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

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

Board of Supervisors
HILDA L. SOLIS
First District
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District
SHEILA KUEHL
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

November 25, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Hilda Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN 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 Families for Children Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2014. The FFA has one site located in the Second Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's program statement, its purpose is "1. To place children in homes that are safe, clean, stable and where the child feels nurtured and accepted. 2. To acknowledge the diversity of the population of Los Angeles County. 3. To assist in providing appropriate resource referrals for clients and their families. 4. To provide counseling services to children placed through DCFS and their families. 5. To provide clinicians sensitive to the diverse needs of various ethnic groups. 6. To ensure that all emancipation age children obtain the appropriate information about programs and opportunities after foster care."

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 recommendation noted in this report. In April 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:gw

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Andrew Henderson, Executive Director, Families for Children Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Leonora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN 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 Families for Children Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2014. 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 children, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three certified foster parents, two FFA social workers, and one FFA administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was one, their overall average length of placement was 18 months and their average age was 13. The focus children were randomly selected. One of the focus children was 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 is free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or intimidation in placement.
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 CSW, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - Focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, the FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence 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	5	**Good Stability** - The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers in those settings.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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 strengths and needs.	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSW, certified foster parent and the focus child feel heard and respected.
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.
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 are functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the child's strengths, needs, and preferences is frequently updated. Present strengths, risks, and underlying needs requiring intervention or supports are substantially recognized and well understood.
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 life, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together; at least one face-to-face team meeting has been held to develop plans.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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 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's safety status was optimal. The FFA administration and certified foster parents (CFPs) ensure that the focus children feel safe in placement. The FFA social workers have developed a rapport with the focus children. The focus children were free from daily harm in their daily settings. The focus children reported that they feel safe and comfortable in their certified foster homes (CFHs). It was reported that the CFPs are always present and make themselves available to talk to the focus children and the CFHs are safe places to live. The CFPs reported that the FFA provides them with ongoing trainings, which includes role playing, and acting out different types of scenarios. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA communicates with them promptly and consistently shares information regarding the focus children with them.

The FFA submitted six Special Incident Reports (SIRs) through the ITrack database system during the past 30 days. The SIRs included two medical related incidents (one involved a focus child), two assaultive behavior incidents (by a child toward a caregiver and by a community child toward one of the focus children at school), one theft incident, and one "other" incident that involved a focus child having difficulty with a peer at school. None posed an immediate child safety concern. According to Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section, there were no substantiated referrals or open investigations for the FFA during the last 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provides substantial permanence for the focus children. The FFA works with the focus children, the CFPs and with the DCFS CSW to assist in the development and determination of the most permanent plan for the focus children.

The FFA social workers maintain constant contact with the DCFS CSWs and discuss case plan goals for the focus children. During weekly visits, the FFA social workers assess the attachment between the CFPs and the focus children. The CFPs reported that the FFA provides them with different training to better assist them in working with the children in their care. The FFA shares information with the CFPs and the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA ensures that everyone is on the same page in regards to the best interests of the focus children and assists the focus children in maintaining family ties. One of the focus children has reunification services; permanent planned living arrangement (PPLA) is the permanency plan for the other two focus children. The two focus children receiving services under PPLA are not interested in adoption or legal guardianship. However, their attachment to their foster mother is strong, they are building a life-long connection and the plan is for them to remain placed in their current CFH beyond the age of 18.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for the focus children. The FFA utilizes a strict intake process to ensure that there is the best possible fit between the focus children and the CFPs to ensure a positive outcome for the focus children.

During the first 30 days of the placement, the CFPs complete a behavior log. The FFA social workers engage the children in conversation and with the CFPs assist the focus children in developing a sense of belonging. Each of the focus children expressed a feeling of closeness with their respective CFPs. One of the focus children indicated that if she wanted anything she could just ask for it and that nothing needed to be changed to improve her placement.

