COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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June 4, 2007

TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **THE MULTICULTURAL SERVICE CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of The Multicultural Service Center Foster Family Agency (Multicultural or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Multicultural, a private non-profit community-based organization, to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Multicultural is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Multicultural oversees a total of ten certified foster homes in which thirty-one DCFS children were placed. Multicultural is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Multicultural a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Multicultural receives between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between $624 and $790

per month, per child. DCFS paid Multicultural approximately $500,000 for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Multicultural was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Multicultural's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Multicultural received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed Multicultural's staff, the children and the foster parents. We also visited a number of certified foster homes.

Results of Review

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, Multicultural maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by the CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Multicultural did not always ensure foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. For example, the foster parents at the two homes inspected did not adequately secure knives and cleaning solutions. In addition, one of the two homes did not have a smoke detector in the hallway to the children's bedroom or an adequate method of escape from the second story of the home in case of emergency.

Multicultural also did not ensure that the children's Needs and Services Plans were prepared in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain the signatures of the DCFS social workers indicating that the social workers approved the Needs and Services Plans. The Needs and Services Plans also did not contain short-term goals for the children.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

On April 19, 2007 we discussed our report with Multicultural, who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Multicultural's management identified the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Multicultural for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Dr. Ernest Nunez, Executive Director, The Multicultural Service Center
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006
MULTICULTURAL SERVICES CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether The Multicultural Services Center Foster Family Agency (Multicultural or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited two of the ten Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Multicultural billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in March and April 2006 and interviewed the three foster parents and four of the seven children placed in the two homes. We also reviewed the case files for the three foster parents and five of the children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Multicultural needs to ensure foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes. Multicultural also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Termination Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- One (50%) of the two foster homes visited did not secure cleaning detergents and pesticides as required. The other home visited did not secure cleaning detergents and sharp kitchen knives as required.

- The backyard of one (50%) of the two homes visited contained a large non-operable and unstable satellite antenna stored in the children's play area. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require Multicultural to ensure that foster parents provide homes and yards that are safe and well-maintained. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the antenna had been removed from the yard.

- One (25%) of the four foster homes inspected did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the children's bedroom as required. In addition, the home's emergency plan did not include an adequate means of escape from the second story

of the home in case of emergency as required. Subsequently, the foster parents purchased a smoke detector for the hallway to the children's bedroom and established a means of exit from the second story of the home by purchasing an emergency escape ladder.

Needs and Services Plans and Termination Reports

- All five Needs and Services Plans (Plan) reviewed did not contain the DCFS social workers' signatures indicating the social workers' approval of the Plans as required. The Plans were forwarded to the DCFS social workers for approval in all five cases. However, Multicultural did not follow-up with the DCFS social workers when the Plans were not returned.

- The goals listed in all five Plans did not meet the criteria established by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The goals were general and did not meet the criteria of specific, measurable and attainable. In addition, the County contract requires Agencies to establish short term and long term goals for children. Multicultural's social workers only established long term goals for the children.

- All seven Termination Reports reviewed did not include a closing summary of the Agency's records relating to the placed child as required.

Foster Parent Certification

- One (33%) of three foster parent files reviewed did not contain documentation that the foster parent received an orientation from the Agency prior to the certification process as required. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation that the foster parent attended the required orientation.

Recommendations

Multicultural management:

1. **Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**

2. **Ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, cleaning solutions, detergents and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**

3. **Ensure that foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to children's bedrooms.**

4. **Ensure that foster homes' emergency plans include a means of escape from all floors of the home.**

5. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Termination Reports contain all the information required and that the DCFS social worker approves in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

6. **Ensure that foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations and that their case files contain all the information required.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants received the services that Multicultural billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed four children placed in two Multicultural certified foster homes and three foster parents to confirm the services Multicultural billed to DCFS.

Results

Overall, the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Multicultural met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly. The children interviewed also stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Multicultural's social workers' case loads do not exceed fifteen placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Multicultural's director and supervising social worker. In addition, we reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for February and March 2006.

