



Children's Home Society  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

# ADOPTION WORKS

*A Guide* TO NORTH CAROLINA'S WAITING CHILDREN

# WAITING CHILDREN *Need* FAMILIES.

*CHS is committed to providing you the information and tools you need in considering adoption.*

## *Contents*

- 4 : WHO ARE NORTH CAROLINA'S WAITING CHILDREN?
- 6 : STEPS TO ADOPTION
- 8 : SOME QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL ADOPTIVE PARENTS
- 10 : CHS TRAINING AND SUPPORT
- 12 : FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
- 14 : GLOSSARY



Children's Home Society  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

*Transforming* FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES  
SO CHILDREN CAN *Thrive*

# THE *Mission* OF CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY

*is to promote the right of every child to a permanent, safe and loving family.*

Children's Home Society (CHS) has served families for more than a *century* and has placed more than *14,500* children into adoptive homes. With nearly *2,700* children awaiting adoption, we need you to open your home and *heart*.

"My adoptive parents have changed my life - for the better." *Malcolm, 10*



“Nothing is better  
than being loved.”

Keisha, 7

*facts*

.....  
How long have the Waiting Children  
been in foster care?  
.....

LESS THAN  
30 MONTHS  
66%

MORE THAN  
30 MONTHS  
34%



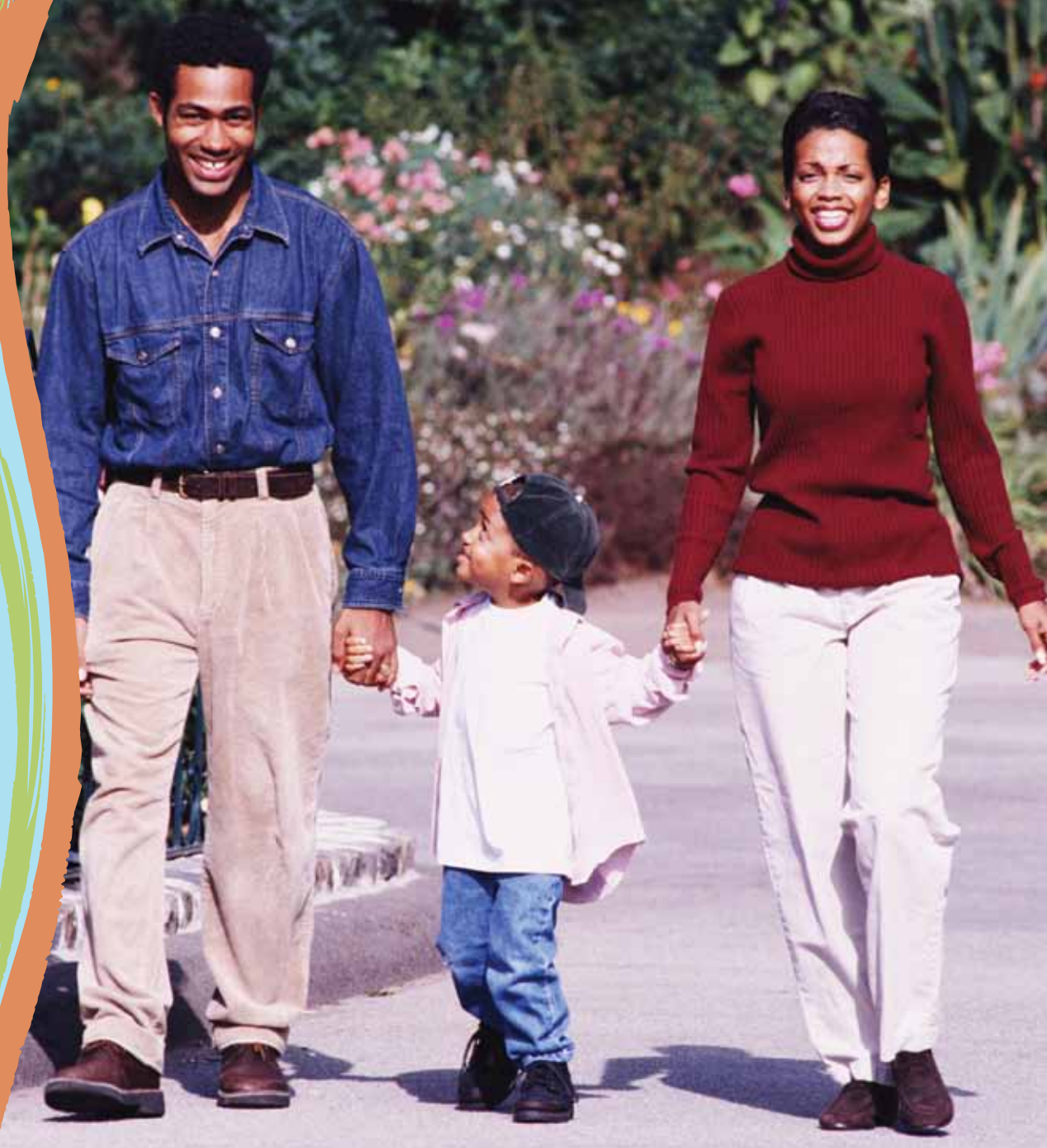
“Our world is complete with Jerome. I never thought I could feel this way about a child.”

