




DIRECTIVE MEMO
D19-07

September 1, 2019

TO: Executive Staff
County Directors
Regional Adoption Administrators
Private Attorneys representing adoptive parents in DSS adoptions

FROM: Mike Leach, DSS State Director 

SUBJECT: Adoption Finalization Incentive Program

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) believes that every child should have a safe, stable, and loving forever family in which to grow. As a part of our commitment to achieving this outcome for children who cannot be reunified with their families, DSS has continued in its efforts to increase the timeliness of adoption finalizations.

Therefore, effective September 1, 2019, DSS will continue its Adoption Finalization Incentive Program with the following requirements. This Incentive will remain in effect until this memo is rescinded. Under this initiative, DSS will provide private attorneys, representing prospective adoptive parents of children in foster care, a monetary incentive to finalize their adoptions in a timely manner. This program may be reviewed periodically and may be continued, modified or discontinued.

To qualify for this incentive payment:

- (1) the Petition for Adoption must be filed in Family Court within three business days of the signing of an Adoption Placement Agreement by prospective adoptive parents;
- (2) the hearing to finalize the adoption must be completed within 45 days of the filing of a Petition for Adoption;
- (3) the Complaint for Adoption must be served upon DSS's Office of General Counsel at least 30 days prior to the finalization hearing; and

(4) the final Decree of Adoption must be filed within five business days of a final hearing.

Upon satisfaction of these four conditions, DSS will award an incentive payment of \$375.00 per adoptee child to the attorney representing the adoptive parents.

This incentive is in addition to any reimbursement of non-recurring costs as provided for in Human Services Manual Section 442. If you have any questions about the processing of payments, you may contact Avery O'Toole, Adoption Subsidy Coordinator, at (803) 898-7539 or Avery.Otoole@dss.sc.gov. If you have questions about how attorneys qualify for the incentive payment, please contact the Office of General Counsel at 803-898-7368.