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December 28, 2015

To: Supervisor Hilda Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

pls by Diane Sylvia

WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER 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 Westside Children's Center Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2015. The FFA has one licensed office located in the Second Supervisorial District. The office provides services to County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to provide interdisciplinary resource that provides crucial support to our community by uniting and strengthening families so that all children can achieve their optimal growth and development and reach their full potential in the safety of permanent and nurturing families."

The QAR looked at the status of the focus 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 8 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Teamwork.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In July 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 area of 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
Heather Carrigan, Executive Director, Westside Children's Center FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER 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 Westside Children's Center Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2015. 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 placed children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three certified foster parents, two FFA social workers, and one FFA administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was 4, their overall average length of placement was 7 months and their average age was 5. 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	6	**Optimal Safety Status** - The focus children are optimally and consistently avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and is 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, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - Focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, FFA/GH staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure life-long.
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 substantial 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. Only age-appropriate changes are expected in school settings.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally 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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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 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.
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 matches 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, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory.
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 are 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.
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; face-to-face family team meetings are held periodically and at critical points to develop plans.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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)

Safety (6 Optimal Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA's administration ensures that children feel safe in placement by ensuring that the FFA social workers complete weekly home visits; talking to the children privately; and being available to the Certified Foster Parents (CFPs) 24 hours a day with an on call duty worker. Additionally, the FFA ensures that there is training and support groups available to the CFPs. Two of the focus children had limited verbal capacity due to speech delays and were unable to provide statements. The third focus child reported feeling safe in her current placement. She feels comfortable talking to her foster mother and knows that she can express her concerns. The focus child stated that there have been no safety concerns while being placed in her current Certified Foster Home (CFH). All three focus children appeared well adjusted and very comfortable in their placement with their CFPs.

All three DCFS CSWs reported that they had no safety concerns regarding the FFA's CFHs. The FFA staff and DCFS CSWs report that the focus children are in safe living environments with caregivers that are very reliable, engaged and dedicated to protect the children at all times.

The FFA did not submit any Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via I-Track database system over the last 30 days. In addition, Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) did not conduct any investigations on any of the certified foster homes associated with the FFA.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provided substantial permanency for the three focus children. Two of the focus children are in homes where the key people believe that the relationship will endure and the permanency goals are supported.

The first focus child is receiving family reunification services; however no concurrent plan has been developed if reunification fails, as the team is committed to the plan that the focus child will reunify with the father. Prior to placing the focus child in her current CFH, the FFA ensured that it would be a good match in the event that family reunification should be unsuccessful. The CFP stated that she supports the plan of reunification and would maintain contact with the biological parents while caring for the focus child. The CFP also stated that she is aware that there are other potential family members being assessed for a placement resource and to provide permanency for the focus child and she supports the plan. The child was not verbal and therefore unable to provide a statement.

The second focus child's permanency plan is adoption. The DCFS CSW indicated that she communicates with the FFA social worker by email and she provides an update on everything that is going on in court to the FFA social worker. The FFA staff helps support the focus child's permanent plan by ensuring that the focus child is linked to therapy on the adoption process and the CFP stated that she has began discussing adoption with the focus child. The DCFS CSW, FFA social worker and the CFP reported that everyone keeps communication open and permanency goals were updated as often as needed.

The third focus child's permanency plan is also adoption. The FFA social worker reported working very close with the Adoption CSW and is helping prepare the focus child for adoption by discussing the plan with him during home visits. The DCFS CSW stated that collaborating with the FFA social worker was very helpful because they work well together and communication is good. The focus child's CFP reported that she attends therapy sessions with the focus child to assist in the discussion of planning for adoption and to help the focus child process his feelings.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for the three focus children and there have been no placement disruptions over the past 30 days. The focus children are comfortable in their CFHs. The third focus child reported having everything that she needs in her placement. All of the DCFS CSWs indicated that the focus children are stable in their placements and that the CFPs are supportive and attentive to the children's needs.

Each of the CFPs reported feeling that the FFA is very supportive. The CFPs are provided with adequate information prior to a child being placed in the home, which helps make them aware of past trauma and triggers. The CFPs reported that having knowledge about the child's history prior to placement has helped them to handle issues as they arise. According to the CFPs, the FFA works with them to assist them in establishing positive relationships with the focus children.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA is providing generally effective family connections for the focus children. At the time of placement, the FFA staff obtains information from the DCFS CSWs on the

visitation orders of the court for the focus children. The FFA seeks to arrange visitation with all parties as required by the court order and facilitates most visitations at the FFA headquarters. The FFA staff and CFPs have arranged a plan to decrease disappointment with the focus children when the parents do not show up for the visit. This includes the FFA staff contacting the CFPs when and if the parents come to the office for the visit prior to the CFPs driving to the agency with the child.

Two of the focus children have monitored visits with their parents. The first focus child has separate monitored weekly visits with her parents. DCFS staff monitors the focus child's visits with one parent and the FFA social worker monitors the visits with the other parent. The DCFS CSW stated that she, the FFA social worker and CFP share information regarding how the visits went. The second focus child has monitored visits with her parents once a week; however visits are not consistent. The third focus child no longer has visitation with his family due to termination of parental rights, this focus child is in an adoptive placement.

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 and consistently engages the key parties in decisions that are being made for the focus children. The FFA has built a good rapport with the DCFS CSWs and other team members including representatives from the UCLA Ties program.

