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

February 25, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

ORANGE COUNTY CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION 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 Orange County Children's Foundation Group Home (the Group Home) in April 2015. The Group Home has three licensed sites, one located in the Second Supervisorial District, one located in the Fourth Supervisorial District and one located in the County of Orange, and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the Group Home's program statement, its purpose is, "to increase the likelihood that those residents who remain in the program until their 18th birthday will demonstrate a measurable increase in academic and social adaptive skills and decrease in maladaptive behaviors to enable them to adjust successfully as adults."

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 all 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, as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In August 2015, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss results of the QAR.

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
Calvin Remington, Interim Chief Probation Officer
Audit Committee
Rachel Suit, Assistant Executive Director, Orange County Children's Foundation Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

ORANGE COUNTY CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION 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 Orange County Children's Foundation Group Home (the Group Home) in April 2015. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the Group Home's service delivery and to ensure that the Group Home is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

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

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

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

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

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, three Group Home child care workers, one County of Los Angeles Deputy Probation Officer (DPO), one Group Home administrator, three Group Home social workers, and three Group Home children's caseworkers.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was five months, and their average age was 16. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of 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 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 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, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - The focus children reside in a group home and DCFS permanency goals are adequately supported by the Group Home. The focus children are in a setting which will endure until they reach maturity.
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 no disruptions. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers at the Group Home. Only age-appropriate changes in school settings are expected within the next six months.
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Family Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	GH QAR Score	GH QAR Rating
Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff working with the child, biological family, extended family and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to focus on the child's strengths and needs.	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, 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 & Services** - A good and substantial array of supporters and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in case plan. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress towards planned outcomes. A usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services are available, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory.
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 focus children's strengths, needs, and preferences is frequently updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are substantially recognized and 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 focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks, and plans together.

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. 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)

Safety (6 Optimal Status)

Safety Overview: The Group Home is providing a safe environment for the focus children. The focus children have been free from abuse, neglect, exploitation and intimidation during the past 30 days. The focus children reported feeling happy and safe in their current placement, and they stated that the Group Home is a safe place to live. The DCFS CSWs and DPO reported that the Group Home provides a safe environment for the focus children.

The first focus child reported that there is always appropriate supervision at the Group Home, and he feels protected. He stated that he has never been hurt, but he knows he can inform Group Home staff or the Group Home therapist if he has a concern.

The second focus child stated that staff closely supervised all the children placed at the Group Home. He also stated that he feels protected by the Group Home staff. He also shared that he can speak with the Group Home staff if he was hurt or if he has a concern.

The third focus child stated that he is supervised by the Group Home staff. He shared that he feels safe, because the Group Home staff cares for him and provides for his needs. The focus child also stated that his current Group Home is the best group home he has been placed in.

The Group Home submitted 33 Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database during the last 30 days. None of the SIRs submitted posed an immediate child safety risk. Two SIRs involved one focus child. The Group Home addressed each of the SIRs with the placed children involved in the incidents. The SIRs submitted were comprehensive, capturing the aspects of the reported incidents. When necessary, the Group Home provided additional information by submitting addendums, as requested. Further, the Group Home ensured the incidents were cross-reported to all required parties.

The DCFS Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section did not have any open referrals or investigations.

The DCFS CSWs and the DPO did not have any concerns regarding the safety of the focus children or of the supervision provided by the Group Home.

Permanency (5 Good Stability)

Permanency Overview: The Group Home provided substantial permanence for each focus child and fully supported the permanency goals established by DCFS and the Department of Probation. The focus children have demonstrated progress toward achieving their permanency goals.

The first focus child's permanency plan is Family Reunification, and the concurrent plan is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA). The Group Home is providing the services necessary to support reunification with his mother. However, the focus child expressed that he wishes to become independent and transition out of care. The focus child's plan is to work and attend college, and he would like to participate in a Transitional Housing Program (THP).

The second focus child is under the joint supervision of DCFS and Probation. His permanency plan is PPLA. The focus child expressed that he would like to graduate from high school and become independent. The focus child shared that the Group Home is supportive of his plans, as he does not wish to reunify with his paternal aunt, who is his former legal guardian. His DCFS CSW and DPO stated that the Group Home is supportive of the focus child and that the Group Home is providing the supervision and services to ensure the focus child complies with the conditions of his probation and assisting him in transitioning out of care.

The third focus child's permanency plan is also PPLA, and he is in the process of transitioning to transitional housing. The Group Home is supportive of his permanency goal of self-sufficiency. The focus child is determined to live independent, and is attaining his permanency goal. He has graduated from high school and is attending a welding certification course through a local occupational training program. He also would like to enroll in community college in the future.

DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that the Group Home social workers are in constant communication with them and that they work collaboratively to ensure that each focus child is receiving the appropriate permanency services. The Group Home is following the DCFS and Probation's recommendations of supporting the permanency plans for the focus children.

Placement Stability (5 Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The Group Home provides substantial placement stability for each of the focus children. The Group Home takes responsibility in ensuring the focus children are provided with the treatment needed for them to become stable in all areas. According to the Group Home's Director of Operations, the Group Home hires trained capable staff and ensures that the staff receives training regularly so they are equipped to properly address the needs of the focus children.

