County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

Board of Supervisors
HILDA L. SOLIS
First District
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District
SHEILA KUEHL
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

February 23, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC. 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 Children's Institute, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2014. The FFA has one licensed office located in the Fourth Supervisorial District. The office provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to promote the well-being of vulnerable children by healing those harmed by abuse or neglect, helping families provide safe, nurturing homes and the resources their children need to thrive, and advancing innovative programs and policies that contribute to the welfare of children."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed 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 June 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
Mary Emmons, Executive Director, Children's Institute, Inc. FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC. 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 Children's Institute, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2014. 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 focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, and three Certified Foster Parents (CFPs).

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was one, their overall average length of placement was 13 months and their average age was 12. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children in this review 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 are free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement but rarely may present a behavior that has low or mild risk of harm.
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** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
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 and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting over the past 12 months with none in the past six months.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptance Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

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's 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. The array provides an appropriate range of options in the selection of providers.
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. Necessary conditions for improved functioning and increased overall well-being are generally understood and used to select promising change strategies.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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 lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together; at least one face-to-face team meeting has been held to develop plans.
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 focus children's 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 safety status was optimal as the FFA provided a highly safe living situation for the focus children. The three focus children are well protected by their CFPs and they are free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation in their current Certified Foster Homes (CFHs). The FFA social workers reported that they conduct inspections of the CFHs on a regular basis, ensuring that CFPs are able to provide a safe living environment for the focus children. During monthly home visits, the FFA social workers also interview placed children privately to ensure their safety.

The CFPs reported that they received training from the FFA on different topics to assist them in recognizing behaviors that may pose a safety risk to placed children. The CFPs also stated that if placed children present risky behaviors, they inform the FFA social workers and they work together to develop a safety plan to ensure child safety. The CFPs also stated that as a safety precaution, the FFA also provided them with a 24-hour emergency contact number for the FFA staff, law enforcement and Psychiatric Mobile Response Team.

All of the focus children reported that their CFHs were a safe place to live and they are free from harm in their placements and other daily settings, including at school and in the community.

Each of the focus children stated that they can talk with their CFPs if they were hurt. The first focus child stated that he feels safe in his CFH because he is watched by his CFP. The second focus child indicated that his CFPs are very caring and he feels safe because there is always adult supervision. The third focus child stated that she has emergency numbers and knowing that her CFP can help her makes her feel safe. The DCFS CSWs reported that there were no safety issues regarding the FFAs CFHs.

The FFA submitted one Special Incident Report (SIR) via the I-Track database during the last 30 days. The SIR did not involve the focus children. The FFA complied with protocol as the SIR submitted was timely, cross-reported to appropriate parties and in accordance with SIR guidelines. The SIR designated as assaultive behavior involved a placed child experiencing severe mental health issues. A safety plan was immediately put in place by the FFA and CFPs to ensure the safety of the family and the placed child. The FFA ensured that the placed child and CFP involved in the SIR received appropriate follow-up services and support in a timely manner. According to the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section, there were no substantiated referrals or open investigations during the last 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provided substantial permanence for each of the focus children. The FFA demonstrated good efforts to reach the permanent plans requested by DCFS. The FFA fully supports the goals in place for all of the focus children. The FFA social workers, CFPs and DCFS CSWs work together to determine appropriate supports to address the permanent plans for the focus children.

The first focus child is receiving family reunification services with a concurrent plan of Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA). The focus child stated that he did not know what his permanency goal or plan was. The second focus child is receiving family reunification services with his mother. The concurrent plan is PPLA. The focus child stated that the FFA is supportive of his plan and that he maintains visits with his mother. The third focus child has a permanent plan of PPLA. The FFA social worker has referred the child to the Life Skills program to assist her with enhancing self-sufficiency skills. The FFA social worker is helping the focus child with selecting colleges of interest, as her goal upon transitioning out of care is to attend college. The focus child has indicated that she wishes to remain in her current CFH until she transitions out of care.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided good placement stability for the focus children. The FFA was able to assess each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure that a good match with the CFPs was made. The FFA provided the CFPs with support groups and training. The FFA social workers visited the focus children weekly to assess their well-being. The FFA provided CFPs with adequate information prior to a child being placed with them. According to one of the FFA supervisors, the FFA provides respite care when needed to avoid potential placement disruptions.

The FFA worked with their CFPs to assist them in establishing positive relationships with the focus children. The focus children maintained positive relationships with their CFPs and their placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions.

