

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission San Mateo County, California

Group Home Inspection

Facility Name: Canyon Oaks Youth Center **Facility Capacity:** 12

Address: 400 Edmonds Rd, Redwood City, 94062 **Phone Number:** 650-839-1810

Date of Last Inspection: August 11, 2020

Dates of Inspection: July 22 & August 30, 2021

Annual Population: Average 9-10

Current Population: 8 on July 22 and 6 on August 30. On 7/22, two were in the hospital on 5150s.

Contact Person: Victoria Valencia, Supervising Mental Health Clinician

Facility Commission Inspection Team: Monroe Labouisse, Susan Swope

School Commission Inspection Team: Melissa Wilson, Karin Huber-Levy, Victor Lecha III

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge: Hon. Susan Irene Etezadi

Facility Overview

Canyon Oaks, which opened August 18, 2003, is now a co-ed STRTP facility offering comprehensive services to youth ages 12 through 18 years with serious emotional and behavioral challenges. Youth in the Canyon Oaks program can also be AB12 youth (extended foster care). Each resident receives individual services to meet their needs and circumstances. Youth are referred to Canyon Oaks Youth Center by Youth and Family Services of San Mateo County, by school districts throughout San Mateo County, and by Juvenile Probation (although no current youth are on probation). Before placement residents are certified by the County's Interagency Placement Review Committee as a youth who requires residential treatment services at an STRTP that provides intensive mental health services. The objective of the program is to help youth reduce symptoms, gain stability and transition into the least restrictive setting in which they can succeed. The typical resident spends one year at Canyon Oaks.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Commendations

We visited Canyon Oaks on July 22 to interview the Director, Victoria Valencia, and we returned via Zoom on August 30 for follow-up questions and to interview youth. Our overall impression of the facility is that it is professionally run by a knowledgeable and dedicated staff large enough to present a very favorable staff to resident ratio which is good for youth, and that despite the fact that teens in an

STRTP setting will often have some complaints, they are generally well-cared for and appear to appreciate the team at Canyon Oaks. The facility is commendable and doing a very good job of serving youth.

Response to COVID-19

What were the biggest challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic?

It was difficult for youth to be restricted to the facility--no day passes or overnight passes to youth, no outings, no visitors during lockdown. School was also a challenge. The teachers were remote and youth used Chromebooks for online classes.

How were they overcome?

The staff developed new onsite programming to keep youth engaged and happy. They had a virtual graduation. They also managed the pandemic by conducting onsite testing for both youth and staff. They got vaccines in February 2021 and as of August 30 all six of the current residents were vaccinated by their choice.

What protocols and practices will be kept in place when the pandemic ends?

The facility staff are not planning to maintain pandemic practices like Zoom visits, because they much prefer in-person visits for the wellbeing of the residents. They have, for example, already restarted in-person family therapy sessions. They would rather not do anything remotely.

Concerns & Recommendations

Canyon Oaks is a well-operated and well-regulated facility for youth. This inspection team could not find any concerns or reasons to recommend changes. Between the Commission's inspection, licensing inspection, and the opportunity for youth and their families to file grievances, there is sufficient opportunity for concerns to arise and we are not aware of any. Canyon Oaks is an asset for our County.

After review of this inspection report, please respond to the Inspection Team Leader with planned actions to address the recommendations above within 45 days.

REPORTS

Fire Inspection Report: Yes No Date: 10/28/2020
Comments: Compliant and up to date _____

Resident's Handbook: Yes No Date: updated in the last year

Comments: Also available in Spanish _____

Licensing Inspection: Yes No Date: 7/20/2021

Comments: Passed inspection just two days before our visit

Rating Level: STRTP

AREAS REVIEWED

Quality of Life

- Physical Buildings
- Meals/Nutrition
- Mental Health
- Physical/Dental Health
- Religious Services
- Volunteer Involvement
- Visiting

Programs

- Education
- Vocational/Employability
- Community Service
- Individual/Group Counseling
- Substance Abuse
- Other: _____

Persons Interviewed

- Youth
- Director
- Youth Supervisor/Staff
- Food Services Staff
- Other: _____

YOUTH GENERAL INFORMATION

Target population of youth:

Youth with serious emotional and behavioral challenges, as determined by the County's IPRC (Interagency Placement Review Committee). Canyon Oaks takes youth whose challenges are appropriate for the type of therapy they provide, which is dialectical behavior therapy. For example, they do not take on youth with intellectual disabilities. Youth need to have at least a 5th grade level reading ability.

