COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

August 21, 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: **GREATEST LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Greatest Love Foster Family Agency (Greatest Love or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Greatest Love, 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.

Greatest Love is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Greatest Love oversees a total of 34 certified foster homes in which 69 DCFS children were placed. Greatest Love's headquarters is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Greatest Love 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, Greatest Love 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 Greatest Love approximately $1,150,000.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

Greatest Love needs to improve their oversight of their foster homes. Unsafe conditions existed at two of the five homes we visited. These conditions should have been detected and corrected by the Agency's social workers during their routine visits to the homes. One home had numerous safety and maintenance violations. At the time of our visit, the home was infested with roaches, the bathroom's toilet was unclean, the kitchen sink contained a large pile of dirty dishes, and the hallway leading to the child's bedroom did not contain a smoke detector as required by the County contract. In addition, the backdoor to the home contained a two inch gap between the floor and the bottom of the door, leaving a space wide enough for insects, small animals and cold air to enter the home. The child's bedding material also needed cleaning. At the conclusion of our visit, we notified Greatest Love's management of the home's deficiencies, and the Agency immediately removed the child and decertified the foster parent.

The door to the children's bedroom in a second home did not have a door knob. The doorknob hole on the bedroom door was stuffed with material, and it was difficult to properly close the door. In addition, the home had an unlocked tool shed containing sharp tools that was accessible by the children. There was also a large amount of trash in the backyard.

In addition, Greatest Love did not properly assess three homes prior to placing more than two children in the homes as required by the County contract. Greatest Love also did not maintain current court authorizations for three of four children on psychotropic medication, and the medications were not incorporated into the children's Needs and Services Plans.

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

Review of Report

On August 1, 2006 we discussed our report with Greatest Love's management who were in general agreement with the findings. In their attached response, Greatest Love management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Greatest Love 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
Joan Smith, Acting Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Dr. Wayne Kelley, Executive Director, Greatest Love Foster Family Agency
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006
GREATEST LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited 5 of the 34 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Greatest Love billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in November and December 2005 and interviewed the 5 foster parents and 10 of the 14 children placed in the 5 homes. We also reviewed the case files for the 5 foster parents and 10 children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

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.

Greatest Love needs to improve their oversight of their foster homes to ensure the homes are safe and comply with the provisions of Title 22 and the County contract. In addition Greatest Love needs to ensure that current court authorizations are maintained for children on psychotropic medications and that the medications are incorporated into the children's Needs and Services Plans.

Foster Home Visitations

- One (20%) of the five homes visited had numerous safety and maintenance violations and should not have had children placed in the home. The child's bedroom had a stained dirty sheet as the only bed covering and pillows without pillow cases. The home was infested with roaches. They were found in the kitchen cabinets and on the floors and walls of the home. The bathroom toilet was filthy, a pile of dirt and debris was left on the living room floor, and a large pile of dirty dishes was in the kitchen sink. In addition, the home's back door had a two inch gap at the bottom of the door, leaving a space wide enough for insects, rodents and cold air to enter the home.

Also, the home did not have an emergency plan, conduct semi-annual disaster drills, have an adequate first aid kit or post an emergency contact sheet as required by the County contract. The home did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the child's bedroom and did not have an adequately supplied first-aid kit as required by the County contract. At the conclusion of our inspection, we notified Greatest Love management of the home's deficiencies, and the Agency immediately removed the child and decertified the foster parent.

- One (20%) of five homes visited did not have a door knob on the children's bedroom door. The door knob hole was stuffed with material, and it was difficult to close the door. The home also had an unlocked tool shed in the backyard that contained sharp gardening tools that was accessible by the children. In addition, there was a large amount of garbage in the back yard of this home. The County contract requires Agencies to monitor to ensure that foster parents provide a home and yards that are safe, appropriately furnished and well maintained with acceptable housekeeping.

