

ORANGEWOOD CHILDREN'S HOME

SUMMARY

Orange County is one of twelve California counties that operate a 24-hour emergency shelter for abused children. The Orange County shelter, Orangewood Children's Home (Orangewood), is a well-designed and maintained facility. The living quarters are arranged around an inner courtyard that creates a park-like setting. Security for the facility continues to be upgraded and is well designed to prevent unauthorized entry.

Two major population changes have occurred in the last year at Orangewood:

The total population has declined from an average daily attendance of 234 children in 1998 to 110 children in 1999.

The pre-school age population has decreased even more significantly from 78 children in September 1998 to 24 children in September 1999.

The major findings of the Grand Jury focused on these two trends:

- The significant population decline has presented a challenge for the Social Services Agency in determining the appropriate current and future staffing level for Orangewood.
- If pre-school children are removed or are subject to reduced stays at Orangewood, the older and more emotionally-disturbed children could make up a much greater percentage of the population in the future. Staffing and training needs could be significantly altered by this trend.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

On August 17, 1999, members of the Orange County Grand Jury toured Orangewood Children's Home. Orangewood is a temporary 24-hour county shelter for dependent children. The shelter is a 236-bed facility operated under the auspices of the Social Services Agency.

The purpose of this study is to assess the current operation of Orangewood and to determine if any improvements can be made to benefit both the staff and the children. This study focuses on facility security, maintenance, population trends, staff training, staffing levels, inventory controls, and audit programs.

There has not been a comprehensive Grand Jury review of Orangewood since 1990.

METHOD OF STUDY

INTERVIEWS

Many fact-gathering interviews were held with County agencies and community organizations to obtain information and to test various assumptions.

REPORTS

Several reports and documents were reviewed that focused on Orangewood Children's Home and the foster care system. The following reports played a major role in the Grand Jury's understanding of key issues:

- Little Hoover Commission Report, August 1999.
- Orange County 1989–90 Grand Jury Report, Evaluation of Orangewood Children's Home.
- Orange County 1997–98 Grand Jury Report, Orangewood Admissions and the Placement Process.
- Orange County Social Services Agency, Grand Jury Notebook, 1999/2000.
- Orangewood Children's Home, Operations Manual.

TOURS

Tours were taken of Juvenile Hall, Orangewood (six visits), selected group homes (three visits), the Youth Resource Center in Santa Ana, homeless shelters (three visits), the Orangewood Foundation, and the San Diego County Emergency Shelter.

BACKGROUND

CHILD ABUSE REGISTRY

The Child Abuse Registry (CAR) is the entry point into the Social Services Agency for families to receive child welfare services. CAR operates a 24-hour child-abuse telephone hotline. Each year, CAR receives over 25,000 telephone calls and facsimiles reporting suspected child abuse. The senior social workers staffing CAR evaluate these telephone calls to determine if the children involved are in danger. The first priority of the social worker is to help children remain with their families, especially if it is the first CAR report and the child does not appear to be in danger. In keeping the family together, a wide array of services is provided by the Social Services Agency. If all these efforts fail, a Welfare and Institutions Code 300 petition is filed with the Juvenile Court for the protection of the child. These children are then referred to the County-operated Orangewood Children's Home for emergency shelter.

The Orange County Grand Jury of 1993–94 studied the Child Abuse Registry and found many opportunities for improvement. At that time there was inadequate staffing and the telephone system needed upgrading. The telephone call-abandonment rate was up to 25 percent and delays often approached 40 minutes. Since then, the phone system has been upgraded with additional trunk lines. The current average response time is 52 seconds, and there are a negligible number of abandoned calls. The number of social workers was increased from 11 to 18 and the number of clerical workers to process reports was significantly increased.

While significant improvements recommended by the Grand Jury of 1993–94 were made, one important suggested improvement has not been implemented. Orangewood is still the receiving location for all Child Abuse Registry calls from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. and on weekends. Orangewood, because of the nature of its services, is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The 1999–2000 Grand Jury believes Orangewood is a cost-effective off-hour solution and recommends no changes to this arrangement. However, counselors receiving calls at Orangewood have not received the same level of training as the CAR social workers.

