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February 23, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

LATINO FAMILY 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 Latino Family Institute, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in April 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 maintain families by using extended family or community resources, to facilitate the reunification of children with birth family members who are able and willing to raise and provide permanent homes for those children when reunification is not possible or in the child's best interest, the Latino Family Institute, Inc. will have Latino families available and prepare to adopt these 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 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 Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Maria Quintanilla, Executive Director, Latino Family Institute, Inc. Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

LATINO FAMILY 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 Latino Family Institute, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in April 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, three certified foster parents, and one therapist.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was six months and their average age was ten. 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 are 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** - 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.
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. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers in those 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 family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members 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 child feel heard and respected.
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.
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/or plans together; at least one face-to-face team meeting has been held 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 ongoing 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 focus children have highly safe living situations with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children at all times. The FFA administration and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children feel safe in placement. The FFA social workers talk to the children privately in regards to safety in their certified foster homes. The interview is conducted away from the certified foster homes. The FFA utilizes a form they developed to assess placed children's level and identify any child safety concerns.

The focus children were free from harm in their daily settings. Two of the focus children reported feeling safe in the certified foster homes. The first focus child stated "the foster parents are like family to me". The second focus child reported "the foster parents put us first [the placed children]". The third focus child was too young to make a statement, but was observed to be physically attached to the foster parents. The two verbal focus children reported they are always supervised.

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

The FFA submitted one Special Incident Report (SIR) during the past 30 days. The SIR reported an illness. The FFA adhered to policies and procedures for submitting the SIR via the I-Track database, as the SIR was submitted timely and properly cross-reported to all required parties.

The DCFS CSWs interviewed reported having no safety concerns regarding the FFA's certified foster homes or the care that the focus children received.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section did not receive or investigate any referrals for 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 appropriate permanent plan for the focus children. The FFA social workers maintain constant contact with the DCFS CSWs and discuss case plan goals for the focus children. During weekly visits, the FFA social workers assess the attachment between the certified foster parents and the focus children. The FFA also prepares and assists the certified foster parents all throughout the adoption process.

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. The first focus child's permanency plan is family reunification; however, the certified foster parents may consider legal guardianship. The second focus child's permanent plan is Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA); however, the certified foster parents are considering legal guardianship. The third focus child is in the process of being adopted by her current certified foster parents.

The first focus child stated that she does not want to be adopted but would be okay with her current certified foster parents seeking legal guardianship. The second focus child stated that she has not thought about a permanent plan. The third focus child was too young to provide a statement regarding permanency.

The certified foster parents reported that the FFA provides them with different training to better assist them in working with placed children in their care. The FFA shares court information with the certified foster parents and the focus children regarding permanency.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: All of the focus children have substantial stability in placement, and in their school settings and community. The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The FFA engages the DCFS CSWs by assessing each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure a good match with the certified foster parents. Additionally, during the FFA social workers' weekly visits to the certified foster homes they conduct family meetings with certified foster parents and the focus children to assess the well-being of the focus children. The FFA uses a team approach, and they see cooperation and collaboration as key for the placed children's stability in placement. The FFA provides the certified foster parents with ongoing training to ensure they have the tools to care for placed children.

The focus children are adapting well in their current certified foster homes. The focus children feel safe, comfortable and respected. There have been no major issues or concerns. Two of the focus children reported that their caregivers and the FFA are meeting all their needs, and they have formed a good, supportive relationship with their caregivers.

The certified foster parents reported that there is constant communication with the DCFS CSWs, the FFA social workers and the focus children's therapist to discuss the focus children's adjustment to placement and stability in their certified foster homes.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA social workers always share information with them regarding the focus children's progress in placement.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has generally maintained effective visitation and maintenance of family connections. The FFA follows the court-ordered visitation plans and engages in discussions of the focus children's visitation plan with DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents on a regular basis. If visits are missed, visits are rescheduled in a timely manner. DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents indicated that the FFA makes efforts to ensure focus children's visits are successful. The FFA monitors family visits and provides transportation to the visits, if necessary. The first focus child does not have visits with family members. The second focus child does not wish to visit family members. The third focus child has visits with her biological mother, but the visits are inconsistent. The certified foster parents monitor and provide transportation to the visits, when they take place. The FFA staff, certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs work together to assist the focus children in maintaining connections with their families. If the focus children do not wish to have visitation, the FFA, the certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs encourage and support the focus children in maintaining connections with their extended family members.

