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August 5, 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

LIFECIRCLES 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 the Lifecircles Group Home (the Group Home) in August 2015. The Group Home is a Rate Classification Level 11 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 provide a stable, constant, nurturing and normal environment that is responsive to the individual resident's needs, to minimize the risk factors that may impede the resident's ongoing development, to encourage the bonding process and to strengthen parent/child attachment. Finally, our purpose is to support the parents' efforts to reunite with their child by providing parent education, advocacy, and support."

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 6 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Teamwork. The OHCMD noted opportunities for improving performance in the focus areas of Safety, Engagement, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In February 2016, 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 to address methods for improvement in the areas of Safety, Engagement, and Tracking & Adjustment. The Group Home provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 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
Dewayne Winrow, PhD, Executive Director, Lifecircles Group Home
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Leonora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

LIFECIRCLES GROUP HOME
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Lifecircles Group Home (the Group Home) in August 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 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 five DCFS placed children. The focus children's average number of placements was four, 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	4 - Fair Safety Status	The focus children have a minimally safe living arrangement with the present caregivers. Protective strategies are at least minimally adequate in reducing risks of harm. The focus children are at least minimally free from danger in other settings.
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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
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	5 - Good Stability	The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting over the past 30 days.
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	4 - Minimally Adequate to Fair Engagement Efforts	To a minimally adequate degree, a rapport has been developed, such that Group Home staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable) and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate minimally adequate to fair efforts are being used.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
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	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. 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 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	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.
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	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/or plans together.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	Group Home QAR Score	Group Home QAR Rating
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	4 - Minimally Adequate to Fair Tracking and Adjustment Process	Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are minimally responsive to changing conditions. Periodic monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the Group Home in October 2014, and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Teamwork. In May 2015, 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 to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below, it appears that the Group Home showed improvement in the area of Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR. However, the OHCMD noted an opportunity for improvement in the areas of Safety, Engagement, and Tracking & Adjustment.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	4	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that the Group Home's score fell below the minimum acceptable score, as one of the focus children reported that he does not feel safe at the Group Home 50 percent of the time and that he "gets a bad vibe." The focus child also reported that the Group Home staff is not always there to provide supervision. Additionally, the Group Home was placed on an "Investigative Hold" on October 30, 2015, due to general neglect of the placed children and the safety and well-being of the placed children, as the Group Home failed to immediately pick up a child from school and a child from a home pass. The "Investigative Hold" was extended on December 15, 2015, due to the Group Home not developing a Corrective Action Plan to adequately address how the Group Home would

ensure the safety and well-being of the placed children. The "Investigative Hold" was subsequently lifted on January 12, 2016.

The Group Home continued to provide good Permanence and Placement Stability for the children in its care. The permanency plan for two of the focus children is Family Reunification. Both of the focus children expressed a desire to reunify with their family. The third focus child's permanency goal is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. The third focus child reported that his goal is to graduate high school to be able to transition out of care. The Group Home staff also reported collaborating with the focus children and their DCFS CSWs to assist in the determination of the best permanent plan for the focus children. The Group Home staff reported that they assist the focus children with their permanency goals by assisting them to stay focused on their goals, and on the right track to achieving their permanency goals. DCFS CSWs reported that they inform the Group Home of the focus children's permanency plan and work with the Group Home to assist the focus children in achieving their permanency goals.

The focus children have been stable in their placement. Two of the focus children have been placed at the Group Home for at least six months, and the other focus child was recently placed at the Group Home. The focus children reported establishing a positive relationship with the Group Home staff. The focus children reported that they could go to any of the Group Home staff if they have any concerns about their placement at the Group Home, with the exception of the staff member that gave the focus child a bad vibe.

In the area of Visitation, the Group Home continues to be generally effective in maintaining family contact and follows the court ordered visitation plans and recommendations of the DCFS CSWs. The focus children's visitation plans are being fully implemented by the Group Home. The Group Home continues to be supportive of the focus children's visitation plans and encourages them to maintain regular contact with their family members, whenever possible. All three of the focus children have visits with their family members. The Group Home facilitates visits for the focus children by transporting and monitoring visits as needed.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

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

In the areas of Service Needs and Assessment & Linkages, the Group Home continues to make good efforts at ensuring that the intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plan and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) match the services that are being provided to the focus children. There continues to be a good array of services offered to the focus children. The Group Home continues to assess the focus children's needs and provides intervention for them to function effectively in daily settings.

In the areas of Engagement and Tracking & Adjustment, the Group Home maintains minimally adequate engagement efforts with the key people for the focus children and intervention strategies, support, and services provided to the focus children are minimally responsive to changing conditions. The focus children reported that they like the Group Home staff and are generally treated with respect. However, the second focus child reported that one staff member gives him a bad vibe, but did not report that any incidents had occurred.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they have a good working relationship with the Group Home Director and Group Home Social Worker. The DCFS CSWs reported that they maintain contact with the Group Home Director and the Group Home Social Worker in regards to the focus children's progress and needs. The DCFS CSWs reported that during their monthly face-to-face visits with the focus children, they also meet with the Group Home supervisor and the Group Home staff to discuss how the focus children are doing. The Group Home staff reported that the facility managers and the Group Home child care workers review the focus children's status on a daily basis.

