COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-2766
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

February 23, 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: **CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Children's Bureau of Southern California Foster Family Agency (CBSC or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

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

CBSC is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. CBSC oversees a total of 155 certified foster homes in which 170 DCFS children were placed. CBSC's headquarters is located in the Third District.

DCFS pays CBSC 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, CBSC receives between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between $624 and $850 per month, per child. DCFS paid CBSC approximately $3.9 million for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether CBSC was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated CBSC's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether CBSC 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 CBSC 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. The foster homes visited were in compliance with CDSS Title 22 safety regulations and were well maintained. CBSC also maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by the CDSS Title 22 regulations. However, CBSC needs to obtain written approval from the DCFS social workers for the children's Needs and Services Plans as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

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

Review of Report

On January 29, 2007, we discussed our report with CBSC who generally agreed with the finding. In their attached response, CBSC management indicated the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendation. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank CBSC 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. Lou Graham, Director, Children's Bureau of Southern California FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006
CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Children's Bureau of Southern California Foster Family Agency (CBSC or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited 9 of the 155 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that CBSC billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in February and March 2006 and interviewed 11 of the 16 foster parents and 8 of the 25 children placed in the 9 homes. We also reviewed the case files for 16 foster parents and 17 children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The nine foster homes visited were all well maintained and in compliance with Title 22 safety regulations. The sixteen foster parents were certified in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, the seventeen children's files reviewed contained all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

CBSC did not always ensure that the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) were signed by the DCFS social workers indicating the social workers' approval of the NSPs as required. Four (22%) of the eighteen NSPs reviewed were not approved by the DCFS social workers. The Plans were forwarded to the DCFS social workers for approval in all four cases. However, CBSC did not follow-up with the DCFS social workers when the NPSs were not returned.

Recommendation

1. **CBSC management ensure that the DCFS social workers approve in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed eight children placed in nine CBSC certified foster homes and eleven foster parents to confirm the services CBSC billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from CBSC 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 CBSC 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 the CBSC Director and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for February and March 2006.

Results

CBSC six supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers and the Agency's eighteen social workers carried an average caseload of eleven cases during the months of February and March 2006.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed the CBSC 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

CBSC Director, supervising social workers and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, the Agency conducted hiring clearances for all staff as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The Agency also provided ongoing training and performance evaluations for the staff.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

CHILDREN'S BUREAU
Saving Children, Healing Society.
FOR OVER 100 YEARS

11815 Riverside Drive
North Hollywood, CA 91607
Telephone: 818.985.8154
Fax: 818.985.7045
www.all4klds.org

February 6, 2007

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

From: Lou Graham, Director of Foster Care and Adoptions
Children's Bureau of Southern California Foster Family Agency

Subject: Response to our Agency Contract Review

Dear Supervisors:

We would like to thank the Auditor-Controller's office for their professional manner and responsive approach during the comprehensive review of our Foster Family Agency. Ms. Alice Manutari and Mr. Brian Henricks were professional, knowledgeable and a pleasure to work with. Children's Bureau has served the community of Los Angeles for over a hundred years and we hope to continue our partnership with Los Angeles County for many more years to come. In the last year alone we served over 425 foster children and finalized over 100 adoptions. We have also provided additional support to 200 families and children thus far through our Adoption Promotion and Support Services Contract with Los Angeles County. Children's Bureau is committed to providing the best possible services to our children and families.

The following addresses the one recommendation listed in the Foster Family Agency Audit Report:

1. CBSC management ensure that the DCFS social workers approve in writing all Needs and Service Plans.

It should be noted that during your visit eighteen Needs and Service Plans were reviewed and all eighteen were forwarded to the DCFS social workers for approval. Of the eighteen only four were not received back.

Children's Bureau already has a procedure in place for obtaining approval and signature of the County Social Worker on Needs and Service Plans, which was completed for all eighteen Needs and Service Plans your office reviewed. We send the Needs and Services

Plan with a cover letter of explanation and an additional signature page to be signed and mailed back in a stamped, self-addressed envelope. We were surprised at your office's recommendation, as proof of this cover letter and the Needs and Service Plan in the file has always sufficed in other audits as a reasonable effort in the past. In addition, we make additional attempts to involve the County Social Worker in making and approving the Needs and Service Plan through inviting their participation in our Needs and Service Plan team meetings which are held within the first few weeks of placement and every six months thereafter.

To comply with the auditor-controller's recommendation, if written approval of the Needs and Service Plan is not received back after two attempts, one by mail and one by telephone and documented as such, our staff will contact the Supervising County Social Worker for their assistance in obtaining written approval from the County Social Worker. We feel three attempts are more than reasonable effort by our Children's Bureau social workers. Spending even this amount of time on this takes the focus of our social workers away from the crucial services and day-to-day support we provide to families and children.

It appears that the word "ensure" in the language of the contract is what prompted your office to make the above recommendation to our agency. The word "ensure" in this section is probably not an appropriate word for an area not totally within our control. We cannot in reality "ensure" that DCFS do anything, as we are not their direct supervisor. In fact, we are basically their subcontractor. We can do our part to "ensure" that the Needs and Services Plan is sent to the County Social Worker requesting written approval (which we had done for all 18 Needs and Service Plans) but cannot "ensure" that the CSW will sign it or get it back to us. While we agree with our making reasonable effort, which we believe we had done, accountability for this item is a shared responsibility between the county and the agencies they contract with. Please pass this information on to the county to raise their awareness of the need to continue to train/remind county social workers to return requested documents to agencies in a timely manner to prevent this type of issue in the future. During the next county contract renewal period, it is our recommendation that this word be changed and a procedure put into place and clearly outlined in the Statement of Work as to what specifically would suffice for a reasonable effort in this regard. We continue in our desire to work in a collaborative manner with the county and our auditors to make sure there is as much clarity surrounding expectations as possible. This in turn will enable us to remain in compliance with our contract and continue to provide the best services possible to children and families.

We appreciate the Auditor-Controller's recognition of our program and look forward to continuing our positive working partnership with Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

Lou Graham
Director of Foster Care and Adoptions

Cc: Alex Morales, CEO and President of Children's Bureau
Brian Henricks, Principal Accountant-Auditor
Lisa Parrish, Deputy Director, Resource Management Division, Los Angeles County