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February 25, 2016

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

DAVID AND MARGARET 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 David and Margaret Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in May 2015. The FFA has one licensed office located in the First Supervisorial District, and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS foster children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "in partnership with others, will provide therapeutic foster care services to children and families to protect, nurture and advocate on behalf of children and youth who have been abused and/or neglected and are removed from their families."

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 all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan, as the FFA scored at or above the minimal acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In September 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR.

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

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DAVID AND MARGARET 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 David and Margaret Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in May 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 focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 10 months and their average age was nine. 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 focus 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 usually avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community but rarely may present a behavior that has low or mild risk of harm. The focus child may have had related history, diagnoses, or behavior presentations in the past but may have presented risk behaviors at a declining or much reduced level over the past 30 days.
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	6	**Optimal Status** – The focus children have optimal permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus 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	6	**Optimal Stability** - The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary with caregivers, key adult supporters, and peers.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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 sought for all significant family/Non Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFM have regular visits.
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. Strong, positive working relationships between FFA staff, DCFS CSW, certified foster parent and the focus children are evident in this case.
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.
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.

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	5	**Good Teamwork** - The team contains all of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed an excellent, consistent working system that meets, talks, and plans together; face-to-face family team meetings are held periodically and at critical points 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 the 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. The FFA's program administrator, program support administrator, FFA social workers, and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children feel safe in placement. The FFA ensures that the certified foster homes are a safe place to live. The certified foster parents reported that the FFA provides them with ongoing trainings, which include role playing, where they act out different types of scenarios of possible behaviors they will encounter with the placed children. The certified foster parents stated the role-playing gives them confidence to handle the real behaviors they will encounter. One of the certified foster parents stated that the FFA provides them with other safety procedures, such as fire drills, to ensure the certified foster homes are safe. The FFA program support administrator stated that she visits the certified foster homes monthly to make sure the FFA policies and procedures are being followed.

The focus children were free from harm in their daily settings. The focus children reported that they feel safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes. The focus children also reported that their certified foster parents are always present and make themselves available.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA administrator and FFA social workers communicate with them promptly and consistently share information regarding the focus children. The FFA's quality assurance staff performs monthly inspections at each certified foster home to ensure that they are in compliance with Title 22 regulations and that there are no child safety concerns. The protective strategies used by the FFA were fully operable and dependable.

The FFA did not submit any Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via I-Track database in the last 30 days. According to the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section, there were no substantiated referrals or open investigations for the FFA during the last 30 days.

Permanency (6 Optimal Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provides optimal permanence for the focus children. The FFA works with the focus children, their certified foster parents and their DCFS CSWs to assist in the determination of the most appropriate permanent plans for the focus children. The FFA social workers maintain contact with the DCFS CSWs and discuss case plan goals for the focus children. The certified foster parents reported that the FFA provides them with training on the importance of supporting placed children's permanency plans and training to assist them in working with the children placed in their care.

The first focus child is receiving family reunification services and her concurrent plan is adoption. When it became uncertain whether the focus child would be able to reunify with her parents, her DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, certified foster parent, and the focus child met to discuss the permanency plan of adoption by her current certified foster mother. The focus child stated that she wants to be adopted by her certified foster mother. Her certified foster mother reported that she has begun the adoption process for the focus child and her siblings.

The second focus child is receiving family reunification services and his concurrent plan is adoption. The plan is for the focus child and his siblings to be reunified with their mother. The focus child stated that he is looking forward to returning home to his mother. He also stated that he would like to stay in contact with his certified foster mother.

The third focus child is a non-minor dependent. Her permanency plan is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. The focus child stated that she has decided that she would like to continue residing in the home of her certified foster mother under the extended foster care program as she attends college. The focus child's attachment to her certified foster mother is strong and they are building a lifelong connection.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA ensures that everyone is on the same page in regards to the best interests of the focus children and assists the focus children in maintaining family ties.

Placement Stability (6 Optimal Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided optimal stability for the focus children. The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The FFA program support administrator engages the DCFS CSWs by assessing each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure a good match with the certified foster parents. Strategies utilized by the FFA include weekly visits to the certified foster home by the FFA social workers, and weekly family meetings with certified foster parents and the focus children to assess the well-being of the focus children. The FFA also provides the certified foster parents with support groups to aid them in assisting placed children's adjustment to placement. Each of the focus children expressed a feeling of closeness to their respective certified foster parents.

