

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARDS
2009 NOMINATION GUIDELINES**

Thank you for your interest in the Adoption Excellence Awards. To facilitate processing, a complete nomination package must be received by COB:

Tuesday, May 22, 2009

Please send your nomination package to:

Adoption Excellence Awards
USDHHS, Children's Bureau
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW, Suite 8148
Washington, DC 20024

ATTN: La Chundra Lindsey

Selection of the Adoption Excellence Award winners for the year 2009 will be based on the contents of the nomination submission. Please review all of the guidelines and review criteria before preparing your nomination. *For the purposes of this award, adoption and excellence are defined, as follows:*

Adoption:

A formal legal process to adopt a child or children from public foster care.

Excellence:

Excellence is the quality or state of being outstanding by providing superior leadership, innovation, and making contributions in child welfare which produce positive outcomes for children.

Purpose

In the United States, there are currently 496,000 children in foster care. Of these children, 130,000 are free for adoption and awaiting a permanent home. These awards, presented by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), demonstrate the Department's national commitment to expedite rebuilding the lives of those children and achieving permanency for those awaiting adoption. The Adoption Excellence Awards have been awarded annually since 1997 to recognize individuals, families and organizations that share and support HHS's priority for permanency for children in public foster care.

The Adoption Excellence Awards acknowledge leadership, innovative approaches and dedication which significantly contribute to the successful adoption of children from foster care.

What Is The Award?

The Adoption Excellence Award is not a monetary award. Award recipients receive an engraved crystal monolith (approximately 9" tall). Engraved on the front of the monolith are the HHS logo, name of award recipient, and the category in which the recipient is honored.

Who May Nominate?

Anyone may nominate one or more candidates. Self-nominations are welcomed. Please submit a separate package for each candidate nominated.

Who May Receive These Awards?

The Department will honor those States, agencies, organizations, businesses, individuals and families that have demonstrated excellence in providing stable, permanent homes for our nation's children in foster care. Unless specifically designated in the award category description, nominees may include, but are not limited to:

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| 1. State and Tribal Agencies | 9. Families |
| 2. Local public agencies | 10. Courts |
| 3. Businesses | 11. State legislatures |
| 4. Foundations | 12. Universities |
| 5. Faith-based organizations | 13. Tribal courts and governments |
| 6. Media | 14. Advocacy organizations |
| 7. Individuals | 15. Community-based organizations |
| 8. Child welfare organizations | |

For information about past Adoption Excellence Awardees, along with information describing their contribution to excellence in the adoption of children from public foster care, please visit: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/current_initiatives/aeawards.htm

Award Categories

When submitting a nomination package, one of the following award categories must be selected. For categories that recognize "organizations," all entities under *Who May Receive These Awards* are eligible except for families and individuals.

1. **Decrease in the Length of Time that Children in Foster Care Wait for Adoption** – recognition of organizations that have developed and implemented strategies which have achieved a significant decrease in the average length of stay in foster care.
2. **Increased Adoptions of Older Children** - recognition of organizations that have developed and implemented strategies which have significantly increased the number of children over age 8 adopted from the public foster care system.
3. **Inter-jurisdictional Adoptions** - recognition of organizations that have created strategies which have overcome interjurisdictional barriers to adoption for children in foster care.

4. **Support for Adoptive Families** - recognition of organizations that provide significant support to help families adopt and promote the stability of those adoptions through recruitment, preparation, training, post-placement and post-legal adoption services for adoptive families.
5. **Individual and/or Family Contributions** - recognition of the personal contribution of an individual(s) professional(s), or family(ies) that promotes the adoption of children from foster care. These individuals and/or families may have provided exceptional care for children or may have influenced development of better programs for children adopted from foster care.
6. **Philanthropy and/or Business Contributions/Initiatives** - recognition of works or endeavors that promote adoption for children in foster care, such as financial aid, endowments, gifts, scholarships, or other charitable support. This category includes organizations or businesses that promote adoption for children from foster care through activities such as partnerships, sponsorships, donations, or volunteerism.
7. **Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement** - recognition of court or public/Tribal child welfare agency system change that resulted in fewer children coming into care or expedited the movement of children from foster care to permanency.
8. **Adoption of Minority Children from Foster Care** - recognition of organizations, businesses, or individuals/families that have positively impacted children of color achieving permanency from public foster care.
9. **Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care** - recognition of media and/or public awareness campaigns that have increased the community's understanding of the need for permanency for children in public foster care.

What Are The Selection Criteria?

Nominations will be reviewed, judged and selected based on ten criteria. Your nomination package must include information on each of the criteria and the impact and outcomes of the nominee's accomplishments. Nominations that demonstrate extraordinary contributions and excellence in promoting and/or increasing permanency will receive the highest consideration. Therefore, it is advised that the nomination clearly address each of the following:

- Collaboration/Partnerships
- Evidence-Based/Measurable Goals
- Innovation/Uniqueness
- Leadership
- Outreach
- Overall Impact/Contribution of Accomplishments to Permanency
- Use of Resources
- Sustainability
- Ability to Replicate
- Community Involvement

What Is Included In The Nomination Package?

The nomination package MUST include the following:

1. **Nomination Form: WORD or PDF (Required):** One page of identifying information on the nominator and the nominee. Here, you must also indicate the award category for the nomination (see *Award Categories*).
2. **Nomination Letter (Required):** Not to exceed six double-spaced pages. The letter describes the nominee's accomplishments and services in support of permanency for children in foster care. Font size should not be smaller than 10 points.
3. **Supporting Documentation (Required):** Not to exceed six pages. Nomination must include at least one letter of support, newspaper article, recommendation from adoption worker, testimonial, or other documentation which supports nomination. Do not send video/audio tapes; they will not be reviewed or returned.

Please note that only letters of support and material submitted in the nomination package will be accepted. Material sent under separate cover will not be considered. Audio and video tapes cannot be reviewed as part of the selection process. The complete nomination package should not exceed 12 pages. Any pages that exceed the 12-page limit will not be reviewed.

How Will Award Winners Be Selected?

Awards will be made in the nine (9) categories listed under "*Award Categories*." Multiple awards may be given in each category. Nominations will be reviewed and awardees recommended by a panel of recognized experts in the adoption field, including members from Federal and State agencies. Recommendations will be submitted to the HHS Secretary for approval.

Award Ceremony

Awards will be distributed and recipients recognized in a ceremony to be held in the Washington, DC area in August 2009.

For more information about the awards and past recipients,
visit the Children's Bureau website,

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/current_initiatives/aeawards.htm,

or contact:

La Chundra Lindsey, as (202) 205-8252 or
lachundra.lindsey@acf.hhs.gov.