

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Facility Inspection Report

Facility Name:	Family Life Center
Address:	The girl's main campus, school and on campus housing at 3480 Bodega Avenue and the girl's offsite campuses of 518 Orchard Lane, Penngrove CA 94951
Phone	Main office: (707) 795-6954
Contact Person	Jim McNulty, Program Director, cell phone 657-9929

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Jody Edwards and Hank Mattimore
Date of Inspection	11/10/14
Date of Last Inspection	6/14/13
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	3480 Bodega: 11/5/13; 518 Orchard: 8/29/08

**S= Satisfactory or exceeds N.I. = Needs Improvement/corrective action*

INSPECTED	S	N.I.	Comments
Grounds	X		FLC takes very good care of their properties. All the properties are in rural Petaluma settings with large inviting yards. The girls assist in outdoor maintenance both at the satellite homes and at the main campus. The girls have an outdoor maintenance space they are totally responsible for, they weed, they plant, and they are encouraged to really own that space.
Building Exterior	X		All in excellent condition
Living Room	X		Very comfortable, homey rooms which are nicely decorated
Kitchen	X		Clean and orderly, Girls have one night a week they are responsible for cooking, can do by self or can get help.
Bedrooms	X		Typically two students per room but if there is room, it is allowed to have one child per room. All bedrooms were very clean and orderly. Roommates are decided based on age and personality. They can't be greater than two years apart to be in the same room.
Bathrooms	X		Clean
Fire Safety	X		All in order
Food	X		Refrigerators are stocked with lots of good healthy food
Health Services	X		FLC is a certified mental Health level 12 facility. The focus is therapeutic treatment for addiction and mental health and education. Every child has individualized therapy at least once a week, group work three times a week and family therapy. The whole program is structured for the kids to look more deeply into themselves. We pay attention to behaviors but we look for the source. We work with the whole person and that includes nutrition, sleep, therapy, school and more.
Medications	X		All locations have secure and locked medication cabinets
Recreation (on site)	X		We observed the girls doing PE on a sports court. On the main campus there are areas for volleyball and basketball. There is a field adjacent to the property they use for organized Olympics events. At the offsite house we observed a ping pong table and a TV which we learned is only for approved movies and video games.

Outings (off site)	X		There are weekend outings. Recently they held a Harvest Fair festival with pumpkin carving, face painting etc. They can go to a movie, shopping, trips to the museum, to the beach, to parks with picnics, hikes along the ocean. Once a summer they go on a sailing trip, a donor donates that. They also do wilderness trips in the summer, backpacking, both boys and girls separately
Education/ Classrooms	X		There is a Western Association of Schools and College (WASC) accredited High School named after Larry M. Simmons on each of main campuses. There are two main classrooms on site and a couple small rooms for subjects such as transitions. These are students who will be leaving FLC soon either because they graduate high school or because they are leaving to go home. They create their own transition plan and if they are a senior, they do a presentation.
Mail/Phone	X		Kids can receive mail and send mail. They may not use email. Phone - a time is reserved for them to call out and it is a private space. On the main residence the phone number is dialed for them, at the FLP, it is their integrity. Phone privileges increase based on phase of each child
INSPECTED	S	N.I.	Comments
Family Contact	X		Families visit weekly if they are local or they skype with them if they are out of town. Periodically they travel to their home. For the most part all families do want to work with us. Parents are involved on a weekly basis. Kids can call home daily if they want to. When a kid gets better, we transport them home or to the airport. When they turn 18, they have go home or to a transition house.
Discipline	X		We have been told that the plan for discipline is to fit the circumstances. It's positive discipline, it's about teaching. Punishment sends the message of don't get caught. For example, if discipline is needed for natural impulse problems, fitting it to the circumstances includes redirecting that energy, and having them do push-ups. We saw the list of push-ups that are required for an entire list of infractions. For example 50 pushups are required if the child is not up by 7:00am. FLC asks the students to take responsibility for their behavior and talk about it at circle. Language is important, the students stand up and own it and speak to the behavior. They make it positive, not punitive. The students earn points every day, they start with zero every day and have hundreds of opportunities to earn points, no points are lost. It is really a different mindset.
Library	X		On this trip we did not see the library, but there were books by the sides of the beds of all the girls. We have seen the library in the past and it is quite extensive.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Family Life Center is a comprehensive Level 12 residential program serving boys and girls aged 13 - 18. It was founded in 1978 and provides on-site school and treatment in a family style setting. The main campus includes the staff offices, the school and the residential program for girls. Additionally, there are three separate satellite homes for girls. This girls program is referred to as the Bodega Program. It is entirely separated from the boys' sites. Today there are 15 girls and 16 boys in residence, 5 of their 31 children from Sonoma County and there are 60 full time staff for these 31 kids. The average length of stay is 9 months to 18 months.

FLC is in process of being acquired by Seneca Family of Agencies out of San Leandro. Seneca Family of Agencies was founded in 1985 by advocates who were determined to more effectively meet the needs of children in group homes and foster family care. Seneca established itself as an innovative leader in the provision of unconditional care through a comprehensive continuum of school, community-based and family-focused treatment services for children and families who have experienced high levels of trauma and are at risk for family disruption or institutional placement of the children. In 2011, a strategic merger with Kinship Center formed Seneca Family of Agencies. In 2012, Canyon Acres Ranch was incorporated into the Orange County programs of Kinship Center, expanding the local base of mental health, wraparound, child placement, family finding and professional and parent training services.

Today Family Life Center and Seneca are blending their resources.

