County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

BRANDON NICHOLS
Chief Deputy Director

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August 31, 2016

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

ALLIANCE HUMAN SERVICES 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 Alliance Human Services Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. The FFA has three offices, one located in the Fourth Supervisorial District, one office in San Bernardino County and one office in Kern County. The offices provide services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to develop, implement and maintain a system of care which provides children or non-minor dependents with complex circumstances options for living in the community, supports for attaining independence (when appropriate), and opportunities to grow and develop personal connections in natural settings."

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, Service Needs, Engagement, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In May 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA and discussed results of the QAR. The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR.

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
Calvin C. Remington, Interim Chief Probation Officer
Luigi Grimaldi, Executive Director, Alliance Human Services FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

ALLIANCE HUMAN SERVICES 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 Alliance Human Services 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, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, three certified foster parents, and two service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 57 DCFS placed children in 41 certified foster homes. There were no Probation youth placed. The focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was 12 months, and their average age was 12. 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	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 January 2015, and noted opportunities for improvement in the focus areas of Permanency and Teamwork. 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 to address methods for improvement in these two areas. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the areas of Permanency and Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	4	6	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	6	5

In the areas of Safety and Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide the focus children with quality services to ensure all placed children reside in a safe and stable environment. The FFA makes efforts to ensure the focus children are safe in their certified foster homes and communities by providing safety-related trainings to the FFA Social Workers and certified foster parents. The FFA Social Workers visit the focus children weekly and conduct quarterly home inspections to ensure the safety and well-being of the placed children. The focus children have optimal stability. The FFA staff encourages the development of positive relationships between the focus children and their certified foster parents. The certified foster parents shared that they care about the well-being of the focus children, and they stated that they want the focus children to remain in their care as long as is necessary. The focus children have not experienced any placement disruptions since their placement in their current certified foster homes. The certified foster parents reported that

the FFA Social Workers are supportive and committed to work with them and the focus children. The certified foster parents further shared that they work together to ensure services are provided to meet the needs of the focus children and to ensure there are no placement disruptions. One certified foster parent reported that the FFA Social Worker was supportive and reassuring when she experienced anxiety after the focus child's mother went to the certified foster home against court orders. The focus children reported they feel safe in their certified foster homes and are happy that they live in a loving home environment where their needs are met. The children's DCFS CSWs reported the certified foster parents provide a safe and nurturing home environment and stability.

In the area of Permanency, the OHCMD found that the FFA had implemented the 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to ensure the FFA collaborates with the DCFS CSWs and the certified foster parents to develop appropriate and clear permanency goals and concurrent plans for the focus children. The focus children are being provided with the necessary services to ensure permanency. One focus child's permanent plan is Adoption, and the FFA staff, DCFS CSW, the certified foster parents, and the focus child have agreed that the certified foster parents will be pursuing adoption of the focus child. The focus child reported that she is happy about being adopted; she calls her certified foster parents mommy and daddy. The permanency plan for the two other focus children is Family Reunification. The FFA and their certified foster parents are working together to facilitate the reunification process. One of the focus children stated that she does not want to reunify with either of her parents, due to family turmoil, and wishes for her certified foster parents to adopt her. The FFA and the certified foster parents support the focus child's permanent plan by encouraging contacts with family members, and they are providing the focus child with counseling to address the focus child's needs and concerns. They are also keeping the father informed and have worked out visitation arrangements between the focus child and her father. The focus child's certified foster parent also encourages the focus child to maintain regular telephone contact with her grandmother who resides out-of-state.

The FFA supports the maintenance of family visitation and connections for the focus children. The FFA adheres to the focus children's visitation arrangements, as established by the DCFS CSWs and the Court. The FFA, the certified foster parents, and the DCFS CSWs are working collaboratively to ensure the two focus children have visits with appropriate family members. One of the focus children reported enjoying visits with his family members, whom he sees weekly. His certified foster parent transports the focus child to and from the visitation site. The second focus child is reluctant to have visits with her father; however, the FFA Social Worker and her certified foster parents are working with the focus child and her father. Visits between the focus child and her father are occurring weekly at the certified foster home. The focus child reported that she feels safe when her visits with her father are held at her certified foster home.

