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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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November 23, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

SOUTH BAY BRIGHT FUTURE 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 South Bay Bright Future Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 2015. The FFA has one licensed office located in the Fourth Supervisorial District and provides services to County of Los Angeles foster children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its mission is "to ensure the safety of each child, support and strengthen biological/certified families and promote the healthy development of all children. In addition, to design a treatment program for each foster child that focuses on family reunification. When family reunification is not possible, FFA agency works with the County authorities to develop an alternative treatment/placement program."

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, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Teamwork.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In July 2015, 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 Teamwork.

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

PLB:EM:KR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
William Hill, Chief Executive Officer, South Bay Bright Future FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

SOUTH BAY BRIGHT FUTURE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of South Bay Bright Future Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 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 reviewer focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the reviewer 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 (CFPs).

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was 11 months and their average age was 6. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the 2014-2015 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 child. 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 ensures that the child is free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6	**Optimal Safety Status** - The focus children are optimally and consistently avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and are free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement. The focus children may have had related history, diagnoses, or behavior presentations in the past but have not presented risk behaviors at any time over the 30 days.
Permanency - The degree to which the child is living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the child reaches adulthood, or the child is in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the child, the FFA staff, caregivers and DCFS CSW, support the plan.	5	6	**Optimal Status** - The focus children have optimal permanence. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the child, FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker and all team members have evidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA ensures that the child's daily living, learning, and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions and known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption.	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 12 months and little likelihood of future disruption. Only age-appropriate changes are expected in school settings.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFM have regular and, where appropriate, increasingly frequent visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff working with the child, biological family, extended family and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to focus on the child'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, certified foster parents and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used by the FFA staff as necessary to find and engage the focus children, caregivers and other key people. Useful accommodations are used to provide scheduling times and locations based on convenience of appropriate parties. Engagement efforts are made frequently and on an ongoing basis.
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff involved with the child, work toward ensuring the child's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the child's unique needs.	5	5	**Good Supports & Services** - A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the case plan. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. A usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriately used, and seen as generally satisfactory. The array provides an appropriate range of options in the selection of providers.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff involved with the child and family understand the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and underlying issues and services 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. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are substantially recognized and well understood. Necessary conditions for improved functioning and increased overall well being are generally understood and used to select promising change strategies.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the child and family have formed a working team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.	5	4	**Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork** - The team contains some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is 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 focus children's status and service results to the team are occurring. Generally, successful adaptations are based on a basic knowledge of what things are working and not working for the focus children.

STATUS INDICATORS

(Measured over last 30 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Safety (6 Optimal Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA complied with the procedures and protocols and made reports to the child protection hotline in a timely manner in the past 30 days. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times while in their current Certified Foster Homes (CHFs) and have not exhibited any suicidal ideation or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors. The focus children are free from harm in their placements and other daily settings, including at school and in the community.

The FFA submitted three Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database. However, none of these SIRs involved the focus children. One incident involved a medical related hospital visit, the second involved a child running away from a certified foster home, and the third incident involved a school suspension due to fighting.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) did not receive any referrals or conduct investigations on the FFA during the most recent 30 day period.

Permanency (6 Optimal Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provides optimal permanence. The primary permanency and concurrent goals were appropriately developed and submitted in a timely manner. The FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency. The FFA and the CFPs are supportive of the focus children's permanency plans, and meetings (which include the FFA social worker, the DCFS CSWs, the focus children and the CFPs) are regularly held to discuss the permanency plan for each child. The focus children are aware of their permanency plan and concurrent plans, as well as the steps being taken to ensure timely permanency. The FFA also ensures the focus children are visiting with their family members and other important people in their lives to ensure these bonds are maintained and are life-long.

The permanency plan for two of the focus children was family reunification, with a concurrent plan of legal guardianship or placement with a relative. The permanency plan for the third focus child is planned permanent living arrangement. The third focus child expressed his interest in remaining with his CFP until his parents complied with the service plans and court orders. It was evident that the FFA and the CFPs worked with the focus children and their families toward achieving permanency, as one focus child reunified with her mother, and the second focus child was replaced to the home of her brother's caregiver, who is interested in legal guardianship of the focus child and her siblings.

Placement Stability (6 Optimal Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA is providing optimal placement stability for the focus children. All of the focus children have substantial stability in placement and in their school settings. The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The FFA engages

the DCFS CSWs by assessing each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure it is a good match with the CFPs and placed children. Strategies utilized by the FFA include weekly visits to the CFHs by the FFA social workers, weekly family meetings with CFPs and the focus children to assess the well-being of placed children. The FFA provides the CFPs with support groups and ongoing training.

