



DEVELOPING RECRUITMENT PLANS

A Toolkit for States and Tribes



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR
DILIGENT RECRUITMENT
at AdoptUSKids



Table of CONTENTS

1	The value of a strong planning process and plan
3	What should a recruitment plan be?
8	Example planning guide
10	Example—simplified planning guide
12	Ways to engage with your data
14	Additional resources that may be useful
15	Recruitment planning worksheet
16	Planning overview—using the planning worksheets
17	WORKSHEET 1 Who are the children and youth currently in your care?
19	WORKSHEET 2 Who are your current kin, foster, and adoptive parents?
22	WORKSHEET 3 Who are the children and youth currently most in need of homes?
23	WORKSHEET 4 What is your recruitment target?
24	WORKSHEET 5 Attracting more families like your current successful resource families
26	WORKSHEET 6 Recruitment outreach
27	WORKSHEET 7 How will you support and retain resource families?
29	WORKSHEET 8 Retention and recruitment goals
30	WORKSHEET 9 Strategies
31	WORKSHEET 10 Action plans

Purpose of this toolkit

We developed this toolkit as a resource that child welfare systems can use in multiple ways to support your processes for developing recruitment plans. Through our work with states, tribes, counties, and territories on diligent recruitment and recruitment planning efforts, we hear a strong desire for additional tools and resources to help child welfare systems develop strategic, data-driven recruitment plans that will help you build and sustain a pool of resource families that can meet the needs of children in foster care.¹

What is in this toolkit?

This toolkit offers ideas and strategies to consider, examples of ways to develop recruitment plans, tools you can use in your planning processes and adapt to meet your needs, key considerations, and other information that we think may be helpful.

What is *not* in this toolkit?

This toolkit does not offer any guidance about what should be included in a diligent recruitment plan as required by the Children's Bureau, nor does the information in this toolkit replace any guidance that the Children's Bureau provides to states and tribes on diligent recruitment requirements or expectations. States and tribes should follow the Children's Bureau's guidance and approval process for diligent recruitment plans.

¹ In this toolkit, we use the term “resource families” as an inclusive way of referring to foster, adoptive, kinship, and guardianship families. This term reflects the idea that families in each of these roles serve as a resource to children in foster care.



The value of a strong planning process and plan

A strategic, data-driven recruitment plan is a valuable tool to guide your work, and we know that you are eager to have a plan quickly. Beyond just the final recruitment plan document itself, however, the process of developing the ideas, priorities, values, and strategies that go into a recruitment plan contributes strongly to ensuring buy-in, clarity, and shared commitment to recruiting, developing, and supporting families.

In addition to helping to create a useful plan, a strong process for developing a recruitment plan can provide additional benefits, such as:

- Bringing people together to focus on their shared goals for children and families, which helps develop and sustain the relationships that are important for working together on ongoing recruitment efforts
- Helping people reaffirm their commitment to meeting children's needs, which can re-energize and motivate people to continue doing this work
- Providing an opportunity to celebrate your successes and strengths, which sometimes gets ignored in the face of the challenging work of child welfare systems
- Helping to develop a shared set of priorities and to focus everyone's use of time, resources, and effort, which is crucial given the limited resources that child welfare systems have for staffing, recruitment activities, materials, etc.
- Raising awareness and deepening understanding among stakeholders about federal requirements for having a diligent recruitment plan
- Promoting increased consistency in recruitment efforts and a shared understanding of what the recruitment needs and priorities are

Stakeholder engagement is crucial

We have seen that it is incredibly valuable for recruitment plans to be living documents that people continually refer to and update, as a guiding document for efforts to recruit, respond to,

develop, and support families. A key strategy for developing a recruitment plan that is used and valued in this way is to have deep engagement of stakeholders—including both internal staff and external partners—during the development process. If people are participating in the development of the recruitment plan goals, strategies, activities, and ways of measuring success, they are more likely to be committed to implementing the plan thoroughly and successfully. As you consider ways to engage stakeholders in the planning process, keep in mind the following tips:

