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ALLISON BLAKE, PH.D., L.S.W.
Commissioner

March 11, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities
Department of Children and Families Staff
Contracted Case Managers

FROM: Peter Shulman, Acting Commissioner
Department of Education

Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W., Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

SUBJECT: Interagency Guidance Manual to Improve Educational Outcomes of
Children in Out-of-Home Placements

New Jersey is committed to excellence in education for all of its children, and we all understand the additional challenges facing children that have been victims of abuse or neglect and who were removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care. We are pleased to note that New Jersey's schools and the Division of Child Protection and Permanency have taken major steps towards addressing these challenges by successfully implementing the educational provisions of the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351) and the state legislation on educational stability.

Ongoing work is necessary to fully implement the requirements of having our state child welfare agency coordinate with local school districts to ensure improved educational outcomes for children in state supported care. To support our continued progress, we are pleased to share with you ***Improving the Educational Outcomes of Children in Out-of-Home Placements: An Interagency Guidance Manual***. This manual was developed through the multi-year collaboration and dedicated work of the New Jersey Departments of Children and Families (DCF) and Education (NJDOE), community stakeholders and advocates. The guidance manual

includes a model memorandum of agreement and is available on the DCF website at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/families/educational/stability/> and on the NJDOE website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/edservices/stability/>.

The interagency guidance manual provides specific actions to achieve the indicators and goals set forth in the model memorandum of agreement. Many of the actions are already required by statute or regulation and others are strongly recommended by the multi-agency working group to promote, develop, and enhance collaborative efforts among school, behavioral health, and child protective service systems to improve the well-being of children in our state.

The model memorandum of agreement creates a framework for promoting interagency collaboration and communication that supports educational stability and continuity for children in out-of-home placements. The framework is based on the *Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care*, developed by the American Bar Association's Legal Center for Foster Care and Education.

On behalf of the children in out-of-home placements, we encourage you to ask staff to review and follow this guidance manual and consider signing a local memorandum of agreement, although it is not required, to memorialize your commitment toward interagency collaboration and communication to promote improved educational outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

If you have any questions regarding the memorandum of agreement or the interagency guidance manual, please contact Danielle Anderson-Thomas, state coordinator, Education for Homeless Children and Youth and Migrant Education Programs at (609)984-4974 or Debora Torres, DCF coordinator, Educational Stability at (609)888-7379.

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