Age range of youth: 12-19

Ethnicity of youth: "Mostly Latinx", per the Director

Youths' home counties & number of youth per county:

San Mateo County only, by design in order for youths' families to be nearby.

STAFFING

Describe staff specialties:

Clinical staff includes two full-time therapists, an occupational therapist, and an art therapist. That does not include the Director and Supervisor, both of whom are also therapists. The facility also has an opening for a co-occurring AOD therapist. Also, a psychiatrist visits twice a week and is otherwise available as needed.

Describe staff including numbers, background, ethnicity, language:

In addition to therapists, Canyon Oaks employs 17 full-time Residential Counselors (“RCs”), whose job it is to provide care and coaching for residents and to provide for their safety. Residential Counselors are the primary caregivers for residents and are on-site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Canyon Oaks also has on-staff 15 ‘relief’ RCs who are called on when full-time RCs need to take time off. Canyon Oaks always has at least one bilingual therapist on staff, and at least 3 of the RCs are bilingual. The Director estimates that 85-90% of the RCs are people of color and the majority are Black.

Educational requirements for staff:

All clinicians have at least a Master’s degree. RCs are required to have at least a Bachelor’s degree, and several have Master’s degrees as well.

Training provided for staff:

All staff receive a minimum of 40 hours of training every year, including the year they’re hired, as required for STRTPs. At onboarding, RCs and clinicians receive direct training from more senior staff, e.g., 8 hours of shadowing, in addition to using the Relias online training system (a state-approved system for STRTPs) for start-up training. Then, Ongoing, inc. trauma-informed, cultural, suicide prevention + county-required.

There is also a separate 40 hours (2 ½ days) training (similar structure) for clinicians. Proact Advantage training for hands-on situations, includes trauma-informed care, cultural competence, and psychotropic medications. Clinicians also have required training for licensure. This requires ongoing training, 36 hours every two years to maintain their licensure.

Staff to Youth Ratio

Awake: Three RCs are staffed, seven days a week, during a morning shift and six during an afternoon shift. In addition, during weekday work hours, the four staff clinicians/therapists are on site, plus the Director and Supervisor. During the school year, a teacher is on site as well. So, during waking hours, during the week, staff often outnumber clients/youth.

Currently: We visited during a summer weekday when the Director and three staff clinicians were on site, but no teacher because school was not in session.

Sleeping: Three RCs are onsite for the overnight shift, seven days a week.

How is staff backup handled during grave-yard shift?

The ‘relief’ RCs are available to backup staff during the grave-yard shift. Several relief RCs prefer working grave-yard shifts. Normally, three RCs are staffed overnight, and even if the facility was at capacity with 12 youth and only two RCs were able to work, the facility would still be in compliance. Clinicians are onsite Monday through Friday.

In addition to RCs, either the Director or Supervisor, who are also clinicians, are always on call 24/7 during grave-yard shifts and on weekends; in the event that law enforcement must be called on site, e.g., for a 5150 call when a youth is a danger to themselves or others and law enforcement are required to visit in order to take a youth to the hospital. Only the Director or Supervisor are authorized to call law enforcement.

Describe staff turnover, including frequency and reason:

There is little to no turnover amongst RCs at Canyon Oaks. Most have a tenure of around 15 years. The Director and Supervisor have also both been at Canyon Oaks for many years. Staff clinicians turn over more frequently, which the Director described as typical for serving youth like the residents of Canyon Oaks. Staff clinicians tend to be clinicians early in their career who are still working on their licensing, and after a couple or few years at Canyon Oaks, once they are licensed, most move on to other types of clinical work.

Describe general staff and youth interactions:

We had little opportunity to observe interactions between staff and youth and for the purpose of the facility's annual inspection will have to leave that part of the inspection to the team visiting the school. During our first visits, youth were in group therapy and there were also relatively few youth to observe in the first place. During our Zoom second visit, we did talk to one youth, hear her feedback about the staff, and see her interaction with the staff; that one interaction did support the other evidence that youth staff interactions are generally positive and healthy.

