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July 21, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

ASPIRANET FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Aspiranet Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. The FFA has one office located in the Fourth Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to meet the need for quality human services for children, families and community and to provide those communities quality foster care services for referred children and their families."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In April 2016, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas; therefore, the FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR
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Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
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ASPIRANET FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the Aspiranet Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the QAR focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR focuses on the FFA's service delivery during the most recent 90-day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, three certified foster parents and three service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 51 DCFS placed children in 24 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 16 months and their average age was 14. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review.

QAR SCORING

The FFA received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, and interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Safety - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6 - Optimal Safety Status	The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	5	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 30 days.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	5 - Good Engagement Efforts	To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5 - Good Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.	5	5 - Good Teamwork	The team contains most of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks and/or plans together.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5 - Good Tracking and Adjustment Process	Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in February 2015 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In April 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the area of Safety on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	6	5

In the area of Safety, the FFA scored at the optimal level. Previously, the FFA was not following the reporting guidelines for special incident notification. The FFA now ensures special incidents are appropriately cross-reported to the appropriate parties. The FFA supervisors now review reports regarding special incidents by accessing the FFA's internal tracking system to ensure that the reporting guidelines are followed and that reports are properly cross-reported to all required parties. In addition, the FFA has also utilized their special incident tracking log to monitor the progress of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). To further enhance safety related to suicide prevention, the FFA staff complete their internal suicide assessment form to assess all children or youth ages six and older within the first seven days of the initial placement. All focus children reported that there are no safety concerns in their placements. All of the DCFS CSWs interviewed reported that they have no safety concerns regarding the FFA's certified foster family homes.

In the areas of Permanency and Visitation, the FFA continues to provide substantial permanence and assistance to the focus children in achieving permanency. The FFA supports visitation for the focus children by providing transportation and monitoring the visits. The FFA maintains consistent communication with the DCFS CSWs and the certified foster parents to ensure that the focus children are fully aware of their permanent plans. The FFA also works closely with the DCFS CSWs to ensure that the court visitation orders are met and visits are not missed. If missed, visits are rescheduled in a timely manner. The FFA has established and maintained substantial family connections for the focus children.

In the area of Placement Stability, the FFA scored at the optimal level. The FFA is providing excellent placement stability for the focus children. The FFA provides adequate support to the certified foster parents to assist them in utilizing problem solving skills to assist the focus children in their daily activities. The focus children's overall average length of placement was 16 months and none of the focus children have experienced any placement disruptions since being placed. The focus children reported that they enjoy positive and enduring relationships with the FFA staff, certified foster parents and other key adult supporters. The FFA had only one placement discharge during the past 30 days.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The FFA establishes and maintains a good rapport among the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, DCFS CSWs and the certified foster parents. To ensure that the FFA is making consistent efforts to engage the focus children's team, the FFA supervisor is utilizing an internal form to monitor the frequency of contact between the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs and other key people on a regular basis. The FFA continues to provide good supports and services to assist the focus children in making progress toward their planned outcomes by providing in-home tutoring, individual and family therapy and psychological evaluations. All of the focus children stated that their needs are met and that they are satisfied with the services they are receiving. The DCFS CSWs reported that services provided to the focus children are appropriate and they work with the FFA Social Workers to ensure that the focus children are progressing toward achieving their case plan development. The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood by the FFA. The FFA also assesses the focus children's needs and provides intervention to assist the focus children toward making progress and improving their functioning during their daily activities. The FFA

involves key people to participate in team meetings and works collaboratively to develop case plans on behalf of the focus children. The DCFS CSWs reported that they are always involved in discussions and meetings to share input regarding the treatment goals of the focus children. The FFA utilizes team meetings to develop the focus children's goals with the certified foster parents, focus children, DCFS CSWs and key people. The FFA tracks the focus children's progress and if they are not progressing toward their case plan, adjustments are promptly made to ensure the desired results. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA Social Workers provide updates regarding the focus children's progress toward their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. Each of the DCFS CSWs reported having good communication with the FFA in regards to how the focus children are functioning in their foster homes.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In February 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Maintenance of Required Documentation, Education and Workforce Readiness, and Personnel Records. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure the development of timely, comprehensive, Initial and Updated NSPs with the participation of the certified foster parents and age appropriate child; maintenance of the current copies of the children's report cards in their case files; and that FFA employees complete all required training and maintain their training certificates in their personnel files.

In April 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas; therefore, a QIP was not required of the FFA. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation as needed.