

North Carolina Division of Social Services Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

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# North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

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# **Introduction and Overview**

North Carolina is a state supervised, county administered child welfare system with partially privatized foster home licensing and adoption services. Prospective foster and adoptive families can be licensed as foster families and/or approved as adoptive families by either a County Department of Social Services, a licensed child placing agency, or licensed adoption agency. North Carolina does not have a dual foster care/adoption licensure process. For the purposes of this Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, the term "County Department of Social Services" includes consolidated human services agencies.

Each county in North Carolina has a different need around Diligent Recruitment and Retention. For example, some counties have very few children in foster care and even fewer who become available for adoption. They may opt to place all their children in privately licensed foster and adoptive homes and meet their diligent recruitment and retention needs through their partnership with the private agencies that serve their area. Some counties have robust diligent recruitment and retention programs for foster care, but may rely on private agency resources to meet their needs for adoptive homes. Finally, some counties have robust diligent recruitment and retention programs for foster and adoptive families. This variation in service provision across the state provides a wide variety of localized licensure and approval options for families but also creates a complex system that can be confusing and frustrating to prospective families and stakeholders.

Through this updated Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, NC intends to provide increased consistency in both messaging and service provision to prospective and current foster and adoptive families, as well as developing increased capacity to meet the needs of children and youth in care.

## Values and Vision for Diligent Recruitment and Retention in North Carolina

The North Carolina child welfare system has the following core values regarding diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families:

- We value all prospective, current, and former foster and adoptive families.
- We value the belief that retention of foster and adoptive families is a customer service based activity that begins at the first contact with a prospective family and continues through post permanence support.
- We value all caregivers, including kinship caregivers, and encourage the licensure of kinship homes whenever possible, including the use of licensure waivers when appropriate.
- We value opportunities for support, engagement, and training of foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

- We value opportunities to increase North Carolina's capacity to track and interpret data.
- We value the use of data to inform diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.

The North Carolina child welfare system has the following long term vision regarding diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families:

- Structured statewide approach to the diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.
- Efficient and easily understood process for prospective families when navigating their initial interest in being foster/adoptive families.
- Placement stability for children served by the foster care system.
- Placement of children in their home communities and school districts.
- Placement of sibling groups together.
- Diverse population of foster and adoptive families, including but not limited to ethnicity, race, language and geographic location.
- Familiarity with the North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan among public and private child welfare staff.
- Consistent engagement in technical assistance, information sharing, and collaboration around Diligent Recruitment and Retention by the NC Division of Social Services, County Departments of Social Services, and private child placing agencies.
- Statewide use of a customer service approach to diligent recruitment and retention with positive feedback from foster and adoptive families.
- Representation of foster and adoptive families and youth served by the foster care program in the recruitment and retention process.
- Statewide capacity to collect, assess, and interpret data to inform diligent recruitment and retention activities.

# **Roles and Responsibilities of State Division of Social Services**

Three statewide, all day, stakeholder meetings were held in October 2016 and January 2017 with over 200 participants, to seek input for NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. These stakeholders included County DSS's, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, youth, Guardian Ad Litem staff, and other key stakeholders. Each attendee provided input into the development of the North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. The approach was collaborative and structured, and was facilitated by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at Adopt US Kids.

Information gained through the stakeholder meetings was used by a work group made up of the Division of Social Services, local County Departments of Social Services, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, and youth both currently and formerly in foster care to write NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.

Through this work, it was ultimately determined that the most appropriate plan for diligent recruitment and retention in NC was to have a statewide plan that provided concrete goals for

statewide achievement, consistency, and structure, while also allowing for localized planning for diligent recruitment and retention efforts within each individual County Department of Social Services, in partnership with their private child placing agency partners.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of County Departments of Social Services**

To best meet the needs of children in the custody of each county Department of Social Services and NC's foster and adoptive families, North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan must consider the needs, resources, and structure of each individual county. For that reason, each county is tasked with writing an annual localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan with the technical assistance and resources provided by the North Carolina Division of Social Services. The first county-specific Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will be written during state fiscal year 2017/2018 and then implemented in state fiscal year 2018/2019. Following the first year of implementation, an updated plan will be submitted by the county on an annual basis, due on September 1 each year. The county-specific plan will be comprehensive and include the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) requirements.

