

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
INSPECTION REPORT**

**UNITY CARE PHOENIX ADOLESCENT GROUP HOME
JUNE 2009**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission conducted an announced visit to Phoenix House, an adolescent group home for boys owned and operated by Unity Care Group, Inc, a non profit corporation, for the purpose of routine inspection pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code Section 229.5. Unity Care operates seven group homes, five level-12 homes in San Jose and two level-14 homes in Salinas. They are licensed for dependency and delinquency justice court placements. The home visited was previously a placement for dependency status girls, but in September 2008, it became a Probation House. Minors residing in the home are placed by the Juvenile Justice Court and are on court ordered probation. Five Commissioners visited Phoenix House on June 17, 2009, at which time the facility was inspected and interviews were conducted with corporate, site staff and juveniles who had been placed in the home. A second interview was conducted at the Unity Care, Inc company headquarters on July 14, 2009. The findings and observations of the inspection and interviews conducted are detailed in the following report.

II. POPULATION

During the June 17 visit, Commissioners were told there were three boys, ages 13 to 18, living at the Phoenix House. The home is licensed for a maximum capacity of six minors. Staff reported that the home has been below capacity for approximately one month. Staff expressed concern over the length of time (3+ weeks) it was taking to place youths at the home after receiving notification of placement. Six minors were placed in the home when it opened in September 2008. Of the six, four ran away, one was returned to custody for a new violation and the sixth boy is still in placement and graduated from high school the day before this visit. Staff was preparing for a graduation party in his honor. In addition to this minor, one 14-year old and another 17-year old were placed within the last four months and are currently living in the home.

III. STAFFING

There are three daily shifts; one from 8 am to 4 pm; a second from 4 pm to 12 am and a third shift that is from 12 am to 8 am that are assigned to residential counselors. Staff is supervised by a facility manager. Medical emergencies that require the minor to be transported off site are the responsibility of the facility manager who transports the minor to the medical facility while the residential manager remains on duty.

IV. FACILITY

The Phoenix House in San Jose is a two-story level-12 facility, state-licensed for a maximum of six boys. The group home is located in a residential area in South San Jose. On either side of the group home are two other two-story homes. There is an apartment complex across the street. The front yard is well-maintained with several trees and trimmed shrubs, but no grass. There were several 5-gallon bottles of drinking water at the front door on the day of the visit.

In the fenced back yard, there is a deeply shaded area to the right with trees and a few bushes but little grass. There is a concrete patio immediately outside the kitchen and family room which extends to the left and around the side of the house. There is a basketball hoop on the concrete on the side yard. Beyond the concrete patio directly behind the house, there is a neatly mowed grassy space with shaded patio under a columned trellis. To the left and rear of the house there is a large area (approximately 50' x 30') which looked as if a project had not been completed. The facility manager explained the project to build a volleyball court was placed on hold after the organization that had sponsored it ran out of money.

All the trees, hedges and bushes in the backyard looked well maintained. The residential counselor said a landscaper cared for the area. Commissioners were told that there was no problem with the neighbors, but the boys were allowed in the backyards only with a staff person present. One of the foundation air vent screens on the left rear of the house was missing

The living room was furnished with two sofas, a rocking chair, a coffee table, a TV cabinet with some shelving and a video game unit, and a bulletin board. There were two bookcases, but only a total of four books and a couple of games. There is a portable air conditioner by the front window. The hardwood floors throughout the downstairs were clean.

The family room is furnished with two sofas, a bookcase with no books, and a television with a few DVD's on the side. There is a fireplace. The residential counselor said they do not use the fireplace. In the middle of the room there was an area rug.

In the hallway outside the family room was an alcove with a desk and chair set up as a study area. There was a bulletin board with resident information, college information,

house rules and a list of personal rights for children in resident facilities. While there was some natural light coming from the bathroom to the rear and there was a wall lamp over the top of the desk, this alcove would be too dark for extended study without an additional lamp.

Off the front hallway is a door leading to the laundry area and to the garage. A timetable for doing wash was posted above the washer and dryer. It was noted that if a resident misses his wash day, he would have to wait for his next scheduled wash day. There was some loose wiring around the doorway. In the garage, there was a punching bag and weight bench. There was a work bench along the side of the garage. A number of paint cans were stored in the garage.

The kitchen was clean with a good deal of natural light. The dining area had a table and four chairs. When asked where the expected additional residents would sit, the residential counselor said that they had ordered more chairs and they were getting a new table. In the corner of the kitchen was some shelving with fresh fruit; bananas and apples. In the basket on the counter were some granola bars. The residential counselor said a resident can ask for a snack. Posted on the bulletin board and on the cabinets were notices related to proper food storage and food handling procedures. There was a 5-gallon water cooler in the kitchen. Cleaning supplies are locked in an under-sink cabinet in the kitchen and in the locked closet in the front hall.

