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February 25, 2016

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

MCKINLEY CHILDREN'S CENTER 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 McKinley Children's Center Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in December 2014. The FFA has one licensed office located in the First Supervisorial District in the County of Los Angeles. The offices provide services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and youth. According to the FFA's program statement, its stated mission is "Helping children and youth gain the skills, knowledge and self-esteem essential to personal maturity and return to successfully functioning 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 FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 7 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunities for improved performance in the focus area of Safety and Teamwork.

The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In February 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the areas of Safety 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
Anil Vadaparty, Chief Executive Officer, McKinley Children's Center FFA
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

MCKINLEY CHILDREN'S CENTER 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 McKinley Children's Center Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in December 2014. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment, which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

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

Status Indicators:

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

Practice Indicators:

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

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

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), as one of the CSWs was on medical leave, three Certified Foster Parents (CFPs), two FFA social workers, and one FFA administrator.

At the time of the QAR, the placed children's average number of placements was three, 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	4	**Fair Safety Status -** The focus children are usually avoiding behaviors that cause harm to self, others, or the community. Protective strategies used by the FFA staff or certified foster parent are at least minimally adequate in reducing risks of harm.
Permanency - The degree to which the child is living with caregivers, who are likely to remain in this role until the child reaches adulthood, or the child is in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the child, the FFA staff, caregivers and CSW, supports the plan.	5	5	**Good Status** - The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the children, FFA 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 past 12 months with none in the past 6 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	5	**Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections -** Generally effective family connections are being at least minimally maintained for all significant family member/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) 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 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 -** 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.
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.
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 lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a minimally adequate to fair working system that meets, talks, and/or plans together.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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)

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

Permanency (5 Good Status)

Permanency Overview: The FFA is providing substantial permanence for each of the focus children. All of the focus children live in family settings where the key people believe the relationship will endure. The CFPs are supportive of the focus children's permanency plans. The focus children are aware of their permanency plan and concurrent plans. The FFA also ensures the focus children are visiting with their family members and other important people in their lives to ensure these relationships are maintained and are lifelong.

The first focus child is receiving family reunification services with his mother. The reunification plan is supported by the FFA, as the CFP monitors weekly visits with the child, his sibling and mother. The CFP indicated that she offers emotional support to the focus child to help him prepare for reunification.

The second focus child reported that although the plan is to reunify with her mother, she does not want to return home. The CFP for the focus child reported that she always encourages the child to visit and call her family and reminds the child of her reunification plan. The DCFS CSW recommended that the child and mother participate in conjoint counseling to address concerns that the child has about returning home.

The third focus child's permanent plan is Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA). The plan for him is to transition from the foster home into being independent, as he attends college and works. He stated that his FFA social worker meets with him consistently and is always there to assist with anything he needs. He reported that his FFA social worker assisted him so that he could take his driver license exam. He stated that his DCFS CSW is very responsive and is constantly working with him to help him achieve his goal of independence. The focus child has completed life skills training

and a transitional independent living plan agreement. The CFP encourages the child to attend college and supports his plan to live independently. The DCFS CSW indicated that the FFA has been able to find appropriate resources when needed and that the CFP is very supportive of the focus child.

Placement Stability (5 Good Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: The FFA provided substantial placement stability for the focus children and there have been no recent disruptions. Each of the focus children shares positive and supportive relationships with their CFPs. The FFA has been able to manage known risks to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption for the focus children. The FFA supports the CFPs by providing training and education as a method to prevent placement instability. The FFA uses conflict resolution to address potential risk for replacement; talking with the child about their needs and making referrals to outside services, if necessary. In addition, the FFA provides the CFPs with information about the child prior to placement and makes referrals to needed resources like therapy or Wraparound services.

The focus children are adapting well in their current Certified Foster Homes (CFHs). The focus children feel safe, comfortable and respected. There have been no major issues or concerns. The focus children reported that their CFPs and the FFA social workers are meeting all of their needs, and they have formed a good, supportive relationship with their CFPs. The first focus child was previously placed with the CFP and has a good rapport with her, as well as his mother. The second focus child had no complaints about her CFP and indicated that she would rather stay in her placement then return home with her mother due to the strained relationship with her mother and the consistent attention and support provided by the CFP. The third focus child reported that his placement is meeting all of his needs and that his CFP is assisting him with applying to college and that he likes that she always communicates openly with him and makes the home environment positive and fun.

The CFPs indicated that the FFA is supportive and meets with the focus children and CFPs weekly to discuss any issues. The DCFS CSWs indicated that information is provided to the FFA regarding children's history prior to placement. If problems occur with the focus child, then they discuss the issue with the CFPs.

The FFA social workers reported that the FFA tries to exhaust all possible ways to meet the needs of the children. Beginning at intake, the FFA makes every effort to make a good placement match with the child and potential CFP.

