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February 9, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES 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 Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home (the Group Home) in March 2015. The Group Home has one site located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles foster children and youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its mission is, "to engage the families of the youth and teach these youth appropriate problem-solving and coping skills to give them the tools necessary to return to be healthy and live successfully with their family and the community."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 8 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendation noted in this report. In July 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 Safety.

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
Joe Ford, Vice-President of Operations, Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES 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 Hathaway-Sycamores Group Home (the Group Home) in March 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.

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), and three Group Home staff members.

At the time of the QAR, the focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was six months and their average age was 15. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review.

QAR SCORING

The FFA 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 FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the children. 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	5	**Good Safety Status** - The focus children are generally and substantially avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and are free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement over the past 30 days.
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** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, the Group Home staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the Group Home ensures that the child's daily living, learning, and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions and known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption.	5	5	**Good Stability** - The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers in those settings.
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visits and other connecting

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
			strategies.
Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff working with the child, biological family, extended family and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to focus on the child'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 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	5	**Good Supports & 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 focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the children'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	5	**Good Teamwork** - The team contains some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children'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

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
			face-to-face team meeting has been held to develop plans.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the Group Home staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	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 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)

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provided good permanence to the focus children. The Group Home uses the Core Practice Model to be in-line with DCFS practices and makes efforts to collaborate with DCFS CSWs to assist in the determination of the best permanent plan for the focus children. The Group Home facilitator maintains contact with the DCFS CSWs to discuss the permanency plans for the focus children.

The first focus child stated that his permanency plan is family reunification with his biological mother. The second focus child's permanency plan is Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA); however, efforts are being made to place the focus child with a relative. The focus child stated that he is aware of his permanency plan and that his DCFS CSW is planning to place him with an aunt. The third focus child's permanency plan is PPLA; efforts are being made to place the focus child in a certified foster home through a program, which operates in conjunction with the Group Home's Foster Family Agency to transition placed children to a lower level of care. The focus child stated that he was aware of the Group Home and his DCFS CSW's plan to place him in a certified foster home.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home is supportive and works toward maintaining family ties for the focus children. One DCFS CSW stated that she only has good things to say about the Group Home.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home provided substantial placement stability for the focus children. The Group Home staff completes daily behavioral logs to assess the children's adjustment to placement. On a daily basis, the Group Home facilitator reviews the daily behavioral log and observes the attachment between the Group Home youth specialists and the focus children. The Group Home facilitator and youth specialist regularly discuss the focus children's adjustment to placement. When a placed child presents difficulty adjusting to placement, this is conveyed to the Group Home therapist who assists the placed children to work through placement challenges.

Each of the focus children have developed a positive relationship and expressed a feeling of closeness with the Group Home staff, especially to the Vice President of Operations. The first focus child stated that therapy has helped to make the placement stable. The second focus child stated that he could count on his therapist. The third focus child reported he could speak to anyone at the Group Home about his concerns. None of the focus children has had any placement disruptions since being placed in the Group Home.

The DCFS CSWs for the focus children indicated that the Group Home always shares information with them regarding the focus children's placement stability. The DCFS CSWs complimented the Group Home on their pre-placement interview and that they are invited and encouraged to participate in the intake screening process to ensure that the Group Home's program meets the needs of placed children.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home has established and maintained acceptable family connections for the focus children. The Group Home staff works with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, and their families to ensure that the court's visitation orders are met and family ties are maintained. The Group Home has a cottage on-site called the "Family Cottage", where placed children's family members can have overnight visits. The Group Home staff monitors visits for the focus children and provides transportation for family members, if needed. The Group Home staff works to arrange visits for the focus children to ensure visits are reasonable and flexible for all parties.

The focus children are encouraged to maintain telephone contact with those who are important to them. The focus children reported that the Group Home staff cares about them and their well-being. The focus children are appreciative as to the effort the Group Home makes to help them maintain family ties.

