Engaging Community Stakeholders: Strategies for Effective Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Families

Welcome. The webinar will begin in a few minutes.
The call-in number is 800-933-2547
Housekeeping

- 90 minutes long
- Recorded and archived
- How to interact, ask questions, etc.
- Evaluation and certificate of attendance
Overview of Webinar

Webinar Goals

• Provide creative strategies for engaging community partners

• Highlight the importance of community stakeholders in recruitment efforts

• Share lessons learned about involving community partners in diligent recruitment
Presenters

• Kate Lodge, Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services
• Margaret Booker, Denver Department of Human Services
• Karen Franklin, Ramsey County Permanent Families Recruitment Project
Diligent Recruitment

From the Children’s Bureau:

• There is a need to design and implement models of diligent recruitment for kinship, foster, and adoptive families to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in foster care and to meet the diligent recruitment requirements of MEPA.

• Diligent recruitment should not be viewed as a separate system but be part of the overarching process for achieving permanency from the day of entry into care.
Diligent Recruitment Grants

• The Children’s Bureau is funding two rounds of Diligent Recruitment grantees (8 in 2008 and 7 in 2010)

• Information about all of the Diligent Recruitment grantees available at: adoptuskids.org/professionalResourceCenter/diligent-recruitment/
2008 Funding Announcement

• The purpose of this program announcement is to fund, by awarding cooperative agreements, multi-faceted diligent recruitment programs for a range of resource families for children in foster care, including kinship, foster, concurrent and adoptive families.
Diligent Recruitment Grants

• Implement comprehensive, multi-faceted diligent recruitment programs for resource families, including kinship, foster, concurrent and adoptive families for children and youth served by public child welfare agencies as a means of improving permanency outcomes;
Diligent Recruitment Grants

• Integrate the diligent recruitment program with other agency programs including foster care case planning and permanency planning processes to facilitate active concurrent planning activities;

• Evaluate the implementation of the comprehensive diligent recruitment programs to document processes and potential linkages between diligent recruitment and improved outcomes; and
Diligent Recruitment Grants

• Develop identifiable sites that other States/locales seeking to implement improved diligent recruitment methods can look to for guidance, insight, and possible replication.
A public private partnership to address the need for permanency for teens and sibling groups in foster care
A Broad Vision of Change for CCDCFS and Partners

• Recruitment of families for youth in care is everybody’s business

• Family finding + Family engagement = Permanent connections for youth

• Policy supports practice in making permanency as intuitive as safety and well being
Adoption Opportunities Grant
Goals pertaining to CFSR/CPOE

• Increase percent of children who exit for adoption in less than 24 months from 25.1 to match state’s goal of 37.2% or higher

• Reduce the median length of stay from 41.5 months to less than 27.3 months

• Increase number of teens who have permanency and who have been in care for 24 months from the current 21.9% to 29.1% or higher
Objectives

- Implement a multi-faceted approach to finding permanency for teens at risk of aging out, and for sibling groups.

Support to relatives through the process of becoming permanency options for their relatives in foster care

System change accompanies practice demonstration
The collaboration:

• Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services

• Adoption Network Cleveland

• Cuyahoga County Neighborhood Collaboratives,

• Beech Brook

• Case Western Reserve University
Why Community Partners strategies matter in Cuyahoga County

- Rich Settlement House History and resource
- Family to Family context/1994 to present
- Evolution of the *child welfare* specific community collaboration
Assumptions that underlay the community work
Strategies that anchored the recruitment work in the community

- Retreat at Friendly Inn
- Recruitment Management Team
- Out of the box planning with targeted neighborhoods
- Contracts/Family to Family
- Training on Child centered recruitment techniques
Community Activities as a result of the grant

- Dreams come true
- Marsha Fudge forum/kinship care
- Ambassadors/Hair Salon and Faith Based program
- Ambassador Breakfast
- Navigators
- Child centered recruitment strategies to neighborhood
A Community Conversation with Rep. Marcia L. Fudge about Kinship Care and Adoption
February 2010