CONDITIONS OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Give a general description of the property:

The building is a one-story structure on the edge of a wooded area on three sides and a fire station and mental health hospital on the road leading up to it. There is a walled court inside the entrance. The building looks freshly painted. There is a large patch of dead vegetation in the court (that once was grass and needs to be made usable by reintroducing grass or artificial lawn) along with a half basketball court and several vegetable/flower beds that are tended by the residents. They are eating the veggies they grow.

Give a general description of the main facility including housekeeping and sanitation: _____

The facility is a one-story building. There is a wing that has a lobby, two classrooms and a therapy room. Off that is a dining room and kitchen. There is a hall with bedrooms on either side that leads to a living room area that has armchairs and sofas, a large-screen TV and a study area. On the other side of the living room is another hall with bedrooms on either side. At the end of the hall is an office for the therapists, a laundry room, a safety room, and a therapy room. They have a janitor who comes in every day Monday through Friday. The facility looked clean and well organized.

Lawns: Acceptable Unacceptable: Director has asked for artificial turf to be installed, which would make the lawn area available for outside activity. They are still waiting for the astroturf.

Playing Fields: Acceptable Unacceptable. NA

Blacktop: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Paint: Acceptable Unacceptable: Looks newly painted. _____

Roof: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Drains and Gutters: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

General Appearance: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Condition of Interior of Building

They are waiting to receive a generator to provide power during planned outages and for new chairs. There is nothing broken that needs to be fixed.

Walls: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Paint: Acceptable Unacceptable: Painter comes through periodically to touch up walls where needed. The Director described the walls as "like the Golden Gate Bridge" ;-), i.e., continually maintained.

Floors: Acceptable Unacceptable: The carpets are scheduled to be cleaned in August. They are steam cleaned annually.

Ceilings: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Drains: Acceptable Unacceptable: Did not observe closely. No issues noticed. _____

Plumbing Fixtures: Acceptable Unacceptable: Same as previous _____

Air Vents/Heating/Windows: Acceptable Unacceptable: Same as previous _____

Smoke Alarms: Acceptable Unacceptable: Same as previous _____

Storage of Cleaning Fluids/Chemicals: Acceptable Unacceptable: Stored in a locked closet. _____

Recreation/Sports Equipment: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Hallways Clear/Doors Propped Open: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Sleeping Rooms: Acceptable Unacceptable: Either single or double occupancy

Beds: Acceptable Unacceptable: twin beds

Art, Books, Personal Items Allowed in Rooms: Acceptable Unacceptable: Youth can decorate their rooms as they wish.

Graffiti Present: Acceptable Unacceptable: None evident

Ample Blankets: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Study Area: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Adequate Lighting: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Temperature: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF YOUTH

Appearance: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Showers (frequency, privacy, supervised): Acceptable Unacceptable:

Youth may shower as often as they like in am, pm, or on request. There are 2 showers and 1 bathtub available.

Condition of clothing (clean, fit, etc.): Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Clothing appropriate to current weather: Acceptable Unacceptable: _____

Comments: Previous few answers are based on speaking with one resident, a 12-year-old girl, who wore appropriate teen clothing and looked well groomed. She was the only resident of the current six, who was willing to talk with us.

YOUTH ORIENTATION

What is the intake process for the facility? The Interagency Placement Review Committee notifies the Director that they have a youth they would like admitted. The youth's social worker gives her information about the youth. She interviews the child wherever they are at the time (hospital, YSC), always outside of Canyon Oaks for a first visit, to get a sense of the child. The child is then brought to Canyon Oaks by the parent, guardian, social worker, or probation officer.

Are youth oriented to the house rules and procedures? Yes No **Explain:** _____

They give the youth an orientation, including going through the house rules and the grievance process. They are introduced to the staff and the other residents and given a handbook. Each child gets two primary staff assigned to them. They have an orientation packet to fill out. When that is completed the youth can participate in off-site programming.

Are house rules and grievance procedures posted? Yes No **Explain:** When they are admitted these are explained. They are given a handbook with house rules and grievance procedures. They are also posted in the hall.

What is in place to ensure that these rules and procedures are understood by youth? Staff go through the handbook with the youth and quiz them on it to be sure they understand. Also, youth are held accountable to rules and procedures through an incentive and phasing system. As residents learn and demonstrate compliance with rules and procedures, they advance through phased levels: 1) Orienting, 2) Learning, 3) Practicing, and 4) Succeeding. With each new phase, they acquire new privileges. Once they attain a phase, they don't lose it, though if they stop behaving in accordance with their level, they may temporarily lose certain privileges.

