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June 21, 2016

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

PROJECT SIX DBA THE HELP GROUP 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 Project Six dba The Help Group (the Group Home) in November 2015. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 12 and has one site located in the Third Supervisorial District. The Group Home provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the Group Home's Program Statement, its stated purpose is to "decrease residents' maladaptive behaviors and improve their social, emotional and academic/occupational functioning."

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 opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Teamwork.

In January 2016, 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. The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations noted in this report.

If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR:KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Barbara Firestone, Executive Director, Project Six/The Help Group
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

PROJECT SIX DBA THE HELP GROUP GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Project Six dba The Help Group (the Group Home) in November 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 QAR focuses on the focus child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR 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 Group Home served six DCFS placed children. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was eight 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 Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 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 focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
Safety - The degree to which the Group Home staff ensures that the focus children are 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 and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the Group Home staff, caregivers, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, Group Home staff and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the Group Home staff ensures that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	5	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 30 days.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
Visitation - The degree to which the Group Home staff support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation and Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the Group Home staff working with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children'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, DPOs (if applicable) and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.
Service Needs - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	6 - Optimal Supports and Services	An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are substantially helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided 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 focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is continuously updated.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or 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.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the Group Home staff involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are 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 is occurring.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	5	5	6
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	6	5

In the areas of Safety and Placement Stability, the Group Home is providing optimal safety and stability for the focus children. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times and being supervised by the Group Home staff. Additionally, the focus children reported a sense of security at the Group Home, as the doors and gates are secured throughout the facility and its grounds, limiting public access. The Group Home therapist reported that she tries to follow up with the focus children on a daily basis as she feels this will foster a trusting relationship and will encourage the focus children to be open and communicate any safety concerns to her. The Group Home therapist stated that when a safety concern arises with a placed child, she meets with the placed child and the Group Home staff to address the concerns and create a safety plan. The DCFS CSWs reported that the Group Home therapist informs them of any incidents involving the focus children and that they

have no safety concerns. OHCMD found that the focus children have optimal stability at the Group Home and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with Group Home staff and their peers. There is no history of instability or disruptions for the focus children since their placement at the Group Home. One focus child reported that he has a good relationship with one of the Group Home staff who shares the same religious background. The focus child reported that the Group Home is considerate of his culture and religion, and the Group Home staff member arranged for the focus child to attend religious studies on Sundays. Additionally, according to the focus child's DCFS CSW, the Group Home hosted a Bar Mitzvah for the focus child and all of the placed children and Group Home staff attended the celebration. This event was a significant milestone in the focus child's life.

In the areas of Permanency and Visitation, the Group Home provided substantial permanence for the focus children. The Group Home is providing the services that correspond with the focus children's permanency plans and demonstrated good efforts to support the focus children in the permanency plan recommended by DCFS. The permanency plan for each of the focus children is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. One focus child has a concurrent plan of adoption; his DCFS CSW reported the Group Home therapist is working with the focus child and a prospective adoptive family to transition the focus child into their home. The Group Home therapist ensures that the focus children receive Independent Living Program services such as, assisting with resumes, job searches, transportation and transitional housing. The Group Home is supportive of the focus children's visitation plans and ensures that those plans are fully implemented. The focus children are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their family members or key supporters whenever possible. According to the Group Home therapist, she schedules all visits for the focus children, and the Group Home also facilitates visits for the focus children by providing transportation, monitoring visits and ensuring visitation schedules are convenient for all parties. At the conclusion of all visits, the therapist reported that she followed up with the focus children, family members and any additional individuals who visited with the focus children to see how the visit went. The Group Home therapist reported that she also ensures that any placed children who do not have any family involvement are linked to mentors, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and/or Permanency workers to establish a support system for them. The DCFS CSWs report no concerns in the area of Visitation.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the Group Home in December 2014. The Group Home did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as the Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In July 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR. Based on the information below, it appears that there is opportunity for improvement in the area of Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	6	6	6	6	6
2015-2016 Scores	5	6	6	4	5

In the area of Teamwork, OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance. Although the focus children were aware of whom their team members were, all of the focus children reported that they had not participated in team meetings while placed in the Group Home. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children also reported that they had not participated in any formal team meetings. The Group Home therapist reported that she participates in staff meetings once a week to discuss each of the placed children's current issues, and interventions for the placed children. She added that if a placed child's DCFS CSW requests a meeting, she would schedule one; however, there are no regularly scheduled team meetings for the focus children and their team members to participate in.

In the areas of Engagement and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home has developed a strong rapport with the focus children. The focus children reported that they feel heard and respected. The Group Home has made good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions made for them. The Group Home therapist reported that she has a great relationship with the focus children. The Group Home therapist added that she communicates with and engages the focus children, DCFS CSWs, CASAs, and family members, if appropriate, on an ongoing basis to keep everyone informed of the focus children's progress towards their treatment goals and to address any concerns. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the Group Home therapist and the DCFS CSWs. The Group Home therapist reported that she tracks the progress of the focus children through weekly staff meetings, Needs and Services Plans, case notes, daily logs for each of the focus children and through clinical supervision twice a week.

In the areas of Service Needs and Assessment & Linkages, the Group Home continues to provide optimal supports and services to the focus children and comprehensively understands the focus children's functioning and needs. An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan for the focus children. The focus children receive individual counseling, group therapy, as well as medication management and monthly psychiatric evaluations, if necessary. The Group Home therapist reported that she conducts regular assessments of the placed children and links them to services that best meet their needs. The Group Home therapist added that she had recently assessed a focus child and referred him to an off-site program where additional psychological testing was conducted to determine the services that were best suited for him. The second focus child's DCFS CSW reported that the focus child is a client of the Regional Center and that the Group Home goes beyond in ensuring the focus child is linked to appropriate services such as, grief therapy and animal assisted therapy.

The Group Home transports the focus child to an equestrian center twice a week where the focus child participates in equine therapy. The Group Home therapist also reported that she strongly encourages the focus children to participate in extracurricular activities. Two focus children are involved in extracurricular activities, which include boxing, color guard and track. The focus children shared that they are given opportunities to choose activities they are interested in, and they enjoy attending their activities after school.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In July 2015, OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements, Facility and Environment and Health and Medical Needs. Technical support and training provided to the Group Home related to ensuring Special Incident Reports are timely, clothing allowance logs are comprehensive and receipts are attached, smoke alarms are operable and there is follow up related to dental and orthodontic appointments.

In January 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the Group Home to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the Group Home with technical support addressing methods on improving in the area of Teamwork. The Group Home submitted the attached approved QIP. OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.