

# MRS!

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA'S MULTIPLE RESPONSE SYSTEM

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June 2010

## Plan a National Reunification Day Celebration!

Reprinted from the CB Express, June 2010

To raise awareness of the importance of family reunification and to celebrate families and communities coming together across the country, June 19, 2010, is being recognized as the first National Reunification Day.



When children are removed from their homes and placed in foster care, reunification is the preferred outcome. It takes hard work and commitment from social workers, parents, family members, and the community, among others. Hundreds of thousands of children are reunited with their families each year, which is their best option for a permanent home.

To learn how you can plan your own National Reunification Day celebration, the American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law website has a page dedicated to help. This page provides tools to make your event successful, such as a planning timeline, a proclamation, tips for media outreach, and more.

To learn more about National Reunification Day and to view the American Bar Association's Reunification Day web page, please visit: <http://new.abanet.org/child/Pages/nationalreunificationday.aspx>

### Inspirational Reunification Resources

Marie Jamieson, a social worker in Washington State, attended a presentation by parents who had had their children returned to them from foster care. Inspired, she launched a project to capture and share stories about successful reunifications.

The fruits of this project include a report filled with helpful suggestions for child welfare professionals and birth families, as well as a free poster. To access them, go to [www.catalystforkids.org](http://www.catalystforkids.org) and click on the link for publications.



## MRS Meetings

MRS and System of Care meetings take place three times monthly via conference call. Dates and call-in information are listed below.

### July 22, 27, & 28

Call times: 10-11:30 a.m.  
Call-in number:  
(218) 936-4141  
Access code: 956303

### MRS Questions?

If you have questions regarding the implementation of any aspect of MRS, please contact Holly McNeill  
828/757-5672  
[holly.mcneill@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:holly.mcneill@dhhs.nc.gov)

## Training Dates

### Adoptions in Child Welfare Services

**July 27-30**  
Asheville

**October 12-15**  
Charlotte

### Effects of Separation and Loss on Attachment

**July 8-9**  
Asheville

**September 29-30**  
Charlotte

**October 14-15**  
Kinston

To learn about these courses or to register, go to <http://www.ncswLearn.org>

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#### Comments?

Contact Patrick Betancourt, Child Welfare Services, NC Division of Social Services, 2408 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC 27699-2408, Courier: 56-20-25, 919/334-1104; [patrick.betancourt@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:patrick.betancourt@dhhs.nc.gov)

#### Online

[www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs)

### *Another State's Approach to Reunification*

## **New Mexico's "Transition Home Plan"**

In New Mexico, a permanency option of reunification requires the development of a Transition Home Plan. Transition Home Plans describe progressive visitation, efforts to preserve connections with school and community, and other steps to achieve the transition home.

In New Mexico, written Transition Plans must be developed by child welfare professionals and ordered by a judge. The plan needs to provide a clear directive on how the transition will happen for the child and the parents. It should be developmentally appropriate, created in conjunction with the family, and tailored to the circumstances of the case. The plan should include provisions for graduated visitation, wraparound services and support, therapeutic services, transportation, exit and entry into schools, opportunities for closure with connections made in foster care, time frames, and progress indicators. A six-month calendar is developed and given to the foster parents, respondent attorney, guardian ad litem or youth attorney, and child welfare case worker.

#### **Advantages**

- Transition Home Plans increase the likelihood of safe and successful reunification.
- All parties know the expectations and timelines well in advance.
- Young people understand the efforts made to preserve important connections.

### **Successful Transition Home Planning**

Child welfare professionals must take many factors into account as they create Transition Home Plans for children and young people. Following are some tips for facilitating transition home planning with parents.

- Create a list of all upcoming events or appointments for the child. Review this list with the parent(s). Ensure that all events are recorded on the calendar. Discuss transportation logistics. Work with the parent(s) and the child to develop a comprehensive plan that will facilitate the child attending all appointments and events.
- Schedule special meetings and appointments with the child's school, doctors, and therapists. Ensure that the parent(s) can attend. Use these meetings as an opportunity to explain to the teachers, administrators, doctors, and therapists that the child will be returning home and to express your trust in the parent's ability to be involved. Explain that the child welfare agency will no longer be attending meetings and appointments.
- Have a realistic conversation with the parent(s) before the transition home regarding budgeting and expenses. Often the reality of the expense of supporting a child with high needs can be overwhelming. Discuss realistic options with the parent(s). Encourage them to seek resources such as budget management training that will help them succeed.

