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May 25, 2011

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

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

We have completed a review of Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency (Bienvenidos or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contract provider. The purpose of our review was to determine whether Bienvenidos was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and their County contract. We completed our review in February 2009, and conducted a follow-up review in March 2010.

DCFS contracts with Bienvenidos, a private, non-profit, community-based organization, to recruit, train and certify foster parents to supervise children DCFS places in foster care. Once Bienvenidos places a child in a foster home, the Agency is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from foster care. Bienvenidos oversees 90 certified foster homes in which 181 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Bienvenidos is located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and San Bernardino County. DCFS paid Bienvenidos approximately $4.9 million and $4.5 million during Fiscal Years 2008-09 and 2009-10, respectively.

Results of Review

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents, and the foster parents indicated that the services they received from Bienvenidos met their expectations. In addition, the Agency ensured that their social workers' caseloads did

not exceed the maximum established by California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Title 22 regulations, and that their staff had the required education and work experience. Bienvenidos also conducted hiring clearances, and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract. However, we noted that Bienvenidos did not always comply with all of the requirements of CDSS Title 22 regulations and their County contract. For example:

- One (10%) of the ten foster homes reviewed in 2009 did not adequately secure kitchen knives. This issue was also noted in our January 26, 2007 report on Bienvenidos.

  During our 2010 follow-up, we noted this home and the four additional homes reviewed at that time had secured knives.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they conducted an Agency-wide training that included securing knives.

- One (10%) of the ten foster homes reviewed in 2009 was not assessed by Bienvenidos to ensure the foster parents could care for more than two children. At the time of our review, six children were placed in the home.

  During our 2010 follow-up, we reviewed three additional homes that had more than two children, and noted that Bienvenidos had completed the required assessments.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their supervisors on completing the assessments.

- Three (30%) of the ten children reviewed in 2009, who were taking psychotropic medications, did not have a current court authorization for the medication. This issue was also noted in our January 26, 2007 report. In addition, the files of two (20%) children did not have documentation of the required monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician, and one (10%) child's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) did not indicate that the child was prescribed, or was taking, psychotropic medication. However, the foster parents and children we interviewed indicated that the children were seen monthly by the prescribing physician, and the medication logs indicated the children were taking their medication as prescribed. After our review, the Agency provided current court authorizations for the three children.

  During our 2010 follow-up, we reviewed all ten children taking psychotropic medication at that time, and noted that all ten had court authorizations, monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician, and the NSPs indicated that the children were prescribed, and were taking, psychotropic medication. In addition, the foster parents and children indicated that the children were taking their medication as prescribed.

Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on psychotropic medications.

- Five (24%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 were completed an average of 30 days late.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all six NSPs reviewed were completed timely.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on completing NSPs timely.

- Fifteen (71%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 were not approved by the DCFS social workers. This issue was also noted in our January 26, 2007 report.

  During our 2010 follow-up, one (17%) of the six NSPs reviewed was not approved by the DCFS social worker.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on obtaining approval from the DCFS social workers.

- Ten (48%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 did not have specific, measurable and time-limited goals. This issue was also noted in our January 26, 2007 report.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all six NSPs reviewed had specific, measurable, and time-limited goals.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on NSP goals.

- Twelve (57%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 did not have recommendations for ongoing placement needs.

  During our 2010 follow-up, one (17%) of the six NSPs reviewed did not have recommendations for ongoing placement needs.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on NSPs.

- Three (14%) of the 21 case files reviewed in 2009 did not have documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates on the children's progress.

  During our 2010 follow-up, one (17%) of the six additional case files reviewed did not have documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates.

Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on providing updates to DCFS social workers.

- Three (14%) of the 21 Quarterly Reports reviewed in 2009 did not include details of the children's progress on their goals as required.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all six additional Quarterly Reports reviewed included details of the children's progress on their goals.

  Bienvenidos' attached response indicates that they trained their staff on Quarterly Reports.

Details of our review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

To enable Bienvenidos to begin taking action immediately, we discussed the findings and recommendations from our reviews with Agency management while we were completing our review and our follow-up.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Bienvenidos on January 10, 2011, and with DCFS. Bienvenidos' management's response (Attachment I) indicates the actions the Agency has taken, or plans to take, to address the issues noted in our report. DCFS' response (Attachment II) indicates they will monitor the Agency's compliance with our recommendations.

