

Appendix A

Types of Group Homes Surveyed

	Facility Type	Capacity	Gender served	Location & DSHS Region
1	Group home ¹	49	Mixed (boys & girls)	Urban ² , Region 1
2	Group home	6	Girls	Rural, Region 1
3	Group home	12	Girls	Urban, Region 1
4	Group home	12	Girls	Urban, Region 2
5	Group home	6	Girls	Urban, Region 2
6	Group home	8	Mixed	Urban, Region 2
7	Group home	35	Boys	Rural, Region 3
8	Group home	6	Girls	Urban, Region 3
9	Group home	36	Mixed	Urban, Region 4
10	Group home	24	Boys	Urban, Region 4
11	Group home	35	Mixed	Urban, Region 4
12	Group home	10	Boys	Urban, Region 5
13	Group home	8	Mixed	Urban, Region 6
14	Group home	9	Girls	Urban, Region 6
15	Group home/Crisis Residential Center ³	8	Mixed	Urban, Region 5
16	Staffed Residential Home ⁴	6	Boys	Rural, Region 1
17	Staffed Residential Home (4 homes with 6 beds each)	24	Mixed	Urban, Region 1
18	Staffed Residential Home	5	Boys	Urban, Region 2
19	Staffed Residential Home	5	Mixed	Urban, Region 3
20	Staffed Residential Home	6	Boys	Urban, Region 3
21	Staffed Residential Home	5	Girls	Urban, Region 4
22	Staffed Residential Home	5	Mixed	Urban, Region 3

¹ A “group care facility for children” or group home means a location maintained and operated for a group of children on a twenty-four-hour basis. (WAC 388-148-0010).

² “Urban” classification includes homes located in suburban areas.

³ A "Crisis residential center (CRC)" means an agency under contract with DSHS that provides temporary, protective care to children in a foster home, regular (semi-secure) or secure group setting. (WAC 388-148-0010).

⁴ A “staffed residential home” means a licensed home providing twenty-four-hour care for six or fewer children or expectant mothers. The home may employ staff to care for children or expectant mothers. It may or may not be a family residence. (WAC 388-148-0010).

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

1. What information did you have before you moved in about this group home?
(circle all that apply)

- a. available services
- b. information about the staff
- c. information about the facility (what the room look like, etc.)
- d. the rules
- e. your rights (privacy, visits, etc.)
- f. I had no information.
- g. Other_____

Where did you get the information?

- a. caseworker
- b. parent(s)
- c. counselor
- d. CASA
- e. Other_____
- f. I don't remember.

2. Did you choose this home?

Yes No

If yes, why did you choose to live here and was it your first choice?

If no, why not and who chose it?

3. Do you have plans for where you will be living next?

Yes No

Comments:

4. Has any staff helped you with your plans or future goals?

Yes No

If yes, how have they helped?

5. Do staff members respect your privacy?

Yes No

Comments:

Do the other residents?

Yes No

Comments:

6. Do you have a place to make confidential phone calls and get confidential messages?

Yes No

Comments:

7. Who do you turn to for help and support?
(Circle all that apply.)

-
- a. friends
- b. family
- c. brother and/or sister
- d. counselor
- e. CASA/guardian-ad-litem
- f. church/synagogue
- g. Other(s): _____

Comments:

8. Do you have contact or visits with the above people?

Yes •No

How often? _____

Comments:

9. Many youth have several helping professionals in their lives. Who are some people that you work with and what do they do for you? Circle all that apply and write what they do in the blank. *You do not have to write their names.*

- a. counselor _____
- b. doctor _____
- c. lawyer _____
- d. mentor _____
- e. teacher _____
- f. CASA/guardian-ad-litem _____
- g. Other _____
- h. I don't know his/her title. He/she does _____ for me.

Do you have a choice in who you work with?

Yes •No

Comments:

10. Are you receiving what you need besides food and clothing?

-
- a. Physically:
Yes •No

If not, what do you need that you are not getting?

- b. Emotionally:
Yes •No

11. Do you feel safe here?

Yes No

Please explain:

12. Do you know your rights and the grievance process in this home?

Yes No

Comments:

13. Has your race/ethnicity affected how you are treated?

By staff?

Yes No

By residents?

Yes No

Comments:

14. What are two suggestions you have to improve the foster care system?

1. _____
2. _____

15. What are the two best things about living here?

1. _____
2. _____

16. What else would you like to share with the Ombudsman about your experience?

Optional Personal Information

Age: _____

Gender: M F

Race/Ethnicity:

Dependant or Non-dependant (placed by the state or by parents)

Length of stay in current home: _____ days

APPENDIX C

Youth Assent Form

Mary Meinig, Director Ombudsman
Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman
6720 Fort Dent Way, Suite 240
Tukwila, WA 98188
(800) 571-7321

Youth in Group Care Outreach Project
Youth Assent Form

What is the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman?

