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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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December 17, 2007

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

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **FAMILIES UNITING FAMILIES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW - A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES SERVICE PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with Families Uniting, 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.

Families Uniting 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 13 certified foster homes in which 33 DCFS children were placed. Families Uniting is located in the Fourth District.

DCFS pays Families Uniting 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, Families Uniting 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. Families Uniting was paid approximately $636,000 during Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Families Uniting 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 Families Uniting's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed several children and foster parents.

Results of Review

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Families Uniting generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, the staff working on the County contract possessed the required education and work experience.

Families Uniting did not always ensure that the foster homes were maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes. For example, the carpet in the children's bedroom in one home was dirty and stained and needed to be cleaned or replaced. The ceiling in the bathroom was very moldy. The electrical outlets and a light switch in one of the three homes visited did not have cover plates creating a potential safety hazard. Prior to the issuance of this report, Families Uniting provided documentation that the carpet was professionally cleaned, the bathroom ceiling was cleaned and painted and the cover plates for the electrical outlets and light switch were installed.

Families Uniting also did not always ensure that children's Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) were prepared in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example, none of the NSPs reviewed contained goals that were time-limited and four of the five NSPs were not individualized to address the children's needs. In addition, one of the NSPs did not address emancipation services being provided to the child who was nineteen years of age at the time of our review.

We also noted that two of six foster parents' pre-certification health examinations were not conducted within the timeframes specified.

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

Review of Report

On November 1, 2007, we discussed our report with Families Uniting who was in general agreement with the findings. In their attached response, Families Uniting's management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. The Agency's response also referenced four attachments. The attachments included client information and were not included as an attachment to this report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Families Uniting 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
James Schrage, Director, Families Uniting Families
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FAMILIES UNITING FAMILIES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Families Uniting Families Foster Family Agency (Families Uniting 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 13 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Families Uniting billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in December 2006 and January 2007, and interviewed five of the six foster parents and four of the nine children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the case files for the six foster parents and five children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Families Uniting generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Families Uniting needs to ensure foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes. Families Uniting also needs to ensure that children's Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and foster parents' certification files contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- One (34%) of the three foster homes visited was not maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The carpet in the children's bedroom was stained and dirty and needed to be cleaned or replaced. In addition, the ceiling in the bathroom was very moldy and also needed to be cleaned or repainted. Prior to the issuance of this report, Families Uniting provided documentation that the carpet was professionally cleaned and the bathroom ceiling was cleaned and painted.

- One (34%) of three foster homes visited did not have cover plates on the electrical outlets and a light switch in the home's bathroom which posed a potential safety

hazard. The County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations require that foster homes be safe and in good repair at all times. Prior to the issuance of this report, Families Uniting provided documentation that cover plates for the electrical outlets and light switch had been purchased and installed.

Needs and Services Plans

- None of the five NSPs reviewed contained goals that were time-limited.

- None of the five NSPs reviewed addressed the children's need for continuing services, the need for modification in services, the Agency's recommendation regarding the feasibility of the child's return to his/her home, placement in another facility or move to independent living.

- Four (80%) of the five NSPs reviewed were not individualized to the child as required. These four NSPs contained almost identical goals/objectives for the four children. The County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations require social workers to develop comprehensive individualized NSPs for each child.

- Two (40%) of the five NSPs reviewed did not address the children's ability to manage their own money or the maximum amount of money the children were allowed to have in their possession at one time.

- One (20%) of the five NSPs reviewed did not address emancipation services being provided to the child. The child was nineteen years of age at the time of our review.

Foster Parent Certification

- Two (50%) of six foster parents' pre-certification health examinations were not conducted within the timeframes specified. The two foster parents' pre-certification health examinations were conducted fifteen and seventeen months prior to certification. The County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations require pre-certification health examinations to be conducted not more than one year prior to or seven days after certification.

