

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Group Home Inspection Report

Facility Name:	TLC Phoenix House
Address:	On File
Phone	On File
Contact Person	Andrew Day/Jami Stoll

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Jane Person/Michael Charpiot
Date of Inspection	November 21, 2016
Date of Last Inspection	November 24, 2016
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	September 27, 2012

**O = Outstanding *S= Satisfactory or exceeds *N.I. = Needs Improvement/corrective*

Action

INSPECTION	O	S	N.I.	Comments (required if "N.I." is checked)
Grounds	X			Grounds are spacious and open. A resident was observed working in the garden. Phoenix House itself shares its property with several TCL buildings including the Administrative Offices, Journey School, and Orchard House Group Home.
Building Exterior	X			Exterior provides a welcoming entrance. House appeared to this Commissioner to be adequately painted. However, Jami Stoll stated that painting the outside of the building was a priority in the future.
Living Room		X		There are two large comfortable rooms. One is identified as the game room (see notes under Recreation on Site) and one is identified as the Living Room. The living room has in it a new TV. There is also a bookshelf filled with books. Also there are games and a computer. Finally there is ample comfortable sitting space for residents.
Kitchen	X			The Kitchen is spacious. There was a fruit bowl for snacking. A large turkey was in the refrigerator and will be cooked for Thanksgiving in a joint meal with residents from all three group homes (all but two of Phoenix house residents will be away on Thanksgiving passes) and TLC staff. A staff member was preparing dinner while we were there in the late afternoon. A locked storage room was inspected—sharp objects are kept there for safety. Additionally in this room each resident has a box with snacks specifically chosen and purchased by them. These are primarily available for residents on weekends.
Bedrooms		X		Currently there are eight boys in placement. There is room for 10 residents. Each resident has his own room furnished with a bed, table, desk, desk lamp, and closet. Each bedroom door had a white board on it for messages. The rooms were tidy although several beds were unmade. Residents are free to decorate their own rooms. The residents are responsible for cleaning their own rooms. There was a small dent recently inflicted on one of the

			<p>bedroom walls that has not yet been repaired. That along with minor recent damage to a bedroom door was seen. Both are to be repaired soon.</p> <p>Currently three of the residents are from Sonoma County, one from Marin, one from Alameda, one from Contra Costa, one from San Mateo, and one from Shasta County.</p> <p>Two of the minors are placed due to failed or failing adoptions. There is one Dependency placement and one Probation placement. Four placements are currently from the schools.</p> <p>The boys range in age from 14-17.</p> <p>Length of placement 6-9 months. Runaways do occasionally occur and there was a recent unplanned removal by a relative.</p> <p>TLC is the first placement (except for shelter care-VOM) for most residents but not for all of the current placements.</p> <p>Two of the residents are transgendered teens. Their sexual preferences are shared with the other residents only at the initiation of the transgendered youth himself. Having these minors in placement has caused no difficulty with the other boys. The group home is licensed for both males and females.</p>
Bathrooms	X		<p>Very clean. Large with toilets and showers. The shower pans show signs that they will need to be replaced in the future. Two bathrooms are shared by residents in one wing of bedrooms and one by residents in the other bedroom wing. Cleaning these bathrooms is one of the assigned chores for the residents. Only one boy can be in the bathroom at a time.</p>
Fire Safety --Extinguishers	X		<p>Extinguishers have timely inspections and were in plain sight throughout the home.</p>
Fire Safety --Smoke Alarms	X		<p>Smoke alarms are situated through out the facility. Both hard wired and battery operated alarms were observed. Fire drills are held once a month.</p>
Fire Safety --Evacuation Plan		X	<p>Evacuation Plans are posted next to the exits. They need to be more visible in the hallways and main living space and not just near exit doors.</p>
Food		X	<p>Residents can help in food prep and suggestions but food prep is not a mandatory chore.</p>
Emergency Supplies		X	<p>Emergency supplies are kept in separated building on TLC property. The emergency supplies are intended for all three group homes and Journey School.</p>
Health Services	X		<p>Each resident is seen within three months for a physical. However, minors will be screened by TLC's medical coordinator at intake for the need to be seen for illness before the physical.</p> <p>Psychiatrist Dr. Oklun sees the minors re psychiatric meds within 2-3 weeks of placement. Psychiatric meds are generally not changed during the first weeks of placement to allow the minors to settle into placement so that medication needs can be made based on reporting of the residents and observation of behavior by staff. Most minors, but not all, come into placement with meds prescribed. Dr Oklun continues to see each resident at least monthly.</p>

