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December 7, 2015

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

MARY'S SHELTER 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 Mary's Shelter Group Home (the Group Home) in November 2014. The Group Home has two sites located in the County of Orange and provides services to County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth, as well as children from other counties. According to the Group Home's program statement, its purpose is, "to provide services to pregnant teenagers."

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 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, as the Group Home scored at or above the minimal acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In August 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
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Barbara Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Mary's Shelter Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

MARY'S SHELTER 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 Mary's Shelter Group Home (the Group Home) in November 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), four Group Home childcare workers, one Group Home social worker and two Group Home administrators.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was one, their overall average length of placement was nine months and their average age was 17.

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 are 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 DCFS CSW, support the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - The focus children have substantial permanency. The focus children reside in a group home and DCFS 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 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	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally, effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH 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's strengths and needs.	5	6	**Optimal Engagement Efforts** - To an optimal degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, and the focus children 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	6	**Optimal Supports & 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 selection 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	5	**Good Teamwork** - The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks, and plans together; face-to-face family team meetings are held periodically and at critical points to develop plans.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH 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 focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking, and communication of the focus children's 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 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 complied with the procedures and protocols for making reports to the child protective hotline and reporting Special Incident Reports (SIRs). In the last 30 days, all SIRs were submitted timely via the ITrack database and properly cross-reported. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times while at the Group Home and have not shown any suicidal ideation or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors. The focus children are free from harm in their placement and other daily settings, including at school and in the community.

The Group Home demonstrates great efforts in keeping all placed children safe. The Group Home prepares SIRs to address unauthorized absences, assaultive behavior peer to peer, or staff to child, illness, behavior problems, hospitalization and other incidents that occur at the Group Home. The Group Home submitted 17 SIRs during the past 30 days; however, none of the SIRs involved the focus children. Three of the 17 SIRs involved two children who were no longer residing at the Group Home. The other SIRs involved runaway behaviors; one in which the Group Home child care worker on duty attempted to dissuade the children from leaving. She followed the children as they ran from the Group Home, continuing her efforts to counsel them, to no avail. There were 2 SIRs that reported incidents of drug use and sexual behaviors in which the children had engaged in while the children were absent from the Group Home.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provides substantial permanence for the focus children. The Group Home demonstrates efforts to achieve the permanency plan developed by DCFS; two of the focus children are under Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) and are working on

transitioning to independent living arrangements. The third focus child is 19 years of age and remains placed at the group home as a non-minor dependent and remains placed under extended foster care.

The Group Home ensures the focus children are visiting with their family members and other important people in their lives. The Group Home counsels the focus children, provides services and teaches the children necessary skills to assist them in becoming more independent. The Group Home teaches the focus children independent living skills, assists them with job search and college preparation, as well as obtaining transitional housing. The focus children are aware of and work toward their permanency goals of PPLA.

The Group Home prepares the focus children for college enrollment, job searching and completing employment applications, transitional housing preparations, parenting classes, emancipation and youth development services. The focus children and the Group Home are fully supporting the goals in place.

Each of the focus children is placed with their infant children and they are learning to care for themselves and their children. The focus children are working toward becoming independent. They each reported that they are benefitting from the support services they are receiving. The Group Home is also ensuring that the focus children maintain relationships with their family members and mentors so that these relationships are strengthened and are permanent.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home is providing good placement stability for the focus children. The Group Home takes responsibility in ensuring the focus children receive the necessary resources to help them achieve their goals and to achieve stability at the Group Home, at school and in the community. The focus children may access services such as childcare, parenting classes, postpartum wellness program, mentoring services, and if appropriate, an on-grounds school. The Group Home ensures that the staff has training to deal with the focus children's needs.

The focus children reported that they enjoy positive and enduring relationships with their primary caregivers and key adult supporters. The services and resources received from the Group Home are beyond their expectations. The focus children reported that they get along well with their peers and the Group Home staff. They each stated that the Group Home provides them with good care and that the Group Home staff is supportive.

