



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

Pat McCrory
Governor

Richard O. Brajer
Secretary DHHS
Wayne Black
Division Director

October 1, 2015

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DEAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF ADOPTION CHILD PLACING AGENCIES

SUBJECT: ADOPTION PROMOTION PROGRAM FUND

The Division of Social Services announces the availability of the Adoption Promotion Program Fund to departments of social services and licensed child placing agencies for SFY 2016. This Fund has made it possible for hundreds of children who were living in foster care homes or institutions to be adopted into safe and secure homes.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Fund is to enhance and expand adoption programs, to secure permanent homes for hard to place children, and to encourage partnerships between public and private agencies to achieve permanency for children in a timely manner by providing incentives for the adoption of special needs children. Participating agencies are compensated for adoption services that culminate in the finalization of an adoption. These services, as defined below, are recruitment of adoptive families, pre-adoption training, post placement support and the facilitation of legal procedures resulting in the finalization of an adoption.

- **Recruitment** is the process of finding, screening, and identifying prospective adoptive placement resources.
- **Pre-adoption Training** is preparatory training for prospective adoptive families to provide knowledge and skills necessary for parenting children with special needs.
- **Post Placement Support** is services provided by an adoption agency between the time that a child is placed in the home of his or her prospective adoptive parents and the time that the child's adoption is finalized in court.
- **Facilitation of Legal Procedures** is the completion of legal work necessary to consummate an adoption.

BASELINE: County Departments of Social Services may apply for reimbursement of adoption services culminating in the issuance of a decree of adoption after exceeding a predetermined baseline and spending or encumbering previously received funds from the Adoption Promotion Program Fund or Special Children Adoption Fund. A county's baseline will be determined by the average number of children who exited the foster care system by a decree of adoption during the last four years after discarding the year with the highest number of decrees of adoption.

Child Welfare Services

www.ncdhhs.gov • www.ncdhhs.gov/dss

Tel. 919-527-6340 • Fax 919-715-6714

Location: McBryde East Building • 820 South Boylan Ave. • Raleigh, NC 27699-2439

Mailing Address: 2406 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2406

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Information for the baseline comes from the Adoption Information Management System (AIMS) database that includes the dates of the decree of adoption and names of adopted children. Please review the baseline information (Attachment 1) carefully and contact the Division of Social Services immediately, if you believe that the information is incorrect. The Division will correct the baseline number if your agency can provide documentation showing that the baseline information found is inaccurate.

Reimbursement requests for youth 13 to 18 years old and sibling groups of three more placed together with the same family may be submitted, regardless of whether the agency has met its baseline. Previous reimbursements from either Fund to county departments of social services must have been spent or encumbered prior to submission of requests for payment.

FUNDING AMOUNTS: The payment levels for disbursement of the Adoption Promotion Program Fund for SFY 2016 are:

- \$ 7,200 per child for children from 0-12 years old;
- \$12,000 per child for children from 13-18 years old, and
- \$12,000 per child for sibling groups of three or more who are placed together at the same time in an adoptive family home

Payments are only made on behalf of children who have been determined eligible or potentially eligible for adoption assistance benefits. Children who meet the “potentially eligible” criteria for adoption assistance also qualify for consideration in determining agency’s baseline.

SHARING FUNDING: This Program is designed to encourage partnerships between licensed child placing agencies and departments of social services in achieving permanency for children from the foster care system.

- The total amount is paid to an agency when the agency recruits, trains, provides post placement support to the prospective adoptive family and completes the legal paperwork to finalize the adoption.
- Partial payments are paid when agencies work together to complete an adoption.
- It is imperative that partnering agencies mutually predetermine each agency’s responsibilities in the adoption process and the percentage of payment that each agency will request, if the placement is shared.
- The Adoption Services Agreement shall indicate services provided by each agency and be submitted with requests for reimbursement when two agencies work together to finalize an adoption. Each agency **must** mutually acknowledge the agreed upon financial arrangement between the agencies by signing the Adoption Services Agreement form (DSS-5113) <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5113-ia.pdf>.
- If agencies share in the placement of a child or receive payments from another agency or the adoptive family, it is mandatory that this information be reflected on the Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form, (DSS-5320) <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/DSS-5320-ia.pdf> when reimbursement is requested.
- It is expected that agencies ensure that needed child, birth family and prospective adoptive family information are openly shared and communicated between both entities via the Information Sharing Partnership Agreement form, <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5247.pdf>.

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS: An agency may not claim full reimbursement, if that agency worked in partnership with another agency, even though the other agency is not eligible for payment from the Division. If an agency received payments from other sources for adoption services this information shall be reflected on DSS-5320 form.

