COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-2706
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

WENDY L. WATANABE
ACTING AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

ASST. AUDITOR-CONTROLLERS

ROBERT A. DAVIS
JOHN NAIMO
MARIA M. OMS

October 8, 2008

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

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe FOR
Acting Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **UNITED CARE INC. FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY - A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with United, 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.

United 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 182 certified foster homes in which 276 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. United is located in the Second District.

DCFS paid United 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, the Agency received 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 United approximately $5,340,000 during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether United 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 the Agency's 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 United generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. United also ensured that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations and that staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required.

United needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports, case files, and staff are in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- Two of the 30 children did not have shoes that met the quality standards required by the County contract. The shoes for one child had holes in the soles and the shoes for the other child were scuffed and worn.

- Twenty-eight of the 30 NSPs reviewed did not contain all the required information. For example, the NSPs were missing short and long term goals, or contained goals that were not specific, individualized, measurable, or time limited.

- Twelve of the 30 NSPs reviewed were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.

- None of the 30 Quarterly Reports reviewed adequately discussed the children's progress towards achieving goals. In addition, these 30 Quarterly Reports did not contain an assessment of unmet needs, efforts made to meet those needs and modifications made to the children's treatment plans.

- Five of the 30 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by United's social workers during their first three months of placement as required by the County contract. During this period, seven required visits were not documented for these five children.

- Four of the 22 certification files reviewed did not contain documentation that the foster parents completed 15 hours of annual continuing education training. The

four foster parents completed an average of five hours of training during our review period.

- Four Agency supervising social workers carried more cases than allowed by Title 22 regulations.

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

Review of Report

We discussed our report with United on September 3, 2008. In their attached response, United indicates agreement with our findings and the actions they have taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank United 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
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Michael White, Chair, United Care Board of Directors
Craig Woods, Executive Director, United Care, Inc., Foster Family Agency
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
UNITED CARE, INC. FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited 14 of the 182 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that United billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in July and August 2007, and interviewed 16 foster parents, 23 of the 30 children, and observed five toddlers placed in the 14 homes. We also reviewed the case files for the 22 foster parents and 30 children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents stated that the services they received from United generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The five children we observed appeared well cared for and happy. United also ensured that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

United needs to ensure that children's clothing meets the quality standards required by the County contract. United also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports, and foster parent certification files contain all the required information. We specifically noted the following:

Children's Clothing

- Two (6%) of the 30 children visited did not have shoes that met the quality standards required by the County contract. The shoes for one child had holes in the soles and the shoes for the other child were scuffed and worn.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- Twenty-eight (93%) of the 30 NSPs reviewed did not contain all the required information. For example, the NSPs were missing short and long term goals, or contained goals that were not specific, individualized, measurable, or time limited.

- Twelve (40%) of the 30 NSPs reviewed were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.

- None of the 30 Quarterly Reports reviewed adequately discussed the children's progress towards achieving goals. In addition, these 30 Quarterly Reports did not contain an assessment of unmet needs, efforts made to meet those needs or modifications made to the children's treatment plans.

Children's Case Files

- Five (16%) of the 30 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by United's social workers during their first three months of placement as required by the County contract. During this period, seven required visits were not documented for these five children.

- One (3%) of the 30 children's initial dental and medical examinations were not conducted timely. The child's initial medical examination was conducted approximately 35 days late and his initial dental examination was conducted approximately 90 days late. In addition, two (6%) of 30 children's annual dental exams were past due at the time of our review. The annual dental exams were approximately two and three months past due, respectively.

Foster Parent Certification

- Four (18%) of the 22 certification files reviewed did not contain documentation that the foster parents completed 15 hours of annual continuing education training. The four foster parents completed an average of five hours of training during our review period.

Recommendations

United management ensure:

1. **Children's clothing meet the quality standards required by the County contract.**

2. **NSPs contain all required information and are approved by the children's DCFS social worker.**

3. **Quarterly Reports contain all the required information.**

4. **Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement.**

5. **Children's initial and annual dental and medical examinations are conducted within the required timeframes.**

6. **Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed 26 children and observed five toddlers placed in 14 United certified foster homes and interviewed 16 foster parents to confirm the services United billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated they were generally happy with the services they received from the Agency and the foster children indicated they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, the toddlers we observed appeared well cared for and happy.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether United 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 CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed United's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social workers.

Results

The Agency's social workers carried an average caseload of 15 and the supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers. However, four of United's supervising social workers carried more cases than allowed by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The four supervising social workers carried an average of five more cases than allowed.

Recommendations

United management ensure:

7. **Social workers do not maintain more cases than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

8. **Hire additional social workers if the number of cases exceeds the maximum number allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether United 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 to staff.

Verification

We interviewed United's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, and ongoing training.

