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

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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

January 5, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

O'CONNER AND ATKINS 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 O'Conner and Atkins Group Home (the Group Home) in June 2014. The Group Home has one site located in the Second Supervisorial District, and provides services to DCFS placed children and youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its stated purpose is "to provide services to court dependent, emotionally disturbed, abused and neglected children."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Group Home's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 4 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Visitation and Engagement. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus areas of Placement Stability, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In October 2014, 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 Placement Stability, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

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
Tony Chustz, Group Home Administrator, O'Conner and Atkins Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Leonora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

O'CONNER AND ATKINS GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2013-2014

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of O'Conner and Atkins Group Home (the Group Home) in June 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/youth's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the Group Home's service delivery during the most recent 90 day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with two focus children, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), one Group Home staff member, and the Group Home administrator. There were no Group Home social workers interviewed, as the Group Home was without a social worker.

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 ten.

QAR SCORING

The Group Home received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS files, and interviews with the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and children.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Agency Score	QA Rating Score
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 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 CSW, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - Children have substantial permanence. The 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	4	**Fair Stability -** The children have minimally acceptable stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in settings within the past 12 months and none in the past 90 days.
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 Member (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Agency Score	QA Rating Score
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, certified foster parent and the 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	3	**Marginally Inadequate Supports and Services** - Supports and services identified in the case plan may be somewhat limited or may not be readily accessible or available. A limited set of supports and services may be inconsistently available and used but may be seen as partially unsatisfactory.
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	4	**Fair Assessment and Understanding** - The children's functioning and support systems are minimally understood. Information necessary to understand the children's strengths, needs, and preferences is periodically 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	4	**Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork** - The team contains some of the important supporters and decision makers in the children's lives, 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	Agency Score	QA Rating Score
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	4	**Minimally Adequate to Fair Tracking and Adjustment Process** - Intervention strategies, supports, and services being provided to the children are minimally responsive to changing conditions.

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. Group Home staff members continuously address safety issues through communication with all team members, including the children. The Group Home therapist and the Group Home administrator are knowledgeable of the children they serve. The Group Home administrator and child care worker/facility manager expressed the importance of observing the children, identifying the problem and using precautions to maintain child safety.

The Group Home has been free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and intimidation during the past 30 days. Both DCFS CSWs are committed to the focus children and have good, ongoing communication with all Group Home staff members. The Group Home utilizes protective strategies that are fully operative and dependable in maintaining excellent conditions. Both focus children reported feeling safe and expressed that they can discuss their concerns with any staff member. There were no Special Incident Reports submitted via the I-Track database over the last 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provided substantial permanence for both of the focus children. The Group Home worked with the DCFS CSWs to ensure that the focus children's permanent plan was being followed. The first focus child has a permanent plan of adoption. Although attempts to place him in an adoptive home have not been successful, the Group Home works with the DCFS Adoptions CSW and fully supports this plan.

The second focus child has reunification services. Adoption has been identified as the concurrent plan if reunification efforts fail. The focus child expressed his dissatisfaction with previous attempts for alternative placement and has stated his preference is to remain placed at the Group Home until reunification with his mother occurs. The effort towards reunification with his mother is progressing and should be a realistic option in the near future.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home has maintained effective family connections for both of the focus children. The Group Home is committed to ensuring that children receive their court ordered visitation, and they assist with transportation when necessary. The Group Home is in constant communication with the DCFS CSWs and follows each child's visitation plan. The DCFS CSWs, Group Home administrator and staff ensures that the outcomes of the children's visits are shared among the key players.

The first focus child has monitored visits away from the Group Home. He is transported to the visits by DCFS staff that also monitors his visits. The Group Home supports and encourages the child's monitored visits with the mother and ensures that he is prepared and ready for visits.

The second focus child's visits are not monitored. He has daily and overnight weekend visits at his mother's home, which he thoroughly enjoys; his visits are encouraged by the Group Home staff. The Group Home administrator and staff have established a good relationship with his mother and are accommodating to timeframes and transportation.

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

Placement Stability (4 Marginally Inadequate Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home provided fair placement stability for both of the focus children. Both of the focus children reported that the Group Home protects them, feeds them and meets their needs. Both of the focus children have been in the Group Home for almost one year and have not had any placement disruptions. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers; however, the ability to assess for possible disruption, develop treatment plans and address the focus children's issues is impaired without the key support of the Group Home social worker. The absence of a Group Home social worker reduces the opportunity to continuously assess stability patterns across daily settings for the focus children.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

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

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Visitation: The Group Home has developed a strong rapport among all team members. Both of the focus children feel respected and heard. Ongoing communication exists with all appropriate parties including the DCFS CSWs and when appropriate, family members. Communication between the DCFS CSW and the Group Home administrator and staff members is ongoing. The Group Home also engages all placed children on a monthly basis to obtain input from them on what outing the Group Home will participate in.

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 children. Both of the focus

children are encouraged to maintain contact with all staff members, their DCFS CSWs and all team members as they desire. Both children have established a good rapport with the Group Home staff.

