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February 23, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Philip L. Browning
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KOINONIA FOSTER HOMES, INC. 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 Koinonia Foster Homes, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2015. The FFA has six licensed offices; one in the Second Supervisorial District, one in the Fifth Supervisorial District, one in Orange County, one in San Bernardino County, one in Riverside County and one in Ventura County; and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS children, as well as children from other counties. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to provide the highest quality treatment foster care program available for children, youth and their families whose special needs can be met through services delivered, supervised and supported by professional Agency staff."

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 did not require a Quality Improvement Plan, as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment.

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.

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

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KOINONIA FOSTER HOMES, INC. 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 Koinonia Foster Homes, Inc. Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2015. The purpose of the QAR is to assess The FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30 day period and for Practice Indicators, the reviewer focuses on the FFA's service delivery during the most recent 90 day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was six months and their average age was 11. 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. The focus children may have had related history, diagnoses, or behavior presentations in the past but have not presented risk behaviors at any time over the 30 days. The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children well at all times.
Permanency - The degree to which the child is living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus 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	6	**Optimal Status** - The focus children have optimal permanence. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting about which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers, DCFS CSW and all team members have evidence 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	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs 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's strengths and needs.	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts** - To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSW, certified foster parent and the focus children feel heard and respected.
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff involved with the child, work toward ensuring the child's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the child's unique needs.	5	5	**Good Supports & Services Needs** - A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's 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 are 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 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.

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.
Tracking & Adjustment - The degree to which the FFA staff who is involved with the child and family is carefully tracking the progress that the child is making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5	**Good Tracking and Adjustment Process** - Intervention strategies, supports, and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking, and communication of the focus children's status and service results to the team are occurring. Generally successful adaptations are based on a basic knowledge of what things are working and not working for the focus children.

STATUS INDICATORS

(Measured over last 30 days)

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

Safety (6 Optimal Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA provided optimal safety status for the focus children. The FFA staff stated that they try to ensure that children feel safe in their placements. Prior to certification, foster parents receive training, including parenting techniques and building trust in a safe environment. The FFA social workers reported conducting safety assessments as part of their weekly home visits to the certified foster homes during the first three months of placement, then once the placement is stable, every other week thereafter.

The three focus children have been free from harm in their placement and other daily settings, including at school and in the community. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times while in their current foster homes, and have not shown any suicidal behaviors or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors.

One of the certified foster parents reported that they are able to call their FFA social workers at any time for assistance or to conduct an immediate home visit if necessary. The certified foster parents reported being trained on interventions to utilize when a child is presenting safety threats to themselves or others. The DCFS CSWs reported there were no child safety concerns. One DCFS CSW reported that she did not find any safety hazards while conducting her monthly visits to the certified foster homes.

The FFA complied with the procedures and protocols by reporting Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database in a timely manner. The FFA submitted 34 SIRs in the last 30 days. None of the SIRs involved the focus children or posed an immediate child safety risk. The SIRs included, nine Illnesses, seven Medical Related, seven Injuries (minor injuries not requiring medical treatment), six Others as information to DCFS CSWs; two Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors (disclosure of incidents prior to current placement), one Inappropriate Sexual Behavior at school (child touched her private area) and two Assaultive Behavior (peer to peer) at school not requiring medical attention.

Based on the QAR, the protective strategies used by the FFA were optimal in reducing risks of harm to placed children. There were no substantiated referrals or open investigations to the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section for the FFA during the last 30 days.

Permanency (6 Optimal Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provided optimal permanence for the focus children. The FFA works with the DCFS CSW to provide supports and services that correspond to the permanency plan for each of the focus children. The focus children, certified foster parents, FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs were all aware of the focus children's permanent and concurrent plans. The FFA reported that all FFA certified foster homes are dually prepared for adoption. Further, the FFA has a matching coordinator to match prospective adoptive families with the DCFS children who are in need of an adoptive family.

The permanency plan for the first and second focus child is family reunification with the goal of being reunified with their mothers. Their concurrent permanency plan is adoption by their current certified foster parents, should reunification not occur. The FFA social workers and certified foster parents are supportive of the focus children's permanency plan.

The first focus child indicated that she wants to remain with her certified foster parents. According to her certified foster mother, the focus child is an introvert and usually does not share what she wants with her FFA social worker or DCFS CSW. The certified foster mother reported that the focus child's mother is on track to reunify with the focus child; however, she would be willing to give the focus child a permanent home through adoption if reunification is unsuccessful. The DCFS CSW reported that the plan of family reunification is viable as the mother is complying with court orders. The DCFS CSW reported that she appreciated that the certified foster parents are willing to consider adopting the focus child if family reunification does not occur.

The second focus child indicated that he wants to remain in his current placement until he reunifies with his mother. The DCFS CSW reported that the FFA social worker has ensured the focus child and his mother have regular family visits despite the focus child's mother not always communicating clearly and her demeanor toward the FFA social worker and certified foster mother.

