COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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June 6, 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: **ZENITH FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Zenith Foster Family Agency (Zenith or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Zenith, 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.

Zenith is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Zenith oversees a total of 26 certified foster homes in which 46 DCFS children were placed. Zenith is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Zenith 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, Zenith 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 Zenith approximately $1.1 million for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Zenith was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Zenith's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Zenith 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 Zenith'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, Zenith maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by the CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Zenith did not always ensure foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- Two of the three homes inspected did not store kitchen knives in a secured location.

- One home did not have an appropriate automobile child passenger restraint system.

- Five of the six Needs and Services Plans (NSP) reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable and time-limited and three NSPs did not contain the signatures of the children's DCFS social workers indicating the social workers approved the NSPs.

- Four children were placed in one of the homes which was approved by Zenith to care for only two children.

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

Review of Report

On May 21, 2007, we discussed our report with Zenith who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Zenith'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 Zenith 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
Ms. Dietra Handy, Director Zenith Foster Family Agency
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006
ZENITH FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

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

Results

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

Foster Home Visitation

- Two (67%) of the three foster homes visited did not store kitchen knives in a secured location as required. In addition, one of the two homes did not secure cleaning detergents as required.

- One (33%) of the three homes visited did not have an appropriate automobile child passenger restraint system for the three year old child in the home. The County contract requires that foster children up to six years of age who weigh less than sixty pounds must be secured by a child passenger restraint system that meets federal motor safety standards.

- One (33%) of the three foster homes visited was not assessed by Zenith to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home as required. Four children were placed in the home at the time of our visit.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- Three (50%) of the six Needs and Services Plans (Plan) reviewed did not contain the children's DCFS social workers' signature indicating the social workers approved the Plans as required. Zenith indicated that the Plans were sent to the DCFS social worker for approval. However, they did not follow-up with the DCFS social worker when the Plans were not returned.

- Five (83%) of the six Plans did not have goals that were specific, measurable and time limited.

- Five (83%) of the six Quarterly Reports did not discuss progress made towards the children's goals as required by the County contract.

Medical Services

- The Agency did not maintain a current court authorization to administer of the medications for one (50%) of the two children using psychotropic medications, as required by the County contract. At the time of our review, the child's authorization had been expired for two months. Prior to the issuance of this report, Zenith obtained court authorization for administering psychotropic medications to the child.

Recommendations

Zenith 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 parents use a child passenger restraint system that meets federal motor safety standards when transporting children up to six years of age who weigh less than sixty pounds.**

4. **Ensure that assessments are completed to evaluate a foster home's capability to provide quality care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.**

5. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required and that DCFS social workers approve in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

6. **Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medications.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

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

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Zenith 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 Zenith'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 Zenith's director and supervising social worker. In addition, we reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for March and April 2006.

Results

Zenith's supervising social worker supervised an average of five social workers and the Agency's social workers carried an average caseload of ten cases during the months of March and April 2006.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Zenith'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

Zenith'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, Zenith conducted hiring clearances, on-going training and performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

Zenith Foster Family Agency

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May 23, 2007

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

From: Deatra Handy
FFA Administrator
Zenith Foster Family Agency

Subject: Response to Agency Contract Review

Zenith Foster Family Agency has reviewed the findings on the FFA review report. We agree to adopt all of the recommendations in the report. Please find the corrective actions implemented based on the recommendation.

Zenith Foster Family Agency appreciates your support and recommendations to assist us in our attempt to provide the best service possible to the children, foster parents and the compliance to our contract with DCFS and Title 22 regulations. Please find the attached responses.

Recommendations and Responses:

(1) Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster home to ensure that they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations

The Zenith FFA Administrator and Supervising Social Worker will ensure that the staff will adequately monitor the foster homes certified by our agency to ensure that the homes comply with the County Contract and Title 22 regulations. Zenith Social Workers will visit homes on a regular basis and conduct home inspections as well as the Quality Assurance person will conduct follow-up inspections for checks and balances.

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

Zenith FFA Social Workers will ensure that knives, cleaning solutions, detergents and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children are properly stored and locked. These items will be inspected and documented monthly for compliance.

(3) Ensure that foster parents use a child passenger restraint system that meets federal motor safety standards when transporting children up to six years of age who weigh less than sixty pounds.

Zenith FFA Administrator, or Supervising Social Worker will inspect the child passenger restraint system prior to certification of the home. Furthermore, the Zenith Social Workers and Quality Assurance will monitor and inspect the care seat quarterly when the home inspection is conducted, to ensure that the child passenger restraint system meets the federal motor safety standards when transporting children six years of age who weigh less than sixty pounds. These items will be added to the home inspections and audit reports.

(4) Ensure that assessments are completed to evaluate a foster homes capability to provide quality care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.

Zenith FFA has created a form to provide an assessment for certified home that would accommodate more than two children. The assessment of the home will accompany any placements of more than two children in any certified home. (See attachment)

(5) Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required and that DCFS social workers approve in writing Needs and Services Plans.

Needs and Services Plan (NSP) will reflect the child's current needs. The NSP will reflect recent short-term goals and show the services implemented that would assist the child in progressing towards the attainment of goals. Long-term goals will reflect specific measurable goals. Supervising Social Worker, Zenith Social Worker and CSW will collaborate to ensure that NSP will be specific and goal oriented to the needs of the child.

Quarterly reports will reflect the current needs plan and progress. The goals will reflect the timelines indicated in the NSP. The timelines will reflect the progress in attainment of the goals and reassessments if goals are not attained

Zenith Social Workers will make all efforts to attain DCFS social workers approval in writing. The agency will send the reports to the CSW and request the approval signature with the report. If the signature of approval is not received within one week the agency will request in writing with the second request and secure the fax transmittal of proof. If the signature of approval is not received within one week of the second request the CSW Supervisor will be contacted and the agency will request assistance in obtaining the signature of approval. If the Supervisor is unable to secure the signature the agency will send the Supervisor a request in writing for the signature of approval and secure the fax transmittal for verification of the attempt.

(6) Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medications.

Administrator and Supervising Social Worker will monitor the deadlines for the court authorization. The Zenith FFA will contact the CSW thirty to forty five days prior to the due date. Written request will be made and fax transmittal will verify notification. The agency will continue to correspond weekly until the court authorization form is attained.

If you need any further information please contact me at (310) 219-0466.

Sincerely

Deatra Handy

Deatra Handy
Administrator

ZENITH FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

Evaluation of Foster Home for Additional Placements

Name: **Date:**

1.) Will the foster parent be able the meet the needs of additional children.

Yes ____ No__

Comments:

2.) Does the foster parent have a t least twelve months experience in caring for foster children?

Yes ____ No__

Comments:

3.) Has the foster foster parent provided quality care with the children they have worked with in the past and with current placements?

Yes ____ No__

Comments:

(4) How many bedrooms does the foster home have?