*Harold, parent*

.....

Harold & Denise decided to adopt four-year-old Jerome after trying to have a child for years. From the beginning, the trio was an instant family. “Jerome has changed our lives,” Denise adds. “His heart is so big and he is so eager to learn, he makes us want to be the very best parents we can possibly be.”

.....



# WHO ARE NORTH CAROLINA'S *Waiting Children?*

*Almost all of the Waiting Children in North Carolina become available for adoption through the foster care process outlined in the following basic steps.*

## THIS IS JAMAL'S STORY.

### STEP 1

**Abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, verbal) or neglect occurs in the home.**

*Jamal's broken arm was concealed in a sling but it couldn't hide the years of abuse he had endured from his father. Jamal is only six years old.*

### STEP 2

**Situation is reported and an investigation follows.**

*Every week, Jamal comes to school with bruises or broken bones that seem suspicious. Jamal's teacher reports her observations to the Department of Social Services (DSS). Child Protective Services investigates the allegations.*

### STEP 3

**Child is removed from birth family and placed into foster care.**

*Jamal is removed from his birth family and placed into foster care where he is safe from abuse. Jamal remains in foster care while the investigation continues.*

# ADOPTION is the *Final Step*.

“I’m glad my new parents found me. They make me happy.”

**Finally at age 9**, a suitable, loving home has been found for Jamal. The adoption process has been finalized. His new parents are aware of the pain in Jamal’s past and are committed to raising him in a supportive environment. Jamal and his adoptive parents start a new life together.



## STEP 4

**A plan is developed for reunification or adoption.**

*Jamal receives counseling and care while a plan is developed to determine whether he will be reunified with his birth family. In Jamal’s case, DSS concludes that he should not be returned to his birth family.*

## STEP 5

**Parental rights are terminated and the plan of permanency becomes adoption.**

*The state terminates Jamal’s parental rights and the plan of permanency becomes adoption. He becomes depressed and struggles with the separation from his birth parents. Jamal stays in foster care and waits for the next phase of his life to begin.*

## STEP 6

**Child remains in foster care until an adoptive family is found.**

*For three years, Jamal remains in foster care. He has been in 3 different foster families and has suffered from the pain of not having a permanent home or parental love. During this time, the state and many agencies, including CHS, search for a suitable home for Jamal.*

# Steps TO ADOPTION

**1** **After you call or write the Children's Home Society,** you will receive information about our organization and the needs of children who are waiting for adoption. You will also receive an application for adoption.

**2** **Your completed application will be referred** to a Children's Home Society social worker in your area, and they will contact you.

**3** **You and your social worker will meet** to discuss your interest in adoption and the comprehensive services provided by the Children's Home Society.

**4** **You will be asked to participate** in group training, also known as MAPP training, in your area.

**5** **A home study,** also known as a pre-placement assessment, will be completed as the final step in the licensing process to qualify a family for adoption.

**6** **You will continue to discuss with your social worker** your family situation and explore together the type of child or children for whom you would provide the best home.

**7** **You will begin to be considered for children** based on your preferences and adoption plan. Also, you may be given names of adoptive parents with whom you can contact on your own if you wish.

**8** **Once you have been selected for a child or children,** you'll be given all available information about their background.

**9** **Pre-placement visits will be scheduled** in the child's home community and in your home to give you and the child (children) an opportunity to meet and to get to know one another. You may also meet persons who have played a significant role in the child's life - foster parents, teachers, counselors, etc.

**10** **After the child (children) joins your family,** your social worker will continue to provide support as you become a family through adoption.

**11** **Your adoption is legally completed,** and you receive a copy of the decree of adoption.



“After being moved around for so many years, I finally made it home.”

*David, 15*


*facts*

.....  
What is the average age of a child waiting to be adopted?  
.....

