

Diligent Recruitment Plan

Missouri 2022 APSR - Attachment B

Section 422(b)(7) of the Social Security Act requires that the state provide for the diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are sought. There are no prohibitive policies or laws in Missouri that limit the state's ability to recruit foster and adoptive parents who reflect the diversity of children in Children's Division's custody. In Missouri, targeted recruitment strategies occur statewide, initiated by the local office based on the needs of each child as well as general recruitment efforts throughout the state.

To plan for years 2020-2024, Missouri will continue to take a collaborative approach of engaging private and public partners. Missouri will partner with the following groups to illicit input on the most effective collaboration for recruitment planning:

- Family Resource Centers in Kansas City, St. Louis, Central Missouri, and Springfield
- Recruitment and Retention Units (RRU) of Southeast and Southwest Missouri
- Cornerstones of Care Recruitment and Retention Privatization Contractor in Kansas City and the Northwest Region
- Raise the Future, formally The Adoption Exchange, of Missouri
- AdoptUSKids
- Recruitment and Retention Workgroup
- CFSR Advisory Committee
- Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids
- Native American partners workgroup
- Faith Based partners throughout Missouri

Statewide meetings for the recruitment committee in 2020-2024 will include the representatives that have been identified by the groups. In addition to the representatives identified, the team is comprised of standing members including:

- Staff from the Raise the Future of Missouri
- Communications Director from the Department of Social Services
- Foster Care/Adoption Manager
- Quality Assurance System representative
- Privatization contract representative
- Private case management contract representative

2020-2024 report out and planning will occur as part of the ARTS (Adoption Recruitment Training and Supports) Team agenda. This is a quarterly central meeting attended by partners sharing this common focus. This meeting is attended by both private and public partners as

well as contractors such as the Raise the Future and representatives from the Family Resource Centers and Recruitment and Retention Contractor.

Data Gathering:

The following data was compiled to enhance recruitment efforts for the 2020-2024 planning years. In addition to these data points Quality Assurance staff provides local reports upon request such as zip code information or school district codes and specific point in time demographic information to tailor information to specific recruitment activities and the groups in attendance.

Statewide Resource Family Data 2/28/21

Foster and Adoptive Homes

	Total Homes		Homes with Availability	
	Foster Homes	Adoptive Homes	Foster Homes	Adoptive Homes
Kansas City	334	1,119	176	365
Northeast	615	1,024	388	303
Northwest	335	827	198	270
Southeast	539	1,419	264	236
Southwest	867	1,878	561	631
St Louis	503	1,179	292	353
Total	3,193	7,446	1,879	2,158

Foster Parent Race by Region – total homes

	White	Black/African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi-Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	344	121	3	5	0	7	53
Northeast	909	58	0	1	1	4	69
Northwest	516	20	3	1	0	6	41
Southeast	818	42	0	2	1	3	49
Southwest	1,334	23	4	3	2	6	109
St Louis	384	299	0	3	1	4	21
Total	4,305	563	10	15	5	30	342

Foster Parent Race by Region - of homes with availability

	White	Black/African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi-Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	198	54	2	4	0	4	22
Northeast	565	40	0	1	1	2	41
Northwest	309	14	2	0	0	4	19
Southeast	385	24	0	1	1	1	26
Southwest	860	10	0	2	2	3	59
St Louis	205	191	0	3	0	1	8
Total	2,522	333	4	11	4	15	175

Adoptive Parent Race by Region – total homes

	White	Black/African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi-Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	1,023	437	6	8	2	10	202
Northeast	1,457	86	0	2	0	5	182
Northwest	1,212	55	3	2	4	13	137
Southeast	2,182	79	2	1	1	6	152
Southwest	2,807	33	6	3	2	16	327
St Louis	779	757	3	1	2	3	107
Total	9,460	1,447	20	17	11	53	1,107

Adoptive Parent Race by Region - of homes with availability

	White	Black/African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi-Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	354	134	4	3	1	1	60
Northeast	458	16	0	0	0	1	51
Northwest	414	16	2	2	0	6	33
Southeast	366	21	0	1	0	0	19
Southwest	953	5	2	2	0	5	97
St Louis	219	238	3	0	0	0	22
Total	2,764	430	11	8	1	13	282

Note: When homes are dually licensed, counts of each type of resource home are unduplicated.

