



J. TYLER McCAULEY  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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July 19, 2004

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

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **UNITED CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of United Care Foster Family Agency (United Care or Agency), a Foster Family Agency (FFA) service provider. The review was conducted as part of the Auditor-Controller's Centralized Contract Monitoring Pilot Project and is the second FFA review completed.

**Background**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with United Care, 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 United Care places a child, the agency is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

United Care is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. In addition, United Care is responsible for training and certifying foster parents. United Care oversees a total of 112 certified foster homes in which 153 DCFS children are placed. United Care is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays United Care 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, United Care receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, United Care pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2002-03, DCFS paid United Care approximately \$3.1 million.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

### **Purpose/Methodology**

The purpose of the review was to determine whether United Care was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated United Care's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our review included determining whether United Care received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. As part of our monitoring visits, we reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed United Care's staff, the foster children and the foster parents. Our review also included visits to a sample of certified foster homes to complete a home inspection.

### **Results of Review**

Overall, United Care provided the services outlined in its County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they receive from United Care meet their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. In addition, United Care maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their case loads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22.

However, United Care does not provide the foster parent's with a copy of the child's Needs and Services Plan, as required by the County contract. The Agency also does not always conduct an assessment to evaluate the ability of the foster home to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home. In addition, United Care's social workers' "termination reports" do not always contain complete information about the child's case records, as required by the County contract.

We recommend that United Care ensure that certified foster parents receive a copy of a child's Needs and Services Plan and United Care social workers prepare "termination reports" that contain complete information about the child's case records. We also recommend that United Care assess the ability of foster homes to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.

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

### **Review of Report**

On July 7, 2004, we discussed our report with United Care who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, United Care indicated they will submit a corrective action plan, including the timeframes to implement the recommendations, to DCFS within 30 days.

We thank United Care 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:DR:DC

Attachment

- c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Department of Children and Family Services
  - Dr. David Sanders, Director
  - Angela Carter, Deputy Director
  - Paul Freedlund, Deputy Director
  - Ed Sosa, Division Chief Quality Assurance
- Craig J. Woods, Executive Director, United Care Foster Family Agency
- Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
- Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
- Public Information Office
- Audit Committee

**CENTRALIZED CONTRACT MONITORING PILOT PROJECT  
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY (FFA) PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2003-04  
UNITED CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

**BILLED SERVICES**

**Objective**

To determine whether United Care provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations. The services include training and certifying the foster parents, conducting monthly visits to the foster homes to ensure the children's needs are met and ensuring that the homes are properly maintained. United Care is also responsible for providing quarterly progress reports on placements to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers.

**Verification**

We reviewed the case files for 4 of the 85 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that United Care billed DCFS for in September and October 2003. We also visited the 4 foster homes and interviewed the 4 foster parents. In addition, we interviewed the 15 children placed in the 4 homes.

**Results**

Overall, United Care provided the services required by its County contract. The foster homes were well maintained, clean and in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 requirements. United Care's foster parents were certified and were given appropriate training by United Care as required by the County contract.

United Care's social workers developed adequate Needs and Services Plans that addressed each child's educational and health needs. The Needs and Services Plans also addressed emancipation services available to the child when appropriate. In addition, United Care's social workers maintained and documented required contacts with children's DCFS social worker. However, United Care did not provide the foster parents with copies of the child's Needs and Services Plan, as required by the County contract. In addition, United Care's social workers did not always document a foster parent's ability to provide quality care when placing more than two children with foster parents, as required by the County contract.

Specifically, we noted the following:

### Program Services

- For 15 (100%) of the children, United Care did not provide the foster parents with copies of the children's Needs and Service Plans, as required by the County contract. The foster parents interviewed stated that they participated in the development of the children's Needs and Service Plans. However, they did not receive a copy of the document.
- For one (25%) foster home visited, United Care did not conduct an assessment of the foster parent's ability to meet the needs of two or more children, prior to placing the third child in the home.
- For five (100%) children, whose placements within a foster home ended in September and October 2003, the social workers' "termination report" did not address the child's overall adjustment to the placement, educational and developmental progress, medical and psychological history, or the goals established for the child and their progress in achieving those goals, as required by the County contract.

### Facility and Environment

- For one (25%) foster home visited, the home's interior smelled of cigarette smoke. The foster parent stated she only smoked outside the home. However, the foster child stated that the foster parent also smokes inside the home. The County contract and Title 22 require that the FFA monitor for compliance that children are not exposed to second hand smoke.

