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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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December 28, 2015

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
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Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

PLB by DM

THE VILLAGE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW, FISCAL YEAR 2013-14

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 June 2014. The FFA has two sites located in the First Supervisorial and Third Supervisorial District and provides services to County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's program statement, its mission is to provide services 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 5 of 9 focus areas: Placement Stability, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus areas of Safety, Permanency, Visitation, and Teamwork.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In October 2014, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the areas of Safety, Permanency, 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
Hugo Villa, Chief Executive Officer, The Village Foster Family Agency
Lajuanna 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 2013-2014

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of The Village Foster Family Home (the FFA) in June 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 and one FFA administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the focus children's average number of placements was nine, their overall average length of placement was 24 months and their average age was 15. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the 2013-2014 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, CFPs, 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	5	**Good Safety Status** - The focus children are generally and substantially avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community and is 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 DCFS CSW, supports the plan.	5	4	**Minimal to Fair Status** - The focus children have minimally acceptable to fair permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members expect will endure until the children reache maturity.
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. 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 (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies.

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 CSWs, 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 & 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.

Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff 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)

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for all of the focus children. The FFA works with their CFPs to assist them in establishing positive relationships with the focus children. The FFA provides background information on the children prior to placement. A CFP for one of the focus children stated that the FFA provides her with adequate information prior to a child being placed in her home. The CFP is made aware of past trauma and triggers for the child that will be placed in her care. By having this knowledge, she is better equipped to appropriately handle issues as they arise, which reduces the likelihood of placement disruption.

Collectively, the three focus children have had an average of nine placements prior to being placed in their current Certified Foster Homes (CFHs). Each of the focus children report being satisfied in their current placements. One of the focus children stated that she feels like she is a part of the family; she is very close to her foster mother, who is like a mother to her. All of the focus children indicated that their current CFH was meeting their needs and they felt supported by their CFPs, one of the focus children reported that her CFPs were advocates for her.

The placements for the focus children have been stable and there have been no recent placement disruptions for any of the focus children over the last 30 days.

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

Safety (5 Good Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA provided a substantially safe living environment for the three focus children. The focus children reported that their CFHs are a safe place to live and that there were no safety concerns. The DCFS CSWs indicated that there were no safety issues regarding the FFAs CFHs. The FFA generally provides a safe living environment with competent, caring caregivers.

One of the CFPs stated that they receive training from the FFA that covers different topics to assist them in recognizing problems that may pose a safety risk to placed children. The CFP also stated that if children who are placed with them present risky behaviors, the information is shared with the FFA social worker and they work together on a safety plan to ensure child safety.

Although the FFA staff and the DCFS CSWs all worked together to ensure child safety, the FFA fell below the minimum score in the area of Safety due to the FFA reporting eleven Special Incident Reports (SIRs), which were child safety related (assaultive behavior, self-injury, physical abuse, injury and runaway). None of the SIRs involved any of the focus children. Additionally, at the time of the QAR, the FFA had three open Child Abuse/Neglect referrals, which were under investigation with Out-of-Home-Care Investigation Section (OHCIS). Subsequent to the QAR, the referral for physical abuse and At-Risk Sibling Abuse was closed as Unfounded; the second referral for General Neglect and Physical Abuse was closed as Unfounded; the second referral for Physical Abuse was closed as Unfounded and the third referral alleging Physical Abuse was Evaluated Out.

Permanency (4 Minimal to Fair Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA rated minimally acceptable to fair for permanency for the three focus children. The FFA staff did not work with the DCFS CSWs, focus children and their family members to ensure that legal steps to permanence were achieved. There seems to have been a disconnect between the FFA staff and the DCFS CSWs when it comes to developing appropriate permanency goals. Two of the focus children with a plan of family reunification have not been provided with adequate emotional support to strengthen and maintain family connections; a concurrent plan was not developed and permanency options for the focus children have not been shared amongst all key parties. Further, one of the focus children did not want to visit with her mother and the second focus child wanted to remain in her CFH and did not want to reunify with her mother. The FFA did not assist either of the focus children in working through their ambivalence. Additionally, the FFA did not appear to place an emphasis on developing lifelong relationships that will endure for the third focus child who had a plan of Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

Visitation (4 Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has maintained fair support of most important family connections for the three focus children. The FFA engages the DCFS CSWs and CFPs in discussing court-ordered visitation. The FFA makes visitation arrangements with the parties listed in the case plan and court order and provides transportation when needed.

