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June 30, 2016

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

CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE 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 Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in October 2015. The FFA has one office located in the Fourth Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to promote the well-being of vulnerable children by healing those harmed by abuse and neglect, helping families provide safe, nurturing homes and 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 all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

On March 20, 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in each of the focus areas, therefore a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was not required.

If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR
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Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
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Mary Emmons, Executive Director, Children's Institute Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
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CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Children's Institute Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in October 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 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 QAR focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR 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 three service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 33 DCFS placed children in 29 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was eight months and their average age was 8. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 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 staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6 - Optimal Safety Status	The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	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 30 days.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	5 - Good Engagement Efforts	To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5 - Good Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.	5	5 - Good Teamwork	The team contains most of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks and/or plans together.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are 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 is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in April 2015 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Teamwork. In October 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in these two areas. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in this area on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the FFA continues to provide a highly safe living environment. The focus children concurred that they feel safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes. The FFA ensured protective strategies are in place to ensure the focus children's safety. The FFA trains staff and certified foster parents in identifying behaviors that may pose a safety risk to the placed children. In addition, the FFA Social Workers are also trained on how to complete home inspections during their monthly visits to the certified foster homes to ensure that the focus children are provided with a safe living environment. During monthly visits, the FFA Social Workers conduct private interviews with the placed children to ensure their safety. The FFA staff ensures that the Special Incident Report guidelines are adhered to. The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that they did not have concerns regarding the FFA's supervision and treatment of the focus children. There is open communication between the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents to ensure that the focus children's needs are being met.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide good stability to the focus children. The FFA staff assists the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by providing counseling services and family therapy to facilitate their permanency goals and the certified foster parents support the FFA's efforts. The three focus children's permanency plan goal is Family Reunification. Due to the FFA's permanency efforts, one focus child successfully reunified with her mother and to ensure the reunification is stable, the FFA is providing conjoint counseling to the focus child and her mother. The second focus child successfully reunified with a family member. The third focus child is placed with his younger sibling in the same certified foster home and neither sibling has experienced any placement disruptions. The FFA has prepared the one focus child for independence by providing her independent living skills, such as budgeting and personal hygiene maintenance; however, this focus child subsequently reunified with her mother. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters such as the certified foster parents, FFA staff and their therapist. The DCFS CSWs reported that they were pleased with the focus children's permanency and placement stability provided by the FFA.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA continues to provide good quality services. The FFA has ensured that the focus children and their family members/NREFMs had visitation as recommended by the court and the DCFS CSWs. The FFA provides transportation and monitors visits as well. The certified foster parents ensure that the focus children have regular contact by telephone with their family members. The focus children reported that they had visitation with family members/NREFMs. The FFA's visitation efforts have lead to the reunification of two focus children with their family. The focus children expressed that they were happy with the visits with their family.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	4	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on behalf of the focus children. The focus children reported that they have a good relationship with the FFA staff and their certified foster parents. There continues to be a good array of services being provided to the focus children. The FFA has a Mental Health Program, Family Support Program and Youth Development Program that includes extracurricular activities and an Individualized Transitional Skills Program. Intervention strategies identified in the case plan and Needs and Service Plans (NSPs) match the services that are being provided. The FFA continues to

assess the focus children's needs to provide effective services. The focus children were receiving individual counseling and the FFA staff provided transportation to and from their counseling sessions. The focus children were also connected to a community based organization to address separation issues. Additionally, the focus children were receiving tutoring from the school and one focus child's certified foster parent is a teacher and provides the focus child with tutoring in the home. One of the focus children was significantly behind academically, but with the provision of after school tutoring put in place by the FFA, the focus child made significant academic progress. DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA stays in regular contact with them in regards to the focus children's progress and adjustments made to the focus children's treatment plan.

In the area of Teamwork, OHCMD found that the FFA has implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the quality of care to the children in their care. Previously, the FFA was not conducting team meetings or contacting family members to provide status updates. To address Teamwork, the FFA provided Core Practice Model training to the FFA Social Worker staff to promote teaming efforts. The focus children and DCFS CSWs concurred that the FFA staff is now working as a team. The FFA has increased their teamwork efforts by conducting team meetings on a weekly basis to implement the focus children's case plan. Additionally, the FFA administrator is now responsible for monitoring the team's collaboration efforts to ensure that teaming and meetings are occurring. The FFA also ensures that the team communicates with DCFS CSWs regularly to provide updates, if they are unable to attend a team meeting.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In October 2015, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the following areas: Licensure/Contract Requirements, Facility and Environment, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, Health and Medical Needs, Personal Rights and Social/Emotional Well-Being and Personal Needs/Survival and Economic Well-Being. Technical assistance was provided on how the FFA can ensure that the initial and re-certification for foster parents is conducted timely, the common areas are well maintained, educational materials are provided, NSPs are developed timely, Initial medical exams are conducted timely, children are informed of their personal rights at the time of placement, and that allowance logs are properly maintained.

In March 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at the minimum score in each focus area; therefore, a QIP was not required from the FFA. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff has and will continue to provide technical support, training and consultation as needed.