



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Social Services  
2410 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2410  
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Dempsey Benton, Secretary

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

September 13, 2007

**Dear County Director of Social Services**

**Attention: Child Welfare Supervisors**

**Subject: 2007 Challenge for Children**

The Division's Challenge for Children, established in 1997, is celebrating ten years of County Departments of Social Services making concerted efforts to reduce the number of children in the foster care backlog. Challenge for Children used the Kellogg Foundation's Families for Kids principles to drive a paradigm shift in how child caring agencies view children in the foster care system. Over the past ten years, the Division has seen a major reduction in the length of time that children remain in foster care. The number of children attaining permanency through adoption has increased. Children are remaining in their homes as a result of MRS and the family-centered, strength-based method of service delivery.

Challenges remain for the state in the foster care system. The array of services available and access to those services continue to be a concern in many communities in North Carolina. The over representation of African-Americans children in the foster care system continues to be problematic. Data from the 2007 Challenge for Children show an increase in the number of adolescent females entering the foster care system. Also, establishing permanency for older children in the foster care system continues to be a challenge for most counties.

For all of the Division's programs and initiatives to be successful, it is important that these challenges are addressed at all levels, especially on the community level when input is needed in developing service resources for families and recruiting foster and adoptive homes.

All counties are commended not only for their participation in Challenge for Children but also their concerted effort to achieve permanency for children as demonstrated by:

- The reduction of time in out of home placements
- Finalized adoptions
- Youth participating in LINKS
- Effective collaboration with community partners
- Multiple Response System (MRS)

There has been a reduction in the foster care backlog for eight of the ten-year period of Challenge for Children. One hundred counties participated in the 2007 Challenge for Children. Data from the 2007 Challenge for Children indicates that there was a 1.4% statewide reduction in the foster care backlog. Fifty-four counties reported a reduction in the backlog, no backlog or the backlog remained the same. In 2006, County realized a backlog change of \_\_\_\_%. Overall counties in this category realized a \_\_\_\_% change in the backlog.

As in the past, if you would like a letter of commendation sent to your community partners, send the name and address of the individual to receive the letter to:

**Phyllis Fulton**  
**Community Based Programs**  
**325 N. Salisbury Street, MSC 2410**  
**Raleigh, NC 27699-2410**

**This information must be received at the Division by October 10, 2007.**

Again, thank you for your commitment to assuring child wellbeing in North Carolina. Questions or comments regarding Challenge for Children may be sent to Phyllis Fulton at the above address or by email to [phyllis.fulton@ncmail.net](mailto:phyllis.fulton@ncmail.net). Ms. Fulton's telephone number is 919-733-2279.

Sincerely,



Esther T. High, Acting Section Chief  
Family Support & Child Welfare Services Section

cc: JoAnn Lamm  
Keith Davis

**FSCWS-62-07**