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August 24, 2016

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

CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES DBA FOSTER FAMILY NETWORK 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 ChildNet Youth and Family Services dba Foster Family Network Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in May 2016. The FFA has three licensed offices. One office is located in the Fourth Supervisorial District; one located in Kern County; and another in Riverside County. The offices provide services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to offer long/short-term foster care and placement for children working toward family reunification and permanency."

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 June 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss 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 focus areas of the QAR.

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

PLB:KR
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Attachments

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CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES DBA FOSTER FAMILY NETWORK
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 the ChildNet Youth and Family Services dba Foster Family Network Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in May 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 45 DCFS placed children in 22 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was eight months and their average age was 10. The focus children were randomly selected. One of the focus children was 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, 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	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 May 2015 and noted opportunities for improvement in the focus areas of Permanency and Teamwork. In August 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 these two areas. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA showed improvement in these two areas, and the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all focus areas on their 2015-2016 QAR.

STATUS INDICATORS
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	6	4	5	6
2015-2016 Scores	6	5	5	5

In the area of Safety, the FFA is providing optimal safety for the focus children. The focus children reported that their certified foster homes are a safe place to live. The first focus child reported that he feels very safe with his current foster mother, and he truly feels like he is at "home". The second focus child reported that he knows that his foster mother really cares about him, and he did not have any safety concerns. The third focus child reported that she feels safe and wants to remain placed with her certified foster mother, because she can count on her for everything. Each of the certified foster parents stated that they communicate with the focus children daily to inquire as to how they are doing at the certified foster home and at school. The FFA Regional Director stated that she directs the FFA Social Workers to ensure that all of the certified foster parents create a safe living environment for the placed children by keeping their homes clean and free of safety hazards. Additionally, the FFA provides its

staff members and the certified foster parents with trainings on a number of topics with safety as the main goal for the placed children.

In the area of Permanency, the OHCMD found that the FFA had fully implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). During the last QAR, the OHCMD found that there was a need for better collaboration between the FFA staff, certified foster parents and the DCFS CSWs to ensure that the permanency plans and concurrent plans are identified and implemented in a timely manner. Further, all efforts made by the FFA to assist the focus children in making progress toward their permanency goals needed to be documented and communicated with key members in the focus children's lives. To address these issues, the FFA is now contacting the DCFS CSWs at the time of a child's initial placement with the FFA to determine what the permanency plan is for the child, as well as obtain concurrent plan information. Additionally, all permanency case plan goals for the placed children are documented in their Needs and Services Plans (NSPs). The FFA Social Worker works closely with the DCFS CSWs, the certified foster parents, and the placed children to facilitate optimal permanency status.

Based on the current QAR, the FFA is providing good services that correspond with each focus child's permanency plan, and the FFA demonstrates efforts to assist the focus children in achieving their permanency goals. The FFA ensures the FFA Social Worker, the focus children, and the certified foster parents are aware of the focus children's permanency plans, and they meet regularly with the DCFS CSWs to discuss permanency goals and options during the home visits and prior to developing the NSPs. Two of the focus children are in the process of transitioning to the care of family members with the assistance of the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). The focus children are expected to be reunified with their relatives in the summer of 2016. The FFA and the certified foster parents collaborated with the focus children's family members and DCFS CSWs to arrange extended visits during spring break. The FFA also encourages these two focus children to maintain regular telephone contact with their family members, as well as to Skype with them to improve communication and strengthen their relationship. The third focus child's permanency plan is Family Reunification with a concurrent case plan of Family Finding. The DCFS CSW is assessing the focus child's step-grandmother's home for possible placement.

In the area of Placement Stability, the focus children have been stable, with no placement or school disruptions while in their current certified foster homes. The FFA and the certified foster parents are committed to working with the focus children, they take responsibility in ensuring that the focus children's needs are met, and they have the children's best interests in mind. For example, one certified foster mother experienced an unfortunate water leak in her home, which forced her to move in with her mother. The certified foster mother did not intend to disrupt the focus child's placement, as she and the focus child had developed a strong bond. The FFA worked diligently to certify her mother's home, providing encouragement and support, including purchasing some of the needed items to comply with certification requirements, including smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and a bed. The focus child expressed his gratitude, as he and his sister, who is also placed in the certified foster home, did not need to be replaced. The focus child further shared that his certified foster mother takes good care of him and his sister. All of the focus children

