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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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February 28, 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: **GUARDIANS OF LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

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

Background

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

Guardians is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Guardians oversees a total of 57 certified foster homes in which 95 DCFS children were placed. Guardians is located in Los Angeles in the Second District.

DCFS pays Guardians 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, Guardians 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 Guardians approximately $1.7 million for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Guardians was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Guardians' ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Guardians 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 Guardians 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 generally met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Guardians did not always ensure the foster parents complied with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Guardians did not always prepare the children's Needs and Services Plans, Termination Reports and Special Incident Reports in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Specifically, we noted the following:

- All three foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions. In addition, sharp gardening tools, non-operable motorcycles, and lawn mowing equipment were stored in the children's play area at one home.

- Two (67%) of three homes visited with more than two children were not assessed by Guardians to evaluate the foster parents' abilities to effectively care for more than two children as required.

- The case file for one (50%) of the two children taking psychotropic medication did not contain documentation that the child was seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

- The Needs and Services Plans for all nine children sampled did not contain the DCFS social workers' signatures documenting the social workers' approval of the Needs and Services Plans. In addition, the goals listed were not specific, measurable and attainable.

- Two (22%) of the nine children were not visited weekly by Guardians' social workers during the first ninety days of placement. The Agency's social workers missed three weekly visits to one child and two weekly visits to a second child.

- One child in our sample was taken to a hospital's emergency room for a burn injury. Guardians' social worker did not prepare a Special Incident Report

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

Review of Report

On February 8, 2007, we discussed our report with Guardians who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Guardians management identified the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Guardians 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
Marvett Black, Administrator, Guardians of 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
GUARDIANS OF LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Guardians of Love Foster Family Agency (Guardians 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 fifty-seven Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Guardians billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in February and March 2006. We also interviewed three of the four foster parents and five of the nine children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the case files for the four foster parents and the nine children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Guardians needs to ensure foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes. Guardians also needs to ensure children's Needs and Services Plans, Termination reports and Special Incident reports are prepared in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- All three foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions. In addition, sharp gardening tools, non-operable motorcycles, and lawn mowing equipment were stored in the children's play area at one home.

- One (33%) of the three homes visited had a community pool in front of the foster parent's apartment. The foster parent in the home had not taken a class to obtain a water safety certificate. Prior to the issuance of this report, the foster parent obtained the required water safety certificate.

- One (33%) of the three foster homes inspected did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the children's bedroom as required. Prior to the issuance of this report, the foster parent purchased and installed a smoke detector.

- All three foster homes visited were not periodically conducting disaster drills with the children as required. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require foster parents to perform disaster drills with children at the time of placement and every six months thereafter.

- All three foster homes visited were not maintaining an allowance log for the children. The County contract requires Guardians to ensure that certified foster parents maintain a log indicating the date, the amount of the allowance the children receive, and the children's signature upon receipt of the allowance. We interviewed the children in the three homes and they indicated that they did receive their allowances.

- Two (67%) of the three homes visited were not assessed by Guardians to evaluate the foster parent's ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home as required. Three children live at one home and four children lived at the second home.

Children's Case Records

- The case files for five (56%) of the nine children did not contain acknowledgements signed by the children or the children's DCFS social workers of receipt of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, house rules, discipline practices, grievance/complaint procedures and discharge procedures as required.

- Two (22%) of the nine children were not visited weekly by Guardians' social workers during the first ninety days of placement. The Agency's social workers missed three weekly visits to one child and two weekly visits to a second child.

- The initial dental exam for one (11%) of the nine children was conducted approximately four months late. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require that the Agency arrange for children to have an initial dental exam within thirty days of placement.

- The case file for one (50%) of the two children taking psychotropic medication did not contain documentation that the child was seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

Needs and Services Plans

- All nine Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain short-term goals. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require the Agency to establish short-term and long-term goals for the children that are specific, measurable, time-limited and attainable. In addition, the long-term goals that were established for the children were very general and not specific to the individual child.