Adapted from *Transition Home Plans*, a bulletin co-sponsored by Advocacy Inc., Corinne Wolfe Children's Law Center, New Mexico Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families, New Mexico CASA Network, New Mexico Citizen Review Board, and the New Mexico Court Improvement Project. To access this bulletin, go to <<http://ipl.unm.edu/childlaw/publications.htm>>

### Sample Transition Home Plan

On [date], a team of [child welfare agency, court-appointed attorneys, clinical providers, etc.] determined that it is in the best interest of the child to return home and that transition can be safely accomplished. The Court approved the goal of reunification on [date].



The [child welfare caseworker] convened a meeting to finalize the Transition Home Plan on [date]. Input was solicited from [clinicians, teachers, others] who have had contact with the child and family. Birth parents and [foster parents, the child, others] participated. The plan calls for [services, supports, meetings, etc.] to meet needs for [emotional support, problemsolving tools, parenting skills, wraparound and therapeutic services and support, etc.].

A home visit to the place where the family is going to live is scheduled for [date]. The [child welfare caseworker] will assess the safety and appropriateness of the home, and gather additional information about what is in place to support the transition. Any needs identified will be incorporated in the Plan.

A meeting with the foster parent, the case worker and the parent(s) has been scheduled for [date]. At this meeting, the foster parent will review the care for the child; the child's school and other activities; and observations of the child's current strengths and needs. At this meeting a plan for the child to say goodbye, and have closure with, or decide on future contact with [current school, church, etc.] will be developed.

Unsupervised visits between the parent(s) and the child will commence on [date]. Visits will occur [frequency, duration, days]. [Parent(s)] will pick up [child] after school and after the visit, return him/her to his/her [foster home]. If all goes well with unsupervised visits, overnight visits will begin. The first overnight visit will take place [date]. If the overnight visit goes well and no concerns arise, then overnight visits will continue on [series of consecutive dates].

On [date], [parent(s)] will pick up [child] from school and take him/her home where he/she will live permanently.

The six-month calendar for this plan is attached.

### Training Dates

#### Intake in Child Welfare Services

**August 11-13**  
Kinston

**November 8-10**  
Greensboro

#### CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services

**June 28-July 1**  
Kinston

**August 17-20**  
Greensboro

**August 24-27**  
Charlotte

**October 26-29**  
Asheville

#### Staying Power! A Supervisor's Guide to Retaining Child Welfare Staff

**July 12-14**  
Charlotte

**September 13-15**  
Kinston

**December 8-10**  
Asheville

To learn about these courses or to register, go to <http://www.ncswLearn.org>

## Training Dates

### Methamphetamine: What a Social Worker Needs to know

This self-paced online course is always available. To take it, simply log on to <http://www.ncswLearn.org> and access this course via the Personalized Learning Portfolio (PLP) / Online Courses section of the website.

### Introduction to Supervision for Child Welfare Services

**Starts July 14**

Fayetteville

**Starts October 6**

Greensboro

### Child Development in Families at Risk

Upcoming sessions of this online course start on the following dates:

**July 7**

**July 29**

**August 10**

**August 24**

**September 23**

**October 5**

To learn about these courses or to register, go to <http://www.ncswLearn.org>

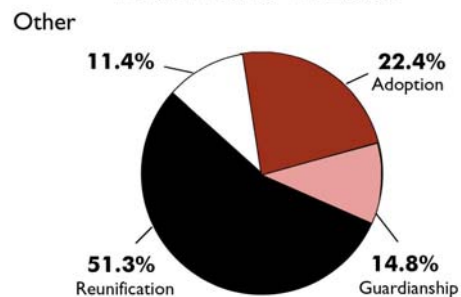
## Reunification in North Carolina in 2006

To work effectively with children and their families, we need to know what happens to children and families involved with the child welfare system. The following information about the reunification of children in foster care in North Carolina comes from *Child Welfare Outcomes 2003-2006: Report to Congress*, which was released in 2010 by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services. Currently 2006 is the most recent year for which the federal government has complete statistics. Based on this report, here's what we know:

**Reunification is the most likely outcome for children placed in foster care.** In 2006, of the 5,557 children who left foster care in North Carolina, 2,861 (51.3%) were reunified with their families. Figure 1 illustrates the different destinations of the children who left foster care in 2006.

