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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
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April 24, 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: **SECURE TRANSITIONS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

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

Background

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

Secure Transitions is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Secure Transitions oversees a total of 28 certified foster homes in which 48 DCFS children were placed. Secure Transitions is located in Culver City in the Second District.

DCFS pays Secure Transitions 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, Secure Transitions 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 Secure Transitions approximately $1.1 million for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Secure Transitions was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Secure Transitions' ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Secure Transitions 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 Secure Transitions' 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. In addition, Secure Transitions maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by the CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Secure Transitions did not always ensure that foster parents complied with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Secure Transitions did not always complete the children's Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports, and Termination Reports in accordance with the County contract. For example:

- One home did not store the ammunition for a firearm in a separate location away from the firearm as required.

- Two (50%) of the four foster homes sampled were not assessed by Secure Transitions to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home as required. An average of five children were placed in each home.

- One (25%) of the four foster parent's certification files reviewed did not contain a criminal record clearance from the California Department of Justice or a child abuse index clearance as required. In addition, Secure Transitions did not have these clearances on file for the foster parent's mother, who lives in the home. Prior to the conclusion of the review, the Agency provided documentation that clearances for the foster parent and her mother had been obtained.

- The goals listed in all seven children's Needs and Services Plans reviewed were general and did not meet the criteria of specific, measurable and attainable. In addition, Secure Transitions did not establish short term goals. The County contract requires the Agency to establish long term and short term goals for children.

- The Quarterly Reports for all seven children did not contain a discussion of the children's progress towards attaining their goals.

- Fourteen (77%) of the eighteen Termination Reports reviewed did not include a closing summary of the Agency's records relating to the children.

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

Review of Report

On February 2, 2007, we discussed our report with Secure Transitions who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Secure Transitions' management identified the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Secure Transitions 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
Dr. Melvin Moore, Executive Director, Secure Transitions 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
SECURE TRANSITIONS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited four of the twenty-eight Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Secure Transitions billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in February and March 2006 and interviewed the four foster parents and seven of the eleven children placed in the four homes. We also reviewed the case files for the four foster parents and seven children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Secure Transitions needs to ensure foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes and that foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Secure Transitions also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports, and Termination Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- Two (50%) of the four foster homes visited did not secure detergents and cleaning solutions. In addition, one of the two homes did not secure a butcher knife. The cleaning solutions and detergents were stored in unlocked kitchen cabinets and the butcher knife was stored in an unlocked silverware drawer.

- In one (25%) of the four foster homes inspected, the foster parents owned a firearm that was appropriately locked to prevent access by the children. However, the ammunition and the firearm were stored in the same location. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require ammunition to be stored and locked separately from firearms.

- One (25%) of the four 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.

- Two (50%) of the four foster homes visited were not performing 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. In addition, one of these two homes did not have a posted emergency contact list or an emergency plan, including methods of escape, as required.

- Two (50%) of the four foster homes visited did not maintain an allowance log for the children. The County contract requires Secure Transitions 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 two homes and they indicated that they did receive their allowances.

- One (25%) of the four foster homes visited did not supply the children with adequate drawer space to store their clothing. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require that each child's bedroom shall have closet and drawer space to accommodate the children's clothes and personal belongings. One child in the home did not have drawer space to store her clothes while the other child's dresser was falling apart and needed to be repaired or replaced.

Foster Parent Certification

- Two (50%) of the four foster homes were not assessed by Secure Transitions to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home as required. An average of five children were placed in each home.

- One (25%) of the four foster parent's certification files reviewed did not contain a criminal record clearance from the California Department of Justice or a child abuse index clearance as required. In addition, Secure Transitions did not have these clearances on file for the foster parent's mother, who lives in the home. Prior to the conclusion of the review, the Agency provided documentation that clearances for the foster parent and her mother had been obtained.

- One (25%) of the four foster parent's certification files reviewed did not contain a current driver's license or proof of automobile insurance for the foster parent or the foster parent's designated driver on file. In addition, another foster parent's certification file did not contain proof of current automobile insurance on file. Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency provided proof of current driver's licenses and automobile insurance for the two foster parents and the designated driver.

