

OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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 | ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE | TRANSMITTAL: 99 OCFS ADM-1  
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TO: Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors  
 DIVISION: Development & Prev. Services/Strategic Planning & Policy Development  
 DATE: November 09, 1999

SUBJECT: The Adoption Album - Our Children, Our Families:  
 Automation of The Blue Book and The Adoptive  
 Parent Registry (PAPR)

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 ATTACHMENTS: | o - DSS-2703 (Interim 9/99) Referral of a  
 | Child to State Adoption Services and  
 | instructions  
 | o - DSS-857 (Interim 9/99) Application to  
 | Adopt and instructions  
 | o - Process and Systems Flow Charts (Forms  
 | not available on-line)

FILING REFERENCES

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Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
97 ADM-14	86 ADM-25	18NYCRR Parts 420, 421, 424	SSL 153-d 372-b 372-f		

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to advise social services districts and voluntary authorized agencies about the implementation of a new computer system. This will require submission of additional information regarding photo listed children and prospective adoptive parents so matches between children and families can be administered. The standards for referral and photo listing of children freed for adoption as set forth in Office regulation 18 NYCRR Part 420 remain in effect. The new system will automate the current process related to the photo listing of children freed for adoption referred to New York State Adoption Services and redesign technology associated with the Prospective Adoptive Parent Registry (PAPR). Consequently, the new process will allow caseworkers to proactively plan for permanent placement of children.

II. BACKGROUND

In 1997, The Office of Children and Family Services(OCFS) received federal funding to convert the "Blue Book" (New York State's Waiting Children) into an automated listing of children freed for adoption. Implementation of these activities is the responsibility of OCFS' New York State Adoption Services (NYSAS).

The new automated process will address many issues identified with the current Blue Book to provide for a more timely photo listing of children freed for adoption and to photo list children who are "truly available" (no prospective adoptive parent(s) interested or identified) for adoption. It will also involve updating the PAPR system to improve the quality of the Registry and provide caseworkers with a user-friendly system that expedites the process of matching Waiting Children with prospective adoptive parents.

Currently, the photo listing information submitted to OCFS/NYSAS is reviewed and submitted to a printing company where the Blue Book inserts are developed. These inserts are mailed to approximately 900 subscribers throughout the United States. This process takes approximately six to eight weeks. Unfortunately, the time frame required for printing reduces the impact of the updates on the children as their situation changes. Once the inserts are sent to the subscriber, it is their responsibility to update the Blue Books. However, the workload of the subscriber may delay the updating of the Blue Books. Consequently, prospective adoptive parents viewing outdated Blue Books may become discouraged and frustrated, as their calls yield the response that the child they are inquiring about has already been placed for adoption or is no longer available.

The intent of PAPER is to utilize the statewide computer network to allow agencies with waiting children to identify specific waiting families across New York State who might be suitable candidates for a particular child or sibling group. When prospective adoptive parents express to their caseworker a desire to adopt hard-to-place or handicapped children, the caseworker would use the information recorded on the Application to Adopt form (LDSS-857) to register the family with PAPER. The prospective parents' registration information must be updated from time to time or deleted if the family no longer wishes to adopt or when they do adopt. Since PAPER exists on a mainframe database that is cumbersome to use, PAPER has been under utilized.

New technology associated with photo listing children and registering families will help to facilitate matching children freed for adoption with suitable approved prospective adoptive parents regardless of the state or county where the children or parents reside. This will help reduce delays in interjurisdictional placements as addressed by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

Seven focus group meetings were held across the State. At the meetings, caseworkers, prospective adoptive families, and OCFS staff had an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns associated with the photo listing of freed children and PAPER, as well as provide recommendations regarding the design of the photo listing system. The consensus throughout the State was the need to keep some information confidential and to photo list on the Internet children who were truly available for adoption.

