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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Acting Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY (FORMALLY WILENE'S CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE) CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES SERVICE PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracted with Village, 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.

It should be noted that Village voluntarily terminated their Foster Family Agency contract with the County effective February 29, 2008. The 34 children placed at Village during the time of our review were transferred to other Foster Family Agencies.

Under the contract, Village was required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency was responsible for a total of 16 certified foster homes in which 34 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Village was located in Pomona in the First District.

DCFS paid Village a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Village received between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency paid the foster parents between $624 and $790 per month, per child. Village was paid approximately $597,000 during Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Village 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 Village 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 Village generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Village also ensured that their social worker caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Village needs to ensure that foster homes, case files, and staff are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- One of the two homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions.
- One of the two homes did not have any between-meal snacks available to the children at the time of our visit. The children we interviewed indicated that the foster parent usually provides them snacks.
- None of the two homes were assessed by Village to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.
- Two of four foster parents did not have a current CPR certificate on file.
- Three of four foster parents did not complete 15 hours of continuing education.
- Four of the five Needs and Services Plans (NSP) were not approved by the DCFS social worker.
- The majority of the children's goals in the five NSPs reviewed were not measurable and specific.

- Three of the five case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited the required number of times by Village social workers. During the first three months of placement, 25 required visits were not documented and one case file did not have documentation of visits by the Village social workers during the subsequent six months. Prior to the start of our review, Village terminated the social workers responsible for these three children.

- One of the two case files of children taking psychotropic medications did not contain documentation that the child was seen monthly by the prescribing physician.

- None of the five case files reviewed contained documentation that the child was enrolled in school within three days of placement with the Agency.

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

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Village management, and they generally agreed with the findings in our report. Village voluntarily terminated their Foster Family Agency contract with the County, effective February 29, 2008. As a result, Village did not submit a response to the recommendations contained in this report. The 34 children placed at Village during the time of our review were transferred to other Foster Family Agencies. Prior to receiving another DCFS Foster Family Agency contract, DCFS needs to ensure that Village is in compliance with the recommendations contained in this report. We notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Village 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.

WLW: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
Laquetta Bush-Simmons, Executive Director, Children of the Village FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

Village voluntarily terminated their Foster Family Agency contract with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) effective February 29, 2008. Prior to receiving another DCFS Foster Family Agency contract, DCFS needs to ensure that Village is in compliance with the recommendations contained in this report.

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited two of the 16 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Village billed DCFS in January and February 2007 and interviewed two foster parents and four of the eight children placed in the two homes. We also reviewed case files for four foster parents and five children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Village needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example, Village needs to ensure Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) contain all the information required and are prepared within the specified timeframes. The Agency also needs to ensure that foster parents are certified in accordance with the County contact and CDSS Title 22 regulations and that their certification files contain all the required information. In addition, Village needs to ensure that their social workers visit children the required number of times.

Foster Home Visitation

For one of the foster homes visited:

- The detergents and cleaning solutions were not adequately secured.

- The bathroom medicine cabinet was rusted and moldy and in need of cleaning and resurfacing. In addition, the dining room chairs were heavily soiled and in need of cleaning and replacing. CDSS Title 22 regulations require that homes be clean, sanitary, and in good repair at all times.

- The children's bedroom was lit by exposed light bulbs without fixtures resulting in harsh lighting.

- At the time of our visit, the home did not have any snacks or fruit available for the three children in the home. CDSS Title 22 regulations require that between meal nourishment or snacks be available for all children. The children we interviewed indicated that the foster parent usually provides them snacks.

Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency's social worker gave the home a corrective action plan and the foster parent fixed all the items noted above.

For the second home visited, the emergency plan did not include an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in case of emergency. Prior to the issuance of this report, the foster parents purchased an emergency escape ladder for the second story of the home.

Our prior audit report, dated May 24, 2005, also noted that Village did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Foster Parent Certification

- Three (75%) of the four foster parents did not complete any of the required 15 hours of continuing education during calendar year 2006.

- Two (50%) of four foster parent certification files did not contain copies of current automobile insurance. In addition, one of the two certification files did not contain a copy of the foster parent's driver's license. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Village provided documentation that the foster parent had a valid driver's license.

- Two (50%) of four foster parent certification files contained expired CPR/First Aid certificates. The certificates had expired approximately six and 11 months prior to our review, respectively. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation that the two foster parents had current CPR/First Aid certificates.

- Both homes reviewed did not have a comprehensive annual home safety evaluation conducted prior to the homes' annual recertification as required by Village's Program Statement. The last comprehensive annual home safety evaluation for each home was conducted approximately three years prior to our review. Prior to the issuance of this report, the Agency conducted home safety evaluations for both homes.

- Both homes reviewed were not assessed by Village to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the homes. Four children were placed in each of the homes at the time of our review.

