



**County of Los Angeles  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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February 25, 2016

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

**FIVE ACRES 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 Five Acres 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 foster children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its mission is "to help families raise children to become caring and productive adults by building on their strengths and those of their communities by working to: prevent child abuse and neglect; care for, treat and educate emotionally disturbed, abused and neglected children and their families in residential and outreach programs; advance the welfare of children and families by research, advocacy and collaboration; and strive for the highest standards of excellence by professionals and volunteers."

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 recommendation noted in this report. In August 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  
Chanel Boudakitis, Executive Director, Five Acres Foster Family Agency  
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division  
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

**FIVE ACRES 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 Five Acres 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 children, three Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers, three FFA staff members, three certified foster parents, and one therapist.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was six months and their average age was 11. 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
<b>Safety</b> - 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	<b>Optimal Safety Status</b> - 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.
<b>Permanency</b> - 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 DCFS CSW, supports the plan.	5	5	<b>Good Status</b> - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, the FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
<b>Placement Stability</b> - 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	<b>Good Stability</b> - The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers in those settings.
<b>Visitation</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	<b>Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation &amp; Connections</b> - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p><b>Engagement</b> - 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.</p>	5	5	<p><b>Good Engagement Efforts</b> - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSW, certified foster parent and the focus child feel heard and respected.</p>
<p><b>Service Needs</b> - 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.</p>	5	5	<p><b>Good Supports &amp; Services</b> - 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.</p>
<p><b>Assessment &amp; Linkages</b> - 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.</p>	5	5	<p><b>Good Assessment and Understanding</b> - The focus children are functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the child's strengths, needs, and preferences is frequently updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are substantially recognized and well understood.</p>
<p><b>Teamwork</b> - The degree to which the "right people" for the child and family, have formed a working team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.</p>	5	4	<p><b>Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork</b> - 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.</p>

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p><b>Tracking &amp; Adjustment</b> - 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.</p>	5	5	<p><b>Good Tracking and Adjustment Process</b> - 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 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.</p>

**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 focus children have highly safe living situations with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children at all times. The FFA social workers meet privately with placed children during their weekly home visits in which safety issues are addressed. The FFA social workers ensure that the certified foster parents follow Title 22 regulations and the Prudent Parent standards to ensure child safety.

All three focus children reported feeling safe in their current certified foster homes and always being supervised. The first focus child stated "I know my dad loves me and he will take care of me," referring to his foster father. The second focus child reported that she likes the foster home and feels safe in the home because there is an adult in the home. The third focus child stated that the people in the home (certified foster parents) make her feel safe. This focus child was observed to be physically attached to the foster parents.

The certified foster parents reported the FFA social workers talked privately with them and placed children regarding safety in their certified foster homes. They also reported there is constant communication with the FFA social workers.

The DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported there were no safety issues regarding the focus children's current certified foster homes. They also reported that if needed, they would communicate with the focus children's certified foster parents to address safety issues.

The FFA adhered to policies and procedures for submitting Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database. The SIRs were timely and properly cross-reported. The FFA submitted four SIRs during the past 30 days. One SIR involved a focus child. The incident involved the focus child using assaultive behavior toward a peer at school. The other three SIRs involved two absence without leaves (AWOLs), one with Police Involvement (a child picked up at local law enforcement office after AWOLing), and one "Other" which involved a young child being disruptive at the day care center.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section did not receive or investigate any referrals from the FFA within the last 30 days.

### **Permanency (5 Good Status)**

**Permanency Overview:** The FFA provides substantial permanence for the focus children. The FFA works with the focus children, the certified foster parents and with the DCFS CSWs to assist in the development and determination of the most suitable permanency plan for the focus children. There is constant communication between the FFA social workers and the DCFS CSWs to discuss case plan goals for the focus children. Although adoption is generally the permanency plan goal for placed children, during weekly visits, the FFA social workers assess concurrent permanency options, when appropriate. The FFA also shares court information with the certified foster parents and the focus children regarding their permanency plan.

