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

October 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 FOR
Acting Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **CHILDHELP INC. FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER**

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

Background

DCFS contracts with Childhelp, 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.

Childhelp 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 11 Los Angeles County certified foster homes in which 13 DCFS children where placed at the time of our review. Childhelp's headquarters is in the Second District and the Agency also has an office in San Bernardino County.

DCFS pays Childhelp 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, Childhelp 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 Childhelp approximately $259,000 during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Childhelp 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 the children and the foster parents.

Results of Review

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Childhelp generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Childhelp needs to ensure that foster homes, Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), and Quarterly Reports are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- In one of the three homes visited, the children's bathroom shower was moldy, the sink needed cleaning, and the home's back yard was littered with dog feces. In addition, the home did not adequately secure kitchen knives and alcoholic beverages.

- One of the three homes did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the children's bedrooms.

- One of the three homes visited was not assessed by Childhelp 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 of the four NSPs reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable, and time limited.

- None of the four NSPs reviewed contained documentation that the children and foster parents were offered the opportunity to participate in the development of the NSPs and were not approved by the DCFS social worker as required.

- None of the four Quarterly Reports reviewed were completed timely. The four Quarterly Reports were prepared an average of 19 days late.

It should be noted that prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation indicating that many of the deficiencies noted had been corrected. The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Childhelp on September 9, 2008. In their attached response, Childhelp 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 Childhelp 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
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Joyce Bulifant, Vice President, Board of Directors, Childhelp FFA
Dr. Quinn, FFA Director, Childhelp
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
CHILDHELP INC.
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Childhelp Inc. Foster Family Agency (Childhelp 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 of the 13 certified foster homes that Childhelp billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in October and November 2007 and interviewed three foster parents and four of the twelve children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the certification files for five foster parents and the case files for four children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Childhelp generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Childhelp needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Childhelp needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and Quarterly Reports contain all the required information and are prepared within the required timeframes. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation

- One (34%) of the three homes visited was not maintained in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example, the children's bathroom shower was stained, the sink needed cleaning, and the home's back yard was littered with dog feces. In addition, the home did not adequately secure kitchen knives and alcoholic beverages. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation indicating that these deficiencies had been corrected.

- Two (67%) of the three homes visited had carpet in the children's bedrooms that needed to be professionally cleaned or replaced. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Childhelp provided documentation that both carpets had been professionally cleaned.

- One (34%) of the three homes visited did not have a smoke detector in the hallway leading to the children's bedrooms. Although the children's bedrooms had smoke detectors, CDSS Title 22 regulations require that smoke detectors be installed in the hallways leading to the children's bedrooms. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation that a smoke detector was installed in the hallway leading to the children's bedrooms.

- One (34%) of the three homes visited was not assessed by Childhelp to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the home. At the time of our review, five children were placed in the home.

Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- Two (50%) of the four NSPs reviewed were not updated timely. The NSPs were both updated 11 days late. In addition, three (75%) of the four NSPs reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable, and time limited.

- None of the four NSPs reviewed were approved by the DCFS social worker as required. Although all four NSPs were sent to the DCFS social worker for approval, the Agency did not follow up with the social workers when the NSPs were not returned.

- None of the four NSPs reviewed contained documentation that the children and foster parents were offered the opportunity to participate in the development of the NSPs.

- None of the four Quarterly Reports reviewed were completed timely. The four Quarterly Reports were prepared an average of 19 days late.

- One Quarterly Report did not contain an Emancipation Preparation Contract as required for children 14 years of age and older. At the time of our review, one child was over 14 years old.

Recommendations

Childhelp 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, alcoholic beverages and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.**

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

4. **Foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways leading to the children's bedrooms.**

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

6. **NSPs are updated within the required timeframes and contain goals that are specific, measurable, and time limited.**

7. **NSPs are approved by the DCFS social worker and contain documentation that the children and foster parents were offered the opportunity to participate in the development of the NSPs.**

8. **Quarterly Reports are prepared within the required timeframes and contain an Emancipation Preparation Contract for children 14 years of age or older.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

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

Verification

We interviewed four children placed in three Childhelp certified foster homes and three foster parents to confirm the services Childhelp billed to DCFS.

Results

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

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

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

Results

Overall, Childhelp's 13 social workers carried an average caseload of six cases and the Agency's three supervising social workers each supervised an average of 4 social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether Childhelp 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 Childhelp's administrator and supervising social worker. We also reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, and ongoing training.

Results

Childhelp's administrator, supervising social workers, and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, the Agency conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

Childhelp®

Founded in 1959
by Sara O'Meara and Yvonne Fedderson
PREVENTION and TREATMENT of CHILD ABUSE

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
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[illegible]
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www.childhelp.org

September 22, 2008

Department of Auditor-Controller
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 525
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Attn: Auditor-Controller/Contract Monitoring Div.

RE: Childhelp, Inc. Foster Family Agency Contract Review

Dear Auditor-Controller;

Childhelp, Inc. would like to thank the Auditor-Controller's office for its efforts in supporting our mission to meet the physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of abused, neglected and at-risk youth. We focus our efforts on advocacy, prevention, treatment, and community partnerships.