The Division of Social Services will continue to provide state level diligent recruitment and retention activities while also providing technical assistance, resources, and support to the County DSS's and private agencies in their specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts.

A template for a county-level Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan is provided, as well as supplemental guides and attachments that will be used to track data, provide best practice outcomes, and provide ongoing support to localized efforts. Counties will then submit their annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan to the state for review, feedback, and technical assistance as needed. Each County's Plan will be reviewed by their assigned NC Kids Consultant; a plan for technical assistance created if needed, and then written correspondence that the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan has been received and reviewed.

Each County's annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will also serve as their annual MEPA Plan. Please reference the County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template and the attached resources for additional guidance and information regarding the overlap between diligent recruitment and retention and the requirements of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act.

The County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans will be initiated during two phases throughout fiscal year 2017/2018, for implementation during fiscal year 2018/2019 with the expectation that the County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will be updated and resubmitted to the Division of Social Services by September 1st of each year going forward.

While County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans are scheduled for formal implementation beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, counties are highly encouraged to use any time in fiscal year 2017/2018 to begin implementation activities and data tracking once their county specific plan is complete and approved.

#### **Phase 1 Counties:**

Alamance, Alexander, Alleghany, Avery, Bladen, Brunswick, Burke, Caldwell, Carteret, Catawba, Chowan, Cleveland, Columbus, Currituck, Davidson, Davie, Duplin, Edgecombe, Gaston, Gates, Granville, Halifax, Haywood, Hertford, Iredell, Johnston, Lee, Macon, Madison, Martin, McDowell, Mitchell, Montgomery, Moore, Nash, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Polk, Randolph, Robeson, Rutherford, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Warren, Wayne, Transylvania, Tyrell, Union, Vance, Yancey, and Yadkin

County DRR Plan due to NC Kids Consultant on February 1, 2018, effective July 1, 2018

#### **Phase 2 Counties:**

Anson, Ashe, Beaufort, Bertie, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Camden, Caswell, Chatham, Cherokee, Clay, Craven, Cumberland, Dare, Durham, Forsyth, Franklin, Graham, Greene, Guilford, Harnett, Henderson, Hoke, Hyde, Jackson, Jones, Lenoir, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, New Hanover, Onslow, Orange, Pamlico, Pender, Pitt, Richmond, Rockingham, Rowan, Sampson, Scotland, Wake, Washington, Watauga, Wilkes, and Wilson

County DRR Plan due to NC Kids Consultant on May 1, 2018, effective July 1, 2018

#### NC Kids Consultant and County Assignments

Alamance through Cumberland Counties Shirley Williams, Program Consultant Shirley.Williams@dhhs.nc.gov (919)527-6404

Johnston through Polk Counties Kerri Shiflett, Program Consultant Kerri.Shiflett@dhhs.nc.gov (919)527-6366 Currituck through Jackson Counties Britt Cloudsdale, Program Consultant Britt.Cloudsdale@dhhs.nc.gov (919)527-6358

Randolph through Yancey Counties Mary Mackins, Program Consultant Mary.Mackins@dhhs.nc.gov (919)527-6287

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of Private Agencies**

Private child placing agencies are a vital aspect of NC's child welfare system. Each Department of Social Services is highly encouraged to collaborate with the private child placing agencies that serve children and families in their counties in the writing of their Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. Many private child placing agencies engage in the development of their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan on a regular basis. Private child placing agencies are encouraged to share these detailed plans with the NC Division of Social Services and the counties they serve to promote collaboration and consistency in practice. Private child placing agencies may utilize the templates provided to inform their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. At a minimum, private child placing agencies who place children in the custody of a County Department of Social Services in their licensed foster homes are required to report

data to the NC Division of Social Services at the end of each fiscal year using the attached Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B).

## State Level Data Regarding North Carolina's Children in Foster Care and Foster and Adoptive Families

In addition to county Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies submitting a completed data profile (Appendix B) annually, the North Carolina Division of Social Services provides the following data summary of the statewide characteristics of children in foster care, children legally free for adoption, as well as comparable data regarding licensed foster homes. The table below provides that information in this initial report and will be updated annually at the time of submission of the statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan through the Annual Progress and Services Report.