- One (25%) of the four foster parents completed only seven hours of the fifteen hours of annual on-going training required by the County contract.

Children's Case Records

- Two (29%) of the seven children's case files reviewed did not contain a signed acknowledgement by the child or the child's DCFS social worker of receipt of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, house rules, discipline practices, grievance/complaint procedures, and discharge procedures.

- Five (71%) of the seven children's case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency's social worker conducted bi-weekly visits with the children for the months of April through June 2006. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require Agencies' social worker to make and document two face-to-face contacts per month with the foster children and foster parents after the initial ninety days of placement. We verified with the foster parents and children that their social workers visited regularly. However, the social worker did not document the visits as required.

- One (14%) of the seven children exceeded the maximum age that Secure Transitions could bill DCFS for services. In addition, another child, who was not part of our sample, lived in the same foster home and also exceeded the maximum age that Secure Transitions could bill DCFS for services. Secure Transition's program statement allows the Agency to provide services to children ranging from infant to seventeen years old, unless a Community Care Licensing (CCL) exception is on file. Subsequent to the issuance of this report, the Agency received exceptions from CCL for the two children.

- One (14%) of the seven children's initial dental exam was conducted approximately eleven 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.

Needs and Services Plans

- All seven Needs and Services Plans' (Plans) goals were general and did not have short term goals and the goals did not meet the criteria of specific, measurable and attainable.

- The Plans for two children taking psychotropic medications did not incorporate the medications into the Plans.

- All seven Plans reviewed did not contain the signature of the children's DCFS social worker indicating the social workers' approval of the Plans. The Plans were forwarded to the DCFS social workers for approval. However, the Agency did not follow-up when the signatures were not obtained.

Quarterly Reports and Termination Reports

- All seven Quarterly Reports reviewed did not contain a date that they were mailed to the DCFS social workers. Therefore, we could not determine if they were mailed within ten days following the end of the quarter as required by the County contract.

- All seven Quarterly Reports reviewed did not contain a discussion of progress made towards the children's goals as required by the County contract. In addition, four of the seven Quarterly Reports reviewed for children fourteen years of age or older did not contain a copy of the children's Emancipation Preparation Contract.

- Fourteen (77%) of the eighteen Termination Reports did not include a closing summary of the Agency's records relating to the placed child.

Recommendations

Secure Transitions 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 knives, cleaning solutions, detergents and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**

3. **Foster homes lock and store ammunition separately from firearms.**

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

5. **Foster homes have an emergency plan, conduct and document disaster drills with placed children and post an emergency contact list.**

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. **Foster homes supply children with adequate closet and drawer space to accommodate the children's clothes and personal belongings.**

8. **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.**

9. **Foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations and that their case files contain all the information required.**

10. **Children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and that staff conduct and document required visits with the children as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**

11. **Children meet the criteria outlined in Agency's Program Statement and license.**

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

13. **Needs and Services Plans contain all the information required and that the DCFS social worker approves in writing all Needs and Services Plans.**

14. **Quarterly and Termination Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and are prepared within the timeframes specified.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed seven children placed in four Secure Transitions' certified foster homes and four foster parents to confirm the services Secure Transitions billed to DCFS.

Results

Overall, the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Secure Transitions generally met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly. In general, the children interviewed also stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

One foster parent interviewed complained that the Agency did not appropriately arrange transportation for the child to attend vocational school and to her job. The foster parent indicated that the Agency's social worker and the DCFS social worker could not reach an agreement on who should supply a bus pass. As a result, the child purchased her

own bus pass for transportation to her school and work. The County contract requires the Agency to arrange or provide transportation for the children so that they can attend the activities specified in their Needs and Services Plans. These activities include school and the place of the child's employment.

Recommendation

15. Secure Transitions management ensure that transportation is provided to children in accordance with the activities specified in the children's Needs and Services Plans.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Secure Transition's 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 Secure Transitions' administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for February and March 2006.

