# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
## DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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September 30, 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: **FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN FOSTER HOMES, INC. FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER**

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

## Background

DCFS contracts with Families for Children, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster 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 for Children 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 16 certified foster homes in which 27 DCFS children were placed. Families for Children's headquarters is located in the Second District.

DCFS paid Families for Children 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, Families for Children 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. DCFS paid Families for Children approximately $619,500 during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

## Purpose/Methodology

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

Families for Children needs to ensure that foster homes, Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), and Quarterly Reports are in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- Two of the three foster homes visited did not adequately secure items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.

- One of the three foster homes visited had a window in the children's bedroom that was obstructed, on the outside, by old furniture and lumber. The window also had a newly installed safety device that the foster parent did not know how to operate. As a result, it would be difficult to exit from the window in case of an emergency.

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

- None of the five Quarterly Reports reviewed addressed the children's progress made towards achieving goals.

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

## Review of Report

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

We thank Families for Children 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
Warren Magness, Chair, Board of Directors, Families for Children
Andrew Henderson, Executive Director, Families for Children
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

# FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
# FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN FOSTER HOMES, INC.
# FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

## BILLED SERVICES

### Objective

Determine whether Families for Children Foster Homes, Inc., Foster Family Agency (Families for Children 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 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Families for Children billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in August and September 2007 and interviewed three foster parents and five of the seven children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the case files for three 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 for Children generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Families for Children needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The Agency also needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports, and Termination Reports contain all the required information. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- Two (66%) of the three foster homes visited did not adequately secure items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children. One of the homes did not adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, knives, and alcoholic beverages. The other home did not adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, tools, and electrical equipment.

- One (33%) of the three foster homes visited had a window in the children's bedroom that was obstructed, on the outside, by old furniture and lumber. The window also had a newly installed safety device that the foster parent did not know how to operate. As a result, it would be difficult to exit from the window in case of an emergency.

Our prior audit review also noted that Families for Children did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

- One (33%) of the three foster homes was not assessed by Families for Children to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home. Three children were placed in the home at the time of our review.

Written Reports

- None of the five NSPs reviewed contained goals that were measurable and specific. Our prior audit review also noted that Families for Children did not always ensure that NSPs included all the required information.

- None of the five Quarterly Reports reviewed addressed the children's progress made towards achieving goals. In addition, three (60%) of the five Quarterly Reports reviewed did not contain the date they were sent to the DCFS social worker. As a result, we could not determine if they had been sent to the DCFS social worker timely.

- One (8%) of the 12 Termination Reports did not contain a closing summary of the Agency's records related to the child's placement or the reason the child's placement ended.

**Recommendations**

**Families for Children 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 detergents, cleaning solutions, knives, alcoholic beverages, tools, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.**

3. **Foster homes and yards are maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

4. **Bedroom windows are not obstructed and foster parents know how to operate window safety devices.**

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

6. **NSPs contain goals that are measurable and specific.**

7. **Quarterly Reports contain the children's progress made towards achieving goals and contain all the required information.**

8. **Termination Reports contain a closing summary of the records related to the child's placement and the reason the child's placement ended.**

## CLIENT VERIFICATION

### Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Families for Children billed to DCFS.

### Verification

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

### Results

Families for Children's supervising social worker supervised six social workers and the Agency's six social workers carried an average caseload of six cases.

#### Recommendation

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

### Objective

Determine whether Families for Children 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 Families for Children'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

Families for Children's administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. The Agency also conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

#### Recommendation

**There are no recommendations in the 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 Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on September 21, 2005.

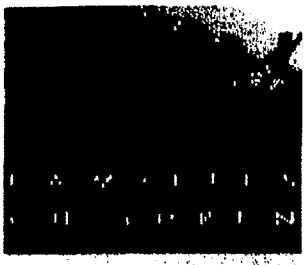
## Results

The prior monitoring report contained two outstanding recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations one and six in this report where also noted in the prior monitoring review. Families for Children management indicated that they implemented the prior recommendations during January 2008.

### Recommendation

9. **Families for Children management implement the two outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring report.**

10.



