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December 21, 2015

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

CASA EDITHA FOUNDATION, INC., dba AVA LYN'S 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 Casa Editha Foundation, Inc., dba Ava Lyn's Group Home (the Group Home) in October 2014. The Group Home has one site located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and provides services to County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its purpose is, "to enable these children to increase their independent adaptive skills and decrease their maladaptive behaviors in order to gain skills necessary for successful adult adjustment."

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 minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In August 2015, OHCMD quality assurance manager discussed results of the QAR with the Group Home.

If you have any questions, your staff may contact 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
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Edith Avanzado, Executive Director, Casa Editha Foundation
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

CASA EDITHA FOUNDATION, INC., dba AVA LYN'S 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 Casa Editha Foundation, Inc., dba Ava Lyn's 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 Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), the Group Home Administrator, the Group Home social worker, and two Group Home child care workers. Interviews were not conducted with the focus children; the children in the Group Home are severely mentally disabled and non-verbal. This QAR is based on the observation of the focus children's functioning, as well as their interactions with staff and peers and a review of DCFS records and Group Home files.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was eleven months, and their average age was fourteen. Only two focus children were selected for the QAR. At the time of the QAR, there were only three DCFS placed children; one of the children was placed while the QAR was in process.

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/youth. The minimum acceptable score is six in the area of Safety and five 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. The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers who protect the children well at all times.
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 life-long.
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 in either setting over the last 12 months with none in the past six months. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caretakers, key adult supporters, and peers in those settings. 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/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	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSW, 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	5	**Good Supports and 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 focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
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 system are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the child's strengths, needs, and preferences are frequently updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring interventions and 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	5	**Good Teamwork** - The Team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the child's life, including informal supports. The Team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks, and plans together; at least one face-to-face team meeting has been held to develop plans. The Team has good and necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to organize effective services with a child of this complexity and cultural background.

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 child are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking, and communication of the child status and service results to the team are occurring.

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 provides a safe living environment for each of the focus children. The safety of the children is a key focus of the Group Home staff. The Group Home staff is fully reliable and competent, providing a safe living situation for the children. The Group Home staff remains in close proximity to the children at all times. The DCFS CSWs commented that the staff to child ratio is usually one-to-one in supervision and in interacting with placed children. They are quick to intervene if any situation arises and they are always on top of the children's behaviors.

The Group Home staff has learned to recognize the behaviors of the focus children. They are familiar with each child and their likes and dislikes, what activities they like to engage in and those they do not enjoy. The focus children require maximum assistance and supervision in their daily needs. The Group Home staff ensures that the children are constantly supervised and that their needs are met. In the last 30 days, there have been no Special Incident Reports reported by the Group Home. There have been no investigations by Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section or complaints to Community Care Licensing.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home is providing substantial permanence for the focus children. The key individuals in the focus children's lives are all working in the children's best interest. During visitation, the Group Home encourages the focus children's approved visitors to maintain contact with placed children.

The permanency plan for the first focus child is family reunification. His mother maintains consistent phone contact with him and his father diligently ensures he visits every weekend.

The permanency plan for the second focus child is planned permanent living arrangement services. The focus child continues to exhibit self-injurious behaviors, such as hitting and scratching himself, requiring constant staff intervention. His father has weekly monitored visits. However, family reunification is not a viable option as his mother resides out-of-state, maintains infrequent contact, and due to his parents' inability to provide for his special needs and medical care. When the focus child turns 18, he will become eligible for adult regional center services, at which time, the regional center will become responsible for his care and supervision and ensure appropriate placement in an adult facility.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home is providing substantial placement stability for the two focus children in its care. The Group Home is committed to working with the focus children. The Group Home takes responsibility in ensuring that the focus children are provided with the care and support services to assist the focus children to be stable in all areas. The Group Home staff takes time to interact with the focus children and ensure that the focus children's needs are met.

Neither of the focus children have had any recent placement disruptions since being placed at 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 is committed to ensuring the focus children receive their visitation, including providing monitored visits when necessary and required. The Group Home is in constant communication with the DCFS CSWs and follows each child's visitation plan. The DCFS CSWs, the Group Home Administrator, and Group Home staff each ensure that the plans are followed and that the outcomes of the visits are shared among the key players for the children.

The first focus child has weekly monitored visits with his father. Although the focus child's mother does not visit, she has begun calling the Group Home more frequently to get updates and has shown greater interest in the focus child. The Group Home Administrator and Group Home social worker encourage mother to visit.

Per DCFS CSW, the second focus child has monitored visits with his father, away from the Group Home at a convenient location for all parties. Father is visiting on a regular basis.

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: There is a strong rapport between the key team members, and the focus children are respected and well cared for. The DCFS CSWs and the Group Home staff expressed that there is always open communication between all the of the focus children's key team members.

