County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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Chief Deputy Director

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July 27, 2016

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

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES 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 Hathaway-Sycamores Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in August 2015. The FFA has one office located in the Fifth 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 safe family home environments that offer more structure, services opportunities than traditional foster care but are less restrictive and intensive than a psychiatric group home."

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 February 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. 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
Joe Ford, Vice-President of Operations, Hathaway-Sycamores Foster Family Agency
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES 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 Hathaway-Sycamores Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in August 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, three certified foster parents, and one service provider.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 15 DCFS placed children in six 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 15. 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	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 July 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.

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 area of Safety, the FFA continues to score at the optimal level as they provide quality services to the focus children. The focus children reported that their certified foster parents make them feel safe and welcome in their certified foster homes and have highly safe living situations with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children at all times. The FFA Social Worker meets privately with the children during their weekly visits and conducts unannounced home visits. The FFA developed a quarterly safety checklist to ensure the children's safety. There were no safety issues regarding the focus children's current certified foster homes. Safety issues are discussed at Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings, and there were no substantiated investigations within the last 30 days.

In the areas of Permanency and Visitation, the FFA continues to provide quality services to the focus children. The FFA staff assists the focus children in attaining their permanency goals. The permanency plan for one focus child is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, as the focus child expressed that she would like to receive extended foster care services

upon graduation from high school. The permanency plan for two focus children is Family Reunification. The second focus child is happy in his current certified foster home. He is looking forward to a more permanent arrangement, as his certified foster parents are in the process of adopting him. There is also a more permanent arrangement for the third focus child, as his certified foster parents are in the process of applying for legal guardianship. The focus children are encouraged to visit and maintain telephone contact with their family members and other key people in their lives. One of the focus children has two siblings in placement. The focus child's certified foster parents always welcome and encourage the focus child's sister to visit, and she is included in outings, such as eating out. The focus child's other sibling also has visits with the focus child. The focus child stated that visiting and seeing his siblings very often makes him happy.

In the area of Placement Stability, the FFA enhanced their performance to provide stability to the focus children. The FFA is providing optimal placement stability for the focus children by ensuring the best placement match with a certified foster family that would best meet the children's needs. Prior to being placed in their current certified foster homes, each of the focus children had experienced multiple placement disruptions. Since their placement through the FFA, the focus children have not had any placement disruptions. The FFA and the certified foster parents have also demonstrated being extremely supportive of maintaining family connections and flexibility in arranging visitation.

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	5	5

In the areas of Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make good efforts to ensure an array of services are being provided. The focus child reported they have a good relationship with their certified foster parents, the FFA Social Worker, and their DCFS CSWs. The focus children are provided with an array of services and extracurricular activities of their choice. One focus child volunteers locally in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. Another focus child is receiving therapeutic and psychiatric services. The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) match the services being provided to the focus children. The FFA's team approach and bi-weekly case reviews allow the FFA staff to monitor and assess the focus children's progress toward achieving their NSP and case plan goals. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA Social Workers maintain regular contact with them in regards to the progress and concerns of the focus children via e-mail and telephone contact.

The FFA scored at the optimal level in the area of Engagement. The FFA has developed a strong rapport with the focus children, key people in the focus children's lives, and certified foster parents to obtain consensus in decisions that are made on behalf of the focus children. The FFA Social Workers maintain constant communication with the DCFS CSWs and the FFA therapist via e-mail, telephone, and progress reports to keep them included in the focus children's progress. The focus children reported having positive relationships with their certified foster parents.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA implemented the 2014-2015 QIP. The OHCMD noted that the FFA was not conducting team meetings; however, the FFA is now ensuring that team meetings are conducted frequently. Additionally, communication is occurring with the focus children's service providers, such as therapists, Wraparound facilitators, as well as with the DCFS CSWs, the children's family members, and the certified foster parents. The FFA Social Worker and the Wraparound facilitator work closely in order to share relevant information regarding the focus children's plans and goals. The team members try to meet at the certified foster parent's homes, depending on the team members' availability, at least once a month during the DCFS CSWs monthly home visit with the focus children. When necessary, the FFA conducts bi-monthly Child and Family Team meetings to evaluate the focus children's needs and ensure services are being provided.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In January 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Certified Foster Homes, Facility and Environment, and Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure that Certificates of Approval contain all the required information, certified foster parents are provided with the required annual hours of training, ensure that the common quarters are maintained, as per Title 22 Regulations; and development and maintenance of the placed children's clothing logs and ensuring NSPs are comprehensive.

In February 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA did not require a QIP, as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas of the QAR. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff has and will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation as needed.