Visitation (5 Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: The FFA has maintained generally effective family connections for the three focus children. At the time of placement, the FFA staff obtains information from the DCFS CSWs on the visitation orders of the court. The FFA seeks to arrange visitation with the parties listed in the case plan and court order and provides transportation for the focus children when needed. The FFA provides supports and services to address the focus children's concerns and discusses with them the importance of maintaining family connections. All of the focus children are visiting with family.

The first focus child visits with his mother and sibling weekly and he reported enjoying his visits, which are monitored by his CFP. The second focus child has visits with her mother and siblings. The

visits are monitored by the FFA social worker; however, the child reported not wanting to visit with her mother and not wanting to reunify. Her CFP reported encouraging the child to maintain telephone contact with her family when visitation does not occur. The DCFS CSW stated that she is aware the focus child does not enjoy visiting with her mother. The third focus child has a very busy schedule as he works full time, however he reported visiting with his grandmother and mother when he has time. The DCFS CSW indicated that he randomly visits with his family.

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

Safety (4 Fair Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA's safety status was fair. The FFA administration ensures that children feel safe in placement. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times and have not shown any suicidal behaviors or exhibited any self-injurious behaviors. The focus children are free from harm in their placements and other daily settings, including at school and in the community.

The two DCFS CSWs interviewed reported there were no safety issues regarding the FFAs CFHs. The FFA generally provides a safe living environment for the placed child with competent, caring caregivers.

All three CFPs stated that they receive training from the FFA on different topics to assist them in recognizing problems that may pose a safety risk to placed children. The CFPs also stated that if placed children present risky behaviors, they share the information with the FFA social worker and they work together on a safety plan to ensure child safety.

Although protective strategies were in place for the three focus children, the FFA submitted a total of 31 Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the I-Track database. Approximately five of these SIRs were not submitted timely. Ten of the SIRs were child safety related (assaultive behavior; accident; injury; substance abuse; police involvement and runaway). None of the SIRs involved the focus children. Within the last 30 days, the Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section had five open referrals for the FFA; all five referrals were closed as unfounded.

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 good rapport and consistently engages the key parties. The focus children reported that their concerns were heard and they felt respected. All of the focus children reported that they could confide in various team members as needed to discuss their concerns.

The FFA works to ensure that rapport has been developed with the focus children and their families, CFPs and DCFS CSWs. Furthermore, the FFA social workers ensure that connections are maintained with the focus children by conducting weekly visits to the home and ensuring regular telephone contact with the DCFS CSWs is made. The DCFS CSWs and CFPs interviewed are in

agreement that engagement efforts are made by the FFA on a regular basis, and reasonable efforts have been made by the FFA to engage the focus children, CFPs and DCFS CSWs.

Service Needs (5 Good Supports & Services)

Service Needs Overview: The FFA has a substantial array of support services to help the focus children to make progress toward their planned outcomes. The focus children are receiving academic support services to help them improve academically.

The FFA social workers and the CFPs, provide support to assist the focus children in making progress towards their case plan goals. All focus children reported that the services received are appropriately meeting their needs.

The first focus child reported that all of his needs were being met and that he feels comfortable talking to his CFP about any needs he has. He is participating in tutoring for math. The CFP stated that she keeps in contact with both the DCFS CSW and FFA social worker, letting them know if additional support or services are needed.

The CFP of the second focus children advocated for an Individualized Education Plan, so that the focus child could be assessed, allowing the focus child to receive special educational services at school. The focus child had a history of changing schools frequently and has a deficit in reading. The focus child reported heavily relying on her CFP for all of her needs and also participating in individual therapy. The DCFS CSWs indicated that they are involved in the development of treatment goals.

The third focus child is working full time until the college semester begins. He indicated that he feels comfortable talking to his CFP, FFA social worker and DCFS CSW about any concerns or needs that he has and that it makes a difference. He indicated that everything is in place to meet his needs, including successfully completing Wraparound services and high school summer classes so that he can begin college in the 2015 Fall semester. The CFP reported seeking out community resources and getting assistance from the FFA social worker to help meet the needs of the child. The DCFS CSW stated that when the treatment goal is not sufficient she meets with the FFA social worker, CFP and service provider to discuss and ensure everyone is on the same page.

Assessment & Linkages (5 Good Assessments and Understanding)

Assessment & Linkages Overview: The focus children's functioning, challenges, earlier life traumas and support systems are generally understood by all parties involved. The FFA assesses the focus children's needs and provides intervention if necessary so that they are able to function in their daily settings. Information necessary to understand the strengths, need and choices of the focus children are updated.

The DCFS CSWs and all three CFPs interviewed stated that the FFA always kept them abreast as to any updates on the focus children. The FFA social workers and CFPs for the focus children have a very good understanding of what the children need.

