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Adoption [Folder 2]

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RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
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P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

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HHS BRIEFING ON REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON ADOPTION

January 27, 1997

AGENDA

- HHS Overview of Consultation/Outreach Process
- Discussion of Directive and Related Policy Questions

I. Goal of doubling by 2002 the annual number of adoptions and alternate permanent placements

- ✓ A. Setting state-specific numerical targets *- State report on overall goal (give them 3-6 mos) - harder to commit to specific targets.*
 - 1. Time line for setting targets? *- endorsement of report*
 - 2. Will any states have set targets by submission of report? Perhaps big 8 states (cumulatively with over 75% of children waiting)?

B. Per-child financial incentive

- 1. Bonus structure -- flat per-child payment or annual payment based on increases in certain types of adoptions?
- 2. Payment to state or local level? *weighting critical or else could cream*
- 3. Uses of payment -- administrative or programmatic?

✓ C. Multi-Ethnic Placement Act Implementation (MEPA) *- no tolerance for denial (when put out guidelines)*

- 1. Strategy for "aggressive implementation"? *penalties*
- 2. Progress by HHS Office of Civil Rights in designing a compliance review process? *strategy of review in place*

✓ D. State-by-state report card *me: time*

- 1. Strategy for design and dissemination?

✓ E. Recognizing successful states

- 1. Recommendation for citations?

II. Moving children more quickly from foster care to permanent homes *more agreement?*

A. Identifying barriers to permanency and targeting hard-to-place children

- 1. Strategy for technical assistance and programmatic grants to states?

*increase to previous yr.
increase # + target set.*

what's HHS prof that mean it?

B. Shortening time between placement in foster care and first dispositional hearing

1. Recommendation for change in statutory language? *Chapa/Rohypelle*
2. Discussion of eliminating waiting periods for the termination of parental rights or mandating termination of parental rights after a certain amount of time in foster care? *18 mos to 12 mos. - permission to do more, fly. freq.*

C. Clarifying purpose of "dispositional hearings"

1. Recommendation for change in name to "permanency planning hearing"? *clearer language on purpose of hearings*
2. Legislative action required?

D. Clarifying "reasonable efforts" standard

1. Reaction from consultation process?
2. Process for evaluation and action?

E. Emphasizing permanency planning

1. Plans to devise a standard, equal to the "reasonable efforts" standard, for achieving permanency? *Conkley & Child safety need to send a clear signal*

F. Examining alternate permanency arrangements

1. Strategy for review?

• Discussion of Inter-Agency Components of Directive

- Public awareness campaign
- Dissemination of relevant materials
- Recognizing model businesses
- Providing information and support to federal workers

Inter-agency points of contacts:

Department of the Treasury:	Michael Thorton
Department of HHS:	Carol Williams, Melissa Skolfield
Department of Labor:	TBD
Department of Commerce:	TBD
Office of Personnel Management:	Janice Lachance

Interagency Piece

THEMES EMERGING FROM THE ADOPTION 2002 CONSULTATION PROCESS**ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO PERMANENCY**

- **The Elimination of Geographical Barriers**

A number of geographical barriers to the placement of waiting children were identified, including the lack of dissemination of information on waiting families and children, a reluctance on the part of agencies to conduct home studies to place children who are outside of their jurisdictions, a reluctance of agencies to accept home studies conducted by agencies in other jurisdictions, difficulties in transferring Medicaid benefits, and issues with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

- **Current Funding Streams**

Some participants stressed a need to provide more flexibility to spend money in the front end of the service continuum for better family assessment, prevention and reunification activities. They expressed concern that the supportive services required for good child welfare practice are unavailable or inadequate. The unavailability of substance abuse and mental health treatment was specified repeatedly. Finally, they felt that potential adoptive parents were often not informed about the availability of adoption subsidy. The funding stream problems are exacerbated by fragmentation and separation of foster care and adoption in the child welfare system. Some participants felt that the system currently provides rewards to States to keep kids in foster care or reunify them, but not for adoption.

- **Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)/Interethnic Placement Provision**

In discussions about MEPA and the Interethnic Placement provision, groups repeatedly placed a strong emphasis on the recruitment provisions of MEPA. Most participants volunteered no information or opinions on how to better ensure compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions. One group of participants insisted that States continue to ignore MEPA/IEP and that HHS needs only to enforce the current law.