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. The FFA social workers have bi-weekly meetings at the certified foster home with the focus children, certified foster parents and at times with the DCFS CSWs. The FFA engages certified foster parents and anyone who is important to the focus children to develop the focus children's case plans and goals and set meetings to discuss progress. The focus children reported sharing positive relationships with their certified foster parents and the FFA social workers as they were people that they could count on.

The certified foster parents reported that they are included in discussions regarding the focus children and participate in team meetings; however, meetings do not take place monthly. The certified foster parents stated that their relationship with the DCFS CSWs, the FFA social workers, and the therapist are positive. It was also reported there is a great deal of communication among the team members.

The DCFS CSWs reported that everyone works together and communicates what is needed for the focus children, and there is constant communication via email, telephone, and through the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs).

The focus children's therapist reported there is constant communication with the FFA social workers. The therapist also reported communicating with the DCFS CSWs twice a month to update them as to the focus children's progress and any major changes.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides a good and substantial array of supports and services to the focus children. The services and extracurricular activities 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 the services and supports needed to appropriately meet the needs of the focus children and resources being provided are constantly reviewed to ensure positive outcomes for the focus children. All three of the focus children are receiving therapeutic services.

The two verbal focus children reported that the services in place are meeting their needs. They also stated that their certified foster parents and FFA social workers care about them and their well-being. The support is demonstrated by spending time with them and talking with them. The second focus child also reported that participation in extracurricular activities is based on academic performance.

The certified foster parents reported that they are included in the discussion of services needed for the focus children. The certified foster parent for the first focus child reported that she does her own research on extracurricular activities to find the best available resources for placed children. The certified foster parent keeps open communication with the school staff, as the focus child is receiving tutoring services at school. The certified foster parents for the second focus child reported that the focus child is attending Saturday classes so that she may improve her grades. The third focus child is too young to participate in extracurricular activities.

The focus children's DCFS CSWs report that they are contacted by the FFA and are asked to provide input in regards to the needs of the focus children. One DCFS CSW reported being in constant communication with the focus child's therapist and makes himself available for face-to-face meetings.

The focus children's therapist reported sharing information with the FFA social workers to assist them with a better understanding of the focus children's needs and which services need to be in place to meet their needs and achieve their case plans and goals.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally 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 key parties. The services provided such as therapy and tutoring are geared to assist the focus children toward making progress and improving their functioning and well-being. 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 FFA created a chart to monitor the children's progress toward case plan and NSP goals. The DCFS CSWs reported they receive a quarterly report from the focus children's therapist as to the focus child's progress. The DCFS CSWs welcome the children's therapist report as this information is included in their Court reports. They also reported having good communication with the FFA social workers.

The focus children's therapist reported that she conducts initial therapeutic assessments to identify services needed for the focus children, their certified foster parents and the focus children's family. The focus children's therapist reported contacting the DCFS CSWs twice a month to provide updates, and providing the DCFS CSWs with monthly and quarterly reports.

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. The FFA has a tracking log to make sure that NSPs are developed timely. The FFA social workers do a good job of maintaining communication with the DCFS CSWs and the focus children's therapist.

The FFA supervising social worker and FFA social workers meet weekly to discuss how the focus children are progressing towards meeting their NSP goals, make adjustments, and modify goals as needed. The FFA includes certified foster parents in the discussions. The NSPs are developed by the FFA social workers in conjunction with the DCFS CSWs, certified foster parents, the therapist and the focus children. The FFA, in collaboration with the focus children, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs review and modify the goals as necessary. There is also a constant review of resources to ensure positive outcomes for the focus children.

The certified foster parents track the focus children's behavior at home and at school so that any issues are identified immediately and adjustments can be made timely. All three certified foster parents reported there is a great deal of communication with the FFA social workers via email and telephone contact, and they are given the opportunity to participate in the development of NSPs.