We thank Bienvenidos management for their cooperation and assistance during our review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:JLS:DC:AA

Attachments

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., Interim Director, DCFS
Francisco J. Nicholas, Esq., Board of Directors Chair, Bienvenidos
Ritchie L. Geisel, President and CEO, Bienvenidos
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

BIENVENIDOS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
CONTRACT COMPLIANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEARS 2008-09 AND 2009-10

BACKGROUND

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) pays Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency (Bienvenidos or Agency) a monthly rate per child per month, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Bienvenidos received between $1,430 and $1,679 per child per month, based on the child's age, for a total of approximately $4.9 million and $4.5 million during Fiscal Years (FY) 2008-09 and 2009-10, respectively.

PURPOSE/METHODOLOGY

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Bienvenidos was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and their County contract. We reviewed the Agency's certified foster parent files, children's case files and the Agency's employees' personnel files. We also interviewed Bienvenidos' staff, visited ten of the Agency's certified foster homes, and interviewed 11 foster parents and 17 foster children. We completed our review during February 2009 and conducted a follow-up review in March 2010.

To enable Bienvenidos to begin taking action immediately, we discussed the findings and recommendations from our reviews with Agency management while completing our review and our follow-up review.

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Bienvenidos provided program services in accordance with CDSS Title 22 regulations and their County contract.

Verification

As noted earlier, we visited ten of Bienvenidos' 90 certified foster homes in Los Angeles County, and interviewed 11 foster parents and 17 children placed in the ten homes. We also observed four toddlers who were too young to interview. In addition, we reviewed the case files for 14 foster parents and 21 children, and reviewed the Agency's monitoring activities.

Results

Bienvenidos did not always adequately monitor foster homes and ensure compliance with CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract. Specifically:

Foster Home Visitation/Foster Parent Certification

- One (10%) of the ten foster homes reviewed in 2009 did not adequately secure kitchen knives. We noted a similar issue in our January 26, 2007 report on Bienvenidos.

  During our 2010 follow-up, this home and four additional homes reviewed adequately secured their knives.

- One (10%) of the ten foster homes reviewed in 2009 was not assessed by Bienvenidos to ensure the foster parents could care for more than two children. At the time of our review, six children were placed in the home.

  During our 2010 follow-up, we noted that Bienvenidos had properly assessed the three additional homes reviewed with more than two children.

Medical Services

- Three (30%) of the ten children reviewed in 2009, who were taking psychotropic medications, did not have a current court authorization for their medication. We noted a similar issue in our January 26, 2007 report. In addition, two (20%) children did not have documentation of the required monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician, and one (10%) child's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) did not indicate that the child was prescribed, and was taking, psychotropic medication. However, the foster parents and children we interviewed indicated that the children were seen by the prescribing physician monthly, and the medication logs indicated that the children were taking their medication as prescribed. After our review, the Agency provided current court authorizations for the three children.

  During our 2010 follow-up, we reviewed the files of all ten children who were taking psychotropic medication at the time, and noted that all ten had court authorizations, documentation of monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician, and the NSPs indicated the children were prescribed, and were taking, psychotropic medication. In addition, the foster parents and children indicated that the children were taking their medication as prescribed.

Needs and Services Plans and Children's Case Files

- Five (24%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 were completed an average of 30 days late.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all six additional NSPs reviewed were completed timely.

- Fifteen (71%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 had not been approved by the DCFS social workers as required. We noted a similar issue in our January 26, 2007 report.

During our 2010 follow-up, one (17%) of the six additional NSPs reviewed had not been approved by the DCFS social worker.

- Ten (48%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 did not have specific, measurable and time-limited goals. We noted a similar issue in our January 26, 2007 report.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all six additional NSPs reviewed had specific, measurable, and time-limited goals.

- Twelve (57%) of the 21 NSPs reviewed in 2009 did not have recommendations for ongoing placement needs.

  During our 2010 follow-up, one (17%) of the six additional NSPs reviewed did not have recommendations for ongoing placement needs.

- Three (14%) of the 21 case files reviewed in 2009 did not have documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates on the children's progress.

  During our 2010 follow-up, one (17%) of the six additional case files reviewed did not have documentation that the Agency gave the child's DCFS social worker monthly updates.

Quarterly Reports and Termination Reports

- Three (14%) of the 21 Quarterly Reports reviewed in 2009 did not include details of the children's progress on their goals.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all six additional Quarterly Reports reviewed included details of the children's progress on their goals.

- Three (33%) of the nine Quarterly Reports reviewed in 2009 for children 14 years old or older did not include Emancipation Preparation Contracts as required. We noted a similar issue in our January 26, 2007 report.

  During our 2010 follow-up, all four additional Quarterly Reports for children 14 years old or older reviewed included Emancipation Preparation Contracts.

- Two (67%) of the three Termination Reports reviewed did not indicate the date they were sent to the DCFS social workers. As a result, the Agency did not document that the reports were sent to the DCFS social workers timely. In addition, none of the three Termination Reports had the required closing summary of the Agency's placement records.