There are three resident bedrooms and one resident bathroom upstairs. The resident bedrooms each had two twin beds, adequate closet space, and a mirror. The rooms were in good order. Two of the three bedrooms had dressers. One bedroom had only one dresser. The Residential Counselor said that an additional dresser for that room had been ordered. The Commissioners noted that there were few personal items in any of the rooms and the rooms lacked a homey feel. The master bedroom upstairs has been converted to a staff office with storage and a staff bathroom.

Food

In addition to the refrigerator in the kitchen, there is a large freezer in the area adjacent to the laundry area and the garage. There was very little in this additional freezer on the day of the visit. A graduation party was planned for the evening of the day of the inspection. Much of the food on hand was in preparation for the party. The Commissioners asked about the menu and the Residential Counselor said it must have been misplaced the last time the kitchen was cleaned, and that it is usually posted on the refrigerator. Later in the staff office, the Commissioners viewed a menu and meal count table but it did not seem to include a dinner menu, having lunch and snack items listed as the third meal. The Residential Counselor and Compliance Specialist said they did not think that they had an emergency food supply. The Compliance Specialist said that the menus are prepared by the nutritionist. The Commissioner was told that the Facility Manager buys food for the home and the residents give input. When Commissioners spoke to one of the residents, he said that the

residents sometimes go shopping with the Facility Manager. One resident said he was happy with the food served and another resident said that the food was too greasy.

Safety

There were evacuation plans and maps in several locations throughout the house. There were smoke detectors in each of the upstairs bedrooms and the office and there were two in the hallway downstairs. There was a fire extinguisher (last inspected 4/17/09) in the kitchen and there was one in the laundry room. There was a fire pull box in the downstairs hallway that the Residential Counselor said was connected to the Fire Department. There was also a sound alarm. The fire safety permit was displayed in the office upstairs and was to expire on June 30th, 2009. The residential counselor said that they were in the process of arranging a visit with the Fire Marshall in the next week. The Residential Counselor stated that they have monthly fire drills and they had had a drill two days before the inspection.

There was an emergency Disaster Plan and Crisis Protocol posted on the bulletin board in the front downstairs hallway. Commissioners were told that the Facility Manager is always on call and that in event of an emergency the SJPD and the Facility Manager would be called.

The front door remains locked at all times and the residents are not allowed to answer the door. The other doors and windows are closed and locked when they go out. Resident's records, cash, other valuables and medications are kept locked in the file cabinet in the office. While Commissioners were in the office a resident asked to retrieve his toiletries and walked into the office and retrieved it himself.

According to the Residential Counselor all minors are placements under the W & I Code Section 602. House rules include no wearing of gang colors, no low hanging pants, no swearing, no gang drawings, and no cell phones. All outside phone calls are supervised. Residents are not allowed to carry cash; if they want to purchase something they shop with the Residential Counselor or Facility Manager. Minors are searched before leaving for school or home visits and searched again upon their return.

V. PROGRAMS

There are a number of group activities that are planned throughout the month in which minors can participate. For example there are trips to the Teen Center, YMCA, a game night the Campbell B-Ball and "Pic Nick" at the local park. Track and field activities are scheduled at the Hayes Mansion two times each month. There is also a workbench and one weight bench placed in the garage, a basketball hoop in the backyard and a X-Box game console in the living room for the boys entertainment. On Tuesdays, minors go to the Mexican American Community Services Agency (MACSA) for gang intervention classes from 6 pm to 7:30 pm. Anger management classes are held on Mondays from 5 pm to 6:30 pm. Wednesday are typically program free days and the staff takes the minors to the YMCA, park or the library. Independent Living Program (ILP) classes are conducted on Thursdays from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm and all minors 16 years and older attend. The Unity Care social worker provides individual, group and family counseling in the group home. The probation officer, social worker, facility manager, and four Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS) workers attend a team meeting on Thursdays. All minors are asked to attend the end of the meeting and to express any concerns and to discuss their progress in the home.

VI. BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Youth obtain privileges through a seven level phase program based points accumulated for positive behavior and fulfillment of responsibilities. Each phase level then determines the amount of privileges and freedoms a youth may or may not have, depending on rule violations and total points. Youth enter the program at Phase Two and then are rewarded privilege points daily for each completed responsibility. Youth advance to another phase after accumulating at least 350 privilege points and can maintain their phase by maintaining 250 points over a one week period. Points can be lost due to rule violation. Each youth is evaluated weekly to determine what phase level he is in. Weekly allowance is based on the current phase level. Minors on Phase Two start at \$3 per week and will progress to \$15 a week at Level Six after maintaining that level for three weeks. Privileges that increase with points include additional telephoning rights, increased TV privileges, later bedtimes and increased opportunity for home visits. A review of incidents report since last September showed no significant incidents with the residents.

VII. MEDICAL CARE

Minors needing urgent medical care are transported to Valley Medical Center (VMC). Routine medical appointments are provided by the VMC Outpatient clinic. Dental services are provided by Western Dental Group. An optometrist is also available should

minors required such services. Either the Facility Manager or the Program Manager transports minors to medical appointments.

Prescribed and over-the-counter medications are locked in a file cabinet in the staff office. Commissioners were concerned as the lock on this cabinet was not functioning properly at the time of the inspection. Staff administers prescription medication to minors as prescribed and over-the-counter medications are never sent home with the minor. Parents are expected to provide these medications if they are necessary during the home visit.

