



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

Margaret Ross Schultze  
COMMISSIONER

July 31, 2015

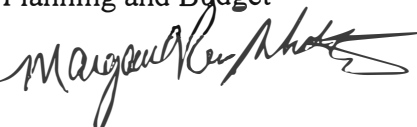
**MEMORANDUM**

**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 

**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

## Quarterly Report on Adoption of Children in Foster Care April – June 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 SFY 2015 fourth quarter report, provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). There were 727 finalized adoptions in SFY 2013 and 647 finalized adoptions in SFY 2014. For the nine-month period ending March 31, 2015, preliminary data reports indicate that 496 adoptions occurred in the first nine months of SFY 2015 (July 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015). In SFY 2014, 37.4% of adopted children exited within 24 months of their most recent removal from home – higher than the year before (31.5%). The national standard is 36.6%. The rate of timely adoptions is not yet available for the current state fiscal year; however, preliminary reports indicate that the rate will either match or exceed the previous year’s performance.<sup>1</sup> Refer to the appendix for statistical details.

The bulk of the new 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 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

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the previous quarterly report from OASIS, on the 12-month period of April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015, 39.8% of adoptions were finalized within 24 months of the last removal.

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 39 children. Of the 39 cases, the outcomes to date are the following:

- Reconnections, 85% (33);
- Final Adoption, 8% (3);
- Final Adoptions pending and projected within next six months, 0%;
- Matched, 51% (20);
- No longer interested, 31% (12).

Of the 39 cases, 56% (22) of the youth were in group homes or residential treatment facilities when services began.

#### **Extreme Recruitment Case Profile - The Story of F**

When F was referred for Extreme Recruitment she was about to turn 16 years old. She was neglected by her birth family, removed and then adopted by a family as a young girl. Sadly, her adoptive father was physically abusive and that adoption dissolved. In the seven years she was in care after that, F had 15 placements. As a result of the family finding efforts that are part of Extreme Recruitment, she was connected with a great aunt who wanted to adopt her. They visited weekly for a while – the aunt driving about 90 miles each way to visit F at the residential treatment center where she was living. Much to everyone’s disappointment, the great-aunt decided she was moving out of the area to get married and would not adopt F as planned. Fortunately, a single parent family who was recently approved by the contractor was told about F and was interested in adopting. After initial visits, they were matched and eventually, F was placed in her home earlier this year. Although there are challenges for F and her new mom, they are making it work. F will always have a family to call her own and a mom she can count on as she becomes a young adult herself.

#### **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 was to use Market Segmentation to identify types of families that are most likely to be interested in and to 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 ended June 30, 2015. Through April 30, 2015, a total of 1,303 foster care adoption inquiries had been tracked by the contractor. The contractor reports are based on the State Fiscal Year. The April monthly report provides the following details: The majority of the inquiries came from the Northern region, 32%. The least number continues to be the Western region, 9%. Of the number of inquiries, 61% requested basic information about adoption and 3% requested information about foster care. The primary resources of media inquiries were from were radio, 55%, the internet, 19% and churches, 17%. For follow-up by the contract agency, there was a 60% 'no response' from the clients. The combined numbers of those clients who made contact with a child placing agency and started training with an agency was 19%.

### Post-Adoption Services

VDSS awarded two contracts to develop or provide training in the area of post adoption services. These contracts began September 1, 2014 and ended June 30, 2015.

The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) is working in the Piedmont region of the state to develop more 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 (TAC). 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.

C.A.S.E. partnered with a consortium including Commonwealth Catholic Charities and Lutheran Family Services. For the fourth quarter report, the consortium therapists provided adoption competent services to 25 families with another 180 adoptive families receiving adoption competent clinical services from the students/clinicians who successfully completed the TAC course. The Consortium partners facilitated four W.I.S.E. UP! <sup>SM</sup> education workshops with families, five S.A.F.E. <sup>SM</sup> (Support for Adoptive Families by Educators) at school trainings with school personnel and a webinar series. W.I.S.E. UP! <sup>SM</sup> was developed by C.A.S.E. to empower children and their parents to respond to questions and comments made about adoption.

The C.A.S.E. services under this contract are evaluated by PolicyWorks, Ltd, a program evaluation and policy research firm based in the Richmond area. They have extensive experience in external evaluation of a wide range of child welfare-related programs and services. Following are the initial results from the client satisfaction surveys that were administered by PolicyWorks:

- 83% of families that responded reported that they were very satisfied with their treatment.
- 100% of the families that responded agreed that their therapist had an in-depth understanding of the many issues associated with being an adoptive family.
- 100% strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of how early trauma can affect behavior and relationships years later in life.
- "Our experience has been wonderful. The therapist is very easy to talk to and understands the numerous issues of adoption."

- “Since beginning therapy, my child has been able to ask us questions about his birth family for the first time, and has been working through the grief of loss.”
- “We are very happy with our therapist. She has really helped us to start our family off on the right foot. She helps us to understand our daughter and why she acts and feels the way that she does.”

