

## **NOW is the Time to Write Your Legislator with Your Concerns To Eliminate Disincentives To Adoption**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) outlined five areas that DCF has identified as initiatives to increasing adoptions. The five identified areas do not have individual bill numbers but instead are included as part DCF's budget proposal.

**1. To have a central intake for all incoming phone calls statewide by prospective families for foster care and adoption.**

The Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (CAFAP) currently operates a Helpline that assist foster and adoptive families. CAFAP will be adding the KidHero line on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. The KidHero line will receive all inquiries statewide for prospective foster and adoptive families. This will increase consistency and response time to these calls and give these prospective parents realistic expectations as they first approach their journey to being an adoptive or foster parent.

**2. Fund case management, assessment and referral services that will support families who are experiencing difficulties maintaining an adoption.**

4,600 special needs children in Connecticut receive adoption subsidies. Some of these children have experienced abuse/neglect and have been in the child welfare system for several years. The families that adopt these children may have difficulties that they cannot handle alone because many of the children have mental/behavioral health issues.

To assist adoptive families, DCF will develop initial case management and services using the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as a model. The program would supply post-adoption outreach for families to understand the services that would be available to them.

**3. Develop a post-masters certification program to strengthen therapeutic competencies in the community to serve adoptive families**

DCF is working with the University of Connecticut and Southern Connecticut State University to develop a University-Agency partnership. The post-masters certification for adoption competencies would allow therapists who work with the community and the Department to expand supportive adoption counseling.

**4. Provide for postsecondary education for children adopted after January 1, 2005 through the state's public child welfare system**

Currently children that remain in foster care are eligible for financial assistance toward college tuition. Offering tuition for children adopted through the child welfare system would eliminate this barrier to adoption.

It would be expected that the child would have to meet regular acceptance guidelines and also apply for grants (such as the Pell grant). The maximum allowable stipend under this initiative would be calculated at the cost of attending an in-state university.

**5. Special needs adoptions finalized after January 1, 2005 would include the subsidy, which is comparable to the foster care rate.**

Families that have adopted through the state's public child welfare system receive a slightly lower subsidy as compared to a foster parent subsidy. This initiative would raise the adoption subsidy to the same rate as the foster care subsidy.

**Write Your Legislator!**

The Appropriations Committee will be meeting on Wednesday, 3/2/05. If your legislator is a member of the Appropriations Committee, it is especially important for you to write your legislator now. Even if your legislator is not a member of the Appropriations Committee, it is still very important to write your legislator with your thoughts on these budget issues. Your letters will be most effective if it is sent by March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

If you are not sure who your legislators are (Senator, Representative) you can follow this link, <http://www.cga.ct.gov/>, which brings you to the Connecticut General Assembly website. To the left of the web page click on the House or Senate, then click Find Your Legislator. Next click the district number of your town and you will get your legislators web page with their contact information.

If you would like a list of the Appropriations Committee's members, go to [http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/MemberList.asp?comm\\_code=APP&doc\\_type=](http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/MemberList.asp?comm_code=APP&doc_type=).

Please feel free to call me with any questions you may have.

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