ORANGEWOOD CHILDREN’S HOME

Orangewood currently has a design capacity for 236 children, and began operations in 1985 when it replaced an older facility. Children at Orangewood are assigned to living units called “cottages” based on their age and, for older youth, gender. Recently, one cottage has been dedicated to the care of siblings. These cottages are arranged around an inner-courtyard, creating a park-like setting. Each cottage contains a central living room, kitchen and bedrooms. The residential units are clean, brightly decorated and well-supplied with educational and recreational materials. When not attending the on-site school, the children have a full range of social and leisure activities. The counselors frequently arrange field trips to athletic events, amusement parks, movies, and beaches.

SECURITY

Security is designed to prevent unauthorized entry into Orangewood Children’s Home. After the initial tour in August, Grand Jury members returned for five additional visits and interviews. A visit on November 3 also included a perimeter inspection. The Grand Jury learned from these visits that:

- During the day shift, staff members enter through the front entrance. After 8:00 p.m., staff members use the intake door that also opens into the reception area that is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The doors leading from the reception area to each wing of the administration building are keypunch only.
- School employees are supplied keys and use the locked entrance by the dining hall. Other doors leading to the inside of the facility are locked.
- Officers are assigned to the control room 24 hours a day, seven days

Overall security precautions are well designed and effective.

a week. During the evening/night shifts, officers patrol the perimeter on a regular schedule (However, during the afternoon visit on November 3rd, no officer was present in the control room.)

- Authorized visitors are listed in the CIS 2000 system. Individuals with propensity to violence are displayed in red on the screen located by the check-in area.
- Three video cameras are located at the front of the facility. These cameras cover the parking lot, intake door, and inner courtyard and are monitored from the reception center and the control room.
- Bulletproof glass is installed in the front windows of the facility on both the first and second floors.
- The outside perimeter of the facility is protected by eight-foot-high, chain-link fence or masonry wall.
- The children are not allowed to move about the facility without supervision or prior notification with the control room.
- All employees wear picture identification badges.
- Windows in all the cottages are permanently locked.
- The public access road between Juvenile Hall and Orangewood is under controlled access and completely closed after 2:00 p.m.

MAINTENANCE

Four published Juvenile Justice Commission inspection reports (1997 and 1998) stressed the need for improved maintenance. During the six visits by the Grand Jury, the facility appeared in good repair. The staff did not indicate any problems getting the proper level of support in this area. Two subsequent Juvenile Justice Commission inspections (1999) indicated a significant improvement in the level of maintenance.

POPULATION TRENDS

During the last year, there has been a significant reduction in the population of Orangewood as displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1

ORANGEWOOD CHILDREN'S HOME 1998-99 Summary		
Average Daily Population		% Change
1998	234	
1999	110	-53.0 %

Admissions		
1998	3174	
1999	2769	-12.8%

Average Length of Stay (Days)		
1998	28.9	
1999	20.8	-28.0%

Orangewood Children's Home average daily population for 1999 was 47% of capacity.

The 1999 average daily population represents the lowest average since Orangewood opened in 1985. A significant factor in this population reduction is directly related to the Social Services Agency's increased emphasis on the enhanced-placement options program. This program expands services to help maintain children in the least restrictive family-like setting possible.

Table 2 summarizes the population of Orangewood by age. With this recent increase in the percentage of older children, the potential exists for more behavioral problems, lengthier stays, and greater staff challenges in counseling and motivating the population of the facility.

TABLE 2

	PRE-SCHOOL	6-10	11-13	14-18
September 1998	78	33	31	31
September 1999	24	15	21	33

The pre-school population has declined from 78 to 24 in one year.

STAFF TRAINING

The training program for the counselors at Orangewood Children's Home has been significantly impacted by AB1197, Chapter 1088, statutes of 1993. One section of AB1197 focuses on improving and expanding training programs for childcare counselors. This mandated training falls into two categories:

- An on-going in-house training program focusing on child development (four hours per month).
- A college program requiring twelve credits in early childhood education.

It is anticipated that the twelve-credit program for current employees will be completed in the second quarter of 2000.

STAFFING LEVELS

The 1998–99 approved, and the 1999–2000 recommended, staff level for Orangewood Children’s Home was 318 positions.

TABLE 3

ADMINISTRATION/ORANGEWOOD	1998-99 APPROVED	1999-2000 RECOMMENDED
Appropriations	\$ 20.7 Million	\$21.0 Million
Revenues	<u>11.8</u> Million	<u>\$11.9</u> Million
Net County Cost	\$ 8.9 Million	\$ 9.1 Million
Positions	318	318

This includes the support costs and staff to provide 24-hour care, assessment, and treatment for children admitted to Orangewood Children’s Home.

