



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



Commission on Youth VA Adoption Home Study process

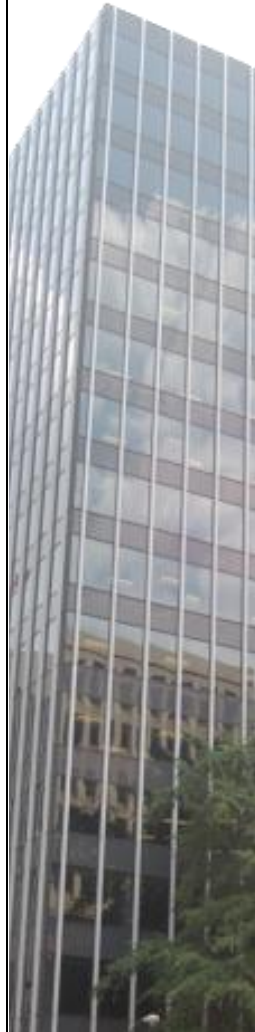
September 7, 2016

Division of Family Services

*People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect
to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities*



Basic Data Overview

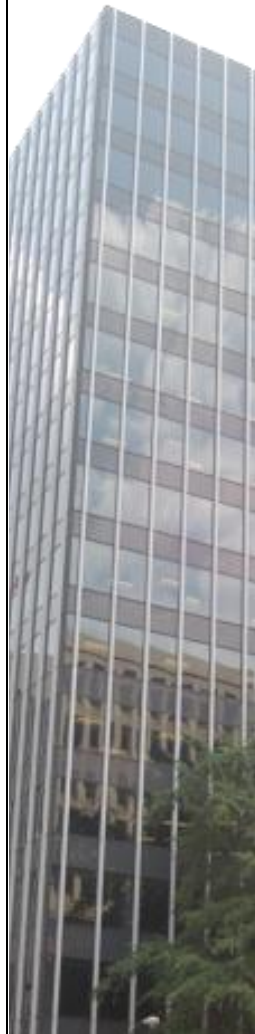




Foster Care

Between July 1 and 31, 2016:

- 4856 children between the ages of 0 and 17 were in foster care
- 3997 (82.3%) were in family-based placement settings (foster homes, pre-adoptive homes, trial home visit, etc.)
 - 6.1% were kinship foster homes
- 859 (17.7%) were in congregate care settings (group home or residential)



Foster Parent Adoptions in Virginia

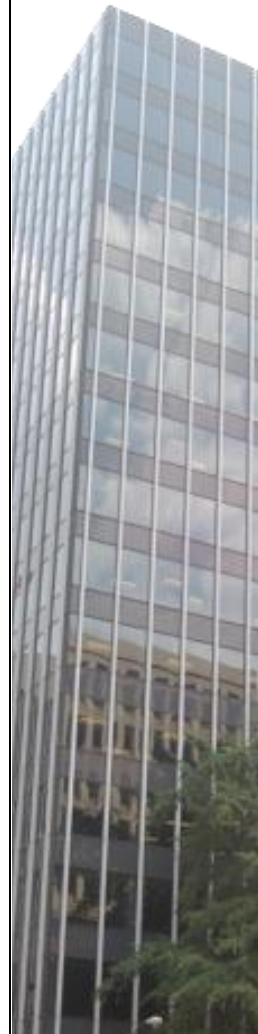


In FFY 2014:

- 88.6% of children adopted were adopted by their (non-relative) foster parents
- 7.8% were adopted by relatives, who may or may not have been foster parents

