



HENRY McMASTER, GOVERNOR  
MICHAEL LEACH, STATE DIRECTOR

April 8, 2021

The Honorable Henry McMaster  
State House  
1100 Gervais Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor McMaster,

Please allow this letter to provide you an update on the current status of DSS discussions with the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) regarding the subject of *unaccompanied* migrant children arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border. DSS was contacted last Thursday, April 1, by the ACF to determine potential support resources in the State of South Carolina for placement of unaccompanied minors from the border. It was requested that DSS provide copies of group home and foster home policies and regulations and DSS referred ACF to PAFCAF (Palmetto Association for Children and Families) for further discussions around potential private/Non-State placement options (children would not be in the custody/care of the State). DSS is aware that follow-up conversations between PAFCAF and ACF have occurred, as well as conversations with NOSAC (National Organization of State Associations for Children) to provide a list of interested private providers (businesses licensed to provide placement/group home services in South Carolina) who have organizational capacity and available bed space.

At this time, DSS is aware of six private providers who have indicated interest and have capacity for placements. It is our understanding that ACF is offering these provider businesses very favorable terms for placement assistance. ACF informed DSS that the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and ACF would be responsible for coordinating placement support and case management for children who may be placed with providers in SC, so DSS would not be involved unless an incident of abuse or neglect occurs within the facility. The anticipated duration of placement is 35 days, but could be longer if diligent efforts to locate relatives are prolonged or unsuccessful.

Currently, there are no such unaccompanied minors who have been placed under this framework. DSS will continue to keep the Governor's Office updated if any children are placed in SC, including how many are placed and for how long. DSS expressed a number of concerns to ACF about the impact on overall bed capacity, the priority for placement of South Carolina children entering foster care, the length of time unaccompanied minors may reside in a placement the anticipated challenges in locating family, and any unaccompanied minors ultimately entering the SC foster care system.

Please let me know if you have questions about this information or require additional information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Leach', is written over a horizontal line.

Michael Leach, State Director  
South Carolina Department of Social Services