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Wayne E. Black
Division Director

November 1, 2013

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF LICENSED PRIVATE CHILD-PLACING AGENCIES

ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE ADOPTIONS STAFF

SUBJECT: ADOPTION PROMOTION PROGRAM FUND

BACKGROUND: The Division of Social Services announces the availability of the Adoption Promotion Program Fund to county child welfare agencies and licensed child-placing agencies for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014. This allocation of this discretionary fund continues to make it possible for children living in foster homes or institutions to find permanence and to be adopted into safe and secure homes.

INTENT: The purpose of the fund is 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. This is accomplished by providing incentives for the completion of adoption of "special needs" children. Agencies are compensated for adoption services that culminate in the finalization of an adoption (as evidenced by a Final Decree of Adoption). These services, as defined below, are recruitment of adoptive family, pre-adoption training, post-placement support and the facilitation of legal procedures resulting in the finalization of an adoption.

- **Recruitment** is the process of finding, screening, and identifying prospective adoptive placement resources;
- **Pre-Adoption Training** is preparatory training for prospective adoptive families to provide knowledge and skills necessary for parenting children with special needs;
- **Post-Placement Support** is services provided by an adoption agency between the time that a child is placed in the home of his or her prospective adoptive parents and the time that the child's adoption is finalized in court;
- **Facilitation of Legal Procedures** is the completion of legal work necessary to consummate an adoption.

ACTION STEPS: Local county child welfare agencies may apply for reimbursement for adoption services leading to the issuance of a decree of adoption after exceeding a predetermined baseline and spending or encumbering previously received funds from the Adoption Promotion Program Fund or Special Children Adoption Fund. The county child welfare agency's baseline will be determined by the average number of children who exited the foster care system by a Decree of Adoption during the last four years after discarding the year with the highest number of finalized adoptions.

Information for the baseline comes from the Division's *Adoption Information Management System (AIMS)* database that includes the dates of the Decree of Adoption and names of adopted children. Please review the

baseline information (Attachment 1) carefully and contact the Division of Social Services immediately, if you believe that the information is incorrect. The Division will correct the baseline if documentation is provided showing that the baseline information found in the baseline attachment is inaccurate.

Reimbursement requests for youth ages 13 to 18 years old may be submitted, regardless of whether the agency has met its baseline, if previous reimbursements from either fund has been expended or encumbered prior to submission of requests for payment.

FUNDING AMOUNTS: The payment levels for disbursement of the Adoption Promotion Program Fund for SFY 2014 are:

- $ 7,200 per child for children from 0-12 years of age;
- $12,000 per child for children from 13-18 years of age;
- or $12,000 per child for sibling groups of three or more who are placed together at the same time in an adoptive family.

Note that agencies are eligible to only be funded at the single highest applicable funding level as the following examples illustrate:

Example 1 – a sibling group comprised of a 14, 16, and 17 year old adopted by the same family results in the agency being eligible for $36,000 total not $72,000 (and eligibility is not dependent on the agency meeting its applicable baseline).

Example 2 – a sibling group comprised of a 3, 6, and 9 year old adopted by the same family results in the agency also being eligible for $36,000 total (depending upon the agency having met its baseline).

Payments are only made on behalf of children who have been determined eligible or potentially eligible for adoption assistance benefits. Children who meet the "potentially eligible" criteria for adoption assistance also qualify for consideration in determining agency's baseline.

FUND SHARING: The Adoption Promotion Program Fund is designed to encourage partnerships between licensed child placing agencies and county child welfare agencies in achieving permanency for children from the foster care system. As such, the following guidelines are applicable to this fund:

- the total amount is paid to an agency when that agency solely recruits, trains the adoptive parent, provides post placement support to the prospective adoptive family and completes the legal paperwork to finalize the adoption;
- partial payments (in 25% increments) are paid to each agency when agencies work together to complete an adoption;
- it is required that partnering agencies mutually predetermine each agency's responsibilities in the adoption process and the percentage of payment that each agency will request, if the placement is shared;
- each agency **must** complete and sign the Adoption Services Agreement (DSS-5113 http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/forms.aspx?dc=dss) mutually acknowledging the services provided by each agency and the agreed upon financial arrangement between the agencies when they work together to finalize an adoption;
- if agencies share in the placement of a child or receive payments from another agency or the adoptive family in support of the adoption (e.g., pre-placement assessment fees) it is mandatory that this information be reflected on the Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form, DSS-5320 http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/DSS-5320.pdf), when reimbursement is requested;
- agencies must ensure that necessary child, birth family and prospective adoptive family information is openly shared and communicated between both entities via the online Information Sharing Partnership Agreement form (DSS-5247 http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5247.pdf).

