

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

**Group Home Inspection**

**Facility Name:** Canyon Oaks Youth Center                      **Facility Capacity:** 12 (11 during pandemic)

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

**Dates of Inspection:** September 7 & 20, 2022              **Date of Last Inspection:** August 30, 2021

**Annual Population:** Average 9-10

**Current Population:** 7 youth in residence (5 girls/2 boys); 1 youth AWOL as of 9/2

**Contact Person:** Victoria Valencia, Head of Service, Clinical Services Manager

**Facility Commission Inspection Team:** Karin Huber-Levy, Melissa Wilson

**School Commission Inspection Team:** Sathvik Nori, Johanna Rasmussen, Roczana Enriquez

**Presiding Juvenile Court Judge:** Hon. Susan Irene Etezadi

**Facility Overview**

Canyon Oaks Youth Center (COYC) opened in August 2003 as a Level 14 group home. To comply with the policy changes of AB403 (Continuum of Care Reform, 2015), COYC converted to a Short Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP) facility, receiving their permanent STRTP license on June 1, 2019. COYC is a co-ed facility with 12 beds, located at the Cordilleras site in Redwood City, and operated by the Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) Division of San Mateo County Health. The program serves seriously mentally ill and emotionally disturbed boys and girls, ages 12-18. Serving as an alternative to psychiatric hospitalization for youth in crisis, the program's "crisis beds" are used to stabilize out-of-control, dangerous behaviors so that youth can be returned to the community as quickly as possible. The program also serves the most challenging youth that require out-of-home treatment for a longer period of time. Intensive individualized services are provided to these youth, engaging families as working partners in the treatment process. Youth in COYC can also be AB12 youth (extended foster care). The program is designed to work closely with all levels of service providers within BHRS and the referring agencies of Children and Family Services, Juvenile Probation, and local Special Education Departments, to provide effective and well-integrated services.

Before placement, residents are certified by the County's Interagency Placement Review Committee as youth who require 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.

COYC is guided by a program philosophy that provides placement for youth who face serious emotional and behavioral challenges: they strive to ensure that youth are not discharged as a result of their prior or current challenging behaviors. This is referred to as a 'no eject, no reject' philosophy. If the treatment team is unable to meet a youth's needs safely or adequately, a treatment plan is made for the youth to be transferred to a facility that can better meet their needs. A plan is made for a youth to return to COYC once they have been stabilized. The ultimate goal is always to return the youth, in the least amount of time possible, to the least restrictive setting in which they can succeed.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Commendations**

We visited Canyon Oaks Youth Center on September 7, 2022 to interview Victoria Valencia, Head of Service, and again on September 20, 2022 to interview Karrie Stafford, Supervisor for Direct Care. During our first visit we toured the facility, reviewed key documents, ate lunch with residents, and interviewed three youth and a staff member. We returned to the Center on September 20 for follow-up questions and specifically to review the binder/file of current grievances, which was not available for our review during our initial visit.

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, 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 and the services provided to them. The facility is commendable and does a very good job of serving the youth entrusted to their care.

### **Concerns & Recommendations**

As stated above, the facility is commendable for the treatment, services and opportunities provided for residents. The physical facility is well maintained and provides a positive, supportive environment for residents. We do wish to note the following concerns:

#### **1. BHRS Grievance/Problem Resolution Process**

**Concern:** Of the three youth interviewed during our inspection, one expressed satisfaction with the grievance process, however two youth expressed reluctance to file grievances citing concerns about staff retaliation. These two youth shared with us serious, credible concerns for their own safety; the third youth referred to this same safety threat as the one thing they wished could change about COYC. We urged the two youth to file grievances to document their concerns, but only one agreed to file.

The negative consequences they both cited included:

- Public, whole-group conversations (staff and youth) in which youths' grievances are discussed, with negative staff comments by Residential Counselors (RCs).
- Being denied participation in an activity, with reason given by the RC that 'now I am not comfortable taking you out' unless a second RC accompanies them. Having a second RC along

on an outing may be a reasonable precaution, but it was perceived as punitive when introduced after a grievance was filed.

- Staff supervisors encourage residents to focus on understanding the perspective of the RCs, but do not validate concerns expressed by residents.