None of the focus children have had any recent disruptions since being placed in the FFA. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children indicated that the FFA always shares information with them regarding the focus children's progress.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has established and maintained acceptable family connections for the focus children. The FFA and CFPs work with the DCFS CSWs and focus children to ensure that the court visitation orders are met. The FFA staff and the CFPs monitor visits as ordered by the court. Everyone works together to arrange the visits which are reasonable and flexible for all parties.

The focus children are encouraged to maintain telephone contact with those who are important to them. Two of the focus children have face-to-face visits with family members and maintain telephone contact. The third focus child's family members reside out of state; she maintains contact via telephone and the internet and the FFA is supportive of maintaining the connection.

The FFA is supportive of visitation and conducts monitored visits at the FFA office. Transportation and monitoring for visits is frequently provided by the CFPs. When the CFPs are unable to transport the focus children to visits, the FFA social workers will transport in order to ensure that a visit is not missed. If a visit is cancelled, the FFA social workers talk to the focus children about it and allow them to express their feelings.

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 has established and maintained good engagement efforts with key parties. The FFA administrator reported that the FFA keeps a checklist of the focus children's progress and this information is shared with the DCFS CSW within the first 30 days of placement to develop a history. The FFA engages CFPs, birth parents and anyone who is important to the focus children to obtain ideas to better service the focus children.

Weekly face-to-face contact is made by the FFA social workers with the CFPs and the focus children. The FFA social workers maintain monthly contact with the DCFS CSWs via telephone and e-mail.

Each of the focus children reported sharing positive relationships with their CFPs and the FFA social workers, as they were the people which they could count on. The CFPs reported that they are included in discussions regarding the focus children.

The DCFS CSWs reported that everyone works together and communicates what is needed for the focus children.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides the focus children with an array of services and extracurricular activities to help the focus children make progress toward their planned outcomes. The FFA clinical director and the FFA social workers meet and discuss what direction to take to appropriately meet the needs of the focus children.

The CFPs reported that they are included in the discussion of service needs of the focus children. The FFA, in collaboration with the focus children, CFPs and DCFS CSWs, review and modify the goals as necessary. There is a constant review of resources to ensure positive outcomes for the focus children. The focus children's DCFS CSWs report that they are contacted by the FFA and are asked to provide input in regards to the needs of the focus children. All of the focus children reported that their needs are being met.

The FFA and the CFPs assist with youth development services (YDS) for older children. The YDS component of the FFA program is geared toward assisting older children in moving toward self sufficiency. One age-appropriate focus child receives YDS services, which includes teaching the focus child how to utilize public transportation, shopping, meal preparation and maintaining personal hygiene.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. The focus children's strengths and underlying needs are recognized and understood by the FFA and all key parties. The services provided such as therapy, tutoring and YDS services are geared to assist the focus children toward making progress and improving their functioning and well-being.

The FFA social workers and the CFPs engage the focus children through dialog and observation to gain a clear picture of the focus children's strengths and needs. One CFP reported that she spends time with the focus child and over time, she has learned what the focus child's capabilities are. One DCFS CSW reported that she receives a monthly report from the FFA social worker as to the focus child's progress. The DCFS CSW further reported that if the focus child wants to do something, all she has to do is ask and the DCFS CSW tries to work with the FFA to make it happen.

Each of the focus children reported that their CFPs and FFA social workers care about them and their well-being. This is demonstrated by spending time with them and talking with them according to the focus children. One of the focus children experienced the loss of a relative and requested items of the relative that were important to her. The FFA social worker got involved and was able to retrieve the items and present them to the focus child. The CFP reported that the action of the FFA social worker made the focus child feel that she was cared for.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided generally reflect the focus children's needs. The FFA clinical director and the FFA social workers review the focus children's status on a weekly basis. Weekly checklists are maintained by the FFA social workers to track the focus children's behaviors and well-being in the CFHs, at school and in the community. The FFA social workers send month-end reports to the DCFS CSWs along with maintaining monthly telephonic contact to discuss the focus children's status. The FFA social workers also make weekly visits to the focus children and CFPs.