			Dental care is provided on site every six months.
Medications	X		Medications are double and triple locked as required (locked office door, locked file cabinet, and finally locked safe). Trained staff distributes medication and witnesses the taking of this medication twice daily, by schedule, individually to each resident. If additional med times are needed, those are arranged. Please see Andrew Day's comments concerning medications below in Additional Comments section.
Recreation (on site)		X	<p>There is a game room on site. It is kind of empty. It had, at one time, a pool table. The pool table was removed when the youth had little to no interest in it. Jamie mentioned that the youth now have an interest in exercise equipment. That might be a good idea for the room. TLC has a membership at a local gym that is underutilized by the boys. The room is a nice space and could be better utilized. The game room does have a game system.</p> <p>The living room has a new TV with Cable and also a computer. A net nanny program is in place.</p> <p>There is a basketball hoop available outside.</p>
Outings (off site)		X	Some of the residents were at the beach the day of our visit. School was out for Thanksgiving vacation. The home has a gym membership but the youth are not currently interested. The residents also go on field trips—hikes, snow trips, camping, swimming, movies and others. Some of the youths ride bikes accompanied by staff. Also some youth skate board.
Education & Classrooms		X	<p>Five of the current residents attend Journey High School. Two others attend Casa Grande in Petaluma. I believe one of the residents attends El Molino High School in Forestville.</p> <p>One of the minors will be graduating in December. He works 30 hours a week in a restaurant and will be transitioning to one of TLC's independent apartments.</p> <p>Two additional residents with one more year of high school to complete will also be transitioning to supportive apartment living monitored by TLC.</p>
Mail/Phone		X	Phone privileges depend upon the level attained by the resident. Level 2-3 can talk with friends using the resident phone. Level 2 can use their cell phones for one hour. Level 3 can use their cell phones after school to bedtime. Mail is opened in the presence of staff.
Discipline		X	Discipline procedures are based on a hierarchy of interventions from least intrusive, i.e. non-verbal or verbal cue to more intrusive (i.e. taking away privileges).
Library		X	There is a small bookshelf in the living room or family room. Don't know if the youth use it much. Books and magazines were observed in the resident rooms that were viewed.
Money		X	The residents receive a base pay based on their level. Additional moneys may be earned by extra chores. These allowances are paid weekly in the amount of twelve dollars as a base.
Security	X		Four new cameras have been installed in hallways so residents are visible in public areas outside their own bedrooms or bathrooms. The quality of the

camera photos is excellent.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Due to recent concerns appearing in newspapers regarding medications for minors in placement, I wrote Andrew Day prior to our inspection that I wanted to spend time trying to understand how Phoenix House controls for possible medication abuses. This was his written response which I am including in these comments:

“So we are acutely aware of all the issues surrounding the over-medication issues that the media and politicians have jumped on. Much of it we take exception to because it is such a complicated story. We have extensive medication protocols, initial and annual trainings, a very well respected psychiatrist on staff, a RN who conducts quality assurance checks on a regular basis and who also tracks and monitors the types of psychotropics being prescribed. We also work with a challenging population of youth. How is it surprising that youth in foster care are prescribed medication at three times the rate of the general population? It's akin to asking a group of athletes if they have ever experienced an ankle or knee injury. My hunch is that they will answer yes much more than people who do not participate in sports.

Our youth have experienced significant trauma in their lives. Some youth are referred to us from higher-level programs including psychiatric inpatient units where they may have been over-medicated based on an acute mental health issue. We absolutely need to manage that titration process as they transition to a lower level of care. And we do.

Keep in mind, the medications are prescribed by a psychiatrist, not the provider. There are certain situations when our psychiatrist does prescribe multi psychotropic medications when he believes that it would be a more effective regimen with fewer side effects. This is pretty unusual for TLC though.

Lastly... when people have medical problems, the first thing we do is tell them to take medication to manage the pain, inflammation etc.

It seems to me that there is this mindset out there in the community that the goal is for youth to not be on meds. We completely agree! But if there is a way to provide some relief to youth experiencing mental health challenges, we believe that there may be a place for medication in addition to all the other therapeutic interventions.

Hope that provides a bit of perspective from our end.”

Since placements can be initiated and made in four ways (Dependents, Delinquent, Failed/Failing Adoptions, Direct School placements), I asked if the Adoption and Direct School Placements would come under AB 403. It appears minors placed due to Adoption issues would not be covered by the requirements of AB 403. Additionally the school placements may or may not be covered by AB 403. According to Andy Day this has potential ramifications for their program that is being discussed. One option would be to convert one of the TLC group homes to serve only school placement residents.