During our 2010 follow-up, all 16 additional Termination Reports reviewed were sent to the DCFS social workers timely, and included a closing summary of the Agency's placement records.

Recommendations

Bienvenidos management ensure:

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the CDSS Title 22 regulations and County contract.**
2. **Foster parents secure knives and other items that could pose a hazard to children adequately.**
3. **Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.**
4. **Children taking psychotropic medication have a current court authorization on file for the medication, and are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.**
5. **NSPs and case files have all the required information.**
6. **NSPs are prepared within the required timeframes, approved by the DCFS social workers and have specific, measurable and time-limited goals.**
7. **Quarterly Reports and Termination Reports are submitted timely and have all the required information.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the foster parents and children received the services that Bienvenidos billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed 11 foster parents and 17 children placed in ten Bienvenidos certified foster homes and. We also observed four toddlers who were too young to interview.

Results

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. In addition, all 17 foster children indicated that they enjoyed

living with their foster parents, and the toddlers we observed appeared well cared for and healthy.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Verify that Bienvenidos social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements, and that the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract.

Verification

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

Results

Bienvenidos' 17 social workers carried an average caseload of 12 cases, and the Agency's three supervising social workers supervised an average of six social workers, which complies with CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Bienvenidos staff had the education and work experience required by CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted required clearances before hiring their staff, and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

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

Results

Bienvenidos' staff had the required education and work experience, and the Agency conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Objective

Determine the status of the recommendations from the prior Auditor-Controller monitoring review.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from our FY 2006-07 monitoring review had been implemented. The report was issued on January 26, 2007.

Results

Our prior monitoring report had nine recommendations. Bienvenidos has fully implemented five recommendations and partially implemented one recommendation. However, three of the issues noted in our current review related to foster parents storing knives safely, maintaining documentation for children taking psychotropic medications, and completing NSPs were also noted in our 2007 report.

Recommendation

8. **Bienvenidos management implement the outstanding recommendations from the prior monitoring report.**

January 18, 2011

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslvasky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Karina Souquette
Director of Foster Care

Subject: Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency Contract Review - A Department of Children and Family Services Provider

This letter is the corrective action plan for the audit conducted by the Auditor-Controllers office. Although some of the findings were corrected previously or on site while you conducted the audit, I will address each finding and the note correction.

1. Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

   An agency wide training was conducted on complying with County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

2. Foster parents adequately secure knives and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.

   An agency wide training was conducted on locking up knives and routine home inspections.

3. Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.

   Regional Office Supervisor's will be trained on completing assessments over two in a timely manner.

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4. Children taking psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for their medication and are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

   An agency wide training was conducted on psychotropic medications: monthly health log by psychiatrist, and incorporating psychotropic medication treatment plan into the Needs and Service plan.

5. NSPs and case files have all the information required.

   There was a training on treatment plans at our in-service training.

6. NSPs are prepared within the required timeframes, approved by the DCFS social worker and have goals that are specific, measurable and time-limited.

   FCSW will follow-up with CSW to obtain approval in a timely manner. FCSW will document attempts on the signature page of the Quarterly report. An FCSW training was conducted on completing NSP's in a timely manner, obtaining CSW's signature and addressing goals to be specific, measurable and time limited.

7. Quarterly reports and Termination reports are submitted timely and have all required information.

   An agency wide training was conducted on Termination and Quarterly reports need to be included in the summary and reports need dates mailed/e-mailed and need to be completed on a timely manner.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please call me at (909) 267-1116.

Sincerely,

Karina Souquette
Director of Foster Care

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
426 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, CA 90020

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Acting Director

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GLORIA MOLINA
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MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
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ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

April 4, 2011

TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM: Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head
Out-of-Home Care Management Division
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF BIENVENIDOS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

The Auditor-Controller's (A-C) Contract Review of Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency was conducted in February/March 2009. The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) received the A-C's January 7, 2010 draft report on January 7, 2010 and responded to the report on February 5, 2010 (Attachment II).

On January 21, 2011, the A-C submitted a final draft report which included a follow-up to their initial February/March 2009 review. The follow-up review was conducted in March 2010 to determine the status of their prior findings. The A-C's follow-up review reflects they verified that five of eight recommendations were fully implemented and three was partially implemented. Bienvenidos submitted a Corrective Action Plan, dated January 18, 2011 addressing each of the A-C's recommendations.

The OHCMD will follow up on the A-C's recommendations to assess for full implementation during our next monitoring review.

KR:EAH

c: David Seidenfeld, CEO, Children and Families Well-Being Cluster
Wendy Watanabe, Auditor-Controller
Antonia Jimenez, Director, DCFS
Rhelda Shabazz, Deputy Director, DCFS