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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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July 20, 2017

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
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Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: *for* 
Brandon T. Nichols
Acting Director

**DAVID AND MARGARET HOME 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 the David and Margaret Home Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in April 2017. The FFA has one office located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "in partnership with others, will provide therapeutic foster care services to children and families to protect, nurture and advocate on behalf of children and youth who have been abused and/or neglected and are removed from their 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 all nine focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In June 2017, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas of the QAR.

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

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Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller
Public Information Office
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Terri L. McDonald, Chief Probation Officer
Charles Rich, Executive Director, David and Margaret Home Foster Family Agency
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**DAVID AND MARGARET HOME FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEAR 2016-2017**

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the David and Margaret Home Foster Family Agency (the FFA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017 in April 2017. 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 focus 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, one biological mother, and two service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 23 DCFS placed children in 13 certified foster homes; their overall average length of placement was 18 months. There were no Probation youth placed with the FFA at the time of the review. The focus children's average number of placements was two, their overall average length of placement was 13 months, and their average age was 10. The focus children were randomly selected. At the time of this QAR,

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the Contract Administration Division (CAD) had not conducted their FY 2016-2017 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, interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is six in the area of Safety and five in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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, Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.</p>	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.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	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.

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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.

The OHCMD conducted the previous QAR of the FFA for FY 2015-2016 in March 2016, and noted the FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas. In June 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of that QAR and provided the FFA with technical support to address methods for maintaining and/or improving their level of service. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA continues to provide quality services and supervision of the placed children, as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas of their FY 2016-2017 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2015-2016 Scores	6	6	6	5
2016-2017 Scores	6	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the FFA continues to score at the optimal level. The FFA's certified foster parents provide a good quality of care to the placed children. The FFA ensures appropriate supervision of the placed children at all times and takes responsibility for their safety. The FFA Social Workers conduct formal and informal quality assurance inspections during their monthly visits to the certified foster homes. The FFA Quality Assurance staff also provides training regarding Title 22 Regulations to the certified foster parents during the visits, when needed. The Quality Assurance staff stated that frequency of visits to the certified foster homes is increased if additional support and training is warranted to ensure the safety and well-being of the placed children. The OHCMD noted that the focus children appeared well-adjusted and very comfortable in their placements, as evidenced by positive interactions with their certified foster parents. The focus children reported that their certified

foster parents are always present and make them feel safe and supported. The DCFS CSWs did not express any concerns regarding the FFA. They further reported that the focus children experienced a highly safe living environment and that the certified foster parents are reliable and competent.

In the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide good permanency and stability to the focus children. The FFA staff works with the focus children, their certified foster parents, and the DCFS CSWs to assist in the development of the most suitable permanency plan for the focus children. The permanency goal for two of the focus children is Family Reunification (FR). The first focus child's biological mother has made minimal progress towards achieving her case plans. A Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting will be held to discuss the concurrent case plan goal of Legal Guardianship with his current caregiver. The second focus child's mother is compliant with all court-ordered programs and is consistent with weekly visitation. However, if FR is not successful, the focus child will be adopted by her sibling's adoptive parents. The third focus child is receiving Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) services. The certified foster parent has expressed interest in exploring legal guardianship. The focus child's sibling's adoptive parents are also interested in adoption. None of the focus children have experienced any placement disruptions since being placed with their current certified foster parents. The focus children have established positive relationships with key adult supporters, such as their family members/NREFMs, their certified foster parents, the FFA staff, and the FFA therapist. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA staff does a good job of matching the placed children with the most appropriate certified foster parents at intake to avoid placement disruption.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA is generally effective in maintaining family contact and follows the DCFS CSWs' recommendations. The FFA Social Workers inform each placed child and their certified foster parents of the placed child's visitation court orders to ensure the visits occur. Prior to the scheduled visits, the certified foster parents call the family members/NREFMs to confirm the visits. The FFA staff and certified foster parents shared that this helps to ensure visits occur and reduces the emotional disappointment that may result from cancelled visits. The FFA staff provides transportation when needed, monitors visits on site, and makes every effort to ensure visitation arrangements are convenient for family members/NREFMs. The FFA maintains visitation logs, and if visits are missed, the visits are re-scheduled in a timely manner. Additionally, when visitation is not feasible, the FFA and the certified foster parents encourage and support alternative methods of communication in order to maintain important connections, such as telephone calls or texting. All three focus children stated that they have regular visits with their family members/NREFMs at the FFA office. They shared that the FFA visitation room has a kitchenette where their family members/NREFMs can prepare meals and they can eat together. The second focus child stated that she celebrated her birthday with her mother at the FFA visitation room.

