

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS SHEILA KUEHL AND
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December 1, 2015

When a child must be removed from his or her home, it is the charge of the Los Angeles County Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation to find an appropriate placement for that child, such as in the home of a relative, foster parent or in a group home. Currently, DCFS and Probation contract with 65 providers across the County to care for approximately 1,052 children in group homes. To ensure the quality of their care and the appropriate use of public funds, these contracts include provisions allowing DCFS, Probation and the Auditor-Controller to monitor and audit these group homes. Together, these activities form a rigorous system of program and fiscal oversight and compliance.

~~Recently, as a result of a call to the County Fraud Hotline, the Auditor-Controller became aware of the use of non-contracted group homes.~~ In instances when a Children’s Social Worker has exhausted all other options and cannot find a suitable placement with a contracted provider, he or she may obtain approval to place the child with a non-contracted group home, according to DCFS policy. In May 2015, 17 such agencies were providing care for 41 children.

MOTION

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~~In response to the Hotline call, the Auditor-Controller attempted to investigate an allegation made against one of these homes, but the group home's executive management refused to cooperate with the investigation. Because the County had no actual contract with the facility, it had no authority to access records or information.~~

~~As a result,~~ On November 16, 2015, the Auditor-Controller released a report detailing their findings on the use of non-contracted group homes. These non-contracted homes are licensed by the California Department of Social Services, and the State regularly monitors them. However, the review identified a number of opportunities for improving the accountability over the use of these homes, as well as setting out a process through which group homes may contract with the County.

As an additional precaution, the Children's Group Home Ombudsman within the Auditor-Controller, acting as a personal rights advocate, visited the majority of these facilities to ensure that the children, many of whom are non-verbal, knew their rights to access their services.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Children and Family Services, in consultation with County Counsel, to determine the feasibility of streamlining, expediting and improving the existing process for contracting with licensed group home providers. This may include the feasibility of establishing an open, continuous process for evaluating statements of qualifications from the prospective group home contractors, and adding qualified new contractors to DCFS' list of contracted providers.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation, in consultation with County Counsel, implement the recommendations included in the Auditor-Controller's November 2015 report, as set forth below. In addition, effective immediately, the Departments shall provide regular reports on

implementation, as well as updates on the number of children placed in non-contracted group homes to the Children's Audit Committee.

1. Update and revise departmental policies and procedures for placing children with non-contracted group homes, including provisions that such placements shall only be made when mandated by the Court or after completing an appropriate search for a suitable relative or contracted placement and finding that none is available, and that such placements should be temporary and limited in duration until a suitable relative or contracted placement is available.
2. Ensure that all Children's Social Workers, supervisors, and management are trained on the revised policy and procedures for placing children with a non-contracted agency.
3. Develop controls to ensure that non-contracted placements are appropriately tracked, monitored, and periodically reported to executive management.
4. Establish a process to periodically review each placement in a non-contracted group home, to determine whether there is a suitable contracted placement available, and ensure that children are transitioned to contracted placements timely.
5. Review the placements discussed in this report and other non-contracted placements, identify any policy or administrative violations, and take appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action.
6. Have Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) management ensure that prior to placing a child with an agency, the agency has a current Rate Classification Level established and authorized by the California

Department of Social Services, as required by the Non-Contracted DCFS Placements Policy #0100-510.35. Also ensure that the level of the placement is appropriate for the child, and that justification for the level is adequately documented.

7. Work with County Counsel to create a new placement agreement or a supplemental form that strengthens program and fiscal requirements for non-contracted group homes and ensure that a proper system of accountability and monitoring exists over non-contracted group homes where County children are placed.
8. Update the Children's Group Home Ombudsman (Ombudsman) monthly on any non-contracted group home placements, to ensure that placed children are aware of the Ombudsman and know how to access the services and assistance of that office.
9. Ensure that Special Incident Reports completed by non-contracted group homes are entered and tracked in the Department's web-based Incident Tracking (iTrack) System.