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November 24, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

THE VILLAGE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW, FISCAL YEAR 2014-15

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of The Village Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in April 2015. The FFA has two licensed offices located in the First and Third Supervisorial Districts. The offices provide services to County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is "to protect children from abuse, preserve families, and build a stronger and safer community for all."

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

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In August 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 areas of Safety, Assessment & Linkages, and 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
Hugo Villa, Chief Executive Officer, The Village FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

THE VILLAGE 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 The Village Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in April 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 three, their overall average length of placement was six months and their average age was 13. 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	4	**Fair Safety Status** - The focus children are usually avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community but rarely may present a behavior that has low or mild risk of harm. The focus children may have had related history, diagnoses, or behavior presentations in the past, but may have presented risk behaviors at a declining or much reduced level over the past 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	5	**Good Status** - Focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, 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's 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 children 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 and 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	4	**Fair Assessment and Understanding** - The focus children's functioning and support systems are minimally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is periodically updated.
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 supporters. 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 the 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)

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provides good permanence. The primary permanency and concurrent goals for each of the focus children were appropriately developed and processed in a timely manner. The FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency and ensures that the treatment team is aware of each focus child's permanency plan. The CFPs are also supportive of the focus children's permanency plans. The focus children reported that they are aware of their permanency plan and concurrent plans, as well as the steps taken to ensure timely permanency, as their FFA social workers discuss their goals monthly with them. The FFA also ensures the focus children are visiting with their family members and other important people in their lives to ensure these relationships are maintained and are lifelong.

For two of the focus children, the permanency plan is Permanent Plan Living Arrangement. One of the focus children reported that the FFA supports her by providing her with services she needs to ensure she is stable and prepared to transition out of care. Currently, she is participating in individual therapy, exploring her feelings and developing coping skills. The second focus child continues to have monitored weekly visits with his mother; his CFPs provide transportation and monitor the visits. He reported that he discusses his permanency options with the FFA social worker and they decide on the next steps to take. The third focus child's permanency plan is adoption. His placement into his current foster/adoptive home occurred after the adoptive match was made. The FFA ensured that appropriate services were place and is providing in-home supportive services to support the focus child and the certified foster/adoptive parent through the adoption process.

One DCFS CSW reported that she and the FFA are exploring family members, as potential placement resources for the focus child. The second DCFS CSW reported that the focus child is in an Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC) foster home and that she is working with the FFA to transition the focus child into a less restrictive foster home. The third DCFS CSW reported that she worked with the FFA to place the focus child into the current foster adoptive home.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provides substantial stability for the focus children in placement. The focus children have established positive relationships with their CFPs, as they have remained stable in their current placement. The focus children reported feeling supported by their CFPs, as they can talk to them and they listen. The focus children are adapting well in their current Certified Foster Homes (CFHs). The focus children feel safe, comfortable and respected. There have been no major issues or concerns.

The focus children reported that they like their current placements and did not want any changes to their current placement.

DCFS CSWs reported that they work with the FFA in ensuring services and supports are in place for the focus children to ensure that they are stable in placement and there are no placement disruptions. They also reported that the FFA staff is supportive of the CFPs, ensuring they are available to address any concerns that arise.

The CFPs reported that the FFA social worker is responsive and provides supportive services for them, as well as for the focus children, any time issues arise to prevent disruptions. The FFA social worker meets with the focus children and the CFPs at the foster home, where it is convenient and where the focus children are most comfortable.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA maintains effective family connections for the focus children through visits and other connecting strategies. The focus children all have regular visits with their family members. The FFAs CFPs transport and monitor visits for the focus children, when appropriate.

For one focus child who is in an adoptive placement, his CFP continues to transport him to visit with his biological father. This CFP also transports the focus child's sibling, who is placed in a Group Home, to and from her home for sibling visits, so the focus child may continue to have a relationship with his sibling and maintain family connections.

The second focus child initially did not want to visit his mother. However, the CFP developed a relationship with his mother and maintained contact with her. The CFP works through the focus child's resistance and continued to encourage him to maintain contact with his mother. The focus child now visits his mother at least once a month and the CFP continued to provide transportation to visits.

The third focus child has regular unmonitored visits with her paternal grandmother, whom she was detained from and enjoys her visits. The CFP transports her to and from the visits.

The focus children reported that they are very happy that they have visits with their family members. They enjoy seeing their family. They also shared that the CFPs facilitate the visits by providing transportation and monitoring the visits, when visits require monitoring.

DCFS CSWs reported that they are very happy with the CFPs facilitating visitation for the focus children. The DCFS CSWs also reported that the birth families have also shared with them that CFPs are good in ensuring visitation with the focus children occur.