As a result of designing a new process, the common terminology, Blue Book, no longer accurately describes the breadth of this project. OCFS/NYSAS elicited recommendations for a new name for the process from caseworkers, children's advocates and prospective adoptive families who will use this process on a daily basis. The new name selected for the Adoption Photo Listing system is "The Adoption Album - Our Children, Our Families." In addition, for the purpose of this directive, the Adoptive Parent Registry as defined in 18 NYCRR 424.1(a) will be referred to as the Family Adoption Registry. The new names selected more accurately reflect the children and families the process is designed to serve; encompass the many aspects of the project; and provide a positive beginning to a process that will bring more children and families together.

### III. PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

The Adoption Album - Our Children, Our Families (The Adoption Album), is a photo listing, registering, and matching process that will serve both children and families by providing the information needed to find permanent homes for New York State's Waiting Children. There are two components in this process -- Child Photo Listing and the Family Adoption Registry.

The Child Photo Listing component of the process will automate the current photo listing process and replace the current photo listing prototype available on the Internet. In addition, OCFS/NYSAS staff in

Albany will use this process to update the new hard copy of The Adoption Album and generate reports. The Child Photo Listing component of the process will provide comprehensive information to be available for caseworkers on each child and the ability for the child's information to be more timely and accurate.

Families will have the opportunity to register in the Family Adoption Registry. The Family Adoption Registry will maintain and publish a list of families who are looking to adopt children with special needs. This process will satisfy New York State legislative requirements, match families against photo listed children, and allow caseworkers to document and prove that they have made an effort to locate an appropriate adoptive family for a child(ren). This process will allow caseworkers to focus on both prospective families and children they consider to be a potential match.

Caseworkers will administer the process and receive information associated with photo listed children and registered families through the Intranet.

Intranet: The Intranet is the OCFS internal network which caseworkers can access only on CONNECTIONS. Standard NT security will be enforced to assign access to the system. This will prevent unauthorized users from accessing information maintained on the Intranet. The Intranet will allow caseworkers to provide additional information regarding the children in their care, so more applicable planning can be made for children. In addition, the Intranet will maintain the photo listing of all children freed for adoption.

The general public will access the photo listing of children by using the Internet.

Internet: The Internet will provide prospective adoption families with a web site that will photo list children who are truly available for adoption. The children truly available for adoption represents a subset of the children photo listed on the Intranet. Limited information describing the children will be available on the Internet. In addition, with the consent of the adoptive families, the Internet will feature adoption success stories of families and children.

#### Child Photo Listing

The Adoption Album will automate the method in which caseworkers refer children to OCFS/NYSAS for photo listing. Caseworkers will initiate the photo listing referral by submitting electronically the Referral of Child to State Adoption Services form (LDSS-2703) and by mailing a printed copy of the referral form and the photograph of the child to NYSAS. The information transmitted to NYSAS will register a child for photo listing on the Intranet and allow truly available children to be photo listed on the Internet. Please note: In cases where a "waiver of photo listing," or a "waiver of referral" is being requested, caseworkers must continue to follow the instructions in 97 ADM-14 Referral of a Freed Child to New York State Adoption Services.

The automated child photo listing publication on the Intranet and Internet will reduce the amount of time it takes to make a new child accessible to caseworkers and the public, respectively. This process will take approximately two weeks. The implementation of the new process will not result in additional work on the part of the caseworker or NYSAS. NYSAS will continue to provide a printed version of the photo listing and distribute a limited number of copies to agencies, social services districts and other subscribers who request a copy of the photo listing.

#### Family Adoption Registry

To help caseworkers match children and families, the Family Adoption Registry will maintain and publish a list of families who are looking to adopt children with special needs. All prospective adoptive parent(s) who express a willingness to adopt handicapped or hard-to-place children must be registered in the Family Adoption Registry. The information entered in the registry is based on the information provided on the Application to Adopt form (LDSS-857). The registry will allow caseworkers to match the applicant's profile and acceptable child characteristics with children referred for photo listing. Consequently, prospective adoptive parent(s) can be matched only on information provided to the registry. Agencies are reminded of their continued mandate to comply with the requirements of the federal Multiethnic Placement Act and the ASFA interjurisdictional provisions set forth in more detail on page nine of this directive.