- It's helpful to include a wide range of perspectives related to recruitment, such as those of families who have worked with your child welfare system as resource families; staff involved in training and licensure of prospective families; staff from your agency's data unit and staff involved in continuous quality improvement efforts; community partners (e.g., faith-based organizations, adoption exchanges, parent support groups, media partners); contracted private agencies; and communications staff.
- Build in time in your planning process for meaningful stakeholder involvement. It may seem that creating opportunities for meetings and discussions with stakeholders will slow down your process for developing a recruitment plan, but it is a worthwhile investment of time for the longer-term success and effectiveness of your plan.
- Be prepared to hear diverse ideas and suggestions and be open to considering new viewpoints. Some of your child welfare system's stakeholders may have concerns, questions, or suggestions that you find challenging. By being open to honest discussions—including on problems or sensitive issues—you can create a more productive process for addressing barriers that might need to be resolved in order for your recruitment efforts to be effective.
- Be thoughtful about ways to engage stakeholders from relevant child welfare systems and seek to work together across jurisdictional boundaries. For example, if you work for the state child welfare agency, find ways to include leaders from relevant tribes and tribal child welfare systems so that you can partner with each other to address the need to recruit and support families for Native American children. If you work for a tribal child welfare agency, find ways to include relevant state and county agencies in your planning process.

Our customizable [Diligent Recruitment Navigator](#) is a tool that suggests discussion questions and people to include in planning discussions for each element of a comprehensive diligent recruitment program. Reviewing the Diligent Recruitment Navigator can provide ideas about stakeholders to consider involving in your planning process.



What should a recruitment plan be?

Many child welfare systems ask, “What should our diligent recruitment plan look like?” The good news and the bad news is that there isn’t one simple answer. There isn’t one set template that child welfare systems use or that we recommend; we encourage child welfare systems to develop a format and framework for their plan that fits their needs and will be most useful for having the plan guide their work.

What is a plan?

At a basic level, a useful plan provides clear information about what you have decided about what you are attempting to accomplish, what your strategies will be, and how you will implement those strategies. Any plan—whether it is a recruitment plan or some other plan—can be a powerful tool for communicating your values, goals, priorities for your work, and beliefs about what strategies will be effective for achieving your goals.

We encourage child welfare systems to view plans as living documents that can serve as a useful guide for your work on a regular basis, rather than as a document to be written for reporting purposes and then simply put away or filed. Thoughtful, well-designed plans can provide a strong foundation for ongoing work, as well as offering a framework for you to track your implementation process and adjust your approaches as needed in order to make progress toward your goals.

What should be included in a plan?

In order to serve as a helpful guiding document, a plan should include the following elements in some form:

- Stated goals, intended outcomes, and objectives
- Quantitative and qualitative data that provides clarity on your current situation, needs, strengths, and gaps (*See below for more detailed information on ways to engage with your data for a recruitment plan.*)

- Strategies and action steps to accomplish the goals, outcomes, or objectives
- Accountability information—People or groups responsible for implementing the strategies and action steps
- Timelines for the action steps to be started and completed
- Ways of capturing whether the action steps were completed and what impact the action steps and strategies had in helping to accomplish the goals, outcomes, or objectives

Various kinds of recruitment plans

Recruitment plans can take many forms, depending on your goals and how you intend to use the plan. Following are a few examples.

Comprehensive diligent recruitment plan

One common form of a recruitment plan is the diligent recruitment plan that states and tribes submit to the Children’s Bureau as part of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), and as part of the updates in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). Comprehensive diligent recruitment plans provide a five-year strategic approach to building a pool of families that reflect the population and can meet the needs of children in foster care. The Children’s Bureau provides guidance on required information and elements to include in these plans. Looking beyond the required elements, you can consider having your diligent recruitment plan describe how you will implement a comprehensive diligent recruitment program. Our tip sheet [What is Diligent Recruitment? \(164 KB PDF\)](#) describes all of the components involved in a fully comprehensive diligent recruitment program. In addition, our customizable [Diligent Recruitment Navigator](#) provides in-depth suggestions for discussion questions and stakeholders to include in developing a diligent recruitment program.

Short-term recruitment plans

These plans focus on rapid implementation, learning, and revision of recruitment approaches through a six- or nine-month plan—or other short time period that works for a child welfare agency—to test recruitment strategies that can be implemented and assessed right away. Short-term recruitment plans can help you make incremental progress in a manageable way toward broader, more long-term goals that are included in your comprehensive diligent recruitment plan. A helpful way to use these short-term recruitment plans is to have an ongoing cycle for the plans and a built-in process for checking on the progress and effectiveness of the recruitment plan. This allows you to incorporate lessons learned from the implementation into the next short-term plan, following a continuous quality improvement approach.