• 100 people in attendance at JFK High School in targeted area

• Panel speakers with personal experience of the child welfare system

• Media coverage, including a featured youth interviewed for a WKYC “Romona’s Kids” segment.
Engaging the Arts Community in Recruitment:

- Gospel Recording Artist
- Heart Gallery/engages professional photographers
- Art Poster for Ambassador Program
- Karamu Theater
Life Book Workshops in the Community
Ambassador Breakfast
Lessons Learned

- Need strategies for engaging those that are not in the service provider category

- Don’t depend on money to solidify relationships: trust, showing up and walking your talk is what works

- Communication lessons:
  - Straight talk: Clear expectations and Clear feedback
Partners for Forever Families

- Kate Lodge, PFFF project manager: lodgek@odjfs.state.oh.us
- Faye Nicolson, PFFF internal liaison: NICOF@odjfs.state.oh.us
- Lisa Stevens Cutner, Family to Family Administrator: STEVEL06@odjfs.state.oh.us
- Zelma Brown, Adoption Network Cleveland: Zelma.brown@adoptionnetwork.org
Denver’s Village
Wrapping Families with Community Support

Denver Human Services
Margaret Booker – Project Director
Linda Trantow – Project Administrator
Anthony Clayton – Project Coordinator
Fabiola Esposito – Grant Specialist

Butler Institute for Families
University of Denver
Michele Hanna – Evaluator
Project Description

- *Denver’s Village* is a community-based, data driven recruitment model focused on
  - keeping children in their home neighborhoods
  - recruiting resource families who reflect the race and ethnicity of the children in care.

- **Major components:**
  - Recruitment & Retention
  - Agency Cultural Shift
  - Permanency & Concurrent Planning
  - Data Management
Engaging Community Partners

- Whose job is it to recruit?
  - Department Responsibility
  - Community Responsibility
  - Joint Responsibility

- Existing community infrastructure
  - Formerly Family to Family
  - Community Collaborative Partnership Centers (CCPCs)
Strategies

- Community Based Resource Teams (CBRTs)
  - CCPC site coordinators
  - Community Outreach Workers
  - Other community members
  - Denver DHS staff
Engaging ethnic communities
- African American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Native American

Engaging community of resource families

Engaging youth

Engaging DHS management & staff…
Core Value Development

**STRONG RESOURCE FAMILIES**

Resource families will receive the support and training they need to be an effective partner in working with families

- Resource families will be treated as professionals with respect, dignity, and cultural competence
- Resource families have the right to information known to DHS that directly affects the care of the children we placed in their homes
- Resource families will be included as active member of intervention teams
- Resource families will receive consistent support and services
- Service integration with other DHS divisions will provide support to resource families
- Resource families will be respected for their individualized differences and strengths, including non-traditional cultural differences
- Resource families have a right to request their personal information will remain confidential
Engagement At Work

- **Resource Family Customer Service Leadership Team**
  - To Create and Implement a Department-wide Customer Service Model
  - Includes the Participation of Resource Families, Youth, and Staff
  - T/TA from the NRCRRFAP

- **African-American Recruitment**
  - The Development and Implementation of Targeted Recruitment Plans
  - Utilization of Resource Families and Leaders from within the African-American Community
  - T/TA from the NRCRRFAP

- **Kinship DREAM Team**
  - To Create and Establish Goals to Ensure a more Productive Relationship and Work Plan between DDHS and Kinship Providers
  - “Nothing About Us Without Us”
Lessons Learned

- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- It’s okay to start over
- Transparency
  - Data
  - Admit shortcomings
- Inclusiveness
- Heterogeneous groups
- Follow-through is extremely important
- Be Responsive
- Ask, but more importantly listen
- Look at capacity before making commitments
- Think outside the box
- Relax, let go, release
  - Power
  - Control
Contact Information

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Ramsey County
Community Human Services

“Permanent Families Recruitment Project”
The **Permanent Families Recruitment Project** will develop, implement and evaluate a **multifaceted** diligent recruitment plan, to increase the number of foster and adoptive homes, thereby increasing the number of children reaching permanency through adoption.
A Collaborative Initiative Between...

