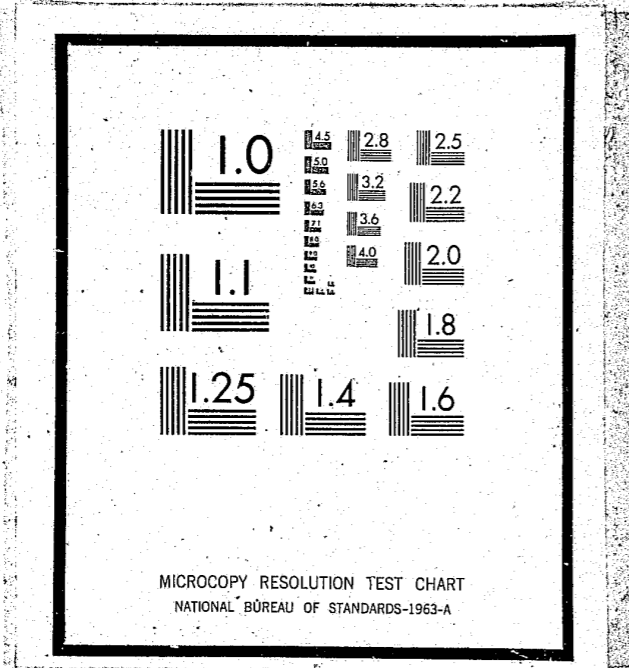


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## A SYNOPSIS OF CALIFORNIA'S GROUP HOME PROJECT FINAL REPORT

### ("DIFFERENTIAL PLACEMENT OF DELINQUENTS IN GROUP HOMES")

by

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Sponsors:

CALIFORNIA YOUTH AUTHORITY

and

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Increasingly, group homes are being utilized as an out-of-home placement resource for troubled and troublesome youths. This is largely due to the part which they seem able to play in helping avoid unnecessary removal from the community setting and in facilitating an earlier release from institutions as well. All in all, group homes appear to fit right in with today's emphasis upon the strategy of "diversion", in general-- and greater usage of community resources, in particular. They are also less expensive than various forms of institutionalization.

A great deal remains to be learned about the effective use of group homes, and group home staff. Despite (and, because of) today's limited knowledge and experience, a "panacea phase" has emerged within recent years in connection with group homes. This "phase" has been characterized by high hopes, a relatively undifferentiated usage, and, quite probably, an over-usage of group homes. In the final report of the California Youth Authority's Group Home Project, an effort is made to delineate some of the issues and limitations which may have to be faced when the current wave of enthusiasm begins to subside. Hopefully, one product of Projects such as this will be a more discriminating, efficient and integrated utilization of this potentially valuable, yet potentially very troublesome, tool: group homes.

## THE GROWING USE OF GROUP FOSTER HOMES

Since 1967, group homes have increasingly been viewed as a significant resource for meeting the placement and developmental needs of delinquent, pre-delinquent, dependent, and neglected children, and adolescents as well. Between July, 1969 and June, 1970 alone, the Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention Administration (YDDPA) issued 24 separate federal grants to state and local agencies within a total of 20 states, to facilitate the establishment, expansion, and evaluation of group homes.<sup>1</sup> This trend is also observed outside of the USA, e.g., in England, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel. By the late 1960s England, Australia, and New Zealand each had between 20 and 40 state-administered "youth hostels" or "family homes". Recent books and reports have provided some historical perspective, and pertinent research data as well, related to the use and implications of out-of-home placements.

Group homes usually accommodate from 4 to 8 youngsters at any one point in time, although some are built to house as many as 10 or 14 individuals. Typical age-groupings within any given home are: 8 to 12, 12 to 15, and, most common of all, 15 to 18. A few homes accept individuals in their early 20s. Referrals may come from one or more of a variety of sources, including local courts (in lieu of, or as a condition of, parole;

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<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act of 1968. Fiscal Year 1970 Grants. Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention Administration. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Washington, D.C. 1970.

in lieu of, or subsequent to, institutionalization), state agencies, private agencies, community mental health centers, relatives, and self. Individuals ordinarily receive an intermediate-length placement (2-5 months) or, more commonly, a long-term placement (6-12 months, or more). However, it is not uncommon for individuals to be accepted on an emergency (1-3 days) or short-term (5-25 days) basis. The staff typically consist of a full-time, non-professionally trained husband-and-wife, supplemented by part-time (e.g., culinary or domestic) and/or relief personnel. Professionally trained staff, together with volunteer and/or "paraprofessional" personnel, are by no means uncommon, whether as adjuncts to, or full-time substitutes for, the more typical husband-and-wife pattern.