All of the focus children indicated that their medical and dental needs are always taken care of. The first focus child stated that he is able to participate in extracurricular activities of his choice including

attending church, and going to amusement parks through the Sheriff's Department Youth Activities Program. The second focus child participates in school choir and receives Wraparound services. Her CFP is also teaching her how to play the guitar. The third focus child is able to go cycling as often as his work schedule permits.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: The FFA has provided intervention strategies, supports, and services that are generally responsive to the changing conditions for each of the focus children. Regular monitoring and tracking of the focus children's status is communicated between the FFA, DCFS CSWs, CFPs and the focus children.

The CFP for the first focus child reported that she talks with the focus child about his goals, and also all of his service providers, DCFS CSW and FFA social worker regarding his progress. She stated that she is able to work with the FFA social workers to modify and update the NSP.

The CFP for the second focus child reported that progress and lack of progress is communicated weekly between her and the FFA social worker. She is able to communicate any needs of the child and the FFA social worker will come up with new strategies to help the child reach goal. The child is also included in the communication regarding the progress and any need to adjust goals. The DCFS CSW reported ongoing email and telephone communication with the FFA social worker regarding progress and that tracking is reviewed in the NSP.

The CFP for the third focus child reported communicating progress and NSP reports with the FFA social worker and DCFS CSW and that she is able to request modifications when necessary. The DCFS CSW reported that the services are being tracked and adjusted through the NSP and that she is in communication with the FFA social worker and CFP, as to the focus child's progress. She indicated that her experience with the CFP and FFA social worker has been very supportive.

Although the FFA works toward ensuring that the needs of the children are recognized and met, the NSP goals reviewed were not child specific or measurable and were not responsive to changing conditions for the focus children.

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

Teamwork (4 Minimally Adequate to Fair Teamwork)

Teamwork Overview: The FFA provided a minimally to fair team working system, as the FFA involved some of the important supporters and decision makers in the focus children's lives in the decision making process. There is also constant communication between the CFPs, FFA social workers and the DCFS CSWs.

The team consists of the DCFS CSW, the FFA social worker, CFPs, therapist, family members and the focus children. All of the focus children indicated that they knew who their team members were. Although the FFA social worker, the CFPs and the focus children seem to be very consistent with face-to-face meetings, the first and second focus child and one of the DCFS CSWs reported that there have been no face-to-face team meetings where the focus child and all of the key team members are present. The third focus child reported having a team meeting to discuss plans for him

after he transitions out of care. The team lacks family member inclusion and the participation of the DCFS CSWs in the team meetings.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In November 2014, 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, maintenance of the facility and rounds, review and maintenance of staff files and 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 February 2015, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer discussed results of the QAR. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

Chief Executive Officer
Anil Vadaparty

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International Association for Continued Education and Training

Member Agency:

Association of Community Human Service Agencies

Child Welfare League of America

Via Email
Aiyana Rios, MSW
Children's Services Administrator I
Quality Assurance Reviewer
Department of Children and Family Services
Out of Home Care Management Division
9320 Telstar Avenue, Suite 216
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RE: PLAN OF IMPROVEMENT FROM QAR (REVISED)

Dear Aiyana,

Thank you for the draft of the Quality Assurance Report (QAR) for the FFA program. As always, we appreciate the collaborative effort with your department and value your feedback. We are proud of the many high scores we received in the QAR, but always strive to improve our services.

As requested, below are the areas that were found to be needing improvement along with our response.

Focus Area Needing Improvement:
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.

MCKINLEY'S RESPONSE: A required 1 hour training was conducted with all staff by our Supervising Social Workers on May 21, 2015 that included the following: Supervision of Foster Family, Understanding Reporting Incidents Categories, Clarifying SIRs Cross-Report Parties, and SIR Reporting Timelines. Effective May 21, 2015 all new hire staff will receive this training and Supervisors will be responsible for monitoring all staff regarding child safety issues on a continuous basis. We have improved our efforts with communication with CCL and OHCIS regarding investigations outcomes. Families with substantiated complaints or citations, or families with extensive referral histories will be reviewed for appropriateness.

Focus Area Needing Improvement:
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.

MCKINLEY'S RESPONSE: A mandatory 1 hour training for all staff has taken place on new methods they practice as an attempt to improve the participation level of families and DCFS workers. Effective May 21, 2015 all FCSW's will make actual contact with assigned CSW minimally once per month and all supervisors are expected to follow up with DCFS Workers' Supervisor as needed in an attempt to solidify active participation from a representative of the Department.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your feedback and the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

Julissa Castillo,
Chief Programs Officer for Out of Home Services

CC: Anil Vadaparty, Chief Executive Officer