

**PROBATION DEPARTMENT  
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**



Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission  
222 Paul Scannell Drive  
San Mateo, CA 94402

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Nov. 28, 2017

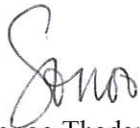
Saila Martinez  
Receiving Home Supervisor  
San Mateo County Receiving Home  
31 Tower Road  
San Mateo, CA 94402

Dear Saila Martinez,

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission inspected the San Mateo County Receiving Home on June 12, 2017. We very much appreciate your assistance and time in conducting the inspection.

The complete inspection report is attached for your records.

On behalf of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission,

  
Sonoo Thadaney  
Chair, JJDPC Inspection Committee

# Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission San Mateo County, California

## Group Home Inspection

Please respond to sections that apply to the facility you are inspecting.  
Type or print clearly.

Facility Name: San Mateo Receiving Home

Date of this Inspection: 6/12/17

Address: 31 Tower Road, San Mateo, CA

Date of Last Inspection: 6/24/16

Contact Person: Saila Martinez, Receiving Home Supervisor

Facility Capacity: 12

Phone Number: (650) 312-5320

Current Population: 3

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge: Honorable Judge Cretan

Annual Population: 70-85

Commission Inspection Team: Melissa Wilson

### Documents Reviewed

Fire Inspection Report:  Yes  No Date: 6/22/2016

Health Department Report:  Yes  No Date: Awaiting Report

Environmental Health Report:  Yes  No Date: 12/30/2016

Intake Packet:  Yes  No

Disciplinary Policy:  Yes  No

### Major Concerns, Observations, and Recommendations

#### Observations:

The Receiving Home is a welcoming, well-kept home for youth anticipated to be placed within 30 days and for youth not able to be placed outside for some reason. The home supports student's school activities and also provides its own programming, particularly in the summer.

The staff is very responsive to the individual youths in optimizing what is a difficult situation. The environment is friendly and relaxed. The youth feel safe, well-cared for, and place their trust in the staff. Staff cook in response to youth requests and likes.

Staff is empowered to make purchases in response to youth needs or requests and there is money available or the staff is subsequently reimbursed. The lack of bureaucracy is a key component to meeting the needs of these youth, i.e. to buy supplies for an art project, shampoo if a certain kind is requested, etc. This is impressive for a public facility.

There is good availability of county-provided transportation to meet youth medical needs, educational needs, and provide trips to the library and off-campus special activities called the "Community Activities Program", and religious services. The transportation consistently arrives on-time.

Concerns:

There are no concerns. This commissioner was very impressed with the leadership of Ms. Martinez, her staff, and the quality of services they provide the youth.

Recommendations:

1. As mentioned in the 2016 report, write the disciplinary system in a more legible, understandable manner.

2. We encourage the county to replace the two laptops for youth use that "died" due to viruses. These were PCs and Macs would be less likely to get contaminated. These computers need to not have cameras. Currently youth use staff computers in the staff room. This takes a staff computer off-line and a staff member from general supervision as the youth on the computer needs to be supervised.

## Areas Reviewed

### Quality of Life:

- Physical Plant
- Meals/Nutrition
- Mental Health
- Physical/DENTAL Health
- Religious Services
- Volunteer Involvement
- Visiting
- Other:

### Programs:

- After School Activities
- Independent Time
- "Community Activities Program" (Trips/Activities)
- Individual/Group Counseling
- House Meetings (2/week)
- Substance Abuse
- "Supper Club" (1/week)
- "Independent Living Program" (County Provided Workshops)
- Supervision of Youth on Directed Studies
- Movies

Other: Individual youth programming needs are defined with their social worker and by the youth's own determination.

### Persons Interviewed:

- Minors (2)
- Director
- Supervisory Staff (1)

## General Information

Stated purpose of facility: The Receiving Home is a county-run, 30-day shelter for dependent youth awaiting placement. The offices of the foster family coordinator and the placement coordinator who finds short-term or long-term placement for youth are also located here. While there is normally a maximum stay of 30 days that a youth may stay, the court may extend the stay for a given youth, for example, if placement is difficult to find due to special needs (behavioral issues, gender identity, developmental disabilities, to finish school if there is no placement near school, etc.)

Their mission statement is "To provide culturally relevant and trauma informed services for the stability, support and nurturing of residents; to help them strengthen their skills, encourage positive attitudes and to assist them in attaining their educational goals. We will respect the rights of residents to explore life's options and to maximize their individual potential."

Type of operating license: CCL group home

License number: 415650019

Rating level: They are not assigned a level because they are a shelter, but they estimate that they are the equivalent of a level 12.

