case Manager, the DCFS CSWs, and DPO so she knows what to work on during therapy sessions. This collaboration also includes discussing the focus children's progress to track whether the focus children are meeting their case plan goals. Adjustments to the services being provided will be made, when needed to ensure that the focus children achieve their case plan goals. The focus children report they have a good connection with the Group Home staff that works directly with them to build healthy relationships, set up short/long term goals, and discuss their progress.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2016, 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 Facility and Environment and Personal Rights and Social/Emotional Well-Being. Technical support was provided on how the Group Home can maintain appropriate and comprehensive monetary, clothing, and sign in/out logs; and on making snacks available and accessible to the placed children.

In October 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 of maintaining their current level of care. The Group Home scored at the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas; therefore, the Group Home did not require a QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation, as needed.