In 1996, the Legislature created the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman. We are part of the Governor's Office, and are not part of the Department of Social and Health Services. Our mission is to help families and young people who are in state care. We make sure that the people who are responsible for helping you are doing their jobs. We also tell the Governor what youth in state care think about how to improve the child welfare system.

Why Do We Want to Speak With You?

In this project, we want to learn about your experience as a resident in a group home. We are interested in learning more about your interactions with staff and other residents, as well as the contacts you may or may not have with family members, friends, siblings, and other supportive people in your life. You're welcome to tell us any other things about your group home experience too.

After we have visited youth around the state, we will write a report to the Governor. In the report we will include some of the stories and ideas we hear from you and other group home residents. We want to share the stories and ideas that will be most helpful to kids living in group homes, both currently and in the future.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?

If you agree, staff members from the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman will meet with you and other youths at your group home. You will be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire about your experiences. It should take no more than about an hour to meet with us and fill out the survey. If you would like to talk to us individually you are welcome to do so.

What Are Your Rights If You Decide to Participate?

Taking part in the survey is up to you. You don't have to speak with us if you don't want to. If you decide to take part, you can skip any question, for any reason. You can also stop the questionnaire or discussion any time you want.

How Will Your Privacy Be Protected?

The staff at your group home have arranged for us to talk with you. After the survey, only the Ombudsman staff talking with you will know how you answered the questions. Even if we use your answers and ideas in our report to the Governor, we will not include your name. Your name will not be recorded with any of your answers. We will not tell your caseworker, group home staff, or anyone else how you answered the questions. There are two possible exceptions. First, if we hear about or see child abuse or neglect, then we are required by law to make a report to Child Protective Services (CPS). Second, if you tell us that you feel like hurting yourself or someone else, the law requires us to get help for you.

If you have any questions before you start the questionnaire or discussion, just ask the Ombudsman staff members meeting with you. Or if you think of a question later, you can call Mary Meinig or Colleen Hinton at (800) 571-7321.

Interviewer's Signature

Date

Youth Agreement to Take Part

Youth Name: _____

The survey has been explained to me. I voluntarily agree to take part. I am being asked to do a questionnaire that includes questions about the experiences I've had while living in my current group home. My comments and ideas may be included in a report to the Governor, but my name will be kept private.

Youth Signature

Date

Copies: Youth
OFCO

APPENDIX D

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OFFICE OF THE FAMILY & CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN

An Independent Voice for Families and Children

THIS BROCHURE IS FOR YOUTH UNDER STATE SUPERVISION WHO HAVE
QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CARE.

Do you feel safe?

Do you feel listened to?

***Do you feel like people
are acting on your
behalf?***

IF NOT, CALL US – WE CAN HELP.

Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman
6720 Fort Dent Way, Suite 240
Tukwila, WA 98188
Phone (206) 439-3870 or (800) 571-7321
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www.governor.wa.gov/ofco

APPENDIX E

Legal Rights of Children in Out-of-Home care⁵

- *Have regular visits with siblings [RCW 13.34.025(1)]*
- *Practice his or her own religion [WAC 388-148-0430(3)]*
- *Make and receive private phone calls and letters unless the court orders otherwise. [WAC 388-148-0422(1)]*
- *Contact his or her assigned social worker, legal representative, parents or other family members identified in the case plan, and individuals providing therapeutic care as part of the case plan. [WAC 388-148-0470(3)]*
- *Attend school. [WAC 388-148-0510(1)]*
- *Receive fair, reasonable, consistent discipline related to his or her behavior [WAC 388-148-0465(4)]*
- *Be free of cruel, unusual, frightening, unsafe or humiliating discipline practices (lists nine specific examples) [WAC 388-148-0470(1)]*
- *Not be physically locked into a room in a way that prohibits him or her from exiting [WAC 388-148-0470(6)].*
- *Be protected from all forms of child abuse and neglect [WAC 388-148-0420*
- *Receive adequate services to meet his or her basic needs [Braam v. State of Washington, 150 Wn.2d 689, 700]*
- *Receive adequate food, clothing and shelter [WAC 388-148-0470(2)(b)]*
- *Receive adequate medical and dental care [WAC 388-148-0470(2)(e)]*
- *Be free of the administration of medication other than that prescribed by a physician or psychiatrist [WAC 388-148-0470(4) and (5)]*
- *Not be deprived of sleep [WAC 388-148-0470(2)(a)]*
- *Breathe freely [WAC 388-148-0470(2)(a)]*
- *Take care of his or her own hygiene and toilet needs [WAC 388-148-0470(2)(d)]*

⁵ Casey Trupin, Columbia Legal Services, "Foster Child Rights," memo, May 17, 2007.

APPENDIX F

Individual Youth Complaints to OFCO

During our visits, we accepted specific complaints from 15 youth regarding issues under the purview of Children's Administration. These youth were interviewed privately to gather information regarding their concerns. In each case, an ombudsman followed up with the youth to provide information on OFCO's investigation and the outcome.

