County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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

January 5, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

VISTA DEL MAR 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 Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in May 2015. The FFA has one licensed office located in the Second Supervisorial District. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to provide foster care and permanency/adoption services for children ages birth to 17, or 18 if not emancipated, in need of out-of-home care due to physical and/or sexual abuse, neglected, abandonment, or endangerment as determined by the Department of Children and Family Services. This includes circumstances such as children prenatally exposed to drugs, fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects, and trauma associated with physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, or endangerment. Every effort is made to keep sibling groups together and to place children within their communities."

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 all focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan, as the FFA scored at or above the minimal acceptable score in their QAR. In July 2015, OHCMD quality assurance reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR.

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
Louis Josephson, CEO Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

VISTA DEL MAR 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 Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in May 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 one Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Worker (CSW), one FFA staff member, and one Certified Foster Parent (CFP) as the focus children are siblings placed in the same home. Interviews were not conducted with the focus children; the children in the Certified Foster Home (CFH) are too young. One focus child is pre-verbal, and the second focus child, although verbal, was too young to comprehend the questions asked. This QAR is based on the observation of the focus children's functioning, as well as their interactions with the CFPs, and a review of DCFS records and FFA files.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was six, their overall average length of placement was two months and their average age was four. The focus children were randomly selected. The focus children were included as part of the sample for the 2014-2015

Contract Compliance Review, as at the time of the QAR there were only two County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children.

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. 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	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Member (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	6	**Optimal Engagement Efforts** - To an optimal 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 & 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, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory. The array provides an appropriate range of options in the selection of providers.
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. Necessary conditions for improved functioning and increased overall well-being are generally understood and used to select promising change strategies.

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; face-to-face family team meetings are held periodically and at critical points to develop plans. The team has good and necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to organize effective services with children of this complexity and cultural background.
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 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)

Safety (6 Optimal Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA's safety status was optimal, as the FFA provided a safe living situation for the focus children during the past 30 days. The FFA complied with all their procedures and protocols for safety. Based on observation of the focus children, they appear to be well cared for and attached to their caregivers. The CFH was observed to be very clean and neat. The CFPs reported that they follow all the safety guidelines set by the FFA. The focus children are never left unsupervised, and there is an adult who is always with them. Safety gates were observed at the top and bottom of the stair case, and all medication and alcohol was secured in a locked cabinet.

Based on the QAR, the protective strategies used by the FFA were optimal, as there were no safety concerns reported regarding the FFA, the CFH, or the care the focus children receive. The CFPs are very involved and work collaboratively with the FFA to provide an optimally safe living environment for the focus children.

The FFA did not submit any Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database during the past 30 days, as there were no special incidents to report. Further, the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section did not have any open referrals during the past 30 days.

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA is providing good stability for the focus children in its care. The FFA staff, administration and the CFPs fully support the permanency plans of the focus children. Family reunification services for the focus children have been terminated. The focus children are receiving adoption services; the CFH is a foster adoptive home. The CFPs are interested in adopting both focus children, as the focus children are siblings.

The CFPs follow all the recommendations made by the DCFS CSW and DCFS Adoptions CSW. The CFPs and the FFA fully support the focus children's permanent plan of adoption and are waiting for the necessary steps to finalize the adoption.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The focus children have substantial placement stability in their current placement with the FFA. The FFA takes responsibility in ensuring the focus children receive the appropriate support services needed for them to become stable in all areas. The FFA ensures that the CFPs receive support and training to provide for the focus children's needs and assists them in establishing positive relationships with the focus children, to further ensure permanency and stability. The focus children appeared to be very comfortable in their care.

Prior to the focus children being placed in the CFH, there was a pre-placement meeting, as the CFH is a foster-adoptive home. The CFPs had day and weekend visits prior to the focus children being placed in their home. The FFA provided all the necessary information in regards to the focus children, their strengths, behaviors, and health information prior to placement. The CFPs fully support the children's cultural development by remaining involved in their community and attending African-American cultural events. The CFPs are supportive of the placement and work with the DCFS CSW to ensure that this placement is not jeopardized and that the focus children remain stable in their placement.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation and Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has established and maintained excellent family connections for the focus children. Although family reunification Services were terminated, the FFA and the CFPs have agreed to provide visits, once a week, for the focus children with their biological mother. The CFPs transport the focus children to the visits, as well as monitor the visits. The FFA ensures that the arranged visits are convenient for the focus children's mother so that visitation occurs regularly. The FFA follows the recommendations and visitation guidelines set by the court and the DCFS CSWs. Although biological mother is inconsistent with visitation, the CFPs continue to drive to a location near the mother's home. The mother has not visited with the focus children in the last month.