Statewide Alternative Care Population Data:

Total Alternative Care Population as of 2/28/21

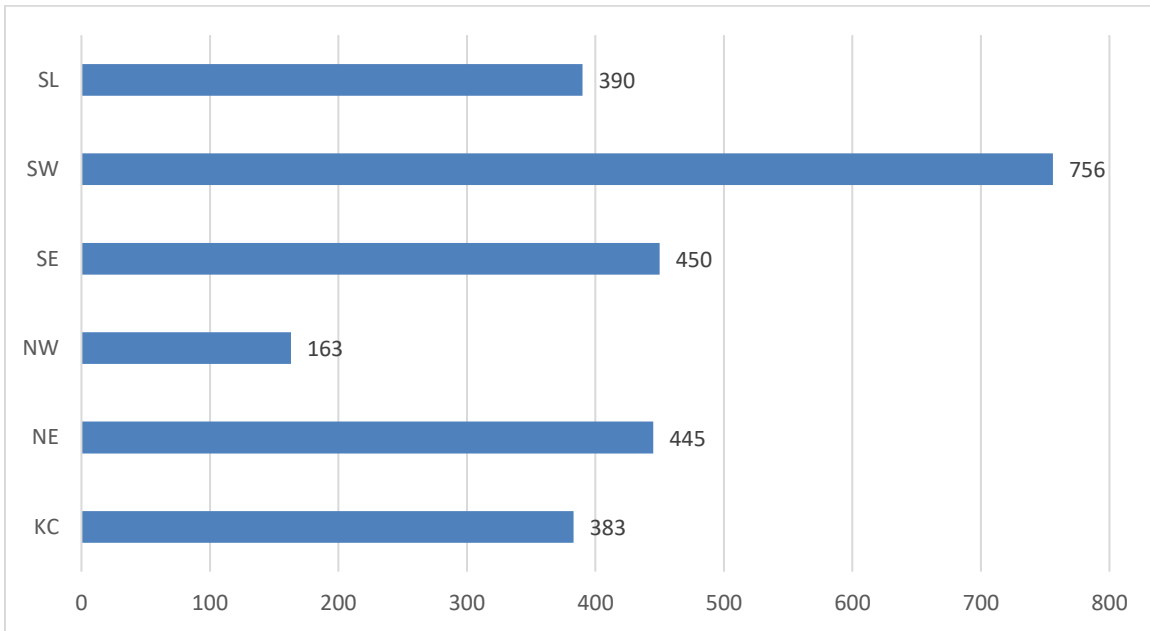
<u>Gender</u>		
Males	7,282	52.41%
Females	6,613	47.59%
<u>Race</u>		
White	9,845	70.85%
African American	2,649	19.06%
Amer. Indian/AK Native	66	<1.0%
Asian	33	<1.0%
Native HI/Pac. Islander	9	<1.0%
Multiracial	312	2.25%
Unable to Determine	981	7.06%
<u>Age</u>		
0-2	3,046	21.92%
3-5	2,233	16.07%
6-9	2,344	16.87%
10-12	1,772	12.75%
13-16	3,005	21.63%
17+	1,495	10.76%

Missouri does not have any federally recognized Indian tribes, which is reflected in the data above. Native children are placed with relatives who share their heritage whenever possible, with a member of their identified Tribe, or a Native American (NA) foster home. In some cases, children are placed out of state with relatives. Children's Division recognizes the need to develop families within the tribal community whether these families are within Missouri or are in adjoining states where culture may be preserved. A workgroup has been formed for 2020-2024 to collaborate ideas for the most effective targeted recruitment strategies to increase Native American foster and adoptive families. This workgroup is comprised of current Native American foster parents, NA partners from community Indian Centers, NA staff, and staff who have an interest in the NA community. Much work is being done to accurately capture the population of Native children, to assure culture is being preserved and resources are available to place children. During 2020 Missouri CD created Legal Aspects: Understanding and Applying ICWA training for all staff to complete. This training is a comprehensive and interactive training exploring ICWA law and regulations and their application. It amplifies the need to keep children within their NA communities to foster growth.

