

# Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

2015-2019

Section 422(b)(7) of the Social Security Act requires that the state provide for the diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are sought.

To plan for years 2015-2019 Missouri took a collaborative approach of engaging private and public partners in considering the questions posed in the Diligent Recruitment Navigator provided by the Children's Bureau as developed by the NRC for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids. Prior to submission of this document, meetings were held with two of the groups doing this work. Meetings will continue with these partners as outlined throughout this plan to develop a robust roadmap for recruitment of resources in Missouri.

## **Partners Enlisted in Collaborative Efforts to Strategize:**

Meetings were held with the following three groups to gather input regarding the questions posed in the Navigator as well as to elicit suggestions on the existing groups to reach out to as the plan is further developed.

- Foster Care Case Management Program Managers state meeting
- Recruitment, Training and Support Workgroup in St. Louis
- Statewide ARTS (Adoption Recruitment Training and Support) Team,

Meetings are scheduled or are being scheduled with the following groups throughout the remainder of 2014 and 2015 to further develop the plan:

- Adoption Resource Centers in Kansas City, St. Louis, Jefferson City and Springfield
- Resource Team of Southwest Missouri
- Cornerstones of Care Recruitment and Retention Privatization Contractor in Kansas City and the Northwest Region along with the subcontractors Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association and Missouri Baptist Children's Home
- Faith Partners including:
  - Global Orphan Project in the Kansas City metro area
  - Cherish Kids in Springfield and the Southwest Missouri area
  - Fostering Faithful Families in St. Louis region
    - Each of these Faith Based Partners have demonstrated themselves to be leaders in Faith Based Recruitment, Training and Support of Foster and Adoptive Families and work closely with the Children's Division in these efforts.

Meetings are being held with each of these groups to provide information regarding the five year plan development and review the Diligent Recruitment Navigator. Each of these groups has been asked to

nominate a delegate to serve on a statewide Diligent Recruitment team ongoing 2015-2019 to review progress and make adjustments to the plan.

In addition to the delegates the standing members of the statewide Diligent Recruitment team will be:

- Representatives of the Missouri Indian Centers
- Staff from the Adoption Exchange
- Communications Director from the Department of Social Services
- Foster Care and Adoption Manager
- Quality Assurance/COA Manager and a QA/QI Field Staff representative
- Quality Improvement Manager
- Privatization contract representative

Private case management contract representative

The intent of involving all these partners is to ensure all parts of the community are reached in recruitment of foster and adoptive resources. Each of these members know their community and its inherent activities which would be excellent venues for recruitment. These specific communities, neighborhoods and populations can be tapped according to the very specific information provided by the QA staff as discussed in the following section. Engagement of the community is also a strategy for dealing with linguistic barriers by allowing alliances to form within the community to assist with translation. When these barriers cannot be addressed with community resources, the state has available to them a translation contract. Additionally, involving all members of the community allows staff to become familiar with diverse communities and training can occur by experience. Trainings are also provided by the Children's Division regarding various communities. Missouri staff had the opportunity to take part in various trainings at the national NACAC conference where information and strategies were provided for working with all communities to benefit the child welfare population.

## **Plan Elements:**

### **Data Gathering:**

Currently resource staff are provided with region specific data through regional QA staff. This data includes age, race, gender, ethnicity, placement type and goal for children for whom placement is being sought. Information is also provided on the number of resources available in each region including license/approval types, capacity and length of licensure period. This data is also provided to the Faith Based Partners and the privatized Recruitment and Retention contractor.

Missouri's population in need of placement for adoption includes youth 9 and over, sibling groups and children of African-American heritage.

In initial meetings, the following requests were made for information which would prove helpful in recruitment efforts:

### **Child/Youth Data:**

- Sibling information on children for whom we are seeking placement
- Richer data on the medical and emotional needs of children in care including:
  - Percent of sibling groups requiring placement
  - Percent of sibling groups who are not placed in the same home
- Zip Code information for the community from which children were removed.

### **Resource Home Data:**

- Demographic data on successful foster and adoptive parents
- Data on placements which disrupt in first 30 days and reported reason for disruption
- Information on referral source for resource parents to establish the typical path to becoming a resource parent.
- Use of exit survey information from foster parents to determine the reasons resource parents resign.

Throughout the remainder of 2014 and 2015, input will be received from the remaining groups and data reports will be refined to meet the needs of staff recruiting foster and adoptive families and seeking placements for youth awaiting adoption. During 2015-2019 this data will be put into practice and assessed for usability and value in recruitment, refining as necessary.

### **Methods for Information Dissemination and Recruitment:**

The following projects are in process for 2015 to allow for a variety of diverse methods to ensure information is being provided throughout all communities about being foster or adoptive parents and the children available for adoption and seeking temporary placements through foster care.