For YTD SFY 2016-2017 CHILDREN			
CURRENTLY IN FOSTER CARE	N=10935	%	Data Source/As of
Female	5291	48.39	CSDW
Male	5644	51.61	April 2017 data
Caucasian	5556	50.81	month
African American	3370	30.82	Run 5/24/17
Hispanic	886	8.10	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	229	2.09	
Asian	22	0.20	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	19	0.17	
Bi-racial	660	6.04	
Other	74	0.68	
Unable to Determine	119	1.09	
Ages 0-5	4330	39.62	
Ages 6-10	2710	24.80	
Ages 11-14	1773	16.22	
Ages 15-17	1761	16.11	
Ages 18-21	355	3.25	
ICWA-Eligible	41	0.37	

For YTD FY 2016-2017 CHILDREN WHO EXITED FOSTER			
CARE	N= 4785	%	Data Source/As of
Female	2321	48.51	CSDW
Male	2464	51.49	April 2017 data
Caucasian	2404	50.24	month
African American	1415	29.57	Run 5/24/17
Hispanic	388	8.11	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	163	3.41	
Asian	21	0.44	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	10	0.21	
Bi-racial	287	6.00	
Other	51	1.07	
Unable to Determine	44	0.92	
Ages 0-5	1883	39.35	
Ages 6-10	1207	25.22	
Ages 11-14	636	13.29	
Ages 15-17	488	10.20	
Ages 18-21	571	11.93	
ICWA-Eligible	19	0.40	
Reasons for Exit	N=4785	%	
Reunification with Parents or Primary Caretakers	1405	29.36	
Guardianship with a Relative	708	14.80	
Adoption	1153	24.10	
Guardianship with Court- Approved Caretaker	153	3.20	
Custody with Non- Removal Parent or	540	11.47	
Relative Custody with Other Court- Approved Caretaker	549 123	2.57	-
Emancipation	461	9.63	
Transfer to Another Agency	69	1.44	
Runaway	7	0.15	-
Death of Child	7	0.15	
ICPC	4	0.08	-
Authority Revoked for Reasons Other than Above	108	2.26	
Missing Field (blank)	38	0.79	

	Ν	%	Data Source/As of
TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION	1227 (735 also coded as Free for Adoption as of 5/24/17)		CSDW April 2017 data month Run 5/24/17
CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION *AND IN NEED OF AN	N	<b>0</b> /	
ADOPTIVE HOME	N	<u>%</u> 43.06	_
Female	431	56.94	
Male	570		
Caucasian	521	52.05	_
African American	295	29.47 7.59	-
Hispanic	76	1.39	_
American Indian or Alaskan Native	20	2.00	
Asian	n/a	n/a	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.10	
Bi-racial	76	7.59	
Other	7	0.70	
Unable to Determine	5	0.50	_
Ages 0-5	285	28.47	
Ages 6-10	321	32.07	
Ages 11-14	235	23.48	
Ages 15-17	160	15.98	
ICWA Eligible	9	0.90	
Total	1001	100%	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING ACTIVELY	Legally Free: 237		AIMS 6/2/2017
RECRUITED FOR BY NC (NC's Adoption	Legal Risk: 53		
Exchange and Photolisting)	Hold: 101		

TOTAL NUMBER OF LICENSED BEDS	Ν	%	Data Source/As of
Foster Care (privately licensed)	1297	12.57	XPTR 2/28/17
Special Program (privately licensed)	142	1.38	
Therapeutic Homes (privately licensed)	2646	25.64	
Foster Care (county licensed)	6235	60.42	XPTR 5/17/17
Total	10320	100%	

RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FOSTER FAMILIES (Private Agency Supervised Households)	N	%	Exported from SESSIONS 5/30/17
Caucasian	1587	40.11	
African American	2295	58.00	
American Indian or	38	0.96	
Alaskan Native			
Asian	9	0.23	
Native Hawaiian or Other	2	0.05	
Pacific Islander			
Multi-racial	17	0.43	
Unable to Determine	9	0.23	
Total	3957	100%	
Hispanic or Latino	129	3.26	
Not Hispanic or Latino	3828	96.74	

RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FOSTER FAMILIES (DSS Supervised Households)	N	%	Exported from SESSIONS 6/1/2017
Caucasian	1921	72.71	
African American	668	25.28	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	27	1.02	
Asian	8	0.30	
Native Hawaiian or Other	3	0.11	
Pacific Islander			
Multi-racial	11	0.42	
Unable to Determine	4	0.15	
Total	2642	100%	
Hispanic or Latino	100	3.79	
Not Hispanic or Latino	2541	96.18	
Unknown	1	0.04	

# **Statewide Goals and Strategies for Diligent Recruitment and Retention**

All statewide and localized diligent recruitment and retention activities in NC should support the following goals and strategies. The primary owner of each strategy is listed in parentheses after each strategy.

