COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-2706
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

WENDY L. WATANABE
CHIEF DEPUTY

November 27, 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: **HUDSON LYNDSEY FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES SERVICE PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Hudson Lyndsey Foster Family Agency (Hudson or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with Hudson, 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.

Hudson is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 16 certified foster homes in which 29 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Hudson is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Hudson 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, Hudson 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. Hudson was paid approximately $606,000 for Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

Hudson needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes. Unsafe conditions existed at one of the three foster homes visited. These conditions should have been detected and corrected by the Agency's social worker during routine visits to the home. At the time of our visit, the interior of this home needed painting, there were loose electrical wires hanging from the ceiling of a hallway, the window safety lock in the child's bedroom was inoperable, and the window was obstructed by the child's bed making it very difficult to escape in case of an emergency. In addition, some of the furniture in the home was unsuitable, and the home did not have an operable smoke detector in the hallway leading to the child's room. Subsequent to our visit, Hudson removed the two foster children from the home and placed the home on hold. In addition, the other two homes visited also were not in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 safety regulations.

Hudson also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports, Termination reports and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- Children's NSPs did not always contain all the information. In addition, the children's NSPs were not always prepared within the timeframes specified.

- One of two children taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization for the administration of the medication as required. In addition, both children did not have the medication incorporated into their NSPs.

- Two of five children's initial dental examinations were 100 days late on average.

- Two of five children were not visited by Hudson's social worker the required amount of time during the first ninety days of placement.

- One of three foster homes reviewed was not assessed by Hudson to determine the foster parent's ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.

- The Quarterly Report for a 20 year old young adult did not include an Emancipation Preparation Contract as required.

- Nine of the 19 Termination Reports were not reviewed by the children's DCFS social workers. In addition, after providing the nine DCFS social workers with copies of the Termination Reports, the social workers stated that the Termination Reports contained inaccurate information.

Further, Hudson needs to ensure sufficient funds are available in their bank account to pay foster parents timely. The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

On October 3, 2007, we discussed our report with Hudson who was in general agreement with the findings. Within thirty days of the issuance of this report, Hudson's management will submit to DCFS a detailed Corrective Action Plan that specifically addresses the actions the Agency will take to implement each of the recommendations contained in this report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Hudson 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, Department of Children and Family Services
Cynthia Powell, Director, Hudson Lyndsey FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
HUDSON LYNDSEY FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Hudson Lyndsey Foster Family Agency (Hudson 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 sixteen Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Hudson billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in August and September 2006, and interviewed three of the four foster parents and two of the five children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the case files for the four foster parents and five children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Hudson needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Hudson also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans, Quarterly Reports, Termination Reports and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Foster Home Visitation

One (33%) of three foster homes visited contained a number of safety issues. We specifically noted the following:

- There were loose electrical wires hanging from the ceiling in a hallway.
- The bathroom walls needed to be re-tiled and the bathtub needed to be re-glazed.
- The carpeting throughout the home was worn and dirty and the kitchen floor was uneven as a result of the foster parent replacing the kitchen floor herself.
- The interior of the home needed painting.
- The living room couch was unsuitable for sitting as it cushions were lumpy and frayed and the springs providing support were broken.

- A trampoline did not have a safety net in the backyard of the home which posed a potential safety hazard for the children placed in the home.

- The window safety lock in the child's bedroom was obstructed by the child's bed making it very difficult to escape in case of an emergency and the foster parent was not familiar with how to operate the safety lock.

- The home did not have an operable smoke detector in the hallway leading to the child's room.

- Detergents and cleaning solutions were not stored in the locked are provided by the Agency.

After our inspection of the home, Hudson immediately removed the two children and placed the home on hold for future placements.

For the other two homes visited, we noted the following:

- The window safety device in the children's bedroom in one (50%) of the two homes visited was inoperable. In addition, the bathtub in the bathroom used by the children in this home needed to be re-glazed. Hudson's annual recertification inspection had noted both of these issues almost a year prior. However, correction action was never implemented by the foster parent. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation that the window safety device had been fixed and that the bathtub had been re-glazed.

- One (50%) of the two homes visited did not have an operable smoke detector in the hallway to the children's bedroom as required. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Hudson provided documentation that the battery in the smoke detector had been replaced and that the smoke detector was operable.

- One (50%) of two homes visited did not have tooth brushes for the two children placed in the home. The two children were recently placed in the home and the foster parent stated that the children were placed without tooth brushes. Foster parents are required to supply the children with new personal hygiene and care items.

- One (50%) of two homes visited did not lock prescription medications as required. The medications were stored under the foster parent's bed instead of the lockbox that was proved to the foster parent by the Agency.