Results

Secure Transition's supervising social worker supervised five social workers and the Agency's five 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 Secure Transitions' staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Secure Transitions conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training and performance evaluations to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Secure Transition's 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

Secure Transitions' administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. However, Secure Transitions did not obtain a written and signed declaration from one contract social worker stating that the social worker's total caseload from all contracted Agencies would not exceed fifteen placed children. Secure Transitions' administrator corrected this deficiency.

In addition, one social worker did not have a current driver's license on file with the Agency as required. Prior to the conclusion of the review, the Agency provided proof of a current driver's license for the social worker.

Recommendation

Secure Transitions management:

16. **Ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that their total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children.**

17. **Ensure that proof of a valid driver's license is maintained for staff working on the County contract.**

SECURE
TRANSITIONS, INC. 6101 W. CENTINELA AVENUE, SUITE 380 CULVER CITY, CA 90230 (310) 342-3950 / FAX: (310) 342-3955
A Foster Family Treatment Agency

February 19, 2007

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

FROM: Melvin M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Secure Transitions Foster Family Agency

SUBJECT: SECURE TRANSITIONS FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW

The following consists of Secure Transitions' corrective action plan developed in response to the contract review conducted by the Auditor-Controller Office of the Department of Children and Family Services. Agency responses are provided in the order presented in the Auditor-Controller's report to the Board of Supervisors.

BILLED SERVICES

Recommendation:

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

Agency Response:
To ensure that Agency staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations, the Agency reviewed with its Quality Assurance staff, their responsibilities with respect to their home inspection duties. Quality Assurance staff submit inspection reports to their supervisor quarterly.

Additionally, Agency administrators conducted a series of meetings with its social work staff to review specific Title 22 regulations and policy changes. These staff meetings were held on:

- June 19, 2006 (procedures for Quarterly Reports, Needs and Services Plans and CSW contacts);
- June 26, 2006 (emancipation plans, follow up on Quarterlies, Needs and Services Plans);
- July 3, 2006 (review of change in procedures for completing request for age-exceptions; progress notes; Needs and Services Plans);
- July 10, 2006 (review of new procedures for progress notes);
- July 31, 2006 (appropriate completion of revised Needs and Services Plans);
- August 14, 2006 (formulating goals and objectives – revised Needs and Services Plans – 3 months and six months);
- October 2, 2006 (enforcement of Title 22 Regulations); and
- February 5, 2007 (review of Auditor's Report).

Additionally, to further ensure compliance with the Agency's responsibilities under the County contract and Title 22, the following issues were among the Title 22 regulations discussed at a certified foster parent meeting held on July 20, 2006: 1) monthly clothing purchases and related receipts, 2) children allowances and their documentation, 3) psychotropic medications – daily monitoring and logging; destruction of unused medications; monthly psychiatric visits and their documentation; 4) transportation of children to various activities (e.g., medical and dental examinations; school, teen clubs, relative visits, sibling visits, etc.); 5) regulations regarding home capacity and requests to increase capacity, specifically – that requests would be granted depending on a) the quality of care the parent is providing for the children currently placed in the home; b) ability of the parent to meet the needs of additional children; c) parent must have at least 12 months of experience in caring for placed children. d) an exception to the 12 month requirement would be made for placement of siblings and teens as long as the first two criteria were met.

2.
Recommendation:

Ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, cleaning solutions, detergents and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.

- Of the four homes inspected, two contained unlocked detergents and cleaning solutions in the kitchen cupboard. One of these homes also had an unlocked butcher knife in the silverware drawer.

Agency Response:
Licensing regulations regarding the storage of toxic substances were reviewed with the certified parent to ensure her compliance. However, it should be noted that all of the girls residing in this home at the time of the audit were over the age of 14 years. They were assigned chores to help promote age-appropriate independent functioning; these chores required the use of detergents and cleaning solutions.

At the time of the audit, three of these teens had Needs and Services Plans dated 1) December 2005 & June 2006; 2) February 2006 & August 2006; and 3) March 2006 & September 2006.