One CFP encourages the focus child who has a plan of reunification to speak with her mother. The child's visits with her mother are sporadic and the focus child has expressed a lack of interest in visiting her mother; however, she does visit with another family member. Despite the plan of reunification, the FFA did not develop a plan to address the focus child's needs or assist her with processing feelings surrounding the sporadic visitation.

One focus child has weekly visits with siblings who are placed with a relative and another relative monitors the visits. Another focus child does not have visits with parents and there are no extended family members in the area. The focus child does have regular visits with an adult sibling and a former foster family.

Although the three focus children have visits with extended family members, the FFA fell below the minimum score due to the need of the FFA to work toward improving its efforts to support visitation and building better communication between the focus child and their extended family.

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 developed a strong rapport and appears to be making good efforts in engaging key parties and bringing the team together, as necessary, to meet the needs of the focus children. One focus child and the CFPs reported that their concerns were heard and they felt respected. The focus child reported that they could confide in various team members if needed to discuss any issues or concerns that may arise. Two of the CFPs stated that they were given pertinent information about the focus child's history and trauma prior to placement, which helped them to prepare for the focus child.

All of the CFPs expressed ongoing support and a good working relationship with the FFA social workers. The DCFS CSWs for the focus children stated that they have ongoing communication with the FFA social workers and communicate with the FFA a few times per month.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA has a good array of supports, extracurricular activities and services to help the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. Although the FFA works toward ensuring the focus child's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported, the intervention strategies identified in the service needs and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) do not match the case plan goals.

The three focus children indicated that they are provided with an adequate array of services to meet their needs. Each of the focus children participated in Independent Living Program services. One focus child was in the process of raising her grades and was referred to tutoring by the FFA. Another focus child recently graduated from high school and has enrolled in a local junior college where the plan is for her to continue playing sports as she did while in high school. The third focus child is succeeding academically and attended summer school; she also participates in individual therapy. Her CFP stated that the FFA is supportive of the focus child and has provided various resources to meet her needs.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems. Both formal and informal techniques are used to determine the strengths and underlying needs of the focus children and certified foster parents. The FFA social worker and the CFPs consistently speak with and observe the focus children to assist with determining their strengths, needs and progress being made.

The necessary conditions for improved functioning and increased overall well-being are generally understood and used to drive changes. The FFA staff reported that on a weekly basis, they get feedback from the CFP about the focus child and any concerns. Observation of the child, reviewing assessments and background history assist the FFA staff in determining whether the child is progressing toward their goals.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. The FFA regularly monitors the status of the focus children through observation, reviewing the NSPs and progress notes; this provides the FFA with a general understanding of what's working and what's not working. When strategies in place are not working to help the focus children meet their goals, the FFA is able to make the needed adjustments. When adjustments are made in an effort to assist the focus children in meeting planned outcomes, this information is promptly shared by the FFA staff with the focus child's DCFS CSW.

The FFA communicates with the DCFS CSWs regularly regarding any changes in the status of the focus children. The focus children appeared well adjusted to their living environment. However, for two of the focus children, the FFA did not develop a plan to accomplish the focus children's goals and meet their needs. For the third focus child, the NSP did not reflect or address how the focus child's needs would be met.

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

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: When asked about their teams, each of the focus children was aware of their team members. The team members identified included CFPs, FFA social worker and their DCFS CSWs. One of the focus children meets with her team and reports that the team works together in order to accomplish her goals.

The FFA's teams contained some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives, such as the child's DCFS CSW, FFA social worker, CFPs and therapist. The teams also formed minimally adequate to fair working systems that have somewhat collaborative problem solving skills.

Although the FFA did engage in some aspects of teaming on behalf of the focus children, the teams did not seem to have input from the focus children's families to define and organize effective services that would benefit the focus children and their family. The families for the focus children were not included as a part of the team and there did not appear to be any effort by the FFA to include the focus children's families.