The DCFS CSW stated that she was pleased with the relationship that the certified foster mother established with the first focus child and her siblings. Moreover, the FFA social worker and DCFS CSW were pleased that the certified foster mother, who was about to retire from being a foster parent, was willing to adopt the focus child and her siblings, prior to retiring. The first focus child stated, "I like this home and I have my own room with a television".

The DCFS CSW stated that the second focus child and his siblings wanted to continue their relationship with their certified foster parents after being reunified with their mother; and his biological mother reported being pleased with the care her children received from their certified foster parents.

The DCFS CSW for the third focus child stated that she was happy with how the FFA social worker and certified foster parent worked with the focus child. The DCFS CSW stated that they would always do more than what was required, such as going with the focus child to provide support and assist her in enrolling in junior college after she graduated from high school.

There have been no major issues or concerns. All of the focus children reported that their caregivers and the FFA staff are meeting all of their needs, and they have formed a good, supportive relationship with their caregivers.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA ensures that family visits for the focus children are maintained. The FFA staff, certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs work together to assist the focus children in maintaining connections with their family. The FFA stated that they follow the court-ordered visitation plans and review the focus children's visitation plan with their DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents on a regular basis. The FFA keeps logs regarding visitation, and if visits are missed, the visits are rescheduled in a timely manner. The DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents indicated that the FFA makes great efforts to ensure the focus children's visits are successful. The FFA monitors family visits and provides transportation to the visits, if necessary.

All of the focus children have regular weekly visits with their family members. The first focus child has visits with her mother; however, the certified foster mother reported that the focus child's mother seldom visits. The focus child's grandmother has recently requested visits. The focus child stated that she does not get to visit her mother often, but she enjoys her visits with her grandmother.

The second focus child has visits with his mother and siblings each weekend and stated that he enjoyed the visits. The certified foster father stated the focus child and his sibling always look forward to visits with their mother. According to the DCFS CSW, the children will be reunifying with their mother soon.

The third focus child and her parents have a strained relationship. The certified foster mother stated that the focus child said her parents do not approve of her lifestyle, so the focus child has chosen not to visit her parents at this time. However, she maintains contact with her siblings through telephone calls and visits. The focus child stated that maintaining her relationship with her siblings was important to her.

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 has established and maintained good engagement efforts with key parties for the focus children, including their family members, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs. The FFA social workers ensure that rapport has been developed among the DCFS CSWs, family members, as well as the certified foster parents and the focus children. Furthermore, the FFA ensures that continuous updates on the progress of the focus children is shared with the DCFS CSWs by regular telephone contact, e-mail, and face-to-face contact. One of the certified foster parents stated that the DCFS CSW is supportive and is "very easy to talk to; she takes her time, listens to us and follows through."

The focus children reported that they are able to discuss their issues and concerns with their family members, certified foster parents, FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs, without any problems.

The FFA social workers, DCFS CSWs, certified foster parents and focus children are in agreement that reasonable efforts have been made by the FFA to engage all team members. For example, when termination of parental rights was considered for the first focus child, the FFA social worker, DCFS CSW, certified foster mother and focus child discussed the concurrent plan of adoption. The certified foster mother decided she would not retire but instead would adopt the focus child and her siblings because she did not want them to be placed in another home. She added that children need a permanent home and should not be moved from foster home to foster home.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides the focus children with an array of supports and services to help the focus children make progress toward their planned outcomes. The FFA program support administrator stated they ensure that the focus children are provided with the needed services to progress toward meeting their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The focus children are receiving therapeutic services to address mental health issues, as well as regular medical and dental check-ups. The FFA frequently reviews resources being provided to the focus children to ensure positive outcomes for the focus children.

The first and second focus child are receiving academic support services such as the after-school tutoring program, to assist them to improve academically. The focus children's grades and behavior have improved since being provided with tutoring services. The third focus child receives Youth Development Services (YDS) which includes teaching her how to utilize public transportation, shopping, meal preparation and maintaining personal hygiene.

The certified foster parents reported that they are included in the discussion of service needs of the focus children. The certified foster parents stated that they assist age-appropriate placed children in developing independent life skills by incorporating life skills into their daily chores.

