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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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February 18, 2016

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

PARAGON CENTER, INC. 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 Paragon Center, Inc. Group Home (the Group Home) in November 2014. The Group Home has one site located in Orange County and provides services to DCFS placed children and youth, as well as children from other counties. According to the Group Home's program statement, it stated purpose is, "to enable these children to increase their independent adaptive skills and decrease their maladaptive behaviors in order to gain the necessary skills 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 8 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Teamwork.

The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In July 2015, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of 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
Pamela Cutchlow, Paragon Center, Inc. Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

PARAGON CENTER, INC. 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 Paragon Center, Inc. Group Home in November 2014. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the Group Home's service delivery and to ensure that the Group Home is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the Group Home's service delivery during the most recent 90 day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), two Group Home staff members, one Group Home social worker, and the Group Home administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was 13, their overall average length of placement was eight months and their average age was 17. 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 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 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	6	**Optimal Safety Status** - The focus children have 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** - 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	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/non-related family members 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 children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate excellent, efforts are being used by the Group Home staff as necessary to find and engage the focus children, caregiver, and other key people.
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 Needs** - 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. A usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory. The array provides an appropriate range of options in the selection of providers.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the child and family understand the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and underlying issues and services are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	6	**Optimal Assessment and Understanding** - The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood. Knowledge necessary to understand the children's strengths, needs, and preferences is continuously updated.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the child and family, have formed a working team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.	5	4	**Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork** - The team contains some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus 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	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the Group Home staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5	**Good Tracking and Adjustment Process** - Intervention strategies, supports, and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status and service results to the team are occurring.

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 and reported Special Incident Reports (SIRs) in a timely manner. During the QAR, it was reported that the Group Home took responsibility for the safety of the focus children. The focus children interviewed reported feeling safe at all times while at the Group Home and always being supervised by staff.

DCFS CSWs did not report any child safety concerns in regards to the Group Home and the safety of the focus children.

The Group Home submitted a total of seven SIRs during the past 30 days. All seven SIRs involved one of the focus children. The SIRs included: two incidents of running away, substance abuse while on AWOL, one incident where the focus child was sent home from school for not following directions, one incident of suicidal ideation, three incidents of assaultive behavior toward a peer and property damage.

The focus child involved in these incidents reported feeling safe at the Group Home. However, she shared that she was not happy with how the Group Home handled physical altercations between peers. The Group Home staff reported that the focus child was usually provoking arguments with the other residents and being defiant. The focus child has also openly expressed that she does not want to be at the Group Home because it is located out of county and wants to go back to her father, who resides in Los Angeles County. All of the SIRs occurred during a period of one week. The Group Home worked with the focus child, her mentor, the Group Home therapist and her DCFS CSW to ensure appropriate interventions and services were in place, and increased supervision to ensure incidents do not escalate.

The Group Home therapist reported that the Group Home staff and Group Home administrator always keep her informed of any incidents and self-endangering behaviors the focus children might engage in, in order for her to address these triggers and assist the focus children in developing coping skills to decrease self-harming behaviors. Also, at times, develop a safety plan for the focus children if needed.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section did not investigate any open referrals in the last 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home is providing the services that correspond with the focus children's permanency plans. The Group Home demonstrates efforts to reach the permanency plan requested by DCFS. The permanency plan for all three of the focus children is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement; each of the focus children is receiving extended foster care services and working on transitioning to an independent living arrangement. The focus children were fully aware of their permanency plans, concurrent plans and the steps being taken to ensure timely permanency. The Group Home is providing permanency services that include emancipation and youth development services. The focus children and the Group Home are fully supporting the goals in place for all the focus children.

The first focus child reported that her plan is to transition out of care. She also added that she has developed a positive and enduring relationship with the Group Home administrator. The focus child reported that the Group Home has supported her with her permanency goals by teaching her independent skills, such as budgeting. The focus child stated that she has matured and her behavior has improved since being placed at the Group Home.