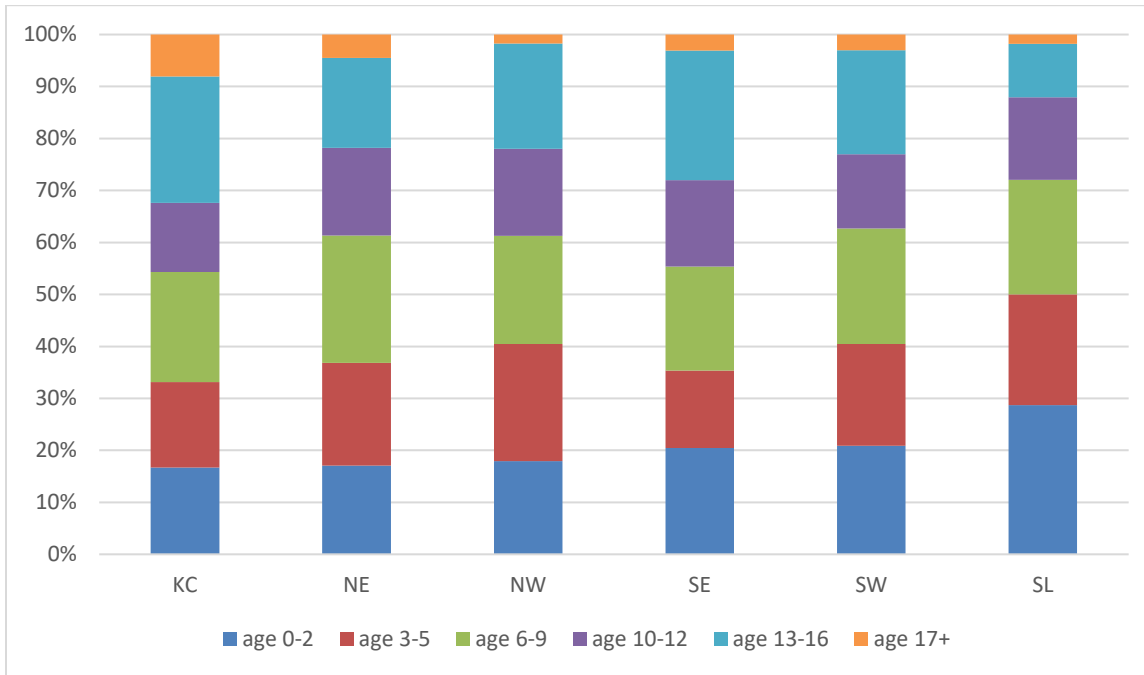
During 2022 and continuing through 2024, Missouri will continue to work to build upon the relationships with tribes in adjoining states which represent the population of Native Americans

in Missouri and continue to build relationships with Native American partners to join in delivering comprehensive services to Native American families. (See Consultation and Coordination between Tribes and States section).

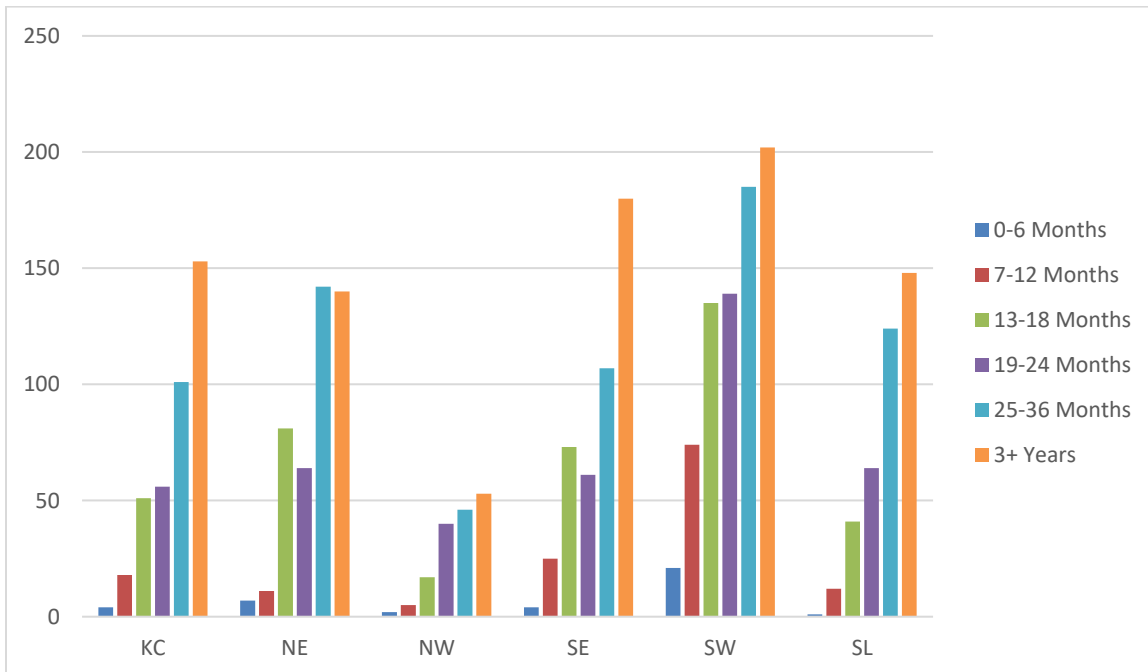
**Number of Children in Children’s Division Custody with Goal of Adoption
As of 2/28/21 (2,587 Statewide)**