Each of the focus children shared that they like residing at the Group Home. The focus children stated that they felt stable in the Group Home and that the staff is always available to supervise them and assist them. The focus children each expressed that the Group Home staff is supportive and

each of the focus children identified the Group Home staff as caring and available to help them meet their needs. The three focus children felt they could go to staff when they have a concern or need emotional support.

The first focus child reported that he is happy in the Group Home. The focus child has resided at the Group Home approximately two years. He shared that he is doing well in placement, and that he is receiving assistance to improve his behavior and performance in school. He also shared that he is comfortable at the Group Home and he feels respected.

The second focus child reported that he is receiving the services he needs, and that the Group Home staff is encouraging and assisting him to do better. He shared that the Group Home staff help with his schoolwork and that he is following the conditions of his probation.

The third focus child has resided at the Group Home for approximately eight months. The focus child shared that he had been in multiple placements prior to his placement at the Group Home. The focus child stated that he is much happier, and that he feels everything is working out, since being placed at the Group Home. He added that prior to being placed at the Group Home, he would absence without leave (AWOL) often, but now, he is doing much better and is making progress toward achieving his goals.

The focus children's DCFS CSWs and DPO were pleased with the children's stability. They further shared that the Group Home is ensuring the focus children's needs are being met. They expressed their satisfaction with the stability the focus children have demonstrated while placed at the Group Home.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The Group Home is generally effective in maintaining family connections and follows the court-ordered visitation plans and the DCFS CSWs and DPO's recommendations for the focus children. The Group Home makes efforts to ensure the focus children maintain contact with family members. The Group Home monitors family visits requiring supervision and provides transportation for visits, as needed. The Group Home keeps visitation logs, and if visits are missed, the visits are rescheduled in a timely manner.

The first focus child has monitored visits with his mother every other week in a neutral setting. However, his mother is not consistent with the visits. He also has unmonitored phone calls with his mother. The focus child reported that he enjoys talking with his mother and the visits are fun. He also stated that he feels good speaking and visiting with his mother, and that she is the only person he visits with. The Group Home staff encourages the focus child to stay in contact with his mother.

The second focus child has unmonitored visits with his paternal aunt. According to the Group Home staff, she had not made efforts to visit him, as she would like to ensure the focus child is stable before visits are initiated. The focus child does maintain regular telephone contact with his paternal aunt. The Group Home has discussed arrangements for mentoring services if the maternal aunt does not follow through with visiting the focus child.

The third focus child communicates with his family members by telephone, as they live out of the country. He shared that he calls his parents often, especially his mother. He shared that he is

looking forward to being able to visit with them one day. The focus child has a girlfriend that he visits on the weekends, and he spends time with his friends from school. Although the focus child has been offered mentoring services, the focus child refused a mentor.

According to the Group Home administrator, the focus children are able to contact their DCFS CSWs or DPO whenever they wish. The Group Home staff maintains communication with appropriate family members, and they keep the family members informed of the focus children's successes, as well as any concerns that may arise.

The DCFS CSWs and DPO did not express any concerns regarding the focus children's visitation arrangements. They stated that the Group Home adheres to the visitation orders and recommendations and the Group Home provides transportation for visits.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(*Measured over last 90 days*)

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The Group Home makes good efforts and consistently engage key parties and the focus children in making decisions in the best interest of the focus children and the focus children expressed that they felt they were respected and their concerns were heard. The Group Home ensures that the focus children have regular contact with their DCFS CSWs and/or their DPO, family members, and other key people involved in their lives. The Group Home is in contact with the DCFS CSWs, providing information about the children's progress and concerns. Information regarding the focus children is provided to DCFS CSWs, DPO, and key people via telephone, e-mail, or face-to-face. The Group Home makes efforts to meet with the DCFS CSW and the DPO on a monthly basis.

According to the Group Home staff and Group Home Director of Operations, the focus children may contact DCFS CSWs when they want to do so. The Group Home social workers have built a good rapport with DCFS CSWs and the DPO, and they reported maintaining regular communications with them.

The focus children reported that they are included in meetings and their input is taken into consideration when developing goals or making changes to their treatment plan. They shared that they feel heard and respected. The focus children reported that they could count on the Group Home staff and they have good relationships with them. They also shared that they know their DCFS CSWs and DPO are involved and kept informed by the Group Home staff, because they discuss current issues and concerns, as well as treatment and case plan goals with them during their monthly visits to the Group Home. The focus children also shared that their therapist is also engaged and supportive of their goals, as the therapist participates in meetings with the Group Home staff. The focus children also reported addressing issues that come up at the Group Home during therapy.

The DCFS CSWs and DPO reported that they receive reports from the Group Home and that they have a good working relationship with the Group Home staff. They expressed that they are working together in the best interests of the focus children.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The Group Home provided a substantial array of supports and services matching the intervention strategies identified in the case plan of the focus children. The Group Home social workers collaborate with the DCFS CSWs and DPO, and the focus children are included in the development of the treatment and Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. They all work together to ensure that the services match intervention strategies identified in each focus child's case plan. The Group Home provides weekly individual and group therapy, anger management, substance abuse counseling and life skills training. The Group Home provides transportation for all therapeutic, recreational, medical, and dental services. The Group Home is supportive of teaching the focus children to become more independent by teaching them self-care and life skills, such as money management, doing laundry and cooking.

