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October 9, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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From: Philip L. Browning
Director

CONCEPT 7 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 Concept 7 Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in October 2014. The FFA has three licensed offices located in the First Supervisorial District and in the Counties of Orange and San Bernardino. 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, "to provide foster homes for children in need of out-of-home care by training and certifying acceptable foster parents in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego; to provide social work services and on-going education and training to foster parents. In addition, to design a treatment program for each foster child that focuses on family reunification. When family reunification is not possible, FFA agency works with the county authorities to develop an alternative treatment/placement program."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the Group Home'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 (QIP) addressing the recommendations noted in this report. In February 2015, the 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.

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 Hamai, Interim Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
Audit Committee
John Peel, Chief Executive Officer, Concept 7
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

CONCEPT 7 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 Concept 7 Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in October 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, 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 fourteen months and their average age was ten. 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 child. 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 but rarely may present a behavior that has low or mild risk of harm. The focus children may have had related history, diagnoses, or behavior presentations in the past but may have presented risk behaviors at a declining or much reduced level over the past 30 days.
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**. 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	**Optimal Stability**. The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships primary caregivers, key adult supporters, and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 12 months and little likelihood of future disruption. Only age-appropriate changes are expected in school settings.
Visitation - The degree to which the FFA staff support important connections being maintained through appropriate visitation.	5	6	**Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections**. Fully effective connections are being excellently maintained for all significant family/non-related extended family members (NREFM) through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFM have regular and, where appropriate, increasingly frequent visits.
Engagement - The degree to which the FFA staff working with the child,	5	5	**Good Engagement Efforts.** To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed,

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
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.			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. Useful accommodations are used to provide scheduling times and locations based on convenience of appropriate parties. Engagement efforts are made frequently and on an on-going basis.
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. The array provides an appropriate range of options in the selection of providers.
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

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
			periodically and at critical points to develop plans. The team has good and necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to organize effective services with children of this complexity and cultural background.
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 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 provides good permanence. The primary permanency and concurrent goals were appropriately developed and processed in a timely manner. The FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving permanency and ensures that the treatment team is aware of each focus child's permanency plan. The FFA ensures meetings are held regularly to discuss permanency options for each of the focus children. The meetings include the FFA social worker, the DCFS CSWs, the focus children and the CFPs. The CFPs are also supportive of the focus children's permanency plans. The focus children are aware of their permanency plans and concurrent plans, as well as the steps being taken to ensure timely permanency. The FFA also ensures that the focus children are visiting with their family members and other important people in their lives to ensure these bonds are maintained and are life-long.

Placement Stability (6 Optimal Stability)

Placement Stability Overview: All of the focus children have substantial stability in placement and in their school settings. The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The FFA engages the DCFS CSWs by assessing each focus child's needs prior to placement to ensure a good match with the CFPs. Strategies utilized by the FFA include weekly visits to the certified foster homes (CFHs) by the FFA social workers, weekly family meetings with certified foster parents and the focus children to assess the well-being of the focus children. The FFA provides the CFPs with support groups and on-going training.

The focus children are adapting well in their current CFHs. The focus children feel safe, comfortable and respected. There have been no major issues or concerns. The focus children reported that their caregivers and the FFA are meeting all of their needs, and that they have formed a good, supportive relationship with their caregivers.

Visitation (6 Optimal Maintenance of Visitation & Connections)

Visitation Overview: Family visits for the focus children are well maintained. All three focus children have regular weekly visits with their family members. The FFA monitors the family visits and provides transportation to the visits. The FFA staff, CFPs and DCFS CSWs work together to assist the focus children in maintaining connections with their family. If the focus children do not wish to have visitation, the FFA, CFPs and DCFS CSWs encourage and support the focus children in maintaining connections with their relatives. The FFA follows the court-ordered visitation plans and engages in discussions of the focus children's visitation plans with DCFS CSWs and CFPs on a regular basis. The FFA keeps logs regarding visitation and if visits are missed, the visits are re-scheduled in a timely manner. DCFS CSWs and CFPs indicated that the FFA makes great efforts to ensure that the focus children's visits are successful. The FFA monitors family visits and provides transportation to the visits, if necessary.

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

Safety (4 Fair Safety Status)

Safety Overview: The FFA complied with the procedures and protocols and made reports to the Child Protective Hotline in a timely manner in the last 30 days. The focus children reported feeling safe at all times while in their current CFHs 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.

Although protective strategies were in place for the three focus children, the FFA had submitted a total of twenty-nine Special Incident Reports (SIRs) via the ITrack database in the last 30 days. However, none of these SIRs were related to the focus children. Of these twenty-nine SIRs, eleven were child safety-related. One incident involved property damage by a child; two involved suicidal attempts and/or hospitalization; seven were for injuries sustained by the children at the CFH; and one involved siblings fighting. It should be noted that FFA social workers did speak with the children involved and the CFPs about alternatives to engaging in aggressive behavior towards others and preventing children from harming themselves or others.