# Goal 1: Recruit and maintain a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program.

- Strategy 1 Provide a template for each county to write their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 2 Development and implementation of localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (County Departments of Social Services and Private Agencies)
- Strategy 3 Review and approve each County's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 4 Provide technical assistance, education, and resources specific to diligent recruitment and retention and MEPA compliance to County and private agency partners on an individual, regional, and statewide basis as needed (NC Division of Social Services)
- Measures of success:
  - Each County Department of Social Services will write and implement an annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan
  - Data regarding race/ethnicity of children in foster care and the pool of licensed foster families are aligned
  - Increase in the number of new applications submitted to licensing authority who
    reflect the ethnicity and race of the children served by the foster care program

# Goal 2: State, counties, and private child placing agencies have the capacity and ability to use data to inform and monitor diligent recruitment and retention efforts throughout North Carolina

- Strategy 1 Provide a data profile (Appendix B) for quarterly and annual reporting of key state identified diligent recruitment and retention measures, with an option for additional county specific measures. to be reported based on individual county Diligent Recruitment and Retention plan (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 2 County Departments of Social Services and licensed private foster care agencies update data profile measures quarterly, and submit to NC Division of Social Services annually (County Departments of Social Services and private agencies)
- Strategy 3 Publish annual statewide cumulative data profile (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 4 Provide technical assistance to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies regarding access, tracking, and interpretation of data to inform their diligent recruitment and retention efforts (NC Division of Social Services)

- Strategy 5 Build capacity to track and report demographic characteristics of licensed foster homes at all levels of service provision (NC Division of Social Services, county Departments of Social Services, private agencies)
- Measures of success:
  - Annual publication of diligent recruitment and retention data
  - An increase in the capacity of County Departments of Social Services to determine realistic targets for diligent recruitment and retention based on data
  - Creation of state level reports regarding licensed foster families' race and ethnicity

# Goal 3: Excellent customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families

- Strategy 1 Update NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Website adoptnckids.org (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 2 Create a decision tree accessible on the adoptnckids.org website for prospective foster and adoptive families to use to navigate making an informed decision in selecting prospective child placing agencies that meet their needs (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 3 Develop and disseminate a communication plan to County Departments of Social Services and private agencies regarding the updated website and decision tree features with suggestions for increased collaboration among agencies (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 4 Assess each agency's customer service culture and identify any needed changes in the approach to customer service in each county's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans (County Departments of Social Services)
- Strategy 5 Provide resources, tools, and technical assistance to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies specific to evaluating and improving customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster and adoptive families (NC Division of Social Services)
- Measures of success:
  - The completed update of the adoptnckids.org website
  - The completed decision tree available on adoptnckids.org website
  - Decrease in calls to the NC Kids statewide hotline about problems with the inquiry, response, and licensing process. A baseline for comparison will be established beginning in June 2017
  - Develop the capacity to track the time from initial inquiry to licensure for foster families on a statewide level, and work to decrease the time from initial inquiry to licensure for foster families

# Goal 4: Excellent customer service provided to internal and external community partners/stakeholders

- Strategy 1 Provide diligent recruitment and retention resource list, sample documents, and appendices to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 2 Implement quarterly diligent recruitment and retention calls to increase communication, information sharing, and collaboration between the North Carolina Division of Social Services, local county Departments of Social Services, private child placing agencies, and community stakeholders (NC Division of Social Services)
- Strategy 3 Ongoing use of webinars and state publications to provide topic specific resources, training, and information sharing regarding diligent recruitment and retention (NC Division of Social Services)
- Measures of success:
  - The number of events, agencies, and individuals participating in quarterly diligent recruitment calls
  - The number of requests for and topics of technical assistance made to the Division of Social Services around Diligent Recruitment and Retention

# Use of Data and Data Systems to Build Statewide Capacity

Throughout the development process for this Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, it was recognized that County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies have a wide variation in capacity to track, maintain, and interpret diligent recruitment and retention data. Each agency is encouraged to begin building their data capacity through their first Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. Acknowledging a lack of use of data around recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families, and taking the first steps to begin to build that capacity is acceptable and encouraged. Technical assistance regarding the building of data capacity is available through the North Carolina Division of Social Services.