The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that they are contacted by the FFA and are asked to provide input in regards to the needs of the focus children. All of the focus children reported that their needs are being met.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA fully understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. The focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized and understood by the FFA and all key parties. The services provided such as therapy, tutoring and YDS are geared to assist the focus children in making progress, improving their functioning, and well-being. During weekly visits to the certified foster home, the FFA social workers assess the attachment between the certified foster parents and the focus children. The FFA social workers and the certified foster parents engage the focus children through dialog and observation to gain a clear picture of the focus children's strengths and needs.

The certified foster parent for the first focus child reported that she spends time with the focus child and over time she has learned what are the focus child's strengths and needs. When the certified foster parent became aware that the focus child was having trouble in school, the certified foster parent enrolled the focus child in an after-school tutoring program.

The certified foster father for the second focus child stated he observed that the focus child was not completing his homework when he came in from school, as the focus child was not used to a structured family setting where homework is done every day. According to the certified foster father, they enrolled the focus child in the after-school tutoring program and monitored his homework daily. As a result, the focus child showed academic improvement.

The FFA social worker stated that the certified foster mother worked with the third focus child on her post graduation plans, which included selecting a college. The certified foster mother encouraged her to enroll in college and accompanied her to assist with navigating through the process and to provide support.

Each of the focus children reported that their certified foster parents and FFA social workers care about them and their well-being. According to the focus children, their certified foster parents demonstrate that they care about them by spending time with them, talking with them, attending their sporting events, school conferences, and plays.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA involved all of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team consists of the DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, certified foster parents, family members, the focus children and their therapist. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that has ongoing discussions and works collaboratively in case planning. The team members for each of the focus children appear to be attuned to the focus children's strengths and needs, and they ensure the necessary supports are available to assist the focus children in addressing their underlying needs.

The FFA social workers, focus children, and certified foster parents meet monthly during home visits to discuss any concerns. The FFA program manager stated that visits to the certified foster home would be increased depending on each situational need. Additionally, the FFA social workers meet monthly with either the FFA program manager or the other treatment team members to review and discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications to their treatment plans or strategies to assist them in making progress toward their case plan goals. The FFA social workers also maintain regular contact with the focus children's DCFS CSWs, via face-to-face contacts at their monthly visit to the certified foster home, by telephone or via e-mail. The focus children reported that they are satisfied with the teamwork demonstrated by the team members. The focus children stated that they are included in the team meetings, and feel heard and respected. The FFA program manager stated that they extend requests to the DCFS CSWs to attend Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings.

The FFA has held team meetings for all of the focus children and members of their team were present. The DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, certified foster parent, and the first focus child attended a CFT meeting to discuss the concurrent plan of adoption.

The DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, certified foster father, and the second focus child had a team meeting to discuss the current permanency plan of family reunification. In which, the DCFS CSW informed the team that the second focus child and his siblings would be returning home after the next court hearing.

The third focus child had a team meeting with her DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, and certified foster parent to decide where she would live after graduating from high school. The focus child stated that they discussed extended foster care and the options available to her. The focus child and her certified foster mother decided that she would continue to reside in her current certified foster home while she attends junior college.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: Intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and their families are highly responsive and appropriate to changing conditions. The focus children's needs and progress are regularly evaluated, and services provided are modified accordingly. Adjustments are promptly made when it is determined that specific services are not producing the desired results. The FFA uses NSPs to closely document and monitor each focus child's progress toward their treatment goals. The FFA program manager and FFA social worker ensure that barriers encountered and any strategies modified are communicated with key members of the team.

For example, the first focus child's certified foster mother stated that she had concerns about the focus child's behavior in school; her certified foster mother worked closely with the therapist and school to monitor the focus child's behavior in class. In addition, her certified foster mother met with the focus child's teacher to discuss tracking her behavior at school. As a result of the intervention, the certified foster mother reported that the focus child's disruptive behavior has significantly decreased.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review, which consisted of the following: discussion of compliance regarding timely reporting of SIRs; Community Care Licensing deficiencies; safety inspections; maintenance of the facility and grounds; maintaining non-perishable foods; conducting routine disaster drills; submitting comprehensive and timely NSPs; and addressing concerns related to the maintenance of the vehicles used to transport the children.

In September 2015, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The Group Home scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas; therefore a Quality Improvement Plan was not required. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide the FFA with ongoing technical support, training and consultation on an as needed basis.