



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27603
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor
H. David Bruton, M.D., Acting Secretary

E.C. Modlin, ACSW, Director
(919) 733-3055

January 17, 2001

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT: Challenge for Children, 2000 - End of Year Reports
and
Challenge for Children, 2001 - Time to Make a Commitment**

We have just completed the fourth year of the **Challenge for Children**. During calendar year 2000, ninety-one (91) county Departments of Social Services accepted the **Challenge for Children, 2000** to make reduction of the foster care backlog a top priority. All participating DSS agencies were formally recognized and thanked at the Children's Services Conference in March. These county agencies also received invitations to participate in a number of special training opportunities held across the state.

It is now time for the county DSS agencies that participated in the **Challenge for Children, 2000** to submit their year-end backlog information. Backlog is defined as those children who have been in the custody or placement responsibility of a county Department of Social Services for more than 12 months, regardless of their current living arrangement (i.e., placement.) In other words, the children in your backlog as of January 1, 2001, will have entered the custody or placement responsibility of your agency prior to January 1, 2000. Included with this letter is information that the Division received from you in early 2000 identifying the children in the foster care backlog on January 1, 2000. Please review the information carefully, striking through the name of each child that left the backlog during 2000 along with the reason the child left, (adopted, returned to parent, kinship care placement, etc.), and making changes in the custody status, age, name spelling, gender, race, etc. of any remaining children. Please also identify those youth who are 18 years of age or older and remain in foster care pursuant to a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) so that they can be deducted from the official backlog count. This is done by placing an "X" in the VPA column.

County DSS agencies that participated in the **Challenge for Children, 2000** should use the attached "**CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN 2001**" form to identify any additional children (i.e. not remaining on the original list) who are in the foster care backlog on January 1, 2001. The data will be compared to the data submitted in January 2000, in order to determine the percentage of change in your backlog over the past year. County DSS agencies that did not participate in the **Challenge for Children, 2000** but want to

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participate in the **Challenge for Children, 2001** should use the attached "**CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN 2001**" form to identify all children in the foster care backlog on January 1, 2001.

In addition to the county-specific backlog information for January 1, 2001, all county DSS agencies that want to participate in the **Challenge for Children, 2001** must submit an agency-prepared statement of acceptance of the **Challenge for Children, 2001** and the attached "vision" for the child welfare system, bearing the signatures of the agency Director and all of the agency's child welfare social work and supervisory staff (including IFPS, CPS, Foster Care, and Adoptions).

Please submit backlog information and your acceptance statement with signatures no later than February 10, 2001, directly to:

**PHYLLIS B. FULTON
N.C. DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CHILDREN'S SERVICES SECTION
325 N. SALISBURY STREET, 2408 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-2408**

As in previous years, all county DSS agencies that accept the **Challenge for Children, 2001**, will receive formal commendation from the Division, recognition at the statewide child welfare conference (March 6-9, 2001, in Greensboro), and invitations to participate in 3-4 special training opportunities during 2001. County DSS agencies with the most significant backlog reduction will receive special recognition.

This is a most important challenge that we hope every county DSS will accept for 2001. Thank you for your consideration of this challenge. I want to personally commend all of the counties that participated in the **Challenge for Children, 2000**, and especially those counties that have participated for the past four years. Your willingness to accept the **Challenge** and the success that you have experienced are now receiving national recognition as a part of the child welfare reform effort.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Fulton at (919) 733-4622.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Harris, Chief
Children's Services Section

CS-01-2001

cc: Chip Modlin

Karen Anderson

Local Support Mgrs.

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**NORTH CAROLINA'S VISION FOR THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM
Challenge for Children, 2001**

COMMUNITY – BASED SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES...

promotes a family's ability to cope with difficult situations and resolve family problems.

ONE COORDINATED ASSESSMENT PROCESS...

involves the family in a comprehensive evaluation of their strengths and needs.

ONE CASEWORKER OR CASEWORK TEAM...

ensures that everyone is working together toward a permanent plan for the child.

ONE SINGLE, STABLE FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT WITHIN THE CHILD'S OWN COMMUNITY...

provides temporary stability until a lifelong home for the child is achieved.

A SAFE PERMANENT HOME WITHIN ONE YEAR...

for all children for whom a county DSS has legal custody or placement responsibility.

EVERY NC CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY

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Use additional sheets as necessary