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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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December 11, 2015

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

TRINITY YOUTH SERVICES 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 Trinity Youth Services Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2014. The FFA has five licensed offices: one is located in the First Supervisorial District; one in the Fourth Supervisorial District; one in the Fifth Supervisorial District; and two in San Bernardino County. All offices provide services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its mission is "to provide children with an appropriate family match and give the families support and training to ensure that placements will be beneficial in meeting the children's needs. We then provide case work services and specific treatment to each child as specified in the treatment plan."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 7 of 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus areas of Visitation and Teamwork.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In May 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 Visitation 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
John Neiuber, Chief Executive Officer, Trinity Youth Services FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

TRINITY YOUTH SERVICES 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 Trinity Youth Services 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 focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three Certified Foster Parents (CFPs), two FFA social workers, one FFA Regional Director, and the FFA's Director of Foster Care and Adoptions.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was 8 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 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 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.
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, support the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the 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 in either setting over the past 12 months with none in the past six months. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters, and peers in those settings. Any known risks are now well controlled.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	4	**Acceptable Maintenance of Family Connections** - Fairly effective family connections are being at least minimally maintained for most significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) 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. Accommodations are used to provide scheduling times and locations based on convenience of appropriate parties.
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.
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.
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's status and service results to the team are occurring. Generally, successful adaptations are based on a basic knowledge of what strategies, supports and services 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, made reports to the Child Protection Hotline and reported Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database system in a timely manner during the last 30 days. The FFA took responsibility for the safety of the focus children. The FFA ensures that children are placed in Certified Foster Homes (CFHs) that provide the best possible supervision at all times. The focus children reported that they were safe and well cared for by their Certified Foster Parents (CFPs). Based on the interviews conducted with the focus children, DCFS CSWs and the FFA staff, it was reported that the focus children experienced highly safe living situations with CFPs who are reliable and competent. The focus children have not shown any suicidal behaviors or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors in the last 30 days.

The FFA has ensured protective strategies for the children and their safety status. According to the FFA's Foster Care and Adoptions Director, the FFA conducts training on different topics to assist CFPs in recognizing problems that may pose a safety risk to placed children. The FFA also trains its social workers to have regular contact with all those involved in the children's lives. The FFA ensures that the children are in safe homes that provide for the children's basic needs, shelter, food and clothing. The FFA social workers meet with the focus children at least twice monthly.

The FFA submitted 33 SIRs via the I-Track database system during the past 30 days. None of the SIRs involved the focus children, and none of the reported incidents posed an immediate child safety concern. Further, the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) and Community Care Licensing also reported no referrals or complaint investigations during the past 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA is providing the services that correspond with each focus child's permanency plan. The FFA demonstrates efforts to support the focus children in achieving the permanency plans requested by DCFS. The FFA provides permanency services, such as emancipation services, youth development services and prepares placed children for transitional housing. The FFA and the CFPs are supportive of the relationships the focus children have with their family members and the positive adults involved in their lives.

The FFA has encouraged the development of a good relationship between focus children and their CFPs. The CFPs ensure that the focus children receive support and assistance in addressing concerns. The CFPs are attentive to the focus children's needs and concerns and help the focus children strive in their day-to-day lives. The CFPs for each of the focus children stated they are willing to continue caring for the focus children as long as necessary.

The permanency plan for one of the focus children is family reunification with her mother, and the concurrent plan is planned permanent living arrangement (PPLA). The focus child's paternal relatives recently became involved in the child's life. The paternal relatives reside near her CFH. The focus child has regular visits with her mother and the relatives.

The second focus child's permanency plan is legal guardianship with his current certified foster mother and the concurrent plan is PPLA. The focus child's mother recently contacted the certified foster mother and requested that she provide a permanent home for the focus child's siblings. The FFA and the DCFS CSW have initiated the process to have the children placed together.