The third focus child's permanency plan was family reunification. The FFA social worker and certified foster parents were supportive of family reunification by accommodating family visits. The FFA also ensured the focus child was able to continue attending her school of origin. However, during the QAR, family reunification services for the focus child's father were terminated and adoption became her permanent plan. Her DCFS CSW reported that her father has requested that relatives be explored for placement and permanency. The DCFS CSW is exploring relatives and will explore the appropriateness of certified foster parents adopting the focus child, as they have expressed an interest. The focus child indicated that her certified foster parents are her "permanent parents".

Placement Stability (6 Optimal Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for the three focus children. During the certification process, the FFA prepares the certified foster parents with the skills to provide short-term foster care, but also prepares them to be able to provide a permanent home through adoption. At Intake, the FFA staff reported that the information provided by the DCFS CSW is utilized to determine the most appropriate certified foster parents and make the best match for children requiring placement.

The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The focus children reported that they feel safe, comfortable and respected. The focus children reported that their certified foster parents and the FFA are meeting all of their needs, and they have formed a remarkable relationship with their caregivers.

The FFA social workers reported that the FFA utilizes certified foster family meetings, DCFS Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings and/or resources to prevent placement disruptions. The certified foster parents reported that the FFA social workers provide feedback and interventions to help resolve issues and stabilize placements for the focus children. Two of the certified foster parents reported that the training they receive at certification and ongoing trainings have assisted them with understanding the trauma the focus children go through, their needs, and alternative methods of parenting. Another certified foster parent reported that through the FFA's Foster Parent Support Group, parent partners provide certified foster parents with support to continue providing care of placed children.

According to the first focus child's FFA social worker, the child exhibits social and developmental delays and does not talk much with adults, other than her certified foster parents. Further, her DCFS CSW reported that the focus child is attached to her certified foster mother and generally communicates her needs and wants to her, which was evident during the QAR interview. The focus child reported that she likes living with her certified foster parents because they solve her problems, help her with homework and make her favorite meals.

According to DCFS CSW and certified foster parent, the second focus child requested to be placed in his current certified foster home in order to be placed with his two younger brothers. The focus child reported that he likes his current placement the most and that his certified foster parents trust him, care about him and take care of him. The DCFS CSW reported that the focus child has been adjusting well to placement.

Per the FFA, the third focus child was matched with her current certified foster parents, as they were willing to maintain her in her school of origin and support visits with her father, a previous relative

caregiver and her aunt. The focus child refers to her certified foster parents as her "parents" and stated that she will be living with her "parents" from now on. The focus child also reported that she is happy in her current placement because her certified foster parents treat her well, they have a backyard with toys and she likes to play with her foster siblings. The DCFS CSW reported that the certified foster parents are meeting more than just the focus child's basic needs. The DCFS CSW also reported that the focus child has integrated well into the certified foster family.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has established optimal effective visitation and maintenance of family connections for the three focus children. The FFA engages the DCFS CSWs, certified foster parents and biological family in conversations regarding the visitation plan. The FFA social workers make visitation arrangements and assist the certified foster parents with transporting the children to and from visitation locations. Visitation monitoring responsibilities are shared between the FFA social workers and the certified foster parents. The FFA documents observations noted during monitored visits and any concerns noted regarding unmonitored visits on a visitation log, which is shared with the DCFS CSWs. The FFA social workers also inform the DCFS CSWs of any immediate concerns, as well as the progress of the family visits.

According to the first focus child's DCFS CSW, the focus child has weekly monitored visits with her mother. Her certified foster mother provides the focus child with transportation to the FFA. The FFA social worker monitors the visits. The certified foster mother reported that when visits with mother do not occur, she gives the focus child one-on-one attention and makes efforts to make her feel better.

According to second focus child's DCFS CSW, the focus child has weekly-unmonitored visits with his mother and weekly monitored visits with his mother and stepfather. The DCFS CSW reported that the FFA social worker has been helpful and supportive of the family visits. The certified foster mother reported that she provides the focus child with transportation to the FFA and the FFA social worker monitors the visits. The focus child reported that he feels happy during his family visits.

According to the third focus child's DCFS CSW, the focus child has monitored weekly visits with her father, monitored visits twice per month with her maternal aunt and weekly-unmonitored visits with her previous relative caregiver. The DCFS CSW also reported that the FFA social worker and certified foster parents have been flexible with the father's schedule and have rescheduled visits to accommodate her father's schedule so that visits with the focus child are not missed. According to the focus child's certified foster parents and the FFA social worker, they alternate in providing the focus child with transportation to the FFA where her family visits take place. The focus child reported that she feels really good about her family visits.