Each of the focus children have adapted well in their current placements. They appear comfortable and report that they like the homes they are placed in and their CFPs. They expressed that their current placement is meeting all of their needs, and they feel an attachment to their CFPs. The focus children reported that they feel safe, comfortable and respected. They have formed a good, supportive relationship with their CFPs and there have been no major issues or concerns.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: Family visits for the focus children are excellently maintained. All three focus children have regular weekly visits with their family members. The FFA monitors the family visits and provides transportation. The FFA staff, CFPs and DCFS CSWs work together to assist the focus children in maintaining connections with their families. The FFA follows the court ordered visitation plans and engages in discussions of the focus children's visitation plan with DCFS CSWs and the CFPs on a regular basis. The FFA keeps logs regarding visitation, and if visits are missed, the visits are rescheduled in a timely manner. DCFS CSWs and CFPs indicated that the FFA makes great efforts to ensure that the focus children's visits are successful.

The focus children expressed that they enjoy visits and expect to continue visiting their family members. One focus child appreciates that the FFA and her CFPs make extra efforts to transport her bi-monthly, out-of-county to visit her siblings. The second focus child stated that through the visits with her family, her family ties remain strong. The third focus child maintains close connections with his mother and siblings and visits with them bi-weekly.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

What's Working Now (Score/Narrative of Strengths for Focus Area)

Engagement (5 Good Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The FFA makes consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for the focus children. The FFA works to ensure that a rapport has been developed between the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, family members, CFPs and the focus children. One FFA social worker reported that engaging the focus child was difficult at first, but by respecting the rights of the focus child and her willingness to return home to her mother, the FFA social worker has been able to build a good rapport with the focus child and her mother. Furthermore, the FFA ensures that connections are made between the focus children and the CFPs by ensuring the FFA social worker conducts weekly visits and by maintaining regular telephone contact and face-to-face contacts with the DCFS CSWs.

Each focus child reported that their concerns and needs were heard and respected. One focus child reported that her CFP assists her mother in improving her parenting skills. Another focus child stated that the FFA social worker and her CFPs work diligently with her DCFS CSW to develop her visitation plan to assist in reunification efforts. The focus children reported that they could confide in various team members to discuss their issues of concern.

The CFPs reported that prior to the placement of children in their homes, they are provided with information regarding the children's history and trauma, which helps them prepare for the child prior to placement. One CFP reported improvements in the focus child's behavior and their ability to accommodate the needs of the focus child was due to the input of formal and informal supports from DCFS and the FFA. Another CFP expressed being supported by the FFA and having a good working relationship with her assigned FFA social worker. This CFP further reported a high-level of confidence in the FFA social worker, due to his providing assistance timely.

The DCFS CSWs interviewed are in agreement that engagement efforts are made on a regular basis and reasonable efforts have been made by the FFA to engage all team members.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA has a good array of supports and services that match intervention strategies identified in each focus child's case plan. The focus children are receiving therapeutic services, wraparound services to address mental health issues, as well as regular medical and dental check-ups.

The FFA effectively works with the focus children's schools, ensuring that appropriate support services are in place. For example, one focus child has an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and receives weekly speech therapy. Her foster mother is working closely with her and her teacher to monitor her progress. When appropriate, the FFA and the CFP attend school conferences to discuss the focus child's academic progress and to advocate for her educational needs.

The FFA social workers, CFPs and the focus children's family members also provide support to assist the focus children in making progress towards meeting their case plan goals. The FFA is in constant contact with service providers and the services provided are seen as very satisfactory by the focus children, family members and their CFPs. In addition, the FFA utilizes a team approach to develop Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The FFA social worker collaborates with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, family members and the CFPs to develop NSP goals for the focus child. All focus children reported that the services received are appropriately meeting their needs.

Each of the CFPs reported that they have a great support system from the FFA because they have access to the FFA social workers at all times. The CFPs also reported that the FFA social workers return telephone calls expeditiously.

The DCFS CSWs and the FFA social workers have a good working relationship, as they collaborate for the best interest of the focus children. They work together to ensure that the services provided for each child are the most appropriate.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessment and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. Information necessary to understand the focus children and their families' strengths, needs, and choices are frequently updated. The FFA assesses the focus children's needs and provides intervention for them to function effectively in daily settings. The services and supports are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals. Educational supports such as tutoring, referral for IEP assessment are provided, and participation in extracurricular activities is encouraged by the FFA. Focus children on psychotropic medication receive monthly psychiatric visits and medication monitoring.

An example of the FFAs assessment and linkage involved a focus child who was exhibiting delays in regards to developmental milestones, as well as aggressive behavior and crying often. The focus child was referred for an assessment. As a result, this focus child is receiving Wraparound services, which includes weekly individual therapy, individual rehabilitation services, and targeted case management. The FFA and DCFS CSW also referred the focus child to the regional center for further assessment. The CFP reported that with the services in place, the focus child has made satisfactory improvement.