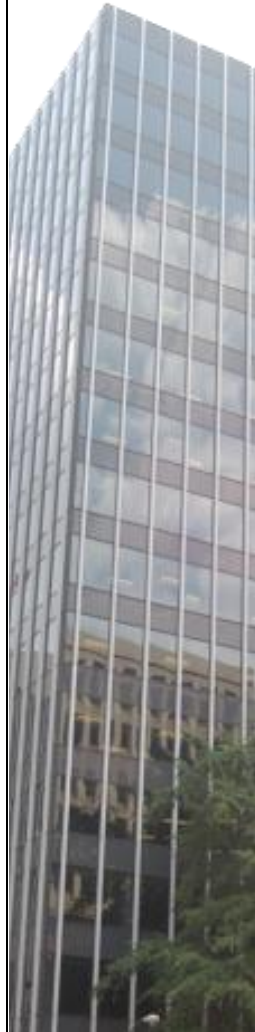
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>

Data current as of July 2015

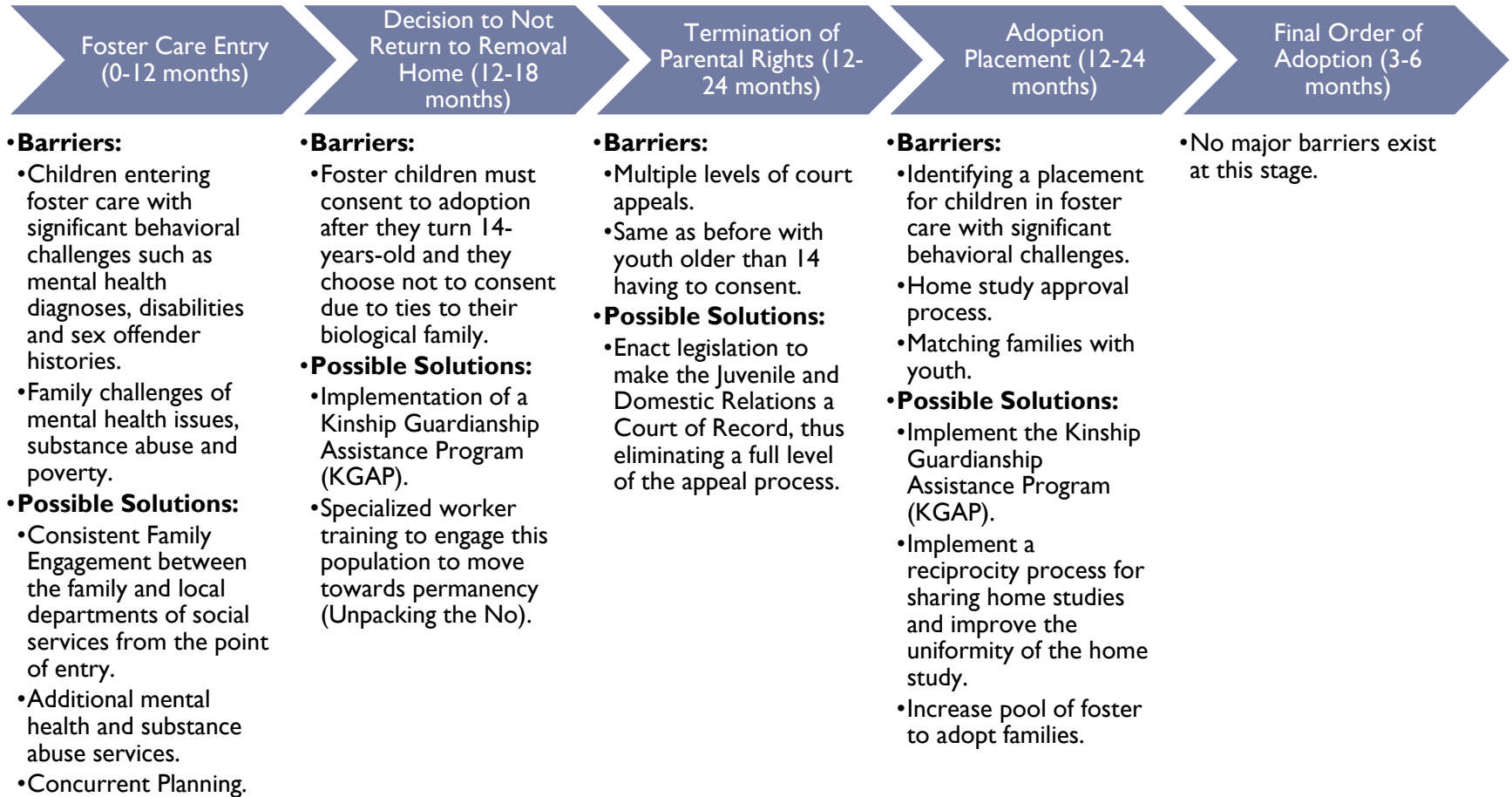




Previous Workgroups Efforts and Recommendations



Foster Care to Adoption Timeline



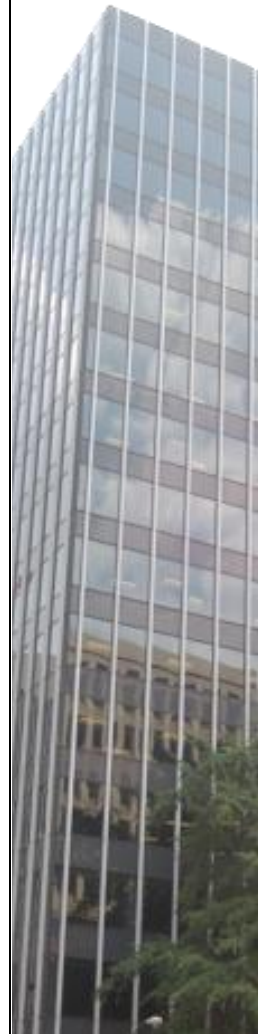


Home Study Work group

Feedback/Suggestions - 2015

Uniformity

- Review content of Mutual Family Assessment (MFA)/Licensed Child Placing Agency(LCPA) home studies
- Are there regular reviews of MFA written by LDSS?
- Random review of (2-3)MFAs of LDSS staff who were completed CWS 3103
- What is the LCPA review process? Review their protocol
- Ensure regular collaboration between the LCPAs and LDSS
- Complete generic study and utilize an addendum for a child specific study
- Modify current Adoption Through Collaborative Partnership(ATCP) contract language –when to use addendums
- Add language to home study that it is specific to VA requirements and that information on the home study is gathered for a specific time period between the LDSS or LCPAs