The new process will expand the required Family Adoption Registry functionality by including a Family Photo Listing. The Family Photo Listing will be available to all New York State residents who are registered in the Family Adoption Registry with an approved home study. Once the caseworker has completed the Family Adoption Registry and the family has provided the photo listing information, the caseworker can register the family in the Family Photo Listing. However, if the family did not have an approved home study and/or photo listing information when they were registered in the Family Adoption Registry, the caseworkers can photo list the family at a later time. The Family Photo Listing is available to caseworkers on the Intranet.

#### The Adoption Album Administrative Components

OCFS/NYSAS will use The Adoption Album process to send caseworkers 18 month reminder letters regarding children who are coming due or overdue for photo listing. Caseworkers can print reports on children photo listed by their agency, and by a specific worker. In addition, this process will allow caseworkers to print/publish hard copies of the children who are photo listed and/or the families who are photo listed by various breakouts: by worker, district, agency, etc. The computer system does not have the capacity to support printing unlimited hard copies of the photo listings.

Important Note: Once The Adoption Album is fully implemented, security authorization will be required for all caseworkers responsible for

referring a child for photo listing and registering prospective adoptive families. OCFS/NYSAS will provide specific information necessary to obtain security authorization.

IV. REQUIRED ACTION

To facilitate the implementation process, OCFS/NYSAS must convert information recorded on the current Internet prototype and Blue Book data base and begin to enter prospective families into The Adoption Album. The conversion and implementation process will require social services districts and voluntary authorized agencies to provide limited additional information regarding the children currently photo listed and prospective families currently listed with these agencies.

Based on the effective date of the directive, social services districts and voluntary authorized agencies must adhere to the following instructions regarding the provisions of additional information associated with:

- \* children currently photo listed;
- \* new children required to be referred for photo listing;
- \* children whose current photo listing information is either overdue by 18 months or coming due for new photo listing; and
- \* the registration of prospective adoptive families.

Attached is the Interim LDSS-2703 Referral form (with instructions) which will be used to convert child-specific information to the Child Photo Listing component of The Adoption Album; and the Interim LDSS-857 Application to Adopt form (with instructions) which will be used to register prospective families in the Family Adoption Registry. Although both forms currently exist, they have been amended for the purpose of converting and implementing the new Adoption Album process.

- Interim LDSS-2703 Referral: The Interim LDSS-2703 form is amended to reflect data fields in the Child Photo Listing component of The Adoption Album. The Interim LDSS-2703 Referral form includes additional data fields to describe children with pre-defined disability characteristics and severity levels; primary and secondary language; and allergies to pets. Although all children should be photo listed on the Internet, the Interim form includes a section of pre-defined reasons why a child should not be photo listed on the Internet.
- Interim LDSS-857 Application to Adopt: The Interim LDSS-857 Application to Adopt form is amended to reflect data fields in the Family Adoption Registry component of The Adoption Album. The Interim form contains the same pre-defined disability characteristics and severity levels; primary and secondary language; and allergies to pets data fields as the Interim LDSS-2703 referral form. The data fields allow prospective adoptive families to identify the characteristics of children they are willing to adopt. Including the same data fields on both forms allows caseworkers to record the necessary

information to match children and families by using the same identifying information. Please submit the completed forms to OCFS/NYSAS (see new address in Section VI) with the additional information needed. Begin immediately to use the Interim forms to refer children for photo listing and to register prospective adoptive families.

To help social services districts and voluntary authorized agencies identify the children currently photo listed in the Blue Book, OCFS/NYSAS has compiled a complete listing by agencies of all photo listed children. The list will be mailed separately to all agencies with responsibility for referring children freed for adoption to OCFS/NYSAS. Agencies should check the list to ensure that it matches the list of photo listed children in your agency. This is an opportunity to correct any discrepancies between OCFS/NYSAS photo listing data base and your agency records.