Results

United's administrator, supervising social workers, and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to 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 2003-04 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on July 19, 2004.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained four outstanding recommendations. United implemented all four recommendations.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

Friday, September 26, 2008

To: Supervisor, Yvonne Burke
Supervisor, Gloria Molina
Supervisor, Zev Yarslovaky
Supervisor, Don Knabe
Supervisor, Michael D. Artonovich

From: Nakeyshaey M. Allen, FFA Administrator
Craig J. Woods, Executive Director

RE: UNITED CARE, INC. – FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

The following is a response to the audit – contract compliance review made by the County of Los Angeles – Department of Auditor –Controller's office for findings from 01/01/2007 – 10/31/2007. Please note that during the time of this audit compliance review that our agency had two different administrators, and I am currently the third. Additionally, it is because of their lack of oversight, follow through, and an efficient check and balance system that they are no longer with United Care, Inc. Since the start of my tenure, which was July 1, 2008, the items cited throughout the report have been adequately addressed through the following:

- Review of foundation principles and ethics of social work practice.
- Development of workflow matrixes that assist with the flow of work through the appropriate systems internally and externally.
- Training on social work competencies in report writing that addresses attention to details and appropriate use of documentation.

Additionally, the following outlines the Corrective Action Plans that address the Auditor-Controller's recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Children's clothing meets the quality of standards required by the county contract.

Corrective Action: FFA Supervisors and the FFA Administrator developed and facilitated a comprehensive training on how to observe and monitor all children's clothing via the standard County Contract clothing inventory form and working with foster parent to purchase age appropriate and quality clothing. This comprehensive training is held quarterly via a social work in service and on an as needed basis.

Note that the following Corrective Action addresses both recommendation 2 and 3

Recommendation #2: NSPs contain all required information and are approved by the children's DCFS social worker.

Recommendation #3: Quarterly Reports contain all the required information.
NSPs contain all required information and are approved by the children's DCFS social worker.

Corrective Action: Throughout the month of July 2008 all FFA Worker and Supervisors were intensely trained on the new Needs and Services Plan that is to be implemented by all FFA's by November 1, 2008. Effective August 1, 2008 all agency FFA Workers and Supervisors were required to utilize the new County standard Needs and Service Plan. Additionally, a check and balance system was created that requires all FFA workers to work with CFP and CSW's to develop the NSP (for 30 day reports) within 14 days of placement, (for 90 day reports) within 60 days of last report (45 days if the last report was the 30 day report), and all reports, including signatures, are to be submitted 7 days prior to the due date for supervisory oversight and approval. When the final report meets supervisory approval - then the report is given to office clerk to be mailed to all members of the treatment team and other appropriate parties. Additionally, the FFA Supervisors and Administrator have since developed a tracking tool to be utilized during weekly supervision that addresses all content required for the development of the Initial and Quarterly Reports. Furthermore, a thorough process was created that monitors and ensures that all Needs and Service Plans submitted to the CSW's are approved, and confirms that all documentation is placed in each children's file.

Recommendation #4: Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement.

Corrective Action: All FFA Supervisors and the FFA Administrator developed a process/system through supervision, customer service, and other positive forms of interaction with CFP's that monitors and ensures that <u>all</u> required visits by UCI - FFA Workers are made, documented, reviewed and confirmed.

****Note that the following Corrective Action addresses both recommendation 5 and 6****

Recommendation #5: Social Workers do not maintain more cases than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Recommendation #6: Hire additional social workers if the number of cases exceeds the maximum number allowed by the CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Correction Action: UCI has taken a proactive stance in marketing the agency's program, services, and employment opportunities at social service employment agencies and local schools of social work to increase the amount of quality

social workers within our agency. Additionally, we have developed a comprehensive contractor program that utilizes Independent Contract Workers to carry, on average, a part time case load.

Recommendation #7: Children's initial and annual dental and medical examinations are conducted within the required timeframes.

Corrective Action: All FFA Supervisors and the FFA Administrator have developed a comprehensive training that identifies all of the required compliance elements for the initial and annual dental and medical examinations. This in service training was provided to all FFA Workers and Supervisors. This process is continuously monitored via supervision. Additionally, trainings on this process are held quarterly and on an as needed basis.

Recommendation #8: Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.

Corrective Action: UCI has a comprehensive training program that addresses a variety of topics that impact children and foster parents. Our training dates and times have been extended to include the last Friday of the month from 9 – 5 PM, the last Thursday of the month from 6- 9 PM, and the last Saturday of the month from 9 – 12 and 1 – 4 PM. The flexibility in our schedules is designed to accommodate the complex schedules of our CFPs. Also, based on the skill sets and needs of our CFPs a, individual re-certification, training may be provided for the CFP and their family, but only on an as needed basis. Additionally, all continuing education hours are monitored closely by our Quality Assurance Manager who oversees this component and ensures its timely compliance.

United Care, Inc. – Foster Family Agency has provided quality service for foster children, foster families and certified foster parents for over 11 years throughout Los Angeles County. We take the responsibility of providing quality services to our community very seriously. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to this Compliance Review and we intend to continue to take proactive action in the areas outlined in this response. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Professionally,

Nakeyshaey M. Allen
FFA Administrator
United Care, Inc. – Foster Family Agency

CC: Wendy L. Wantabe, Acting Auditor-Controller
Brian Henricks, CIA

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