MOVING CHILDREN TO PERMANENCE MORE PROMPTLY

- **Reasonable Efforts Requirements**

Participants indicated that the safety of the child was of paramount concern and that the child's best interests should be at the heart of all decisions. In general, participants felt that the reasonable efforts requirements need clarification. In general, the groups reacted positively to proposals to add a requirement that a reasonable effort for permanency standard is needed.

- Improvements in Timely Decision-Making

All focus groups emphasized that the court system is as crucial as the child welfare system for ensuring timely decision-making. They repeatedly called for the education of attorneys and judges about the importance of permanence for children. They cited the Court Improvement Projects, currently under way, as examples of technical assistance and leadership that the Federal government can use with the judiciary. The groups also offered specific proposals including the use of concurrent planning, family mediation, and open adoption particularly for relative placements. Concurrent planning seems to be a growing trend.

DOUBLING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ACHIEVE PERMANENCY

- Focus on the Children who are Hardest to Place

The participants repeatedly expressed concern that numerical targets and financial incentives might drive States to focus on children who are easiest to place (e.g., very young children and those already in adoptive placements with foster parents), exacerbating the problems of waiting children who are older or in large sibling groups, who form the large judicial backlog.

- The Incentive Structure Inherent in Adoption 2002 Bonuses

Participants discussed the way that the Adoption 2002 financial bonuses may affect or distort the incentive structure in the child welfare system. The participants wanted to use the Adoption 2002 fiscal incentives to benefit the children who are hardest to place, without resulting in the separation of sibling groups, a disproportionate focus on younger children, or an increase in adoption disruptions. In addition, they indicated that the bonuses should be implemented in ways that are respectful of the rights of birth families and that improve the functioning of the entire child welfare system over the long-term. The groups also were concerned that fiscal penalties might accompany the bonuses, such as reductions in Title IV-E funds for children who remain in foster care for extended periods of time.

- Cross Cutting Principles

All groups agreed that the best interests of the child should be the driving concern in all of our work.

**PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS AND CONFERENCE CALLS
CONDUCTED BY CHILDREN'S BUREAU**

Conference Call with "Big 8 States"
Tuesday, January 14, 1996

NEW YORK

Don Smith
Associate Deputy Commissioner
Services and Community Development Division
New York Department of Social Services

FLORIDA

Mrs. Dee Richter, Program Manager
Permanency Planning Division
Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services
[Carolyn Glenn and Linda Harris also on call]

OHIO

Isaac Palmer
Deputy Director
Ohio Department of Human Services
[4 others also to be on call, including rep. from Governor's Office.]

CALIFORNIA

Marjorie Kelly
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division
California Dept. of Social Services

MICHIGAN

Richard Hoekstra, Manager -- invited not on call
Division of Adoption Services
Office of Children's Services
Michigan Family Independence Agency

ILLINOIS

Joe Loftus
Executive Deputy Director
Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services

PENNSYLVANIA

Warren Lewis
Office of Children, Youth and Families
Pennsylvania Dept. of Public Welfare

TEXAS

Jim Hine
Executive Director
Texas Dept. of Protective and Regulatory Services

**Conference Call with Urban Child Welfare Administrators
Wednesday, January 15, 1997**

Houston/Harris County, TX

Sara Webster
Regional Director
Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

New York City

Nicholas Scopetta
Commissioner
Administration for Children's Services

[Three Deputy Commissioners, Linda Gibbs, Aubrey Featherstone and Joseph Cardieri, also expected to participate.]

Miami/Dade County, Florida

Mr. Imran Ali
District Program Manager
District 11
Florida Dept. of Health and Rehabilitative Services
[Ms. Donna Silverman will also participate.]

Los Angeles County

Renee Powers
Deputy Director
Department of Children and Family Services

Philadelphia, PA

Joan Reeves
Commissioner
Department of Human Services

Chicago/Cook County, IL

Joe Loftus
Executive Deputy Director
DCFS

[Also Alice Castillo and Mark Testa, DCFS]

National Organization Focus Group

January 15, 1996

Mary Lee Allen, Children's Defense Fund
Mark Harden, American Bar Association
Karabelle Pizzigati, Child Welfare League of America
Pam Day, CWLA
Ann Sullivan, CWLA
Tom Birch, National Child Abuse Coalition and Voice for Adoption
Bill Pierce and Patrick Purtill, Jr., National Council for Adoption
Mary Sullivan, National Adoption Information Clearinghouse
Brenda Russell Nordlinger and Dan Drolet, National Association of Homes and Services for Children
Christine Koucher, Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments
Caren Kaplan, National Association of Social Workers
Joyce Thomas, People of Color Leadership Institute
Judy Leavitt, Generations United