*Source: 1999-2000 Orange County Budget Book

In 1999 the Social Services Agency contracted with outside consultants to study staffing levels at Orangewood Children’s Home to recommend appropriate standards. The recommendations were somewhat mitigated by four new variables:

- Among required mandates of AB1197 are increased staffing ratios and specific limitations on the length of time a pre-school child may be held in a temporary shelter-care facility.
- Development of new regulations by the Division of the State of California Community Care licensing is applicable to Orangewood when providing care to children under age six. These regulations require a one-staff-to-three-child ratio 24 hours per day.
- Required training mandates related to these same regulations, which created new educational standards for staff working with children under age six. The Social Services Agency has contracted with Cypress College to conduct college classes at Orangewood. The goal is to bring all Orangewood child-care staff into compliance with Community Care Licensing regulations by June 2000. Additional staff is needed to care for the children while regularly assigned staff is in class. This double staffing demand will end by June 2000.
- Admissions have decreased less than the average daily population figures as a significant number of children continue to be admitted to Orangewood. (Table 1.) Efforts to reduce each child’s length of stay have resulted in shorter stays for each child; however, staffing levels are also tied to admission numbers to ensure sufficient staff is on duty to care for new arrivals.

The Social Services Agency has recently convened a community task force to address adolescent behavior-management issues facing Orangewood. This task force will include representatives from Orange County Probation, Health Care Agency, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Orangewood staff representatives and legal advocates representing foster youth. The task force will focus on the challenge facing Orangewood in caring for seriously emotionally or behaviorally disturbed adolescents; this review will include consideration of

current training and staffing patterns and should result in recommendations affecting staffing levels.

CLOTHING PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Children entering Orangewood Children's Home are provided County clothing to use during their stay. All their personal property (including clothing) is stored and returned on their departure from Orangewood. Many children admitted to Orangewood are inadequately clothed and the current procedure is to supply all children three days of clothing upon their release. During the past 18 months, as the number of diverted children has increased, Orangewood has continued its policy of also providing these children three days of clothing. (Diverted children enter the foster care system; however, they do not stay at Orangewood.)

DONATED ITEMS

On a daily basis, Orangewood Children's Home receives a significant amount of donated clothing, footwear, and toys. During all of the Grand Jury visits, it was noted that six to twelve large bags of donated material were stored by the intake door. These items are screened by employees of Orangewood for potential use at the facility. Material that does not pass the screening process is transferred to the foster care store in Anaheim operated by the foster care parents auxiliary. This material arrives at the foster care store with a minimum of category sorting, (i.e. men's, lady's, and children's clothing). This store is the only store in Orange County dedicated to providing discounted clothing to foster care parents. Two volunteers under the auspices of the Foster Care Parents Auxiliary run the store. They have a paid manager and some contract labor to assist in the operation. Information about this store is included in the Social Services Agency's quarterly "Teen Talk" newsletter and is available to foster parents. There is no information about the store included in the orientation material provided to new foster care parents.

NEW CLOTHING

Orangewood has a 1999-2000 fiscal year budget of \$180,000 for new clothing. Orangewood has an effective computer system for the release of this new clothing. As these items are released, the remaining inventory balance is automatically updated. Once this new clothing is returned to the laundry for its initial cleaning, it is combined with donated items that have passed the screening process and is stored in a separate location. There is no inventory control system to account for these used items.

ONGOING AUDITS OF FACILITY

Orangewood currently has the following three types of audit programs:

- The Social Services Agency conducts a biannual fixed-asset audit.
- The County Health Care Agency conducts an annual audit. These all-day visits include an inspection of both the physical plant and the existing operating procedures.

- The Juvenile Justice Commission inspects the facility semi-annually. These inspections focus on the care and treatment of the children. These visits consist of one announced visit and one unannounced visit. The results of these inspections are summarized in the Commission's annual report.

FINDINGS

In accordance with *California Penal Code* Sections 933 and 933.05, responses are required to all findings. The 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at the following findings:

1. Security measures at Orangewood Children's Home are well designed and effective; however, 24-hour security officer coverage and receiving dock vigilance could be improved. (During the past several years, many security upgrades have been added to protect the facility.)

A response to Finding 1 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

2. There has been a significant decline in the average daily population of Orangewood Children's Home from 1998 to 1999. However, the demand for County-supplied clothing remains high because children entering the foster care system and bypassing Orangewood still receive three days of clothing.

