

# Training **MATTERS**



A PUBLICATION OF THE NC DSS FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STATEWIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Volume 9, Number 3 • July 2008

*Training Matters* is produced by the North Carolina Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership, an organization dedicated to developing and delivering competency-based, job-relevant, accessible child welfare training. Partners include:

- NC Division of Social Services
- NC Association of County Directors of Social Services
- Appalachian Family Innovations at Appalachian State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative
- NC State University Department of Social Work
- NC A & T State University Social Work Program
- Resources for Change, Inc.
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (Jordan Institute for Families)
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine
- UNC-Greensboro Department of Social Work

## **We Want to Hear from You!**

If you have questions or would like to comment about something that appears in *Training Matters*, please contact Teresa Turner, Program Administrator, Family Support and Child Welfare Services Staff Development, NC Division of Social Services, 2412 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury Street, Suite 531, Raleigh, NC 27699-2412, State Courier: 56-20-25, (Teresa.Turner@ncmail.net, 919/733-7672).

## **Visit Our Website**

Go to <[www.trainingmatters-nc.org](http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org)>.

This issue of *Training Matters* was produced by John McMahon of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

References for this issue can be found at <[www.trainingmatters-nc.org](http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org)>

## **To Learn More about Resource Family Recruitment & Retention**

There are many resources out there for public agencies interested in improving their efforts to find families for children in foster care. Here are a few you should know about.

### **Training**

#### **Rolling Out the Red Carpet.**

The NC Division of Social Services offers a course called *Recruitment and Retention: Rolling Out the Red Carpet for Foster and Adoptive Parents*. For years this two-day course has prepared participants to help meet their agencies' R&R needs and provided an overview of MEPA and its impact. This course will be revised in the summer and fall of 2008 and offered again on an ongoing basis beginning in spring 2009.

**Periodic Webinars.** Periodically during State Fiscal Year 2008-09 the Division and its training partners will offer a short (60 to 90 minutes) online seminar (webinar) on a topic related to resource family R&R. Though topics have not yet been chosen, some being considered include: using a "regional approach" to finding resource families, exploring the connection between resource family R&R and successful implementation of MRS, and the link between child and family team meetings, concurrent planning, and resource family R&R. To suggest a webinar topic, contact Mellicent Blythe (mblythe@email.unc.edu). The Division will contact your agency soon to confirm the dates and registration details for these online learning events.

### **Written Guides and Tools**

**Answering the Call.** To assist states and Tribes in recruiting foster and adoptive families for children in foster care, the Collaboration to AdoptUsKids has developed a number of excellent recruitment resources. The following are of particular interest:

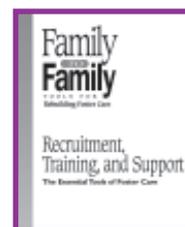
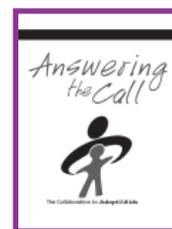
- A recruitment plan for adoption & foster care program managers
- A practitioner's guide to help recruiters and agency staff retain more parents from their recruitment efforts
- A family pocket guide to help prospective parents understand and follow their individual journey throughout the process (in English & Spanish)

These and other resources can be found at <<http://www.adoptuskids.org/resourceCenter/atcPublications.aspx>>.

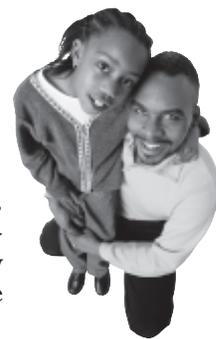
#### **Recruitment, Training, & Support: The Essential Tools of Foster Care.**

This tool suggests ways to rethink traditional approaches to finding, recruiting, training, and supporting foster parents so they will remain in your system and many more will consider becoming adoptive parents. The approach applies to every child welfare agency large or small, urban or rural, public or private, offering concrete actions you can adapt to your situation and steps you can take right now. Available at <<http://www.aecf.org/Home/MajorInitiatives/Family%20to%20Family/Resources.aspx>>.

**The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning** has developed a large collection of resources on this topic that can be accessed by visiting <[http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/recruitment-and-retention.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/recruitment-and-retention.html)>.



# Core Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Resource Families



**R&R is easiest when you have satisfied foster parents.**

Agencies already have the most important resources at their disposal for recruiting and retaining resource families. To direct those resources effectively they may wish to consider the following core strategies:

## 1. Use current foster parents

Satisfied foster parents are the best tool for recruitment and retention. In a survey by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one state reported that more than 50% of its successful foster parent recruits are referred by other foster parents, compared to a 10% recruitment rate for general recruiting (USDHHS 2002). Another study of 650 foster parents found that only 21% had found out about fostering through media sources, while 58.5% did so because of the connections they had with other foster parents or children in foster care (Rodger, et al. 2006).