The first focus child has unmonitored, overnight weekend visits with his mother. The focus child's family spends the weekend at the Group Home's "Family Cottage". According to the focus child, the visits are great. The second focus child has unmonitored visits at the Group Home with his mother and two family members. The focus child stated that the visits go well. The third focus child has unmonitored, off-site visits with his grandmother every other week, on holidays and for his birthday. The focus child reported that he has fun during the visits and they make him feel like he is back at home.

The DCFS CSWs indicated that the Group Home makes great efforts to ensure that the focus children's visits are successful and they reported being satisfied with the efforts made by the Group Home to ensure that the focus children visit with important people in their lives.

What's Not Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Safety (5 Good Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The Group Home's safety status was good. The Group Home staff ensures that the focus children feel safe in placement by continuously addressing safety issues among team members. The Group Home ensures that all of the Group Home staff receive training and are knowledgeable of safety issues. The Group Home facilitator develops a safety plan within 30 days of a child being placed at the Group Home. The Group Home facilitator also interviews the focus children privately to ensure child safety.

The focus children reported that they felt safe and comfortable in the Group Home. They reported that Group Home staff is always with them and they are asked if they feel safe. The first focus child reported that there are no problems in the Group Home and staff takes good care of him. The second focus child reported that the Group Home staff takes good care of him. The third focus child reported that staff pays attention to him and makes sure that "we (placed children) are all right".

The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that the focus children's behavior has improved in part because they feel safe at the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs did not express any concerns regarding the focus children's safety.

The Group Home submitted ten Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database during the past 30 days. One SIR involved substance abuse; two SIRs involved assaultive behavior child to child; one SIR involved assaultive behavior child to staff; and six SIRs involved absence without leaves (AWOLs). One SIR involved the third focus child AWOLing. Further, when the focus child returned to the Group Home, he tried to set his t-shirt on fire.

Although the Group Home completed a SIR regarding the third focus child's AWOL internally, the Group Home fell below the minimum acceptable score of six in the area of Safety due to the Group Home not following SIR reporting guidelines, as the incident was not entered into the I-Track database. Further, the incident was not reported to the Child Protection Hotline.

According to Out-of-Home-Care Investigations Section, there were no substantiated referrals or open investigations for the Group Home during the last 30 days.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The Group Home has established and maintained good engagement efforts with the focus children and key parties. The Group Home ensures that rapport is developed among the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, the focus children's family members, and the focus

children. The Group Home utilizes daily interaction as a tool to ensure that rapport is established between the focus children and the Group Home staff. The Group Home's facilitator reported that she maintains communication with the focus children's DCFS CSWs, via e-mail, telephone calls, and monthly reports. The Group Home facilitator coordinates the communication among team members and is assigned to develop the children's Needs and Services Plans (NSPs).

Each of the focus children reported that their concerns were heard and respected by the Group Home staff as they are people they could count on. The focus children reported that they are able to discuss their issues and concerns with their family members and with Group Home staff.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home staff is in frequent communication with them and they work together to address the needs and concerns of the focus children.

Service Needs (5 Fair Support & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home provides the focus children with an array of services and extracurricular activities to help the focus children make progress toward their planned outcomes. The Group Home staff meets on a regular basis to discuss what direction to take in providing services that will appropriately meet the needs of the focus children. The focus children are receiving therapeutic and psychiatric services to address mental health issues, tutoring, and independent living skills. The Group Home assists with Youth Development Services (YDS) for older children. The YDS component of the Group Home program is geared toward assisting older children in moving toward self-sufficiency.

The focus children reported that their needs are being met. The focus children receive weekly individual therapy, group therapy and monthly psychiatric consultation. The focus children also reported participating in YDS. The first focus child is receiving tutoring to assist in Math; he is also in the process of being assessed for an Individualized Educational Plan. The second focus child enjoys music and uses the on-grounds cottage music studio to "rap". The third focus child is receiving YDS services to assist the focus child in developing basic skills such as cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry.

