

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Facility Inspection Report

Facility Name:	Valley of the Moon Children's Home
Address:	112 Children's Circle, Santa Rosa, CA 95409
Phone	707 565-6350
Contact Person	Leslie Winters Section manager, we also met with Stacie Kabour, Program manager

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Jody Edwards and Hank Mattimore
Date of Inspection	April 15, 2014
Date of Last Inspection	April 15, 2013
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	December 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 six years and are in great shape.
Living Room	X		The central living area 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 inspected the bedrooms in both the boys and girls wings. In general they have two to a room depending on the population. If they have enough rooms and the child wants to be by themselves they will accommodate that. For the under age 13 halls, we saw school schedules and homework posted on the door of each child. Every child potentially goes to a different school so there is much to keep track of. In each room there is a big board to personalize. School schedules and homework are posted on the door of each child. There is a big board in each room to personalize
Bathrooms	X		Clean, plenty of appropriate products available.
Fire Safety -Extinguishers -Smoke Alarms	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		There are 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.

			<p>A nurse practitioner coordinates all their medical care, does the original assessment and ensures that what is needed such as immunizations, does indeed happen.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. If they started therapy and then the child is placed, therapy would start again with someone new and that can be disruptive. The Katie A lawsuit will change the way Mental health works with foster youth. We're working to understand those changes and improve it here This is a big concern as children stay for many months sometimes..</p>
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		There is an honor room with video games and musical instruments that girls can purchase with points to use. In this room staff doesn't have to be with them. We observed play areas outside and inside as well as the place where they watch movies. We were also told that the gym at the school on-site is used for recreation.
Outings (off site)	X		For Easter there is a special invitation only event at the Snoopy Ice Arena that the children participate in.
Education/ Classrooms	X		<p>The on-site school has closed. This is working out well. It was a push from the state to have the children stay in their district of residence. We do the transport for the first few days until transportation is arranged. Then the districts send a bus. Some kids are bused as far as Lake County. They'll do a 'best interest' review when it is that far away. If the goal is for the child to go back to that community then they will most likely continue to bus them to the school.</p> <p>In terms of the building, the land is owned by the county but SCOE owns the building. They let us use the gym for our youth. The classrooms we use for training.</p>
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.
Discipline	X		There are four levels the child can achieve. They get points and can turn in those points for toys. They use the Boys Town Model which includes a detailed positive reward system.
Library	X		There is a large library in the cafeteria area and bookshelves of books in each of the central living areas.

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. They are not a treatment program. The facility is considered a group home for all levels and of the kids in residence; teens (ages 13-18), pre-teens (ages 6-12) and children under age six are in separate programs.

Children are typically placed within an average of 30 to 60 days but some do return to VOMCH because they have blown their placements in some way. Since the advent of AB74, the average stays have become longer due to the fact that they are holding out for a 'family placement' rather than immediately sending them to a group home. There is definitely a group of youth that are hard to place. They wish they had more Intensive treatment Foster homes (ITFC). When the length of stay is too long here, the behavior of the child can start deteriorating.

The average cost per child per day is \$775.00. The first 30 days are funded by federal money. The longer they are here, the less the reimbursement.

The capacity is 86 including the under six area. They are licensed for 60 but if there was a need greater than that they could be licensed for 86. The most they have ever had is 54 children.

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. An exception to that was last summer when those placements were full and they had multiple under age six children for a while.

The average length of service for the direct care staff is about ten years. There are 27 direct care staff and they range from 5-20 years of service. There is very low turnover among the direct care staff.

There is one girl who has a 1-on-1 staff ratio. This is because she wanders and is non-verbal and is physically aggressive. This is unusual. Another reason for 1-on-1 staff is suicide ideation.

The following notes are a result of comments we had heard from various youth no longer at VOM and in other out of home placements:

We asked about a particular staff member saying "Well aren't you pretty" to the female residents. The response was that they staff talk about boundaries with kids and their rights. They told us that side hugs are ok, but only if the child initiates it.

We asked about "other kids are mean and fight with younger kids". The response was that when you have the age 6-12 boys together, the eleven or twelve year old could get irritated with the younger kids. They know of no fights, but there have definitely been assaults and that's when staff intervenes. Restraints are a last resort. If we have a kid picking on another kid or the interventions aren't working then we can move them to another area.

We asked if the staff listen well to the children. The response was that they have a really high quality staff. I would call our staff strong listeners. Our crisis intervention is all about listening. There is tremendous kindness in all our staff and volunteers.

We asked about runaways. The response was that if a child is age thirteen or older they can leave and we can't stop them. The average runaway is 15 or older. We are not a locked facility and we are not allowed to restrain them. If they tell us they are planning to leave, we'll try to get them to stop. If they leave, we walk with them until we can't. If they get to Hwy 12 we stop and then call the police. It is not safe at HWY 12, there is no pedestrian path and we don't want to be chasing them into traffic. The police will bring them back. They do not send staff into the public looking for them. For under age 13, they will stop them before they get to Hwy 12 and bring them back. Just based on size we are able to do that. If the runaway is developmentally delayed, we are required to make every effort to stop them. And yes, it does happen that they leave for a few days and then return for food and good sleep and then run away again.

We asked about girls prostituting themselves. The response is that there are sophisticated girls who prostitute themselves and try to take our innocents with them. One time we sent a girl to Juvenile Hall because that was the only way to stop that from happening.

Youth Interviews

TOPICS	S	N.I.	Comments
Evaluation of Program	X		They both agreed that they were treated with respect, but some staff order us around and watch us. They each said they felt safe at VOM. The girl said she feels much safer here than she did at home. They both felt like they got along well with the other kids. The girl has a brother and a sister at VOM and when asked said she gets enough time with them. Given our question they said that yes, kids run away a lot. They told a story of two girls running away just last week. They leave for a couple days and then return to eat and sleep.
Counseling/ Therapy	X		
Physical Education	X		
Health Services	X		
School	X		To go to school, the boy goes on the bus and it is an hour both ways. For the girl it is 45 minutes each way. They were ok with that.
Food	X		Both agreed the food is good, one said that sometimes it is too fancy, but overall it is good.
Snacks	X		

Library	X		
Chores	X		
Money	X		
Mail / Phone	X		They are allowed two phone calls a day for ten minutes and the boy was saying that was hard for him because there are three important people he wants to talk to regularly.
Levels (privileges)	X		
Laundry	X		Teens do their own laundry
Grievances	X		
Activities & Entertainment	X		
Program Length Understood	X		
Staff evaluation	X		Both said they were treated with respect
Discipline	X		
Allowance	X		
Clothes	X		
Medications	X		
Drugs/Alcohol			
Probation officer			
			The bedrooms are fine but the mattresses are hard. Both agreed with this statement.

Number of Youth Interviewed: 2

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 continues to be a weakness in the system when it comes to mental health services for the kids who are there for longer than a couple weeks. As a temporary facility, treatment of mental health issues is not provided, only assessment. 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
Inspecting Commissioner

Date:

Mary Cone, 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