The permanency plan for the first focus child is adoption; the certified foster parent is currently pursuing legal guardianship; however, he is willing to consider in the future. The focus child stated that he wants to be adopted by his current certified foster parent. The second focus child's permanent plan is Family Reunification with the biological family. The FFA is supporting the focus child in maintaining family ties and the permanency plan of Family Reunification by transporting her to weekly visits with her biological family. The second focus child stated that she may be reunified with her biological family. The third focus child is in the process of being adopted by her current certified foster parents. When asked how she felt about being adopted, she did not understand what it means to be adopted and was unable to verbalize her feelings about the adoption process.

The certified foster parents reported that the FFA provides them with different training topics to better assist them in working with the children in their care. The FFA also prepares them for adoption and any concerns that may arise regarding the adoption process.

The DCFS CSWs reported that there is consistent ongoing communication with the FFA social workers to ensure that the FFA is following DCFS recommendations and supporting the permanency plan for the focus children.

### **Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)**

**Placement Stability Overview:** All of the focus children have substantial stability in placement and in their school settings. The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The FFA engages the DCFS CSWs in assessing each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure a good match with the certified foster parents. The FFA utilizes Child Family Team (CFTs) meetings and Team Decision Making (TDMs) meetings and meets individually with placed children to assess the focus children's adjustment to placement and stability in their certified foster homes. Additionally, the FFA social workers conduct weekly visits to the certified foster homes

and conduct weekly family meetings with certified foster parents and the focus children to assess their well-being. The FFA provides the certified foster parents with ongoing training.

The focus children appeared to be adapting well in their current certified foster homes and reported feeling safe, comfortable and respected. There have been no major issues or concerns. The focus children reported their needs are being met and have formed a good, supportive relationship with their caregivers. The first focus child stated he is doing well in his current placement because "he (referring to his foster father) loves me." The second focus child stated that her certified foster parent is "good to her." The third focus child stated that she likes her home.

The certified foster parents reported that there is constant communication with the DCFS CSWs, the FFA social workers and the focus children's therapist. However, the second focus child's certified foster parent reported that it would be beneficial to receive more information about the children before or at the time of placement.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA social workers always share information with them regarding the focus children's progress and adjustment to placement. The DCFS CSW for the third focus child reported that the intake process of the FFA resulted in a good match between the focus child and her current certified foster parents.

### **Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)**

**Visitation Overview:** The FFA has generally maintained effective visitation and maintenance of family connections for the focus children. The FFA social workers and the certified foster parents work with the DCFS CSWs and focus children to ensure that the court visitation orders are met. Transportation and monitoring of the focus children's visits are frequently provided by the certified foster parents, and if needed by the FFA social workers. If a visit is cancelled, the FFA social workers discuss the missed visit with the focus children and allow them to express their feelings. The FFA also encourages placed children to maintain telephone contact with those who are important to them.

The first focus child has monthly face-to-face visits with his siblings. He also maintains telephone contact with his mother who resides out-of-state. The focus child stated that he enjoys the visits with his siblings. The second focus child has weekly two hour face-to-face visits with her biological mother; the visits are monitored by her certified foster parent. She also maintains regular telephone contact with her mother. The focus child stated that she looks forward to the visits with her mother. The third focus child does not have visits with family members as parental rights were terminated, and the focus child is in an adoptive placement.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA social workers and the certified foster parents are always willing to transport and monitor the focus children's visits.

**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 developed a strong rapport with the DCFS CSWs and consistently engages key parties and the focus children in decisions that are made on behalf of the focus children. The FFA social workers maintain good communication with the DCFS CSWs regarding the focus children's progress via e-mail and telephone contact. Additionally, as an engagement strategy, the FFA conducts individualized assessments of the focus children to determine which services are needed to best meet their needs. The FFA engages certified foster parents, birth parents and anyone who is important to the focus children to develop the children's case plans and goals.

The focus children reported positive relationships with their certified foster parents and the FFA social workers, and identified them as people they could count on.

The certified foster parents reported that they are included in discussions regarding the focus children's progress, and participating in meetings to discuss the focus children's case plans. They also reported that there is a great deal of communication with all key parties. The certified foster parents stated that their relationship with the DCFS CSWs and the FFA social workers is positive. The certified foster parents of the two focus children receiving therapeutic services stated that the relationship with the children's therapist was positive.