The FFA clinical director and FFA social workers meet and discuss how the focus children are working towards meeting their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals, make adjustments and modify goals as needed. The CFPs are also included in the discussions. The NSPs are developed by the FFA social workers in conjunction with the DCFS CSWs, CFPs, therapists and the focus children.

The CFPs track the focus children's behavior at home and at school so any issues are identified immediately and adjustments can be made timely. An example of this is one of the focus children was truant from school and reported to his foster mother that he did not want to go back to school as he was being taunted by another student. The CFP immediately contacted the school counselor and arranged a meeting. The CFP and the focus child met the school counselor and the other child involved for a resolution to the problem, which resulted in a positive outcome for the focus child. The FFA social worker also followed-up with the focus child on positive ways to deal with problems.

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

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA involves some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team consists of the focus children, DCFS CSWs, the FFA administrator, the FFA social worker and the CFPs.

While there is collaboration between the team members and information is communicated in a fluid manner regarding the focus children, the FFA does not conduct team meetings, which include all key parties and supports of the focus children. The FFA clinical director and FFA social workers meet weekly to discuss the focus children. The FFA social workers meet weekly with the CFPs. According to the FFA administrator, the team does not meet all together unless there is a crisis. One focus child reported that she did not know who the members of her team were. The other focus children reported that they have not participated in any team meetings.

The DCFS CSWs and CFPs reported that there has not been a face-to-face team meeting with all of the key parties.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In May 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to Licensure/Contract Requirement; Certified Foster Homes; Facility and Environment; Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery; Personal Rights; Personal Needs; and Personnel Records findings indicated in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review. Technical support was provided on properly cross-reporting SIRs; how the FFA can assist the CFPs with transportation; ensuring that the children's bedrooms and common areas are maintained; and ensuring the foster home maintain an adequate amount of perishable foods and that the children are provided with the appropriate monetary weekly allowance; comprehensiveness of the NSPs and Quarterly Reports; ensuring that the children are aware of their right to refuse medication and medical and dental care; ensuring that children are aware of the amount of their monthly clothing allowance; assisting and encouraging children to maintain photo album/life books; and ensuring that all staff members obtain initial and ongoing training.

In April 2015, 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 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.

A Foster/Adoption/Mental Health Services Agency

August 17, 2015

County of Los Angeles
Department of Children and Family Services
9320 Telstar Avenue, Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731

Attention: Corliss Robinson, Manager

RE: FFC – FFA Quality Assurance Review
Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) – **Teamwork**

Dear Ms. Robinson,

In connection with the Quality Assurance Review and our April 2015 meeting with our OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer, Greta Walters, attached please find the following QIP:

While there is collaboration between the team members and information is communicated in a fluid manner regarding the focus children, the FFA does not conduct team meetings, which include all key parties. The FFA Clinical Director and FFA social workers meet weekly to discuss the focus children. The social workers meet weekly with the certified foster parents. According to the FFA Administrator, the team does not meet all together unless there is a crisis. One focus child reported that she did not know who the members of her team were. The other focus children reported that they have not participated in any team meetings. The DCFS CSWs and certified foster parents reported that there has not been a face-to-face team meeting with all of the key parties.

The agency has taken action steps to address methods for improvement in the area Teamwork.

- Effective August 31, 2015, the Clinical Director will be responsible for extending an invitation to all current and new placement County Social Workers to attend a face-to-face collaborative meeting with key parties at the agency's main office appx every (4) four months, such as the focus children, their foster parents, agency social workers, and Therapist, if any, in addition to extending an invitation to any weekly Clinical meeting that they are available to attend. The purpose of the working team meeting will be to meet, discuss and make plans together in the best interest of the focus children and to include, expound upon and/or convey information obtained during the weekly clinical meetings. The meetings will be documented as to content and team member attendance.

Families for Children appreciates the working partnership established with Ms. Greta Walters, our very informative and experienced Quality Assurance Reviewer. Thank you for the opportunity to provide services to the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

Sincerely,

THenderson, Ph.D.

Terilyn Henderson, PhD.
Administrator
Clinical Director
(323) 750-5855 Ext 102