One of the focus children stated that the Group Home plays an important role in her life and that the Group Home and the services she is receiving are helping to transition her into adulthood. She shared that the Group Home has supported her in finishing high school and she is now attending community college. She also was able to secure a part-time job during summer break. The second focus child stated that the Group Home is providing her with good care. She reported that she is doing well at the Group Home and that she was on behavioral level four, this is the highest exemplary behavioral level at the Group Home. The third focus child referred to the Group Home staff and other placed children as her family and shared that she enjoys being a part of the family. She also shared that she feels secure, protected and that she is living in a highly safe environment.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home is generally effective in maintaining family contact and follows the recommendations of the DCFS CSWs. The focus children's visitation plans are fully implemented and visits are consistent for all of the focus children. The Group Home is effective in maintaining family connections for most of the focus children and encourages the focus children to maintain regular contact with their families, significant others or mentors. The Group Home provides transportation for the visits, if necessary, and maintains visitation logs. Missed visits are re-scheduled in a timely manner. The DCFS CSWs indicated that the Group Home makes very good efforts to provide the focus children with their visitation.

One focus child has regular weekly visits with her mother. The second focus child did not have visitation with family members; however, she does have a mentor with whom she visits monthly. The third focus child's relationship with her mother remains strained and she is unwilling to initiate contact with her mother at this time. Staff is supportive of the focus child, and the Group Home connected her with a mentor. She enjoys and appreciates the time she and her mentor spend together

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 makes consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The Group Home ensures that the focus children have regular contact with their DCFS CSWs, family members and other team members who are involved in their lives. Team members report specific and useful accommodations being made to provide scheduling times and places based on the family's convenience.

One focus child shared, that initially she had no support from, or regular contact with her family. However, she stated that she no longer feels this way, because she now has the support from the Group Home staff and her mentor. She stated that the Group Home linked her with a very good mentor who supports her in all areas. Her mentor was present at the birth of her baby.

The second focus child reported that prior to her placement at the Group Home, she felt she was on her own, without anyone's support. Now, she and her mother are working on strengthening their relationship and she is visiting with her mother. She shared that these changes in her life would not have been possible without the support from the Group Home, as the Group Home maintained contact with her mother to provide updates regarding her progress. Once her mother learned about the birth of her grandchild, her mother started visiting. In addition, she shared that with the Group Home's assistance, she has become very involved and engaged with various community programs that are helping her improve herself, such as utilizing childcare services, participating in parenting class and attending a postpartum wellness program.

Although there is no family involvement for the third focus child, the child feels much supported by the Group Home and is very happy to also have her mentor involved in her life; the mentor is also supportive of the focus child.

The DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that they all have a good rapport and working relationship with the focus children's Group Home social worker and case manager. They further reported that the Group Home social worker keeps them informed of how the focus children are doing on a monthly basis, or more often, if needed. The Group Home maintains a good relationship with DCFS CSWs and the key people in the focus children's lives, including family members, relatives, and teachers, as well as all the Group Home staff members. The Group Home also engages the community partners such as mentors, Independent Living Program (ILP) Coordinators, and parenting class trainers who provide services to meet the needs of the focus children. The Group Home continues to make efforts to maintain regular contact with the CSWs and provides information regarding the focus children via face-to-face meetings, by telephone or via e-mail.

Service Needs (6 Optimal Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home is providing an excellent array of supports and services to meet the needs and ensure the well-being of the placed children and their infants. These services include an on-grounds school, childcare services, parenting classes, postpartum wellness program, mentoring services, Head Start program, ILP classes and emancipation preparation services. The Group Home is in constant contact with other service providers in the community and the services provided are seen as very satisfactory by the focus children. In addition, the Group Home utilizes a team approach to develop Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The Group Home social worker collaborates with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, and the Group Home staff to develop NSP goals for the focus children. The Group Home social worker develops behavior contracts/level system with residents to help them remain focused and make progress toward achieving their NSP goals. The Group Home ensures that the focus children attend regular weekly individual and group counseling sessions. All the focus children reported that the services they received are exceeding their expectations and they feel they are benefitting from the services.

The DCFS CSWs and the Group Home social worker have an excellent working relationship, as they collaborate for the best interest of the focus children. They work together to ensure the services provided to the focus children are the most appropriate.