The permanency plan for the third focus child is PPLA and the concurrent plan is legal guardianship. The foster mother wishes to adopt the focus child. The focus child shared that he has no interest in reunifying with his mother. He expressed that he enjoys living with his foster mother and that he wanted to remain with her, but he did not express a preference between adoption and legal guardianship.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA is providing good stability for the focus children. The FFA takes responsibility in ensuring that the children receive services needed for them to become stable in all areas and to develop lifelong relationships with responsible caring adults. The FFA ensures that the certified foster parents receive support and training to provide for the focus children's needs. The focus children reported they have no problems with their CFPs or with the FFA staff. They expressed their desire to remain in their current placement until a more permanent placement is available for them. The FFA is providing good placement stability and the certified foster parents are providing excellent care for the focus children. The three focus children are stable in school and in their foster homes.

The first focus child reported that she is happy. She is doing well in school and her behavior has improved since being placed in her current CFH. She has demonstrated stability in placement, and she is focused on reunifying with her mother and being with family.

The second focus child is doing well in his CFH and he is very happy that his brother is placed with him. The FFA, DCFS CSW, and the foster mother agree to keep the children together.

The third focus child is happy at his foster home. He wants to remain with his foster mother as she is committed to caring for him long-term.

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

Visitation (4 Acceptable Maintenance of Family Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has maintained at least minimally, effective family connections for the three focus children. The FFA social workers, the CFPs and all team members follow the visitation recommendations made by the DCFS CSWs. The CFPs support the children visiting with their families and are in regular contact with the DCFS CSWs regarding scheduled visits. The CFPs keep records of the focus children's visits with their relatives, approved visitors and outside contacts, and missed visits are rescheduled in a timely manner.

During the QAR, it became apparent that the CFPs have taken the lead in ensuring important lifelong connections are maintained for the focus children. Further, the biological mother for one of the focus children lived more than sixty miles away from the CFH. Visits between the focus child and her mother were occurring because the DCFS CSW was transporting the focus child to the visits at least twice per month. The FFA can improve in the area of visitation by assisting with transportation to ensure that the visits for placed children with their family occur as frequent as possible and that visits are not missed due to the DCFS CSW not being able to provide transportation.

For the second focus child, the CFP was proactive; she arranged for the focus child to have a mentor. The mentor is a California Highway Patrol officer who visits with the focus child twice monthly and takes him out to the movies or to lunch. The CFPs also transport the focus child and his sibling to a neutral location for weekend family visits.

The third focus child has no visits with his family at this time. His mother is not involved in his life, and his two half-siblings reside with their respective fathers, one in Oregon, and the other out of the country. The focus child stated he does not have contact with them. However, he is very involved with his certified foster mother's church, and he has made positive connections with adult males from the church that have befriended him and visit with him. The certified foster mother is committed to caring for the focus child. The relationship with his certified foster mother and these positive adults are expected to be lifelong connections.

Based on the QAR, it appears that the FFA can do more to assist in ensuring visits and regular communication between the focus children and their family members or important people in their lives.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

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

Engagement (5 Good Engagement)

Engagement Overview: The FFA makes consistent good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for the focus children. The FFA reported that the focus children have regular contact with their DCFS CSWs, available family members and other appropriate adults involved in their life. Both the FFA social workers and therapists maintain a good working relationship with the DCFS CSWs. The FFA provides information regarding the children via face-to-face contact, by telephone or via e-mail. All three DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported that the FFA was very good at keeping them informed and engaged regarding the children's progress, the services the children are receiving, and activities in which the focus children are involved. According to the FFA Foster Care and Adoptions Director, the focus children may contact their DCFS CSWs whenever they want to do so. The FFA has built a good rapport with the DCFS CSWs.

One of the focus children reported that she has regular contacts with her mother by telephone, and more recently with paternal aunts and uncle. She sees her DCFS CSW regularly; in addition to the monthly contacts, she sees her DCFS CSW twice a month when she is transported for the visits with her mother.

