

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.

1425 H St., N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 628-6800



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**PRESIDENT—1981**  
Dr. Nancy A. Humphreys, ACSW  
Highland Park, New Jersey

**FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT—1981**  
Betty Sancier, ACSW  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT—1980**  
Dr. George O. Matrey, ACSW  
Piscataway, New Jersey

**SECRETARY—1980**  
Ronald K. Green, ACSW, JD  
Knoxville, Tennessee

**TREASURER—1981**  
George M. Nishinaka, ACSW  
Los Angeles, California

Gerald N. Beator, ACSW—1981  
Bronx, New York

Raleigh Campbell, ACSW—1980  
Roanoke, Virginia

Dolores S. Deahanty, ACSW—1982  
Louisville, Kentucky

Dr. Ismael Dieppa, ACSW—1981  
Tempe, Arizona

Alejandro Garcia, ACSW—1982  
Syracuse, New York

J. Dianne Garner, ACSW—1981  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Barbara A. Graham, ACSW—1981  
San Diego, California

Roye Ann Hargrove—1981  
Hillside, New Jersey

Mable T. Hawkins, ACSW—1982  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Charles Howard—1980  
Washington, D.C.

Margarita R. Huantes, ACSW—1980  
San Antonio, Texas

Nellie B. Hutchison, ACSW—1980  
Jackson, Mississippi

Norma P. Jones, ACSW—1982  
Detroit, Michigan

Helen J. Lane, ACSW—1982  
Chicago, Illinois

Dr. Joseph F. Meisels, ACSW—1981  
Boston, Massachusetts

Cajla M. McKinney, ACSW—1980  
Portland, Oregon

Jane K. Thompson, ACSW—1980  
Wakefield, Rhode Island

Joy F. Watson, ACSW—1982  
Yorktown, Virginia

Deborah K. Zinn, BSW—1980  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Chauncey A. Alexander, ACSW, CAE

**ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Leonard W. Stern, ACSW

May 9, 1980

Mrs. Diane D. Broadhurst  
Executive Secretary  
Model Adoption Legislation and  
Procedures Advisory Panel  
Children's Bureau  
P.O. Box 1182  
Washington, D. C. 20013

Dear Mrs. Broadhurst:

Re: Draft Model Adoption Act and Model  
State Adoption Procedures

We are writing to comment on the above-named draft, and to commend you and your Advisory Panel on an important contribution to the establishment of consistent and thoughtful protection for those involved in the adoption of children.

The philosophy guiding the draft is based upon serving children who need permanent homes, rather than focused upon serving "families seeking children." This is in line with the NASW policy on adoption as ratified by the NASW Delegate Assembly in November, 1979, where the first principle states: "All parties to adoption are appropriately regarded as individual clients whose needs and rights should be respected and considered to the greatest extent possible. The child must, nevertheless, be seen as the primary client whose best interest must take priority."

Given this viewpoint, many of the provisions of the proposed model act are sound and helpful, such as ensuring that should the adoptee wish it, birth records will be open to him/her when an adult. From the viewpoint of the parent seeking a child to adopt, that provision might be experienced as threatening. As we know more about the importance of people being able to know their genetic heritage, or to "find their roots," we realize how important it is to adoptees to have this knowledge available to them. There is no implication that if an adoptee knows who the birth parent is, or even meets the birth parent, that the adoptee will then stop loving his adoptive family or cease to regard them as his "real" parents. That seems to be a common fear of adoptive parents based on understandable insecurity rather than fact. Not all adoptees will wish to know the birth parent, nor to meet her/him. But surely the option

should be there as opposed to a rigid secrecy which can leave adoptees feeling that there is some monstrous secret in their past. We, therefore, applaud the concept of more open records and the sections relating to this.

Throughout the Model Act there is appropriate mention made of the need for careful and professional counseling for the various members of the adoption triangle at particular points in the adoption process. Mention is also made of the need for assessment of potential adoptive homes. These are all crucial issues in the process of an adoption. We urge you, therefore, to specify that all counseling and home assessments be done by those with professionally recognized qualifications to do so, such as graduation from an accredited social work education program.

Section 603 of the Model Act states the qualifications for licensing of Family Assessment Practitioners for intercountry adoptions, including "evidence that the applicant holds a master's degree in social work..." We believe that those of our citizens adopting children from our own country also deserve such professional services. To omit a statement of qualifications for those who will offer counseling and do family assessments in such a sensitive arena such as adoption is to do a great disservice to the population being served. To just say "counseling" with no specification of the qualifications of the persons to do it and no assurance of a professionally delivered service, is to leave this area open to any interpretation desired with resultant potential harm done to the clients. To offer counseling is to offer help in a sensitive, crucial area. Not to qualify the counselors means that whether or not the client receives the necessary skilled help is a matter of chance.

Adoption is at best a situation fraught with potential difficulties, pain and problems. Skilled help is an essential component in resolving these problems and smoothing difficulties. We urge that you include in the Model Act a clause in the definitional section which specifies that where counseling, or family assessments, or a home study is mentioned within the Model Act, that the person to do this should be a social worker with a degree from an accredited school of social work education.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this document, and would be glad to offer any additional consultation or help needed.

Yours sincerely,



Chauncey A. Alexander, ACSW, CAE  
Executive Director

cc: Elaine Schwartz  
Frank Ferro  
John Calhoun