

## February 16, 2020 — Adoptions

**Panel Members:** **Bree Bofill** (Citrus - Adoption Program Manager) and **Becky Gil** (Guardian ad Litem - Assistant Circuit Director)

**From Dorothy Marin (*Voices for Children — Children's Needs*); [dmarin@beavoice.org](mailto:dmarin@beavoice.org)**

- *Voices* has received emergency funding for utilities and housing.
- To apply, applicants must have fallen behind on rent and have received an eviction notice.
- The funds are only allowed to cover 1 month's rent — no security deposits or fees.
- For water or sewer fees, the applicant must have received a final notice. Funds can only cover up to 1 month — will not cover reconnection fees.
- Applicant must be a Miami-Dade County resident; must have copy of signed lease; and an eviction/3-day notice.
- GALs can contact Dorothy directly without going through your CAM as these funds are available for a limited amount of time.

### **Adoptions:**

- All adoptions of children from the foster care system are considered public adoptions. All the children are considered special-needs children. The adoption process is free.
- To be a licensed foster parent or an adoptive parent, you must complete PRIDE training. Once training is completed, it will be determined if you are eligible to be an adoptive parent, and an adoption home study will be ordered. There are approximately 100 (80-120) children available for adoption with no family available/willing to adopt.
- People adopting children from the system receive an adoption subsidy until the child is 18. (For children ages 16-17 who are adopted from the system, there is an extended adoption subsidy until age 21.) The adoption subsidy starts at \$417 monthly, but can be negotiated. For example, a foster parent who adopts a child who was in their care, can get 100% of the rate they were receiving as a foster parent. This must be approved by DCF and is called an **enhanced-subsidy** request.
- Other benefits of adoption include: Medicaid; a tuition fee waiver for any Florida State school; post-adoption services; a \$1,000 adoption reimbursement after the adoption is finalized (usually used for attorney fees). State employees who adopt receive certain tax benefits.

### **Recruitment:**

- GALs can help with recruiting adoptive parents.
- It is the responsibility of the case manager to enter the child into the state DCF website. [www.Adoptflorida.org](http://www.Adoptflorida.org)
- There is a **Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN)** child ID# —your CAM or a GAL admin has access to FSFN, and you can have them enter the child ID# — this is a different # from your case #! If your child is available for adoption — there is a final TPR judgement —a photo and blurb of your child should be posted.

- It is mandated that all our children who are available for adoption be on the state website.
- Another source of recruitment is the Miami Heart Gallery. (Each county has their own separate Heart Gallery.)
- Citrus has adoption/permanency recruiters — (3) each assigned to each separate agency: Ora Duke/CHS and Wesley House; Samia Jones Paramour/FRC; and Amanda Ponce/CFCE.
- The GAL should be included in all match and **ARC (Adoption Review Committee)** staffings and is entitled to review all home studies.
- Recruitment begins when a TPR petition is filed. If someone is interested in adopting one of your kids, they should start to complete the adoption package, but shouldn't date it because there are time limits.
- The photos/blurbs of the child cannot be posted until there is a final judgement.
- Once you have a FSFN child ID#, make sure picture is current and blurb is well done. If you need anything updated, contact the Case Manager and copy the permanency recruiter from the appropriate agency. If the blurb is poorly written, you might want to rewrite it and give it to the Case Manager as a "suggested update."
- No mental-health diagnoses are posted because the children have a right to privacy, and diagnoses are personal information. If someone is interested in adopting a child, there is a disclosure staffing where they are told everything about the child.
- **Family Finders** – this process begins as soon as the children come into care.
- **Wendy's Wonderful Kids** looks specifically within the child's network.
- [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org) is the national adoption website.

**Post adoption services** — for questions, contact Katerin Chavez- 305-761-3490:

- Mental and behavioral health
- Tutoring
- Medical subsidy
- Medicaid issues
- Adoption support groups
- Subsidy issues/ increases

**Miscellaneous:**

- Most adoptive families know the child. They are either family members, foster parents, or someone in the child's network.
- Dissolution rate is less than 1%. These are children who were adopted; the adoptive parents are TPR-ed; and the child comes back into the system.
- Sibling relationships are extremely important and as of now, a good enough job isn't done to keep siblings together. Sibling staffings for separated siblings are a GAL requirement.

**AARC — Adoption Applicant Review Committee:**

- AARC meets because there is some sort of problem — such as, there may be more than one person seeking to adopt the child or something comes up in the background check of the applicant — criminal history or abuse.

- The committee interviews all applicants.
- Becky Gil attends all AARC staffings, and the GAL is invited.
- When the AARC is finished meeting, Citrus and DCF vote. The person whose application is denied receives a letter from DCF and has a brief period to appeal the denial. If the appeal is granted, there is an hearing before an administrative judge (not the dependency judge) who makes the final decision.

**Adoption Checklist is attached below:**

- Not all the forms listed in the Adoption Checklist are for the family to complete.
- The Checklist includes everything that is in the package that is submitted for review.
- The adoption package is too large an attachment to include here (and the GAL is invited) so if you have a case and a potential adoptive parent, please ask your case manager for a copy of the adoption packet.

