

Answering the call



Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers

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*Funded through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau • Grant #90CQ0001.*

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Welcome From AdoptUSKids



We are privileged to welcome State and Tribal program managers and leaders in adoption and foster care as partners in improving the effectiveness of recruitment nationwide.

Your work is challenging. You have a mountain of information and priorities to manage as part of your position in child welfare. So why do you need another manual on your desk? Good question!

It's an important question and we will try to answer it for you.

Recently, in partnership with the Children's Bureau, the Administration for Child and Families (ACF), division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Ad Council, *AdoptUSKids* announced its National Ad Campaign to encourage adults to adopt children who are in foster care. This multi-media, three year advertising campaign, is set to launch in the Spring of 2004. Section Two of this *Manager's Guide* describes this and other national recruitment initiatives sponsored by *AdoptUsKids* in detail, including specific timelines and strategies being planned.

AdoptUSKids was encouraged by State program managers to develop a guide to help States respond effectively to the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign and other national recruitment projects that we will be responsible for over the multi-year grant period. Our theme for this project is *Answering the Call*.

Before *AdoptUSKids* began the *Answering the Call* project, we asked many of you how we could be most helpful. The response was that States want assistance in enhancing their Child and Family Services Recruitment Work Plans to include national recruitment initiatives, incorporate recruitment related issues from their Program Improvement Plans (PIPs), and improve outcomes from all their recruitment efforts. States reported that, even when they have many recruitment inquiries, holding on to families to adopt and foster children is becoming a serious crisis. This impedes their ability to achieve timely safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for their children.

This was a challenge we couldn't resist. It was decided that the *AdoptUSKids Answering the Call* series and all its technical assistance and training services will be driven by the needs identified by our State partners.

This *Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers* was designed to be flexible to accommodate continuous improvement in recruitment. It is entirely focused on how agencies can maximize their results from recruitment by attending to their response system from that important first call through a seven-step process to placement. It is more than just a notebook for managers. Included in the *Answering the Call* series are two addi-

tional products designed for front-line use. They are:

- *AdoptUSKids Family Pocket Guide*—This is a product for parents that can be used as their roadmap to track their own progress from inquiry to placement. Our research tells us that many families are confused about the process and where they are in it.
- *AdoptUSKids Practitioner’s Guide*—This is a product for anyone in the agency who has a hand in the recruitment to placement process, from the person who answers the phone to the placement worker. Our research tells us that the current response system practiced in most agencies contributes heavily to the drop-out rate in recruitment.

Samples of these products are included with your guide. These can be ordered from *AdoptUSKids* in bulk, free of charge. See Section Eleven in this guide for the order form. *AdoptUSKids* has additional products being developed including publications on inter-jurisdictional placements and ethical standards in utilizing photo-listing services. States will be notified when these become available.

For States that want additional information on specific recruitment techniques, *AdoptUSKids* joined with the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children to produce the Recruitment and Marketing Kit. Even though this kit was developed for States to use in the 2003 National Adoption Month Campaign, it includes excellent examples of recruitment methods and tools that can be used for adoption and foster care recruitment year around. This kit can be ordered through *AdoptUSKids*. See the order form in the back of this Guide.

Upon first review, this manager’s guide may seem a bit overwhelming. But look again. It was not meant to be a “sit-down” read, but instead a notebook-style reference for your everyday work. It is meant to be a living, empowering, evolving guide that will change as needs change and new lessons are learned.

As *AdoptUSKids* finds promising practice knowledge and more tools for improving recruitment, in our collaborative work with States, we will be passing this information on to you. And, no doubt, you will develop and add your favorite tools and resources to this guide.

After reviewing this guide and its companion “Answering the Call” products, it is our sincere hope that you will want to access our training and technical assistance services in improving recruitment outcomes in your State.

Please see the following pages for a description of *The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids*’ history, organization, technical assistance and training services and our website—adoptuskids.org—for additional information regarding children waiting for adoption and our services.

In partnership with and upon approval of the ACF Federal Regional Offices and the Children’s

Bureau, *AdoptUSKids* can provide up to 10 days of technical assistance per year to States and Indian Tribes to support the recruitment provisions of the Child and Family Service Review and Program Improvement Processes.

We stand ready to assist you in our mutual goal of improving safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for our nation's most vulnerable children and their families.

Most Sincerely,

Barbara Holtan

Barbara Holtan, MSW, MA, Executive Director of the Adoption Exchange Association, Project Director for *The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids*, A Service of the Children's Bureau

AdoptUSKids Mission and Technical Assistance and Training Services



AdoptUSKids' Mission

In 2002 the Children's Bureau, Administration for Child and Families (ACF), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, entered into a partnership and Cooperative Agreement with the Adoption Exchange Association and its partners, *The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids*, to carry out its mission.



"To recruit and connect foster and adoptive families with waiting children throughout the United States."

AdoptUSKids performs the following recruitment-related responsibilities and functions:

- Provides technical assistance and training to States and Indian Tribes
- Devises and implements national adoptive and foster family recruitment and retention strategies, including:
 - National recruitment campaigns and support strategies
 - An Annual Recruitment Summit for State and Tribal, Foster and Adoption Program Managers
 - A National Adoption Workgroup
- Enhances and operates the *AdoptUSKids* photo-listing website (www.adoptuskids.org)
- Encourages and enhances adoptive family support organizations through mini-grants and other efforts
- Conducts a variety of adoption research projects

AdoptUSKids Technical Assistance and Training Services (TA/T)

The technical assistance services provided by *AdoptUSKids* include:

- Conducting individualized State and Indian Tribe assessments of recruitment and retention strengths, needs and programs including process mapping
- Benchmarking and disseminating information about established, effective recruitment and retention practices, see Section Eight for more information on the benchmarking technical assistance provided by *AdoptUSKids*
- Offering access to expert technical assistance providers

- Working strategically with States and Tribes to implement TA/T services tailored to their specific needs including practice issues
- Producing definitive booklets and providing technical assistance and training on inter-jurisdictional placements and other TA/T topics

Training services provided by *AdoptUSKids* include but are not limited to:

- Recruitment practices for foster and adoptive families (general, targeted, child-specific and child-centered practices)
- Placing children across inter-jurisdictional boundaries
- Utilization of the national online photo-listing website
- Writing child profiles
- Developing and sustaining community-based partnerships
- An agency's recruitment response system

Methods used by *AdoptUSKids* to provide TA/T include:

- Brief on-site training and technical assistance
- Intensive technical assistance engagements (up to 10 days per year)
- Telephone consultation
- Teleconference training
- Needs assessments
- Conference planning and workshop presenters
- Information and referral
- Newsletters and promising practices bulletins
- Partnerships with other National Resource Centers (NRCs)

You can access *AdoptUSKids* TA/T services by:

- Contacting your ACF Regional Office to discuss your needs and to request approval
- Contacting the *AdoptUSKids* TA/T Coordinator directly for a preliminary discussion about your State's technical assistance and training needs

All plans for training and technical assistance must be approved by your ACF Regional Office.

For additional information contact:

Melody Roe, Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator for *AdoptUSKids*
 (303) 755-4756 x 241 • e-mail: melody@adoptex.org

The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids— Who We Are And What We Do



In 1998 the Department of Health and Human Services was directed to explore the use of the Internet to find homes for waiting children. Subsequently, an HHS report was issued called: “A Plan to Implement a National Internet Adoption Photo-listing.” The *AdoptUSKids* photo-listing website was launched at a White House ceremony in July of 2002.

In 2002 the Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, entered into a partnership and Cooperative Agreement with the Adoption Exchange Association and its partners, *The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids*, to implement the *AdoptUSKids* program.

The Adoption Exchange Association (AEA) is the fiduciary agency for *AdoptUSKids* and provides overall grant oversight and management. Key functions of *The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids* include: Online Photo-listing, National Adoption Recruitment Campaign, Training and Technical Assistance, Development of Parent Support Group Network, Adoption Research, National Adoption Workgroup, Summit on Adoption, and Evaluation. Each of these functions and partner’s roles are delineated as follows:

1. **Training and Technical Assistance** (Coordinator—Melody Roe)

Collaborator: The Adoption Exchange, Inc., Aurora Colorado

- Provide up to 10 days of technical assistance each year per State and/or Tribe—no cost to the States or Tribes. Provide technical assistance to help States overcome gaps identified in their Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs), assist States in developing and implementing their Program Improvement Plans (PIP) and/or the State’s Child and Family Services Recruitment Plans
- Develop and maintain a database of contract trainers/topic matter experts. Expert consultants are matched with each State’s or Tribe’s needs
- Benchmark and disseminate promising practices. McKenzie Consulting, Inc. is our collaborator to provide technical assistance in benchmarking and other areas related to the *AdoptUSKids*’ mission

2. **Summit on Adoption** (Coordinator—Ada White)

Collaborator: The Child Welfare League of America

- Plan and hold an annual summit of adoption and foster care managers to plan strategies and provide opportunities for peer networking in recruitment
- Cooperate with the National Association of State Adoption Programs (NASAP), State

Foster Care Managers, Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) Administrators, Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA) Administrators, National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC), National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption and National Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning and Tribes

- Include representatives from the public and private sector at the Summit on Adoption. Scholarships are available for States and Territories

3. On-line Photo-listing (Coordinator—Barbara Pearson)

Collaborator: The Northwest Adoption Resource Exchange

- Increase the number of children and families registered on the website
- Increase the website's user-friendliness
- Provide reports for statistical purposes

4. Parent Support Group Network (Coordinator—Sylvia Franzmeier, AEA)

Collaborator: North American Council on Adoptable Children

- Provide annual mini-grants to parent support groups to defray start-up costs, assist with events, etc.
- Conduct Parent Leadership Training at no cost to mini-grant recipients

5. Research (Coordinator—Ruth McRoy, University of Texas)

Collaborator: The University of Texas-Austin, School of Social Work

- Conduct study of the barriers to completion of adoption process by following families through the process
- Identify the components that lead to favorable long-term outcomes for families adopting waiting children

6. National Recruitment Campaigns (Coordinator—Rebecca Jones Gaston, AEA)

Collaborators: Holt International Children's Services, The Ad Council, and the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children

- Consolidate recruitment efforts at all levels
- Assist States in preparing for and incorporating national campaigns into their existing efforts to recruit foster and adoptive families
- Develop collaborative partnerships with national, regional and local organizations to promote and support the National Recruitment Campaign
- Develop and disseminate National Adoption Month marketing packets and materials. The National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption was retained to provide this service for *AdoptUSKids*

- Coordinate the National Recruitment Campaign with The Ad Council and The Children’s Bureau
- Holt International provides the design and production of public relation materials, letter-head, brochures, etc.

7. Evaluation (Coordinator—Oronde Miller)

Collaborator: The Child Welfare League of America

- Link the service components of *AdoptUSKids* to the predicted outcomes of increased adoptions and increased numbers of prospective foster and adoptive resource families at the conclusion of the five year grant
- Evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the overall project



Section One: Overview and Definitions

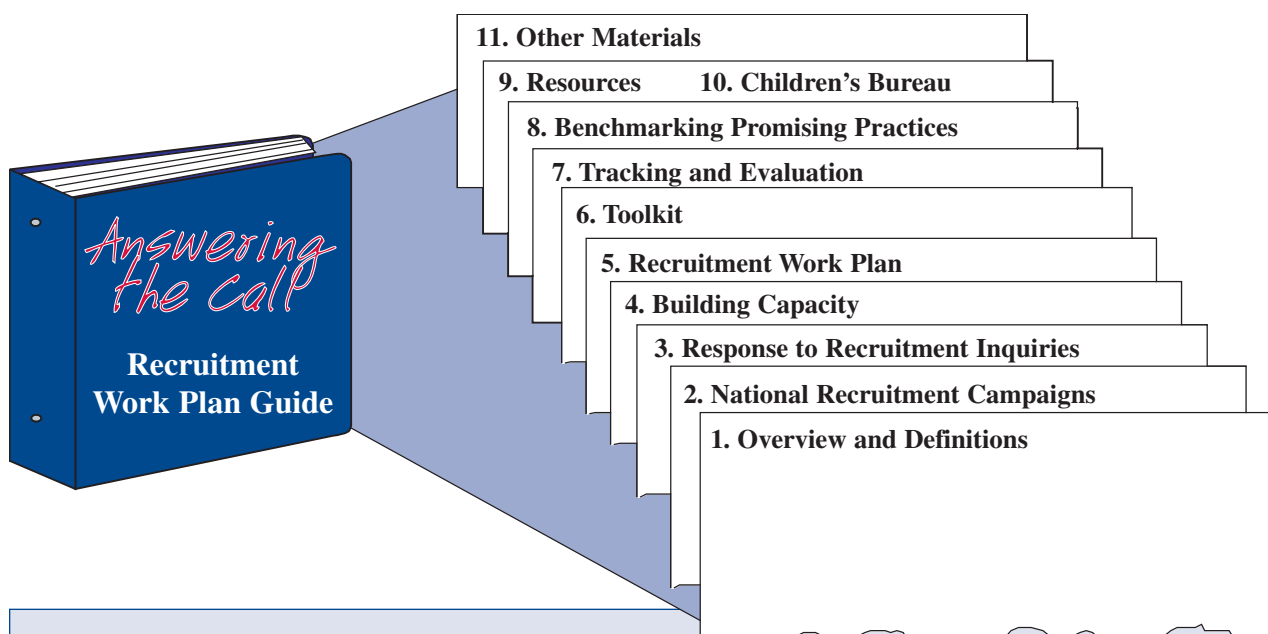
Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce and describe the *Program Manager’s Guide* and present a definition of and need for results-based recruitment. This section will:

- Describe *Answering the Call—Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers*
- Highlight the challenges with recruitment today
- Introduce a results-based definition of recruitment and the *AdoptUSKids* values that underpin this concept

Description of the Manager’s Guide

With the program manager in mind, *Answering the Call—Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers* is organized into 11 sections. These are illustrated as follows:



Purpose of the Guide

- Provide States with guidance to respond to and incorporate national recruitment campaigns into their ongoing State and local recruitment programs
- Help States address CFSR requirements and incorporate National Recruitment efforts in States’ Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and Child and Family Services Recruitment Plans
- Provide training, technical assistance and tools specific to recruitment issues and/or to enhance a State’s Child and Family Services Recruitment plan

The Challenges With Recruitment Today

The challenges in recruitment are well known by adoption and foster care program managers. There is no point in belaboring those challenges, except to summarize some key points, which are:

- The number of children in the care of the child welfare system has continued to grow, from approximately 260,000 children in the late 1980s to more than 540,000 in the latest AFCAR statistics. Concurrently, the number of available foster homes has declined approximately 4% and continues to decline over time.
- Child welfare agencies report alarm at the rising difficulty of finding appropriate foster and adoptive families and the rapid and high drop-out rate after recruitment. One study of adoption claims that only 3.3% of recruited adoptive families make it through the system. Most agencies report a less than 10% retention rate after the initial call.
- Surveys report that the primary reasons parents drop out are lack of responsiveness, communication and support from the foster care system (Annie E. Casey Foundation).
- Through focus groups and interviews, researchers have consistently documented that parents encounter a wide range of barriers within the agencies which include:
 - Difficulties in reaching the right person
 - Multiple unreturned calls
 - Insensitivity to the experience and needs of parents
 - Overly negative descriptions of the children
- An individual worker (or manager) can have a profound effect in creating a successful recruitment outcome.

“The first person I talked with was Patty...from that moment it’s like she cradled us. She walked us through the process—it was so easy it was almost unbelievable.... It went exactly like she said.... She gave us a lot of information and everything took place exactly as she said.”

Actual quotes from prospective parent—Jeff Katz Study, 2003

Toward a Definition of Results-Based Recruitment



When recruitment in an agency or community is defined narrowly and managed in a vacuum, it is bound to have negative consequences. This effect is illustrated in the following actual quotes from prospective parents:

“The radio ad kept running and running so I thought the place was spilling over with kids.”

“It took me four or five calls to finally get in touch with somebody...it was this department, that department...I just wanted to know about this little boy and it just seems like it was a thousand phone calls and a thousand people and this one doesn’t know what you are talking about and let me transfer you to somebody else....”