## THE GROUP HOME PROJECT

### Nature and Objectives

From April, 1966 through September, 1969 the California Youth Authority (CYA) and National Institute of Mental Health sponsored a Group Home Project. This was a demonstration program which focused upon the feasibility of establishing specified types of group homes for seriously delinquent male adolescents. It was also concerned with describing the nature, and assessing the impact, of these homes. The homes were operated within the structure of California's Community Treatment Project (CTP).<sup>1</sup> CTP is an intensive, low-caseload, community-based program for juvenile court commitments, ages 13 through 19 at intake; it has operated continuously from 1961 to the present.

The study sample consisted of adolescents who had been committed from local courts to the state correctional system, after an average of five police arrests. (These individuals comprised that 1 out of every 13 or 14 youths who had not "made it"--i.e., did not "succeed"--on probation alone. In this respect, they were quite un-representative of the typical, local probation population.) Seriously assaultive cases--those committed in connection with armed robbery, forcible rape, etc.--were excluded.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1961-1969, CTP (MH 14734) was an experiment in the intensive treatment of delinquent youths within their home communities, and without a period of prior institutionalization. (Average caseload size was 11 - 12 youths per parole agent.) This is in contrast to the traditional CYA program--viz., institutionalization for several months, then followed by non-intensive parole (60 - 70 cases per agent). CTP was operated mainly in Sacramento and Stockton, California. It operated in San Francisco (1964-1969) and Modesto (1967-1969) as well. The utility and/or effectiveness of the 1961-1969 community-based CTP program, as compared with the traditional program, was evident particularly in relation to: lower rate of recidivism (revocation of parole); greater positive pre-post psychological test score change; lower proportion of unfavorable discharge from parole; and, major reduction in capital outlay costs with regard to construction of new residential facilities.

<sup>2</sup> Three of every 10 male commitments were thus excluded from the study sample.



The 215 page final report is a summary and review of the experiences and findings of the Group Home Project. The incentive for this Project emerged from early experiences within CTP. For example, as early as 1962 CTP parole agents were utilizing out-of-home placements at least five times more often than agents with regular caseloads, outside of CTP. While far from ideal, independent out-of-home placements seemed to pose few unusual difficulties within CTP. However, problems were frequently encountered in relation to individual foster homes--e.g., problems with reference to obtaining and establishing suitable homes, maintaining them, and integrating them within the overall operation. Operations staff began to feel that--if carefully coordinated with other CTP activities--specified group homes could probably provide a more controlled and, hopefully, a reasonably appropriate living environment for youths who, while not yet ready for independent placement, were in need of a long-term, out-of-home living arrangement. They visualized possible advantages of a group living arrangement over that found within the typical, individual foster home. Beyond this, staff began taking note of the several instances in which, on the one hand, (a) formal, secure custody (e.g., juvenile hall) seemed neither essential nor appropriate--yet, on the other hand, in which (b) temporary housing did appear to be needed (and, often, at unpredictable times).

In 1965, a proposal--"Differential Treatment Environments for Delinquents (DTED)"--was drawn up by CTP staff.<sup>1</sup> It utilized, as its theoretical frame of reference, the I-level classification system which had been pioneered at

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<sup>1</sup>Look, L. and Warren, M. (1965), "A demonstration project: differential treatment environments for delinquents". Proposal submitted to NIMH. California Youth Authority.

CTP<sup>1</sup> and which constituted an essential part of the latter's existing research design.<sup>2</sup> The Group Home Project sought to establish five types of group homes--three for long-term care (Types I, II, and III) and two for temporary care (Types IV and V). The five homes would differ from one another in specified ways. For example:

Type I--Protective: Would be designed for conspicuously immature and dependent youths, whose family background has involved many elements of neglect or brutality. The home would attempt to approximate normal, non-disturbed family living as closely as possible. A maximum of four youths--Ap's and Cfm's--could be served at any point in time.

