



## TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE E-NOTES AUGUST, 2009

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### **A NOTE FROM SHARRI**

Dear Readers,

*I've invited a "guest columnist" to take my spot this month. Read on for some important information from our Assistant Director, Tamika Williams:*

### **RECRUITMENT WORKS/RETENTION MATTERS**

*Good Customer Service: What Public Welfare Workers Should Know About International Adoptions* is a recent article in the *Roundtable* newsletter published by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption. The author, Victor Groza, points out that "Currently, many families hold the perception that adoption from a third-world country is more predictable and easier than adopting from the public child welfare system." He proposes that greater understanding of international adoption by public child welfare workers would address the loss of a pool of families for waiting American children and would also increase awareness of the post-adoption needs of international adoptive families.

The article identifies three specific steps which agencies can take to increase adoption from the public system by families that might otherwise have pursued international adoption:

- | Friendly and responsive customer service.
- | Predictability about the adoption process.
- | Support during the waiting period from home study to placement.

Dr. Groza notes that prospective parents can be discouraged by a long wait until a child can be placed. He advises minimizing waiting times and emphasizing engagement of families while they wait by providing information about the process, linking them with other families, and making them aware of local adoption events and websites such as AdoptUsKids.org. Finally, readers are reminded that attention to customer service should extend into the post-adoption period.

More detailed discussion and recommendations can be found in the article, which is [available here](#).

### **INTERJURISDICTIONAL PLACEMENT SERVICES**

The good news keeps coming! As of this date, more than 11,000 of the youth who have been photolisted on the AdoptUsKids website have been placed with adoptive families. Moreover, most of these youth were older! We recognize that this success was made possible through the efforts of public and private child welfare agency staff and adoption exchanges. Yet this occasion provides an opportunity to highlight that there are still more children and youth who could benefit from photolisting; however, they are not listed on the website. Reasons for not registering youth are plentiful, with a primary cited reason being the other priority areas that compete for staff time. Therefore, AdoptUsKids has sought ways to assist jurisdictions in streamlining the registration process in hopes of ultimately registering more youth and thus, permanent family connections.

In comes....**PROJECT CONNECT!** Project Connect is designed to increase child registrations on AdoptUsKids by providing a tool to streamline the transfer of specific data from a State's SACWIS database to the photolisting website. Project Connect is not intended to replace a State's current photolisting process. Rather it will enhance the process so that more children can be registered, more quickly.

Please contact me at [Tamika@adoptex.org](mailto:Tamika@adoptex.org) if you would like to learn more about Project Connect. We can provide assistance in assessing the staff planning and training needs associated with a State's readiness

Twenty-four enthusiastic adoption and foster care professionals and resource parents gathered in Providence, Rhode Island on June 5th to focus attention on improving practices related to interstate placements. Eager to build knowledge and skills related to interjurisdictional (IJ) practice, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families requested technical assistance in developing training curriculum focusing on the legal, regulatory, and clinical aspects of making and supporting IJ placements. As a result, T/TA consultant Jackie Pray has been partnering with the State to develop "Adoption and Foster Care Across State Lines" which will be incorporated as an elective course in Rhode Island's Adoption/Foster Care Certificate Program. In addition, this T/TA experience has provided impetus for the NRCRRFAP at AdoptUsKids to develop curricula for use by other states, territories, and tribes.

Improving practices related to IJ placements remains one of the NRC's priority areas. Watch for more information about the availability of the IJ curriculum.

## TIPS AND TOOLS

A curriculum to train supervisors to assist workers in identifying and exploring relatives has been developed by the University of Southern Maine. The *Supervising for Comprehensive Relative Identification and Exploration Training Curriculum* was developed "to increase the State's practice in identifying and exploring relatives for each and every child involved with child welfare services so that every child has lifetime family connections even in situations where children cannot live with family members." It recognizes the important role of supervisors as the link between policy and direct practice.

The half-day workshop includes sections on Creating a Sense of Importance for Relative Identification and Exploration: What it means to the Child; Introduction to Decisive Factors that Indicate High Quality Identification and Exploration; Application of the Decisive Factors; and Supervisory Practice Expectations.

You can learn more about the curriculum at [this link](#).

## T/TA HIGHLIGHTS

The NRCRRFAP at AdoptUsKids recently provided support to the State of Oklahoma in its efforts to strengthen its IVB State Recruitment Plan and work to integrate its practice model, which involves the inclusion of Bridge (Resource) Parents. In addition, as

for implementation. I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Tamika Williams

NRC for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUsKids



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## CONTACT US

For more information about AdoptUsKids Training and Technical Assistance Services, contact Tamika Williams at (303) 726-0198 or email [Tamika@adoptex.org](mailto:Tamika@adoptex.org).

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a Diligent Recruitment grantee, the State was seeking ways to connect the elements of its multi-faceted approach to recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents.

The TA team was on site for three days and was represented by Judy and John McKenzie, Michelle Hanna, and Tamika Williams. During the first day, the consultant team laid the framing groundwork as 22 State administrators participated in developing a vision and critical issues for the State. The second day included a meeting with 85 stakeholders, including area specialists, permanency social workers, One Church One Child, private agency partners, tribal members and bridge families. The participants identified their vision, priorities and critical areas for the State to include in development of a comprehensive and evolving engagement plan. Building from the first two days, a working plan was initiated based on priorities and goals and strategies were constructed. Oklahoma will further develop action steps, and the NRCRRFAP will return for follow up on developing next step items.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION NETWORK

Adoptment™ is a unique adoption-focused mentoring program founded by April Dinwoodie of Changing the World One Child at A Time (CT WOCAT) in New York City. Adoptment mentors are adults who have been adopted or spent time in foster care. They are matched with young people who have also been adopted or are waiting for adoption in the foster care system. While the program is similar in structure and activities to traditional mentoring programs, it is specifically designed to allow an opportunity for the youth to share adoption related feelings and issues with an adult who "truly understands". The first group began in New York City in 2004 and several additional groups have now been established, including other locations in the state. Additional information can be obtained on the [CT WOCAT website](#) or by contacting April Dinwoodie at [April@ctwocat.org](mailto:April@ctwocat.org).

Hillside Children's Center in Syracuse, New York operates an Adoptment™ chapter which meets weekly as a group so that both the children and adults can form a bond through play and discussion. Once a mentor has a relationship with a mentee, individual outings occur. Hillside provides training and support for the mentors. The goal of the program is to show teens that successful adults have lived through what they are now experiencing and to give them a safe, secure person with whom they can discuss their concerns. To learn about Hillside's program, contact Mike Finn at (585) 350-2502 or [mfinn@hillside.com](mailto:mfinn@hillside.com).

Please send us your stories and ideas that have shown results in recruitment, retention and interjurisdictional placements. Email

your offerings to sharri@adoptex.org.

## **FYI**

The Safe Start Center has developed several brief publications addressing the symptoms and effects on children of exposure to violence as well as practical strategies caregivers can use to support healing. The publications are directed to biological, adoptive and foster parents and are available in English and Spanish. *Healing the Invisible Wounds: Children's Exposure to Violence-A Guide for Families* and other publications can be found at [this link](#).