### Clothing and Allowances

- All 4 foster homes maintained the required clothing inventories and allowance logs for each of the children. All 15 foster children in the 4 foster homes possessed the amount of clothing required by the County contract. The children stated that their foster parents purchased the clothing for them and that they did not have to use their own money to purchase clothing. The children also stated that they were satisfied with the allowance they received and that they were free to spend their allowances as they wished.

### Health Services

- United Care ensured that the children received the medical, dental and psychiatric services required by the County contract.

Foster Parent Training and Certification

- United Care ensured that foster parents were appropriately certified prior to placing children with the foster parents. In addition, United Care provided yearly on-going training to the certified foster parents, as required by their County contract.

United Care needs to ensure that foster parents receive copies of the children's Needs and Services Plan and should assess the ability of foster homes to care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the homes. United Care also needs to ensure that "termination reports" contain complete information about the child's case records. In addition, United Care needs to ensure that their monitoring visits to foster homes are designed to detect instances of non-compliance with the County contract or Title 22 regulations.

**Recommendations**

**United Care management ensure:**

- 1. Foster parents receive updated copies of the children's Needs and Services Plans.**
- 2. Staff conduct an assessment 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.**
- 3. Termination Reports contain complete information about the child's case records, as required by the County contract.**
- 4. Monitoring visits to foster homes and related interviews with foster children and foster parents are designed to detect instances of non-compliance with the County contract or Title 22 regulations.**

**CLIENT VERIFICATION**

**Objective**

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

**Verification**

We interviewed 15 children placed in 4 certified foster homes to confirm the services United Care billed to DCFS.

**Results**

No exceptions. The program participants interviewed stated that the services they receive from United Care meet their expectations and their assigned social worker visits them frequently. In addition, the children were happy with their placements.

**Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**

**Objective**

Determine whether United Care's social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than 6 social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We interviewed United Care's 12 social workers and 3 supervising social workers and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for October and November 2003.

**Results**

No exceptions. Each of United Care's 12 social workers maintains an active caseload of approximately 14 children. In addition, each of the 3 supervising social workers supervised approximately 4 social workers.

**Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**

**Objective**

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

**Verification**

We interviewed United Care's 12 social workers, three supervising social workers and the FFA Administrator. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for

documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

**Results**

No exceptions. United Care's social workers, supervising social workers and the FFA Administrator possess the required education (college degrees) and work experience identified in the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, United Care appropriately conducted hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

**Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

July 7, 2004

J. Tyler McCauley  
Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller  
500 W. Temple Street, Room 525  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2766



**RE: Audit Results**

Dear Mr. McCauley:

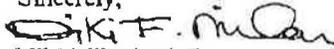
This letter is in response to the audit results of United Care Foster Family Agency completed by your office.

We are in general agreement with the findings outlined in your report. However, the one area we question is your interpretation of the assessment of a foster parent's ability to meet the needs of two or more children, prior to placing the third or subsequent children in the home. The audit has found that United Care had completed an assessment prior to placement of more than two children in 75% of its reviewed homes (3 out of 4). In all three homes, there was at least one foster child placed. We completed an assessment before the introduction of third or fourth subsequent placement. United Care Foster Family Agency strives to provide the best possible care to the children and youth who are under our supervision with the children's well-being and safety as our primary concern. We feel that the language of the contract is open to interpretation when there is no other children living in the foster home and there is a sibling group to be placed.

In the contract under deliverable 4.11 in the Statement of Work, it states: "prior to more than a total of two children being placed in a Certified Family Home, the CONTRACTOR's supervising social worker shall assess the placement to determine that the Certified Foster Parents: 1) are providing quality care for the currently Placed Children; (2) will be able to meet the needs of additional foster children; and (3) have at least 12 months of experience in caring for foster children. The home in question comprised of a foster parent who was with United Care since 1997. Furthermore, she had no other children, biological or foster children, residing at the home when the three sibling group was placed with her. It would be difficult to address the assessment items (1) and (2) given that she had no children in the home. As for the last item, this foster parent had experience caring for foster children for more than five years.

It has been a pleasure working with you and your staff on our foster family agency audit. I would like to thank you and your staff for their professionalism and their willingness to discuss our concerns with them. We will be addressing the areas of recommendation outlined in the report to the Department of Children and Family Services within 30 days. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (323) 934-7762 ext. 107.

Sincerely,



Niki Milani, Ph.D.  
Administrator