- One (20%) of five homes visited did not have operable safety release devices on the security bars on the window in the children's bedroom. The County contract requires that each sleeping area shall have at least one operable window or door that ensures a safe direct exit to the outside. In addition, this home did not have adequate closet or clothes storage space for the two children placed in the home. The closet and dresser in the children's bedroom were used by the foster parent's biological children. As a result, the foster children stored their clothes in a hallway linen closet. The County contract requires that each child's bedroom shall have portable or permanent closets and storage space to accommodate the children's clothing and personal belongings. Subsequent to the conclusion of our review, the foster parent replaced the security bars in the children's bedroom and removed the biological children's clothing from the foster children's bedroom to allow the foster children to use the closet and dresser.

- One (20%) of five home's first aid kit did not contain all of the items required by the County contract. For example, this home's first aid kit did not include items for cleaning and dressing wounds as required by the County contract.

Foster Parent Certification

- Three (60%) of five foster homes were not assessed by Greatest Love to evaluate the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home as required by the County contract. An average of four children were placed in each home.

- Greatest Love did not have proof of a current driver's license or automobile insurance for the foster parent's designated driver as required by the County contract for one (20%) of five foster homes. Subsequent to the conclusion of our

review, the Agency provided documentation that the designated driver for this foster parent had a current license and automobile insurance.

- One (20%) of the five foster parents did not complete the required hours of continuing education during her first year of certification. The foster parent completed nine of the twelve hours of continuing education required by the County contract during her first year of certification.

Medical Services

- Greatest Love did not have current court authorizations in the children's case files for three (75%) of four children taking psychotropic medications. The authorizations in the children's files had expired an average of five months prior to our review. Subsequent to the issuance of this report, the Agency provided documentation that current court authorizations had been obtained for the medications.

- One (10%) of ten children did not receive his annual dental exam within the timeframes specified in the County contract. At the time of our review, the child's annual dental exam was seven months past due. Subsequent to the issuance of this report, the child was placed with another Foster Family Agency.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- Three (30%) of ten Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not include information on the child's personal care and grooming or the child's ability to manage his/her own money as required by the County contract.

- All four children taking psychotropic medications did not have the medications incorporated into their Needs and Services Plan as required by the County contract.

- The one Quarterly Report for a child over 14 years old did not include a copy of the child's Emancipation Preparation Contract or a discussion of the child's Transitional Independent Living Plan as required by the County contract.

Children's Case Files

- One (10%) of ten children's case files reviewed did not meet the placement criteria outlined in Greatest Love's Program Statement. This child was placed with the Agency after being discharged from the hospital and was diagnosed with shaken baby syndrome. In addition, the child's discharge papers indicated the child was possibly blind with subdural hematomas and that the prognosis for the child was guarded. Greatest Love's Program Statement and the Foster Family Agency license do not include placements for medically fragile children. As of the issuance of this report, the child is in the final process of being "fast-tracked" for adoption.

Recommendations

Greatest Love's management:

1. Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they 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 homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to the children's bedrooms.

4. Ensure that security bars on windows in foster homes have operable safety release devices.

5. Ensure that foster homes provide children with appropriate closet or clothing storage space.

6. Ensure that foster homes' first aid kits contain all the items required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

7. Ensure that assessments are completed to evaluate a foster home's capability to provide quality care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.

8. Ensure that foster parents or their designated drivers possess a valid driver's license and auto insurance.

9. Ensure that foster parents complete the required number of yearly continuing education hours specified in the County contract.

10. Ensure that current court authorizations for children using psychotropic medication are maintained and that the medication is documented in the child's overall treatment plan.

11. Ensure children receive their routine annual dental examinations within the timeframes specified in the County contract.

12. Ensure that the Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports are completed in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 requirements.

13. Ensure that children meet the placement criteria outlined in the Agency's Program Statement and license.

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Greatest Love billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed ten children placed in five Greatest Love certified foster homes and five foster parents to confirm the services Greatest Love billed to DCFS.