- Recruitment video production in partnership with Cornerstones of Care
  - Expressing the inspiring voices of successful foster and adoptive parents who have experienced both the rewards and challenges of providing a home for children from foster care temporarily or permanently.
  - Voices of children who lived in foster homes and went on to be adopted, re-unified or exited foster care without a permanency outcome.
- Localization of AdoptUSKids messages for Missouri
- Heart Gallery recruitment project 2014-2015 which opened in Kansas City in May 2014
  - The Gallery continues to be both a traveling gallery and an electronically produced gallery available on the internet
- Portraits of Grace recruitment project and Hope for Kids event
- Billboard in tourist area in Hannibal, MO
- Baseball Cards to be used in church bulletins in the Kansas City, MO metro area
- Bi-State Wait No More Event with Kansas Social and Rehabilitative Services being brought to Kansas City by the Global Orphan Project

- Shared online training calendar with contact information for each available agency to ensure all families have access to each agency and making families aware there is no fee associated with attending an informational meeting or proceeding with the process of becoming a resource parent.
- Increased social media presence for recruitment and sharing of information

For the remainder of 2014 and 2015 the Children’s Division will be exploring with the remaining groups additional initiatives to be considered and added to the plan. The following activities will be refined during this period.

- Increased Partnership with the Adoption Exchange to include video as well as still photo presentation in the Heart Gallery
- Print materials consistent with the message in the video
- Maximization of use of the AdoptUSKids website and services for recruitment and information dissemination as well as data/report collection.
- Exploration of use of successful, inspiring foster and adoptive parents to recruit other resource providers by becoming identified recruiters and hosting recruitment activities such as in their church, community organizations or home.
- Exploration of enlistment of members of diverse cultural and racial communities who can provide information to resource staff about engaging and respecting these communities in an effort to recruit families and provide families for children from these populations.
  - Enlist these individuals to assist with existing linguistic barriers searching for individuals with known relationships to families recruited to serve as translators.
- Exploration of flexibility in training using a mix of online, in person, self study training to meet the needs of families.

Ongoing activities include use of the Heart Gallery, AdoptUSKids and ensuring all children available for adoption with no identified resource are featured on the site. Other activities include use of the Adoption Exchange website, Facebook promotion and e-mail blasts through our Adoption Resource Centers and support groups, continuation of the Linking Hearts Community Event and use of recruitment through baseball cards created from the Heart Gallery photo and profile.

**Timely search for Prospective Adoptive Parents:**

Missouri has been involved with a number of initiatives to ensure timely search for prospective adoptive parents including the Heart Gallery, use of adoption exchanges and use of AdoptUSKids to ensure placement of children in appropriate households. Additionally, CD has been focusing heavily for the last five 5 years as a Diligent Recruitment grantee on timely search for prospective parents through Extreme Recruitment(ER) in the St. Louis Region as well as imbedding the concepts and philosophies of family finding into CD practice statewide. Extreme Recruitment has been spread to the Kansas City Region and in 2015 ER will be spread to the central and southwest regions through the Adoption Resource Centers.

Extreme Recruitment is a 12-20 week intervention to identify resource homes for children who wait for a permanent placement through adoption. The intervention focuses on finding relatives or kin as placement resources and providing supports to those identified to result in stable placements. Extreme Recruitment has led to the inception of 30 Days to Family which supports identifying the best placement with relatives or kin during the first 30 Days of a child/ren's entry into alternative care. ER, not surprisingly, proved the longer children are in foster care identification/engagement of relatives and kin becomes more difficult and re-inforced the need to identify these resources as soon as possible in a case. Missouri CD in cooperation with the Diligent Recruitment team will continue 2015-2019 to work to infuse the principles of 30 Days to Family into CD practice of family engagement and timely search and placement.

In January 2014 the Northwest Region of Missouri as well as Jackson Co. came under the purview of a contract for Privatization of Recruitment Licensing and Retention of Resource Homes. This pilot project was awarded to Cornerstones of Care (COC) and they are responsible for the recruitment and training of resource homes in the counties of the Northwest Region and Jackson Co. Approximately 850 cases were transferred to COC and an additional 300+ applications have been received since the contract's effective date. COC and their two subcontractors are managing these cases completing activities of licensure and re-licensure as well as support services to retain foster and adoptive parents. Additionally, the contractor is responsible for identifying placements for children from their pool of resources for placement of children managed by the Children's Division. The contractor will be fully involved with the Diligent Recruitment Plan ongoing.

The information gleaned from the individual meetings with partners enlisted in the collaborative efforts to strategize for Diligent Recruitment planning as well as the information learned in the Privatization Pilot and through the existing initiatives of Extreme Recruitment and 30 Days to Family will be funneled to the statewide Diligent Recruitment Team throughout 2015 to develop a comprehensive plan for recruitment throughout Missouri.

Missouri charges no fees for the home assessment and training of applicants to provide foster or adoptive care to children in the care and custody of the Children's Division.

To ensure all families have access to agencies who license/approve foster and adoptive families the Children's Division has historically and as indicated by the developing plan will increase coordination with private case management contractors to assure exposure to all options for licensing/approval. The Children's Division also provides to interested applicants a list of child placing agencies with contact information.