Although the DCFS CSWs reported that they have a good relationship with the staff, and reported that the Group Home stayed in regular contact with them in regards to the progress, needs, and adjustments made to the focus children's treatment plans, the Group Home fell below the minimum score in the area of Engagement. This was due to two focus children not being aware of the engagement efforts between the Group Home staff and their DCFS CSWs. It is also of great concern, that during the QAR, two of the Group Home child care workers reported that they do not work or have any contact with the DCFS CSWs of the focus children. In addition, the Group Home child care workers reported that they are not fully aware of the focus children's permanency plans and goals, visitation plans, services the focus children were receiving, team meetings, and the process of tracking and adjustment the Group Home utilizes. The first Group Home child care worker reported that he worked the morning shift and does not know all the information in regards to the focus children. The second Group Home staff reported that she worked the evening shift and did not know specific information regarding the focus children. The Group Home also had an inadequate to fair tracking system in place for monitoring the progress that the focus children were making towards their treatment plan goals, based on the Group Home's daily logs, as the logs that were provided contained minimal information on the daily status of the focus children. Additionally, the Group Home child care worker reported that he is not aware of how progress is communicated among team members.

In the area of Teamwork, the Group Home implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) by involving most of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports and family members, if involved. The team has formed a good working system that meets, talks, and plans together. Face-to-face meetings are being held by the Group Home periodically and as needed for the focus children. Two DCFS CSWs reported attending a team meeting held by the Group Home where the Group Home Staff, Group Home Social Worker, and family members had attended. The other DCFS CSW had not attended a team meeting, but reported being aware of a team meeting for the focus child, in which his therapist was present. Two of the focus

children were not interested in discussing their team members or if they had participated in team meetings. The other focus child identified his team members and reported recently participating in a team meeting. Two Group Home staff members reported participating in weekly meetings, in which the Group Home staff discuss the focus children and their progress. However, all three Group Home staff reported that they do not participate in team meetings with the focus children and their team members. The Group Home staff could benefit from participating in team meetings; as these staff provide direct care and supervision to the placed children and need to be aware of their needs and treatment plan goals.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In December 2015, the OHCMD provided the Group Home with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirement, Facility and Environment, and Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery. Technical support was provided on how the Group Home can ensure that Group Home vehicles are always in good repair; Special Incident Reports are properly cross-reported and allowances log documented; common areas are free of hazards and non-perishable food are not kept past their expiration dates. In addition, how the Group Home can ensure that the NSPs are comprehensive.

In February 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 QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the Group Home in implementing their QIP.

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Lifecircles

We make a way when there's no way
That's the circle of life.

DCFS Out-of-Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Avenue, Room 216
El Monte, CA 91731
Attn: Manyahlhal Adenow, Quality Assurance Reviewer /
Rhonda David-Shirley, CSA III Out-of-Home Care Quality Assurance

Quality Improvement Plan
Lifecircles Group Home
April 27, 2016

Dear Mr. Adenow,

Enclosed, please find Lifecircles Group Home's Quality Improvement Plan.

We look forward to continue working with the Department of Children and Family Services in providing quality residential treatment for the young males placed in our care. Please feel free to contact us if there are any questions in relation to this information.

Mamie Nelson

P.S Lifecircles never received a copy of the review from Out-Home- Care, all information is based on verbal conversation with DCFS.

Quality Improvement Plan
Lifecircles Group Home
April 27, 2016

The following Quality Improvement Plan serves as the foundation of the commitment of Lifecircles Group Home to continuously improve the quality of the treatment and services it provides.

Areas of Recommended Improvement:
-Safety
-Engagement
-Tracking and Adjustment

Area: Safety

Item I: One placed child reported that he does not feel safe 50% of the time, and that he gets "A bad vibe" and that the Group Home staff is not always there to provide supervision.

Quality Improvement Plan:

- To ensure the quality of care and safety given to the placed children, we have conducted "Client-Staff Communication" in-services on 1/20/16. Staff was trained on questions to ask placed children to monitor that placed children feel safe and secure. Any concerns brought up by placed children are to be written in the Staff Communication Log and communicated immediately to the Program Director. This "Client-Staff Communication" in-service for Group Home staff will be refreshed quarterly throughout the year by the Facility Managers for a total of 4 in-services per year on "Client-Staff Communication."
- On-shift Group Home staff is available at all times to the placed children. Room checks have been increased to every 15 minutes and have been performed throughout the shifts. The Group Home Program Director and Program coordinator will ensure that staff is following this increase by checking in with staff regarding placed children's well-being and whereabouts at random via telephone or in-person.
- Any staff that does not follow these directives with placed children will be considered in violation of Lifecircles Policies and Procedures. Violating Lifecircles Policies and Procedures will obligate Lifecircle to use its disciplinary actions with its staff, which may include, but not limit to, verbal warnings, written warnings, time off without pay, and termination.