The FFA needs to develop a plan that consistently includes key members in the decision making team, as two of the focus children's family and extended family members, who were consistently involved in the focus children's life, were not included in the decision making team.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In August 2014, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the findings from the 2013-2014 contract compliance review. Technical support provided was related to Community Care Licensing findings; obtaining timely CSW authorization on the NSPs; children being involved in clothing selection; maintaining allowance logs and creating Life books.

In October 2014, the OHCMD reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and provided the FFA with technical support addressing methods on improving areas of Safety, Permanency, Visitation and Teamwork. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

In March 2015, an informal meeting was held with the FFA to discuss the re-certification process and to provide technical assistance, as the FFA was re-certifying their CFPs, prior to obtaining historical Child Abuse/Neglect background search results from OHCMD.

the village
family services

January 21, 2015 *****Revised*****

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

Re: Quality Assurance Review

Dear Alyana,

This letter is in response to the foster family agency Quality Assurance Review that was completed on June 30 2014 by OHCMD.

Findings:

Focus Area: Safety
Out-of-Home-Care Investigation Section received three Child Abuse referrals from May 30, 2014 to June 30, 2014. In the same time period, the FFA filed 28 Special Incident Reports, of which 11 were related to safety issues.

- Two allegations were closed as unfounded while the third allegation was referred out since time of QAR.
- The Village Family Services is in the process of revising its certification process in conjunction with other foster care agencies in LA County. Our intention at TVFS is to improve the process to ensure we are certifying only those prospective foster parents who are best equipped to provide quality care to the children we serve. During annual re-certification, The Village Family Services' foster care supervisors are currently assessing each home for safety concerns, possible patterns that could put children at risk for abuse, and determining capacity and/or other changes that may need to take place to ensure our homes are equipped.
- Effective February 1, 2015, The Village Family Services will conduct monthly safety assessments with each child placed in our care. This will include a private meeting with the youth with questions specific to safety in the home. FCSW will address potential issues of concern and provide ongoing training to foster parents in attempts to reduce special incidents that may occur in the home and will document in the child's file.

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Focus Area: Permanency

It was noted that under permanency there is a disconnect/discrepancy between the FFA and DCFS CSW when it comes to appropriately developing a permanency goal and a concurrent case plan.

- The Village Family Services will continue to document the permanency plan for all youth placed in the child's Needs Service Plan. This plan will be reviewed with foster parent, youth, and CSW and documented in the minor's chart to ensure all parties are knowledgeable of the permanency plan and working towards this goal.
- Other alternative plans will be explored, such as; AB 12 or independent living when age appropriate. TFVS will seek trainings for certified foster parents and transitional age youth on this topic to ensure everyone's competency.
- TVFS is prepared to support all youth with their case plan goals as we have a drop-in center equipped to work with transitional age youth and adoptions department to identify adoptive families.

Focus Area:Visitation

It was stated that FFA needs to improve its efforts to support visitation and alternative forms of communication with the children's biological parents.

- If the youth in placement is not in agreement with the visitation plan set forth by the court, FCSW will work in collaboration with the CSW and therapist to provide the youth with services and/or options to work toward the goal set forth by court. These efforts will be documented in the child's NSP and/or progress notes effective February 1, 2015. Furthermore, the minor will be encouraged to discuss their preferences with visitation schedules with their attorney to support their voice and choice.

Focus Area: Teamwork

It was stated that the FFA does not appear to have the placed youth's family input to define and organize effective services for this youth and family.

- The Village Family Services promotes positive relationships and communication between foster families and biological families. As an agency and within our contractual guidelines, we strive to involve the biological parent during case planning when possible. To improve this communication, we are committed to inviting all parties to address needs and services for the youth placed in our care. Effective February 1, 2015, FCSW will make documented efforts to collaborate with the CSW in arranging meetings to include biological families at their discretion. Attempts will be made to host the CFT in a neutral setting so all parties may attend.
  These efforts will be documented in the youth's NSP and/or progress notes.
- When there is no family involvement, FCSW will invite other natural supports or service providers that are involved in the well-being of the youth.

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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