We recognize that staff response is context dependent, and that the outcomes described above may be reasonable in a specific context. However, we are concerned that: (1) even the perception that filing a grievance carries with it a risk of retaliation will prevent residents from accessing the grievance process and thus issues will not be documented and addressed; and (2) there may be actual retaliation in the form described above.

We note that it is the practice of clinical staff to file grievances on a youth's behalf when they become aware of relevant issues and youth do not themselves file a grievance. This practice provides a method for grievance documentation, but does not resolve the issue of reluctance to use the grievance process for fear of retaliation.

**Recommendation:** The issue of residents' lack of trust in the grievance process due to their perception of retaliatory consequences, or the possibility of retaliatory actions by RCs, should be addressed in order to safeguard the integrity of the grievance process. We defer to the experience and expertise of the clinicians at COYC to consider and take the appropriate steps to address the issues raised in our concern.

## **2. Procurement**

**Concern:** The length of time - often multiple years - and effort required by staff to get needed repairs to the facility and replacement of equipment is problematic. There are a number of repairs and replacements to be addressed, including: resurfacing the basketball court, installing a new generator, upgrading the laundry machines, and replacing out of date/broken technology, including a broken laptop meant for youth use, an outdated cell phone meant for youth use, and a staff computer.

We spoke with BHRS Deputy Director of Administration, Janet Gard, who provided the following information:

(1) Identifying County-approved contractors who pass background checks is a problem and the main source of delays for repairs. She suggested that BHRS assign a dedicated repair person who is a County-approved contractor to address ongoing maintenance needs at COYC.

(2) While funding has been an obstacle in the past, there are currently sufficient funds to address needs. Because budgetary timelines can be an obstacle, COYC staff are encouraged to contact Ms Gard directly as needs occur. For example, the current technology needs of COYC could be resolved on an expedited basis through available discretionary funds.

**Recommendation:** COYC staff should direct specific requests to BHRS Deputy Director of Administration regarding needed technology replacements and upgrades. BHRS should assign a dedicated County-approved contractor to carry out ongoing maintenance and repairs at COYC.

## **3. Food**

**Concern:** During Resident Council meetings, residents were invited to make and had made menu suggestions, which have largely not been incorporated in menu offerings. Menus and food (both raw ingredients and prepared items) are provided by San Mateo Medical Center. A new MOU has recently been entered into with San Mateo Medical Center for a dedicated dietician to be on site at COYC every other week. It is our understanding that this dietician will be able to apply menu input from residents to inform the menu as much as possible within the applicable stringent regulatory standards.

**Recommendation:** COYC to follow up with dietician and residents to ensure appropriate and options are included in weekly menu choices.

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

- **Canyon Oaks Youth Center, please address the grievance process and food/menu recommendation.**
- **BHRS, please address the remaining procurement issues.**

**Other Notes:**

**Access to Youth**

During a facility inspection, JJDPC Commissioners typically interview any youth residents who agree and wish to be interviewed. This is a critical part of the inspection process as it allows Commissioners to understand and assess the youths' lived experience in the facility/residential program and the services provided to them, and identify any concerns or needs that they have. From our perspective, the ability to interview any youth willing to speak with us is an important part of the inspection process.

As of the date of this report, we have been advised that, going forward, JJDPC Commissioners will be permitted to interview only wards of the court/court-dependent youth at COYC.

Interviews of youth who are willing to speak with us, whether court-involved or non-court-involved, provide important insights relevant to evaluating the overall facility and its appropriateness for court-involved youth. For instance, the youth we interviewed at COYC this year were not court-involved youth, however, they shared credible concerns for their personal safety, and their reluctance to use the formal grievance process to report those concerns.

Given this limitation on youth interviews, Commissioners will need to determine when court-involved youth are at COYC and conduct periodic facility visits throughout the year in order to ensure that an adequate number of wards of the court/court-dependent youth are interviewed.

**Response to COVID-19 - Update:**

**What were the biggest challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic?** COVID-related restrictions on visitors and day and overnight passes made daily life difficult for residents - these restrictions have now all been lifted. Also remote school was a challenge, and school has now returned to its pre-pandemic forma and is entirely in person. Online education is occasionally used to enhance in-person offerings.

