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July 27, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
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KINSHIP CENTER/SENECA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Kinship Center/Seneca Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in December 2015. The FFA has three licensed offices in Orange County and provides services to the County of Los Angeles and County of Orange DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide adoption, guardianship, emancipation from foster care with connection to one or more adults, to provide social work services and ongoing education and training to foster parents."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency, and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In March 2016, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in each of the focus areas; therefore, a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was not required.

If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR
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Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
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Ken Berrick, CEO, Kinship Center/Seneca Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

KINSHIP CENTER/SENECA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Kinship Center/Seneca Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in December 2015. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the QAR focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR focuses on the FFA's service delivery during the most recent 90-day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, three certified foster parents and three service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 31 DCFS placed children in 18 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 14 months and their average age was eight. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review.

QAR SCORING

The FFA received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, and interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Safety - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6 - Optimal Safety Status	The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	6 - Optimal Status	The focus children have optimal permanency. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and all team members have evidence will endure lifelong.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	5	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 30 days.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	6 - Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections	Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	5 - Good Engagement Efforts	To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	6 - Optimal Supports and Services	An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are substantially helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5 - Good Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.	5	5 - Good Teamwork	The team contains most of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks and/or plans together.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5 - Good Tracking and Adjustment Process	Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in December 2014 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus areas of Safety and Teamwork. In December 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in these areas. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the areas of Safety and Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	5	6	5	6
2015-2016 Scores	6	6	6	6

In the area of Safety, the FFA provides a highly safe living environment as the FFA ensures that protective strategies are in place to ensure the focus children's safety. Specifically, the FFA has trained their FFA Social Workers how to complete home inspections of the certified foster homes and how to identify behaviors that may pose a safety risk to the focus children. The certified foster parents reported that they are also provided with training by the FFA on different topics to assist them to identify risky behaviors and that they work with the FFA Social Workers by reporting incidents immediately for necessary action, if needed. The FFA interviews the focus children individually to assess their safety and checks on their supervision by the certified foster parents. The FFA was not previously in compliance with the reporting and submission procedures or protocols for reporting special incidents. The focus children reported that the FFA staff and their certified foster parents make them feel safe and comfortable. DCFS CSWs reported that they were pleased with the FFA and had no concerns regarding the FFA's ability to provide a safe environment.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide a good quality of stability to the focus children. The FFA supports the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by providing the FFA Social Workers with effective training towards permanency and placement stability. The FFA staff matched the focus children with certified foster parents that are supportive of their culture. The FFA makes every attempt to recruit qualified certified foster parents that have the knowledge and ability to provide the focus children with good care and educational support. Due to the FFA's efforts, none of the focus children have experienced any placement disruptions. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters such as the FFA staff, therapist and certified foster parents. The focus children reported that they were happy living with their certified foster parents and wanted to be adopted by them. The focus children's DCFS CSW and Adoption DCFS CSW worked closely so that the FFA staff could approve the certified foster parents for adoption. The DCFS CSWs reported that the certified foster parents have demonstrated that they provide permanency and stability for the focus children. During the QAR, all of the focus children were successfully adopted by their respective certified foster parents.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA scored at the optimal level. The FFA ensures that visitation occurs for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs. Two of the focus children are placed in the same home with some of their siblings and the FFA facilitates visitation with siblings who are placed in different certified homes. The FFA staff and certified foster parents demonstrate that they go above and beyond to support and ensure that the focus children remain in constant communication with their siblings and family members/NREFMs that are approved by the court. One focus child has alternate weekend visits with his sibling and his certified foster mother is also pursuing adoption of this focus child's sibling. The FFA certified foster parents assist the focus children in making phone calls to maintain communication with their siblings. The certified foster parents include the focus children in family birthday celebrations and special holidays so that the focus children feel part of the family and they build a close relationship. The FFA Social Workers provide visit monitoring and transportation services, if needed. The FFA maintains records of visits and communicates the status of the visits to the DCFS CSWs.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	4	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	6	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that

are being made on their behalf. The FFA makes consistent efforts to build a rapport with the focus children, their DCFS CSWs, certified foster parent and appropriate family members/NREFMs. The FFA Social Workers communicate with the team members and engage them to contribute support to the focus children. The FFA continues to assess the focus children's needs and provides intervention for them to function effectively in daily settings. The FFA Social Workers and the FFA child care counselors continue to share and communicate with each other to assess the focus children's status on a daily basis to ensure that interventions and strategies remain appropriate. If interventions and strategies require modification, the case plan will be adjusted to meet the focus children's needs. The FFA Social Workers and child care counselors will also review case notes and the previous Needs and Services Plan (NSP) to ensure that the focus children are linked to any additional services they may require. DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA stays in regular contact with them in regards to the progress and adjustment of the focus children's case goals. The focus children reported that they have a good relationship with their certified foster parents. The FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, and therapist are communicating to support the focus children's achievement of their case plan goals. The certified foster parents report their observations of the children's progress at home and in school and the FFA ensures that all the documentation is collected regarding each focus child and reviewed by the DCFS CSW. The FFA ensures that the DCFS CSW is updated on the focus children's status and their needs.

In the area of Service Needs, the FFA scored at the optimal level. The FFA provides a good array of services to the focus children and intervention strategies identified in the case plan and NSPs match the services that are being provided. The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. The focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized. The FFA Social Workers request Individual Educational Plans, when needed and Mental Health Services approved by the focus children's DCFS CSWs. The FFA Social Workers ensure that the certified foster parents follow the DCFS CSWs recommendations for the focus children. The FFA ensures that the focus children receive the services needed and extracurricular activities, such as art classes, swimming, sports and traveling. One certified foster parent took the child to Hawaii and other places. The FFA also connected the focus children to in-home support counseling provided by a community based organization. One focus child has additional therapy with a specialist to address his learning disability. The three focus children are receiving tutoring from the school; one focus child is placed with the certified foster parents who are teachers and they provide this focus child with tutoring at home as well. As a result of the FFA's efforts, the focus children are doing well in school and have made significant progress. The focus children reported that they enjoy the activities that the FFA provides for them. The DCFS CSWs indicated that the focus children's needs are met and placed as a priority by the FFA staff and certified foster parents. The focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized by the FFA. The FFA Social Workers ensure that the certified foster parents follow the DCFS CSWs recommendations for the focus children. The FFA ensures that the focus children receive the services needed.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA implemented the 2014-2015 QIP to enhance the quality of care provided to the placed children in the FFA. Previously, the FFA was not conducting team meetings or contacting family members/NREFMs to provide status

updates on the focus children. The FFA has developed a plan to ensure that the FFA Social Workers include the certified foster parents, the focus children, DCFS CSWs and other relevant parties to team meetings. The FFA staff contacts the team via e-mails and telephone calls. The FFA administrator is actively involved in ensuring that the team members are developing case plans and NSPs for each focus child to ensure that the goals are met and that any issues or problems with communication in the case will be relayed to the FFA supervisor. The FFA supervisor will ensure that the concerns are resolved efficiently and in the best interest of the focus children. The FFA Social Workers, DCFS Adoption CSWs, DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents worked as a team towards the focus children's adoptions.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In February 2016, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the following areas: Licensure/Contract Requirements; Certified Foster Homes; and Maintenance of Required Documentation. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can remain free of Community Care Licensing citations; ensure that special incidents are properly reported and submitted; ensure certified foster parents complete all required training; and that authorization of DCFS CSWs is obtained prior to the implementation of the NSPs.

In February 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas; therefore, a QIP was not required. However, OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation as needed.