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

Safety (4 Fair Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA's safety status was fair as the FFA provided a safe living situation for the focus children during the past 30 days. All three focus children reported feeling safe at their CFHs and reported that they have never been left unsupervised. The focus children also reported that if someone would ever hurt them in their CFHs, they would either report the incident to their FFA social worker, DCFS CSW or their CFP.

DCFS CSWs did not report any safety concerns in regards to the safety of the focus children or the CFPs.

Based on the QAR, the protective strategies used by the FFA were only adequate in reducing risks of harm to placed children. The DCFS Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) reported that it was investigating three open referrals involving the FFA received during the past 30 days: one referral alleging General Neglect and At-Risk Sibling Abuse was evaluated out; the second referral alleging General Neglect was closed as Unfounded; and the third referral alleging Physical Abuse was closed as Inconclusive.

Additionally, the FFA submitted 40 Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database in the last 30 days. However, three of the SIRs were not submitted timely. The SIRs included incidents of injuries, running away, police involvement, illness, assaultive behaviors towards another placed child, psychiatric hospitalizations, property damage, as well as inappropriate sexual behavior. Only one SIR involved a focus child; the focus child had complained of stomach pain and the CFP took the focus child to the hospital. The FFA followed protocol and timely reported the incident.

Further, OHCIS requested a Corrective Action Plan from the FFA in April 2015, as the FFA failed to report and submit a SIR regarding notification of subsequent arrest, conviction, probation, or parole violation of a CFP.

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 all the key people in the focus children's lives. The FFA works to ensure that rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSW, CFPs, and the focus children and their families feel heard and respected. Furthermore, the FFA ensures that connections are made between the focus children and the CFPs. The FFA social workers conduct weekly visits to the CFHs to monitor the progress of the focus children and to ensure they are doing well.

All three focus children reported having a great rapport with their CFPs and FFA social workers. The focus children also reported that they count on their CFPs and can go to them with any concerns or issues they may or may not have.

DCFS CSWs reported that they work with the FFA social workers to coordinate monthly visits in the CFH to ensure that all the key people communicate effectively for the best interest of the focus children. DCFS CSWs also reported having a good rapport with the FFA social worker who they communicate with via telephone, e-mails, as well as face-to-face during monthly visits.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports and Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides the focus children with a good and substantial array of supports and services, which matches the intervention strategies identified in their case plans. The FFA and the CFPs ensure that the focus children are receiving the services recommended by the DCFS CSWs. All three focus children are receiving individual counseling.

The first focus child is receiving Wraparound services; he is currently in an adoptive placement and is doing well. The second focus child is receiving ITFC services and is doing very well in regards to meeting his goals and working towards transitioning into a less restrictive foster home. The third focus child is receiving individual counseling services and reported that she enjoys her sessions with her therapist.

Two of the focus children reported that they informed their CFPs in regards to extracurricular activities they would like to participate in and their CFPs ensure that they are able to participate in activities of their choice. The third focus child reported that he informed his CFP that he would like to participate in soccer, which his certified foster mother is exploring.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the services in place meet the needs of the focus children and they have observed improvements with the focus children.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA and CFPs are aware of the ongoing and changing needs of the focus children. The CFPs are ensuring that the focus children receive the necessary assessments to make certain that the appropriate services are in place and they communicate the results to the DCFS CSWs and FFA staff. The FFA tracks each focus child's progress through communication with the CFPs and with the DCFS CSWs via telephone or e-mails and by sending the DCFS CSWs the NSPs developed by the FFA. The FFA is responsive to changing conditions for each of the focus children and in ensuring that services in place meet the needs of the focus children.

DCFS CSWs reported they communicate regularly with either the FFA social worker or the therapist regarding how the focus children are doing. The DCFS CSWs also reported that the CFPs are also very informative during their monthly face-to-face visits in sharing how the focus children are doing and progress they are making in regards to the services they are receiving.

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

Assessment & Linkages (4 Fair Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The focus children's functioning, challenges and support systems are minimally understood by all parties involved. The FFA assesses the focus children's strengths and needs and provides intervention based on their needs to ensure that the appropriate services are in place. The FFA could benefit by including the input of key members and decision makers in the focus children's life and by developing goals for the focus children that are child-specific and based on the observation and reports from the CFPs, DCFS CSWs and the FFA social workers.

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA involves some of the important supports 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.

For one focus child, who is in the ITFC program, team meetings occur bi-weekly with all the team members, who include the focus child, CFP, DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, and service providers. The focus child reported being happy with the way his team functions. The FFA reported that all team members were aware of how the focus child is doing in regards to his strengths and needs and services being provided, as they communicate and meet twice a month.

Although the other two focus children reported that they are aware of whom their team members are, they both reported that they have not participated in any team meetings. This was also reported by their DCFS CSWs, who shared that they have not participated nor have they been invited to any team meetings held by the FFA.

