

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE MARCH 1, 2008

CIRCULAR LETTER # SSA 08 - 16

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors of Social Services
Local Departments of Social Services

FROM: Cathy F. Mols, Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: Differential Board Rates For Public Family Foster Care

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Foster Care Services)
and Resource Units

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Resource Development Placement and Support Services

ACTION REQUIRED OF: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Foster Care Services)
and Resource Units

REQUIRED ACTION: The Local Departments of Social Services will implement
procedures when responding to differential board rates for
foster family care

ACTION DUE DATE: MARCH 1, 2008

CONTACT PERSON: Kevin Keegan, Director
Resource Development Placement and
Support Services
410 767-7910

Purpose

This circular letter is to provide guidelines for the distribution of differential board rates for public foster care families in Maryland. Maryland has launched a vigorous foster care recruitment campaign with the goal of recruiting a minimum of 1,000 new public foster families by 2010. The District of Columbia has a number of approved foster homes located in various counties in Maryland. The District of Columbia pays their public foster families a higher board rate. To help assure retention of Maryland Foster Homes, a differential rate is needed.

Background

Some jurisdictions in Maryland have been losing public foster families by record numbers to the District of Columbia as a result of the District paying a higher board rate to the families that they approve. There are also record numbers of relatives in Maryland providing foster care services to foster children committed to the District of Columbia. In certain jurisdictions, such foster care placements exceed the number of children in the local jurisdiction's custody. These facts have created a major barrier in the recruitment of adequate numbers of public foster families to accommodate the number of Maryland foster children needing placements in keeping with the Place Matters Initiative.

**DEFINITION OF
DIFFERENTIAL
BOARD RATE**

A specific foster care board rate which exceeds the standard Maryland board rate for the purpose of maintaining adequate numbers of public foster families to provide foster care services for foster children in specific Maryland jurisdictions.

If children from other jurisdictions are placed with a public foster family in a county where differential board rates are in effect. The placing county will be responsible for paying the differential board rate.

**CRITERIA FOR
THE
DIFFERENTIAL
BOARD RATE
FOR FOSTER
FAMILY CARE**

The following criteria necessitates providing public foster families in a local jurisdiction with a differential board rate:

- The number of children placed in a given county or Baltimore City from another state or the District of Columbia represents at least one-third (33%) of the total number of children in the custody of the given county or Baltimore City
- The majority of the “out-of-state children” are from a state or DC that pays a higher board rate than Maryland’s standard board rate

**RESPONSIBILITY
OF LDSS**

- Keep accurate and up-to-date data regarding trends that would necessitate the differential board rate for a given jurisdiction
- Conduct a yearly reassessment of the need for modification of a jurisdiction’s differential board rate
- Make payments to public foster parents at the amount identified by the Social Services Administration
- Local departments will report the need for a differential board rate to SSA if they determine the criteria apply in their jurisdiction

**RESPONSIBILITY
OF DHR/SSA**

- Conduct statewide assessments to determine a local jurisdiction’s eligibility to receive the differential board rate
- Provide assistance to local jurisdictions with tracking and monitoring
- Provide support, assistance, and advocacy
- Identify the exact amount to be paid, based on a review of the board rate in the identified state and communicate the findings

Action to be taken

- The determination of qualifying counties for the current fiscal year, to remain in effect through Fiscal Year 2009 are Prince Georges and Charles counties
- The differential foster care board payment to foster families in Prince Georges and Charles counties, from the period of March 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009 is \$875/month for children 0-11 years old, and \$890 for children 12 years and older