County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

Board of Supervisors
HILDA L. SOLIS
First District
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District
SHEILA KUEHL
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

December 29, 2015

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

PUB by Diane Iglesias

KINSHIP CENTER/SENECA FAMILY OF AGENCIES 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 Kinship Center/Seneca Family of Agencies Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in December 2014. The FFA has three licensed offices located in the County of Orange. The offices provide services to County of Los Angeles and County of Orange DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to provide adoption, guardianship, or 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 7 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Safety and Teamwork.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In May 2015, 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 areas of Safety and Teamwork.

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

PLB:EM:KR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Ken Berrick, Chief Executive Officer, Kinship Center/Seneca Family of Agencies
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

KINSHIP CENTER/SENECA FAMILY OF AGENCIES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Kinship Center/Seneca Family of Agencies Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in December 2014. 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 Reviewer focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the Reviewer 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 social workers, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was five 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 2014-2015 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 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 ensures that the child is free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	5	**Good Safety Status** - The focus children are generally and substantially avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and are generally free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement.
Permanency - The degree to which the child is living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the child reaches adulthood, or the child is in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the child, the FFA staff, caregivers and CSW, support the plan.	5	6	**Optimal Status** - The focus children have optimal permanence. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting about which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker and all team members have evidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA ensures that the child's daily living, learning, and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions and known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption.	5	5	**Good Stability** - The focus children have good 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 12 months and little likelihood of future disruption.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFM have regular and, where appropriate, increasingly frequent visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff working with the child, biological family, extended family and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to focus on the child's strengths and needs.	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA, staff, DCFS CSW, certified foster parent and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent, efforts are being used by the FFA staff as necessary to find and engage the focus children, caregivers and other key people. Useful accommodations are used to provide scheduling times and locations based on convenience of appropriate parties. Engagement efforts are made frequently and on an ongoing basis.
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff involved with the child, work toward ensuring the child's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the child's unique needs.	5	5	**Good Supports & Services** - A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially match intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. A usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriately used, and seen as generally satisfactory. The array provides an appropriate range of options in the selection of providers.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff involved with the child and family understand the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and underlying issues and services 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. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are substantially recognized and well understood. Necessary conditions for improved functioning and increased overall well being are generally understood and used to select promising change strategies.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the child and family have formed a working Team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.	5	4	**Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork** - The Team contains some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and plans together; at least one face-to-face family team meeting has been held to develop plans.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree, to which the FFA staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is 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 child status and service results to the team are occurring. Generally successful adaptations are based on a basic knowledge of what things are working and not working for the focus children.

STATUS INDICATORS

(Measured over last 30 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Permanency (6 Optimal Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provides optimal permanence for the focus children. The primary permanency goals of adoption were appropriately developed and processed in a timely manner. The FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency. The FFA and the Certified Foster Parents are supportive of the focus children's permanency plans. The certified foster parents interviewed are committed to the permanency plan of adoption for all the focus children. Meetings, which include the FFA social worker, the DCFS CSWs, the focus children and the certified foster parents, are regularly held to discuss the permanency plan for each of the focus children. The focus children are aware of their permanency plan, as well as the steps being taken to ensure timely permanency. The FFA also ensures the focus children are visiting with their family members and other important people in their lives to ensure these bonds are maintained and are lifelong.

The DCFS CSWs and the DCFS Adoption Social Workers all agree that the focus children will remain placed in their current home. The focus children and the FFA are fully supportive of the permanency goals.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: All three focus children have good stability in their current Certified Foster Homes and at school. The focus children's placements have been stable with no disruptions. In efforts to ensure a good placement match with the certified foster parents, the FFA assessed each focus child's needs prior to placement. The FFA provides the certified foster parents with support groups and ongoing training to assist them in enhancing their parenting skills and establishing positive relationships with the focus children.

The focus children are adjusting well in their respective certified foster homes. The focus children reported that they feel safe, comfortable, and well cared for, and each focus child reported being happy in their home and having a good relationship with their foster parents.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: Although the focus children are not required to have family visits because they have either been legally freed for adoption or parental rights being terminated, the FFA and the certified foster parents still work with the biological families, if appropriate, and assist in arranging visitation with the focus children. For example, two of the focus children still visit with their birth parents weekly. The FFA staff or the certified foster parents monitor the family visits. The certified foster parents also provide transportation to the visits. The FFA staff, certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs have worked together to assist the focus children in maintaining family connections with their parents, as well as their siblings and appropriate relatives. The FFA maintains logs regarding visitation, and if missed, visits are re-scheduled in a timely manner.

