



STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT THE CRIME AND DISORDER PROBLEMS CAUSED BY AT-RISK YOUTH LIVING IN GROUP HOMES:

- The West Covina Police Department received 3 responses. Further research paved the way for some additional strategies which had not previously been considered.
- The City of Downey correctly pointed out that the supremacy of State law makes it almost impossible for municipal governments to effectively regulate juvenile group homes.
- Many cities encourage aggrieved neighbors to file civil actions against the property owners. This can take the form of small claims actions for damages or asking the courts for injunctive relief. The legal standard for a civil “nuisance abatement” claim is far less than what is required for a criminal nuisance abatement action – district attorneys seldom file these types of actions. Citizens should be told to take the initiative themselves instead of asking government to solve their problem.
- Contact your local office for the State Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division (in southern California: 1000 Corporate Center Dr., Suite 200A, Monterey Park, 91754 323-918-3300)
 - They proved very willing to move problem juveniles
 - They will conduct licensing inspections and cite the home for any violations
 - West Covina learned that they will send articulate representatives from the state to address your city council in open session and deflect much of the heat from your police department and elected officials.
 - This is the agency with authority to revoke the license of a Group Home if violations exist
 - They also have authority to mandate changes in staffing levels if they deem it necessary
 - All Group Homes are required by the State of California to have a Neighborhood Complaint Policy. This is a public record and police department can examine them. If they don’t meet State licensing standards, there can be sanctions.
- The West Covina City Council adopted a new ordinance, modeled after a Bakersfield ordinance, which requires homeowners renting out more than two rooms to obtain a conditional-use permit that has to be submitted to the Planning Commission for review. This enables the City to have some very modest regulatory control. West Covina will forward a copy of the newly adopted ordinance to any interested city.

Under current California law, cities have very little authority of Group Homes. West Covina is drafting legislation for consideration by our State Senator that would require the State to notify a municipal government entity when a new Group Home is being licensed and allow for public input through a public hearing. This legislation is pending.