Recommendations

Families Uniting 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 safe, well maintained, and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children.**

3. **Ensure that Needs and Services Plans contain all the information required.**

4. **Ensure that foster parents' pre-certification health examinations are conducted within the timeframes specified.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants received the services that Families Uniting billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed four children and five foster parents to confirm the services Families Uniting billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster children indicated they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents stated they were pleased with the services they received from the Agency.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Families Uniting'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 Families Uniting's director and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers.

Results

Families Uniting's supervising social worker supervised two social workers and carried a caseload of two children and the Agency's social workers carried an average caseload of 15 cases.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Families Uniting'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 Families Uniting's administrator 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

Families Uniting's FFA administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Families Uniting conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training and performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract as required.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this secti

Board of Directors
James M. Schrage, MSW, President
Kevin Sandercock, JD, Vice-President
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Grace Orpilla, MSW, Secretary

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November 21, 2007

County of Los Angeles
Department of Auditor-Controller
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
LA County Board of Supervisors
500 W. Temple Street, Room 525
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2706

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

From: James M. Schrage, MSW
Families Uniting Families, Executive Director

Subject: Response to Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller contract review of Families Uniting Families Foster Family Agency– A DCFS Service Provider

An audit was conducted of the December 2006 & January 2007 services billed to Los Angeles County and four recommendations were made based on the findings of the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller.

Recommendations that Families Uniting Families management should:

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 safe, well-maintained, and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children.

3. Ensure that "Needs and Services Plans (NSPs)" contain all the required information

4. Ensure that foster parents' pre-certification health examinations are conducted within the timeframes specified

Mr. Brian Henricks and his program auditor met with Families Uniting Families (FUF) James Schrage (Executive Director), Carlee Okerman (Foster Care Social Worker), and Marilyn Mejia-Pena (Foster Care Social Worker) to discuss the findings of the program audit. An exit interview document was also prepared by the offices of the Los Angles County Auditor-Controller and presented to FUF management.

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On 11-20-07, I spoke with Mr. Henricks about the details for the preparation of the agency's response to the findings that would describe any corrective actions that would be required to ensure compliance with the County contract and state regulations. Listed below are the items in need of redress.

In response to recommendation #1, "that FUF will ensure that staff will adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations" and to recommendation #2, "that FUF will ensure that foster homes are safe, well-maintained, and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children".

- A formal facility check is made every three months to ensure that each certified home facility is in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Likewise, as the Foster Care Social Workers make regular contact with the facility during their home visits, they will examine the home between formal facility checks and provide directives to certified parents if the facility falls below an acceptable standard of care.

In response to recommendation #3, "that FUF will ensure that 'Needs and Services Plans (NSPs)' contain all the required information."

- Our treatment team met the week following the exit interview with the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller's office and we incorporated their concerns in a revised format of the Appraisal/Needs and Services Plan that addresses areas noted in A-C's audit letter:
  - 1) Time limited goals/objectives,
  - 2) timeframes for length of placement and ability to return home,
  - 3) Comprehensive individualized goals for each child,
  - 4) Child's ability to manage money, and
  - 5) Emancipation services.

- The version of the Appraisal/Needs and Services Plan that FUF was using prior to this audit was the form that the State of California provides to licensed providers and last revised in October 1998 (see attachment #1). To make certain that all NSPs would be compliant this new form was developed and implemented as a measure to address those short-comings. Mr. Henricks was notified of the agency's attempts to revise this document and provided him a revised version of the Appraisal/Needs and Services Plan the week after the audit noted that FUF's drive to and the use of the form was approved by Mr. Henricks (see attachment #2). FUF immediately trained our workers on the use of this form and used it up until the standardized version that was provided by DCFS/LA C AC/FFA panel members (see attachment #3)

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In response to recommendation #4, "that FUF will ensure that foster parents' pre-certification health examinations are conducted within the timeframes specified".

- Agency now utilizes an internal audit form that notes required timelines for health screen reports (In red letters). This document is to be used before the any home achieves certification (see attachment, #4).

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Schrage, MSW
Executive Director