Age of Children with Goal of Adoption as of 2/28/21 (2,587 Statewide)



**Length of Stay for Children with Goal of Adoption
As of 2/28/21 (2,587 Statewide)**

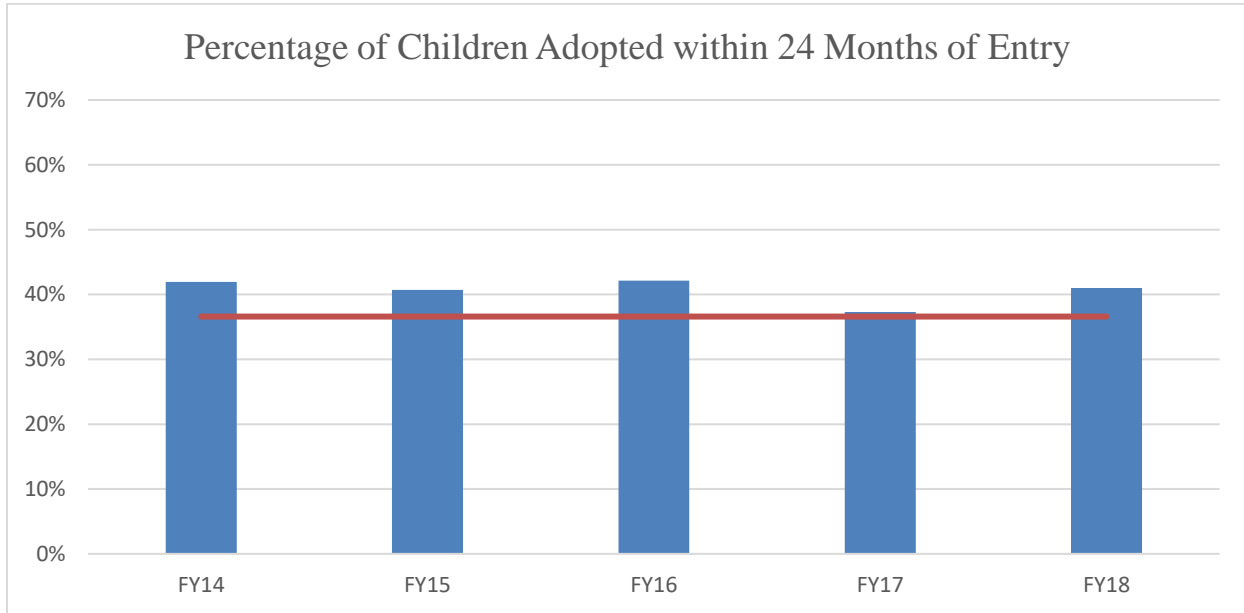


Placement Types of Children Awaiting Adoption by Region as of 2/28/21

	Adoptive Home	Foster Home	Relative Home	Residential Facility	Other	Total
KC	3	191	133	23	33	383
NE	7	228	165	32	13	445
NW	0	62	85	15	1	163
SE	2	178	177	66	27	450
SW	16	350	319	53	18	756
SL	7	199	144	31	9	390
TOTAL	35	1,208	1,023	220	101	2,587

Of the children available for adoption who are not currently in an adoptive home, 34.2% of the children are considered in a pre-adoptive home with their foster parent, relative or kinship provider. This is a decrease from 52% in last year’s report.

As outlined in the Diligent Recruitment plan, the Children’s Division has devised several strategies aimed at continuing to meet the statewide goal of 32 percent for all children who exited care to a finalized adoption do so within 24 months of entry.



In addition to the items outlined for recruitment, local circuit meetings continue to be held with Juvenile courts to address procedures for filing of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petitions. Access to legal representation has also been improved for CD staff through a joint memorandum and protocol with the Division of Legal Services. As a result of efforts to recruit

resources to meet the needs of the children who await adoptions and the efforts to assure TPR's are completed appropriately and timely, the finalized adoptions for SFY 2020 decreased 9.57% from the previous fiscal year. It can be said that the COVID-19 pandemic did have an impact on finalizations of adoptions in 2020 due to court hearings being canceled or delayed.

