Innovations in Family Recruitment
Today’s Presenters

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Innovations in Family Recruitment

- Five year federal diligent recruitment grant (2013-2018)
- Ongoing work with implementation counties to enhance foster parent recruitment and retention in Regions III, IV & V
- Tools:
  - Revitalizing Recruitment (best practices)
  - Taking Action (the “Blueprint”)

www.recruit4fostercare.org
Spotlight on recruitment and retention

Quality foster parents are essential to positive outcomes for children

Counties and agencies invest in recruitment and want to receive the best return on that investment

- Effective
- Cost-efficient

NYS Counties and Agencies - 3 year Recruitment and Retention Plans

www.recruit4fostercare.org
Revitalizing Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents

Quality foster/adoptive homes are crucial in achieving good outcomes for children and youth in care, but finding and keeping foster and adoptive parents is an ongoing challenge. This site is designed to help counties and agencies revitalize their recruitment and retention plan of action.

TAKING ACTION:
A blueprint for targeted recruitment and retention of foster, adoptive, and kinship parents.

A hands-on, step-by-step guide for putting diligent recruitment into action, with tools and tips you can use along the way.

REVITALIZING RECRUITMENT
Practical strategies for finding and keeping foster, adoptive, and kinship homes

A compendium of best practices, with real-life examples, resources, and practice models from New York and across the U.S.

Do you have a comment about this site, or do you have a recruitment/retention strategy to share? Send us an email at info@welfareresearch.org.
TAKING ACTION:
A blueprint for targeted recruitment and retention of foster, adoptive, and kinship parents

This is a how-to guide for foster care programs that want to put targeted, diligent recruitment into action. It is based on the research and real-life experiences of local Social Services Districts in New York State that are participating in the Innovations In Family Recruitment Project (IIFR). Come back often as you engage in your recruitment and retention work.

Why is this work important?
Even the most robust foster care programs can face challenges in recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive families. **Find out how data-driven recruitment can benefit your agency.**

Your Recruitment and Retention Team

The Ongoing Process
Collect Data
Analyze Data
Make A Plan
Take Action
Measure Progress

**It’s an Ongoing Process**
The process of putting diligent recruitment to work involves 5 key phases that are continuously reviewed, revised, and renewed. In the real world, the process is often not as neat and clean-cut as it appears here. Adapt this guide to your own real world, and expect success!
Forming a recruitment and retention team

Local Social Services districts and voluntary agencies are encouraged to set up teams to plan and implement revitalized recruitment programs in their jurisdictions. While an outside facilitator is helpful to this process, such a person is not necessary as long as agency staff with the needed skills are available.

Commitment to change is essential, and this commitment must come from the top. The local commissioner of social services or agency director has to be on board with devoting staff time to this effort and with achieving a more systematic approach to recruitment. Ideally, this person is an active member of the team, especially at the onset. If this person is not a regular, ongoing member of the team, s/he should be informed of its progress, provide feedback to the team as needed, and attend meetings when possible.

What will the team do?

The Recruitment & Retention Team is responsible for guiding the agency through the process of revitalizing its recruitment efforts. Read more . . .

Who should be on the team?

In addition to individuals involved in home finding, the ideal team includes staff members from all agency departments that interact with current and prospective foster/adoptive parents. Foster parents, older youth, and community stakeholders also should contribute to the team’s work. Read more . . .

Getting “buy-in” from the agency and community

The presence of the team has an added benefit: an increased awareness of the value and priority of recruiting and retaining quality foster homes. Read more . . .
An Ongoing Process

The process of putting diligent recruitment to work involves 5 key phases that are continuously reviewed, revised, and renewed. In the real world, the process is often not as neat and clear-cut as it appears here. Adapt this guide to your own real world, and expect success!

What's the data … and where do you find it?

The first thing to remember about the data used to analyze recruitment and retention is that some of it is already in your hands. Much of the information has been captured by your agency in a variety of ways. The key is to pull it all together and find out what it reveals about strengths and gaps in your recruitment and retention process.

