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August 24, 2016

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

FIVE ACRES 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 Five Acres Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 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 help families raise children to become caring and productive adults by building on their strengths and those of their communities by working to: prevent child abuse and neglect; care for, treat and educate emotionally disturbed, abused and neglected children and their families in residential and outreached programs; advance the welfare of children and families by research, advocacy and collaboration; and strive for the highest standards of excellence by professionals and volunteers."

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 May 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 areas; therefore, the FFA was not required to submit a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

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

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
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FIVE ACRES 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 Five Acres Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in February 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, two Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, three certified foster parents, and two service providers.

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 five, their overall average length of placement was eight months and their average age was eight. 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	6 - Optimal Status	The focus children have optimal permanency. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and all team members have evidence 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	6 - Optimal Supports and Services	An excellent array of supports and services fully matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are substantially 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	6 - Optimal Teamwork	The team contains all of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed an excellent, consistent 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 an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of 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 this area. Based on the information below, 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	6	6	5

In the area of Safety, the FFA continues to score at an optimal level for its provision of services to ensure the safety of the placed children. The focus children have highly safe living situations with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children at all times. The focus children reported that their certified foster parents make them feel safe and welcomed in their homes. During the Quality Assurance Reviewer's visit to the certified foster homes, it was noted that the focus children appeared to feel safe, comfortable and protected with and around their certified foster parents because the focus children were at ease in the presence of their certified foster parents. The focus children's FFA Social Workers conduct weekly visits to the certified foster homes to assess and address any child safety concerns. As part of the initial certification and recertification process, the certified foster parents are presented with a myriad of topics, to include safety issues, and how to develop a Safety Plan when a child presents suicidal ideation. The placed child's team

members develop the Safety Plan; the placed child's school is notified, and the certified foster parents supervise the placed children at all times.

The FFA demonstrated increased performance in the areas of Permanency and Placement Stability. The FFA is providing optimal permanency for the focus children in ensuring the best permanent plan for the focus children is developed. At the time of placement, the FFA begins to explore adoption as the permanent plan for all placed children, in the event Family Reunification is not possible. The permanent plan for two focus children is adoption with their current certified foster parents. The third focus child's permanent plan is Family Reunification with a family member from out-of-state. An Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children has been initiated. If the results are not positive, the focus children's current certified foster parents will continue with the adoption process. The FFA provides optimal placement stability for the focus children. The FFA's intake process includes appropriately matching the placed children with certified foster parents. The intake coordinator gathers all pertinent information from the placed child's file and contacts the DCFS CSW for any additional information. This information is then presented to the FFA Supervising Social Worker to make a determination as to which certified foster parent is best suited for the placed child. Also, during the FFA Social Worker's weekly visits to the certified foster homes, they meet individually with placed children and the certified foster parents to continually assess their compatibility. The FFA utilizes team meetings to assess the focus children's adjustment and stability in their certified foster homes. The focus children's placements have been stable with no placement or school disruptions. The focus children appeared to be adapting well in their current foster homes and reported feeling safe, comfortable, and respected; there have been no major issues or concerns. The focus children reported their needs are being met and have formed a good, supportive relationship with their caregivers. The certified foster parents praised the focus children's FFA therapist and rehabilitation specialist and reported that they were instrumental not only in assisting the focus children to adjust to their certified foster homes and certified foster parents, but more than anything, being available to them to learn and understand what it means to be an adoptive parent. The certified foster parents also reported that the FFA therapist and the rehabilitation specialist also use role play with the certified foster parents and the placed children. They present different scenarios to assist the certified foster parents to work through various behavioral challenges. The certified foster parents stated that without the support of the FFA therapist and specialist, it would have been almost impossible to continue with the adoption process.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA continues to provide substantially acceptable visitation and maintenance of family connections for the focus children. The FFA Social Worker and the certified foster parents work with the DCFS CSWs and the placed children to ensure that the court visitation orders are met. The certified foster parents and the FFA Social Workers provide transportation and monitoring of visits, as needed. The FFA staff and certified foster parents encourage placed children to visit and maintain telephone contact with their family members/NREFMs. The two focus children who are in the process of being adopted by their certified foster parents do not have contact with family members. However, the first focus child's certified foster parents are encouraging him to have telephone contact with an aunt who has five of his siblings placed with her. The third focus child maintains telephone contact with a family member who resides out-of-state. This family member has also visited the focus child.