**What protocols and practices will be kept in place when the pandemic ends?** The facility staff still offers Zoom visits for convenience, however most youth and their families prefer in-person visits, as do staff, for the wellbeing of the residents. All therapy sessions are in person. Staff are required to be masked; youth are not required to wear masks unless they have tested positive for COVID. On site COVID testing (both PCR and rapid) is available. Vaccinations are not mandatory, however there are ensuing restrictions on travel to and from the Center if a youth is not vaccinated. As of the date of our inspection, all youth in residence were fully vaccinated.

**REPORTS**

**Fire Inspection Report:**             Yes  No            Date: 9/6/2022  
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: 12/15/2021  
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:** The Mental Health Services at COYC serve emotionally disturbed youth aged 12-18 (up to 19 if Non-Dependent Minor) who are in residence at the CYOC, Short Term Residential Treatment Program. Youth are referred to COYC by Juvenile Probation, Children & Family Services of San Mateo County and by school districts throughout San Mateo County per the IEP Process. Placement is paid for by the school district. Each youth served will have been certified by the County’s IPRC

(Interagency Placement Review Committee) as requiring residential treatment services at an STRTP facility providing intensive mental health services. 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.

Almost all of the youth currently in residence were referred by school districts and their exit will be determined by an IEP team meeting or by a parent or guardian (which may include the juvenile court judge). Two youth in residence are on informal probation: one was referred by their school district and the other by a social worker.

**Age range of youth:** 12-19      **Ethnicity of youth:** “Mostly Latinx”, per the Head of Service.

**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, plus an occupational therapist (Tina Jenson) and an art therapist. In addition, the Head of Service (Victoria Valencia) and Supervisor for Direct Care (Karrie Stafford) are also therapists. Ms Stafford is leaving her position as of mid-September and the open job position has now been posted by BHRS (Supervising Mental Health Clinician). The opening for a co-occurring AOD therapist has been filled, however the incoming person is currently on sabbatical until July 2023. A psychiatrist (Dr Osher) visits the Center two times per week (Wednesday/Friday) and is otherwise available as needed by telephone 24/7. BHRS assigns a replacement when Dr Osher is on vacation.

**Describe staff including numbers, background, ethnicity, language:** Staff include a Supervising Mental Health Clinician (1), Mental Health Program Specialist (1), Psychiatric Social Workers/Marriage and Family Therapists (2.5), Creative Arts Therapist (1), Occupational Therapist (1), Psychiatrist (.25), Residential Counselors (17 plus per diem relief staff) and a Medical Office Specialist (1).

The 17 full-time Residential Counselors (RCs) provide care and coaching for residents and 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 retains 12-13 ‘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 Head of Service noted that having two bilingual therapists would be ideal. Regarding ethnicity of staff: 6 of the 17 full-time RCs are LatinX and bilingual; the remaining are biracial or African American/Black. Currently, there are 38 persons on staff at the Center.

**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. Ongoing training includes trauma-informed, cultural, suicide prevention, and County-required training. 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 of 36 hours every two years to maintain their license.

### **Staff to Youth Ratio**

**Awake:** RCs are on duty seven days per week: three for the morning shift, and six for the afternoon shift. In addition, during weekday work hours, the four staff clinicians/therapists are on site, plus the Head of Services and Supervisor for Direct Care. Teachers rotate in for different subjects during the school day. During the day on weekdays, staff often outnumber clients/youth.

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

**How is staff backup handled during graveyard 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 Head of Service or Supervisor for Direct Care, both clinicians, are always on call 24/7, including during grave-yard shifts and on weekends to respond 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. Only the Head of Service or Supervisor for Direct Care 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 Head of Service and Supervisor for Direct Care have also both been at Canyon Oaks for many years, although as noted above, Ms. Stafford, the Supervisor for Direct Care is now leaving (her last day was September 23). Staff clinicians turn over more frequently, which the Director described as typical when 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 few years at Canyon Oaks, once they are licensed, most move on to other types of clinical work.

**Describe general staff and youth interactions:** During our first visit, we were able to have lunch with 3 of the youth, and they were friendly and open to speaking with us. From our conversations, we were left with the impression that youth-staff interactions are generally positive, although during one:one discussions, youth shared with us issues pertaining to staff reactions to their use of the grievance process.