Target population of juveniles: Youth needing temporary shelter while finding more permanent placement.

Age range of juveniles: 6-17 years-old, with never more than 4 or more years in age difference (i.e., a spread of 11-15 years is okay, but no broader age range allowed at any one time.

Juveniles' home counties: San Mateo and many other counties – Southern California, Sacramento, out of state. They house runaways from other counties until arrangements can be made to return them to their home county.

Preplan for emergencies: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Date of last drill: monthly for fire, 10/20/2016 for earthquake

Comments: They have annual staff training on handling emergencies. Information is posted. They have a monthly fire drill. They have a yearly county-wide earthquake drill. They have an emergency food and water supplies. If they need to evacuate because the facility was uninhabitable, they would go to Canyon Oaks.

Describe staff specialties: A total of (5) permanent staff have M.S.W.s, one has an additional masters in Drug and Alcohol. Staff have additional skills with which they engage the youth. Staff members prepare and cook the meals. One is artistic and assists on youths' creative projects for school. Staff are able to tutor in different subjects. The foster family coordination team and the youth placement team are on-site. Beginning in September, the educational liaison will be located at Gateway next door which will be an asset to the receiving home.

Describe staff including numbers, background, ethnicity, language: At the receiving home, there are (5) permanent shelter care counselors; (1) full time clerk; (1) full time custodian; (7) extra help. Mostly women; two are men. The facility will be hiring (2) more permanent shelter care counselors and (5) more extra help staff. The ratio of staff to youth is required to be 1:4.

Ethnicities: Middle Eastern, Islamic, African American, Vietnamese American, Chinese America, Latina, and Caucasian

Languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese

Educational requirements for Staff: For permanent staff, they generally require a minimum of 18-months of experience providing advice, assistance, supervision and direction to dependent and neglected adolescent age children. Two staff have A.A. degrees, most have a B.A. or B.S., (5) have a Masters in Social Work degree and one staff member is in school for her MSW.

Training provided for staff: When they start, staff receive one-on-one training by Brooke Lewellyn, Julia Barboza, and seasoned staff. They shadow other staff for 72-hours. On their first day, new staff are given a packet that they complete. The training staff has to initial every area that is covered

during training. There are also questions that the new staff need to read from the handbook and answer. They are mandated to be CPR/First Aid and CPI (nonviolent crisis intervention) certified. Also, the Receiving Home and Community Care Licensing mandate a minimum of 20 hours of training on various topics such as foster youth rights, trauma, etc throughout the year. MSW staff are required a minimum of 40 hours of training per year.

Staff to minor ratio:                      Awake 1:4                      Sleeping 1:4

There are always two staff members per shift, including two at night (staff do not sleep). They adjust schedules according to needs, but always have the amount required by CCL.

How is staff backup handled during grave-yard shift?: Supervisors on-call

Describe staff turnover, including frequency and reason: This is a stable staff with low turnover; when staff do leave it is for other employment opportunities, or life changes like retirement.

Describe general staff and minor interactions: Observed staff-minor interactions were comfortable. Two female youth were preparing to go out of the facility with a staff member. A staff member suggested to one youth that she wear more clothing which was agreeably accepted. Youth were comfortable speaking in front of staff about their experience at the facility.

Comments: Staff appeared to be positive; have a relaxed, but present energy; and seemed well-attuned to the teenagers. The receiving home benefits from warm and strong leadership. It feels like a very emotionally safe environment for youth in very difficult circumstances.

#### Conditions of Grounds and Building Exterior

Give a general description of the property: The Receiving Home is located on Tower Road next to Gateway school. It is a pleasant one-story building, landscaped in front, and has an outdoor recreation area. The building is locked from the outside. Youth have free access to leave.

Give a general description of the main facility including housekeeping and sanitation: The Receiving Home is very well-maintained by the county and by the full-time custodian. It is neat and very clean. There are two living units. Each has one double room and the rest are single rooms. Each unit has a living room with couches and a TV, and a recreation room with pool tables, a lot of exercise equipment, games, and other recreation options. A staff room is in the center of the two units, but the staff do are always present on the floor interacting with youth. There is a large kitchen open to the students upon request with a dining area. The facility is carpeted. It feels like a college dormitory in terms of furnishings.