Targeted recruitment plans focused on specific geographic areas or populations

These plans can take several forms:

- A recruitment plan for a specific city, county, or region
- A plan focused on recruiting families from particular groups (e.g., recruiting in faith communities, recruiting Native American parents)
- A plan for recruiting families for particular groups of children (e.g., recruitment plans for sibling groups or for teens)

NOTE: If you are using these smaller-scope, targeted plans, be sure to connect these plans to your broader diligent recruitment plan.

Recruitment strategies as part of a program improvement plan (PIP)

Some child welfare systems include strategies specifically related to recruiting families or building a pool of resource families as part of a PIP as a way to improve placement stability or permanency outcomes as noted in from a Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). You may find it helpful to have the PIP strategies, deadlines, and other information that is specifically related to recruitment available as a stand-alone plan as well, to ensure that staff can use that plan to inform their work and to help connect the PIP activities to your other recruitment plans.



Consider implementation

For each of these categories of recruitment plans, you should consider how you will implement and track implementation of the activities in the plan. Some child welfare systems find it helpful to develop an implementation plan to accompany the recruitment plan, for internal use for ensuring success in carrying out the recruitment plan. An implementation plan can help you capture details and manage information, such as:

- Timelines for incremental steps
- Specific people to involve for specific activities or for ongoing engagement
- How workgroups and key meetings will be structured to support the activities in the recruitment plan
- Other important initiatives or events that need to be considered as you conduct the strategies and activities in the recruitment plan



Tips for developing a recruitment plan

- ▶ Determine what kind of recruitment plan(s) you need. (*See list of various kinds of recruitment plans above for some of the options.*)
- ▶ Explore whether your agency has an existing format for plans that you can use—either as a template or as a starting point that you can adapt to fit your needs—so you don’t have to create a format from scratch.
- ▶ Focus on answering the question: “Ultimately, what do we want to accomplish?” People may have differing understandings and definitions of “goals,” “outcomes,” and “objectives” for the purposes of developing a plan. We encourage you to set aside these differences and not to get stuck on debating whether an idea is a goal or an objective.
- ▶ Be specific in writing your statements describing what you want to accomplish. If possible and appropriate to the goal, include measurable details and time-frames (e.g., By July 2019, increase the number of appropriate placement options for sibling groups of three by 30 percent over our April 2015 number.)
- ▶ Look at recruitment plans from other child welfare systems to see examples of multiple ways of developing, writing, and structuring a recruitment plan. Keep in mind that examples from other child welfare systems likely won’t be an exact fit for your system, so look to the examples for ideas but keep in mind that a plan will be most useful for you if you design it in a way that fits your system. You can see states’ diligent recruitment plans by searching the [Children’s Bureau’s database of CFSPs and APSRs](#) and searching within each CFSP or APSR for the section on diligent recruitment.
- ▶ Learn from what other child welfare systems are doing in sections throughout the NRCDR’s website, including ideas for working with [diverse populations](#), [developing and supporting families](#), specific ideas [for tribes](#), and ideas for several categories of recruitment strategies to improve [placement stability and permanency](#). Explore the work done by the Children’s Bureau’s [Diligent Recruitment Grantees](#), and see the documents they have produced that you may wish to replicate or adapt for your work (e.g., surveys, tracking tools, recruitment brochures).
- ▶ Consider ways to leverage tools and materials that are available from external sources, including the [National Adoption Recruitment Campaign](#) materials that can be localized for your jurisdiction through AdoptUSKids.

As you develop your recruitment plan, look for ways to build on existing information, knowledge, and momentum such as:

- Your current, accurate data on children and families and on your inquiry-to-licensure process (if available)
- 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 previous grants and from Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs)
- Existing partnerships and community relationships
- Any current requirements related to recruitment, development, or support of families (e.g., in tribal–state agreements or contracts, consent decrees, Child and Family Services Review PIP, border agreements)



Example planning guide

NOTE: We are including some example text below to demonstrate what kind of information to include in each section of this planning guide. The example text below does not represent a comprehensive plan.

