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 | INFORMATIONAL LETTER |
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TRANSMITTAL: 93 INF-31

TO: Commissioners of
 Social Services
 Executive Directors

DIVISION: Services and
 Community
 Development

DATE: July 28, 1993

SUBJECT: Plans for a Revision of the Model Foster Parent
 Manual

SUGGESTED

DISTRIBUTION: Director of Services
 Child Welfare Supervisors
 Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON: Regional Office Directors:
 Albany: John O Connor 518-432-2751 USER ID: R0F015
 Buffalo: Linda Brown 716-847-3145 USER ID: 89D421
 Metro: Fredric Cantlo 212-804-1202 USER ID: 0FG010
 Rochester: Linda Kurtz 716-238-8200 USER ID: 0FH010
 Syracuse: Jack Klump 315-428-3235 USER ID: 89W005

ATTACHMENT: Agency Reporting Form For Project To Revise The Model
 Foster Parent Manual is available On-Line

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
88 INF-40		443.3(p)		1988 Model Foster Parent Manual	

I Purpose

This release has two purposes. The first is to advise authorized agencies of the Department's plan to enlist agency cooperation and participation in a major revision of its model foster parent manual. The revision, which is expected to be ready for distribution in late 1994, will replace the 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual.

The second purpose is to request authorized agencies to begin considering what changes and additions to The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual will be necessary to make the next one a highly practical, useful document for foster parents.

II Background

Foster parent manuals distributed by the Department in 1983 and 1988 were intended to facilitate agency compliance with regulation 18 NYCRR Section 444.3:

(p)"Authorized agencies shall provide each foster family boarding home with a manual that summarizes all current agency policies and procedures that have some direct or indirect bearing upon the role and responsibilities of a foster parent."

Policies, procedures and practices that have changed the foster family care program during the past five years make it essential to replace the now out of date 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual.

III Program Implications

- A. A comprehensive manual summarizing policies and procedures relating to the foster family's role and responsibilities is important for maintaining an effective foster family care program. Without a reliable and accessible source of information about policies and procedures, foster parents may feel themselves to be in an awkward position when faced with urgent problematic situations. They could decide either to do nothing until an agency caseworker can be reached or to risk agency censure by an initiative that may be inconsistent with agency practice, procedures, standards, etc. In such situations, foster family morale suffers and open, spontaneous communication begins to breakdown.
- B. To be universally accepted and valued by foster parents, the revised model foster parent manual has to aim for clarity and coherence, relevance, proper scope and substantive content. Agency staff should understand that a foster parent manual is an indispensable tool for helping foster parents and staff to be clear about the foster parent role and responsibility. Confusion about the foster parent role and responsibility can lead to foster parent-agency conflicts that inevitably undermine an agency's program.

- C. To develop such an effective manual, a review and developmental process is being planned that is expected to last 15 - 18 months. The date of this release will mark the beginning of the process. Sufficient time is being allowed for a comprehensive, statewide effort that will elicit comments and suggestions from the staffs of all foster family care programs and, also, from experienced foster families.

The process will include the following activities:

1. the use of foster parent and staff focus groups to identify the positive and useful sections and the gaps and deficiencies in the 1988 Model; suggestions formulated by the focus groups are to be submitted to the Department's regional offices.
2. an invitation to all commissioners of social services and executive directors to arrange for staff review and assessment of the current model and the formulation of suggestions that will be submitted to the regional offices;
3. final review and assessment of the initial draft of the revised manual by the original focus groups and by a sample group of public and private agencies.

IV Recommended Action

- A. Use attachment A for:

1. advising your regional office of the agency's interest in having either the N.Y. State Child Welfare Training Institute or the N.Y. State Foster and Adoptive Parent Association organize a focus group from among the most experienced and active foster families currently certified by the agency;
2. identifying the staff person assigned to coordinate the agency's work on the proposed revision with the Department's regional office.

- B. Begin to make plans for what the agency will want to include in those sections of their own foster parent manual that have to do with local policies, procedures, and requirements. By doing this, agencies will correct one of the weaknesses that was frequently found in local manuals that were based upon the Department's 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual.

V. Additional Information

- A. The Department plan is to have a Spanish translation ready for distribution no later than six months after the publication of the revised model foster parent manual. Arrangements will be made for the translation to begin as soon as the final version of the revised manual is ready.

- B. Attachment A is a reporting form that will assist the Department and the N.Y. State Child Welfare Training Institute and the N.Y. State Foster and Adoptive Parent Association in organizing the foster parent focus groups. Any questions about the form and the plans for the focus groups may be discussed with the staff at the Institute. The contact person is Diana A. Davis, (716)-881-2800.

- C. It is assumed each agency will have a sufficient supply of The 1988 Model Foster Parent Manual to begin the review process and to help foster families and staff prepare for their participation in a focus group. Any shortage of manuals should be brought to the attention of the Department's regional offices.

Frank Puig
Deputy Commissioner
Services and Community Development

ATTACHMENT
Agency Reporting Form For Project To
Revise The Model Foster
Parent Manual

Instructions: Authorized agencies are requested to submit this form to the appropriate SDSS regional office within 30 working days of the release of the Informational letter.

Answer yes or no for 1. and 2.

1. This agency would like to be considered as one of the sites for a foster parent focus group. [] yes [] no
2. There is interest among; (a) foster parents in being focus group participants who will identify deficiencies in the 1988 model manual. [] yes [] no, (b) agency foster care staff in being focus group participants etc. [] yes [] no
3. The staff person designated as the agency's coordinator for the review project is:

Name

Telephone Number

Date: _____ Prepared by: _____ Telephone # _____
Name