However, all three DCFS CSWs reported that they have not participated in any Needs and Services Plan (NSP) meetings, which are held quarterly; the FFA therapist develops the NSP goals without their input and sends the NSPs to them for their signature.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In July 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical supports related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review, which consisted of the following: timely and comprehensive initial and quarterly NSPs; developing Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results Oriented and Time-Limited goals for the NSPs; and modifying and updating goals.

In August 2015, 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 Safety, Assessment & Linkages, and 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.

October 13, 2015

Department of Children and Family Services
Out of Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Ave, Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731
ATTN: Adelina Arutyunyan

Re: Quality Assurance Review

Dear Adelina,

This letter is in response to the foster family agency Quality Assurance Review that was completed in April 2015 by OHCMD.

Findings:

Focus Area: Safety
Out-of-Home-Care Investigation Section reported that it was investigating three open referrals: one referral alleging General Neglect and At-Risk Sibling Abuse which was evaluated out; the second referral alleging General Neglect was closed as Unfounded; and the third referral alleging Physical Abuse was closed as Inconclusive. Additionally, the FFA had submitted 40 SIRs in the 30 day period in which three of the SIRs were not submitted timely. Further, OHCMD had requested a CAP from the FFA in April 2015 as the FFA had failed to report and submit an SIR regarding Notification of Subsequent Arrest, Conviction, Probation, or Parole Violation of a certified foster parent.

- In efforts to increase the safety of our homes, The Village Family Services conducted a re-certification training for foster parents on September 19, 2015. This training focused on the youth's personal rights and ways to ensure safety for all youth. (Attached is a copy of the agenda with training topics and sign in sheet).
- The Village Family Services submitted a CAP to OHCMD in which staff was trained on Special Incident Reporting with regard to notification of subsequent arrest, conviction, and probation or parole on Wednesday April 15, 2015. In addition, foster parents were trained on the importance of notifying the agency of all subsequent arrest, convictions and probation or parole violations in a timely manner on September 19, 2015 (see proof of training attached).
- In addition, The Village Family Services implemented a protocol on April 21, 2015 to ensure all incidents are reported timely. The protocol requires that once a staff member is notified of any arrest, conviction, or violation, staff will send a blanket email to the director, foster care supervisors and both recruitment counselors. After notifying

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the team of the incident or arrest, the FCSW will be responsible to submit a notification via itrack for review and submission. Recruitment counselors will be responsible for submitting the Notification of Subsequent Arrest form to the assigned Quality Assurance monitor at DCFS.

Assessment and Linkages

It was noted that the focus children's functioning, challenges, and support systems are minimally understood by all parties. The FFA could benefit by including the input of key members and decision makers in the focus children's life and by developing goals for the focus children that are child-specific and based on observation and reports from the certified foster parents, DCFS, CSWs and the FFA social workers.

- The Village Family Services works hard to assess and assure our youth are receiving all necessary services to ensure their success. In effort to team more effectively, we are committed to ensuring all NSPs are developed in a team setting. Effective November 1, 2015, foster care social workers will invite the youth's county social worker and document efforts at engaging CSWs. A CFT meeting will also be scheduled to ensure everyone's input on the youth's goals. This documented effort will be via email or phone call and will be noted in the youth's file.
- In addition, all youth will be screened by foster care social workers and linked to services as needed. Effective November 1, 2015, The Village Family Services' agency social workers will conduct assessment tools with each youth including screening tools for youth 0-5 and other designated screenings for older youth. Screening tools are currently being assessed by TVFS Research and Outcomes department and will be shared with staff prior to November to ensure competency.

Focus Area: Teamwork

It was noted that the FFA involves some of the important supports 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 plan together. Although two focus children reported that they are aware of whom their team members are, they both reported that they have not participated in any team meetings. CSWs also reported no participation in the Needs and Services Plan meetings which are held quarterly.

- The Village Family Services is committed to teaming with community partners and other support services to improve the outcomes for our youth. In an effort to improve our teaming, the Village Families Services will implement a protocol effective November 1, 2015 in which all NSP meetings are documented in a CFT (Child and Family Team Meeting). An invitation will be extended to each youth's CSW to ensure their participation and input in the youth's goals. These efforts at engagement will be documented in the youth's file. Foster care social workers will also make efforts to invite all members of the child's team including but not limited to natural supports, therapists, school staff, biological parents if appropriate and any other individuals the youth wants to include in his or her team. Furthermore, the CFT meetings will require

the youth's participation as mandatory. These documented efforts will be noted in the youth file.

- Effective November 1, 2015, The Village Family Services' Quality Assurance team will revise the current audit tool to check and ensure the child and team meetings are documented during the NSP development.

Thank you for your guidance and feedback on improving our quality of care.
Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Diana L. Redeemer
Director of Foster Care, Adoptions, & ITFC
The Village Family Services
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