<p>Goal 1</p> <p>Increase pool of foster families for older youth by 15 percent by June 2017</p>	<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Increase retention of current foster families for older youth</p>
<p>Strategy 1</p> <p>Hold focus groups with current foster families to identify the areas in which they would like to continue to develop their skills and what kind of support the families need</p>	

#	Action step	Person or people responsible	Start date	Complete date
1	Compile list of current foster families who are open to placement of older youth	Seth Supervisor	August 1, 2016	August 15, 2016
2	Develop invitation for focus groups to send to families on list	Wendy Worker	August 5, 2016	August 20, 2016
3	Obtain gift cards to give to participating families in recognition of their contribution and investment of time in the focus groups	Margie Manager	August 5, 2016	August 25, 2016

Strategy 2				
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#	Action step	Person or people responsible	Start date	Complete date
1				
2				
3				

Goal 1	Objective 2
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Strategy 1

#	Action step	Person or people responsible	Start date	Complete date
1				
2				
3				

Strategy 2

#	Action step	Person or people responsible	Start date	Complete date
1				
2				
3				

Goal 2	Objective 1
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Strategy 1

#	Action step	Person or people responsible	Start date	Complete date
1				
2				
3				



Example—simplified planning guide

GOAL 1

Strategies and action steps

Strategy 1:

- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline

Strategy 2:

- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline

GOAL 2:

Strategies and action steps

Strategy 1:

- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline

Strategy 2:

- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline
- Action step and deadline



Ways to engage with your data

Regardless of what kind of recruitment plan you develop, data should be a key foundation of your plan. By combining data on children in foster care and on your pool of resource families, you can see the full picture of what your recruitment needs are and how to target your recruitment, response, development, and support efforts in order to build the pool of resource families that you need.

For your recruitment plan, it's helpful to base your planning on—and include information in your written plan about—clear data on:

- The children in foster care in your child welfare system, including key themes in the data about the groups of children for whom it is most challenging to find appropriate placements. (See [worksheet 1 on page 17](#) of this toolkit.)
- Your current pool of resource families, including information about their licensed capacity (i.e., number of children they can have placed with them) and their preferences for ages and needs of children (e.g., whether they will take placements of children with specific special needs, sibling groups). As part of this data, it's helpful to know how many families are licensed but haven't had any placements and to understand why families either aren't accepting placements or aren't being used as a placement resource. (See [worksheet 2 on page 19](#) of this toolkit.)
- Your process for prospective families from initial inquiry through to licensure, including information on how many families drop out at each step in the process, how long it takes on average for families to move from one step to the next, and any other data you have on how the inquiry-to-licensure process is working. (See [worksheet 7 on page 26](#) of this toolkit.)

Key considerations for using your data effectively

Data is powerful and crucial for your planning efforts, but we know that data and data analysis can be challenging, especially if your existing data systems don't provide all of the information you need in a clear way. Below are some suggestions for ensuring that data provides helpful insights and a strong foundation for your recruitment plan:

- Explore ways to represent your data in the most effective way. For example, some data—such as information on the areas from which children enter foster care—might be best represented through mapping so you can see the specific neighborhoods, communities, and counties where you may want to target your recruitment efforts. Other data might be helpful to present as both raw numbers and percentages, so you can see both the relative scale and the firm numbers (e.g., seeing that you need a 10 percent increase in the number of foster families in a certain areas but also that a 10 percent increase might only represent a need for five additional families).
- Look for ways to share and use data across partners and silos, including coordinating with other relevant public agencies and private agencies that are contracted to do any portion of your recruitment, development, and support of resource families. These other divisions and organizations may have important data that you don't have, if they have a role in other parts of the recruitment, response, licensure, or support process. This sharing approach might involve identifying which data elements you will all collect and share with each other and agreeing on shared definitions and ways of collecting those data elements. Coordinate with these partners on interpreting and using the data, so you benefit from each other's thinking about the implications of the data on your recruitment-planning efforts.

Key resources on using your data

A useful resource for helping you examine your data on prospective and current families is our publication, [Data-Driven Recruitment: Key Data Elements on Foster and Adoptive Families \(487 KB PDF\)](#). This publication provides suggested priorities for key data elements on prospective and current families that will help inform your efforts to recruit and maintain a pool of families and help you assess the effectiveness of your recruitment efforts. In addition, the following resources provide helpful information and ideas for using your data effectively as part of recruitment efforts:

- [Diligent Recruitment Navigator](#)—our customizable tool with suggested discussion questions to help you develop a comprehensive, data-driven diligent recruitment program.
- [Webinar: “Data-Driven Diligent Recruitment: Partnering and Prioritizing to Strengthen Your System’s Use of Data”](#). This webinar helps child welfare systems explore ways to build your capacity to use data effectively to inform your recruitment, development, and support of resource families to meet the needs of children and youth in care.
- [Speaking the Same Language: Understanding Multiple Meanings of Terms Used by Child Welfare Program and IT/Data Staff to Support Diligent Recruitment \(147 KB PDF\)](#): Highlights the importance of communicating effectively between program staff and IT/data staff and provides examples of key words and phrases that program and data/IT staff may use but that may have different meanings.

