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

WENDY L. WATANABE
ACTING AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

ASST. AUDITOR-CONTROLLERS

ROBERT A. DAVIS
JOHN NAIMO
MARIA M. OMS

May 6, 2008

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: **INNER CIRCLE FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION SERVICES CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Inner Circle Foster Care and Adoption Services (Inner Circle or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with Inner Circle, 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.

Inner Circle 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 39 certified foster homes in which 61 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Inner Circle's office is located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays Inner Circle 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, Inner Circle 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. DCFS paid Inner Circle approximately $1,442,000 during Fiscal Year 2006-07.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

Overall, the Agency complied with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The four foster homes we visited were well maintained. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Inner Circle met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. One foster parent was especially grateful for the support and help she received during a child's health crisis. In addition, Inner Circle ensured that children's educational needs were met. For a developmentally delayed child, Inner Circle went beyond the requirements of the County contract.

The staff working on the County contract at Inner Circle possessed the education and work experience required by CDSS Title 22 regulations. Inner Circle also ensured that social workers' caseloads did not exceed the limits established by CDSS Title 22 regulations. Inner Circle's social workers developed Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports that contained all the required information. However, the Quarterly Reports need to be prepared within the timeframes specified in the contract.

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

Review of Report

On April 22, 2008, we discussed our report with Inner Circle who was in agreement with the finding. In their attached response, Inner Circle's management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendation. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Inner Circle 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, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ron Smith, Chairperson, Board of Directors, Inner Circle FFA
Melissa Thompson-Jinariu, Assistant Executive Director, Inner Circle FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
INNER CIRCLE FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION SERVICES
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Inner Circle Foster Care & Adoption Services, a Foster Family Agency (Inner Circle or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited four of the 39 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Inner Circle billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in October and November 2007 and interviewed four foster parents, two of the twelve children, and observed seven toddlers placed in the four homes. We also reviewed the case files for four foster parents and nine children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The four foster homes we visited were well maintained and in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Inner Circle's social workers visited the children the required number of times and appropriately documented the visits in the children's case files. Inner Circle also ensured that children's medical, dental, and educational needs were met. One foster parent was especially grateful for the support and help she received during a child's health crisis. In addition, for a developmentally delayed child, Inner Circle went beyond the requirements of the County contract. For example, Inner Circle visited and monitored the child more than required by the County contract and arranged for numerous therapy sessions and evaluations.

Inner Circle developed Needs and Services Plans that addressed the identified need of the children and that contained all the elements required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Quarterly Reports addressed all the elements required by the County contract.

Inner Circle needs to ensure that Quarterly Reports are prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract. Two (22%) of nine Quarterly Reports reviewed were prepared an average of six days late.

Recommendation

1. **Inner Circle management ensure that Quarterly Reports are prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed two children and four foster parents to confirm the services Inner Circle billed to DCFS. We also observed seven toddlers in four homes.

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. The toddlers also appeared to be well cared for and happy.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

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

Results

Overall, Inner Circle's six social workers carried an average caseload of 12 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised an average of six full-time social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Inner Circle staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by the 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 Inner Circle'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

Inner Circle's administrator/supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, Inner Circle conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing 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 the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on July 5, 2007.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained four recommendations. All four of the recommendations were implemented by Inner Circle.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

April 23, 2008

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

FROM: Melissa Thompson-Jinariu, Assistant Executive Director
Inner Circle Foster Care and Adoption Services

SUBJECT: Response Agency Contract Review

Dear Esteemed Supervisors,

Inner Circle Foster Care and Adoption Services is dually licensed agency that has enjoyed working collaboratively with the county of Los Angeles to promote the safety, permanence, and well-being of our community's at risk children since 1991. To date, we have provided services to over one thousand children.

After having examined the report of the contract review conducted in February of 2008, we are thrilled that there were no findings and only one recommendation. Inner Circle agrees to adopt the recommendation made in the report as follows:

1. Inner Circle management ensure that Quarterly Reports are prepared within the timeframes specified in the County contract.

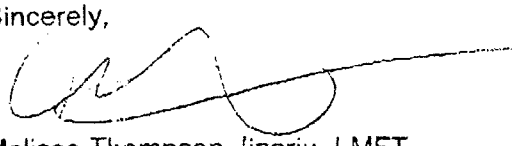
It is Inner Circle's policy to ensure that Quarterly Reports are completed and sent to the Department of Children and Family Services' regional Child's Social Worker within the time frame specified in the County contract. Previously, Inner Circle had employed a social worker who was struggling to comply with this mandate Several corrective action steps were taken by the administration to assist this employee in increasing compliance. Unfortunately, however, the employee was unable to meet this expectation and was relieved from employment at Inner Circle just prior to the Auditor Controller's review. The Social Work Supervisor and Lead Social Worker conduct regular monthly audits for each child in placement to ensure that Quarterly Reports are completed in

VAN NUYS: 7110 Hayvenhurst Ave Suite 204 • Van Nuys, California 91406 • (818) 988-3300 • Fax: (818) 988-7087
PALMDALE: 13[illegible] East Palmdale Blvd Suite 18 • Palmdale California 93550 • (661) 575-9190 • Fax: (661) 575-9198
www.Fosterfamily.org • E-mail info@Fosterfamily.org

compliance with the contract. Inner Circle does not anticipate any ongoing concerns in this area as it was a situation limited to one delinquent employee.

Our staff and foster families found that it was a pleasure to work with the personnel of the Auditor-Controller's office and were impressed with their amicability, thoroughness, and dedication to vulnerable children. Inner Circle appreciates the feedback that was received through the review of our program as it assists our agency in ensuring the best practice of care for families and children.

Sincerely,



Melissa Thompson-Jinariu, LMFT
Assistant Executive Director