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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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August 29, 2016

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

**DAVID AND MARGARET YOUTH AND FAMILY 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 David and Margaret Youth and Family Services Group Home (the Group Home) in May 2016. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has one site located in the Fifth Supervisorial District. The Group Home 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 provide a safe and structured environment for remediation and treatment of presenting symptoms of adolescent girls who have histories of abuse, neglect, or delinquent behavior."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency, and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Group Home's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In July 2016, 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 for maintaining the current level of services. 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 9 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.

PLB:KR  
KDR:rds

**Attachments**

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer  
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee  
Calvin C. Remington, Interim Chief Probation Officer  
Charles Rich, Executive Director, David and Margaret Youth and Family Services  
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division  
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**DAVID AND MARGARET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES 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 David and Margaret Youth and Family Services Group Home (the Group Home) in May 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, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and three Group Home staff members.

At the time of the QAR, the Group Home served 21 DCFS placed children. The focus children's average number of placements was five, their overall average length of placement was five months and their average age was 15. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review.

**QAR SCORING**

The Group Home received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, and interviews with the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
<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, 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.

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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	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability 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	6 - Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections	Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained 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	6 - Optimal Engagement Efforts	To an optimal degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable) and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that excellent efforts are being used.

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	6 - Optimal Supports and Services	An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are substantially helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
<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	6 - Optimal Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood. Knowledge necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is continuously updated.
<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	6 - Optimal Teamwork	The team contains all of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed an excellent, consistent 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	6 - Optimal Tracking and Adjustment Process	Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are highly responsive and appropriate to changing conditions. Continuous monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the Group Home in May 2015, and noted that 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 9 focus areas of the QAR. In August 2015, 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 maintaining and improving their level of service. Based on the information below, it appears that the Group Home maintained an acceptable level of service in all 9 focus areas of their 2015-2016 QAR.

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

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
<b>2014-2015 Scores</b>	6	5	6	6
<b>2015-2016 Scores</b>	6	5	6	6

In the area of Safety, the Group Home scored at the optimal level. The Group Home has a mandatory safety plan orientation at the time of intake that each placed child attends and actively participates in developing their individualized safety plan. The Group Home's internal Safety Plan program's objective is for each placed child to commit to not obtaining an absence without leave (AWOL) from the facility by discussing the dangers associated with AWOL behaviors. In addition, the Group Home staff assists the placed children in providing their input on what would make them feel safe. The input of the placed children is then incorporated into their case plans. The Group Home also talks to and cautions the placed children regarding the recruitment tactics and the trafficking of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The Group Home also provides information from several services (Crisis Support and Assistance) that are available at the Group Home to assist the placed children in adjusting to living in the Group Home.

The Group Home's internal Safety Plan program includes keeping continuous contact with each placed child. The Group Home staff performs a visual check every 15 minutes and this information is logged and made available to the Group Home staff. The Group Home provides additional support to the cottage counselors through their Intervention Office which provides supervision of staff on duty and provides crisis management services to residents after hours, weekends, and holidays. The Group Home staff is equipped with walkie-talkies and cellular phones that are used to monitor the activity of the placed children at the Group Home. The Group Home staff will follow and engage any placed child leaving the Group Home campus unauthorized and report the information to the Group Home campus for needed action.

The focus children reported that they feel safe and comfortable in their Group Home. The focus children stated that the Group Home staff are always around and make themselves available to speak with them and that the Group Home staff actively work to keep the Group Home a safe place to live. The Group Home staff reported that the Group Home Program Director provides them with ongoing trainings which include addressing current issues that arise in the Group Home in addition to standard training requirements. The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home staff communicates with them promptly and consistently shares information regarding the focus children with them.

In the areas of Permanency, Placement Stability, and Visitation, the OHCMD found that the Group Home continues to provide excellent services and stability to the focus children. The Group Home's programs extend from Transitional Shelter Care (temporary shelter placement up to 72 hours), Emergency Shelter Care (temporary 30-day placement), Residential Services, Foster Family Agency and Adoption Programs, and Transitional Youth Housing Programs. The Group Home's multiple placement programs provides for a stable continuum of care and services for the placed children in their facilities and significantly reduces the risk of placement disruption. Family Reunification is the case plan for all three focus children.

