

**ADOPT
AMERICA
NETWORK**
Toledo, OH

**ADOPTION
EXCHANGE
ASSOCIATION**
Baltimore, MD

**ADOPTION
RHODE ISLAND**
Providence, RI

**CHILDREN
AWAITING
PARENTS**
Rochester, NY

**CHILD WELFARE
LEAGUE OF
AMERICA**
Washington, DC

**CONSORTIUM
FOR CHILDREN**
San Rafael, CA

**FAMILY
BUILDERS
NETWORK**

**FOSTERADOPT
CONNECT**
Independence, MO

**HARMONY
FAMILY CENTER**
Knoxville, TN

**KINSHIP
CENTER
SENECA FAMILY
OF AGENCIES**
Salinas, CA

**NORTHWEST
RESOURCE
ASSOCIATES**
AK, OR, WA

**NORTH
AMERICAN
COUNCIL ON
ADOPTABLE
CHILDREN**
St. Paul, MN

**NY COUNCIL ON
ADOPTABLE
CHILDREN**
New York, NY

**SIERRA
FOREVER
FAMILIES**
Sacramento, CA

**SPAULDING FOR
CHILDREN**
Southfield, MI

**THE ADOPTION
EXCHANGE**
Aurora, CO

**THREE RIVERS
ADOPTION
COUNCIL**
Pittsburgh, PA

Voice for Adoption

SPEAKING OUT FOR OUR NATION'S WAITING CHILDREN



October 27, 2017

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
Strategic Planning Team
Attn: Strategic Plan Comments
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 415F
Washington, DC 20201

Dear U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Strategic Planning Team,

On behalf of Voice for Adoption, a coalition of 17 adoption and child welfare organizations around the United States, I respectfully submit the following comments on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2018–2022 draft strategic plan. Voice for Adoption (VFA) develops and advocates for improved adoption policies. Recognized as a national leader in special needs adoption, VFA works closely with federal and state legislators, as well as other child welfare organizations, to make a difference in the lives of the children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted and the families who adopt children from foster care.

A core function of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is to ensure the safety of children who have experienced abuse and neglect, yet the strategic plan does not mention these children or identify goals for ensuring that all children have a safe, loving, and supported family.

At the end of federal fiscal year 2015, more than 427,000 children were in U.S. foster care, and these numbers have been increasing in year years, in part due to the nation's opioid crisis. Of these children more than 112,000 were not going to return home and were waiting for an adoptive family. In 2015, more than 20,000 children left care with no family of their own. These children deserve the attention of the HHS strategic plan—our nation was continue to do all that it can to ensure that every child has a family.

We ask the HHS strategic planning team to consider adding elements to the plan under Goal 3 that address the issues of children who are in foster care or at risk of entering foster care, including items such as:

- Ensure more children safely avoid foster care placement by encouraging the availability of effective, accessible family support services to address the issues families face, including the use of drugs such as opioids



- Support efforts to place children in foster care with their extended birth family when they cannot remain at home and support these kinship caregivers to ensure the best possible outcomes for children
- Promote public and private efforts to recruit, train, and support adoptive families for children and youth whose birth parents and relatives cannot safely care for them, especially targeted efforts to encourage the adoption of older children and teens
- Support efforts to ensure the well-being of children in foster care and those who age out of foster care without a family

Children and youth who have abused or neglected deserve the attention of our nation, including through the HHS strategic plan. We must have strategies to ensure their safety and well-being so they can grow and thrive and build successful lives.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-210-8118 or director@voice-for-adoption.org

Sincerely,



Schylar Baber
Executive Director

