



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201 | www.acf.hhs.gov

May 31, 2019

Dear State Child Welfare Director,

I am writing to highlight an important, urgent need to achieve adoption for the tens of thousands of children and youth in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. As you know, achieving permanency for children and youth is a crucial responsibility of all of us working in child welfare systems.

Call to Action

We at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) are calling on you to engage with us in the development of new strategies to achieve timely permanency for these children and youth who are waiting to be adopted.

Background

When children and youth in foster care cannot return to their birth family, we have an obligation to provide them with a permanent, loving family as soon as possible. Unfortunately, far too many of these children and youth continue to wait for an adoptive family. According to 2017 AFCARS data, the number of children and youth in foster care who are waiting to be adopted grew to more than 123,000 and of this number almost 70,000 have already had a termination of parental rights.

Only 13% of these children/youth are reported as being in pre-adoptive homes. Seventeen percent of the children/youth wait 18 months or longer after the termination of parental rights for a finalized adoption. We know that teens wait twice as long as younger children and that 20,000 youth were reported as emancipating from the system without a permanent home.

Though almost 60,000 children/youth were successfully moved to adoptive homes in 2017, there are many who wait too long or leave the system without a permanent home.

We urge you to examine the data produced by your systems and your policy and practices to determine improved and streamlined methods that will assure no youth linger in the system. It is only in understanding the barriers to permanency for children/youth that we can build a strategy that will transform their opportunities and timeframes for permanency.

To support you in this important call to action, ACF is launching new efforts to support the states and build your capacity to achieve timely permanency for children and youth. We invite you to participate in all of the following events:

- **Kick-off event:** We will begin this work with a virtual kick-off event scheduled for June 28, 2019 from 12 to 2 p.m. Please be on the look-out for these details in your invitation and for the state data profiles that we will be providing to you.
- **Regional discussions:** Following the kick-off event, we will convene a series of virtual regional events, for more in-depth discussions with peers about the initiative, ways to analyze your data to identify your priority areas of focus, and next steps.
- **In-person summit:** On August 23, 2019, we will hold an in-person summit in Washington, DC, for a day-long working session. We are formally inviting each state to send four people to participate in this summit: the State Adoption Manager, the State Foster Care Manager, a Court Improvement Program representative, and one community-based partner (from a private and/or faith-based provider agency) that is engaged at the local level and that can represent the overall network of partners working to achieve permanency for children and youth in foster care.

As you consider your attendance at the August Summit, please know that states may use Title IV-B, subpart 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families) funds for the travel of state child welfare representatives as well as for your invited community-based partner. The Court Improvement Program representative may use CIP funds to pay for their travel.

I encourage each state to make a commitment to participating in these events and to accept this call to action in addressing the barriers to permanency for children and youth. I do hope your state will make this a priority this year and please know that ACF is here to support you in your efforts.

Please contact Jane Morgan at the Children's Bureau with any questions that you may have (Jane.Morgan@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Jerry Milner
Acting Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families