



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEV DUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

LISA TUCKER CAULEY • Division Director, Human Services

April 2, 2026

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,  
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

**SUBJECT: ADOPTION PROMOTION PROGRAM (APP) FUND**

**PURPOSE/BACKGROUND: UPDATED GUIDANCE REGARDING THE ADOPTION PROMOTION  
PROGRAM (APP) FUNDS**

**REQUIRED ACTION:**  Information Only  **Time Sensitive**  Immediate

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services (NCDHHS DSS) is issuing updated guidance regarding the Adoption Promotion Program (APP) funds to the county child welfare agencies.

During the current state fiscal year, 638 children have achieved permanency through adoption. This accomplishment reflects the continued commitment and dedication of county agencies to securing safe, permanent homes for children in foster care. North Carolina remains focused on safely reducing the number of children in foster care, and the strategic, compliant, and innovative use of APP funds is critical to achieving this goal-particularly for children who are legally free for adoption, currently placed in adoptive homes, or have a permanency goal of adoption.

The Adoption Promotion Program is supported by federal funds intended to increase the number of children in foster care who achieve permanency through adoption. As such, North Carolina must ensure that all expenditures comply with federal requirements and support adoption focused services, particularly for children with special or higher level of needs. Counties are encouraged to partner with private agencies to help expedite permanency outcomes and expand adoption resources.

This communication provides clarification on allowable and non-allowable uses of APP funds and a request for information on how counties are utilizing their annual APP awards.

Funds received from the APP must be used exclusively to enhance and/or expand adoption services. Focus must be on securing permanent homes for children who are harder to place and on promoting collaboration between public and private agencies to expedite permanency outcomes, particularly for children with special needs.

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

LOCATION: 1915 Health Services Way, Raleigh, NC 27607

MAILING ADDRESS: 2410 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2410

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6404 • FAX: 919-733-3052

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Allowable Expenses that may be used to enhance or expand:

- **Recruitment of Adoptive Families:** Related to general recruitment, assessment, and approval of prospective adoptive families.
- **Pre-Adoption Training:** Training designed to prepare prospective adoptive parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to care for children with special needs.
- **Post Placement Support:** Services provided from the time of placement through finalization, including supports and referrals that promote placement stability and successful adoption outcomes beyond required monthly visits.
- **Facilitation of Legal Procedures:** Activities associated with completing the legal requirements necessary to finalize adoptions.

APP funds are not recurring and should not be incorporated into operational budgets. They must be expended within 36 months of the award date. APP funds may be subject to recoupment and reallocation if not used timely or in accordance with federal and state guidelines.

Non-Allowable uses of APP funds include, but are not limited to:

- Purchase of vehicles;
- Salary supplementation for county staff;
- Building renovations or construction (including playgrounds);
- Any expenditure not directly supporting children exiting foster care through adoption.

Counties are expected to utilize alternative funding sources (e.g., Medicaid, Adoption Assistance Vendor Payments, Non-recurring Adoption Expenses) prior to using APP funds when applicable.

**Required Action:**

To ensure compliance with federal requirements, all counties that received APP funds for State Fiscal Year 2024-2025 are required to complete the APP utilization [survey](#) no later than April 17, 2026. Survey responses will be reviewed before the upcoming APP end of year distributions.

APP Funding Guidance Sheet is attached to provide examples of allowable expenditures. This document is not exhaustive and will be updated based on county-reported practices and identified needs.

The Adoption Promotion Program is designed to recognize and reward strong performance in achieving adoption outcomes. NCDHHS DSS is committed to supporting counties in this work and appreciates your continued efforts to ensure safe, permanent homes for North Carolina's children.

If you have questions about the Adoption Promotion Program, please email [app.contracts@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:app.contracts@dhhs.nc.gov).

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

LOCATION: 1915 Health Services Way, Raleigh, NC 27607  
MAILING ADDRESS: 2410 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2410  
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6404 • FAX: 919-733-3052

Sincerely,



Adrian W. Daye, MSW  
Section Chief, Permanency  
Division of Social Services, Child Welfare  
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Cc: Lisa Tucker Cauley, Division Director, Human Services, Child, Family, and Adult Regional Support  
Donna Fayko, Deputy Director, Child Welfare Services  
William "Ben" Rose, Lead Regional Director  
Kathy Stone, Section Chief, Safety  
Kimaree Sanders, Section Chief, Regulatory and Licensing  
Heather McAllister, Section Chief for Child and Family Services

Attachment: Adoption Promotion Program Use of Funds

CWS-26-2026

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

LOCATION: 1915 Health Services Way, Raleigh, NC 27607  
MAILING ADDRESS: 2410 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2410  
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6404 • FAX: 919-733-3052

## Adoption Promotion Program Use of Funds

Funds received from the Adoption Promotion Program are to be used to enhance and/or expand adoption programs. These funds should not be treated as recurring and must be spent within 36 months of the award. These funds may be reallocated by the state if they are not utilized in a timely manner. The state may recoup funds that are spent outside the guidelines.

Adoption Promotion Funds cannot be used to purchase automobiles for the county, supplant the salaries of county workers, to renovate buildings/ rooms, or for any purpose that does not aide children exiting foster care through adoption. If other funding sources are available to pay for an item or service, it should be utilized prior to using Adoption Promotion Funds. (Ex: Medicaid, Adoption Assistance Vendor Payments, Non- Recurring Expenses, etc.)

Allowable expenditures include direct provision or purchase by contract of services provided under the Adoption Promotion Program Fund: Recruitment, Training, Placement Support & Supervision and Legal Services. Below you will find some examples of allowable services that counties and private agencies have reported:

- Contracting with out-of-state agencies that are providing services to an adoptive family for a child.
- Facilitation of cross jurisdictional placements.
- Activities surrounding the recruitment, training, preparation, assessment and retention of adoptive parents.
- Targeted child specific recruitment activities. Some examples include: Having professional photos taken for NC Kids registration, creating a photo gallery of waiting children, coordinating matching events, purchasing child specific recruitment materials.
- General Recruitment activities: Purchase a professional recruitment video to use at events, a billboard or banners to display the need for adoptive families in your community.
- Completion of Pre-Placement Assessments.
- Contracting with a Foster/Adoptive Parent to co-facilitate your MAPP classes.
- Services provided to the child and family to sustain the adoptive placement prior to finalization.
- Adoption preparation/readiness activities for youth. Some examples include: Adoption workshops/conferences, Adoption preparation camps, identify and utilize resources to assist the child in understanding their biological and cultural heritage, Personalized Adoption books (using Shutterfly & letting the youth select their photos), etc.
- Create or update an adoption resource library.
- Contracted Legal services to expedite the adoption process.
- Specialized assessments and subsequent recommended services for a child that would assist in locating and/or sustaining an identified adoptive placement. These services must not be covered by any other funding source or medical insurance program such as Medicaid or private insurance.
- Social worker travel associated with the recruitment, assessment and training of adoptive parents, as well as post placement support.
- Local and national adoption conferences to enhance skills of adoption staff and adoptive families.
- Fees associated with the facilitation of an adult adoption for a young adult participating in the Foster Care 18-21 program.

This is not an exhaustive list of examples for use of these funds. We encourage agencies to network with other agencies to gather ideas or partner together for recruitment and retention events.