

I

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
OUT-OF-STATE CERTIFICATION REVIEW
OF
GEORGE JUNIOR REPUBLIC**

BACKGROUND

George Junior Republic (GJR) was incorporated in 1909. "The basis of the foundation is to provide a wholesome, healthy living environment for wayward youth. The goals and objectives of the organization are directly related to identifying the needs of the troubled youth placed in our care and meeting those needs in the most effective and cost efficient manner. The organization began by providing residential services to youth from Pennsylvania and Ohio; this has currently been expanded to services for youth from fifteen other states, as well as some other countries."

Support Agencies

GJR is licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Public Welfare (DPW), Western Regional Office of Children Youth and Families. As a result of a recent Pennsylvania law change, GJR now currently holds 53 separate residential licenses. One license is granted for each of the residential houses, cottages, and/or units.

On March 20, 2001, the DPW facility representative was contacted. It is reported that GJR is currently operating within compliance under Pennsylvania licensing regulations. They have no current or pending legal actions.

The Child Protective Services (CPS) is part of the DPW. All investigations of sexual and physical abuse are conducted by the licensing program representative of that particular facility. The licensing program representative acts as both "licensing evaluator" and "CPS investigator."

The Pine Township Fire Department of Grove City, Pennsylvania provided fire clearances for GJR.

California Placing Agencies

GJR currently has one child in placement that has been placed by San Francisco County Juvenile Probation Department. This facility had a pre-certification visit by San Francisco County on November 18, 2000. The child was placed at GJR on January 14, 2001.

GEORGE JUNIOR REPUBLIC PROGRAM STATEMENT

The following summarizes the George Junior Republic's Program Statement.

Children Served

The program statement states that GJR will accept boys ages 8-18 with the following characteristics: abuse/neglect, delinquent offenses, developmental disabilities, and physical health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, allergies and HIV/AIDS. GJR will not accept youth who are blind, deaf/hearing impaired, or have a history of arson, and eating disorders.

Program Description

GJR is a private, non-profit, residential treatment facility for delinquent boys ages 8-18. The main campus is located in Grove City, Pennsylvania. The 400-acre campus is home to 450 youth from one-third of the United States. GJR is one of the largest residential facilities in the United States; however, there are small-group living arrangements allowed for individual attention.

Open Residential Living Units - are single-family homes on campus streets. Most youth live in one of the 48 campus homes with counselor/parents and seven other residents. The Residential Program utilizes Counselors/Parents (live-in married couples) to implement the "Teacher Parent Model."

Community-Based Group Homes - are another primary source of residential living. GJR currently operates eight residential group homes with a total capacity of 55 residents. These community homes emphasize education, appropriate social behavior, avoidance of negative peer groups in the community and general development of the skills they will need to become productive members of society.

Students are given psychological testing and a psychiatric evaluation upon entry. Education at GJR is both an on-grounds academic school and vocational school. Each school is fully accredited. The academic program is provided by the Grove City area School District and administered in the school buildings on campus. The campus is fully equipped with a recreational and athletic department offering a wide range of activities for the residents. Included is a \$2 million dollar athletic complex which houses a large gymnasium, locker rooms, racquetball and handball court.

OUT-OF-STATE CERTIFICATION REVIEW FINDINGS

The Out-of-State Certification Team (OSCT) conducted a certification review March 26-29, 2001. There was one California child in placement at the time of this review. With the approval of authorized representatives from Pennsylvania, Michigan and Virginia to interview youth outside California jurisdiction, a total of six (6) children were interviewed, followed by nine (9) interviews with staff. Staff interviews included the counselor parents, treatment team coordinator, crisis intervention specialist and coordinators, medical personnel (nurse), licensed therapist and other direct care staff. A sample of one (1) child's file, and ten (10) staff files were reviewed. A physical plant inspection of the facility was conducted along with an off-grounds inspection to one of the community based group homes. Members of the OSCT observed children in the daily living program, which included school, cottage lunch, and students' participation in the daily recreation and program activity.