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

Service Needs (3 Marginally Inadequate Supports and Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home's supports and services have been limited. For the past two months, the Group Home has been without a social worker, which impairs the children's treatment plans. While there is a limited array of key supporters to partially meet most needs, the Group Home has been impacted in providing therapeutic services to the children due to the lack of a Group Home social worker. The first focus child is on the waiting list for an Intensive Treatment Foster Home and has been referred for D-Rate placement. One of the DCFS CSWs interviewed state that the Group Home therapist was "great". OHCMD reviewers stressed to the Group Home administrator the need for a Group Home social worker to provide, develop, and evaluate treatment goals for placed children.

Assessment & Linkages (4 Fair Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home has minimally understood the focus children's functioning and support systems. Each month, the Group Home meets with all of the children to gather suggestions for Group Home activities. The focus children stated that the Group Home protects them, feeds them and meets their needs in every way, however, the Group Home appears to be limited in its understanding of the focus children's underlying needs. Although academic tutoring, staff assistance with their studies, and visitation for the focus children are helpful, the absence of a Group Home social worker has an impact on the Group Home's ability to identify underlying needs of the focus children and to provide effective interventions.

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home has a fair working system of teamwork and teams for the focus children include some of the important supporters. Although the Group Home does not usually conduct face-to-face meetings with DCFS CSWs, phone contact, and emails are utilized as each member is familiar with the key adult supporters. Any information from DCFS CSWs is documented in the communication log and is shared with Group Home staff members. Team meetings are held weekly or more frequently. Actions of the team generally reflect a fairly coherent pattern of effective teamwork and collaborative problem solving with the child.

While the Group Home has excellent communication with the DCFS CSWs, OHCMD reviewers encouraged the Group Home administrator to invite the DCFS CSWs to team meetings and engage in face-to-face interactions with all Group Home staff and the placed children.

Tracking & Adjustment (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home's intervention strategies, supports, and services being provided to children are minimally responsive to changing conditions due to the lack of a Group Home social worker. In reviewing the past 90 days, the impact of not having a Group Home social worker providing treatment planning for the past 30 days has impacted the quality of services

being provided to the children. The Group Home staff members are providing the monitoring, tracking, and communication of the children's status and service results to other team members, including the DCFS CSWs, teachers, and other key supporters. The interviewed DCFS CSWs expressed good communication and responsiveness by the Group Home administrator and staff members; the focus children felt the Group Home staff members were responsive to their needs as well. This indicates somewhat successful adaptations to supports and services are being utilized.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

On June 30, 2014, OHCMD Quality Assurance Section provided the Group Home with technical support related to the findings indicated in the 2013-2014 contract compliance review. The OHCMD reviewers informed the Group Home administrator that without a social worker, a void exists in the ability to assess the progress of the focus children toward their goals and as to what services were necessary and accessible for the children. Not having a social worker inhibits the Group Home's ability to monitor the effectiveness of goals and to modify them as needed.

On July 8, 2014, the quality assurance reviewers met with the Group Home administrator and proposed that the Group Home offer additional recreational activities that expanded the children's exposure and included outings such as fishing, the zoo, involvement in Boy Scouts and YMCA. The quality assurance reviewers provided technical support relating to developing and maintaining comprehensive Needs and Services Plans (NSPs). The reviewers suggested that the Group Home maintain report cards for all children and maintain documentation of the Group Home efforts to provide what is necessary to assist the children in obtaining their educational goals.

On October 23, 2014, the quality assurance reviewers met with the administrator to discuss the results of the quality assurance review and advised of the need for a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The reviewers provided technical support to the administrator to assist the Group Home in the development and implementation of their QIP.

On December 4, 2014, the Group Home hired a social worker and is now providing needed services to the children.

On December 27, 2014, the California Department of Social Services Foster Care Rates Bureau reduced the Group Home's Rate Classification Level (RCL) from RCL 7 to RCL 5. Two points below the minimum requirement for the current DCFS Group Home contract of RCL 7.

On January 17, 2015, the Group Home owner made a call to the Child Protection Hotline requesting that all placed children be removed, because a neighbor informed the reporting party that an unknown man with a gun was looking for one of the placed children because of a gambling debt. On January 21, 2015, Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) investigator spoke with the Group Home administrator. The Group Home administrator informed OHCIS investigator that the Group Home owner had terminated all staff and he was there cleaning the facility. There has been no further communication with the Group Home as the Group Home owner and administrator have been unresponsive to emails and phone calls. On January 19, 2015, all placed children were removed.

O'CONNER AND ATKINS GROUP HOME

October 29, 2014
Out of Home Care Management
Children Service's Administrator
Los Angeles County Department of Children and family Services

O'Conner and Atkins Group Home
2010 West 41st Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90062
(323) 294-7305

RE: Quality Improvement Plan
2014 Quality Assurance Report/Quality Improvement Plan

The QUALITYY IMPROVEMENT Plan (QIP) has been implemented as follows for O'Conner and Atkins Group Home located at 2010 West 41st Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90062.

