

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
INSPECTION REPORT
KOOSER HOUSE ADOLESCENT GROUP HOME
MAY 2013**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission conducted an announced visit to Kooser House, an adolescent group home for boys owned and operated by EE Residential Homes, Inc, for the purpose of routine inspection pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code Section 229.5. EE Residential Homes operates five group homes in Santa Clara County. They are licensed for dependency and delinquency justice court placement. Four Commissioners visited Kooser House on May 14, 2013 at which time the facility was inspected and interviews were conducted with corporate personnel, on-site staff and juveniles who had been placed in the home. The findings and observations of the inspection and interviews conducted are detailed in the following report.

II. POPULATION

During the May 14th visit, Commissioners met four young men who were currently living at the Kooser House. The home is licensed for a maximum capacity of six minors. Two boys were placements from Alameda County. The remaining two boys were placements from Santa Clara County. This facility is not licensed to accommodate youth with disabilities.

II. FACILITY

The house is located in a residential neighborhood that is quiet and maintained. Inspection of the group home exterior, front and back, indicated that the property appeared to be in good condition and properly maintained. The gutters and roof also appeared to be in good condition. The front of the house had a small lawn and attractive stone fill as decoration. The house fronts on a busy street and is located perhaps one block away from a city park with recreational facilities. The backyard was basically dirt with some grass surrounded by wood privacy fences, two sections of which were in poor condition. The residents do not use the fenced backyard for sports activities because the neighbors complained about noise. However, the facility supervisor, having worked there for many years, stated that, in

general, relationships with the neighbors were good. There is a large cement slab off the patio entrance to the backyard from the living room that can be furnished with lawn furniture and a BBQ grill. This equipment was not displayed during our visit.

All of the interior rooms seem to have been recently painted and well maintained. There is no air conditioning in the house or office. All rooms contained functioning smoke detectors and there was at least one CO2 detector in the hallway. There was an industrial-grade fire alarm pull handle and wall-mounted alarm bell in the front hall.

The three bedrooms were clean and well organized. Only two rooms were currently in use. The bathrooms in the master bedroom and hall were both clean and well organized. None of the windows in the house is equipped with special locks or escape alarms.

The living room was nicely appointed and contained two couches and a coffee table. There was also a TV and a computer on a stand next to the kitchen.

The computer does not have internet access but the youth may take turns using it depending on homework deadlines. The manager said she had internet access on her office computer so if a youth needed to look something up on Wikipedia, the counselor would stay with him until the task is done.

In the kitchen, all counters and cupboards were clean and well organized, with cutlery kept in a locked drawer. The food was stored in cupboards where the expiration dates were quite visible and easy to read. Appliances appeared to be newer and in good condition. The dining area was clean and tidy. A fire extinguisher, recently inspected, was located in a break-the-glass case on a kitchen wall. Several forms such as the evacuation plan, menus, chore assignments, grievance forms and residents' rights and responsibilities were posted on another kitchen wall.

The counselor's office and sleeping area are located in the converted two-car garage. The youth's files are kept in a locked desk drawer, and the key to the files is carried at all times by the supervisor on duty. A duplicate file is maintained at the EE corporate office.

The interior door from the office to the kitchen area and another exit to the side yard had large, industrial-grade looking locks. The washer and dryer, both of recent vintages, are also in the office area. Part of the sleeping area is used for locked storage of certain foodstuffs, detergents, emergency water, etc.

One concern noted was that in the office there was a side door that was open inside a screen door and that screen door opened to the walkway that had an unlocked gate open to the street. If the door were open and the counselor was otherwise occupied in the house, someone could enter the office through the walkway door and possibly gather information on the residents unobserved.

IV. STAFFING

The staff works a three-day shift one week and then four-day shift on alternate weeks. The total number of hours per shift is 54 over 3.5 days and staff sleep at the site. Staffing hours are as follows: 10 a.m. Wednesday to 6 p.m. Saturday; 6 p.m. Saturday to 10 a.m. Wednesday-alternating every other week. There is one staff person on-site at all times, and one supervisor with one relief staff is available when needed. An administrator is on call at all times. There are two beds in a small supply room, located off the staff office to accommodate the facility manager. One “awake” night staff is stationed in the front hall from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. throughout the week.

All staff members are required to have at least one of four qualifications: an A.A., BA., 60 college units or two years of experience in the field. Most staff members had a major in Psychology or Criminal Justice. There is weekly staff training, and each staff person is required to have 40 hours of training each year. The Seneca Center and other professionals in the community conduct training.

V. FOOD

The kitchen was located adjacent to the dining area. Youth eat their meals at a large table that accommodates eight people. The kitchen was very clean, and the refrigerator was well stocked. Canned goods and non-perishables were all marked with purchase and expiration dates. Cupboards were neat and clean. Additional non-perishable items were maintained in a large cabinet in the room adjacent to the supervisor’s office, which additionally served as a sleeping room for night-shift staff. All were marked with purchase dates and expiration codes. The office manager purchases the food that is delivered through the local Safeway store. Menus are planned four weeks in advance, and meet the nutritional requirements under the Title 15 (Minimum Standards For Juvenile Facilities). Commissioners reviewed the projected menus for the next 30 days. Interviews conducted with the residents indicated that they were happy with the food that was being served. Youth are taken out to local hamburger restaurants once a month for a meal. The young men cook the evening meals, according to the menu plan. This is done on a rotating chore assignment.

