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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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April 8, 2008

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

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe Wendy L. Watanabe
Acting Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **KOINONIA FOSTER HOMES, INC. CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with Koinonia, 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.

Koinonia 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 46 certified foster homes in which 74 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Koinonia's offices are located in the Second and Fifth Districts.

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

Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between $656 and $835 per month, per child. Koinonia was paid approximately $1,771,000 during Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Koinonia 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 Koinonia 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 Koinonia generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Koinonia did not always ensure foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example, one of the foster homes we visited had a gate to a fence around a backyard pond that was not self-closing and self-latching. In addition, two of the five foster homes visited did not adequately secure kitchen knives and one of the two homes did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions. Koinonia also did not always assess the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home.

In addition, Koinonia did not always ensure that foster parent certification files contained all the required information. For example, two of five foster parent certification files contained expired automobile insurance certificates while two of nine foster parents did not complete the required amount of annual continuing education training. In addition, Koinonia did not obtain an initial health screening for a social worker within the timeframes specified in the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

In our prior monitoring review, dated September 20, 2005, we noted some of the same findings and recommendations included in this review. Koinonia management indicated that the recommendations related to our prior review were implemented during February 2008.

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

Review of Report

On February 12, 2008, we discussed our report with Koinonia who generally agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Koinonia management indicates the actions they have taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Koinonia 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
Dave Wesson, Associate Executive Director, Koinonia Foster Homes, Inc.
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
KOINONIA FOSTER HOMES, INC.
FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited five of the 46 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Koinonia billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in February and March 2007 and interviewed five of the nine foster parents and seven of the 13 children placed in the five homes. We also reviewed the case files for nine foster parents and ten children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

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

Koinonia needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example, Koinonia needs to ensure that gates to fences around pools or ponds are self closing and self latching. The Agency also needs to ensure that foster parents adequately secure knives, detergents, cleaning solutions and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the children.

Foster Home Visitation

- One (20%) of the five foster homes visited had a decorative pond in the backyard of the home that was not in compliance with CDSS Title 22 regulations. The pond was fenced and gated. However, the gate to the fence was not self-closing and self-latching as required.

- Two (40%) of the five foster homes visited did not adequately secure kitchen knives. In addition, one of those two homes did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions.

  Our prior audit review, also noted that Koinonia did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations during their regularly scheduled visits to the homes.

Foster Parent Certification

- Two (22%) of the nine foster parents did not complete 15 hours of annual continuing education training. Both foster parents only completed eight hours of continuing education.

- Two (40%) of the five foster home certification files reviewed did not contain documentation of current automobile insurance. The automobile insurance had expired fourteen and eight months prior to our review, respectively.

  Our prior audit review also noted that Koinonia did not always maintain documentation of current automobile insurance for foster parents.

- Two (40%) of the five foster homes reviewed were not assessed by Koinonia to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the homes. One of the two homes had three children while the other home had four children at the time of our review.

NSPs and Children's Case Files

- None of the ten NSPs reviewed contained goals that were measurable and specific.

- Three (42%) of the seven children taking psychotropic medications did not have the medications incorporated into their NSPs.

Medical and Educational Services

- Two (28%) of the seven children taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization for the administration of the medication. Koinonia did request that the court authorizations be renewed. However, the Agency did not follow up with the DCFS social worker when the requested court authorizations were not received.

- Three (30%) of ten case files did not contain documentation to verify that the children were enrolled in school within three business days of placement with the Agency. The foster parents indicated that the children were enrolled in school shortly after placement.

Recommendations

Koinonia management ensure that:

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

2. **Fence gates for foster homes with ponds, pools or other bodies of water are self-closing and self-latching.**

3. **Foster parents adequately secure knives, detergents, cleaning solutions and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the children.**

4. **Foster parents complete the required amount of annual continuing education training hours.**

5. **Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including documentation of current automobile insurance.**

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

7. **Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

8. **Children on psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for the administration of the medications.**

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

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed eight children placed in five Koinonia certified foster homes and five foster parents to confirm the services Koinonia 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 Koinonia 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 Koinonia's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Four Agency's social workers in January 2007 and three social workers in February 2007 carried sixteen cases each which are more than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Koinonia's supervising social worker carried three more cases than allowed during February 2007.