Results

Multicultural's supervising social worker supervised an average of three social workers and carried an average caseload of nine cases. In addition, the Agency's three social workers carried an average caseload of nine cases during the months of February and March 2006.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Multicultural's staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Multicultural conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training and performance evaluations to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Multicultural's director and supervising social worker. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, ongoing training and performance evaluations.

Results

Multicultural's director, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Multicultural conducted hiring clearances and performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract.

Multicultural did not maintain documentation that staff working on the County contract received the required ongoing training. In addition, Multicultural did not obtain a written and signed declaration from one contract social worker stating that the social worker's total caseload from all contracted Agencies did not exceed fifteen placed children. Multicultural's administrator immediately obtained the required declaration from the social worker.

Recommendations

Multicultural management:

7. Ensure that staff working on the County contract receive ongoing training as required.

8. Ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children.

The Multicultural Service Center

TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Ernest V. Nunez, Psy.D. LCSW
Executive Director

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MULTICULTURAL SERVICE CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW

The agency would like to thank the auditor staff for the professional manner in which they conducted the audit. The information attained during the audit has been helpful and has already been put into place.

The goal of The Multicultural Service Center is to provide the best possible services to our foster parent families and the children placed with them. By incorporating the recommendations of the audit, we know we our moving in the right direction toward achieving our goal.

Recommendations and Responses:

1. Ensure that staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

   Corrective Action Plan: Agency social workers were given a follow up training regarding Title 22 Regulations and County contract requirements, with regard to home inspections Home inspections reports will be completed on each home on a quarterly basis The foster parents will be required to sign the reports and address any noted deficiencies ASAP. This information was passed on to foster parents at a foster parent training

2. Ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, cleaning solutions, detergents and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.

   Corrective Action Plan: The home inspection report will be utilized to ensure that foster families are compliant with Title 22 Regulations and County contract requirements. Agency workers will also discuss with foster families their obligation to ensure that they comply with agency requirements, regarding knives, cleaning solutions, detergents and other items that could pose a safety hazard to ensure the safety of children placed in there home.

   It should be noted that normally, foster parents are very diligent with regard to ensuring

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that knives and detergents are locked up. But at the time of the audit the family was doing laundry and was in the process of beginning to prepare their dinner. Thus the aforementioned, items were under the supervision of the parents.

3. Ensure that foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to children's bedrooms.

   Corrective Action Plan: Foster families were reminded to ensure that operable smoke detectors are in the hallways leading to children's bedrooms. The smoke detector for the home in question was installed and in working order. Pictures were sent to verify compliance.

4. Ensure that foster homes' emergency plans include a means of escape from all floors of the home.

   Corrective Action Plan: Inspection was done to all homes to ensure that emergency plans provided a means of escape from all floors of the home. For the home in questions an exit ladder was purchased and county auditor noted verification

5. Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Termination Plans contain all the information required and that the DCFS social worker approves in writing all Needs and Service Plans.

   Corrective Action Plan: Current Needs and Service report and Termination plans were updated so they contain the information required by Department of Children and Family Services. Needs and Service Plan now contain long & short-term goals and Termination reports contain a summary. As mentioned in the report, the agency did send out all Needs and Service Plans for signing, but some were not returned To further ensure that county social workers remember to sign and return the signature page, phone calls will be made to remind them of their obligation to sign and return the plan

6. Ensure that foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations and that their case files contain all the information required.

   Corrective Action Plan: Foster care workers were retrained with regard to County contract and Title 22 regulations for certification of homes. In the past agency would include orientation as part of foster family applicants total training, thus the certificate would only mention training. To meet the auditor's requests, now the agency will give a separate certificate for orientation. A copy of original certificate for the family in question was submitted to the auditors.

7. Ensure that staff working on the County contract receives ongoing training as required

   Corrective Action Plan: Agency will ensure that current training done within and outside the agency is documented. Currently staff are supervised on a weekly basis by the

agency foster care supervisor and Dr. Nunez, with regard to their caseload and therapeutic application.

8. Ensure that contract social worker sign a written declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children

Corrective Action Plan: The agency will ensure that any future contract social workers sign a written declaration, stating their caseload total for all contracted agencies will not exceed 15 cases.

The form was completed by our contracted social worker during the audit and the form was submitted to auditor staff.