



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

December 1, 2013

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Honorable Robert F. McDonnell  
Governor of Virginia

Honorable Walter A. Stosch  
Chairman, Senate Finance

Honorable Lacey E. Putney  
Chairman, House Appropriations

Daniel Timberlake  
Director, Department of Planning and Budget

**FROM:** Margaret Ross Schultze  
Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Ross Schultze', written over the printed name.

**SUBJECT:** Report on Item 341 of the 2013 Appropriation Act- Adoption of Children in Foster Care

I am pleased to submit the Department of Social Services' first report pursuant to Item 341 G (1) and (2) of the 2013 Appropriation Act. Item 341 G (1) provided \$828,734 in State Fiscal Year 2014 and \$1,500,000 in State Fiscal Year 2015 to implement pilot programs that increase the number of foster care children adopted. Item 341 G (2) requires the Department of Social Services to report quarterly to the Governor, the Chairmen of House Appropriations, the Senate Finance Committees, and the Director of the Department of Planning and Budget on the use and effectiveness of this funding including the number of additional children adopted from foster care and the types of ongoing supportive services provided as a result of the expenditure of these funds. If you have any questions or need additional information concerning this report, please contact me.

MRS: kc

Attachment

## **Report on Adoption of Children in Foster Care November 2013**

### **Report Mandate and Background**

Item 341 (G) (1) and (2) of the 2013 Appropriation Act provides:

*(1) “Out of this appropriation, \$828,734 the first year from federal funds and \$1,500,000 the second year from the general funds shall be provided to implement pilot programs that increase the number of foster care children adopted.”*

*(2) “Beginning October 1, 2013, the department shall provide a quarterly report, within 30 days of quarter end, on the use and effectiveness of this funding including, but not limited to, the additional number of special needs children adopted from foster care as a result of this effort and the types of ongoing supportive services provided, to the Governor, Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees, and the Director, Department of Planning and Budget.”*

This is the first report provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and it details activities for the first quarter of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014. The bulk of the new adoption appropriation from the 2013 General Assembly has been allocated to funding three new initiatives that meet the intent of the appropriation. Monies were awarded to organizations that developed innovative approaches to encourage families to adopt Virginia’s waiting youth and to support those families who have adopted children from foster care.

### **New Funding Initiatives- Request for Proposals (RFP)**

- **Targeted Recruitment:** This RFP addressing the targeted recruitment of adoptive families was awarded to two organizations, United Methodist Family Services and coordinators<sup>2</sup>. Awarded \$300,000 of the appropriation, these organizations will use Extreme Recruitment®, an evidence-based model to identify, recruit and match families for hard-to-place youth who are available for adoption. The target population will be Virginia’s 100 “Longest Waiting Youth,” followed by children who have been in care longer than 15 months and are older than 10 years of age.

Missouri, Florida and California have had success in targeted recruitment, which targets extended family members and other kinship relationships of the child. Family members or close friends have proven to be the most likely people to adopt a child in foster care and best practices indicate having a child adopted by a family member or close family friend contributes to the long-term psychological health of the child.

- **Recruitment & Market Segmentation:** The second RFP was awarded in early October 2013 to Bethany Christian Services for \$399,557, to create a state-wide general recruitment campaign. This contract incorporates the use of market segmentation to target potential families using the training and technical assistance of the National Resource Center on Diligent Recruitment. Virginia purchased market segmentation software that will allow existing data on adoptive families to be utilized in identifying future families who are willing to adopt. Market segmentation is comparable to micro-targeting

practices that businesses and campaigns use and enables DSS to develop a profile of families who are likely to adopt. Colorado, New Jersey and Kentucky have used market segmentation with good degrees of success.

- **Post Adoption Support:** Submissions for the third RFP, focused on innovative post-adoption services and supports to adoptive families, are currently being reviewed. Up to \$500,000 is being allocated. These services will be designed to help families stabilize during crisis and are also intended to prevent dissolution of adoptions. Underserved areas of Virginia and unmet post-adoption services were given greater consideration. The RFP was written in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to address gaps in the continuum of care in Virginia.

### **VAdopts: Campaign for 1000**

Under the leadership of Secretary of Health and Human Resources William A. Hazel, Jr. and Secretary of the Commonwealth Janet Kelly, “VAdopts: Campaign for 1000” was created to promote adoption and find families to adopt the children who are available and waiting. To begin the effort, eight regional events were held around the state and almost 1,000 interested families and local dignitaries were in attendance. These events generated over 15 media stories with positive messages in both print and television in multiple media markets. Most significantly, over 300 families expressed an interest in becoming adoptive and/or foster parents. Many of these families are actively engaged in the orientations and trainings required to adopt. At the time of this report, Virginia had 876 matches (families have met the children and are committed to adoption) or adoptions out of a goal of 1,000.

On July 1, 2013, Virginia began a social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook entitled, “100 Kids, 100 Days.” Each day, a new child was profiled on the Governor’s social media accounts. With over one million unique page views, 100 children were profiled and eight have been matched. The next phase of the social media campaign, entitled, “#IHeartAdoption,” will feature Virginia government officials and dignitaries photographed holding placards with a written tagline as to why they support adoption. Appendix I shows some of the children who, as a result of being profiled through the “100 Kids, 100 Days” campaign, were successfully matched with families.

### **Focus Groups**

The DSS hired a contractor to facilitate several focus groups with the intent of identifying barriers to adoption and timely permanency in Virginia. The focus groups, the first of which was completed on October 18, 2013, will include several types of constituents, especially families and foster youth and adoptions workers. The results of the focus groups will serve an important role in documenting the barriers to successful foster care adoptions, and inform policy and legislative decisions over the coming year.

### **Adoption Awareness Month & Other Events**

In November and December 2013, several adoption events will be held with the support of the Governor’s Office. The first will be an adoption celebration for Virginia’s adoptive families on November 9, 2013 at the Science Museum of Virginia to honor Adoption Month (November).

The second event is scheduled for December 5, 2013, to provide an opportunity to discuss lessons learned and share the results of the focus groups with interested stakeholders.

Appendix I  
100 Kids, 100 Days

**“Jeff”**



Jeff is a fifteen year old young man and has been in foster care since he was ten. He has been waiting for an adoptive home for 27 months and was recently matched to a family through VAdopt’s social media campaign: *100 Kids, 100 Days*. Jeff reports that he is excited about going to live with his new family and he “really wants to be adopted.” The adopting father recognized Jeff’s profile on the Governor’s FaceBook page and contacted his local department of social services.

**“Georgia”**



Georgia is another child whose profile was featured on the *100 Kids, 100 Day* campaign. Her adoptive family first discovered her through the campaign and Georgia was placed with them in mid October. Georgia entered foster care when she was six years old and her adoption will finalize when she is twelve.

**“Ethan and Dominique”**



Ethan and Dominique were featured in the *100 Kids, 100 Days* campaign and have been matched with a caring family who are strong advocates for their needs both at home and at school. The family discovered the children by visiting the VAdopts social media sites. This sibling group entered foster care when Ethan was two years old and Dominique was 7 months old. They are now fifteen and thirteen.

## Appendix I 100 Kids, 100 Days

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