A response to Finding 2 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

3. There is an effective automated system for releasing new clothing items; however, there is no inventory control system for used clothing.

A response to Finding 3 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

4. Many donated items (clothing, footwear, toys, etc.) are received daily by Orangewood Children's Home. These items are screened for potential use at the home. If they do not pass the inspection process, they are transferred to the foster care store in bulk without any regard to saleability or pricing.

A response to Finding 4 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

5. Orangewood Children's Home is becoming increasingly populated with older children. In September 1999, children ages 11 through 18 represented 58 percent of the total population at Orangewood Children's Home. (In September 1998, older children accounted for 36 percent of the total.) This trend is likely to continue based on recent state legislation, such as AB1197. In many cases, these older children are individuals

with behavioral and emotional challenges. The Social Services Agency has recently formed a community task force to study the implications of an older population at Orangewood.

A response to Finding 5 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

6. Based on the average daily population of 110 children in 1999, Orangewood Children's Home is currently overstaffed with counselors and support personnel.

A response to Finding 6 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

7. Information about the foster care store is not provided to new foster care parents in current orientation material.

A response to Finding 7 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

8. Group counselors at Orangewood Children's Home receive all Child Abuse Registry (CAR) calls on weekends and from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. on weekdays. These counselors do not receive the training given to the CAR social workers on a continuing basis.

A response to Finding 8 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with *California Penal Code* Sections 933 and 933.05, each recommendation must be responded to by the government entity to which it is addressed. These responses are submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. Based on the findings, the 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury recommends that:

1. To continue the process of continuous improvement in the security arrangements for Orangewood Children's Home, two enhancements are suggested:
 - A contingency plan should be developed to ensure 24-hour coverage if a scheduled security officer is absent for any reason (vacation, holiday or illness).
 - A video camera should be installed to monitor the receiving dock area (vulnerable to outsiders).

A response to Recommendation 1 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

2. The current annual budget of \$180,000 for new clothing should not be reduced based solely on the significant decline in the average daily population of Orangewood Children's Home from 1998 to 1999.

A response to Recommendation 2 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

3. A study should be initiated on the feasibility of creating an inventory control system for all or selected used-clothing items. This study should address the question of whether such a system can be operated on a cost-effective basis.

A response to Recommendation 3 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

4. To improve service to the foster care store, the following changes should be considered in the handling of donated material. (See Appendix A)
 - In the screening process, items that are not useable or saleable or could potentially represent a safety hazard should be discarded and considered for sale to a contract dealer.
 - Saleable items should be sorted by major category for ease of handling at the foster care store.
 - A pricing system should be investigated for installation at Orangewood Children's Home for items transferred to the foster care store.

A response to Recommendation 4 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

5. The community task force should focus their initial efforts on providing staffing recommendations for Orangewood to the Social Services Agency before the 2000-01 budget process is completed.

A response to Recommendation 5 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

6. The Social Services Agency should consider the following in determining future staff levels for Orangewood Children's Home:
 - Explore whether new employees at Orangewood could complete the required 12-credit early childhood education program on their own time.
 - A five-year population projection by age category should be completed for Orangewood in preparation for the 2000-01 budget.

A response to Recommendation 6 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

7. Orientation material presented to new foster care parents should include information about the foster care store.

A response to Recommendation 7 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

8. Orangewood Children's Home should remain the receiving location for child abuse calls from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. and on weekends. The Social Services Agency and Child Abuse Registry should initiate a study of the feasibility of re-training Orangewood Children's Home group counselors along with CAR social workers so that after-hours calls can be handled more effectively.

A response to Recommendation 8 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

COMMENDATIONS

The 1999-2000 Orange County Grand Jury commends:

1. The **Department of Children's and Family Services** of the **Social Services Agency** for:
 - The success it has achieved in expanding programs to help maintain children in the least restrictive family-like setting possible.
 - The cooperation of the staff of **Orangewood Children's Home** in the interviewing process and in their responsiveness in supplying requested quantitative data and information.
2. The **Salvation Army** for its flow and tracking system on donated items. The Grand Jury's visit to their central warehouse was a valuable educational experience.
3. The **Foster Care Parents Auxiliary** for their dedication and support in maintaining a discount store for foster care parents.

APPENDIX A

FLOW AND TRACKING OF DONATED ITEMS IN A WELL-MANAGED WAREHOUSE

