County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

Board of Supervisors
HILDA L. SOLIS
First District
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District
SHEILA KUEHL
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

October 9, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Hilda Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

SAND HILL 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 Sand Hill Group Home (the Group Home) in October 2014. The Group Home has one site located on the Second Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its purpose is "to provide services to court dependent seriously emotionally disturbed and chronic run away children."

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 7 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus areas of Safety and Teamwork.

The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In April 2015, the OHCMD quality assurance reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support to address methods for improvement in the areas of Safety and Teamwork.

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

PLB:EM:KR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi Hamai, Interim Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Gene Brown, Sand Hill Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

SAND HILL GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a quality assurance review (QAR) of Sand Hill Group Home (the Group Home) in October 2014. 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 reviewer focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the reviewer 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 focus children, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), one Group Home child care worker and one Group Home administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was three months and their average age was fifteen. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the 2014-2015 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 child. The minimum acceptable score is six in the area of Safety and five in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Safety - The degree to which the Group Home ensures that the child is free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	5	**Good Safety Status** - The child generally and substantially avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and is generally free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement.
Permanency - The degree to which the child is living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the child reaches adulthood, or the child is in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the child, the Group Home staff, caregivers and CSW, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - Child has minimally acceptable to fair permanence. The child lives in a family setting that the child, GH staff, caseworker, and team members expect will endure until the child reaches maturity. Reunification or Permanency goals are being fully supported by the Group Home.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the Group Home ensures that the child's daily living, learning, and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions and known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption.	5	5	**Good Stability** - The child has substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting over the past 12 months with none in the past six months. Any known risks are now well-controlled.
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/NREFM through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff working with the child, biological family, extended family and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to focus on the child strengths and needs.	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home, staff, DCFS CSW, and the child/youth feel heard and respected.
Service Needs - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the child, work toward ensuring the child's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the child's unique needs.	5	5	**Good Supports & Services** - A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are generally helping the child make progress toward planned outcomes. A usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the child and family understand the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and underlying issues and services are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5	**Good Assessment and Understanding** - The child's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the child's strengths, needs, and preferences is frequently updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are substantially recognized and well understood.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the child and family, have formed a working team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.	5	4	**Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork** - The team contains some of the important supporters and decision makers in the child's life, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together; at least one face-to-face team meeting has been held to develop plans.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree, to which the Group Home staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is 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 child are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking, and communication of child status and service results to the team are occurring. Generally successful adaptations are based on a basic knowledge of what things are working and not working for the child.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provides good permanence for the focus children. The Group Home makes efforts to collaborate with the DCFS CSWs and the focus children to assist in the determination of the best permanent plan for the focus children. The permanency goals that are established by the DCFS CSW is supported by the Group Home.

The DCFS CSWs indicated that the Group Home is supportive and works toward maintaining family ties for the focus children. Permanent Planned Living Arrangement is the permanency plan for both of the focus children and the Group Home supports the plan by ensuring that each focus child maintains an appropriate relationship with an adult who is able to provide a lifelong connection.

One of the focus children maintains contact with a relative who is unable to be a permanency option for him at this time; however the relative remains an important lifelong connection for the focus child. The focus child has a court appointed special advocate (CASA) who visits with him regularly and the Group Home supports this relationship. The second focus child maintains regular contact with his family. The Group Home supports this connection by allowing him to obtain community passes and providing transportation for visits when needed. The Group Home is assisting the focus child in the area of self-sufficiency by providing training in various areas and discussing possible options with the focus child including transitional housing.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home provided substantial placement stability for the two focus children. The Group Home staff socializes and interacts with the children on a daily basis; both the staff and the focus children have developed a positive relationship. The focus children reported having positive connections with the Group Home staff. One of the focus children indicated that he liked being in the Group Home because the staff were nice to him and the other focus child indicated that he liked it and that he got along well with the other boys in the home.

In order to establish positive relationships with the children placed in the Group Home, the staff members take the time to talk with the focus children and all other placed children to see how they are doing. One strategy that the Group Home uses to maintain stability is a points system to encourage positive behavior from the focus children. With the points system, the focus children's positive behavior is rewarded with extra privileges such as increased allowance, later bedtimes and curfew.

