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December 28, 2015

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

PLB by Diane Iglesias

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 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 Southern California Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 2014. The FFA has one licensed office located in the First Supervisorial District and in the County of Los Angeles. The office provides services to County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is "to provide foster and adoptive families who offer stable, secure and nurturing environments to children who are dependents of the court until they are reunited with their birth families, are adopted or become independent."

The QAR looked at the status of the focus children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Group Home'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: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In February 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 Safety.

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
Andrew Bridge, Chief Executive Officer, Southern California FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 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 Southern California Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 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, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), and three Certified Foster Parents (CFPs).

At the time of the QAR, the focus children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was 20 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	5	**Good Safety Status** - The focus children are generally and substantially avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and are generally 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** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, FFA/GH 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	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	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections -** Generally effective connections are being maintained for all significant family/Non Related Extended Family Member (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family member/Non-Related Extended Family Member (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 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. 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.
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 highly dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriate, 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 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.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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	5	**Good Teamwork** - The team contains most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's life, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks, and 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 child 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 is providing good permanence for each of the focus children. The FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency and ensures that the treatment team is aware of the focus child's permanent plan. All of the focus children live in family settings where the key people believe the relationship will endure and the permanency goals are supported. The focus children expressed feeling secure in their current homes and do not wish to live elsewhere. The focus children feel that their CFPs are supportive of their goals.

The first focus child's permanency plan is Permanent Planned Living Arrangement with his CFPs until he transitions out of care. He has been in his current Certified Foster Home (CFH) for four years and has established himself in the home and community. He reported that he has permanency in his current home and does not wish to live elsewhere. He feels that his CFPs are supportive of his goals. The focus child plans to attend college after he graduates from high school. The CFPs report that they are willing to provide long term care.

Two focus children have a permanent plan of adoption. One of the focus children has established a sense of belonging in the home and desires to remain in the care of his CFPs. The CFPs are interested and committed to providing permanence for him and he is in agreement. The second focus child is participating in therapy where the focus is on transition, understanding and adjustment to the permanent plan of adoption. The focus child is comfortable in her CFH. Since the time of placement she has not had any incidents or concerns and reported to her DCFS CSW that she loves her new home. The DCFS CSW indicated that the CFP provides a safe home.

To support permanency, the FFA social workers talk to the children about their permanency plans and try to ensure that they are linked to appropriate referrals for therapy in order to help the children cope with changes.

Placement Stability (6 Optimal Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for each of the focus children. The focus children's placements have been stable with no disruptions in placement or school. One strategy that the FFA utilizes to decrease the potential for placement disruption is to engage with the DCFS CSWs and assess each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure a good match with the CFPs occur. The FFA social workers conduct visits to the CFH to meet with the CFPs and assess the well-being of the focus children.

Each of the focus children reported that they share positive and supportive relationships with their CFPs. The focus children reported that they feel safe, comfortable and respected. There have been no major issues or concerns. The second focus child reported that the placement meets all of his needs including making him feel like a normal kid.

The CFP for one of the focus children stated that no information about the child was shared prior to the placement due to the emergent nature of the placement. The CFP reported that the FFA staff was very supportive and visited the home twice a month and that the FFA social worker is very thorough and responsive to the needs of the focus children and CFPs. The CFPs for the second focus child indicated that DCFS provided a comprehensive biography about the child through an adoption presentation, after which, pre-placement visits were scheduled. The CFP reported that the FFA social worker is very supportive and is available to address any needs. It was also reported that the focus child is very aware and involved in every discussion regarding his placement and future. The CFP for the third focus child reported that prior to placement she was able to have pre-placement meetings for two months before the focus child was placed in her home. She was given information about the focus child's history, behaviors and number of previous placements. The DCFS CSW for the third focus child reported working with the CFP and the child to prevent instability in the child's placement.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA social worker, CFPs, and DCFS CSWs work together to assist placed children in maintaining connections with their family. The FFA social workers and CFPs encourage and support the children in maintaining connections with their relatives. In general, the FFA follows the court ordered visitation plan and engages in discussions of the placed children's plan with the DCFS CSWs and CFPs.

Although, the parental rights have been terminated for the parents of the focus children, the first focus child has siblings with whom he has regular visits. The CFPs support their visitation by allowing the siblings to visit in the home. In addition he is encouraged to maintain contact with his biological mother via telephone since visitation is not possible due to her living out of state. The second focus child also has siblings, but he is not interested in visitation with them at this time and reports keeping in contact with them by telephone. The third focus child has sporadic visits and telephone calls with her mother and adult sibling, due to the family's failure to follow through with the visitation plan. The CFP is dedicated to ensuring that she does everything that she can to assist with helping the focus child maintain family ties.