Lawns: Acceptable Unacceptable

Playing Fields: Acceptable Unacceptable

Blacktop: Acceptable Unacceptable

Paint: Acceptable Unacceptable



Roof: Acceptable Unacceptable: Didn't observe; no reported problems

Drains and Gutters: Acceptable Unacceptable: Didn't observe; no reported problems

General Appearance: Acceptable Unacceptable

Condition of Interior of Building

Walls: Acceptable Unacceptable

Paint: Acceptable Unacceptable: Unmarked and well-kept

Floors: Acceptable Unacceptable: Carpeted facility except for kitchen/dining area

Ceilings: Acceptable Unacceptable

Drains: Acceptable Unacceptable: Didn't observe; no reported problems

Plumbing Fixtures: Acceptable Unacceptable

Air Vents/Heating/Windows: Acceptable Unacceptable: the AC compressor was recently replaced. The facility reports immediate response by the county when it calls in any needs.

Smoke Alarms: Acceptable Unacceptable: They also have carbon monoxide detectors

Storage of Cleaning Fluids/Chemicals: Acceptable Unacceptable: All chemicals are locked in two storage rooms. One is in the kitchen and the other is off the game room, closest to the Supervisor's office.

Recreation/Sports Equipment: Acceptable Unacceptable: One treadmill is broken and awaiting removal.

Hallways Clear/Doors Propped Open: Acceptable Unacceptable

Sleeping Rooms: Acceptable Unacceptable

Beds: Acceptable Unacceptable

Art, Books, Personal Items Allowed in Rooms: Acceptable Unacceptable: Acceptable - all items are allowed in room unless it is a phone or laptop with a built-in camera due to safety concerns that the youth take photos of themselves and post them to the internet.

Graffiti Present: Acceptable Unacceptable: None present

Ample Blankets: Acceptable Unacceptable: Did not observe

Study Area: Acceptable Unacceptable: While no formal study area is provided, there are a number of quiet private rooms with tables to use. Youth have a desk provided in each room. Youth may also use

computers in the staff area. Youth often sit on the couches in the living room to study. There is also a table set aside for youth to work with tutors.

Adequate Lighting: Acceptable Unacceptable: Each room has (2) ceiling lights

Temperature: Acceptable Unacceptable

#### Orientation of Minors

What is in intake process for the facility?: When youth arrive, he or she meet with a staff member and his or her social worker to go over the intake packet. He or she get a tour of the facility and are issued toiletries and clothing as needed.

Are minors oriented to the house rules and procedures?: Yes No Explain: Reviewed as part of intake process.

Are house rules and grievance procedures posted?: Yes No Explain: Posted

What is in place to ensure that these rules and procedures are understood by minors?: The youth is given a handbook that includes the disciplinary rewards system. These rules are reviewed, posted, and enforced through daily activities. The youths point accumulations affect their privileges (going off-campus) and weekly allowance (\$20 if at the highest level). Students earn a step each day of good behavior.

Are clothing and possessions inventoried on arrival and departure?: Yes No

How are juvenile's clothing and possessions protected or stored?: Each resident has a bin located in the central office where he or she can store items. This office is locked or staffed at all times.

Interviewed Minors: Yes No Details:

Commissioner met with two (of the three current residents), of whom, one was here for the second time being there for 3 weeks in the last 3 months. This resident stated that she is happy being at the receiving home, given her situation. To paraphrase, she said that being there is the best part of an awful experience. She likes the staff and feels comfortable speaking to staff directly if she had any problem and that her grievances are generally acknowledged and addressed. The other resident was there for the first time and had been there 2 weeks. She said it was, "okay." Both residents were getting ready to go out with a staff member and changing their clothes, doing their hair, etc. Residents did not request any changes to the facility, staffing, or policies.

Residents reported that they are aware of shelter rules and have a handbook to refer to.

Residents are allowed one hour of unsupervised free time per day outside of the shelter unless there are behavioral reasons.

Residents use the internet only with staff supervision and are able to use computers for purpose driven tasks, like homework or writing papers. Cell phones are kept in the staff office and residents



may check them out and in. Residents are allowed use of cell phones. They typically use the foyer as this is where residents personal wifi is accessible. Only one resident is allowed at a time in the foyer. If there is more than one resident, then a staff person is present. There are two cordless phones in the staff office that residents may use. In general, the residents may talk for 15 min., but this is flexible and context driven. Residents are not allowed to bring their cell phones in their rooms out of concern that they take and post photos online.

#### Meals/Nutrition

Kitchen: Acceptable Unacceptable: A large, well-equipped kitchen with a large island. It is large enough to hold a number of people, as with "Supper Club".

Do the youth share in preparation of meals?: Yes No Details: Staff cook. Youth are welcome, but not required to share in preparation of meals. On Tuesday nights, they have "Supper Club" with community volunteers who cook with the youth.