	Number of Finalized Adoptions
SFY 14	1,250
SFY 15	1,315
SFY 16	1,524
SFY17	1,588
SFY18	1,740
SFY 19	1,826
SFY 20	1,740

Ongoing Recruitment Efforts:

The Division has refined and expanded the social media presence utilizing the DSS Facebook, DSS Twitter, the Social Services homepage. Children's profiles are being posted on the DSS Facebook once a week throughout the year as well as a few times a month on the DSS Twitter account. Many community partners are reposting these children on their agency and personal Facebook pages and twitter feeds. The MO Heart Gallery website is being used more consistently to promote foster care, adoption and events specific to recruitment and support of resource parents. The MO Heart Gallery has gone from less than 50 children on the Website to over 150 children. Video segments/digital stories continue to be added to a number of profiles featured on the Gallery. Raise the Future and AdoptUSKids websites are featuring the same children and increasing their viewing audience. The multifaceted approach includes:

- Person to person contacts by current foster/adoptive parents with potential foster/adoptive parents which has proven to be the single best method for recruitment. Social media features make information sharing seamless for resource parents to share with their social groups/contacts;
- Recruitment of distinct individuals based on profession or prior involvement with a child as mandated by a child's special need;
- Monthly Adoption Heart Gallery Highlight presentations through WebEx for staff to present children to other staff and potential families;
- Community informational meetings and events to educate about foster care and adoption (shopping malls, fairs, libraries, bookstores) featuring the Missouri Heart Gallery and recruitment materials;

- Adoption Information On-Line Webinars to educate about Missouri foster care and adoption providing a basic overview of adoption in the state of Missouri;
- The news media (newspapers, radio station, television station, cable network station, special interest bulletins), including expanding Wednesday’s child features into the Springfield television market;
- Displaying flyers, pamphlets, posters, handouts and electronic web notices and social media posts;
- Coordination with faith-based partners in communities throughout the state to feature photos and profiles of children currently waiting for adoption and informing churches of the need within their community for foster and adoptive families by providing zip code specific information to the faith-based partners for recruitment;
- Coordination with faith-based partners also has resulted in increased support of relative and non-relative resource families and through this support has increased interest in providing care as a foster parent;
- Distribution of informational packets and foster parent information in Heart Gallery promotion materials at recruitment and community events;
- Utilizing AdoptUSKids site and Raise the Future websites where Missouri’s waiting children are featured in addition to the MO Heart Gallery site;
- Celebrating National Foster Care month (May) and National Adoption month (November) and including media campaigns and print materials for recruitment;
- Linking Hearts Event in Rolla MO which is a collaborative effort between the Phelps County Community Partnership and the Panhellenic Society at Missouri S and T University. This is an effort to have families interact with available children and receive information about foster care and adoption;
- National Recruitment Saturday Celebration in St. Louis County and Jackson County; and
- Light the Night Adoption Awareness Activity.

Policy and practice changes that were incorporated in FY 2020 included:

- Addition of the Resource Parent Inquiry Questionnaire in FACES as a tool for staff to capture inquiries.
- Revisions to the Relative Resource Home Non-Safety Licensing Standard Waiver Process in response to observed safety concerns.
- New definition of identifying information, lineal descendant, and non-identifying information. (Revised Missouri Statute 453.121)
 - “Identifying information” is now defined as individually identifying information for or about a unique individual, including information likely to disclose the contact information, location, or identity of such individual.
 - “Lineal descendant” is now defined in Section 472.010 RSMo.

- “Non-identifying information” is now defined as information that is not identifying information.
- Addition of legislation to release all information to an adult adoptee who registers with the adoption information registry or petitions the court if the adult adoptee’s biological parent had their parental rights terminated through a nonconsensual or involuntary termination of parental rights proceeding.
- Introduction of the Missouri Kinship Navigator Program that connects formal and informal relative caregivers to quality information, outreach activities and support services across Missouri.

During 2020 the Division took a closer look at the Heart Gallery website and partnered with Raise the Future to create a new web design with some additional features. The website added the ability for the public to request information on how they can get involved by becoming a volunteer photographer or hair stylist, or hosting an event. This has opened the door for more communication that has then created more of an inquiry on how to become a foster or adoptive family.

Photographs are printed twice a year for the traveling Heart Gallery. Each region receives an 8x10 image of the children who are featured in the Gallery for display at their events. For children to be listed on Raise the Future website, staff complete an on-line registration or relist if a child is already on the site. This registration will register the child with the Raise the Future, AdoptUSKids and the Missouri Heart Gallery websites at the same time as well as the DSS Facebook page and on the DSS Twitter account. Raise the Future changed their name from The Adoption Exchange in 2020 and designed a new look for their website. The addition of video segments/digital stories continue to be added to a number of profiles featured on the Heart Gallery.

Continued coordination occurs with Raise the Future to:

- Further expand their role in recruitment of foster and adoptive parents for youth.
- Increase connections for youth in foster care and awaiting adoption through targeted recruitment meet and greets with waiting youth and waiting families with similar interests.
- Increase features of video/digital profiles on Raise the Future and Heart Gallery websites to bring the waiting children’s personalities and interests to life.
- Provide Adoption Information On-Line Webinars a few times a year to educate about Missouri foster care and adoption, providing a basic overview of adoption in the state of Missouri.