The DCFS CSWs reported that everyone works together and communicate what is needed for the focus children and that they have built good rapport with the FFA social workers and certified foster parents.

The focus children's therapist reported she has weekly contact with the FFA social workers, and monthly contact with the DCFS CSWs to update them as to the focus children's progress.

**Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)**

**Service Needs Overview:** The FFA provides a good array of support, services and extracurricular activities to help the focus children make progress toward their planned outcomes. The FFA supervising social worker, the FFA social workers, and the focus children's therapist meet and discuss what services need to be put in place to appropriately meet the needs of the focus children. The FFA, in collaboration with the focus children, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs review and modify goals as necessary.

All three of the focus children are receiving therapeutic services. The focus children reported that the services they are receiving are meeting their needs. The first focus child stated "I met my goals." The certified foster parent reported that the third focus child is receiving academic support services, by attending an after-school tutoring program, where she receives assistance with her homework. The certified foster parent added that she has open communication with the after-school tutoring program.

The certified foster parents reported that they are included in decisions made regarding services for the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs report that they are contacted by the FFA social workers and are asked to provide input in regards to the service needs of the focus children. The DCFS CSWs also reported receiving monthly progress reports from the focus children's therapist.

The focus children's therapist reported she shares with the FFA social workers information regarding the services that best fit the focus children to make progress and to assist the focus children with services needed to achieve their case plans and goals.

### **Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)**

**Assessment & Linkages Overview:** The FFA has an optimal understanding of the focus children's functioning and support systems. Formal and informal techniques are used to determine the strengths and the underlying needs of the focus children and the certified foster parents. By assessing each placed child individually, the FFA social workers ensure progress is being made towards their case plan Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals.

Each of the focus children reported that their certified foster parents and FFA social workers care about them and their well-being. This is demonstrated by spending time with them and speaking with them to assess their strengths, needs, and challenges.

The certified foster parents reported that through interaction and observation of the focus children they are able to determine which extracurricular activities would benefit the focus children. The first focus child's certified foster parent reported that extracurricular activities are based on academic performance. He also reported that the focus child participates on his school football and basketball teams. The second focus child's certified foster parent reported that the focus child is encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as dancing since this is an activity the focus child enjoys. The focus child is currently participating in singing and dance at school.

The DCFS CSWs reported having good communication with the FFA social workers regarding assessments conducted and services being provided to the focus children.

The focus children's therapist reported she conducts initial therapeutic assessments to determine services that need to be provided for the focus children, their certified foster parents and the focus children's family members. The focus children's therapist reported meeting with the FFA social workers once a week, and contacting the DCFS CSWs monthly. She also stated that she provides to the FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs monthly and quarterly reports, and coordinates monthly team meetings with them.

### **Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)**

**Tracking & Adjustment Overview:** The FFA's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided, generally reflect the focus children's needs. The FFA supervising social worker and the FFA social workers review the focus children's status on a weekly basis and tracks progress utilizing the Comprehensive Assessment of Needs and Services (CANS) tool. The FFA social workers

provide the DCFS CSWs with updates on the focus children's status by providing them with a copy of the CANS reports on a monthly basis. The FFA social workers also maintain monthly telephonic contact with the DCFS CSWs to discuss the focus children's status. Additionally, the FFA develops NSPs in conjunction with the DCFS CSWs, certified foster parents, the therapist and the focus children. The FFA supervising social worker and FFA social workers also meet to discuss the progress the focus children are making towards meeting their NSPs goals and make adjustments, and modify goals as needed.

The certified foster parents stated that they track the focus children's behavior at home and at school so that issues are identified immediately and adjustments can be made timely. The certified foster parents also reported that they are active participants in the development of the focus children's NSPs. The DCFS CSWs stated that they receive NSPs on a quarterly basis, are called and e-mailed regularly by the FFA social workers.

### **What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement)**

#### **Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)**

**Teamwork Overview:** The team consists of some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The teams consists of the focus children, DCFS CSWs, the FFA supervising social worker, the FFA social workers, the certified foster parents, and the focus children's therapist.