**8 YEARS OLD**

# SOME *Qualities of successful* ADOPTIVE PARENTS



- **The ability and commitment to learn** different parenting skills that are more appropriate for children who are adopted
  - **An extraordinary amount of tolerance,** patience, perseverance, flexibility and dedication
  - **An understanding of the child's feelings** and the ability to consider the child's view of his/her circumstances
  - **Good communication and interpersonal skills** with the child and the community
  - **Willingness to seek professional assistance** and support to resolve difficult situations
  - **An ability to remember** what it is like to be a child
  - **An ability to avoid** engaging in win/lose situations
  - **Sense of humor**
- 
- **An ability to remain calm** and think clearly in times of crisis
  - **An ability to discipline** without using threatening physical punishment or removal from the home
  - **The ability to nurture** and express affection
  - **The enjoyment of children** and the acceptance of the changes in lifestyle that result from becoming adoptive parents
  - **A special kind of love** to cope with issues and circumstances that adoptive children have experienced
  - **A commitment** to love unconditionally
  - **A healthy support network** of family and/or friends
  - **Ability to view** the child as a survivor rather than a victim



“I love my new brother and sister. We have so much fun together,”

*says Danny of his adoptive brother and sister, Will (9-years-old) and Natasha (5).*

## *facts*

What is the gender distribution of the Waiting Children?



MALE  
52%



FEMALE  
48%

# Exceptional TRAINING AND Support SERVICES

*Adoption is a lifelong process. CHS is your partner every step of the way.*

## BEFORE YOU ADOPT

Through counseling with experienced staff and valuable training classes, CHS prepares you for the unique challenges of adopting a child.

### **MAPP-GPS**

*(Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting-Group Preparation and Selection)*

- Teaches prospective parents what unique challenges to expect when adopting a child
- Provides assistance and guidance in deciding whether adoption is an appropriate choice for prospective parents

## AFTER YOU ADOPT

In many ways, an adoption is just beginning when a child is brought into your home. CHS provides lifelong support and assistance to adoptive families.

### **After an adoption, families receive:**

- Post-placement visits with an experienced social worker
- On-going post adoption services
- The CHS Supportive Post Adoption Network (SPAN) provides specialized post adoption services and resources for families needing additional support

## SUPPORTIVE POST ADOPTIVE NETWORK (SPAN)

The purpose of SPAN is to provide a continuum of specialized prevention and intervention services that facilitate the growth and preserve the permanency of adoptive placements.

### **SPAN services:**

- Behavioral Management
- Parenting Strategies
- Specialized Family Support Services
- Family and Child Assessment
- Crisis Management
- Individualized Services Planning

### **SPAN training:**

- Special Needs Adoption Preparation
- Attachment
- Child Development
- Grief, Separation, and Loss
- Understanding the Sexually Abused Child
- Love and Logic Parenting
- Transracial Adoption
- Nurturing Your Child and Yourself



“They love me  
for me.”

Samantha, 6

*facts*

.....  
What is the race of North Carolina's  
Waiting Children?  
.....

BLACK	44%
WHITE	41%
HISPANIC	6%
OTHER	9%

# FREQUENTLY *Asked* QUESTIONS

## WHO CAN ADOPT?

Families of all kinds adopt children of all kinds - newborns, teenagers, and those with special needs. Children of every race and every ethnicity are available for adoption.

### ***Prospective parents might be:***

- Foster parents
- Singles and married couples
- Relatives or stepparents

Age, income level, home ownership and race of prospective parents usually do not enter into the agency's equation. Furthermore, divorce, disability and/or a history of marital or personal counseling does not automatically eliminate anyone as a candidate.

## WHAT ARE SPECIAL NEEDS?

One of the myths surrounding adoption is that "special needs" children waiting to be adopted are always severely impaired - either physically, emotionally, or mentally challenged. Special needs actually applies to children who fall into a number of categories, including ethnic/racial minority, age and siblings who need to stay together.

### ***Special needs children may include:***

- Older, school age children
- A member of a minority group or culture
- A brother or sister who should not be separated from other siblings
- Under special medical care for a condition such as asthma or diabetes
- Physically, emotionally or mentally disabled to varying degrees
- Prenatal exposure to drugs and/or alcohol

## WHAT IS TRANSRACIAL/ TRANSCULTURAL ADOPTION?

Transracial or transcultural adoption means placing a child who is of one race or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another race or ethnic group. Transracial adoptions are frequently discussed as a separate category due to the unique cultural issues faced by these new families.