Actual quotes from prospective parents—Jeff Katz, Study, 2003

It is time for a new definition of recruitment, a definition that is inclusive and broad...and is measured by its effectiveness for getting parents for kids. The *AdoptUSKids* definition is offered as a starting place for looking at recruitment improvements as a systemic, results-based solution. It says:

Recruitment includes all outreach, educational and supportive activities that an organization uses to interest and help an individual and/or family become a foster and/or adoptive parent. This includes all activities from outreach and/or first contact to placement of a child with a licensed and/or approved parent.

This definition includes some activities that others may call “retention” or family preparation. The *AdoptUSKids* definition is comprehensive, as it is promoting a definition of recruitment that is results-based and inclusive of all persons (practitioners) in the agency who have a hand in helping a prospective parent become a foster or adoptive family. The intended result of recruitment is the placement of a child with a prepared and committed foster and/or adoptive family.

Beliefs Underpinning a Results-Based Definition of Recruitment

Recruitment is more than just bringing people to the door. It is a living system that can only be measured by its results for kids and families. Following are eight beliefs that underpin this definition of recruitment:

- 1. *Results-based recruitment is everybody’s job:*** From the agency director to the person who answers the telephone, recruitment is everybody’s job. High functioning organizations tie recruitment to their mission statements and encourage all staff to be community ambassadors for the children and families they serve.
- 2. *Results-based recruitment is customer-driven:*** Past thinking is that foster and adoptive parents are clients. They are not. They are at first customers and, ultimately, part of the team... a team of social workers, resource parents, and others working together to achieve permanency for children. Surveys repeatedly find that the primary reasons parents drop out of the

system are lack of responsiveness, communication and support from the foster care system. It has been found through Child and Family Service Reviews that when foster and adoptive parents feel supported, permanency outcomes are improved.

In all of its processes, it is important that the organization determines who its customers are and how to keep them satisfied. Good recruitment practice demands that organizations understand the expectations of their prospective adoptive and foster parents, develop listening and learning strategies to understand and anticipate their needs, provide post placement support services, have effective systems for tracking customer satisfaction and resolving misunderstandings and complaints.

3. ***Results-based recruitment portrays the children who need help and the role of the foster and adoptive parent optimistically and honestly:*** There is no doubt that fostering and adopting children who are in foster care is hard work and very challenging. A rule of thumb is that families should be provided enough reliable information to make an informed decision about fostering and/or adopting. Practitioners must have good information about the children and their needs to present a realistic picture to prospective parents. Too much negativity strips everyone of their unique humanity—the children, the families and the agency. But, neither is it wise to give families an unrealistic picture of the needs of the children, their birth families or the distinct roles of resource parents in reunification and/or adoption. Giving parents the opportunity to explore areas where they may have doubts and respecting their ability to make good decisions for themselves is a key principle in results-based recruitment.

4. ***Results-based recruitment works to rule people in, not out of the process:*** Experienced foster care and adoption professionals know that, with training and support, the most ordinary and, sometimes, unusual, people have grown into the role of foster or adoptive parents with amazing results. This is a developmental process that engages parents and practitioners in a partnership over time, and no one can be expected to have all the necessary skills in the beginning. Sure, it is important to rule out people who are dangerous to children. But let's not rule people out because they have limited resources, miss meetings and/or are a little difficult to engage. Results-based recruitment managers are customer advocates and see roadblocks as challenges to be overcome, not indications of a potential parent's value as a prospective foster and/or adoptive parent. Most of the time parents present themselves to the agency for an altruistic purpose. They have passion and emotion about this. The challenge is how to maintain that passion and turn it into informed commitment through results-based recruitment processes.



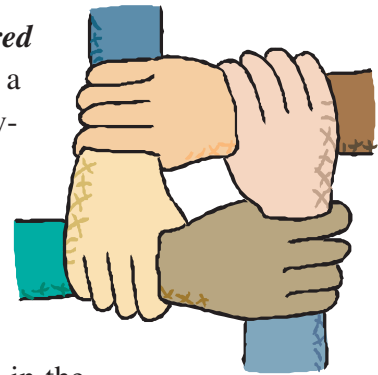
5. **Results-based recruitment works best when seasoned foster and adoptive parents are partners in the process:** People believe and learn from others who have “been there, done that.” Agencies that have used “Resource Parents” in preparing, training and supporting new parents through the process have realized good outcomes in many ways. New parents feel valued and supported, they have peers to talk with and consider difficult issues.



Experienced parents feel affirmed in their roles and grow in their commitment to the agency and its work. “Word-of-mouth” has teeth when resource families are active and avid spokespersons and mentors. Of course, it goes without saying that resource parents will need training in an organization’s philosophy, parameters and methods to be true partners with staff.

6. **Results-based recruitment is a community endeavor:** Involvement of private contract agencies, community groups, businesses, faith-based organizations, and individual volunteers can be very helpful in spreading the word about the need for families and supporting families who “answer the call” to foster and/or adopt. When there is more than one agency recruiting in a community, it is best when they coordinate their big campaign efforts. Many individuals will step forward to help and later find that they are not ready or suited for the role of foster and/or adoptive parent. These people may be possible volunteers to help agencies with recruiting, supporting others with transportation, child-care, etc., and/or helping to raise funds for recruitment programs. Many such persons have passion for the children and could be engaged in helping out. Remember—“Results-based recruitment is everybody’s job.”

7. **Results-based recruitment involves teamwork and a shared sense of urgency:** Everyone who comes into contact with a prospective parent is part of a team in a very important endeavor. Finding and preparing families to adopt and foster is a very complex process that involves hand-offs from recruiter to trainer, to family assessment worker, to placement worker, etc. All involved must have the same value system and a sense of urgency about completing the work as soon as possible.



The longer it takes, the less likely the family is to stay in the process. However, if a parent is treated well throughout the process, understands the reasons for necessary time, and helped to feel part of the team early on, he/she is more likely to stay the course and not drop out.

8. **Results-based recruitment involves tracking and evaluation and it is always time-sensitive:** Most agencies are reporting that it takes as long as 7 to 9 months to get a family from first inquiry to licensing and/or approval. Due to the long wait, families are often lost in the transition and multiple hand-offs from one staff person and/or stage of recruitment response to the other. The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that families are often lost during the gaps

in a seven-step process, as illustrated below:

When Do Gaps Occur?	
BETWEEN	AND
The first call	Orientation
Training	Application
Assessment	Approval
Orientation	Pre-service training
Application	Assessment
Approval	Placement

High functioning agencies are starting to track the time and numbers of people who drop out during these transitions (Casey Foundation, 2001). Some agencies have developed effective mechanisms for getting feedback from parents about the process at various stages, including from those parents who drop out of the process. How to keep parents involved is addressed in Section Three in this notebook and in the *Practitioner's Guide* of the *Answering the Call* Series. Evaluation is discussed in Section Seven of this notebook.

In the next section of this guide, *AdoptUSKids* has described National Recruitment Campaigns and initiatives that will be available to States in the next 6–12 months and continuing for a number of years. Section Two also provides recommendations on how States can maximize State and local benefits from these near-term initiatives by integrating these efforts into their ongoing recruitment initiatives and readying their response systems. In subsequent sections, materials, tools and suggestions are made for enhancing a State's recruitment work plan and continuously improving a State's results from its recruitment, with a particular emphasis on the local sites' response to parents from the first call to placement.

AdoptUSKids stands ready to provide technical assistance and training for States for getting ready for national recruitment campaigns and for longer-term program improvements. Contact our Technical Assistance and Training Coordinator by calling (303) 755-4756.

Section Two: National Recruitment Campaigns



Introduction

AdoptUSKids, as a service of the Children's Bureau, has the responsibility to conduct and provide support to national recruitment campaigns for adoptive and foster parents throughout the year. These initiatives are designed to augment and strengthen the States' and local sites' recruitment plans and calendar. They are not meant to replace them.

National media campaigns can build public awareness and interest families that might not be reached through other means. They are intended to provide a positive image of foster care and adoption and provide a foundation for States' more targeted recruitment efforts. It would be very expensive for individual States to launch such campaign efforts.

Recruitment has many facets. It starts with good public relations activities to build awareness of the need for parents for children and it includes every staff person who interfaces with the community and the agency's resource parents. It has been documented over and over again that the way the agency treats its resource parents is the key to success.

There are four types of recruitment used by most agencies. These include: general, targeted, child specific and child-centered recruitment. These are explained in more detail in the *Practitioner's Guide* in Section Three of this notebook. *AdoptUSKids* is available to provide technical assistance to States in all recruitment methods for both foster care and adoption. Ultimately, it doesn't matter what type of recruitment method brought the prospective parents to the door, it is still incredibly important, for the child's sake, that the agency's response system is designed to welcome prospective parents and ultimately develop a constructive partnership with them. Having a focus on the results from recruitment will better enable a State to address permanency outcomes in its Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and enhance its Child and Family Services Recruitment Plan (CFSP).

With these principles in mind, *AdoptUSKids* has focused much of the material in the *Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Managers* on the agency's services to prospective families after they have made that first call until a child is placed with them.

The following information is contained in Section Two:

- Description of the features and timing of each of the planned national recruitment campaigns
- Description of *AdoptUSKids'* role in helping States get ready for national campaign initiatives
- Suggestions for States, Indian Tribes and local sites on how to attain maximum benefits from national, State and local recruitment campaigns

National Recruitment Campaign Plans October, 2003 through September, 2004

The annual calendar for *AdoptUSKids* involvement in national recruitment campaigns runs from October 1 to September 30 each year. Over the next two years, the planned events include:

National Adoption Month—November is National Adoption Month every year. Many States have very active programs to bring attention to the children who need adoption and increase public awareness. Many community-based activities are sponsored by local agency sites and community collaboratives during this period.

AdoptUSKids, along with the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, has provided the *National Adoption Month Recruitment and Marketing Kit* for State and local sites to use to plan and implement their strategies for National Adoption Month. That publication is a very comprehensive catalogue of ideas and tools to use for recruiting at the State and local levels. It includes a CD ROM of tools including brochures, big banners and podium signs that are available to download and print out for States to use. In addition, *AdoptUSKids* will be sending samples of posters to States and bookmarks, and note cards. More information regarding National Adoption Month is contained on the *AdoptUSKids* website (www.adoptuskids.org).



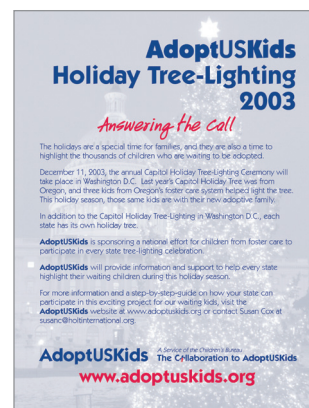
National Adoption Day, November 22, 2003—Planning activities for the fourth annual National Adoption Day on November 22, 2003 are now underway coordinated by the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Casey Family Services, Children’s Action Network, the Congressional Coalition for Adoption Institute, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Freddie Mac Foundation and Target Corporation. The partners are reaching out to courts and judges, State and local foster care departments, care providers and children’s advocates nationwide to interest them in participating. The effort in

2003 will bring even greater exposure and participation for National Adoption Day. For the past four years, many courts and communities have opened their doors and hearts on National Adoption Day to finalize adoptions of children from foster care and to celebrate all adoptions. On November 22, 2003 we hope courts in each of our 50 States will continue this tradition and help finalize more than 1,000 adoptions from foster care.

AdoptUSKids can provide technical assistance to States regarding planning and implementing special recruitment events, such as those mentioned above.

Holiday Tree Celebration—Every year, a State is chosen to contribute the official holiday tree to be displayed on the west lawn of the Capitol Building in Washington, DC and a date is chosen for the official tree lighting, which is open to the public. In December 2002, the tree came from

the State of Oregon. *AdoptUSKids* took this opportunity to use the tree-lighting ceremony as a way to remind people about the children waiting in foster care for an adoptive family. *AdoptUSKids* cooperated with the State of Oregon to fly three older waiting siblings to DC to appear at the tree lighting and be the ones to “flip the switch” lighting the tree. This generated a significant amount of media coverage for waiting kids in general and, as a result, the three children found a permanent family and were placed for adoption.



In 2003, *AdoptUSKids* is encouraging States to involve waiting foster children in local tree-lighting ceremonies.

Home for the Holidays—The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the Children’s Action Network have joined once again to present the fifth annual “A Home for the Holidays” television special on CBS. On Tuesday, December 23, 2003, “A Home for the Holidays” will once again feature well-known celebrities and performers in a variety of roles. Each will share their perspective on the joys of adoption. This special is intended to raise awareness of prime time television viewers about waiting children.

National Foster Care Month—National Foster Care Month is in May each year. *AdoptUSKids* will work with States and Indian Tribes through its technical assistance and national campaigns offices to bring attention to the need for foster homes and to highlight the important role that foster parents play in the lives of our nation’s children.

Other Ongoing National Recruitment Initiatives:

Bruce Willis Initiative—In July 2002, President Bush appointed Bruce Willis as National Spokesman for Children in Foster Care. Mr. Willis is promoting foster care and adoption in a number of ways, including creating and distributing public service announcements.

A Unique Opportunity: The *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign 2003-2006

Recently, *AdoptUSKids*, in partnership with the Children's Bureau, Administration for Child and Families, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Ad Council, announced a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign that will encourage people to adopt children who are currently in the foster care system. The Ad Council is a private, non-profit organization with a 60-year history of marshalling volunteer talent from the advertising and media industries to deliver critical messages to the American public. The Ad Council icons and slogans are woven into the very fabric of American culture—from Smokey Bear’s “Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires” to the United Negro College Fund’s, “A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste.”

This year's multi-media campaign is set to launch in the Spring of 2004. It will include television, radio, print and Internet public service announcements. *AdoptUSKids* is currently working with the Children's Bureau to provide technical assistance to States and Tribes to help them plan their State and local response to the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign and other national recruitment initiatives. The Campaign will focus on adoption, but it is expected that States will be able to encourage responding families to also consider fostering, once they understand the needs of the children and the nature of the services provided by the agency. Again, how parents are initially treated, welcomed-in and provided information and training will determine whether they will see themselves becoming resource parents.

Activities and Preliminary Schedule for the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign Rollout:

Year #1 Spring 2003–Spring 2004

Research and Planning—The advertising firm, kirshenbaum bond and partners based in New York, has been selected to create this campaign. They are a national firm whose clients include: Target, Citibank, Wyndham Hotels and more. The advertising firm and its other partners are conducting preliminary research to determine an effective recruitment focus and message. Their research includes holding focus groups with parents and practitioners in several States. Once the preliminary research is finished, the initial public service announcements will be created and tested.

Year # 2 Spring 2004–Spring 2005

Implementation—The public service announcements (PSAs) will be finalized and distributed through the Ad Council's sources to national media outlets, including television, radio, Internet and print media. In collaboration with *AdoptUSKids*, the Ad Council will create a Site Press Kit for States to use in preparing local media for the campaign. The press kit and sample PSAs will be distributed to local sites as soon as they are available. *AdoptUSKids* will also be working with the Ad Council to create an Ad campaign in Spanish. The PSA Campaign will begin sometime in the Spring and continue throughout the next two years. Actual timing is yet to be determined, however, *AdoptUSKids* will keep States continuously informed of the situation.

Year #3 Spring 2005–Spring 2006

Refinement and Improvement—The PSAs will continue to appear during this period and the messages will be refined based on feedback and results.

The Ad Campaign messages will be frequent and strong. The Ad Council is known for their proven ability to get excellent placement of PSAs and ads on television, radio and the Internet. This as an exceptional opportunity for States to bring public awareness to the need for permanent homes for children. Hopefully many American families will respond to the need. This effort will help establish a platform for the States’ recruitment efforts for both foster and adoptive children, as well as strengthen all of the *AdoptUSKids* national recruitment initiatives. The *Answering the Call* series has been developed and disseminated to States to help maximize the benefits of national recruitment initiatives for kids.

