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September 30, 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: **ALLIANCE HUMAN SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW - A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with Alliance, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster 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.

Alliance 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 12 certified foster homes in which seven DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Alliance is located in the Fourth District.

DCFS paid Alliance 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, Alliance received between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency paid the foster parents $825 per month, per child. DCFS paid Alliance approximately $199,000 during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Alliance 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, interviewed several foster parents and observed several children.

Results of Review

Overall, the Agency complied with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Alliance generally met their expectations and the two toddlers we observed appeared well cared for and happy. Alliance ensured that Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports were comprehensive, timely, and contained all the required information. Alliance also ensured that staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required.

We noted one area where Alliance management needs to better monitor foster homes and ensure compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. One of two homes visited had trash and many other discarded items cluttering up the backyard of the home, which made it unsuitable as a place for the children to play.

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

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Alliance on July 8, 2008. In their attached response, Alliance indicates agreement with the recommendation and the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendation. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Alliance 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
Ellen Wright, Chair, Board of Directors, Alliance Human Services FFA
Michelle Kaveh, Administrator, Alliance Human Services FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
ALLIANCE HUMAN SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited two Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Alliance billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in December 2007 and January 2008, and interviewed two of the three foster parents and observed two of the three toddlers placed in the two homes. We also reviewed the case files for three foster parents and three children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The toddlers we observed appeared to be well cared for and happy and the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. The foster parents were certified in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports reviewed were comprehensive, timely, and contained all the required information. Alliance also ensured that children's dental and medical needs were met and that Alliance's social workers visited the children the required number of times.

We noted one area where Alliance management needs to better monitor foster homes and ensure compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. One of two homes visited had trash and many other discarded items cluttering up the backyard of the home, which made it unsuitable as a place for the children to play.

Recommendation

1. **Alliance management monitor foster homes to ensure they are maintained in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We observed two toddlers placed in two Alliance certified foster homes and interviewed two foster parents to confirm the services Alliance billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. The toddlers also appeared to be well cared for and happy.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

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

Results

Alliance's supervising social worker supervised one social worker who carried an average caseload of seven cases.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Alliance 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 Alliance'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

Alliance's administrator/supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The Agency also conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

July 10. 2008

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

From: Michelle Kaveh, Program Manager/Administrator of Torrance
Alliance Human Services Foster Family Agency

Subject: Response to our Agency Contract Review

Dear Supervisors:

We would like to thank the Auditor-Controller's office for their professional manner and responsive approach during the comprehensive review of our Foster Family Agency. Ms. Alice Manutari and Mr. Brian Henricks were professional, knowledgeable and a pleasure to work with.

Our goal is to provide the highest quality foster care services to those we serve. Your audit provides us with the opportunity to receive feedback on whether or not we are meeting this goal and most importantly, if we are holding to our promises and commitments. It was a pleasure interacting with our auditors, Brian Henricks and Alice Manutari. Their approach was one of teaching, consulting, and giving honest feedback on their experience of our program and staff. Overall, the audit process was positive, informative and helpful to Alliance.

The following addresses the one recommendation listed in the Foster Family Agency Audit Report that was submitted to the agency on July 10, 2008:

1. **Auditor Comment:** One of two homes visited had trash and many other discarded items, such as tables, ladders, an old door and other miscellaneous items cluttering up the backyard of the home. All these items made the yard unsuitable as a place to play for the children placed in the home.

   Auditor comment: Alliance management monitor foster homes to ensure they are maintained in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

   Alliance's Response: The home in question immediately corrected the deficiency, in that back yard was cleaned and pictures are available upon request to show that the deficiency was corrected. Alliance's existing policy is that each active home is evaluated quarterly with

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the use of the "Foster Home Evaluation" form. Part of this evaluation includes a walk through of the home setting to ensure compliance with Title 22 regulations and County contract requirements. All social workers have been instructed to monitor the certified home (including the back yard) that needs constant reminder of keeping the home up to Title 22 regulations standards carefully and more often than our existing policy of quarterly evaluation.

Again, thank you for taking the time to come out and evaluate our current program. Your audit has provided us with valuable feedback. Please call me if you have additional questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Michelle Kaveh
Program Manager