From Andy Day:

“You are correct about the types of youth that will be affected by AB403 and CCR in general. This is why we are considering converting two of our programs to STRTP's and see how that goes, and retain our other program as a traditional licensed group home which has the potential to serve what we call private pay or non-child welfare youth. Those conversations are happening daily and are very internal at this point.

The AAP youth are a bit up in the air. The State is trying to digest where they would fit as technically they are private, but the funding comes from a place that may be tied to "foster care dollars". They are thinking about a blended rate that would pay for a type of placement such that treatment could be more individualized as some of those types of referrals may not need the intensity of a STRTP.”

Jami Stoll, Phoenix House Manager, was asked about the strengths of the program from her point of view. She indicated that strengths come from a solid Intake Process. The diversity of the youth is a strength. Finally she believes that the normality of a homelike environment including the hominess, normal activities including rafting, snow trips, swimming, and shared meals with staff create a supportive environment for the youth. Jamie would like to have the residents do even more outdoors activities.

Staffing is a problem in this facility as it is in most group homes. Jamie indicated that for many staff it is an early career job and people leave to go on to school.

Training becomes a key issue and one that will be explored in more depth at the next TLC group home inspection. Training in self-care is currently being provided. Included in this training is staff setting of boundaries—burnout protection. Supportive supervision and team building are other on-going strategies to lessen staff turnover.

YOUTH INTERVIEWS

TOPICS			
Evaluation of Program		X	From the viewpoint of the two residents interviewed the program is satisfactory. One resident had been in multiple placements including out of state placements (due to multiple moves of parent) prior to coming to TLC. He likes TLC the best but is looking forward to living independently in the near future.
Program Understood		X	It was difficult to know if one of the youth interviewed did understand the program. He did not know about the grievance procedure. The other youth did seem to have a good grasp of the program. This second youth did not like being identified as having emotional problems simply because of the placement. He is in transition to independent living graduating in December from Journey School and working 30 hours a week.
Levels (Privileges)	X		Both seemed to have a grasp on levels. One is at a level 2 and one at a level 3.
Grievances		X	One minor did not know how to do a grievance. He seemed vague about a lot of things compared to the resident who had been placed for the longer time.
Discipline		X	See under Staff Evaluation.
Staff Evaluation		X	Staff seems supportive and fair according to both boys. However the newer boy said one or two staff do not always listen. Further, he also said he would like a warning before privileges are taken. Also he would like to know the consequences of his actions.
Health Services			Did not discuss with youth but see above.
Counseling/Therapy			Did not discuss.
Chores & Allowance			Allowances vary according to levels and chores. But the boys said they get about \$12 per week. They believe the allowance is fair.
Laundry		X	Residents said they do their own laundry after signing up for a time. This generally works well although recently staff was using the laundry during time youth had signed up. It seemed to be a little annoying but not a real problem.

Clothes		X		Clothes needed and wanted were purchased, including jeans, shirts, and shoes.
Food		X		Food is good. Portions ok. One of the residents is eating a vegetarian diet and is lactose intolerant. He would like to eat a vegan diet that does not seem to be possible. The other resident is not real enthusiastic about the food but still says it is ok. He likes takeout pizza. The minor who was here longer suggested he do a grievance if he did not like the food. He said he did not know how.
Snacks				Available.
School				Did not discuss.
Library				Did not discuss with youth but see above.
Activities & Entertainment				Did not discuss with youth but see above.
Money				Allowances given are between \$10 to @\$15 per week.

ADDITIONAL NOTES & SUGGESTIONS BY YOUTH

Of Youth Interviewed: 2

Two minors were interviewed together. Both attend Journey School. There were no specific suggestions by these residents. However one of the residents would like the availability of a vegan diet.

Inspection Summary

Well run group home with dedicated and enthusiastic staff. The facility itself is comfortable with each minor having his own comfortably furnished bedroom. This home meets and exceeds standards in care and program for youth. The program has flexibility that is important given the very different levels of need with which each teen enters the placement. The minors come from different counties, placed by different agencies (probation, social services, adoption, and schools), with varied reunification needs including return to relatives, foster care, and independent living. This facility has found ways to focus on the needs of each individual child while still having a cohesive home like setting.

Next Inspection Recommended: _____ or X Annual Inspection

Inspection Commissioner Jane Person

Inspection Commissioner Michael Charpiot

Mary Cone, Commissioner/Report Review

Dennis Ruggiero, Chairperson

cc: Honorable Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court
Commissioner of the Juvenile Court
Probation Department, Chief of Probation
Sonoma County Family Youth & Children's Services
State of California, Community Care Licensing
Facility Inspected

Revised 12/2016