These Plans specify in the "Functional Skills" section of the Plan that the objective is "To develop independent functioning skills." One objective included: "Learn and practice tasks around the house, such as *cooking, cleaning*, and budgeting…" "Cooking" required that they used knives; "cleaning" required that they used soaps and detergents, and other such toxic substances. These tasks were done under the supervision of the foster parent.

The Agency was advised during the audit that this could continue, but the handling of the "toxic substances" would have to be on a limited basis, and under the supervision of the foster parent. The fourth teen did not have a Needs and Services Plan that specified the above. She transferred into the identified home approximately two months prior to the audit; her Plan was not due to be updated, but should have been to conform to the functioning skills plan implemented at the home.

3.
Recommendation:

Ensure that foster homes lock and store ammunition separately from firearms.

- One of the four homes inspected had a gun locked in the master bedroom file drawer; however, the bullets to the gun were locked in the same drawer.

Agency Response:
The agency reviewed with certified foster parent the Licensing regulations regarding the storage of firearms and ammunition in the foster family home. The certified parent removed the bullets from the file cabinet; she now stores them separately from the firearm.

4.
Recommendation:

Ensure that foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to childrens' rooms.

- Of the four homes inspected, one home did not have a smoke detector installed in the hallway outside a child's bedroom.

Agency Response:
The licensing requirement concerning the installation of smoke detectors was reviewed with certified foster parent. Smoke detector has been installed in the hallway of the indicated bedroom.

5.
Recommendation:

Ensure that foster homes have an emergency plan, conduct and document disaster drills with placed children, and post an emergency contact list.

- Of the four homes inspected, parents in two homes indicated that they do not perform fire drills with the children. Also, one of these homes did not have an emergency contact list.

Agency Response:
Licensing regulations regarding conducting and documenting disaster were reviewed with the certified foster parents in violation of these regulations to ensure their future compliance. Reviewed also was the regulation regarding the posting of written disaster plans and emergency contact list. Emergency disaster plans are now posted in all certified homes.

Additionally, twenty-four of our twenty-eight certified foster parents attended an Emergency Disaster Preparation workshop on October 19, 2006 conducted by AmeriCorps.

6.
Recommendation:

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.

- Of the four homes inspected, certified parents in two of the homes were not logging the children's allowance.

Agency Response:
The certified foster parents in violation of this regulation were reminded of licensing regulations regarding the maintenance of allowance logs for all placed children that includes the amount of allowance and the child's signature. The above parents now log in allowance for all children under their care.

Additionally, these regulations were reviewed with all parents certified with Secure Transitions during a certified foster parent meeting held on July 20, 2006.

7.
Recommendation:

Ensure that foster homes supply children with adequate closet and drawer space to accommodate the children's clothes and personal belongings.

- In one foster family home, one child did not have drawer space to store her clothes. The child was sharing a dresser with another child sharing her bedroom.

Agency Response:
The certified foster parent was counseled regarding this violation; she subsequently purchased an additional dresser.

8.
Recommendation:

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.

- Four children were placed in two homes where the total number of children was greater than two. The assessment of the foster parent's ability to meet all the children's needs was not completed prior to the placement.

Agency Response:
It is Secure Transition's practice to assess the capabilities of each certified foster parent prior to placement; however, this assessment, like many others was not documented. The Agency will, in accordance with the County contract, assess and document the certified family home to determine that the certified foster parent: 1) is providing quality care for the currently placed children; 2) will be able to meet the needs of an additional foster child; and 3) has at least twelve (12) months of experience in caring for foster children. Documentation that this assessment has taken place will be placed in the foster child's case file.

The Agency understands that according to the County contract the experience requirement in item (3) above may be less than twelve (12) months to accommodate sibling groups or teenagers as long as all of the requirement in items (1) and 2) are met. The Agency understands further that the assessment shall be included in the Needs and Services Plan or other documents in the placed child's file and be readily accessible to the CSW and/or audit staff. In addition, the Agency held a foster parent meeting on July 20, 2006 that covered compliance with Title 22 regulations, including the home capacity issue.