RPC (Resource Parent Curriculum) from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network will continue to be offered throughout 2021 and beyond with a focus on building capacity to provide the RPC curriculum more frequently.

Outreach was expanded by current foster and adoptive parents in recruitment of new resources using the demonstrated strategies by partners on the Diligent Recruitment Team. These strategies were refined based on the information provided by the data shared to assure families are being recruited consistent with the demographic makeup and needs of the alternative care population and in turn the subgroup of that population awaiting permanency through an adoptive home.

Additional electronic or media profiles were developed and presented in local television markets and subsequently posted on the Heart Gallery website and social media platforms for featured children. More Faith Based partners are coming forward wanting to offer their time and equipment to produce video segments/digital stories for the children seeking an adoptive home.

Continued partnership with Faith and Community Partners to:

- Ensure outreach to all communities representative of the youth population in care.
- Accomplish outreach to neighborhoods for development of resource homes where children are removed to ensure children can remain in close proximity to family, school and social connections.
- Recruit families committed to preserving Native American/Alaskan Native culture for children/youth with such cultural background which is being accomplished through partnership of the ICWA workgroup.
- Support the Recruitment and Retention contractor in their MOU in recruiting, supporting and maintaining resource homes who are provided support from their church congregation.
- Produce video segments/digital stories for the children seeking an adoptive home.

In progress to achieve the rate of 50% or more placement of children in foster care with relatives, CD is focusing significant energy on relative assessment, training and supports. In early 2019 a designated Relative First Program Development Specialist was added to the team in CD Central Office to spearhead this work. In 2018 Missouri was fortunate to have the National Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA), through the Missouri chapter, facilitate a summit with Missouri Children's Division and current Therapeutic Program Care providers to explore expansion of Therapeutic Care to Relative Providers. By late 2018 the local FFTA Chapter and Missouri Children's Division had developed a process to pilot provision of these services under the existing contract structure. In 2019 there were three active cases of youth residing in Relative Treatment Foster Care (TFC) homes. The goal of the pilot was to reach up to 10 cases and determine the most effective strategies and processes to bring a Relative TFC Program into an available service option for all relative children requiring a higher level of care at entry or as stepdown from residential care.

The Relative Treatment Foster Care (TFC) pilot met the goal of 10 cases in March, 2020. The Relative TFC pilot has continued to accept new cases, a total of 16 cases to date, while the Relative TFC Program was being developed and in the approval process. This new Relative TFC service is not only an additional service to the existing Residential TFC contract, but also a major component of a new TFC contract for licensed child placing agencies that will allow more opportunity to expand the TFC Program to serve more children and families throughout Missouri. This new Child Placing Agency TFC contract and Residential TFC contract amendment offering the Relative TFC Program service is in the final approval stages and should be available in April, 2021. Children's Division is excited to soon offer the Relative TFC service to all relative children requiring higher level of care and additional individualized training/supports to relative caregivers in order to maintain placement with relative family, prevent moves to more restrictive placements, allow step down from residential, and provide additional supports to biological families on reunification efforts.

In November 2018 the Children's Division was accepted as a pilot site for the National Training Development Curriculum project through Spaulding for Children who was awarded a 5-year cooperative agreement from the Children's Bureau. The grant is being used to develop and evaluate a state of the art training program to prepare foster and adoptive parents to effectively parent children exposed to trauma and to provide these families with ongoing skill development needed to understand and promote healthy child development. As a participant of the project Missouri will have access to a free, comprehensive curriculum that has been thoroughly evaluated to be used to prepare resource parents. The training includes a foster, relative and adoptive track. As a result of this notification, Missouri decided to put energy being spent on refinement of pre-service and in-service trainings into development of the training with NTDC, in the meantime continuing with the existing training curriculum, STARS.

Efforts to heighten awareness of the need for foster and adoptive providers in National Adoption Month occurred in November. Social media was maximized for this effort with children or sibling groups featured every day in November, along with interviews of adoptive parents and staff in an effort to recruit. Adoption month bracelets are shared with community partners as conversation starters at each of the events held in local jurisdictions.

As a result of the Family First Legislation passage, Missouri CD is contracting with ParentLink to provide Kinship Navigator Services to relative providers. The navigator services are available to both formal and informal kinship providers. The contract with ParentLink requires a steering committee to include management of Missouri's Adoption or Family Resource Centers to assure combined efforts for relative care providers and cross pollination of support or retention services provided to relative and non-relative resource families where appropriate.