Results

Overall, the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Greatest Love generally met their expectations. The children interviewed also stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Greatest Love's 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 executive director, FFA administrator, one of two supervising social workers, and three social workers and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for November and December 2005.

Results

One social worker, who was granted an education exemption by the State's Community Care Licensing Division, carried more cases than the exemption allowed. The social worker maintained an average of 15 cases for the months of November and December 2005 and the exemption only allowed her to maintain ten cases.

Recommendation

14. Greatest Love's management ensure that social workers do not maintain more cases than is allowed by the County contract or the state's Community Care Licensing Division, if applicable.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Greatest Love's human resources director. 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

Greatest Love did not obtain a written and signed declaration from their one contract social worker stating that the social worker's total caseloads from all the agencies she contracted did not exceed 15 placed children as required by the County contract. Subsequent to the conclusion of the review, the Agency prepared and had the social worker sign the written declaration.

Recommendation

15. Greatest Love's management ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseload does not exceed 15 placed children.

XAVIER PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING AND TREATMENT CENTER, INC.
THE GREATEST LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

August 4, 2006

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

From: Wayne Kelley, Ph.D. Wayne Kelley, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Patricia Duck, LCSW Patricia A Duck LCSW
Assistant Executive Director

Re: Corrective Action Plan
Audit

Background

Xavier Psychological Testing and Treatment was established in 1997. The Greatest Love Foster Family Agency was licensed in 1999.

As a foster care agency, we support family reunification whenever appropriate. We endeavor to provide each foster child placed in our care a sense of safety, stability, and strong family belonging. We strive to foster within each child recognition as a valued member of society by providing stability, family based developmental opportunities and connections to community resources that will build self-worth and develop character to last a lifetime.

Since our first placement in September 2000, we have served 541 children. 50% of the children we serve have been placed with parents or relatives. We have certified 100 homes in Los Angeles County primarily in the inner city.

Xavier Psychological Testing and Treatment, Inc., DBA Greatest Love Foster Family Agency is committed to continuing to providing quality services to the children and families we serve.

The agency has instituted the following plan to address the audit findings.

Billed Services

Foster Home Visitations:

It was noted that there were numerous safety and maintenance violations. While the agency disagrees with the overall description of the home's general appearance, it concedes that there was room for improvement.

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Both the agency social worker and the DCFS social worker made regular visits to the home. During the visits, it should be noted that neither reported serious violations that precluded a child being placed in the home. Both agreed that the certified foster parent provided quality care to the child.

The child that was known to the certified parent and was placed in her home as a result of his mother's death and no other family members were available to take care of him at the time. Additionally, his mother was a childhood friend of the certified foster parent thus she was like family to him.

As a result of this finding, the home is no longer being used to take care of children in foster care.

All certified foster homes first aid kit were checked by the agency social worker. Each first aid kit was replaced or replenished. This issue was further addressed at the certified *parent meeting in June 2006.*

The Greatest Love Foster Family Agency has ensured that each and every home under auspices is safe, appropriately furnished and well maintained with acceptable housekeeping.

The agency instituted the following plan of action to address the issues of safety and maintenance.

- The agency administrator or designee is conducting random home visits to complete home safety inspections.
- The agency social workers are swapping homes to complete home safety inspections. This will ensure that the social workers have fresh viewpoint when assessing the homes for safety and maintenance.
- At the certified parent foster parent meeting on June 20.2006, the issues of general appearance, cleanliness and first aid kits were addressed.

Foster Home Certification:

The agency instituted the following plan of action to address the issues of foster home certification.

- The agency developed and is using the Foster Parent Evaluation form that is completed by the agency social worker and approved by the Supervising Social Worker before an additional child is placed in the certified home. This form is used to assess the certified foster parent's ability to care for the children placed in the home.

- Each month at the clinical staff meeting the Supervising Social Worker reviews with the agency social worker, all due dates including car insurance and driver's license.

