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February 23, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

ASPIRANET 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 Aspiranet Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 2015. The FFA has one licensed office located in the Fourth Supervisorial District. The office provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is, "to meet the need for quality human services for children, families and community and to provide those communities quality foster care services for referred children and their families."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency, and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Foster Family Agency'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 addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In August 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer discussed results of the QAR and provided 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
Vernon Brown, Executive Director, Aspiranet FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

ASPIRANET 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 Aspiranet 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 (CFPs).

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was 12 months, and their average age was 12. 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 DCFS CSW, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - Focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, FFA staff, caregivers, caseworker, and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA ensures that the child's daily living, learning, and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions and known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption.	5	5	**Good Stability** - The focus children have substantial stability in placement and school settings with only planned changes and no more than one disruption in either setting over the last 12 months with none in the past six months. The focus children have established positive relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters, and peers in those settings. Any known risks are now well controlled.

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 Acceptance Maintenance of Visitation & Connections** - Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) 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'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. 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 usually dependable combination of informal and formal supports and services is available, appropriate, used, and seen as generally satisfactory.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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 are 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.
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 lives, 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)

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA provided substantial permanence and efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency. The FFA and the DCFS CSWs maintain consistent contact to discuss the permanent plan for the focus children. The FFA social workers indicated that during their visits to the Certified Foster Homes (CFHs), they share the most current court orders and information that they have received from the DCFS CSWs with the focus children and their CFPs. The FFA ensures that meetings include the FFA social workers, DCFS CSWs, the focus children and CFP, are regularly held to discuss the permanent plan for each placed child. The FFA also provides Emancipation and Adoption Promotional Support Services to assist placed children in achieving their permanency plan.

The focus children reported that they are fully aware of their permanent plans. The first focus child is receiving adoption services and wants to be adopted by her CFP. The focus child's DCFS CSW reported that she always discusses alternative permanency options, such as adoption and legal guardianship, with the CFPs. The CFP indicated that she is working very hard with the focus child because she wants to adopt her.

The other two focus children are receiving Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) services. The second focus child reported that he feels very comfortable remaining with his CFPs until he transitions out of care because they assist and encourage him to improve his behavior and his academics. The third focus child reported that his CFPs told him he can stay with them for as long as he wants. Both of the DCFS CSWs for the focus children receiving PPLA stated that they provide the FFA social worker, CFP and the focus child with updates regarding the permanency status after each court hearing.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for the focus children. The FFA works with their CFPs to assist them in establishing positive relationships with the focus children. The FFA engages the DCFS CSWs by assessing each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure a good match is made with the focus child and CFPs. Strategies utilized by the FFA include weekly visits to the CFH by the FFA social worker and weekly family meetings with CFPs and the focus children to assess the well-being of the focus children. The CFPs stated that the FFA provides them with monthly training to ensure that CFPs have received adequate training to assist the focus children in recognizing and addressing their past trauma.

The focus children reported that they are well adapted in their current CFHs and have developed good relationships with their CFPs. They feel supported by their CFPs and their needs are quickly addressed. According to the focus children, their current placements are meeting all of their needs.

All of the DCFS CSWs interviewed stated that they provide all necessary information, such as the focus children's immunization records, medical and dental records, placement history and child

welfare history to the CFPs. The DCFS CSWs also discuss the focus children's issues with the FFA social workers and CFPs to ensure that everyone is working together. The DCFS CSWs reported that there have been no issues with the FFA social workers and they always maintain contact with the FFA social workers and the certified foster parents to assist the focus children.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA was generally effective in maintaining family contact and followed the recommendations of the DCFS CSWs. The FFA supports visitation for the children placed within their CFHs. The FFA monitors and provides transportation to family visits for placed children as needed. The FFA is flexible in accommodating the focus children's visits with their family members and shows efforts to arrange visitation with all parties listed in the focus children's case plans. The FFA maintains logs regarding visitation, and if visits are missed, they are rescheduled in a timely manner. The FFA social workers and CFPs encourage and support the focus children in maintaining connections with their family members. On a regular basis, the FFA discusses the focus children's visitation plan with DCFS CSWs, CFPs and the focus children.

The first focus child stated that she has monthly visits with her maternal aunt. The CFP transports and monitors the focus child's visits. The maternal aunt is the only family member that keeps in contact with the focus child. The second focus child reported that he has weekly overnight visits with his adult sister. The CFP coordinates the visits with the focus child's adult sister to ensure that the schedule is convenient for the adult sister. Additionally, the focus child has monitored visits twice a week with his 16 year old brother and he also maintains telephone contact with his father. The third focus child stated that he has visits with his two adult half-sisters and that he enjoys the visits. The CFPs arrange the visits with his adult half-sisters.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA staff and CFPs are very flexible in scheduling the focus children's visits with their family members and they always encourage them to maintain connections with their family members.

