



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Margaret Ross Schultze
COMMISSIONER

June 30, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia

Honorable Walter A. Stosch
Chairman, Senate Finance

Honorable S. Chris Jones
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 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.

MRS: kc

Attachment

Report on Adoption of Children in Foster Care January – March 2015

Report Mandate and Background

Item 339 (F) (1) and (2) of the 2014 Appropriation Act provides:

(1) "Out of this appropriation, \$1,500,000 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 FY2015 third quarter report provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). There were 667 finalized adoptions in Calendar Year (CY) 2013 and 645 finalized adoptions in CY 2014. In CY 2014, 38.9% of adopted children exited care within 24 months of their most recent removal from home – higher than the year before (34.3%). The national standard is 36.6%. The report appendix includes details on achievement of adoption for two cohorts (groups) of foster youth.

The bulk of the adoption appropriation was allocated to funding three initiatives that met the intent of the General Assembly to recruit and support adoptive families. 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. A fourth initiative, Change Who Waits (CWW), is also included in this report. CWW is a no-cost contract and the funding source is the contractor and a network of community faith-based contributors. Updates on these separate initiatives are below.

Adoption Initiatives

Extreme Recruitment®

VDSS has contracts with two non-profit child placing agencies to do Extreme Recruitment®: United Methodist Family Services and Coordinators/2, Inc. Coordinators/2 serves the VDSS Central Region; and both contractors serve the VDSS Eastern Region. The objective of Extreme Recruitment® is to reconnect 90% of youth served with a safe and appropriate adult from their past. Often this reconnection is with a relative. It may also be with a neighbor, baby sitter, step-parent, god parent, foster parent, etc. A "reconnection" is defined as any form of contact (i.e., letter, phone call, visit, etc.) after there has been no contact for a minimum of six months. The goal is to achieve a minimum of 40 reconnections during a 12–20 week period.

To date, these two agencies have provided Extreme Recruitment® services for 38 children. (Previously reported was 43 children, but the number has been revised since all referrals did not actually result in work on the case by the contractor). Of the 38 cases, the outcomes to date are as follows:

- Reconnection 89% (34)
- Matched 21% (8)
- No longer interested 11% (4)
- Final adoption pending and projected within next six months 8% (3) [The 'Matched' number is not a subset of 'Pending adoptions']
- Final adoption 3% (1)

Of the 38 cases, 58% (22) of the youth were in group homes or residential treatment facilities when services began. Seven of the twelve youth for whom Extreme Recruitment® began while they were in a residential placement have been matched with a family who wants to adopt the youth and the youth wants to be adopted by the family.

Two of the reported reconnections involved two sibling groups, one of which involved twins who did not live together and had no contact for over a year. Under Extreme Recruitment®, a home was found for both and adoption is their goal. The scenario for the second sibling group is similar; they are now both in the same foster home and services are in place to stabilize the placement. In another case, the youth turned 18 in March 2015. In his current foster home, matched by the contractor, the family and youth will do an adult adoption.

During the eighteen months of the contract services, one contractor had three match disruptions of youth in prospective placements and, at the same time, their Extreme Recruitment® services (12-20 weeks) expired. The contractor continued services for the youth and all youth have been re-matched. The contractor continues to follow these cases with the goal of a finalized adoption for each.

Recruitment & Market Segmentation

Bethany Christian Services received the contract award for Family Resource Recruitment. The purpose of the contract is to develop and implement innovative approaches for foster and adoptive recruitment. One of the strategies for innovative recruitment is Market Segmentation to identify types of families that are most likely to be interested in and follow through in becoming foster or adoptive parents. Through Market Segmentation, recruitment activities and messages can be focused on venues and resources that are used by these family types. At the request of VDSS, the National Resource Center (NRC) for Diligent Recruitment provided technical assistance on Market Segmentation. The NRC, in partnership with VDSS, used the ESRI Business Analyst software to identify segments of the population that are likely to be prospective foster and adoptive parents and the marketing characteristics associated with these groups. This profile helps to determine where to recruit and how to develop marketing materials. Bethany Christian Services, along with other recruitment contractors and state staff, were trained to use this data and training continues.