In the past year or so FLC had gotten to the point of revenue not keeping up with expenses due to decreased enrollment levels, decreased educational funding and no mental health billing. Therefore about a year ago they decided to bill Medi-Cal for mental health services. If a child is not Medi-cal eligible the school district will pay for the services that are needed.

They have always been providing mental health services to their residents and their families, but now they are actually billing for those mental health services.

FLC and Seneca have a long standing and mutually respectful relationship. In fact FLC trained some of the Seneca staff. When Susan LeMieux, the founder/director of FLC approached Seneca's CEO, Ken Berrick, to discuss merging. We were told that

Seneca is not an organization trying to fold in lots of group homes; they simply made an exception for FLC because of that mutual respect and long standing relationship. We asked about changes that might be made to FLC's program due to the blending and were told that they would stay the same but ultimately FLC may have the kids here shorter amounts of time, but services will follow the kids to their homes.

Youth Interviews

TOPICS	S	N.I.	Comments
Evaluation of Program	X		<p>Comments we heard about the program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I believe this program has saved my life. I've had trouble with self-harm."</i> • <i>"It has helped me in certain ways, but reversed my progress in other ways. It helped me stop self-harm. But it's made my mind think it's so wrong that I can't even see blood or a scratch on me anymore."</i> • <i>"Certain things have been addressed and worked through, but the last couple months it's gotten harder. It could be because of a med change and it could be because I'm almost 18 and have to make some hard decisions. There are lots of limitations."</i> • <i>"Being here I've lost a lot of childhood because we have to be so appropriate, and we can't just be stupid with our friends. Like when I go on a home visit and see my friends, one of them tried to teach me to "____" and I had all these messages going through my brain about how inappropriate that was."</i>
Counseling/ Therapy	X		One of the girls said, <i>"I've had therapists my entire life and this is the best one."</i>
Physical Education	X		
Safety	X		<p>We asked if the girls felt safe here. Their answers were unanimously they felt safe physically. From the staff they all felt safe. Where they felt unsafe was in these comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Emotionally, it is intense here and intense things happen and I feel unsettled from that, I'm really sensitive. When other students are disrespectful, I feel a little emotionally unsafe. I try to keep to myself."</i> • <i>"I've had other students put their face in mine and tell me to go kill myself. I don't trust other students. The staff feels safe."</i>
Health Services	X		
School	X		
Food	X		<p>Comments we heard about food are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"It's nutritious but sometimes repetitive."</i> • <i>"For me, I despise fish and I wish there was an alternative."</i> • <i>"On the site we have a chef prepare everything, at the FLP's you get to choose the meals."</i> • <i>"They won't let you be a vegetarian unless you come into the program as a vegetarian."</i> • <i>"There's definitely enough food."</i> • <i>"Food proportions are ok, except at breakfast, it is not enough then, but the fruit that sits out makes it ok to last"</i>
Snacks	X		They seemed to really appreciate the new rule about having fruit available at all times.
Library	X		
Chores	X		
Money	X		

Mail / Phone	X		
Levels (privileges)	X		At the Family Living Phases(FLP) which is the offsite house, they like that not every minute is structured which is what it feels like at the main site.
Laundry	X		
Grievances	X		<p>We asked, if you could change this place, what would you change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I wish we could drink energy drinks."</i> • <i>"I wish we could go to off campus visits sooner, I had to wait five months to visit my mom because you have to be at a certain phase to go home. yet I understand why they do it because I know home like the back of my hand and I would have booked."</i> • <i>"There are a lot of rules I'd like to change, I understand them, but I still would like to change them. Like the clothing rules about no skulls or bits of blood on t-shirts. I miss wearing my favorite rolling stones t-shirt. It has one tiny skull on it. if one person interprets something in the wrong way then it's banned."</i> • <i>"I don't like that you can't wear sweats, even on a Friday night, you have to wear jeans or pants of some kind."</i> • <i>"I am a Mormon and I wish I could go to Mormon church, there is only a Christian church available."</i> <p>We asked if they had an avenue to give this kind of feedback? The answer was, "Yes but if you suggest something, it might get changed, but not until after you're gone."</p>
Activities & Entertainment	X		
Program Length Understood	X		
Staff evaluation	X		We asked the girls if they were listened to by the staff. They all said yes and two had some qualifications to their yes's. One girl thought that the staff didn't listen to her very well but her therapist did. Another girl said yes I am pretty well heard, but a couple staff members don't listen too well, but there's a lot going on here.
Discipline	X		
Allowance	X		
Clothes	X		
Medications	X		
Drugs/Alcohol			
Probation officer			

ADDITIONAL NOTES & SUGGESTIONS BY YOUTH

of Youth Interviewed: 3

The interviewees were less positive about that program than the interviewers have experienced in the past. They all said the program has helped them, they have learned to be respectful to others and to themselves. They all said they saw themselves as much more mature than in the past. In the past we have experienced the youth saying in totally positive answers how much they liked from it, they have grown from it and had trouble coming up with things they would have changed. Perhaps these students were just being more honest. Regardless, these interviewers believe the youth have definitely been helped by the program and have grown from it.

Family Life Center is a strong program and is making a tremendous difference in the lives of the youth it serves. As interviewers we came to the inspection visit worried about how the change to Seneca would affect the strength of the program. We have years of seeing it as an exceptional program. After hearing from Jim, we are less worried (see comments above) and will watch it over the years as it blends with the services offered by Seneca.

Signature of Commissioner

Next Inspection Recommended: _____ **or** **X** **Annual Inspection**

Date

Chair, Juvenile Justice Commission

cc: Honorable Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court
Commissioner of the Juvenile Court
Probation Department, Chief of Probation
Department of Social Services
State of California, Community Care Licensing
Juvenile Probation Director
Facility Inspected