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	6	5	6	5

In the areas of Engagement and Service Needs, the FFA demonstrated increased performance. The FFA is providing optimal services to the placed children. The FFA has developed a strong rapport with the focus children, their certified foster parents, the focus children's family members, the focus children's therapist, the rehabilitation specialist, and their DCFS CSWs. The FFA consistently will engage key parties and the focus children in decisions that are made on behalf of the focus children. The focus children reported that they can count on their certified foster parents and their FFA Social Worker. The FFA staff will communicate with service providers via e-mails, telephone, and progress reports to keep them abreast of the focus children's progress. The FFA therapist is the liaison with all key parties and they coordinate meetings among the other team members, the focus children, their certified foster parents, and the placed children's family members/NREFMs to arrange meetings to develop the focus children's NSPs and/or to modify the focus children's goals. The FFA therapist will also request an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the placed children when children's educational needs require an assessment. The FFA therapist will invite the placed children's family members/NREFMs and the DCFS CSW to attend the IEP meeting. The FFA therapist has quarterly meetings with the FFA Social Worker and the rehabilitation specialist to discuss the focus children's treatment goals and to make any modifications to the goals if needed. If goal modifications are made, the DCFS CSW will be contacted to be advised of the change. The FFA therapist also provides biweekly counseling to the focus children in their certified foster homes and has provided last minute crisis intervention when the focus children's acting out behavior required her to assist the certified foster parents. Additionally, the FFA therapist provides family therapy for placed children and their family members when Family Reunification is the permanency plan. The FFA provides a good array of support, services and extracurricular activities to help the placed children make progress toward their planned outcomes. For the placed children in high school, the FFA has developed a partnership with the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Guardian Scholars wherein the identified children are invited to attend a summer program, staying on campus to learn academic and life skills. All the focus children are being provided with individual counseling and one focus child is being provided with tutoring services. The focus children reported participating in extracurricular activities such as dancing, art classes, basketball, soccer and swimming.

In the areas of Assessment & Linkages and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA has an understanding of the focus children's functioning and support systems. The FFA therapist conducts initial therapeutic assessments to determine services that need to be provided for the focus children, their certified foster parents and the family members, and ensure timely

delivery of services. The FFA therapist also reported meeting with the FFA Social Workers once a week to discuss the focus children's strengths, stressors and life events that may affect the focus children's behavior. Additionally, during the FFA Social Worker's visits to the certified foster home, they assess each placed child individually to ensure progress is being made towards their case plan and Needs and Services Plan (NSP) goals. The FFA's intervention strategies, supports, and services provided, generally reflect the focus children's needs. The FFA Supervising Social Worker and the FFA Social Workers review the focus children's status on a weekly basis and tracks progress, utilizing the Comprehensive Assessment of Needs and Services (CANS) tool. The FFA Social Workers share the CANS report with the DCFS CSWs on a monthly basis. The FFA Social Workers also maintain telephonic contact with the DCFS CSWs to discuss the focus children's status. The DCFS CSWs stated that they receive NSPs on a quarterly basis, and are called and e-mailed regularly by the FFA Social Workers to provide updates.

In the area of Teamwork, the OHCMD found that the FFA had implemented the 2014-2015 QIP and scored at the optimal level. The FFA was to ensure that team meetings were to take place at least quarterly and that all team members were invited to participate in team meetings. The FFA therapist coordinates and participates in team meetings as well. The FFA Social Workers and their supervisor meet weekly to discuss the focus children's progress and any modifications that need to be made to their case plan. The OHCMD noted that the FFA now ensures that quarterly meetings are conducted and there is communication among the focus children's team members, which include the focus children and their certified foster parents, the focus children's family members/NREFMs, the FFA Social Workers and DCFS CSWs, and the FFA therapist and rehabilitation specialist. There is now a good collaboration between the team members and information is being communicated on a flow basis via telephone calls, e-mails and written reports. The FFA Social Workers attempt to coordinate their visits with the focus children and the DCFS CSWs to ensure they meet to discuss the focus children's progress and needs. If they are unable to coordinate the meetings, the FFA Social Workers will contact the DCFS CSWs for their input. The focus children's FFA therapist is an active member of the team and reported participating in the monthly and quarterly face-to-face team meetings with the FFA Social Workers, the focus children, and their certified foster parents to provide updates, and obtains input regarding services being provided to the focus children.

NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES

In March 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements, Facility and Environment, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery, and Psychotropic Medication. Technical support was provided on the FFA's Community Care Licensing citations; how the FFA can ensure that weekly allowance logs are individualized, that amounts received by the placed children is recorded in the allowance log, and logs are signed by the placed children; how the FFA can ensure that updated NSPs are comprehensive; children's Psychotropic Medication Authorizations are renewed timely, and psychotropic evaluations are on file.

In May 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 9 areas; therefore, the FFA was not required to submit a QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA in maintaining their services to DCFS placed children.