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November 24, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

PROJECT SIX GROUP HOME DBA THE HELP GROUP 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 Project Six Group Home dba The Help Group (the Group Home) in December 2014. The Group Home has one site located in the Third Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth, as well as children placed through various school districts and private placements from various counties. According to the Group Home's program statement, its purpose is to "decrease residents' maladaptive behaviors and improve their social, emotional and academic/occupational functioning."

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 9 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

The Group Home did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the Group Home scored at or above the minimal acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In July 2015, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss results of the QAR.

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 A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
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Barbara Firestone, Executive Director, Project Six/The Help Group
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

PROJECT SIX GROUP HOME DBA THE HELP GROUP
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 the Project Six Group Home dba The Help Group (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 three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), two Group Home staff members, one Group Home social worker, and the Group Home administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was eight, their overall average length of placement was ten months, and their average age was sixteen. 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 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH 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	6	**Optimal Safety Status** - The focus children are optimally and consistently avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and is 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, support the plan.	5	5	**Good Status.** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, the Group Home staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
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 focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters, and peers in those settings.
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/non-related extended family members through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.
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	6	**Optimal Engagement Efforts** - To an optimal degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSW, and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that excellent efforts are being used by the Group Home staff as necessary, to find and engage the focus children and key people.

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	6	**Optimal Supports and Services** - An excellent array of supports and services fully match intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are substantially helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. The array provides a wide range of options for appropriate treatment interventions and selected of providers.
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	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.
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	6	**Optimal Teamwork** - The team contains all the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supporters. The team has formed an excellent, consistent working system that meets, talks, and plans together. Face-to-face team meetings are held regularly and as frequently as the team sees the need, as well as at critical points to develop plans.
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	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. Highly successful modifications are based on strong knowledge of what things are working and not working for the focus children.

STATUS INDICATORS

(Measured over last 30 days)

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

Safety (6 Optimal Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The Group Home's safety status was optimal, as they provide a highly safe living situation. The Group Home complied with the procedures and protocols and reported Special Incident Reports (SIRs) in a timely manner in the last 30 days. During the QAR, the focus children reported that the Group Home took responsibility for their safety, and they reported feeling safe at all times while at the Group Home.

Each of the focus children reported feeling safe at the Group Home. They also reported that there is always staff to supervise them and that staff is always present to assist in resolving problems, provide guidance and to protect them.

The Group Home submitted seven SIRs during the past 30 days. The SIR's included: one hospitalization; one physical restraint; two assaultive behavior incidents; one incident in which a child was going to travel and the DCFS CSW forgot the child's medication in the car; an incident in which the fire alarm was pulled and a child refused to evacuate the building; and the final incident involved a child that pulled the fire alarm and everyone at the Group Home had to evacuate.

The Group Home did not have any Community Care Licensing (CCL) complaints or investigations in the last 30 days. Further, the Out-of-Home Care Investigation Section (OHCIS), reported that it did not receive or investigate any referrals regarding the Group Home within the last 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provides substantial permanence for the focus children. The Group Home is providing the services that correspond with each of the focus children's permanent plan and demonstrates good efforts to reach the permanent plan recommended by DCFS. The Group Home and the DCFS CSWs have meetings in order to discuss the concurrent or permanent plan for the children.

The focus children interviewed all have family connections and are working on either reunification or transitioning to a lower level of care. The focus children interviewed all stated that the Group Home is supporting them in achieving their permanency goal with their families.

One focus child reported that the Group Home helps her by decreasing her negative behaviors related to impulse control and anger outbursts so that she may eventually be placed with family members. The second focus child reported that the Group Home helps her address anger issues so she could transition to the home of her maternal aunt and uncle. The third focus child reported that he plans to reside with his maternal grandmother once he turns 18. He stated that the Group Home is supportive of his relationship with his maternal grandmother. However, the Group Home staff reported that his grandmother has acknowledged that she is not able to provide a home for him at this

time, as she works full-time and would not be available to provide the care and supervision that he requires. The Group Home facilitates visitation in efforts to ensure the focus child's grandmother remains actively involved in his life.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The focus children at the Group Home have substantial stability with only planned changes in regards to their placement, school or the services they receive. All three focus children reported liking their placement and establishing positive relationships with key people at the Group Home. The focus children reported that the Group Home meets their needs and there is nothing they would change about the placement. They reported that they have people they can talk to at the Group Home who care for them and meet their needs. In addition, the Group Home Administrator interviewed reported that the focus children are stable and like their placement at the Group Home and they rarely have children absent without leave (AWOL).

