

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

## CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

September 9, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: AREA EXECUTIVE STAFF, COUNTY DIRECTORS, AND  
CHILDRENS SERVICES STAFF

FROM: FREDERIC M. SIMMENS, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES FOR E-MAILS REGARDING FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE  
HOME SEARCHES

REFERENCE: CHILDREN'S DIVISION

## DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidelines for writing and responding to statewide e-mails that request assistance in finding foster or adoptive homes for children in the custody of the Children's Division. The use of this system for finding homes for children has proven to be effective. Workers are able to communicate with one another across the state, sharing resources that may otherwise be untapped. This approach is one way workers can work together, taking a team approach to utilizing our resources appropriately. Making and maintaining a specific e-mail list serve is impossible at this point due to changes in caseloads and worker turnover.

When writing these e-mails, please remember to protect the child's identity and dignity. Provide only the necessary information in the general e-mail. Please state that further information may be obtained by individual workers who feel they may have a resource for the child profiled. Remember that workers are often forwarding these e-mails to prospective foster or adoptive families when seeking placement, therefore, the information you send may be shared with people outside of the Children's Division, and that confidentiality must be maintained.

All e-mails are to be reviewed by the worker's supervisor prior to posting the e-mails. When e-mailing these requests, use the "F\_All Circuit Managers" distribution list, which will send it to all Circuit Managers. Upon receipt of these e-mails, Circuit Managers are requested to forward these e-mails to their circuit staff.

The information outlined below should be sent within the e-mail rather than as an attachment. This will speed up the delivery process of e-mails, and allow for everyone to be able to read it regardless of what word processing program they have on their computer. If a photo is available, state that one is available upon request. The use of photos within e-mails or

attachments slows down the retrieval of the e-mail and, in some areas, may take an extensive amount of time to download. From this point on, please discontinue the automatic inclusion of photos within e-mails.

### **Foster Home Searches:**

E-mails searching for foster homes must have the words, "foster home needed for (age and gender)" in the subject line. This will alert those who may have a home available to look at the e-mail. If this e-mail does not apply to some who receive it, they may delete it automatically. Information contained in the e-mail should only include the following:

- ★ Child's first name, age, race and gender.
- ★ The type of home needed for the child.
- ★ When a home is needed for the child.
- ★ Strengths of the child.
- ★ Significant special needs the child has and the skills the prospective foster family needs to possess.
- ★ Any expectations for extraordinary travel, visitation, etc.
- ★ Worker name, county and phone number.

### **Adoptive Home Searches:**

E-mails searching for adoptive homes must have the words, "adoptive home needed for (age and gender)" in the subject line. This will alert those employees who may have a home available, know someone interested in adoption, or even be interested in adoption themselves, to look at the e-mail. If the email does not apply to some who receive it, they may delete it automatically. Information contained in the e-mail should only include the following:

#### Include:

- ✓ A purpose statement at the beginning: "The purpose of the information provided below is to briefly introduce you to the child (ren) for whom our agency is recruiting an adoptive placement."
- ✓ Child's first name, age, race and gender.
- ✓ Colorful details on the child's unique character, activities, hobbies and interests.
- ✓ School – favorite classes and activities. Their strengths.
- ✓ Special issues – significant medical issues, contact with siblings, family or past placement providers.
- ✓ Positive quotes from the child's caregiver (don't refer to the "residential" caregiver).
- ✓ Quotes from the child, describing themselves. (i.e., favorite thing about themselves, etc.)
- ✓ Type of family the child wants, and any specific type of family the child needs if a distinct need exists.
- ✓ Is the child legal risk or legally free for adoption?
- ✓ To use this profile for the child's DFS-AEM-8 and Internet adoption photo listing profile, the profile must be at least three paragraphs and 150 words. NO more than 1 – 1 ½ pages in length.
- ✓ The date of profile was completed/updated.
- ✓ An ending statement: "For more detailed information about \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) contact \_\_\_\_\_ (worker's name and phone)."

#### Do Not Include:

- ✓ Identifying information (i.e., child's last name, parent's names, school name, reason the child came into care.)
- ✓ Birth family information

- ✓ Parental diagnosis/parental protected health information.
- ✓ Child's psychological diagnosis.
- ✓ Anything that might be embarrassing to the child.
- ✓ Date of births or grades in school as part of the narrative.

**Note:** If you follow the guidelines listed above, you may use this profile as the media recruitment profile for this child, also. With judicial recruitment approval, this profile may be used on the DFS-AEM-8, on the Internet, and may be provided to interested adoptive families.

Necessary Action:

1. Share this information with all Children's Division staff.
2. Immediately implement this policy regarding statewide e-mails searching for foster or adoptive homes for children using the "F\_All Circuit Managers" distribution list.
3. Supervisors are to review all e-mails for appropriateness prior to them being sent.
4. Circuit Managers are to forward e-mails they receive regarding foster and adoptive home searches to the staff in their circuit.
5. Any questions regarding this memorandum are to be sent through normal supervisory channels.

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