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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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July 30, 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: **NUEVO AMANECER LATINO FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES SERVICE PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Nuevo Amanecer Latino Foster Family Agency (Nuevo or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

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

Nuevo is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Nuevo oversees a total of 220 certified foster homes in which 476 DCFS children were placed. Nuevo's headquarters is located in the First District.

DCFS pays Nuevo 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, Nuevo receives between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out

of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between $645 and $855 per month, per child. Nuevo's contract was for approximately $7,609,000 through May 2007 for Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Nuevo was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Nuevo's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes where we interviewed several children and foster parents.

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

Nuevo did not always ensure foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes. For example, two homes inspected did not lock items that posed a potential danger to the children as required. In addition, one home did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the children's bedroom as required. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation that the two homes purchased locks/lockboxes to secure the items that posed a potential danger to the children. In addition, the Agency also provided documentation that the other home purchased a smoke detector for the hallway of the children's bedroom.

Nuevo also did not prepare children's Needs and Services Plans in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In general, the children's goals listed in the Needs and Services Plans were general and did not meet the criteria of being specific and individualized to each child. In addition, the goals generally were not measurable as required. Nuevo also did not always attempt to obtain tutoring services for children who were working below grade level in school.

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

Review of Report

On June 18, 2007, we discussed our report with Nuevo who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Nuevo's management indicates the actions the

Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Nuevo 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: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Jorge Acosta, Executive Director Nuevo Amanecer Latino Foster Family Agency
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
NUEVO AMANECER LATINO FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

Our review focused on Nuevo's East Los Angeles, San Fernando and Covina offices. We visited 19 of the 146 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Nuevo billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in April and May 2006 and interviewed 23 of the 32 foster parents and 32 of the 61 children placed in the 23 homes. We also reviewed the case files for the 32 foster parents and 45 of the children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

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

Foster Home Visitation

- Three (16%) of the nineteen foster homes visited did not lock items that posed a potential safety hazard to the children as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. One home had unlocked kitchen knives in the kitchen and one of the other three homes had unlocked detergents and other toxins in the laundry room. The third home had unlocked medications that belonged to the foster parent's birth daughter in a bedroom closet. The daughter shared the bedroom with a foster child in this home. In this home, the foster mother immediately locked the medications in a hallway closet. In addition, prior to the conclusion of the review, Nuevo provided documentation that the other two foster homes purchased lockboxes and cabinet locks to secure the items.

- One (5%) of nineteen homes visited did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the children's bedroom. There was a smoke detector in the children's bedroom. However, the Country contract and Title 22 regulations require that a

smoke detector be placed in the hallways leading to the children's bedroom. Prior to the conclusion of the review, Nuevo provided documentation that the foster parent purchased and installed the required smoke detector.

- Two (11%) of nineteen foster homes visited did not have air conditioning or fans in the children's bedrooms. The bedrooms were extremely warm during our visit, and a child in one of the homes indicated she was having a hard time sleeping at night because it was too hot. Title 22 regulations require that foster homes to maintain a comfortable temperature for children at all times. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Nuevo provided documentation that the foster parents obtained fans for the foster children's bedrooms.

- One (5%) of nineteen foster homes visited did not have a working telephone in the home at the time of our visit. Title 22 regulations require that all foster homes shall have telephone services, unless alternative telephone access is approved and documented. The foster parent indicated that the phone had been shut off but that service would resume sometime later that week. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Nuevo provided documentation that the foster home's phone had been turned back on.

Needs and Services Plans

- None of the Needs and Services Plans reviewed were prepared in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require that Nuevo's social workers develop a comprehensive, individualized Needs and Services Plan for each child for each child that are both long and short term, and are specific, measurable, time limited and attainable. For the most part, the plans were not individualized to the child, were very general, and in most cases contained goals that were not measurable and time limited. Specific areas that required more detailed information/goals were the areas of education and money management.

- Six (55%) of eleven children on psychotropic medications did not have the psychotropic medications incorporated into their Needs and Services Plan as required by the County contract.

Children's Case Files

- Nuevo's social workers did not always visit the children at the children's foster home in accordance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. The County contract and Title 22 regulations require that Neuvo's social workers make weekly face-to-face visits during the first ninety days of placement with at least two of the weekly meetings occurring in the children's foster home every month.

  During one month of the first ninety days of placement, Nuevo's social workers did not visit one child at the child's foster home as required. Nuevo's social workers also

only visited two other children once at the children's foster home during one month of the first ninety days of placement.

- Thirteen (29%) of forty-five children's case files did not contain clothing receipts for the two-month period under review. Nuevo's Program Statement states that it is the Agency's expectation that foster parents will spend a minimum of fifty dollars per month on the replacement of clothing for foster children. During our visits to the homes, we verified that the children were provided with sufficient clothing.

Educational Services

- Seven (16%) of forty-five children's case files reviewed indicated that the children were working below grade level in school. The case files did not contain documentation that the Agency made an attempt to obtain tutoring services for the children to improve their basic educational skills as required by the County contract.

Foster Parent Certification

- Twelve (38%) of thirty-two foster parent certification files contained documentation that indicated they attended fifteen hours of initial training prior to the placement of children in their homes. However, the County contract requires foster parents to receive eighteen hours of initial training prior to having children placed in their homes. Nuevo management indicated that their training records for these twelve foster parents were incorrect and that the foster parents did attend the required amount of training hours.

