

# Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report

## Children's Village

April 2013

The Juvenile Justice Commission has deviated from its customary inspection form in the case of Children's Village, 1321 Lia Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, because we feel that structure would not provide us the room to address our concerns.

Commissioners Cone, Lopez and Zita conducted an inspection on Saturday, April 6, 2013, and observed the following regarding this group home, some of which caused concern:

### **General condition of all four residences and grounds including kitchens and furniture:**

- New carpeting had been installed in all homes. This improvement addressed a concern expressed in 2012 in which carpets were found to be torn, over worn, and in some cases malodorous.
- Fire extinguishers were all found to be current. There were smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and evacuation plans in all homes.
- The general upkeep of the residences was of concern: there were dirty doors, and broken blinds noted throughout. Front and backyards needed weeding, and mowing, hedges required trimming.
- All bathrooms had hot water, although a towel rack was missing in one bathroom. It needs repair.
- Electrical stove outlet has no plate cover next to hutch in House C. It needs repair.
- All of the kitchens were found to be messy, there was not enough silverware in any of the houses, there were not enough plates or utensils and the ones there were mismatched. This needs to be addressed.
- In all homes the furniture was found to be in poor condition and mismatched. Dining room tables had mismatched chairs, many of which were dirty. In general, furniture cushioning was dirty in all homes. Instead of feeling like a home, one commissioner stated it felt like living in a "frat house." There were no paintings on the walls in common areas. Commissioners did not observe well-kept main areas that promoted a homey living environment.

- Specifically in House B, the entertainment center had top drawer with no bottom panel. That should have been repaired as it was a danger to kids. Also, the blue couch fabric was ripped.

### **Support for health and well-being:**

- One child stated that, "sometimes the food is good." Commissioners observed that much of the food that is available is comprised of simple carbohydrates, such as pasta, frozen waffles, pancake mix, sandwiches, and frozen pizzas. Healthy snack choices were available in all homes.
- In speaking with staff and children, commissioners did not get the impression that many trips are planned, other than shopping. One child said that some children get to go to Scandia occasionally. No one reported trips to the park, beach or movies, or any excursions for hiking, swimming, or fishing, etc. Some staff and children talked about a recent trip to Disneyland during spring break. On the day of the inspection, most of the children in House C were watching Wrestling on TV on a Saturday morning.
- For the most part all homes had ample books, VHS, DVDs which were age appropriate -- although it was noted that few books were found in House B. This inconsistent availability of entertainment and enriching educational materials needs to be addressed. Specific to House C, it was observed that National Geographic magazines were available. Books and games for more mature children were available and appropriate. The types of games that were available for ages 6 and up were Rummy, Yahzee, 1,000 piece puzzle.
- The medication logs were reviewed in all homes; randomly one child's record was chosen in each house. All medications were secure and locked in the office area of each of the homes. Records were kept in binders with medications listed on white boards, as well. A concern was expressed by a commissioner regarding a 16 year old girl on Lo-Ovral who missed pills on March 16 and February 7 and doubled up the next day. Stephanie said that the pill was prescribed for regulation not for birth control. Minor items regarding fluoride treatments were noted: one child missed a fluoride chew on March 19<sup>th</sup> in House A and another child missed fluoride on March 5<sup>th</sup> in House B.

### **Interviews with Children**

Commissioners spoke with six children who reside at the Children's Village:

- a boy with a birthday in May had spoken with one of the commissioners regarding setting up his bedroom and tidying up for new resident. He was measuring the room for possibly moving furniture around
- One of the commissioners spoke with a girl who had arrived from Valley of the Moon Children's Home. She said it was "okay" at CV. Attended Kawana Springs Elementary school and was doing well in school.

- All three commissioners, having visited group homes throughout Sonoma County, noted that the children were not as communicative and forthcoming as those visited in other group homes. One commissioner had an interaction with a rude youngster.

Prior to the visit Emily Mann, LMFT, had provided the Pre-Inspection Report along with the Village Grievance Acknowledgement and Complaint forms and a copy of the Discipline Policy. All documents were found to be in good order with one exception. The Grievance form did not delineate the children's right to contact the JJC with complaints and concerns. Also, the Pre-Inspection form was thoroughly completed; however, commissioners had concerns that the high turnover rate of employees prevents the development stable long-term relationships between children and staff, amongst staff, and between staff and administration.

In the debrief meeting with Emily Mann and Anjana Utarid, on April 6, 2013, all three commissioners shared the positive aspects of the inspection as well as those that caused concern. Commissioners welcomed Children's Village staff to join inspections to other group homes so that they could see for themselves the differences observed between the care, support and services provided by the Children's Village and those provided by other group homes.

Due to concerns, commissioners requested the following: Corrected Grievance Form with directions regarding how to contact the JJC, a furniture audit, maintenance documentation, the 20 Year Site Plan, a three month record of incidents, a copy of the rental lease for grandparents and the grandparent handbook. All of the requested documents were provided on April 9, 2013.

Commissioners Cone, Lopez and Zita agreed that in addition to welcoming Children's Village staff to join an inspection to other group homes, that more frequent monitoring of the Children's Village is necessary to ensure the level of care and support children receive, to gain clarity on the implementation timeline of the 20-year plan, and to gain a greater understanding of the role of grandparents. The JJC will be requesting the records for tracking the volunteer hours as well as how those activities were determined by the grandparents and the Village to meet children's needs, per section 900.4, bullets 1-4 of the Grandparent Handbook.