### **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 neat and maintained from the outside. The interior courtyard contains an area for turf, benches and tables, a basketball court, and planting boxes. New turf was being installed during our visit. The basketball court still requires repaving as it is quite rough and presents a risk of injury should a youth or staff fall. There are several small vegetable/flower beds that have been planted and are tended by the residents. Up the hill on the property are storage sheds and a garden in development. The building and property are small for the activities it accommodates and will feel even more so when the new hospital construction is complete.

**Give a general description of the main facility including housekeeping and sanitation:** There is a wing that has a lobby, two classrooms and a therapy room. There is a dining room with a connected kitchen and a pass through window at which food is served for pick up by the residents. There is a hall with bedrooms on either side that leads to a living room area furnished with armchairs and bean bag sofas, exercise equipment, a bookcase, large screen TV, and a chalkboard wall. The area with the large screen TV, chalkboard wall, and bean bag sofas includes a memorial area being designed by residents to honor a RC who recently passed away. On the other side of the living room, there is another hall with bedrooms on either side. At the end of that hall is an office for the therapists, a laundry room, a safety room, and a therapy room. A janitor comes in every day Monday through Friday.

The facility looked clean and well organized. However, we were informed by staff that as the current laundry machines are not commercial grade, they are not suitable for the intense use of the Center and frequently break down and require repair. While waiting for repairs, the Center's staff must arrange for a commercial laundry service to pick up and drop off laundry or go to a laundromat to do the laundry, both of which are inconvenient and time-consuming.

**Lawns:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Artificial turf was being installed in the interior courtyard during our visit.

**Playing Fields:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable.  NA

**Blacktop:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: The blacktop is in need of resurfacing to be safe for use. (This issue was identified in the 2019 inspection report).

**Paint:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: \_\_\_\_\_

**Roof:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: \_\_\_\_\_

**Drains and Gutters:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: \_\_\_\_\_

**General Appearance:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Staff have requested various small repairs and improvements; it is taking far too long to fulfill requests.

**Condition of Interior of Building**



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As noted in the 2021 inspection report, COYC has requested a new generator to provide power during planned outages. This request is still outstanding. Although there was nothing in urgent need of repair on the day of our inspection, the existing laundry machines fail on a fairly regular basis and require repairs which result in them being out of service for weeks. The current machines are not robust enough to withstand institutional use. Accordingly, new commercial grade laundry machines are needed on an urgent basis. In addition, a larger refrigerator for staff use would be helpful.

**Walls:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable:

**Paint:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: The interior walls are touched up periodically where needed.

**Floors:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: The carpets are steam cleaned annually, and looked clean and well maintained when we inspected the facility

**Ceilings:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable:

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

**Plumbing Fixtures:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Did not observe closely. No issues noticed.

**Air Vents/Heating/Windows:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Did not observe closely. No issues noticed.

**Smoke Alarms:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Did not observe closely. No issues noticed.

**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 may 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: Center has air conditioning and was comfortable even during the heatwave occurring at the time of our visit.

## 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:** The three youth we spoke with all commented that they had made suggestions for menu items, however their suggestions were only minimally implemented. It was our observation that the youth may benefit from programming which incorporates their suggestions for healthy menu options along with nutrition and exercise goals in a positive and interesting format.**YOUTH ORIENTATION**

**What is the intake process for the facility?** The Interagency Placement Review Committee notifies the Head of Service when they have a youth to recommend for admission. The youth's social worker provides information about the youth. The Head of Service interviews the youth wherever they are at the time (hospital, YSC) to get a sense of the child; typically this takes place outside of Canyon Oaks for a first visit. The child would then be brought to Canyon Oaks by the parent, guardian, social worker, or probation officer. Now, with more voluntary placements occurring, the first meeting may take place at Canyon Oaks. According to the Head of Service, there are currently almost no court or social services placements.

**Are youth oriented to the house rules and procedures?** ✓ Yes  No **Explain:** The orientation includes reviewing the house rules and grievance process verbally, providing a copy of the Resident Handbook, and having the youth fill out an orientation packet.

**Are house rules and grievance procedures posted?** ✓ Yes  No **Explain:** These are 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) Orientation, 2) Learning, 3) Practicing, and 4) Succeeding. With each new phase, youth acquire new privileges. Once they attain a phase, they don't lose it even if they stop behaving in accordance with their level, however, 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, we ate lunch with three youth who all agreed to speak with us afterwards for private 1:1 discussions. Overall, the youth were positive about their living conditions at Canyon Oaks, and had no major complaints. They appreciated the opportunities provided to them. One youth is currently working at a part-time job at Michael's (craft store), and they enjoy this.

