



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
*Office of the Commissioner*

Margaret Ross Schultze  
Commissioner

March 28, 2014

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Honorable Terry McAuliffe  
Governor of Virginia

Honorable Charles J. Colgan  
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance

Honorable Walter A. Stosch  
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance

Honorable S. Chris Jones  
Chairman, House Appropriations

Daniel Timberlake  
Director Department of Planning and Budget

**FROM:** Margaret Ross Schultze

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' third quarter 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 on the use and effectiveness of this funding. If you have any questions or need additional information concerning this report, please contact me.

MRS: kc

Attachment

## **Quarterly Update on Adoption of Children in Foster Care March 2014**

### **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 third report provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and details activities for the third quarter of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014. There were 523 finalized adoptions that resulted from adoption matches made in 2013. This included 438 adoptions finalized on or before December 31, 2013, and 85 adoptions finalized in early 2014. Between January 1, 2014 and February 28, 2014, 77 adoption matches were made, according to reports from 116 localities.

### **Initiatives Funded Through 2013 Appropriation Act**

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. Using the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, funds were awarded to agencies that developed innovative approaches to encourage more families to adopt Virginia's waiting youth and to support those families who have adopted children from foster care. Updates on the initiatives are below.

#### **Extreme Recruitment**

Since the last report, recruiters from United Methodist Family Services (UMFS) and coordinators<sup>2</sup> in the Eastern and Northern regions assisted agencies in identifying over 100 relatives in an effort to achieve permanency. Currently both agencies have been assigned 18 youth collectively. Combined, there has been one match with a youth and family, and two pending matches. As result of weekly team meetings, internet searches and a private detective, over 560 relatives have been identified as possible permanency placement options for Virginia's "100 Longest Waiting" youth.

#### **Recruitment & Market Segmentation**

During this quarter, Bethany Christian Services developed marketing products in consultation with DSS, including a brochure, radio and TV commercials and website updates. A video of an adoptive family testimonial is pending. This contract will incorporate the use of Market Segmentation to target potential families through training and technical assistance provided by the National Resource Center on Diligent Recruitment. Collaborative meetings have been scheduled for the months of March and April 2014 with the National Resource Center, DSS adoption staff and contractors (UMFS, coordinators<sup>2</sup>, One Church One Child, Change Who Waits and Bethany Christian Services).



### **Post Adoption Services**

Post adoption services contractors are Center for Adoption Education and Support (C.A.S.E.) for the Piedmont Region and Frontier Health for far southwest in the Western Region. C.A.S.E. will begin Training for Adoption Competency (TAC) in April 2014. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) has been extremely helpful in identifying and targeting staff from Community Services Boards (CSB) to participate. CSBs are a targeted group because they accept Medicaid payments and training CSBs in adoption competency increases the opportunity to continue services to adoptive families beyond the grant to C.A.S.E. Staff from Frontier Health elected to use the Circle of Security @model to increase their competency in working with adoptive families. Both C.A.S.E. and Frontier Health are working closely with the respective DSS regional offices in Piedmont and Western.

### **Virginia Heart Gallery**

In 2005, DSS sought to promote youth eligible for adoption through the use of professional portraits known as the Virginia Heart Gallery. From 2005-2009, each of the five DSS regions have had at least one Heart Gallery featuring youth in their respective region. In 2010, Virginia's Heart Gallery was converted to one gallery featuring eligible youth for adoption across the state. A contract to enhance and expand the Virginia Heart Gallery was executed in February 2014. Under "Change Who Waits," services to be covered include: updating the existing Heart Gallery portraits and replicating three sets of the updated Heart Gallery exhibit; creating the portraits in formats suitable for various resources to include web-based options; presenting the display around the state; and creating digital stories featuring the children in their own voices with images.

### **Program Updates**

As a result of the December 2013 focus groups, plans are moving forward to address specific barriers through a practice known as Concurrent Planning, as well as through training and improvements to the adoption contracts.

By year's end, DSS plans to move forward with the implementation of Concurrent Planning as a standard practice for all local departments of social services. Concurrent planning is a national best practice and is the pursuit of the primary goal of reunification with birth parents while also pursuing an alternative plan, such as adoption, should reunification efforts fail. This may require refresher training for local staff, Court Services and external community stakeholders. Standardization of Concurrent Planning will assist in increasing and achieving both adoptions and timeliness to permanency.

The re-issue of the RFP for the "Adoptions Through Collaborative Partnerships (ATCP)" adoption contract is in progress. The current contract will end June 2014. Mickey Grooms, national consultant, has been providing technical assistance to DSS in preparation for the RFP release scheduled for the end of March 2014. The new ATCP RFP, with a focused approach to increasing and improving outcomes for the adoption contracts, will provide for increased performance-based accountability and fees for services.