Conference Call with National Organizations

January 16, 1997

3:30 - 5:00 pm

Peggy Soule, Children Awaiting Parents
Zena Oglesby, Institute for Black Parenting
Carolyn Johnson, National Adoption Center
Mary Ford, North American Council on Adoption
Judith McKenzie, Spaulding for Children
Terry Cross, National Indian Child Welfare Association
Delois Caldwell, National Association of Black Social Workers
Robert Ortega, National Latino Child Welfare Advocacy Group
Shane Salter, Adoptive Families of America
Mark McDermott, American Academy of Adoption Attorneys

**Focus Group with Kellogg Foundation Families for Kids Grantees
January 16, 1997**

Karen Abmanm, Arizona Families for Kids (FFK)
Sarah Anderson-Mims, North Carolina FFK
Judge William Byars, South Carolina FFK
Don Duquette, University of Michigan Law Clinic
Brenda Gadson, Massachusetts FFK
Susan Ignelzi, Ohio Governor's Office
Marie Jamieson, Washington FFK
Gloria Hochman, National Adoption Center
Jacquelyn Kidd, North American Council on Adoptable Children
Wendy Lewis Jackson, Grand Rapids FFK
Anotoinette Nelson, New York FFK
Rene Sanders, Ohio FFK
Joan Wagnon, Kansas FFK
Linda West, Mississippi FFK
Ying-Ying Yuan and Gila Shusterman, Walter R. McDonald & Assoc., Inc.
Karen Lake, Valora Washington and Carole Smith - W.K. Kellogg Foundation

**Focus Group with Casey and Clark Foundation Grantees
January 17, 1997**

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation Community Partnership reps.:

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Anne Grunewald, private social service agency administrator
Jody Weigel, public agency supervisor

Louisville, KY

JoAnn Harrison, public agency administrator
Karen Hawkins, Community Action Agency administrator

Jacksonville, FL

Diane Seymore, public agency administrator
Gwen Vareene, public agency administrator

St. Louis, MO

Tena Thompson, public agency administrator

Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative reps.:

Terri Ali
Beverly Nelson
Patricia Newell
Marsha Rose Wickliffe

**Focus Group at meeting of
National Association of Child Advocates
January 17, 1997, Baltimore, MD**

(Names to be provided)

**Conference Call with national experts and advocates
Convened by National Council for Adoption (NCFA)
January 21, 1997**

Elizabeth Bartholet, Harvard Law School
Carol Coccia, National Committee to End Racism in America's Child Care System, Inc.
Phoebe Dawson, New Beginnings (Georgia)
Jane Edwards, Board member, NCFA, Harlem-Dowling West side Service and Episcopal
Mission Society (New York City)
Patrick Fagan, Heritage Foundation
Rene Garfinkel, Adoption Studies Institute
Richard Gelles, University of Rhode Island
Beverly Jimmerson, Policy Advisor to Governor Bush (Texas)
Carol Olwert Reese, Partnership for Adoption Advocacy
Mary Beth Style, NCFA Consultant
Woody Turner, Pennsylvania Adoptive Family Rights Council
Sam Totaro, American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (invited, not present)

**Intergovernmental Focus Group
January 22, 1997
2:00 - 4:00 pm
(invited, not all confirmed)**

Melissa Baker, APWA
Susan Golonka, NGA
Marilina Sanz, NACO
Sherry Steisel, NCSL
Joe Dimas, Nat. League of Cities
Laura Waxman, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Gene Flango, National Center for State Courts

**Tribal Conference Call
January 23, 1997
(participants not yet confirmed)**

file adoption

ADOPTION 2002
SAFE AND PERMANENT HOMES FOR ALL CHILDREN

President Clinton announced today that he will move forward with ambitious legislative and administrative changes to move children more rapidly from foster care to safe, permanent homes. The recommendations are included in a report submitted to the President today by the Department of Health and Human Services, in response to a Presidential directive signed by President Clinton on December 14. The report, entitled "Adoption 2002," takes its name from the President's goal to at least double by the year 2002, the number of children adopted or permanently placed each year.

"Adoption 2002" outlines a new action plan to help states set and meet urgent new adoption targets. To help states meet these goals the report presents several important actions. Key among these actions is our commitment to clarify reasonable efforts. We will also offer sensible financial incentives to states to increase adoptions and permanent placements; and provide technical assistance to states, courts and communities to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes. In developing the report, HHS conducted an extensive consultation process with leaders in Congress, states, child welfare organizations, child welfare experts, civic leaders and hundreds of foster and adoptive parents.