The FFA social workers support the focus children by offering emotional support and talking to the children about reasons why visitation may not occur. The FFA social workers and the CFPs assist with transportation and monitoring for the children's visits. In addition, the FFA staff writes a summary of the visits in the focus children's Needs and Services Plan (NSP), case notes and also emails the information to the DCFS CSWs.

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

Safety (5 Good Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA ensures that placed children feel safe in placement by ensuring that home visits are occurring in the CFH and that the CFPs are properly trained and offered continued education. If additional support is needed by the CFP, the FFA social worker provides additional training. In addition, the FFA seeks to learn as much information about the placed child prior to placement. After the child is placed, the FFA social workers meet with the child privately once a month.

All three focus children reported feeling safe at all times while in their CFHs. The focus children are free from harm in their placements and other daily settings, including at school and in the community. One of the focus children reported that he feels very safe with his CFPs and feels at home since he had been placed there for several years. The second focus child reported feeling safe and comfortable like a "normal" child. The third focus child reported feeling safe and enjoys having her foster mother and her family around.

According to one of the DCFS CSWs, the FFA is very quick to communicate via email and follow up with a phone call to discuss any issues or concerns. The second DCFS CSWs reported mostly interacting with the CFP for updates on the status of the focus child. Neither of the DCFS CSWs reported concerns regarding the safety of the focus children.

Although protective strategies were in place for the three focus children, the FFA submitted a total of six Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database in the last 30 days. Two of the SIRs, two were child safety-related (Injury); one involved a child falling from the bed and the other involved a child's finger being closed in a door. The FFA complied with SIR reporting guidelines. SIRs were properly cross-reported and submitted timely.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section did not receive any referrals or have any open investigations during the last 30 days.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

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

Engagement (5 Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: The FFA has established rapport with the focus children and CFPs. The FFA makes consistent and good efforts to engage the child and key people in decisions that are being made on behalf of the focus children. Furthermore, the FFA ensures that connections are maintained; the FFA social workers conduct bi-monthly visits with the focus children and their CFPs. The FFA social workers also maintain regular telephone and email contact with the DCFS CSWs.

Each of the focus children interviewed reported that their concerns and needs were heard. All three of the focus children reported having a good relationship with their CFPs and feeling that they can count on them. The first focus child reported that his DCFS CSW, CFPs and FFA social worker work well together. The second focus child reported having a good relationship with his CFPs and in the short period of time that he has been placed there, he feels at home and a part of the family. The third focus child reported that she relies on her CFP.

One of the CFPs reported that everyone is open to communication and that the FFA goes above and beyond as it relates to supporting the focus child. Two of the CFPs indicated that communication with the DCFS CSW is usually attempted through telephone and email contact.

The FFA social workers reported engaging the child and CFPs during visits to the home and communicating with the DCFS CSW by telephone, email or inviting the DCFS CSW to joint visits. One of the DCFS CSWs participated in the joint visits at the CFH. Both DCFS CSWs reported communicating mostly with the CFP and child during monthly home visits.

Service Needs (5 Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA has a good array of supports and services that match intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. Children are receiving therapeutic services and participating in extracurricular activities of their choice. The services in place are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. The focus children were reported to be able to participate in extracurricular activities of their choice and each were involved in a wide variety of activities.

Each of the focus children participate in individual therapy on a weekly basis. The first focus child participates in the Color Guard at school, computer academy and is a member a leadership club. He reports that all of his needs are being met and that he feels comfortable talking to his CFPs about his needs. In addition he is connected to a mentor through the Friends of the Children Foundation.

The second focus child has been participating in both individual and group therapy related to adoption. He reported enjoying his services and reported that his CFPs are very responsive to his needs. The second focus child's goals is to lose weight; in order to assist, his CFPs obtained the

services of a personal trainer for him at the gym. In addition, he is participating in a cooking class and driver's education. The child feels that his CFPs are teaching and providing him with the skills he needs to successfully transition into adulthood.