I. FOCUS AREA – PLACEMENT STABILITY.

The children have established positive relationships with the primary caregivers: although during the past 30 days, the agency has lacked a key adult supporter by not having a Group Home Social Worker to address the children's issues and treatment plans. Further disruption may occur if the agency Social Worker position remains unfilled. The interviewed children stated that the Group home protects them, feeds them and meets their needs in every other way.

QUALITYY IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

O'Conner and Atkins Group Home has interviewed and offered a contract for the Group Home Social Worker position. On July 25, 2014, the Group Home submitted all necessary documents to Community Care License for clearances'. At this time Community Care License has required an EXEMTION for the prospective Social Worker. Group Home Administrator, has been in contact with the CCL Analyst for assistance with the hopes of expediting this process.

O'Conner and Atkins will continue to look for additional Social Worker to either replace, or to use as a backup Social Worker for the group home.

II. FOCUS AREA – SERVICE NEEDS

For the past two months, the Group Home has been without a Social Worker, which impairs children/youth's treatment plans. While there is a limited array off key supporter to partially meet most needs, the Group Home has been impacted in providing therapeutic services to the children with the lack of a Group Home Social Worker. It should be noted that the one of the sampled CSW's stated that the Group Home Social Worker was "GREAT" although the Social Worker is no longer working for the Agency. The Group Home, As of August 12, 2014 is still without a Social Worker and according to CCL there has been no request for clearances for a social worker replacement.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

O'Conner and Atkins on July 25, 2014, did indeed submit to CCL the request for background clearance for a social worker. O'Conner's Group Home was informed an EXEMPTION was needed and said paperwork was submitted to Sacramento for further review before clearance could be approved. To date, Administrator has had contact with CCL Analyst for assistance, who stated there was nothing more she could do other than wait.

O'Conner and Atkins Group Home is also actively looking for addition qualified Social Workers as either a replacement or backup for this position.

III. FOCUS – ASSESMENT & LINKAGES

The Group Home does have monthly meetings with the children to provide their input into the activities they participate in each month and the children do enjoy the outings. When able, the Group Home attempts to meet the extracurricular activity desired by the children. However, the Group Home needs to additional options toward extracurricular activities in addition to the children's preferences of going out to eat and watching movies. Activities which may enrich the children's interest and exposure might include participation in community hiking, and Boy Scouts. In addition, the Group Home should include special outings such as amusement parks, entertainment centers, and the like. The Group Home has an understanding of what [children] are interested in and are attune to provide these activities to meet their desires when able. Academic tutoring, staff assistance with their studies and visitations for the children are helping them to develop a sense off well being.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

O'Conner and Atkins Group Home will continue to hold monthly meetings with staff, and children to plan activities. Administrator will monitor these monthly meetings and offer

options to effectively enhance the social and development skills. Group Home staff and Administrator will also encourage children to actively participate in community activities, such as sports teams, school dances, Boys and Girls Clubs and the YMCA. The Group Home staff will also continue to help the children with personal relationships by actively help find mentors for the children when appropriate.

IV. FOCUS - TEAMWORK

The Group Home has a fair working system off teamwork. Although the Group Home does not usually conduct face-to-face meetings with CSW, phone contact and emails are utilized as each member is familiar with the key adult supporters. Any information from CSWs is documented in the communication log and is shared with staff members. Team meetings are held weekly or more frequently. The Group Home has been without the services of a Group Home Social Worker for the past two months, and consequently has been unable to include this key supporter in the team process. The Group Home reports that they are in process of hiring a social worker. Actions of the team generally reflect a fairly coherent pattern of effective teamwork and collaborative problem solving with the child.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

On July 25, 20144, O'Conner and Atkins Group Home hired on a new Social Work. The Group Home is awaiting the clearance from CCL for an official start date. With the addition of this key supporter, O'Conner and Atkins Group Home will be able to better communicate with all treatment team members to better facilitate all the needs of the children placed in the home. The new Group Home Social Worker will maintain communication with the CSW's by phone, email and invite to treatment team meetings or face-to-face meeting.

V. FOCUS – TRACKING & ADJUSTMENT

Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to children are minimally responsive to changing conditions due to the lack of a Group Home Social Worker. In reviewing the past 90 days, the impact of not having a Group Home Social Worker providing treatment planning has impacted the quality of services being provided to children. The Group Home staff members are providing the monitoring, tracking, and communication of the youth's status and services results to other team members, including

the CSW, the teachers and other key supporters. The interviewed CSW's expressed the good communication and responsiveness by the Group home Administrator and staff members; the children felt the staff members were responsive to their needs as well. Somewhat successful adaptations to supports and services are being utilized.

Quality Improvement Plan:

The Group Home Administrator will continue to seek out other a response from CCL for the clearance o the proposed hired Social Worker. Once the social worker has been cleared, the communication, tracking and adjustment or the children in the care of O'Conner and Atkins Group Home will be better served. Until such time, all staff, teachers, parents and CSW's will continue to communicate.

The Group Home Administrator will be responsible for supervising and enforcing the compliance of this Quality Improvement Plan.

Signature Tony Chest Date 10/30/14

Administrator