



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Margaret Ross Schultze
COMMISSIONER

July 24, 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

Mr. 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' fourth 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, 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 at (804) 726-7011.

MRS: kc

Report on Adoption of Children in Foster Care April-June 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 fourth report provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and details activities for the fourth quarter of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014. There were 665 finalized adoptions that resulted from adoption matches made in 2013. This included 448 adoptions finalized on or before December 31, 2013, and 208 adoptions finalized in 2014. Ninety-four local departments of social services (LDSS) reported having children in their care who were eligible for adoption in 2014. Between March 1, 2014 and June 30, 2014, 375 adoption matches were made, according to reports from 116 localities.

The bulk of the new adoption appropriation from the 2013 General Assembly was allocated to funding three new initiatives that meet the intent of the appropriation. Using the Request for Proposals (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 and coordinators² in the Eastern and Northern regions assisted LDSS 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 a 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 VDSS, including a brochure, radio and television commercials and website updates. Bethany Christian Services, VDSS regional staff and other community stakeholders attended a presentation on recruitment and market segmentation. Market segmentation is used to identify target groups of current foster and adoptive families and develop recruitment efforts geared

toward similar populations of families in an effort to increase capacity of foster, resource and adoptive families. Bethany Christian Services assigned staff to each region within the state and plans to collaborate with VDSS regional staff to strategize recruitment efforts based on specific target groups.

Post Adoption Services

Post adoption services are being delivered by Frontier Health to the Southwest Virginia counties of Lee, Scott, and Wise and the City of Norton, providing beneficial services and training to professionals and adoptive families. Adoption competency training was delivered in April 2014 to community professionals and interested families by Maureen Heffernan from the Spaulding Institute for Children in corroboration with the National Resource Center for Adoption. Frontier Health provided monthly post adoption forums in the community to interested adoptive families to increase awareness of the needs of their children during the adoption process and adolescence. Frontier Health Post Adoption Services Coordinators attended the Circle of Security (CoS) training and returned with the ability to train adoptive parents in successful attachment techniques with CoS training materials provided to the attending parents. Scheduled at the end of July 2014, Frontier Health will promote adoption through a community viewing of relevant adoption films followed by a Q&A session on the benefits of adoption.

Change Who Waits

Change Who Waits, a separate contractor, is currently working with 36 youth featured in the Heart Gallery. The organization had one display, at Cherrydale Baptist Church in Arlington, from May 18-June 1, 2014. During that time, 77 families indicated interest in 35 of the 36 profiles on display. The families were referred to either the contractual recruitment agency for the specific child or Bethany Christian Services for assistance with completing the requirements for adoptive home approval. Change Who Waits proposes to update the photographs and the bios on each child currently being featured. These plans include securing a list of photographers that will be available to assist with the above.

Program Updates

The "Adoption through Collaborative Efforts" RFP was released in May 2014. This grant will allow for LDSS and private providers to work collaboratively to achieve permanency through adoption for youth who have special needs. The new RFP includes improvements in performance-based accountability as a measure to improve outcomes. The current contract ended in June.

The VDSS incorporated use of Concurrent Planning as a best practice for timeliness to permanency, for the July 2014 release of the Permanency (Foster care/Adoption) guidance. Standardization of Concurrent Planning will assist in increasing and achieving adoptions and timeliness to permanency. Training will be developed and offered for LDSS in the third quarter of this year. Subsequent trainings will be offered to Court Services and external community stakeholders.