



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

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

Beverly Eaves, Governor
Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

November 16, 2010

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: ADOPTION PROMOTION PROGRAM

The Division of Social Services announces the availability of the Adoption Promotion Program Funds. As a vital resource in the placement of special needs children, the Adoption Promotion Funds have made it possible for hundreds of children who were living in foster care homes or institutions to be adopted into safe and secure adoptive homes. Previously referred to as the Special Children Adoption Funds as identified in the State TANF Block Grant and the Adoption Promotion Funds from IV-B, the Division will strengthen its commitment to achieving permanency for children in foster care in a timely manner with a more efficient and effective delivery of adoption services.

The Adoption Promotion Fund is designed to encourage partnerships between public and private agencies to finalize adoptions of children from foster care by providing incentives for the adoption of special needs children when an agency exceeds a predetermined baseline. **An agency'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.** The highest number in the four year period is excluded in the average for the baseline

Information for the baseline comes from the Adoption Information Management System (AIMS). Data in AIMS that includes the dates of the Decree of Adoption and names of adopted children. **Please review the baseline information (Attachment 3) 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 information that shows that the baseline information found in Attachment 3 is inaccurate. The payment levels for disbursement of the Adoption Promotion Program Fund for SFY 2011 are:

- ◆ Payment level of \$ 7,200 per child for children from 0-12 years;
- ◆ Payment level of \$12,000 per child for **ALL** children from 13-18 years, regardless of whether an agency has met its baseline;
- ◆ Payment level of \$12,000 per child for sibling groups of three or more who are placed together at the same time in an adoptive family

The total amount is paid to an agency when the agency recruits and trains the adoptive parent, supervises the placement and completes the legal paperwork for adoption. Partnerships between public and private agencies are strongly encouraged to maximize available placement resources to children in the foster care system.

The Adoption Services Agreement (Attachment 1) should indicate services provided by each agency and be submitted with requests for reimbursement when two agencies work together to finalize an adoption. It is imperative that partnering agencies mutually determine each agency's responsibilities in the adoption process and the percentage of payment that each agency will request if the placement responsibilities are shared. We encourage partnerships and trust that agencies will work together when funds are requested. If agencies share in the placements or received payment from another agency or the adoptive parents, it is mandatory that this information is reflected on the DSS-1571, (*modified*) (Attachment 2) when reimbursement is requested.

We cannot provide the full amount of payment to two agencies for the placement of the same child nor reimburse an agency for adoption services for which it has already received compensation. The Division of Social Services expects that local departments of social services and private adoption agencies ensure that needed child information and prospective adoptive family history is openly shared and communicated between both entities. The Division of Social Services further encourages both agencies to appropriately assess the amount of supervision needed to monitor the placement, whether or not the custodial agency needs to jointly monitor the placement that monthly detailed progress reports are submitted, and mutually agree upon the desired timeframe to finalize the adoption based on the needs of the individual child(ren).

The Fund is performance-based in that payments can only be made after a Decree of Adoption has been issued. Payments can only be made on behalf of children who have been determined eligible for adoption assistance cash payments. **Children who meet the “potentially eligible” criteria for adoption assistance cash payment qualify for payment under the Fund and for consideration in determining agency’s baseline.**

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

1. Submit the Adoption Services Agreement (Attachment 1) along with the adoptive name and the SIS identification number for adoption assistance of each eligible special needs child for whom a decree of adoption has been entered since July 1, 2010. This will enable the Division of Social Services to identify the point at which the baseline is exceeded. **Do not submit this information until you have exceeded your baseline and become eligible for payment, unless you are requesting payment for youth age 13 or older included in your baseline. Payments are only made after the case is activated in the Child Placement and Payment System (DSS-5095).** Agencies should verify the adoption assistance information has been entered. **If the child’s case is not activated via the DSS-5095, payment for the child will be denied.**
2. Complete the revised DSS-1571 (*modified*) (Attachment 2) to indicate children included in your baseline and to request a payment on behalf of those children for whom the Decree of Adoption enables you to exceed your baseline. Provide all the information that is requested, including name, race, age, SIS identification number, agency partner sharing in placement, amount of reimbursement, receipt of funds under other sources, and special needs of the child. Please do not use numeric codes to indicate special needs. It is important to write out the special needs (i.e., sibling, teenager, etc.).
3. All sections on DSS-1571 (*modified*) (Attachment 2) must be completed, including the signature of an authorized agency official. **INCOMPLETE DSS-1571 Part IV (*modified*) (Attachment 2) WILL NOT BE PROCESSED.** (See Instruction for Completing DSS-1571 (*modified*) (Attachment 2).
4. Mail the completed DSS-1571 (*modified*) (Attachment 2) as soon as possible. The Division of Social Services will not accept faxed DSS-1571 (*modified*)(Attachment 2). Do not include children for whom payment has already been made on the DSS-1571 (*modified*) (Attachment 2).

All agencies that received payments from the Special Children Adoption Fund or adoption promotion contract in the past **must** provide information on how the money was used to enhance or expand their adoption program before funds can be received for the current fiscal year. Agencies must provide the following information with the first request:

- ◆ **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 1011 to enhance and/or expand adoption services for the agency.**

Allowable uses for the Fund include the direct provision or purchase by contract of services included in the definitions of Adoption Services (010), Adoption Recruitment (011), Adoption Assistance Case Management (012), Child-Specific Recruitment, Assessment and Training of Adoptive Parents (013), and Post Adoption Case Management (016). The Division encourages you to use these funds for legal or court related services to expedite the adoption process, for post-adoption services and for child-specific recruitment efforts. This would include the funding for contracts with-out-of-state agencies that are willing to provide a family for your child. **Funds cannot be used to purchase automobiles for the county or to supplant the salaries of current workers.**

The Division will contact the agency, if there are questions about the information submitted. We encourage you to keep clear and accurate records of the use of the funds for auditing purposes, if requested. If you do not exceed your baseline, it is not necessary to submit this information.

We encourage more agencies to participate during SFY 1011. 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.

If you have questions regarding the Adoption Promotion Program, please contact Amelia Lance at (919) 334-1096 or amelia.lance@dhhs.nc.gov. Requests for payments, including all of the required documentation described in this letter should be sent to Ms. Lance at the following address:

**North Carolina Division of Social Services
325 N. Salisbury Street Suite 725
2408 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408**

The Division sincerely appreciates all of your efforts in providing safe, permanent homes for children. The Fund offers an opportunity to provide additional financial resources to county departments of social services and our private adoption agency partners to improve adoption services for children. Since the creation of these programs the number of adoptions has steadily increased and we believe that combining these adoption programs will maximize our resources.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kelley, Interim Chief
Child Welfare Services

[Attachment 1 - Adoption Services Agreement](#)
[Attachment 2 - ADOPTION PROMOTION FUND \(DSS-1571\)](#)
[Attachment 3 - Agency Baseline](#)

cc. Sherry Bradsher
Jack Rogers
Kathy Sommese
Hank Bowers
Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Local Business Liaisons
Work First Representatives

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