Recommendations

Nuevo management:

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

2. **Ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, detergents and toxins, medications and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**

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

4. **Ensure that foster homes maintain a comfortable temperature for children at all times.**

5. **Ensure that foster homes have a working telephone unless alternative telephone access is approved and documented.**

6. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required and that children taking psychotropic medications have the medications incorporated into their Needs and Services Plans.**

7. **Ensure children are visited weekly by the Agency social worker during the first 90 days of placement and that at least two of the visits per month occur in the children's foster home.**

8. **Ensure that foster parents spend a minimum of fifty dollars per month on the replacement of clothing for foster children.**

9. **Ensure that children's educational progress is monitored and document attempts to provide tutoring services when children are working below grade level.**

10. **Ensure documentation is maintained to support that foster parents attended 18 hours of initial training.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed thirty-two children placed in twenty-three Nuevo certified foster homes and twenty-three foster parents to confirm the services Nuevo billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from Nuevo 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 Nuevo'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 Nuevo's quality assurance director. In addition, we reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for March and April 2006.

Results

Nuevo's ten supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers, and the Agency's thirty-three social workers carried an average caseload of fourteen cases during the months of March and April 2006.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Nuevo's human resources 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

Nuevo's director, supervising social workers and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Nuevo conducted hiring clearances, on-going training, and performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

NUEVO AMANECER LATINO CHILDREN'S SERVICES

June 20, 2007

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

From: David Danwing
Director of Quality Improvement
Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services

Subject: Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services Response to Contract Review

Attention: Mr.J. Tyler McCauley
Auditor Controller,

Honorable supervisors,

This is to thank you for your continuous support and the profesionalism of Auditor Controller team during our contract review. Recommendations were well taken, deficiencies were corrected immediately during the review process, and we are here to continue improving our performance while keeping our quality improvement culture of building bridges to children and families success through a continuous quality improvement process.

Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services management has analyzed Auditor-Controller contract review and recommendations for corrective actions. The following are our responses:

Recommendation 1:	**Ensure that staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the county contract and title 22 regulations.**
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	Nuevo Amanecer will ensure that foster care staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure foster families comply with the county contract and Title 22 regulations. Houses are formally evaluated on a quarterly basis via safety walkthrough of the home conducted by foster care social workers. In addition, homes are monthly observed and assessed during foster care social worker home visits.
Recommendation 2:	**Ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, detergents and toxins, medications and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	Nuevo Amanecer will ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, detergents and toxins, medications and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children. Foster care staff will continue in a monthly basis to adequately monitor foster homes in order to assure the safest environment in accordance with the contract and Title 22

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Recommendation 3:	***Ensure that foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to children's bedrooms.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer will continue ensuring that foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways to children's bedrooms care staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure foster families comply with the county contract and Title 22 regulations. Foster care staff will continue in a monthly basis to adequately monitor foster homes in order to assure the safest environment in accordance with the contract and Title 22 regulations.*
Recommendation 4:	***Ensure that foster homes maintain a comfortable temperature for children at all times.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer will continue ensuring that foster homes maintain a comfortable temperature for children at all times. Foster care staff will continue in a monthly basis to adequately monitor foster homes in order to assure the safest environment in accordance with the contract and Title 22 regulations.*
Recommendation 5:	***Ensure that foster homes have a working telephone unless alternative telephone access is approved and documented.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer will continue ensuring that foster homes have a working telephone or any other alternative telephone access approved and documented. Nuevo Amanecer foster care staff will continue to adequately monitor foster homes effective telephone access in order to assure effective communication and the safest environment.*
Recommendation 6:	***Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required and that children taking psychotropic medication have the medication incorporated into their Needs and Service Plans.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer will continue ensuring that Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required and that children taking psychotropic medication have the medication incorporated into their Needs and Services Plans. Nuevo Amanecer Latino's foster care social workers and involved staff will continue keeping monthly reviews of the Needs and Service Plans to ensure files contain all the information required.*
Recommendation 7:	***Ensure children are visited monthly by the Agency social worker during the first ninety days of placement and that at least two of the visits per month occur in the children's foster home.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer will continue ensuring that children are visited by its foster care social workers, as minimum one per week.*

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Recommendation 8:	***Ensure that foster parents will spend a minimum of fifty dollars per month on the placement of clothing for foster children.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer Latino's foster care social worker will assure that foster parents will spend a minimum of sixty dollars per month on the placement of clothing for foster children.*
Recommendation 9:	***Ensure that children's educational progress is monitored and document attempts to provide tutoring services when children are working below grade level.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer Latino's foster care social workers will continue to monitor the foster children's educational progress monthly by contacts with the teachers, counselors, grade reports. If a child is found to be working below average; foster care social workers in tandem with teachers, counselors, and involved parties, with the authorization from the CSW, will develop a plan to ensure that the child achieve his own academic potential. This plan could include but is not limited to tutoring, home study time, and foster parent involvement.*
Recommendation 10:	***Ensure documentation is maintained to support that foster parents attended eighteen hours of initial training.***
Ongoing Corrective Action Plan:	*Nuevo Amanecer Latino will continue providing foster parents with the training required by the contract, as minimum. Nuevo Amanecer is already providing foster parents with more hours of training than the required by the contract.*

If I can of further assistance, please, do not hesitate to contact me at Email davidd@nalffa.org or (323) 353-1086.

Sincerely,

David Danwing, MS
Director of Quality Improvement
Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services

Cc: Jorge Alberto Acosta, Executive Director
Board of Directors