PRACTICE INDICATORS
(Measured over last 90 days)

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2016-2017 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the area of Engagement, the FFA continues to develop a strong rapport with the focus children's DCFS CSWs and consistently engages key parties and the focus children in the decision-making. The FFA staff reported engagement strategies that include accommodating the family members/NREFMs and the DCFS CSWs' schedules to ensure that they are able to attend the team meetings. The focus children reported sharing positive relationships with their certified foster parents and the FFA Social Workers. They further shared that they feel their FFA Social Workers and their DCFS CSWs listen to them and they assist them whenever they have a need or concern. The focus children's certified foster parents stated that the FFA Social Workers would call, text, or e-mail them, at least once a week, to assess how things are going. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA staff maintains regular contact with them regarding the focus children's progress toward achieving their treatment plan goals.

In the areas of Service Needs and Assessment & Linkages, the FFA continues to provide quality services and continually assesses the focus children's needs and status to ensure appropriateness of services and interventions. The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems, and the information necessary to understand the focus children and their families' strengths and needs is frequently updated. The FFA provides a good array of services that fully match intervention strategies identified for the focus children, such as therapy, tutoring, in-home life skills training, and transportation. Two focus children are participating in after-school programs to address their educational needs and are receiving assistance with completing homework assignments. All three focus children are receiving weekly therapeutic services to address their mental health needs. The second focus child is receiving conjoint family therapy with her biological mother to support reunification. Her biological mother reported that the FFA staff has modeled how to be a better mother through role play during the family visits. The FFA Social Workers stated that their assessments are ongoing and that they provide feedback to the placed children, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs to develop the most appropriate goals for each placed child.

In the area of Teamwork, the FFA continues to demonstrate good efforts in leading the team and ensuring the team meets regularly to discuss the placed children's needs and develop their treatment plan goals. The FFA Social Worker Supervisor meets with the FFA Social Workers weekly to discuss and assess the focus children's individual concerns and progress. The FFA Social Workers and the certified foster parents maintain open communication with

the focus children to develop a better understanding of the focus children's functioning, development, and strengths. The focus children and the certified foster parents reported feeling they are a part of the team and they feel supported by the other team members. The DCFS CSWs reported that they have built a good rapport with the FFA Social Workers and certified foster parents, and they maintain consistent communication.

In the area of Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA staff ensured that intervention strategies, supports, and services provided to the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are generally responsive to changing conditions. The FFA staff regularly evaluates the focus children's needs and progress and modifies services provided, accordingly. The FFA is aware of the ongoing and changing needs of the focus children and modifies the needed services accordingly. The FFA Program Director and the FFA Social Workers ensure that any barriers encountered or 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. For example, when initially placed, the first focus child was hoarding food under his bed. The team worked together to lessen the focus child's food anxiety through counseling, helped him build a trusting relationship with his certified foster mother, conducted daily room checks, and held regular team meetings. His FFA Social Worker and his certified foster mother shared that he is more at ease in the certified foster home and over time, the food-hiding behavior gradually decreased. His certified foster mother reported that there have been no recent incidents of hiding food under his bed. The focus child reported that he is happy and he understands that he does not need to worry about food because he is well cared for by his certified foster mother.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

At the time of the QAR, the CAD had not completed their FY 2016-2017 Contract Compliance Review of the FFA. The OHCMD will meet with the CAD and the FFA, upon the completion of the review, to discuss and provide the FFA with technical support, if findings are noted.

In June 2017, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all nine focus areas; therefore, a QIP was not required of the FFA. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to the FFA, as needed.