Specifically, the recommended actions to accomplish the President's goal include:

I. Doubling the Number of Children Adopted or Permanently Placed by 2002:

Creates Incentives for States: To focus on successful outcomes for children, HHS will work with states to set specific numerical targets leading to doubling by the year 2002, the number of children adopted or permanently placed each year. To assist states in reaching their targets, the President's budget proposal includes \$10 million for technical assistance and grants to state agencies, courts and communities to help them develop: an outcome-based approach to permanency placement; collaborative efforts to encourage placements across geographical boundaries; and models to recruit adoptive families.

To encourage and reward states for their efforts, the Clinton Administration will propose legislation to offer a new financial per-child bonuses to states that increase the number of adoptions from the public child welfare system. The bonuses will pay for themselves, as bonus payments are offset by savings in foster care. HHS will publish annual reports on the progress states are making toward their adoption targets and will work with foundations and intergovernmental organizations to promote public annual recognition awards to states for successful, innovative accomplishments.

Breaks Down Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption: HHS will issue guidance that outlines appropriate implementation of and strict penalties for non-compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA), as amended by the Interethnic Adoption provisions (IEP) of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996. HHS also will provide technical assistance to states to ensure that states comply with these laws. HHS will continue its aggressive implementation of MEPA which prohibits adoption agencies from denying or delaying placement of a waiting child based on race, color, or national origin.

II. Moving Children More Rapidly From Foster Care to Permanent Homes:

Clarifies Reasonable Efforts: Under existing law, states are required to make "reasonable efforts" to both prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their families and to reunify children who have been placed in foster care with their natural families. HHS will issue guidance and work with Congress to seek legislation that changes federal law to clarify the "reasonable efforts" provision: to explicitly include the health and safety of the child as the first priority in determining whether a child should be removed from his or her home; and to introduce for the first time a new standard that "reasonable efforts" be made by states to secure permanent homes for children in foster care who cannot return safely to their homes and for whom adoption is the goal.

Decreases Procedural Delays: To speed up the process of reviewing a child's status in foster care, HHS will propose to change the federal law to require that a court hearing be held no later than 12 months after a child enters the foster care system. Current law requires that a court hearing be held within 18 months after a child's placement in foster care. HHS also will propose to change the title of that hearing from "dispositional hearing" to "permanency planning hearing" to encourage the focus of deliberations for the child to be on a finding a permanent, safe home.

Helps States Identify and Address Barriers to Permanency: To encourage and support states to identify and overcome the barriers to permanent placements for children in foster care, the President's budget proposal includes \$10 million for HHS to establish competitive grants to up to 15 states to develop model strategies to reform permanency planning and adoption services.

HHS Also Approves Ohio's Child Welfare Demonstration Project: Today President Clinton announced approval of Ohio's innovative managed care demonstration project, the fifth child protection waiver granted by the Clinton Administration. Under existing law, HHS has the authority to conduct demonstrations using waivers to as many as 10 states. HHS will propose a change in federal law to expand the department's authority to grant additional child protection waivers to test alternative permanency arrangements and other innovations.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION RECORD ON ADOPTION

"We must work tirelessly to make sure that every boy and girl in America who is up for adoption has a family waiting up to reach him or her. No child should be in foster care for one day longer than he or she needs to be." -- President Clinton, Radio Address, December 12, 1996

President Clinton announced today that he will move forward with ambitious legislative and administrative changes to move children more rapidly from foster care to safe, permanent homes. The recommendations are included in a report submitted to the President today by the Department of Health and Human Services, in response to a Presidential directive signed by President Clinton on December 14. The report, entitled "Adoption 2002," takes its name from the President's goal to at least double by the year 2002, the number of children adopted or permanently placed each year.

"Adoption 2002" outlines a new action plan to help states set and meet urgent new adoption targets. To help states meet these goals the report presents several important actions. Key among these actions is our commitment to clarify reasonable efforts. We will also offer sensible financial incentives to states to increase adoption rates; and provide technical assistance to states, courts and communities to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes. In developing the report, HHS conducted an extensive consultation process with leaders in Congress, states, child welfare organizations, child welfare experts, and hundreds of foster and adoptive parents.