The second focus child reported that she also has a good relationship with the Group Home administrator. The focus child reported that her plan is to go to transitional housing once she graduates from high school. The focus child reported that the Group Home is supporting her in achieving her permanency goals and becoming more independent by teaching her how to cook and teaching her responsibility through chores she must complete. The focus child reported that the Group Home has also helped her obtain her California Identification card and Social Security card to ensure that she has proper documentation once she transitions out of care.

The third focus child reported that she does not want to be at the Group Home due to the location; however, the focus child did report that she has a good relationship with the Group Home administrator. The focus child reported that her plans are to return to Los Angeles County once she graduates from high school.

DCFS CSWs reported that they inform the Group Home of the permanency plan for the focus children and the Group Home assists based on their permanency plan. DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home assists with the permanency goals by assisting the focus children to stay on track with school and work towards high school graduation, teaching them daily living skills, such as money management and transporting the focus children to Independent Living Program (ILP) classes.

The Group Home staff reported that they assist the focus children in building a strong foundation to be independent and transition to a lower level of care. The Group Home staff reported that they help the focus children by teaching them to cook, manage their money, fill out job applications, obtain college resources and take them to transitional housing interviews.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home is providing good placement stability for the focus children. The focus children have stability in their placement and in school and are working on graduating from high school. All three focus children have established positive relationships with the Group Home administrator and report that they can always count on her for all their needs. The Group Home administrator reported having a good relationship with all three focus children as she is always at the Group Home speaking to the focus children to ensure that they are well, that their needs are met and they are stable at the Group Home.

The focus children have made changes in improving their behavior, maturing, and becoming more independent, as they are working towards moving into transitional housing and transitioning out of care.

The first focus child reported that she has been at the Group Home for over a year and is stable. The focus child shared that she has made positive changes and has seen improvements in her behavior, and she has matured. The focus child also reported that she has been in many placements in the past and this is the only placement she has been where she sees herself making progress and achieving her goals. The focus child attributed the positive changes to the support she receives from the Group Home.

The second focus child reported that she has become more independent since being placed at the Group Home. The focus child reported that the Group Home meets all her needs and assists her with her educational needs, completing job applications and participating in activities.

The third focus child reported that she does not want to be at the Group Home due to its location, as it is out of county and she would like to be in Los Angeles County. The focus child also stated that she has discussed her desire to relocate to Los Angeles County with her DCFS CSW.

DCFS CSWs reported that the focus children have stability at the Group Home. DCFS CSWs reported that when and if any issues arise, they ensure that they address it with the focus children and the Group Home staff to ensure that there are no placement disruptions.

Although one focus child has demonstrated defiance and oppositional behavior, the Group Home has continued to work with the focus child in efforts to prevent placement disruption.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home has provided optimal maintenance of visitation and family connections for the focus children. The Group Home transports one of the focus children to and from Los Angeles County to maintain visitation with their family. In addition to maintaining family connections, two of the focus children are also linked to mentors, with whom they have visits. The

Group Home ensures that the focus children have connections with either family members or mentors as they get ready to transition out of care.

The Group Home staff encourages the focus children to contact their families, when there is family involvement to ensure connections are maintained. The Group Home administrator is actively involved with the children and ensures that the focus children contact their family members.

The first focus child has weekly monitored visits with her mother and unmonitored visits with her mentor. The focus child reported that the Group Home administrator will remind her to contact her mother when her mother is unable to visit her. The focus child reported enjoying her visits with her mentor.

The second focus child has unmonitored weekend overnight visitation with her aunt and uncle. The focus child reported enjoying her visits and is highly satisfied with the family connections she maintains.

The third focus child has unmonitored overnight visits every other weekend with her mentor. The focus child reported enjoying her visits with her mentor. The focus child also shared that the staff at the Group Home encourage her and remind her to contact her mother, father and siblings, as she does not have visits with them at this time.

Two of the focus children reported that the Group Home staff transport and monitor their visits, if necessary, with their family members.

DCFS CSWs reported being very happy with the Group Home efforts in maintaining family connection for the focus children as they ensure visitation is convenient for family members.