The worksheets in this toolkit (beginning on page 15) also provide helpful ideas for ways to track and analyze data on your resource families as part of understanding your needs related to recruiting, developing, and supporting families.



Additional resources that may be useful

The NRCDR and the entire AdoptUSKids project have several materials, tools, and information that can help you develop and implement a strong recruitment plan. Consider using the following resources as you develop ideas for developing and implementing a recruitment plan:

- Our customizable [Diligent Recruitment Navigator](#) provides suggested discussion questions and people to include in your discussions about each of the elements for a comprehensive diligent recruitment program. You can use this tool in various ways to structure your recruitment planning discussions. Learn more about [Using the Diligent Recruitment Navigator Effectively \(78 KB PDF\)](#) and [Using the Diligent Recruitment Navigator to Support Implementation and Ongoing Program Improvement \(225 KB PDF\)](#).
- Explore information about ways to localize the [National Adoption Recruitment Campaign](#) for your area, with support from AdoptUSKids.
- Consider ways to partner with your agency's communications staff or public information officer to help share clear, effective messages with your communities about foster care and adoption. For more ideas and strategies, see our publications: [Partnering for Permanency: Working with Your Public Information Officer \(246 KB PDF\)](#) and [Media Toolkit for Child Welfare Leaders \(565 KB PDF\)](#).
- Make use of the [AdoptUSKids photolisting](#) as an active tool within your recruitment efforts to search for approved families who are interested in adopting children from foster care. Registered users on the photolisting can [search for families](#) who match the characteristics of children for whom you are seeking an adoptive family.
- Explore the other information and resources on the [NRCDR website](#).



Recruitment planning worksheets

- 16 Planning overview—using the planning worksheets
- 17 **WORKSHEET 1**
Who are the children and youth currently in your care?
- 19 **WORKSHEET 2**
Who are your current kin, foster, and adoptive parents?
- 22 **WORKSHEET 3**
Who are the children and youth currently most in need of homes?
- 23 **WORKSHEET 4**
What is your recruitment target?
- 24 **WORKSHEET 5**
Attracting more families like your current successful resource families
- 26 **WORKSHEET 6**
Recruitment outreach
- 27 **WORKSHEET 7**
How will you support and retain resource families?
- 29 **WORKSHEET 8**
Retention and recruitment goals
- 30 **WORKSHEET 9**
Strategies
- 31 **WORKSHEET 10**
Action plans



Planning overview—using the planning worksheets

Date range covered by plan	
Net gain goal How many more total licensed resource families do you expect to have on the last day of this plan period, as compared to the number on the first day of the period?	
Contact name	
Date submitted	
Agency approval Signature/date	

Instructions

- Goal:** Develop a minimum of one measurable goal for each of these three tasks:
 - Retaining and supporting currently licensed families
 - Recruiting additional resource families for targeted areas of need
 - Responding to and retaining prospective resource families during the inquiry to licensing phase of the process

For more extensive recruitment plans, you will likely need to develop several measurable goals for each of these tasks.

- Strategy:** Identify at least one strategy for each goal. The strategy is a brief statement of how you plan to reach your goal. For instance, if your goal is “License 10 more families willing to accept placement of youth between the ages of 13–18,” a strategy might be “Recruit resource parents who have children attending Metropolis High School.” You may have more than one strategy per goal. Where you have more than one strategy per goal, please number them in addition to writing in the description of the strategy.
- Action Plan:** Complete one action plan for each strategy of your targeted recruitment plan, detailing the steps that will be taken to address the strategy.
- One blank action plan sheet is attached for each of the three recruitment and retention tasks (retention of currently licensed families; recruitment of additional resource families; and response/retention of new families in the inquiry to licensing phase). If more space is needed, add lines or additional pages as needed in order to document your entire recruitment and retention plan.

Who are the children and youth currently in your care?

1. Using your agency data, describe your current population of children in care.

- How many children/youth total in out-of-home care? _____
- Dividing your data by age group, approximately what number and percent would fall into each category:

	Number	Percent of total children in care
Birth-1	_____	_____
2-5	_____	_____
6-12	_____	_____
13-15	_____	_____
16 and older	_____	_____

2. Next, use the three tables below to further refine the number and percent of children and youth in each age group by race/ethnicity; sibling status; placement type & location; and other needs and considerations.

