COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

May 2, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **AVIVA FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Aviva Family & Children's Services Foster Family Agency (Aviva or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider. The review was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Countywide Contract Monitoring Division.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Aviva, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Aviva is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of nine certified foster homes in which 21 DCFS children were placed. Aviva is located in the Third District.

DCFS pays Aviva a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Aviva receives between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, the Agency pays the foster parents between $624 and $790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2004-05, DCFS paid Aviva approximately $348,000.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Aviva was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Aviva's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether the Agency received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Aviva staff, the children and the foster parents. Our review also included visits to a sample of certified foster homes to complete a home inspection.

Results of Review

Overall, Aviva provided the services required by the County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, Aviva maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social worker caseloads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22.

Aviva did not prepare the Needs and Services Plans in accordance with the County contract. The four Needs and Services Plans sampled did not have goals that were specific, time-limited and measurable as required. In addition, Aviva needs to ensure that staff document their monthly contact with the children's DCFS social workers.

The details of our review, along with recommendation for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On April 12, 2006, we discussed our report with Aviva who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Aviva management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Aviva for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, PhD., Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Andrew Diamond, CEO, Aviva Family & Children's Services
Shari London, Director, Aviva Foster Family Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006
AVIVA FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

To determine whether Aviva Family & Children's Services Foster Family Agency (Aviva or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations.

Verification

We visited two of the 11 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Aviva billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for in August and September 2005 and interviewed two of the three foster parents and the four children placed in the two homes. We also reviewed the documentation in the case files for the three foster parents and four children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Overall, Aviva provided the services required by the County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Aviva met their expectations and the children stated they enjoy living with their foster parents. Both foster parents interviewed stated the Agency's director and social workers were knowledgeable, supportive, and available at all times. We also noted that the Agency maintained the appropriate staffing levels and that case loads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22. Additionally, Aviva paid their foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

Aviva needs to ensure that the children's Needs and Services Plans contain all the elements required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition the Agency needs to ensure foster parents complete the required amount of training hours specified in the County contract. Aviva also needs to ensure that staff document their monthly contact with the children's DCFS social workers. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Parent Certification

- One (33%) of the three foster parents did not complete 15 hours of ongoing training prior to recertification as required by Title 22 regulations and the County contract. The foster father completed only four hours of on-going training. The foster mother

who is the children's primary caregiver exceeded the required hours of ongoing training.

Needs and Services Plans

- The four (100%) Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not have goals that were specific, time-limited and measurable as required by the County contract.

Reporting Requirements

- The DCFS social worker interviewed stated that Aviva's social worker contacts her on a monthly basis to update her on the two children assigned to her caseload. However, two (50%) of the four children's case files did not contain documentation that Aviva's social worker contacted the children's DCFS social workers on a monthly basis to discuss the children's progress as required by the County contract.

Aviva needs to ensure that their foster parents complete the necessary hours of ongoing training prior to recertification. Aviva also needs to ensure that its Needs and Services Plan contain goals that are specific, time-limited and measurable. In addition, Aviva needs to ensure that staff document contact with the children's DCFS social worker on a monthly basis to discuss the children's progress.

Recommendations

Aviva management:

1. **Ensure that foster parents complete the required number of ongoing training hours prior to recertification.**

2. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans contain goals that are specific, measurable and time-limited.**

3. **Ensure that staff document contact with the children's DCFS social worker on a monthly basis to discuss the children's progress.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Aviva billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed four children placed in two certified foster homes and two of the three foster parents to confirm the services Aviva billed to DCFS.

Results

The program participants interviewed stated that the services they received from Aviva met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly and were available to them.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether social worker's case load exceed 15 children and whether the supervising social worker did not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Aviva's director and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for August and September 2005.

Results

The social worker's caseloads averaged 10 children and the supervising social worker supervised one social worker during August and September 2005.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Aviva's staff meet the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Aviva conducted hiring clearances for staff assigned the County contract.

Verification

We interviewed Aviva's director. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Aviva's director, supervising social worker and social worker possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Aviva completed hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

Aviva Family and Children's Services

Incorporated as Hamburger Home Founded 1915

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Annenberg Residential Center
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Aviva Girls Graduate House
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Aviva Community Services Community Mental Health Services
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President/CEO
Andrew R. Diamond, LCSW

April 14, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

Re: Response to Contract Review Audit of December 12, 2005

We are in receipt of the contract compliance review which was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Countywide Contract Monitoring Division. The following is the response to the findings and recommendations from above mentioned audit.

Foster Parent Certification

One of three foster parents residing in one of two foster homes visited did not complete 15 hours of ongoing training prior to recertification as required by Title 22 regulations and the County contract. The foster mother in this home, who is the children's primary caregiver, did exceed the required amount of ongoing training hours. However, the foster father completed only four hours of training.

Response: In the one family where there was a problem, the foster father completed four hours of training (CPR). However, the foster mother, the primary caregiver, exceeded the required amount of ongoing training (15 hours). In fact, it should be noted that the foster mother who is the primary caregiver completed almost double the required number of hours of training (28 hours). It should also be noted that part of the problem stems from the County Contract which requires that a certain number of hours of training be outside the foster parents' home. The foster father's work schedule precluded his attending our scheduled out of home training, although we would have provided more training for him in the home had the County Contract permitted it. While we believe this is a problem with the County Contract, the agency will ensure that both parents in a two parent foster family complete at a minimum the required 15 hours of training.

Needs and Services Plans

Four of four Needs and Services Plans did not have goals that were specific, time-limited and measurable as required by the County contract.

Response: In each of the cases evaluated Needs and Services Plans were present. They were descript in terms of the services that were being provided to each client and it was clear that the client was in a warm, safe, structured and nurturing environment. All of the needs of the clients were being met as well as all expectations by county workers were being met. The goals developed in agency quarterly reports were expressed in a specific time-limited way through both short-term and long-term measures. The agency will ensure that goals developed will be more specific and of a more measurable nature.

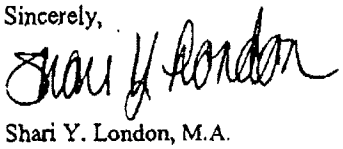
Reporting Requirements

Two of four children's files did not contain documentation that the DCFS social workers were updated on a monthly basis concerning the child's progress as required by the County contract. Contact was made with the DCFS social worker and verification was obtained that Aviva's social workers do maintain regular contact.

Response: We are pleased that it was evident that we are updating the DCFS social workers regularly. We produced phone records which showed unsuccessful attempts to reach the DCFS workers in all cases where there was not an entry in the file. Aviva social workers make various and numerous contacts with the DCFS social workers on a monthly basis throughout the duration of a foster placement. The county workers are well informed as to the progress that a child is making throughout the course of their placement, as well as any significant incidents that may occur. The agency will ensure that Aviva social workers will more clearly document their contacts (or unsuccessful attempts to contact) county placement workers in the children's files.

I believe this clarifies issues addresses in the audit report. Please contact me should you have any questions regarding this response.

Sincerely,



Shari Y. London, M.A.
Foster Family & Adoption Agency – Director
Aviva Family & Children's Services

Cc: Ira J. Kruskol, LCSW, BCD
VP Community Services
Aviva Family & Children's Services

Andrew Diamond, LCSW
President & CEO
Aviva Family & Children's Services

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