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North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services
Regulatory and Licensing Services

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October 15, 2008

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS AND LICENSING STAFF

SUBJECT: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER HOMES

Continuous recruitment and retention of foster homes are vital to effectively serve abused and neglected children. Recruitment and retention are also key components of our Program Improvement Plan as related to the federal Child and Family Services Review. As part of our ongoing work to enhance these efforts, the Division of Social Services is offering a special online learning opportunity on November 3, 2008.

A webinar (online seminar) produced by the Jordan Institute for Families entitled "Revitalizing Your Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Efforts" will be held on November 3, 2008 from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. This training event will offer real-world examples and practical suggestions for recruitment and retention. Featured presenters will be Ruth Amerson and Jeff Olson. Ms. Amerson is the founder and director of Another Choice for Black Children and Mr. Olson is a Program Manager with the NC Division of Social Services.

Individuals can register for the webinar by contacting John McMahon (johnmcmahon@mindspring.com) with the Jordan Institute for Families. Mr. McMahon will collect the e-mails of the individuals who have registered and will send a link for the webinar before November 3, 2008. The deadline for registration is Wednesday, October 29, 2008. Please encourage your staff to participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charisse S. Johnson".

Charisse S. Johnson, Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Jo Ann Lamm
Sarah Barham
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Children's Services Program Representatives
Regulatory and Licensing Services Consultants

FSCWS-60-08

Revitalizing Your Resource Family Recruitment & Retention Efforts

Welcome!

If you have not yet printed out the handout
for this webinar, you can download it by
clicking on this link:

<http://www.practicenotes.org/Expectations.pdf>



UNC-CH JORDAN INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES AND CHILD WELFARE
STATEWIDE TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP



UNC
School of Social Work
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Revitalizing Your Resource Family Recruitment & Retention Efforts

Agenda:

- ❑ Orientation
- ❑ Introductions
- ❑ "5 Secrets of Success," by Ruth Amerson
- ❑ Discussion of Case Scenarios
- ❑ "Elements of a Successful R&R Effort,"
by Jeff Olson
- ❑ Q & A
- ❑ Sharing time



Your presenters today are:

Mellicent Blythe, UNC

Ruth Amerson, Another
Choice for Black Children

Jeff Olson, NC DSS

Technical Support Today:

John McMahon, UNC

Phillip Armfield, UNC



Goals for Webinars

1. Provide relevant **practice suggestions**,
examples, and information
2. Provide **perspectives** from important
stakeholders
3. Provide an **interactive forum** for
professional support, collaboration, and
problem-solving

Five Secrets of Success



Ruth Amerson
Another Choice for Black Children

A Brief History...



Founded January 15, 1995

First agency devoted to finding homes for African-American children

Successfully united more than 600 children with families

Majority older children or members of sibling groups

Another Choice for Black Children: Secrets of Success



#1

It's all about relationships.



- What does respect look like?
- What does partnership look like?

Expectations of Staff

- Respect
- Prompt follow-up
- Confidentiality
- Be available
- Be honest
- Inform you of services
- Provide quality and responsive services including post-placement
- Advocate for families



Expectations of Staff

- Open communication
- Confidentiality
- Families for available children
- Return calls in 24 hrs
- Start & end on time
- Ensure licensing standards
- Have fun, be informed and professional



Expectations of Families

- Accept children unconditionally
- Work as a team
- Strong support system
- Advocate for child
- Participate in therapy
- Provide transportation
- Keep appointments

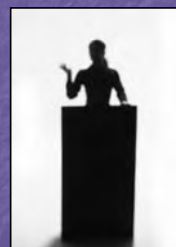


Expectations of Families

- Be honest/share information
- Use funds appropriately
- Sense of humor
- Recruit other families
- Maintain licensing standards
- No corporal punishment





Another Choice for Black Children: Secrets of Success



#2 Everyone is a recruiter.


- ALL agency staff
- Foster/adoptive parents
- Youth in care


Another Choice for Black Children: Secrets of Success 



#3
Screening in vs. Screening out

- What does a "good family" look like?
- What if they don't look like me?
- What might I see if I look deeper?
- What am I willing to do to help them succeed?

Another Choice for Black Children: Secrets of Success 



#4
There is a family for every child.

- Sense of the possible
 - There is no such thing as an unadoptable child.
- Sense of urgency
 - We have to push for timely permanent placements: every delay and move causes more damage

Another Choice for Black Children: Secrets of Success 




#5
Post-placement support is key.

- Always part of the family
- Can save placements/ adoptions
- Critical to retention

The Five Secrets

1. It's all about relationships.
2. Everyone is a recruiter.
3. Screening in vs. screening out.
4. There is a family for every child.
5. Post-placement support is key.



Questions?



Case Scenario #1

A single African-American male wants to adopt three special-needs siblings. He is a professional who works in public school administration.

Use the chat pod:

- What concerns might an agency have in considering this placement?
- What supports might help this potential resource parent succeed?

Follow-up on Case #1



- The man went on to successfully adopt the 3 children.
- After two years, the family continues to do well.