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. The Post Adoption Forum staff continued the Circle of Security Parenting curriculum training course throughout April, meeting every Thursday. Six families continued to remain in attendance along with fifteen children. The group will continue to meet through the duration of the eight week requirement. Childcare is provided with an adoption themed craft or conversation activity in place for the children to fellowship with each other. An example of the work by the post adoption staff follows: They received a referral from an adoptive family and conducted several home visits. They provided the family with a referral and linked them with community professionals. Additionally, they developed an action plan to help alleviate stress and increase communication, trust, and attachment with their adoptive children.

The statistical picture of services provided by Frontier Health in April 2015 follows: Number served, 92. Of the number served, the presenting problems were: attachment disorders (22); behavioral problems (30); and post-Traumatic stress/trauma (40). The types of 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 nine (9) children. Of the nine, there are three sibling sets. The youth are these sibling sets: Jade (12) and Hailey (8); Brandon (15) and Bradley (15); Lacy (10) and Tyler (7). The other single youth are Meg (13) and Eric (13). The design of the website is engaging since it has a constant movement that gives the pictures energy.

### **Adoption Program Update**

Debbie Johnson, CEO of Care Advantage, Inc. and appointed by Governor McAuliffe in 2014 as Virginia’s adoption champion, has created the Connecting Hearts Foundation. The purpose of the foundation is to ensure every child has the opportunity for a loving home. Connecting Hearts Foundation enhances public understanding and creates positive attitudes about adoption and foster care. Goals of Connecting Hearts Foundation include:

- To increase education, awareness and advocacy for adoption and foster care.
- To educate the public as to the positive values of adoption and foster care.
- To provide educational programs that will strengthen area adoption and foster care nonprofits.

- To find affordable ways for adoptions to happen and lessen the financial burden to families.
- To facilitate connections between organizations and VDSS by lobbying General Assembly.
- To execute an annual conference to include all related agencies and Virginia's Adoption Champion.
- To offer continuous communication; including e-mails, monthly newsletter etc.
- To create community events with awareness and fundraising components.

Ms. Johnson made several public appearances to draw awareness to May as Foster Care Month. One activity sponsored by the Connecting Hearts Foundation was a toiletry drive for foster youth. VDSS meets quarterly with the foundation's executive director in an effort to work on similar objectives towards achieving permanency for foster youth through recruitment initiatives and post adoption support.

#### Adoption Contracts

Request for Proposals (RFP) have been issued for two of the three funded contracts presented in this update. The Post Adoption Services RFP #FAM-15-083 was issued on April 6, 2015. Seven proposals were received and new contracts were expected to begin July 1, 2015. The RFP underscored a preference for proposals to cover underserved areas in far southwest Virginia, gaps in Piedmont and the Eastern Regions. The funding available is \$500,000. The second RFP #FAM-15-093 is for Child Specific Recruitment using the Extreme Recruitment® model was issued May 21, 2015. Proposals were due July 8<sup>th</sup> and contracts are expected to begin September 1, 2015. The Resource Family Recruitment RFP is being re-written to utilize a marketing firm in assisting LDSS, developing marketing tools and providing training to increase and streamline recruitment efforts using market segmentation data.