To make data driven decisions regarding diligent recruitment and retention, each County Department of Social Services and private child placing agency that licenses foster families will complete a quarterly update to the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B). The completed profile will be provided to the NC Division of Social Services by August 1<sup>st</sup> of the next fiscal year. Comprehensive statewide data will then be issued on an annual basis to assist in informing ongoing localized and statewide diligent recruitment and retention efforts.

Private Child Placing Agencies are required to complete the foster family specific section of the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B) on a quarterly basis and submit it to the Division of Social Services by August 1<sup>st</sup> for the previous fiscal year.

# **State Level Diligent Recruitment and Retention Activities**

#### NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network

The Division of Social Services' NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network is North Carolina's Statewide Diligent Recruitment Entity and Adoption Exchange Program. NC Kids manages the following elements of diligent recruitment and retention:

- State level first point of contact for individuals interested in becoming foster or adoptive families via a general email address and telephone hotline as direct points of intake, talking families through the general process of becoming a foster and/or adoptive family in North Carolina.
- Manage and facilitate North Carolina's adoption exchange program, providing targeted child specific recruitment of adoptive homes through online photo listing.
- Conduct preliminary review of approved adoptive family's Preplacement Assessment for initial matching before final matching determination is made by the County Department of Social Services.
- Manage and facilitate the North Carolina Heart Gallery, a traveling photography exhibit of children legally free for adoption and in need of adoptive families.
- Provide diligent recruitment tools for use at the state level or by County and private agencies such as the NC Kids website, general brochures, fliers, pens, key chains, magnets, and posters.
- Provide technical assistance and support to the County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies regarding general, targeted, and child specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts.
- Provide monitoring and technical assistance support for each county's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan on an annual basis.
- Publish North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan data on an annual basis.

#### Foster Home Licensing

The Division of Social Services serves as North Carolina's licensing authority for the licensure of all North Carolina's foster homes. Public and private child placing agencies recommend foster homes for licensure. All foster home license actions are put through a rigorous quality assurance review before being approved or denied by the Division of Social Services. The Regulatory and Licensing Team also provides technical assistance and training to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies regarding the training and licensure process for foster families.

#### Treat Them Like Gold and Latino Recruitment and Retention Guide.

The North Carolina Division of Social Services' recruitment guide <u>*Treat Them Like Gold*</u> is a diligent recruitment guide that provides suggested practices, resources, and general guidance on how to effectively recruit and retain foster and adoptive families in NC. A companion <u>guide</u> that specifically focuses on recruitment and partnering with Spanish speaking foster and adoptive families is available.

#### Statewide Diligent Recruitment Calls and Trainings

Through the development process for the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, it was recognized that there is a significant need for regular, ongoing communication and collaboration between agencies on the topic of diligent recruitment and retention. The NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network will initiate standing quarterly calls regarding diligent recruitment and retention beginning in fiscal year 2017/2018.

The Division of Social Services will also facilitate recorded webinars as needed on a variety of diligent recruitment and retention topics. These topics will be determined through assessment of patterns in technical assistance needs, topics that arise during quarterly calls, and requests by both County DSS's and private child placing agencies.

#### Fostering Perspectives

(<u>www.fosteringperspectives.org</u>), is a free newsletter produced by the NC Division of Social Services in partnership the UNC School of Social Work. It is published twice a year and the intended audience is foster, adoptive, kinship, and therapeutic families as well as child welfare professionals in North Carolina. Each issue furthers diligent recruitment efforts by regularly featuring waiting children and offering information that supports the educational needs of existing foster families.