The Bethany contract began October 1, 2013 and was renewed in SFY 2014; it ends June 30, 2015. Through January 30, 2015 (16 months), a total of 1,160 foster care adoption inquiries were tracked by the contractor. The contractor reports are based on the State Fiscal Year and the next quarter ends March 30, 2015. The January monthly report provides the following details: The majority of the inquiries come from the Eastern region (35%) and the least number from Northern region (8%) and Western region (5%). Of the inquiries, 81% requested basic information about adoption and 4% requested information about foster care. The two primary resources of media inquiries were from radio, 49% and the Internet, 35%. For follow-up by the contract agency, there was a 64% "no response" from the inquirer; and 4% signed up for an information meeting with an agency or started training with an agency.

Post-Adoption Services

The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) is working in the Piedmont region of the state to develop additional post-adoption services for the region. The C.A.S.E. contract outcomes that involve training clinicians and professionals to be adoption-competent have met or exceeded goals. The goal was to train 16 mental health clinicians and 24 were trained. The curriculum used was Training for Adoption Competency. After analyzing utilization of this contract, VDSS approved a modification to the contract that will allow C.A.S.E. to provide pre-adoption services, with continued priority given to post-adoption cases.

For the third quarter C.A.S.E. report, 22 families received post-adoption services. Twelve of the cases were foster care adoptions, eight international adoptions, one private domestic adoption and one pre-adoption case. What follows is a case highlight of the impact of post adoption services.

DP, a 12 year old boy referred by DSS

According to his mother's report, DP has had increased episodes of angry outbursts including physical aggression to other children at school and home. This type of activity was novel for him although he has engaged in physically aggressive behaviors in the past. His adoptive mother and father have been so distraught about the growing non-compliance and deviancy of his actions, that in anger, his father threatened him that they would give him back to DSS if he continues with oppositional behaviors.

DP is one of 5 siblings. His birth mother is originally from Central America. She was unable to care for DP or his siblings resulting in foster care placements for all. DP was placed with his current adoptive parents for foster care and has been in the home for six years. DP's adoptive mother has had a reoccurrence of uterine cancer and is dying. Her family believes that if DP cannot behave well, then she should place him in foster care as her health is more time consuming and challenging. She cannot agree to this plan and sought some intervention to assist her and her family.

Through play therapy and discussion DP admitted great fear and sadness about knowing of his mother's possible death. He worried that his family would give him up and place him in foster care. The adoptive mother was unaware of his fears. Two of his siblings are adopted by another family. After a therapeutic meeting with the mother to discuss options, she called the other family and they were willing to care for DP should his father not be able to do so. When she was certain that the family had a care plan they could agree upon in the event of her death, the family and the therapist met with DP to explain the plan and that both families would begin more frequent visits to strengthen their bonds with each other,

DP's challenging behaviors at home and school have decreased and he is continuing counseling as a place to share his feeling about his family as they undergo issues related to bereavement and loss of a parent and family member.

Frontier Health is working in southwestern Virginia (Lee, Scott, Wise counties and the City of Norton) to increase the number of adoption-competent professional and mental health providers and to provide services to families who may not know about post adoption services.

Frontier Health held a Post Adoption Forum where 17 families and children were in attendance. The topic of the Forum was transitioning from foster care to adoption. Post Adoption Services staff is in the infancy stages of developing one day training on post adoption needs. Staff has been trained in adoption competency and in Circle of Security. Active supervision and follow up training in Circle of Security is ongoing. Staff met with published author and local business owner Wendy Welch to develop a blog to showcase adoption stories in their community. The blog was launched in February 2015. Mrs. Welch is currently working with 4 families to facilitate their personal "adoption story." These stories will be featured monthly on the blog along with community events and other pertinent information to adoptive and foster to adopt families.

The statistical picture of services provided by Frontier Health in January, 2015 follows: Number served, 111. Of the number served, the presenting problems were: Attachment Disorders (35); Behavioral Problems (24); Post-Traumatic Stress/Trauma (44); Depression (4); and Anxiety/Panic/Phobia (4). The sum of the services provided to these clients were; psychiatric, evaluation/medications, psychological evaluation, individual and family therapy, and targeted case management.

Change Who Waits

The CWW contract with VDSS is intended to increase the visibility of children waiting to be adopted. CWW created three additional Heart Gallery exhibits that are scheduled at various venues (primarily churches).

The CWW website can be found at <http://changewhowaits.org>. The website has video clips for two sets of youth, Jade (12) and Hailey (8), who are sisters, and Meg, age 12. The website also features youth who appear in the Heart Gallery. The report shows the Gallery in two venues during the reporting period. Unity Baptist Church (zip code 23875) with an estimated 500 visitors and Antioch Baptist church (zip code 22039) with 1200 visitors to the gallery.