Neither of the focus children have had any recent disruptions since being placed in the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children indicated that there is constant communication with the Group Home and that the Group Home has been a stable placement.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home has established and maintained family connections for both focus children through their support of visitation. The Group Home staff engages the DCFS CSWs and children in discussing the court visitation orders to ensure everyone has the same understanding regarding visitation. The Group Home is able to monitor visits for the focus children and their families of important lifelong connections; and displays flexibility with visitation time and location to enable visits to be convenient for all parties.

The Group Home provides community passes and arranges transportation for the focus children when needed. One of the focus children has unmonitored visits with a relative every weekend. This focus child stated that he enjoys visiting with his relative. The focus child's Wraparound team assists the Group Home with arranging transportation for visits. When visits cannot occur, the Group Home shows support for maintaining family connections by ensuring the children have the opportunity to maintain telephone contact. The second focus child maintains regular telephone contact with relatives and has monitored visits with family members which occur sporadically. This focus child also has regular visits with his CASA. During the QAR, it was learned that the focus child was not having visits with a sibling who is also in placement. This was brought to the attention of the Group Home administrator who was unaware of this issue and stated that he would work with the DCFS CSW to ensure visits occurred. The Group Home would work in conjunction with the DCFS CSW to coordinate visits with the sibling's caregivers. Subsequently, there have been face to face visits between the focus child and his sibling.

What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement)

Safety (5 Good Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The Group Home's safety status was good. The Group Home administration makes sure that the focus children feel safe in placement. The focus children were free from daily harm in their daily settings. The focus children reported that the Group Home is a safe place to live and they feel safe in placement. The focus children reported that the Group Home staff give them space when needed and that they feel comfortable talking to staff when they need someone to listen.

Although the focus children, the Group Home staff and the DCFS CSWs all worked together to ensure child safety, the Group Home fell below the minimum score of six in the area of Safety due to the Group Home not cross reporting a Special Incident Report (SIR) to OHCMD, which involved a vehicle striking the facility and causing structural damage. None of the children were injured.

The Group Home submitted a total of four SIRs through the ITrack database system during the past 30 days. The SIRs included one medical related incident, which occurred off-site, two assaultive behavior incidents by a child toward a caregiver and by a child toward another child and one runaway incident that involved law enforcement. None of the SIRs involved the focus children and the Group Home had no substantiated investigations from the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS).

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The Group Home has established and maintained good engagement efforts with the focus children and key parties. The Group Home has developed an open dialog regarding the well-being and progress of the focus children with the DCFS CSWs, relatives of the focus children and other professionals providing services.

Both focus children reported that they were heard and respected by the Group Home staff. Although one of the focus children reported that a Group Home administrator speaks to him in an abrupt tone, which he doesn't care for, he reported that the Group Home staff does take the time to hear him out and also help him with personal issues.

The Group Home has developed rapport with key parties and keeps them informed of issues impacting the focus children. DCFS CSWs reported that the communication with the Group Home staff was open and fluid. According to the Group Home administrator, the Group Home staff is available to talk with the DCFS CSWs during visits to the Group Home.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home provides the focus children with an array of services and extracurricular activities to help the focus children make progress toward their planned outcomes. Both of the focus children receive Wraparound and therapeutic services to assist them with any mental health issues that may arise. The focus children also participate in tutoring to enhance their academic functioning. There is a constant review of resources to ensure positive outcomes for the focus children. The focus children's DCFS CSWs report that they are able to give and receive feedback from the Group Home staff in relation to the needs of the focus children.

The Group Home provides Youth Development Services (YDS) for children that are age appropriate. The YDS component of the Group Home program is geared toward assisting older children in moving toward self sufficiency. One focus child receives YDS services, which includes teaching the focus child how to utilize public transportation, shopping, meal preparation and maintaining personal hygiene.

Both of the focus children reported that the services they receive from the Group Home meets their needs. One of the focus children indicated that the therapy he receives has helped him manage his anger and to stay in control.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. The focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized and understood by the Group Home and all key parties. The services being provided such as Wraparound, therapy, tutoring and YDS are geared to assist the focus children toward making progress and improving their functioning and well-being.

