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November 19, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

**HAMBURGER HOME DBA AVIVA FAMILY AND CHILDREN 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 Hamburger Home dba Aviva Family and Children Services Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2015. The FFA has one licensed office in the Third Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to provide specialized, supportive foster care homes in Los Angeles County, and thereby maximize the children's potential for optimal growth and development."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Group Home's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 9 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the FFA scored at or above the minimal acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In May 2015, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR.

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
Regina Bette, President and CEO, Hamburger Home dba Aviva Family and Children Services
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**HAMBURGER HOME DBA AVIVA FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES**
**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 Hamburger Home dba Aviva Family and Children Services Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in October 2014. 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; and
- Visitation.

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement;
- Service Needs;
- Assessment & Linkages;
- Teamwork; and
- 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, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs) (as one CSW services two focus children), three certified foster parents (CFPs), three FFA social workers, and one FFA administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was eight months and their average age was twelve. 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 child. 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 is 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, support the plan. | 5 | 5 | **Good Status** - Focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, 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 | **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 12 months and little likelihood of future disruption. Only age-appropriate changes are expected in school settings. |
| **Visitation** - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation. | 5 | 6 | **Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/non-related extended family members |

| Focus Area | Minimum Acceptable Score | FFA QAR Score | FFA QAR Rating |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFM have regular and, where appropriate, increasingly frequent visits. |
| **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 parents and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent, efforts are being used by the FFA staff as necessary to find and engage the focus children, caregivers and other key people. Useful accommodations are used to provide scheduling times and locations based on convenience of appropriate parties. Engagement efforts are made frequently and on an on-going basis. |
| **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 | 6 | **Optimal Assessment and Understanding** - The focus children's functioning and support systems are comprehensively understood. Knowledge necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs, and preferences is continuously updated. |
| **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 | 5 | **Good Teamwork** - The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supporters. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks, and plans together. |

| 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 | 6 | **Optimal Tracking and Adjustment Process** - Intervention strategies, supports, and services being provided to the focus children are highly responsive and appropriate to changing conditions. Highly successful modifications are based on strong 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, as they provided a safe living situation for the focus children during the past 30 days. The focus children all reported that they feel safe in their foster homes, because of their foster parents who protect them and provide for all their necessities.

The FFA adhered to policies and procedures for submitting Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database, as SIRs were timely and properly cross-reported. The FFA submitted five SIRs during the past 30 days. Three SIRs reported the following incidents: a child illness; a school suspension; and a perceived inappropriate relationship between a child and an adult. This information was reported to the DCFS CSW and therapist. The therapist addressed it with the minor and the minor denied an inappropriate relationship. The DCFS CSW was alerted and agreed to follow-up and there did not appear to be any child safety concerns. Two of five SIRs involved one of the focus children. In one incident, the focus child had engaged in a physical altercation at school with a student. The other incident involved the focus child and her younger sibling fighting at the foster home. The CFP took appropriate action by contacting the in-home support counselor for both children; a meeting was held and a safety plan was developed to ensure the safety of the children, as well as interventions to prevent further incidents.

The DCFS CSWs interviewed reported having no safety concerns regarding the FFAs certified foster homes (CFHs) or the care that the focus children received.

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

**Permanency (5 Good Status)**

**Permanency Overview:** The FFA is providing good stability for the focus children. The FFA staff, administration, and CFPs fully support the permanency plans of each of the focus children.

One of the focus children and his parents are receiving court ordered family reunification services with the concurrent plan of adoption. The FFA social workers and DCFS CSW have been working together on a consistent basis to ensure that the permanency plan is achieved.

The other two focus children are also receiving court-ordered family reunification services. The concurrent plan is legal guardianship. The FFA social workers and the DCFS CSWs have been trying to be transparent with the focus children in keeping them informed of the status of their case; however, the focus children feel that they are not being supportive of them returning home.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they are in constant communication with the FFA social workers to ensure that the FFA is following DCFS recommendations and supporting the permanency plan for the focus children. The DCFS CSWs reported that they ensure that appropriate services are in place for the focus children to maintain their stability in the foster homes.

**Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)**

**Placement Stability Overview:** The focus children have substantial placement stability in their current placement with the FFA. The FFA takes responsibility in ensuring that the focus children receive the treatment needed for them to become stable in all areas. The FFA ensures that the CFPs receive support and training to meet the needs of placed children and to assist them in establishing positive relationships with the focus children, further ensuring permanency and stability.

The focus children have adjusted well in their certified foster homes (CFHs) and have made great improvement. The focus children reported that they like their current CFHs and count on their CFPs. One of the focus children reported that she has developed a good bond with her foster mother and foster family, especially with the foster mother's daughter. The FFA and the CFPs are committed to working with the focus children to prevent future placement disruptions.

One of the DCFS CSWs reported that he and the FFA are very invested in the case. The DCFS CSW reported that he has been working with the FFA in ensuring that the four siblings were all placed within the FFA to ensure placement stability and all services are provided to meet the focus children's needs, including facilitating sibling visitation. It was noted that the CFPs for the two focus children and their siblings are supportive of each other and have worked together to ensure that the children maintain family ties and stability in placement. Another DCFS CSW reported that she has great rapport with the FFA social worker and that they work together to ensure that the placement is stable for the focus child.

**Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)**

**Visitation Overview:** The FFA has established and maintained excellent family connections for the focus children. The CFPs transport the focus children to the visits. The FFA and CFPs encourage the focus children to maintain regular contact with their families. The FFA social workers or the CFPs

monitor the visits. The FFA ensures that the arranged visits are convenient for the birth parents to ensure that family visitation is occurring regularly for the focus children. The FFA follows the recommendations and visitation guidelines set by the DCFS CSWs.

Both DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA is very good in ensuring that the visits are convenient for the focus children's biological parents. The DCFS CSWs also reported that the CFPs are also very committed and work collaboratively, when it comes to ensuring the focus children visits take place; the certified foster parents coordinate transportation to ensure the focus children and their siblings visit each other weekly.

## PRACTICE INDICATORS

*(Measured over last 90 days)*

**What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)**

**Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)**

**Engagement Overview:** The FFA has developed a strong rapport with the DCFS CSWs and consistently engages key parties and the focus children in decisions that are made for the focus children. The FFA social workers have weekly or bi-weekly meetings at the CFH with the focus children, CFPs and at times with the DCFS CSWs. The FFA also invited the parents of the focus children to meetings. Meetings include various service providers, such as the therapist, in-home support workers, intensive treatment foster care (ITFC) facilitators and therapeutic behavior services (TBS) workers.

The focus children reported that they could count on their CFPs. The focus children reported that the DCFS CSWs, FFA social workers and CFPs have meetings at the CFH and discuss how they are doing.

The DCFS CSWs also reported that they have built good rapport with the FFA social workers and CFPs and they stay in constant communication.

**Service Needs (6 Optimal Supports & Services)**

**Service Needs Overview:** The FFA provides an excellent array of supports and services that fully match intervention strategies identified for the focus children. The FFA works toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and that identified services are being implemented as stated in their case plan.

One of the focus children participated in weekly counseling to address trauma related to his prior abuse. The focus child completed therapy and is now doing well. The focus child reported that he is doing well in school, and he is attending an after-school program, where he receives tutoring services and assistance with homework. The focus child also reported that he participates in a soccer team.

Another focus child is receiving ITFC services, which includes an array of intensive supports and services with a specialized treatment team. The specialized treatment team members include a treatment facilitator, therapeutic behavioral specialist, coaching/in-home support counseling 2-3 times

a week, as well as monthly team meetings, to which her biological mother is invited and has participated in a few of the team meetings.

The third focus child is receiving weekly individual therapy through the FFA. The CFPs are supportive of the focus child receiving therapeutic services and the focus child fully participates.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they communicate with the FFA on a regular basis to ensure that the appropriate services are in place for the focus children. They further stated that they and the FFA constantly team to discuss and re-visit the treatment goals in place to ensure that the goals are appropriate and that the focus children are meeting their goals. The DCFS CSWs reported that if the treatment goals are not sufficient, the goals are modified.

**Assessment & Linkages (6 Optimal Assessments and Understanding)**

**Assessment & Linkages Overview:** The FFA has an optimal understanding of the focus children's functioning and support systems. Formal and informal techniques are used to determine the strengths and the underlying needs of the focus children and the CFPs. Meetings are held based on the focus children's needs; frequency of meetings range from weekly to monthly. The meetings consist of most of the key members in the decision-making, including the focus children and their biological parents. Both DCFS CSWs reported that they communicate with the FFA social worker on a regular basis. They also reported that they receive the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) quarterly, and they are invited to the team meetings held by the FFA on behalf of the focus children.

**Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)**

**Teamwork Overview:** The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, including the CFPs, FFA social workers, DCFS CSWs, service providers, such as the therapist, TBS workers, in-home support workers and biological parents. DCFS CSWs maintain regular monthly contact with the CFPs, the FFA social workers, and the focus children. The FFA does a great job working as part of the team, meeting weekly, or more often as necessary to address the focus children's needs.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they maintain regular contact with the FFA social workers to coordinate any meetings. The DCFS CSWs reported that they continuously team in order to meet the best needs of the focus children.

**Tracking & Adjustment (6 Optimal Tracking & Adjustment Process)**

**Tracking & Adjustment Overview:** The FFA tracks each focus child's progress through regular meetings. Frequency of the meetings is dependent upon the needs of the focus child or any concerns that may arise. The FFA is highly responsive and appropriate to changing conditions for each of the focus children. The team communicates to ensure the resources in place are helping the focus children achieve treatment goals, and when progress is not made, the team modifies the goals. The FFA also includes the biological parents, to assist in better understanding the needs of the focus children. The FFA social worker is the key person who tracks how the focus children are doing, coordinates, and communicates with all the other key people for the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they have developed excellent rapport with the FFA social workers, who they collaborate with to ensure that all the appropriate resources are in place for the focus children. 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 are made, the treatment resources and supports for the focus children are in place, and that they are involved in making any modifications to the NSPs and case plan. Each of the focus children reported that their needs are being met at their current certified foster homes.

## NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In September 2014, 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 the DCFS CSWs' signatures were obtained on the NSPs, as well as ensuring that the FFA provides all available resources prior to requesting the removal of a child.

In May 2015, quality assurance reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. If the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score, a Quality Improvement Plan was not requested of the FFA. However, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer has and will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation, as needed to the FFA.