Case Scenario #2

A sibling group of three was placed with a foster family. The GAL thought the family's home was too small and the community had too much crime.

Use the chat pod:

- What concerns might your agency have in considering this placement?
- What supports might help this potential resource parent succeed?

Follow-up to Case #2



- The agency decided not to place the siblings in the home, and ended up having to separate them.



- The 2 sisters were adopted.
- The brother is still waiting.
- The family went on to successfully foster another group of 3 siblings through another county.

Case Scenario #3

A potential adoptive family saw a 17-year-old girl's picture in the NC Kids photo listing. The girl had said previously she did not want to be adopted.

Use the chat pod:

- What would your agency do?

Follow-up to Case #3



- The young woman saw a picture of the family and decided she'd be willing to meet them.
- She was placed with the family in June and a petition for adoption was just filed.

Questions?

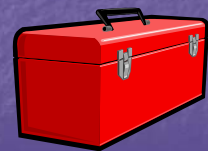


Elements of a Successful R&R Effort



Jeff Olson
NC Division of Social Services

- Your MEPA plan has all the components of an effective plan
- Work your plan



I. Recruitment and Retention Are a Package

- It is all about relationships
- It is a partnership from the first contact
- Foster/adoptive families are the best recruiters
- Success in one area does not assure success in both



II. It's a Whole Agency Project

- Treat them like gold!
- From Receptionist to the Director
- Sensitivity to "1st Times"
- Sensitivity to all "Times"
- Celebrate with them...
Mourn with them



What it looks like
in the field



Use the chat pod:

What challenges have you experienced in getting everyone in the agency involved in recruitment and support of foster families?

What ideas do you have to make it happen?

III. Community Recognition and Support

- Celebrate successes and challenges with the community
- Families that opt out are still resources
- Find points for community involvement
- Cultivate a list of support groups



IV. Active and Ongoing Dialogue with Families

- Eliminate the "waiting list"
- Pre screen for MAPP
- Keep families in the loop
- Have foster parents as trainers and mentors
- An association supported by the agency

What it looks like
in the field



Take a poll:

How does your agency partner with foster/adoptive families in your recruitment, retention, or training efforts?

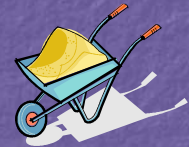
V. Keep Children and Families at the Core

- Foster care is for children
- Children are diverse
- Instill partnership principles
- Be realistic



VI. Regional Collaboration: They're All North Carolina's Children

- Lighten everyone's load
- Collaborate with other counties and agencies
- NC DSS encourages & will provide assistance
- It's about children, not jurisdiction



Elements of a Successful R&R Effort

1. Recruitment and retention are a package.
2. It's a whole agency project.
3. Community recognition and support.
4. Active and ongoing dialogue with families.
5. Keep children and families at the core.
6. Regional collaboration: They're all North Carolina's children.

NC Successes

- Nash County DSS
 - R & R Committee
 - Reviewing data/setting goals
- Pitt County DSS
 - Community Advisory Board
 - Foster parent recruiter
- Guilford County DSS
 - Recruiting at polling stations



What's It to **You**?

Use the chat pod:

- Think of one idea you would like to try in your own work or in your agency. What can you do in the next 3 months?

A Few Last Details...

- E-mail: R & R questions, ideas to share
mblythe@email.unc.edu



Expectations of Families

We understand that adoption is a lifelong commitment to a child. We understand that our family will need to make sacrifices and be flexible in order for a child to remain a part of our family. Therefore, as adoptive or foster parents of Another Choice, we agree:

1. Be spiritually connected. Understand the power of and the need for prayer.
2. Accept children unconditionally.
3. Work as a team/accept help and follow through with suggestions.
4. Develop (have) a strong support system.
5. Do not embarrass easily.
6. Advocate for the child.
7. Participate in therapy.
8. Provide transportation to appointments and visits.
9. Be responsible for child's care and welfare by keeping medical, therapeutic, or educational appointments.
10. Be honest and forthright in sharing information including changes in household, employment, and medical.
11. Use funds (foster care board or adoption assistance) appropriately.
12. Develop (have) a sense of humor.
13. Recruit other families to become adoptive or foster parents.
14. Maintain licensing standards.
15. Expect an adoptive worker to be assigned once you receive your criteria letter.
16. Respect and abide by the state and agency's policy which prohibits the use of corporal punishment on children in the foster care system.

Expectations of Staff of Another Choice

Our motto is, “When you adopt through Another Choice, Another Choice adopts you.” We are committed to being there for you. To that end, we promise:

1. Respect
2. Prompt follow up with concerns or actions
3. Confidentiality
4. Be available for (to) you
5. Be honest in sharing and forthcoming with information
6. Inform you of services available
7. Provide quality and responsive services, including post-adoption services
8. Advocate for families (we will hold your hand throughout the process)
9. Will maintain open communication with you and your family
10. Recruit families for available children
11. Return phone calls within 24 hours
12. Start and end meetings on time
13. Ensure your home continues to meet licensing standards
14. Have fun, be informed and professional

We will live our mission, which is “Building and Sustaining Families.”

Let’s Shake On It!