Our prior audit review also noted that Koinonia did not always ensure that their social workers' caseloads did not exceed limits established by CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Recommendations

Koinonia management:

10. **Ensure that social workers and supervising social workers do not have more cases than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

11. **Hire additional social workers if the number of cases exceeds the maximum number allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Koinonia 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 Koinonia'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

Koinonia's administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, Koinonia provided ongoing training and performance evaluations for staff working on the County contract. However, one social worker's health screening was conducted approximately three months after his hire date. CDSS Title 22 regulations require that health screenings be conducted not more than one year prior to or seven days after an employee's hire date.

Recommendation

12. **Koinonia management ensure that health screenings for staff working on the County contract are conducted within the timeframes specified in CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

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 2005-06 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on September 20, 2005.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained four outstanding recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations 1, 3, 5, 10 and 11 contained in this report were also noted in the prior monitoring review. Koinonia management indicated that they implemented the prior recommendations during the month of February 2008.

Recommendations

13. **Koinonia management implement the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring report.**

KOINONIA FOSTER HOMES

Bringing Hope To a New Generation

February 27, 2008

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

Subject: Koinonia Foster Homes, Inc. Contract Review

Dear Supervisors:

The following letter is being written to address recommendations listed in the foster family agency audit report. The responses to the auditor's recommendations have now been implemented.

We would like to thank the County of Los Angeles for making it a priority to monitor and evaluate our program. Koinonia's mission is to provide the highest quality treatment foster care program available for children, youth and their families whose special needs can be met through services delivered, supervised and supported by professional agency staff. It was once again a pleasure to interact with auditors Brian Henricks and Cassandra Youngblood. As before, both Brian and Cassandra were respectful and courteous with our staff and those they interacted with. Their approach was one of teaching, consulting, and giving honest feed back on their experience of our program and staff. Once again, overall the audit process was positive, informative and helpful to Koinonia.

Koinonia's response to comments and recommendations as outlined in the audit report:

1. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations."
   Koinonia's Response: Koinonia has developed monitoring tools for staff to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with regulations and county contract. With new management and staff, Koinonia will be following up with both management and staff to assure compliance with CDSS Title 22 regulations and LA County Contract requirements through on-going training and staff meetings.

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2. **Auditor Comment:** "One (20%) of the five foster homes visited had a decorative pond in the backyard of the home that was not in compliance with CDSS Title 22 regulations. The pond was fenced and gated. However, the gate to the fence was not self-closing and self-latching as required."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that fence gates for foster homes with ponds, pools or other bodies of water are self-closing and self-latching."
Koinonia's Response: Koinonia does have an assessment tool to monitor pools and ponds in certified homes. This was over looked due to new staff on the caseload and a training issue. Koinonia will continue to train staff on CDSS Title 22 Regulations. As to this particular home, the fence was remedied that very day.

3. **Auditor Comment:** "Two (40%) of five foster homes did not adequately secure kitchen knives. In addition one (20%) of the five foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions."
Auditor Recommendation: "Foster parents adequately secure knives, detergents, cleaning solutions, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the children."
Koinonia's Response: Koinonia operates statewide within California. Historically, Community Care Licensing throughout the state has not interpreted Title 22 Regulations as requiring that knives, detergents, cleaning solutions and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children be locked up. The only requirement is that they be inaccessible. With the change in the management staff in our Southern California operation, we were interpreting what we knew to be exercised state wide. Koinonia will comply with LA County's interpretation that "adequately secure" means that these items are locked up. In this particular case where Koinonia was cited, the foster mother did have the said items accessible. Koinonia's staff is being instructed to continue to train parents and then cite parents in violation for non compliance which could lead to decertification.

4. **Auditor Comment:** "Two (22%) of the nine foster parents reviewed did not complete 15 hours of annual continuing education training as required by the County contract. All four foster parents completed only eight hours of the required 15 hours of annual continuing education."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that foster parents attend the required amount of annual continuing education training hours specified in the County contract."
Koinonia's Response: When there was a change in management, the new management did discover that parents were not meeting their training hour requirements. As a result, management has informed their foster parents that unmet training hour requirements will result in decertification. Koinonia does have monitoring tools available to staff to keep foster parents aware of their training hour status. This will be reinforced through training.