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August 19, 2008

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

FROM: Andrew Henderson, MS
Executive Director

Subject: **Families For Children Foster Family Agency Contract Review A Department of Children and Family Services Provider**

Families For Children Inc. has provided foster care services to Los Angeles County since 1993 and has consistently received outstanding program and performance audit reviews from The Department of Children and Family Services. We have been recognized for our level and quality of documentation and our attention to quality of life issues with the adolescent foster care population. One of our program highlights is our annual Foster Youth Empowerment Workshop. This is a four day workshop that takes place in Big Bear CA. The workshop is designed to provide a "soft skills" emancipation experience for teenage youth in foster care. We use the 7 core Resiliency Skills and Adventure Based Counseling as the curriculum pieces.

The auditor controller staff that conducted this contract review was both professional and appropriate. The results of this county contract review states: **The Foster Parents stated that the services they received generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.** Families For Children intends to continue to provide the quality care we have been recognized for and will implement all recommendations stated in this report.

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

Agency Corrective Action Plan
Families For Children will include elements of Title 22 and the County contract in all training sessions. This element of our corrective action plan was initiated immediately after notification of non-compliance. Families For Children will provide a Title 22 check sheet that will be completed at each home visit. Our intent is to have our homes and social workers develop a pattern and habit of compliance in this area. As part of this training we will also address and insure compliance in the area of home and yard cleanliness and the absence of yard trash that could prove hazardous to children.

**Families For Children Inc.**

**2. County Recommendation**
Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, knives, alcoholic beverages, tools, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
This recommendation was addressed in corrective action item #1 This is a Title 22 issue.

**3. County Recommendation**
Foster home and yards are maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
Families For Children will insure that **all** training for agency staff and certified parents consistently include identification of hazards in the home and yard and monitor for compliance during each home visit.

**4. County Recommendation**
Bedroom windows are not obstructed and foster parents know how to operate window safety devices.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
Families For Children will insure that this item is part of our certified parent pre-service and in-service training and that all staff are trained to monitor this item for compliance.

**5. County Recommendation**
Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
The agency will ensure that we remain in compliance with the County Contract in this area.
The agency was utilizing the Needs & Service Plan to note the more than two children approval. The agency is now completing a separately written assessment of the homes where more than two children are placed and filing it in the parent file, which includes the parent's provision of care for the current children in the home, their ability to meet the needs of additional foster children and their prior experience in caring for foster children.

**6: County Recommendation**
Needs and Services Plans, (NSP) contain goals that are measurable and specific.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
The agency is currently using the Department of Children and Family Services new NSP format
That, unlike previous State and County forms, is designed to obtain more specific and measurable goals.
Agency staff attended County training programs for the new NSP that was conducted by the Auditor Controllers office and the Department of Children and Family Services.

**7: County Recommendation**
Quarterly Reports contain the children's progress made towards achieving goals and contain all the required information.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
Quarterly reports are now incorporated in the new Needs and Service Plan format and social workers have received training on the documentation of goals achieved as well as all required information.

**Families For Children Inc.**

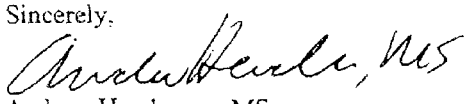
**8: County Recommendation**
Termination Reports contain a closing summary of the records related to the child's placement and the reason the child's placement ended.

Agency Corrective Action Plan
Future termination summaries for all children who are discharged will include the reason for the child's exit, who determined the child was ready to leave, the address to which the child was discharged, if available, if the children was discharged according to their permanency plan, and/or to a less restrictive environment, if the child met their needs and services Plan goals prior to discharge, an assessment of the child's level of functioning upon discharge, and any Agency recommendation for continued services for the child.

**Prior Audit Findings**
Families For Children will modify our Quality Assurance plan through training, documentation and home visits to insure our certified homes maintain a higher level of County contract and Title 22 compliance. For the specific actions FFC took to implement the 2 prior audit recommendations see our corrective action plan for County Recommendations 1 and 6 above.

Thank you for giving Families For Children the opportunity to serve our community.

Sincerely,



Andrew Henderson, MS
Executive Director

cc. Warren Magness
Chairman