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October 1, 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: **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY AND ADOPTION AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW - A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with SCFFAA, 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.

SCFFAA 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 56 certified foster homes in which 65 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. SCFFAA's headquarters is located in the First District.

DCFS paid SCFFAA 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, SCFFAA received between $1,589 and $1,865 per month, per child.

Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between $650 and $805 per month, per child. DCFS paid SCFFAA approximately $1,175,000 during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Purpose/Methodology

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

Results of Review

The foster parents interviewed stated they were very satisfied with the services they received from the Agency and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required by CDSS Title 22 regulations. SCFFAA also ensured that social workers' caseloads did not exceed the limits established by CDSS Title 22 regulations.

SCFFAA needs to ensure that foster homes and cases files are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- Five of the six homes visited did not adequately secure kitchen knives. In addition, one of these homes did not adequately secure prescription medication.

- Six of the nine Needs and Services Plans reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable, and time-limited and were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.

- One Special Incident Report was not prepared when required.

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

Review of Report

We discussed our report with SCFFAA on July 18, 2008. In their attached response, SCFFAA indicates general agreement with the findings and the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank SCFFAA 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
James Negele, Chairperson, Board of Directors, SCFFAA Foster Family Agency
Sylvia Fogelman, Executive Director, SCFFAA FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY AND ADOPTION AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

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

Verification

We visited six of the 52 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that SCFFAA billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in June and July 2007, and interviewed eight of the eleven foster parents, five of the ten foster children, and observed an infant and three toddlers placed in the six homes. We also reviewed the case files for eleven foster parents and nine children and reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated they were very satisfied with the services they received from the Agency and the foster children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. SCFFAA needs to ensure that foster homes and cases files are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- Five (83%) of six foster homes visited did not adequately secure kitchen knives. In addition, one of the homes did not adequately secure prescription medications.

Needs and Services Plans

- Six (67%) of the nine NSPs reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable, and time-limited and were not approved by the DCFS social worker as required. However, the Agency maintained documentation that all six NSPs were forwarded to the DCFS social worker for signature.

Special Incident Reports

- One (11%) of nine case files reviewed contained documentation that a foster child did not return home by her designated curfew time. Although the Agency contacted DCFS and law enforcement located the child and returned her to her

foster parents, the Agency should have prepared a Special Incident Report as required.

Recommendations

SCFFAA management ensure:

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

2. **Foster parents adequately secure knives, medications, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the children.**

3. **NSPs contain goals that are specific, measurable, and time-limited and are approved by the children's DCFS social worker.**

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

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed five children, observed an infant and three toddlers placed in six SCFFAA certified foster homes and interviewed eight foster parents to confirm the services SCFFAA billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated they were very satisfied with the services they received from the Agency and the foster children interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The infant and three toddlers also appeared to be well cared for and happy.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

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

Results

Overall, SCFFAA's five social workers carried an average of 12 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised an average of five social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether SCFFAA 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 to staff.

Verification

We interviewed SCFFAA's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

SCFFAA's administrator/supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. SCFFAA also conducted hiring clearances, and provided ongoing training 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 2004-05 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on December 1, 2004.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained two outstanding recommendations. Both recommendations were fully implemented by SCFFAA.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

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July 30, 2008

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

From: Sylvia Fogelman, President & CEO

Subject: Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency
Contract Review

Thank you for helping us to maintain a high quality of service to the children and families whom we serve. We were pleased to note that the families you visited in the course of the audit stated that they were very satisfied with the services they received from the agency. Similarly, we were pleased that the children you interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Certainly, that is our goal.

With regard to the recommendations, we have already implemented procedures to avert these problems in the future.

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

On a monthly basis, when the Agency's Foster Care Social Workers visit the foster homes, they are completing a checklist that ensures compliance with CDSS Title 22 and the DCFS contract. The need for a corrective action is noted when a home is out of compliance and the home is reinspected to ascertain that the correction has been made.

Recommendation 2. Foster parents adequately secure knives, medications, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the children.

As above. Additionally, foster parents, who had been informed in the past that they needed to make knives and similar items inaccessible, are being informed that they need to lock up all knives and other items that may pose a safety hazard to the children.

Recommendation 3. NSPs contain goals that are specific, measurable and time-limited and are approved by the DCFS Children's Social Worker.

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Subsequent to the Auditor-Controller's review, SCFFAA began to use the DCFS newly designed NSP, which requires specific, measurable and time-limited goals. The NSPs are always sent to the DCFS CSW for signature; on the rare occasion, they are returned with signatures. To increase the success of gaining CSW signatures, per the Auditor-Controller's recommendation, SCFFAA will request thesignatures three more times by fax or phone and note the request in the in the case record.

Recommendation 4. Special Incident Reports are prepared when required.

The rapid resolution of the problem cited in the report, caused the agency to have not written an SIR. This was an exception to the agency's routine practice.

Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency is pleased to note that in general, it is in compliance with the DCFS contract and Title 22 regulations. The agency hires well qualified social workers and maintains sufficiently low ratios of social workers to children, so that each child may be helped individually. Further, SCFFAA is diligent about training opportunities for its staff. The agency's training of foster parents is continual, addressing the needs of foster children and families.

Once again, we thank the Auditor-Controller's staff for its professionalism and respect for our staff, parents and children.