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

Safety (5 Good Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA's safety status was good. The FFA provides a safe living environment for the focus children with competent and caring CFPs. The FFA utilizes protective strategies, such as conducting CFH inspections to ensure that the CFPs are able to provide a safe living situation for the focus children and interviewing the focus children in private. The FFA also provides specific training to the CFPs to assist them in reducing risks of harm for the focus children. All CFPs receive Special Incident Report (SIR) reporting requirements, first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training.

All focus children reported that there are no safety concerns in their placements and they felt comfortable asking their CFPs if they needed any assistance. The first focus child reported that she likes living with her CFP because she feels secure and respected. The second focus child stated that he feels safe because his CFPs always provide adequate supervision and provide him with assistance. The third focus child reported that he feels comfortable speaking with his CFP, especially if he needs any assistance.

The CFPs reported that they receive instruction and appropriate follow up services and support from the FFA social workers. The DCFS CSWs reported that there were no safety issues regarding the FFA's CFHs.

The FFA submitted four SIRs via the I-Track database in the last 30 days. None of these SIRs involved the focus children. The four SIRs included one child's illness, one child's injury at school, one CFP child abuse referral investigation and one incident regarding a child's use of marijuana at school. The FFA did not always follow SIR reporting guidelines, as one of the SIRs was not cross-reported to all required parties.

The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) reported one open investigation during the last 30 days. The DCFS Emergency Response CSW concluded the referral as inconclusive. However, OHCIS conducted a supplementary investigation and requested a corrective action plan from the FFA, which was received and approved.

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 made consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on behalf of the focus children. The FFA establishes and maintains good rapport among the focus children and their family members, DCFS CSWs and the CFPs. The FFA social workers reported that when a child is initially placed in a CFH, they contact the DCFS CSWs by telephone and email to schedule the first visit. After the initial contact, the FFA social workers schedule face-to-face meetings with the DCFS CSWs at the CFHs. The FFA social worker maintains regular contact with the DCFS CSWs at least twice a month. The FFA social workers also utilize the focus children's intake assessment forms and the focus children's placement history to identify the key people in the focus child's life in order to invite them to participate and develop the treatment goals for the focus children.

Each focus child reported that their concerns and needs were heard and respected. All of the focus children reported that they are able to discuss their needs and concerns with their family members, CFPs, FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs.

All of the DCFS CSWs interviewed reported that they are in agreement that engagement efforts are made by the FFA social workers and CFPs on a regular basis, and reasonable efforts have been made by the FFA social workers and CFPs to engage all team members.

Service Needs (5 Good 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. The FFA provides placed children

with services such as therapeutic services and Wraparound services to address mental health issues, as well as regular medical and dental check-ups.

All of the focus children reported that the services they received are appropriately meeting their needs. The first focus child reported that she has been placed in different foster care placements and is looking for a permanent home. The DCFS CSW, FFA social worker and CFPs put services in place to assist her with adapting to her prospective adoptive placement. The first focus child is receiving tutoring to assist with academics, weekly therapy sessions and also played on a softball team.

The second focus child reported that he is receiving in-home tutoring services to help him improve academically. He was participating in Wraparound services to assist him with managing his behavior at school and at home. At the last Wraparound Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting, the team made a decision to allow the focus child to graduate from the Wraparound Program because he completed his goals and he has shown improvement in his behavior. He participates in skate boarding and other sports.

The third focus child attends an after school tutoring program and stated the tutoring he receives is helping him with completing his homework and assignments timely and his grades have improved. He also has a Wraparound team in place. The third focus child stated that he was not interested in participating in baseball, acting, or drama classes at this time because he prefers to spend time with his friends.

The CFPs reported that they provide support to the focus children if they need any assistance with their school work. They also attended Wraparound CFT meetings and are working closely with the Wraparound parent partner and youth specialist to monitor the focus children's progress. The CFP for the third focus child reported that she always explores other community resources or services, such as the Boys and Girls Club and encourages the focus child to participate if she thinks the services will be beneficial for the focus child.

The FFA social workers reported that they work with the DCFS CSWs and the CFPs closely to assist the focus children in progressing toward achieving their Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals.

The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA social workers and CFPs communicate with them to develop NSP goals and services that are to meet the focus children's needs. One of the DCFS CSWs interviewed stated that she is pleased to see the CFP's willingness to try different techniques to help the focus child to feel comfortable and view the CFH as her own home. She further stated that the interaction between the CFP and the focus child is genuine.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The FFA generally understood the focus children's functioning and support systems. The FFA social workers meet with the focus children and CFPs weekly to assess their progress and evaluate their needs. The FFA ensured that initial medical and dental visits for the focus children were completed within the first 30 days of placement. Educational supports such as tutoring are provided, and participation in extracurricular activities is encouraged by the FFA. For example, one of the focus children played on a softball team; another focus child participated in a drama club.

All the focus children's NSPs are completed timely with input from the DCFS CSWs, CFP and the focus children. The FFA supervisors and FFA social workers meet weekly to discuss concerns regarding the focus children's progress toward meeting their NSP goals. Supports and services are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is made toward NSP goals.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they are made aware of the focus children's progress toward their NSP goals and needs.