Based on the QAR, the protective strategies used by the FFA were fairly adequate in reducing risks of harm to placed children, as a referral in which a child had sustained injuries was called into the Child Protection Hotline during the most recent 30 days. This referral was investigated by DCFS Emergency Response CSW. The allegation of General Neglect was substantiated and the allegations of Physical Abuse and At Risk of Sibling Abuse were inconclusive. All placed children were removed. Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS) conducted a supplemental investigation and placed this CFH on an indefinite hold and this home will no longer be utilized as a placement resource for DCFS children.

The FFA analyzed and assessed its current practices and concluded that additional observation by the FFA's professional staff during contact with the CFPs and placed children and offering further training to the FFA staff and families would improve the FFA's protective strategies in reducing risks of harm. Further, maintaining a more in depth dialogue among the FFA's professional/administrative staff with the CFPs, the children and their teams will ensure the area of safety is addressed and improved agency-wide.

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 makes consistent and good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made for the focus children. The FFA works to ensure that rapport has been developed among the FFA, DCFS CSWs, family members, as well as the CFPs and the focus children. Furthermore, the FFA ensures that connections are made between the focus children and the CFPs by conducting weekly visits by the FFA social workers and ensuring regular telephone contact and face to face contacts with the DCFS CSWs. 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 issues and concerns with their family members, CFPs, FFA social workers and DCFS CSWs, without any problems. All parties interviewed are in agreement that engagement efforts are made by the team members on a regular basis and reasonable efforts have been made by the FFA 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 focus children are receiving therapeutic services and Wraparound services to address mental health issues, as well as regular medical and dental check-ups.

The focus children are receiving academic support services to help them improve academically, such as after-school tutoring program. The CFP of one focus child advocated for him to receive additional assistance in math at school, as he was struggling with his math assignments. The CFP is working closely with him and his teacher to monitor his progress. When appropriate, the FFA and the CFPs advocate for the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, so that an IEP may be developed and the focus children may receive special educational services at school. The CFPs for one focus child attended a school conference to follow-up on the child's academic progress.

The FFA social workers, CFPs and the focus children's family members also provide support to assist the focus children in making progress towards their case plans. The FFA is in constant contact with other service providers and the services provided are seen as very satisfactory by the focus children, family members and their CFPs. In addition, the FFA utilizes a team approach to develop Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The FFA social workers collaborate with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, family members and the CFPs to develop NSP goals for the focus children. All focus children reported that the services received are appropriately meeting their needs.

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 interventions for them to function effectively in daily settings. The services and supports are regularly assessed and modified to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals. Educational supports such as tutoring are provided, and participation in extra-curricular activities is encouraged by the FFA.

The FFA determines if the focus children are making progress towards their NSP goals by observing if there is a reduction in incidents, occurrences and acting-out behaviors. Progress is also determined by observation and reports from the CFPs. Focus children prescribed psychotropic medication have monthly psychiatric visits. The FFA provides services required to help the focus children and supports them to make their placement successful. The FFA seems to have a good assessment and understanding of the functioning and support systems for the focus children.

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, FFA social worker, CFPs, family members, the focus children, and their therapist, has formed a good, dependable working system that

has on-going discussions and works collaboratively in case planning. The team members for each of the focus children appear to be attuned to the focus children's strengths and needs and they ensure that the necessary supports are available to assist the focus children in addressing their underlying needs related to child abuse and neglect.

The FFA social worker, focus children and CFPs meet weekly during home visits to discuss any concerns. Additionally, the FFA social workers meet monthly with either the FFA regional director or the other treatment team members to review and discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications to their treatment plans or to strategies to assist them in making progress. The FFA social workers also maintain regular contact with the focus children's DCFS CSWs, via face-to-face contacts, by telephone or via email. One FFA social worker reported that he attempts to coordinate his visits for the focus children with the DCFS CSW's visit schedule to ensure he meets with the DCFS CSW to discuss the focus child's progress and needs. The focus children reported that they are satisfied with the teamwork demonstrated by the team members. The focus children reported that they feel they are included in the team, and feel respected when they are permitted to make their own choices regarding placement, visitation or contact with their family members.

Tracking & Adjustment (5 Good Tracking & Adjustment Process)

Tracking & Adjustment Overview: Intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and their families are generally responsive to changing conditions. The focus children's needs and progress are regularly evaluated, and services provided are modified accordingly. The FFA is aware of the on-going and changing needs of the focus children and modifies the needed services accordingly. The FFA regional director and FFA social worker ensure that barriers encountered and any strategies modified are communicated with key members of the team. Adjustments are promptly made when it is determined that specific services are not producing the desired results. The FFA uses NSPs to closely document and monitor each focus child's progress toward their treatment goals.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In November 2014, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical supports 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 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 and timely NSPs.

