



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

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

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher
(919) 733-3055

December 19, 2006

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Child Welfare Supervisors

**Subject: 2006 End of Year Report and
2007 Challenge for Children – Time to Commit**

In 1997, the North Carolina Division of Social Services incorporated changes in the child welfare system that reflected a paradigm shift. The paradigm shift was driven by the need to assure the safety and wellbeing of children. North Carolina's Challenge for Children was modeled after the Kellogg Foundation's Families for Kids (FFK) by applying the five FFK outcomes to all children in the foster care system. Since 1997, North Carolina's child welfare practice has engaged terms and conditions of the IVE Waiver initiative, FFK II, the Annie Casey Family to Family Project (F2F), the System of Care (SOC) program and other initiatives culminating with the statewide implementation of the Multiple Response System (MRS) during 2006.

County Departments of Social Services, with the implementation of Multiple Response System (MRS) statewide, are making diligent efforts to thoroughly assess families for strengths and needs, utilize the court system when necessary, make kinship placements when possible, adhere to permanency in a year and timely registration of children with NC Kids, etc. In 1997, sixty-seven counties reported a backlog of more than 7,000. The actions of child welfare staff in one hundred counties resulted in the number of children in the backlog at the end of 2005 being 5,110. The foster care backlog is defined as children who are in the custody of a County Department of Social Services for more than twelve months. All counties are commended on their dedication to families and children in North Carolina. The Division extends a special commendation to those counties that have accepted the Challenge for Children from the start of the program.

It is time to accept the 2007 Challenge for Children. Enclosed with this letter is your county's report of the children in the your county's backlog. Please review the report for accuracy in regards to children's names and the number of children reported. Return this report to the Division with a line drawn through the children that exited the backlog and state the reason (adopted, returned to parents, kinship placement, aged out, voluntary placement agreement, etc.) in the margin beside the child's name. An example of what the report should look like is included with this letter.

When completing the 2007 Challenge for Children form, report all children in your agency's custody on December 31, 2006 that were in custody on January 1, 2006 and are not listed on the report that is included with this letter. Do not list any children that came into custody during 2006. Do not list children that came into custody during 2006 and left custody prior to December 31, 2006. The backlog includes children who have been in your agency's custody for twelve months or more with no break in the agency's placement responsibility.

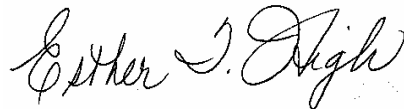
All county DSS agencies who plan to participate in the Challenge for Children 2007, must submit an agency-prepared statement of acceptance of the Challenge for Children 2007 that includes the signatures of the agency Director and all of the agency's child welfare social work and supervisory staff (including IFPS, CPS, Foster Care, and Adoptions).

Please submit backlog information and your acceptance statement with signatures **no later than January 30, 2007**, directly to:

**PHYLLIS B. FULTON
N.C. DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CHILDREN'S SERVICES SECTION
325 N. SALISBURY STREET, 2410 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-2410**

All county DSS agencies that accept the Challenge for Children, 2007, will receive formal commendation from the Division and an invitation to participate in special training opportunities during 2007. This is a most important challenge that we encourage every county DSS to accept for 2007. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Fulton at (919) 733-2279.

Sincerely,



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

ETH/pbf

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Jo Ann Lamm
Keith Davis

FSCWS-69-06

