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July 27, 2016

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

NUEVO AMANECER LATINO CHILDREN'S SERVICES 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 Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. The FFA has three offices located in the First, Third and Fifth Supervisorial Districts; one office in San Bernardino County and one office in Orange County; and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide children with a continuity of family based foster care, nurturance and services which will meet their individual needs and expectations, and those of their biological 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, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR. The FFA score at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 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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NUEVO AMANECER LATINO CHILDREN'S SERVICES 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 Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services 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, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), four FFA staff members and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 398 DCFS placed children in 151 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was five months and their average age was 13. The focus children were randomly selected. At the time of the QAR Contract Administration Division (CAD) had not begun their 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	5 - Good Stability	The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting 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	6 - Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections	Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained 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	6 - Optimal Teamwork	The team contains all of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed an excellent, consistent 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 May 2015 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In August 2015, 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	5	6

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that the FFA had implemented the 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the quality of care provided to the placed children in its care. The FFA continues to conduct an orientation to the placed children at their certified foster home where they are given a copy of the Personal Rights policy. The FFA also conducts quarterly safety checks to ensure that the certified foster homes are in compliance with safety standards. Additionally, the FFA now conducts "Peer Reviews" where an FFA Social Worker who is not assigned to a particular certified foster home does a safety review of a certified foster home. The FFA Social Workers also send monthly safety assessments to DCFS CSWs to keep them apprised of the level of care provided. When the focus children are out in the community, the certified foster parents communicate with the focus children via text messages and phone contact to ensure their safety. The FFA decreased the number of referrals being investigated from six to two. Additionally, there were no substantiated investigations within the last 30 days. The focus children reported that the

certified foster parents make them feel safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes and feel protected by their caregivers at all times.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide substantial quality of services and stability to the focus children. The FFA assists the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by providing counseling services when the permanency goal is Family Reunification. During weekly visits, the FFA Social Workers assess the bond between the certified foster parents and the focus children. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters such as the FFA staff and their certified foster parents. The permanency plan for the three focus children is Family Reunification. The FFA is ensuring the best placement match with a certified foster family to best meet the focus children's needs. However, one certified foster parent stated that she does not always receive all relevant information regarding the placed children at the time of placement. The FFA Social Workers discuss with the focus children and their certified foster parents any possible changes that may arise in case the focus children are removed, or whether they are adopted to ensure a smooth transition. One focus child had been replaced five times before being placed in his current certified foster home; he has now been in this home for nine months. The certified foster parents are discussing the possibility of adopting the focus child with an Adoptions DCFS CSW. Since their placement through the FFA, the focus children have not had any placement disruptions.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA scored at the optimal level. Fully effective connections are being maintained for the focus children with all significant family members through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies such as telephone contact. The FFA follows the court ordered visitation plans. The certified foster parents provide transportation to the focus children to their visits with their families and monitor the visits, if necessary. For one focus child whose mother resides out of the country, the certified foster mother facilitates communication with the focus child's mother via FaceTime and also by calling her almost on a daily basis. For the second child who is placed with a sibling and has two other siblings in placement with two separate foster parents, the FFA and the certified foster parents coordinate the weekly visits to ensure that all the siblings and the focus child's parents have successful and meaningful visits. The third focus child does not have any visitation with his mother; and his father has been very inconsistent in making himself available for visitation. The FFA continuously makes attempts to engage both parents in team meetings and for visitation. However, the FFA cannot compel the parents to be involved.

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	6	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment and Linkages, and Tracking and Adjustment, the FFA continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for them. The focus children reported that they have a good connection with the FFA staff. The FFA Social Workers include the DCFS CSWs, the focus children and their families, the focus children's certified foster parents, and the service providers to develop the focus children's Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and share information regarding the focus children's progress. The information is shared via telephone, e-mail and at team meetings. The FFA provides a good array of supports and services to the placed children, including counseling and tutoring services and enrollment in extracurricular activities to help the placed children make progress toward their planned outcomes. If the children do not want to participate in extracurricular activities, the certified foster parents encourage the children to enroll in activities they are interested in. Intervention strategies identified in the case plan and NSPs match the services that are being provided to the focus children. The FFA Social Workers and the certified foster parents engage the focus children through dialogue and observation to gain a clear picture of the focus children's strengths and needs. During their weekly home visits, the FFA Social Workers discuss the focus children's goals with the focus children and their certified foster parents. When the focus children are not making progress, treatment goals are modified by the FFA Social Worker to ensure achievable outcomes are developed.

In the area of Teamwork, the FFA scored at the optimal level. FFA involves all of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team consists of the focus children, DCFS CSW, the FFA Social Workers, the certified foster parents and the therapist. However, for one focus child, his biological parents are not willing to participate and the FFA has been unsuccessful in their attempts to involve the parents. What is working now is that the FFA developed a form that is sent to the DCFS CSWs, the focus children's families and the service providers on a monthly basis inviting them to meet to develop the children's NSPs, goals and to discuss any issues that may arise. Team meetings with the focus children and their certified foster parents, the DCFS CSWs, the focus children's families and service providers are conducted more frequently. The success of team meetings is due to the FFA Social Workers maintaining frequent contact with the focus children's DCFS CSWs, by telephone or via e-mail. If a team member cannot attend the focus children's team meetings, the FFA Social Workers would call or send e-mails with an update regarding the issues discussed during the team meeting.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

The Contract Administration Division has not conducted a 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review of the FFA.

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 areas; therefore the FFA was not required to submit a QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation, as needed.