What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement)

Safety (5 Good Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA makes good efforts to provide a safe environment for the focus children. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times in their current certified foster homes and have not shown any behaviors of concern. The focus children are free from harm in their placement and other settings, including at school and in the community. The DCFS CSWs reported there were no safety issues regarding the focus children or their current Certified Foster Homes.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) reported that it did not receive or investigate any referrals regarding the FFA within the last 30 days.

The FFA stated that safety of the children in their care is a key focus. Although the FFA had complied with child abuse reporting requirements and reported incidents of abuse to the Child Protection Hotline during the past 30 days, the QAR revealed that the FFA had not fully complied with procedures and protocols for submitting Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database. The FFA had documented four incidents that had occurred; however, SIRs were not submitted via the I-Track database and they were not cross-reported to the OHCMD. The SIRs reported the following: two medical/health visits; one incident of self-injurious/aggressive behavior by a child; and one incident of abuse, which had occurred at a child's previous placement. None of the SIRs were related to the focus children.

Appropriate efforts, care, and supervision were taken by the FFA and the certified foster parents to address the incidents related to the SIRs submitted. Immediately after the deficiency was brought to the FFA's attention, the FFA completed a check of their computer system to ensure technical issues were not the cause of the failure to submit and cross-report the SIRs. The FFA also reviewed SIR reporting guidelines and its tracking procedures. Additionally, the FFA re-entered the missing SIRs into the I-Track database.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The FFA developed a strong rapport with and consistently engages the key persons in the focus children's lives. The focus children felt that their concerns were heard and they felt respected. The focus children reported that they could confide in various team members whenever they needed to discuss their issues of concern.

A certified foster parent reported that he makes sure to communicate with the focus child regularly to ensure that the focus child's needs are being met. He reported improvements in the focus child's behavior and in their ability to accommodate the needs of the focus child due to the input of formal and informal supports from the DCFS CSW and the FFA. A certified foster mother expressed being

supported by the FFA and having a good working relationship with the FFA social worker. This certified foster parent further reported a high level of confidence in the FFA social worker due to her timely assistance.

The DCFS CSWs interviewed agreed that engagement efforts are made on a regular basis and reasonable efforts have been made by the FFA to engage all team members. They further reported that the FFA social workers are in constant communication with them to keep them informed of the progress of each focus child.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides the focus children with a good and substantial array of services and extracurricular activities to help the focus children make progress toward their planned outcomes.

Each of the focus children reported that their certified foster parents are supportive and that they are receiving academic support services to help them do well at school. The focus children also participate in organized sports or other activities to enrich their lives and keep them active in the community.

One focus child reported that his certified foster parents provide a very stable home environment where education is a priority. He has improved his math grade and is currently earning good grades in every subject. This focus child is enrolled in an after-school one-on-one tutoring program, which has resulted in improved behavior and attention in the classroom. The focus child also had participated in a summer gymnastics class and performed very well. The focus child is currently on the school soccer team.

The second focus child attends individual therapy services to address past trauma, as well as to address anxiety regarding more recent experiences and changes in his life. The focus child enjoys playing soccer, reading, playing video games, attending church with his certified foster family and regularly attending Sunday school and midweek activities at the church.

The third focus child is doing well in school and is earning good grades. The certified foster parents work closely with the focus child's teacher and they communicate with the teacher on a weekly basis to discuss the focus child's progress. This focus child is in the school band and is also learning to play the saxophone.

The FFA ensures that the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported. In addition, the FFA utilizes a team approach to develop Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The FFA social worker collaborates with the DCFS CSWs, DCFS Adoption Workers, the focus children and the certified foster parents to develop NSP goals for the focus children. All focus children reported that the services they are receiving are appropriately meeting their needs.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The focus children's functioning, challenges, earlier life traumas and support systems are generally understood by all parties involved. The FFA assesses the focus children's needs and provides interventions to assist them in addressing their traumas and improving their behaviors. The services and supports are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals. Educational supports such as tutoring are provided, and conferences with the teachers, if necessary are held. Participation in extracurricular activities is encouraged by the FFA.

The FFA determines if the focus children are making progress towards their NSP goals by observing if there is a reduction in behavioral incidents, occurrences and acting out behaviors exhibited by the focus children, or if there is an improvement in their school grades. Progress is also determined by observation and reports from the certified foster parents. The FFA provides services required to help the focus children and supports them to make their placement successful. The FFA seems to have a good assessment and understanding in the functioning and support systems for the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they are made aware of the focus children's progress toward achieving their NSP goals, as the FFA social worker maintains regular contact with them via telephone or e-mail. They also stated that they inform the FFA of the focus children's needs, such as medical, dental, education, and mental health services, and the FFA does a good job in ensuring the needs are met.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: Intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. The focus children's needs and progress are regularly evaluated and services provided are modified accordingly. The FFA is aware of the on-going and changing needs of the focus children and modifies the needed services accordingly. The FFA Regional Director and FFA social workers ensure that barriers encountered and any strategies modified are communicated with key members of the team. Adjustments are promptly made when it is determined that specific services are not producing the desired results. For example, one focus child had recently been having tantrums more than usual and it was taking the child a while to deescalate. The FFA referred the focus child to a counseling program through the FFA Resource Center. Another example of the supports and changes made by a certified foster parent in the best interest of one focus child, was relocating to a larger home so that the focus child and his five siblings could be placed together. The FFA also assisted the certified foster parents with relocation efforts, obtained more car seats and high chairs, and connected them with respite care services for support.