FUNDING USES: Allowable expenditures include direct provision or purchase by contract of Adoption Promotion Services. This would include funding for contracts with out-of-state agencies that are willing to provide a family for the child. Specifically, these adoption promotion service activities are allowable:

- Casework services to the child and family to sustain placement.
- Recruitment and assessment of prospective adoptive parents.
- Adoptive home assessments.
- Social Worker travel associated with recruitment and assessment adoptive parents.
- Documentation associated with the recruitment and assessment of prospective adoptive parents.
- Determination of eligibility for special needs children for Adoption Assistance benefits.
- Identification, assessment, selection, and preparation of adoptive families for children eligible for Adoption Assistance benefits.
- Preparation and review of Adoption Assistance benefits.
- Participation in grievances, appeals, and fair hearings surrounding denial of Adoption Assistance benefits.
- Annual review of eligibility for Adoption Assistance benefits.
- Ensuring that special needs adoptive placements across state lines are in compliance with Interstate Compact laws.
- Management of non-recurring adoption costs eligibility determination, approval and authorization for reimbursement.
- Travel associated with Adoption Assistance Case Management.
- Short term training of current or prospective adoptive parents.
- Travel associated with the training of adoptive parents.
- Payment of legal services to expedite the adoption process.

Some examples agencies have used this resource for include adoption matching events, adoption resources libraries, professional photos of waiting children, adoption billboards and banners, adoption advertisements, resources for the child to gain understanding of their biological/cultural heritage, mentoring resources, and child specific recruitment materials and efforts. This is not an exhaustive list of examples for uses of these funds.

Funds cannot be used to purchase automobiles for the county or to supplant the salaries of county workers. Please contact the Division if you have any questions regarding use of Adoption Promotion Program funds.

PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSEMENT: To receive a payment from the Adoption Promotion Program Fund, participating agencies must provide the Division with the following information:

1. Submit the Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form, DSS-5320, <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/DSS-5320-ia.pdf> to indicate children included in your baseline, if applicable, and to request a payment on behalf of those children for whom the Decree of Adoptions enable you to receive compensation. All sections on Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form, DSS-5320, must be completed, including the signature of an authorized agency official. (See instructions for completing Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/DSS-5320ins.pdf>).
2. Submit the Adoption Services Agreement with the child's adoptive name and the SIS identification number for each eligible special needs child for whom a decree of adoption has been entered since July 1, 2015. <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5113-ia.pdf>. This will enable the Division of Social Services to identify the point at which the baseline is exceeded. County agencies shall not submit this information until they have exceeded their baselines and become eligible for payment, unless requesting payment for youth age 13 or older or more or a sibling group of three or more included in the baseline. Payments are only made after the case is activated in the Child Placement and Payment System via DSS-5095 <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5095.pdf>.
3. Mail the completed Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form, DSS-5320, as soon as possible. Do not include children, for whom payment has already been made on the Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form. **Final requests for reimbursement must be received by June 5, 2016 to allow sufficient time to process requests by the end of the state fiscal year. Agencies may submit reimbursement requests on the final invoice for anticipated adoptions, if a decree of adoption has been filed.**

County agencies that received payments from the Special Children Adoption Fund or Adoption Promotion Program Fund previously ***must*** provide an Affidavit of Adoption Expenditures (Attachment 2) documenting how previous monies received were used to enhance or expand their adoption services program before additional funds can be received for the current fiscal year. Agencies must provide the following information with the first request for payment:

- The total amount of money that was received;
- The state fiscal year in which the money was received; and
- An itemized statement documenting how the money was used or will be used in its entirety before the end of SFY 2016 to enhance and/or expand adoption services for the agency.

If you have questions regarding the Adoption Promotion Program Fund, please contact Amelia Lance at (919) 527-6346 or Amelia.Lance@dhhs.nc.gov. Requests for payments, including all of the required documentation described in this letter should be sent to the following address:

**North Carolina Division of Social Services
Adoption Promotion Program Fund
2408 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408**

We encourage you to keep accurate records of the use of the funds for auditing purposes. If you do not exceed your baseline, it is not necessary to submit this information. The purpose of the fund is to recognize and reward exceptional performance in adoption services. It is our expectation that all participating agencies adhere to best practice standards in providing these

services. Failure to adhere to best practice standards will result in an agency's ineligibility to continue participation in the Fund.

The Division is committed to providing funding for this program and appreciates all of your efforts to provide safe, permanent homes for North Carolina's children.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Kevin Kelley, Chief
Child Welfare Services

Attachments (2)

1. Adoption Promotion Fund SFY 2016 Baseline
2. Affidavit of Adoption Expenditures