



AAICAMA- Permanency Matters

May 11, 2020

Elizabeth Darling, Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington DC 20201

Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner
Children's Bureau
Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street SW
Washington DC 20201

Dear Commissioner Darling and Associate Commissioner Milner:

We appreciate the hard work and numerous efforts that the Administration on Children, Youth and Families and the Children's Bureau have taken to address the range of issues facing agencies and families during the coronavirus pandemic.

We ask that the Children's Bureau issue guidance to states to encourage them to consider contacting adoptive and guardianship families during this time. Families may welcome the information that there is the possibility of a review of their child's Adoption or Guardianship Assistance Agreement and a temporary increase in its payment rate or a one-time, additional payment during this pandemic and its aftermath. These funds have always offered a continuous source of support for a permanent placement and continue to be a valuable resource that may be revised for an appropriate length of time by an appropriate amount to reflect changing needs. We feel that this is an important consideration because assistance rate determinations for children in adoption or guardianship are different than those for youth in foster care.

As representatives of organizations and agencies that work with the families of children and youth adopted or in guardianship from foster care, we would like to bring focus to the needs of families served by title IV-E funds. As you know, all families are experiencing new demands on their lives and changes in the construct of their days. We seek your guidance and assistance with states to inform and encourage proactive efforts in support of adoptive and guardianship families facing the hardships and challenges inherent in a global pandemic.

Federal law permits the benefits and payment rates of adoption and guardianship agreements to be adjusted periodically, depending upon changes in the needs of the child or the circumstances of the family. As we all are, these families are facing new and unplanned challenges. These challenges include financial and psychological stressors that may disproportionately impact the families that traditionally adopt or assume permanent guardianship of children and youth from state care. Additional stressors brought on by the pandemic not only affect the stability of the home, they may affect the stability of a placement, an adoption, or permanent guardianship and result in a child returning to foster care. Disruption and dissolution are always a consideration

during times of crises. These outcomes would not only detrimentally affect the lives of the child and its family, it would add strain on an increasingly stressed, state system of child welfare.

We know how committed you are and have always been in meeting the needs of families with children and youth in foster care. We hope you will provide this new guidance to encourage states to consider the needs of adoptive and guardianship families. Especially considering recent Congressional action that increases the federal financial support available to children and youth eligible for title IV-E and the measure that several states are taking of providing adjusted payments to foster parents during this crisis. In promotion of equal support of all children and youth served by title IV E, we ask for this guidance.

Thank you for your commitment to reducing the number of children waiting for permanency and your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Sharon E. McCartney

Director, Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (AAICAMA)



Christine James-Brown

President/CEO, Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)