County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

BRANDON NICHOLS
Chief Deputy Director

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May 26, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN 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 Families for Children Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 2015. The FFA has one office located in the Second Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "1. To place children in homes that are safe, clean, stable and where the child feels nurtured and accepted. 2. To acknowledge the diversity of the population of Los Angeles County. 3. To assist in providing appropriate resource referrals for clients and their families. 4. To provide counseling services to children placed through DCFS and their families. 5. To provide clinicians sensitive to the diverse needs of various ethnic groups. 6. To ensure that all emancipation age children obtain the appropriate information about programs and opportunities after foster care."

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

In March 2016, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the acceptable minimum score; therefore, a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was not required from the FFA.

If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR:KDR:rds

Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
Andrew Henderson, Executive Director, Families for Children Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Families for Children Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in November 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 QAR focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR 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 FFA supervised 20 DCFS placed children in 40 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 15 months and their average age was seven. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 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 focus 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 staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6 - Optimal Safety Status	The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
Permanency - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Placement Stability - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	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 30 days.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	6 - Optimal Engagement Efforts	To an optimal degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that excellent efforts are being used.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
Service Needs - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
Assessment & Linkages - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided 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.
Teamwork - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.	5	6 - Optimal Teamwork	The team contains all of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed an excellent, consistent 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 and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are 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 is occurring.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	6	5

In the areas of Safety, Permanency and Visitation, the FFA continues to provide a good quality of services and stability to the focus children. The FFA continues to ensure that the placed children reside in highly trained certified foster homes. The FFA ensures that the certified foster parents have access to someone from the FFA staff on a 24-hour, seven days a week basis. The certified foster parents reported that the FFA places an emphasis on training. Some of the training topics include following the FFA procedures, Title 22 Regulations and the County contract. They report that the FFA Social Workers are always available to provide advice and assist them in parenting the focus children. One certified foster parent reported that there is constant communication with the FFA staff. The focus children reported feeling safe in the certified foster homes because there is someone to talk to and their certified foster parents care about them. One DCFS CSW reported that the FFA Social Worker for her focus child is very diligent in making sure all pieces are in place to ensure positive outcomes for the focus child. The FFA assists the focus children in reaching their permanency goals by collaborating and remaining in constant contact with the DCFS CSWs to ensure that the projected outcomes for the focus children are executed. The FFA and the certified foster parents continue to support the focus children's visitation plans by maintaining contact with all DCFS approved visitors. Court ordered visitation plans are followed, but a level of flexibility is maintained to accommodate all parties.

In the area of Placement Stability, the FFA improved the quality of service in this area by having the FFA Social Workers gather as much information as possible about the focus children such as their likes and dislikes and their comfort level during visits to the certified foster homes. The FFA Social Workers counsel the certified foster parents to assist them with any challenging times they may be going through. The focus children report that they have caring relationships with their certified foster parents. One certified foster parent stated that the FFA program administrator is always available to assist in working on a plan and coming up with solutions. One DCFS CSW reported that she liked that the FFA arranged to have the focus child's siblings placed with her after the focus child made the request.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in November 2014 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Teamwork. In April 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below it appears that the FFA showed improvement in the area of Teamwork on their 2015-2016 QAR.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	4	5
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	5	6	5

In the areas of Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to ensure that there is a good array of services available to the focus children. The FFA continues to develop Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) collaboratively with the focus children, certified foster parent and DCFS CSWs which coincide with the services that are being provided to the focus children. The needs and strengths of the focus children are frequently assessed and case plans are modified to ensure that they are able to function successfully in their certified foster home and in the community. The DCFS CSWs reported that there is regular communication from the FFA regarding the well-being, growth and adjustment of the focus children to ensure that their treatment plans are adhered to.

OHCMD found that the FFA had implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in the area of Teamwork by extending invitations to the DCFS CSWs to attend collaborative meetings with key parties every four months at the FFA office.

The FFA scored at the optimal level in the area of Teamwork and Engagement. The FFA developed a plan to assist the placed children to understand the concepts of Engagement and Teamwork. The FFA Social Workers addressed the areas as a game with the placed children. The FFA Social Workers asked the placed children to name the people on their

team and allow them to pick anyone they want to be on the team. This practice engages and excites the placed children and allows them to have a voice and choice in what occurs in their lives. One placed child got so involved in the game that she drew a picture of her team members. The focus children, the certified foster parents and DCFS CSWs all report that they participate in the team meetings. The focus children reported that they have a say in who is on their team. One certified foster parent reported that there is open communication with the FFA staff and that she and the FFA Social Worker sit down to discuss what is going on with the focus child placed in her home. Another certified foster parent also reported that there was constant communication with the FFA. One DCFS CSW reported that the FFA set up the meeting and did a great job of accommodating everyone's schedule. Another DCFS CSW stated that the FFA suggests a date to meet and the team either agrees or identifies a convenient time for all parties.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In March 2016, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Facility and Environment and Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure that common areas in the certified foster homes are well maintained, allowance logs are documented and that the NSPs are comprehensive.

In March 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA met the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas, therefore no QIP was required.