The first focus child is to be reunified with her mother at the next Court date. The Group Home has supported her plan by providing transportation to her overnight weekend visits with her mother. The Group Home also provided the family therapy for the focus child and her mother. The Group Home attends the team meetings with the focus child, her mother, and the DCFS CSW to discuss and track the progress of the reunification goal. The second focus child was previously placed with a certified foster parent and the case plan is to return her to the home of her former certified foster mother. The Group Home provides transportation to and from visits with the certified foster mother and sister who resides in the home. The Group Home has also provided emancipation/life skills workshops as the focus child stated in the team meetings with her DCFS CSW that she may seek to emancipate from the Group Home if she is not reunified with her previous certified foster mother. The third focus child's case plan is to be reunified with her mother. The Group Home provides family therapy for the mother and focus child as well as transportation for the focus child as needed for visits. The Group Home staff attends the team meetings with the focus child, her mother, and DCFS CSW to discuss and track progress of the permanency goal.

The focus children reported that they have established positive relationships with the Group Home key adult supporters such as the Group Home staff and their Group Home therapist. One focus child stated that she enjoys the support of her mentor that the Group Home connected her with. The focus children reported that they are encouraged to have regular telephone contact with friends and family members/NREFMs. The focus children also reported that they are allowed community passes so they can spend free time with their friends.

There have been no placement disruptions for the three focus children while at the Group Home or at school. The focus children have been able to resolve minor conflicts by talking with the Group Home staff in their cottages and their therapist. The Group Home staff meets with each DCFS CSW during their monthly visit to discuss the placed child's individual plans and placement. The DCFS CSWs reported that they did not have any concerns about the focus children's placement stability at the Group Home.

In a continuing effort to enhance the quality of services to the placed children, the Group Home hired an internal full time Quality Improvement/Assurance Coordinator who will track on a quarterly basis how well the Group Home is performing and how they can improve in the area of Permanency.

**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>2014-2015 Scores</b>	6	6	6	6	6
<b>2015-2016 Scores</b>	6	6	6	6	6

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home continues to make excellent efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for them. The Group Home's engagement process consists of the Group Home communicating with the placed children, DCFS CSWs, parents, family members/NREFMs and anyone who is important to the children to address the assessed needs of the placed children. The Group Home offers family visits during the weekends twice a month on their campus to meet and engage the placed children, their family members/NREFMs and friends. The Group Home offers several services at their facility that allows them to assess the strengths and needs of the placed children as well as maintain excellent working relationships with the placed children. An example of some of the programs are therapy (individual, group, and family), 1:1 skill coaching (building self-esteem, conflict resolution, employment preparation), Life Skill Development, Nutritional Assistance-Guidance, tutoring, and recreational activities. The Group Home staff shares the necessary information on a weekly basis via telephone, face-to-face contacts and e-mails with the DCFS

CSWs. The focus children reported that they trust and have a good connection with many of the Group Home staff that provide services and supervises them.

The Group Home provides a number of residential program supports and services that fully match the intervention strategies identified for the focus children. The Group Home ensures that each placed child receives two or more services and supports that address the goals of their Needs and Services Plans (NSPs). All of the focus children stated that their needs were being met by the Group Home. The Group Home Chief Program Officer stated that over the past year, through a focus group with the placed children, the following changes to their program were made based on their input which included increasing the monthly clothing allotment and increasing money for hair care/personal items. The Group Home has also added Netflix accounts for the cottages and one laptop for each cottage to be used for homework. The Group Home continues to work on providing services and supports for all of the placed children at the facility. The Group Home implemented an evidenced based sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and pregnancy prevention program called "Be Proud, Be Responsible." The Group Home also started a work readiness trainee program for residents to gain work experience in their recreation department and retail store.

The Group Home staff reviews and documents the focus children's needs and strengths weekly in order to ensure they are linked to the proper resources to assist them in performing successfully in their daily environments. The second focus child was not completing her homework assignments and was in danger of being transferred from public high school to the Group Home Non-Public School. The Group Home staff and the public high school counselor met with the focus child to discuss her educational needs. The second focus child was provided counseling and tutoring and is now on track to graduate next year. The Group Home staff also encourages the placed children to complete a self-assessment by using the Daily Point Sheet which tracks their progress on their case plan goals. The Group Home facility managers along with the Group Home child care workers review the focus children's status on a daily basis. DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home stays in regular contact with them in regards to the progress and adjustment of the focus children. The Group Home staff invites the focus children, their DCFS CSW, and family members/NREFMs to participate in team meetings twice a month. During the team meetings, the participants provide their input with regard to the services being provided to the focus children and will make adjustments to the services and/or identify additional services needed.

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

A 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review has not been posted for the Group Home.

In July 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 maintaining their current level of services. The Group Home did not require a QIP as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas of the QAR. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the Group Home as needed.