Youth complaints related to one or more of the following issues:

COMPLAINT ISSUE	Number of Complaints
<p>Basic needs not met <i>OFCO contacted the agency in each case to ensure needs were met. One group home that generated a number of complaints about basic needs not being met was the subject of a DLR investigation. A "stop placement" directive was issued and has now been lifted following corrective action.</i></p>	4
<p>Lack of contact with family <i>Two complaints involved lack of contact with a parent; three involved lack of contact with a sibling. The Braam settlement agreement requires the agency to ensure contact between siblings placed in different placements, where appropriate. OFCO found that in some cases, there was a court order prohibiting contact or a treatment provider recommending against contact between the youth and a particular family member. OFCO requested that this be explained again to the youth. In other cases, logistics for arranging visits were difficult due to the youth being placed distant from family, and OFCO found that the agency was doing what it could to arrange regular visits.</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><i>In one situation, a youth who had been placed out-of-region was very anxious as her adult sibling in her home region was about to have her first baby, and the youth very much wanted to be present for the birth. The youth had requested approval for a visit, some time ago. As the due date got closer she had been calling her caseworker and supervisor who were out of the office, and group home staff were telling her their calls to the agency weren't being returned. OFCO made persistent efforts to track down a decision-maker at DCFS and the visit was promptly arranged.</i></p> </div>	5
<p>No contact with or lack of a guardian ad litem and/or attorney <i>Five youths were unaware of whether they had a GAL or attorney or reported not having contact with them in a long time. In one case, the relatively newly-assigned caseworker was not aware whether the youth had an attorney and agreed to find out. In the other four cases, the youth did have a GAL or attorney and OFCO either contacted those professionals directly, or asked the agency to assist the youth in contacting them.</i></p>	5
<p>Inadequate services <i>One youth was confused by the roles of the many professionals involved in her case. OFCO asked the youth's caseworker to review these professionals and their roles and contact information with the youth.</i></p> <p><i>Another youth who would be aging out of group care in a few months' time reported not receiving information about independent living options since return home was not an option. OFCO verified that the new caseworker had limited information at the time the youth requested it, but later obtained the information and shared it with the</i></p>	3

youth.

A third youth reported not receiving health and safety visits from the caseworker. The record revealed that visits were occurring as required, but by various courtesy supervision workers as the youth was placed out of region. OFCO followed up with the youth to explain why he wasn't seeing his caseworker regularly, and provided him with contact information for his current local courtesy supervision worker.

Reunification with parent/placement with relative

Two youths desperately wanted to return home and felt the reunification process was taking too long. In one case, the youth returned home six months after OFCO contacted the agency (see below). In the other case, the youth and family were not assessed as being ready for reunification by the youth's team, but reunification remained the goal.

One youth opposed the agency's imminent plan to place her with an out-of-state parent she did not know very well. OFCO talked with the youth's attorney and caseworker and the youth's team ultimately decided to delay placement until more phone contact had occurred and visits by the parent could be arranged.

One youth wanted to be placed with a relative. OFCO contacted the caseworker, who agreed to pursue this relative who was showing some interest in taking the youth. The relative ultimately decided against placement and another less restrictive placement is being sought for the youth.

One fifteen-year-old dependent youth we met appeared extremely depressed and unhappy, stating that his parent had complied with all court orders and wanted him home, and he did not understand why this was not happening. The youth had been in out-of-home care for over three years, in multiple placements: four group homes, one foster home, and once in detention. OFCO verified that the agency was pursuing reunification as the parent had made significant positive changes, but had moved out-of-state, and an ICPC and other requirements were being pursued. This was proving to be a lengthy process. Meanwhile, the youth's behavior and progress was deteriorating; he felt isolated and unfairly deprived of his now well-functioning parent. When the youth was detained a second time, the parent filed a motion to dismiss the dependency based on parental stability and the youth's deterioration in out-of-home care. OFCO consulted with the agency, who felt obligated to oppose the parent's motion in court but acknowledge that the system did not have much more to offer the youth at this point. The court dismissed the dependency and ordered that the youth be returned to the parent.

Safety in the group home

One youth reported concerns about assaultive behavior by residents and staff. While OFCO verified that these specific concerns were reported, investigated and unfounded, OFCO also noted a concerning pattern of licensing complaints and CPS referrals regarding this particular group home, resulting in many valid findings. OFCO requested a review of the pattern of referrals and findings by DLR. This review is ongoing and DLR, BRS and contracts administrators are working with the group home to improve the facility and program.

Another youth reported concerns about the severity of physical restraint techniques used by group home staff to restrain youth who were out of control. Although these specific allegations were investigated and not substantiated, OFCO discussed these concerns with DLR. The group home concerned is receiving a combination of coaching and corrective action planning to address these concerns.

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