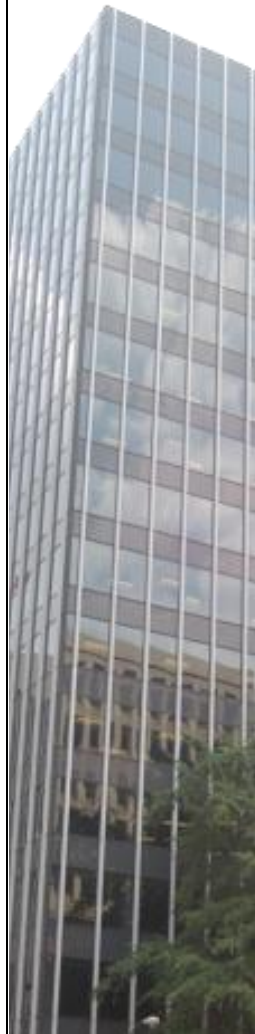


Home Study Work group

Feedback/Suggestions - 2015

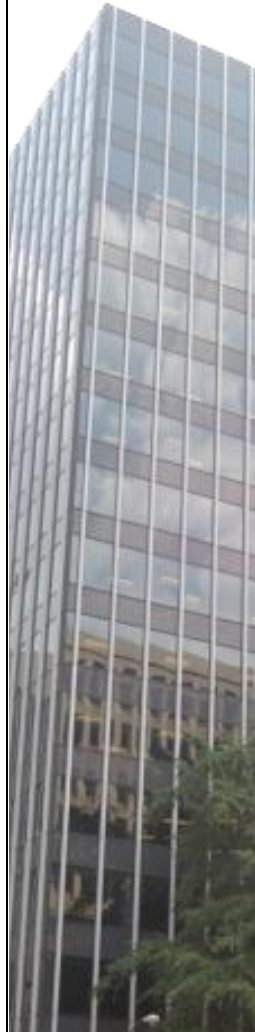
Reciprocity

- Develop process to share information
- Update Resource Family Guidance
- Clarify “who owns” MFA/Home study in ATCP contract/require contract modification
- Utilize non-conviction letter from contractor or LDSS complete their own checks
- Develop process regarding release of home study/MFA
- May require review by AG- release sufficient from family to share (with specific time) and list confidentiality issues





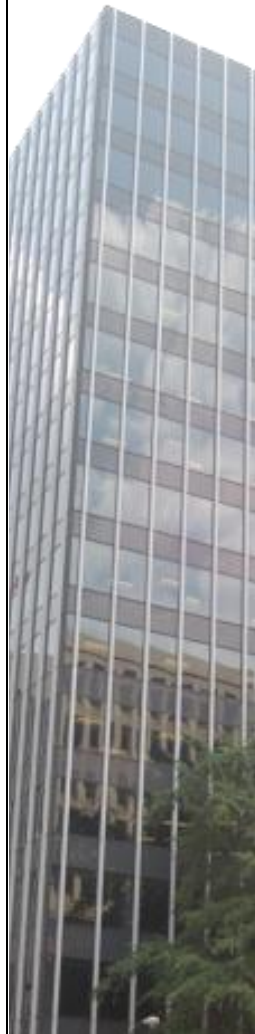
Home Study and Mutual Family Assessment Process





Overview of Mutual Family Assessment (MFA) Process

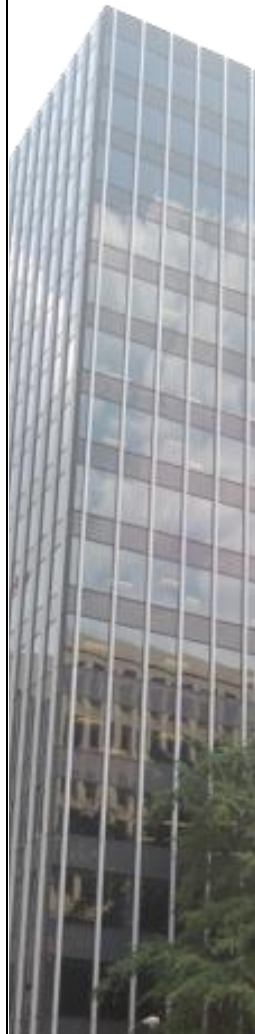
- During VDSS Child Welfare Transformation in 2009, the home study process for approving foster and adoptive families was improved by using a more inclusive process referred to as the mutual family assessment.
- As a result of this process, the final decision to approve the home reflects the family's perceived ability and willingness to foster or adopt as well as the agency's assessment of the family.
- The MFA is more about the adequacy of the home and not just do they meet the basic standards.





Foster/Adoptive parent training curriculum – General

- Many of Virginia's local departments of social services (LDSS) and licensed child placing agencies (LCPA) use the PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education) curriculum or a modified version of the PRIDE curriculum.

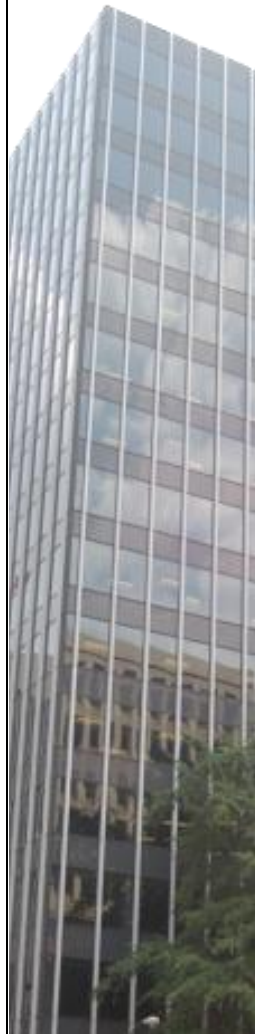




Foster/Adoptive parent training curriculum – General (cont.)