Program Overview

George Junior Republic consists of one main campus and six community group homes for 53 separate residences. The facility is licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Public Welfare. All of the residences have a separate license. The facility has several types of cottages and houses that make up the main campus in Grove City, Pennsylvania. The main site consists of several special needs units, the shelter, diagnostic unit, crisis intervention unit, infirmary, drug and alcohol units, 90-day intensive treatment program and line cottages. This main campus also houses numerous recreational, vocational and educational programs. The community group homes are located in several surrounding communities.

The diagnostic program is a short-term, structured program that is utilized for the children who need a high level of treatment and supervision. This is a ten-bed unit and is available for youth aged ten to eighteen. The diagnostic process consists of a 75-day period of thorough testing and interviews, psychosocial assessment, and behavioral observations. There is a school that operates in the unit and consists of a certified teacher and a teacher's aide. The treatment for the youth in the diagnostic unit is coordinated by a Masters level social worker. An interdisciplinary staffing is held when the student completes the evaluation period on the diagnostic unit. The results of the evaluation are discussed and the treatment goals and objectives are formulated as well as the placement recommendations. These are forwarded to the placing agency and/or the court.

The main campus, located in Grove City, also has a special needs program which is designed to meet the needs of moderate to severely emotionally disturbed adolescent boys. The special needs program is described as a highly structured unit with a psychiatric-oriented program. The objective of the program is to provide treatment in order for the youth to improve their behavior to a level that will enable them to live in a less secure, more residential setting. The California

child at George Junior Republic resides in a Special Needs program. The youth are all placed on Level 1 of the motivational system. The facility program statement indicates that these boys participate in "intensive individual therapy two to three times per week." The California youth denies that he is receiving this amount of therapy. The therapist for the unit indicated that he "checks in several times a day" with this youth.

The Delinquent Shelter Program is also located on the grounds of the main campus. This is a 12-bed unit utilized by surrounding counties instead of more costly detention centers. George Junior Republic utilizes two beds for youth who are transitioning into the Special Needs programs, if a Special Needs bed is not available. The program is a highly structured, self-contained unit for high risk youth while they are awaiting dispositional hearings. The multidisciplinary treatment team approach and a behavioral/educational model of treatment is used in the daily routines.

There is a 90-Day Intensive Treatment Program at George Junior Republic. This program provides short-term, intensive, residential treatment designed to have a positive effect on first and second time offenders in an effort to divert them from further delinquent behavior. Weekly team meetings are held in order for the treatment team to review the progress of each youth in the 90-Day Intensive Treatment Program.

The Crisis Intervention Unit (CIU) is utilized when a child requires short term, highly structured program lasting from a few hours to several days. There are also rare occasions when a boy may be placed on this unit for a number of weeks due to the seriousness of his behavior or for a boy who is awaiting placement at another facility. It was reported that the youth are not allowed to talk during certain time periods on the Crisis Intervention Unit and this includes during dinnertime.

The corner stone of the George Junior Republic program is the Cottage Parent (CP). The two primary cottage parents for every line cottage and group home is typically a married couple that reside in an apartment within the assigned cottage. Other staff members fill in for the cottage parents when they have their days off. Each cottage or group home also have clinical and management staff. The cottage parents prepare the meals in the home. Meals are sometimes prepared in a campus central kitchen when the cottage parents have days off. There are no cottage parents assigned to the Special Needs programs and the Crisis Intervention Unit. They have treatment team coordinators and cooks assigned to the units.

There are also some educational differences and program differences in various parts of the George Junior Republic program. All of the living units utilize a point and level system but there are some differences on each unit on how the point/level system is administrated. This is based on the behavioral, psychiatric,

emotional and developmental issues of the youth residing in each unit. The youth residing in the cottages and group homes all attend the main school that is located on the campus. This school is part of the Grove City Public School District and the teachers, school counselors, principal and teachers aides are all employed by the school district. The school has a large vocational component. There are facilities for trades such as welding, building trades, computer technology, electronics, food services, automobile repair and auto body. The youth have the opportunity to be trained in a full service restaurant that is open to the public.