We have identified three types of data that can be explored in this way.

- **Tracking the process from inquiry to certification**: data captured during the solicitation, engagement, and certification of prospective foster families.
- **Defining the characteristics of current and needed homes**: data that provides a profile of the current foster homes and the characteristics of the children they are able to care for, compared to the needs of children coming into care.
- **Identifying retention successes and challenges**: data that is collected about both current and former foster/adoptive homes.

These three types of data are central to review while developing a robust diligent recruitment process. Analyzing this type of information can illuminate trends, provide perspective, and help strategically address recruitment and retention needs.
Describing current foster homes and children in care

Targeted recruitment directs an agency’s resources and efforts where they are mostly likely to yield results. As a data-driven technique, it requires agencies to have an accurate picture of the types of foster homes that are needed in your area. To get this picture, you will need information about the current foster homes and the children receiving foster care. This will allow you to determine the gaps between available homes and homes that will meet the needs of children coming into care.

Characteristics of children in care

Data on the characteristics of children in foster care can be obtained from agency records and reports available from OCFS. Read more . . .

Characteristics of foster homes

The characteristics of the agency’s pool of foster homes can be obtained from agency records, from data such as demographic information, location, and placement preferences. Read more . . .
Making sense of the data

Data alone won’t provide you with the steps to take toward a more effective recruitment plan. Analysis is the first step in making sense of the data you’ve collected, and helps you identify strengths and gaps in your agency’s approach. The next step is to address current recruitment needs and plan for the future.

What do the numbers tell you?

As your team reviews the data it has collected about the characteristics of foster homes and of children in care, several significant bits of information may jump out at you. Read more...

Compare needs with current foster homes

Compare your current recruitment needs with your current pool of certified foster homes. What demographics or characteristics are your current homes able to serve? Would increasing the use of kinship homes help meet the needs of children in care? Read more...

Are there critical needs that are not being met by the current pool? Are there homes that could be re-recruited to meet your current needs? This information helps shape your targeted recruitment plan, including the Recruitment and Retention Plan your agency submits to OCFS every three years.

If there are gaps between needs and services, these areas may be “hard-to-find homes.” As a team, discuss questions such as: Which homes were easy to find? Which were more difficult, and why? This should help shift thinking from “hard-to-place children” to “hard-to-find homes.”

Zero in on the homes that are most difficult to find, and identify the characteristics that are the most common (e.g., homes for teens, homes for children who are medically fragile). Based on your review of your data, what do you consider the key characteristics of your most-needed homes?

For more information about targeted recruitment strategies and hard-to-find homes, see the Revitalizing Recruitment resource. The National Diligent Recruitment Resource Center recently released this toolkit to assist in the development of recruitment plans.

Meeting current needs by re-recruiting existing foster homes

Foster parents as recruiters

How well are you recruiting kinship homes?
Recruitment and Retention Action Plan

Read about how to develop each part of a plan, then scroll down, and click on the buttons to fill in a sample plan.

1) Identify "big picture" aims
Each aim should address a need identified by data collection and analysis. It should be a general statement, and yet specific enough to be achievable within a reasonable period of time. Action Plans typically have three to five aims.

2) Develop specific objectives
Specific objectives should be practical, reachable goals that are measurable. In this case, the team will be able to determine whether the objective was reached completely or partially during a 12-month period.

3) Propose strategies that are likely to lead to achievement of the objective
Research multiple options – Best practice suggests that you use evidenced-informed strategies. Is there a new tool or technology that can be helpful with your current aim?

Revisit past ideas as possibilities – What have you learned as part of your overall experience in the field?