Child/youth gender and race/ethnicity—use number and percent (as of date: _____)

	Female	Male	Hispanic	Native American	African American	White	Other	2 or more races
Birth-1								
2-5								
6-12								
13-15								
16+								

*Add an additional table to specify tribes

Sibling status—use number and percent (as of date: _____)

	Siblings in care	Sibling group of 2	Sibling group of 3 or more
Birth-1			
2-5			
6-12			
13-15			
16+			

Current placement type for children—use number and percent (as of date: _____)

	Kin/relative	Foster home	Specialized foster home	Shelter/group home	Residential treatment
Birth-1					
2-5					
6-12					
13-15					
16+					

3. Answer a few more questions to consider the trends that may affect the need for resource families now and in the near future.
- Is the use of kinship care placements likely to increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
 - Is kinship care used more commonly for specific groups of children/youth, depending on their age or other characteristics? If so, which groups of children are more likely to need a non-kin placement?
 - Are the overall numbers of children/youth entering out-of-home care increasing or decreasing? Is one age-range entering more frequently than others?
 - Are children being placed near their home communities from which they entered foster care?
 - Are siblings in foster care being placed together? Does your data accurately track whether sibling groups are placed together?
 - How many children are in need of concurrent planning placement?
 - Does the data above for the children/youth in care accurately describe the characteristics of children and youth who are likely to enter over the next year, based on current trends? If not, what additional factors must be taken into account in recruitment planning to meet the needs of the children and youth you can expect to serve over the coming year?

Your current kin, foster, and adoptive parents

1. How many total kin, foster, and adoptive homes and beds are currently available?

	Number		Number
Licensed homes		Currently vacant beds	
Licensed beds		Currently overcapacity homes	
Licensed homes that are for kinship placements only (child-specific placement option)		Licensed beds that are for kinship placements only (child-specific placement option)	
Adopt-only homes (even if licensed for foster care)		Adopt-only beds (even if licensed for foster care)	

NOTE: It is helpful to consider how many of your licensed homes and beds are kinship placements that aren't open to non-relative children, so you have an accurate count of your actual placement capacity for children in non-kinship settings.

2. What are the demographic characteristics of your current pool of resource families? Describe the individual parents (not couples) by race and ethnicity below.

Resource parent race/ethnicity—use number and percent (as of date:)

	Hispanic	Native American	African American	White	Other	2 or more races
Kinship parents						
Foster parents						
Adoptive parents						

3. Use the three charts below to describe the current capacity and placement preferences of your resource family pool:

DATE:

For age ranges:	Total resource homes	Licensed capacity (total # of beds)	Vacancies
Birth-1			
2-5			
6-12			
13-15			
16+			

DATE:

Licensed capacity (# of children they can take)	Total resource homes	Vacancies
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6 or more		

DATE:

Location: Neighborhood/ community (list)	Total foster homes	Total licensed capacity	Vacancies
Special needs*			
Educational			
Emotional/behavioral			
Medical/developmental			
Other (specify)			
Other (specify)			
Other considerations			
Concurrent planning			
Adoption			
LGBTQ children			

*You may wish add categories to identify willingness to accept mild, moderate and severe levels of need.

- How many licensed families have not had a placement in the last six months?
 - › Why haven't they had a placement (e.g., they rejected placements, the agency didn't seek to place a child with them, they aren't open to the ages/needs of children in need of placement)?

- For families that haven't had a placement in the last six months, what additional training, development, or support could you offer to make these families options for placements?
 - › If the families can't be—or aren't interested in being—developed to be open to appropriate placements, what is the plan for discussing closing the families' licenses or referring them to more appropriate agencies

Who are the children and youth currently most in need of homes?

1. Based on the data and observations considered in worksheets 1 and 2, where are the greatest gaps between the number of available resource family homes and the number and characteristics of children needing care? List the top three to five gaps below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

2. Are there children or youth currently residing in group care that could be living in a family-based setting if one was available? If so, add this group to the list above (if not already listed).
3. What are the characteristics of children and youth most likely to be placed on an overcapacity basis because there are few resource families available for them? If not already listed, add this group to the list above.

What is your recruitment target?