Are clothing and possessions inventoried on arrival and departure? How are youth's clothing and possessions protected or stored? Youth wear their own clothes. Staff inventories everything at orientation, and takes away anything that could be used for self harm or is inappropriate, e.g., overly revealing. They also do not allow anything gang-related, including gang colors, if the youth has gang orders from the court. Youth cannot keep a mobile phone unless they need it for a job. Clothing and possession inventories are updated upon return from each day or overnight pass. If appropriate for their development level, youth may have a lockbox in their room to safely store their possessions.

Pre-Plan for Emergencies: Yes No **Date of Last Drill:** unknown

Interviewed Youth: Yes No **Details:** During our on-site visit, all youth were in a group therapy session. We returned via Zoom on 8/30 to interview youth and follow-up on general questions.

On August 30th, only one of the current six youth in residence, a 12-year-old girl from Redwood City, was willing to talk with us. Overall she was quite positive. She said that living at Canyon Oaks was fun, but sometimes boring. Mostly, she said, the staff are nice. One is mean, according to her. The therapists are nice. She likes going to school on site. She enjoys outings, talking with staff, gardening and shooting hoops.

Asked what she would change, she would like to have her phone, change bedtime from 9 pm during the week and 10 pm on weekends to midnight. She wishes there were more youth in residence. She would like to be able to go on home passes sooner. She misses her family.

MEALS/NUTRITION

Kitchen: Acceptable Unacceptable: They recently installed a new refrigerator. The Hospital nutritionist oversees the kitchen and menus.

Do the youth share in preparation of meals? Yes No:

Sometimes, youth cook with Andre, especially if they are preparing to transition. They have provided training for a food handling certificate that qualifies the youth to work in a commercial kitchen.

Are meals served family style? Yes No: _____

Youth come to the window between the kitchen and the dining room to pick up their plated meal. They have a choice of the scheduled menu or an alternate.

Are youth permitted to converse during meals? Yes No: _____

Are staff present and supervising during meals? Yes No: _____

Are weekly menus posted? Yes No: _____

They are posted in the dining room next to the kitchen door. Menus are developed by a nutritionist and sent to them.

Are servings ample, nutritious, appetizing? Yes No: _____

Did not observe a meal. The facility's menu is overseen for nutrition by the San Mateo Medical Center.

Weaker youth protected from having food taken from them? Yes No: _____

Not a problem. The Director cannot imagine someone stealing someone else's food.

Are snacks and beverages available? Yes No: _____

AT 7:30 am, 10:10 am, 12:10 pm, 2:30 pm, 5 pm, and 8 pm. Youth can purchase snacks with points they've earned. They just ask the staff. Snacks they can choose are in a closet in the dining room. Fruit is available all day long.

How does the facility meet special nutritional needs?

When a special need is identified, e.g., diabetic, vegan, appropriate meals are prepared as needed.

Length of time allowed to eat? Up to an hour. They can be at dinner as long as they want.

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

Breakfast: 9-10:30 am summer
pm summer **Dinner:** 5 pm all year round

Lunch: 12:10 - 2:30

_____ 7:30-8:45 school year
_____ 12:20 PM school year
_____ unless they are off-site

Comments: _____

MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Access to Medical and Dental Services: Acceptable Unacceptable:

_____ Each youth has a physical within 30 days of admission. They can choose to go to their own doctors if they have one. Otherwise they are taken to the teen medical clinic in San Mateo.

Access to Mental Health Services: Acceptable Unacceptable:

_____ The most common mental conditions of the residents are depression, anxiety, PTSD, trauma. Some have bipolar, other psychotic disorders. Clinicians check in with them all the time. They have meals with them. Do case management. They check in with the school teachers to see how they are doing.

Individual Counseling: Acceptable Unacceptable:

_____ They have individual counseling once a week. Might have more if needed. They use the first 30 days to stabilize the youth and develop goals. They gather history before beginning family counseling. They use Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. Aims include safety, communication, handling triggers, distress tolerance, healthy emotional relationships, self-regulation, mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness.