The PRIDE curriculum utilizes the following core competencies:

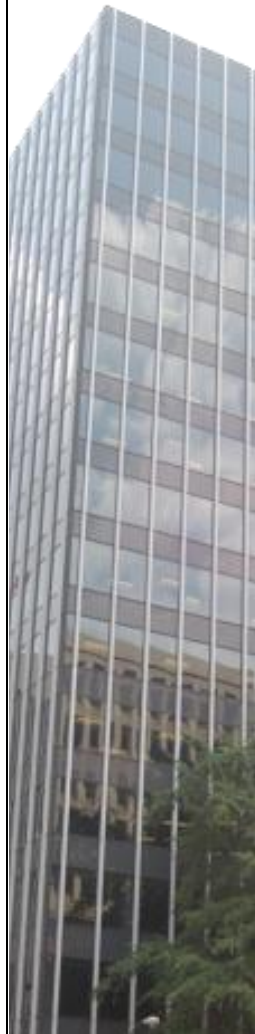
- Protecting and nurturing children
- Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays
- Supporting relationships between children and their families
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
- Working as a member of a professional team





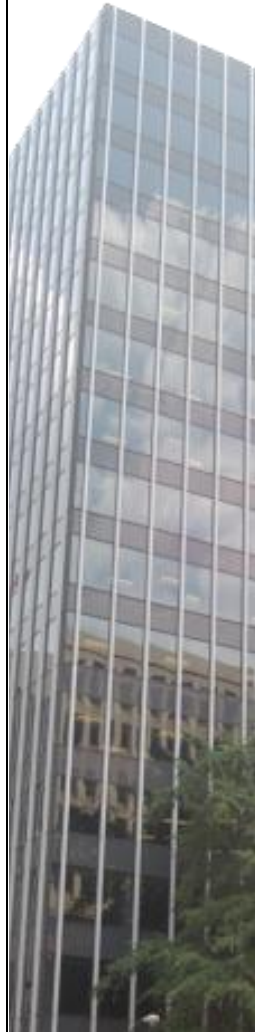
Foster/Adoptive parent training curriculum - Relative (cont.)

- Traditions of Caring (TOC) and Collaborating Model of Practice
 - This is a specially designed curriculum for use with kinship foster and adoptive homes





