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August 26, 2014

Honorable Lesley D. Holland, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 201022
Stockton, CA 95201

Dear Judge Holland:

Response to 2013-14 Grand Jury Report

Pursuant to Section 933 and 933.05 of the California Penal Code, Attachment A, attached to this letter in the response to the report on *Fostering Administrative Efficiency (Case No. 0413)*.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Monica Nino, County Administrator, at 468-3203.

Sincerely,



Robert V. Elliott
Chairman, Board of Supervisor

Attachment A

cc: Board of Supervisors
County Administrator
County Counsel
Director of Human Services Agency



Fostering Administrative Efficiency
(Case No. 0413)

Response from San Joaquin County Human Services Agency's Office:

1.0 Training for New and Continuing Foster Parents

Finding F1.1:

The County-sponsored training for new foster parents is outdated.

Response to F1.1:

Agree.

The Agency agrees with the finding that County-sponsored training for new foster parents (pre-licensure) is outdated.

Finding F1.2:

Annual training for continuing foster parents is repetitive.

Response to F1.2:

Agree.

The Agency agrees that the annual training for continuing foster parents contains some repetitive courses from year-to-year.

Finding F1.3:

The county does not offer nor identify support groups to assist foster parents.

Response to F1.3:

Agree.

Recommendation R1.1

No later than November 1, 2014, the San Joaquin County HSA is to review and update its training programs for new foster parents as well as its annual training for continuing foster parents to assure relevance, interest to foster parents and a broader breadth of topics.

Response to R1.1

Will be implemented, but not within recommended time-frame.

The recommendation to update training for new foster parents is in the process of being implemented. A complete revision to pre-service foster parent training, which currently consists of 30 hours was initiated by the Agency in March of 2014.

The goal is to complete one training module revision per month and to implement the new curriculum in the Fall of 2015.

The recommendation to review and update annual on-going training available to foster parents is and will continue to be under constant review and ongoing subject topics will be updated as appropriate to current regulation and practice as well as foster parent input.

- 1) The courses offered to existing foster parents through Delta College are basic augmentations of their pre-service training and are essential to the growth and development of the most recently licensed foster parents. Additionally, there are updated policies and practices pertaining to these topics that may be discussed during the annual trainings, which is informative for continuing foster parents.

2) The Agency sends information pertaining to community or HSA sponsored trainings (often under the auspices of University of California Davis) to foster parents. Foster parents are also encouraged to avail themselves of other local community resources for their continuing education requirements.

3) Foster parents are both able and encouraged to access alternative forms of continuing education through various on-line resources which provide a wide range of topics. According to Licensing Staff, most foster parents choose to take the online annual trainings, due to convenience.

San Joaquin County foster parents are approved to take online trainings on the following two websites:

<http://fosterparents.com/>

Offers over 145 courses

<http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/>

Offers 47 online courses

Recommendation R1.2:

No later than November 1, 2014, the San Joaquin County HSA is to identify community resources for support groups or provide support opportunities for foster parents.

Response to R1.2:

The Agency will seek to contract with local community resources by November 1, 2014 to establish a Foster Parent Support group for county foster homes.

2.0 Lack of Productive Two-Way Communication Between HSA Divisions and Personnel

Finding F2.1:

When social workers do not file a form SOC 158A in a timely manner it may result in unrecoverable overpayments to foster parents.

Response to F2.1:

Agree.

Finding F2.2:

Lack of information shared among the divisions responsible for foster care makes it difficult to track and hold social workers accountable for submitting timely payment requests.

Response to F2.2:

Agree.

Recommendation R2.1:

No later than November 1, 2014, the Eligibility Payment Unit and the Children Services is to develop an information sharing and tracking system to identify and hold social workers accountable for submitting timely payment requests.

Response to R2.1:

Has been implemented.

Although the error rate is extremely low (.0001%) relative to the Foster Care budget), the Grand Jury report correctly identified that Administration was not always aware of how many late submissions occurred and which staff were responsible.

Beginning July 1, 2014, the Foster Care Eligibility Supervisor began providing the Children's Bureau Deputy Director a list of all unrecoverable foster care overpayments to include identification of the amount and the staff person responsible.

3.0 Required Monthly Visitations by Social Workers

Finding F3.1:

There is a lack of immediate detailed documentation of foster care site visits by social workers. This could result in problems reviewing or investigating the accuracy of information about problems that exist in a foster home.

Response to F3.1:

Partially Agree.

Agency policy instructs case-carrying staff completing in-home visits with children to enter the details of that visit within 7 days into the Child Welfare Services Case Management System.

In the event that a case-carrying social worker has a concern regarding the safety of a child or receives a complaint from the child or other person regarding the care or treatment of the child, the social worker contacts the assigned Licensing social worker as soon as possible by telephone, email or in person of their concerns so that the Licensing social worker may initiate an investigation. The entry or non-entry of the case-carrying social worker's information into CWS/CMS would not affect the timeliness of response since the protocol for notification of concern to the Licensing social worker is through direct notification from the case-carrying social worker.

Finding F3.2:

A lack of immediate detailed documentation may weaken the accuracy of the SafeMeasures Report.

Response to F3.2:

Partially Agree.

Lack of timely data entry only impacts the date by which an accurate of report can be drawn from SafeMeasures. The SafeMeasures reports are statistical and historical by nature, in that they track completion of tasks numerically but not qualitatively. It is used as a tool to identify trends, as opposed to real-time day-to-day oversight. The data that is entered is only compiled by the software every three to four days even if entered daily.

Recommendation R3.1:

No later than December 1, 2014, HSA is to develop a standardized form or checklist to be used by social workers following their monthly on site visits with foster children.

Response to R3.1:

The Agency will construct and publish a set of guidelines outlining expectations for monthly visits with foster children by December 1, 2014.