

ACF

Administration
for Children
and Families

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for 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):

- a community resource guide to services and programs for families with children with developmental disabilities;
- a list of family supportive service organizations that assist families with children who have developmental disabilities;
- a descriptive list of Federal and State financial adoption assistance programs for adoptive parent(s); and
- 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 on Developmental Disabilities
Administration for Children and Families

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

Attachments:

[Attachment A](#) - Adoption Resources
[Attachment B](#) - State Developmental Disabilities Councils
[Attachment C](#) - National Office
[Attachment D](#) - University Affiliated Programs for People with Developmental Disabilities

Attachment A

ADOPTION RESOURCES

Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
PHONE: 202-628-8787

American Public Welfare Association
810 First Street, NE
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002-4267
PHONE: 202-682-0100

Child Welfare League
440 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
PHONE: (202) 638-2952

North American Council on Adoptable Children
970 Raymond Avenue
Suite 106
Southfield, MI 48075
PHONE: (612) 644-3036

National Indian Child Welfare Association
3611 S.W. Hood Street
Suite 201
Portland, OR 97201
PHONE: (503) 222-4044

National Black Child Development Institute
Suite 600
1023 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
PHONE: (202) 387-1281

National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoptions
16250 Northland Drive
Suite 120
Southfield, Michigan 48075
PHONE: (810) 443-7080

National Adoption Center
1500 Walnut Street
Suite 701
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
PHONE: (215) 735-9988

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse
10530 Rosehaven Street
Suite 400
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
PHONE: (703) 385-3206

National Council for Adoption
1930 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
PHONE: (202) 328-1200

Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.
140 W. 22nd Street, Suite 302
New York, New York 10011-2420
PHONE: (212) 206-1090

Attachment B

STATE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCILS (EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS)

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WISCONSIN

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Attachment C

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Attachment D

University Affiliated Programs for People with Developmental Disabilities

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Arizona

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Arkansas

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size="-1">NOTE: THERE ARE 60 UAPs AND ONE SUPPLEMENTAL AWARD TO THE
PACIFIC BASIN.

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FEDERAL EXPRESS

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California

USC University Affiliated Program
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