



Fred and Mabel R. Parks Emergency Shelter, Operated by Parks Youth Ranch, Inc.

A Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Contractor

Results in Brief

Why OIG Conducted This Audit

The Texas Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated this audit as part of an ongoing risk assessment of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) contracts for the provision of essential services to children in the state's conservatorship.

Summary of Review

The audit objective was to determine whether Parks Youth Ranch, Inc. (Parks Youth) had processes and controls in place to provide foster care services at the Fred and Mabel R. Parks Emergency Shelter (Parks Emergency Shelter) in accordance with selected statutes, contract terms, and minimum standards.

The audit scope included processes and controls related to staff, child services, and revenue from September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022, as well as processes and controls related to selected expenses from January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021.

Conclusion

Parks Youth Ranch, Inc. (Parks Youth) had processes and controls in place over the Fred and Mabel R. Parks Emergency Shelter (Parks Emergency Shelter) for it to meet selected requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children in its care. Specifically:

- Parks Youth performed initial health screenings or verified that other acceptable medical examinations had been completed mostly within required timelines. Seven of eight children tested (88 percent) had an acceptable medical examination performed within required timelines. The eighth child had a health screening performed five days after admission rather than within 72 hours.
- Parks Youth mostly completed preliminary service plans within 72 hours of admission. However, it did not ensure the plans addressed all required categories of needs. Specifically:
 - Eight of nine (89 percent) preliminary service plans were completed within 72 hours of admission, as required. The remaining plan was completed 11 days after admission.
 - Eight of nine (89 percent) preliminary service plans addressed medical and supervision needs but did not address the child's educational needs. The remaining preliminary service plan addressed all required needs.
- Parks Youth mostly completed initial service plans to address all of the child's needs and within 45 days of admission as required. However, Parks Youth could not always support that required individuals participated in the service planning.
- Parks Youth had caregivers on duty to meet the required ratios over the 25 days tested. Parks Youth had a weekly schedule in place to assign adequate staff to each shift and identify backups.
- For all ten staff records tested, Parks Youth's staff (a) passed their most recent background checks and those checks were performed within the required timelines (b) substantially met the minimum training requirements, and (c) passed their most recent drug test.

Background

Parks Youth is a non-profit shelter. This audit focused on operations at the Parks Emergency Shelter in Richmond, Texas, which is licensed to provide emergency care for services for up to 30 children, ages 7 through 17, for up to 90 days. During this time, Parks Youth identifies more permanent placement options for those children. Parks Emergency Shelter served 56 children during state fiscal year 2022.

During the audit scope, Parks Youth was contracted with DFPS and single source continuum contractors (SSCCs) to provide care for children from DFPS Region 1 (the Texas Panhandle), Region 6 (Houston), and Region 8b (Texas Hill Country).

DFPS contracts within a geographic service area with a single source continuum contractor, known as an SSCC. The SSCC is responsible for finding foster homes or other living arrangements for children in state care and providing them a full continuum of services. These SSCCs then contract with various foster care providers to deliver those services within its geographic service area.

During August 2022, 421, or 3.5 percent, of the state's foster children were in emergency shelters: 20 were from Region 1; 41 were from Region 6; 126 were from Region 8; and a total of 12 were in the care of the Parks Emergency Shelter.

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Additionally, for the tested payments it received from DFPS, Parks Youth verified the accuracy of all 15 payments.

However, Parks Youth did not always include only allowable costs on its 2021 cost report. Specifically, 7 of 25 expenses tested (28 percent) included sales tax, which is an unallowable cost. Including unallowable costs on the cost report inflates reported expenses, which makes HHSC's rate setting less reflective of the actual cost of providing childcare services.

Recommendations

Parks Youth should:

- Develop and strengthen its processes to include only allowable costs on its cost report.
- Strengthen its processes and controls to:
 - Complete health screenings within required timeframes.
 - Complete service plans within required timelines that (a) include all required needs and (b) support required individuals' participation and approval.

Management Response

OIG Audit presented preliminary audit results, issues, and recommendations to Parks Youth in a draft report dated June 27, 2023. Parks Youth agreed with the audit recommendations and indicated corrective actions would be implemented by July 2023. Parks Youth's management responses are included in the report following the recommendations.