One DCFS CSW interviewed stated that the Group Home has done a great job in meeting the focus child's needs and that the focus child reported that she really loves her placement and is very happy. Another DCFS CSW reported that the Group Home provides the services needed for the focus child on their caseload and that they are in constant communication in regards to services being provided. The third DCFS CSW reported that she has not had any issues with the Group Home, as this is the focus child's second time placed at the Group Home.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: Optimal maintenance of visitation and connections are being provided to the focus children at the Group Home. Effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family and non-related extended family members through visits. The Group Home arranges visitation that is convenient for the family members. The Group Home staff monitors visits and transports the focus children to and from the family members' home. The Group Home has even provided transportation for one focus child to an out-of-county location in order for him to maintain family important connections.

One DCFS CSW reported that she and the Group Home staff have worked together to obtain a court appointed special advocate worker for the focus child, and that they are in the process of approving visits with relatives. The two other focus children reported that the Group Home assists with transporting them to their relative's homes to ensure they have regular visitation with their family members.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

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

Engagement (6 Optimal Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The Group Home has developed strong rapport with and consistently engages the key parties. The focus children reported that they feel heard and respected. Excellent

efforts, such as constant communication, collaboration, and meetings are being used by the Group Home staff, as necessary, to engage the focus children, CSWs, family members and key people for the best interest of the children.

The focus children reported that the Group Home staff, especially their therapist and DCFS CSWs work together to meet their needs or to address any concerns they may have. Two of the focus children reported that they can go to any staff and/or their therapist with any concerns they may have.

The DCFS CSWs all reported being in constant communication with the Group Home therapist regarding the focus children's needs and how the focus children are doing. They all reported having a good rapport with the therapist and with staff at the Group Home.

Service Needs (6 Optimal Supports and Services)

Service Needs Overview: An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan for the focus children. The Group Home therapist always involves the focus children and their DCFS CSWs in implementing their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals and anytime the goals needs to be modified. In addition, the Group Home informs all their staff, which includes their child care workers, supervisors and any other staff who supervises the focus children, of their specific goals in order to implement their treatment goals and be successful.

The focus children are receiving weekly individual therapy, group therapy, and monthly psychiatric evaluations. The focus children each reported that they feel the services they are being provided meet their needs and that they have improved in many aspects since being placed at the Group Home. One focus child reported that she has developed a good rapport with her therapist and that her therapist is assisting her with addressing her depression. Another focus child stated that therapy has really helped her decrease negative behaviors.

The Group Home ensures that the appropriate services are in place for the focus children. The focus children's therapist reported having a great rapport with the focus children and a strong knowledge of their needs. The focus children interviewed also stated the same, in regards to having a great rapport with their therapist.

Assessment & Linkages (6 Optimal Assessment and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood by the Group Home. Knowledge necessary by the Group Home's therapist to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences are continuously updated, in order to meet their treatment goals and development of their NSPs. The NSPs are also comprehensive for the focus children as they involve key peoples input, including the focus children. The services provided to the focus children assist them in improving their behaviors in order to reunify with their family or be able to transition to a lower level of care.

The focus children are always seen timely for their medical and dental needs. Further, all three focus children reported that they can participate in extracurricular activities of their choice by informing their therapist, who in turn informs the Group Home Administrator.

The DCFS CSWs reported being in constant communication with the focus children's therapist in regards to their strengths and needs to ensure that appropriate services are in place and that the focus children's needs are being met on an ongoing basis.

Teamwork (6 Optimal Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The team contains all of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supports. All three focus children interviewed reported knowing who their team members were and reported that they can speak either to their therapist or to their DCFS CSW to call a team meeting. The focus children reported participating in team meetings on a regular basis with their DCFS CSW, the Group Home therapist, family members and other service providers. The team has formed an excellent, consistent working system that meets, talks and plans together for the best interest of the focus children on an ongoing basis.

The DCFS CSWs reported having a great rapport with the Group Home therapist and they consistently collaborate to address any needs that arise. The DCFS CSWs also reported that they have team meetings at the Group Home and that either they or the Group Home therapist may request a meeting at any time. They also reported that the focus children can always talk to them about any concerns and they discuss their concerns with the Group Home therapist or program director to ensure the focus children's concerns are heard.

Tracking & Adjustment (6 Optimal Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children by the Group Home are highly responsive and appropriate to changing conditions. This is achieved through constant collaboration with the DCFS CSW's team meetings that are held on a regular basis, involving family members and all staff at the Group Home. Highly successful modifications are based on superb knowledge of the therapist of what things are working and not working for the focus children. Due to the excellent rapport the focus children have developed with their therapist at the Group Home, all three focus children reported that they could talk to their therapist about any concerns, and by talking to their therapist, changes are made and they feel heard and that their needs are met.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2014, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2013-2014 contract compliance review. Technical support and training provided to the Group Home related to SIR guidelines. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in this quality assurance review.

In July 2015, 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; a quality improvement plan was not requested of the Group Home. However, OHCMD quality assurance staff has and will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation, as needed, to the Group Home.