1. Considering the gaps and needs identified in worksheet 3, what are the characteristics of resource families that are needed most now and for the near future? Be very specific and clear. Examples might include the following:

- Foster families for teen boys age 13 and older
- Spanish-speaking families for children and youth of any age
- Concurrent-planning families¹
- Foster families for infants under the age of six weeks
- Families for sibling groups of three or more in the Elmhurst neighborhood
- Adoptive families for sibling groups of four and more

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2. Look at your list again, and determine how many of these types/groups of families you will focus on right now for your recruitment plan.

NOTE: If you are developing a shorter-term recruitment plan, consider focusing on only the top two or three types of families that are most needed. If you are developing a more comprehensive recruitment plan, you may want to address all of these types of families. Identify which types of resource families you will address in your recruitment plan by placing a check mark next to each selected type in the table above.

1 Child Welfare Information Gateway describes concurrent planning as: “Concurrent planning is an approach that seeks to eliminate delays in attaining permanent families for children in the foster care system. Concurrent planning involves considering all reasonable options for permanency at the earliest possible point following a child’s entry into foster care and concurrently pursuing those options that will best serve the child’s needs. Typically the primary plan is reunification with the child’s family of origin. In concurrent planning, an alternative permanency goal (e.g., adoption) is pursued at the same time rather than being pursued sequentially after reunification has been ruled out.”

Attracting more families like your current successful resource families

1. Think about some of your current resource families who have characteristics similar to the families you now wish to target for recruitment.
 - What are the characteristics of current families that are good at meeting the needs of the children entering care? How do we define “successful families” to guide our recruitment efforts?

 - How were these current families recruited?

 - What were key factor in helping these families progress through the process from initial inquiry about foster care/adoption to becoming licensed (e.g., timing/frequent availability of training, support while waiting between steps in the process)?

 - What needs to be done to support these families so they continue to work with your agency? (Think about family engagement/customer service and support strategies as well as other factors you know to be relevant.)

2. How can you identify new families by beginning with some of the characteristics of your current successful target-group families?
 - Where do your current successful target-group families live (neighborhoods/communities)?

 - Where do they work (types of job, specific employers, and communities)?

- What are some of their most important values? What motivated them to become resource parents?
- In what social, cultural or community activities or groups do they participate?
- Where do they worship or participate in spiritual activities?
- What schools do their children attend?
- What do they do for fun or recreation?
- Where do they shop?
- Where else do they spend time?
- Where do they get information (TV, internet, newspapers, friends/family, community groups, schools, church)?
- Do they use social media, and if so, what type?

Recruitment outreach

Use the answers to the questions on worksheet 5 to help develop ideas for strategies to reach and engage new families in your targeted group(s). You can work through these questions to develop strategies for each target group of families you need to recruit.

What message(s) will have the most meaning for the target group? What are likely to be the target families' current perceptions of your agency and of foster care or adoption? What misconceptions will you need to dispel? What cultural factors or historical issues should be considered?

Where: Thinking of places where the targeted families can be found, where will you focus your efforts?

Who can best help you reach out to the target group in a way that will be most welcome and credible? Who specifically will you ask to partner in the recruitment effort, for example: current resource parents, agency staff, youth, faith leaders, or community partners?

How: What methods and materials will be most appealing to the target group? What methods or materials might turn them off or even be seen as offensive? What types of print or electronic media will you use? What types of social media? What types of speaking engagements and where? What types of advertising, if any?

When? What timing issues are important to consider in relation to your targeted needs or target group of families? What time of day or day of the week will be best? What seasonal considerations are important? What times or situations are likely to be most convenient for the families you want to reach? How will you arrange for staffing at the times that are most convenient to families?

Other important factors relative to reaching the targeted group of families? For example, would the [National Adoption Recruitment Campaign](#)—including with localized materials—be helpful for reaching any of your targeted groups of families?

How will you support and retain resource families throughout the process?

The questions and data described below will be helpful for informing your recruitment, response, and support efforts, but your child welfare system may not currently have a clear way to collect, track, and analyze this data. Start where you are currently in terms of your capacity to capture this information, while also looking for ways to capture this information in more thorough ways in the future.

How many families have made inquiries in the past six months? _____

How many families have attended an initial orientation or participated in an initial orientation discussion with a worker? _____

Of those, how many families have attended pre-service training?	
Of those, how many were certified/licensed?	

How long, on average, does the process take for families from the point of application to final licensure/approval?

