



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Margaret Ross Schultze
COMMISSIONER

November 1, 2014

MEMORANDUM

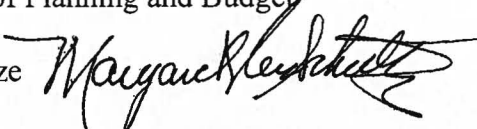
TO: The Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Charles J. Colgan
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance

The Honorable Walter A. Stosch
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance

The Honorable S. Chris Jones
Chairman, House Appropriations

Mr. Daniel Timberlake
Director Department of Planning and Budget

FROM: Margaret Ross Schultze 

SUBJECT: Report on Item 339 of the 2014 Appropriation Act – Adoption of Children in Foster Care

I am pleased to submit the Department of Social Services' quarterly report pursuant to Item 339 F (1) and (2) of the 2014 Appropriation Act. Item 339 F (1) provides \$1,500,000 the first year and \$1,500,000 the second year to implement pilot programs that increase the number of foster care children adopted. Item 339 F (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 July-September 2014

Report Mandate and Background

Item 339 F (1) and (2) of the 2014 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 initial report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2015 provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and details activities for the first quarter of SFY 2015. There were 747 finalized adoptions that resulted from adoption matches made in Calendar Year (CY) 2013. This included 448 adoptions finalized on or before December 31, 2013, and 299 adoptions finalized in CY 2014 (77 occurred in July and August). At the start of 2014, 85 local departments of social services (LDSS) reported having children in their care who were eligible for adoption in 2014. A total of 511 adoption matches were made in 2014, including 179 in July and August. Of the matches made in 2014, 139 resulted in finalized adoptions.

The bulk of the new adoption appropriation from the 2013 General Assembly was allocated to funding three new initiatives that met the intent of the appropriation. Using the Request for Proposals 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 these separate initiatives are below.

Extreme Recruitment

To date, extreme recruitment contractors have provided services to 14 youth. A total of 1,008 relatives were identified as potential resources for these youth. Of these 14 youth, nine have reconnected with family members. The contractors are currently working with seven youth who are available for adoption. Of these seven youth, four (who are among Virginia's *Longest Waiting Youth*) have been matched. One family signed an adoptive placement agreement on August 26, 2014. Of the three remaining, one youth's identified family resides in North Carolina and began adoptive parent training in September 2014. Another youth's family resides in Texas and they have started the home study process. An Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children packet, which is required to send children to placements in other states, has been completed for both youth. The last youth was matched with an older sister. Four additional youth have potential matches and case managers are moving forward with the extreme recruitment process to support these potential placements.

Recruitment & Market Segmentation

During the past quarter, Virginia utilized Esri's Geographical Information Systems database to unveil market segmentation. Market segmentation is a marketing approach that involves dividing a broad target market into subsets of consumers and then implementing marketing strategies. Bethany Christian Services was trained to use the marketing segment data to increase recruitment strategies. Bethany is currently working in collaboration with VDSS on target-specific ad campaigns for the upcoming year. These campaigns will include PSAs on radio and television, community-based information meetings, participation in local events and participation in larger events that will target the specific successful families indexes within each region. During this time of marketing revision, regional outreach specialists continue to hold information meetings in churches and other community organizations, and participate in local events to help recruit for the state. This quarter has also been a time to develop and improve follow-up processes for recruited families. Currently, Bethany Christian Services is following up and collecting information to help inform the state about from where the foster care adoptive inquiries are coming, the services in which they are interested, how they were recruited, and whether they have started the adoption process.

Post Adoption Services

Post adoption services are being delivered by Frontier Health to the southwestern Virginia counties of Lee, Scott, and Wise and the city of Norton. Frontier Health is providing supportive services and training to professionals and adoptive families. 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. In July 2014, Frontier Health promoted adoption through a community viewing of relevant adoption films followed by a Q&A session on the benefits of adoption.

The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) is working in the Piedmont region of the state. C.A.S.E. partnered with Radford University and other organizations to offer the Training for Adoption Competency course for professionals in the community. The agency partnered with several multimedia forms to solicit their counseling services in Danville, Salem, Fincastle, and Vinton. Educational programs were provided in collaboration with Franklin County Schools in September and October, 2014.

Change Who Waits

Change Who Waits is in the process of coordinating three additional Virginia Heart Gallery exhibits scheduled for the fall of 2014, with adoption information sessions planned for interested families at each venue. The venues are located at the Mechanicsville Christian Center, Colonial Heights Baptist Church and West End Assembly of God. In addition, they are working on a collaborative partnership with Norfolk Department of Human Services to schedule a photo and video shoot for Norfolk-area children to be highlighted in the Virginia Heart Gallery. The Change Who Waits website will be going live to further expand the reach of Change Who Waits and introduce more families to waiting children.

Adoption Program Updates

The Adoption through Collaborative Partnerships grant began August 1, 2014. Twelve private providers representing all parts of the state were awarded a grant. The twelve contractors are working in partnership with over 60 LDSS to achieve permanency through adoption for youth who have special needs.

In recognition of the continued importance to focus on adoption, Governor McAuliffe appointed Debbie Johnston to serve as the “Adoption Champion” for the Commonwealth. In this role, Ms. Johnston will promote awareness of foster care and adoption and encourage recruitment of foster and adoptive families. Ms. Johnston will work closely with VDSS in their efforts to find families for youth awaiting adoption.