The 2003-2004 National Recruitment Campaign Calendar

<p>October 03</p> <p>Distribution of the <i>AdoptUSKids</i> /NRC National Adoption Month, Campaign Recruitment and Marketing Kit</p> <p>Distribution of the <i>Answering the Call</i> series</p>	<p>November 03</p> <p>National Adoption Month</p> <p>Nov. 6 –7 Annual Recruitment Summit, Washington D.C.</p> <p>Nov. 22 National Adoption Day</p>	<p>December 03</p> <p>Holiday Tree Celebration</p> <p>Dec. 23 “A Home for the Holidays” television show</p>
<p>January 04</p>	<p>February 04</p>	<p>March 04</p> <p><i>AdoptUSKids</i> National Ad Campaign launched (specific date TBD)</p>
<p>April 04</p> <p>PSAs</p>	<p>May 04</p> <p>National Foster Care Month</p> <p>PSAs</p>	<p>June 04</p> <p>PSAs</p>
<p>July 04</p> <p>PSAs</p> <p>July 15–16 Annual Recruitment Summit</p>	<p>August 04</p> <p>PSAs</p>	<p>September 04</p> <p>PSAs</p>

Getting Ready: *AdoptUSKids* Role

AdoptUSKids’ role is to help States get ready for and maximize the impact of all national recruitment campaigns through a variety of methods. These include:

1. Communicating information about the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign and other national initiatives to States, as planning continues to develop.
2. Holding an Annual Recruitment Summit for State Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers.
3. Providing information and tools for States and local sites to review and improve their systems for responding to inquiries.

4. Providing technical assistance and training to States to improve their recruitment programs and response, as requested, including providing regional “train the trainers” for States’ response teams and participating individuals.
5. Participating directly in the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign by taking first calls.
6. Providing financial incentives to help States improve their response to prospective parents.

1—Communications—*AdoptUSKids* has created a communications plan to connect directly with State foster care and adoption staff and additional contact persons, as designated by State program managers, regarding national recruitment initiatives and events as they are developing. Monthly Recruitment Bulletins will keep each State’s foster care and adoption program manager informed of developments. E-mail and the website will also be used to keep communications timely. Teleconferences and web-based conferences will be scheduled at periodic intervals to answer questions and present new information. *AdoptUSKids* will be soliciting feedback from the States as to how these communications can be regularly improved.

2—Annual Recruitment Summit—In collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the Children’s Bureau, *AdoptUSKids* will hold an Annual Recruitment Summit in Washington, D.C. This Annual Recruitment Summit meeting for foster and adoption program managers will address the concerns that States bring about recruitment and provide ample opportunities for States to share promising practices and solutions with one another. It is scheduled for November 6–7 in 2003 and will be held every year thereafter.

3—Publications to Improve the State’s Response Systems for Recruited Families—*AdoptUSKids* has taken a comprehensive and systemic approach to providing information and tools for a State to improve its recruitment response system. This approach can touch every recruitment practitioner and recruited family, if a State chooses to use the tools that have been provided. See Section Three—Response to Recruitment Inquiries. It provides a *Practitioner’s Guide—Getting More Parents for Children From Your Recruitment Efforts*. It also includes tips on how a manager can use this guide with staff. In addition, the *Answering the Call* series includes a *Family Pocket Guide* for prospective parents to use in demystifying the whole process from inquiry to placement. See Section Eleven for the order form for these publications. In addition, *AdoptUSKids* has new publications in the works, including two on inter-jurisdictional adoptive placements (for parents and practitioners) and one on ethics and standards in using adoption exchanges. States will be notified when these publications become available.

4—Providing Technical Assistance and Training for States to Improve Their Response Systems—*AdoptUSKids* is planning to provide regional “Train the Trainers” programs for State’s recruitment response teams and designated individuals, as one of its technical assistance and training initiatives. In addition, *AdoptUSKids* can provide up to 10 days of technical assistance for each State in areas that the State selects to improve its outcomes. *AdoptUSKids* can help a State assess

and improve its recruitment and response systems by flowcharting or mapping the current process and using other problem-solving tools to improve processes. *AdoptUSKids* has contracted with an independent firm, McKenzie Consulting Inc., to provide technical assistance services to assist States in improving their response systems, meet program improvement requirements and provide other technical assistance services, e.g. benchmarking and disseminating promising practices.

5—Financial Incentives to Improve Response Systems—*AdoptUSKids* is currently exploring the feasibility of providing financial incentives to States and Indian Tribes to help them expand their capacity to respond to inquiries. *AdoptUSKids* will be working with State representatives who serve on the project’s National Recruitment Work Group to define the criteria and parameters for use of these funds.

6—Participate Directly In The National Ad Campaign by Taking First Calls—*AdoptUSKids*’ nationwide 800-number will be on all of the National Ad Campaign public service announcements in all media. So it is highly likely that first calls in response to the PSAs will come to the *AdoptUSKids* office. *AdoptUSKids* is currently developing its internal response system to manage these calls and refer them to local response teams and individuals. *AdoptUSKids* will be working with States to determine the best methods and the individual persons or response teams who will be receiving and following-up on the referrals. It is also likely that direct calls will be received by the States and local offices in response to these PSAs. Either way, it will be important to have a local response plan for handling the referrals and calls received by your State.

The remainder of this section will suggest methods and procedures that can result in an effective collaboration between the States and *AdoptUSKids* and a more strategic national response to the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign and other national, State and local recruitment efforts.

Suggestions for Getting Ready: A Collaborative Effort

AdoptUSKids understands that most States are reeling from budget cuts and have limited resources. It also understands that each State and local site is unique in its stage of development, as it relates to conducting recruitment and responding to prospective families who call. It is the intent to be of service and to extend an invitation to States to participate at whatever level is feasible, given their setting and circumstances. *AdoptUSKids* wants to be part of an effort of working smarter, not harder.

The *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign will be conducted with one central telephone number for initial inquiries. *AdoptUSKids* has been designated to take first calls through their 800-number. *AdoptUSKids* will be working to collaborate and coordinate its efforts with State and local sites.

In order to facilitate collaboration and provide support to the States, *AdoptUSKids* has established

a new position of “Fulfillment Director” to assist States in maximizing the resources of *AdoptUSKids*, that were described above. This person will be responsible to help States access financial incentives, develop and implement their recruitment response teams and train response team members and other participants.

With the help of State program managers, who are representatives on the National Recruitment Work Committee, *AdoptUSKids* has devised the following steps for planning and implementing the Ad Campaign in the Spring of 2004. These steps will put in place a foundation for all future collaborative efforts between *AdoptUSKids* and States related to national recruitment initiatives.

***AdoptUSKids* will:**

1. Request that a recruitment point person(s) from adoption and/or foster care be designated at the State level.
2. Provide regular communications to that person and be readily available to answer questions.
3. Conduct teleconferences and web-based conferences and e-mail, and written communications with point persons.
4. Provide telephone and/or on-site technical assistance, if requested by the States, which can include: assessing and providing guidance in improving response systems; training for local response teams or individuals, and other State requests.
5. Provide ongoing feedback to the States regarding the evaluation results of national recruitment initiatives.

States will be asked to:

1. Designate their State-level point person(s) from the areas of adoption and/or foster care and communicate this information to *AdoptUSKids*.
2. Determine their system for responding to referrals.
3. Identify local response teams or individuals to take and respond to referrals from *AdoptUSKids*.
4. Communicate this information to *AdoptUSKids*.
5. Orient local response teams to the National Recruitment Campaign strategies, literature, tools, etc.
6. Seek training for response teams and/or individuals in collaboration with *AdoptUSKids*, as appropriate.
7. Arrange training for all relevant staff on what constitutes an effective response to recruitment efforts. (The *Practitioner’s Guide* and *Family Pocket Guide* for parents can be used to train and/or provide staff with tools and information.)

8. Help local sites assess their readiness and address gaps in the following areas:
 - a. Know the local demographics of children needing care, in both foster and adoptive care
 - b. Review their intake and telephone systems for receiving inquiries and referrals
 - c. Understand and employ good customer service techniques throughout the system from first inquiry to placement
 - d. Coordinate national campaigns with other internal and external recruitment campaigns
 - e. Have materials and talking points ready for persons making the first contact with prospective parents
 - f. Have State and/or *AdoptUSKids* information packets and materials ready for parents
 - g. Review and seek to close gaps in the current response system
9. Provide feedback to *AdoptUSKids* on results, benefits and challenges related to the national recruitment initiatives through channels established between the State-level point person and *AdoptUSKids*.

On the following page is a suggested timeline for the collaboration between *AdoptUSKids* and States to maximize the benefits and opportunities from the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign.

AdoptUSKids will be providing States with continuous updated information about national recruitment initiatives on a regular basis. These bulletins can be put in this section of the *Program Manager's Guide*.

Timeline for Getting Ready for the *AdoptUSKids* National Ad Campaign 2004

	Oct/Nov 03	Dec 03	Jan 04	Feb 04	March 04	April 04
What <i>AdoptUSKids</i> will do:	Getting Started	Developing Collaboration	Communicating and TA	Training of Response Teams	Improving Response Process	
	Define the referral system Send monthly bulletins Hold National Summit (Nov 6–7) Request State point person information Conduct teleconference, e-mail communications with the point person(s) Distribute <i>Answering the Call</i> and recruitment marketing kit materials	Continue communication strategies Provide TA via telephone Distribute monthly bulletin Hold telephone and web-based conferences as needed Provide on-site TA and training as requested and approved by ACF regional office	<i>Same as December 2003 plus</i> Communicate more specific/updated Ad Council information Send additional materials to local response teams and individuals Respond to incentive funding requests Provide on-site TA and training as requested and approved by ACF regional office	<i>Same as January 2004 plus</i> Distribute Ad Council site press kit Provide specific TA guidance on use of press kit as requested Provide States with procedures for training of response teams Provide on-site TA and training as requested and approved by ACF regional office	<i>Same as January 2004 plus</i> Make improvements to procedures and training materials based on specific feedback from States Provide on-site TA and training as requested and approved by ACF regional office	
What States can do:	Designate State recruitment point person(s) Send representatives to National Summit (Nov 6-7) Participate in <i>AdoptUSKids</i> recruitment teleconferences and e-mail communications Distribute information to key recruitment persons within State Review and order additional <i>AdoptUSKids Answering the Call</i> and other materials, as needed	Designated State point person(s) continues to participate in <i>AdoptUSKids</i> collaboration and communication mechanisms Continue to distribute information to key recruitment persons within the State Assess the need for TA and training Make plans for TA and training with <i>AdoptUSKids</i> as needed	<i>Same as December 2003 plus</i> Identify local recruitment response teams or individuals who will receive referrals from <i>AdoptUSKids</i> Send list of State's local contacts to <i>AdoptUSKids</i> Apply for <i>AdoptUSKids</i> incentive funds for local response teams, as appropriate	<i>Same as January 2004 plus</i> Local response teams and individuals receive orientation and training by State's own resources or by requesting assistance from <i>AdoptUSKids</i>	<i>Same as January 2004 plus</i> Assist local sites to assess their readiness and address gaps in their recruitment response systems, see item 8a–8g above Develop and implement action plans as appropriate	

Section Three: Response to Inquiries



“Get these families in here. Collect them all. Then we will get them in groups and then we will see...”

Actual quote from recruitment practitioner—Jeff Katz Study, 2003

Introduction and Features

In some recent studies it has been reported that less than 10% of the prospective foster care / adoptive parents that make that first inquiry actually make it all the way through to placement of a child into their care. Why is this so?

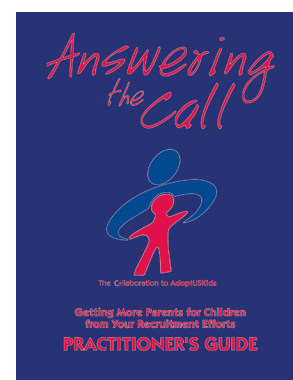
- Do prospective parents get confused and don't know where they are in the process, don't know what they are expected to do next?
- Do they feel unwelcome and unappreciated?
- Are they tired of waiting too long between steps?
- Is there a well-defined and consistent process to follow or do people get all tied up in the bureaucracy?

The *Practitioner's Guide* of the *Answering the Call* series is contained in this section. It focuses on the agency's response to inquiries and offers suggestions of promising practices to improve an agency's recruitment outcomes. Its contents and potential uses are described below:

Answering the Call: A Practitioner's Guide

This Guide is designed to help local agency staff respond more effectively to parents who inquire about children in care as a result of their recruitment efforts.

This Guide contains many tips that individuals or teams can use to improve recruitment results. It is designed to help agencies look at their local response process from that important prospective parent's first call to when a child is placed with a new family. It challenges the recruitment practitioners to walk with the parents on their journey. It highlights practices that can help the team be responsive to the concerns of parents and reduce the time it takes them to become foster and adoptive parents.



For purposes of this guide, the response process is presented in seven steps.

AdoptUSKids does not encourage a strict linear sequence of activities. Many agencies will have a different sequence of steps and/or do several steps concurrently, especially when there is a foster parent or relative adoption involved. The Practitioner's Guide has been divided into three parts. Following is an overview of each part.

Part I—Introduction

- Background and Definitions
- 11 Things a Practitioner Can Do to Improve Recruitment Outcomes
- The Practitioner's Values and Challenge

Part II—Examining and optimizing the recruitment process from first inquiry to placement. This part describes a seven step journey, each step addressing:

- What results are we looking for at this step?
- How does this look from the parent's point of view?
- Impact of wait time
- What agencies do to get best results

Part III—Other considerations and information

- Information related to the children
- 10 characteristics of successful adoptive and foster families
- Characteristics of successful recruitment practitioners
- Cultural competency—issues to be considered by individuals and agencies
- Additional considerations—Native American Tribes
- Staying motivated
- The pre-service curriculum
- A word about the pre-service trainers
- References for more information about Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment
- Helpful websites

Answering the Call: Parents' Family Pocket Guide

The product is designed for parents to help them understand and track their journey from their first call through orientation, pre-service training, application, home study and placement.

Part I

- Letter and introduction to the prospective parent
- Place for their name, photograph, names of agency staff with whom they will be working



Part II

- Defines what basic qualifications the prospective parent needs to become licensed or approved
- Gives an overview of the seven-step journey

Part III

- Defines each step of the journey
- Answers the question, “What do I have to do during this step?”

Part IV

- Lists and answers frequently asked questions
- Provides a place for important appointments, names and phone numbers

Following is the introductory letter shown in the *Family Pocket Guide*:

Dear Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents,

Thank you for answering the call to adopt or foster a child in need. We are very pleased that you are interested in working with us.

There is no doubt that fostering and adopting children who are in foster care is hard work and very challenging. There is a lot you will have to do to get ready for this challenge and the many rewards that come as a result. You may think of this as going on a life-changing journey. The *AdoptUSKids Family Pocket Guide* was developed to help you record your questions, log your progress and keep important contact information along the way.

This is your guide for the journey. It is being given to you as part of your initial orientation. So write your name on the opposite page and the names of your important contact people on page 2. This may be your assigned social worker, orientation coordinator and/or other important people who you will want to remember and be able to call.

On page 5 you will see the seven basic steps of this journey. There is a brief description of each with space for you to write in the questions you want to ask and the answers you receive. You may wonder why there is so much information to gather and questions to be asked in this process. It is because the agency is required by law to assure that foster and adoptive children will be safe and well cared for in their new homes. And, we can serve you better once we get to know you and understand your ideas, preferences and unique circumstances.

Please be aware that the steps/process used and time it takes will vary somewhat from agency to agency.

