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June 30, 2016

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

**ALPHA TREATMENT CENTERS 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 Alpha Treatment Centers Foster Family Agency (the FFA) on January 6, 2016. The FFA has one office located in the First 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, "to provide short-term and long-term foster care for the treatment of needy male and female minors, ages birth to 17 years."

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 8 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted an opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

In April 2016, OHCMD 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 the area of Safety. The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendation noted in this report.

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
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Rachel Dyer, Executive Director, Alpha Treatment Centers Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
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**ALPHA TREATMENT CENTERS 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 Alpha Treatment Centers Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in January 2016. 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 42 DCFS placed children in 25 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was nine months and their average age was 7. 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 | 5 - Good Safety Status | The focus children have a generally and substantially safe living situation with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children well under usual daily conditions. Protective strategies are generally 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 | 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 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 | 5 - Good Engagement Efforts | To a strong 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 good, consistent 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 | 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/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. |

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in February 2015 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; however, OHCMD noted an opportunity for improvement in the area of Safety on their 2015-2016 QAR.

**STATUS INDICATORS**
*(Measured over last 30 days)*

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

In the areas of Permanency, Placement Stability, and Visitation, the FFA continues to provide a good quality of services and stability to the focus children. The FFA provides services that correspond to the permanency plan for each of the focus children. To ensure that the permanency plans for the focus children are facilitated, the FFA communicates with the DCFS CSWs to discuss court orders on a weekly basis, or more frequently, as needed. The FFA and certified foster parents support the focus children's permanency plan and assists them in maintaining contact and communication with their family members. The FFA continues to provide adequate support and ongoing training according to the needs of the certified foster parents. The FFA Social Workers and certified foster parents consistently assesses the well-being of the focus children and share the information and concerns with the DCFS CSWs to avoid any placement disruptions. Due to the FFA's efforts, none of the focus children have had any placement disruptions within the review period. The focus children have developed positive relationships with the FFA Social Workers and their certified

foster parents. The FFA supports and promotes important connections between the focus children and their family members through appropriate visitation and alternate methods of communication, such as telephone contact with key people in their lives. The FFA always supports the visitation plans for the focus children by adhering to the DCFS court orders. The FFA staff also provide transportation for visits and will monitor visits as well.

Although the FFA staff, the DCFS CSWs and the focus children did not express any child safety concerns, the FFA fell below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety due to a child safety concern involving an allegation of sexual abuse. The incident involved a placed child being subjected to inappropriate sexual misconduct by a male adult in the certified foster home. The incident was investigated by an Emergency Response (ER) DCFS CSW that deemed the allegation of sexual abuse to be substantiated. The ER DCFS CSW deemed the allegations of physical abuse, general neglect and at-risk to be inconclusive. Community Care Licensing (CCL) also investigated the allegations of sexual abuse and personal rights violation; however, they deemed the allegations to be inconclusive. The Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) conducted a supplemental investigation and placed this certified foster home on an "Indefinite Hold." All of the children in the certified foster home were removed and the home will no longer be used as a placement resource for DCFS children.

**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** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The FFA ensures that a good rapport has been established among the FFA, certified foster parents, family members and the focus children. The DCFS CSWs reported that they do not have any concerns with the FFA and engagement efforts are made by all the team members on a weekly basis or more frequently, as needed. The focus children reported that they are able to ask their certified foster parents for assistance. The FFA continues to provide the focus children with a good array of supports and services, such as weekly individual counseling, psychological evaluations and the Play and Read after school program to assist the focus children in making progress towards their planned outcomes. Services provided to the focus children match the intervention strategies identified in the case plans and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) for the focus children. The FFA staff assesses the focus children's strengths and their underlying needs. The FFA makes changes when necessary to ensure that the focus children are functioning effectively in their daily settings. The FFA tracks the

implementation of strategies, supports and services via the FFA Social Worker's monthly reports, progress notes, NSPs, and communication with the certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs, all involved parties, and the focus children.

In the area of Teamwork, OHCMD found that the FFA implemented the 2014-2015 QIP to improve teaming efforts. The FFA previously did not conduct face-to-face team meetings; however, the FFA is now actively working with the DCFS CSWs to coordinate team meetings that include the certified foster parents, family members, the placed children and any other approved participants to discuss the needs and services for the placed children. The DCFS CSWs reported that they were invited and participated in team meetings.

## NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

On November 12, 2015, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirement. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure that Special Incident Reports are appropriately documented and cross-reported to the OHCMD and ensure that the FFA follows Title 22 Regulations to reduce the number of Community Care Licensing complaints.

In April 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Safety. The FFA submitted the attached approved QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.