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September 19, 2017

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
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Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: *for Cynthia McCoy Miller*
Brandon T. Nichols
Acting Director

PENNY LANE CENTERS 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 Penny Lane Centers Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 2017. The FFA has three offices, one located in the First Supervisorial District, one in the Third Supervisorial District, and one in the Fifth Supervisorial District, all of which provide services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide education, support and treatment services that empower others, including the child when appropriate, to make positive life decisions surrounding the care and future of foster children."

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 8 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment. The OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

In May 2017, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Safety. The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report.

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

BTN:KR
NS:pbg

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Ivelise Markovitz, CEO, Penny Lane Centers Foster Family Agency
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**PENNY LANE CENTERS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEAR 2016-2017**

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Penny Lane Foster Family Agency (the FFA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017 in March 2017. 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 focus 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 one service provider.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 281 DCFS placed children in 196 certified foster homes; their overall average length of placement was six months. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 11 months, and their average age was 11. 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) FY 2016-2017 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, interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is six in the area of Safety and five in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p>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.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>5 - Good Safety Status</p>	<p>The focus children have a generally and substantially safe living situation with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children well under usual daily conditions. Protective strategies are generally operative and dependable.</p>
<p>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, Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>5 - Good Status</p>	<p>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.</p>

PENNY LANE CENTERS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
<p>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.</p>	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
<p>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.</p>	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.

The OHCMD conducted the previous QAR of the FFA for FY 2015-2016 in May 2016, and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In August 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of that QAR and to provide technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Safety. Based on the following information, it appears that there is a continued need for improvement in the area of Safety on their FY 2016-2017 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5
2016-2017 Scores	5	5	5	5

During the previous QAR, the FFA scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety, due to child safety-related concerns. Two child abuse and neglect referrals were investigated by the DCFS Emergency Response (ER) CSWs and they were both deemed Inconclusive. The first referral alleged that a certified foster parent had pulled the arm of a placed child because the child refused to eat and that on occasions he yelled at the placed child. The second referral was generated on a different certified foster home. It was alleged that a placed child was a victim of physical abuse by an unknown perpetrator. To address these concerns, the FFA developed the FY 2015-2016 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that included the implementation of a Parent Training Academy to provide more robust training to all certified foster families. In addition, the FFA's internal Quality Assurance Department developed an updated audit sheet, follow-up standards, and improved systems for data analysis related to outcomes on reports of all serious incidents involving the placed children.

During the current QAR, the focus children reported that the FFA provides a safe place to live and that the FFA staff and their certified foster parents make them feel safe in their certified foster homes. The certified foster parents appeared attuned to the needs of the focus children and the focus children appeared well adjusted and very comfortable in their placements, as evidenced by their positive interactions with their certified foster parents. The focus children each reported there is always an adult present in the certified foster home and that they have developed a trusting relationship with their certified foster parents. The FFA administrator reported that the FFA Social Workers are trained to ensure ongoing safety of the placed children and on conducting periodic home inspections of the certified homes. The DCFS CSWs did not report any safety concerns.

Although the focus children reported feeling safe and welcomed in their certified foster homes, the FFA scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety. It appears that the FFA has not implemented the FY 2015-2016 QIP. There were continued child safety concerns, as a referral was generated to the Child Protection Hotline alleging Sexual Abuse of one placed child by her sibling who is placed in the same certified foster home. The FFA Social Worker has collaborated with the DCFS CSW and the certified foster parent to implement a safety plan. The DCFS Emergency Response (ER) CSW investigated the allegations and closed the referral as Inconclusive. During the investigation, all placed children denied any abuse; however, it also became known that one frequent visitor to the certified home had not been fingerprinted. The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) also received this referral and will be conducting a supplemental investigation.