Suggested ways Program Managers can use the *Practitioner's Guide*

1. Use it as a way to analyze current processes—As shown in the description above, the *Practitioner's Guide* has been divided into three parts. Part Two describes a typical process of what happens from the time a prospective parent makes that first inquiry through to placement of a child into their family. This is shown as a seven-step process. Your process will no doubt be somewhat different.
 - Consider mapping out your current process steps
 - Flowchart your current process (see flowcharting/process mapping in Section Six: Toolkit)
 - Look for areas of inconsistency or redundancy in your current process
 - How effective are handoffs from one area of the organization to another?
 - Are processes done serially or concurrently?
 - Consider addressing the questions presented in the guide for each of your process steps
 - What results are we looking for at this step?
 - How does this look from the parent's point of view?
 - What is the impact of wait time?
 - What do other agencies do to get best results?
2. Use it during meetings with staff as a tool for discussion—Set aside 15 to 20 minutes during your regularly scheduled staff meeting to review each process step. Review one step per week. You could assign or ask a different volunteer each week to present a step and then have discussion about it. Talk about what is working or not working in your own process. Then use some of the tools in Section Six Toolkit to:
 - Brainstorm for solutions in areas needing improvement
 - Affinitize the responses (see Affinity Diagram) and then prioritize using either the Importance, Urgency & Do-ability tool or the Problem Solving Grid and Worksheet
 - Develop action plans for process improvement
3. Pass it on to your staff training department
 - To use as a handout in training the subject of recruitment
 - To use as a tool to discuss how inquiries from prospective parents might be handled
 - To use as a basis for developing training exercises
4. Use it during new employee orientation
 - Hand out copies of the *Practitioner's Guide* to new staff.
 - Have them read it and then review your own strategies, processes and tools.
 - It can be used as a device for mentors (or buddies) assigned to each new staff to review and discuss how things work at your agency.

The *Practitioner's Guide* is meant for use by anyone involved in one or more of the seven-step process.

Suggested ways Program Managers can use the *Family Pocket Guide*

1. Present it to front line program managers and supervisors for possible use in the State's program.
2. Consider handing it out to prospective parents during the first orientation meeting where it can be reviewed, explained and parents can start to use it.

Additional copies of the *Practitioner's Guide* and the *Family Pocket Guide* can be ordered from *AdoptUSKids* free of charge. See the ordering instructions contained in Section Eleven, at the back of this notebook.

Section Four: Building Capability



“Child Welfare is not rocket science. It’s harder than rocket science.”

David Liederman—CWLA Adoption Conference, 1998

Introduction

Many organizations have been very disappointed in the results from their recruitment efforts. The purpose of this section is to provide ideas for improving results one step at a time. This section will:

- Present a developmental model for program improvements in recruitment
- Suggest that progress can be made incrementally by breaking down the many elements of results-based recruitment into stages of development. These stages of development are often referred to as a **Capability Maturity Model** or CMM

Just like a child has to grow and progress through a series of stages to be capable of...



Crawling



then Walking



and finally Running

... so does an organization progress through its own stages of organizational development to achieve full capability. It is important to understand the basic characteristics of each of these stages of organizational development. And to understand which stage best characterizes your organization¹.

Examples will be presented and divided into categories of how an organization can understand, grow and progress in their capability development, first from stage one—then to stage two—then to stage three.

¹—It should be said at this point that a capability maturity model is typically divided into five stages. But for its application to recruitment only three stages are presented.

In Section One: Introduction and Background, *AdoptUSKids* defined results-based recruitment as:

Recruitment includes all outreach, educational and supportive activities that an organization uses to interest and help an individual and/or family become a foster and/or adoptive parent. This includes all activities from outreach and/or first contact to placement of a child with a licensed and/or approved parent.

This definition includes some activities that others may call “retention” or family preparation. The *AdoptUSKids* definition is comprehensive, because a definition of recruitment is promoted that is results-based and inclusive of all persons (practitioners) in the agency who have a hand in helping a parent become a foster or adoptive family. The intended result of recruitment is the placement of a child with a prepared and committed foster and/or adoptive family.

This definition is a backdrop for examining the implications of the three-stage Capability Maturity Model as it applies to a systemic view of recruitment.

Capability Maturity Model Definitions For Results-Based Recruitment

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<p>Inconsistency of methods and unpredictable results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just-in-time planning and actions • Putting out fires, focus on short-term fixes • Ad hoc actions • Results not documented or repeatable • Tracking and evaluation, if it occurs, is done and then put on the shelf; no impact on services 	<p>Focus on understanding specific areas needing improvement; work to make incremental improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning is geared to specific programs and procedures • Isolation and prioritization of specific processes needing improvement • Processes are documented; staff training is inconsistent • Results are documented but unpredictable • Tracking and evaluation information is gathered for a specific area, but no lasting impact is achieved 	<p>Expand recruitment to include whole system and process from initial call through placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning is strategic • Focus is on total recruitment system/process and involving cross-functional representation • Processes are documented and repeatable • Results are predictably successful • Tracking and evaluation (both customer and peer reviews) are taking place so that teams track their own progress and make continuous improvement

Specific Areas to Consider in Improving an Agency/Organization’s Capability in Recruitment

“Success in any area requires constantly readjusting your behavior as the result of feedback from your experience.”

Michael Gelb, Tony Buzan—“Lessons in the Art of Juggling”

The Capability Maturity Model leads an agency progressively through three stages of development to achieve optimal performance. However, development is always uneven. Organizations (in the real world) cannot move from stage to stage as purely as delineated in models. There is always overlap between stages with some areas of excellence mingled with some areas of extreme dysfunction. However, models do help organizations form a vision of what can be achieved so that action plans can be developed and progress made. Following are examples of specific functions that must be performed by an agency. Each function has been depicted to show the three stages of capability development relating to recruitment planning and response systems.

Planning

Planning is a crucial element of any organization’s recruitment strategy.

- Stage 1—An agency will usually do “just-in-time” planning. Typically, planning centers around a particular recruitment event and is done by the recruitment staff. It usually does not address the agency’s response system for recruitment, except for the few days after the event.
- Stage 2—An agency may plan an annual recruitment calendar. The recruiters are trained and supported by their leaders. Procedures are in place for the recruitment response team.
- Stage 3—Planning is strategic. Planned actions are linked to achieving desired outcomes. Attention is given to the total recruitment/response system.

Response procedures are documented and reinforced as a priority through training, rewards and sanctions. A comprehensive plan is developed for recruitment that is participatory, strategic and updated regularly. The planning process includes staff as well as community and resource parent stakeholders. The total agency sees recruitment as everybody’s job. The response process is well defined, institutionalized and regularly monitored. See the seven-step process shown in the *Answering the Call— Practitioner’s Guide* as an example of a defined model.



Staff Resources

Qualified and committed staff are the agency's most important asset in results-based recruitment.

- Stage 1—Recruitment or contracted agency staff are isolated from the rest of the agency's functions. When campaigns or major recruitment projects are in process, it is “feel good time,” but not too many families get licensed. Training and placement staff often see interested families as “inappropriate for our kids.” In this stage, there can be a lot of finger pointing and frustration.
- Stage 2—Recruitment or contracted agency staff are trained and effective, they spend significant time in outreach and work year-round on using targeted recruitment. There are sufficient numbers of staff deployed for recruitment, but actual results are still fairly insignificant for the expended effort and resources. Costs of these campaigns, particularly considering staff costs, often outweigh the benefits. Turnover and poor morale can be a result.
- Stage 3—Recruitment or contracted agency staff are co-located, formed into cross-functional teams with training, licensing and placement staff. The organization pays special attention to its processes for welcoming and keeping families involved from first inquiry to placement. Careful consideration is given to deploying enough qualified staff to do the pre-service training and family assessment processes. Attention is on documenting processes and listening to, developing and retaining staff. Program administrators are known to be involved in recruitment initiatives, and the total agency is very customer-service oriented.

Involvement of Community

The reputation of the agency in the community and the extent to which the community is involved with the agency is a barometer of how effective recruitment can ultimately become.

- Stage 1—Agencies will from time-to-time reach out to the community to pass out flyers, run a recruitment program in a local church or community center, or help with a special recruitment grant. These programs often die when the grant money is gone. Relationships established are between the recruiter and the people in the community. Communities often feel exploited in these initiatives. Feedback is not given to the community about results.
- Stage 2—Agency administrators are active in the local community and participate in building relationships. Recruitment initiatives are sustained and regular. Some orientation meetings and pre-service programs are also held in the community. Community members, although they may help with recruitment at times, are not involved in providing support to families throughout the process.



- Stage 3—Community leaders are engaged in planning recruitment and participate on the agency’s decision-making bodies. Community members help to support families while they are in the process of adopting and fostering and after they have had a child placed in their home. The agency reciprocates by providing other services to the community, e.g., parent training programs, guest speakers at community events, advice on kinship parenting, etc.

Involvement of Resource Parents

Word-of-mouth has traditionally been the best recruitment program an agency can have. In other words, satisfied customers bring in more satisfied customers.



- Stage 1—Agencies talk to parents about being team members, but often hold resource parents at arm’s length. There is ambivalence toward the role of resource parents. Some parents participate in case decision-making in formal case reviews; many are encouraged to help with birth parent visiting. Agencies hold support groups for parents and may include parents as co-trainers in pre-service training.
- Stage 2—Resource parents are consistently involved in case team meetings. They may serve on some planning committees for parent recognition and events for children.
- Stage 3—Parents are an integral part of the agency. They serve on decision-making groups. They assist in recruitment events, follow-up on initial inquiries from recruited parents, help parents resolve barriers to licensing, help with paperwork, provide telephone support, serve as co-trainers and help parents in crisis. They lead parent groups and assist with other agency functions.

Media Support

Good media relations can be instrumental in positioning all recruitment initiatives to be seen and heard by the maximum number of potential parents.

- Stage 1—The agency occasionally uses television and print media to advertise the need for families. Media contacts are made by supervisors or staff responsible for recruitment without the involvement of the rest of the organization. Public service announcements and press releases are sent from the director’s office with little or no follow-up. They come as a surprise to the media and the rest of the agency’s staff because there is not enough time to prepare.



Many agencies work with media to develop regular newspaper and television features to show children available for adoption. Some of these features have been taken for granted by the agency's leaders and, although they remain, they have become rather stagnant.

- Stage 2—The agency's public relations officer or director of the agency has contacts with the media and occasionally seeks special public interest articles or interviews, relative to impending big news stories, fund-raising events and/or national campaign efforts. The organization is kept informed of the plan and the schedule of upcoming events.
- Stage 3—The agency has a programmed approach to the media. Its recruitment calendar is connected to an ongoing public relations strategy. Media representatives are involved in some high-level board or committee work of the agency. The media is regularly thanked and recognized for its efforts in promoting the agency's mission. The organization has a proactive stance in heading off negative publicity and/or managing public relations crises. The media is seen as an agency partner in promoting public awareness of its mission and needs.

Tracking and Evaluation

Tracking and evaluation is the means by which agencies will know what is working and what is not working in its recruitment and response to prospective families. Tracking and evaluation will connect recruitment outreach with predictable and successful results.

- Stage 1—Tracking will tell an organization where a family is in the process and may give information about the length of time a particular family spends in the process. It will not tell an agency much about what outreach efforts are most effective or what response strategies are most satisfying to recruited families. The agency probably doesn't know why prospective parents drop out of the program.
- Stage 2—An agency will regularly do parent satisfaction surveys with licensed and approved families, track families in the approval process, and use automated systems.
- Stage 3—The agency will monitor its own processes through tracking and evaluation. They will get feedback about processes from resource parents and prospective parents. Surveys will be conducted of parents who drop out of the process to get their version of "why." Tracking and evaluation data will be automated and accessible so that "in-process" corrections can be made. The evaluation will capture continuous feedback from staff, resource parents.

A Warning and a Hope

Agencies are truly strapped for resources in today's world of budget cuts, rapid turnover, and complex child and family situations. Change is difficult and resistance to change will naturally be an issue. An agency in this environment will have to work smarter, as the work is already hard enough. And, what could be harder than recruiting families only to lose them? *AdoptUSKids* is suggesting that an agency use an incremental or developmental model of change (such as this Capability Maturity Model) that seeks to build organizational capability for results-based recruitment over time.

The examples given of the three stages of organizational development represent a sample of what distinguishes one capability stage from another. To make the change from one stage to another isn't easy. Management and workers alike require clear and compelling reasons to make the change. The organization needs to consider:

- Is there significant dissatisfaction with the way things are currently working? Is there enough pain to make people want to change?
- Is there a vision of how things should be? Is this vision expressed in a way that everyone in the organization can understand, appreciate and commit to it?
- Is there a plan on how to achieve the vision? If not, consider benchmarking. Section Eight in this guide explains the concepts of benchmarking and some of the benefits it can bring to helping your organization map out a plan for success.
- Is the State/agency willing to commit resources to planning, making and managing change?

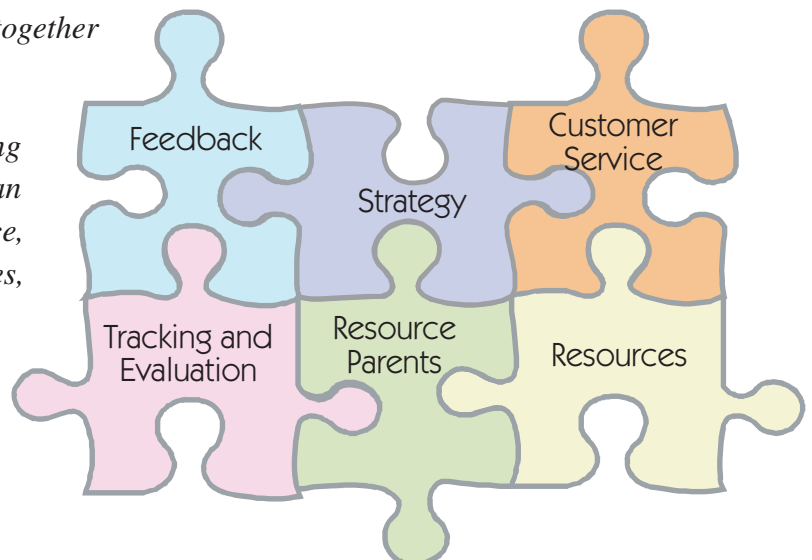
This is the warning...

If these four points are not considered then it is likely that things will remain as they are or get even worse.

This is the hope...

It can all come together like fitting together the pieces of a puzzle.

Real change can be made by putting together a well thought out strategic plan that includes: a focus on customer service, strategic allocation of limited resources, involvement of experienced resource parents and a good feedback system. By being planful and systematic, agencies can move up the steps of developmental capability.



Section Five: Developing a Recruitment Work Plan



Introduction

In this section *AdoptUSKids* has provided a Work Plan framework and assessment tool to aid States and local service sites to develop their work plans. Each of these are contained in pull-out booklets in this section.

As an agency begins to consider improving its recruitment effectiveness and outcomes, it will want to think more strategically about allocating its limited resources to get better results in recruitment.

Various Options for Developing a Child and Family Services Recruitment Plan

There are many ways that an agency can do strategy planning. The work plan guide presented in this section is just one example and it is not required that States use it. It is an option for States to consider in developing their Child and Family Services Recruitment Work Plans.

Some State agencies are now looking at doing their foundation for planning at high levels, e.g., vision, mission, philosophy, and policy. And doing “line of service” planning at the State and/or local site program manager levels. In this context, a line of service might be defined as foster and adoption functions from recruitment to placement.

The Children’s Bureau has provided guidance for a State’s Child and Family Services Work Plans content in two documents. These are contained in Section Ten of this notebook. They are called:

- Exemplary Elements of a IV-B Recruitment Work Plan
- Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment

Features of the *AdoptUSKids* Work Plan Guide

The planning process *AdoptUSKids* is offering for consideration is a classic strategic planning model, with some unique features to make it a user-friendly process. These features include:

- A proven step-by-step process
- A pull-out booklet format for use with teams
- Definitions and examples at each step
- An assessment tool for an agency’s recruitment program, using factors consolidated from promising practices and Children’s Bureau and ACF guidelines

- And white space for the planning group participants to record their notes and progress along the way

This work plan format and accompanying *Assessment Tool for Recruitment Programs* were designed so that they can be used for planning at State, local site, regional site and/or contract agency levels. The content of the plan will vary depending on the organizational level or setting doing the planning. Program management staff at the State level will have different roles and responsibilities than site level management staff, therefore, their sphere of influence and respective plans will emphasize different themes.

Also, States will vary in their organizational structure. Some will be State administered, others will be county or regionally administered. Some States may have contracted out the responsibility for service delivery in recruitment to private agencies and/or other types of organizations. For these reasons, the design of the planning document has been made generic. It can be used flexibly with other planning efforts. The examples in this guide are specific to recruitment responsibilities.