The focus children reported that they liked their CFHs because they felt safe, comfortable, and are treated as a member of the family. When asked if there was anything that could be improved about their placement, the focus children stated that nothing could be improved and everything is fine.

The CFPs shared some of the methods that they use to ensure placement stability for the focus children including communicating with the focus children; ensuring that they remain safe and treating them as family. The DCFS CSWs indicated that the focus children have been stable in their placements.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has maintained generally effective family connections for the three focus children. The FFA maintains flexibility with visitation plans by taking into consideration the schedules of the focus children, their family and CFPs. The FFA social workers and CFPs support important connections with placed children and their family members to ensure appropriate visitation occurs. The FFA social workers and CFPs provide transportation and also monitor family visits. In situations where face-to-face contact is not a viable option, the FFA social workers, DCFS CSWs, and CFPs always encourage and support alternative methods of communication in order for the focus children to maintain contact with their families.

Each of the focus children has visits with family members. The first focus child has monitored visits with his father once per week. The visits are monitored by his CFP. The focus child indicated that he likes his visits. The focus child also maintains telephone contact with his father throughout the week. According to the DCFS CSW, the second focus child has unmonitored visits with his mother and sister twice per week. The focus child reported that he enjoys his visits. The third focus child has weekly unmonitored visits with her aunt, as her parents do not reside within the United States. The CFP and the focus child's aunt coordinate the visitation schedule. The focus child stated that she feels good about the visits with her aunt. Although her parents are not in close proximity, the focus child is able to maintain contact, as her CFPs call her parents once per month to allow the focus child to speak with them.

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 and the focus children. The FFA social worker and CFPs maintain communication with the DCFS CSW and provide continual updates on the focus children. The focus children reported that they could confide in various team members, as needed, to discuss their concerns. The focus children reported that they are able to discuss their needs and concerns with their family members,

CFPs, FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs without any problems; they felt their concerns were heard and they were respected.

Good engagement between the focus children and each of their CFPs is exemplified when the focus children were asked who they were able to count on. Each focus child identified their CFPs as someone they were able to count on, in addition to their family.

The DCFS CSWs and CFPs reported that communication with the FFA is ongoing; the DCFS CSWs added that they have good communication and responsiveness from the FFA staff. In addition, the FFA social workers ensure that they engage the focus children, CFPs and DCFS CSWs on a regular basis.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA has a good array of services and supports that match intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs). The FFA provided the focus children with an array of services to help them make progress toward planned outcomes. In addition, the FFA ensures that each focus child receives services that are necessary to meet their needs. Some of the services that the focus children receive include Wraparound services, Life Skills training and individual therapy.

The first focus child receives Wraparound services to assist him with his defiance and disruptive behaviors within the CFH and also in school; through the Wraparound program, he receives counseling services in his CFH on a weekly basis.

The second focus child is doing well in placement and in school. The focus child is not participating in any services. Although he does not currently participate in any extracurricular activities, the focus child was previously involved in a tennis class and stated that his CFPs paid for him to go to tennis classes. The focus child has been encouraged by the FFA social worker and CFPs to consider an activity that he would like to get involved in.

The third focus child currently participates in the Life Skills program to enhance her self-sufficiency skills. Some of the skills being taught include meal preparation, completing laundry, using public transportation, selecting clothes and money management. The focus child participates in college and university information meetings that are held at her school. The FFA social worker has assisted the focus child with identifying colleges of interest and the admission requirements needed for each of the colleges. The focus child also receives individual therapy at school to assist her with making good choices.

All of the focus children stated that they felt that the services they received and the resources available to them met their needs. The FFA social workers, DCFS CSWs, and the CFPs worked toward ensuring that the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented, supported, and were listed on their case plans and NSPs.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: Generally, the focus children's functioning, challenges, and support systems are understood by all parties involved. The focus children's strengths and

underlying needs were assessed by the FFA staff and were recognized and understood amongst team members. The FFA staff indicated that they utilize the focus children's report cards, review NSPs and rely on communication with the focus children and the CFPs to assist in determining the strengths and needs of the focus children. As reported by the FFA staff, they meet with the children and CFPs during visits to assess the focus children's progress. The services and supports such as Wraparound services; individual therapy; and Life Skills training are regularly assessed and modified to ensure that the focus children are making progress towards their case plan goals.