Implementation Date April 16, 2016

Item II: The Group Home was placed on an "Investigative Hold" on October 30, 2015 as the Group Home failed to immediately pick up one child from school and another child from a home pass. (CAP completed and approved)

Quality Improvement Plan:

A Quality Improvement Plan has been put into place to ensure that all placed children are picked up in a timely manner. This Quality Improvement Plan has been completed and approved. In case there is an emergency (placed child needs to be picked up for any other reason than scheduled pick up), the group home staff will contact the Facility Manager. If the Facility Manager is not available, the Program Coordinator shall be contacted. Staff will be given authorization to contact outside transportation (ie. cab or uber driver) to pick up the placed children and return them to the group home. Pick-up will be coordinated between Lifecircles and the parent/guardian or the responsible adult of the placed child. The Facility Manager will be responsible for the maintenance of this Corrective Action Plan. The Program Director will be responsible for making sure this Corrective Action Plan is implemented.
Implementation already in effect and will continue to be used.

Area: Engagement

Item I: The Group home maintains minimally adequate engagement efforts with key people for the children and intervention strategies, supports and services provided to the focus children are minimally responsive to changing conditions.

Quality Improvement Plan:

- The Group Home staff has been trained by Facility Managers on improving communication with significant adults involved with the placed children, their school staff, Children's Social Workers, parents, counselors, therapists, probation officers, psychiatrists, and health care providers. The Group Home staff is to log all communication with these individuals in the Staff Communication Log as well as communicate such information to the Program Director or Facility Managers. The Program Director and Facility Managers will overlook Group Home staff's verbal statements and Communication Logs to ensure that proper communication is being conducted. Group Home staff will stay in constant contact with these individuals/teams, via telephone, email, or in person, at least twice a month to assure that interventions, strategies, support, and services provided have the highest priority and focus to give maximum responses to changing conditions. Facility Managers will ensure that this training is refreshed with staff quarterly throughout the year.

- The Group Home staff is trained to communicate any and all pertinent information in regards to placed children in the Staff Communication Log and directed to communicate any immediate needs to the Facility Manager or Program Director.
- The Facility Manager and Program Director will both read the daily Staff Communication Log and discuss all information with Group Home staff during the weekly team meetings.

Implementation Date April 16, 2016

Item II: One placed child reported that one staff member gives him a bad vibe.

Quality Improvement Plan:

- The Group Home Program Director will meet with the placed children a minimum of two times a month specifically to ask placed children how they feel about staff, visitors, and any other person in their environment.
- The Group Home Program Director will maintain notes on these meetings with the placed children. Any concerns brought up by placed children will be immediately investigated.

Implementation Date April 16, 2016

Area: Tracking and Adjustment

Item I: Two of the focus children were not aware of the engagement efforts of the Group Home with their DCFS CSWs.

Quality Improvement Plan

- Lifecircles Group Home has improved on the quality of the communication of Group Home staff with the placed children; we have implemented weekly meetings with placed children as well to ensure that they are aware of all communication that the Group Home staff has with their Department of Children and Family Services Children's Social Workers.
- All information in regards to communication with placed children's DCFS CSWs will be communicated to placed children by the Program Manager or the Group Home Social Worker.

Implementation Date April 16, 2016

Item II: During QAR, two of the Group Home's child care workers reported that they don't work with or have any contact with the DCFS CSWs.

Item III: Two Group Home staff reported that they are not fully aware of the focus children's permanency plans and goals, visitation plans, services the focus children

were receiving, team meetings, and the process of Tracking and Adjustment the Group Home utilizes.

Quality Improvement Plan

- All Group Home staff, in particular Social Workers and Supervisors, has been trained in keeping contact with Case Social Workers and the Department of Children and Family Services.
- Lifecircles Group Home has provided in-house training to its staff on how to document all communications in a detailed and timely manner, including the documentation of all efforts made to reach the placed children's Children Social Workers. Lifecircles Group Home has also informed its staff to inform all placed children what communication has been made with their respective Children Social Workers as necessary.
- In addition to improving the quality of communication with the placed children, the quality of communication among staff on all shifts has also improved through the already implemented Staff Communication Logs and discussions when one shift turns over to the other shift. It is not possible for all staff to communicate with the Department of Children and Family Services or Children Social Workers because of the hours they work.
- To ensure that all staff is receiving the quality information on the placed children's Permanency Plans, goals, and visitation plans, each staff member had read the file of each placed child and signed off that they have completely read and are aware of the plans of placed children.
- In the weekly staff meetings, each placed children's case is reviewed by all staff present and discussed at length, as staff and Program staff gives their input on whether changes are necessary. This ensures that all placed children's required Tracking and Adjustments are discussed and utilized in the team staff meetings.

Implementation Date April 16, 2016

Thank you,

Mamie Nelson
Program Director
Lifecircles Group Home