COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

July 6, 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: **ETTIE LEE YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services Foster Family Agency (Ettie Lee or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Ettie Lee, 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.

Ettie Lee 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 36 certified foster homes in which 55 DCFS children were placed. Ettie Lee is located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays Ettie Lee 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, Ettie Lee receives between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between $624 and $790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2005-06, through May 2006, DCFS paid Ettie Lee approximately $1,003,000.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Ettie Lee was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated the Agency's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Ettie Lee 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 Ettie Lee staff, the children and the foster parents. We also visited a number of certified foster homes.

Results of Review

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, Ettie Lee maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social worker caseloads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22. Ettie Lee also paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

The Agency did not always ensure that the foster parents each received the 15 hours of training that is required for their annual recertification. One of the five foster parents reviewed received only three hours of training. A second foster parent received only eight hours of training. The remaining three foster parents received the appropriate level of training.

The Agency also did not always complete the children's Needs and Services Plans or the Quarterly Reports in accordance with the County contract. For example, the eight Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not discuss the children's ability to groom and care for themselves.

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

Review of Report

On June 16, 2006, we discussed our report with Ettie Lee who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Ettie Lee's management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Ettie Lee 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
Dr. David Sanders, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Clayton Downey, CEO, Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services
Saundra Johnson, Director, Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005
ETTIE LEE YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services Foster Family Agency (Ettie Lee or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations.

Verification

We visited four of the 36 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Ettie Lee billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for in September and October 2005 and interviewed four of the five foster parents and seven of the eight children placed in the four homes. We also reviewed the case files of the five foster parents and the eight children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Generally, Ettie Lee provided the services required in the County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Ettie Lee met their expectations and the children stated they enjoy living with their foster parents. Additionally, Ettie Lee paid their foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

Ettie Lee needs to ensure that foster parents receive the required on-going training hours required by the County contract prior to the parent's annual recertification. In addition, the Agency needs to ensure Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all information required by the County contract. Ettie Lee also needs to ensure that staff contact children's DCFS social worker monthly concerning the children's progress. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitations

- One (25%) of four homes visited had a room that the children had access to where the glass in the room's window was broken and jagged which posed a safety hazard. The County contract requires Ettie Lee to monitor to ensure that foster homes are safe and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children. Prior to the conclusion of the audit, Ettie Lee provided documentation that the glass in the window had been replaced.

Foster Parent Certification

- Two (40%) of five certified foster parents did not complete 15 hours of ongoing training prior to annual re-certification as required by the County contract. One foster parent completed eight hours of training and the other foster parent completed three hours of training.

Needs and Services Plans

- The Needs and Services Plans developed for all eight children did not evaluate the children's ability to groom and care for themselves as required by the County contract. Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency included this information in subsequent Needs and Services Plans.

- Four (50%) of the eight children's Needs and Services Plans were not specific to the children. Even though the ages of the children ranged from six to 14 years old, two of the four plans were identical and all four plans contained identical educational goals. The County contract requires Ettie Lee's social workers to develop comprehensive individualized Needs and Services Plans that are specific to each child.

- Three (38%) of the eight Needs and Services Plans did not contain the written approval of the children's DCFS social worker prior to implementing the plan as required by the County contract.

Reporting Requirements

- Three (75%) of the four Quarterly Reports for children whose age was 14 years or older did not include the children's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required by the County contract.

- Six (75%) of the eight Quarterly Reports did not contain modifications to the children's treatment plan or a discussion regarding a reassessment of unmet needs and efforts made to meet those needs as required by the County contract.

Children's Records

- Four (50%) of the eight children's case files did not contain documentation that DCFS social workers were updated by telephone on a monthly basis concerning the children's progress as required by the County contract.

- One (13%) of the eight children's case files did not contain adequate documentation that weekly visits with the child occurred during the child's first 90 days of placement. For five consecutive weeks, the case notes documenting the weekly visits were a series of identical photocopied case notes that did not sufficiently document the weekly visits. The County contract requires that Ettie Lee's social workers conduct

weekly face-to-face visits with children during the first three months of placement and document the visits.

Recommendations

Ettie Lee management:

1. **Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract and Title 22 Regulations.**

2. **Ensure that foster homes are safe and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children.**

3. **Ensure that foster parents complete the required number of training hours prior to their annual recertification.**

4. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all information required by the County contract.**

5. **Ensure that staff contact the DCFS social workers on a monthly basis to discuss children's progress.**

6. **Ensure that staff conduct and appropriately document the required number of visits to foster children.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed seven children placed in four Ettie Lee certified foster homes and four foster parents.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they receive from Ettie Lee met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly. The children interviewed also stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and that they liked their assigned social worker.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed the director and supervising social worker and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for September and October 2005.

Results

The five social workers maintained an average caseload of 11 cases and the supervising social worker supervised five social workers during the months of September and October 2005.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Ettie Lee's director and supervising social worker. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, ongoing training and performance evaluations.

Results

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

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

ETTIE LEE
Youth & Family Services

Saving lives. Changing lives. Building hope for youth and families.

