COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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January 26, 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: **BIENVENIDOS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

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

Background

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

Bienvenidos is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Bienvenidos oversees a total of 94 certified foster homes in which 191 DCFS children were placed. Bienvenidos' headquarters is located in South El Monte in the First District.

DCFS pays Bienvenidos 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, Bienvenidos 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 Bienvenidos approximately $4,470,000 for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

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, Bienvenidos maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by the CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Bienvenidos did not always comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- The case files for four (22%) of eighteen children taking psychotropic medication did not contain documentation that the children were being seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

- The Needs and Services Plans for eight (53%) of fifteen children did not address the children's personal care and grooming or ability to manage their own money.

- The Needs and Services Plans for twelve (80%) children were not signed by the children's assigned DCFS social workers to document their approval of the Plans.

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

Review of Report

On January 10, 2007 we discussed our report with Bienvenidos who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Bienvenidos management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Bienvenidos 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
Brian Fernandez, Program Director, Bienvenidos 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
BIENVENIDOS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited six of the ninety-four Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Bienvenidos billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for and interviewed six of the seven foster parents and thirteen of the twenty-four children placed in the six homes. We also reviewed the case files for the seven foster parents and fifteen 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. Bienvenidos also paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

Bienvenidos needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure the foster parents comply with all the provisions of the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Bienvenidos also needs to ensure Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract. In addition, the Agency needs to ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medications and that the children are seen on a monthly basis by the prescribing physician as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitations

- Two (33%) of six homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions as required. In addition, one (17%) of six homes did not lock kitchen knives as required.

- The carpet in a child's bedroom in one (17%) of six homes visited was very dirty and in need of cleaning or replacement. The County contract and Title 22 regulations requires the Agency to monitor for compliance that foster parents provide a home

and yards that are appropriately furnished and well-maintained with acceptable housekeeping.

- All six homes visited did not maintain a weekly allowance log for the children in the home. The County contract and program statement require the log be completed weekly and contain the date, the amount of allowance, and the children's signatures upon receipt of the allowance. The children indicated that they received their allowances weekly and the foster parents indicated that they complete the logs for the children at the end of each month.

- One (17%) of six homes visited had a newly installed pool. The pool was appropriately gated as required. However, the foster parents did not possess a water safety certificate. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the foster parents attended a water safety class and obtained the required certification.

- Two (33%) of six homes visited did not maintain documentation that the foster parents were conducting disaster drills as required.

- One (17%) of six foster homes had security window bars in three of the rooms in the home. The foster parents and the children in this home did not know how to release the bars in an emergency situation. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require that foster homes have a written emergency plan that includes methods of escape in case of an emergency. Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency provided documentation that the foster parents and children in the home were trained on how to release the window bars in case of emergency.

Medical Services

- One (5%) of eighteen children taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization for the administration of the medication. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require that the Agency monitor that the prescribing physician submits a request and obtains court authorization. The Agency shall maintain copies of the court authorization in the child's case record. Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency obtained a current court authorization for the child.

- Four (22%) of eighteen case files for children taking psychotropic medication did not contain documentation that the children were being seen monthly by the prescribing physician as required. Bienvenidos management indicated the children were seen monthly by the prescribing physician. However, the Agency had difficulty obtaining documentation of the visits from the physician.

Needs and Services Plans, Children's Case Files and Quarterly Reports

- Twelve (80%) of fifteen Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain signatures of the children's DCFS social worker indicating the social workers'

approval of the Needs and Services Plans as required. The Agency forwarded all twelve Plans to the DCFS social workers for approval but did not conduct any follow-up when the Plans were not signed and returned. In addition, two of the fifteen children's files did not contain a signed acknowledgement by children or the children's DCFS social workers of receipt of a written copy of the children's personal rights.

- Eight (53%) of fifteen Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not include a discussion of the children's ability to manage money or information on the children's personal care and grooming as required.

- Seven (47%) of fifteen Needs and Services Plans reviewed contained goals for the children that were not time-limited as required. The County contracts requires Bienvenidos' social workers to develop Needs and Services Plans that contain both long and short term goals for the children that are specific, measurable, attainable and time-limited.

- Three (17%) of eighteen children taking psychotropic medication did not have the medication incorporated into their Needs and Services Plan as required by the County contract.

- Eleven (73%) of fifteen Quarterly Reports reviewed did not contain the date they were mailed to the DCFS social workers. Therefore, we could not determine if the DCFS social workers received the report by the tenth business day following the end of the quarter as required. In addition, one of three Quarterly Reports, for children fourteen years and older, did not contain a copy of the child's Emancipation Preparation contract as required.