### ***Transracial and transcultural families are encouraged to:***

- Become intensely invested in parenting
- Tolerate no racially- or ethnically-biased remarks
- Surround yourselves with supportive family and friends
- Celebrate all cultures
- Talk about race and culture
- Expose your child to a variety of experiences so that he or she develops physical and intellectual skills that build self-esteem
- Take your child to places where most of the people present are from his or her race or ethnic group

"I don't have to pretend anymore. Now I have a real mommy and daddy."

**Eric and Karen have made a wonderful home for their 8-year-old adopted daughter, Maria.**

"This has been such a blessing. We could not have asked for a more wonderful daughter," says Eric. Karen and Eric spent years trying to have kids and finally decided to adopt. "It was the biggest decision we have ever made, but it has also been our best. Knowing that there are so many children out there that don't have parents, we feel grateful that we can give a child a home and a family."



## ARE PRENATALLY DRUG-EXPOSED CHILDREN DAMAGED FOR LIFE?

In the past, widespread media coverage for newborns prenatally exposed to cocaine drew negative findings, feeding a popular myth about the growth, performance, development and future of these children.

Fortunately, many of these perceptions were dispelled by new research in the late 1990's:

- The effects of prenatal exposure cover the range from severe effects (neurological damage and growth retardation) to minor effects, resulting in normal outcomes.
- The interaction pattern between mother and child, as well as other social factors, have more effect on a child than prenatal drug exposure.
- For children entering foster care, the number of times a child moves from home to home while in care is more significant to the child's outcome than prenatal drug exposure.
- The most powerful, positive ingredient of all influencing the potential of these children appears to be the love, care and permanence of adoptive families. To successfully overcome these special challenges, parents need preparation, education and support services not only before, but during and after placement.

## HOW DO I BEGIN THE ADOPTION PROCESS?

Just call (800) 632-1400 and ask for Adoption Services. We will discuss the process with you personally and answer your specific questions.

## HOW LONG DOES IT USUALLY TAKE TO ADOPT?

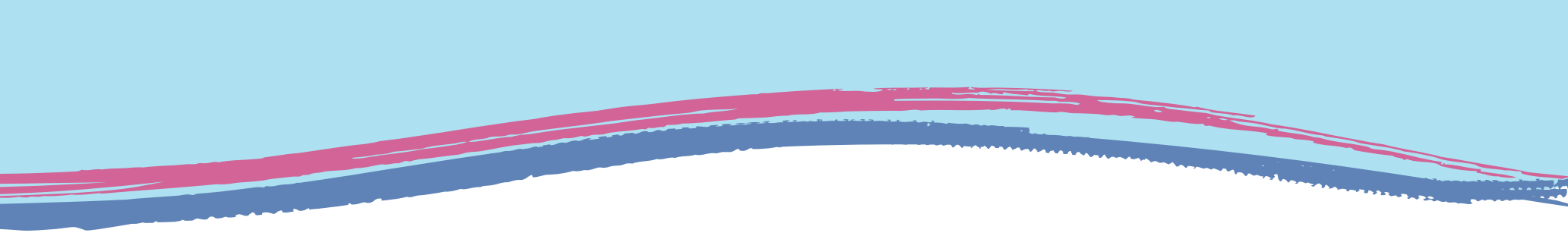
The length of time depends upon how quickly the home study (pre-placement assessment) proceeds, a family's flexibility regarding the type and number of children they can potentially parent, and the actual children that need adoptive or foster/adoptive homes.