In February 2015, the 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 area of Safety. The FFA submitted the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). OHCMD quality assurance staff will continue to provide on-going technical support, training and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.

Concept 7
Family Support & Treatment Centers

March 3, 2015

Jui Ling Ho
Children's Services Administrator
Out of Home Care Management Division
Group Home Monitoring Section
9320 Telestar Avenue, Suite 216
El Monte, CA 91731

Dear Ms. Ho,

Thank you for meeting with us and explaining the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process and describing what the identified scores reached meant for Concept 7. Know that we are proud of our history with County of Los Angeles – Department of Children and Family Services. We are looking forward to your support in carrying through this recommended Quality Improving Plan (QIP) to increase the quality of service and practice standards. The C7 staff remains committed to a continued delivery of quality of care, services to the children, and enhancing our strategies in reducing risks and harm. We value this process and respect that it grants us this opportunity to enhance the children's safety, physical care, stability, permanency and address the various challenges foster children may encounter.

We are submitting this Quality Improving Plan (QIP) as our response to the QA Review you conducted in October 2014. This QIP identifies five strategies to improve the focus area of Safety, starting March 1st, 2015. The area of safety being the only one of nine areas that C7 did not meet the minimum acceptable score. The score received prompted C7-FFA the opportunity to analyze and assess our current practices and learned that there is always room for improvement. We concluded that with additional observation by our professional staff during contact with CFPs, foster children and offering further training to professional staff and the families, our protective strategies will be better in reducing risks of harm. Maintaining a more in depth dialogue among professionals/administrative staff with CFPs, foster children and their teams, C7-FFA will ensure the area of safety is addressed and improved agency wide. Our goal remains to continue providing children with the quality care and services they need. Among other responsibilities for C7-FFA is having the children feel safe and protected, which in turn will offer us the opportunity to be effective in our efforts to enhance their safety, growth and development.

The following is a list of five (5) recommended interventions/strategies ready to adopt, that are geared to improve our agency score in the area of Safety:

1. On a monthly basis, Regional Directors will review I-Track SIR Statistics to assess and analyze patterns in safety related to incidents. Regional Directors will review the generated SIRs related to safety during weekly supervision meetings with the agency social workers. The intent is to broaden the administrators' and agency social workers' perception of prevention, protective strategies and reducing risks of harm. The agency social workers will address incidents with the CFPs and the children, and will elaborate on the importance of child safety, preventing children injuries and reduce the frequency of SIRs related to safety. The agency social workers will continue to document communication with foster families after safety/injury incidents, and provide hands-on interventions, adequate training, and on-going support.

2. The agency social workers will be required to complete a Kinship Care Education D-Rate training consisting of 16 hours. The D-Rate training is geared to help caregivers cope and help caring for children and youth that have emotional and behavioral difficulties. The agency social workers will better prepare foster parents to cope, guide, and help the children and themselves. It is anticipated that by June 2015, all agency social workers will have completed this training.

3. The agency social workers will conduct a minimum of one (1) un-announced home visit during a quarterly period. Conducting un-announced home visits will strengthen the team members' support system, ensuring safety, continuity and gain insight to meeting the needs of foster children and CFPs.

4. The agency social workers will conduct quarterly home inspections that are not in their assigned case load. This strategy will offer another set of eyes, ongoing observation, and review of records in an attempt to ensure safety for the children in placement. The agency social workers will declare the home environment is safe and suitable by meeting all Title 22 requirements. The agency social workers will evaluate the foster parents per proper supervision, nutrition, housekeeping, sanitation and hygiene; including a successful completion of a home inspection.

5. The re-certifications conducted annually will now include a review of the following: History of Child Abuse and Neglect Results, Special Incident Reports and Corrective Action Plans, if applicable. The agency social workers in conjunction with the supervisor will assess foster parents' strengths, areas of need that may justify additional relevant training requirements. This practice will ensure the safety and stability of the placed child.

This concludes our recommendations to the QIP developed in an effort to address and improve the QAR focus area of safety for C7 FFA. We are looking forward to your on-going technical assistance, support and training in an effort to implement this QIP and increase the quality of care and improve our performance standards. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Ana R. Zimmer, MS
Regional Director
LA County Site Administrator

CC: John Peel, Executive Director
Gabby Vidaurreta, MA, Regional Director
David Scorse, Psy. D., Regional Director
Susana Cortes, MSW, Director of Training and Recruitment