The Clinton Administration has previously taken several important steps to encourage and increase adoptions and to support the families that choose to open their hearts and their homes to these children. Since taking office in 1993, the President has championed programs that find and assist adopting families, and has committed his Administration to breaking down barriers, including high adoption costs and complex regulations. These steps include:

GIVING STATES FLEXIBILITY AND SUPPORT

Today, President Clinton granted Ohio a waiver making it the fifth state to test innovative strategies to improve its child protection system. Delaware, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon have already been given more flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of children and families, and up to five more states will receive approval for similar demonstrations. In addition, this administration has provided states with enhanced technical support and helped improve court operations so they can focus on successful outcomes. To prevent children from entering foster care in the first place, in 1993 the Clinton Administration secured federal funding for the Family Preservation Program to help states, local governments and service providers develop effective programs to serve children and families at risk.

MAKING ADOPTION AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES

In August, President Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 which provides a \$5000 tax credit to families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. This policy will alleviate a significant barrier to adoption, helping middle class families for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive and making it easier for families to adopt children with special needs. Since President Clinton took office, the number of children with special needs who were adopted with Federal adoption assistance has risen by 60 percent.

BREAKING DOWN RACIAL AND ETHNIC BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

Strengthening the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which the President signed in 1994, the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 also ensures that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity.

PROVIDING SUPPORTS FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND ADOPTION

In 1993, President Clinton signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance. In addition, the welfare reform bill that the President signed into law maintains the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and does not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, foster care and adoption services.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Through speeches, writings, events and public service announcements, the President and First Lady have promoted the importance and benefits of adoption.

Ready to cry?

**DEANNA COLLINS
REMARKS**

A year and half ago, when I came to the White House, I was still in foster care, and shared with you, Mrs. Clinton, my dream for a home of my own. My dream has come true, and this is my first Valentine's Day with my family -- my parents are standing here with me. Thank you, Mr. President, for doing all you can to make it possible for more children to be adopted and be adopted quickly, because waiting is very difficult. Please remember, as you are making policy, that the children who are waiting are counting on you.

Happy Valentine's Day, I have Valentines to give to you and Mrs. Clinton.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 19, 1997

PRESS BRIEFING BY
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR
DOMESTIC POLICY JENNIFER KLEIN

The Briefing Room

12:46 P.M. EST

MR. TOIV: Good afternoon. As you know, the President is going to sign the adoption legislation today, and here to brief on that is Jennifer Klein, who is Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, works closely with the First Lady's Office on these issues.

MS. KLEIN: As Barry said, today the President is going to sign historic legislation to change the nation's child welfare system. It's a fitting time to do this because November is National Adoption Month. The bill passed Congress with really hard work on both sides of the aisle and intense work by the administration and overwhelming bipartisan support.

I want to just take a step backward and tell you where this started. First and foremost, the First Lady has been committed to this issue for more than 25 years and has really been a leading force in the administration on adoption and child welfare and particularly on many of the provisions that are actually in this bill. A little less than a year ago, the President issued an executive memorandum directing Secretary Shalala to come back within 60 days with specific recommendations on strategies to move children from foster care to permanent homes and to double the number of children adopted or permanently placed by the year 2002.

The report came back to the President on February 14 of this year and it outlined a very ambitious agenda with three key principles -- the first was that every child deserves a safe, permanent family; second, that children's health and safety should be the paramount concern; and third, that foster care is not -- is by definition a temporary situation, not a place for children to grow up.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act that the President is going to sign today reflects those principles and includes many of the specific recommendations in that report. First, in terms of the goal, the bill actually in its preamble makes very clear that the health and safety of children must underlie all decisions in the child welfare system. And there's a number of provisions to that end.

A key one is the clarification of the reasonable efforts standard. The law both reaffirms the importance of making reasonable efforts to reunify families before children are placed in an adoptive or other permanent placement. But it also makes clear that there are certain circumstances where the child's safety is at stake where states are not required to keep children with their parents, such as cases where the child has been abandoned or tortured or chronically abused. At the same time, the legislation also reauthorizes the Family Preservation and Family Support Services program, which provides services to help families stay together whenever possible.

Second, the legislation ensures that foster care is temporary, as it should be. It sets time limits and it promotes the

MORE

adoption of children who can't return to their homes. In that vein, it includes the President's plan to provide financial incentives to states to increase the number of children who are adopted each year, and it authorizes \$20 million for each of five years to do that.