The FFA provides services and supports necessary to help the focus children and ensure their placement is successful. The FFA seems to have a good assessment and understanding in the area of functioning and support systems for the focus children.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: Intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and their families are generally responsive to changing conditions. There is continuous monitoring, tracking, and communication of the focus child's status, and service results are occurring. The FFA determines if the focus children are making progress towards their NSP goals by observing if there is a reduction in incidents, occurrences and acting-out behaviors exhibited by the focus children. Progress is also determined by observation and reports from the CFPs. The FFA tracks weekly contact records, monthly CSW contact logs, quarterly health and safety assessments, and uses the information gathered to develop NSPs for the focus children. The NSPs are forwarded to the DCFS CSWs for review and signature. Adjustments are promptly made when it is determined that specific services are not producing the desired results. Additionally, the FFA uses NSPs to closely document and monitor each child's progress toward their treatment goals and submits SIRs via the I-Track database system to address unauthorized absences, assaultive behaviors by children, or by staff to a child, illness, behavior problems, hospitalizations, or other incidents that occur.

An example of the FFA's continuous tracking and adjustment of services is when one focus child demonstrated challenges in complying with school rules and teacher directives. The focus child was reported to be defiant and hit and spit on other children. His CFP addressed the behaviors through the implementation of a behavioral chart and by employing restrictions when the focus child misbehaved. Additionally, the focus child is receiving Wraparound services and a weekly behavioral modification plan was implemented to address these behavioral challenges, which resulted in a decrease in his maladaptive behaviors.

What's Not Working Now and Why (Score/Narrative of Opportunities for Improvement)

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: Although the FFA and its staff make efforts to communicate with the team members for each of the focus children, the FFA has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system. When the FFA meets to develop the focus children's case plans or addresses concerns regarding the focus children, it appears that the FFA involves only some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The teams consisted of the DCFS CSW, the FFA social worker, CFPs and therapist. The DCFS CSWs were not consistently invited. The teams lacked the participation of family members with whom the focus children maintain regular contact and visits and could benefit from involving key supports of the focus children in the decision making process.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they do not participate in regular team meetings for the focus children. They reported that the focus children's progress is communicated to them via telephone or email contacts or when they visit the focus children at their CFHs. Further, one DCFS CSW stated that the FFA social worker did not always contact her monthly, and she had not been invited to participate in a team meeting for the focus child.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In June 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical supports related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review, which consisted of the following: discussion of compliance with Title 22 Regulations and ensuring monetary and clothing allowance logs are maintained; addressing concerns related to comprehensive and measurable goals in NSPs; and obtaining the DCFS CSW's authorization to implement NSPs timely.

In July 2015, 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 the area of Teamwork. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

SOUTH BAY BRIGHT FUTURE, INC.

24404 South Vermont Avenue, Suite 201 • Harbor City, CA 90710
Phone: (310) 891-0096 • FAX (310) 891-0195

September 2, 2015

Jui-Ling Ho
Department of Children and Family Services
Out of Home Care Management Division

RE: Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The Quality Assurance Review (OHCMD) conducted March 2015 revealed the agency needs improved performance in the focus area of Teamwork.

QIP: South Bay Bright Future Foster Family Agency (SBBFFFA) shall monitor for compliance that everyone involved with the child have formed a working Team that meets, talks, and makes plans together.

In order to formulate the Team SBBFFFA shall request and obtain from the CSW the identification of the known people that are important in the child's life. This information shall include but is not limited to: CSW, agency social worker, certified foster parent, biological parents, grandparents, etc. In addition, the aforementioned shall be invited to attend meetings to talk and make plans for the future enhancement of the child and family life. Further, the Administrator may be invited to participate in the meetings.

The initial invitation to the meeting shall be sent to each person identified by the CSW as being important in the child's life. The invitation shall include but not limited to:

- **Date, time and location of the meeting.**
- **List of attendees**
- **Subject matters**

Although these meetings are scheduled for quarterly sessions, there may be a need to have an unplanned meeting to address newly concerns. Whereas, in this case, all indentified attendees shall be notified of the meeting.

During the first meeting contact information shall be requested from all attendees, whether e-mail, cell phone, etc. to keep everyone informed of the Team's meetings. In addition, minutes shall be generated from each meeting and minutes from the last meeting shall be distributed to all attendees. The minutes shall include the date, time and location of the next meeting. A copy of the minutes shall be maintained in the case file.

As a result of the Team meeting, talking and making plans together can be instrumental in addressing Smart Goals in the NSP(s).

Upon your approval SBBFFFA's Administrator shall be responsible for ensuring the above QIP is fully implemented within the aforementioned date. The effective date of the QIP is November 1, 2015.

SBBFFFA respectfully summits this Quality Improvement Plan for your review. The agency thanks you for the evaluation of our program and helping the agency identify areas for improvements. If additional information is needed please contact me at (310) 891-0096. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marvett Black
Administrator

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Administrator