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April 29, 2008

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

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Acting Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **WALDEN FAMILY SERVICES CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with Walden, 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.

Walden 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 96 certified foster homes in which 143 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Walden's offices are located in the Fifth District.

DCFS paid Walden a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Walden received between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out

of these funds, the Agency paid the foster parents between $624 and $790 per month, per child. DCFS paid Walden approximately $3,404,000 during Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Walden 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 Walden staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed several children and foster parents.

Results of Review

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Walden generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, the foster homes visited were well maintained.

Walden needs to ensure they complete the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) in accordance with the County contract and maintain the appropriate documentation for children taking psychotropic medications. Specifically:

- Four (25%) of the 16 NSPs reviewed were prepared an average of 27 days late.
- Ten (63%) of the 16 NSPs reviewed were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.
- Four (22%) of the 18 children taking psychotropic medications did not have a current court authorization for the administration of the medication.
- Twelve (67%) of the 18 children taking psychotropic medication did not have monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician documented in their case files.

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

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Walden on February 27, 2008. In their attached response, Walden's management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Walden 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.

WLW:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Lisa Williamsen, Director, Walden Family Services FFA
Hal Dunning, Chairman, Walden Family Services, Governance Board of Directors
Ed Earl, Chairman, Walden Family Services, Foundation Board of Directors
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
WALDEN FAMILY SERVICES
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited nine of the 96 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Walden billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in March and April 2007 and interviewed eleven of the fourteen foster parents and fifteen of the 32 children placed in the nine homes. We also reviewed the case files for fourteen foster parents and sixteen children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Walden generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Walden needs to ensure that the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and Quarterly Reports contain all the required information. The Agency also needs to ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medication and that the prescribing physicians' monthly evaluations are documented in the children's case files. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation and Foster Parent Certification

- The emergency plan for two (22%) of the nine foster homes visited did not include an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in case of emergency. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency purchased emergency escape ladders for the two homes.

- One (7%) of the 14 foster parents did not complete all of the required 15 hours of annual continuing education training. Prior to the issuance of this report, Walden provided documentation that the foster parent completed the annual training.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- Four (25%) of the 16 NSPs reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes specified in the County contract. On average, the four NSPs were prepared 27 days late.

- Ten (63%) of the 16 NSPs reviewed were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required. Walden sent the ten NSPs to the DCFS social workers for approval but did not follow-up with the social workers when the approvals were not obtained. Prior to the issuance of this report, Walden obtained five of the ten approvals.

Our prior review also noted that Walden did not always ensure that NSPs were approved by the DCFS social worker.

- Four (25%) of the 16 NSPs reviewed were not individualized and specific to the children as required.

- One (17%) of six Quarterly Reports reviewed for children 14 years of age and older did not include a copy of the Emancipation Preparation Contract as required. At the time of our review, six children were over 14 years old.

- Twelve (75%) of the 16 Quarterly Reports reviewed did not include a specific reassessment of the children's unmet needs and efforts made to meet those needs.

Medical Services

- Four (22%) of the 18 children taking psychotropic medications did not have a current court authorization for the administration of the medications. Prior to the issuance of this report, Walden provided documentation that they received a current court authorization for one of the children.

Our prior review also noted that Walden did not always ensure that children taking psychotropic medication had a current court authorization for the administration of the medication.

- Twelve (67%) of the 18 children taking psychotropic medications did not have monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician documented in their case files. During a six month period, 38 monthly visits were not documented for these twelve children.

Recommendations

Walden management ensure that:

1. **Foster homes' emergency plans include an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in case of emergency.**

2. **Foster parents attend the required amount of annual continuing education training hours specified in the County contract.**

3. **Needs and Services Plans are prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract.**

4. **Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations, including: the NSPs' required approval by the children's DCFS social workers; NSPs that are individualized and specific to the children; Quarterly Reports that include the Emancipation Preparation Contract; Quarterly Reports that include specific reassessment of the children's unmet needs and efforts made to meet those needs, etc.**

5. **Children on psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for the administration of the medications.**

6. **Documentation is maintained to support that children taking psychotropic medication are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Walden billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed fifteen children placed in nine Walden certified foster homes and eleven foster parents to confirm the services Walden billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster children interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Walden'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 Walden's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Overall, Walden's thirteen social workers carried an average caseload of 11 cases and the Agency's three supervising social workers each supervised an average of four social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Walden 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 Walden's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, ongoing training and performance evaluations.

Results

Walden's administrator, supervising social workers and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, Walden conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing 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 the Fiscal Year 2004-05 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on April 29, 2005.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained four outstanding recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations 4 and 5 contained in this report were also noted in the prior monitoring review. Prior to the issuance of this report, Walden management indicated that they have implemented the two outstanding recommendations.

Recommendation

7. **Walden management implement the two outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2004-05 monitoring report.**

March 7, 2008

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

RE: Walden Family Services Contract Review

Dear Los Angles County Board of Supervisors,

Based upon the findings of your audited conducted June 2007, the following Corrective Action Plan has been instituted:

Recommendation 1: Ensure foster homes' emergency plans include an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in the case of emergency.

All currently certified foster parents who have a second story in their home now have an emergency escape ladder. In addition, an emergency escape ladder will be added as a prerequisite prior to certification.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that the foster parents attend the required amount of annual continuing education training hours specified in the county contract.

Tracking systems to monitor foster parents' continuing education hours have been put into place and is reviewed monthly. At least three months prior to certification, foster parents who have not completed the required training hours will be contacted to complete their hours. This process will continue monthly up until their hours are completed prior to their recertification.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that Needs and Services Plans are prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract.

Tracking systems to monitor due dates for Needs and Services Plans have been put into place and are monitored by the district social work supervisors. Upcoming Needs and Services Plans will be reviewed with the FFA social worker during supervision.

Recommendation 4: Ensure the Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

The Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports will be completed by the FFA social worker and reviewed and approved by the district social work supervisor for

accuracy and inclusion of all required elements. In addition, the FFA social worker will FAX/Mail the report along with a request for signature to the CSW three times, follow up with phone calls, and will document all attempts.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that children on psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for the administration of the medications.

Prior to current court authorizations expiring, FFA social worker will begin contacting CSW and psychiatrist to secure the submission of a new court authorization. FFA social worker will follow-up with CSW, psychiatrist, and the D-Rate desk at the county to secure the approved authorization. FFA social worker will document all requests to acquire authorizations.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that documentation is maintained to support that children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

The Needs and Services Plan/Quarterly Reports will contain the dates of all medication management appointments. If the prescribing physician does not require the minor to be seen monthly, that information will be included in the Needs and Services Plan/Quarterly Reports and the FFA Social Worker will request such information in writing from the prescribing physician. FFA Social Worker will document all attempts at getting written documentation from the prescribing physician.

Recommendation 7: Walden's management to implement the two outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal year 2004-2005 monitoring audit.

Please see the above responses to recommendations four and five, which were implemented prior to the writing of this report.

We hope that this Corrective Action Plan meets with your approval. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (619) 584-5777.

Sincerely,

B. Barnes, LCSW

Beth Barnes, LCSW
Senior Director of Quality Assurance