PRACTICE INDICATORS

(Measured over last 90 days)

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

Engagment (6 Optimal Engagement Efforts)

Engagement Overview: Excellent efforts, such as constant communication, collaboration, and meetings are being used by the FFA to engage the DCFS CSW, DCFS Adoptions CSW, and the CFPs for the best interest of the focus children. The CFPs have a strong, positive working relationship and rapport with the FFA social worker, DCFS CSW, and the DCFS Adoptions CSW. The team maintains regular contact via telephone, e-mails and text messages on a weekly basis, or more often, based on the focus children's needs.

The FFA social worker, CFPs and the DCFS CSW collaborate and communicate with one another on a weekly basis to ensure that the resources and services for the focus children are in place, as the focus children are in the process of being assessed for various services. The team is supportive of the CFPs; makes excellent efforts to ensure that their needs, as well as the needs of the focus children are met.

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 the Needs and Services Plan (NSP). The FFA and the CFPs ensure the focus children are receiving weekly individual counseling. The DCFS CSW has submitted a referral to the regional center to have the focus children assessed for possible developmental delays. The CFPs will ensure the focus children are taken to the regional center for an assessment once the appointment is set. The FFA is also working with the school district to have the focus children assessed for special education services. The CFPs are working with the school district to finalize an Individualized Education Plan for one of the focus children, as he has speech delays and has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). The focus child also sees a psychiatrist monthly for psychiatric evaluation and medication monitoring.

The DCFS CSW meets with the FFA social worker, CFPs and the DCFS Adoptions CSW for the development and implementation of the treatment goals for the focus children every three months. The team collaborates effectively to determine the appropriate and best services for the focus children. The CFPs are proactive in ensuring they follow all recommendations made by DCFS and the court.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA has a good understanding of the focus children's functioning and support systems. Formal and informal techniques are used to determine the strengths and the underlying needs of the focus children and the CFPs.

The team, which consist of the FFA social worker, DCFS CSW, DCFS Adoptions CSW, and CFPs, all work together to assess the focus children's needs and ensure that the appropriate services are put in place.

Regular contact to discuss the focus children's progress with the DCFS CSW is maintained by the CFPs and the FFA social worker. Telephone conferences are also utilized to ensure that the focus children are receiving the appropriate services, and the NSP goals are modified as needed. The services and supports are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward the case plan goals and NSP goals. Educational supports are provided, and the focus children are participating in extracurricular activities. One of the focus children is in an after school program, where he receives tutoring and assistance with his homework. He also participates in flag football. The other focus child has not been enrolled in any extracurricular activities; the CFPs will enroll her in age-appropriate extracurricular activities once she is verbal.

The CFPs are ensuring that the children are taken to the required appointments, such as to the regional center and school district, as the focus children are in the assessment phase in determining whether the focus children qualify for services. The CFPs keep the FFA social worker and DCFS CSW informed of the status of the assessments, as the FFA social worker and DCFS CSW assist the CFPs to ensure that all resources are in place for the focus children.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The focus children are receiving adoption services. The team, which includes the CFPs, FFA social worker, DCFS CSW and DCFS Adoptions CSW, communicate and collaborate at a minimum of once a week to ensure the focus children's needs are being met and that they are doing well in the CFH. Frequency of the meetings is dependent upon the needs of the focus child or any concerns which may arise. The focus children have only been at the CFH for approximately two months, therefore quarterly meetings have not yet occurred. However, the CFPs keep the team informed of the focus children's progress to prepare for the meetings.

The FFA social worker meets bi-weekly with the CFPs at the CFH to observe the focus children and discuss the progress the focus children are making. The FFA social worker and the CFPs also maintain weekly contact with the DCFS CSW to ensure that the court orders and DCFS recommendations are followed. The CFPs also attend every court hearing for the focus children to ensure that they do not miss any important informative decisions made in regards to the focus children. The CFPs are invested and would provide a permanent home for the focus children.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking and Adjustment Overview: The FFA tracks each focus child's progress through regular visits, reports, and through the case plan. The FFA is highly responsive and appropriate to changing conditions for each of the focus children. Intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and the CFPs are generally responsive to changing conditions. There is continuous monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status, and service results are occurring. The FFA determines if the focus children are making progress towards their NSP and case plan goals by observing if there is a reduction in incidents, occurrences and acting-out behaviors exhibited by the focus children. Progress is also determined by observation and reports from the

CFPs. The team communicates to ensure that the resources in place are helping the children achieve their treatment goals, as they have recently been placed with the FFA.

The FFA and CFPs are aware of the ongoing and changing needs of the focus children and make modifications as needed. The CFPs ensure that the focus children receive the necessary assessments to ensure that the appropriate services are in place and they communicate the results with the DCFS CSW, DCFS Adoptions CSW and the FFA. Information obtained is properly documented.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In April 2015, the FFA received their 2014-2015 contract compliance review. The FFA did not have any findings related to their review.

In July 2015, quality assurance reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in each of the focus areas; therefore, a Quality Improvement Plan was not requested of the FFA. However, OHCMD quality assurance staff has and will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation, as needed to the FFA.