The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that they communicate with the Group Home staff on a regular basis to ensure that the appropriate services are in place. The DCFS CSWs also reported that they are invited to participate in monthly Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings where the needs of the children are discussed and modifications to their treatment plans are made, as needed. The DCFS CSWs also reported that they are asked to participate in the focus children's NSP team meetings where the focus children's needs are discussed, goals are set and the treatment plan is implemented.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. The focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized and understood by the Group Home staff and key parties. The services provided such as individual and group therapy, psychiatric services, and YDS are geared to assist the focus children toward making progress and improving their functioning and well-being.

The Group Home staff meets regularly to discuss the focus children's case plan goals and hold CFT meetings. There is an open line of communication between the Group Home staff and the DCFS CSWs via e-mail and telephone. The Group Home staff also provide the DCFS CSWs with monthly progress reports on the focus children. The Group Home is in frequent communication with the focus children's school to ensure that they are making academic progress or to address academic performance.

The DCFS CSWs reported that everyone works together and communicates what is needed for the focus children. They also reported that participating in team meetings is very helpful to them as the focus children's progress or lack of progress is identified and noted in their NSPs and strategies are discussed during CFT meetings. The information obtained regarding progress made and the services the focus children receive is provided to the Children's Court.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The Group Home involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team consists of: the focus children and their family, the Group Home youth specialist, behavioral specialist, facilitator, clinician, therapist, psychiatrist, administrator, Vice President of Operations, and the DCFS CSWs. The team members of the focus children appear to be attuned to the focus children's strengths and needs, and they ensure the necessary supports are available to assist the focus children in addressing their underlying needs. The Group Home meets once a week, and in some instances more often, if needed. The purpose of the Group Home team meetings is to discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications to their treatment plans or strategies to assist them in making progress toward their treatment goals.

The focus children reported being satisfied with their teams and its functioning. The focus children stated that it is important to have all key parties present during the CFT meetings, especially their family members. The focus children reported that they are satisfied with the teamwork demonstrated by their team. The focus children reported that they feel they are included in the team, and feel respected when they are permitted to make their own choices regarding visitation or contact with their family members.

The DCFS CSWs indicated that the Group Home maintains constant communication with them via e-mail, telephone, and written progress reports. The DCFS CSWs also indicated that they are invited and are active participants in the Group Home's monthly CFT meetings. In addition, if they are not able to attend the CFT meetings, they can participate over the phone.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided generally reflect the focus children's needs. The Group Home's treatment team meets frequently to review the focus children's status.

Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the Group Home and the DCFS CSWs. The Group Home facilitator tracks intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and the Group Home's youth specialists documents daily progress notes of the focus children's behavior. The information is then shared with the focus children's team members.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In January 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review. Technical support and training was provided regarding appropriate maintenance of comprehensive clothing logs; ensuring maintenance of sufficient recreational equipment, including computers; maintenance of adequate nutritious perishable and non-perishable foods; ensuring DCFS CSWs' authorization of NSPs; NSPs being developed timely; and ensuring that staff receive the required hours of annual training.

In July 2015, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support addressing methods on improving in the area of Safety. 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.

Dario Villamarin
Department of Children and Family Services
Out-of-Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Avenue, Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731

August 12, 2015

Dear Mr. Villamarin,

This letter is written per your request for Hathaway-Sycamores to provide a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to address the issue of ensuring documentation deficiencies (SIR timeliness) from occurring in the future for our facility # 197804907 that is due to you by August 14th 2015.

The Plan of Correction is as follows:

The Out-of- Home Care Management Division noted a concern in the area of Safety. The group home Safety status was good. However, it was brought to our attention that SIR's were not cross reported to Out-of-Home Care Management Division.

On January 14, 2015, the residential Youth Specialists, Clinicians, and Supervisors were trained on SIR procedures. Our process to properly document and cross report incidents are as follow: once an incident occurs, the staff involved will document the details of the event in an SIR by the end of their shift. By the next day, the Supervisor will review, approve and submit the report. Incidents surrounding safety concerns, such as AWOLs, self-harm, physically aggressive behaviors, will be reported.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mia Williams
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