Group Counseling: Acceptable Unacceptable: They have two groups by age: one for 12- to 14-year olds, the other for 15- to 18-year olds. Groups meet twice a week for 90 minutes. They have art therapy twice a week for 45 minutes and occupational therapy three times a week for 45 minutes. As appropriate for each youth, they may also have weekly family therapy.

Substance Abuse Counseling: Acceptable Unacceptable: This is integrated with their individual counseling therapy. They have an AOD therapist part time, and kids have access to a HealthRight 360 course online. They have had AA groups onsite sometimes, if youth in residence needs it, or youth can also go to an outside group.

PROGRAMS

Most programming was stopped because of Covid. They are looking at bringing activities back, like drumming, yoga (was twice a week), hiking, and skating. They also go to museums, parks, and movies.

Recreation (type, amount, etc.): Acceptable Unacceptable: Acceptable under current circumstances. Currently, they go for walks every day. They visit parks, play softball, and garden. Girls have make-up sessions. They try to do more outside during the summer. If a youth has interests, they try to keep that going.

Exercise (daily schedule, amount, etc.): Acceptable Unacceptable: Nothing is required. They have PE at school. Other than that, any exercise is voluntary.

Access to Religious Services: Acceptable Unacceptable: They take youth to services on request. They will take them or they may go with their parents. Online services are also an option.

Victim Awareness Classes: Yes No: _____

Gang Awareness Classes: Yes No: _____

Sexual Harassment Classes: Yes No: They address it if it comes up. It is covered in the house rules.

Parenting Classes: Yes No: Unless a youth is pregnant or has a child. Then, they would arrange them.

Vocational Classes: Yes No: Their occupational therapist will tailor classes for youth as needed.

Work Program: Yes No: Their occupational therapist arranges as needed. They participate in Workability through the school, and the Independent Living Program through the County.

Internet Access and Use of Technology:

See comments elsewhere in this report on use of laptops for occupational therapy, etc.

YOUTH DISCIPLINE

Describe the discipline process of youth: Refer to Phases on page 5. They cannot touch youth to restrain them. They may send them to their room for 24 hours.

Number of Law Enforcement Contacts: Law enforcement visit the facility regularly, mainly because the staff are required to call in 5150s (potential self-harm). They have two residents in the hospital right now.

Describe interaction with police (Incident Reports):

Incident reports are available for inspection if needed.

GRIEVANCES

Grievance Process: Acceptable Unacceptable: There are lots of layers. It is described in the handbook. They fill out a form that goes to Victoria or Carrie. They need to resolve it within 24 hours. If the youth is not satisfied, they can report their grievance to the Office of Consumer Affairs and OCA will investigate. Youth can also call Community Care Licensing at any time. In addition to grievances filed, OCA also sends out a satisfaction survey to youth and their families twice a year.

Number of grievances this year: They've had about 6 from youth. None of these were escalated to licensing. They did have one sent to licensing by a youth's family; the resolution of that grievance was that the licensing organization followed up, investigated, and then dismissed all issues raised in the grievance.

Trends and/or Comments: Grievances are varied: staff unfair, they aren't treated the same, not happy with the consequence staff imposed. Victoria noted that they are treated differently based on their individual diagnoses.

COMMUNICATION

Access US Mail? Yes No:

Postage Free? Yes No

Incoming/Outgoing Mail (screened? Confidential?): Yes No: Someone who is authorized for contact with the youth will open mail to check for contraband. They do not read the message.

Access to Telephone? Yes No: They can only call people on their approved contact list.

Visiting Schedule: Flexible, based on the needs of the youth and their families. Usually week to week and parents arrange visits with therapists. All visitors are screened with Covid questions and have their temperatures taken, just as they did with us.

Do all youth have access to visitations? Yes No: Unless there is a court order prohibiting them.

Under what circumstances would visitation be restricted? The court may restrict visits. The youth can say if they don't want to see a person, including a parent.

Are visitation logs kept? Yes No: _____

Adequate Space: Acceptable Unacceptable: Can go outside, use a therapy room, or a classroom.

*San Mateo County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission
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Staff Supervision: Acceptable Unacceptable: Canyon Oaks staff do not supervise. The youth's social worker may.

Privacy Provided: Yes No: _____

Games or Activities Provided: Yes No: They can choose any games they want, watch TV, play video games.

Signature of Commissioner(s) preparing this report:

Monroe Labouisse _____

Date _____

/s/: Susan Swope _____

Date 16 September 2021