In the area of Permanency, the FFA continues to provide good permanency to the focus children. The FFA ensures that the FFA Social Workers and the certified foster parents are aware of the focus children's permanency plans and regularly discuss their permanency goals and options. The permanency plan for all three focus children is Adoption. The focus children's respective certified foster parents are supportive of their current permanency plan and transport the focus children to every dependency court hearing. The permanency plan for the first focus child is adoption by a family member/NREFM that lives out of state. For the second focus child, DCFS is currently making efforts to identify an adoptive family; the focus child is currently participating in adoption fairs and the DCFS Permanency Partners Program (P3) is actively involved in identifying significant players in the child's life. The second focus child's certified foster parent has expressed a strong desire to assume legal guardianship if attempts to pair the focus child with an adoptive parent do not produce a positive outcome. The permanency plan for the third focus child is adoption by her current certified foster parents. The third focus child refers to her certified foster parents as "mommy and daddy" and the certified foster parents have reported that the focus child is already part of their immediate and extended family. The FFA staff continues to assist all the focus children in reaching their permanency goal by keeping their certified foster parents informed and by sharing updates from the DCFS CSWs regarding the focus children. The focus children reported that they are happy with their current respective certified foster families.

The FFA continues to provide a stable home environment for the focus children. The focus children reported feeling secure and doing well in their current certified foster homes. All three focus children stated that their best confidants are their respective certified foster parents. The first focus child reported that he regularly talks with his certified foster mother

about how his day went and that his certified foster mother and the FFA Social Worker always give him good advice. The second foster child reported that her certified foster parent is always there for her and encourages her to always be attentive to her personal safety and do well in school. The focus child added that she is getting straight As in all her classes. The third focus child reported that her certified foster parents always encourage her to pursue her interests, which are reading and painting. The focus child also reported that she feels supported and encouraged by her FFA Social Worker, whom she trusts.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA has made efforts to support the focus children’s visitation plans. The first focus child has had no recent visitation with any family members/NREFMs, due to court orders. However, the FFA was supportive of the one visit the focus child had with his prospective adoptive parent, who resides out of state. The FFA Social Worker and his certified foster parent also encourage him to maintain regular telephone contact with his prospective adoptive parent. The focus child reported that the phone calls help him maintain the strong bond with his prospective adoptive parent. The second focus child currently enjoys monitored visits with her family members/NREFMs. Her certified foster parent transports the focus child for the visits while the FFA Social Worker assists by monitoring the visits. The focus child reported enjoying the visits and feeling great after each visit. She reported that her family members/NREFMs often cancel the scheduled visits but that she is supported by her certified foster mother who talks to her and encourages her to call and maintain contact with them. The third focus child has no visits with family members/NREFMs at the current time due to court orders. The focus child’s certified foster parents have fully incorporated her into their extended family and she participates in all family events and gatherings. The focus child reported that she is happy that she now has many new “cousins” because of her placement in the current certified foster home.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2016-2017 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement and Teamwork, the FFA continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in the decision-making process. Based on the QAR interviews, it appears that the FFA staff maintains good communication and works to ensure good rapport between the team members, which include the certified foster parents, the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, their family members/NREFMs, and key supporters. The FFA staff further reported making efforts to engage the DCFS CSWs during monthly visits, inviting them to team meetings, and encouraging them to phone in during monthly team meetings, if unable to attend. The focus children reported having positive relationships with their certified foster parents and their assigned FFA Social Workers and identified them

as people they can count on to advocate for them. The FFA staff works closely with the staff at the focus children's school. The certified foster parents stated that they are active participants in every team meeting and are encouraged to share their unique insight into their respective focus children. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA staff invites them to attend team meetings and keeps them informed of the focus children's progress.