Instructions for Photo listing Children:

\_ Children Currently Photo listed: If a child is currently photo listed in the Blue Book, do not complete the entire Interim LDSS-2703 Referral form. Complete the entire top portion on page one of the form; Part III (if applicable); and all of Part IV. It is not necessary to provide a narrative or a new picture as we will use what is currently on file. However, if you would like to amend the existing narrative or submit a new picture, you can do so in this process. Information regarding children currently photo listed must be submitted by November 30, 1999.

\_ New Children Not Yet Registered: If the child is not currently registered for photo listing in the Blue Book, you must register the child for photo listing by completing the entire Interim LDSS-2703 form, although not all of the information on the form will appear in The Adoption Album. The child's information will be registered on the Intranet, the child will be photo listed in The Adoption Album, and, unless one of the exceptions is checked in Part III of Interim LDSS-2703, the child will be photo listed on the Internet.

Note: If the Interim LDSS-2703 form is not used, the child cannot be registered for photo listing and the social services district or the voluntary authorized agency will be in violation of the photo listing statute and regulations.

\_ Overdue and Coming Due for Photo listing: If a child is overdue or coming due, you must use the Interim LDSS-2703 form to update the child's information. The same procedures as noted in the previous paragraph apply to registering and photo listing the child.

Instructions for Family Adoption Registry:

\_ Families Currently Registered: If your agency currently maintains records of prospective adoptive families who would like to adopt a hard-to-place or handicapped child(ren), you must register the families

on the statewide Family Adoption Registry. Please complete Part I (Family Adoption Registry Information) and Part II (Family Certification Information) of the Interim (LDSS-857) Application to Adopt form. Information regarding family registration must be submitted by December 15, 1999.

\_ New Families Not Yet Registered: If a family is not registered as a prospective adoptive family and would like to be registered, you must register the family by completing the entire Interim (LDSS-857) form. The information will be entered into the Family Adoption Registry. If the Interim (LDSS-857) form is not used, the family cannot be registered into the new system. Please begin using the Interim (LDSS-857) form immediately.

V. SYSTEMS IMPLICATIONS

Continue to use all CCRS adoption codes as indicated in 97 ADM-14 Referral of Freed Child to New York State Adoption Services instructions.

VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional Features to the Adoption Photo Listing System  
(Optional)

Along with the photographs of the children, we would like the same children to provide us with a drawing of their interpretation of a family. The drawing will be incorporated into the web site design. Although this is optional, it will help bring life to the web site and place focus on the children. The deadline to submit the drawings is December 15, 1999. Please submit the drawing to OCFS/NYSAS:

NYS Office of Children and Family Services  
New York State Adoption Services  
Riverview Center, 6th floor  
40 North Pearl Street  
Albany, New York 12243

In addition, the system is being developed to support video and audio clips of children who may wish to be featured on the Internet. When this capacity is available, OCFS/NYSAS will provide instructions on how to have video and audio clips of your children featured on the Internet.

Important - ASFA Implementation: In December of 1998, OCFS promulgated regulations which addressed requirements set forth in the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 relation to barriers to interjurisdictional adoptions. The Office added 18NYCRR 421.26 to provide that an authorized agency may not delay or deny the placement of a child freed for adoption with an otherwise suitable approved adoptive parent on the basis that the approved adoptive parent resides in a state or county different from that of the agency with jurisdiction of the child. The above referenced standard, along with a right of an administrative hearing to challenge any such denial are in

effect and must be complied with by all social services districts and voluntary authorized agencies.

Multiethnic Placement Act: Social services districts and voluntary authorized agencies are reminded of the need to comply with federal and State requirements relating to the use of race, color or national origin as a consideration in foster care and adoptive placements. Agencies are urged to carefully conform with such standards, which are addressed in more detail in 98 INF-8 and 98 INF-10.

VII. EFFECTIVE DATE

This directive is effective November 12, 1999.

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Donald K. Smith  
Deputy Commissioner  
Development and Prevention Services

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William F. Baccaglioni  
Director  
Strategic Planning and  
Policy Development