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 provides optimal degree of engagement for the focus children. The Group Home administrator has developed a rapport with the focus children where they feel heard and respected. The focus children have a strong, positive working relationship with the Group Home administrator and reported that they can always count on her to address all of their needs and concerns. All three focus children and DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home administrator does a great job engaging the key people in the focus children's lives, such as the DCFS CSWs, the Group Home therapist and Group Home staff and family members, if there is involvement. The Group Home ensures that accommodations are made for DCFS CSWs and other key people, in scheduling meetings that are convenient for everyone. The Group Home administrator ensures that engagement efforts are consistent.

The first focus child reported that she can count on the staff at the Group Home and the Group Home administrator. The focus child reported that the Group Home administrator and staff have open

communication and have meetings with her DCFS CSW to discuss how she is doing and reported that they all work together for her best interest. The DCFS CSW reported that she has a good working relationship with the Group Home administrator and that the Group Home makes certain that she is included in the decision-making and discussions regarding her progress.

The second focus child reported that she can count on the Group Home administrator. The focus child reported that her DCFS CSW and Group Home administrator work with her to ensure that all her needs are met. The focus child reported that the Group Home administrator has contacted her counselors at school when she requests or asks for assistance in ensuring her educational needs are met.

The third focus child reported that she counts on her mentor; who has been a part of her life for six years. The Group Home staff engages her mentor, as they have a good working relationship. The focus child also reported that the Group Home administrator engages the DCFS CSW in regards to the progress she is making. An example of optimal engagement efforts by the Group Home is when there was an incident with the focus child wanting to harm herself, the Group Home staff, Group Home administrator and the focus child's mentor all worked together to put a safety plan in place to ensure the safety of the focus child.

The DCFS CSWs also reported building a great rapport and working relationship with the Group Home administrator. DCFS CSWs stay in constant communication with the Group Home administrator by telephone, e-mail and during monthly visits to the Group Home to ensure that the focus children are making progress towards meeting their goal of reaching independence.

The Group Home therapist reported that she has a good working relationship with the DCFS CSWs for the focus children. The Group Home therapist reported that the Group Home administrator has a great rapport with the DCFS CSWs. The Group Home therapist also shared that the focus children have a great relationship with the Group Home administrator.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: Intervention strategies identified in the case plan and Needs and Services Plan match the services that are being provided for the focus children. The services put in place are helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.

The focus children receive individual and group therapy, tutoring services, family support, if appropriate, life skills, educational support, job search/career exploration, psychiatric consultation and medication monitoring, as needed. The primary goal for each of the focus children is to graduate high school and transition to independence. The focus children are receiving the services they need to achieve permanency.

The first focus child is receiving individual and group therapy twice a week and monthly psychiatric consultation and medication evaluation. The focus child is also receiving tutoring and education support, life skills, educational support and job search/career exploration through the Group Home. The focus child reported being happy with the services she receives and reported that the Group Home meets all her needs.

The second focus child is receiving individual and group therapy twice a week, tutoring twice a week, life skills training, education support and job search/career exploration. The focus child reported being happy with the services she receives and reported that the appropriate services are in place and meet all their needs.

The third focus child is receiving individual and group therapy twice a week. She is participating in anger management classes. The focus child receives educational support services and tutoring. The Group Home is also providing life skills training and job search/career exploration services. Although, the focus child is receiving all the appropriate services at the Group Home, as stated by her DCFS CSW and documented in her case plan, the focus child is not happy at the Group Home and claims that she is not receiving what she needs, as her main focus is to move closer to her family.

DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home develops and implements the treatment goals for the focus children and provides them with the NSPs for review and approval. DCFS CSWs reported that they ensure they communicate with the Group Home administrator regarding services the focus children need and the Group Home administrator ensures that the services are in place.

The Group Home therapist reported that her main goal is to start where the focus children are as her baseline in creating and developing the treatment goals. She reported that she works with the focus children and the DCFS CSWs in modifying the goals and ensures that the focus children are aware and in agreement with their NSP and case plan goals.

Assessment & Linkages (6 Optimal Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home has an optimal understanding of the focus children. The Group Home administrator, along with the Group Home therapist and DCFS CSWs work together in order to fully recognize and understand the focus children's strengths, risks and underlying needs and provide the services needed for them to graduate high school and obtain transitional housing. The focus children are involved in providing input in regards to the services they receive and what is working for them and what is not.