<sup>1</sup>A given individual's position within this system is determined primarily by means of a lengthy, in-depth interview. The I-level designations, and related youth-subtypes, are:

<u>I-Level</u>	<u>Subtype</u>	<u>Code</u>
Lower Maturity (I <sub>2</sub> )	Asocialized, Aggressive	Aa
	Asocialized, Passive	Ap
Middle Maturity (I <sub>3</sub> )	Conformist, Immature	Cfm
	Conformist, Cultural	Cfc
	Manipulator	Mp
Higher Maturity (I <sub>4</sub> )	Neurotic, Acting-out	Na
	Neurotic, Anxious	Nx
	Situational Emotional Reaction	Se
	Cultural Identifier	CI

For brief definitions, see: Palmer, T. (1971), California's community treatment program for delinquent adolescents. J. Res. in Crime and Delinq., 8, No. 1: 74-92.

<sup>2</sup>Sullivan, C., Grant, M., and Grant, J. (1957), "The development of interpersonal maturity: applications to delinquency". Psychiatry, 20: 373-385.

Type II--Containment: Would be designed for youths who are often labeled 'defective characters', 'psychopaths', and/or 'culturally conforming delinquents'. The home would provide clear structure and firm limits. It would operate on a 'non-family' basis and would emphasize concrete, attainable demands for socially acceptable, constructive behavior. A maximum of six youths--Mp's and Cfc's--could be served.

Type III--Boarding: Would be designed for the more interpersonally mature youths--those who might soon be able to maintain themselves in an independent placement. The home would attempt to provide a 'YMCA hotel' atmosphere--while also allowing for personal relationships to develop on the youths' initiative. A maximum of six youths--chiefly Na's and Nx's, but conceivably Ci's and Se's in addition--could be served.

Type IV--Temporary Care: Would be designed for youths who have a temporary placement need, but for whom both custody and independent living are viewed as neither appropriate nor a placement of choice. Where possible, youths in this home would be allowed to continue their regular CTP program (e.g., counseling, school, work, etc.)...and, if appropriate, to even 'do very little' if this might help them 'calm down'. A maximum of six youths--from any I-level or subtype--could be served.

Type V--Short Term Restriction: Would be designed for youths in need of fairly restrictive behavioral limits, yet not necessarily in need of detention within local juvenile halls, CYA facilities, local jails, etc. A type of 'house arrest' rather than an actual 'locked door' policy would prevail. Placement would be limited to about one week--during which time at least some of the youth's treatment program would hopefully be continued. A maximum of six youths--from any I-level or subtype--could be served.

Some of these homes would be established within the Sacramento area (pop. 250,000) while others would be established in or near Stockton (pop. 100,000).



As it turned out, two additional types of homes were studied during the Project period: A long-term care model which had not been described in the DTED proposal was defined, by group home staff, during the Project's second year. This type of home--"Type VI, Individualized"--was established shortly thereafter and remained in operation for thirteen months.

The Type VI home was designed to accommodate up to six higher maturity youths. In the main, these would be Na's and Nx's who were not in a position to concentrate upon the issues of physical and/or emotional emancipation,<sup>1</sup> yet who seemed in need of a healthy, 'family-life' situation in which at least one of several types of relationships--with adults--could theoretically be made available to them. The scope and focus of the relationships would vary as a function of the needs, interests and limitations of the individual youth. Much flexibility would be allowed relative to expectations placed upon youths within the home (individually and collectively).

Finally, a Girls Group home (Type VII) was studied for a period of nine months. This took place during the final thirteen months of the Project. The girls home--for long term care--had been in operation within CTP for eleven months prior to its being officially focused upon by group home staff.

The objectives of the Project were:

- (1) to determine the feasibility of establishing and maintaining the Type I - V group homes;
- (2) to develop a taxonomy of relevant environments;
- (3) to evaluate the impact of group home experiences upon youths placed within them.

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<sup>1</sup>Theoretically, this would be the most significant developmental distinction between youths who were to be placed within the Individualized home and those within the Boarding home.

An additional, implicit objective was that of assessing the general worth or utility of each of the given homes, and of the group home concept per se. The assessment of impact--i.e., objective (3)--would necessarily be 'global' rather than precise. This mainly reflected the fact that no control group would be built into the program--i.e., no random assignment into the group homes, either individually or collectively.<sup>1</sup> It also reflected the fact that--for any given youth--the group home experience would represent only one of several 'inputs' and/or program components available within CTP.