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS: An agency may not claim full reimbursement, if that agency worked in partnership with another agency, even if the other agency is not eligible for payment from the Division. If an agency received payments from other sources for adoption services this information shall be reflected on Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form (DSS-5320).

FUNDING USES: Funds may be used for the direct provision or purchase by contract of services included in the Services Information System (SIS) manual (http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/rim-01/man/SIS.pdf) definitions of Adoption Services (010), Adoption Recruitment (011), Adoption Assistance Case Management (012), Child-Specific Recruitment, Assessment (013) Training of Adoptive Parents (014), and Post Adoption Case Management (016). The Division encourages you to use these funds for legal or court related services to expedite the adoption process, for post-adoption services and for child-specific recruitment efforts. This would include the funding for contracts with-out-of-state agencies that are willing to provide a family for your child. Funds cannot be used to purchase automobiles for the county or to supplant the salaries of county workers.

PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSEMENT: For county child welfare agencies to receive a payment from the Adoption Promotion Program Fund, those agencies must provide the Division with the following information:

1. Submit the Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form, (DSS-5320), to indicate children included in the agency's baseline, if applicable, and to request payment on behalf of those children for whom the Decree of Adoptions enable your agency to receive compensation. All sections of the DSS-5320 must be completed, including the signature of an authorized agency official. For additional information, refer to the instruction included with the Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Instructions Form (DSS-5320).

2. Submit the Adoption Services Agreement (DSS-5113) including the adoptive name and SIS identification number for each eligible special needs child for whom a final Decree of Adoption has been entered since July 1, 2013. This will enable the Division of Social Services to identify the point at which the agency's baseline is exceeded. County child welfare agencies shall not submit this information until they have exceeded their baselines and become eligible for payment, unless requesting payment for youth ages 13 or older included in the baseline. Payments are only made after the case is activated in the Child Placement and Payment System (CPPS) as reflected on the CPPS Adoption Assistance Form (DSS-5095 http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5095.pdf).

3. Mail the completed Adoption Promotion Program Fund Reimbursement Form (DSS-5320). The Division of Social Services will not accept scanned or faxed documents.

All agencies that received payments from the Special Children Adoption Fund or Adoption Promotion Program Fund previously must provide information on how the money was used to enhance or expand their adoption services program before funds can be received for the current fiscal year. Agencies must provide the following information with the first request:

- the total amount of money that was received;
- the state fiscal year in which the money was received; and
- an itemized statement documenting how the money was used or will be used in its entirety before the end of SFY 2014 to enhance and/or expand adoption services for the agency.

If you have questions regarding the Adoption Promotion Program Fund, please contact Amelia Lance at 919-527-6346 or at amelia.lance@dhhs.nc.gov. Requests for payments, including all of the required documentation described in this letter should be sent to Ms Lance at the following address:

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services | Division of Social Services
Attn: Adoption Promotion Program Fund
2408 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408

Agencies are strongly encouraged to keep accurate records of the use of the funds for auditing purposes. If your agency's baseline is exceeded, it is not necessary to submit this information. The purpose of the fund is to recognize and reward exceptional performance in adoption services. It is our expectation that all participating agencies adhere to best practice standards in providing these services. Failure to adhere to best practice standards will result in an agency's ineligibility to continue participation in the fund.