#### FosteringNC.org

Fosteringnc.org is a learning site for North Carolina's foster and adoptive families and kinship caregivers. This site features on-demand courses, webinars, videos, resources, and answers to foster, adoptive, and kinship caregiver's frequently asked questions. The Division of Social Services, in partnership with the University of NC Chapel Hill, NC State University, and Independent Living Resources, will maintain and update the learning site with additional resources and trainings on a regular basis.

#### Online Orientation for Prospective Foster Families

North Carolina's online, on-demand, self-paced <u>orientation for NC foster parents</u> provides an over view of foster care in North Carolina. Public and private child-placing agencies are required to make completion of this online orientation mandatory for all foster families.

#### NC's Permanency Innovation Initiative (PII)

PII is an effort launched in 2013 by NC's General Assembly. Under this state-sponsored initiative a private child-placing agency, Children's Home Society of North Carolina (CHS), provides services to improve permanency outcomes for children living in foster care, to improve engagement with biological relatives, and to reduce costs associated with maintaining children in foster care. Since July 1, 2015 CHS has achieved positive outcomes for children and families through Family Finding, child specific adoption recruitment, and permanency related training.

#### Adoption Promotion Program Fund

The Adoption Promotion Program Fund is utilized to enhance and expand adoption programs, to secure permanent homes for hard to place children, and to encourage partnerships between public and private agencies to achieve permanency for children in a timely manner by providing financial incentives for the adoption of special needs children. Allowable expenditures of the funds received include direct provision or purchase by contract of general and child specific adoption recruitment, retention, and promotion services.

#### Post Adoption Support Services (PASS)

Post Adoption Support Services (PASS) are intended to ensure the permanency and well-being of adoptees and their families. PASS are voluntary services available to all adoptees in NC, regardless of age of the adoptee or the type of adoption. PASS also provide education, outreach, and support to families at risk of or experiencing an illegal custody transfer.

#### State-Funded Supplement for Children Exposed to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

North Carolina provides supplemental board payments for children served by the foster care program and supplemental adoption assistance payments for children who have been adopted that were diagnosed as having been prenatally exposed to HIV or who have developed symptoms of HIV/AIDS in foster care. Supplemental payments for HIV positive children may be made to foster/adoptive families, group homes, or child caring institutions licensed by NC DSS.

#### Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund (SCAIF)

The NC Appropriations Act annually authorizes Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding for a Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund. The SSBG funding is then combined with local and state matching funds to make adoption a possibility for children with special health care needs who would otherwise remain in the foster care system because of the financial loss to adoptive families.

#### Foster Care to 21

NC Session Law 2015-241 (2015 Appropriations Act) was passed to include "Fostering Success/Extend Foster Care to 21 Years of Age." The North Carolina Division of Social Services worked with collaborative partners and the General Assembly to afford the opportunity for youth to continue foster care services from 18 to 21 years of age if the individual meets the requirements for the program. This law also provides the availability of adoption assistance payments to continue until the youth reaches the age of 21 if the youth was adopted at 16 or 17 years of age. Implementation of this initiative began on January 1, 2017. These developments around Foster Care 18 to 21 will enhance North Carolina's capacity to recruit, retain, and support families for children and youth, specifically youth ages 16 and 17 in need of foster and adoptive homes.

#### Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)

NC Session Law 2015-241 (2015 Appropriations Act) was passed to include a Guardianship Assistance Program. The purpose of GAP is to make funds available for the financial support of youth ages 14 to 18 who are determined to be in a permanent family setting, eligible for legal

guardianship, and otherwise unlikely to obtain permanency. GAP reimburses room and board at the same rate as North Carolina's foster care board rates. A child eligible for GAP must be living in a licensed foster home for six months. The GAP provides an additional mechanism to support permanency through guardianship for specific youth and their licensed caregivers.

#### Foster Parent Liability Insurance

Foster parent liability insurance became available to North Carolina foster families on May 1, 2016. Foster families can use this optional insurance, if they choose to purchase it, to protect their assets against litigation in the event a child in their care is hurt.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template

Appendix B Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile

Appendix C Diligent Recruitment and Retention Resource List

State of North Carolina • Roy Cooper, Governor Department of Health and Human Services Mandy Cohen, Secretary Division of Social Services www.ncdhhs.gov • www.ncdhhs.gov/dss

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