The focus children reported that they do not like to participate in extracurricular activities, as they are in their late teens and prefer to do things on their own time. The focus children did report if they were to express interest in an activity, the Group Home administrator will ensure to obtain information on resources available for what they would like to participate in.

DCFS CSWs reported that they obtain information regarding the focus children's progress toward their NSP goals by communicating with the Group Home staff, the focus children and reviewing the NSPs.

The Group Home therapist reported that she continuously conducts psycho-social assessments of the focus children during therapy sessions to ensure that she identifies the focus children's strengths and to better understand their needs. The Group Home therapist reported that she also asks the focus children to share what they feel their needs are so that she may assess progress they are making toward their treatment goals or to make the modifications, if needed. The Group Home therapist also shared that she encourages the focus children to participate in extracurricular activities, as it is important and helps with their stressors; however, the focus children chose not to participate.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided generally reflect the focus children's needs. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the Group Home administrator and the DCFS CSWs. The Group Home therapist along with the DCFS CSWs and Group Home administrator are aware of what is working and not working for the focus children. The DCFS CSWs have good understanding of what the focus children are in need of and communicate with the Group Home to ensure the focus children are receiving the appropriate resources and services. When the focus children are not receiving the services they need, interventions are modified to best meet their needs.

DCFS CSWs reported that due to being in communication with the Group Home administrator and the focus children on a monthly basis or more often as needed, they are aware of how the focus children are doing and whether the services in place are meeting the focus children's needs. DCFS CSWs also reported that they work with the Group Home staff to modify and change the goals on the NSPs if needed.

The Group Home tracks and modifies the treatment goals for the focus children by constantly communicating with the focus children and the DCFS CSWs. The Group Home also tracks the focus children's progress through NSPs and staff meetings, which is also documented and tracked.

The Group Home therapist reported that the Group Home staff and Group Home administrator keep her up-to-date in regards to how the focus children are doing, so that she can update and modify interventions for the focus children. The Group Home therapist reported that she communicates with the focus children as well to get their feedback on what needs to be modified and changed, along with the DCFS CSWs.

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

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 children, the team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks and plans together as a team.

The focus children reported that they did not know who their team consisted of, as they do not participate in team meetings regularly. The focus children reported communicating only with the Group Home administrator when they have concerns, issues and/or need assistance at the Group Home and most of the time only speaking with their DCFS CSWs.

The DCFS CSWs reported that their primary contact at the Group Home is the administrator.

Although the Group Home administrator does a great job in meeting all the needs, concerns, and ensuring services for the focus children, it appears that she is the main team player identified as the team leader assigned at the Group Home who will ensure that all team members work, collaborate, and hold team meetings on a regular basis.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In June 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review. Technical support and training provided to the Group Home related to SIR reporting guidelines.

In July 2015, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer discussed the results of the QAR and methods for improvement in the area of Teamwork with the Group Home. 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.

PARAGON CENTER, INC.

July 15, 2015

Children Services Administrator I

DCFS-Out-of-Home Care Management Division

9320 Telestar Ave, Suite 126

El Monte, Ca 91731

ATTN: Adelina Arutyunyan

Subject: Quality Improvement Plan

Dear. Ms. Arutyunyan

Per your Quality Assurance Review on Paragon Center Quality Improvement Plan follows:

I. 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.

Quality Improvement Plan: Administrator has selected a team leader for every shift. Effective August 1, 2015 the team leader will focus on planning, tasks, monitoring, participation, meeting clients concerns, problem solving, decision making, assigning responsibilities and group interaction and individual interaction with residents, therapist and other significant others in clients lives. Team members will also hold monthly meetings with placed children as a group and other staff members as well. Team leader will meet monthly with Administrator to discuss any improvements, changes needed, resident updates, and concerns. Administrator will continue to conduct monthly meetings with all staff and therapist to discuss group home, concerns, improvements and activities as a team.

If you have any questions or concerns or require additional information, please feel free to contact me (714)321-5704 or via email paragoncenter@msn.com

Respectfully Submitted

Denita Trowel, Group Home Administrator

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