- Additionally, at recertification, and every six month at the time of the home safety inspection, the proof of current driver's license and automobile insurance is checked to ensure it is current. The automobile insurance and driver's license expiration dates are document on the home inspection checklist.

In 2005, the agency offered 50. 5 hours of training to the certified parents. The certified parent due to her work schedule was not able to attend the training. She has since completed an additional 6 hours of training.

From January until August 2006, the agency has offered 30 training hours to the certified foster parents.

- The agency will provide certified foster parents that have work schedule conflicts with other training options such as one on one training with qualified professionals.

Medical Services:

The Greatest Love has worked diligently to ensure the necessary court authorizations are obtained. There have been several barriers to ensuring that the authorizations are received as required by the contract.

The agency instituted the following plan of action to address the issues of medical services.

- 30 days before expiration of the court authorization for psychotropic medication, the agency will initiate a request to the doctor to begin the renewal process. At that time, a copy of the court authorization request will be obtained from the prescribing doctor. The agency will track the court authorization request until the formal court authorization is obtained.

- The agency incorporated into the quarterly report medical section, an area that notes the next due date for annual physical and dental exams. The due dates are flagged every three months to ensure exams are completed annually.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports:

The agency instituted the following plan of action to address the issues of needs and services plans and quarterly reports.

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THE GREATEST LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

- The social work staff was provided with training in February and March. At the training all missing aspects including information on personal care and grooming and the child's ability to manage his or her own money was addressed.

- The social work staff was provided with training in February and March. At the training incorporating the psychotropic medication into the needs and services plan was addressed.

- The quarterly report has been revised to include a section to flag the need for the emancipation preparation contract. The agency will work in partnership with Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services Children Social Worker to complete the emancipation preparation contract. All actions regarding the emancipation preparation contract will be documented in the case file.

Children's case files

The agency instituted the following plan of action to address the issue of children's case files.

- The initial assessment for the child did not include all the child's medical history. Upon placement of the child, the certified parent was able to meet the child's needs and express interest in adopting the child.

- In order to ensure the child was not further traumatized by moving her and taking in consideration that the certified parent was able to meet the child's needs, the child was not replaced.

- The agency will ensure that we only accept children as designated by the program statement. If it is determined that a child is medically fragile after placement, an assessment will be completed to determine what the best action is to ensure the least amount of trauma to the child.

- The agency is in the process of reviewing it's program statement to determine if it is necessary to revise the placement criteria. If it is determined that the criteria needs to be revise, the revision will be submitted to Community care licensing and when approval is received, it will be forwarded to the Department of Children and Family Services.

Staffing/Caseload Level

The agency currently employs six social workers including one contract social worker. Four of the six social workers have earned master in social work. One has a master in psychology. Two of the six are currently register as social work associates, one is a registered MFT intern and one is a license clinical social worker.

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The sixth social worker has completed her requirements for the MSW and her degree will be conferred on August 25, 2006.

At the time, the social worker was in the process of completing her first year in the Master in Social Work program and met the criteria to carry a full caseload.

The agency instituted the following plan of action to address the issue of staffing and caseload.

- The exception to carry 15 cases was granted on 5/4/2006.
- The agency administrator will ensure that the social work exceptions are applied for in a timely manner.
- The agency administrator will that all contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social worker's total contracted caseload will not exceed 15 placed children.

We are constantly making changes to ensure that we meet the expectations as outlined in the contract.

As a demonstration of our commitment, the entire social work staff participated in the exit interview to help them understand the full scope of expectations as outlined by the contract.

It is therefore, our mission to provide and equip our clients with necessary tools and resources in order to successfully face life's challenges, to facilitate more interest and enjoyment in learning to negotiate their needs. To foster and promote individual growth and development in the area of self-esteem and self-awareness among those individuals with behavior and emotional issues. In addition, to channeling the energy and creativity that individuals have been utilizing to generate deviant behavior patterns in the past into productive conduits that will assist in achieving self actualization within the individual rather than working against them

Cc: Board of Directors

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