CWW volunteer staff continues to attend meetings with local adoption and foster care staff in the Eastern and Central regions to support creation of new photos, narratives and videos that can become a part of the Heart Gallery. CWW's presence has been requested in the Piedmont Region, but CWW does not have a full complement of volunteers to support expansion at this time.

Adoption Program Update

Adoption Contracts Survey

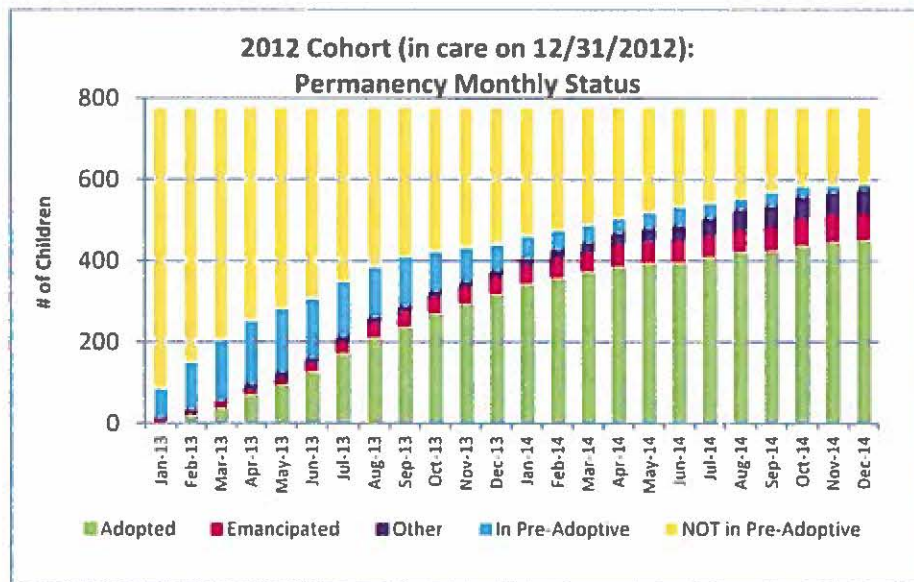
VDSS developed a survey to get feedback from local departments of social services who received adoption-related services delivered under any of the following contracts: Resource

Family Recruitment, Extreme Recruitment®, and Post-Adoption Services. All three contracts are undergoing a thorough evaluation pending new RFP in 2015.

The NRC extended its service agreement with Virginia to include assistance to improve the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia photo listing and workers' use of the AdoptUSKids tools for matching children and families and tracking family matches. A conference call with consultants from the AdoptUSKids National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment was held in February 2015 and an onsite meeting took place March 2015 to discuss next steps in regards to resource family recruitment and updating guidance on photo-listing requirements. Discussion items include issues with photo-listing youth in care, tracking outcomes of the media campaign, and additional market segmentation analyses.

Appendix Cohort Data on Finalized Adoptions

- Of the 774 children who were in foster care as of December 31, 2012 and had a goal of adoption (referred to as the “2012 Cohort”), 453 (59%) eventually exited to adoption 24 months later (by the end of December 2014). Sixty-seven children emancipated out of foster care and 52 left for other reasons (e.g., reunification with biological parents, juvenile detention). This leaves 202 children who were still in care by the close of 2014. However, among these children, 14 were in pre-adoptive homes, waiting on finalization of their adoptions.
- Of the children who were in foster care on December 31, 2013 and had a goal of adoption (“2013 Cohort”; N=466)¹, 236 (51%) exited to adoption 12 months later, by the end of 2014. Eighteen children emancipated out of care and two left for other reasons. This leaves 209 children who were still in care; however, 46 were in pre-adoptive homes, waiting for finalization of their adoptions.
- The charts below track the progress of these two cohorts through December 2014. For the 2012 cohort, 320 children, or 41% of the cohort, had exited to adoption 12 months later (by end of December 2013). In comparison, the 2013 cohort achieved adoption for 51% of their youth within the first 12 months. Based on current trends, it is likely that the 2013 cohort will achieve nearly 70% of their youth exiting to adoption within 24 months. We will continue to track both groups’ progress.



¹ These children came into foster care between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013 and are not included in the 2012 cohort.