Teamwork (5 Good Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA involves most of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives. The team, consisting of the DCFS CSW, DCFS Adoption CSW, FFA social workers, the focus children, their family members, CFPs and therapists has formed a good and dependable working system that has ongoing discussions and works collaboratively in case planning on behalf of the focus children.

The FFA social workers reported that they meet with the focus children, CFPs and DCFS CSWs during home visits to discuss the focus children's strengths and any concerns. Additionally, they meet monthly with either the FFA program administrator or other treatment team members to review and discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications to their treatment plans or strategies to assist them in making progress. The FFA social workers also stated that they maintain regular contact with the focus children's DCFS CSWs, via face-to-face contact, by telephone or e-mail.

All of the CFPs report that they have participated in team meetings. The first focus child's CFP reported that she called for a team meeting because the focus child was not keeping up with her personal hygiene. As a result of the team meeting and the prompting and encouragement that she receives from her CFP, the focus child has shown improvement. The CFPs for the second and third focus children stated that they attend the weekly CFT meeting to discuss the focus children's strengths, needs and services being provided, to assist the focus children in meeting their case plan goals.

The focus children reported that they were satisfied with the teamwork demonstrated by the team members. The focus children reported that they thought they were included in the team and they felt respected when they are permitted to make their own choices regarding placement and visitation. The first focus child stated that her aunt was invited to a meeting to discuss her permanent plan. The second focus child reported that his adult sisters are also included in team meetings to discuss a flexible visitation schedule that will be convenient for his sisters and his CFPs. The third focus child stated that he is satisfied with the way his team is functioning and his team meets his needs.

According to the FFA social workers, family members and DCFS CSWs are always invited to attend the team meeting.

The DCFS CSWs reported that they were included in discussions and meetings regarding the treatment goals of the focus children. One DCFS CSW stated that no one is trying to be in charge, and it is just a team effort. The focus child, CFP, FFA social worker, DCFS Adoption CSW and DCFS CSW meet regularly at the FFA to discuss the progress of the adoption.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA provided intervention strategies, supports, and services that are generally responsive to changing conditions for each of the focus children. The FFA social workers reported that they are aware of the changing needs of the focus children and they modify the needed services accordingly. The FFA uses the NSPs to closely document and monitor each child's progress toward their case plan goals. The FFA social workers ensure that progress and barriers encountered and any strategies that are modified are communicated with key members of the team.

All of the focus children stated that after they reported their concerns to their teams, they noticed changes. The second focus child stated that he has difficulty getting along with his brother, his CFPs reported it to the team and a meeting was scheduled to discuss resolving their differences. The first and the third focus child reported that they feel comfortable reporting to their teams if things are not right at school or at home.

The CFPs stated that the focus children's progress and needs are regularly evaluated and services provided are modified accordingly. For example, one CFP stated that he monitors the focus child's school grades through the school website and he reports to the team if the focus child is not progressing. Adjustments are promptly made when it is determined that the focus child is not progressing toward meeting his academic goals. For example, the second focus child receives in-home tutoring to help him complete his homework, but his grades were not showing any improvement. The CFP met with his teacher and found out that the focus child was not submitting his homework on time. The focus child told the CFP that he loses his homework when he gets to school. The CFP discussed the issue with the teacher and as a result, the focus child was able to submit his homework when he first arrives at school instead of later in the day.

All DCFS CSWs reported that they were informed by the FFA social workers or the CFPs about the focus children's progress on a regular basis.

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, which consisted of the following: discussion of compliance regarding Title 22 regulations and maintenance of the facility and grounds, review and maintenance of staff files, compliance with training requirements, review of procedures for submitting timely NSPs and addressing concerns related to the maintenance of the vehicles used to transport the children.

In August 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer discussed results of the QAR and provided 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.

ASPIRANET
Strengthening Children, Youth, Families and Communities

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Visit our website at www.aspiranet.org

November 16, 2015

To: Kong Ng
Los Angeles County, Out of Home Care Management Division

From: CeCe Anthony
Program Diretor, Aspiranet

Re: Aspiranet Foster Family Agency Quality Assurance Review

Dear Kong,

This letter is in response to the Quality Assurance Review that was conducted in February 2015 by Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD). On September 9, 2015 OHCMD reviewed the findings with Aspiranet. As a result of the findings, a Quality Improvement Plan is required in one area.

The agency received a score of 5 of 6 in the Safety Focus Area. This was in response to a Special Incident Report that was reported timely but omitted the cross reporting to Out of Home Care Management Division.

To address cross-reporting to the appropriate parties, including OHCMD, all supervisors review Special Incident Reports (SIRs) and have access to the Special Incident Reporting guidelines and the submission process, to ensure all required and/or appropriate parties are informed correctly. The Program Director reviewed the Special Incident Reporting Guidelines with supervisorial staff on September 12, 2015.
Please contact me should you need additional information or have questions.

Sincerely,

Celia Anthony, Program Director
Aspiranet