The following letter identifies the corrective action plans which address the findings and recommendations based on the Contract Review Audit which was conducted in January 2008. The corrective action plans were immediately instituted by the agency and documentation of all correction were provided to the Auditor-Controller on February 7, 2008.

Childhelp, Inc.'s response to recommendations as outlined in the audit report:

1. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Childhelp management ensure staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations."
   Childhelp's Response: The agency has several monitoring tools for staff to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 Regulations. The staff utilize a Foster Home Inspection Report which has been updated to include the required Title 22 and County regulations and is completed four times a year, or more if needed. Staff are trained in CDSS Title 22 Regulations and County contract requirements upon new hire, in addition to training updates on new regulations. Staff training occurred on 9/4/2008 by the new Director and Assistant Director. Supervisors also monitor compliance with the clinical staff during weekly case management meetings. Circumstances surrounding the foster home deficiencies included weather not permitting adequate access to the cleaning of dog feces in outside yard (in addition to new puppies being born), foster parent recuperating from surgery and preoccupation with attending to the

emotional needs of a foster child regarding the death of her birth parent. The agency provided documentation of corrected physical plant deficiencies in a timely manner.

2. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Foster parents adequately secure knives, alcoholic beverages and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children."
Childhelp's Response: On 1/30/08, the family was re-trained on how to properly store knives, alcoholic beverages and other items in a locked location. Photos were taken of the locked bin where the knives are now stored, and of the locked cabinet in the garage where the alcohol is stored. Childhelp utilizes an assessment and monitoring tool on a regular basis to ensure regulation compliance.

3. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Foster homes are maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.
Childhelp's Response: Childhelp provides a self monitoring tool to the foster parent(s) at certification and a copy of this tool is also located in the Foster Parent Handbook for easy reference. Regular on-going home inspections are completed by the Clinical Coordinator and the annual re-certification home inspections are completed by the foster family developer to ensure that the foster home remains in compliance with all regulations.

4. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Foster homes have operable smoke detectors in the hallways leading to the children's bedrooms."
Childhelp's Response: Two smoke detectors were purchased and installed in the two hallways on 2/4/08, in addition to the existing operable smoke detectors which were already located in each of the bedrooms. The agency understood that if smoke detectors were in the bedrooms, none were needed in the halls. The agency has added to it's Foster Home Inspection Report the addition of a smoke detector in hallways adjacent to sleeping quarters as stated in Cal. Health & Safety Code 13113.8 and National Fire Protection Assoc. 72. Childhelp utilizes this monitoring tool and encourages the foster parents to use their self monitoring tool on an ongoing basis.

5. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed."
Childhelp's Response: On 2/5 and 2/6/08, the foster home assessments were completed for the two children in placement. Childhelp has an assessment tool which is used at intake/referral that prompts staff to complete an individualized/child specific assessment prior to a child's placement in a

foster home if there are more than two children in a home. The assessment outlines the three identified criteria in accordance with the county contract.

6. **Auditor Recommendation:** "NSPs are updated within the required timeframes and contain goals that are specific, measurable, and time limited."
Childhelp's Response: Childhelp had difficulty formatting the new Quarterly/NSP reports and have since been trained on utilizing these reports. Childhelp's new Director and Assistant Director were trained by CCL LPA in August regarding NSPs required timeframes and goals being specific, measurable and time limited. The Assistant Director provided this information to the clinicals in staff meeting and it is reinforced by the supervisor during individual case management. It is Childhelp's protocol to turn in reports for internal review at least 10 days prior to the due date and to send the approved reports to the county within 10 days of the report's due date. Tracking systems are utilized to help monitor timeframes of reports and are monitored by supervisors and reviewed in weekly case management with the clinicals.

7. **Auditor Recommendation:** "NSPs are approved by the DCFS social worker and contain documentation that the children and foster parents were offered the opportunity to participate in the development of the NSPs."
Childhelp's Response: The agency provided documentation that the children and foster parents signed the NSPs in question. Childhelp has updated it's agency protocol to include documentation regarding obtaining the DCFS signed approval of the NSPs. Protocol includes documenting the agency clinical social worker making at least three attempts (a week apart) to obtain signature from the DCFS social worker before contacting the DCFS supervisor for assistance if there is no response by the DCFS social worker. The reports are also faxed directly to the county social worker and the fax confirmation of receipt is filed as record of the county social worker receiving the report in a timely manner. This is also record of the initial request for approval of the needs and services plan.

8. **Auditor Recommendation:** "Quarterly Reports are prepared within the required timeframes and contain an Emancipation Preparation Contract for children 14 years of age or older."
Childhelp's Response: A tracking system is utilized to monitor due dates of reports and are reviewed in weekly case management by the supervisor in addition to weekly staff meeting reviews. DCFS social worker informed Childhelp, after two failed attempts at getting the Emancipation Preparation Contract for a child 14 years or older, that DCFS no longer uses these contracts and instead uses a "TILP." Childhelp is using a tracking system

which identifies a child age 14 or older so we can determine the need for TILP's based on a child's age.

Thank you for your recommendations and evaluation of our foster care program. Your audit has provided us with opportunities to improve our services to children and families, as well as to remain in contract compliance and implement best practice techniques.

Respectfully,

Jennifer A. Quinn, Psy.D.
Childhelp, Inc. Foster Family Agency. Program Director