Assessment & Linkages (6 Optimal Assessment & Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home fully understands each focus child's functioning and support system. The focus children meet with the Group Home social worker at least once per week to assess their progress and to evaluate their needs. The implementation of selected services is specifically tailored to meet the focus children's and their infant's unique needs. The Group Home determines if the focus children are making progress towards their NSP goals by observing if there is a reduction in incidents, occurrences and acting out behaviors that the focus children exhibit. Progress is also determined by what staff observes and reports. The Group Home's program director, social worker and case manager meet weekly during their social services meetings to discuss concerns regarding the focus children. They also meet monthly with the Group Home staff and all other treatment team members to obtain input and to share their understanding of each focus child's strengths, needs, resources and their efforts to help the focus child to progress and succeed at the Group Home.

The focus children also participate in Pregnant and Parenting Teen (PPT) and other team meetings to assess and evaluate their needs and develop a plan for each child to help them progress towards meeting their NSP goals during their stay at the Group Home. The PPT meeting is held for all children

when they are initially placed to timely discuss and arrange all services to meet the needs of the placed children and their infants. The Group Home provides services required to help the focus children and supports them to help make their placement successful. The PPT and team meetings are scheduled by the DCFS CSWs in collaboration with the Group Home program director and social worker. Children are encouraged to participate in the PPT and team meetings. The Group Home made good assessments and has a clear understanding of the functioning of the focus children and the services and supports the focus children are receiving, such as therapy, mentoring, parenting and child care services and most importantly encouraging communication with and involvement of family members and significant others in the lives of the focus children. All of the focus children reported that they are happy at the Group Home and they have benefitted from the services.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the placed children's lives. The team consisting of the DCFS CSWs, Group Home program director, social workers, case managers, parenting coordinator, medical coordinator, childcare workers, and the placed children, has formed a good, dependable working system that has on-going discussions and works collaboratively in case planning. The Group Home social workers also maintain regular contact with the children's DCFS CSWs, whether it be face-to-face, by telephone or via e-mail. One interviewed DCFS CSW reported that the Group Home social worker and case manager always make extra efforts to contact her. One DCFS CSW stated that the Group Home's efforts in providing feedback and keeping all team members informed are beyond her expectations. The focus children reported that they are satisfied with the teamwork and felt respected when they were permitted to make their own choices regarding placement and visitation or contact with their family members. Although the children and the key supports and decision makers were a part of the team, the team could benefit from participation of family members.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home tracks the focus children's progress through weekly and monthly meetings, which address the child's progress and concerns. Additionally, the Group Home social worker has quarterly meetings with each focus child to address NSP goals and progress. The Group Home staff members document each child's behavior, visits, outings, progress in log books, the Group Home's activity planner and sign-in/out sheets. The Group Home uses a target behavior rewards system to reward the children for positive behavior and progress, as well as to determine if privileges need to be removed from residents who fail to follow the rules and guidelines of the Group Home. The teams meet with the focus children regularly to discuss NSP goals and encourage them to make progress toward achieving NSP goals.

The Group Home social worker and case manager ensure that any barriers encountered or any strategies that are modified are communicated with all members of the team. Modifications to strategies are promptly made when it is determined that the focus children are experiencing difficulty in achieving their treatment goals. If it is determined that the focus children are in need of support services, appropriate services are initiated. To assist the focus children in being successful at the Group Home and in treatment, tasks are modified or broken down into smaller tasks to help produce desired results.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2014, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support to address deficiencies that had been noted in the 2013-2014 contract compliance review. Technical support consisted of the following: review of SIR guidelines; discussion of compliance with Title 22 Regulations and maintenance of the facility and grounds; review and address maintenance of staff files; and to address concerns related to the maintenance of the vehicles used to transport the children.

In January 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to findings noted in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review. The quality assurance reviewer discussed guidelines for timely submittal of SIRs and provided the Group Home administration with a copy of the SIR reporting guide. Maintenance of the Group Home's restrooms was also addressed. The need for comprehensive documentation of monthly contacts with DCFS CSWs was discussed. The need for the Group Home to ensure staff compliance with all required training hours and the need to ensure communication with Group Home staff, especially the Group Home child care workers, when revisions are made to the Group Home's house rules and policies, were also addressed. Recommendations for improvement in these areas were also given.

In February 2015, OHCMD reviewed the results of the 2014-2015 quality assurance review with the Group Home. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas. A Quality Improvement Plan was not requested of the Group Home. However, OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide on-going technical support, training and consultation to the Group Home.