



CHAMBERS OF
MICHAEL NASH
PRESIDING JUDGE

JUVENILE DIVISION
The Superior Court
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TO: All Juvenile Court Judicial Officers
Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
Probation Department (Probation)
All Interested Individuals and Entities

FROM: Michael Nash, Presiding Judge 
Juvenile Court

SUBJECT: REPORT ON GROUP HOME PLACEMENT (Effective March 1, 2014)

There are currently approximately 2000 or more children/youth under juvenile court jurisdiction placed in group homes, which is the least preferred placement option for children and youth. For purposes of this memo, group homes are placements licensed by the state with six or more beds and which have a Rate Classification Level (RCL).

Generally, speaking outcomes for dependent youth in group homes include return home or to a less restrictive placement, aging out or crossover to Delinquency Court jurisdiction. For delinquent youth, outcomes include return home or aging out. Both of these populations are also potential candidates for Extended Foster Care (EFC). Significantly a disproportionately high percentage of youth in group homes are African-American.

The goal of this memo is to increase the focus on children/youth under our jurisdiction and group homes so that we can ensure that children/youth are not unnecessarily placed in group homes; ensure that children/youth who are placed in group homes remain there only as long as necessary; ensure that there is a clear and comprehensive case plan for all children/youth placed in group homes; and ensure that the case plans for all children/youth placed in group homes are being timely and appropriately monitored and implemented.

Whenever a child/youth under juvenile court jurisdiction is placed in a group home from a less restrictive placement for the first time, or is moved from one group home to another group home, DCFS or Probation shall file a report with the child/youth's court of record within three court days. It shall include the following information:

1. What is the name of the group home and where is it? How many other children/youth are in the group home and what is the age range?
2. Who is the CEO/Executive Director of the group home? What is the ratio of direct care staff to children/youth in the group home in the awake and non-awake shifts?
3. What is the average length of stay for the children/youth currently in the home?
4. How many children/youth have returned home from the group home or moved to less restrictive placements in the past twelve months?
5. How many children/ youth have aged out of the group home in the past twelve months? How many have entered EFC?
6. How many children/youth have run away from the group home in the past twelve months --what is the number of instances of run away and what is the number of youth? How many youth have been discharged from the group home as a result of running away?
7. How many children/youth from the group home have been arrested in the past twelve months?
8. How many children/youth have been moved to other group homes in the past twelve months? How many have come from other group homes?
9. How many children/youth have been identified as victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) activities in the past twelve months? Are any specialized services available for those youth in the group home? What precautions are being taken by the group home to prevent youth from the group home from becoming victims of CSEC?
10. What are the reasons for moving this child/youth to a group home as opposed to a less restrictive placement?
11. Was there a TDM for WIC 300 children or youth prior to the placement? If not, why not? If so, who was present? If the child is under the age of twelve,

has the child's placement in the group home been specifically approved through the DCFS approval process? If not, why not?

12. Is there a plan for how long the child/youth will remain in the group home?
13. What services will be provided so that the child/youth can leave the group home at the earliest possible time?
14. If the plan is for the youth to age out of the group home, what specific services will be provided in that regard? Has the group home received a copy of the of the youth's TILP?
15. Was the child/youth's personal property moved to the group home? If not, why not? What was used to move the youth's property, i.e., suitcase, plastic, paper bag?
16. Was the child/youth given an opportunity to say goodbye and exchange contact information with friends/important adults from the current placement, school or neighborhood? If not, why not?
17. If the child/youth is being administered medication, including psychotropic medication, has a supply of the medication traveled with the child/youth so that there is no interruption of the medication regimen?
 - Has the group home been fully informed of the medication regimen? Has the group home received a copy of the PMA?
 - What is/are the names of the persons responsible for administering and monitoring the medication?
 - Has the group home been informed of the treating physician and whether or not there are upcoming appointments?
 - Will a change of physician be necessary?
18. Is the group home aware that the child/youth has a legal right to obtain medically and legally accurate and comprehensive reproductive health care information and services? Is there any impediment to a youth in the group home obtaining such information and services if he/she so chooses?
19. Will the placement change necessitate a school change? If so, why? What was done to eliminate the need for a school change? Has the group home been fully informed of the child/youth's school status?
 - What impact, if any, will the school change have on school credits?
 - What arrangements have been made to enroll the child/youth in a new school? Are there any barriers to the transfer?
 - Is the child/youth in agreement with the school change?

- Did the holder of education rights agree to the school change?
- Has the old school been notified of the transfer?
- Have the school records, including any IEP's been given to the new school? Will the new school continue to implement the IEP?
If changing school districts, or if there are circumstances requiring a new IEP, such as enrollment in a Non Public School (NPS), when will a thirty day IEP be conducted?

20. If the child/youth is in counseling, will counseling continue with the counselor? What was done to avoid the need to change the counselor? If a new counselor is required, what arrangements are being made to initiate counseling with a new counselor? Does the child object to the change? If a change must occur, is there a transition plan? Does the new counselor have contact information for the old counselor?

21. What is the plan, if any for family therapy?

22. What is the plan to facilitate family visitation?

23. What is the plan for maintaining any other services/treatment that the child/youth is receiving? What was done to avoid the need to change? Does the child object to the change? Does the new service provider(s) have contact information for the old service provider(s)?

24. Has the group home been given a copy of the child/youth's health/education passport? Does the group home have all the information necessary for the continuation of Medi-Cal services?

25. State the names of the Probation Officer or Social Worker who have provided the above information. State the name(s) of the individual(s) who have received the information and the relationship or status vis-à-vis the child/youth.

26. Was the youth/child's attorney notified of the placement change?

27. Did the move to the group home result in separation from siblings? Were the siblings or their attorneys notified of the movement? What plan is in place for sibling contact or visitation?

28. Who else has been informed of the placement change?

- Parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Involved relative(s)
- Involved non-related extended family member(s)

29. Has the group home been informed of the next court date and whether the child/youth needs to appear in court?

30. Has the group home been informed of relevant conditions of probation?

Each department, DCFS and Probation, shall provide the report to the appropriate court of record to be immediately distributed by the court officer in each courtroom.

Subsequent Report

Following review of the Group Home Placement Report, the court of record shall order DCFS or Probation to provide updates on the implementation of the case plan no less than every 90 days. Each report shall be filed in court two days in advance of the hearing and shall include any and all efforts to develop permanency for the child/youth. That includes any and all efforts to maintain, foster and facilitate contact with family members, including siblings, friends, caregivers or prospective caregivers, or other responsible adults.

If a child/youth has been placed in a group home solely because a less restrictive placement is not available, the court shall order the appropriate department to provide a report every fifteen days until the child/youth has been moved to an appropriate less restrictive placement. That report shall detail all efforts that are being made to identify an appropriate less restrictive placement.