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August 11, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

SERENITY INFANT CARE HOMES, INC. 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 Serenity Infant Care Homes Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2016. The FFA has one site located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide the quality foster home for abused, abandoned and neglected infants and children with special emphasis on the care of drug affected infants."

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

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

PBL:KR
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Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
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Jennifer Choctaw, Chief Executive Officer, Serenity Infant Care Homes Inc. Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

SERENITY INFANT CARE HOMES, INC. 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 Serenity Infant Care Homes, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2016. 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 two service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 83 DCFS placed children in 82 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was five, their overall average length of placement was three months and their average age was seven. 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	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and team members have confidence 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	5 - Good Stability	The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting 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	6 - Optimal Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood. Knowledge necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is continuously 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 March 2015 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the area of Safety. In March 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical assistance to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the area of Safety on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

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

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that the FFA had implemented the 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the quality of care provided to the placed children. The FFA has demonstrated that their staff ensures that the placed children are always provided with supervision and that the certified foster parents follow the safety plans to ensure that the placed children are free from abuse and neglect. Previously, the FFA scored below the acceptable minimum score in the area of Safety as one special incident was not cross-reported to the OHCMD and there was a child safety concern due to a lack of supervision to a child with emotional problems which resulted in the child injuring himself. The FFA has trained their Social Workers to ensure that they appropriately report and submit special incidents timely with detailed information describing the incident(s) in full and cross-reporting these special incidents to the OHCMD and all appropriate parties after these reports are approved by their supervisors. The FFA Social Workers were also trained on how

to complete home inspections of the certified foster homes to ensure safety. There is open communication between the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents to ensure the provision of the focus children's supervision and safety and that the focus children's needs are met. The focus children reported that the FFA staff makes them feel safe and comfortable. The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA provides good care for the focus children and they had no concerns regarding the FFA ensuring that the focus children received appropriate supervision and treatment.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide a good quality of services and stability to the focus children. The FFA assists the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by ensuring that counseling services are provided when the permanency goal is Family Reunification. The FFA supports all the focus children in reaching their permanency goals of Planned Permanent Living Arrangement in preparing them for independence by providing youth development services and life skills such as, money management and personal hygiene maintenance. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters such as, their certified foster parents and FFA Social Workers. The focus children have been placed together with their siblings and the FFA is supportive of the focus children's relationships with their family members/NREFMs. The FFA matches the focus children with appropriate certified foster parents so that the children feel accepted and their cultural values are maintained. The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that they were pleased with the children's stability. They also shared that the FFA is providing the children with quality care to meet their permanency plan.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA encourages the focus children to have contact with their family members/NREFMs by providing transportation and monitoring services to facilitate visitation. The FFA ensures that the focus children maintain telephone contact with their family members/NREFMs and that visits occur in a location convenient for all parties. The FFA Social Workers will go above and beyond to ensure that the focus children have visits with their family members/NREFMs. For example, one focus child has additional visits with her maternal cousin apart from her mother and NREFMs and these visits are facilitated by the FFA. The certified foster parents take an active role in ensuring that the focus children remain in contact with their family members/NREFMs by encouraging telephone contact and visitation. The FFA staff, certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs have worked together to assist the focus children in maintaining family connections as well as with their siblings and appropriate NREFMs. The FFA maintains visitation logs, in case visits are missed or cancelled, they can be rescheduled in a timely manner.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

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

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make a good effort to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The focus children reported that they have a good rapport and are engaged with the FFA staff. The FFA continues to build rapport with the focus children, their DCFS CSWs, certified foster parents and family members/NREFMs by maintaining communication with them. The FFA Social Workers communicate via telephone and email to engage the team to contribute their support to the focus children's progress and needs. 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 schedule staff meetings to discuss the children's progress, stability in school and any other service needs. The FFA makes efforts to contact the DCFS CSWs on a monthly basis or more frequently, if needed, to discuss the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and develop goals and any changes to the focus children's treatment plans. The focus children and certified foster parents reported that they and FFA staff works as a team. The FFA administrator works closely with the team to ensure that there is cohesiveness for the team members and the focus children. The DCFS CSWs are included and informed of the team's decisions and the progress of the focus children. The DCFS CSW interviewed reported that the FFA was very good at keeping them informed and engaged regarding the focus children's progress, services being provided, school performance, and information regarding activities that the focus children were involved in their daily activities.

In the area of Service Needs, there continues to be a good array of services to the focus children. Intervention strategies identified in the case plan and NSPs match the services that are being provided to the focus children. The FFA follows the court orders and the DCFS CSW's recommendations regarding treatment and works closely with the focus children's schools to ensure their educational needs are met. The FFA follows through with referrals made by the DCFS CSWs and demonstrates responsibility in linking the focus children to services. Two focus children were referred for an evaluation for additional services; both focus children are now receiving in-home counseling and one focus child is now receiving individual counseling through a community-based organization. One focus child was struggling academically and is now making progress in school with additional tutoring services being provided and one focus child is attending a Montessori School and is provided with advanced education. The FFA encourages extracurricular activities such as music, sports and swimming. One focus child is participating in the school choir and has voice lessons that are being provided by the certified foster parents. The DCFS CSWs reported

that the FFA ensures that the focus children are provided with their emotional and educational needs.

In the areas of Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA staff provides monitoring and tracking of the children's progress and status. The FFA continues to assess the focus children's needs and provides intervention for them to function effectively in daily settings. The FFA Social Worker Supervisors, Social Workers, and certified foster parents review the focus children's status on a weekly basis and work together to ensure that the focus children meet their case plan goals and make modifications when needed. The FFA Social Workers and DCFS CSWs collaborate to develop the NSPs for the focus children. The FFA provides support groups for the certified foster parents and the biological parents, which provide instructions on how to work together to meet the focus children's needs. The FFA provides certified foster parents with additional guidance and ongoing training to be more effective with the focus children's care and needed services. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA stays in regular contact with them in regards to the progress and adjustment of the focus children.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

On February 18, 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirement and Maintenance of Required Documentation. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure that special incidents are appropriately submitted and reported; that the NSPs are completed timely; and the DCFS CSW's authorization is obtained to implement the NSP. On February 26, 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the area of Certified Foster Home. Technical assistance was provided on how the FFA can ensure that the initial and pre-certification inspections/clearances for certified foster parents are conducted according to the guidelines.

The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in each of the focus areas; therefore, a QIP was not required of the FFA. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff has and will continue to provide technical support, training, and consultation as needed.