And in addition, the time that children must wait for hearings is shortened. Currently, there is an 18-month length of time for children before any permanency hearing is held. That's shortened to 12, and even shortened further for children who have been in the foster care system for a longer period of time. And finally, the law ensures that children with special needs will keep health insurance when they are adopted. Those are the outlines of the bill, and I'm happy to take any questions you have.

Q Don't you expect all of this to go through court litigation to actually take children away from their parents? I mean, I'm speaking from a lack of knowledge, but wouldn't there be all these obstacles every inch of the way?

MS. KLEIN: Well, the purpose of this bill is actually to help courts do their job better. For example, the reasonable effort standard that I mentioned, that's a standard that has been imposed in law, and in many cases, although this was not the intention of that provision which came into law in 1980, it has prevented courts from actually getting children moving to the right place, either back with their birth parents or in another situation if that's not going to work. And what this law does is clarify that standard so courts have more of a clear direction of what to do and how to do it more quickly.

Q There's a move in some states to restrict adoption to married couples only. Does the President have any thoughts on any restrictions that should be placed on who adopts?

MS. KLEIN: We haven't addressed that yet.

Q Does he intend to?

MS. KLEIN: I think the President feels strongly that -- first of all, I think that's a state decision. But, second of all, that states decide who the appropriate families for adoptive children to go to, and the most important thing is to look from the perspective of the child, of where that child is going to be the most safe and loved.

Q Who decides that?

MS. KLEIN: Basically, that's a state decision.

Q Is there a special system set up to check and make sure that more children are getting adopted? How are you going to monitor this law?

MS. KLEIN: Part of what was in Adoption 2002, the President's report, which is now in this law, is to set a goal of doubling the number of children that are adopted by the Year 2002. Last year it was 27,000 children by 2002; it would be 54,000 children out of the foster care system. And one of the things that's part of that provision is a tracking system. And it's actually sort of interesting because it's the first time there's ever been performance-based standards in the child welfare system.

Q Were there federal adoption laws before this one?

MS. KLEIN: Yes. The first federal adoption law, the one before this, which was also the first, was passed in 1980. Thank you.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 19, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND FIRST LADY
AT ADOPTION BILL SIGNING

The East Room

1:53 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you and welcome to the East Room. Please be seated. We are delighted to have all of you join us today for this very important event and one that many of you in this room have worked for and looked for for many years.

There are some people that I would like to acknowledge and introduce before we get started. You will hear from the four members of Congress who are here on the stage, Representative Kennelly, Representative Camp, Senator Chafee and Senator Rockefeller. Also attending are Senator Craig, Senator DeWine, Senator Landrieu, Representative Levin, Representative Oberstar, Representative Maloney, and Representative Morella. And I'd like to ask all the members of Congress to please stand. (Applause.)

This was truly a bipartisan piece of legislation. It could not have been passed without the strong support of the members whom you see, including the sponsors who are here on the stage. It was also a work that was very much in the heart of Secretary Donna Shalala and her team from HHS -- Richard Tarplin, Mary Bourdette, and Carol Williams. And I'd like to ask the Secretary and her team to stand please. (Applause.)

There were also a number of members of the White House staff who worked very hard with members of Congress and with members of the HHS contingent, and I'd like to acknowledge just a few of them -- John Hilley, Bruce Reed, Elena Kagan, and in particular Jen Klein and Nicole Rabner. I want to thank all of them. (Applause.)

I'm also pleased that we have Governor Romer of Colorado. We have children, families, advocates, and leaders of the child welfare constituency here in our audience.

Nearly a year ago, the President and I met with children waiting in the foster care system for caring families to call their own. There the President pledged to reform the child welfare system to work better for the children it serves, to put their health and safety first, and to move children more quickly into safe and permanent homes. Today we as a nation make good on that pledge.

And for the thousands of American children who wait for a stable, loving home that will always be there, it is not a moment too soon. Right now there are nearly half a million children in foster care. For most, foster care is a safe haven on the road to a permanent home or back home. Too many, however, make countless detours along the way, shuffling from family to family without much hope that they will ever find permanent parents to love and take care of them. These children who will enter this holiday season unsure about whether the family they celebrate this year will be there with them next year deserve better.

MORE

We know it makes a difference for children to have permanent loving homes. It's not only research that tells us this; we know it by our intuition, by our own experience and we have all seen it firsthand. It was here in this room two years ago that a young woman named Deanna -- a child waiting to be adopted in foster care stood up and read a poem about what she wanted in life, and it wasn't real complicated. It is what all of us want. I'm happy that because of that event here in the East Room, she was able to meet a family who did adopt her. And I saw her last year at an event in Kansas City and almost didn't recognize her -- from a shy, withdrawn 13-year-old, she had blossomed into a cheerful, outgoing, confident teenager with a brilliant smile.