The third focus child participates in group therapy that focuses on adoption. The child participates in dance class, ice skating and swimming lessons. She reported being able to go to her CFP for anything that she needs. The CFP also participates in therapy to help assist in the process of adoption. The CFP reported being included in the process with the FFA social worker to evaluate the child's needs and goals.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessment and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally understood the focus children's functioning and support systems. Information necessary to understand the strengths and needs of the focus children are updated during visits to the home made by the FFA social worker. Both of the DCFS CSWs stated that the CFPs always kept them abreast as to any updates on the focus children. All three focus children reported that their CFPs had a good understanding of what they needed and are responsive to any need that arises.

The CFPs reported that the FFA social workers work with them and the focus children to ensure that they are linked to the appropriate resources. The FFA social workers appear to have ongoing communication with the children and CFPs. All of the CFPs for the focus children appeared to be highly motivated and advocate for the children in their homes. One of the focus children had a goal to lose weight; to encourage the child, his CFPs purchase new clothing when he loses weight and offer incentives and surprise bonuses to his allowance when he makes progress toward weight reduction goals.

The DCFS CSWs indicated that they are informed of how the child is progressing through the quarterly NSPs, emails from the FFA social workers and talking to the CFPs.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA provided good teamwork. The FFA involves most of the important supports and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team, consisting of the DCFS CSW, FFA social workers, CFPs, the child, and their therapist, has formed a good, dependable working system that has ongoing discussions and works collaboratively in case planning.

The team members for each of the focus children appear to be attuned to the focus children's strengths and needs and they ensure that the necessary supports are available to assist the focus children in addressing their underlying needs related to child abuse and neglect. However, the team face to face meetings seem to either consist of the FFA staff, the CFPs and the child or the DCFS CSW, CFPs and child.

The FFA social workers maintain regular contact with the DCFS CSWs by telephone or via email. Additionally, the FFA social workers, focus children and foster parents meet during home visits twice a month to discuss any concerns. The children reported being satisfied with the teamwork and

indicated that they feel included in the team, respected and have the ability to make their own choices. One DCFS CSW reported having one team meeting and the second DCFS CSW reported wanting to participate in a more team approach and has not attended any team meetings.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA has provided intervention strategies, supports, and services that are generally responsive to the changing conditions for each of the focus children. The focus children's needs and progress are regularly evaluated, and services provided are modified accordingly.

The FFA social worker utilizes various tools for monitoring and tracking services being provided to focus children; including meetings with key parties, contact notes and the NSP to monitor each focus child's progress toward their treatment goals. The CFPs reported that they work with the focus child and FFA social worker to modify goals for the focus children when necessary and offer rewards for improvement. The CFPs stated that the FFA social worker assesses the child's goals and progress every visit. The FFA social worker reported making adjustments as needed and makes sure to get the child's input.

All of the focus children are reported as thriving in their CFHs. One of the focus children reported being involved in the process of developing and modifying his goals. The CFPs reported that the child is able to verbalize his strengths and needs and discuss progress and needs during the home visit with the CFPs and FFA social worker. The third focus child has become attached to her foster mother and reduced tantrums while completing homework since being placed in her CFH. Her foster mother reports ongoing communication and tracking of the child's progress through home visits with the FFA social worker and telephone and email conversations with the DCFS CSW.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In April 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the findings from the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review. The technical support focused on maintaining allowance logs; updating the disaster drill logs and clothing logs created by the FFA.

In July 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. 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.

8-19-15

Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency

Quality Assurance Review Fiscal Year 2014-2015

Quality Improvement Plan

Opportunity for Improvement:

Safety:

Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency (SCFFAA) earned a score of 5 (Good) out of 6 (Optimal). Upon review of our agency's SIR's for the month of May 2015, there were 2 incident reports involving an injury. It should be noted that both incidents were properly documented and reported, the involved children (one fell from a bed, the other closed her finger in a door) received timely and appropriate medical attention.

In an effort to reduce incidents of children sustaining injuries during regular daily activity, SCFFAA put the following plan in place:

SCFFAA Foster Care Supervisor developed a Safety Prevention training, along with written materials, covering various safety and supervision topics including: child safety during diaper changing, crib safety, car safety, accident prevention, considerations when supervising a toddler, safety and supervision while outdoors, and steps to take should an accident occur. SCFFAA Foster Care Supervisor reviewed the training material with certified foster parents during an agency event on 8-9-15, sign in sheet is attached. For families who did not attend the event, additional trainings are scheduled for 9-26-15, 11-14-15, and 12-12-15. The Foster Care Supervisor will forward sign in sheets for these additional trainings to the agency's assigned OHCMD Quality Assurance CSA.

Submitted by,

Kimberly Sutton, LMFT

Foster Care Supervisor