Recommendations

Bienvenidos management:

1. **Ensure that foster parents store knives, detergents and other toxic cleaning solutions in a secure location.**

2. **Ensure that foster parents provide homes that are appropriately furnished and well-maintained.**

3. **Ensure that foster parents maintain a weekly allowance log for the children. The log should contain the date, the amount of allowance, and the children's signatures upon receipt of the allowance.**

4. **Ensure that foster parents with pools or other bodies of water on their property, possess a water safety certificate.**

5. **Ensure that foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children at time of placement and every six months thereafter and that foster parents and children who reside in homes with window security bars know how to release the window bars in case of emergency.**

6. **Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medications and are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.**

7. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required.**

8. **Ensure that Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and are submitted to the DCFS social worker within the time frames specified by the County contract.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed thirteen children placed in six Bienvenidos certified foster homes and seven foster parents to confirm the services Bienvenidos billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Bienvenidos 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 Bienvenidos' 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 Bienvenidos' program manager and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records.

Results

Bienvenidos' five supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers and the Agency's twenty social workers carried an average caseload of twelve cases.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Bienvenidos' program manager. 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

Bienvenidos' program manager and supervising social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. However, two of Bienvenidos' social workers did not meet the educational requirements. The Agency did have exceptions on file from CDSS Community Care Licensing allowing the two staff to perform social worker duties while they obtained the required education. However, the exceptions had expired. Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency applied for and received current exceptions for the two employees.

Recommendation

9. **Bienvenidos management ensure social workers possess the appropriate educational requirements or maintain a current waiver from Community Care Licensing permitting the use of staff who do not possess the required education.**

January 12, 2007

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

FROM: Brian Fernandez
Director of Bienvenidos Foster Family Agency

SUBJECT: BIENVENIDOS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW

The following is our corrective action plan in response to the findings and recommendations of the contract review by the Auditor-Controller's Office:

1. Ensure that foster parents store knives, detergents and other toxic cleaning solutions in a secure location.

The two foster homes in question corrected the deficiencies and proof was submitted to the Auditor-Controller's office. Social workers have been instructed to monitor more carefully that knives, detergents and other toxic cleaning solutions be stored in a secure location during visits to the foster homes.

2. Ensure that foster parents provide homes that are appropriately furnished and well-maintained.

The only deficiency found in one of our foster homes during the audit was corrected. The foster parents had the carpet cleaned and proof was submitted to the Auditor-Controller's office. Social workers have been instructed to monitor more carefully to ensure that foster homes are appropriately furnished and well-maintained.

3. Ensure that foster parents maintain a weekly allowance log for the children. The log should contain the date, the amount of allowance, and the children's signatures upon receipt of the allowance

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Although allowance logs for all of the children audited were provided during the audit, and the children stated that they were getting their allowance weekly, foster parents were trained on logging the children's receipt of allowances on a weekly basis.

4. Ensure that foster parents with pools or other bodies of water on their property, possess a water safety certificate.

Proof of the water safety training received by the foster parent in question was provided to the Auditor-Controller's office prior to the completion of the audit. The pool in the foster home was recently installed and the foster parents were unable to find a water safety class sooner. As soon as a class was offered, they completed the course.

5. Ensure that foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children at time of placement and every six months thereafter and that foster parents and children who reside in homes with window security bars know how to release the window bars in case of emergency.

The two foster families in question were trained on not only conducting disaster drills, but documenting the dates when the drills were conducted. A wider agency-wide training was done for our foster families as well.
Documentation was provided to the Auditor-Controller's office in regards to the foster home with the window bars. The foster parents and the children in the home were trained on how to release the window bars in case of emergency.

6. Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medications and are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

Although only one of the foster children placed with Bienvenidos had an expired psychotropic court authorization, an agency wide training was conducted on requesting court authorization for psychotropic medication on a timely basis.
Although all of the children on psychotropic medication were seen by the prescribing physician as required, we were unable to obtain documentation of the visits from one of the physicians. Foster parents have been instructed to request documentation of those visits when they attend appointments.

7. Ensure the Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Social work staff was trained on including children's ability to manage money, personal care and grooming, incorporating psychotropic medication into the plan when applicable, and using both long and short term goals.

8. Ensure that Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and are submitted to the DCFS social worker within the time-frames specified by the County contract.

Although we believe quarterly reports were submitted on a timely basis, we addressed the Auditor-Controller's concern by providing training to all staff instructing them to stamp the copy of the quarterly report with the date it is mailed out.
A copy of a child's Emancipation Preparation contract that was missing was submitted to the Auditor Controller's office. Staff was also trained on including those contracts with the quarterly reports for children fourteen years old and older.

9. Ensure social workers possess the appropriate educational requirements or maintain a current waiver from Community Care Licensing permitting the use of staff that does not possess the required education.

The reason two of our social workers had expired CCL exceptions is that the sub-office they work in was previously located in Los Angeles County, and is now in San Bernardino. The CCL exception they had at that time did not have an expiration date. However, when the office was moved to San Bernardino County, we were unaware that the new CCL exception that was granted there did have and expiration date. Nonetheless, we requested and received a new exception for both of the employees in question. Copies of those exceptions were forwarded to the Auditor-Controller's office.

We appreciate the valuable feed-back provided to us by the Auditor-Controller's office. We look forward to continuing to improve the services we provide to families and children.

Sincerely,

Brian Fernandez, M.A., M.S., M.B.A.
Director of Foster Care