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December 18, 2015

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

BOYS TOWN OF CALIFORNIA 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 Boys Town of California Group Home (the Group Home) in April 2015. The Group Home has one site located in the County of Orange and provides services to the County of Los Angeles and County of Orange DCFS foster children, as well as Probation Department youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its purpose is, "to help each child learn the skills and behaviors that are necessary for successful entry back into their family or to another placement within the community and ultimately, a successful entry into adulthood."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed child'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: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus areas of Visitation and Teamwork.

The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In August 2015, 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 area of Visitation 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 A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Lawren Ramos, Chief Executive Officer, Boys Town of California Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

BOYS TOWN OF CALIFORNIA 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 Boys Town of California Group Home (the Group Home) in April 2015. 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.

At the time of the QAR there was only one dependent from the County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) placed at the Group Home. For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with one focus child, one Children's Social Worker (CSW), one County of Los Angeles Deputy Probation Officer (DPO), two Group Home house teachers, and one Group Home Family Home Consultant.

At the time of the QAR, the focus child's number of placements was four, his length of placement was 11 months, and his 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 CSW, 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 child is 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 child has substantial permanency. The focus child resides 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 child has substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption. The focus child has 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	4	**Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Fairly effective family connections are being at least minimally maintained for most significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) 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 CSW, and the focus child 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 matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are substantially helping the focus child 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	5	**Good Assessment and Understanding** - The focus child's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus 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 focus 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	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 child are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking, and communication of the focus child'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 child.

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 Protection Hotline and reporting Special Incident Reports (SIRs). In the last 30 days, all SIRs were submitted timely via the I-Track database and cross-reported to all required parties. The focus child reported feeling safe at all times while at the Group Home and has not shown any suicidal ideations or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors. The focus child is free from harm in his placement and other daily settings, including at school and in the community.

The Group Home demonstrates great efforts in keeping the focus child and all placed children safe. The Group Home prepares SIRs to address unauthorized absences (AWOLs), assaultive behaviors, illness, behavior problems, hospitalization and other incidents that occur at the Group Home. During the past 30 days, the Group Home submitted two SIRs, and both SIRs involved incidents of substance abuse by the focus child. One incident involved the confiscation of drug paraphernalia during a safety check before the focus child left the Group Home on a day pass. The focus child was placed on a six-day straight-fine subsystem for the incident. The other incident involved the focus child leaving the school campus in the morning to smoke marijuana with his friends; he was detained by school staff upon returning to school later that day. The Group Home house teacher contacted the focus child's DCFS CSW and the DPO to report the incident. The Group Home house teacher counseled the focus child regarding his inappropriate behaviors and ensured closer supervision of the child to prevent future incidents.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) did not receive or investigate any referrals on the Group Home during the most recent 30-day period.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provides substantial permanence. The primary permanency plan and concurrent plan for the focus child were appropriately developed and implemented in a timely manner. The Group Home ensures the focus child is visiting with his family members and other important people in his life. The Group Home counsels the focus child, provides services and teaches the focus child necessary skills to assist him in becoming more independent. The Group Home teaches the child independent living skills, assists him with job search and college preparation, as well as in obtaining transitional housing. The focus child is aware of and works toward his permanency goal, as well as concurrent plan. The Group Home demonstrates efforts to assist the focus child in achieving the permanency plan recommended by DCFS.

Initially, family reunification services were provided for the focus child and his adoptive parents. However, the focus child refused to reunify with his adoptive mother and he continued engaging in non-compliant behavior and AWOLing. The focus child's adoptive father also refused reunification efforts. The Group Home is working with the focus child toward emancipation. The focus child is currently employed part-time. The focus child is very motivated and is working towards living independently. He is researching transitional housing in the areas he would like to reside once he graduates from high school. He is also interested in attending community college. The focus child feels supported by the Group Home staff, and the relationships developed will endure lifelong.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home provided good placement stability for the focus child. The Group Home takes responsibility in ensuring the focus child receives the necessary resources to help him achieve his goals and to achieve stability at the Group Home, at school and in the community. The Group Home staff interacts with the focus child on a daily basis; both the staff and the focus child have developed a positive relationship. The focus child reported that he likes living at the Group Home and that he gets along well with the other children placed at the Group Home.