One of the issues raised in our discussions concerned the youths' perception that the grievance process was not a good way to resolve issues as RCs react negatively to any youth who files a grievance.

### **MEALS/NUTRITION**

**Kitchen:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Food, including raw ingredients and prepared items are supplied by Sysco Foodservices (primary) and BiRite Foodservices, who deliver food to the hospital, where food is prepared and then frozen or refrigerated. Food is then transported to San Mateo Medical Center (5-10 minutes transport) and then delivered on to COYC. Menus for COYC are approved for nutritional content by the head dietician at San Mateo Medical Center, Nutrition Services.

A new MOU has been signed which will provide for additional bi-weekly on site visits by a dedicated dietician, including regular audits of the kitchen. This will hopefully also mean more time to interact with residents and reflect more of their personal choices in the menu offerings.

**Do the youth share in preparation of meals?**  Yes  No: Youth will occasionally cook during the holidays.

**Are meals served family style?**  Yes  No: Youth come to the window between the kitchen and 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.

**Are servings ample, nutritious, appetizing?**  Yes  No: The servings appear to be ample, well-prepared, and include a variety of options. On the day of inspection, lunch included a choice of salad (faro, arugula, strawberries), main (grilled cheese), vegetable side (roasted cauliflower) and vegetable soup. The residents we ate lunch with liked the cook and had no complaints about the food other than they would like to have more of their menu suggestions reflected.

**Weaker youth protected from having food taken from them?** ✓ Yes  No: This is 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/ 7:30-8:45 school year **Lunch:** 12:10 - 2:30 pm summer/12:20 PM school year **Dinner:** 5 pm all year round (unless they are off-site)

**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, and trauma. Some have bipolar, other psychotic disorders. Clinicians check in with them all the time. They have meals with them. They check in with the school teachers every other week to see how they are doing academically. Individual and family therapy are provided.

**Individual Counseling:** ✓ Acceptable  Unacceptable: The trauma-informed psychosocial skills-based/therapeutic attachment model focuses on increasing each resident's ability to form and sustain more gratifying and supportive relationships within the program, their family and the greater community. Through the development of an individualized, strength-based, family-centered *Needs Appraisal and Service Plan*, the program facilitates acquiring skills necessary for youth to reunite with their family or move to a less restrictive setting/lower level of care.

Each youth is provided with a minimum of one hour of individual psychotherapy per week and one hour of family therapy per week. Additional psychotherapy sessions are offered as needed depending on emergent needs and phase of treatment, reflective of the youth's needs as indicated in their *Needs Appraisal and Services Plan* and their BHRS treatment plan.

**Group Counseling:** ✓ Acceptable  Unacceptable: Dialectical Behavioral Therapy groups are offered 3 days/week, focusing on the acquisition and generalization of dialectical behavioral skills to improve functioning in areas of mindfulness, emotional regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness. The goal is to learn to reduce self-harmful behavior, interpersonal conflicts, emotional

lability, impulsivity and aggression. 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.

**Substance Abuse Counseling:** ✓ Acceptable □ Unacceptable: The facility will be without an AOD Counselor until July 2023. Typically, a half-time AOD is on staff. However, AOD counseling is integrated with their individual counseling therapy and there is the HealthRight 360 course online. If youth in residence are in need of it, AA groups are brought onsite, or youth may attend sessions with an outside group.

## **PROGRAMS**

**Recreation (type, amount, etc.):** ✓ Acceptable □ Unacceptable: There is a weekly trip to a local ranch in Half Moon Bay for equine therapy (two sessions: a.m. for up to two residents; p.m for up to 4 residents). There are therapeutic walks. One girl is doing boxing. Art of Yoga is not currently offered, as it was not well received at this time; the facility is working on offering access to programs at the Riekes Center for Human Advancement in Menlo Park instead. Residents also go to museums, parks, and movies.

**Exercise (daily schedule, amount, etc.):** ✓ Acceptable □ Unacceptable: 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: Staff address this 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, staff would arrange them.