Serving Children & Families since 1950

June 15, 2006

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

FROM: Saundra Johnson (SJ.)
Director of Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services

SUBJECT: ETTIE LEE YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW

In response to the findings that were reviewed by the Auditor-Controller's Office, we have completed our correction action plan summarized as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract and Title 22 Regulations.**
   a. *Foster homes are visited by agency social workers no less than two times a month and home inspections are conducted unannounced monthly. Home inspection forms are turned into the trainer/recruiter and filed in a special folder. Corrections are given a deadline and followed up by the agency social worker to ensure that the work was completed.*
   b. *An audit tool is used in supervision with the social workers to review and ensure that the homes comply with the County Contract and Title 22 Regulations as well as National Regulations (COA).*

2. **Ensure that foster homes are safe and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children.**
   a. *Certified homes are visited by agency social workers a minimal of two times a month and all home inspections are conducted unannounced. Deadlines are set with the foster parents for the correction to be completed. This is monitored by the social workers assigned to that particular home. Paperwork documenting the*

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corrections are turned into the Trainer/Recruiter who keeps home inspections on file. A memo is sent to the director if a foster home's corrections were not completed within the appropriate time-frame. In addition, Ettie Lee's Therapists and Mental Health Specialists were trained and given a copy of the home inspection. Therapist and mental health specialist are trained and given a copy of the home inspection. When they go to the home, they will only observe the most obvious and report back to the social worker assigned to that particular home of any problems needing immediate attention. Social workers will then follow-up on any outstanding corrections. Ettie Lee's Trainer Recruiter also conducts a yearly home inspection before re-certification is due.

b. *Various consequences are given if foster parents continue to ignore citations:*
   i. *Conference with director to assess problem*
   ii. *Trainings*
   iii. *Mutual Agreement Contract*
   iv. *Placement Hold*
   v. *Decertification*

c. *One foster home was cited because of a broken window. This, however, was replaced with a new window.*

3. **Ensure that foster parents complete the required number of training hours prior to their annual re-certification.**

a. *A revised annual training schedule has been provided for foster parents so that they will have more options available to them. Letters were sent to all foster parents reminding them of the importance of training and listed all of the ways to obtain their mandatory hours. Twelve hours are to be done at Ettie Lee Agency and the other twelve hours can be completed by way of "on line courses", videos and articles. Proof of training will be collected and filed.*

b. *Mr. and Mrs. Hernandez were cited for not having enough training hours. Mr. and Mrs. Hernandez have been confronted with this problem and have agreed to have the amount of mandatory training hours completed before their re-certification date. Two of the foster children in their home will be emancipated at the end of this month and the other minor will go to another foster home or higher level of care. Foster children will not go into this home if Mr. and Mrs. Hernandez do not put on effort into completing their training hours.*

c. *Training will be tracked and monitored by the director, trainer/recruiter and administrator assistant. The administrator*

assistant will input the training information into the computer. The administrator assistant will meet with the director and trainer/recruiter on a regular basis to review families that need to complete their hours.

4. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all information required by the County Contract.**
   a. *Training was completed by Patricia Gieselman, Vice President of Clinical Services and designer of the Quarterly and Needs and Services Plans. The focus was on specific and measurable goals. Mrs. Gieselman also reviewed with staff, modifications to the treatment plan regarding a reassessment of unmet needs and events made to meet those needs required by the county contract. Staff were trained to develop comprehensive individualized Needs and Services Plans that are specific to each child.*
   b. *Administrative Assistant added the necessary information such as "grooming and personal care" that had been omitted on the previous reports. Before signing reports, the director will assess and will read the reports to ensure compliance with the above requirement.*
   c. *Written approval from the CSW for implementing the Needs and Services Plan was missing in some of the reports, however, the social workers have been trained by the director, Saundra Johnson, to document as proof that they tried to contact the CSW and then if no response call the SCSW. Audit tools are used in supervision and turned in once a month. This will enable the social workers and director to monitor this requirement on an ongoing basis.*
   d. *Some emancipation contracts were missing from some of the quarterly reports. Social Workers were trained by the director, Saundra Johnson, to send an emancipation contract with each quarterly so that the CSW can complete. If CSW does not return the emancipation contract, it will serve as proof that the agency social worker followed-up with the required county regulation.*
   e. *The emancipation contract will be monitored by the internal audit tool that is turned in monthly. Social workers have also added in their report that the emancipation contract has been attached.*

5. **Ensure that staff contact the DCFS social workers on a monthly basis to discuss children's progress.**
   a. *Director, Saundra Johnson, trained staff to update county social workers on a monthly basis with specific information concerning the child's progress and needs.*
   b. *The audit tool monitors this requirement monthly.*

6. **Ensure that staff conduct and appropriately document the required number of visits to foster children.**
   a. *Case notes in some files were redundant and did not reflect that a social worker had visited the foster child.*
   b. *The director monitors this requirement with the audit tool. This information is also reviewed by the director when reports are turned in for signature.*

The above corrections have been implemented in accordance with the County Contract and Title 22 Regulations. Supervision, audit tools, trainings, meetings, documentations, regular social work visits, and home inspections are monitoring tools for ongoing compliance.

Saundra Johnson, MA., MFT.
Director of Foster Care