The focus child is under the dual supervision of DCFS and the County of Los Angeles Probation Department. The focus child has resided in the Group Home for 11 months. He reported that he has a good relationship with everyone at the Group Home. He referred to the Group Home staff and other placed children as his family and shared that he enjoys being a part of the family. He also shared that he feels secure, protected and that he is living in a highly safe environment. However, he also stated that he cannot wait to be on his own and transition out of care. The Group Home house teacher has expressed that he is committed to working with the focus child.

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

Visitation (4 Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home fairly provides conditions necessary to maintain family connections. When the family was receiving family reunification services and visitation was occurring, the Group Home reasonably established and maintained family connections for the focus child. The Group Home made visitation arrangements with the adoptive father and provided transportation when needed. According to the focus child and the Group Home staff, the focus child

had informed Group Home staff that visiting with his family was sometimes stressful. In the past, the focus child had been consistently visiting with and calling his family and had approved overnight visits. During his last visit, which was a week-long visit during the holiday season, the focus child chose to go to a friend's house without approval, resulting in his adoptive father's refusal to have future visits with the focus child. The focus child has not had visitation with his family since this incident.

However, when the focus child's adoptive father refused to continue visitation, there were no efforts made by the Group Home to encourage visitation or support communication between the focus child and his adoptive father, nor did the Group Home work with the focus child to assist him in addressing his concerns regarding visitation with his adoptive father. Further, there were no efforts to arrange visitation between the focus child and other family members by the Group Home. Further, when it was determined that visitation was no longer viable; the Group Home did not refer the focus child to a mentoring program to assist him in developing a life-long connection.

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 a strong rapport with and has consistently engaged the key parties to discuss the focus child's progress and concerns. The Group Home ensures that the focus child has regular contact with his DCFS CSW and DPO. Although the focus child and his adoptive father are no longer visiting, the Group Home has demonstrated efforts to engage the adoptive father. The Group Home will occasionally contact the adoptive father to provide updates regarding the focus child's progress. During the focus child's last AWOL incident, the Group Home contacted his adoptive father to assist in locating him. The focus child feels heard and respected and he stated that with the Group Home's assistance, he has become very involved and engaged in working with the team to identify his strengths, needs and goals. He also shared that he has chosen to participate in community programs, such as the local soup kitchen. He shared that he has become more responsible and has shown improvement by helping others.

The Group Home house teachers reported that prior to the focus child being placed in the Group Home, they were provided with information regarding the focus child's history and trauma, which helped them prepare for the focus child. One Group Home house teacher stated that he makes sure to communicate with the focus child regularly to ensure that his needs are being met. Another house teacher reported that she felt staff at the Group Home have a good working relationship.

The DCFS CSW and the DPO reported that the communication with the Group Home was open and fluid. According to the Group Home Program Director, the Group Home staff is available to talk with the DCFS CSW and DPO during visits to the Group Home.

Service Needs (6 Optimal Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: An excellent array of supports and services is provided by the Group Home to meet the needs and ensure the well-being of the focus child. These services include weekly

individual therapy, substance abuse therapy, internship program, Independent Living Program (ILP) activities, school support, and tutoring, extracurricular activities, and transportation to work. There is a constant review of services and resources to ensure positive outcomes for the focus child. The focus child's DCFS CSW and DPO reports that they are able to give and receive feedback from the Group Home in relation to the needs of the focus child.

The focus child was not performing at his grade level. To ensure the most appropriate school setting, the Group Home enrolled the focus child in a continuation high school to assist him in earning more credits and has been provided with weekly tutoring services. With these services in place the focus child is making academic progress.

The Group Home is ensuring the focus child is equipped with the skills necessary to become more independent. The focus child is learning to identify resources in the community and how to access them. With the Group Home's assistance, the focus child learned job seeking, participated in an internship at a local retail store, learned to prepare for a job interview, and was eventually hired for a part-time position.

Another example of the Group Home's efforts to ensure the needed services is when the Group Home applied for a grant to pay for the focus child's orthodontia, as the services were not covered through Medi-Cal. The funding was approved and orthodontic services have been initiated.

