

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency



353 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335

DATE: November 17, 2020

TO: Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Robert Menicocci, Social Services Agency Director *RM*

SUBJECT: **Off-Agenda Report Responding to Questions related to the Welcoming Center and Licensing.**

At the October 6, 2020 Board meeting, Supervisor Ellenberg requested Administration to provide responses to some questions regarding the Welcoming Center and the Continuum of Care. (Item no. 11)

1. *What concrete steps does DFCS plan to make towards “achieving timely permanency” and children not spending “significant time at placements that do not meet their needs” that requires the Welcoming Center to be with Seneca for three more years?*

The Welcoming Center will serve all children who are in-between placements. This could include children newly removed from their parents care as well as children who experience placement disruptions. Counties will continue to require this type of service so long as children who are removed or experience placement disruptions are not directly placed in a new home. The County’s new continuum of care includes several new placement options—including treatment foster care and enhanced treatment foster care—all of which will ensure children are only placed in homes that meet their needs. The Welcoming Center, either with Seneca or DFCS, will not be a substitute for a placement.

2. *If the Welcoming Center becomes a licensed facility, would it lead to more children staying overnight? How long has it taken Seneca to obtain a license in the past?*

If the Welcoming Center becomes a licensed facility, it will not lead to children staying overnight. The license decision is needed to satisfy the State’s requirements; however, the program design will continue as stated in the full report, regardless of licensing. DFCS continues to work closely with CDSS and Community Care Licensing (CCL) to get facility licensed. CDSS and CCL understand that the County is not building a new shelter, and they agree with DFCS’s stated goal of eliminating congregate care. The program statement for a Welcoming Center license will match the goal to not have any child in the facility longer than 24 hours, with an actual goal of having a child in the facility for no more than 4-6 hours. This is a new use of a licensure option for the State, which is very interested in partnering with the County to assess whether its continuum of care model may have implications statewide.

Seneca reports it has completed a full-licensure process with the State in under four weeks. CDSS and CCL are confident in stating they would expect this process to take three to four weeks.

3. *What concrete steps are available for the “roadmap to permanency”?*

The concept of the continuum of care is to expedite entry for each child into the treatment continuum that will continue after placement. Therapeutic foster homes, while a separate intervention from the Welcoming Center, will utilize similar interventions and supports. This will allow children to transition between the Welcoming Center and any treatment foster care setting with minimal disruption to the child.

Any opportunity to expedite the de-escalation and stabilization process for a child who has experienced a removal or placement disruption increases the likelihood of a timely and appropriate follow-up placement. Timely engagement in the treatment process can also lessen the likelihood of further disruptions. These factors can lead to expedited and increased permanency for children and youth.

4. Does the Seneca contract pull away resources that can help prevent removal, stabilize placements in current foster homes, and exit children from the system with permanency?

No. The County's overall continuum of care will provide additional stabilization services for resource parents. By having access to appropriate treatment level placements, DFCS would also expect positive impacts on permanency outcomes for children. Seneca, as part of the County's improved continuum of care, will help increase permanency. DFCS's Prevention Bureau continues to work with community partners on creating additional prevention services and supports.

5. What is CDSS likely to do around temporary shelter facilities for youth in the dependency system? What options are available to the County long term?

CDSS is still directing counties to move away from non-treatment foster care, such as shelters, and exploring programs that improve services statewide that support children in care. The County has implemented several new placement options in the last few months and is continuing to explore programs that will expand and improve its continuum of care services program.

c: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board