This landmark legislation that the President is about to sign will see to it there are more stories like Deanna's. This legislation stands as proof of what we can accomplish when we come together. As we see today, the national government does have an important role to play in reforming our foster care system, and giving guidance to courts and states in offering incentives to speed up and increase the numbers of adoptions, and in making sure that the health and safety of our children is always the first priority.

But we know even more, all Americans have a role and a responsibility. Businesses can make it easier for their employees to adopt a child. And I want to single out Dave Thomas of Wendy's, who has led the way in showing all of us how that can be done. (Applause.)

Religious leaders can help spread the word about the joys of adoptions. Parents thinking about adoption can expand their search to reach out to kids in foster care. And if we reform the system so that it works the way that it should, more Americans will look to American children to adopt and not feel compelled to go overseas to adopt children. (Applause.)

With us today are some extraordinary Americans who have answered this call. This morning, the Department of Health and Human Services observed National Adoption Month by honoring outstanding achievements with the 1997 Adoption 2002 Excellence Awards. Secretary Shalala developed these awards at the request of the President. The winners are dedicated individuals and organizations, both large and small, who have worked to move children out of the foster care system and into permanent, loving homes. Some of them have been at the forefront of this issue for years; some have promoted and supported adoption in their communities; and some are parents who have opened their homes and hearts to our nation's most vulnerable children.

I'd like to ask all the honorees who were honored this morning to please stand. (Applause.) We want to thank you for the work you have done, for the example you have set. And we hope that through these awards, in conjunction with this legislation, there will be many, many more in your ranks in the years to come.

* * * * *

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue Ann. Thank you, Aaron (phonetic). And I want to thank the Badeau family for showing up. I think it's fair to say it was a greater effort for them than for anyone else here. (Laughter.) I appreciate the rest of your presence. It was easier for me than anybody; I just had to come downstairs. (Laughter.) But I'm grateful that they're here.

Secretary Shalala, I thank you and your staff for your remarkable work on this. And I thank the members of the White House staff, all the members of Congress who are present here. And

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especially I thank Senators Rockefeller and Chafee and Congressmen Camp and Kennelly for their work and for what they said here.

Congratulations to the Adoption 2002 Excellence Award winners. I thank all the advocates who are here. And I say a special word of thanks, along with all the others who have said it, to the First Lady, who has been passionately committed to this issue for at least 25 years now that I know. Thank you, Governor Romer, for coming. And thank you, Dave Thomas, for what you've done.

Again let me say to all the members of Congress who are here, Republicans and Democrats alike, I am very grateful for what you've done. This, after all, is what we got in public life for, isn't it?

Before I make my brief remarks, if you'll forgive me and understand, I have to make one public statement today about the situation in Iraq.

As I have said before, I prefer to resolve this situation peacefully, with our friends and allies, and I am working hard to do just that. But I want to be clear again about the necessary objective of any diplomacy now underway. Iraq must comply with the unanimous will of the international community and let the weapons inspectors resume their work to prevent Iraq from developing an arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The inspectors must be able to do so without interference. That's our top line; that's our bottom line. I want to achieve it diplomatically. But we're taking every step to make sure we are prepared to pursue whatever options are necessary.

I do not want these children we are trying to put in stable homes to grow up into a world where they are threatened by terrorists with biological and chemical weapons. It is not right. (Applause.)

It's hard to believe now, but it was just a little less than a year ago when I directed our administration to develop a plan to double the number of children we move from foster care to adoptive homes by the year 2002. We know that foster parents provide safe and caring families for children. But the children should not be trapped in them forever, especially when there are open arms waiting to welcome them into permanent homes.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act, which I am about to sign, is consistent with the work of the 2002 report and our goals. It fundamentally alters our nation's approach to foster care and adoption. And fundamentally, it will improve the well-being of hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable children. The new legislation makes it clear that children's health and safety are the paramount concerns of our public child welfare system. It makes it clear that good foster care provides important safe havens for our children, but it is by definition a temporary, not a permanent, setting.