Also as a result of the Family First Legislation, the Division is focusing heavily on recruitment of resource homes to assure resources are available for elevated needs children when they enter

care in place of the need for residential care and also as a strategy to discharge youth from residential treatment and assure timely permanency. Jackson County began a right sizing residential group consisting of Children's Division representatives, Foster Care Case Management Partners as well as the Privatized Recruitment and Retention Contractor to develop solutions and strategies for developing family settings for kids. The group has worked to assure Department of Mental Health services are accessed, connecting relatives and foster families to Tools of Choice training through DMH to prepare and equip them for elevated needs youth.

Additional efforts in 2020 include:

- Awarding the RFP for Adoption and Foster Care Recruitment Services which will increase presentation of available children for adoption on the AdoptUSKids, Raise the Future and Missouri Heart Gallery Websites as the primary goals. Secondary goals will be use of the profiles written and photos taken for each of these sites for targeted recruitment for children awaiting adoption. The awarded RFP will increase the numbers of digital stories or media spotlights to be added to each of the sites and to bring the children's spirits, personalities and interests to light to increase matching efforts.
- Expansion and training of staff in use of the AdoptUSKids website for reverse matching to identify potential adoptive families across the nation for Missouri children who wait. In 2020 two trainings were conducted with staff to demonstrate the use of and potential for this tool in identifying families. Each of these activities designed to reduce time to permanency for children for whom an adoptive placement is being sought.
- Amplified Faith Based Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive homes through a fulltime Faith Based Liaison within the Children's Division with planned outreach to large church congregations to focus on recruitment as well as support of resource parents for retention.
- Focus Groups as part of the Survey Project with the National Council for Adoption and Northeastern University to inform the project data and allow for refinements to the retention strategies of the Children's Division and its private contractor.
- Development of new messaging consistent with Family First to wrap services around intact families as the first recruitment strategy, followed by support of relative providers through the Navigators and Family Resource Centers and enlistment of community volunteers, recruitment of resource parents for elevated needs children and youth to allow for stable caregiving for children entering care with elevated needs or stepping out of the residential setting to a resource home and support for each of these placement types.
- Continued recruitment efforts that began with the Adoption Placemat work under the direction of the Adoption Program Specialist. The adoption placemat is intended to increase the number of prospective adoptive resources so all children in need of a permanent home have an adoptive family to achieve timely permanency when they

cannot be reunified with their family. This work will be achieved through the following steps; 1) increased support to field staff to assure accurate capture of goals and pre-adoptive placement to assure the waiting child pool is accurately identified, 2) use recruitment strategies of features on social media, websites, web matching events, targeted recruitment efforts and maximizing involvement of Child Placing Agency partners, 3) assure staff are using the tools available for reverse matching through AdoptUSKids and finally 4) assuring petitions for TPR and adoption are filed promptly to assure timely permanency.

New Efforts in 2022-2024

- Use information from the NCFA survey data including focus group information to identify the most effective venues for recruitment of resource parents and assure information is available in each of these venues.
- Offer On-Line Adoption Information webinars to the public that provide a basic overview of adoption in the state of Missouri.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the new messaging or community ask for family support, respite providers as well as foster and adoptive families being developed in 2020 to assure the messaging resonates with potential supports and resources and make refinements as indicated.
- Focus on recruiting families who can support reunification of children through support of biological family.
- Work with National Training Development Curriculum project to tailor the training message specific to Missouri populations and identified training or support gaps. Assure training can be delivered to all populations regardless of reading level or language requirements. Develop the Missouri specific portions of the NTDC to assure each family receives training and supports in a consistent manner.
- Continued and ongoing training of staff use of the reverse search of the AdoptUSKids website to identify potential families for children needing an adoptive home concurrent with searches of Missouri homes for placement, breaking down jurisdictional barriers.
- Determine a methodology for comparing alternative care population and waiting child population to determine the number of homes needed and preparation level needed for those homes to assure capacity for children of all need levels using and refining current data available as included in this plan as well as the data reports in the Recruitment and Retention Contract section of the APSR.
- Expanded use of Extreme Recruitment and Family Finding efforts to assure children in need of a permanency other than reunification can have that permanency with family.

During 2020, Children's Division has used the information from the National Council for Adoption (NCFA) survey data in the work being done with recruitment, licensure and support of resource homes in Missouri. This work has been accomplished through the work of the

Diligent Recruitment and Recruitment and Retention Reboot workgroups and in collaboration with the Recruitment and Retention Contractor and the partner agencies. Because of the Division's involvement with NCFA and the pilot with National Training Development Curriculum (NTDC), Missouri is working with these groups to move the survey into two additional regions, Southwest and Southeast Missouri, for evaluation to take place in comparison of the NTDC to a newly developed Missouri curriculum being used in those two regions. This evaluation will also allow a third prong evaluation through the comparison group for the evaluation being conducted for the control group for NTDC, which is the current STARS/PRIDE region in the Northeast and St. Louis. In 2020-2021, Children's Division anticipates valuable learning from this combined evaluation, which will afford the opportunity to identify the best training and supports strategies for Missouri resource families.

