County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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Chief Deputy Director

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August 11, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 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 Children's Bureau of Southern California Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2016. The FFA has two offices, one located in the First Supervisorial District and one located in the Fifth 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 prevent child abuse and neglect: protect, nurture, and treat abused children. Enhance the potential of families and communities to meet the needs of their children and advance the welfare of children and families through superior programs in foster care, adoptions, and child development, parent education mental health research and advocacy."

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 8 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment. The OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Service Needs.

In March 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Service Needs. The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendation noted in this report.

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

PLB:KR
KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Alex Morales, Executive Director, Children's Bureau of Southern California FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 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 Children's Bureau of Southern California Foster Family Agency (the FFA) November 2015. 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, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 146 DCFS placed children in 101 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was five, their overall average length of placement was 12 months and their average age was 12. 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, 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	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	4 - Fair Supports and Services	A fair array of supports and services somewhat matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are minimally to fairly 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 April 2015. The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. In September 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. Based on the information below, it appears that there is opportunity for improvement in the area of Service Needs on the 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

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

The FFA continues to provide quality services to ensure the safety of the focus children. All three focus children shared that they really like their certified foster parents and that they felt safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes. One focus child said she felt safe because someone is always home with her. The focus children's DCFS CSWs shared that the certified foster parents have provided the focus children with safe and loving homes. One DCFS CSW reported that the focus child's certified foster parents are protective and "go above and beyond the call of duty" to ensure the focus child's safety and well-being. None of the focus children's DCFS CSWs expressed any safety concerns.

In the area of Permanency, the FFA is providing a good quality of service to ensure permanency for the focus children. The FFA staff and the certified foster parents support the permanency plans established by DCFS, and they are assisting the focus children and their families to achieve their permanency goals. The permanency plan for all three of the focus children is Family Reunification. Two of the focus children shared that they are happy that they will be reunifying with their families. The DCFS CSW for one focus child stated that the

recommendation would be for the focus child to reunify with her family at the next dependency court hearing. The third focus child shared that she is angry with her father and she does not want to reunify with him; she had requested to remain with her certified foster parents until after she graduates high school in June 2016. The FFA and the certified foster parents are supportive of the focus child; however, they are working with both the focus child and her father to improve the relationship. The focus child's father is informed of the focus child's progress. Although the focus child does not want to contact her father, she shared that she can count on him. The focus child maintains a relationship with her stepmother.

In the area of Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide good stability for the focus children. Two of the focus children have resided with their current certified foster parents for more than one year. The DCFS CSWs reported that the certified foster parents provide a stable, nurturing home environment for the focus children, and the focus children's needs are being met. None of the focus children have experienced any placement disruptions since being placed in their current certified foster homes. The focus children reported having a good relationship with their certified foster parents.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA supports the maintenance of family connections by ensuring regular communication and visits between the focus children and their family members. The certified foster parents transport the focus children to and from the visits. Two of the focus children have weekly unmonitored visits with their family members. Although the third focus child is currently refusing to visit with her father, she visits and calls her stepmother often. The FFA, the certified foster parents and the DCFS CSWs have demonstrated a willingness to work collaboratively with the focus children's family members to ensure visits occur and that the focus children spend quality time with their family members. One example is when the visit between a focus child and her mother was extended. On the day of the visit, the focus child's mother had to work; the focus child went to work with her mother. At the end of the visit, the focus child's mother expressed disappointment because she had not spent quality time with the focus child. The focus child's mother requested a few more hours of visitation time. The DCFS CSW and the certified foster parent reported that the focus child and her mother enjoyed the quality time they were able to share.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	6	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	4	5	6	5

In the area of Teamwork, the FFA continues to provide a good working system that meets, talks, and plans together. Face-to-face team meetings occur 30 days from the date of a

child's placement and approximately every six months thereafter. The team meetings include the FFA therapist, FFA Social Worker, FFA supervisor, certified foster parents, the focus children, the biological parents (when appropriate), and DCFS CSWs. The certified foster parents reported that information regarding the focus children is shared with them and they are included in team meetings. The focus children reported that they have participated in team meetings and the team listens to them. The focus children's DCFS CSWs reported that they have participated in team meetings, and that the FFA Social Worker informed them of the meetings in advance so they could arrange their schedules to attend. The FFA Social Worker shared that one focus child's father had participated in a team meeting and the FFA staff keep him informed of the focus child's progress.

