



## Division of Children and Family Services

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December 29, 2010

Dear Foster Parents,

Happy New Year! On behalf of the staff of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), I want to thank you for the service that you have provided to the children and families of Arkansas over the past year. We know that your job is not an easy one, but please know how much we value and appreciate the work you do for our children and families each and every day. We are looking forward to continuing our partnership with you in the coming year.

We also wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with a few DCFS updates. We are excited about the Permanency Round Table strategy that we implemented this past year in partnership with Casey Family Programs. Permanency Roundtables are in-depth, structured case consultations designed to develop creative plans to help children in foster care achieve permanency. This approach has proven effective in other states to move youth into positive permanency. Permanency Round Tables have already been conducted in five areas across Arkansas, and we are seeing some positive permanency outcomes for the youth involved. We will be holding Permanency Roundtables throughout the rest of the state in early 2011.

In 2011 we will also implement a new set of home study tools, the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE). When new families apply to become foster or adoptive parents, they will have to complete a SAFE home study. SAFE will provide us with a more structured format that will allow us to conduct home studies more consistently across the state and help us do a better job of matching children with appropriate families.

SAFE also has a re-evaluation component. As such, when your resource worker conducts his or her annual re-evaluation on your home, the format and questions will be different from re-evaluations that you have had in the past. For example, if your home is a two-parent household, both you and your spouse will need to be present for the annual re-evaluation. We know some of these changes may require adjustments on your part. However, we believe that SAFE re-evaluations will allow us to better ensure the safety and well-being of our children and youth, so thank you in advance for your support of this new process.

Finally, since we did not have a statewide foster parent conference in the fall, we will be hosting this event at the 4-H Center in Little Rock at the end of February. You will receive more information on this conference in the near future. We think it will be a great event that will provide training to help you in your role as foster parents and allow you to connect with other foster parents from around the state. Again, thank you for providing safe, loving homes for our children in foster care. We could not do this work without you!

Wishing you and yours all the best in 2011,

Cecile Blucker  
DCFS Director