Medical releases for all boys are filed in the minors' binders in the staff office. In addition copies of these releases are also kept in the van in the event of an accident.

VIII. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Minors are provided mental health and substance abuse treatment services through a variety of programs which are strength-based and include cognitive behavioral interventions and the positive reinforcement model entitled the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA). These two programs are used by Pathways Inc. Gang rehabilitation services are given with MACSA. Youths weekly services included treatment provided by a residential social worker, substance abuse counselor and family therapist in conjunction with the group home staff. According to the Clinical Services Supervisor, each youth receives a comprehensive psychological evaluation upon entering Phoenix House. An individual treatment plan is developed that focuses on cognitive behavior services, substance abuse treatment, and family therapy. These services are provided by Pathways Inc., an outside contractor, three times a week in 1.5 hour sessions

The Case management team provides case management services based on the youths/family needs. This team includes the Probation Officer, Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) representative, Facility Manager, Program Manager and the Therapist. The team meets weekly to discuss program updates, Incident Reports, staff changes, input from youths.

In addition, clinical services provide weekly individual therapy provided weekly by a substance abuse counselor. Medication Management Services include prescription services managed by a child psychiatrist.

IX. EDUCATION

Staff transports all three minors to and from school. One minor attended San Jose Community Schools this past school term and expects to attend Gunderson High School in the fall of 2009. The graduating minor attended Calero Community School and will be attending orientation at De Anza College. The third minor will continue to attend Ridgement Community School. Staff reported that they have a very good relationship with the local school district and have experienced no problems in enrolling minors in school. None of the minors currently living in the home are special education students. Approximately one hour is set aside on school days for homework when the minors come home from class. The school day ends for the two 17-year olds at 12:30 pm and at 2:30 pm for the 14-year old.

X. FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH

Two Commissioners spoke with a 17 year old resident who had been at the group home for six months. He said that he gets along with the staff and the other residents and that he was treated with respect. He described the group as “easy” and “kick back”. He said he understood the rules and he had received a handbook when he first came there. He said he knew where the grievance forms were, but that he had no grievances. He said he had chores to do and that it is possible to earn extra “points” by doing extra work.

When asked about activities he said every weekend something was planned, going to a park or to a movie. He said that he usually goes home on a pass on the weekends. He discussed weekday activities including team meetings, going to Davis or to the park to play basketball. He said he plans to finish school. He mentioned that he had attended an anger management program and that it had helped him and improved his communication skills. He expects to return to his family in the next month.

Three Commissioners spoke with a 14 year old resident who had been in the home for the last five months. He was reserved but articulate who although preferred his own home, had grown to like the facility. He stated that he had matured a lot over the last five months. He had time to think and learned to talk and let things out instead of holding it all in. When asked about the rap sessions and counseling, he feels that they have all helped. He feels well-treated by the staff and voiced no problems with the other residents. Staff is responsive to his medical needs.

XI. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Commissioners reviewed the Unity Care Phoenix Home Resident Handbook, Phoenix Homes Outcomes Report April 2009, Incident Reports, Unity Care Grievance Form, Group Planned Activities Form, Emergency Disaster Plan for Children’s Residential Facilities Form, Unity Care Referral Form, Unity Care Consequences Sheet, Daily Points Log, and Group Home License.

XII COMMENDATIONS

1. The Compliance Specialist should be commended for her assistance in providing the Juvenile Justice Commission Inspectors with her cooperation in scheduling personnel and providing requested documentation.

2. Phoenix should be commended for offering minors incentives to earn additional points that allow for the youths to advance to the next level faster.

3. The overall cleanliness of the Phoenix House is very good. Staff and minors should be commended for their efforts in maintaining a clean house.
4. Phoenix house staff should be commended for being respectful and caring, as discussed by the minors during their interviews.
5. Staff should be commended for giving special recognition to minors' accomplishments, such as the high school graduation celebration.
6. Staff should be commended for the promptness in getting minors enrolled in school after they are placed in the home.

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that Phoenix House Adolescent Group Home:

1. Insure that additional seating is available for the dining area.
2. Post the dinner menu and follow nutritional guidelines.
3. Provide a desk lamp in the downstairs study area.
4. Secure the loose wiring in the laundry area.
5. Complete the grading or develop the left rear portion of the backyard and consider allowing minors to participate in order to earn extra allowance or points.
6. Provide more reading material for the home residents.
7. Replace the air vent screen on the left rear of the house.
8. Provide an additional dresser for the third bedroom.
9. Dispose of loose materials and partially open containers on shelves in the laundry room.
10. Provide additional lightning in all bedrooms be provided for residents.
11. Insure that cabinet locks in office are made secure.
12. Install a internet capable computer in the home with the appropriate staff supervision.
13. Establish a emergency food and water supply.
14. Provide artwork to increase homelike environment.

XIV. SUMMARY

Based on the information gathered during this inspection, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission reports that Phoenix House has met the standards and requirements for a group home.