The FFA social workers reported that they attempt to coordinate their visits with the focus children with scheduled visits of the DCFS CSWs so that they could meet to discuss the focus children's progress and needs. They also meet weekly with the certified foster parents and the therapist to discuss updates. Additionally, the FFA supervising social worker and FFA social workers meet weekly to discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications that need to be made to their treatment plan. The focus children's therapist reported being an active member of the team and participating in the monthly face-to-face team meetings with the FFA social workers, the focus children and their certified foster parents. The therapist also reported participating in CFTs and TDM meetings, when invited.

Although there is collaboration between the team members and information is communicated between most of the team members, the FFA fell below the minimum score in the area of teamwork, as the FFA does not conduct team meetings on a regular basis that include all team members.

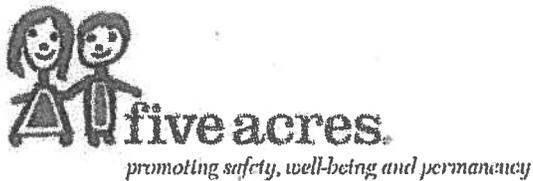
All three certified foster parents reported there was a great deal of communication. However, the certified foster parent for the first focus child reported that the focus child has made progress and that there is not a need for team meetings. The second focus child reported that there are monthly face-to-face meetings, but she declines to meet with the entire team as it is overwhelming. However, her certified foster parent reported that there are no team meetings. The third focus child's certified foster parent stated that there are monthly face-to-face team meetings and that she participates.

The DCFS CSWs reported that there has not been any face-to-face team meeting with all of the key parties.

## **NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES**

In April 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review. Technical support and training provided to the FFA addressed ensuring annual documentation of vehicle maintenance; ensuring that the children's bedrooms and common areas are maintained; ensuring the foster home maintains an adequate amount of perishable foods and that the children are provided with the appropriate monetary weekly allowance; ensuring efforts to obtain the County Children's Social Worker's authorization to implement the NSPs; and ensuring that the children's academic progress increases.

In August 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR, and to provide the FFA with technical support addressing methods on improving 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.



January 12, 2016

DCFS Out of Home Care Management Division  
Attn: Dario Villamarin  
9320 Telstar Ave., Suite #216  
El Monte, CA 91731  
Re: Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Request, 2014/15 QAR

Dear Mr. Villamarin:

The following is the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to address the change in our TEAMWORK rating for our 2015 QAR. On 01/06/2016, you informed us that the rating changed from a 5 to a 4. Specifically the findings indicated:

**Teamwork Overview:** The FFA involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team consists of the focus children, DCFS CSWs, the FFA Social Worker, the certified foster parents, and the focus children's therapist.

In response to these findings the FFA agrees to the following actions:

FFA Social Workers (FFA SW) will inform DCFS CSWs via email or phone call of scheduled weekly or bi-weekly FFA home visit dates and invite the DCFS CSWs to attend one of the visits. During this coordinated visit to the certified foster homes the FFA SW will also make attempts to have all other important persons involved in the care and well-being of the child present at the meeting (i.e. Child and Family Team). These important persons will contribute to the care of the child by possessing skills, family knowledge, and/or abilities necessary to define the strengths and needs of the child and family. This meeting will also be utilized to discuss and organize effective services for the child and family. This group of individuals (therapist, CSW, other service providers, family members, etc.) will form the child's team. This team may also include non-professional persons, such as biological family members which might act as a support for the child. For those parties that are unable to attend, the FFA SW will provide the opportunity for parties to participate via conference call during the meeting. Any

Dario Villamarin  
January 12, 2016  
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important decisions made in these meetings will be communicated to the DCFS CSW, if unable to attend. The FFA SW will document the attempts made to invite important persons to these team meetings in their contact notes.

The FFA SW will be trained on the above procedures for Teamwork during their next Foster Care Staff meeting on January 20, 2016. The person responsible for providing the training to the FFA SW will be the Foster Care Social Worker Supervisor, who has experience with the Child and Family Team meeting process through the Five Acres Intensive Treatment Foster Care program. These above procedures put in place to increase the FFA's ability to team with important persons in the child and family's life will be implemented after the FFA SWs have been trained on January 20, 2016.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 626-246-1734.

Sincerely,



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