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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |  
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Transmittal No: 91 LCM-16

Date: February 7, 1991

Division: Family and Children  
Services

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: New York's Family Album

ATTACHMENTS: New York's Family Album - Not Available On-Line

This is to inform you of a new adoption initiative that the Department has undertaken. In the next few weeks we will mail copies of New York's Family Album to local districts, voluntary adoption agencies, libraries, churches and many other community-based organizations. The Album will showcase 14 special needs children from all over New York State who are in foster care and in need of adoptive families. The magazine will feature full page color photographs of these children along with a personalized written story about the child or sibling group that is being featured. The magazine will feature some of the same children who are currently included in the Department's Blue Book (New York State's Waiting Children), but it will be distributed more widely than the Blue Books. Simultaneously, there will be a variety of public relations efforts to bring our waiting children to the attention of the public. Quarterly editions of the Family Album are planned over the next twelve months.

Departmental Regional Office adoption specialists have already been in contact with adoption workers and supervisors in local districts and agencies throughout the state in an effort to identify children to feature in the Family Album. Excellent cooperation was demonstrated by numerous agency staff and foster parents in preparing children for photo and interview sessions and escorting them to these sessions.

At this point, the contractor has photographed and interviewed enough children for the first two editions of the Family Album. A second round of photograph and interview sessions will be scheduled soon. Agency staff should continue to identify waiting children who need adoptive homes and who will benefit from the increased exposure offered by this recruitment initiative. Regional Office adoption specialists should be contacted at any time once a child or sibling group you believe is suitable for the Family Album is identified.

While a majority of children who enter foster care are returned to parents or relatives, some will need an adoptive home. In New York State, foster parents who are already caring for children are encouraged to adopt them. Nevertheless, there are always children who are legally free for adoption who do not have adoptive homes identified. The children appearing in the Family Album are representative of this population. While the Blue Book has been instrumental in finding families for many of these children, more families are needed. The New York Family Album represents a concerted effort on the part of the state working with districts to ensure a family for every child. We are also alerting voluntary agencies of this initiative.

It is hoped that large numbers of prospective adoptive parents will come forward to adopt the children that are being showcased. It is most important that, as families come forward, they receive a warm welcome and timely and appropriate follow up. If families indicate a desire and willingness to adopt a special needs child, agencies are required (pursuant to Section 421.13 and 421.14 of Departmental Regulations) to initiate a home study and to complete the process within six months. It is also important that the children for whom we are seeking adoptive homes are properly prepared and ready for adoptive placement.

We look forward to working with you on this exciting new initiative, and trust that, by working together we will find families for every single child who is freed for adoption. In the "Decade of the Child", we plan to take whatever additional steps are necessary to appeal to families who can make a permanent home for our children.

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Joseph Semidei  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Family and Children  
Services