

# Voice for Adoption

SPEAKING OUT FOR OUR NATION'S WAITING CHILDREN

## 2011 VFA Advocacy Agenda

Voice for Adoption focuses our advocacy efforts on improving the lives of the 115,000 children and youth in our nation's foster care system; providing a significant interest on children who are waiting to be adopted and the families who adopt youth from foster care. We believe that every child deserves and needs permanent family relationships. We support all forms of permanency that provide children with true, life-long permanent family connections.

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### Our Core Advocacy Priorities

- **Supporting Post-Adoption Services** — VFA calls for dedicated federal funding for post-adoption services and efforts to promote the availability of adoption-competent mental health and other services for children and families.
- **Breaking Down Barriers to Interstate Adoptions** — VFA calls for Congress to support funding the interstate placement bonuses at \$10 million to encourage the process to expedite adoptions across state lines. VFA also urges HHS to examine how to better encourage states to collaborate to increase adoptions across states.
- **Extending the Adoption Tax Credit** — VFA calls for extending the refundable adoption tax credit through 2012.
- **Supporting the Adoption Opportunities Program** — VFA thanks Congress for reauthorizing and improving the Adoption Opportunities Program; we specifically support the dedication of a significant percentage (30-50%) of the programs funding toward efforts to address post-adoption support and overrepresentation of children and youth of color in foster care. VFA encourages HHS to provide significant grants to the field in these important areas. Furthermore, VFA calls for appropriation equal to authorization level.
- **Reauthorizing and Improving PSSF** — VFA calls for the reauthorization of Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) legislation, with a renewed interest in supporting families that adopt by providing a significant interest on the availability of post-adoption services in each state.
- **Protecting Discretionary Adoption Programs** — VFA calls for Congress to remain committed to federal programs that support children and families; VFA specifically supports funding protections for families that adopt children from foster care by protecting discretionary adoption programs such as the Adoption Opportunities Program, Promoting Safe and Stable Families and the Adoption Incentive Program.
- **Amending the Interethnic Adoption Provisions** — VFA calls for amendments to the Interethnic Adoption Provisions to allow race/ethnicity to be one of the factors considered in permanency planning and in the preparation of families adopting transracially. We also advocate for enforcement of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) requirement to recruit families who represent the racial and ethnic backgrounds of children in foster care, and provide funding to support such recruitment.
- **Funding Adoption Incentives** — VFA supports increasing the funding for the Adoption Incentive Program—with an increased focus on the adoption of older children and children with special needs from foster care—to \$60 million, including \$7 million to offset the shortfall in 2010 awards. Any funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year should be reinvested into technical assistance that will promote the adoption of older children awaiting adoption. VFA also calls for Congress to ensure HHS require reports be submitted by any States that receive federally funded adoption bonuses.
- **Opening More Homes to Children** — VFA supports and encourages legislation that breaks down barriers to achieve more adoptive homes for children in foster care through prohibiting discrimination of adoptive and foster parents based on sexual orientation and or marital status.