Build on existing information, knowledge, and momentum such as:
- Your agency’s mission, core values, and practices for children and families
- Relevant agency-wide efforts (e.g., practice model, special initiatives)
- Prior successes and lessons learned, including insights from Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs)
- Existing partnerships and community relationships
- Any current requirements related to recruitment, development, or support of families

4) Determine the specific tasks required
Tasks are the "actions" of the Action Plan. Tasks define the actual work that will be done in order to accomplish the larger objectives and aims. Tasks should be as specific as possible.
5) Who, what, and when
Decide who will execute each task. To encourage buy-in, all relevant team members should be involved in carrying out different parts of the plan.

Timelines help to move the work forward. As each task is added, include a realistic timeline for the completion of that specific task. The timeline is an estimate, and this information can be shifted as needed, but the Action Plan should capture the intended completion date of each task.

6) Outcome
Document results or progress towards major objectives of the plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIM:</th>
<th>Have a pool of foster/adoptive homes that is sufficient to meet the demand for homes that will care for sibling groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVE:</td>
<td>Add ten certified foster homes for large sibling groups within the next 12 months.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>TASKS</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage current foster parents of sibling groups in targeted recruitment and retention efforts.</td>
<td>Sign up 5 foster parents to host information sessions in their homes. Enlist the foster parent of a sibling group to speak at the next foster parent recognition event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review and update the Action Plan

Regularly assess the impact of the recruitment and retention efforts on major objectives outlined in the plan — quarterly or at least twice a year.

Read more...

In the sample Action Plan below, the agency’s objective was to have ten additional certified foster homes for large sibling groups within a 12-month period. The outcome: At the end of the 12-month period, 8 homes were certified and 1 was in the home study phase.

AIM #1: Have a pool of foster/adoptive homes that is sufficient to meet the demand for homes that will care for sibling groups.

OBJECTIVE: Add ten certified foster homes for large sibling groups within the next 12 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>TASKS</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Engage current foster parents of sibling groups in targeted recruitment and retention efforts</td>
<td>Sign up 5 foster parents to host information sessions in their homes.</td>
<td>Homefinder</td>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>30 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>6 applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/25</td>
<td>4 homes certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>1 in home study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5/30</td>
<td>Task not accomplished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff will speak to community groups in targeted neighborhoods.</td>
<td>Enlist a foster parent of a sibling group to speak at the next foster parent recognition event.</td>
<td>Unit Supervisor</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Foster parent could not be scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Task not accomplished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask all staff to identify appropriate community groups.</td>
<td>Agency director</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>12 groups suggested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schedule presentations</td>
<td>Homefinder unit – Secretary</td>
<td>5/15</td>
<td>6 presentations scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make 6 presentations</td>
<td>Homefinder Caseworkers</td>
<td>6/1</td>
<td>5 presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/3</td>
<td>(1 cancelled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/28</td>
<td>124 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7/12</td>
<td>5 applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8/1</td>
<td>4 homes certified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall progress toward the objective was good. The agency came close to meeting its objective within the desired time frame.
An Ongoing Process

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Collect Data  Analyze Data  Make a Plan  Take Action  Measure Progress  Toolbox

What’s the data … and where do you get it?

The first thing to remember about the data used to analyze recruitment is that much of the information has been captured by your agency in a variety of ways. The key is to make sense of the data used to analyze recruitment and retention process.

We have identified three types of data that can be explored in this connection:

1. Tracking the process from inquiry to certification: data captured directly from agency intake and intake meeting documentation.
2. Defining the characteristics of current and needed homes: data that can be collected through surveys of current foster parents to determine if they are able to care for, compared to the needs of children currently in care.
3. Identifying retention successes and challenges: data that is collected about both current and former foster/adoptive homes.

These three types of data are central to review while developing a robust diligent recruitment process. Analyzing this type of information can illuminate trends, provide perspective, and help strategically address recruitment and retention needs.
Diligent Recruitment at Work

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Foster Parent Trainer/Recruiter, Ulster County Department of Social Services
Innovations in Family Recruitment

Engages counties and agencies in a process to illuminate strengths, build upon them and effectively strategize to address any gaps in the recruitment and retention of foster parents

Retention Models

*Recruitment starts with Retention...*

Fostering Futures NY