Role of the State in Planning

The role at the State level in recruitment planning and implementation will vary and may include any combination of the following responsibilities.

- Meeting Federal Child and Family Service Review and/or Child and Family Service Work Plan requirements and guidelines
- Establishing and communicating the State's mission, beliefs, and policy
- Developing high level strategies that will result in better outcomes in recruitment
- Defining statewide recruitment message(s) that reflect the need of the State's children who need care
- Handling public relations with the media through a central source, when statewide recruitment campaigns are in process
- Making annual or quarterly projections of recruitment needs, based on statewide data projections
- Supporting the local effort through funding mechanisms and contracts
- Determining staff training methods and curricula
- Providing resources and barrier-busting to smooth the way for effective recruitment
- Modeling the planning process, including the involvement of stakeholders



- Developing statewide contracts with parent organizations
- Communicating and providing opportunities for the exchange of promising practices and resources across jurisdictions
- Establishing and monitoring uniform tracking and evaluation systems
- Developing uniform packets of information for local sites to use in preparing families
- Determining and/or contracting for pre-service training curricula to be used statewide in preparation of families

A major planning challenge for State level management is to define their unique State role and develop actions to meet these responsibilities, as well as monitor and evaluate the extent to which these functions are fulfilled.

Role of the Local Site in Planning

On the other hand, local recruitment service delivery sites will be more concerned about program and operational issues. They will be considering the extent to which their specific recruitment strategies bring in new families and the effectiveness of their services from the prospective parent's first inquiry to the time a child is actually placed with the parent.

In planning, the local site may be concerned with:

- Developing an appropriate pool of waiting families for the children coming into care and for children waiting for adoption
- Finding resource parents to train, support and mentor new recruits
- Developing a group of effective pre-service trainers
- Deployment of staff so that best results are obtained from recruitment efforts
- Retaining staff and keeping staff motivated during the process
- Their reputation in the community, and particularly communities they will recruit from, and how this impacts their outcomes
- How to communicate the process to staff and families and achieve recruitment results in a timely manner
- How to deal with local pressures from courts, media
- How to engage the local media in the process
- How to be more customer-friendly in their approach

Using the *AdoptUSKids* Work Plan Guide



The work plan guide is appropriate to help you make strategic decisions about managing your resources to achieve better quality services and meet objectives. Since it was not designed to detail all the program elements of your recruitment plan, there is an attachment page that lists the elements of a program description that may be appropriate to include with your plan. The work plan guide is meant to record the strategic elements of your plan.

If you choose to use the planning model presented here in the two booklets that follow, you will also want to review the booklet called “Toolkit,” which is in Section Six. That booklet contains information about how to facilitate a planning meeting and several decision-making and problem-solving tools typically used in strategic and management planning. It also includes a handy tool for depicting the State’s or local site’s data about the population of children who need care.

Detailed instructions for using the work plan guide for managers, the assessment tool and the toolkit are contained within each of these booklets.

Advantages of Using this Guide and Assessment Tool

You can order extra booklets directly from *AdoptUSKids* for use in your planning process. Each person on the planning group can be provided with their own copy of the booklet. Some advantages of using this process include:

- The assessment tool provides information on promising practices and Children’s Bureau guidelines that will enable you to rate your program from jurisdiction to jurisdiction against standardized information.
- The planning guide booklet will allow you to keep your planning group constantly informed of where they are in a standardized planning process, why you are doing a particular step and what is coming up next. This is especially important for stakeholders and staff who may be doing a plan for the first time.
- Your planning group will benefit by learning a process that they can replicate in their community groups and/or other program areas.

Stakeholder Involvement in Planning

It is important to involve stakeholders including resource parents, community leaders, front-line staff, media or public relations experts and others in your planning process, either as direct planners and/or as expert consultants related to particular areas. Involving stakeholders provides a planning group with opportunities to get at the true story from all perspectives, so that they can develop the best solutions and build support for implementation plans.

Section Six: Toolkit



Introduction

In this section *AdoptUSKids* is providing a set of 11 practical tools that can be used by program managers and supervisors who are asked to analyze and solve problems on a daily basis.

These tools are not new. They have been in use by people in business and industry for many years. These tools have been adapted however, with examples to make them more relevant to the recruitment process in child welfare. They have been written in a user-friendly way. But like anything else that's worthwhile, they will require a bit of practice to become truly useful.

AdoptUSKids stands ready to provide technical assistance and training for States in developing and enhancing their Child and Family Service Plans recruitment work plans and/or training managers and others in utilizing the tools available in this kit for recruitment planning.

Most of these tools are for use with organizational processes and methods or qualitative data. This is where a situation needs to be analyzed based on a flow of information, handoff offs between operations, clarification of roles and responsibilities and the like. Although quantitative data is important in the use of these tools, these tools are not intended to replace proper statistical analysis.

In recruitment, it is very important for a State agency to understand its data about the children who are currently in care and will need care in the future. Demographic data will also be needed about the parents who are successfully fostering and adopting. This data needs to be analyzed properly so adequate projections can be made to predict future requirements and to target recruitment efforts. In addition, prospective parents need to be shown this data about the children who need care, in an easily understandable way. See depicting demographics data at the end of the toolkit. True statistical data analysis is complex and requires expert interpretation. Program managers may want to request expert help from appropriate resources within the State and/or contact the National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare (www.nrcitcw.org) for technical assistance.

Features of the Planning Toolkit

The toolkit begins with a table of contents showing the 11 tools. These tools have been arranged in a logical way. The reason for this is to have the solutions resulting from one tool, logically flow as the input into another. For example, many possible solutions will often come out of a brain-

storming session. It is not uncommon for the team's "creative juices" to flow and generate 100 or more possible solutions. The problem then becomes ...what do we do with all these lists of ideas? That's where the next technique of affinitizing comes in. This is where ideas are grouped fairly quickly into logical groups. After this has been done, one of the prioritization techniques can be applied to narrow the lists down into reasonable solutions. And so on.

Not everyone in the organization has to become an expert in the use of all of these tools. It is recommended that a few people study and become familiar with them. These people can then act in the role of facilitator to help others apply the tools to the greatest advantage.

A tool selection chart has been included following the table of contents in the *Toolkit*. This chart will guide the user to which of the 11 tools is recommended for different situations including: general guidance, problem analysis, prioritizing, solutions and action planning, and other strategic planning tools.

Section Seven: Tracking and Evaluation



Current State

A review of current recruitment literature and anecdotal reports reveal that there has not been much emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of recruitment at State and local sites. One major barrier to evaluation is that there is often a large disconnect between the actual recruitment initiatives and the processes that lead to licensing and placement outcomes. Quite often the staff who do recruitment activities and the staff who respond to inquiries and the staff who do training and assessment studies are in different departments and even different organizations and geographic locations. More often than not, the recruitment and placement staff have entirely different value systems, work pressures and priorities and may be pointing fingers at each other when results are dismal. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that recruitment data tells managers how many families were recruited, but doesn't tell them how many families were licensed or approved as a result of a particular strategy or type of recruitment effort.

Many States have internal tracking systems to tell where a particular parent is in the inquiry to placement process. Some of these systems are automated and many are tracked manually through logs maintained by the unit supervisor.

Current reporting mechanisms tell us very little about the parents who opt out of the process at any point. And, thus, there is not sufficient data available to target improvements along the continuum from recruitment to placement.

Some Evaluation Initiatives in Process

AdoptUSKids is collaborating with the University of Texas at Austin to evaluate recruitment barriers. This study will look at why parents are dropping out of the process at different stages and the many barriers affecting our ability to retain families for children. *AdoptUSKids* will be sharing the findings of this and other research studies as soon as reliable data can be made available to the States.

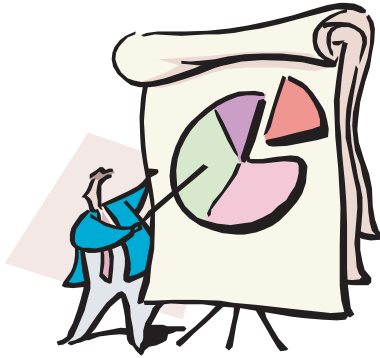
Jeff Katz has conducted extensive interviews with families who have experienced the recruitment and follow-up process for adoption and foster care in three large urban areas. His findings are not published as yet, but preliminary data suggests that the recruitment and systems for engaging families to become foster and adoptive parents are badly broken. For example, his data suggests that of 240,000 inquiries in the studied sites, only 8,000 families made it through to licensing or approval. This is a meager 3.3%. He has interviewed hundreds of prospective parents and is convinced that the problem is not getting them to the door, but is the agency's intake and other processes that defeat the recruitment efforts.

Without effective evaluation processes, how does an agency know if it is using its very limited resources in the most cost effective ways?

What a State or Agency Can Do Now to Improve its Recruitment Efforts

“The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”

General Norman Schwarzkopf



States can make changes on the basis of what they already know. Based on anecdotal reports from the field, a State can assume that any improvements made to its response system will result in more families making it through the system. For example, in Kentucky, Hillsborough County initiated a process where a personal visit or telephone call was made within two days of the inquiry call. Their data showed that 14.9% more parents came to orientation as a result. Another interesting statistic is that the lowest drop-out rate occurred when a current resource family referred a new family to the agency. This finding just confirms what we already know. That is, when resource parents are involved in referrals, the prospective family is more likely to stay in the process. Involvement of resource parents in all stages of the process, including initial recruitment, doing follow-up with initial inquiries, co-training and providing support services, are strategies that show great promise in improving outcomes from recruitment.

Tracking and Evaluation for Continuous Quality Improvements

In its efforts to improve its recruitment program, a State will want to sharpen its ability to make changes based on evidence of what is working and what is not working. States rarely have the resources to do full blown evaluations, except in demonstration projects. But, integrating methods for collecting evaluation data into their current processes will be helpful in determining what to keep and what to change.

Evaluation usually starts with identifying what questions need to be answered. In recruitment most agencies ask questions about the following, mostly quantitative, areas:

- How many parents inquired about becoming foster or adoptive parents?
- How did they learn about the organization?
- How many parents came to orientation?
- How many parents came to pre-service training?
- How many completed pre-service training?
- How many families were licensed or approved?

To get the information needed to improve processes, agencies must also ask questions about quality of services and response to parents, such as:

- What specific recruitment effort did a parent respond to and what appealed to them?
- How helpful was orientation? Did they get sufficient information at orientation?
- How helpful was the pre-service training?
- At what step and why did families drop out of the process?
- Were families satisfied with the process at each step?
- Did families think they were valued and respected during the process?
- What changes would families recommend?
- What aspects of our approach are particularly relevant to the culture of our target populations? What works, what does not?
- What are the barriers to service delivery?
- How much time did it take to complete the process?
- What are common reasons for delays at each step?
- What do seasoned parents think of the process and how would they change it?
- What changes would staff make in the process and why?
- Is our process effective in attaining desired outcomes with the target population?
- What changes in services, process or policies are needed to improve effectiveness?

Methods for Tracking Information and Data

Tracking and sorting of data can be best achieved through the use of a spreadsheet (like MS Excel) or database (like MS Access). Careful consideration must be given to designing your data capture and reporting system. What is the data going to be used for?

- What specific data elements need to be collected?
- How current does the data need to be?
- Who is going to need to see it?
- How often will the data have to be reported?
- What decisions need to be made from it?

Questions like these help to determine what information really needs to be gathered and how often.

Next, you need to consider:

- How much data will be collected, e.g., between 50 and 100 cases or cases numbering in the thousands?
- Over what period of time, e.g., a few months or many years?
- How many people will be entering the data?
- How many people will be asking for reports?

Answers to these questions will help determine what kind of system will be necessary:

- Hand written logs
- Hand written 3x5 cards in alphabetical order
- Spreadsheets
- Database on one computer in the agency
- Database located on a server where several users can access data but only a few can enter or change the data
- Full blown enterprise-wide database system with remote access and voice activated capability

Usually, in larger agencies, an internal IT person/department or quality assurance department will assist in developing the data and reporting systems and training staff in its use. Smaller agencies can contract with database experts to help design, install and train staff. Be sure to ask for references. States may want to contact the National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare (www.nrcitcw.org) for technical assistance.

Evaluation Methods and Procedures

Process mapping: In the *Toolkit*, in Section Six of this guide, are examples of process maps/flow-charts that could be used in determining the current process gaps, redundancies and areas where valuable time is wasted from inquiry to placement. The recruitment process involves a lot of hand-offs and steps that might be shortened if done concurrently. These tools will be helpful in determining what changes might be made to make the current process more efficient and effective.

Reviewing/revising current forms and process: Current forms, e.g., intake forms, can be reviewed and changes made to collect important information within current processes, such as how did the parent hear about the agency? Orientation and pre-service training can have brief evaluation questions related to the process, access, and relevance of training, etc. Self-addressed postcards can be given to parents to remind them of next events and asking for anonymous, periodic feed-

back on how the agency is doing.

Client satisfaction surveys: Many agencies now send out client satisfaction surveys to meet contractual, licensing and/or accreditation standards. Parents who are in the recruitment process can be added to the list. At critical steps in the process, parents can be asked to comment on their satisfaction with the process and how it can be improved.



Surveying parents who drop out: Simple cards can be sent to parents to determine their reasons for dropping out and the possibility of future interest. Also, follow up telephone calls can solicit this information. Possibly a volunteer could be asked to do this for the agency.

Focus groups: Periodic focus groups might be held. For example, an agency's ongoing parent group might be asked to take time on the agenda, every six months or so, to give feedback to the agency about its responsiveness to parents during the recruitment to placement process and how this can be approved.

As *AdoptUSKids* continues to provide technical assistance in States, a benchmarking focus will be to identify and examine effective evaluation and tracking procedures and tools used. *AdoptUSKids* will disseminate findings regularly through periodic bulletins and on the website.

Section Eight: Benchmarking Promising Practices



AdoptUSKids is undertaking a recruitment technical assistance initiative to assist States and agencies to:

- Identify areas for improvement
- Benchmark promising practices
- Adapt promising practices to a State or agency's unique environment
- Document and disseminate promising practices nationwide
- Host and facilitate the exchange of promising practices

Introduction to Benchmarking: What is it?

Have you ever asked yourself these questions?

“How are we doing?”

“How can we get better results?”

“How do we compare with others?”

“Is our evaluation plan meaningful? Are we tracking the right measures?”

“Are we using the best practices?”

Benchmarks and benchmarking can provide you with facts and data to show you what can be achieved. Perhaps more important, benchmarking can tell you how you can achieve better results. In short, benchmarking gives you the external references and the promising practices on which to base your evaluations and to design/improve your work processes.

Definition of Benchmarking

Benchmarking is the process of comparing and measuring an organization, system, process, and/or product against recognized leaders anywhere in the world to gain information that will help your organization take action to improve its performance.

Benchmarking is one of the most effective means available to identify improvements that can make a significant difference to your organization. But be warned that simply **COPYING** an identified improvement from another organization will generally not give you lasting benefit. The key is to **ADAPT** the improvement/promising practice to your organization. Your organization is unique

and the improvement must be adapted to build on your strengths and fit your environment.

Example—Customer satisfaction, what information do you need?¹ [The following example refers to understanding and improving your level of customer satisfaction. To make this example more relevant to you, simply change “customer satisfaction” to whatever you need to improve, e.g., more effective results from your recruitment campaign, the current state of your information or evaluation systems, etc.]

A quick sports analogy illustrates the point. As an athlete trying to gauge your performance in the long jump, you may find that you are jumping one foot less than the world record (best in class). But how can you improve? What does the best jumper do differently than you? It may be that while you are eating corn flakes, your competitor eats wheat flakes. The top performer may devote all her time to practice, while you must work a full-time job.



There may be differences in infrastructure (shoes worn) or training (coaches’ knowledge). Or, you may be jumping off of one foot, while the competitor jumps with both feet. Only by looking beyond the performance measure of “distance jumped” can you ever hope to achieve the superior level of performance.

The same goes for benchmarking customer satisfaction. Get the information you need to know in order to effect change in your organization. Look at the process by which top performers achieve higher levels of satisfaction.