The youth in the Special Needs programs and the Crisis Intervention Unit are required to wear the colors of the units when they are found to be an AWOL risk or they are on the Subsystem level. These units have an assigned color. For example, the youth on a particular unit would wear purple sweats and another unit may wear royal blue sweats. Numerous pairs of sweats are maintained for the youth in a locked closet on the unit. The youth must wear socks or slippers (socks with a rubber sole) and the shoes are locked in a closet on these units. The administrative staff reported that this is done in order to prevent AWOLS. All the rooms are single occupant rooms and the bedrooms in the CIU do not have doors. The youth are not allowed to have personal belongings including clothing in their rooms. The items are kept in plastic bins and are locked in a closet. The Special Needs programs and the CIU all have time-out rooms but the cottages and group homes do not have time-out rooms in the homes. The youth in the special needs programs and CIU all attend school on their unit while the youth in the Line cottages and group homes attend the main campus school.

The discipline is reported to be natural consequences, early bedtime, loss of a home pass, no television or radio, having their desk removed from their room or being taken to the Crisis Intervention Unit. Many of these forms of discipline are connected to the point system. The boys are given negatives on the point card and hole punches at school for inappropriate behaviors. These hole punches are given by the school staff for inappropriate behaviors and these have an impact on the total number of points that are earned by the youth. They may also be placed on the subsystem for more serious behaviors or if receiving negatives has not been successful in getting them back on track. Some of the boys reported that a consequence is sometimes that the youth is removed from the George Junior Republic program by their social worker or probation officer. The youth are sometimes given a time out in which they are required to sit on a chair in the doorway of their room. This was reported to be for various amounts of time but is often for several hours. This time sometimes began one day, the child would continue on the time out until bedtime, go to bed in their room and then the time out on the chair would continue the following morning.

The level system has a total of five levels. The youth are expected to achieve at least a Level 3 before being considered for discharge. The youth are also expected to be receiving good grades, to have had two successful home passed

and have advanced to the group home setting. It was reported that some counties want their youth to achieve a Level Four or Level Five prior to being considered for discharge.

The main campus also includes many other buildings. The campus has a full service infirmary that is staffed by registered nurses and other support staff. This is where the doctors typically see the youth for examinations and routine appointments. There are also two medical isolation rooms in the wing of the infirmary that are used for youth that have sustained injuries that require observation, post operative youth and youth that have contracted a communicable disease.

There are numerous therapeutic and recreational activities offered at the facility. The main campus has six gymnasiums as well as several outdoor sports fields. There is an in-door and an outdoor swimming pool, an on-grounds movie theater, billiards room, bowling alley, snack shop, horse barn and an indoor building that contains the Adventure Based Counseling (ropes course). An athletic complex also contains racquetball and handball courts. There is a campus store where the youth can purchase items such as hygiene products, candy, soft drinks, postage stamps and writing paper. They purchase the items with their allowances that they receive in the form of a store card.

Visits from family members are encouraged at the facility as well as letter writing to and from family members. On-campus accommodations may be available for family members in some circumstances and the facility assists with transportation when needed. The youth are allowed to have home passes with their families when they have achieved a particular level of privileges and approval is attained from the authorized representative. The youth are allowed to make two telephone calls to approved family members per month. All of the telephone calls placed to the youth's probation officer or county social worker must be approved by the youth's therapist.

The following identifies issues that do not meet California licensing standards:

Issues Involving Personal Rights and Emergency Intervention

California licensing standards require that group homes which utilize or it is reasonably foreseeable that they will utilize, emergency interventions to prevent a child who exhibits assaultive behavior from injuring or endangering himself, herself or others, shall have an Emergency Intervention Plan (EIP). The plan is to be included in the group home program statement.

1. The EIP has not yet been received by the OSCU. GJR is currently in the process of reviewing the plan.

Issues Involving Personal Rights

California licensing standards require that each child shall have personal rights which include, but are not limited to the following: to wear his or her own clothes; to have access to telephones in order to make and receive confidential calls, provided that such calls are not prohibited by the child's needs and service plan, are not prohibited as a form of discipline; do not infringe upon the rights of other children; and are not prohibited by the court order or by the child's authorized representative.

