

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Facility Inspection Report

Facility Name:	Valley of the Moon Children's Home
Address:	On file
Phone	On file
Contact Person	Leslie Winters

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Jody Edwards and Hank Mattimore
Date of Inspection	April 15, 2013
Date of Last Inspection	4/30/2012
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	12/12/2013

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

INSPECTED	S	N.I.	Comments
Grounds	X		The grounds are well maintained and attractive.
Building Exterior	X		There are two buildings on site, the administrative building and the children's home building. Both were built within the last five years and are quite beautiful.
Living Room	X		The central living area for the girls which is the only one we viewed was nice, well equipped with books, games, tables and comfortable chairs. There is also a central desk area where a staff member sits and monitors what is happening in the central area as well as any other place where there are computer monitors.
Kitchen	X		Cafeteria is neat and spacious. Menus are posted. Meals served here as well as three snacks a day and fruit is always available.
Bedrooms	X		We did not observe the bedrooms but the children we interviewed thought they were fine. There are monitors on the doors such that at night if they are opened, it is observed by the awake staff.
Bathrooms	X		Clean, plenty of appropriate products available.
Fire Safety -Extinguishers -Smoke Alarms -Evac. Plan ?	X		Evacuation plans visible.
Food	X		Food prepared in accordance with nutritionist's recommendations. Special diets are accommodated. They take input from the kids in creating the menus. There is also a garden program the children can participate in that includes planting, weeding, harvesting and more.
Health Services	X		Offices on-site for doctors, nurses, dentists and dental hygienists. There is also a therapy room for younger children. Older children have therapy outside or in their living areas. A nurse practitioner coordinates all their medical care, does the original assessment and ensures that what is needed such as immunizations, does indeed happen. Since July of 2011, they have provided dental care on-site through the Dental

			Program using the services of a Dental Director (Dr. Jack Sherman, DDS) and volunteer dentists, hygienists, and dental assistants. When a child is admitted to VMCC they are referred to the Dental Program for an initial dental evaluation. At admission, the child is screened for overall mental health. Because of the temporary nature of the child's stay, they are not given a treatment plan from the clinician. It is thought best to wait until they are placed so they can get a mental health professional at that location and create a relationship with that person. Leslie raised a concern about this for the kids that end up staying more than a few weeks.
Medications	X		All medications are given out in a room off the cafeteria. This room is staffed and all medications are kept in this room.
Recreation (on site)	X		We observed play areas outside and inside as well as the place where they watch movies.
Outings (off site)	X		A few outings were mentioned such as taking kids to the Wilmar Center in Sonoma. There they have grief groups for kids age 7 and over. Also they take the children to the Forget me Not farms for animal connections and their therapeutic program.
Education/ Classrooms	X		The public school on-site is run by the SCOE. Right now there are only 3 students at the school. The other youth go to their school of origin; transportation is set up for them. VOMCH sends one staff member per teen or pre-teen group to be present during the school day in order to ensure the correct behaviors are exhibited.
Mail/Phone	X		Phone privileges must be earned.
INSPECTED	S	N.I.	Comments
Family Contact	X		Visiting days are 7 days a week, after school or with more hours available on weekends. Some children leave for weekends with their parents or guardians or even go out-of-state for school vacations. The example we were given was a child visiting an Aunt who was being vetted as a potential guardian and the child went there for spring break.
Discipline	X		They use the Boys Town Model which includes a detailed positive reward system.
Library	X		There was a library in the central living area.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Valley of the Moon Children's Home is Sonoma County's only emergency shelter for children who have been removed due to allegations of abuse, abandonment or neglect. Stays are temporary by design with a goal of 30 days or less to find the right placement for the child or youth. As a result of this temporary nature, staff and volunteers are educated in the appropriate language to use such as saying "good luck" when they leave rather than, "see you next week." They want the children to trust them but not to love them because it is important that the children want to go to the next placement. It is a fine line they must walk.

The facility is considered a group home for all levels and of the kids in residence, 50% need Level 14 or higher care. It is not a locked facility and as a result, they have runaways. Recently the population is lower than their average, but the acuity of the youth is higher. They are getting more kids from psychiatric care and with suicide ideation. Several of the children require 1 on 1 care. Teens (ages 13-18) and pre-teens (ages 6-12) are in separate programs. Children are typically placed within 30 days but some do return to VOMCH because they have blown their placements in some way.

While they can house children under age 6, they have lots of emergency foster placements and almost all of those children go immediately to those homes.

Youth Interviews

TOPICS	S	N.I.	Comments
Evaluation of Program	X		One said she didn't mind the institutional nature of the place, but she preferred the hospitals she had been at rather than this place.
Counseling/ Therapy	X		
Physical Education	X		
Health Services	X		
School	X		On site school but many go to schools of origin.
Food	X		
Snacks	X		
Library	X		
Chores	X		
Money	X		
Mail / Phone	X		You can talk on the phone only if you earn it.
Levels (privileges)	X		
Laundry	X		
Grievances	X		One girl stated that she wrote a letter to the bosses asking to be in a hall with a certain person and they just blew her off. When I asked the staff about this, they told me they did indeed evaluate her request but for some important reasons they declined the request.
Activities & Entertainment	X		They mentioned movie nights and video games.
Program Length Understood	X		
Staff evaluation	X		
Discipline	X		They both commented that there were lots of rules and they were really enforced.
Allowance	X		
Clothes	X		
Medications	X		Both girls took medications and listed for us what medications they took.
Drugs/Alcohol			
Probation officer			

ADDITIONAL NOTES & SUGGESTIONS BY YOUTH

of Youth Interviewed: 2

Ages of youth interviewed: N/A

Length of time at this facility: 1) 2 weeks 2) 70 days

One of the girls we interviewed stated she did not like being at the VOMCH. When asked why she responded first about the food, saying it was not good except for when a certain cook (Crystal) cooks. All her meals are great. The other girl said the food was ok. They said they got enough food; you could always go back for seconds or thirds. Probing further, the older girl said she didn't like the school; there were only three kids there. The younger girl goes to Kids Street School and had no problems with that.

The older girl said she didn't feel safe because she was in a hall with people she didn't like and she had some make-up stolen. The younger girl said it takes forever to earn points; you have to be good for two weeks straight. In terms of the staff, both felt like there were some staff members that really cared, but others who were just here for whatever reason.

Inspection Summary

The Valley of the Moon Children's Home provides a beautiful, spacious home for children in transition. The staff members we met appear to be caring and highly competent. The children who come in crisis are immediately given blankets and stuffed animals for comfort as they get evaluations of their needs and get those needs met. There appears to be a weakness in the system when it comes to mental health services for the kids. We support and encourage Leslie Winter, the section manager and lead staff person as she tries to work out the way to get more intensive mental health services for the kids who are likely to remain for a longer period at VOMCH.

Next Inspection Recommended: _____ or X Annual Inspection

Jody Edwards, Commissioner

Hank Mattimore, Chairperson

cc: Honorable Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court
Commissioner of the Juvenile Court
Probation Department, Chief of Probation
Department of Social Services
State of California, Community Care Licensing
Juvenile Probation Director
Facility Inspected