reported they feel secure and that they are doing well in their certified foster homes. They appeared comfortable and reported they like the certified foster homes in which they are currently placed. The DCFS CSWs reported that the focus children's current placements are stable and are meeting the focus children's needs.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA staff and the certified foster parents encourage the focus children to maintain regular contact with family members and other significant adults in their lives. The FFA Social Worker and the DCFS CSWs for two focus children are working collaboratively with the ICPC to arrange out-of-state visits between the focus children and their respective family members. The focus children shared that visits have gone well, and they are looking forward to visiting them again during summer break. Additionally, one of these two focus children has regular visits with his guardian and the other has regular visits with his biological parents. The third focus child's mother is incarcerated. However, the FFA Social Worker, the DCFS CSW, the certified foster mother, and the focus child's family members worked together to arrange visits between the focus child and her mother. The focus child has visited with her mother on two occasions. The focus child shared that she felt comfortable seeing her mother and she is proud of her, as she is completing her court-ordered services. This focus child also has monthly visits with her step-grandmother. All of the focus children reported that they were happy during the visits with their family members. The focus children reported that their certified foster parents and their FFA Social Workers are supportive of them maintaining contact with family members and help arrange visits.

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 area of Engagement, the FFA continues to make good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions being made for them. Based on the QAR interviews, it appears the FFA staff maintains good communication with the DCFS CSWs, the focus children, the certified foster parents, school teachers, therapists, and their siblings' caregivers. The focus children reported sharing positive relationships with their certified foster parents and the FFA Social Workers, as they are people that they could count on. The DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA Social Workers are accessible. They further stated that the FFA Social Workers always maintain communication with them, invite them to NSP meetings and consistently provide updates regarding the focus children.

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 provides a good array of services that fully match intervention strategies identified for the focus children, such as counseling, tutoring, and transportation. Two of the focus children are receiving Wraparound Services, Therapeutic Behavioral Services, as well as educational support services through their Individualized Education Plan. The FFA works closely with the DCFS CSWs, the service providers, and the certified foster parents to coordinate services for these focus children. The third focus child is receiving tutoring, as well as weekly individual therapy. The focus child is also enrolled in a dance class. The FFA generally understands the focus children's functioning and support systems, and information necessary to understand the focus children and their families' strengths and needs is frequently updated. The FFA Social Workers' supervisor meets with the FFA Social Workers bi-weekly to assess and discuss the focus children's individual needs and progress. The FFA Social Workers and the certified foster parents maintain open communication with the focus children and monitor them to gain a clear picture of the focus children's functioning, strengths and needs.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA had fully implemented their 2014-2015 QIP. During the last QAR, the OHCMD found that not all key supporters were included as part of the team or involved in the decision-making process. To address this, the FFA Social Workers invite the DCFS CSWs to the home visits or NSP development meetings to ensure collaboration between the focus children, certified foster parents, FFA Social Worker, as well as to ensure all key people in the focus children's lives are part of the decision-making process. Based on the interviews, the FFA has demonstrated a good job of leading the team and ensuring the team meets regularly to prepare treatment plans and discuss the needs of the placed children. The FFA staff works to ensure a rapport has been developed between the team members. The FFA Social Workers also meet at least monthly with the FFA administration to review and discuss the focus children's progress and adjust treatment goals, if appropriate. The FFA works collaboratively with the team members from the Wraparound Services and Therapeutic Based Services teams for two of the focus children. The FFA participates in the regular meetings held by the service providers, and the FFA includes the service providers in discussions regarding the focus children's progress and areas needing improvement. The focus children and 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 Worker and certified foster parents, and they stay in constant communication.

In the area of Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA staff and the certified foster parents continuously monitor, track, and communicate the focus children's status and progress with the team members, and they work together to ensure the focus children's needs are met. For example, the FFA Regional Director was informed that one focus child's certified foster mother was requesting additional support from the FFA due to the focus child presenting with increasing emotional and behavioral concerns. The FFA Regional Director spoke with the certified foster mother and requested an assessment of the children in her home. Subsequently, the FFA determined that additional supports were necessary to assist the certified foster mother in addressing the mental health needs of the focus child and his sister.

The FFA Regional Director is working with the focus child's DCFS CSW in referring the children to the Intensive Treatment Foster Care Program. The FFA is constantly reviewing services provided to the placed children and evaluates concerns brought to their attention to ensure positive outcomes. For example, one focus child expressed concerns about his visitation schedule with his family members. The focus child reported that the visits with his paternal grandmother and siblings took place on Friday evenings. However, because of his school schedule, the activities the family could participate in were limited. The focus child wanted to spend more quality time with his family members. The FFA worked with the focus child's paternal grandmother, the certified foster mother, and the siblings' caregivers to reschedule the visits to Saturday mornings. The focus child is happy with the change. He reported that he likes the new schedule better, and he has more time to share and play with his siblings.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In June 2015, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2014-2015 Contract Compliance Review findings in the area of Licensure/Contract Requirements. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can be in full compliance with Title 22 Regulations and remain free from Community Care Licensing citations.

In June 2016, 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 focus areas; a QIP was not requested of the FFA. However, the OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to the FFA.