



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

Margaret Ross Schultze  
COMMISSIONER

July 30, 2016

**MEMORANDUM**

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

Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.  
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance

Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.  
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 blue ink, appearing to read "Margaret Ross Schultze", written over the printed name.

**SUBJECT:** Report on Item 339 of the 2015 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 2015 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 2016

### Report Mandate and Background

Items 339 (F1) and (F2) of the 2015 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 fund 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 State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016 fourth quarter report, provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). The adoption contracts to be reported on are Post Adoption Services, Child Specific Recruitment using the Extreme Recruitment® model, and Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruitment using Market Segmentation.

There were 727 finalized adoptions in SFY 2013 (ending June 30, 2013) and 647 finalized adoptions in SFY 2014 (ending June 30, 2014). In SFY 2015 (ending June 30, 2015), there were 620 finalized adoptions. In SFY 2015, 38.6% of adopted children exited from foster care within 24 months of their most recent removal from home – higher than the percentage in 2014 (37.4%) and in 2013 (31.5%). The national standard is 36.6%.

Through March 31, 2016, there were 386 finalized adoptions. One-third (35%, n=135) of these adoptions occurred within 24 months after the most recent removal from the home.

According to the March 2016 Foster Care and Adoption Report to the Secretary’s Office, 4,924 children were in foster care. This count includes 927 children and youth who are waiting for adoption.

### Adoption Contracts

#### Post Adoption Services – FAM-15-083

There are three contractors providing post adoption services under this funding stream. The contractors are the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E), DePaul Community Resources and Frontier Health. Collectively, the contractors have served 128 families and 163 children. Thirty-one cases have been closed and only one of the 31 closed due to an adoption disruption. The majority of the families served were from Wise, Lee and Scott counties. Eighty-

two percent were classified as agency adoptions and eighty-two percent were post-finalized adoptions compared to pre-finalized adoptions. Individual counseling was the most frequently provided service (37%) followed by family counseling (33%).

#### Extreme Recruitment® - FAM-15-0093

Extreme Recruitment now has four contractors covering Eastern, Central, Northern and Western Regions. The contractors, C2Adopts, United Methodist Family Services (UMFS) Tidewater, UMFS Northern Virginia and Radford Department of Social Services, are currently serving 31 youth. Of the thirty-one, 17 are in foster homes, five are in group homes, eight in residential facilities and one other. The four contractors are working with youth from 23 local departments of social services.

UMFS has several cases matched and are being monitored. Most of these matches are with relatives. Preparing these families has been a very long process. They also have a lot of matches which are located out of state which complicates the ongoing assistance process. This is the primary reason for fewer finalizations.

Factoring in the previous Extreme Recruitment contract, C2Adopt finalized five adoptions since starting Extreme Recruitment and expect another three in the coming weeks of the current contract. All of these finalizations have been with non-family members. These youth were also reconnected with relatives.

#### Foster Care/Adoption Recruitment using Market Segmentation

In March 2016, DFS cancelled its contract with M Network (FAM-16-003), the Miami-based marketing firm that has been working on the development of a campaign since October 1, 2015. Rather than work through a contractor, DFS is working collaboratively with the Division of Public Affairs to develop and execute the campaign. The campaign still includes innovative, regional marketing strategies and implementation tools based on findings from the market segmentation data, but the work has been re-conceptualized based on resources available within VDSS.

In recognition of Foster Care Awareness month, Public Affairs launched a “Foster the Odds” campaign, which included several posters, fliers, and social media examples for LDSS to use. The campaign also included a radio PSA, billboards, and a campaign work plan, which serves as a communications tool for LDSS. All campaign materials were posted to a Digital Campaign Library through VDSS’ intranet site. DFS and Public Affairs are now focusing efforts on Reunification Month in June, which features different campaign concepts and tools for LDSS to use, including billboards, regular social media posts, and testimonial videos and written stories.

Also, DFS has been working with Public Affairs on the release of new web information regarding foster care and adoptive on the VDSS public site. There has been a 62% increase in traffic (unique page views) to the child welfare landing page between April and May and a 59% decrease in the percentage of single page visits (bounce rate) – meaning more users are conducting further exploration through other links provided on the site. Since the “Foster the Odds” campaign was launched on May 1, 2016, preliminary analysis shows that the public

awareness campaign is contributing to increased web traffic. More analysis using Google Analytics will be conducted in the coming months.

Additionally, as work with the LDSS pilot agencies continues, efforts have begun to explore the Family Intake Tracking Tool (FITT), which will be used to track inquiries and basic information from prospective parents. To date, all participating pilot agencies have been registered with FITT, and a webinar was conducted on May 3, 2016 by AdoptUSKids to highlight the tool's various features.