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**DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

 **NEVADA DIVISION of PUBLIC
and BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**



Cody L. Phinney,
MPH
Administrator

Ihsan Azzam,
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Chief Medical
Officer

DATE: 11/07/24

TO: Leon Ravin, Acting Chief Medical Officer

THROUGH: Cody L. Phinney, Administrator
Paul Shubert, HCQC Bureau Chief
Kyle Devine, Deputy Administrator

FROM: Tina Leopard, Health Facilities Inspection Manager

RE: SafeNest Emergency Shelter visit conducted by HCQC 10/30/24.

The Bureau of Health Care Quality and Compliance does not license or certify shelters for domestic violence survivors. However, upon receipt of complaint of a public health hazard, we do investigate to ensure the safety of the public. Having received such a complaint about the conditions at SafeNest, we provide the following report. This inspection was done in a manner as to check on the allegations without invading the space of the residents unnecessarily.

On 10/30/24 two inspectors were sent to SafeNest in response to allegations including but not limited to: men in the same homes as women, client on client violence, client's stealing other client's food/belongings, sexual assault in the residence, unsanitary bathrooms and kitchen, no counseling services, and clients having weapons.

Summary of Findings

On 10/30/24 at 11:15 AM, two inspectors met with the Chief Operating Officer (COO). This individual accompanied the inspectors to the shelter. The COO explained HUD does not allow them to discriminate against male and female clients, so they are not allowed to have separate male and female homes. Males are in their own rooms separate from females.

On 10/30/24 at 11:45 AM, inspectors arrived at the shelter. Three advocates, the Hope Advocacy Director, and the Director of Residential Services (DRS) were the staff members on duty when the inspectors arrived. The DRS reported there are currently 65 clients (62 female and 3 male). The DRS denied there was any physical/sexual abuse, or drug/alcohol use in the shelter.

All four homes were clean. The stairs and the upstairs hallway in the main house did have dirt, dust, and debris on the floors. There was a housekeeper actively sweeping the downstairs upon arrival. Each home had several refrigerators with some food present. The main house which contained shared refrigerators had some food but not a great deal. Some clients had bags of food with their name on it. The freezers were stocked with frozen meat. The pantry had approximately 15 cans of goods. Clients had food lockers which contained dry goods. Most were locked and remained so. One was unlocked and could be checked. It contained some spices, but most contents were in another bag and inspectors were unable to see details. There were clients in the kitchens cooking and eating lunch. Clients and children appeared

groomed and had clean clothes. There was a playground outside and a classroom for kids to enjoy activities and computers.

On 10/30/24 at 11:55 AM, a Client Advocate indicated they had been working at the shelter for eight months and denied ever seeing any physical/sexual abuse, or drug/alcohol use.

On 10/30/24 at 12:00 PM, the Director of Senior Services indicated food was delivered on Tuesdays. Clients take what they want and then store in their food locker or in their room if it's dry goods. For refrigerator and freezer items they will put it in a bag with their name on it in the refrigerator. Clients also get food stamps and are able to buy their own groceries as well if they need something specific. Baby food is ordered and when it comes in on Tuesday clients who have babies will typically take the amount they need for the week and store it in their room. The common areas are cleaned by housekeeping daily and clients were responsible for cleaning their own rooms. No clients interviewed by inspectors specifically mentioned their food was being stolen. The Director of Residential Services and two other clients mentioned when the food is delivered, clients take the food from the kitchen and hoard it in their rooms at times. During a brief inspection of the rooms, inspectors did not witness evidence of food in the resident's rooms.

On 10/30/24 at 12:10 PM, a male client reported things were good there and felt safe. There was no abuse from staff or other clients. He gets enough to eat, and people will share food if someone needs something. They are responsible for cleaning their own rooms, and he acknowledged his room needed cleaning. He reported there was a male resident who called the police one day saying he was being threatened, but he didn't believe that actually happened. He hasn't seen anyone with weapons or drugs.

On 10/30/24 at 12:15 PM, a female resident was speaking to the inspectors and the interview was cut short due to COO coming in and telling inspectors they needed to put interviews on pause because residents might feel uncomfortable. He indicated he was calling the HCQC Bureau Chief to see how he wanted to handle this. The female interviewed appeared nervous and was talking in circles. She did not provide relevant information in the two minutes inspectors spoke to her.

The VP of Advocacy and Collaboration and the COO indicated they wanted to pause the surveyors from speaking to clients in order to assess client's comfort in being involved. It was explained by inspectors that clients have a right to refuse to talk to the inspectors, but it was also the clients' right to speak to an inspector if they wished to do so. The VP and COO both agreed.

On 10/30/24 at 12:40 PM, a female client who lives there with her four kids was interviewed. She reported she loves it there and the staff are great. She feels safe and has not seen any abuse or weapons at the home. They get enough to eat and there's always enough food. Staff had directed inspectors to speak with her.

On 10/30/24 at 12:52 PM, two female clients reported the facility was always dirty and staff knew the State was going to be visiting, so staff scrambled to clean up the shelter. They also indicated there is physical abuse, sexual abuse, and drug and alcohol use in the facility. They explained they feel the staff are doing the best they can, but there is a lack of screening/searching clients. They explained clients will leave the facility to go to the store and return with drugs and alcohol. Overall, the two clients feel the shelter is very unsafe.

No calendar/schedule regarding security/mental health counseling was observed, but when specifically asked, the Vice President of Advocacy and Collaboration advised they were providing those services.

Recommendations

Most of the observations and brief interviews didn't reveal concerns. However, two residents voiced allegations about physical abuse, sexual abuse, and drug and alcohol use in the shelter and explained that

they didn't feel safe. This will be referred to DCFS and ADSD/APS for further follow up on vulnerable persons.

No evidence of crimes was discovered that would warrant a report to law enforcement agencies.

No evidence of a public health hazard was uncovered to warrant further investigation regarding public health.