The DCFS CSWs stated they receive NSPs on a quarterly basis and are called and emailed regularly by the FFA social workers. The DCFS CSWs also maintain regular contact with the FFA social workers and the focus children to ensure any necessary adjustments to the NSP goals.

In addition to the focus children's therapist providing monthly and quarterly reports to the DCFS CSWs, the therapist also meets weekly with the FFA social workers, and provides input in the development of NSPs.

<u>What's Not Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)</u>

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. The team consists of the focus children, DCFS CSWs, the FFA social worker, the certified foster parents, and the focus children's therapist.

While there is collaboration between the team members and information is communicated in a fluid manner regarding the focus children, the FFA does not conduct meetings regularly. The supervising social worker and FFA social workers meet weekly to discuss the focus children. However, the certified foster parents, the focus children, and therapist are not included in the discussion.

The first focus child reported attending monthly meetings, but the meetings do not involve all team members. The second focus child reported that meetings are once a month, but they are too long. The third focus child is too young to make a statement. However, the certified foster parent stated that meetings take place once a month.

All three certified foster parents reported there was a great deal of communication; however, it was also reported that not all team members are present during the monthly face-to-face meetings. They also reported having regular communication and discussions with the FFA social workers. The second focus child's certified foster parent reported that monthly face-to-face meetings do not take place. The third focus child's certified foster parent reported that face-to-face meetings take place once a month.

The DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents reported that there has not been a face-to-face team meeting with all of the key parties.

Although the focus children's therapist is an active member of the team, the therapist reported not attending team meetings on a regular basis. The children's therapist did mention participating in Individualized Educational Plans, as needed.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In January 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 that Certificates of Approval have the correct required information; ensuring that certified foster parents' vehicles are checked annually, and certified foster parents have car seats to transport children; ensuring that expired perishable foods, inadequate drill logs, and clothing allowance logs are comprehensive; ensuring current court-approved authorizations for the administration of psychotropic medication; and ensuring that children are involved in the selection of clothing.

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

LATINO FAMILY INSTITUTE
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October 20, 2015

Mr. Dario Villamarin
DCFS OHCMD
9320 Telstar Ave. #216
El Monte, CA 91730

RE: **Quality Improvement Plan QIP**

Mr. Villamarin,

This Quality Improvement Plan addresses one area of improvement in the area of **Teamwork** that was highlighted during the Department's 2015 Quality Assurance Review with Latino Family Institute.

- Latino Family Institute (LFI) social worker will invite Treatment Team Members to participate in the Goal Planning for NSPs to be held once per quarter. LFI identifies **Treatment Team Members** as those professionals that are privy to the DCFS case such as the Primary CSW, the Adoption CSW (*if applicable*), the Wrap Team Coordinator, and Mental Health Providers. LFI identifies other team members as **Auxiliary Team Members** such as teachers, tutors, Regional Center workers, day care providers, mentors, etc. *Although consultation with Auxiliary Team Members will be encouraged, such members would not be invited to NSP goal planning home visit due to case confidentiality.* LFI has developed a template that will be emailed to Treatment Team Members prior to the NSP Goal Planning home visit. This will be documented in the child's *LFI Contact Log*. The supervising social worker will ensure that such contact is taking place during one-on-one supervision with the LFI social worker.

- LFI social worker will reach out and document attempts to have contact with the county social worker a minimum of once per month. This will be documented in the child's *LFI Contact Log*. The supervising social worker will ensure that such contact is taking place during one-on-one supervision with the LFI social worker. Additionally, supervisor will ensure that such contact is noted in the child's quarterly NSP.

- LFI social worker will document attempts to have email/phone contact with a minimum of one Auxiliary or Treatment Team Member per month. LFI social workers will document said contact in the child's LFI Contact Log. Additionally, the supervising social worker will ensure that such contact is taking place during one-on-one supervision with the LFI social worker.

We appreciate your continued collaborative partnership and honest feedback to improve program services. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions or require additional documentation.

Respectfully,

Virginia Olivas, MSW
LFI Program Manager