The Division is committed to providing funding for this program and appreciates all of your efforts to provide safe, permanent homes for North Carolina's children. Since the inception of the fund the number of special needs adoptions has steadily increased. We believe that this Program is one of the positive factors in that accomplishment.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kelley, Section Chief
Child Welfare Services

CWS-17-2013

Attachments:
Baseline for Participation in Adoption Promotion Fund SFY 2014

cc: Wayne Black
        Kathy Sommese
        Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
        LaKeitha Miller

ADOPTION PROMOTION FUND SFY 2014 PARTICIPATION BASELINE					
COUNTY	SFY 2010	SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	BASELINE
ALAMANCE	18	26	36	23	22
ALEXANDER	3	9	6	6	5
ALLEGHANY	2	6	5	0	2
ANSON	0	5	5	0	2
ASHE	1	3	3	1	2
AVERY	9	10	0	3	4
BEAUFORT	4	10	12	14	9
BERTIE	2	0	0	0	0
BLADEN	7	1	1	1	1
BRUNSWICK	8	23	15	10	11
BUNCOMBE	36	49	32	31	33
BURKE	24	30	15	29	23
CABARRUS	17	8	2	4	5
CALDWELL	37	29	26	36	31
CAMDEN	0	0	0	0	0
CARTERET	7	9	11	8	8
CASWELL	2	2	2	0	1
CATAWBA	49	29	41	29	33
CHATHAM	15	17	11	13	13
CHEROKEE	5	17	5	10	7
CHOWAN	0	0	0	0	0
CLAY	8	0	1	2	1
CLEVELAND	35	15	27	32	25
COLUMBUS	4	0	2	8	2
CRAVEN	39	37	7	6	17
CUMBERLAND	29	26	26	18	23
CURRITUCK	7	2	0	4	2
DARE	7	7	9	6	7
DAVIDSON	17	11	21	18	15
DAVIE	4	3	9	6	4
DUPLIN	5	6	1	0	2
DURHAM	26	22	25	19	22
EDGECOMBE	11	25	4	8	8
FORSYTH	56	34	34	20	29
FRANKLIN	9	16	16	7	11
GASTON	26	36	40	10	24

COUNTY	SFY 2010	SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	BASELINE
GATES	0	0	0	0	0
GRAHAM	0	1	3	2	1
GRANVILLE	4	9	7	0	4
GREENE	2	0	5	5	2
GUILFORD	53	58	45	60	52
HALIFAX	3	3	4	0	2
HARNETT	20	15	14	15	15
HAYWOOD	15	6	9	13	9
HENDERSON	20	23	20	19	20
HERTFORD	3	0	1	0	0
HOKE	10	9	4	0	5
HYDE	1	0	1	0	0
IREDELL	17	19	20	15	17
JACKSON	1	2	3	2	2
JOHNSON	22	10	13	8	10
JONES	0	0	1	0	0
LEE	5	4	1	6	3
LENOIR	4	15	8	2	5
LINCOLN	17	12	6	10	9
MACON	8	3	7	3	4
MADISON	6	6	3	5	5
MARTIN	6	2	1	0	1
MCDOWELL	4	12	23	13	10
MECKLENBURG	163	105	78	72	85
MITCHELL	2	1	2	5	2
MONTGOMERY	2	0	0	1	0
MOORE	7	4	2	2	3
NASH	5	6	12	9	7
NEW HANOVER	61	36	43	35	38
NORTHAMPTON	2	2	2	1	2
ONSLOW	24	12	5	8	8
ORANGE	22	23	9	10	14
PAMLICO	2	0	0	0	0
PASQUOTANK	8	0	3	4	2
PENDER	10	4	7	4	5
PERQUIMANS	0	0	0	0	0
PERSON	4	3	2	6	3

COUNTY	SFY 2010	SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	BASELINE
PITT	1	9	11	9	6
POLK	10	3	8	3	5
RANDOLPH	14	19	14	3	10
RICHMOND	4	4	5	3	4
ROBESON	14	11	35	27	17
ROCKINGHAM	13	12	32	14	13
ROWAN	24	10	15	16	14
RUTHERFORD	16	5	7	14	9
SAMPSON	3	5	14	4	4
SCOTLAND	6	2	13	0	3
STANLY	2	4	5	1	2
STOKES	10	3	15	11	8
SURRY	12	16	6	7	8
SWAIN	0	1	5	3	1
TRANSYLVANIA	7	4	0	1	2
TYRRELL	0	1	0	0	0
UNION	13	9	6	10	8
VANCE	5	6	4	6	5
WAKE	132	100	80	31	70
WARREN	0	4	0	7	1
WASHINGTON	0	1	0	0	0
WATAUGA	4	7	4	2	3
WAYNE	27	10	21	16	16
WILKES	20	25	19	21	20
WILSON	16	7	11	2	7
YADKIN	19	2	10	4	5
YANCEY	8	9	8	3	6