The Group Home staff utilizes daily observation of and socialization with the focus children to gain a clear picture of the focus children's strengths and needs. One of the DCFS CSW reports that she and the Group Home take a team approach to determine what is best for the focus child. The second DCFS CSW states that the Group Home engages the focus child and shares pertinent information with the DCFS CSW.

The focus children reported that the Group Home staff interacts with them and inquires about their feelings and relationships with their families, peers and school. The focus children report that the Group Home staff regularly calls the school to check on their attendance and academic progress.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided generally reflect the focus children's needs. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the Group Home and the DCFS CSWs. The Group Home reviews the focus children's status on a daily basis. Daily progress notes of the focus children's behavior in and out of the Group Home is documented by the Group Home child care workers. The progress notes track the focus children's behaviors and well-being in the Group Home, at school and in the community. Reviews of daily progress notes are shared with team members.

The Group Home reconvenes members of the focus children's teams to review and modify the goals if necessary.

The Group Home staff meets and discusses how the focus children are working towards meeting their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The Group Home social worker meets with the focus children on a weekly basis. The NSPs are developed by the Group Home social worker in conjunction with the DCFS CSWs and the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs reported that goals and the focus children's progress towards those goals are discussed face to face on a monthly basis. In tracking one of the focus children's academic progresses, the Group Home found that he was not completing his homework assignment and his grades had dropped. The Group Home administrator intervened and arranged weekly tutoring for the focus child.

What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement)

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home involves some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team consists of the focus children, DCFS CSWs, the Group Home administrator, the Group Home social worker, Wraparound coordinator, Wraparound therapists and a relative for one of the focus children.

Each team has formed a fair working system that has communication between some of the team members who work collaboratively and contribute to the development of the focus children's case plans. However, this work is often done without input from the whole team as there are no face to face meetings which include all members. It appears that efforts are not being made by the Group Home to pull together a team meeting which includes all key parties.

Although one of the focus children indicated that he can ask for changes if he is not satisfied with how his team operates, and that he always has a say in what happens on his team; the second focus child reported that he has not participated in any face to face team meetings. The DCFS CSWs reported that there has not been a face to face team meeting with all of the key parties.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In October 2014, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to NSPs and Personnel Records findings indicated in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review. Technical Support was provided on timeliness and comprehensiveness of the NSPs; and documentation in personnel records.

In April 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 addressing methods on improving in the areas of Safety and Teamwork. The Group Home submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide on-going technical support, training, and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.

Sand Hill Group Home, Inc.

May 6, 2015

Greta Walters, Children's Services Administrator I
County of Los Angeles
Department of Children and Family Services
Contract Services Bureau; Out-of-Care Management Division
FFA/GH Quality Assurance Review Section
9350 Telstar Ave, CA #216
El Monte, CA 91731

RE: Quality Improvement Plan

Sand Hill Group Home will improve the quality in the following areas:

The cross reporting in all SIRs will be verified by Child Care Worker, Damaine Reed and Administrator, Aubrey Manuel. Each SIR will be printed out and reviewed by the Child Care Worker and the Administrator. If an error is discovered in the cross reporting, a SIR addendum to the original SIR shall be made immediately, correcting the cross reporting error made in the original SIR. The corrected SIR shall be submitted immediately and the affected reporting parties shall be notified by telephone. The phone call shall be documented on the Incident report attached with the SIR. The Administrator will ensure that this entire procedure is implemented by the effective date of May 1, 2015.

While the clients meet with CSW and therapist on a monthly and weekly basis, respectively, there will be a minimum of one team meeting each quarter with all parties involved in the client's case plan. The parties will include: Client, CSW, Group Home staff, therapist, and Wraparound team. The Administrator, Aubrey Manuel will ensure this happens, effective May 15, 2015.

With the above plan being implemented, the quality of service provided to our clients will continue to improve.

Aubrey Manuel
Administrator

Cc: Gene Brown, Executive Director

12108 S. Normandie Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90044
(323) 777-5588 • (323) 777-7821 Fax