When it is discovered that the focus children are not progressing toward meeting their goals, the FFA social worker discusses this with the focus children, CFPs and the DCFS CSWs. The goals are then modified to meet the children's needs. The DCFS CSWs reported that they review the focus children's NSP goals and provide feedback to the FFA and CFPs. All of the focus children expressed being linked to the services that they needed.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA provided intervention strategies, supports and services that are generally responsive to changing conditions for each of the focus children. The FFA utilized various tools for monitoring and tracking services provided to the focus children including, tracking logs, case notes, quarterly reports and NSPs. The FFA social workers stated that they track the focus children's progress during their regular face-to-face visits to the CFHs. The FFA social workers also track the focus children's adjustment at school.

The CFPs reported that they frequently monitor and support the children's case plan goals. The focus children's progress is always shared amongst team members and includes strategies that are working and those that are not working so that the team members can promptly make the necessary adjustments. The CFPs reported that they attend the focus children's parent conferences at school and obtain information which helps them to identify the focus children's educational needs. The CFP for the first focus child attends the Wraparound Child and Family Team meetings weekly.

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 in each of the focus children's lives. The identified team members include the focus children and their CFPs, DCFS CSWs, FFA social workers and various service providers.

The FFA ensures that there is communication between the FFA social workers, CFPs, and the DCFS CSWs. The focus children and others interviewed for the QAR shared information with each other, were aware of the individuals involved on the focus children's team and different members worked collaboratively to address issues related to the focus children.

Despite the FFA staff knowing the team members for each of the focus children, the FFA has not held any face-to-face team meetings where the focus children and all of their team members were present. Although the focus children have regular contact and maintain visits with family members, these key supporters were not included as part of the decision making team.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In July 2014, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2013-2014 Contract Compliance Review. Technical support included: obtaining child welfare historical background information prior to certification of foster parents, ensuring CFPs receive required training prior to certification and yearly thereafter, timely cross-reporting of SIRs, maintaining monetary and clothing allowance logs, developing timely and comprehensive NSPs, obtaining health services timely and maintenance of personnel records.

In June 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review. Technical support consisted of: discussion of compliance regarding Title 22 regulations, maintenance of the facility and grounds, review and maintenance of staff files, compliance with CFPs' training requirements prior to certification and review of procedures for submitting timely and comprehensive NSPs.

In June 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. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

children's institute, inc.
safe children, strong families, healthy communities

Quality Improvement Plan

November 5, 2015

TEAMING

In effort to address identified deficiencies in the area of teaming, Children's Institute, Inc. determined that training and follow up action would be required for all Foster Care Staff. The content of this training would include training on

- Shared Core Practice Model
- Children and Family Team (CFT) meetings
- Translating the above practices into writing of Needs and Services Plan
- Follow up by Foster Care supervisor and Director to ensure Continuous Quality Improvement of teaming practice of each Foster Care staff.

On August 5, 2015, Foster Care Director conducted training with Foster Care Staff to review the **Shared Core Practice Model**, emphasizing teaming. An operational definition for teaming was provided, and examples were given about how to demonstrate teaming practice in casework.

The practice of **Children and Family Team (CFT)** meetings was reviewed at this time. Staff/Child/Family engagement was highlighted as a key component to developing effective teams that are focused on child safety. "Voice and Choice" was discussed emphasizing the obtainment of input about children's underlying needs from each team member.

During this training, there was discussion about how to translate teaming in writing **Needs and Services Plans (NSPs)**. An example of an NSP was distributed, and each section in the NSP was reviewed, and examples were given about how to include team member input into each section of the document. Staff was instructed to include statements from team members for each section of the plan to reflect the teaming process.

Effective immediately, our Program Supervisor will meet with each Foster Care Staff on a weekly basis to ensure teaming occurs on each case, and will provide feedback to staff about ways to improve their teaming process. During each weekly meeting, NSPs that are due will be reviewed to ensure the document addresses all required areas, and

is written in a way that is reflective of teaming that has occurred. The Program Supervisor will document each meeting, will evaluate staff performance in teaming processes, and will ensure that further trainings specific to teaming will be provided, as needed. Program Supervisor will provide a summary report to the Foster Care Director at the end of each week. Foster Care Director will review the summary report, and work with and support the Program Supervisor to ensure any needed training commences.

Effective immediately, Foster Care Director will discuss Teaming during each weekly staff meeting, inquiring about specific cases, and encourage peer feedback as it relates to the effectiveness of teaming on each case.

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

Sincerely,

Robert Haley, MS, LMFT, MFC 35985

Director of Foster Care

Children's Institute, Inc.

4300 Long Beach Blvd. Suite 700

Long Beach, CA 90807

rhaley@childrensinstitute.org

Office: (213) 252-5733

Fax: (562) 256-7127