One CFP stated that she makes sure to communicate with the focus child regularly to ensure that her needs are met. Another CFP expressed being supported by the FFA and acknowledged that she has a good working relationship with her assigned FFA social worker. The third CFP added that the FFA social worker was always available and supportive and the DCFS CSW was responsive.

The DCFS CSWs and the FFA social worker reported that they have ongoing communication. The FFA social worker also reported that the FFA has ongoing communication with their CFPs.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides the focus children with a substantial array of supports and services to help the placed children make progress toward their planned outcomes. According to the FFA social worker, they work primarily with the focus children and their CFPs to determine which supports and services are needed to assist the focus children in addressing their needs and achieving their case plan goals. After the supports and services are decided, the FFA sends the suggestions to the DCFS CSW for their input. The two focus children with the permanency plan of adoption are receiving therapy through UCLA Ties program to assist them in adjusting to their plan of adoption and to support them in their placement. Focus child one and two were referred and linked to speech therapy to assist them with their speech delays.

One of the DCFS CSWs stated that she works with the FFA social worker and CFPs in developing and identifying the needs for her focus child and that everyone works together to ensure that the appropriate referrals are made. The other two DCFS CSWs indicated that although the FFA staff is

very efficient in linking children to resources, they are not involved in the development of treatment goals.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized and understood. The FFA social worker stated that determination whether a placed child is meeting their goals is done through constant observation of the progress the focus children are making toward their goals. The DCFS CSWs and the CFPs stated that the FFA always kept them abreast as to any updates regarding the focus children. The DCFS CSWs and the CFPs reported that the services being provided appear to assist the focus children and improve their functioning and well-being.

The focus children were observed as being attached to their CFPs and are thriving in school. Therapy offered by the UCLA TIES program, which the two focus children with a permanency plan of adoption is receiving, is helping the focus children enhance their overall functioning. The first and third focus children have made significant improvement in not only their speech, but in their behavior as well. The first focus child continues to thrive in preschool and is functioning at a higher level in her CFH. The second focus child has adjusted well to her placement and is showing academic improvement.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA has provided intervention strategies, supports, and services that are generally responsive to changing conditions for each of the focus children. The FFA utilizes various tools including the Needs and Services Plan (NSP); talking with the focus children, CFPs and the DCFS CSWs; and documenting weekly progress in a log designed for the purpose of monitoring and tracking the services provided for each of the focus children. Weekly monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the FFA social worker, DCFS CSWs, CFPs, and the focus children.

The CFPs and the FFA social worker discuss the progress of the focus children during home visits. The FFA social workers ask the CFPs for input when updating and modifying the intervention strategies and supports for placed children. When it is determined that a placed child is not meeting their goals, the FFA may modify the goals or put additional services in place to assist the focus children in meeting their goals and provide additional support to the CFPs.

The CFPs reported that the FFA was very supportive in helping them link the focus children to the appropriate resources including therapy, medical, dental appointment and school. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA social worker keeps them updated and they are emailed the focus children's NSPs and that the CFPs share information regarding the progress of the focus children during their monthly home visits.

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 some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. There is constant communication between the FFA social worker and the DCFS CSWs. The team consists of the DCFS CSW, the FFA social worker, CFPs, therapist and the focus children. For focus child two and three, there have been no face-to-face team meetings where the focus children and all of the key team members are present. The third focus child participated in two team meetings that occurred during joint home visits made by the DCFS CSW and the FFA social worker; the CFP reported that the team worked well together and had great communication.

Two of the DCFS CSWs reported never participating in a team meeting regarding the focus children. The DCFS CSW for the third focus child reported participating in two meetings where the child, CFPs and FFA social worker were present at the CFPs' home.

Although the team has formed a working system that has ongoing communication, works collaboratively and contributes to the development of the focus children's case plans; the team is minimally adequate in their working systems because face-to-face team meetings with the focus children and all key team members, including family are not occurring.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In July 2014, OHCMD FFA and Group Home Quality Assurance Section provided the FFA with technical support based on Agency needs including training on SIR, related to submitting SIRs timely and ensuring that they are comprehensive; writing NSP goals that are Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Timely; and completing timely, comprehensive Certification and Recertification Background Search Requests.

In July 2015, 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 area of Teamwork. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide on-going technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER
Working Hand in Hand to Change Lives

August 7, 2015

Aiyana Rios, MSW

DCFS – Out of Home Care Management Division

9320 Telstar Ave., Suite 216

El Monte, CA 91731

Re: Quality Improvement Plan

Dear Ms. Rios:

Attached please find the Quality Improvement Plan pertaining to the FFA Quality Assurance Review (QAR) - Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

1.) **Deficiency** – 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.

Quality Improvement Plan – Whenever possible our social workers make every effort to meet the CSW's face to face at a home visit in the beginning of every case. Many times the CSW's choose a monitored visit to complete their monthly visit with the child and birth family. It is not unusual that our workers do in fact have in person contact throughout the life of a case. While face to face team meetings with all key team members present is not currently a contract requirement, it is a positive way to build relationships and strengthen communication between all involved. The FFA will make an effort to invite all team members to a meeting at key points throughout the case to keep everyone involved informed and an active part of the case planning process.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Shari London Wolvek, M.A.

Director of Foster Care & Adoptions

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