## HOW MUCH DOES ADOPTION COST?

There are no fees for "Waiting Children" in the custody of the North Carolina Department of Social Services. For other children, fees may apply.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **adoptee**  
A person who was adopted. Some people prefer the terms adopted child or adopted person.
- **adoption**  
The complete transfer of parental rights and obligations from one parent to another. A legal adoption requires a court action.
- **adoption agency**  
An organization, usually licensed by the state, that provides services to birth parents, adoptive parents and children who need families. Agencies may be public or private, secular or religious, for profit or nonprofit.
- **adoption assistance**  
Monthly federal or state subsidy payments to help adoptive parents raise children with special needs.
- **adoption attorney**  
A lawyer who files, processes and finalizes adoptions in court. In some states attorneys may also arrange adoptive placements.
- **adoption consultant or adoptive facilitator**  
Individual whose business involves connecting birth parents and prospective adoptive parents for a fee (only allowed in a few states). In international adoption, a facilitator may help adoptive parents complete the adoption in the child's country of origin.
- **adoption plan**  
Birth parent's decisions to allow their child to be placed for adoption.
- **adoption tax credits**  
Nonrefundable credit that reduces taxes owed by adoptive parents who claim adoption expense reimbursement on federal taxes (and in some states with similar legislation, on state taxes). Through the IRS program, adoptive parents whose annual adjusted gross income is \$150,000 or less can take advantage of up to \$10,000 in tax credits to offset qualifying adoption expenses. The credit calculation can include adoption expenses, court fees, attorney fees, and travel expenses. Consult your accountant for further details.
- **adoption triad**  
The three major parties in an adoption: birth parents, adoptive parents, and the adopted child. Also called adoption triangle or adoption circle.
- **agency adoption**  
Adoptive placements made by licensed organizations that screen adoptive parents and supervise the placement of children in adoptive homes until the adoption is finalized.
- **birth parents**  
A child's biological parent.
- **closed adoption**  
An adoption that involves total confidentiality and sealed records.
- **confidentiality**  
The legally required process of keeping identifying or other significant information secret. Also, the principle of ethical practice that requires social workers and other professionals not to disclose information about a client without the client's consent.
- **consent to adopt or consent to adoption**  
Legal permission for the adoption to proceed.
- **decree of adoption**  
A legal order that finalizes an adoption.
- **dossier**  
A set of legal documents used in international adoption to process a child's adoption or assignment of guardianship in the foreign court.
- **employer benefits**  
Compensation to workers through employer-sponsored programs, e.g., financial assistance, reimbursement of adoption expenses and/or provision of parental or family leave. For a list of employers who provide benefits, call the National Adoption Center at 800 - TO - ADOPT.
- **finalization**  
The final legal step in the adoption process; involves a court hearing during which the judge orders that the adoptive parents become the child's legal parents.
- **foster parents**  
State- or county- licensed adults who provide a temporary home for children whose birth parents are unable to care for them.
- **foster-to-adopt**  
A foster placement that is intended to result in an adoption if and when the child becomes legally free.



- **identifying information**

Information on birth parents or adoptive parents that discloses their identities.

- **independent adoption**

An adoption not facilitated by an adoption agency.

- **INS**

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, a federal agency under the Justice Department that oversees all visas issued to allow entry into the U.S.

- **Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)**

An agreement regulating the placement of children across state lines.

- **legal guardian**

A person who has legal responsibility for the care and management of a person (such as a minor child) who is incapable of administering his or her own affairs.

- **legal risk placement**

Placement of a child in a prospective adoptive family when the child is not yet legally free for adoption.

- **open adoption**

An adoption that involves some amount of initial and/or ongoing contact between birth and adoptive families, ranging from sending letters through the agency to exchanging names and/or scheduling visits.

- **photo listings**

Photos and descriptions of children who are available for adoption.

- **placement**

The point at which a child begins to live with prospective adoptive parents; the period before the adoption is finalized.

- **post-placement supervision**

The range of counseling and agency services provided to the adoptive family after the child's placement and before the adoption is finalized in court.

- **pre-placement assessment (also known as home study)**

A process through which prospective adoptive parents are educated about adoption and evaluated to determine their suitability to adopt.

- **private adoption**

See Independent adoption.

- **private agencies**

Nongovernmental adoption agencies licensed by the state.

- **public agencies**

Social service agencies run by state or county governments that deal mainly with children in foster care.

- **readoption**

For a child adopted in another country, a second adoption in a U.S. court.

- **relative adoption**

Adoption by a biological relative of the child.

- **relinquishment**

Voluntary termination of parental rights. Some prefer the phrase making an adoption plan.

- **reunion**

A meeting between an adopted person and birth parents or other birth relatives.

- **search**

An attempt to locate and/or make a connection with a birth parent or a biological child.

- **semi-open adoption**

An adoption in which a child's birth parents and adoptive parents may meet once or twice but exchange primarily nonidentifying information.

- **special-needs children**

Children whom agencies consider difficult to place because of emotional or physical disorders, age, race, membership in a sibling group, history of abuse or other factors.

- **transracial adoption**

An adoption in which the child and parent(s) are not of the same race.

- **waiting children**

Children in the public child welfare system who cannot return to their birth homes and need permanent loving families to help them grow up safe and secure.



Children's Home Society  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

*Transforming* FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES SO CHILDREN CAN *Thrive*

\* The photos used in the brochure are representative of the children served by Children's Home Society of North Carolina. Actual photos have been replaced due to privacy concerns.





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OF NORTH CAROLINA

*Our Mission* is to promote the right of every child to a permanent, safe and loving family.

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PO BOX 14608, GREENSBORO, NC 27415-4608

1.800.632.1400

WWW.CHSNC.ORG