Are meals served family style?: Yes No Details: Youth and staff dine at a common table.

Are minors permitted to converse during meals?: Yes No Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Are staff present and supervising during meals?: Yes No Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Are weekly menus posted?: Yes No Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Are servings ample, nutritious, appetizing?: Yes No Details: The food looked very appetizing and fresh. It is served family style. Quantities were appropriate.

Weaker minors protected from having food taken from them?: Yes No Details: This is not a problem.

Are snacks and beverages available?: Yes No Details: Youth can get snacks or beverages without restriction. Youth need permission to enter the kitchen/pantry area. Youth are given healthy beverages.

How do you meet special nutritional needs?: Special nutritional needs are accommodated as are special requests/preferences.

Length of time allowed to eat?: As long as they need. Youth are able to leave the table when finished.

Mealtimes (no more than 4 hours between meals, breakfast to dinner, without a snack)

Breakfast:                      Lunch:                      Dinner:

There are not strictly set mealtimes – times depend on what is happening that day.

Comments:

The food looked delicious. Very fresh and yummy.

Appearance: Acceptable Unacceptable

Showers (frequency, privacy, supervised): Acceptable Unacceptable: Youth take showers in privacy as often as desired.

Condition of clothing (clean, fit, etc.): Acceptable Unacceptable: Youth wear their own clothing; extra clothing is available from a "clothing closet" or purchased for youth should they arrive without adequate clothing.

Clothing appropriate to current weather: Acceptable Unacceptable

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

### Programs

Recreation (type, amount, etc.): Acceptable Unacceptable: There are recreational options at the home. They may go on a walk with a staff member 1 hour/day. If the youth has full privileges, youth may be outside the shelter 1 hour/day alone. Starbucks is a typical destination. They also go on group outings together using donated tickets – AT&T park, shows, and museums.

Exercise (daily schedule, amount, etc.): Acceptable Unacceptable: Nothing is required of youth, but exercise is encouraged. Youth like to go off-grounds to parks (up to the Pier in SF, walks on the beach at Half Moon Bay). Several exercise machines are on-site. To provide encouragement, youth may earn more points toward their weekly allowance if they use exercise equipment.

Access to Religious Services: Acceptable Unacceptable: Youth can request to attend and transportation is provided. Family can also bring them. It is rarely requested.

Access to Medical Services: Acceptable Unacceptable: All youth receive check-ups at the county hospital before coming to the receiving home. They return to the teen clinic at the county hospital should medical issues arise.

Access to Mental Health Services: Acceptable Unacceptable: Youth have access to two psychiatrists located off-site at the county teen clinic. Therapists from BHRS come on-site once per week (or twice per week as needed).

Individual Counseling: Acceptable Unacceptable: All receive individual therapy from BHRS once or twice a week.

Group Counseling: Acceptable Unacceptable: A house meeting is held twice per week to involve youth in making future activity-based plans and discuss any issues that arise among the youth. Life issues are discussed. Although not counseling per se, outside organizations occasionally provide programming, such as on personal finance.

Substance Abuse Counseling: Acceptable Unacceptable: They take youth to NA/AA. They can receive 1:1 counseling with staff. One staff has extensive drugs and alcohol counseling training.

Victim Awareness Classes: Acceptable Unacceptable: None

Gang Awareness Classes: Yes No Details: Rare to have issues

Sexual Harassment Classes: Yes No Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Parenting Classes: Yes No Details: Should there be a pregnant teen or young mothers or fathers, they receive parenting classes through the social worker. Infants do not live on-site

Vocational Classes: Yes No Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Program: Yes No Details: Youth may hold after-school jobs and transportation is provided.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Discipline of Minors

Describe the discipline process of minors: They use a points program where youth earn privileges and allowance based on their behavior and cooperation. These points earn allowance (up to \$20/week) and privileges. If there is a serious issue, youth go "off-program" and must work to re-earn privileges and cannot earn money for (3) days, at which time the youth is back on-program. The commissioner guesses that youth accept the general concept of reward/withdrawal, but may not understand specifics. The commissioner could not understand the system fully both in its written form and when explained by staff.

There will be a new discipline system once the status of the facility changes to a short term residential treatment program. The staff are not yet familiar with the specifics of the new system.

Staff is trained in CPI and use verbal de-escalation and engagement to work with youth. The staff isolates the others while working with the individual youth. For more serious offenses (ex: smoking pot on facility, fighting, suspended at school), youth will be considered 'off-program'. They are never locked in their rooms. If youth are unsafe, staff can call the San Mateo County Sheriff. They are very responsive and will come and talk to the youth.