**Appendix**  
**Cohort Data on Finalized Adoptions (as of March 31, 2015)**

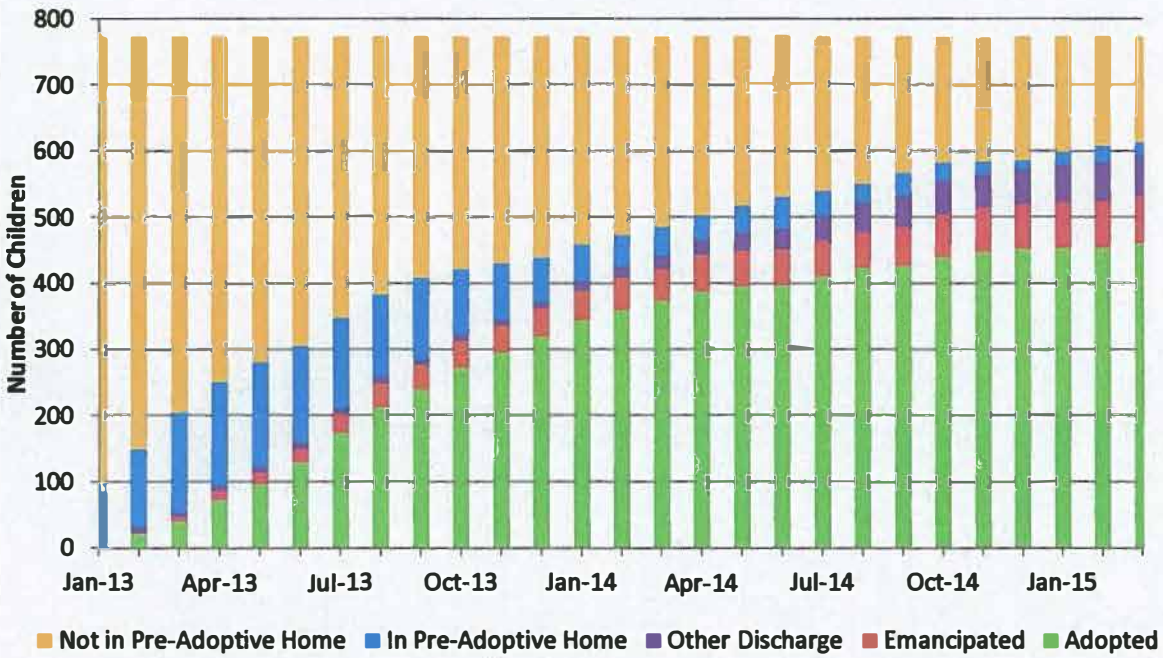
- Of the 774 children who were in foster care as of December 31, 2012 and had a goal of adoption (referred to as the “2012 Cohort”), 462 (62%) children and youth discharged to adoption, 71 (10%) emancipated out of foster care, and 59 (8%) left foster care for other reasons (e.g., reunification with biological parents, entry into juvenile detention). This leaves 182 (25%) children waiting for adoption, including 21 who are in pre-adoptive homes, waiting for 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)<sup>1</sup>, 232 (50%) children and youth exited to adoption, 19 (4%) emancipated out of foster care, and two (< 0.5%) left foster care for other reasons. This leaves 179 (38%) children waiting for adoption, including 43 who are in pre-adoptive homes, waiting for finalization of their adoptions.
- The newest cohort to be tracked is comprised of children who were in care on December 31, 2014 (“2014 Cohort”).<sup>2</sup> As of end of March 2015, of the 534 children in care, 13 have been adopted, four emancipated out of the care, and one discharged for other reasons.
- The charts below track the progress of these three cohorts through March 31, 2015. Comparing the status of the 2012 and 2013 Cohorts 15 months later, the 2013 Cohort had a slightly higher percentage of children who discharged to adoption than the 2012 Cohort (50% vs. 48%). The 2013 Cohort also had a higher percentage of children in pre-adoptive homes than the 2012 Cohort (9% vs. 6%).

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

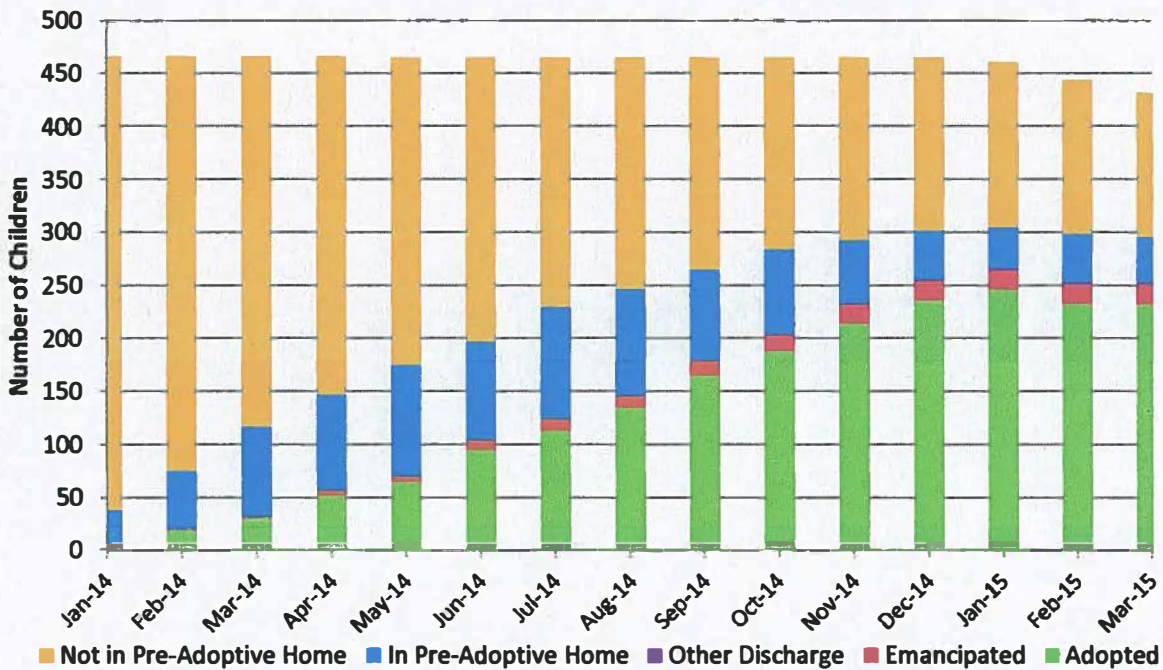
<sup>2</sup> These children came into foster care between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014 and are not included in the 2013 cohort.

**2012 Cohort (N=744):\* Permanency Monthly Status**



\* In care on 12/31/2012.

**2013 Cohort (N=466):\* Permanency Monthly Status**



\* In care on 12/31/2013.



### Percentage of Children and Youth Who Exited to Adoption

