

ACF

**Administration
for Children
and Families**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families

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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: State Child Welfare Administrators
State Adoption and Foster Care Coordinators
State Developmental Disabilities Administrators
State UAP Program Directors
State Developmental Disability Council Directors

SUBJECT: Planning for the Adoption of Children with
Developmental Disabilities

LEGAL AND
RELATED
REFERENCES: Title IV-E Adoption Assistance
Title IV-B of the Social Security Act
The Americans with Disabilities Act
The Developmental Disabilities Bill of Rights
The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994
The Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996
(Public Law (P.L.) 104-188
Title XVI-Supplemental Security Income for the
Aged, Blind and Disabled

PURPOSE: The purpose of this information memorandum is to
encourage States to plan, coordinate and
collaborate with the appropriate public and
private agencies, local community groups and
families to increase the adoption of
developmentally disabled children.

BACKGROUND: At the end of 1994, estimates suggested
that 60,000 children had a permanency goal of
adoption. It is estimated that 27,000 of those
children with a permanency goal of adoption were
legally free. Of those children who were legally
free for adoption, 70% were described as having
special needs, which would have included children
with developmental disabilities.

Across the nation, adoptive parents from various
social, economic, educational and ethnic
backgrounds have successfully adopted children
who have developmental disabilities
as reflected in family satisfaction and

improved life chances for children. Yet, even with the many triumphant stories where these children have been adopted and benefited enormously from their permanent families there is still a significant need for adoptive families for children with disabilities.

There is an opportunity for the child welfare and the disability communities to pool their knowledge and resources to promote adoption. With the appropriate assistance and supports, individuals who are committed to parenting a child with a developmental disability, are able to become successful parents.

For the child with a developmental disability, being adopted can mean an end to living in temporary foster homes or institutions and the beginning of the acceptance that can best be experienced in a permanent family setting. For parent(s) who adopt a child with a developmental disability, adoption can mean benefiting personally from the rewarding experiences that come from parenting.

There are Federal programs, for example, the title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program, Medicaid and title XVI-Supplemental Security Income for the Aged, Blind and Disabled which provide financial support or the necessary assistance to families who adopt eligible children with developmental disabilities.

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities' State Developmental Disabilities Councils develop plans for a more coordinated system of services to enhance the lives of developmentally disabled individuals and their families in States. Similarly, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities' University Affiliated Programs (UAP) provide program support activities which address a broad range of disabilities issues for individuals and families.

RECOMMENDED
APPROACH :

The Administration for Children and Families' Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) and the Children's Bureau (CB) want to

promote the adoption of children with developmental disabilities and recommend the following approaches for States:

- * Concentrate on the value of "family life" for children with developmental disabilities who are in need of adoption.
- * Plan comprehensive recruitment strategies that reflect the needs of the population of children with developmental disabilities in need of adoption.
- * Develop adoption recruitment strategies in partnership with families who have adopted children with mild-to-severe developmental disabilities.
- * Incorporate an array of flexible, culturally and linguistically responsive activities, recruitment literature, as well as audiovisual materials to promote the adoption of children with developmental disabilities.
- * Complete an assessment of those children with developmental disabilities who are in need of families in order to prioritize goals and to obtain a clear description of the adoption needs that should be addressed.
- * Provide prospective adoptive parents of children with developmental disabilities with supportive services including (at a minimum):
 - o a community resource guide to services and programs for families with children with developmental disabilities;
 - o a list of family supportive service organizations that assist families with children who have developmental disabilities;
 - o a descriptive list of Federal and State financial adoption assistance programs for adoptive parent(s); and
 - o a summary of flexible and specialized services that offer respite care.

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities and the Children's Bureau look forward to the continued participation of States in working to support children with developmental disabilities.

We applaud those States that are currently engaging in collaborations that are specifically designed to identify adoptive families for children with developmental disabilities.

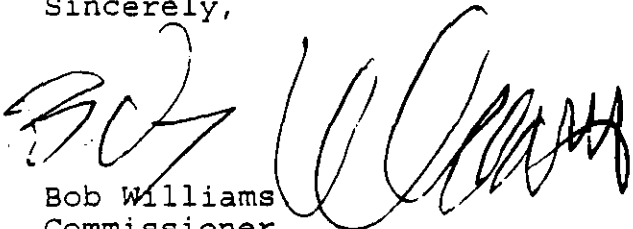
Attached is a listing of resources that have proven to be valuable to States that presently have nationally recognized initiatives to recruit families for special needs children. Please carefully review the attached resource listings and exchange among yourselves pertinent information regarding the best practices, concepts and ideas that may assist in increasing the rate of adoption.

Please forward a description of your most successful recruitment activities aimed at identifying families who are able to provide children with a loving, caring and supportive permanent home that your State has developed. We are requesting that your voluntary information be forwarded to our offices no later than June 29, 1997 so that a best practices list can be compiled and disseminated to State Child Welfare Administrators.

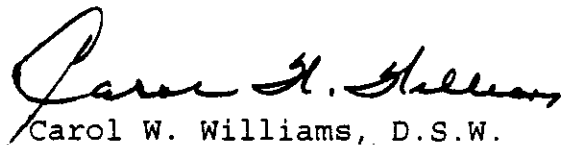
Please send your successful recruitment activities to:

Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Attention: Kathleen McHugh
P.O. Box 1182
Washington, D.C. 20013

Sincerely,



Bob Williams
Commissioner
Administration for Children
and Families
Administration on Developmental
Disabilities



Carol W. Williams, D.S.W.
Associate Commissioner
Administration for Children
and Families
Administration on Children,
Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

ATTACHMENTS