If you discover that on a five-point satisfaction scale your organization is a 4.2 and that best in class is a 5.0, what do you do? Work harder? Odds are it’s not about working harder, but working smarter. And, by taking a process orientation, benchmarkers can answer not only the question of “where am I versus the rest?” but also “How can I get better?”

Differences do exist as to what is the “right” level of customer satisfaction. Is it 100% very satisfied or delighted customers? Maybe not. Organizations need to figure out their own optimum level of customer satisfaction. For example, if in order to achieve the goal of 100% very satisfied customers, an organization needed to give its products and services away for free, it would go out of business. This would clearly not make sense. Therefore, what becomes obvious is that a financial decision needs to be made. What are the true costs associated with customer dissatisfaction? And, how much would it cost the organization to avoid these costs? If it makes financial sense for you to increase your customer satisfaction score, do it!

In short, rather than assuming your organization is exactly like the others you seek to benchmark, look at the process by which other organizations make their investment decisions (investment in

¹—Example from Richard A. Wargo, a former benchmarking specialist with the International Benchmarking Clearinghouse

time, people, budget and other resources). How do they listen to their customers, prioritize issues, action-plan resolutions, and evaluate costs versus benefits? These are the questions to ask if you are serious about understanding “world-class” performance in customer satisfaction.

Where to Begin

Benchmarking can be a tremendous catalyst for change. Seeing how others do what you do can lead to breakthrough ideas. It promotes out-of-the-box thinking and new paradigms.

Benchmarking is a structured way of making change. Change is risky, difficult and requires preparation. Before starting any benchmarking activity you must first do your homework. Before looking at how others do their thing, you must thoroughly understand and integrate your own methods and processes. This preparation/homework phase is often the most important and most difficult phase of the benchmarking activity. This is a process of finding and understanding where the gaps are in your current process.

Plan the Study

The first phase of most benchmarking methodologies includes some form of planning. One of the most critical events that needs to take place in this phase is scoping the study to a realistic size. For example, in one study facilitated by the American Productivity & Quality Center’s International Benchmarking Clearinghouse, an effort to uncover best practices for hospitals in their admitting process was scoped down to the elective acute care inpatient admitting process. Only with such a focus were the participants able to gain detailed knowledge of effective admitting practices.

Scoping a project to a reasonable size is never easy. More often than not, the well-intentioned manager who leads a benchmarking effort has several internal customers; each wanting to add their own special concern(s) to the benchmarking study. Before you know it, there has been “scope creep” and the benchmarking study has grown all out of proportion.

Identify a Suitable Activity to Benchmark

As with all improvement activities, it is better to start with a known problem area, gaps in your current process that can be defined. Look for an activity where improvement will provide maximum benefit (the 80/20 rule works everywhere). Nobody can really grasp an intangible goal like “we want to achieve excellence.” So work to define your problem area clearly and succinctly. For example, one State identified that it had a high drop-out rate between the recruitment steps of the first call and the prospective new parents’ orientation meeting. The prospective parents simply weren’t showing up for orientation. The Agency began to examine its process by using a “secret shopper” to call in pretending to be a prospective foster or adoptive parent. The Agency was able to



identify gaps in its process needing improvement. As a result, they knew exactly what areas they wanted to benchmark for improvement.

Once this has been accomplished, an agency can consider contacting [AdoptUSKids](#) for technical assistance in refining the problem definition and planning next steps.

Some key guidelines to consider when planning a benchmarking study:

1. Benchmarking is only of benefit if the improvement actions are implemented. Always seek to find out “how” an organization or company has improved its performance. This normally comes from the people in an organization, not the management. Management can generally tell you “how much” performance has improved but not necessarily the details of “how” the change was accomplished.
2. Always clearly identify your specific key areas of interest and stay focused on them.
3. Plan thoroughly in advance—prepare detailed questions to ensure that none of the key elements are missed.
4. Be prepared to give a benchmarking partner more information than you receive. Remember improvements are continuous and benchmarks go out-of-date quickly. Your competitors' performance will probably continue to improve in advance of your own.
5. Always remain honest and thoroughly professional and you will be welcome to return for more information in the future.

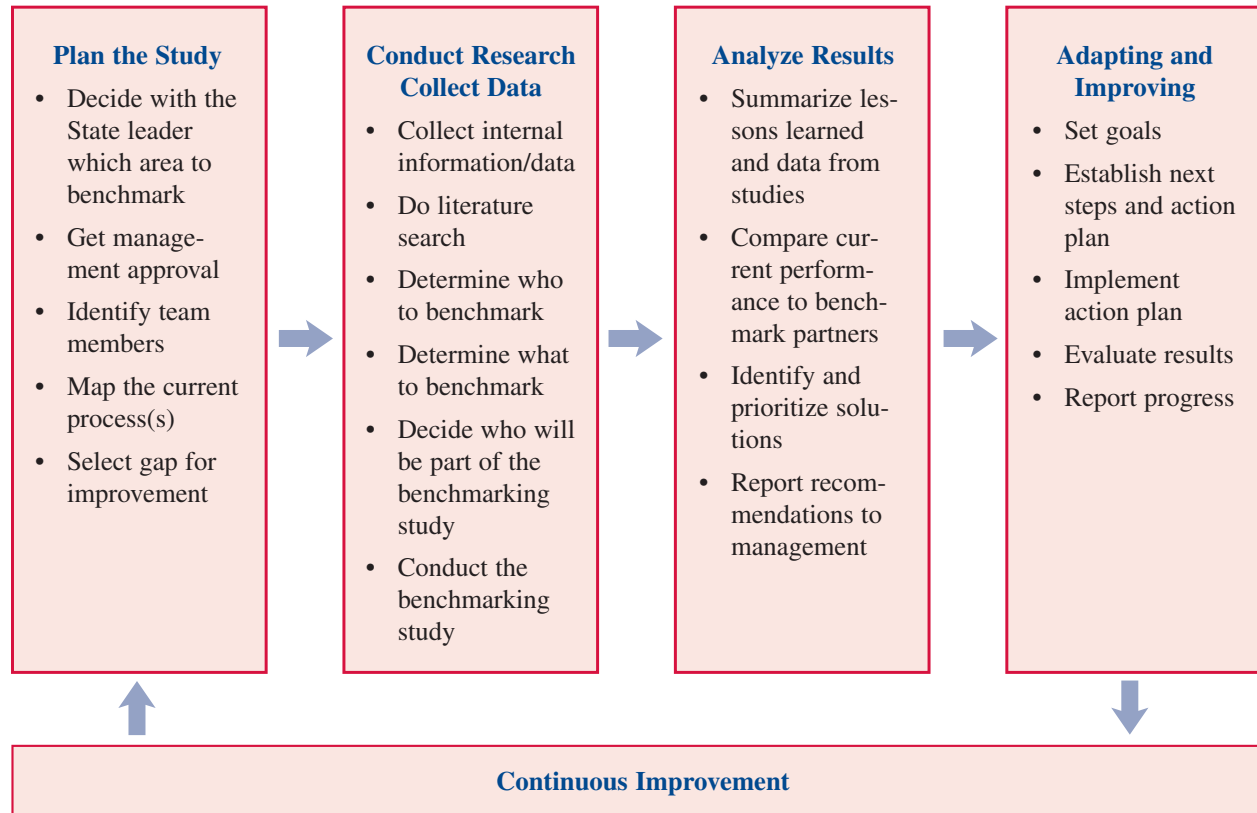
Benchmarking Services [AdoptUSKids](#) Can Provide

As one of its technical assistance services, [AdoptUSKids](#) will partner with interested States to benchmark promising practices in recruitment. [AdoptUSKids](#) may look within the field of child welfare or to other industries with recruitment functions to look for innovation and solutions. Areas for a benchmarking study may include:

- Outreach recruitment strategies for all types of recruitment including: general, targeted, child-specific and child-centered
- The agency’s system for responding to parents from initial inquiry through to placement
- The agency’s tracking and evaluation processes for recruitment
- The agency’s process and requirements for performance contracting
- The agency’s involvement of resource parents in the various steps of recruitment
- And other specific areas needing improvement relating to recruitment outcomes

AdoptUSKids Typical Benchmarking Process Steps

Following is a chart showing the typical benchmarking steps that *AdoptUSKids* will use to facilitate its work with the State.



As a Result of Benchmarking, *AdoptUSKids* Will:

- Disseminate lessons learned:
 - Through a web-based information system
 - Through regular bulletins to the field
- Facilitate regular teleconferences and regional forums about promising practices and problem solving
- Establish peer groups of individuals from States and agencies who have similar issues to address through benchmarking and the exchange of promising practices
- Evaluate and continuously improve its TA process. Seek advice from its benchmarking partners on how to improve the benchmarking and technical assistance process

Section Nine: Resources



Introduction

Following are the references and websites used in developing the *Answering the Call* series. The Program Manager may want to use this section to add their favorite references and contacts.

References and Resources

AdoptUSKids and the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption. (2003) *National Adoption Month 2003 Campaign Recruitment and Marketing Kit*.

Adoption Exchange Association. *A Guide for Military Family Service Center Staff and Civilian Social Workers*.

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McKenzie, Judith and John. (2002) *Strategic Collaboration and Technical Assistance Guide*. National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children.

Spaulding for Children. (1989) *Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families*, a videotape by and adapted from ideas first put forth by Linda Katz in "Parental Stress and Factors for Success in Older Child Adoption." *Child Welfare*, LXV, 6, November-December 1986, pp. 569-578.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2001) *Exemplary Title IV-B Recruitment Plan Elements*.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. *AFCARS Report. Preliminary Estimates for FY 2001 as of March 2003*.

Additional Helpful Websites

The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids—www.adoptuskids.org

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Statistics

—www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/report8.htm



Adoption Exchange Association (AEA)—www.adoptea.org

Adoption Home Study Process—www.calib.com/naic/pubs/f_homstu.cfm

Adoption Exchange Education Center—www.adoptex.org

American Public Human Services Association—www.Aphsa.org

Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance—
www.aaicama.aphsa.org/

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)—www.cwla.org

Department of Health and Human Service’s Children’s Bureau—www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/

Holt International Children’s Services—www.holtinternational.org

National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center—socrates.berkeley.edu/~aiarc

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse—www.naic.acf.hhs.gov

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice—www.cwresource.org

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement—
www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids

National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues—www.abanet.org/child/rc/lij

National Indian Child Welfare Association—ww.nicwa.org/

National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption—www.nrcadoption.org

National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning—www.hunter.cuny.edu/social-work/nrcfcpp

National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare—www.nrcitcw.org

National Resource Center for Youth Development—www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd.htm

National Resource Center for Community-Based Family Resource and Support Programs (FRIENDS)—www.chtop.com/friends

National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment—www.gocwi.org/nrccm

North American Council on Adoptable Children—www.nacac.org/

Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE)—www.nwae.org

Permanency Planning Dept. of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges—http://pppncjfcj.org/html/hot_links.html

Spaulding for Children—www.spaulding.org

The University of Texas School of Social Work and the Center for Social Work Research (CSWR)—www.utexas.edu/ssw



Section Ten: Children's Bureau

Introduction

This section is for the program manager to have easy access to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) requirements and Children's Bureau information related to recruitment.

Initial materials provided with this guide include:

- Exemplary Child and Family Service Plan Elements
- Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment

See the Children's Bureau website to keep up on relevant information (www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/).

From time to time, the Children's Bureau or *AdoptUSKids* may provide additional information that managers may want to keep in this section for easy reference.

Below is a Map of the ACF Regions and Regional Offices



ACF Regional Offices are Located in the Following Cities:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Region I: Boston | Region III: Philadelphia | Region V: Chicago | Region VII: Kansas City | Region IX: San Francisco |
| Region II: New York City | Region IV: Atlanta | Region VI: Dallas | Region VIII: Denver | Region X: Seattle |



Attachment C

www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/pi/pi9523a3.htm

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Administration on Children, Youth and Families
330 C Street, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20201

EXEMPLARY TITLE IV-B RECRUITMENT PLAN ELEMENTS

States are to provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. Both general and targeted recruitment should be used. When using targeted recruitment a State must insure that the children being recruited for are also included in the State's general recruitment activities.

An adequate recruitment process has a number of features. Recruitment efforts should be designed to provide to potential foster and adoptive parents throughout the community information about the characteristics and needs of the available children, the nature of the foster care and adoption processes, and the supports available to foster and adoptive families.

To help States to meet MEPA's diligent efforts requirements, the following examples of Recruitment Plan features are offered for State consideration:

Recruitment Plan Elements

Characteristics of the waiting children should be clearly described, including:

- age
- gender
- membership in a sibling group
- culture and ethnicity
- special developmental, behavioral or medical needs
- child's attitudes, habits and daily routines

Recruitment strategies could include but not be limited to the following recruitment methods:

- decals
- bus and taxi cab placards
- slogans or themes on bookmarks, pencils, balloons, key chains, rain hats, t-shirts, etc.
- displays in store windows and libraries

- information booths at meetings or gatherings
- placemats in restaurants
- flyers, handouts and bill inserts
- notices in congregational and community bulletins
- calendars
- newsletters
- special events, carnivals or fairs
- picnics and ice cream socials
- theme night activities
- puppet shows
- speakers' bureau, scheduling presentations
- awards programs
- appreciation nights and banquets
- welcome wagon packets
- teas, drop-ins, or open houses
- door to door canvassing
- surveys in shopping malls
- television and newspaper feature stories
- television public service announcements or community interest stories
- interview programs
- radio spot announcements
- direct mailing and ad coupons
- display ads in the phone book
- recruitment films
- messages on business marquees
- adoption day in court
- adoptive mother and father of the year

Methods of disseminating both general and targeted recruitment information should utilize mass media and printed materials. Public service announcements, talk shows and news programs should be utilized to illuminate the needs and provide foster children with visibility and delineate their unique characteristics.

Efforts could be undertaken to develop ongoing newspaper columns concerning the plight of children and the need for adoptive and foster families. This should include both major dailies and local weeklies. Ongoing columns have been effective because of their predictability.

Work with reporters and editors to stimulate relevant news and feature articles. Press releases could be prepared and disseminated to weeklies, neighborhood newspapers, trade papers, employee magazines, and the newsletters of unions, clubs, fraternities, sororities and churches.

Posters, flyers and brochures could be developed for distribution throughout communities. They

could be distributed through churches, clubs and other organizations and to doctors' offices, hospital and clinic waiting rooms, libraries, beauty parlors, barber shops, laundromats, community centers, etc.

Agencies could consider decentralizing services so that prospective parents may have physical access to the agency. Agency procedures and practice should be congruent with the cultural and social values of the target population. Adoption agencies should have hours of service that facilitate access by all members of the community.

Agencies should have a fee structure that is non-discriminatory. It should allow families of various income levels the opportunity to adopt. Fees should be charged according to a sliding scale, based on a family's ability to pay. The ability to pay a fee should not influence the choice of the most appropriate family for a child.



Attachment D

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/pi/pi9523a4.htm>

Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment

Recruitment of families to care for children and youth is a complex process. It involves the assessment of a variety of factors to inform agency planning and the construction of an effective recruitment strategy. Preliminary planning of external and internal factors must be addressed in order to reach interested families and actually place children with foster and adoptive parents.

External Factors

The agency must be aware of its reputation in the communities that it serves and from which parents will be recruited. If the perception of the agency is a negative one, people in the community will not respond to recruitment efforts. Regardless of agency auspice, the agency is a part of the child welfare system, and might not have a good reputation in many communities. The television and press have often presented a one-sided view of foster care and child welfare—only reporting failures and not successes.

Media coverage about a child who was abused because the system did not respond as expected, or presenting child welfare workers as only removing children from their families does not lead to positive perceptions. Consequently, perceptions will have to be addressed in designing recruitment programs. Strategies involving public relations and building community relationships will be described later in this paper.

