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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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July 26, 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: **DANGERFIELD FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

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

Background

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

Dangerfield is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Dangerfield oversees a total of 19 certified foster homes in which 53 DCFS children were placed. Dangerfield is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Dangerfield 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, Dangerfield 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. Dangerfield was paid approximately $648,000 for Fiscal Year 2006-07 through May 2007.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Dangerfield was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed Dangerfield's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed the children and foster parents.

Results of Review

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

Dangerfield did not always ensure foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. One of two homes visited had a number of safety issues and other areas of non-compliance. For example:

- The foster parent stored medications, cleaning solutions, detergents, pesticides, knives, and a sword collection in unsecured locations.

- There was a glass top coffee table, resting on the foster parent's bedroom wall, next to the infant's bed.

- The home did not have safety latches on the kitchen cupboards with infants and small children living there.

- The home did not have the required closet or dresser space for one child. The child's bedroom was filled with the foster parent's adult son's clothes and the child's clothes were stored in the family room.

- The home's backyard was not suitable for the children to safely play. The backyard did not have grass, play equipment, and there was a broken glass table and other unsafe materials stacked along the fence of the yard.

Subsequent to our review, Dangerfield decertified this home and placed the children in the home of another foster parent.

Dangerfield also did not always ensure that the children's Needs and Services Plans (Plans) were prepared in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically, none of the five Plans reviewed contained the signature of the children's DCFS social workers indicating that the social workers approved the Plans. In

addition, goals established for the children in the Plans were not specific, measurable and time-limited as required.

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

Review of Report

On July 1, 2007, we discussed our report with Dangerfield who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Dangerfield's management indicates the action the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Dangerfield 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: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ms. Dietra Handy, Director Dangerfield Foster Family Agency
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
DANGERFIELD FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Dangerfield Foster Family Agency (Dangerfield 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 nineteen Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Dangerfield billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in May and June 2006 and interviewed the two foster parents and four of the eight children placed in the two homes. We also reviewed the case files for the two foster parents and five of the children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Dangerfield needs to ensure foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes. Dangerfield also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

Foster Home Visitation

One (50%) of the two foster homes visited had a number of safety issues and other areas of non-compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations:

- The foster parent stored medications, cleaning solutions, detergents, pesticides, knives, and a sword collection in unsecured locations.

- There was a glass top coffee table, resting on the foster parent's bedroom wall, next to the infant's bed.

- The home did not have safety latches on the kitchen cupboards with infants and small children living there.

- The home did not have the required closet or dresser space for one child. The child's bedroom was filled with the foster parent's adult son's clothes and the child's clothes were stored in the family room.

- The home's backyard was not suitable for the children to safely play. The backyard did not have grass, play equipment, and there was a broken glass table and other unsafe materials stacked along the fence of the yard.

- The home was not assessed by Dangerfield 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. Three children were placed in the home at the time of our visit.

Subsequent to our review, Dangerfield decertified this home and placed the children in the home of another foster parent.

- The second foster home visited did not store detergents and cleaning solutions in an inaccessible area as required.

- The bathtub used by the children in the second foster home visited needed to be re-glazed. The bathtub was old and the glazing was cracked and pitted, making it difficult to properly clean. Dangerfield's director stated that the foster parent had been instructed to re-glaze the bathtub but had not complied with the instructions at the time of our review. Subsequent to our review, Dangerfield provided documentation that the foster parent had the tub re-glazed.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- None of the five Needs and Services Plans (Plan) reviewed from the two homes contained the children's DCFS social workers' signature indicating the social workers approved the Plans as required. All five Plans were sent to the DCFS social worker for approval. However, the Agency did not follow-up with the DCFS social worker when the Plans were not returned.

- Two (40%) of the five Plans reviewed did not contain all the information required by the County contract. The two Plans did not include information on the children's personal care and grooming as required by the County contract. In addition, the Plans did not include information on the children's ability to manage his/her own money as required by the County contract.

- None of the five Plans reviewed had goals that were specific, measurable and time limited as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

- None of the five Quarterly Reports reviewed contained a date that they were mailed to the DCFS social workers. Therefore, we could not determine if they were mailed within ten days following the end of the quarter as required by the County contract.

Medical Services

- One (20%) of the five children did not receive their initial medical and dental examinations within the timeframes specified in the County contract. At the time of our review, the child's examinations were five months late.

- One (50%) of the two certified foster parents did not have documentation indicating that a health screening examination was completed prior to certification. A TB test was given but not a complete physical. Subsequent our review, the foster parent completed a health screening examination as required.

Children's Case Files

- Four (80%) of five children were not visited weekly by Dangerfield's social workers during the children's first three months of placement as required. Three children were missing two visits during the first three months of placement. In addition, one child was missing one visit during the first three months of placement.

- Three (60%) of five children's case files reviewed did not contain a signed acknowledgement by the child or the child's DCFS social worker of receipt of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, house rules, discipline practices, grievance/complaint procedures, and discharge procedures as required by the County contract.

