



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of the Assistant Secretary | 330 C Street, S.W., Suite 4034
Washington, D.C. 20201 | www.acf.hhs.gov

October 16, 2025

Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner
New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144

America's child welfare system stands for one simple truth: every child deserves a safe, loving home. Every qualified family should have the opportunity to provide one. These are not partisan ideas, but the bedrock of our national character, and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) shares with you the responsibility of ensuring our child welfare systems reflect compassion, fairness, and the belief that strong families make a strong nation.

As the federal agency administering child welfare resources, ACF has the responsibility to ensure they are used in ways that uphold federal law and the foundational rights of families. It has been brought to my attention that certain policies and procedures in New York deny qualified foster and adoptive parents the opportunity to provide children a loving home solely because they cannot, in good conscience, commit to affirming a hypothetical child's gender identity. Such policies are contrary to the purpose of child welfare programs and inconsistent with our interpretation of federal diligent recruitment plans and constitutional protections, including the First Amendment.

As a former state health and human services leader, I understand the challenges of balancing resources, ensuring child safety, and helping every child find a permanent home. The policies states adopt directly impact how quickly families can step forward and children can find stability.

Families who are ready and able to provide loving, stable homes should be supported – not sidelined – by the systems created to protect children. Policies that elevate ideology or politics above the best interests of children must be corrected without delay.

Please provide a written response outlining how you will review and, where necessary, amend policies to bring them into alignment with these values and applicable laws. As you know, my responsibilities include monitoring the use of relevant federal funds and ensuring compliance with federal law.

Our shared commitment to children's well-being and strong families must guide every decision. Excluding loving families based on ideology or belief weakens the ideals that define our nation. By working together to ensure every qualified family is welcomed, we uphold the truth that strong families make a strong nation.

Sincerely,

Alex J. Adams
Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

CC: Gail Geohagen-Pratt, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services