Internal Factors

The agency must identify resources needed for recruitment effort. These resources include the agency's philosophies and policies and staff resources. An agency's policies and procedures, and general philosophical approach to services will have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of recruitment. An agency that views families as resources who are empowered throughout the intake and preparation process and prepares and supports families to parent children who have been abused or neglected will get a different result than one that begins screening families out from the initial contact and takes an investigatory approach to assessment and preparation. Agencies serving children of color must determine whether their policies, procedures and practices are culturally competent. Accessibility of offices and services to families in targeted communities and staff who are competent to serve the population are important to recruiting and retaining families in the foster care and adoption process. Using staff members who are from the

community may enhance this accessibility. Empowerment, competency and accessibility are important from the time of initial contact and throughout the process that results in foster care placement and finalization of adoption.

Also important are the agency's staff resources. The agency must have a commitment to staff training to ensure that staff have appropriate knowledge and skills needed for recruitment. This includes an understanding and commitment to the agency's philosophy about bringing families into the process, rather than screening them out. An assessment of external and internal factors is an ongoing process. After an initial organizational assessment is done, and revisions implemented, planning for recruitment can begin.

Recruitment Planning

Organizations must clearly identify the children who need care, are in care, and awaiting foster care or adoptive placements. This is important because recruitment efforts must accurately depict the children who need foster or adoptive families. This information on children should include age, gender, race, ethnicity, health status and history, educational level, special challenges and capabilities, and other relevant descriptors. The population of children coming into child welfare placements has changed in recent years. Children coming into care need many more services and skilled foster parents and adoptive parents. These parents may have to assist children who have experienced sexual abuse, serious child abuse and neglect, or been affected by their parents' substance abuse. A recruitment effort is designed to increase general interest in foster parenting and adoption, and create interest in and support for caring for the specific children served by the agency.

One general strategy is a public information initiative. This public information component serves to inform the community of the general need for foster parents and adoptive parents as well as bringing specific children and types of children to the public's attention. A public information strategy might include:

1. Creating recruitment brochures, posters or booklets for display in community settings such as churches, day care centers, barbershops and beauty shops, medical care facilities, and grocery stores.

The construction of these materials may be challenging as an agency attempts to introduce itself, and its services, describe children in need, and describe foster parenting and adoption in an attractive manner that also catches one's attention and communicates accurate information. Graphics, pictures, and wording need to be carefully selected to provide a culturally accurate and inviting message, using the language of the prospective parents.

2. Developing a media campaign using large posters, billboards, radio spots or television to introduce the need for caregivers and the agency. Such initiatives often require a partnership

between the agency staff, who understand the nature of the children in care and the requirements for foster and adoptive parenting, and public information specialists within the agency and marketing and advertising professionals outside the agency. This partnership might be expanded to include community representatives to increase the probability of a message that is properly targeted to the community. It may be possible to find advertising professionals who will work pro bono or at reduced cost for this family and child-centered campaign.

3. Exploring opportunities to present the agency's recruitment needs to an audience through community-oriented programming. This would include having staff appear on local media shows to discuss their work. For example, cable television that targets local communities where the demographics meet the needs of the child welfare population is a good recruitment tool, as are local newspapers that target specific communities. Community level programming may be provided free of charge or at reasonable rates. It may also include participating in community fairs and other events that allow a booth or display or the distribution of materials for social and charitable purposes.

A public service campaign will accomplish two purposes. First, it identifies a number of persons who are willing to take the next steps to find out about foster care and adoption. Some agencies have found that such campaigns generate a high volume of inquiries but a smaller number of more serious persons. But these are still persons recruited who might not have been identified through other means. The second purpose of public information is to provide a positive picture of foster care and adoption, and of child welfare in general. The negative perceptions, noted as external factors hindering recruitment, can be counterbalanced by positive images and human interest success stories provided by agency representatives through the media, community forums and popular publications.

In addition to general strategies for recruitment, there can be initiatives that feature specific children in need of homes and parents.

For example, New York's Family Album is a booklet that features pictures and brief descriptions of children in need of adoptive families. It is a high quality piece done with much color that portrays the children in a positive way and demonstrates respect for the cultures of the children and a commitment to finding families for them. Such material can be useful when addressing groups that may help let others know about adoption, as well as to groups of people who have expressed an interest in adoption.

Such tools can increase public awareness as well as serve to focus on the needs of actual children waiting to be adopted. Organizations have found that in addition to the public information approach they need to simultaneously use child specific approaches for recruitment. These approaches serve to highlight actual children that personally engage interested families. "Waiting Children" newspaper, television and radio features continue to be effective. Some organizations have also begun to explore paid advertising on radio and television. Free public service announce-

ments may serve a public information purpose, but organizations cannot control when they are played. Consequently, they may not reach the desired audience. Paid advertising allows for selection of particular time slots. Radio advertising can often be purchased at a relatively modest rate.

Another specific child adoption recruitment approach involves a variety of ways that interested families can actually meet children waiting to be adopted. Many agencies or organizations now sponsor adoption parties, picnics or other social events where the children can have fun and interested families can meet children in need of adoptive families. Staff are available to provide materials, answer questions that families may have, and support the children. Such gatherings can give prospective adoptive parents a much better understanding of who these “waiting children” are than does a picture and a written description.

Child specific strategies are more difficult to implement in foster care. It is often not possible to identify specific children before placement is needed and there are confidentiality requirements that might limit an agency’s ability to showcase a child in foster care or in need of a foster home. It is possible to discuss types of children in need of care, for example newborns and infants in hospitals whose mothers may have used crack or other substances that placed the child at risk (“boarder babies”). The ability to gain an accurate picture of children in need of foster care and to begin to consider oneself as a child’s caregiver may be enhanced by actively involving veteran foster parents and introducing them to prospective foster parents.

This would allow prospective parents to meet foster parents who could share some of their experiences and to meet children who might be similar to children they might be asked to foster. Another approach for recruitment may be called a community approach. If the organization has been actively engaged with targeted communities, it may collaborate with community leaders, institutions, and organizations to help “spread the word” about children needing foster and adoptive families. This may be done by simply leaving written material with interested individuals and organizations. Formal partnerships can be developed such as that between agencies and African American churches such as in the One Church, One Child programs throughout the nation or Spaulding for Children’s Bandede project in which adoption recruitment and parent preparation classes are presented in each of the African American churches participating in the project. Other States and organizations have collaborated with organizations such as the Urban League, local arms of the National Association of Black Social Workers, various labor unions, and fraternal and social organizations with high community visibility and respect.

One final form of recruitment that is one of the most effective is word of mouth. Prospective and present foster parents and adoptive parents can be key to recruitment. Word of mouth is a powerful tool as a prospective foster or adoptive parent may or may not respond to recruitment efforts depending on what they hear from others who have had this contact with the agency. This underscores the importance of an internal agency assessment. Agency policies, procedures, and ways of engaging inquiring families and veteran families set the tone for this natural means of recruit-

ment. The internal organization must be consumer friendly. For the Executive Director to line staff, the agency must be foster parent and adoptive parent friendly. Parents need to be rewarded, respected, and most of all, their opinions need to be heard and valued. A family that has been pleased with the service it received from an agency will let others know this. Many potential resource families contact an agency because their friend, neighbor, or a relative is a foster parent with or adopted through that agency.

Some agencies have formalized this natural recruitment method by involving foster and adoptive parents in their recruitment programs. This involvement includes assisting potential resource families in complex agency applications, telling them about procedures, providing parent training and serving as a support or leading a family to other foster or adoptive families. In addition to extensive use of foster and adoptive parents as informal and volunteer recruiters, some agencies have encouraged their foster parents as recruiters by offering monetary rewards for bringing in friends and family members to be foster parents, or contracting with them as recruiters, supporters, and parent trainers.

As informal conversations and sharing by foster parents with their own networks is a powerful means of recruitment, the issue of foster parent retention is crucial. Retaining foster parents that have already been recruited is critical because this will reduce the number of new homes needed, and the expense of training new parents, as well as focuses agency attention on the treatment of veteran foster parents. To address recruitment without assessing and improving retention may be potentially self-defeating for an agency. Foster parents need to be treated as valuable agency resources whose significant contribution to children and families is recognized and rewarded in a variety of ways. This respect for veteran parents will engage them as effective informal and formal recruiters. The satisfied, experienced foster parent is the foundation for any recruitment strategy. The satisfaction of adoptive parents and their role as references for an agency and recruiters for waiting children is also significant.

There are several issues to highlight with regard to foster care and to adoption: (1) the importance of cultural competency in recruitment strategies; (2) the linkages between foster care parenting and becoming an adoptive parent; and (3) the central role of recruitment in agency service delivery.

1. Cultural Competency

With an over representation of children of color in out-of-home care, the child welfare system must do more to provide culturally competent services to communities of color. Cultural competence respects the culturally-defined needs of the populations served and acknowledges culture as a force that shapes behavior, values and institutions. It recognizes natural support systems such as the family, community, church and healers in various populations. It acknowledges that the concepts of family and community are different for various cultures and even for subgroups within cultures. (Cross, et.al.)

Within a system cultural competence requires a congruent set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in away that enables that system to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence calls for the awareness of the dynamics that result from cultural differences and expands cultural knowledge while being vigilant in adapting services to meet culturally unique needs. It requires that staff are committed to providing culturally competent services with an awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, an awareness of their own cultural values, that they understand what occurs in cross-cultural interactions, have basic knowledge of the culture of the people with whom they are working and an ability to adapt practice skills to fit that culture. (Cross, et.al.)

For example, programs such as Tayari and Nuestros NiZos in San Diego have been successfully linked to and obtained support from the communities they serve. They have adapted policy, program and practice to meet the needs of children served. Tayari and Nuestros NiZos are satellite offices of the San Diego County Adoption program located in the African American and Latino communities with staff representative of those communities. Staff speak the language and dialects spoken in the community. Nuestros NiZos has recruitment brochures and posters, applications and other written materials in Spanish.

These agencies, and other programs such as One Church, One Child and Friends of Black Children in North Carolina and Tennessee, recognize the strengths of the communities they serve and reach out to leaders in the community. These leaders can serve as gatekeepers to the community. With these leaders sanctioning the agency's recruitment effort, entry into the community is possible. The Institute for Black Parenting in Los Angeles has also worked with community leaders and celebrities as spokespersons for their recruitment efforts. These leaders facilitate the agency's access to people in the community. They can also help to shape policies and procedures that are congruent with the culture and traditions of their communities.

Such successful programs have worked with institutions in the community that have historically served the communities such as the African American church. Ministers have made it possible for agencies to present the need for resource families to their congregations. In some States press conferences are held at each meeting of the Board of Directors of One Church, One Child which bring the media into the communities. The media in turn relay the message that children need families and the ministers support the recruitment effort in the communities they represent. Churches have also sponsored adoption parties in the community.

In order to reach the Latino community in southwest Detroit, the Michigan Department of Social Services staff have reached out to grass roots organizations in their recruitment effort. A contract for recruitment of foster and adoptive families was developed with such a community organization.

These programs have built upon traditions in their communities whereby families cared for their children by simply taking in other families' children in time of need or through informal adoptions. Programs which build on these traditions let the communities they serve know that in fact there are children from their communities in the system and have explored both blood and non-blood kin as resources for children that come to the agencies' attention. They incorporate the history and language of the culture of these communities into their work and celebrate and seek to preserve the culture of the communities. They recognize the importance of cultural identity for children and children's needs for continuity not only with family but also with the community.

In the arena of adoption, successful programs have worked with the knowledge that research has documented: that families of color are meeting the needs of adopted children with special needs (Rosenthal and Groze), and that families of color do adopt and some groups adopt at a rate higher to their representation in the general population than do European Americans (Mason and Williams).

2. Foster Care and Adoption Linkages

Generally, there has been more of a focus on adoption recruitment but research points out the need for collaboration between foster care and adoption programs. Recruitment efforts successfully used in adoption programs can be used in foster parent recruitment. It is estimated that 40% to 90% of children with special needs are adopted by their foster parents. Foster parent adoptions have been found to be an effective avenue to permanency through adoption for children of color (Minority Adoptions).

In fact the Westat study indicated two ways of reducing or eliminating the gap between the adoption placement rates of white children and children of color. The gap was reduced in communities with a positive attitude toward the local public adoption agency. Agencies reported efforts to reach out to communities and develop public awareness programs designed to improve community attitudes and knowledge of the adoption process. They had broadened their recruitment efforts to encourage families of color, single persons and modest income families to adopt. The second way the gap between adoption placement rates of white children and children of color was eliminated was with an active adoption recruitment program in the agency coupled with the presence of a foster family willing to adopt. This was despite the fact that children of color were less likely to have a foster family interested in adopting them.

Certainly if permanency planning is the goal for children, the need to consider foster families as potential adoptive families is apparent. Agencies need families who can accept a child who will be reunited with the family but also who are prepared to adopt the child if the child

becomes available for adoption. As agencies do this, they need to consider whether they are making foster care placements appropriate to meet the life long needs of children. These needs include ongoing developmental needs, safety and health needs, a sense of belonging, and family and cultural continuity and connectedness. Many agencies have begun to do joint foster and adoptive parent recruitment and preparation for fostering and adopting. Agencies that consider families as resources for children seek to help these families determine whether they want to act as a foster parent who will work with the agency only to return children to their birth family or move to an adoptive family; whether they could foster a child but be willing to adopt the child if the child becomes available for adoption; are wanting to adopt but are willing to take a child who is not legally free for adoption; or only will consider adopting a child already free for adoption.

If agencies have foster parents that could adopt, but are not, it is important to identify the reasons why this is so. In the past agencies prohibited foster parents from adopting. Today most States have policies that allow foster parents to adopt children who have been in the home for a period of time and have formed an attachment with the foster family. However, there may be agency barriers to foster parent adoptions. For example, foster parents caring for children with complex emotional, developmental or medical needs may be discouraged from adopting because of the State's policy on adoption assistance. The family may be receiving a special foster care rate due to the child's complex needs, but if they adopt, the adoption assistance rate would not exceed the regular foster care rate. Some States have changed such policies so the adoption assistance payment is comparable to the special foster care rate. This has facilitated the adoption of children who otherwise would not have been adopted.

3. Agency Recruitment Initiatives

In order to focus recruitment efforts, recruiters must clearly be aware of the type of children who are in need of foster and adoptive families and the families who are likely to foster and adopt in order to focus recruitment efforts. This means that recruitment must be an integral part of the entire out-of-home care program. Only in this way is it possible to adapt recruitment efforts in a timely fashion to any changes in the population of children needing services. If there are now younger children entering care, the recruitment program and materials will have to reflect these children. Further, those placing children need to inform the recruitment effort about the types of families that need to be recruited. Historically the middle class, college educated, two parent family has been held out as the ideal family. Research now has begun to confirm what practitioners have known for years. Families with modest incomes, lower educational levels or where there is only one parent are doing fine as foster and adoptive parents. They may be the parents of choice in many instances. (Rosenthal, Groze, Curiel)

The integration of recruitment into the total out-of-home care program emphasizes the need

for staff to be ready, willing and able to help viable, committed families through the process. Those staff charged with preparing and assessing families must respond promptly and with a welcoming approach to those families who can become resources for children. Failure to do so undermines recruitment efforts. Families who do not receive such a response will question the agency's sincerity about their stated recruitment objective of finding families for children.

This may begin with the first telephone call a family makes to the agency in response to some recruitment effort. It is crucial that staff who are knowledgeable about the children and the procedures of the agency are available to take these calls. It is particularly important when children are featured in the media or when particular recruitment campaigns are in progress that staff be available when calls come in. There must also be sufficient telephone lines to ensure that calls get through.

In addition, staff who work with the children awaiting adoption must prepare them for any specific child recruitment efforts as well as the children's caretakers so that they can support the child as these efforts are being made. Such preparation requires that the children fully understand the plan for adoption, are willing to participate in recruitment efforts, and that there are no surprises if friends, school mates, teachers or others see the recruitment material. Children must not be given false expectations about the outcome of recruitment efforts, and workers and caretakers must be available to support children following recruitment efforts, regardless of outcome.

