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

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

BRANDON NICHOLS
Chief Deputy Director

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August 18, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

BIENVENIDOS 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 Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2016. The FFA has one office located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and one office in San Bernardino 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 short-term emergency and longer term therapeutic foster care to children and siblings who cannot immediately return home to their birth families. The program selects, trains, certifies, and supports foster families for care to the children. The aim of the program is to work with all related parties toward reunification or some other appropriate permanency plan."

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 June 2016, the 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 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
KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Stephanie Ivler, Program Director, Bienvenidos FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

BIENVENIDOS 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 Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 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 two service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 255 DCFS placed children in 101 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was eight months, and their average age was nine. The focus children were randomly selected. One of the focus children was 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	6 - Optimal Status	The focus children have optimal permanency. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and all team members have evidence 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	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 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	6	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	6	5	5

In the area of Safety, the OHCMD found that the FFA implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to enhance the quality of care provided to the placed children in its care. During the last QAR, a placed child was sexually exploited via the internet. The certified foster parent received training from the FFA's regional office supervisor and the assigned FFA Social Worker on age-appropriate supervision, the importance of monitoring internet use, and internet safety for computers, tablets, and smart cell phones. The FFA staff also received an in-service training addressing age-appropriate supervision, the importance of monitoring internet use, and internet safety for computers, tablets, and smart cell phones. As a result of the QIP, these topics are now included in both the pre-certification and post-certification process for resource parent training by the FFA's Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting/Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education trainers. There has not been any additional concerns regarding safety, supervision, or monitoring of internet use.

The FFA staff ensures that the certified foster homes are in compliance with Title 22 Regulations prior to certification. The FFA Social Worker reviews an orientation packet with all placed children, which includes personal rights and house rules at time of placement. Within a few days of the child being placed, the FFA Social Worker conducts a home inspection/safety assessment to make sure the placed children feel safe in their certified foster homes. During every home visit, the FFA Social Workers meet with the placed children privately to assess their safety. Some of the home visits are unannounced to observe the natural home environment. When a certified foster parent has a specific training need, the training is provided by the FFA. The FFA also provides ongoing training to certified foster parents in the area of policies, updates, and contract requirements. Additionally, the FFA has weekly staff meetings where they discuss and address any child safety related concerns.

The focus children reported feeling safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes. The focus children also reported that they are comfortable in reporting any safety related concerns to their certified foster parents. The focus children have been free from harm in their placement and other daily settings, including at school and in the community. According to the DCFS CSWs and service providers, there were no child safety issues regarding the certified foster parents or their certified foster homes.

The certified foster parents reported receiving significant assistance from their FFA Social Workers. One of the certified foster parents reported an incident regarding a placed child that presented defiant and problematic behaviors. According to certified foster parent, her FFA Social Worker came to her home three to four times a week to meet with this particular placed child. As a result of the FFA Social Worker's endeavor, the child's behavior significantly improved and the safety of the other placed children was assured.

In the area of Permanency, the FFA continues to provide an optimal quality of services and stability to the focus children. The FFA develops goals and services that correspond to the identified DCFS case plan for each of the focus children. Whether the permanency plan is Family Reunification or not, the FFA makes efforts toward maintaining permanent family connections by encouraging telephone contact and visits with family members when possible. Two of the focus children have Family Reunification services to reunify with their respective mothers, and their certified foster parents will transport them to and from their visits. One of the focus children reported that her certified foster mother would tell her biological mother that she was a good child and behaved, which would make the focus child feel good. During the QAR, this focus child was reunified with her mother. The other focus child receiving Family Reunification services has certified foster parents that encourage positive communication and to update the biological mother with whatever the focus child is doing via telephone calls and weekly visitation. The third focus child has a Planned Permanent Living Arrangement; although, the court ordered the focus child and siblings to be released to the mother once she secures housing. The DCFS CSW for this focus child reported that the concurrent plan is adoption, as the mother is not making any progress with securing housing. Further, the DCFS CSW reported that the certified foster mother is committed to fostering the focus child until the mother secures housing or until the focus child would no longer need her assistance. The certified foster mother explained that she has had recent health changes

and cannot consider adoption at this time. The DCFS CSW reported that the focus child has told her that he would only want to be adopted by his current foster parents.