The DCFS CSW reported that the focus child is receiving appropriate services, and the focus child's needs are being met. The focus child's DPO also reported that, with all the services provided through the Group Home and DCFS, the focus child appears to be making satisfactory progress in his current placement and is doing the best he has ever done in any other placement and in school.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessment & Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The focus child's functioning, challenges, earlier life traumas, and support systems are generally understood by all parties involved. The Group Home assesses the focus child's needs and provides intervention for him to function effectively in daily settings. The services and supports are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is being made toward achieving case plan goals. Educational supports such as tutoring are provided, and participation in extracurricular activities is encouraged by the Group Home.

The Group Home staff utilizes daily observation of and socialization with the focus child to gain a clear picture of the focus child's strengths and needs. If the focus child is in need of services, the Group Home immediately takes action to ensure supports are in placed to ensure the focus child's success. For example, when the focus child was placed on formal probation and was ordered to complete 100 hours of community service. The Group Home took immediate action to work with the Delinquency Court, the DPO and community partners. With the efforts and assistance from the Group Home, the focus child complied with the court's orders and made restitution. The focus child's DPO is amazed by the focus child's progress and is pleased with the supports and services the Group Home has provided. The focus child reported that he appreciates all that the Group Home has supported him with, and he is benefitting from the resources.

The DCFS CSW and the DPO reported that they are made aware of the focus child's progress toward achieving Needs and Services Plan (NSP) and case plan goals, as the Group Home social worker

maintains regular contact with them via telephone or e-mail. They also stated that the Group Home does a good job in ensuring the needs are met.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home tracks the focus child's progress during weekly and monthly meetings, wherein treatment plans are discussed and concerns are addressed. Additionally, the Group Home Family Home Consultant has quarterly meetings with the focus child to discuss his progress and NSP goals. The Group Home staff members monitor the focus child's behavior, visits, outings, and progress via log books, the Group Home's activity planner, and sign in/out logs. The Group Home uses a target behavior rewards system to reward the focus child for positive behavior and progress, as well as to take privileges away when he does not follow the rules and guidelines of the Group Home. Additionally, the Group Home uses the NSPs to closely document and monitor the focus child's progress toward his treatment goals.

An example of the continuous tracking and adjustment of services was when the focus child AWOLed from school with classmates and engaged in smoking at a local park. The Group Home modified the focus child's treatment plan to ensure the focus child attends narcotic anonymous meeting immediately after school. Additionally, the Group Home staff made the decision to walk the focus child to class each day to ensure the focus child attends school and is on time. The Group Home house teacher also counseled the focus child regarding his inappropriate behaviors and ensured closer supervision of the focus child to prevent future incidents.

The Family Home Consultant and house teachers ensure that any barriers encountered or modifications to the treatment strategies are communicated with team members. Adjustments are promptly made when it is determined the specific services are not producing the desired results. The focus child reported that the Group Home strongly focuses on tracking his progress and modifying his treatment goals to ensure success.

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

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home has provided a minimally adequate system of teamwork. Although the Group Home does a great job in engaging all the team players for the focus child, the team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets talks and plans together as a team. The focus child reported that he did not know who his team consisted of, as he does not participate in team meetings regularly. The focus child reported that in most cases, he communicated only with the Group Home's Family Home Program Director when he has concerns, issues and/or needs anything.

The DCFS CSW and the DPO also reported going through the Group Home house teachers when they need to discuss the focus child. Although, the Group Home does a great job in meeting all the focus child's needs, and concerns, and providing supportive services for the focus child, it appears that the house teachers are the main team players for everyone to go. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together, as it was noted that face-to-face team meetings in which all key parties are present are not being held to develop plans, discuss focus child's progress and address the child's concerns.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In December 2014, OHCMD FFA and Group Home Quality Assurance Section provided the Group Home with technical supports to address deficiencies that had been noted in the last 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 timely and comprehensive NSPs.

In August 2015, 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 Visitation and Teamwork. The Group Home submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.

BOYS TOWN California

September 9, 2015

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Children's Services Administrator
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Quality Assurance Section
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Mrs. Jui-Ling Ho,

The following is a Quality Improvement Plan in response to your 2014-2015 Quality Assurance Review of Boys Town California, Inc. programs in Trabuco Canyon. Below you will see your findings and quality improvement plan.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP):

I. Visitation – The degree to which the Group Home staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.

Finding
The Group Home has reasonably established and maintained family connections for the focused child. The Group Home staff engages the focus child's DCFS CSW and Probation Officer in discussing the Court visitation orders. The Group Home makes visitation arrangements with the parties listed in the case plan and Court order, and provides transportation when needed. However, when the focus child's adoptive father refused visitations, there were no extra efforts made by the Group Home to support communications and follow up the visitations for the focus child with his family members. Further, when visitation was not a viable option, there were no mentoring services initiated by the Group Home for the focus child.