The Group Home social workers work collaboratively with the focus children's schools, ensuring that the focus children are attending school regularly, completing school assignments and that they are receiving the necessary support services, such as tutoring, to make academic progress.

The first focus child is receiving weekly individual therapy, anger management, and substance abuse counseling. The focus child also receives monthly medication monitoring and psychiatric services. The Group Home social worker monitors the focus child's school attendance and academic performance; and reports that he is attending school regularly. The focus child reported that he is benefitting from the services his is receiving.

The second focus child is receiving weekly individual counseling through the Group Home. He also participates in weekly group counseling, substance abuse counseling and tutoring. The Group Home social worker maintains contact with the focus child's paternal aunt, to discuss the focus child's academic progress, as she is the holder of the focus child's educational rights.

The third focus child has benefitted from the services he received from the Group Home. The focus child participated in substance abuse counseling and group therapy. He continues to receive individual counseling at the Group Home. He is receiving Independent Living Program (ILP) services and is preparing to transition out of care.

Each focus child is encouraged in participating in extracurricular activities, as well as daily activities and outings offered by the Group Home.

The DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that the focus children are receiving the appropriate services to meet their needs, as each child has demonstrated improvements. The services provided are seen by the focus children, their family members and their DCFS CSWs and/or DPO as adequate in assisting the focus children to meet their treatment goals.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The Group Home provided good assessments and understanding of the focus children's needs. Assessment of the focus children's functioning, strengths, needs, and preferences occur regularly, in order to meet their treatment goals and development of their NSPs. The NSPs are also comprehensive for the focus children as they involve input from key people, including the focus children. The focus children meet with their respective

Group Home social worker weekly, or as needed to assess their progress and evaluate their needs. The Group Home determines the focus children are making progress toward their NSP goals by observing if there is a reduction in incidents and acting out behaviors. Progress is also determined by what the focus children's schools observe and report.

The focus children expressed a positive relationship with the Group Home staff as they provide them with guidance, support, and care. The focus children have regular medical and dental visits. The focus children participate in team meetings to assess and evaluate their needs so that a plan is developed and put in place to assist the focus children in making progress towards meeting their case plan goals. The Group Home makes good assessments and shows an understanding in the functioning and support systems for the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs and the DPO reported that the Group Home is meeting the needs of the focus children and that the focus children were happy being placed at the Group Home.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supporters. The focus children reported knowing who their team members were. The focus children are aware of the people in their lives who are part of their team. The Group Home holds quarterly treatment team meetings to discuss the progress the focus children are making. The Group Home invites all the key people in the children's life to attend, such as the DCFS CSWs, the DPO, focus children's therapist, Group Home staff who provide supervision, appropriate family members, and the focus children. The focus children reported participating in team meetings. The team at the Group Home has formed a good, consistent working system that meets, talks, and plans together for the best interest of the focus children on an ongoing basis.

The DCFS CSWs reported having a good rapport with the Group Home social worker, and they consistently collaborate to address any needs that arise. The DCFS CSWs and DPO also reported that they have team meetings at the Group Home and that either they or the Group Home social worker may request a meeting at any time. They also reported that the focus child can always talk to them about any concerns and that they discuss their concerns with the Group Home social worker or therapist to ensure the child's concerns are heard and addressed.

The DCFS CSWs and DPO reported that the Group Home communicated by e-mail and telephone and informed them about the child's needs and progress. The DCFS CSWs indicated that the Group Home ensures that the Group Home works as a team and if a problem is identified, they work as a team to resolve the issue.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The Group Home's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided generally reflect the focus children's needs. Intervention strategies and services have been helpful for the focus children. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the Group Home and the DCFS CSWs and/or the DPO. The Group Home provided periodic monitoring and tracking of services. The Group Home tracks the children's progress through weekly individual and group meetings.

The Group Home social workers have quarterly treatment team meetings with the focus children to address the NSP goals and the focus children's progress towards achieving these goals. The focus children's behavior is documented in the NSPs. The focus children's academic progress is tracked to determine if additional academic support is needed. The Group Home social workers are readily available and ready to adjust goals or to request adjustments to services to meet the focus children's needs and follow DCFS and Probation's recommendations. There is continuous ongoing monitoring, tracking and communication of the children's status and services. The Group Home uses their weekly contact records, monthly DCFS CSW and DPO contact logs, Individual Education Plan, reports, mental health, quarterly health and safety assessments to track the focus children's progress.

The focus children reported that the Group Home staff is meeting their needs with the assistance of their DCFS CSWs and DPO.

The DCFS CSW reported that the focus children have made progress in the Group Home and that they are satisfied with the level care and treatment they receive through the services being provided by the Group Home.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In April 23, 2015, the OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2013-2014 Contract Compliance Review, which consisted of improving SIRs by submitting amendments when new information is available, as well as submitting them timely.

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