In the areas of Placement Stability and Visitation, the FFA continues to provide a good quality of services and stability to the focus children. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters such as the FFA staff, certified foster parents, certified foster parents' extended family, and service providers. The certified foster parents reported that they incorporate the placed children into their family and treat them as their own children. One of the focus children reported that her certified foster mother tells her that she loves her and that she is a good child. Another focus child reported that his certified foster mother tries to make him happy by meeting his needs including feeding him and allowing him to play outside, ride his bike, and to take a daily shower. The third focus child reported that she appreciates her certified foster parents giving her a warning and two chances before losing a privilege. The three focus children also had their visitation plans supported by their certified foster parents and FFA Social Workers. The certified foster parents transport the focus children to and from their respective mothers once a week; two focus children for unmonitored visits; and the other focus child for monitored visits by a third party. One focus child also has weekly monitored visits with his father, which the certified foster parents monitor. One of the DCFS CSWs reported that the certified foster mother is very accommodating to the mother. When the mother calls spontaneously to visit with the focus child and his sister, the certified foster mother will accommodate the mother's request and make the focus child and his sibling available. According this DCFS CSW, the certified foster mother immediately takes the focus child and his sister to visit with their mother.

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 and Linkages, Teamwork, 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 on their behalf. The DCFS CSWs and service providers reported that the FFA Social Workers provide frequent updates regarding the focus children's well-being via telephone, email, text, and in-person. The FFA staff continues to facilitate and attend team meetings to address educational needs, visitation, permanency goals, and service needs of the focus children. If a team member cannot attend, the FFA Social Worker will provide updates via telephone or e-mail. One DCFS CSW reported that the FFA Social Worker attended the focus child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings and Wraparound meetings. The FFA Social Worker also reported that she initiated team meetings and consultations to collaborate with the DCFS

CSW, Wraparound team (Wraparound therapist, facilitator, and parent partner), and child's attorney to ensure the needs of the focus child and his sister are met. In addition, the FFA Social Worker reported that she personally walked the IEP request to the school and spoke with the school teachers regarding the focus child's academic needs and progress. Another DCFS CSW reported that at the focus child's previous placement within the FFA, there were team meetings to address the issues regarding family visits and the focus child's adjustment. The DCFS CSW further reported that at the current placement, there have not been any issues requiring a team meeting intervention, as the focus child is thriving in placement. The third FFA Social Worker reported shortly after the replacement, the FFA Social Worker initiated and conducted a team meeting in the current certified foster home, which was attended by the certified foster parents, focus child, DCFS CSW, and FFA Social Worker to explain the case to the certified foster parents, address the focus child's needs, and help her transition to her new placement. In addition, the FFA Social Worker reported that for other placed children, she has initiated and conducted team meetings at her office with the biological parents, placed children, certified foster parents, service providers, FFA Supervisor, and DCFS CSWs. When the placed children are presenting behavioral issues at school and/or academic needs, the FFA Social Worker initiates a meeting with the teachers at their schools. There continues to be a good array of services and extracurricular activities provided to the focus children such as in-home individual therapy, tutoring, Wraparound services, and dance classes. One focus child met all therapeutic goals and her in-home individual therapy concluded prior to reunifying with her family. According to a DCFS CSW, the focus child receiving IEP and Wraparound services, including individual therapy, has gone up to his grade level in reading and math, will attend regular classes the following school year, and is in the process of graduating from Wraparound services.

The FFA Social Workers assess the focus children's progress and needs during their home visits. The FFA Social Workers assess further during their weekly FFA meetings, so that as a team they can identify other resources or services to enhance the focus children's well-being. The FFA Social Worker, focus children, and certified foster parents indicated that they work collaboratively to develop the Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The DCFS CSWs reported that they are receiving the NSPs, which they review and approve. Two DCFS CSWs reported they and the FFA Social Workers collaboratively adjust interventions, services, and NSP goals as needed. One DCFS CSW reported that she or the FFA Social Worker determine and execute the modifications needed. The FFA Social Workers utilize weekly home visits, special incident occurrences, and NSPs to track and make adjustments to ensure the focus children are progressing toward their case plan goals.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In June 2016, 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 Requirement, Certified Foster Homes, Facility and Environment, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, Education and Workforce Readiness, Health and Medical Needs, Personal Needs/Survival and Economic Well-Being, and Personnel Records. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure that the FFA is free of substantiated Community Care Licensing citations; child abuse and neglect clearances are obtained from the OHCMD prior to certifying a foster parent; non-perishable food items are

not kept past their expiration dates; employees receive timely health screening/tuberculosis clearance; NSPs are comprehensive; DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents signatures are obtained timely for the authorization of the NSPs; enrollment in school is within three days of placement; documentation of educational progress and support is maintained; initial dental examinations are conducted timely; dental and medical follow-up examinations are conducted timely; and children to be provided with weekly monetary allowance.

In June 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA met the minimum acceptable score in all areas; therefore, a QIP is not required. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation as needed.