In the areas of Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA is continuously assessing the strengths and needs of the focus children, providing a good array of services to meet their needs, and ensuring that the appropriate services are implemented. Intervention strategies identified in the case plans and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) match the services provided to the focus children. All of the focus children were linked to individual therapy at the time of their placement. According to their respective FFA Social Workers, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs, the second and third focus children have shown positive behavioral changes and are no longer receiving individual therapy. The first focus child continues to receive individual therapy and his certified foster parent reported that the focus child has shown improvement in dealing with separation anxiety. All three focus children are doing well in their certified foster homes and attend public school. The FFA provides case management services and ensures that the focus children are up to date on their medical and dental examinations. The FFA continues to assess the focus children's needs and provides intervention for them to function effectively in their daily settings. The focus children's progress is tracked on a daily basis by their certified foster parents and communicated to the FFA Social Workers. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA stays in regular contact with them regarding the focus children's progress and any modifications to their treatment plans or goals. Changes to the focus children's treatment plans are documented in the focus children's NSPs and updates are shared with the DCFS CSWs.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

At the time of the QAR, the CAD had not completed their FY 2016-2017 Contract Compliance Review of the FFA. The OHCMD will meet with the CAD and the FFA upon the completion of the review to discuss and provide the FFA with technical support, if findings are noted.

In May 2017, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support on methods of improving in the area of Safety. The FFA submitted the attached QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ivelise Markovits, MFCC

MEMBER
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Child Welfare League of America
Human Rights Campaign- All Children, All Families Seal
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Patricia Bolanos-Gonzalez, OHCMD Quality Assurance Manager
DCFS Out-of-Home Care Management Division
9320 Testar Ave., Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731

RE: Corrective Action Plan (CAP)

July 13, 2017

Dear Ms. Bolanos-Gonzalez,

Findings: The FFA scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety. There were continued child safety concerns, as a referral was generated to the Child Protection Hotline alleging Sexual Abuse of one placed child by her minor sibling who is placed in the same certified foster home. The FFA Social Worker has collaborated with the DCFS CSW and the certified foster parent to implement a safety plan. The DCFS Emergency Response (ER) CSW investigated the allegations and closed the referral as Inconclusive. During the investigation, all placed children denied any abuse; however, it also became known that one frequent visitor to the certified home had not been fingerprinted.

In response to the above Quality Assurance Review (QAR) findings, Penny Lane is enhancing its safety measures by implementing the following Corrective Action Plan items:

- 1) To enhance safety measures, by July 28, 2017 all Penny Lane Social Workers will be trained on fingerprint clearance and frequent visitor requirements. Attached please find a Memo that outlines the Penny Lane policies, procedures and expectations for each Penny Lane Social Worker to review and sign. This memo includes information that outlines Penny Lane policy requiring Penny Lane Social Workers to discuss visitors to the certified foster home and how often they visit, during their monthly one-on-one home visits. In addition, Social Workers were trained to discuss visitors to the home with each child during their quarterly unannounced visits.
- 2) To further enhance safety measures, during the month of August 2017, Penny Lane Centers will train all families on the fingerprint clearance and frequent visitor

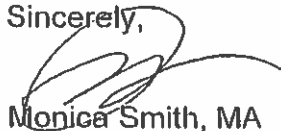


requirements. Attached please find the Question of the Month which outlines the fingerprint clearance and frequent visitor policy. This document is to be reviewed by the Penny Lane Social Workers with every resource family that has a child in their care. It is a training tool designed to ensure compliance of resource families and provides families with on-going individual training credits.

- 3) Along with training of all resource families and social workers, Penny Lane Centers incorporates an annual review or performance evaluation of each family upon re-approval. A Supervisor or Quality Assurance Specialist meets one on one with each family to evaluate their performance throughout the year. Attached please find the Resource Parent Performance Review as well as the Guidelines on Required Criminal Record Clearance form which is reviewed and signed annually with each family.
- 4) Each office Regional Director is responsible to ensure that each action item is properly complied with and that all guests and frequent visitors are fingerprint cleared as mandated in the policies and procedures.

Please contact Monica Smith at 818-894-3384 ext. 4821 or via email at msmith@pennylane.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Monica Smith, MA
Regional Director and Quality Assurance Manager

Cc: Manyahlhal Adenow