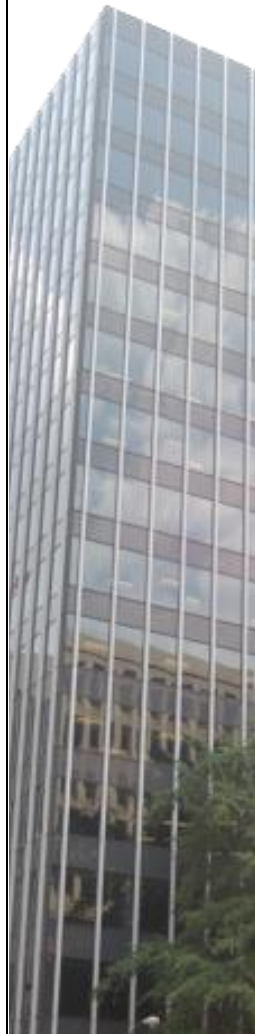
Investments





Investment in Improving the Process

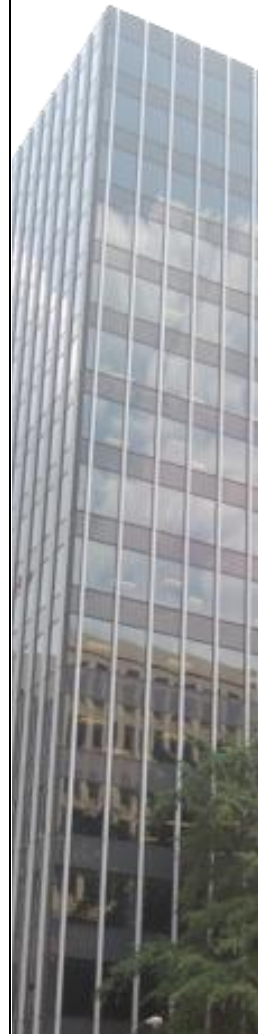
- \$1.5 million in Mutual Family Assessment Regionally-based Staff and Post-adoption support services funded by title IV-E Adoption Savings
- \$1.5 million in State General Funds specifically targeted at pilot programs designed to increase the number of children adopted from foster care
- \$1.9 million through the Adoption Through Collaborative Partnership Grants





Plan for the Adoption Savings Funds

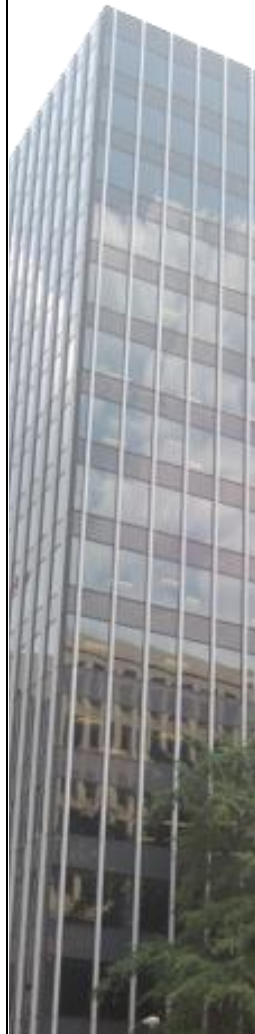
- Beginning in 2010, the Federal Government changed the funding stream for basic maintenance payments in Adoption Assistance Payments.
- Regardless of whether or not the adoptive child was title IV-E while in foster care, their basic maintenance payment is made from title IV-E funds.
- This process was implemented in 2-year increments until all basic maintenance payments are made from federal funds.
- The change resulted in Adoption Savings, which must be re-invested to promote adoption and permanency for children in foster care.
- As a result of the title IV-E Adoption Savings, the Division of Family Services is spending the funds by providing services to eliminate barriers to achieving permanency for foster care youth.





Plan for the Adoption Savings Funds

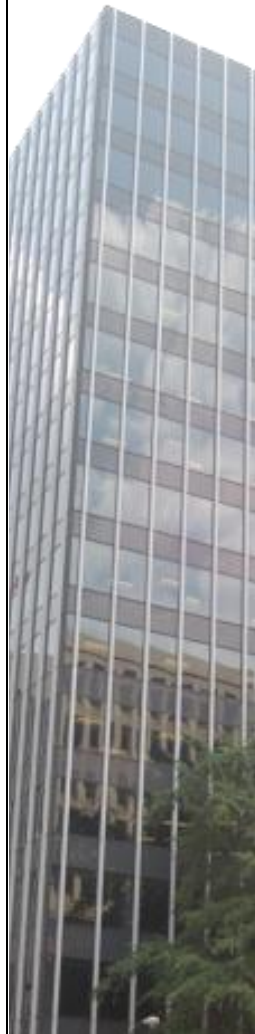
- Hire a minimum of three specialists per region to assist the local departments of social services (LDSS) by completing the foster care and adoption home study process, which includes, written reports and home visits.
- They will report to a consultant.
- The staff, including two consultants, will be hired as wage employees.