The second focus child reported that he feels he can count on his DCFS CSW and foster mother. The focus child also reported that he sees his dependency court attorney as the primary person he can count on. The FFA social worker stated that she visits the CFH regularly to discuss any concerns or progress the focus children are making, adding that she is in constant communication with the focus children, the DCFS CSWs and the CFPs. If there is any concern or issue, she ensures that she is at the CFH by the next day to ensure the matter is resolved. The FFA social worker ensures that she is available when the DCFS CSW for the third focus child conducts monthly visits to the focus child's foster home. They meet to discuss progress and any concerns regarding the focus child.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA provides a good and substantial array of supports and the services substantially match intervention strategies identified in the case plans. The FFA staff collaborates with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children and the CFPs to develop Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals for the children. The FFA ensures that the focus children receive weekly individual counseling sessions by providing the services at the focus children's foster homes. All the focus children have regular meetings with the FFA social workers. The FFA is in constant contact with service providers, including medical, dental and mental health. One of the focus children is a member of the Los Angeles Conservation Corp's after-school program. The focus child was referred to United Friends of the Children's College Readiness Program. Her CFP provides transportation to her extracurricular activities and services.

The second focus child's foster mother contacts the FFA whenever she needs anything for the child. If the FFA is not able to assist, she is willing to do it herself. This focus child receives individual therapy and has a mentor. He also participates in the after-school program at his elementary school, where he receives tutoring, as well as a social and academic support three to four times a week. In addition, this focus child is enrolled in singing lessons and is a member of his church's junior choir.

The third focus child receives weekly mental health services. His foster mother is a teacher and works closely with the school to ensure the focus child succeeds academically. This focus child is participating in choir, dance club, Christian club, wrestling, and Church Youth Leadership. He plays the guitar in the church band. The foster mother transports him to and from all appointments and extra curricular activities. The focus child is learning independent living skills such as cooking, budgeting and learning to use public transportation.

Assessments and Understanding (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessments and Understanding Overview: The focus children meet with the FFA social workers at least three times per month to assess their progress and to evaluate their needs as well as to address their concerns. The focus children also participate in team meetings held by the FFA to develop a plan to assist the focus children in making progress towards meeting their NSP goals. The FFA provides services required to support the focus children and ensure their placement is successful. The team meetings are scheduled by the DCFS CSWs in collaboration with the FFA. The focus children's progress toward achieving their NSP goals is assessed through observation of the children. Progress is also determined by what CFPs observe and report.

The CFPs interviewed expressed a clear understanding of the children's strengths and needs and make every effort to help the children to make progress and succeed in their placement. The FFA social workers and CFPs address any concerns with the schools and ensure that concerns are addressed in therapy. The CFPs expressed that they were satisfied with the focus children in their homes and expressed no concerns regarding the children in their care.

The FFA Director and FFA social workers meet regularly with the CFPs to discuss concerns regarding the focus children. The FFA ensures each focus child's medical, dental, and mental health appointments take place. The FFA social workers keep the DCFS CSWs informed of the focus children's progress toward achieving their NSP goals via telephone calls and e-mails.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they work closely with the focus children to determine their interests and appropriate extra curricular activities. The DCFS CSWs reported having face-to-face contacts with the FFA staff and CFPs when they have their monthly visits with placed children.

Based on the interviews conducted, the FFA has good assessment and understanding in the functioning and support systems for the focus children. The FFA is helping the three focus children achieve their case plan goals. The three focus children spoke positively about their placements and their relationships with their CFPs, FFA social workers, and their DCFS CSWs. The three focus children received guidance, care and support during their placement in their current CFHs.

