



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

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Courier # 56-20-25 Fax 919-733-9386

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

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

April 26, 2004

Dear County Director of Social Services

Attention: Child Welfare Managers

Subject: Promote Foster Care Awareness During May

As you are all no doubt aware, May is national Foster Care Awareness Month. With all the national attention focused on foster care this month, it is an excellent opportunity for your agency to publicly recognize and honor those adults who have opened their hearts and homes, and the children who have been in need of the safe harbor those adults have offered.

The Department's Office of Public Affairs has pulled together a few suggestions to help get you started thinking about what your agency can do to recognize your foster care providers. The attached documents are by no means exhaustive, and your creative staff may have already been thinking about innovative ways to get the word out. Please feel free to add this attached information to your agency's own ideas and insert them in your agency's PR notebook for future reference.

If you have questions about your foster care promotional efforts, please contact Esther High with the Division at (919) 733-9464, or contact your Children's Program Representative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Lamm".

Jo Ann Lamm, Administrator
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

JAL/da
Attachments
FSCWS-12-04

cc: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Family Support and Child Welfare Services' Team Leaders
CPRs

Foster Care Month

Suggested Activities to Promote Foster Care during May

Media contacts: Create a list of people who will talk to the media about foster care. Include foster parents who are doing a great job, and perhaps former foster children who are now adults who can talk about what it's like to be in foster care. Make sure they agree to talk to the media before you send anyone their way. Also, make sure they understand that children should not be interviewed or photographed unless the parental rights have been terminated and the foster parents, as their guardians, believe it is in the child's best interest to be interviewed.

Press Release: Send out a press release to your local newspapers, radio stations and television stations, either at the end of April or just before Mother's Day. A suggested boilerplate release is attached.

Op-ed or letter to the editor: Write an op-ed piece for the local paper, or invite a foster parent to do so. If a good story appears in the paper about foster care, write a letter to the editor thanking them for the story and reiterating the need for more foster parents.

Posters: Posters created for National Foster Care Month are available at www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/foster-care-month. Personalize it by adding a sticker that says: Call DSS at xxx-xxxx. (just print it out on a mailing label). There is some room on the upper right or left-hand corner.

Enlist foster parents from places of worship: Ask local places of worship to place foster parent recruitment announcements in their bulletins or newsletters. Suggested wording:

Loving adults needed for children: In X County, X children are not safe in their own homes and must live in foster care. We need more caring responsible adults to be foster parents. Can you give your time and attention to a child at risk and provide them with a safe and loving home? What could be more important? If you do not want the commitment of being a foster parent but want to help in other ways, there are numerous volunteer opportunities. Call X County Department of Social Services at XXX-XXXX or NC Kids at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 for more information.

Foster Parent Recognition: Do something to recognize your foster parents, even if it's simply a letter to all of them telling them their work is important. Alternatively, hold an event to recognize foster parents, such as a pancake or spaghetti supper at a school cafeteria on the weekend. Ask a local grocery store to donate ingredients. Enlist teen foster kids to do the flipping. Make a speech that recognizes foster parents for all they do. Don't forget to invite the media!

Suggested Press Release for County DSSs

Date: XX/XX/XX

Contact name and number: XXX-XXXX

May is the Time to Honor Foster Parents and Foster Kids

YOUR CITY: May is Foster Care Month, which means it is time to remember and honor the children who live in foster care, and the wonderful adults who care for them.

X County has X foster children, and the state of North Carolina has almost 10,000.

QUOTE FROM YOUR DIRECTOR, SOMETHING ALONG THESE LINES: “It’s tough to be a foster child.” said YOUR DIRECTOR. “We love getting foster parents who can be compassionate and provide a sense of stability to these kids in crisis.”

[GIVE ONE, TWO OR THREE EXAMPLES OF GREAT FOSTER PARENTS, SOMEONE WHO HAS AGREED TO TALK TO MEDIA. FOR A BETTER RELEASE, INCLUDE QUOTES FROM THEM ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO THEM TO BE FOSTER PARENTS.]

Foster parents must be at least 21 years old and get 30 hours of training. They must pass a criminal background check and submit their home to inspection. A stipend is available to cover the child's expenses.

Adults wanting more information about becoming a foster parent can call the X County Department of Social Services at XXX-XXXX or NC Kids at 1-877-NCKIDS-1. Or go to www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/c_srv/cserv_fostercare.htm