COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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January 9, 2007

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

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **TEENS HAPPY HOMES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Teens Happy Homes Foster Family Agency (Teens or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

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

Teens is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Teens oversees a total of twenty-one certified foster homes. Thirty-one DCFS children were placed in fourteen of these homes. Teens' office is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Teens 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, Teens 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. DCFS paid Teens approximately $788,000 for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

The foster homes we visited were well maintained and in compliance with Title 22 safety regulations. The foster parents interviewed 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, Teens maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by the CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Teens did not always ensure their social workers prepared the Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. For example, the Needs and Services Plans did not address the children's visitation plans or the reason for the placement.

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

Review of Report

On December 7, 2006, we discussed our report with Teens who were in general agreement with the findings. In their attached response, Teens management indicated the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Teens 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
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ms. Tina Robinson, Program Director, Teens Happy Homes 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
TEENS HAPPY HOMES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited three of the fourteen Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Teens billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in January and February 2006 and interviewed the four foster parents and three of the nine children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the case files for the four foster parents and five of the 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 that the Teens' social worker visited the home and the children regularly. In addition, the children interviewed indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The three homes we visited were well maintained and in compliance with Title 22 safety regulations.

Teens needs to ensure Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and are prepared within the timeframes specified by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Needs and Services Plans

- All five Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not address all of the elements required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The Needs and Services Plans did not always identify the reason for the children's placement, the emancipation services provided, the children's ability to manage their own money and the children's visitation plan.

- All five Needs and Services Plans' goals did not meet the criteria established by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The goals were general and did not meet the criteria of specific, measurable and attainable. In addition, the County contract

requires agencies to establish short-term and long-term goals for children. The goals established by Teens' social workers did not include long term goals.

- One (20%) of five Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain the signature of the child's DCFS social worker indicating the social worker's approval of the Needs and Services Plan as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Quarterly Reports

- All five Quarterly Reports reviewed were not completed as required by the County contract. Teens did not report the children's reassessment of unmet needs and efforts made to meet those needs, status of the children's physical and psychological health including date of medical/dental appointments, and progress made towards goals established for the children including tasks that have been performed to reach those goals.

- The three Quarterly Reports for children fourteen years of age or older did not include a copy of the children's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required by the County contract.

Children's Case Files

Three (60%) of five children's case files did not contain a signed acknowledgement by the children or the children's DCFS social worker of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, or Legal Rights of Teens (11 years and older), house rules, discipline practices, grievance/complaint procedures, orientation to Teens' policies and procedures and discharge procedures.

Medical Services

One (20%) of five children did not receive an initial medical and dental exam within thirty days of placement as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The child's initial medical and dental exams were seven months late. The Agency indicated that the delay was due to difficulty in obtaining a Medi-Cal card for the child.

Recommendations

Teens' management:

1. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**

2. **Ensure that the DCFS social worker approves in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

3. **Ensure that children's medical and dental exams are conducted within the timeframes specified in the County contract.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed three children placed in three Teens' certified foster homes and four foster parents to confirm the services Teens billed to DCFS.

Results

Overall, the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Teens met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly. 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 Teens' social workers' case loads do not exceed fifteen 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 Teens' administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for January and February 2006.

Results

Teens' supervising social worker supervised four social workers and the Agency's four social workers carried an average caseload of eleven cases during the months of January and February 2006.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Teens' staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Teens conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training and performance evaluations to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Teens' administrator. 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

Teens' administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. However, Teens did not obtain a written and signed declaration from their three contract social workers stating that the social workers' total caseloads from all contracted agencies would not exceed fifteen placed children as required by the County contract. Teens' administrator immediately corrected this deficiency.

Recommendation

4. **Teens' management ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children.**

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Foster Family Agency

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December 20, 2006

TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina; vb;
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Gwendolyn Warren, M.S.W.
Administrator

SUBJECT: Teen's Happy Home Foster Family Agency Contract Review

We would like to thank L.A. County Principal Accountant-Auditor, Brian Hendricks and Program Specialist II. Alice Marutani for their insight and recommendations on how to make Teens Happy Home a more efficient organization whereas, we can better serve the children and families of our community. Based on their recommendations the following corrective action plan has been implemented:

Needs and Services Plan

Finding #1 *All five Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not address all of the elements* required by the County Contract and Title 22 regulations. The Needs and Services Plans did not always identify the reason for the children's placement, the emancipation services provided, the children's ability to manage their own money and the children's visitation plan.