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 with the focus children and their key adult supporters. The FFA makes efforts to engage the focus children's parents and their DCFS CSWs to participate in the development of the focus children's treatment plan. The focus children appear to have established trust and a good rapport with their certified foster parents. They reported they have good relationships with the certified foster parents and they are comfortable communicating with their FFA Social Workers and DCFS CSWs. The FFA continues to ensure necessary services are provided to the focus children to make progress toward their planned outcomes in their certified foster homes, at school, and in the community. All focus children are receiving individual therapy. Two of the focus children attend conjoint therapy; one focus child attends with her sibling and the other focus child attends therapy with her certified foster parents. Two of the focus children have Individualized Educational Plans; they are benefitting from the additional educational supports and services they are receiving. Further, one focus child has been making significant academic progress since her certified foster parents were appointed as holders of the focus child's educational rights. The certified foster parents advocated for the focus child to receive educational services, as the focus child was transitioning from being home-schooled to attending public school. Reports from the DCFS CSWs and the therapists indicated that the focus children are benefitting from the therapeutic supports they are receiving. The focus children participate in extracurricular and recreational activities, as well as activities that enrich their lives such as, eating out at restaurants, going to the movies, and attending after school programs. One focus child shared that her certified foster parents exposed her to various activities such as trips to Disneyland, camping, and going on a cruise. The DCFS CSW reported that the certified foster parents are the best foster parents she has ever known. She stated they are supportive, helpful, treat placed children as their own, take them on outings, always make sure visits are taking place, are always supportive of the parents, and promote reunification. The DCFS CSW further stated that the certified foster parents are great advocates of the placed children; they attend dependency court hearings with the children to provide support. The DCFS CSWs stated that the focus children's FFA Social Workers are supportive.

The FFA continues to assess the focus children's needs and progress through information obtained during their weekly or bi-monthly contacts with the focus children and their certified foster parents, reports from school and from their therapists. The FFA Social Workers evaluate the focus children's needs and develop the Needs and Service Plans (NSPs) for the

focus children. Interventions, adjustments, and/or modifications to the focus children's treatment plans are discussed with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, and their certified foster parents. An example of the FFA's efforts to assess the placed children's needs and make necessary adjustments to treatment or NSP goals is when one focus child had a goal of maintaining grades of As and Bs in all subjects. However, the focus child became overwhelmed with her school assignments; she began to struggle and appeared unable to reach her goal. As a result, the treatment team came together to modify the focus child's NSP goal, and additional support services were added to include specialized educational services through the school district.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA implemented their 2014-2015 QIP. During the last QAR, the OHCMD found that although there were several treatment teams working with the focus children, no meetings in which all the teams collaborated in the development of the focus children's case plans, had occurred. To address this finding, the FFA provided their FFA Social Workers with training on teaming with the focus children's key supporters. The FFA Social Workers have begun inviting the focus children, their certified foster parents, their DCFS CSWs, and other team members to the focus children's quarterly treatment meetings to discuss the focus children's case plans and treatment goals. Further, the FFA Social Workers have been contacting the DCFS CSWs to arrange joint visits to the certified foster homes to facilitate the discussions and the exchange of information. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA Social Workers have contacted them to schedule joint team meeting with the certified foster parents and the focus children.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2015, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of: Licensure/Contract Requirement; Certified Foster Homes; Facility and Environment; Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery; Education and Workforce Readiness; Health and Medical Needs; Psychotropic Medication; Discharged Children; and Personnel Records. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure proper SIR reporting, reduce the numbers of Community Care Licensing complaints, ensure certified foster parents attend the required trainings prior to recertification, proper maintenance of allowance logs and clothing receipts, NSPs are comprehensive, the CSWs' authorization is obtained prior to implementation of the NSPs, proper maintenance of children's educational records, dental examinations are conducted timely, all psychiatric appointments are kept, proper documentation on efforts to stabilize placement prior to discharging the child from the FFA, and ensuring timely health screening for employees.

In May 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation as needed.