

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Group Home Inspection Report

Facility Name:	Family Life Center
Address:	Kuck Lane – Boys Program
Phone	On File
Contact Person	Larkin Sealy, Program Director

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Gina Crozier, Jody Edwards
Date of Inspection	3/23/2015
Date of Last Inspection	5/15/2014
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	

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

Action

INSPECTED	O	S	N.I.	Comments
Grounds	x			Rural setting, large yards each intended for different activities, such as school break areas, small group discussion areas, outside eating areas, exercise areas etc.
Building Exterior	x	x		The school and main building that houses the offices is great, housing for the boys, is older and could use a bit of updating.
Living Room	x			
Kitchen	x			We walked through the kitchen on the main campus and the youth were cleaning it up. It is a large space that looks like it could easily serve the youth that reside here.
Bedrooms	x			Boys worked to keep their bedrooms fairly neat.
Bathrooms		x		There were no hand- towels available and toilet paper was on the floor. In the back house the bathrooms were messy and smelled a bit. Their policy is to have the youth take their towels to and from the bathroom when they shower. And each youth is assigned cleaning responsibility and we were told that someone didn't do their assignment this morning.
Fire Safety --Extinguishers	x			The dates the fire extinguishers had been checked were up to date.
Fire Safety --Smoke Alarms	x			
Fire Safety --Evacuation Plan	x			
Food	x			Chef was great. He obviously cares a lot about the food and tries to involve the teens in the process. Food is prepared to satisfy many tastes,

			including vegetarian, gluten-free, etc. The same food that is prepared for the youth is also provided to the administrative staff in their administrative building. We were provided this lunch and got a chance to speak with the chef. He and the director feel it is important for staff to eat the same meals. Additionally the director told us that given their rural setting, staff could not easily go out for their lunch break and that the conversations that happen during their staff lunches are almost always in service to the youth.
Emergency Supplies			
Health Services	x		To provide mental health services for the youth, there are two licensed MFTs, 2 MFTs working toward their license and one additional person all working 40 hours a week providing individual therapy once a week, family therapy once a week family group therapy once a month and crisis counseling as needed. They have shifted one of their policies in that contact with the family used to be phase dependent and now its kid dependent. Before a youth had to achieve Phase 3 and now they can have family contact from the beginning of their stay. They tell us that they have received good feedback from the youth and the families from that change.
Medications	x		We observed medications being checked out of a locked hall closet. They appeared to be well organized with a good security system.
Recreation (on site)	x		There seemed to be a lot of activity with basketball and lacrosse happening with most of the boys.
Outings (off site)	x		We were told that there were two trips in the summer to the mountains. These are up to ten-day adventures and there are photos on the walls of these trips. Boys can earn the right to be involved with community activities.
Education & Classrooms	x		<p>There is a school on site. Just in the past month FLC has decided to combine the girls and boys at this school. Prior to this for many years, they had the girls go to school at their own site. They have combined them because most youth when they leave will go to a coed school and they want to help them practice the coed experience in a supportive environment. The other reason is that combining them yields greater resources and allows that when a youth leaves the FLC residential environment, they might still be able to stay in the FLC school if that is the right thing for the youth. The school is a very nice new building. Classrooms appear to be well supplied and colorful. Girl's homeroom needs a bit more of their own decorations. Each of the three classroom has a capacity of 12 students and they move from classroom to classroom throughout the day keeping the girls together in one classroom, but enabling the girls and boys to mix during breaks. FLC believes that they see a better success rate overall in the academics because it is tied in to the program.</p> <p>In their school they can take students that have special education needs beyond the capacities of public schools, thus the cost of paying for the education is paid by the district the child resides in.</p>
Mail/Phone			
Discipline		x	This is a phase based program utilizing points and privileges with a focus on the positive. One drawback to the system seemed to be that doing chores seemed to be a voluntary as the boys told us that there are rotating

				chores and some do them and some do not. And according to the boys there is no incentive to volunteer.
Library			x	There was no library that we were shown. There are also almost no books available in the common rooms. Some individual students had personal books. There are many popular series and books that cannot be read by the students. Series that are available are not complete and often very juvenile.
Program		x		They are moving from a passed based program of five phases to three phases. As well they have changed from talking about transitioning out of FLC from where it was before to the day they arrive.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