5. **Auditor Comment:** "Two (40%) of the five foster home certification files reviewed did not contain documentation of current automobile insurance. On average, the automobile insurance for these two foster homes had expired eleven months prior to our review."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that foster parent certification files contain all required information."
Koinonia's Response: Monitoring automobile insurance is being added to our supervision printouts which we title "Master Charts".

6. **Auditor Comment:** "Two (40%) of the five foster homes visited did not have a documented assessment that Koinonia determined the foster parent ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the homes. One of the two homes had three children while the other home had four children at the time of our visit."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed."
Koinonia's Response: Koinonia did believe they had assessments on said clients but LA County is requesting the assessments be placed on a separated form detailing the three required assessment questions for placement. Koinonia is adding to its Master Chart printout that whenever placement is made for more than two children in a home that a required assessment form be completed with the three outlined questions answered and filed in the child's file.

7. **Auditor Comment:** "None of the ten NSPs reviewed contained goals that were measurable and specific to the child. Three (42%) of the seven children taking psychotropic medications did not have the psychotropic medications incorporated into their NSPs."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that Needs and Services Plans and children's case files contain all the information required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations."
Koinonia's Response: Koinonia will continue to train its staff on NSPs that contain goals that are measurable and specific to the child being serviced. With the new format of the quarterlies and NSPs there should be no oversight in addressing psychotropic medications.

8. **Auditor Comment:** "Two (28%) of the seven children taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization for the administration of the medication. Koinonia did request that the court authorizations be renewed. However, the Agency did not follow up with the DCFS social worker when the requested court authorizations were not received."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that children on psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for the administration of the medications."
Koinonia's Response: Koinonia did contact DCFS social workers for authorization for the administration of psychotropic medication. What Koinonia will do in the future is to document additional attempts to receive the needed authorizations from DCFS social workers.

9. **Auditor Comment:** "Three (30%) of ten children's files did not contain documentation that the children were enrolled in school within three business days of placement with the Agency. The foster parents for the four children indicated that the children were enrolled in school shortly after placement."
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that documentation is maintained indicating that children are enrolled in school within three business days of placement."
Koinonia's Response: Koinonia has added to its procedure to document enrollment of children in school within three business days of placement.

10, 11. **Auditor Comment:** "Four of six Koinonia social workers carried more cases than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations during January 2007. On average, each of the four

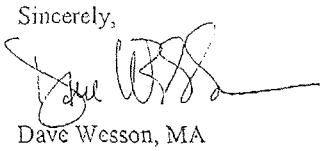
On average, each of the three social workers carried 16 cases during this month. In addition, Koinonia's supervising social worker carried three more cases than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations during February 2007.
Auditor Recommendation: "Ensure that social workers do not maintain more cases than allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations. Hire additional social workers if the number of cases exceeds the maximum number allowed by CDSS Title 22 regulations."
Koinonia's Response: From time to time the caseload ratio may be exceeded for brief periods of time because of an employee's resignation or termination from the company. Koinonia has made every effort to recruit and hire qualified staff or find qualified contractors. When an employee's resignation or termination does result in caseload overage, Community Care Licensing is notified and an action plan is put in place. Koinonia will continue to ensure that the actual number of cases assigned to each social worker does not continually exceed the maximum number established by the contract.

12. **Auditor Comment:** "One social worker's health screening was conducted approximately three months after his hire date. CDSS Title 22 regulations require that health screenings by conducted not more than one year prior to or seven days after an employee's hire date."
Auditor Recommendation: "Koinonia management ensures that health screenings for staff working on the County contract are conducted within the time frames specified in CDSS Title 22 regulations."
Koinonia's Response: All Koinonia supervisors will monitor for strict compliance.

13. **Auditor Comment:** "The prior monitoring report contained four outstanding recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations 1, 3, 5, 10 and 11 contained in this report were also noted in the prior monitoring review."
Auditor Recommendation: "Koinonia management implements the four outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring report."
Koinonia's Response: The above recommendations 1, 3, 5, 10 and 11 have been implemented by Koinonia in their response by February 2008.

Again, thank you for taking the time to come out and evaluate our current program. Your audit has provided us with valuable feedback. Please call me if you have any additional questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,



Dave Wesson, MA
Associate Executive Director, Southern California Region

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