In addition, the FFA uses NSPs to closely document and monitor each focus child's progress toward their treatment goals.

What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team, consisting of the DCFS CSWs, DCFS Adoption Workers, FFA social worker, certified foster parents, the focus child and therapist has formed a fair, dependable working system that has ongoing discussions and works collaboratively in case planning. In essence, the focus children's respective teams appeared to be attuned to the children's strengths and needs and are providing supports, such as adoption planning, tutoring programs, extracurricular activities, and/or counseling services to address identified issues related to the focus children's treatment goals. The FFA social worker, focus children and certified foster parents meet weekly during their visits to discuss concerns regarding the focus children and monthly with the Regional Director and/or other treatment team members to address each focus child's strengths, needs, resources, and their efforts to help the focus children progress and succeed in their foster homes.

Although the focus children have regular contacts with the key people in their lives, it appears that all the team members have not participated in a meeting in which all the team members have come together to discuss the needs of the focus children. The DCFS CSWs reported that regular team meetings are not held on behalf of the focus children. Communication regarding the focus children's progress, service needs or goals occurs through the telephone conversations or via e-mail contacts, or face-to-face with the certified foster parents when the DCFS CSWs conduct monthly visits with the focus children.

Additionally, there seems to be a disconnect between one of the certified foster parents interviewed and the focus child's DCFS CSW, of which the FFA had no knowledge. The quality assurance reviewer followed up with the FFA to determine what efforts could be made to address the matter and to ensure good teamwork. The QAR revealed that there is a need for ensuring that there is a collaborative working relationship between all team members to ensure that the needs of placed children are being met.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In January 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review, which consisted of the following: discussion of compliance with Title 22 Regulations; review of procedures for utilizing the I-Track database to submit timely NSPs; and addressing concerns related to timely and comprehensive NSPs.

In May 2015, OHCMD 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 the areas of Safety and Teamwork. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

KINSHIP CENTER®
A Member of Seneca Family of Agencies
18302 Irvine Blvd., Suite 300, Tustin, CA 92780 | 714-979-2365 | www.kinshipcenter.org

June 11. 2015

Jui Ling Ho
Children's Services Administrator
Out of Home Care Management Division
Quality Assurance Section
9320 Telstar Ave.. Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731
Office:(626) 569-6886
Fax: (626) 572-2367/8

Quality Improvement Plan

Dear Ms. Ho.

Please find the Quality Improvement Plan requested on May 26. 2015.

1) Safety – During the reporting period Kinship/Seneca did not submit SIR's to the itrack system and cross report to OHCMD. After the program review. Kinship/Seneca went back to re-enter the data starting in April 2014 that included a cross report to OHCMD.
   - New systems have been put into place by training with social workers and internal oversight by supervisors within Kinship/Seneca to make sure that every SIR is now properly submitted to the itrack system and cross reported to OHCMD. It is not anticipated that this will be a concern going forward.

2) Team Work – Kinship/Seneca has made changes to ensure that we are working as a team with DCFS CSW's. In taking a team approach. all members of the multi-disciplinary team that interact with the child in care are considered important partners in making sure that there is a strong supportive plan for success.
   - Team meetings will be requested quarterly by the Kinship/Seneca Social Worker and locations will be determined based on the need of the child in care.
   - Team meetings will include everyone salient to the case for goal setting, problem solving for the child or any issues related to the case.
   - Kinship/Seneca social workers will communicate with team members by phone and email and this contact will be documented in the child's file and quarterlies.
   - Prospective adoptive parents and the children in care will be supported by Kinship/Seneca to communicate with all members of the team in a timely manner that ensures a collaborative working environment.
   - Outcomes will be measured by all members of the child's team including the child on a quarterly basis and new goals will be established.
   - Any issues or problems with communication in the case will be relayed to the Kinship/Seneca supervisor to make sure that concerns can be resolved quickly and efficiently.

Thank you for your input to our program. We appreciate your assistance in keeping us on track. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Los Angeles DCFS to serve the children of Los Angeles County. Please let us know if there is additional information that you require.

Sincerely,

Sherie Dechter, LCSW
Adoption Program Director
Kinship Center, A member of Seneca Family of Agencies