- Ramsey County Community Human Services
- Children’s Bureau
- African American community
- Hispanic/Latino community
- Business community
Children of color are overrepresented in Ramsey County child welfare population.

We see this at different points in the system from first point of entry to having parental rights terminated.

African-American children make up 16.9 percent of Ramsey County’s children. 55% of Ramsey County waiting children are African-American.
Community Partnership

Partnership:

Community Partnership is a committed relationship to share & exchange knowledge, teach each other how to solve problems, share intellectual authority, work as a team and together, and close the door on cultural disrespect, arrogance, and human behavior.
WHO ARE THE CULTURAL INFORMANTS?

- Elders of the community
- Faith Based Community
- African-American business owners
- African-American politicians
- African-American leaders in the community
Laying the Groundwork for Partnership

Initial relationship and building activities within the African-American community over a period of time by spreading the word through mass media and individual presentations.

Implementation by attending community meetings and familiarizing ourselves with the various organizations and key community leaders/business organizations.

Shared information and distributed recruitment materials.

Enlisted current & former foster or adoptive parents to partner and assist us in recruitment efforts.
Utilized the internet, church secretaries, and personal relationships to complete spreadsheet of community and business organizations

Conduct surveys at church events

In order to identify entities, conducted web searches and read local African-American newspapers for reference point

Made individual phone calls to connect with business organizations
Youth Advisory Group (YAG)- We have found that utilizing the YAG youth in engaging the African-American community and community leaders on a monthly basis has significantly impacted the implementation of our recruitment strategies, thereby creating more opportunities for the YAG youth to share their experiences and concerns in the community.

Foster & Adoptive Parents--Foster & adoptive parents have been very receptive in co-hosting adoption parties in their homes. The parents not only invited their family and friends to attend, but also provided the refreshments, and some have begun to write blogs pertaining to adoption and are assisting with our recruitment efforts by referring other families. We plan to continue utilizing this positive momentum.
Engaging Our Youth--Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

YAG members with St. Paul City Councilman Melvin Carter III

YAG members with Jackie Turner of St. Paul Public Schools, Executive Director of Community Engagement

YAG members with Tyrone Terrell, President, African-American Leadership Council
Local pastors allowed us to make presentations to congregations, have recruitment materials located in their resource room.

Host events in their fellowship hall, they provided volunteers to assist us with the details of the event.

Allowed us to speak at different community events they were hosting.

We utilized the African American newspapers to allow us to write newspaper articles/editorials for free.
Who holds the knowledge: Elders vs. professionals.

You need the blessings/permission of the community elders before engaging in conversations.

Community engagement takes time and is hard work.

Partnering should be our goal. Partnering with the community rather than partnership.

You can only be competent in your own culture.

In order for professionals to be effective in community partnerships, we must be willing to undertake an “apprenticeship” in our own traditional culture.

As an institution, we are trained to over step our boundaries/authority.

Consistent attendance at local meetings assures you access to leaders.

We are in this partnership for the long haul, we are not in partnership just to get something from the community.

We have to adopt the language of the community.
It has been challenging to focus on building and sustaining partnerships with the local businesses and sororities/fraternities.

Instead, much time and effort has been spent on engaging and developing partnerships with the African-American community and working with our Youth Advisory Group. Consequently, we have not been able to make the kind of progress planned with the local businesses and sororities.

Red Tape within system; bureaucratic hurdles.
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

• We will have an increase in the number of culturally specific foster/adoptive homes.
• There will be a heightened level of awareness in the community regarding Ramsey County’s waiting children.
• We will take steps to sustain these partnerships over time.
For more information contact

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or

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Questions and Answers
Learn More About Diligent Recruitment

adoptuskids.org/professionalResourceCenter/diligent-recruitment/
Training and Technical Assistance

National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUSKids

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Thank you for attending!

Please complete the evaluation form on the next screen.