#### Operations and Main Results

The Group Home sample was made up exclusively of youths who were part of CTP, and whose parole agents were regular CTP personnel. During the former Project's three years of existence, 8 boys homes were studied (6 for long-term placement; 2 for temporary care). Four long-term homes and 1 temporary care home lasted over a year;<sup>2</sup> the others were short-lived. One girls home was studied; it lasted close to two years. No homes were 'mixed', i.e., coeducational. Virtually all homes were large, private dwellings, located well within the city limits of either Sacramento or Stockton. They housed a maximum of six youths at any one time; the average number of youths was four.

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<sup>1</sup>As vs. assignment into, or placement within: (a) individual foster homes, (b) own natural (family) home, (c) independent placement, (d) local juvenile halls, jails, or CYA holding facilities, (e) other specified environments.

<sup>2</sup>Of these, three lasted 20 months or more; one lasted 18 months.



For the four long-term homes which remained in operation at least a year, the average duration per placement was 6.0 months. Of these placements, 30% lasted 0 - 2.9 months, 37% lasted 3 - 7.9 months, 15% lasted 8 - 11.9 months, and 11% lasted 12 months or more.

All homes were operated by a non-professionally trained, husband-wife "team", known as "group home operators". There were no supplementary personnel within the home<sup>1</sup>--e.g., culinary, domestic or relief. Nor were there any volunteers and/or "paraprofessionals".

Collectively, the group home operators tended to come from the lower-middle class socioeconomic segment of the community. On the average, they had not quite completed eleven school grades. Although 21% had continued beyond high school, none had completed college. While all "races" were represented, a sizable majority (71%) were Caucasian. A wide age-range (25 to 74) was included; the average age was 44. 29% were under 30; 71% were 40 or older; 36% were 50 or older. All home operators were married couples. Most couples had two or more youngsters of their own living within the home. 57% of the home operators had had at least one year of prior foster home experience.

All group home operators worked in conjunction with one or more CTP parole agents. These agents always had primary legal responsibility for all youths on their caseload regardless of the latter's particular placement-status. Nevertheless, efforts were made to operate the homes on the basis of a "team approach" (e.g., joint agent-operator involvement; joint decision-making). Differential (but generally limited) success was achieved in this regard, depending upon the particular home and the specific area of involvement.

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<sup>1</sup>Whether full-time or part-time.

A small research staff was responsible for data collection and analysis, plus liaison with Operations staff and home operators.

The following related to the total Project-period. Across all homes, 63 boys were placed (39 = long-term placements; 24 = temporary care). Several youths were placed into a given home on more than one occasion. (This was especially true of those who had been placed into the Temporary Care home.) In all, there were 93 separate placements (51 = long-term; 42 = temporary care). In addition, 11 girls (12 placements) were involved with respect to the Girls Group home.

During the three years of group home operation, 18 male parole agents utilized the 8 boys homes (collectively). At any point in time, the typical number of agents making use of any one home was three.

Although the number of group home candidates was generally low, all but one of the "group home-models" (i.e., specified environments for specified youth-subtypes) were relatively easy to establish.<sup>1</sup> Negative community reaction was virtually absent throughout the Project's existence.

Long-term group homes were used to a moderate, but by no means large extent. (These homes were utilized approximately half as often as traditional, individual foster homes.) When used, they seemed to represent a very plausible out-of-home placement alternative for the given youths. In retrospect, possibly one-third of these youths might have done about equally well within adequately staffed, individual foster homes.<sup>2</sup> However, with few exceptions, individual foster homes were not available at the time of maximal placement need; nor were they likely to be available within the near future.

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<sup>1</sup>The Short-Term Restriction home was never established.

<sup>2</sup>Apart from this, some youths in foster homes could probably have done equally well within a group home setting.



Considerable use was made of the Temporary Care home. Relative to a number of youths and situations, this type of setting appeared to have definite advantages over most others (e.g.,: Independent placement; relatives; individual foster home). In some respects it was used as a two-way, "satellite station".