- All nine Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain the signature of the children's DCFS social workers indicating the social workers' approval of the Needs and Services Plans. In all seven case files, the Needs and Services Plans were forwarded to the DCFS social workers for approval. However, the Agency did not follow-up when the signatures were not obtained.

- Four (44%) of the nine Needs and Services Plans reviewed did not contain information on the children's personal care and grooming. In addition, two of the four Needs and Services Plans also did not contain information on the children's ability to manage their money.

- The Needs and Services Plans for one (50%) of the two children taking psychotropic medications did not incorporate the medications into the child's Needs and Services Plan.

Termination Reports and Special Incident Reports

- All twenty Termination Reports reviewed did not include a closing summary of the Agency's records relating to the children, as required.

- One child in our sample was taken to a hospital's emergency room for a burn injury. Guardians' social worker did not prepare a Special Incident Report.

Recommendations

Guardians management ensure that:

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**

2. **Foster parents adequately secure cleaning solutions, detergents, and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**

3. **Foster parents with pools or other bodies of water on their property possess a water safety certificate.**

4. **Foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to children's bedrooms.**

5. **Foster homes conduct and document disaster drills with children upon placement in the home and every six months thereafter.**

6. **Foster homes maintain an allowance log indicating the date, the amount of the allowance the child receives, and the child's signature upon receipt of the allowance.**

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

8. **Children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and that staff conduct and document required visits with the children.**

9. **Children's initial dental examinations are conducted within the timeframes established.**

10. **Children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.**

11. **Needs and Services Plans contain all the information required and that the DCFS social workers approve in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

12. **Termination Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and that Special Incident Reports are prepared in accordance with the County contract reporting requirements.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed five children placed in three of Guardians' certified foster homes and three foster parents to confirm the services Guardians billed to DCFS.

Results

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

Results

Guardians' supervising social worker supervised six social workers. However, the supervising social worker also maintained four cases for more than a week. The County contract and Title 22 regulations prohibit supervising social workers who supervise the maximum amount of social workers to maintain caseloads. In addition, six of Guardians' seven social workers carried more cases than allowed. The six social workers maintained an average of seventeen cases for a period of one to two weeks each.

Recommendation

13. Guardians management ensure that staff do not maintain more cases than allowed by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. If the excess caseload is not temporary, Guardians management hire additional social workers.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Guardians' administrator 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

Guardians' administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Guardians also conducted hiring clearances and provided training to staff working on the County contract.

Guardians did not obtain written and signed declarations from two contract social workers stating that the social workers' total caseloads from all contracted agencies would not exceed fifteen placed children. In addition, Guardians' Program Statement requires the Agency to complete performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract bi-annually. Nine of the eleven personnel files reviewed did not contain documentation that the employees had been evaluated.

Recommendations

Guardians management ensure that:

14. **Contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social workers' total contracted caseloads will not exceed fifteen placed children.**

15. **Staff working on the County contract receive performance evaluations in accordance with the Agency's Program Statement.**

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February 14, 2007

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

FROM: Marvett Black, Administrator

SUBJECT: **GUARDIANS OF LOVE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

During February through May 2006, the County of Los Angeles Department of Auditor-Controller conducted a contractual review of the agency. The review and recommendations were submitted to the agency on February 1, 2007. Guardians of Love Foster Family Agency would like to thank the Auditor-Controller office for their professionalism and willingness to discuss with the agency any concerns that surfaced. The recommendations presented by the Auditor-Controller office are being addressed by the following **CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS.**

(1) Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

- Corrective Action Plan:

  Guardians of Love Foster Family Agency (GOLFFA) immediately conducted training to review and discuss Title 22 as it related to

certified foster homes. All of GOLFFA's social workers, quality assurance staff and certified foster parents participated in the training (two separate trainings were conducted; one for staff and additional one for certified parents.) In addition, GOLFFA instructed all agency social workers to conduct a more comprehensive Monthly Home Inspection of the home and the surroundings of the residence during their weekly home visits. Further, agency social workers are required (during weekly home visits) to address **any** interior/exterior conditions that do not meet Title 22 regulations and inform certified foster parents that corrections are required.

