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August 11, 2016

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

GUARDIANS OF LOVE 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 Guardians of Love Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2016. The FFA has two offices; one located in the Second Supervisorial District and one office in San Bernardino County. The FFA provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide safe, nurturing, therapeutic certified family homes where children can receive protection from abuse, maltreatment, economic exploitation, malnutrition and/or any form of unsafe environment."

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 May 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is not required.

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
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Kinniki Fullerwood, Executive Director, Guardians of Love FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

GUARDIANS OF LOVE 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 Guardians of Love 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, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 148 DCFS placed children in 80 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was 17 months and their average age was 15. 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	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 June 2015 and noted opportunities for improvement in the focus areas of Safety and Teamwork. In October 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 these two areas. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the areas of Safety and Teamwork, and the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas 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	5

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 and supervision provided to the placed children in its care. During the last QAR, the FFA fell below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety due to child safety concerns. The FFA did not adhere to policies and procedures for reporting special incidents. Additionally, three incidents involved injuries to the placed children. The FFA addressed the safety concerns by providing Special Incident Report (SIR) refresher training to all FFA clinical staff and certified foster parents, to emphasize the importance of adhering to SIR guidelines. During this year's QAR review period, there were no concerns regarding the reporting of special incidents or injuries to the placed children. In addition, the focus children all reported that the FFA staff and their certified foster parents make them feel safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes. The DCFS CSWs reported no child safety concerns.

In the areas of Permanency, Placement Stability, and Visitation the FFA and the certified foster parents remain supportive in ensuring permanency and placement stability for the focus children. The FFA ensured that each of the focus children has a permanency plan, as well as a concurrent plan, and that the FFA staff and their certified foster parents are working together to ensure the focus children achieve their permanency goals. Two of the focus children are receiving Family Reunification services. The third focus child is receiving Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) services; the goal is for this focus child to graduate high school and transition into transitional housing. The FFA staff and the certified foster parent are supporting the focus child in reaching her permanency goal by preparing her to be self-sufficient, teaching her responsibility, as she has chores, and the focus child is exploring summer part-time employment. The focus children have not experienced any placement disruptions since their placement in their current certified foster homes. All of the focus children reported that they are doing well and their needs are being met.

The FFA and the certified foster parents support the maintenance of family connections between the focus children and their family members, as well as ensure the development of positive relationships between the focus children and their certified foster parents. One focus child has resided in her certified foster home approximately seven months; the focus child is happy that her younger brother is placed with her. The focus child reported that although she likes her certified foster family, she is looking forward to reunifying with her family. Another focus child has resided in her certified foster home for approximately three years; her older sister is placed in the certified foster home. Each of the certified foster parents shared that they care for the well-being of the focus children and consider them a part of their family. One focus child has weekly visits with her family members. The FFA staff and the certified foster parents have assisted with transporting the focus child to the visits. Although the second focus child is not able to visit with her family members, as they reside outside of the country, she has regular telephone contact with them. In addition, the focus child has a school friend and a boyfriend with whom she spends quality time.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

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

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to provide a good quality of service and engages the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for them. The focus children reported they have good connections with their certified foster parents and the FFA staff. The focus children further shared that the FFA staff and the certified foster parents listen to and respect them and ensure their needs are being met. The DCFS CSWs, certified foster

parents and the FFA staff reported having a supportive working relationship. They maintain regular contact with each other via telephone, text and e-mail.

There continues to be a good array of services offered to the focus children, and the focus children have benefitted from the services they have received. One focus child was referred for a mental health services assessment; however, it was determined that the focus child did not require mental health services. Another focus child completed individual therapy after the treatment team determined that the focus child had stabilized emotionally. All of the focus children are receiving tutoring services. The FFA Social Workers and the certified foster parents continue to monitor and evaluate the focus children's needs and status on a daily basis. The information is communicated with the treatment team members. The focus children's progress and service results are documented in daily and weekly contact notes and in the Needs and Services Plans. Modifications to the focus children's case plans, treatment goals, and services are made when appropriate.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA had implemented the 2014-2015 QIP. During last year's QAR, only one focus child had participated in a face-to-face meeting where all key parties were present. To address this concern, the FFA is informing all team members of scheduled team meetings. The FFA provides advance notification of the team meeting to ensure all team members have an opportunity to meet and discuss the placed children's progress and needs. The FFA is contacting the DCFS CSWs to provide updates regarding the placed children, as well as to invite them to team meetings, which are held quarterly. The FFA is documenting its attempts to invite the DCFS CSWs, and the information is maintained in the placed children's case files. All of the focus children were able to identify the individuals who they felt had their best interests at heart. Further, all of the focus children had participated in a team meeting where all key parties were present.

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 area of Personal Needs/Survival and Economic Well-Being. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure placed children are encouraged to keep a Life Book or Photo Album.

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