In the areas of Engagement, Assessment and Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make good efforts in engaging the focus children and key people in decisions that are made on their behalf. The focus children reported that they are able to discuss any concerns they may have with their certified foster parents, the FFA staff, and their DCFS CSWs. The certified foster parents reported having good working relationships with the DCFS CSWs and the FFA staff. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA staff is accessible and always available to assist them. Additionally, the DCFS CSWs and the FFA staff reported that the certified foster parents keep them apprised of how the focus children are doing at home, at school, and in the community. The focus children's progress, daily occurrences, and well-being are tracked by the FFA Social Worker, their certified foster parents, and their DCFS CSWs. The information is shared with all the team members. The team members work together to identify the focus children's strengths, to assess their needs, develop the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), treatment plans and goals, and to determine appropriateness of services.

The FFA scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Service Needs. The OHCMD found that the FFA had not provided necessary tutoring services to a focus child who was experiencing challenges with her schoolwork and was earning below average grades. The focus child's NSP clearly identified the need for tutoring, and the certified foster parents reported that they were aware of the difficulties the focus child was experiencing. Further, although tutoring was requested, the focus child did not receive any assistance with her schoolwork. The FFA staff reported that they were also aware of the focus child's need for tutoring; however, there was not sufficient follow-through in providing tutoring for the focus child. The OHCMD provided the FFA with the DCFS Education & Mentoring Section contact information for assistance in future education related matters.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In November 2015, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements, Facility and Environment, and Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can remain free from substantiated Community Care Licensing complaints, as well as ensuring lighting is adequate in the placed children's bedrooms, ample reading materials and educational resources are available, and that NSPs are comprehensive.

In March 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support addressing methods on improving in the area of Service Needs. The FFA submitted the attached approved QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

children'sbureau

1910 Magnolia Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007
(213) 342-0100 Phone
(213) 342-0253 Fax
www.all4kids.org

May 25, 2016

Department of Children and Family Services
Out-of-Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Avenue, Suite # 216
El Monte, CA. 91731
Atten: Sonya Noil, CSA I

Re: Revised Quality Improvement Plan 2016 (original dated April 19, 2016)

Dear Ms. Noil,

Children's Bureau (CB) is in receipt of the Quality Improvement Plan results for FY 2015/2016. Findings indicated an Agency Score of 4 in Service Needs. This is finding is for one of the three youths selected for Quality Assurance Review and specifically relates to the educational support and services offered.

In order to address the "fair" rating and to improve future services to the youth in our care all case carrying workers and supervisors were provided additional training. On April 19, 2016 during the All Foster Care/Adoption Team Meeting/Training, the Director of Foster Care and Adoption and Foster Care and Adoption Supervisor:

1. briefed all case carrying staff on the QAR findings;
2. discussed educational services available to foster youth and how to access; and
3. defined the role that case carrying staff and resource parents play in working toward the child's needs being met and services being implemented and supported for education and all other identified needs.

Attached is the agenda for the Team Meeting/Training and the sign in sheets.

Beginning immediately, supervisors will consult during supervision with each of the case carrying worker who are monitoring school aged children to assess the need for additional educational support. If it is determined supports are needed, a goal will be developed in the NSP and follow up provided by the case carrying worker and supervisor.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at 213-342-0116.

Sincerely,

Amy Heilman, LCSW

Amy Heilman, LCSW
Director of Foster Care and Adoption