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 makes reasonable efforts in engaging key parties and bringing the team together, as necessary, to meet the needs of the focus children. The FFA social workers contact DCFS CSWs at least once a month, and maintain weekly contact with certified foster parents and the focus children. The FFA social workers provide their cell phone numbers to the certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and the focus children, making themselves accessible at all times. The focus children reported that they could confide in various team members, but mainly relied on their certified foster parents and FFA social workers. The certified foster parents expressed ongoing support and a good working relationship with the FFA social workers and the DCFS CSWs.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they receive frequent telephonic and/or electronic updates from the FFA social workers. The DCFS CSWs also indicated that the FFA social workers and certified foster parents engage family members, updating them on the focus children's progress and encouraging family members to visit regularly. In addition, the DCFS CSWs reported that they receive the focus children's Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), SIRs and immediate feedback on the focus children's progress and status from the FFA social workers.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA had a good array of supports, extracurricular activities and services to help the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes. The focus children reported that they are provided with the services and support to meet their needs. The certified foster parents reported that the FFA social workers find resources in their community for placed children and comply with the DCFS CSW's requests. When services do not require a DCFS CSW's referral, the FFA social workers complete the referral process for placed children to expedite services.

The first focus child is participating in in-home weekly individual therapy. She also receives special education services at school via Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which includes a small classroom setting and one-on-one instruction. The focus child reported that the individual therapy helps her express her feelings and improve her behavior. Her DCFS CSW submitted a referral for a Regional Center evaluation, which is currently pending.

The second focus child is participating in in-home weekly individual therapy and in-home tutoring services. The FFA social worker and the DCFS CSW worked collaboratively to establish tutoring services. The FFA social worker indicated that she discusses the focus child's progress with his therapist and tutor twice a month. The focus child reported that he talks to his therapist about things that are hard for him. He also reported that he asked his FFA social worker and certified foster mother for tutoring because he was struggling with math. The focus child indicated that his tutor is helping him to raise his math grade. The FFA social worker indicated that the focus child has a request for an IEP, which is currently pending.

The third focus child is participating in extracurricular activities in her community. She indicated that she was interested in participating in gymnastics and was enrolled immediately. The focus child is also participating in a local soccer league. The certified foster parents provide the focus child with transportation for all extracurricular activities.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments & Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: In general, the FFA understands the focus children's functioning, strengths, needs, preferences and support systems. The FFA social workers utilize a questionnaire to determine the focus child's needs. The information obtained is used to develop the focus children's NSP goals and strategies.

An example is when the first focus child's DCFS CSW and FFA social worker observed possible developmental and communication delays. The DCFS CSW submitted a referral for a Regional Center evaluation and requested that the focus child participate in individual therapy. The FFA social worker connected the focus child to therapeutic services to address communication skills and family trauma. For the second focus child, the team recommended an IEP assessment. The FFA social worker was proactive in explaining the IEP assessment paperwork to the focus child's mother and the FFA social worker will coordinate the IEP meeting based on her availability. For the third focus child, the FFA social worker assisted the certified foster parents in locating extracurricular activities requested by the focus child within their community.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA provides good teamwork. The team involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus child's life. The FFA social workers collaborate with the focus child, family members, certified foster parents and the DCFS CSW; and work together in the best interest of each focus child. The FFA social workers reported having weekly home visits with the focus children and having ongoing communication with the certified foster parents. The FFA also holds monthly treatment team meetings with the FFA social worker, certified foster parents and focus child at the foster home. To keep family members engaged, the FFA social workers provide the NSP goal to the focus children's family members so that they can be aware of the goals and assist the focus children in achieving their goals. The focus children reported that they considered their FFA social workers and certified foster parents part of their teams. The second focus child also indicated that his DCFS CSW was part of his team.

It is also common practice for the FFA social worker to request team meetings and have informal meetings with the DCFS CSW, family members and the focus child before or after monitored visits.

The first focus child reported that she has attended team meetings in which her family members have attended. The DCFS CSW reported that there have not been any concerns to address with the biological family.

The second focus child's FFA social worker reported requesting a TDM to address visitation concerns with the biological parents. The DCFS CSW scheduled and facilitated the meeting. The TDM action plan addressed the visitation concerns. Since the TDM, there have not been any additional visitation concerns. The FFA social worker also reported initiating a meeting with the focus child's biological mother to review the NSP and sign giving her approval.

The third focus child had a team meeting with her biological father, the DCFS CSW, and the FFA social worker to address and incorporate sibling visits at the FFA office. The DCFS CSW reported that the FFA social worker and certified foster parents have been working well with the focus child's father and other family members in the coordination of visits.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking and 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 monitors the status of the focus children and has a general understanding of what is working and not working. Ongoing adjustments to interventions, goals and services are tracked and modified by the FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs. The FFA social workers track all adjustments and progress through their weekly home visit notes, SIRs, monthly treatment team meetings, and NSPs.

The FFA social workers communicate with the DCFS CSWs regularly regarding any changes in the status of the focus children; in particular, the progress of the family visits and services being provided to the focus children. The DCFS CSWs reported that they are updated with any changes related to the focus children. Overall, the progress of the focus children, family visitation, case planning and participation of services is noted in the focus children's NSPs, contact notes, DCFS case plans and DCFS court reports.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In February 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to findings indicated in the 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review, including timely submission of SIRs, reducing Community Care Licensing citations, complying with Certified Foster Home requirements, and meeting the children's needs.

In May 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA met the minimum acceptable level in all focus areas, therefore no Quality Improvement Plan is required. As needed, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide the FFA with ongoing technical support, training, and consultation.