Plans for the Adoption Savings Funds

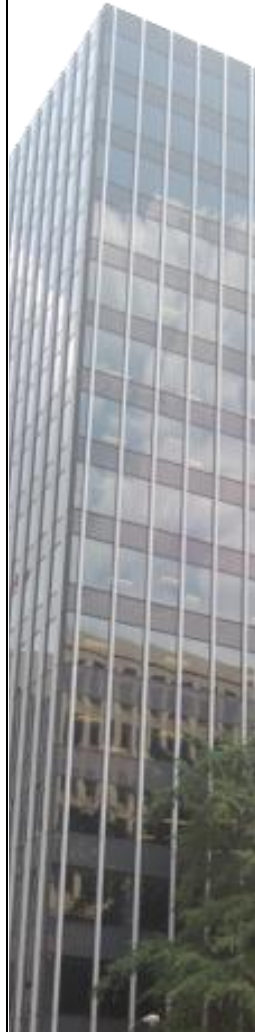
- Additional measures will be built in to add incentives for home studies completed prior to the 60-day timeframe by the Adoption Through Collaborative Partnership (ATCP) contractors and subsequent foster care and adoption placements by the LDSS.



Plan for the Adoption Savings funds

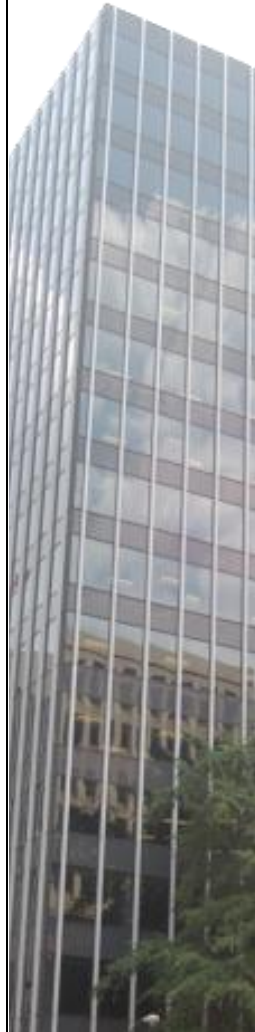


- Federal law requires at least 30% of the Adoption Savings funds to be spent on post-adoption services
- Contractual services will be provided to adoptive families and adoption professionals such as educational resources, clinical services and support to ensure permanency for adoptive youth and families.





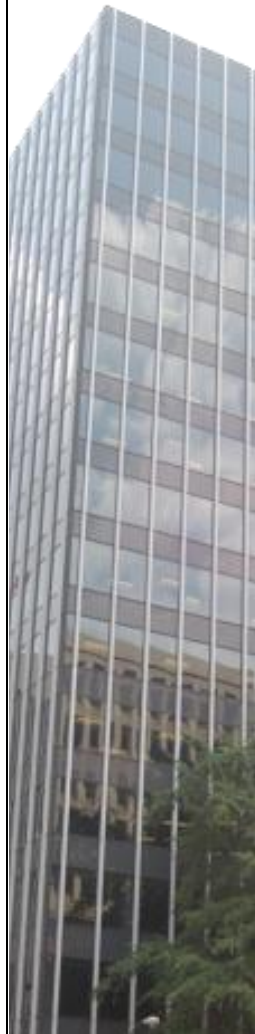
Improvements Presently Underway





Steps Taken to Improve the MFA (home study) process

- Currently updating Foster and Adoptive Family guidance to provide clarity on uniformity and reciprocity of home studies
- Modified the Adoption Through Collaborative Partnership (ATCP) contract. Contractors will be required to complete an addendum or amended study for the purpose of completing a child specific home study for adoption.
- Mutual Family Assessment contractors have been hired to assist LDSS in increasing the number of approved foster and adoptive homes.





Improvements to MFA (home study) process cont.

- CRAFFT (The Consortium for Resource and Foster Family Training) coordinators have increased their supportive role in assisting LDSS by providing PRIDE/Traditions of Care (TOC) training for foster/adoptive/kinship parents.
- Implementation of generic MFA and subsequent completion of addendum or amended study for the purpose of a child specific home study for adoption.