The agency's administrator shall be responsible for reviewing Title 22.

(2) **Ensure that foster parents adequately secure cleaning solutions, and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**

- Corrective Action Plan:

Immediately, GOLFFA corrected the deficiencies in the three homes that were not in compliance with Title 22 and submitted the proof to the Auditor-Controller office. All social workers have been **instructed to monitor more carefully to ensure** that detergents and cleaning solutions are locked up; sharp gardening tools, non-operable motorcycles and lawn mowing equipment are non-accessible to children. During weekly supervision the Supervising Social Worker shall monitor social workers' caseload for Title 22 compliance.

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

- Corrective Action Plan:

The home in question immediately corrected the deficiency, in that a water safety certificate was obtained from the local Red Cross and proof was submitted to the Auditor-Controller's office. **All** social workers have been instructed to monitor more carefully certified home that have a pool or any body of water on the property, for safety.

(4) **Ensure that foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to children's bedrooms.**

- Corrective Action Plan:

The certified home in question immediately corrected the deficiency and the proof was submitted to the Auditor-Controller's office. GOLFFA shall monitor for compliance that all certified homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways leading to children

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bedrooms. All social workers have been instructed to monitor more carefully the aforementioned during weekly home visits and during Monthly Walk-Through Inspection.

(5) Ensure that foster homes conduct and document disaster drills with children upon placement in the home and every six months thereafter.

- Corrective Action Plan:

GOFFA shall ensure that all children in placement participate in disaster drill upon placement and six months thereafter. All children and certified parents immediately participated in disaster drills conducted by social workers. Agency social workers and certified parents have been instructed of the policy on disaster drills. In addition, these disaster drills contain a mass casualty plan of action and a record will be maintained at GOLFFA.

During weekly supervision/case conference the Supervising Social Worker shall monitor caseloads for disaster drills.

(6) Ensure that foster homes maintain an allowance log indicating the date, the amount of the allowance the child receives, and the child's signature upon receipt of the allowance.

- Corrective Action Plan:

GOLFFA immediately trained certified parents on logging and maintaining allowance logs in the home. The training included the following: (1) the name of the child, (2) the date received, (3) the amount of the allowance and (4) the signature of the child. Social workers have been instructed to review allowance logs during weekly home visits. (All children's files reviewed during the audit revealed records of allowances logs and children interviewed stated they had received allowances.)

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

- Corrective Action Plan:

GOLLFA shall ensure that prior to more than two children being placed in a certified home; a complete assessment shall be conducted. The assessment shall include the following:

- Whether certified parent has provided quality care for the currently placed children.
- Whether certified parent will be able to meet the needs of additional children placed in the home.
- Whether certified parent has had at least twelve months experience in caring for foster children.

Supervising Social Worker shall be responsible for the assessment of certified homes for additional placements.

(8) Ensure that children's case files contain all the information required by the county contract and that staff conduct and document required visits with children.

- Corrective Action Plan:

GOLFFA shall ensure that all placed children's file contain acknowledgments signed by the children or if the children are not age-appropriate, the signature of the CSW is required. In addition, all children must have the following signed documentation on file:

- Foster Youth Bill of Rights
- House Rules
- Discipline Practices
- Grievance/complaint Procedures and
- Discharge Procedures

GOLFFA shall monitor for compliance that every minor in place is seen weekly and that there is documentation to substantiate the visit. During the audit it was revealed that there were progress notes for one minor but none for the other minor in the home. Since the audit the agency has changed the template to include all the minors' names placed in the home on the progress form. (The revised form was submitted to the Auditor/Controller's office immediately after the audit.)