Finally, the Agency's client intake screen has been modified to reflect the above requirements to further ensure that such a violation does not occur.

9.
Recommendation:

Ensure that foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations and that their case files contain all the information required.

- Of the four foster parents files reviewed, one foster parent certified for nine months, did not have criminal clearances on file. In addition, the foster parent's mother, who lives in the home, did not have clearances on file.

Agency Response:
The certified foster parent in question was cleared by the Department of Justice, but was not associated with Secure Transitions. The Technical Assistant who reviewed the parent's file prior to certification, made an error by assuming the parent's fingerprint documentation meant she was cleared and associated with the Agency. The certified foster parent is now associated with Secure Transitions.

This home was placed on inactive status until such time that the certified parent's mother is Child Abuse and Department of Justice cleared. To insure that this violation will not reoccur, the Agency's Program Administrator will review each potential foster parent's file prior to certification.

- Of the four foster parents' files reviewed, one foster parent and her designated driver, did not have a current drivers license on file. In addition, two other certified parents did not have current car insurance on file.

Agency Response:
Copies of a current driver's license and two auto insurance documents were not on file at time of audit. Current copies of the above documents are in the respective parent's files.

- Of the four foster parents' files reviewed, one foster parent did not complete all required on-going training hours during the past year. From 2-19-05 to 2-19-06, the certified parent only completed 7.5 hours of training.

Agency Response:
Foster parents certified by Secure Transitions are required, in compliance with the County contract, to complete fifteen (15) hours of training annually. Ms. Taylor completed the required number of training hours by December 31, 2006.

10.
Recommendation:

Ensure that children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and that staff conduct and document required visits with the child as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

- Two of the seven children's files did not contain a signed acknowledgement by the child's CSW of receipt of written copies of personal rights, Foster Youth Bill of Rights, the Legal Rights of Teens, house rules, discipline practices, grievance/complaint procedures and discharge procedures (the New Placement Orientation package).

Agency Response:
The Agency's New Placement Orientation package has been revised to include space for the child's CSW's signature.

11.
Recommendation:

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

- It was found that two youths placed with the agency did not have a current CCL exception on file.

Agency Response:
An exception for both youths was approved by Community Care Licensing (CCL) on September 12, 2006; one of the youths has since been emancipated.

12.
Recommendation:

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

- One child's initial dental exam was eleven months late.

Agency Response:
The treating dentist refused to provide dental exam to this child because child had dental exam less than three months previously; medi-cal will not fund two exams during a six month period. However, to ensure compliance to the County-FFA contract, the Agency reviewed Title 22 regulations regarding initial dental examinations for placed children – with certified parents on July 20, 2006 and with Agency staff on February 2, 2007.

13.
Recommendation:

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.

- Seven of seven Needs & Services Plans reviewed did not contain written approval of the DCFS County Social Worker (CSW). All seven plans were sent to the CSW for approval, however, no follow-up was done as the Plans were not signed and returned.

Agency Response:
All children's Needs & Services are mailed to their respective County Social Worker for approval. The Needs & Service Plans in question were not signed by CSW's because they had not been returned to the agency. Agency follow up had been primarily by telephone, and not documented in writing.

Agency social workers have been directed to become more aggressive in its efforts to have CSW's return signed Needs & Services Plans by sending bi-weekly follow-up letters and monthly follow-up telephone calls.

- All of the seven children's files reviewed did not contain long-term and short-term goals. Plans only contained intermediate goals and these goals were not specific, measurable, and time limited.

Agency Response:
The agency's Needs & Services Plans contained goals that were specific, measurable, and time-limited. These goals, however, were only short-range. The agency modified its Needs & Services Plan form to reflect three (3) month and six (6) month goals.

Agency social workers have been directed to adhere rigidly to the County requirement that all treatment goals be specific, measurable, and time-limited (procedures reviewed during staff meetings held on June 19, 2006, July 3, 2006, July 31, 2006 and August 14, 2006)

- Two children's use of psychotropic medication was not incorporated into their overall treatment plan.