#### Comments:

Make the discipline system easy to read and understand without explanation.

#### Grievances

Grievance Process: Acceptable Unacceptable: Youth can talk to staff or to Ms. Martinez if they have a complaint. They can talk to their social worker. For a formal complaint, they can call CCL – the number is posted in the common area.

Number of grievances this year: 0

Trends and/or Comments: There were no written complaints.

Access US Mail?: Yes No Details: Yes

Postage Free?: Yes No Details: Mail is stamped in another location by county

Incoming/Outgoing Mail (Screened? Confidential?): Yes No Details: As long as mail is addressed to the Receiving Home at 31 Tower Road, mail is not screened. If it is mailed to the general county address, all mail is opened and then directed to the receiving home. Outgoing mail is not screened but the sealed envelopes are sent to the county for stamping.

Access to Telephone?: Yes No Details: Youth often have cell phones that they may use in public spaces. In addition, there is a cordless phone and they can use landlines in the staff office. Youth are not restricted in phone use, however, the norm is 15 minutes. This can be extended as needed. The social worker may limit whom to the youth may speak for the protection of the youth.

## Visiting

Visiting Schedule: Weekdays

Weekends

Special Events

Visiting may occur at any time. The visiting schedule is determined by the social worker. The social worker may limit who may visit the youth for the protection of the youth.

Do all minors have access to visitation?: Yes No Details: Yes

Under what circumstances would visitation be restricted?: By the social worker or by court order.

Are visitation logs kept?: Yes No Details: Specific visitation logs are not kept by the home, but visitors must sign in and out of facility. Visits are mentioned in the daily log and social workers document visitation.

Adequate Space: Acceptable Unacceptable: The space is large and open with sofas along the perimeter and a few round tables in the middle. There is a secondary smaller room with a sofa and chair should privacy be needed. However, this is rarely necessary because of the low youth numbers and the open hours for visitation. The visitation room is also used during intake and for meetings between the youth and his or her social worker.

Staff Supervision: Acceptable Unacceptable: If supervision is necessary, it is provided by social workers or family care workers. Staff does not supervise visits.

Privacy Provided: Yes No Details: Yes as visits are staggered or other rooms are available

Games or Activities Provided: Yes No Details: Board games, television, and distributed between the two units are pool tables (2), foosball, a weight machine, a treadmill, a stair climber, a recumbent bike, and a piano.

## School

List the schools your residents attend: They try to keep youth in their home school district. It was summer break during our inspection. One attended Carlmont High School and one was "home-schooled" at the Receiving Home in an independent study program.

How is transportation to school provided?: The county provides transportation to schools.

Are students able to participate in school-based extra-curricular activities?: Yes, there is no limit to after-school activities and transportation is always possible.

Is tutoring available?: Yes, it is arranged through the educational liaison. The county has a contract with a tutoring agency and sometimes tutoring is provided by the school. Staff supervise and help with homework.

Adequate Supplies, Books, Paper, Computer?: They all have school supplies and make trips to get specialized supplies as needed for school projects. Some youth have their own laptops which they may use publicly (or in their rooms should the laptop not have a built-in camera). Youth may use the staff computer in the office.

Access to Computers/Internet?: Yes No How is this managed?: Staff keep an eye on youth when they are on the computer in the office. The receiving home had two laptops during the 2016 inspection. These were contaminated by viruses and became unusable. Staff requests replacement of these laptops (from 2-4 laptops are requested) in a Mac format so that corrupting viruses are less likely.

Describe the relationship between school and staff: There is an educational liaison from the San Mateo County Office of Education who helps youth with registration, transportation, IEPs, etc. The staff supports the academics of youth by supervising homework, assisting on projects, providing school supplies, and accompanying youth who need to make an "out-of-the-ordinary" trip to school, such as to pick up any packets from his or her home school, when the youth is on directed studies.

#### Comments

General comments or concerns that should be noted that have not already been addressed?:

#### Note:

AB 403, the Continuum of Care Reform, is affecting all group homes in California. The Receiving Home will be changing from a shelter to an STRTP (Short Term Residential Treatment Program). They will be running groups 4 days a week with outside clinicians. These groups will cover different areas, like drug/alcohol and eating disorders, and will be more intensive than they are now. They will add a family therapy component to their program. They will also be assigned a public health nurse so they will have a single point of contact in the county health system.

#### Meeting Needs:

Youth and staff needs would be served by providing (2) Macbooks. Currently, youth use the staff office under supervision which takes staff off the floor and limits staff computer access.

Signature of Commissioner(s) preparing this report:

/s/ Melissa Wilson Date: August 16, 2017