



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 Odom, Secretary

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

September 26, 2005

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: ADOPTION SUPERVISORS
ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: Statewide Contracts with Private Adoption Agencies

The Division of Social Services is again very pleased to announce the renewal of the statewide contracts with four private agencies that are willing to work collaboratively with county departments of social services to find safe, permanent homes for children in the foster care system. The participating adoption agencies are **Another Choice for Black Children, Inc.**, located in Charlotte (704-394-1124); **Adoption Plus with Appalachian Family Innovations**, (formerly Bringing It All Back Home) in Asheville (828-236-2877) and Winston-Salem (336-768-4136); **The Children's Home Society of North Carolina, Inc.**, located in Greensboro (800-632-1400); and the **Methodist Home for Children** located in Raleigh (888-305-4321). Each of these agencies continues to offer their services to all 100 counties in expanding and enhancing placement resources for children in the foster care system.

The performance-based contracts with these agencies have been very successful in families for hard to place children. Reimbursements for services are paid *only* when specific outcomes are achieved. The outcomes are (1) placement for the purpose of adoption; (2) issuance of Decree of Adoption; and (3) the first anniversary of the Decree of Adoption. The provision of post-adoption services beyond the first year of placement is also included in the contracts. You may contact one of these agencies if you have situations where post-adoption services are needed and you need additional support or you are unable to provide the needed services.

The contracts presume that the Contract Agencies will assume primary responsibility for the full adoption process following a referral by a county department of social services agency. Consequently, the statewide contracts include the full range of adoption services, including: accepting and processing referrals from county departments of social services; 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 department of

social services staff should make direct contact with these agencies to request services. Contract agencies have made a strong commitment to maintain frequent contact with the county department of social services 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 completed.

Each of the agencies is licensed by the Division of Social Services and must adhere to the same rules of confidentiality regarding the children and families that we serve. The confidentiality of records must not be used as a barrier to their full access to pertinent information. Therefore, **all information relating to the children should be made available to these agencies, including copies of the DSS-5094 and DSS-5095. Information must be provided in a timely manner.** The contract 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 department of social services with the required documentation of providing services in a timely manner.

The Division has been made aware of the practice by some departments of social services of delaying adoption approval committee meetings until several preplacement assessments have been received for a child. The MEPA/IEP (Multiethnic Placement Act as amended by the Interethnic Provisions of 1996) prohibits the delay or denial of a placement. Therefore, a decision to delay the adoption committee meeting may be viewed as a violation of this Act.

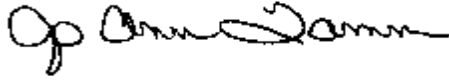
The statewide contracts with these agencies are to complement and enhance your adoption program. The contracts **do not** replace the mandated adoption services, including post adoption services, of county departments of social services. Consequently, the county **must** actively recruit prospective 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.

The statewide contracts with these private agencies do not cover their full, annual operating costs and are typically exhausted before the end of the fiscal year. If the fund becomes depleted, it may be necessary for a private agency to charge fees for their services. These agencies do receive payments from the Special Children Adoption Fund when their contract is exhausted or when they provide services that are not included in the contracts. Each of these private agencies may also be available to provide discrete services as a part of a department of social services initiated adoption process (i.e., preplacement assessments for relative or foster parent adoption) or to dedicate staff time exclusively to a county department of social services on a regularly scheduled basis. Although such partnerships are encouraged, these types of arrangements are not reimbursable under the statewide contracts and the county department of social services should expect to enter into a separate contract with the private agency for this level of service.

Our partnership with these private agencies has strengthened our adoption program, and we appreciate all that has been done to promote a better working relationship between agencies. It is our firm belief that all efforts must be made to assure permanency for all children in the foster care system.

If you have any questions regarding the statewide contract with private adoption agencies, please contact Tamika Williams, Program Consultant with the Foster Care and Adoption Policy Team at Tamika.Williams@ncmail.net or 919-733-2580, or Esther High, Team Leader, at Esther.High@ncmail.net or (919) 733-9464.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Lamm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jo" being particularly prominent.

Jo Ann Lamm, Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section

JAL/ETH/tw

CC: Phoen Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Children's Programs Representatives
Local Business Representatives
Another Choice for Black Children, Inc.
Appalachian Family Innovations
Children's Home Society of NC, Inc.
Methodist Home for Children

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