Needs and Services Plans

- None of the five NSPs reviewed addressed the children's ability to manage money or family visitation plan or contained goals that were measurable and specific.

- Four (80%) of the five NSPs reviewed did not address the children's personal care and grooming. In addition, one of the five NSPs did not address the child's education or medical needs, while another NSP did not include the reason the child was in placement.

- Two (40%) of the five initial NSPs reviewed were not prepared within 30 days from the date of the children's placement as required. The two initial NSPs were completed 30 days and six months late, respectively.

- One (20%) of the five NSPs reviewed was not updated within the required timeframes specified in the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. We noted the NSP was updated two months late.

- One (20%) of the five NSPs reviewed did not contain documentation that the child or the foster parents had been offered the opportunity to participate in the development/modification of the NSPs.

- Four (80%) of the five NSPs reviewed were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.

Quarterly and Special Incident Reports

- One (20%) of the five case files reviewed did not contain an initial Quarterly Report. At the time of our review, this child's initial Quarterly Report was two months past due. The remaining four Quarterly Reports reviewed did not contain documentation indicating when they were sent to the DCFS social worker. As a result, we could not determine if the reports were sent to the DCFS social worker timely.

- One Quarterly Report did not include a copy of the Emancipation Preparation Contract as required for children over 14 years old. At the time of our review, only one child was over 14 years old.

- One (20%) of five case files reviewed contained documentation that the child had been suspended from school and on another occasion had been truant from school. Both of these incidents required the Agency to prepare a Special Incident Report. However, the Agency did not prepare the two Special Incident Reports.

Children's Case Files

- Three (60%) of the five case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by Village social workers during their first three months of placement and twice a month after their first three months of placement as required by the County contract. Twenty-five required visits were not documented by Village social workers during the first three months and one case file did not contain documentation of visits by the Village social workers during the subsequent six months. Prior to the start of our review, Village terminated the social workers responsible for these three children.

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

- None of the five case files contained documentation that Village social workers interviewed the children privately on a monthly basis regarding quality of life issues.

Medical Services

- The NSP for one (50%) of the two children taking psychotropic medications did not indicate that the child was taking medications.

- One (50%) of the two children taking psychotropic medications did not have monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician documented in the child's case file as required by the County contract.

Educational Services

- None of the five case files reviewed contained documentation to verify that the children were enrolled in school within three business days of placement with the Agency.

- One (20%) of the five case files indicated that the child was two grades behind in school. The case file and NSP did not address the reason the child was two grades behind or any actions the Agency was taking to address the child's educational needs.

- One (20%) of the five report cards reviewed indicated that the child was failing math. The case file and NSP did not address any efforts the Agency made to provide tutoring services.

Recommendations

Village management ensure that:

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

2. **Foster parents adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions.**

3. **Foster homes are clean, well maintained, and appropriately furnished with acceptable housekeeping.**

4. **Foster homes maintain between-meal snacks and nourishment for the children.**

5. **Emergency plans for two story foster homes include an adequate means of escape from the second story in case of emergency.**

6. **Foster parents complete the required amount of continuing education.**

7. **Foster parent certification files contain copies of current automobile insurance, drivers' licenses, and CPR/First Aid certificates.**

8. **Comprehensive annual home safety evaluations are conducted prior to annual recertification of foster homes.**

9. **Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.**

10. **NSPs and Quarterly Reports contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations and are prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract.**

11. **Special Incident Reports are prepared when required.**

12. **Children are visited by the Agency social worker the number of times required by the County contract.**

13. **DCFS social workers are updated monthly on the children's progress.**

14. **Case files contain documentation that Village social workers interview the children privately on a monthly basis regarding quality of life issues.**

15. **NSPs include documentation that the children are taking psychotropic medications and that documentation is maintained in their case files indicating that the children receive monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician.**

16. **Documentation is maintained that children are enrolled in school within three business days of placement.**

17. **Childrens' educational progress is documented and addressed in their NSPs and tutoring services are provided to improve basic skills when applicable.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed four children placed in two of Village's certified foster homes and two foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster children interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Village 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 Village's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Overall, Village's three social workers carried an average caseload of 13 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised three social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Village 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 Village's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, ongoing training and performance evaluations.

Results

Village's administrator, supervising social workers, and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, Village conducted appropriate hiring clearances and provided annual performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract.

Village could not provide documentation that staff working on the County contract attended the annual in-service training required by the Agency's Program Statement and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Recommendation

18. Village management ensure that staff working on the County contract attend annual in-service training.

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 the Fiscal Year 2004-05 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on May 24, 2005.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained two recommendations. Village implemented one recommendation. As indicated earlier, Village did not always ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations (Recommendation 1).

Recommendation

19. Village management implement the outstanding recommendation from the Fiscal Year 2004-05 monitoring report.