Staff must be available to begin the preparation and assessment process in a timely fashion following family's initial inquiry. The process and the procedures need to support, educate and engage prospective families in a process of self-assessment that will allow them to make an informed decision about fostering or adopting and about parenting a specific child. Procedures that do not take into account family work schedules or childcare needs will not help families get through the process. A process that is lengthy and focuses primarily on difficulties families have faced rather than how they coped with these difficulties or the strengths they have, may discourage families who actually have what it takes to parent a child who has been abused or neglected.

Values and attitudes of practitioners are also important. For example, workers may hold out for a two parent family for a child on their caseload regardless of whether their assessment of the child specifically documents such a need. The two parent family still is a value even though half the children in this country are likely to spend part of their lifetime in a single parent household. A worker's values in this regard can delay or prevent a child from placement with a family who may be well qualified to parent the child.

Workers' attitudes about children's behavior and needs are also important. If the worker is

overwhelmed by a child's behavior or questions the ability of the child to live in a family setting or does not understand how a family can care for a child with complex medical or emotional needs, that worker will have difficulty recruiting a family for that child or preparing a family to foster or adopt the child. Training and supportive supervision can help workers to make decisions that go beyond individual perceptions of the complexity of certain children's needs. Peer team work and consultation can also help workers focus on the permanency needs of children, as well as support difficult decisions. Collaboration between professionals of different service systems can also assist workers in truly understanding children's medical, emotional, behavioral and developmental needs as well as becoming familiar with services families may need to access.

Collaboration between agencies and jurisdictions is also necessary. An agency that has a child needing a foster or adoptive family must be willing to place the child with a family prepared by another agency, county or State. Usually such placements occur when trust has been established between individuals in the various organizations, jurisdictions and agencies. It is critical that agencies explore strategies to establish relationships and network with other organizations that may be resources for children who need families. Statewide, region-wide or national child welfare conferences help develop networks that allow staff to put faces to names and establish trust. Various networks such as the local consortium of public and private foster care agencies, regular meetings of foster care staff from different counties, local and regional adoption networks such as the Northwest Adoption Exchange, the Rocky Mountain Adoption Exchange and meetings of representatives for the Interstate Compact for Adoption and Medical Assistance also encourage collaboration. They allow for the development of relationships in which all recognize that such collaboration cannot end at the time of placement. The placing agency has the responsibility to ensure that the family receives services necessary, such as adoption assistance, to support the adoptive placement.

All of this requires commitment from every level of the organization. Staff must have adequate training to prepare and assess children and families for fostering and adopting and to provide support to families. There must be policy and procedures to guide them in their work. Funds must be committed in order for staff to do recruitment and to promptly respond to families who respond to recruitment efforts. Administrators must provide leadership in developing positive working relationships with communities of color and encouraging the development of more culturally competent responses to these communities.

Recruitment and retention efforts cannot be a one time campaign or a two year demonstration project. Recruitment must be ongoing and must be systematized in the child welfare program. It requires the development of skills in marketing and working with the media. Agencies have become aware of the need to involve their public information office in recruitment or to hire public relations staff or consultants.

All recruitment efforts need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Such evaluations must go beyond how many recruitment presentations were made or how many children were featured in how many radio or television spots. Even the numbers of families responding to recruitment efforts or the number of children placed cannot stand alone as measures of effectiveness. Recruitment efforts must be evaluated in the context of the total out-of-home care program. Recruitment efforts must be guided by objectives established for the total foster care and adoption program that focus on outcomes such as retention of families who enter the process and appropriate placement of children. How many families got through the process is more important than the numbers recruited. The number of children placed for adoption is dependent upon the numbers of children available for adoption, but factors such as how and when children are identified as needing adoption are important issues to be evaluated. The various factors that effect outcomes must be included in evaluations to determine the effectiveness of particular approaches and ways of improving recruitment and retention practices in order to increase children's opportunities for permanency whether through reunification with their birth families or adoption.

Summary

In summary, successful foster and adoptive family recruitment does the following:

- ensures necessary preparation of children and their caretakers
- realistically portrays the children who are need foster and adoptive families and advocates for the child
- gains community support and participation and is community-based
- develops as an integral component of the total foster care/adoption program
- takes risks to present waiting children to the public in attempts to achieve permanency for them and recognizes all kinds of families as potential resources for waiting children
- takes advantage of every opportunity to highlight the needs of the children and the process
- obtains commitment from all levels of the organization
- requires regular review for quality improvements and results effectiveness by agency and community persons
- occurs on many levels—public awareness, public information, on behalf of a specific child or specific children
- facilitates collaboration with various systems and agencies that impact a child's permanence
- requires cultural competence and utilizes the natural community mechanisms to provide the message regarding the need

Agencies that have been found to be successful in placing children of color for adoption have demonstrated cultural competence which is essential to the opportunities available to the disproportionate numbers of children color awaiting adoption. Many of these agencies are also successful in recruiting foster families who reflect the population of children served. Characteristics of

these agencies are that they:

- Have staff of the same cultural/racial heritage as the children and families
- Take a welcoming approach to applicants
- Minimize bureaucratic procedures
- Locate offices so they are readily accessible to members of the community and are in the community
- Have persons who are culturally competent and sensitive in decision-making positions in the agency
- Facilitate and encourage community involvement and control in the agency
- Have written materials in the language of the community and staff able to communicate in the language and dialect of the community
- Seek blood and non-blood kin as potential resource families
- Encourage and support foster parent adoptions

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The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Wilfred Hamm (Children’s Bureau), Phyllis Gurdin (Leake & Watts Services, New York), and Jake Terpstra (Children’s Bureau).

AFCARS reporting period (*i.e.*, all title IV–E funds expended for a case during the quarter(s) that case is ineligible, including administrative costs). If either the case ineligibility or dollar rate does not exceed 10 percent, the amount of disallowance will be computed on the basis of payments associated with ineligible cases for the entire period of time the case has been determined to be ineligible.

(3) The State agency will be liable for interest on the amount of funds disallowed by the Department, in accordance with the provisions of 45 CFR 30.13.

(4) States may appeal any disallowance actions taken by ACF to the HHS Departmental Appeals Board in accordance with regulations at 45 CFR Part 16.

[65 FR 4091, Jan. 25, 2000, as amended at 66 FR 58677, Nov. 23, 2001]

PART 1357—REQUIREMENTS APPLICABLE TO TITLE IV–B

Sec.

- 1357.10 Scope and definitions.
- 1357.15 Comprehensive child and family services plan requirements.
- 1357.16 Annual progress and services reports.
- 1357.20 Child abuse and neglect programs.
- 1357.25 Requirements for eligibility for additional payments under section 427.
- 1357.30 State fiscal requirements (title IV–B, subpart 1, child welfare services).
- 1357.32 State fiscal requirements (title IV–B, subpart 2, family preservation and family support services).
- 1357.40 Direct payments to Indian Tribal Organizations (title IV–B, subpart 1, child welfare services).
- 1357.50 Direct payments to Indian Tribal organizations (title IV–B, subpart 2, family preservation and support services).

AUTHORITY: 42 U.S.C. 620 et seq., 42 U.S.C. 670 et seq.; 42 U.S.C. 1302.

§ 1357.10 Scope and definitions.

(a) *Scope.* This part applies to State and Indian Tribal programs for child welfare services under subpart 1, and family preservation and family support services under subpart 2 of title IV–B of the Act.

(b) *Eligibility.* Child and family services under title IV–B, subparts 1 and 2, must be available on the basis of need

for services and must not be denied on the basis of income or length of residence in the State or within the Indian Tribe's jurisdiction.

(c) *Definitions.*

Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) means the document, developed through joint planning, which describes the publicly-funded State child and family services continuum (family support and family preservation services; child welfare services, including child abuse and neglect prevention, intervention, and treatment services; services to support reunification, adoption, kinship care, foster care, independent living, or other permanent living arrangements). For Indian Tribes, the document describes the child welfare and/or family preservation and support services to be provided by the Indian Tribe; includes goals and objectives both for improved outcomes for the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families and for service delivery system reform; specifies the services and other implementation activities that will be undertaken to carry out the goals and objectives; and includes plans for program improvement and allocation of resources.

Child welfare services means public social services directed to accomplish the following purposes:

(1) Protecting and promoting the welfare and safety of all children, including individuals with disabilities; homeless, dependent, or neglected children;

(2) Preventing or remedying, or assisting in the solution of problems which may result in the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or delinquency of children;

(3) Preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems and assisting families in resolving their problems and preventing the breakup of the family where the prevention of child removal is desirable and possible;

(4) Restoring to their families children who have been removed and may be safely returned, by the provision of services to the child and the family;

(5) Assuring adequate care of children away from their homes, in cases where the child cannot be returned home or cannot be placed for adoption; and

(6) Placing children in suitable adoptive homes, in cases where restoration to the biological family is not possible or appropriate.

Children refers to individuals from birth to the age of 21 (or such age of majority as provided under State law) including infants, children, youth, adolescents, and young adults.

Community-based services refers to programs delivered in accessible settings in the community and responsive to the needs of the community and the individuals and families residing therein. These services may be provided under public or private nonprofit auspices.

Families includes, but is not limited to, biological, adoptive, foster, and extended families.

Family preservation services refers to services for children and families designed to protect children from harm and help families (including foster, adoptive, and extended families) at risk or in crisis, including—

(1) Preplacement preventive services programs, such as intensive family preservation programs, designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain with their families, where possible;

(2) Service programs designed to help children, where appropriate, return to families from which they have been removed; or be placed for adoption, with a legal guardian, or, if adoption or legal guardianship is determined not to be appropriate for a child, in some other planned, permanent living arrangement;

(3) Service programs designed to provide follow-up care to families to whom a child has been returned after a foster care placement;

(4) Respite care of children to provide temporary relief for parents and other caregivers (including foster parents);

(5) Services designed to improve parenting skills (by reinforcing parents' confidence in their strengths, and helping them to identify where improvement is needed and to obtain assistance in improving those skills) with respect to matters such as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health, and nutrition; and

(6) Case management services designed to stabilize families in crisis

such as transportation, assistance with housing and utility payments, and access to adequate health care.

Family support services means community-based services to promote the well-being of children and families designed to increase the strength and stability of families (including adoptive, foster, and extended families), to increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, to afford children a stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development. Family support services may include:

(1) Services, including in-home visits, parent support groups, and other programs designed to improve parenting skills (by reinforcing parents' confidence in their strengths, and helping them to identify where improvement is needed and to obtain assistance in improving those skills) with respect to matters such as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health, and nutrition;

(2) Respite care of children to provide temporary relief for parents and other caregivers;

(3) Structured activities involving parents and children to strengthen the parent-child relationship;

(4) Drop-in centers to afford families opportunities for informal interaction with other families and with program staff;

(5) Transportation, information and referral services to afford families access to other community services, including child care, health care, nutrition programs, adult education literacy programs, legal services, and counseling and mentoring services; and

(6) Early developmental screening of children to assess the needs of such children, and assistance to families in securing specific services to meet these needs.

Joint planning means an ongoing partnership process between ACF and the State and between ACF and an Indian Tribe in the development, review, analysis, and refinement and/or revision of the State's and the Indian Tribe's child and family services plan. Joint planning involves discussions, consultation, and negotiation between ACF and the State or Indian Tribe in all areas of CFSP creation such as, but

§ 1357.15

not limited to, identifying the service needs of children, youth, and families; selecting the unmet service needs that will be addressed; developing goals and objectives that will result in improving outcomes for children and families; developing a plan to meet the matching requirements; and establishing a more comprehensive, coordinated and effective child and family services delivery system. The expectation of joint planning is that both ACF and the State or Indian Tribe will reach agreement on substantive and procedural matters related to the CFSP.

[61 FR 58655, Nov. 18, 1996]

§ 1357.15 Comprehensive child and family services plan requirements.

(a) *Scope.* (1) The CFSP provides an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a system of coordinated, integrated, culturally relevant family focused services. This section describes the requirements for the development, implementation and phase-in of the five-year comprehensive child and family services plan (CFSP). The State's CFSP must meet the requirements of both of the following programs. The Indian Tribe's CFSP must meet the requirements of one or both of the following programs depending on the Tribe's eligibility:

(i) Child welfare services under title IV-B, subpart 1; and

(ii) Family preservation and family support services under title IV-B, subpart 2.

(2) For States only, the CFSP also must contain information on the following programs:

(i) The independent living program under title IV-E, section 477 of the Act; and

(ii) The Child Abuse and Neglect State grant program (known as the Basic State Grant) under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C. 5101 et. seq.).

(3) States must meet all requirements of this section except those that apply only to Indian Tribes. Indian Tribes must meet the requirements of this section only as specified.

(4) States and eligible Indian Tribes have the option to phase-in the requirements for a consolidated CFSP. The consolidated CFSP requirements

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must be in place by June 30, 1997 and meet the requirements of 45 CFR 1357.16.

(b) *Eligibility for funds.* (1) In order to receive funding under title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2, each State and eligible Indian Tribe must submit and have approved a consolidated, five-year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and a CFS-101, Budget Request and Estimated Expenditure Report that meets the requirements under 45 CFR 1357.16.

(2) States and Indian Tribes that are consolidating the requirements for a CFSP in FY 1995, in accordance with § 1357.15(a), must submit the CFSP and a CFS-101 for FY 1995 and 1996 by June 30, 1995.

(3) States and eligible Indian Tribes choosing to phase-in the requirements for a consolidated CFSP in FY 1996 and 1997 must submit the CFSP, the CFS-101 for FY 1995 for subpart 1 and 2, and the CFS-101 for subpart 2 for FY 1996 by June 30, 1995.

(4) The CFSP will be approved only if the plan was developed jointly by ACF and the State (or the Indian Tribe), and only after broad consultation by the State (and the Indian Tribe) with a wide range of appropriate public and non-profit private agencies and community-based organizations with experience in administering programs of services for children and families (including family preservation and support services).

(5) By June 30, 1996, each grantee must submit and have approved the first Annual Progress and Services Report and a CFS 101 for FY 1997 that meets the statutory and regulatory requirements of title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2.

(6) The Annual Progress and Services Report will be approved if it was developed jointly by ACF and the State (or the Indian Tribe) and if it meets the requirements of 45 CFR 1357.16.

(7) The five-year CFSP for FYs 1995-1999 may be submitted in the format of the State's or the Indian Tribe's choice and must be submitted no later than June 30, 1995, to the appropriate ACF Regional Office.

(c) *Assurances.* The following assurances will remain in effect on an ongoing basis and will need to be re-submitted only if a significant change in

Section Eleven: Other Materials



Introduction

This space is provided for managers to include any articles and/or additional information related to recruitment that may be useful to them, such as specific State recruitment materials, brochures, etc.

Acronyms for Use with Child Welfare and Federal Policy

ABA	American Bar Association
ACF	The Administration for Children and Families (An agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AFCARS	Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System
ASFA	Adoptions and Safe Families Act
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CA/N	Child abuse and/or neglect
CB	Children's Bureau (An office within the Administration For Children and Families)
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CFSP	The State's Child and Family Service Plan, part of Title IV-B
CFSR	Child and Family Services Review
CIP	Court Improvement Project
CPS	Child Protective Services
CRB	Citizen's Review Board
CY	Calendar Year (January 1–December 31)
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services (Washington, DC)
ED	Emotionally Disturbed
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year (October 1–September 30)
FIA	Michigan Family Independence Agency
FPS	Family Preservation Services
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IL	Independent Living

IEPA Inter Ethnic Provision Act of 1996

LTFC Long-term Foster Care

MA Medical Assistance

MEPA Multi Ethnic Placement Act of 1994

MIS Management Information System

NCANDS . . . National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System

PCP Person Centered Planning

PIP Program Improvement Plan

PPLA Permanent Planned Living Arrangement

QA/QC Quality Assurance/Quality Control

RFP Request for Proposal

RFQ Request for Quote

SACWIS . . . Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System

SDM Structured Decision Making Tool

SOC System of Care

SWA Statewide Assessment

TANF Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

TFC Treatment Foster Care

TPR Termination of Parental Rights

Title IV-B . . . Title of IV-B of the Federal Social Security Act, specifies Child and Family Service Plan Requirements (CFSP)

Title IV-E . . . Title of IV-E of the Federal Social Security Act (42 USC 672 679) is an open ended entitlement, funded with a combination of federal and State/local matching funds