



SOCIAL SERVICES NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: June 16, 2015

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CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES SELECTED FOR NEW INITIATIVE TO HELP CHILDREN

HICKORY -- After a rigorous nationwide selection process, Catawba County Social Services has been selected as one of eight sites for a five-year initiative to develop evidence-based models of support and intervention to achieve long-term, stable permanency in adoptive and guardianship homes for waiting children as well as for children and families after adoption or guardianship has been finalized.

Nationally, for every one child placed in publicly financed foster care, nearly 2.8 children are placed in assisted adoptive or guardianship families. These families often face challenges that stem from the children's histories of maltreatment and trauma. Such challenges do not spontaneously disappear with adoption or guardianship, and the persistent effects of maltreatment pose ongoing risk to children's health and well-being. To assist families facing these challenges and to provide supports to preserve adoptive and guardianship families after permanence occurs, Catawba County Social Services is joining the National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation. The QIC-AG is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.

As a partner site in this initiative, Catawba County Social Services will implement a new intervention and will develop system capacity not only to promote these permanency options but also to support adoptive and guardianship families. Throughout the five-year initiative, Catawba County Social Services will receive financial resources, technical assistance, and guidance from the QIC-AG Partnership Team, which includes experts from Spaulding for Children, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Children's Bureau. At the conclusion of the initiative, the QIC-AG will have rigorously evaluated evidence-based models of support and intervention so that the most effective programs and methods can be replicated in child welfare systems across the country.

As the number of adoptive and guardianship placements continues to rise, it will be critically important for Catawba County Social Services to continue strengthening and improving its system capacity to provide a continuum of services for children in foster care who are waiting for permanent homes, as well as children and families who have achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship.

"Being selected for this project is an honor, since only a select few were asked to participate," said John Eller, director of Catawba County Social Services. "This project will allow Catawba County to develop and test models that be support children who have been in the child welfare system to attain their forever homes when they cannot return

to their parents. Nationally, we should strive to increase stability in families who have adopted or assumed guardianship of a child. To do this, we must improve their behavioral outcomes, strengthen child and family well-being, and assess what services caregivers need as well to best support children in their care."

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