How long, on average, does it take for families to move from one step to the next in the licensing/approval process (listed in table below)?

	Average time
Time from inquiry to initial orientation or discussion?	
Time from orientation to first pre-service training?	
Time to get all paperwork in?	
Time for the study to be completed?	
Time for the worker to write it up and get all needed approvals (e.g., supervisor, review team)?	

NOTE: For this section, you may find it helpful to complete the NRCDR’s assessment tool, [“Is Your Response System Family Friendly” \(131 KB PDF\)](#).

1. What areas for improvement were highlighted by the “Is Your Response System Family Friendly?” questionnaire?
2. Based on your data or estimates for how families move through the process and the areas for improvement that you identified above, what adjustments to your current process will be necessary to achieve maximum retention of current resource families and of the new families that will respond to your recruitment efforts?
3. What is your response system approach to responding to families that inquire about foster care or adoption? Do you have appropriate talking points or other messaging for staff to use with inquiring families?
 - a. As you implement your recruitment efforts, how will you ensure that your response messages align with your recruitment messages (e.g., If using localized National Adoption Recruitment Campaign materials, do you have talking points to respond to families who are interested in adopting rather than being foster parents? If you are using recruitment strategies focused on families for older youth, do you have messaging for staff to use about the number of older youth in need of placement and what families should expect?)
 - b. How will your response system begin the process of developing prospective parents’ understanding about the needs of children in foster care, the impact of trauma on children, the range of permanency goals that children in foster care have, the data on how many children are reunified or adopted?
4. How will you build in a way to ask each newly recruited family how they would like to receive support before and after licensing? How will you track how families move through the process from their initial inquiry through to licensure/approval?¹

NOTE: You may find it helpful to consider concepts from market segmentation. In recruiting resource parents, market segmentation can be used to strategically target recruitment efforts to specific neighborhoods and communities where families who are most likely to foster and adopt children in care are located. This is accomplished by gathering, analyzing, and utilizing data about current successful resource families to inform recruitment strategies. Find out more in our [Overview of Market Segmentation \(144 KB PDF\)](#).

1 One tool to consider using to track families’ progress toward licensure/approval is the [Family Intake Tracking Tool](#) available from AdoptUSKids.

Retention and recruitment goals

Develop a minimum of one* briefly stated and measurable goal for each of these three tasks. Examples of measurable goal statements include:

Retain/support currently licensed families:

- Reduce by 50 percent the number of resource families that resign due to dissatisfaction with the agency between 6/30/16 -12/30/16 as compared to the period 6/30/15-12/30/15.
- By 9/30/16, identify five currently licensed resource families to serve as concurrent planning families.

Recruit additional resource families for targeted areas of need:

- License ten new foster families for teen boys age thirteen and older by 12/30/16.
- License five Spanish-speaking families for children and youth of any age by 12/30/16.

Respond to prospective resource families and retain/support them from inquiry through licensure:

- By 6/30/17, increase the percentage of prospective families from initial inquiry to licensure by 10 percent over our current level.

TASK 1

Retain/support currently licensed resource families

Measurable goal:

TASK 2

Recruit additional resource families for targeted areas of need

Measurable goal:

TASK 3

Respond to prospective resource families and retain/support them from inquiry through licensing

Measurable goal:

*It is possible to establish more than one goal for each task. If you are developing a more comprehensive plan, you will likely need to have several goals for each task. For short-term or other small-scope plans, consider the agency's resources and capacity to address more than one goal at a time effectively.

Strategies

Identify at least one strategy for each goal. The strategy is a brief statement of how you plan to reach your goal. For instance, if your goal is “License ten more families willing to accept placement of youth between the ages of 13–18,” then a strategy might be “Recruit resource parents who have children attending Metropolis High School.” If your goal is “Increase retention of inquiring families by 10 percent compared to last year’s retention rate,” then a strategy might be “Produce a data report each month, accurately tracking the status of all open prospective resource families, from the point of inquiry through licensing.”

You may have more than one strategy per goal, depending on your capacity and the scope of your recruitment plan.

Task 1: Retain/support currently licensed resource families

Measurable goals:	Strategy 1:
	Strategy 2 (optional):

Task 2: Recruit additional resource families for targeted areas of need

Measurable goals:	Strategy 1:
	Strategy 2 (optional):

Task 3: Respond to prospective resource families and retain/support them from inquiry through licensing

Measurable goals:	Strategy 1:
	Strategy 2 (optional):



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