Finding #2 All five Needs and Services Plans did not meet the criteria established by the County Contract and Title 22 regulations. The Goals were general and did not meet the criteria of specific, measurable and attainable. In addition the County contract requires that agencies establish *short term and long term goals for children. The goals established by Teens' social* workers were not short-term and long term goals.

Recommendation: Ensure that Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports and children case files contain all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Corrective Action Plan: The Needs and Services Plan has been revised to reflect all required information by the County contract and Title 22 regulations, this include: reason for placement, emancipation services, the ability of the children to manage their own money, their visitation plan, and long and short term goals that are specific, measurable and obtainable.

All Agency social workers were re-trained on the Needs and Services Plan and effective immediately began using the revised Needs and Services Plan. The Social Work Supervisor will monitor the N&S Plans when turned in by Agency social workers to ensure all required information is in the Plan.

Finding #3 One of five Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain the signature of the child's DCFS social worker indicating the social worker's approval of the Needs and Services Plan as required by the County and Title 22 regulations.

Recommendation: Ensure the DCFS social worker gives written approval of children's Needs and Services Plan.

Corrective Action Plan: This has been an ongoing challenge for Agency social workers to obtain the required DCFS social worker's signature. We have a system in place whereas we use a fax cover sheet as verification of attempt to obtain the DCFS social worker signature on the Needs and Services Plan. We have added an additional step, effectively immediately, when the Agency social worker is having difficulty obtaining a response from the DCFS social worker, the DCFS social worker's supervisor will be contacted and a signature/feedback obtained through his or her Supervisor.

Quarterly Report

Finding #4 All five Quarterly Reports reviewed were not completed as required by the County contract. Teens did not report the children's reassessment of unmet needs and efforts made to meet those needs, status of the child's physical and psychological health including date of medical/dental appointments, and progress made towards goals established for the children including tasks that have been performed to reach those goals.

Finding #5 The three Quarterly Reports for children fourteen of age or older did not include a copy of the children's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required by the County contract.

Recommendation: Ensure that Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports and children case files contain all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Corrective Action Plan: The Quarterly Report has been revised to reflect all required information by the County contract, this include: children's reassessment of unmet needs and efforts made to meet those needs, status of the child's physical and psychological health including date of medical/dental appointments, progress made towards goals established for the children including tasks that have been performed to reach those goals and a copy of the children's Emancipation Preparation Contract for children fourteen and older.

All Agency social workers were re-trained on the Quarterly Report and effective immediately began using the revised Quarterly Report. The Social Work Supervisor will monitor the Quarterly Reports when turned in by the social workers to ensure all required information is included.

Children's Case Files

Finding #6 Three (60%) of five children's case files did not contain a signed acknowledgement by the child or the child's DCFS social worker : Youth Bill of Rights, or Legal Rights of Teens (11 years and older), house rules, discipline practices, grievance/complaint procedures, orientation to Teen's policies and procedures and discharge procedures.

Corrective Action Plan: Teens Happy Home Quality Assurance checklist has been revised to ensure all required documents and signatures are secured at intake by the intake/social worker. In the event the child is too young to sign, a form has been developed to send to the DCFS social worker along with the required documents for his/her signature. A copy of the form will be placed in the children's file along with the fax verification form.

Medical Services

Finding #7 One (20%) of five children did not receive an initial medical and dental exam within the three/thirty days of placement as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations The child's initial medical and dental exams were seven months late. The Agency indicated that the delay as due to difficulty in obtaining a Medi-cal card for the child.

Recommendation: Ensure that children's medical and dental exams are conducted within the timeframe(s) specified in the County contract.

Corrective Action Plan: Effectively immediately, further internal controls were put into place to ensure that initial dental and medical examinations are completed within the three/thirty days of placement. The Social Work Supervisor will give written notification of the due date on initial medical and dental examinations. And, if a Medi-cal card can not be obtained, the child will be seen by the DCFS approved HUB Clinic or Teens Happy Home, Inc. will pay for the medical and/or dental exam.

Staff Qualifications

Finding #8 Teens did not obtain a written and signed declaration from their three contract workers stating that the social workers' total caseloads from all contracted agencies could not exceed fifteen placed children as required by the County contract. Teens Administrator immediately corrected this deficiency.

Recommendation: Teens management ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children.

Corrective Action Plan: Immediately upon notification of this deficiency Teens' Administrator devised a form of declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children and all contracted social workers signed the declaration. The declaration form has been added to the orientation packet for all contract social workers who will sign the declaration during orientation and before receiving any cases.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Warren, M.S.W.
Administrator
Teens Happy Home
Foster Family Agency