- Four (80%) of five children's case files reviewed did not contain individual progress notes that are specific to each interview, incident, service, or activity. The progress notes were grouped together by month. The County contract requires the Agency to maintain records on each placed child interviews, social worker progress notes, and notes on the services provided by the various professional and paraprofessional staff. The records need to be in sufficient detail to permit an evaluation of services provided.

- Three (60%) of five children's case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the foster parents were buying the children the required amount of clothing for the two month period of our review. Dangerfield's Program Statement requires that foster parents spend a minimum of thirty to fifty dollars a month for clothing per child in the home.

Criminal Clearance

- One foster home had an adult son, who lived in the home's converted garage in the backyard. The Agency did not have a criminal record clearance from the California Department of Justice or a child abuse index clearance for the adult son as required. Subsequent to our review, Dangerfield decertified this home.

Recommendations

Dangerfield management:

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

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

3. **Ensure that foster homes and yards are safe, well-maintained, appropriately furnished with acceptable housekeeping.**

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

6. **Ensure that Quarterly Reports are dated and prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract.**

7. **Ensure that children's initial medical and dental examinations are conducted within the timeframes established.**

8. **Ensure that foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations and that health screening examinations are conducted prior to certification.**

9. **Ensure that social workers conduct the required number of visits to children and that children's case files contain all information required by the County contract.**

10. **Ensure that criminal and child abuse index clearances are conducted for all adults residing in certified foster homes.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

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

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Dangerfield generally met their expectations. 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 Dangerfield's social workers' caseloads 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 Dangerfield's administrator. In addition, we reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for Dangerfield's supervising social worker and six social workers.

Results

Dangerfield's supervising social worker supervised an average of six social workers and the Agency's six social workers carried an average caseload of eight cases.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Dangerfield's administrator. In addition, we reviewed Dangerfield's administrator, supervising social worker, and social workers' personnel files for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, ongoing training and performance evaluations.

Results

Dangerfield's administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Dangerfield conducted hiring clearances and performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract. However, five (83%) of six social workers did not complete on-going training as required by Dangerfield's Program Statement.

Recommendation

11. Dangerfield management ensure that their social workers receive on-going training in accordance with the Agency's Program Statement.

July 11. 2007

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

"Finding a Safe Harbor"

J. Tyler McCauley, Auditor Controller

Elouise Dangerfield, CEO
Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems Foster Family Agency

[illegible]
[illegible]

Subject: Response to Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems Agency Contract Review

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The following is Dangerfield response to the findings and recommendations made By the Auditor-Controller/Countywide Contract Monitoring Division during their Contract compliance review.

1. **Ensure that staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the County Contract and Title 22 Regulations.**

   Agency social workers will receive ongoing training that focuses on their role and responsibility in ensuring foster homes are in compliance the Title 22 Regulations and County Contract requirements. Agency social workers will receive additional training on Title 22 Regulations and conducting home inspections to assess the condition of foster homes. Agency Social Workers will immediately address any deficiencies with foster parents at the time of home inspections and devise a plan of correction which both the Agency Social Workers and Foster Parent will sign. Supervisory and Administrative staff will be kept abreast of the compliance as well as the non-compliance of Foster Homes during weekly team meetings.

2. **Ensure that Foster Parents adequately secure knives, cleaning solution, detergents, medications, and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**

   Formal home inspections will be performed on a quarterly basis with documentation of the home inspection (Quarterly Home Inspection Check List) serving as evidence that foster homes are in compliance with Title 22 Regulations and County Contract requirements. Foster Parent will receive additional monthly training in the area of maintaining the physical safety of their homes to include making sure cleaning, solutions disinfectants and/or poisons are stored where children do not have access to them. In addition, Foster Parents (will receive follow-up counseling) will be advised that all knives will be kept locked and medications stored in a medication lock box or container.

3. **Ensure that foster homes and yards are safe, well maintained, appropriately furnished with acceptable housekeeping.**

   The Agency expects the Foster Parent to maintain a healthy and safe environment that includes yard areas that are free of debris and clutter. To ensure the physical environment of foster home is being maintained Agency Social Worker will conduct formal and informal home inspections. Play areas such as the backyard will be one of many focal points. If there are deficiencies, Agency Social worker will address with Foster Parent and develop a timed plan of correction. With respect to the two Foster Homes visited at the time of the audit, one foster home resolved compliance issues by storing toxins away making them inaccessible to children and purchasing a medication lock box that Foster Parent now uses to store all medications. The other Foster Home called into question was unfortunately decertified due to serious deficiencies in safety and accident prevention as well as maintenance of the home. If there are deficiencies in these areas the agency will address the deficiencies and work with the foster parent on a plan of correction.

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.**

   Agency has in the past evaluated Foster Parent capacity and ability to care for more than two children and documented on progress note the rationale for such decision. Generally, the agency takes into account the nature of Foster Parent's parenting skills, whether or note the Foster Parent has additional assistance, and pays special attention to sibling sets. For example, if DCFS Social Worker does not want to split siblings up and requests they are placed together. Agency is in the process of developing a form to be used by Agency Social Workers when determining if more than two children should be placed in a Foster Home. Supervisory staff prior to placing a child in a foster Home with two or more children will review this Foster Parent Evaluation Form.

5. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans contain all the information required and that DCFS Social Workers approve in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

   Agency recognizes the importance of DCFS Social Workers reviewing, authorizing, and participating in children's case plans and makes every attempt to secure DCFS Social Workers signature on Needs and Services Plans. The Agency Social Workers forward Needs and Services Plans with a cover sheet requesting DCFS Social Worker review and sign Needs and Service Plans. However, they are frequently not returned. In order to correct this and ensure DCFS Social Worker's cooperation, Agency Social Workers will contact them by telephone reminding them to review and approve Needs and Services Plan and return signature page to agency. Agency Social Workers will document these efforts on CSW Contact Sheet as proof of attempts.

   As mentioned in the Contract Review Report, during the audit, there were Needs and Services Plans that did not contain all the necessary information required by the county contract as well as developing specific, measurable, and time limited goals. As Follow-up, Agency Social Workers have received additional training in the area of developing Needs and Services Plans and properly writing these assessments. Agency Social Worker have also met with Supervisory Staff and discussed and reviewed in supervision children's Need and Services Plans ensuring plans contain all pertinent information and contain appropriate goals. Effective on July 19, 2007 Dangerfield will be going to a training class on the new template on Need and Service Plan and we will utilize the new form after the training.

6. **Ensure that Quarterly Reports are dated and prepared within the time frame specified in the County Contract.**

   Agency Social Workers are responsible for completing Quarterly Reports within the time frame specified in the county contract ten days following the end of the quarter. For the most part, Agency Social Workers are very good at preparing these reports in a timely manner and forwarding them to DCFS Social Workers. To ensure time frames are met, Agency Social Workers will photocopy dated, stamped envelope and file them in the children's file. This will serve as proof that Agency is complying with County Contract.

7. **Ensure that children's initial medical and dental examinations are conducted within the time frames established.**

   Agency works hard to ensure that children placed with the Agency receive initial medical and dental exams within thirty days of placement. Children five and under must have a physical examination within three days of placement. Thereafter, children must have medical and dental examinations at least once a year or more frequently based on the child's age and needs. To ensure all children are receiving these services, Agency will conduct monthly inspections/audits of case files to ensure initial medical

and dental examinations are being performed on children and that there is documentation to support that. The plan of correction will be implemented immediately.

8. **Ensure that Foster Parents are certified in accordance with the County Contract and Title 22 regulations and that health screening examinations are conducted prior to certification.**

At the time of certification, Foster Parents are expected to have received a health screening examination with TB Test. The health screening form serves as documentation that in fact the exam was performed and is maintained in Foster Parent's File. Agency under no circumstances will permit the certification of any prospective Foster Parent until the health-screening exam is performed and the Agency has the proper documentation to support that. Additionally, prior to certification, administrative staff will review prospective Foster Parent's File to ensure all necessary forms and documentation including health-screening form is in the File.

9. **Ensure that Social Workers conduct the required amount of visits to children and that children's case Files contain all information required by the County Contract.**

Agency Social Workers are expected to make Fact-to-Face contacts with children each week during the first 90 days of placement. Visits are documented on Agency Social Worker Visitation Reports and maintained in children's Files. At the time of audit, Children's case files did not reflect weekly Face-to-Face contact in that several Social Workers Visitation Reports were missing from Files. Agency corrected this by ensuring missing reports were completed and filed. As further follow-up, subsequent weekly team meetings focused on completing Social Worker Visitation Reports in a timely manner. Monthly audits of case files have been conducted to ensure visits are being done and Social Worker Visitation reports are being completed and filed.

Follow-up training for Agency Social Workers staff was also provided and focused on proper documentation of visits such as maintaining records for each child and each date of service.

Clothing receipts will be collected at the Foster Parent Training Meeting the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The Social Worker will also check with the Foster Parent at their monthly visit.

Agency Social Workers will have the Foster Parent and CSW and Foster Child to sign Foster Youth Bill of Rights, House Rules, Discipline Practices, Grievance/Complaint, Procedures and Discharge Procedures at the In-Take of Placement and the Foster Parent and Child will receive a copy of the documents and a copies will be placed in the Foster Parent and Child Chart.

10. **Ensure that criminal and child abuse index clearance are conducted for all adults residing in certified Foster Homes.**

    Agency does everything it can to ensure that all individuals over the age of sixteen and may have frequent and regular contact with the children must have the required clearances that include a criminal records clearance and cleared child abuse index. There are times when a Foster Parent withholds information regarding adults living in the home or providing care to the children. Agency is attempting to address this issue by frequently asking Foster Parents about composition of family, if any one has recently moved into the home and/or recently began providing care to the children. In addition, Agency Social Workers may make unannounced visits to Foster Homes to ensure all adults and children in the home are accounted for.

11. **Dangerfield management ensure that their Social Worker receive on-going training in accordance with the Agency's Program Statement.**

    Agency will ensure that current training done within and outside the agency is documented. The Social Worker will attend the Foster Parent Training Monthly.

Lorrie Irving Administrator

7/12/07
Date

cc: Board of Director