



County of Hyde

Department of Social Services

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Hyde County, located in North Carolina, is the second smallest county in the state, with a population of less than 5000 people. Despite its small size, there are currently six children in foster care. According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services policy, it is mandatory to visit each child in foster care at least once per month and have one social worker managing permanency planning who travels over 2000 miles each month to conduct visits, which is only a few hundred miles less than a trip to California. The children's parents are in Hyde County, so working on reunification efforts is challenging. The children attending Hyde County school have been displaced from their families and friends. To address this issue, I am proposing the establishment of an emergency foster care facility in Hyde County. Luckily, we have a vacant nursing home available, and the owner has agreed to lease the facility to accommodate these children. In the past year, we had a four-month-old and a four-year-old who had to spend two nights in our office due to a lack of available placements. We didn't have a crib in our office, so the 4-month-old slept on a pallet on the floor for one night until I could buy a crib the next day. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon problem across the state, and some DSS offices have had children in their offices for several months. Foster children are also spending an enormous amount of time sitting in local hospital emergency rooms; I once knew a child who had to spend 219 days in an emergency room waiting for a placement. It was heart-wrenching to know that during Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, the child was still in the hospital emergency room. To make matters worse, the child didn't receive any school support or mental health services during their lengthy stay; that was my child; what if it were your child or grandchild? Therefore, we need to come up with creative solutions to help solve these problems.

Sincerely,

Laurie Potter, MSW