



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

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Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Carmen Hooker Buell., Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director  
(919) 733-3055

July 12, 2001

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**SPECIAL ATTENTION:                    ADOPTION SUPERVISORS  
ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKERS**

**SUBJECT:                    Statewide Contracts with Private Adoption Agencies**

The Division is again very pleased to announce the renewal of the statewide contracts with private adoption agencies that are willing to work collaboratively with county DSS agencies to find safe, permanent homes for children in the foster care system. The participating agencies are: **Another Choice for Black Children, Inc., based in Charlotte (704-394-1124); Bringing it All Back Home's Adoption Plus Program in Asheville (828-236-2877); The Children's Home Society, Inc., based in Greensboro (1-800-632-1400); and the Methodist Home for Children based in Raleigh (888-305-4321).** Each of these agencies continues to offer their services to all 100 counties on behalf of children in the foster care system.

Effective immediately, you may contact these agencies about adoption services. Please make sure all of your staff who provide adoption services receive a copy of this letter.

The performance-based contracts that were initiated in 1996 have been very successful. Reimbursements for services are paid only when specific outcomes are achieved. The outcomes are: (1) placement for the purpose of adoption; (2) issuance of the Decree of Adoption; and (3) first anniversary of the Decree of Adoption if the placement remains intact.

**Effective July 1, 2001, the statewide contract also expands the capacity of these agencies to provide post-adoption services. Specifically, county DSS staff can now contact these agencies to enlist their help in providing post-adoption support services to families, even if the private agency was not involved in the**

Dear County Director  
July 12, 2001  
Page 2

**adoption process. Within the limits of the contracts, each of these agencies has agreed to work collaboratively with county DSS staff to provide services when referrals are made. We encourage you to contact them when families need post-adoption services beyond what the DSS can provide.**

Following a request from a county DSS for assistance in securing an adoptive home for a foster child, the statewide contracts presume that the private agencies will assume primary responsibility for the full adoption process. Consequently, the statewide contracts require these agencies to provide the full range of adoption services, including: accepting and processing referrals from county DSS agencies; recruiting, training and assessing prospective adoptive families; making informed and well-documented recommendations about the "match" between specific children and prospective families; arranging visits with families; facilitating necessary court proceedings; and supporting families throughout the adoption process and as needed for post-adoption services.

County DSS staff should make direct contact with these agencies when a foster child has become legally free and an adoptive placement has not been identified. All such referrals will be accepted and the agencies have made a strong commitment to maintain frequent contact with the county DSS agency following a referral. At their discretion, these agencies will accept referrals of children for whom Termination of Parental Rights is imminent but not yet complete.

We stress again that the statewide contracts with these agencies are to complement and improve your adoption program. The contracts do not replace the mandated adoption requirements, including post-adoption services, of county DSS agencies. **Consequently, county DSS agencies are required to actively recruit prospective adoptive families and conduct preplacement assessments of families that are interested in adopting children in the foster care system, regardless of whether or not they are interested in becoming foster parents first.** The contracts are intended to provide additional assistance to you when finding an adoptive home or providing post-adoption services for a child is particularly difficult.

Each of the agencies is licensed by the Division and must adhere to the same rules of confidentiality regarding the children and families that we serve. Therefore, all records relating to the children should be made available to these agencies. The confidentiality of records must not be used as a barrier to their full access to pertinent information. All county DSS agencies are expected to provide necessary documents for the legalization of an adoption to the private agencies in a timely manner. The private agencies understand that they must adhere to the Division's practice standards in the provision of adoption services. They are expected to provide the county DSS with the required documentation of provided services in a timely manner. We encourage you to emphasize this expectation in your work with these agencies.

These statewide contracts with these agencies do not cover their full, annual operating costs and are typically exhausted before the end of the fiscal year. These agencies do receive payments from the Special Children Adoption Fund when their

Dear County Director  
July 12, 2001  
Page 3

contract is exhausted or when they provide services that are not included in the contracts. If the Fund becomes depleted, it may be necessary for a private agency to charge fees for their services.

Each of these private agencies may also be available to provide discrete services as a part of a DSS-initiated adoption process (e.g. preplacement assessments for relative or foster parent adoptions) or to dedicate staff time exclusively to a county DSS on a regularly scheduled basis. Although such partnerships are encouraged, these types of arrangements are not reimbursable under the statewide contracts and the county DSS should expect to enter into a separate contract with the private agency for this level of service.

We believe our adoption system is stronger because of our partnership with these private agencies, and we encourage you to utilize the services of these agencies as needed to ensure safe, permanent homes for children in the foster care system. It is our firm belief that every child deserves a permanent family and that public-private partnerships are critical to the achievement of this goal for the children in the foster care system.

If you have any questions about this information, please call Esther High, Special Needs Adoption Coordinator, at (919) 733-4622. Thank you for all that you do to assure safe, permanent homes for children in the foster care system.

Sincerely,

Charles C. Harris, Chief  
Children's Services Section

cc: Pheon Beal  
Nancy Coston  
Paul LeSieur  
Local Support Managers  
Children's Program Representatives  
Children's Services Team Leaders  
Another Choice for Black Children, Inc.  
Adoption Plus  
Children's Home Society, Inc.  
Methodist Home for Children

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