CTP boys who were placed into long-term homes (Group 1) performed somewhat better than CTP boys who were not placed (Group 2). The figures for Groups 1 and 2, respectively, were 17% vs. 31% "parole failure"<sup>1</sup> at 15-months followup, and 33% vs. 43% at 24-months followup. Controlling for age and "type" of youth,<sup>2</sup> the comparable rates were 9% vs. 33%, and 27% vs. 43%. Neither set of figures attained statistical significance, probably because of the small number of subjects involved. When specified, ad hoc analytic restrictions were lifted--thereby increasing both the Group 1 and Group 2 sample-sizes--statistical significance was more closely approached, again in favor of Group 1 youths.<sup>3</sup>

From an overall operational standpoint, there appeared to be two quite successful boys group homes--the "Boarding" home, for higher maturity youths, and the "Temporary Care" home, for all types of youth. (The Girls Group home was also found to be successful and satisfying.) The "Protective" and "Individualized" homes were only moderately successful. Under different, specified conditions, these homes could probably be more successful and substantially more efficient. At least two of the 8 boys homes were unsuccessful. The "Containment" home for Mp's ("manipulators") and Cfc's ("cultural conformists") was able to achieve initial stability with respect to the former youths--but not much else. The originally described model for this type of home required major modifications. A "mini group home" approach was suggested relative to Cfc's and Mp's.

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<sup>1</sup>This included: recommitment by the courts, revocation of parole, or unfavorable discharge from the California Youth Authority.

<sup>2</sup>This resulted in slightly different samples (parole followup cohorts).

<sup>3</sup> $p < .10$  and  $p < .20$ , for the 15- and 24-months followups, respectively.

As compared with middle maturity youths (particularly Cfc's and Mp's), higher maturity individuals (chiefly Nx's) seemed more likely to profit from long-term placement within specified group homes.

It was clear that certain youth-subtypes<sup>1</sup> could profitably be intermingled, within specified long-term homes.<sup>2</sup> It was also possible to mix together carefully selected, middle and higher maturity youths.<sup>3</sup> However, the latter might not represent an "ideal" situation, at least not usually.

Considering all boys homes, collectively: Despite the occasional emergence of moderately serious or serious problems, daily living proceeded in a predictable, relatively smooth, and generally acceptable manner from the standpoint of most youths, home operators and agents. Serious difficulties seldom materialized, particularly when one considers the many areas of potential difficulty. However, when they did emerge, at least some such difficulties evolved into major bones of contention in relation to certain operator-youth combinations. These, in turn, were sometimes capable of adversely affecting other areas of daily living, and altering the general home atmosphere as well.

Perhaps surprisingly, the optimal number of youths within most long-term homes appeared to be 3, or 4.<sup>4</sup> Beyond that, the number of operational drawbacks seemed to rapidly escalate. This number would vary a little (e.g., rise) as a function of specific youth-subtype, or combinations of youth-subtype. In any event, the original estimate--viz., 6 youths--would probably be more than most non-professionally (and, quite possibly, professionally)

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Na's ("neurotic, acting-out") and Nx's ("neurotic, anxious").

<sup>2</sup> This applied to short-term homes, as well.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Cfm's ("immature conformists") and Nx's. Various other subtype-"mixes" would probably not work out too well.

<sup>4</sup> This excludes the home operators' own children.



trained individuals could handle--i.e., handle successfully, on a relatively intensive, long-term basis. Home operators who could handle even four or five youths at any one time, within the context of a complex and active group home program, would probably be characterized by a rather uncommon degree of overall "strength", and skill. In this respect, the issues of recruitment and training become crucial.

The optimal number of parole agents who would make simultaneous use of a home seemed to be 2 (and, under some conditions, 3).

It was felt there would be advantages to having professionally trained individuals operate group homes. These might or might not be husband-wife "teams". Most, though not all of the present youths seemed able to profit from an extensive or intensive exposure to a husband-wife combination. Group homes would probably remain of relevance to many if not most such individuals, even in the absence of this particular feature.

Questionnaires and tests (self-ratings, staff-ratings) showed moderate promise in connection with the selection and general matching of adequate home operators. It seemed that increased emphasis should be given to the issue of operator-youth (and operator-agent) matching.

The following were among the remaining areas covered in the final report:

Group home atmospheres and group home personnel were described on the basis of relatively well-standardized measurement devices--primarily the Moos Social Climate Questionnaire and the Parental Attitude Research Instrument.

An extensive list was provided in connection with the main problem areas, and non-problem areas, which were encountered as part of everyday living within group homes for boys.

The report concluded with a lengthy review and discussion of the major operational issues which emerged across a number of homes.

**END**