Ongoing communication exists with all appropriate parties, including the DCFS CSWs and when appropriate, family members. Communication between the DCFS CSWs, the school staff, the Group Home Administrator and the Group Home social worker is ongoing.

The Group Home is accommodating as to scheduling staff meetings and communicating with all the key adult supporters to ensure uniformity, clarity and understanding of the focus children. The children are encouraged to maintain contact with all staff members, their DCFS CSWs, and all team members, as they desire. Both focus children appear to have established trust and a good rapport with the Group Home staff.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports and Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home ensures that each focus child receives the specialized services that are required for their special needs. The focus children were evaluated by the school district to ensure placement in the appropriate classroom setting and for the school to address their limitations. Both the school and the Group Home provide a learning environment that assists the focus children with special needs in developing life-long learning skills in the areas of feeding, hygiene and academics. Because of their special needs, specialized professionals provide the services to these unique children (with the arrangements made by the Group Home) and complete all medical and dental services and treatments required. For example, in order to have their dental examinations and teeth cleaning, the focus children may need to be sedated. The Group Home provides transportation, arranging for and accompanying the focus children to all specialty medical and dental appointments. The Group Home staff is always close to each of the focus children to intervene, offer support, and provide immediate supervision and guidance.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home provides a good understanding of the needs of the focus children. The Group Home social worker meets with the focus children daily to assess their progress and evaluate their needs. The administrator and Group Home social worker meet with each focus child's DCFS CSW, and maintains contact with past and present schools to ensure the child's academic success. Needs and Services Plans are completed in a timely manner. Both focus children are clients of the regional center; the regional center case managers conduct quarterly visits to the Group Home to check on the status of the children. As DCFS is the primary placing agency for the focus children, the regional center defers to DCFS, the Group Home and the focus children's school for ensuring the children's needs are met. The regional center is available to help plan, access and monitor services and supports in place for the focus children. The regional center will also provide referrals for services, as needed.

The Group Home further ensures that the focus children are exposed to a variety of outings in the community, such as the zoo, beach, Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Legoland, Sea World, shopping, sightseeing, etc.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks and plans together. The team contains most of the important supporters and decision

makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The Group Home conducts face-to-face meetings with DCFS CSWs whenever possible. Phone contact and emails are utilized, as each member is familiar with the key adult supporters. The Group Home Administrator and Group Home social worker are quick to respond to all DCFS CSWs, school and quarterly regional center inquiries regarding the focus children to ensure that communication is open, accurate, and shared with all team members. Any information from the DCFS CSWs is documented in the focus children's file and is shared with Group Home staff members providing care to the placed children. The DCFS CSW meets with the Group Home Administrator, Group Home staff, and Group Home social worker during their monthly visits and more frequently, if needed. Family members are included in the discussions of the focus children whenever they are available. They assist in providing insightful information to the Group Home regarding the focus children's likes and dislikes, their interests, reading and music preferences and other characteristics that would aid in providing care, positive interaction and consistency to the focus children to meet their needs. Any team member can request meetings at any time.

Since DCFS is the primary placing agency for the focus children, the regional center defers to DCFS, the Group Home and the focus children's school for ensuring the children's needs are met. The children's regional center workers visit the focus children quarterly, assess their needs and progress and complete the focus children's individual program plan (IPP). The IPP is completed with input from the Group Home staff, as well as from the DCFS CSW. Depending on any needs the focus children may have, the regional center can provide support and referrals for services.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home's intervention strategies, supports, and services generally reflect the needs of focus children.

The focus children enjoy walking in and about the Group Home and have a good relationship with staff. They like to play and interact with the Group Home staff and occasionally with the other children, and tend to entertain themselves (with the Group Home staff ensuring their safety).

The Group Home Administrator, Group Home staff, and the Group Home social worker are monitoring, tracking, and communicating the focus children's status and results of services provided with team members, including the DCFS CSW, teachers and other key supporters. The interviewed DCFS CSWs expressed good communication and responsiveness by the Group Home Administrator and Group Home social worker. The DCFS CSWs further stated that the staff are always within proximity of the focus children and are caring in providing for the children's needs. The focus children's regional center case manager conducts visits to the Group Home on a quarterly basis to check on the children's well-being and to obtain input regarding the children's progress in the home, at school and in the community. The regional center case manager documents the progress the focus children are making, which services are working for the focus children, as well as which services may need to be adjusted.

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 2014-2015 contract compliance review. The technical support and training addressed maintenance of documentation as it relates to the Group Home's sign-in/out logs and ensuring copies of the Group Home vehicle's insurance certificates were kept in the vehicle. It also addressed proper follow-up of medical appointments and ensuring the Group Home has more than one provider for dental services.

In August 2015, OHCMD quality assurance manager discussed the results of the QAR with the Group Home. The Group Home did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. However, OHCMD has and will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation, as needed, to the Group Home.