**Figure 1**

### Destination of NC Children Leaving Foster Care in 2006

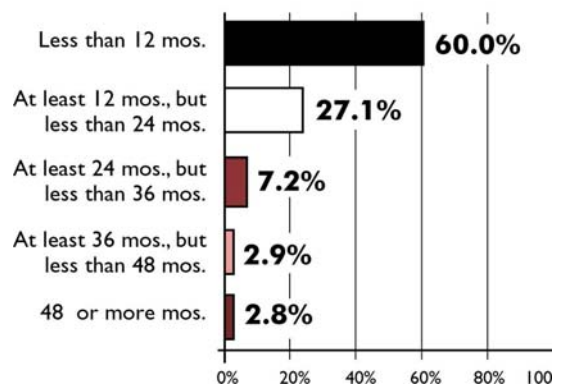


**When reunification occurs, it usually happens in less than 12 months.** Sixty percent of the North Carolina children in foster care who were reunified

with their families in 2006 spent less than 12 months in foster care. This percent falls short of the national median of 69%; it also represents a decline from 2005, when 62.9% of North Carolina children were reunified in less than 12 months. Figure 2 illustrates the amount of time the NC children who were reunified in 2006 had spent in foster care before returning home.

**Figure 2**

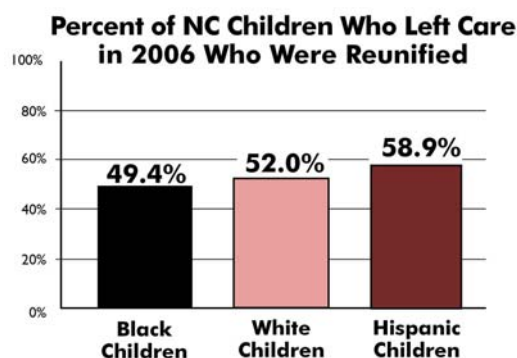
### Time to Reunification in NC in 2006



*continued next page*

**Reunification was not equally likely for children of all races in North Carolina in 2006.** Although reunification was the most likely outcome for foster children of all races in 2006, as Figure 3 indicates, White (non-Hispanic) children were somewhat more likely to be reunified than Black (non-Hispanic) children, while Hispanic children (any race) were reunified more often than White children.

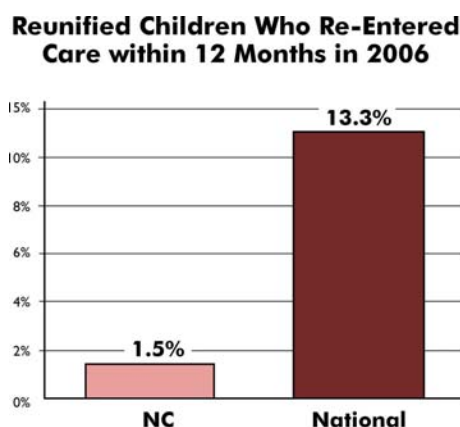
**Figure 3**



**Relatively few North Carolina children re-enter foster care after they are reunified with their families.** Although in 2006 North Carolina did not perform as well as most states when it came the percentage of children who were reunified within 12 months of their entry into foster care, our state had a very low percent of children re-entering foster care.

In 2006, only 1.5% of children entering foster care in North Carolina had been in foster care during the preceding 12 months. As Figure 4 illustrates, this is significantly lower than the national median for this performance measure.

**Figure 4**



This suggests North Carolina does a better job than many states of ensuring that sufficient changes have occurred in birth families before children return home and/or that sufficient post-reunification services are provided.

Source: USDHHS. (2010). Child Welfare Outcomes 2003-2006: Report to Congress. Accessed June 8, 2010 from <[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo03-06/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo03-06/)>

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