The intake staff person shall be responsible for the completeness of the aforementioned and that the documentation is filed in the children's files.

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(9) Ensure that children's initial dental examinations are conducted within the timeframes established.

- Corrective Action Plan:

  GOLFFA shall ensure that **all** minors three (3) years and older receive dental care within thirty (30) days of placement or sooner if services are so deemed. The certified parents/social workers have been instructed that the aforementioned requirement must be implemented.

  During weekly supervision the Supervising Social Worker shall monitor caseloads for initial dental examinations.

(10) Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

- Corrective Action Plan:

  GOLFFA shall ensure that all minors on psychotropic medication shall contain documentation that an evaluation was done monthly by the prescribing physician or mental health agency. Supervising Social Worker shall monitor social worker monthly documentation for "psychological/psychiatrist" visitation log.

(11) Ensure that Needs and Services Plans contain all the information required and that the DCFS social worker approves in writing all Needs and Services plans.

- Corrective Action Plan:

  GOLFFA shall ensure that all Needs and Services contain all information required by County contract. GOLFFA immediately conducted training to social worker re: the following:

  - Needs and Services Plans contain **all** required information such as; personal care and grooming and the ability to handle money.
  - Needs and Services Plans must be measurable and attainable (template has been changed to address **short and long term goals** (the revised template was submitted to the auditor-controller office).
  - All Needs and Service Plans must be individualized.
  - All Needs and Services Plans must meet the approval of the DCFS by signatures on the plans.

- If a child is taking psychotropic medication it should be incorporate into the child's Needs and Services Plan.

Supervising Social Worker shall monitor all social workers' caseload for compliance.

(12) **Ensure that Termination Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and that Special Incident Reports are prepared in accordance with the County contract reporting requirements.**

- Corrective Aotion Plan:

GOLFFA shall ensure that all termination reports shall contain a detailed closing summary of the minor's stay in placement and to include all services provided by the agency. If the minor has been in placement longer than three months, then the last quarterly shall be updated to become the **Termination Report.** All social workers have been instructed to be more detailed when addressing termination reports. The Supervising Social Worker shall review all termination reports during weekly supervision with social workers.

GOLFFA shall ensure that all **Special Incident Reports are** reported in a timely manner and to the proper entities. GOLFFA shall ensure that any time that a minor receives hospital emergency room services a Special Incident Report is required. Social workers have been instructed to act accordingly and the Supervising Social Worker shall monitor for compliance.

(13) **Guardians management ensure that staff do not maintain more cases than allowed by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. If the excess case load is not temporary, Guardian management hire additional social workers.**

- Corrective Action Plan:

GOLFFA shall ensure that **no social worker** shall carry more than fifteen cases. However, in the case of an emergency and a social worker's caseload exceed fifteen (15) cases it shall be **temporary only to allow the supervision of all placed children.** In addition, GOLFFA shall hire additional social workers to ensure compliance with County Contract. In addition, GOLFFA shall ensure that no Supervising Social Worker that supervises a maximum of six social workers be allowed to carry a caseload. GOLFFA's administrator shall be responsible for implementing the aforementioned.

(14) **Ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social workers total contract caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children.**

- Corrective Action Plan:

  GOLFFA shall ensure that **all** contract workers have a written declaration on file stating that the caseload will not exceed fifteen (15) children, including caseload of other foster care agencies. (A written declaration signed by GOLFFA's contract worker was submitted to the auditor-controller office.) GOLFFA's administrator shall be responsible for aforementioned.

(15) **Ensure that staff working on County contract receive performance evaluations in accordance with the Agency's Program Statement.**

- Corrective Action Plan:

  GOLFFA shall ensure that all personnel performance is evaluated after the first three months of employment, six months, one-year and are reviewed annually thereafter. (During the audit evaluations were submitted to the auditor-controller office.)

  GOLFFA's administrator shall be responsible for the aforementioned.