

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARDS  
2016 NOMINATION GUIDELINES**

Thank you for your interest in the Adoption Excellence Awards. A complete nomination package must be received by COB:

**Friday, July 29, 2016**

*Please send your nomination to:*

**[June.Dorn@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:June.Dorn@acf.hhs.gov)**

**Subject Line: AEA Nomination**

In the United States, there are currently 415,000 children in foster care. Of these children, 108,000 are waiting to be adopted. These awards, presented by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), demonstrate the Department's national commitment to achieve permanency for children in foster care and 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.**

Selection of the 2016 Adoption Excellence Award winners will be based on the contents of the nomination submission. Please review all of the attached guidelines and selection criteria before preparing your nomination.

For the purpose of this award, "**EXCELLENCE**" is defined as:

*The quality or state of being outstanding by providing superior leadership and innovation.  
Excellence is demonstrated by making contributions in child welfare which produce positive outcomes for children that are above and beyond the ordinary.*

**THE AWARD:**

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

Awards will be mailed to the recipient, unless other arrangements are made by the Department.

## AWARD CATEGORIES & ELIGIBILITY:

The Department will honor States, agencies, organizations, businesses, courts, individuals, and families that have demonstrated excellence in providing stable, permanent homes for our nation’s children in foster care.

Anyone may nominate one or more candidates. Self-nominations are welcomed. Please submit a separate package for each candidate nominated. When submitting a nomination package, one of the following award categories must be selected.

Note that nominations for Category 1 are limited to families and parents. Nominations for Category 2 are limited to professionals/individuals. Nominations for Category 6 are limited to individual youth or young adults.

#	Award Categories	Who is Eligible?
1	<b>Family Contributions</b> – recognizes the personal contribution of a <u>family or parent(s)</u> who has significantly impacted the life of a child(ren) adopted from foster care. These families may have provided exceptional care for children or may have influenced development of better programs and services for children adopted from foster care.	<u>Only</u> families/parents may be nominated for this category.
2	<b>Individuals/Professionals</b> – recognizes individual contributions to promote the adoption of children from foster care.	<u>Only</u> individuals may be nominated for this category.
3	<b>Business Contributions/Initiatives</b> – recognizes the promotion of adoption for children from foster care through activities such as partnerships, sponsorships, donations, charitable support, or volunteerism.	Any of the following may be nominated for categories 3 through 5:
4	<b>Media/Social Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care</b> – recognizes unique efforts that have increased the community’s understanding of the need for permanency for children in foster care.	
5	<b>Child Welfare/Judicial Systemic Change</b> – recognizes significant strategies that have resulted in fewer children coming into care or expedited the movement of children from foster care to permanency. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies that significantly decreased the length of time that children wait for adoption from foster care,</li> <li>• Strategies which significantly increased adoptions of older children and youth from foster care,</li> <li>• Increased/successful inter-jurisdictional adoptions and overcame inter-jurisdictional barriers to adoption for children in foster care,</li> <li>• Efforts to support families who adopt and promote the stability of those adoptions through unique methods,</li> <li>• Strategies that positively impact the adoption of minority children from foster care, and</li> <li>• Other strategies that have significantly contributed to an increase in the number of children adopted from foster care.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State &amp; Tribal Agencies</li> <li>• Local public agencies</li> <li>• Child welfare organizations</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• Foundations</li> <li>• Faith-based organizations</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Courts</li> <li>• State legislatures</li> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Tribal courts and governments</li> <li>• Advocacy organizations</li> <li>• Community-based organizations</li> </ul>

#	Award Categories	Who is Eligible?
6	<b>Youth/Young Adult</b> – recognizes the individual contributions of a youth/young adult to promote permanency for children in foster care	<u>Only</u> individual youth or young adults

### SELECTION CRITERIA:

Nominations for categories 3 (Business Contributions), 4 (Media/Public Awareness), and 5 (Child Welfare Systemic Change) should demonstrate exemplary evidence of the following criteria:

Review Category	Criteria for Review of Nominations
<b>Innovation/Uniqueness</b>	New approaches (markedly different from the typical) that result in permanency.
<b>Overall Impact/Benefits</b>	Demonstrated commitment to measuring outcomes, impact, and continuous improvement.
<b>Use of Resources</b>	Widely used resources (e.g. volunteers, social media, partnerships, businesses) which contribute to significantly increasing adoptions and awareness.
<b>Community Outreach/Involvement</b>	Significant efforts to connect with the community and raise awareness.
<b>Collaboration/Partnerships</b>	Sustained collaborative partnerships with programs/organizations/individuals, which contributed to positive outcomes.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Long-term plan and demonstrated efforts/activities to maintain high performance which promote increased adoption.
<b>Ability to Replicate</b>	Model/modified approaches that others can readily replicate and sustain to achieve increased positive outcomes.
<b>Leadership</b>	Degree to which the initiative/approach motivated and inspired people toward a common goal and improved performance.

Nominations for categories 1 (Family Contributions) and 2 (Individuals/Professionals) should exemplify the following criteria:

Review Category	Criteria for Review of Nominations
<b>Innovation/Uniqueness</b>	New approaches (markedly different from the typical) that result in permanency.
<b>Overall Contribution(s)</b>	Part played in achieving results or helping to make the effort or change successful.
<b>Use of Resources</b>	Widely used resources (e.g. volunteers, social media, partnerships, businesses) which contribute to significantly increasing adoptions and awareness.
<b>Community Outreach/Involvement</b>	Significant efforts to connect with the community and raise awareness.
<b>Collaboration/Partnerships</b>	Sustained collaborative partnerships with programs/organizations/individuals, which contributed to positive outcomes.
<b>Leadership</b>	Degree to which the individual/family motivated and inspired people toward a common goal and improved performance.

Nominations for category 6 (Youth/Young Adult) should exemplify the following criteria:

<b>Review Criteria</b>	<b>Criteria for Review of Nominations</b>
<b>Overall Contributions</b>	Part played in advancing cause for permanency for youth from foster care.
<b>Community Outreach/Involvement</b>	Significant efforts to raise awareness in the community of the need for permanency for youth from foster care.
<b>Leadership</b>	Degree to which individual demonstrated leadership and inspired others toward a common goal of improved permanency for youth from foster care.

Multiple awards may be given in each category. Recommendations for award are approved through the Children’s Bureau Office of the Commissioner. Once award winners have been selected, they will be notified by Children’s Bureau staff.

**SUBMITTING A NOMINATION:**

Use the attached Adoption Excellence Award (AEA) Application to provide concise details about your nominee’s exemplary accomplishments in support of permanency for children in foster care. Present the information as if the reviewer knows nothing about the nominee. Provide an overview of the individual or entity you are nominating, along with concrete examples and data wherever appropriate to support your nomination. You may be as creative as you wish in conveying the information but it is important that you be specific and clear. A few additional requirements include:

- The nomination cannot exceed 10 pages, including supplemental materials. The pages must be double spaced. Font size should be twelve (12) points. Any pages that exceed the 10 page limit will not be reviewed.
- The nomination must include supplemental or supporting materials, which demonstrate the value of the work. These may include articles, letters of support, etc. You may include website links in the nomination. However, do not send video/audio files or tapes; they will not be reviewed or returned.
- In addition to text, you may use bullet points, charts, graphs, or a combination to tell the story of your nominee.
- To the best of your ability, remember to address each of the Selection Criteria for the category you are submitting a nomination.

*Please send your nomination or questions to:*

**[June.Dorn@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:June.Dorn@acf.hhs.gov)**

**Subject Line: AEA Nomination**

**Deadline is COB Friday, July 29, 2016**

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

**<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/adoption-excellence-awards>**