This is a time of transition for Family Life Center as it blends with Seneca. It was apparent in the staff transitions, staff interviews and observing the physical changes. There has been a 50% turnover rate experienced in the past year that is highly unusual for FLC. They believe the reason is the transition to a different style of service plus a change in the leadership (the ED of 30 years left as they merged the organization). Going from a residential based program, to a transitional 6-9 month placement with the goal of moving the teens into wrap around services, is a definite change from the previous goals of the previous Family Life Center. It will be interesting to note how effective this change will be, how much it will affect the teens, and what the eventual outcome for the teens as they transition into their young adulthood. What we were told is that they believe that in the past and with the average rate of stay 12-18 months at FLC, they had transformative experiences but worried about whether those transformations would translate into the real world. With Seneca's experience in wrap around services, they want to decrease the average length of stay to somewhere between 6 months and 12 months with the goal of finding people who are committed to the kids outside of the FLC residence.

In terms of the boys program, they plan to transition out of the offsite house which is today an incentive for earning increased phases where they can live with more privileges, to having just the main campus which houses 12 boys. We also learned that FLC has moved out of what used to be the main site for the girls (3480 Bodega Avenue) and subleased it to Seneca so that it now houses the Seneca staff in Sonoma County. They have kept the Orchard lane properties and the Jewett property for the girls. The Orchard Lane property is now the main site for the girls.

Youth Interviews

TOPICS	O	S	N.I.	Comments
Evaluation of Program		x		Each youth commented that this has been a really good place for them overall, but then they mentioned that there are some students here now who are acting out and making it unsafe for them.
Program Understood	x			
Levels (Privileges)	x			
Grievances	x			
Discipline	x			
Staff Evaluation	x			One boy said, "I feel like a staff member is the mother I never had." "I was not valued by my family, and I am valued here.
Health Services	x			

Counseling/Therapy		x		Although the boys both said they liked their therapists, they were very definite that they disliked the way therapists would bring up conflicts with other house members at the group meetings. The therapists would also confront the boys and make them discuss things they had admitted that they did when they had come back from a home visit. This seems to be a definite and possibly negative change from the universal way therapy is done. Both young men felt this, although put in terms of confidentiality being the whole group only, was difficult and made a certain level of distrust in the therapeutic relationship.
Chores & Allowance	x			They earn allowance and some we were told that some use it to buy expensive athletic shoes.
Laundry	x			Children have to do their own laundry. In fact there are coin operated washers and dryers and while they are given the coins, this teaches them what they will face in the real world.
Clothes	x			We observed lots of shoes and clothes in the bedrooms.
Food	x			They commented that the food is catered to people's individual diets; there is no microwave food. They like the fact that the rule of silence is gone at mealtime. They also suggested that it would be nice to have desserts more than once a week. They understood the programs reasoning for the lack of desserts but they wanted them more often.
Snacks	x			We observed bowls of fruit out during non-snack or meal time
School		x		Boys thought the school's core curriculum was IEP focused and not enough for them. On the other hand, the math and science part was customized to where the youth was and they liked that. In fact one boy told us the teacher had ordered extra school texts because of his interest area.
Library			x	See library comment above
Activities & Entertainment		x		They would have liked more PE equipment and more variety of it and a well maintained field. There are lots of holes in the field and they can get hurt running and falling in them.
Money				

ADDITIONAL NOTES & SUGGESTIONS BY YOUTH

of Youth Interviewed: 2

Statement from the boys, included things like:

- This place shelters kids from what happens in the real world, but teaches you how to deal with those real world situations.
- I've been in a bunch of programs but I like this one the best.
- The hard part is the structure and having to deal with emotions.
- I don't like the times I have to express things in circle.
- Being here is a very nurturing and loving place.
- This is a place for me to go to live on my own, I really haven't changed.
- I wish they had another Family operated home for independent, independent living.

Inspection Summary

There is a beautiful main building and school, with evidence of much community involvement in the creation. The staff, without exception, was friendly, helpful, and seemed to truly care about the boys. The excellent reputation that Family Life Center has always held is hopefully going to continue with the merger into Seneca. In the process of the many changes that have and will occur, we will be looking for the best outcome for the residents as they mature into the next phase of their lives.

Gina Crozier
Inspection Commissioner

Next Inspection Recommended: _____ or x Annual Inspection

Mary Cone, Chairperson

cc: Honorable Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court
Commissioner of the Juvenile Court
Probation Department, Chief of Probation
Sonoma County Family Youth & Children's Services
State of California, Community Care Licensing
Facility Inspected