VI. SAFETY

Smoke/carbon monoxide detectors are located in all rooms and the office. There was a fire extinguisher in the kitchen (last inspected) January 2013. There was a fire pull-box in the hallway by the entrance, and the evacuation plan was posted in the area between the kitchen and the dining room. The Commissioners were provided a Facility Evaluation Report, dated February 28, 2012 by the Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services. Among other items noted during the inspection were the condition of smoke detectors, fire extinguisher and first aid kits. All were noted to be in proper working order. This was not a locked-down facility. The screened windows were in good condition. They were locked, but could be easily opened from the inside. In the instance of fire, there were several exit doors including a sliding glass door, opening to the backyard. The fenced backyard had one gate, leading to the front of the house, and easily opened for emergency exit.

VII. MEDICAL SERVICES

Minors requiring urgent medical care are transported to Valley Medical Center (VMC). Western Dental Group provides dental services. The facility manager transports minors to medical appointments, in addition to scheduling the appointments for the youth.

Medications are kept in a locked toolbox in the office that is attached by cable to the desk. The on-duty staff manager has the key which must be on the manager's person at all times as per EE rules, the company that runs the group homes.

VIII. MENTAL HEALTH

The youth see one of four therapists called Family Liaison Coordinators (FLC) once a week. Each therapist is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) and has had more than ten years of experience. Their salaries are paid by EE and these specialists visit all EE sites with a caseload of 6-8 youth at each group home. The FLC staff counsels each resident individually one hour per week regarding drug and anger management issues. If the therapist determines that the youth needs more in-depth therapy, the youth is seen by an agency such as EMQ Eastfield Ming Quong. Also, for additional mental health services, the Santa Clara Mental Health and the County Call Center are available, if necessary. There are weekly groups for drug counseling.

IX. EDUCATION

Three of the students attend a continuation high school. Another student attends a comprehensive high school. Students are enrolled in the school by the school district. The school hours are 8:00-2:30. A van transports the youth to and from the schools.

The student who attends the comprehensive high school is a junior. He takes three classes: English, U.S. History and Geometry. He attends a daily study hall and he can get tutoring help, if necessary. He has two hours of homework a day. While the students at the community school do not have homework, the group home enforces a quiet time every evening from 6:00 to 7:30. During that time, the students can read or write letters, among other activities.

X. FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH

Commissioners spoke with a group home resident who had recently been placed in the home. He said the staff treated him very well and that he was treated with respect. He particularly liked the activities that were planned for the residents. He also mentioned that the quality of the food provided was very high. He liked the rotation of duties that were required of each resident, and said he looked forward particularly to the cook assignment. He enjoyed the daily visits to the nearby park for recreational activities each day after school hours. Also, several students stated they liked the school they attended, especially the youth who attended the comprehensive high school. He indicated he planned to graduate from this school even if he had to commute from his residence in Alameda County.

XI. BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Youth were at various behavior levels based on their observance of the group home's rules. These levels indicated how often the youths obtain a weekly pass to go home. If the level were high, they would be able to go home and see their families once a week. If youths were at a lower level, they would get a pass to go home to see their families every other weekend. However, all parents are allowed to visit their children at the group home every weekend. When a youth entered the facility, he would sign a contract acknowledging the house rules and the point system governing the levels. If a resident disagreed with a staff member's judgment about a particular action, he could complete a grievance form that is available on the kitchen wall. The group home manager stated she reviews incident and grievance reports daily.

XII. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

The Commissioners reviewed the following: the Facility Evaluation Report; the House Rules Document; the Community Care Licensing Fees Document; Group Home Dress Codes for Boys and Girls; Activity Schedules; Level Change Request Form; Grievance Form; 30 Day Food Menus; State of California Department of Social Services License; and Annual Fire Inspection Receipt Tag.

XIII. COMMENDATIONS

1. The Program Supervisor should be commended for her assistance in providing the Juvenile Justice Commission Inspectors with her cooperation in scheduling personnel and providing requested documentation.
2. The overall cleanliness of the Kooser House is good. The staff and minors should be commended for their efforts in maintaining a clean house.
3. The staff should be commended for providing an atmosphere of open communication with residents.
4. The staff should be commended for offering well-organized routines for the residents to follow and rely on.

XIV. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Close the door that leads to the outdoor sidewalk anytime an attendant leaves the counselor's office.
2. The Group Home should be considered for increased placement activities by the Santa Clara County Probation Department.

XV. SUMMARY

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

Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on July 2,
2013.

Penelope Blake, JJC Chairperson

Date

Ray Blockie, JJC Inspection Chair

Date