**Vocational Classes:** ✓ Yes □ No: Their occupational therapist will tailor classes for youth as needed with the goal that all youth be employable in a vocational pathway in the future.

**Work Program:** ✓ Yes □ No: The occupational therapist arranges as needed. Residents participate in Workability through the school, and the Independent Living Program through the County. Currently, one youth works at a ranch and another at Michael's (craft & art supply store in San Mateo).

**Internet Access and Use of Technology:** There is an out-of-date cell phone and laptop for resident use. A second laptop no longer works. Technology upgrades are needed.

## **YOUTH DISCIPLINE**

**Describe the discipline process of youth:** COYC utilizes a phase system which is detailed in the Resident Handbook. Each phase has a set of criteria that measures the client's engagement in treatment. There is also a Color System, also explained in the Handbook, which sets out behaviors and corresponding program expectations/limitations as consequences. The Handbook also sets out specific disciplinary procedures along with the therapeutic interventions and limit setting techniques employed by staff. A list of strategies and techniques developed to aid staff in planning interventions is also detailed in the Handbook.

**Describe incident reports:** From July 2021 to June 2022 or three-fourths of the year, there were a total of 113\_(93 in the previous year).

**Describe interactions with law enforcement:** From July 2021 to June 2022, there were 67 incidents of contact with law enforcement. Of those, 36 were for psychiatric holds, 15 for missing persons (AWOL incidents), 8 were associated with CPS reports, 3 were associated with gaining medical clearance, and 0 were for arrest. Six days before our inspection, a youth had been placed on a psychiatric hold and cited for assaulting three staff members (the DA's Office chose not to file charges).

## GRIEVANCES

**Grievance Process:** ✓ Acceptable □ Unacceptable: The San Mateo County BHRS grievance process is set out in the Resident Handbook. Upon admission to COYC, all youth and their parents/caregivers or authorized representatives are given written information about the grievance processes. Staff reviews the written material with them and a copy of the State-mandated Clients Rights is visibly posted in the lobby area, with contact information for BHRS - Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) and Community Care Licensing (CCL). BHRS Problem Resolution Request Forms are also openly available in the lobby area. Youth, caregivers or authorized representatives may file grievances with BHRS-OCA, or they may report them directly to the Head of Service or Supervisor for Direct Care. Any grievances received in person or by telephone that are resolved by close of business the next day following receipt are exempt from the requirement to send a written acknowledgement and resolution letter, however they still are logged and included in reports to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).

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:** Since the last inspection there have been 10 grievances filed by youth: All of these grievances were resolved with satisfactory outcomes; none were escalated to licensing. *There have been no recent grievances filed by any Probation- or CFS-placed youth at COYC. The only recent grievances reported to DHCS and/or BHRS involve youth placed by school districts, which is outside the jurisdiction of the JJDPC and therefore not to be disclosed through the JJDPC inspection process.*

**Trends and/or Comments:** During our inspection interviews, youth discussed their experience of negative consequences in filing grievances, and their consequent reluctance to use the grievance process to report current issues for fear of resulting retaliatory reactions from RCs. They related that senior staff

"backs up the RCs rather than trying to understand clients' views" and that RCs say things to the youth like "go and tell Karrie and Victoria, they can't do anything, we are the ones out in the milieu", "you can't be trusted", and "now I don't feel comfortable taking you out". RCs will also refer to a grievance in a public meeting of youth and staff. We brought this to the attention of the Supervisor for Direct Care.

In general, grievances are varied: staff are unfair, all youth aren't treated the same, they are not happy with the consequences imposed by staff. The Director of Service noted that residents are in fact 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 their visits with the youth's therapist.

**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: Visitation schedules are only kept for one week. There is no long-term tracking of visits.

**Adequate Space:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Youth and families can use a therapy room, a classroom, or use the bench and table in the courtyard (although this location does not preserve privacy as youth windows are open to the courtyard)

**Staff Supervision:**  Acceptable  Unacceptable: Canyon Oaks staff do not supervise visits. 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, read, and play video games.

**Signature of Commissioners preparing this report:**

*San Mateo County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission  
Group Home Inspection Report*

Karin Huber-Levy *Karin Huberr-Levy*

Date: 11/21/2022

Melissa Wilson *Melissa Wilson*

Date: 11/21/2022