Agency Response:
Procedures for completion of Needs & Services Plans were reviewed at Agency staff meetings to ensure that social workers would incorporate a child's need for and use of psychotropic medication and its administration into the child's Needs and Services Plan. These meetings were held on June 19, 2006, July 3, 2006, July 31, 2006 and August 14, 2006.

14.
Recommendation

Ensure that Quarterly and Termination Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and are prepared within the timeframes specified.

- Of the seven children's files reviewed, none of the current Quarterly Reports contained a date as to when the reports were mailed to the child's County Social Worker. The Reports also did not contain progress towards the child's goals. In addition, the four children of the seven children receiving ILP services did not contain Emancipation Preparation Contracts.

Agency Response:
A letter accompanies all Quarterly Reports mailed to County Social Workers; it indicates the date the Report is mailed. In order to ensure that the actual date of mailing of Quarterly Reports, social workers and technical assistants have been directed to date stamp each Report when mailed.

All Agency Quarterly Report forms contain a section entitled, "Quarterly Assessment." In this section social workers document a child's progress toward goals. This section includes a restatement of the child's major issues or needs as indicated in his/her Needs & Services Plan; changes in the Needs & Services Plan; the child's progress toward achieving goals indicated in the Plan; and an overall assessment of the child's progress.

DCFS policy regarding the reporting of each child's progress toward treatment goals was reviewed with Agency social work staff (staff meeting June 19, 2006; June 26, 2006; February 5, 2007). With respect to Emancipation Preparation Contracts, files of all placed children fourteen (14) years of age or older contain Emancipation Preparation Contracts.

Contracts have been placed in each file of a youth 14 years of age or older upon admission; these contracts are ready for completion as each youth begins ILP services.

- Only four of the 18 termination reports submitted during March and April 2006 contained detailed closing summaries of the agency's records relating to the placement as required by the County contract.

Agency Response:
Agency discharge summaries were deficient with respect to the information required by the County contract. The Agency's Discharge Summary Form has been revised to reflect discharge information (child and caregiver identifying data, admission and discharge dates, reason for discharge, new caretaker data, date of placement, discharge, etc) as well as a summary of all pertinent data from most current Needs & Services Plan and Quarterly Report.

CLIENT VERIFICATION

15.
Recommendation:

Secure Transitions management ensure that transportation is provided to children in accordance with the activities specified in the children's Needs and Services Plans.

- One child interviewed stated that she was denied a bus pass needed to attend vocational school and to travel to work. The Agency social worker contacted the child's CSW to obtain the bus pass. The CSW told the Agency social worker that the Agency should provide the bus pass to the child. The Agency assumed wrongly that each child's normal transportation expenses came out of his/her stipend unless the CSW provided a bus pass (which has occurred on several occasions). Unfortunately, the child purchased the pass with her own money.

Agency Response:
The Agency has directed its social work staff to comply with the terms of the County contract that states, in part, that the agency will provide transportation and transportation expenses to placed children as necessary. The Agency reviewed the County regulations regarding transportation of placed children during a July 20, 2006 certified parent meeting.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

16.
Recommendation:

Ensure that contract social workers sign a written declaration stating that the social worker's total contracted caseload will not exceed fifteen placed children.

- The Contractor is responsible for obtaining written declarations for any contract social workers utilized on a part-time basis to the effect that the contract social worker's total contracted caseload with all contracting agencies does not exceed 15 placed children. An independent contract social worker employed by the Agency did not have such a declaration written into her contract.

Agency Response:
The Agency has modified the independent contractor's contract to include a declaration that her caseload with all agencies with whom she contracts will not exceed a combined total of fifteen (15) placed children.

17.
Recommendation
Ensure that proof of a valid driver's license is maintained for staff working on the County contract.

- One contract social worker did not have a current Driver's License on file.

Agency Response:
The contract social worker's current driver's license is now in her personnel file.