1. All youth who reside in the "Special Needs" and "Crisis Intervention Unit" (CIU), are subject to having their personal shoes removed. All shoes are kept under lock and key inside the unit dayroom closet. Youth are given shoes only for special appointments, (i.e., medication runs to and from the infirmary and/or other administrative concerns.)

Youth who reside on these units are not permitted to wear their personal clothing until they have reached a certain level in the program. Youth are provided "color coded" gym clothing and/or sweat suit uniforms. Personal clothing is kept under lock and key in the dayroom closets.

2. Youth who AWOL or attempt to AWOL have their personal shoes removed by the unit staff. Youth are then given a pair of socks or "sock-slippers" and are given back their shoes only when they have a need to leave the unit for special appointments, (i.e., medical, administrative etc.) Withholding clothing and or shoes to prevent runaways is viewed by California and Federal authorities as a detention practice to which foster children shall not be subjected.
3. In the event of an AWOL, staff who are available on campus will conduct a search for the missing youth. If the youth is seen leaving the campus, he is physically escorted back to the facility. According to administrative staff, this practice is expected per Department of Public Welfare (DPW) as well as from other out of state providers. However, after an administrative review of the DPW code of regulations on this issue, no regulation could be found at the time to support this claim. GJR will be conducting further research on this issue.
4. According to both youth and staff, most youth receive a total of two out-going calls per month. This may include any calls to an authorized representative. The number of calls may vary depending on level status. However, youth who are housed on certain units, or remain on average or below level phase do not have access to the telephone to call their probation officers or social workers once the two calls have expired for that month. (GJR is willing to allow only California youth this personal right to call their authorized representative(s))

upon request, permitting it is within reason and within appropriate time guidelines).

Issues Involving Discipline Policies and Procedures

California licensing standards require the licensee to develop, maintain and implement written facility discipline policies and procedures. Staff, children, and authorized representatives shall receive copies of such policies and procedures.

5. A copy of the discipline policy and procedures signed by the youth and authorized representative was not included in the child's file. GJR states that their current "motivational procedure" serves as their discipline policy, which is included in the child's handbook.

Issues Involving Removal and/or Discharge Procedures

California licensing standards require the licensee to develop, maintain and implement written policies and procedures governing a child's removal and/or discharge from the facility.

6. A copy of the discharge policy and procedures signed by the youth and authorized representative was not included in the child's file.

Issues Involving Needs and Service Plan

California licensing standards require that a copy of the child's original needs and service plan is retained in the file; verification, signed by the child and his/her authorized representative(s), that they were offered the opportunity to participate in the plan development; and verification that the authorized representative(s) has approved the plan.

7. A Needs and service plan was in the child's file but did not contain the youth's signature.

Issue Involving Complaint Procedures

California licensing standards require that the licensee of a group home shall develop, maintain and implement written complaint procedures by which children or their authorized representatives are permitted to file complaints, without fear of retaliation, with the facility administrator regarding facility staff or operations.

8. Interviews of both youth and staff concluded that the current grievance/complaint procedure was unclear and inconsistent. Some youth and staff indicated that the complaint process was to utilize the "family conference card" which is a tool used to bring up issues in a group setting in

an attempt for resolution. Others indicated that there was no formal procedure, stating "it is all on a verbal basis."

Issues Involving Buildings and Grounds

California licensing standards require that no more than two children shall sleep in a bedroom.

9. The community-based group home, "Whirshart home" has one bedroom with four beds to accommodate four youth. Four or more to a single bedroom is permissible per DPW Law, granted the room size. (Four to room waiver to be requested).

OTHER ISSUES/CONCERNS

The following issue is not a violation of California licensing standards; however, it is of concern to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and needs to be addressed.

GJR submitted an application for the entire program, however, is now requesting certification of only portions of the program. Under Pennsylvania's new law, each house, cottage, and/or living unit has been licensed individually. There are currently 53 individual residential program licenses at GJR.

CERTIFICATION DECISION

George Junior Republic (GJR) will be offered an opportunity to provide a Plan of Correction. The certification decision will be made following review of the submitted plan of correction.