During 2020, Children's Division was committed to evaluating recruitment messaging and creating two new recruitment videos. The new Foster Parent video was released during National Foster Parent month in May with the link pasted below. The new adoption video was released during National Adoption month in November with the link also pasted below.

Foster Parent Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_P5m-PUc-Q

Adoption Video https://youtu.be/F_P5m-PUc-Q

During 2020 Children's Division conducted trainings for field staff on use of the AdoptUSKids application to accomplish a cross match of families with available waiting youth. Staff found value in this training and identified many potential placements for staff to follow up with after training.

In the 2020 year, Missouri met goal of expanding use of Extreme Recruitment and Family Finding which is executed from the Family Resource Centers.

During 2022-2024 Missouri will continue to strategize on how to achieve the goal of over 50% of placements with relatives, knowing that placements with relatives are more stable, and reunification occurs more expeditiously than placements with foster parents. With the addition of the Missouri Kinship Navigator program through Parentlink and the Missouri Family Resource Centers, needs of families are being clearly identified allowing ongoing work in 2020-2024 to focus on consistent delivery of services to address the identified needs as well as striving to have equal access throughout the state to every available resource.

Children's Division has also been very pleased with work that began in 2019 of developing and expanding Foster Care Neighborhoods around the state. In these neighborhoods, licensed resource families live in adjacent homes within one neighborhood that is provided support by a licensing agency. The families are provided the necessary support to maintain placements and be successful with children by their neighbor foster parents as well as therapeutic supports, and training provided by the support agency. This model has resulted in foster care placements

made into these neighborhoods being stable and the children and youth having the opportunity to build supportive relationships with their foster family, the neighborhood and the support staff. In 2022-2024 plans will continue to work with the existing neighborhoods and assist with development of any additional neighborhoods agencies are interested in sponsoring.

Missouri has participated in all of the Adoption Call to Action Summits hosted by the Children's Bureau.

Following the initial summit, Missouri Children's Division was committed to continuing the goals of:

- Expanding Extreme Recruitment, 30 Days to Family and Family Finding,
- Messaging for recruitment of foster and adoptive families as well as individuals willing to address the needs of the Division and the families served
- Increasing relative placements consistent with the goals of this Diligent Recruitment plan while focusing the recruitment on the populations identified in data.

Children's Division action project was identified as the work of Missouri Permanency Attorney Initiative to reduce time to permanency. The Division has recognized that delays to permanency through reunification, adoption or guardianship exist due to a lack of legal representation to resolve the cases. The permanency attorney initiative has been touted as moving cases more quickly to permanency. The goal of this action item was to determine if assumptions were accurate and what refinements needed to be put in place to result in optimal success. Work was ongoing in 2020 to quantify the outcomes. Work began in developing logic for the comparison and tested the comparison of cases being served by a permanency attorney vs. cases not served by a permanency attorney. In this comparison, it was found that a significant reduction in the number of days to permanency occurred for children who were managed by a foster care case management contractor in one of the largest regions in Missouri.

Children's Division began to work on comparing the population served by the Children's Division in the St. Louis area consistent with the work completed for the contracted providers. This comparison continues. The intent of this exercise is to use data to support and advocate for additional attorneys to assure timely permanency.

It was realized in SFY20 with 1,740 adoptions finalized, this demonstrated a decrease in adoptions in Missouri. It is believed this was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020. The work of the Permanency Attorney Initiative will address any delays or pending adoptions into 2022.

	Number of Finalized Adoptions
SFY 13	1,222
SFY 14	1,250
SFY 15	1,315
SFY 16	1,524
SFY17	1,588
SFY18	1,740
SFY 19	1,826
SFY 20	1,740

All-In-Challenge

Missouri Governor Mike Parson, an adoptive grandparent himself, is committed to adoption and adoption supports. Ideas presented to the Governor’s office for consideration include additional staffing for adoption recruiters, maximization of Wendy’s Wonderful Kids recruiters added to the Missouri workforce and enhanced marketing strategies to recruit foster and adoptive parents using geo mapping principles. During the 2021 legislative session the Division has reviewed a number of legislative proposals that have the potential to support these strategies and provide additional funding to do so.