



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
Carmen Hooker Buell, Secretary

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

May 23, 2001

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: Challenge for Children

In January 1997, the Division issued the first **Challenge for Children** by asking every county Department of Social Services in North Carolina to make foster care backlog reduction a top priority for the child welfare system. The Challenge for Children grew out of our *Families for Kids* experience in which we learned the value of concentrated focus, commitment, and attention. Sixty-seven (67) county DSS agencies formally accepted the Challenge for Children in 1997. In 1998, 76 county DSS agencies accepted the Challenge; in 1999, seventy-five (75) county DSS agencies accepted the Challenge, and in 2000, ninety-one (91) county DSS agencies accepted the Challenge for Children. **Challenge for Children 2001** is the most successful yet, with ninety-five county DSS agencies accepting the Challenge. This level of commitment and determination speak very highly of our public child welfare system.

The ninety-one counties participating in Challenge for Children 2000 reduced their collective backlog by 15%. That translates into 2,470 children who began the year in the foster care backlog and were in a permanent home on New Year's Day, 2001. Washington and Jones counties completely cleared the backlog. Seventy-three other counties experienced either reductions or no increase in the backlog. The remaining sixteen counties reported 152 additional children in the backlog. As of January 1, 2001, thirty-eight counties report fewer than 20 children in the backlog. Your hard work is making a big difference for lots of children and youth!

Fifty-eight (58) county DSS agencies have accepted the Challenge for Children every year since its inception. Fifteen of those agencies have experienced a reduction in their foster care backlog each year. **We applaud the efforts of every county DSS agency that has ever accepted the Challenge!** You and your staff are commended for your efforts to achieve safe, permanent homes for children that others might see as hopeless. We have attached a chart showing the results of your county's backlog reduction efforts. Included also with this letter is your plaque or nameplate commemorating your participation in Challenge for Children 2000.

The Division is prepared to submit letters of commendation to your Board of Social Services, Board of County Commissioners, County Manager, and legislative representatives recognizing the effort that your county has made in reducing the number of children who have remained in your custody or placement responsibility for more than one year. We ask that you review the attached letter to determine whether you would like to have it sent to your county's leadership. Please submit any revisions you would like to your particular letter, and the names and addresses of the persons to whom you would like the letters mailed, to:

Phyllis B. Fulton
N.C. Division of Social Services
Children's Services Section
325 North Salisbury Street, Suite 742-C
2408 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408

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We will not send any letter of commendation until we receive your response. We do urge you to submit your information **no later than June 14, 2001**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Fulton at (919) 733-4622. We want to support and recognize your efforts in participating in the Challenge for Children 2000. The efforts of all participating counties are to be commended and should be recognized by the leadership in each of these counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charles C. Harris", followed by a horizontal line.

Charles C. Harris, Chief
Children's Services Section

cc: E.C. Modlin
Pheon Beal
Nancy Coston
Children's Services Team Leaders
Children's Programs Representatives
Local Support Managers

CS-14-2001