County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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Chief Deputy Director

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August 4, 2016

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

SOUTH BAY BRIGHT FUTURE 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 the South Bay Bright Future Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. 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 ensure the safety of each child, support and strengthen biological/certified families, and promote the healthy development of all children. In addition, to design a treatment program for each foster child that focuses on family reunification. When family reunification is not possible, the FFA agency works with the County authorities to develop an alternative treatment/placement program."

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: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment. The OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

In April 2016, the 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 Safety. The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendation noted in this report.

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

PLB:KR
KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Laneta J. Hill, Executive Director, South Bay Bright Future Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

SOUTH BAY BRIGHT FUTURE 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 the South Bay Bright Future Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. 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 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, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 35 DCFS placed children in 33 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 12 months, and their average age was 15. 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	5 - Good Safety Status	The focus children have a generally and substantially safe living situation with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children well under usual daily conditions. Protective strategies are generally 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	6 - Optimal Status	The focus children have optimal permanency. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and all team members have evidence 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	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability 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 March 2015, and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Teamwork. In July 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 this area. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the area of Teamwork. However, the OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance in the area of Safety on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

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

In the area of Safety, although OHCMD found that the FFA provides appropriate supervision to ensure the focus children's safety and the focus children reported feeling safe and being free from harm at their placement and school, the FFA scored below the minimum acceptable score due to a child safety concern. The incident involved a placed Non-Minor Dependent (NMD) who was assaulted in the community. The NMD's boyfriend informed the certified foster mother of the incident, but did not provide details regarding the assault. The certified foster mother contacted the local hospital to see if the NMD had received any medical treatment. The certified foster mother reported the incident to the local law enforcement agency; however, she did not go to the hospital to check on the well-being of the NMD, nor did she timely report the incident to the FFA. The NMD returned to the certified foster home the following afternoon; he did not appear to be injured. The FFA Social Worker and the certified foster mother attempted to obtain more information from the NMD, but he refused to

speak to them regarding the incident. There were no safety-related incidents involving the focus children.

In the area of Permanency, the FFA is providing optimal services that correspond with each focus child's permanency plan, and the FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving their permanency goals. The FFA ensures the FFA Social Worker, the focus children and the certified foster parent are aware of the focus children's permanency plans, and they meet regularly to discuss permanency goals and options. One NMD focus child's permanency plan is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Her certified foster mother is providing guidance and teaching the NMD life skills needed to live independently. This NMD is also receiving in-home independent living services and skills training through the Individualized Transitional Skills Program on a bi-monthly basis. The NMD reported because of her certified foster mother's unrelenting support and guidance in every aspect of her life, she could focus on her studies. The permanency plan for the second focus child is Family Reunification (FR), with a concurrent plan of legal guardianship with her certified foster mother. The permanency plan for the third focus child is FR with a family member who resides out-of-state. The focus children reported they are aware of their permanency and concurrent plans, as well as the steps taken to ensure timely permanency. The DCFS CSWs reported the FFA and the certified foster parents support the permanency plans established by DCFS.

In the area of Placement Stability, the focus children have been stable, with no placement or school disruptions while in their current certified foster homes. The FFA and the certified foster parents are committed to working with the focus children and they take responsibility in ensuring that the focus children's needs are being met. The focus children reported they feel secure and that they are doing well in their certified foster homes. They appear comfortable and reported they like the certified foster homes in which they are currently placed. The NMD focus child expressed her appreciation for her certified foster mother committing to only caring for one placed child at a time to provide quality care. The second focus child stated that he likes his current certified foster home and the structured environment it provides. He stated that his certified foster mother and the FFA have put their hearts into caring for him and they have helped him to adjust to his placement. The focus child has demonstrated an eagerness to attend school and he completes all homework assignments. The third focus child appears bonded with her certified foster mother and she enjoys a positive, enduring relationship with her. She is doing well in school and is earning good grades. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children indicated they are pleased with the placement stability the FFA has provided for the focus children. The DCFS CSWs expressed that they see commitment and dedication in the certified foster parents.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA has demonstrated optimal efforts in maintaining effective connections for the focus children and their family members. The FFA adheres to the court-ordered visitation plans and engages the DCFS CSWs and the certified foster parents in discussions concerning the focus children's visitation plans, and they work collaboratively to ensure the focus children visit with their family members. One focus child's family members reside more than 50 miles from his certified foster home. His certified foster mother and his DCFS CSW take turns transporting the focus child and monitoring the visits. It

should also be noted that the FFA and the focus child's certified foster mother demonstrated optimal efforts to support family ties and ensure the focus child's family is involved in his life. The FFA and the certified foster mother provided transportation for the focus child's family members so they could attend his football event. The second focus child has unmonitored weekly visits with her mother. The certified foster mother and the focus child's mother have great communication, and they arrange the visits and transportation. The NMD, as she is an adult, makes her own visitation arrangements with her family members. The NMD and her certified foster parents reported that the visits have gone well. All of the focus children expressed that they enjoy visits with their family members, and they look forward to the visits.

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 area of Engagement, the FFA continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions being made for them. Based on the interviews, it appears the FFA maintains good communication with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, and their family members. The FFA staff works to ensure a rapport has been developed between the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, family members, certified foster parents, and the focus children. For example, one focus child's permanency plan is FR. However, the focus child reported that she did not feel her mother was ready to reunify with her and her siblings. The focus child shared her concerns with her certified foster mother and the FFA Social Worker. Together, they worked with the focus child's DCFS CSW to engage and communicate their concerns to the focus child's mother. The focus child's mother agreed and expressed that she wanted the certified foster mother to pursue legal guardianship for the children.