- Both homes did not store detergents and cleaning solutions in the locked area provided by the Agency.

Needs and Services Plans

- None of the five Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) reviewed contained goals for the children that were time limited. The County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations require that goals established for children be specific, measurable, attainable, and time limited.

- Four (80%) of the five NSPs did not contain the children's DCFS social workers' signature indicating the social workers approved the NSPs as required. Hudson indicated that the NSPs were sent to the DCFS social workers for approval. However, they were not returned signed.

- Three (60%) of the five initial NSPs reviewed were not prepared within the time frames established by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Children's initial NSPs are required to be prepared within 30 days of placement. These NSPs were on average 14 days late. In addition, two children's current NSPs were not updated within the time frames. Children's NSPs are required to be updated at least every six months. The most recent update to these NSPs were on average 13 days late.

Quarterly and Termination Reports

- The Quarterly Report for a 20 year old young adult did not include an Emancipation Preparation Contract as required.

- Nine of the 19 Termination Reports were not reviewed by the children's DCFS social workers. In addition, after providing the nine DCFS social workers with copies of the Termination Reports, the social workers stated that the Termination Reports contained inaccurate information.

Medical Services

- One (50%) of two children taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization in the child's records for the administration of the medication as required by the County. The County contract requires Hudson to maintain copies of court authorizations for the administration of psychotropic medications in children's case files. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation that the child had a current court authorization for the medication.

- Both children taking psychotropic medications did not have the medications incorporated into their NSPs as required.

- Two (40%) of five children did not receive their initial dental exams within the first 30 days of their placement. The two children's initial dental exams were on average 100 days late.

Children's Case Records

- None of the five children's case records contained documentation that the children's DCFS social workers were updated monthly regarding the children's progress.

- Two (40%) of five children were not visited by Hudson's social worker the required amount of times during their first ninety days of placement. The County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations require that Hudson's social workers visit children weekly during the first ninety days of placement. Both of these children were missing one of the required visits during their first ninety days of placement.

- Two (40%) of five children's progress notes consisted of only one or two lines of very general information for the period we reviewed. The same limited information was repeated for each month's social worker visits. The County contract requires that Hudson maintain records of social worker progress notes in sufficient detail to permit an evaluation of services provided. In addition, private monthly interviews with the children regarding quality of life issues were not documented in the progress notes as required by the County contract.

Foster Parent Certification

- One (33%) of three foster homes reviewed was not assessed by Hudson to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home. Three children were placed in the home at the time of our review.

Several of the findings noted in this report were also noted in our prior monitoring report, dated October 27, 2005. The Agency stated that corrective action was taken to address the recommendations contained in the prior report.

Recommendations

Hudson Lyndsey 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 homes are well maintained and appropriately furnished with acceptable housekeeping and free of potential safety hazards.**

3. **Ensure that window safety locks in foster homes are operable and unobstructed by furniture.**

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

5. **Ensure that detergents, cleaning solutions, and medications are stored where they are inaccessible to children.**

6. **Ensure that foster homes supply each child, initially and replaced as needed, with new personal hygiene and personal care items.**

7. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans contain all the information required and are initially prepared and updated within the timeframes specified.**

8. **Ensure that Quarterly Reports include the children's Emancipation Preparation Contract when appropriate.**

9. **Ensure that Termination Reports contain accurate information and are prepared and sent to the DCFS social worker within the timeframes specified.**

10. **Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have current court authorizations for the administration of the medications and that the medications are incorporated into the children's Needs and Services Plans.**

11. **Ensure that children receive initial dental exams within the timeframes specified.**

12. **Ensure that children are visited the amount of times required.**

13. **Ensure that children's progress notes contain sufficient information to permit an evaluation of services provided and documents monthly interviews with the children regarding quality of life issues.**

14. **Ensure that foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Hudson billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed two children placed in four Hudson certified foster homes and three foster parents to confirm the services Hudson billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster children indicated they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The foster parents interviewed stated they were generally happy with the services they received from the Agency. However, two foster parents stated that a foster care payment from the Agency took two weeks to clear the bank after the foster parents deposited the check in their account.

Recommendation

15. Hudson Lyndsey management ensure sufficient funds are available in their bank account to pay foster parents timely.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Hudson's social workers' caseloads 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 Hudson's director and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Overall, Hudson's four social workers carried an average caseload of 10 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised four social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed Hudson's director and 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

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

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Objective

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the prior monitoring review completed by the Auditor-Controller.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from our Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on October 27, 2005.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained five recommendations. Hudson stated that the five recommendations were implemented. However, three of the five recommendations are also noted in this report.

Recommendation

16. Hudson management implement the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring report.