COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

WENDY L. WATANABE
CHIEF DEPUTY

August 20, 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: **FIVE ACRES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES SERVICE PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Five Acres Foster Family Agency (Five Acres or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with Five Acres, 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.

Five Acres is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 15 certified foster homes in which 21 DCFS children were placed. Five Acre's offices are located in the First and Fifth Districts.

DCFS pays Five Acres 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, Five Acres 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. Five Acres was paid approximately $874,000 during Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. The foster homes visited were well maintained and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Five Acre's staff possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Five Acres did not always ensure children received timely initial medical and dental exams. For example, two of the five children's initial medical examinations and three of the five children's initial dental examinations were not conducted within thirty days of placement as required by the County contract. Five Acres also did not always ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contained all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

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

Review of Report

On July 11, 2007, we discussed our report with Five Acres who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Five Acre'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 Five Acres 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
Robert Ketch, Executive Director, Five Acres
Patricia Old, FFA Director, Five Acres
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FIVE ACRES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Five Acres Foster Family Agency (Five Acres 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 eighteen Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Five Acres billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in February and March 2007 and interviewed all four foster parents and four of the six children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the case files for the four foster parents and five children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Five Acres needs to ensure that children receive timely initial medical and dental exams, and that their Needs and Services Plans (Plans) and Quarterly Reports include all the information required by the County contract. Specifically:

Medical/Dental Services

- Two (40%) of the five children did not receive their initial medical exams within the first 30 days of their placement as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The initial medical exam was conducted approximately five months late for one child and one month late for the other child.

- Three (60%) of the five children did not receive their initial dental exams within the first 30 days of their placement as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The three children's initial dental exams were on average 35 days late.

Needs and Services Plans/Quarterly Reports

- One (20%) of the five Plans did not include a discussion of the child's ability to manage money as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, the Quarterly Report for the child did not include a copy of the child's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required.

Recommendations

Five Acres management:

1. **Ensure initial medical and dental exams are conducted within the timeframes specified in the County contract.**

2. **Ensure Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants received the services that Five Acres billed to DCFS.

Verification

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

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Five Acres met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly. One of the foster parents who is caring for a special needs child stated she particularly appreciated Five Acre's supportive services. In addition, the foster children indicated they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Five Acre'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 Five Acre's director and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for February and March 2007.

Results

Overall, Five Acre's social workers carried an average caseload of 15 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised an average of three social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Five Acre's director and reviewed each employee's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, ongoing training and performance evaluations.

Results

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

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Objective

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the prior monitoring review completed by the Auditor-Controller.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from Fiscal Year 2003-04 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on November 17, 2004.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained two outstanding recommendations. Five Acres implemented both of the recommendations.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

July 30, 2007

County of Los Angeles
Department of Auditor-Controller
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 525
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2766
Attention: Board of Supervisors

Re: **Five Acres Foster Family Agency Contract Review**

After reviewing the report from J. Tyler McCauley, Five Acres is in agreement with the following two findings:

1. Two of the children did not receive their initial medical exams within the first 30 days of placement as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Three of the children did not receive their initial dental exams within the first 30 days of placement as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

2. The Needs and Services Plan for one child did not include the child's ability to manage money as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. One child's Quarterly Report did not include a copy of the child's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required by the County contract.

A corrective action plan was implemented immediately.

1. Program Director Patricia Old informed the programs social workers and the social worker supervisor in the administrative meeting of this finding. Program staff were instructed to inform their foster parents that foster children must have their medical and dental exams within the first 30 days of placement. During the first home visit after placement, the Five Acres social worker will discuss this issue with the foster parent. If the County Social Worker orders that the child be seen at the HUB, the Five Acres social worker will contact the County Social Worker to ensure that they have made the appointment.

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Founded in 1888 as The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los Angeles County. | Please remember Five Acres in your will.
Participating Member of United Way, Inc | Accredited Member of the Child Welfare League of America/Council on Accreditation for Children + Families Services

2. The Needs and Services Plan was updated and now has a section entitled Money Management. This section will address the child's ability to manage money and the maximum amount of money that a minor is allowed to have in their possession at one time. The Five Acres social worker will contact the County Social Worker regarding children who are required to have the Emancipation Preparation Contract. Since this is a county issued form, Five Acres will make every attempt to obtain this document from the child's County Social Worker.

If you have any questions or need further information, I can be reached at (626) 246-1727.

Sincerely,

Patricia Old, M.A., A.T.R.
Foster Care Program Director

cc: Robert Ketch, LCSW, Executive Director
Regina Bette, LMFT, Assistance Executive Director
Chanel Boutakidis, MA, LMFT, Director of Permanency Programs