



Changing the future, together.

5300 Angeles Vista Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90043
T (323) 295-4555 | F (323) 296-0424 | WayfinderFamily.org

June 16, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

It is an honor and a pleasure to write this letter of support for this fantastic organization, Hope in a Suitcase. Hope in a Suitcase (HIASC) started around the same time as our Transitional Shelter Care program, aka the "Cottage," which launched on March 14, 2016. HIASC's team personally installed the first supply bins for the Cottage, and they organized our delivery system, which has been running successfully for the past six years. During these past six years and since, the excellent HIASC team has helped thousands of children/youth in our Cottage by providing them with enough NEW clothing, sleepwear, undergarments, shoes, a toothbrush, and other hygiene products to assist them while at the Cottage and beyond. Even during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when many organizations could not function, Hope in a Suitcase's small team managed, without fail, to provide uninterrupted support for our city's most vulnerable children. You have no idea what a blessing this was to us and, most importantly, the children/youths at the Cottage.

The Cottage at Wayfinder Family Services provides shelter to children who have been removed from their families because of maltreatment or disruption and come to Wayfinder for a temporary safe haven. Our transitional shelter care program nurtures and stabilizes children in short-term emergency placements. We work hand-in-hand with Hope in a Suitcase to help ease some of the trauma for children and families who arrive with little or no belongings. Most of the children/youth who arrive at the Cottage come with what they have on their backs or were able to pack in a backpack or plastic bag. Hope in a Suitcase gives the children/youth back their dignity and a sense of normalcy by providing them with shoes, clothing, and, most importantly, comfort and a reminder that they are worthy. The children/youth are scared and unsure of what is happening to them, and Hope in a Suitcase understands this, which is why this non-profit organization stands above the rest.

Not only has HIASC provided the highest quality of clothing, shoes, and hygiene products to the Cottage, but many times HIASC has come to our aid with our Foster Care and Adoption programs for children/youth who have been placed with a family member. Sometimes the family does not have the resources to provide clothing, etc. when their family member is placed in their home. HIASC also provided stockings filled with beautiful trinkets and gift cards to our STRTP (short-term residential therapeutic program) youths during the holidays and has opened their boutique for a (free of charge) shopping day, where the youths could pick out entire wardrobe items that they wanted, whether it was Nike tennis shoes, an Old Navy jean jacket, cosmetics, or a journal to express themselves. The smiles and joy that day brought the youth is something they will never forget. The kindness and generosity, all the friendly faces, and the smiles from the staff are heartwarming. There is no judgment, no questions to answer—just a moment in time for them to feel "normal" again. If you believe there are angels on earth, then you know they exist at Hope in a Suitcase.



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Words cannot express Wayfinder Family Services' gratitude for Hope in a Suitcase. We have included a few testimonials from the youths at the Cottage. Due to HIPPA regulations, we cannot provide names or photos of the youths. But know that the work Hope in a Suitcase does is instrumental in the child's welfare. We encourage and respectfully request that you continue to support Hope in a Suitcase and all the outstanding work they do for the underprivileged child/youth in Los Angeles.

Respectfully,

Catherine M. Vioria

Catherine Vioria
Wayfinder Family Services In-kind Coordinator

Attachments



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WAYFINDER FAMILY SERVICES – TRANSITIONAL SHELTER CARE (COTTAGE) TESTIMONIALS

A young boy whose foster parents abruptly kicked him out of their home arrived at TSC in disbelief of the tragedy. This boy turns 18 soon and was distraught by his foster parents, who had housed him for seven years! The boy was very humble, quoting, “thank you so much you have no idea how much this is going to help me,” and broke into tears, thanking our staff numerous times for giving him the bare necessities, food, clothing, and shoes. The boy was motivated to continue his journey of becoming an adult and continuing his job search. Wayfinder was not only able to provide basic needs, but with the help of HISC, we were also able to provide him with the clothing he needed to go on more job interviews.

Another boy who walked into our facility anxious and depressed arrived with very little clothing and one pair of ripped shoes. The boy had to be in court the following day and was worried about looking presentable to the judge. Thanks to HISC, Wayfinder provided him with a nice collared Steussy shirt and a new pair of black pants and looked amazing and confident along with his pair of all-white vans. The youth had a lot of fun trying on multiple options and was motivated, despite his depression, to attend court in presentable clothing. He thanked our staff for helping him look presentable and asked, “can I keep all of this?... I look fly!” When staff told him he didn’t have to give any of it back, he was surprised, grateful, and happy that he had a new wardrobe!

Multiple siblings have arrived through the doors of Wayfinder, often scared and anxious about what waits for them in their journey as a foster youth. Particularly a set of 3 teenage girls who have been removed from their home for the very first time. The girls arrived with only what they were wearing. Despite having themselves for support, these girls appeared very shy and scared to be out of their homes and under the care of DCFS. However, their attitude quickly changed with excitement when providing clothing, make-up, and new pairs of shoes. The girls were able to open up to staff after having a bonding moment over clothing and shoes!

Another boy who was homeless with his mother and his siblings for years walked in with little to no hygiene skills and was unmotivated to do better. Thanks to HISC, our staff could gift him a hygiene kit, new clothing, and a new pair of shoes. Even though it took our staff multiple attempts to get him to shower and better his hygiene skills, the supplies that HISC provided had a role in motivating this boy to want to look and smell better to fit into his new clothes. We hope HISC can continue to provide the many amazing things they do to continue supporting the youth in desperate need of essential life skills.

Another youth was worried because she had been removed from her home and did not have a change of clothes. When staff asked her if she needed anything, she bashfully mentioned that she did not know what she would wear for the next couple of days because she had not had the opportunity to pack a bag when she was removed from her home. Thanks to HISC, staff could ease her worry and provide her with multiple outfits for her use. The youth was relieved to know that she not only would have clothing for her temporary stay at TSC but was relieved to know she would have multiple outfits to take with her to her next placement. This particular youth also became



more confident in asking for other needs, including shampoo, hair gel, make-up, and feminine towels, all of which HISC has also been able to provide to our youth.

Several clients have quoted things like “Thanks for keeping me fit,” “wow, I didn’t even have this at home,” and “I really needed a new pair of shoes; mine have holes” during their stay at our shelter and are excited to leave with name brand clothing such as Vans, Nike, and New Balance shoes. Our staff here at TSC has also seen an increase in confidence in our youth’s ability to ask for basic necessities when they learn of all the items our facility can provide to them; sometimes even quoting, “I didn’t know you had this stuff to give, I also need _____.”

Furthermore, our staff here at TSC mentioned that our youths become excited when learning that not only can we provide the basic needs but also provide items such as full bottles of hygiene products, nail polish, and make-up; All of which most of our kids do not expect us to have in stock but thanks to HISC we can! Our clients have said things like, “wow, do I get to keep this?” “I’ve never had this before” and become so grateful to know that they can leave with the items HISC provides.

The items HISC provides have helped our youth establish and identify their needs, but it has also aided our staff in building rapport and making our clients feel safe during their stay, so much so that sometimes our clients don’t want to leave our facility! Thank you so much, HISC, for continuously serving our youth with so many goodies!