The focus child has approved visits, including overnight, and phone calls with his adoptive father and with his younger siblings. During the holiday season, the focus child visited with his family home for one week; however, the focus child reported to the group home staff that the visits can be stressful. The focus child reported that on the last of the visitation, he chose to go to a friend's house without approval. It was unclear what kind of efforts was made by the group home to communicate and workout the issues. Since the focus child went AWOL during that weekend visit with his adoptive father, the focus child's adoptive father has refused to have visits with the focused child. At this time, the focus child has not had visits.

Quality Improvement Plan

1. Boys Town will make efforts to assure youth have visitation, follow up when visitation is cancelled or refused and resolve issues, if any, and work collaboratively with the youth's CSW.
2. Any type of family contact is written into a daily report. These reports are entered and coded into a Boys Town National Database.
3. The reports will contain the following: The date, the time, who talked to whom, a summary of the content of the call, and the end time. Family Teachers and Assistant Family Teachers will ensure they are documenting any efforts to make visitation happen.
4. At the quarterly NSP meeting, the Family Home Consultant will present the Family Contact report to all parties of the team including the youth.
5. At the time of Needs and Service Plan, the Family Home Consultant will ensure that all Family Contact is entered into the NSP.
6. If the focus youth's family is denying contact with them, the Family Teachers will also document their efforts to reach out to the family members to encourage visitations to happen.
7. If visitations are not an option with family, the Youth Activities Coordinator will help find mentoring services for the identified youth.
8. The Youth Activities Coordinator will document all efforts made to gain a mentor for the youth.
9. Once the mentor has been assigned, the Family Teachers and the Assistant Family Teacher will follow the process above to document any contact the youth or staff have with the mentor as well as include it in the NSP.

Person(s) Responsible for Implementation of the QIP

Family Home Consultant, Youth Activities Coordinator, Family Teachers, and Assistant Family Teachers will ensure implementation of the QIP.

Time Frame of Implementation

The QIP has been implemented.

II. 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.

Finding

The group home has provided a minimally adequate system of teamwork. Although the group home does a great job in engaging all the team players for the focus child, the team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets talks and plans together as a team. The focus child reported that he did not know who his team consisted of as he does not participate in team meetings regularly. The focus child reported that in most of cases, he communicated only with the Family Program Director when he has concerns, issues and/or needs anything.

The DCFS CSW and County Probation Officer also reported going through the group home House Teachers when they needed to discuss the focus child. Although, the group home does a great job in meeting all the focus' child needs and concerns and providing supportive services for the focus child, it appears that the House Teachers are the main team players for everyone to go. The team has formed minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together, as it was noted that face-to-face team meetings in which all key parties are present are not being held to develop plans, or address the child's concerns.

Quality Improvement Plan

1. Approximately two weeks prior to NSP due date, the Family Home Consultant will contact the focus youth's DCFS CSW to ask availability for dates and times for the youth's quarterly meeting.

BOYS TOWN

2. Family Home Consultant will gather input from the Youth's Social Worker on who the important key persons are to attend the meeting.
3. Once the date and time is confirmed, the Family Home Consultant will contact all other members of the youths team including but not limited to:
    a. CSW
    b. Probation Officer
    c. Family Members
    d. Therapist
    e. Mentor
    f. CASA
4. The Family Home Consultant will send a calendar invite to the Family Teachers and all parties that are attending.
5. The calendar invite will be printed and placed in the youth's service planning binder as proof of efforts to get team members to the meetings.
6. At the meeting, a sign-in sheet will be passed around. In the meeting, everyone will have an opportunity to meet, talk, and plan, including the focus youth.
7. If at any time there is a situation that is an emergency, the Family Home Consultant will call an emergency team meeting following the same process.

Person(s) Responsible for Implementation of the QIP
Family Home Consultant and Family Home Program Director will ensure implementation of the QIP.

Time Frame of Implementation
The QIP has been implemented.

Sincerely,

Sarah Terry
Director of Family Homes
Boys Town California, Inc.
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