

## Annual NCACDSS Innovations Award

### 1. Community Engagement

North Carolina has a large population of children in foster care that do not have an appropriate place to live while in agency custody. They are spending nights at the local DSS building or hotels. To combat this problem, our county developed and implemented a plan to utilize emergency foster parents. The goal was to prevent children and workers from staying at the agency and for children to have a home to stay in. Emergency foster parents are on-call and agree, by contract, to take Harnett County foster children that do not have an appropriate placement. Emergency foster parents agree to work with the licensing worker in identifying any needs and to assist with long-term placement for the foster child. Emergency placements are for up to 2 weeks.

Our County has budget approval for 3 emergency foster parents. They are paid \$200.00 per month to be available as needed. The payment is funded by county funds, but we have found that this payment is more cost effective than staying at the agency. If a child is placed in the emergency foster home the foster parent receives regular board payments. Emergency foster parents must maintain their foster care license through our County and the State of North Carolina and maintain good standing.

The outcome of emergency foster homes has been so successful that our County is increasing the number to 4 homes and raising the pay to \$300 per month.

Since implementing Emergency foster parents, the agency has not a any children staying at the agency or in hotels with DSS supervision. Surrounding counties have utilized our emergency foster homes.

Children in foster care deserve and need a home setting whenever possible. Emergency foster homes have allowed children without an identified placement to be in a home while a long-term, appropriate placement is found.

Virginia Smith

Placement / Foster Care Program Manager