In the areas of Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to provide quality services and continually assesses the focus children's needs and status to ensure appropriateness of services and interventions. The FFA provides a good array of services that fully match intervention strategies identified for the focus children, such as Wraparound services, in-home Independent Living Program services, tutoring, parenting classes, transportation, and job search assistance. The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems, and information necessary to understand the focus children and their families' strengths and needs is frequently updated. The FFA staff and the certified foster parents continuously monitor, track, and communicate the focus children's status and progress with the team members and work together to ensure the focus children's needs are met. For example, one certified foster mother observed that one focus child was always trying to parent her younger brothers. The certified foster mother

intervened and advised the focus child to concentrate on caring for and enjoying herself. The certified foster mother discussed the situation with the FFA Social Worker and the focus child's treatment plan was modified to include enrollment in activities that would enrich the focus child's social life. As a result, the focus child is participating in extracurricular activities that she enjoys and is less concerned about parenting her brothers. The DCFS CSWs reported that they have developed excellent rapport with the FFA Social Worker. They further stated they collaborate with the FFA Social Worker to ensure the appropriate resources are in place for the focus children and that modifications to the focus children's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals or treatment plans are made, when appropriate. Each of the focus children reported that the FFA and their certified foster parents are meeting their needs.

In the area of Teamwork, the FFA implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). In the prior QAR, the OHCMD found that the FFA was not having team meetings which included the focus children, their family members and key supporters in the decision making process. To address this, the FFA is having quarterly team meetings with the DCFS CSWs, the FFA Social Workers, certified foster parents, therapists, and the focus children. The FFA invites all team members and provides advance notice of the scheduled team meetings via e-mail, telephone call, or U.S. mail. The team has formed a good dependable working system that has ongoing discussions and works collaboratively. The team members are aware of the focus children's strengths and needs, and they work together to provide the necessary support services for the focus children. The certified foster parents and the focus children reported that their suggestions and input are considered during discussions, and they feel respected. They feel they are a part of the team, and they feel supported by the other team members. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that the FFA is cooperative and works well with them to meet the needs of the focus children.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In June 2015, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirement, Facility and Environment, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, and Personnel Records. Technical support was provided to assist the FFA in ensuring compliance with Title 22 Regulations; certified foster homes are free of hazards; NSPs are comprehensive and submitted timely; the DCFS CSWs' authorization to implement the NSP is obtained; monetary and clothing allowance logs are maintained; initial dental examinations are conducted timely; and all placed children are encouraged to create and update a Life Book or Photo Album.

In April 2016, 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 Safety. The FFA submitted the attached QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

SOUTH BAY BRIGHT FUTURE, INC.
24404 South Vermont Avenue, Suite 201 • Harbor City, CA 90710
Phone: (310) 891-0096 • FAX (310) 891-0195

May 16, 2016

Patricia Bolanos-Gonzales
Children's Services Administrator
DCFS-Out of Home Care Management Division
Quality Assurance Section
9320 Telstar Ave., Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731

RE: QIP Addendum

Dear Patricia Bolanos-Gonzales

South Bay Bright Future (SBBF) wishes to thank you for the 2015 Quality Assurance Review (QAR) submitted to the agency on April 13, 2016. The QAR provided an evaluation of the agency's overall quality of care that has been provided to the placed children. SBBF remains dedicated to providing optimal care to the County of Los Angeles foster youth. It is of the upmost importance of the agency that certified foster parents/homes, social workers and all staff are well trained to ensure the safety of all placed children.

The QAR overview of the agency's quality of care provided to the placed children scored "5" in the area of Safety, not meeting the minimum acceptable score of "6". The agency agrees there is a need for certified foster parents training focusing on a greater understanding of responding to and reporting Special Incidents. The training efforts will focus on presenting scenarios to the certified foster parents and having them present their understanding of responding to and reporting the incident in a timely manner. Although the QAR identified one incident of a certified foster parent who did not follow up on a reported incident by going to the hospital and did not report the incident immediately to the required parties, all certified foster parents will attend the training. The training shall also focus on the agency's protocol of reporting incidents as it relates to DCFS's contract. The ultimate goal is to inform and enlighten the importance of ensuring safety for all placed children/youth. The training is scheduled for May 21, 2016 and shall be conducted by the agency Administrator.

In addition, SBBF provides mandatory quarterly training s to all certified foster parents. The trainings include many subjects and are presented by the Administrator, DCFS staff, social workers and speakers from various organizations as the subject relates to foster care youth. Also, as part of the agency's policy for recertification all certified foster parent status with the agency shall be reviewed in its entirety including Safety which includes responding to and reporting incidents. At that time the agency determines the status of the certified parent with the agency.

Upon your approval SBBF respectfully submit this QIP for your review. The agency thanks you for the overview and allowing the agency the opportunity to improve on Safety as it relates to the placed children. If additional information is needed, please contact me at (310) 891-0096. Thank you for your patience and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marvett Black, MA
Administrator
South Bay Bright Future

Cc: Laneta Hill,
CEO
South Bay Bright Future