

MEMORANDUM

To: Major (ret) Steve Tunnell
Site Director, Alpha Company
Thunderbird Youth Academy

From: Cliff A. Aldridge, Oversight Specialist
Office of Juvenile System Oversight

Reviewer: Cliff Aldridge

Subject: Oversight Visits for 2005—Alpha Company

Date: December 30, 2005

General Information

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) conducted an unannounced visit to Alpha Company of the Thunderbird Youth Academy on February 24, 2005. Additional documents were reviewed at the Oklahoma Military Department's (OMD) headquarters on August 23, 2005, to complete the visit. The purpose of the visit was to assess compliance with established responsibilities and facility policy and procedures. Alpha Company is operated by the OMD. The OJSO has submitted a request to the Division of Child Care of the Department of Human Services (DHS) regarding the application of residential licensure requirements on the Alpha program. At the time of the visit, a response from the DHS had not yet been received.

Persons Interviewed

- An entry conference with the director of the OMD, Youth Programs Division
- A brief entry conference with the site director of Alpha Company
- Three direct care staff members
- Six of the ninety-nine residents
- A brief exit conference was conducted by telephone with the site director

Documentation Reviewed

- Case records on two residents
- Personnel files of two direct care staff members

Overview

Interviews

Two residents from each of the three platoons were selected for interviews. The residents interviewed were generally favorable in their responses to the interview questions about the Alpha Company program, their access to recreation, their participation in community activities, the staff, and their quality of life. No themes of concern were identified from the resident interviews.

The direct care staff members interviewed appeared to be conscientious regarding their duties in providing care and supervision to the residents. Both of them reported using only appropriate consequences for rule violations by the residents. Both described beneficial educational services and regular participation in meaningful recreational activities. No concerns were identified from the staff interviews.

Documentation Review

Two Alpha Company residents' case records were reviewed. The files did not include notification to the residents of their right to file a grievance or the provision of facility policies to the residents or their custodians. Neither of the files documented service plans for the residents.

Two personnel files were reviewed during the onsite visit to Alpha Company, and additional materials were reviewed at the OMD headquarters in Oklahoma City. One file did not contain documentation of orientation training at the time of employment. The other file did not include documentation of pre-employment references. The files were complete for the other items reviewed.

Licensure

The DHS Division of Child Care last inspected the Alpha Company on May 15, 2003. Following the last oversight visit, the OJSO again requested clarification of licensure status from the DHS Division of Child Care. On December 27, 2005, the OJSO received a response to the inquiry from the programs manager of the DHS Division of Child Care. Accordingly, it was determined that Alpha Company is exempt from licensing under Section 403 of the Oklahoma Child Care Facilities Licensing Act (10 O.S. §§ 401-410, Chapter 18).

Conclusion

The documentation concerns cited above represent noncompliance of established responsibilities of residential facilities. Exemption from licensure does not preclude a residential program from examination according to reasonable and established practices and responsibilities in the State of Oklahoma.

The OJSO is mandated to periodically inspect facilities that have children as residents in the State of Oklahoma. An oversight report is critical in nature. The recommendations included do not reflect or identify the positive findings, programs, and resources of the Alpha Company.

Recommendations

1. Resident files should include a copy of the notification to residents of their right to file a grievance.
2. Resident files should include a copy of the notification to residents and their custodians of facility policies.
3. Resident files should include signed copies of resident service plans.
4. Personnel files should contain documentation of orientation training at the time of employment.
5. Personnel files should include documentation of pre-employment references.

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