Tracking and Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking and Adjustment Overview: The FFA tracks each focus child's progress through regular team meetings and through visits with each focus child, at least twice per month. FFA social workers meet alone with the focus children, as well as with the CFPs at their homes to evaluate the focus children's behavior, development, academic performance, involvement in extra curricular activities, participation in counseling, placement stability, progress toward NSP goals, as well as to address any concerns. The CFPs and the FFA social workers monitor the focus children's behaviors, children's visits, outings, as well as document their progress in logs, including sign-in/out logs. The key team members meet with the children regularly to discuss NSP goals, to encourage and assist them to make progress toward achieving the goals. The FFA's intervention strategies, supports and services provided generally reflect the focus children's needs. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the FFA, DCFS CSWs, CFPs and the focus children. When desired results are not occurring, adjustments to treatment goals and services are promptly made.

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

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA reflects a fairly coherent pattern of effective teamwork with most of the people the focus children identified as being a part of their team. The FFA is familiar with who the team members are for each focus child. The focus children are also aware of the people who are in their lives and part of their support team. Although the FFA makes effort to involve some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, not all team members have come together at one time to plan for or engage in a discussion regarding the focus children. The team could benefit from the participation of family members and other appropriate adults involved in the focus children's life. The focus children have regular meetings with only some of the team members. The FFA encourages its social workers to request team meetings if they anticipate any issues arising that would potentially disrupt the placement of the children.

The three focus children reported not ever participating in a team meeting that included a majority of the key people in their lives. One focus child reported that meetings with her foster mother and FFA social worker only occur when the FFA social worker visits her at the CFH. The second focus child reported that he and his brother only meet with the DCFS CSW when the CSW visits them at their CFH. The third focus child could not recall ever having a meeting with the FFA social worker, his foster mother, siblings, his mentor and his DCFS CSW or other team members at the same time. It became apparent that other appropriate adults who have an impact on the focus children's lives, such as mentors, were not included in team meetings.

The FFA could benefit from having more team meetings, as well as reaching out to key team members and important decision makers in the focus children's life. The FFA plans to make it a practice to request a quarterly team meeting, at the time of the NSP review, which will include key team members. These team meetings will provide an opportunity for all team members to come together and contribute to the discussion regarding each placed child's progress and case plan goals.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In October 2014, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 contract compliance review to ensure the following: comprehensive and timely NSPs; participation of the CFPs in the development of the NSPs; and that the FFA obtains or documents efforts to obtain the DCFS CSWs' authorization to implement NSPs.

In May 2015, OHCMD quality assurance staff met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide technical support, addressing methods for improving in the areas of Visitation 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.

May 19, 2015

Mission Office

Foster Care • Residential Services

Patricia Bolanos-Gonzalez, Children Services Administrator II
Department of Children and Family Services
9320 Telstar Avenue, #216
El Monte, CA 91731

Re: Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Dear Patricia Bolanos-Gonzalez,

Trinity Youth Services (TYS) received a request to provide a QIP for the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) recommendations noted for Teamwork and Visitation.

Visitation:
As of 5/1/15, all Office Directors retrained their foster care social workers (FCSWs) regarding visitation and ensuring that all children have established connections with significant family (parents, siblings, step-parents, grandparents, uncles/aunts) or significant person (mentors, former foster parents). FCSW will request minute orders from CSWs to establish who is allowed to have visitation. FCSW will coordinate visitation and telephone calls with the children and their families/significant people. TYS will ensure that foster parents (FPs) transport to and monitor all visitation, when appropriate. If FP is unable to fulfill that responsibility, TYS will make arrangements with TYS staff to ensure visitation occurs. FCSW will document all efforts made regarding visitation/connections.

Teamwork:
TYS's FCSW have regular contact with all those involved in the children's lives. This occurs at a minimum of monthly. TYS FCSW request team meetings if they anticipate any issues arising that would potential disrupt the placement of the children placed.

As of 5/1/15, all Office Directors retrained their FCSWs regarding requesting team meetings not only for negative incidents, but for positive ones as well. FCSW will invite CSWs, therapists, and those involved on the case to a team meeting at the time the Needs and Services Plan (NSP) signing. These team meetings will take place on a minimum of a quarterly basis.

We appreciate the feedback as a means to improve the quality of our services.

Sincerely,

Jackie Jakob, MSW
Foster Care & Adoptions Director