The new law will help us to speed children out of foster care into permanent families by setting meaningful time limits for child welfare decisions, by clarifying which family situations call for reasonable reunification efforts and which simply do not. It will provide states with financial incentives to increase the number of children adopted each year. It will ensure that adopted children with special needs never lose their health coverage -- a big issue. Thank you, Congress, for doing that. It will reauthorize federal funding for timely services to alleviate crisis before they become serious, that aid the reunification of families that help to meet post-adoption needs.

With these measures we help families stay together where reunification is possible and help find safe homes for children much more quickly when it is not. We've come together in an extraordinary

example of bipartisan cooperation to meet the urgent needs of children at risk. We put our differences aside, and put our children first.

This landmark legislation builds on other action taken in the last few years by Congress: the Adoption Tax Credit I signed into law August to make adopting children more affordable for families, especially those who adopt children with special needs; the Multiethnic Placement Act, enacted two years ago, ensuring that adoption is free from discrimination and delay, based on race, culture, or ethnicity; and the very first law I signed as President, the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or their health insurance.

We have put in place here the building blocks of giving all of our children what should be their fundamental right -- a chance at a decent, safe home; an honorable, orderly, positive upbringing; a chance to live out their dreams and fulfill their God-given capacities.

Now, as we approach Thanksgiving, when families all across our country come together to give thanks for their blessings, I would like to encourage more families to consider opening their homes and their hearts to children who need loving homes. You may not want to go as far as the Badeaus have -- (laughter) -- but they are a shining example of how we grow -- (applause) -- they are a shining example of how we grow when we give, how we can be blessed in return many times over. We thank them and all -- all of the adoptive parents in the country.

For those who are now or have been foster or adoptive parents, I'd like to say thank you on behalf of a grateful nation, and again say at Thanksgiving, let us thank God for our blessings and resolve to give more of our children the blessings they deserve.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

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AFTER BEING CAST OUT BY HER FATHER, SHE ENDED UP ON THE STREETS. THEY LED HER TO AN UNLIKELY DESTINATION **BY TERRY HARRAK WITH SUSAN KELLAM**

SOMEPLACE TO CALL HOME

I was 7 the day my father came home and announced, "I've won the Maryland lottery!"

I immediately dashed into my brother Rocky's room and yelled the news, and then he and I and all my sisters ran downstairs to join in the commotion.

Dad piled us all into the car. Judy and I, the two youngest, jumped in the far back of the station wagon. We drove from Vienna to a small shopping center in Glen Echo to claim the money, and I clapped when we crossed the Potomac into Maryland. After my dad cashed in his winnings, he bought each of us ice cream. We felt proud and peaceful that night—hopeful, even, for what might be ahead for us. But my father gambled away most of the winnings, and the groceries my mother bought with her share didn't last a week. The usual chaos of our household—the shouting, the fighting, someone being slapped against the wall by my father—went on as before.

For a long time, though, I held on to the memories of that night. I could easily recall the way the Vienna Metro station seemed so lit up as we drove by, bright and magical the way I had imagined Disney World to be. At the time I didn't know that it was only a Metro station. And I couldn't have known that the benches under the bright streetlights in front of the station would be the same benches, 10 years later, that would become a place for me to sleep.

I AM THE LAST CHILD OF 10. My mother had been sick for a long time but no one really knew why. When she was pregnant with me, her multiple sclerosis was still undetected, but after 10 pregnancies, the symptoms of the disease had intensified. Two weeks before I was born, she had lost most of her sight.

My father and mother fought constantly. There were 12 of us living on his construction salary, and we all lived with that pressure—pressure on him to provide for us, pressure on us to save money any way we could. Most of my sisters left home when they turned 16, some either pregnant or living with a boyfriend. My father believed that children should be independent when they were teenagers, and he let them go out into the world without any struggle. Of course, my father had been on his own for a long time—he had lived in several countries and spoke many languages. The dwindling size of the household did little to ease the tensions between my parents, and the more they fought, the more he stayed away.

Eventually my mother moved into an assisted-living program more than 100 miles away, in Harrisonburg. Dad kept me and my brother, Rocky, who is four years older. Judy, too, until she left at age 13. I was 10 and terribly confused.

A new calm settled over our house, but it didn't last very long. My dad brought home a Chilean woman named Anita, introducing her as our stepmom. Suddenly we could speak only Spanish in the house. My father taught us a little bit here and there so that we could communicate with her. She seemed to want all my father's time—and what little money there was. I felt that in her eyes, I was the brat, the troublemaker.

By the time I turned 15, Anita and I were fighting all the time. Sometimes I would leave home and stay with