Working in collaboration with foster parents to increase recruitment should improve retention as well. Numerous studies have found that retention is significantly affected by how valued foster parents feel and how much they are treated like partners by their agencies (Rhodes et al. 2001; Rodger et al. 2006; NRCSNA 2003). Creatively involving foster parents in an agency's efforts to find and keep other foster parents can build a collaborative, mutually respectful relationship. In fact, attempting to address recruitment without improving retention "may be potentially self-defeating for an agency....The satisfied, experienced foster parent is the foundation for any recruitment strategy" (USDHHS, 1995). Support by other foster parents also plays a crucial role in foster parents' decision to continue fostering (Seaberg & Harrigan 1999).

Foster parents can aid recruitment and retention in many ways (DHHS 2002; NRCSNA 2003), including the following:

- a. Sharing experiences and allowing newly-licensed families to meet children in care before their first placement
- b. Helping prospective resource families complete applications
- c. Providing parts of pre-service and ongoing trainings
- d. Following-up with new contacts with an in-person visit or phone call
- e. Providing support groups
- f. Organizing recognition/appreciation efforts and events
- g. Providing individualized mentoring for new foster parents

## 2. Use Culturally-Sensitive Recruitment

Recruiting foster families of color can pose a particular challenge when there is mistrust between agencies and communities (Casey Family Foundation 2005). The frequency with which children are placed with foster families of a different ethnicity can contribute to this sense of mistrust. In North Carolina, the high incidence of Lumbee children placed in non-Lumbee foster homes

has caused concern (Jenkins, 2007), while the state's growing Latino population suggests a similar trend may develop if Latino foster families are not added to recruitment efforts.

The Casey Family Foundation's Breakthrough Series Collaborative (2005) generated numerous interventions in this area. Agencies in other states have successfully undertaken recruitment campaigns among communities of color with similar interventions (Utah Foster Care Foundation, cited in ACF 2001; Contra Costa, CA, "Kids Like Maria" campaign). Recommendations include:

- a. Translating materials into Spanish or other languages of minority communities, including recruitment brochures, applications, flyers for schools, posters in community spaces, etc.
- b. Certifying foster families of color as co-trainers of MAPP/GPS
- c. Conducting joint recruitment efforts by families of colors at fairs and other community events
- d. Making joint contacts (agency staff and foster parents of color) with prospective foster families
- e. Having existing foster families of color contact prospective families who have dropped out or slowed in their momentum towards licensing
- f. Conducting informational meetings in other languages and/or with other foster parents of color
- g. Creating a recruitment video for families of color
- h. Implementing a dedicated line for foster family inquiries with a recording in multiple languages
- i. Building relationships and focusing recruitment efforts in faith, ethnic, and civic organizations in communities of color

## 3. Use the Media

Use the media to enhance the agency's profile in the community. Best practice in recruitment is to not only pursue targeted recruitment for specific needs, but also to consider the agency's overall presence in the community. This is true for two reasons: first, if the public has a poor perception of the agency, recruitment efforts won't work (USDHHS, 1995). Second, making people aware of fostering is a necessary first step in recruitment. Pasztor & Wynne (1995) found that many people think about fostering for a year or more, and hear messages about fostering three to four times before making an initial call. And the more frequently someone is exposed to the message, the more likely they are to call.

Mass media campaigns can encompass an array of methods, depending on specific recruitment goals and budgets. Agencies often need guidance in selecting the appropriate venue, and then interacting effectively with the media.

## **References for Training Matters, vol. 9, no. 3 (July 2008)**

- Administration for Children and Families. (September/October 2001). Children's Bureau Express Online Digest Vol. 2( 5). Promising Practices: Foster Parent Recruitment Aimed at Latino Families in Utah. [Online] [http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/nonissart.cfm?issue\\_id=2001-09&disp\\_art=335](http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/nonissart.cfm?issue_id=2001-09&disp_art=335)
- Casey Family Foundation (2005). Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families, Promising Practices and Lessons Learned. Seattle, WA: Author. <<http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/F3127E06-7325-4ECA-8FA3-BB98395C6D8D/204/BSCRecruitmentRetention.pdf>>
- Contra Costa County, CA. (n.d.) "Kids Like Maria" campaign. <<http://www.ehsd.org/ehs/ehs013c.html>>
- Jenkins, V. (May 20, 2007). Lumbee foster families scarce. The Fayetteville (NC) Observer.
- National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption. (2003). Retaining recruited resource families. The Roundtable. Vol. 17(2): 3.
- Pasztor, E. M., & Wynne, S. E (1995). Foster parent retention and recruitment: The state of the art in practice and policy. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.
- Rhodes, K. W., Orme, & Buehler, C. (March 2001). A comparison of foster parents who quit, consider quitting, and plan to continue fostering. Social Service Review: 84-114.
- Rodger, S., Cummings, A., & Leschied, A. (October 2006). Who is caring for our most vulnerable children? The motivation to foster in child welfare. Child Abuse & Neglect Vol. 30(10): 1129-1142.
- Seaberg, J. & Harrigan, M. (1999). Foster families' functioning, experiences, and views: Variations by race. Children and Youth Services Review. Vol. 21(1): 31-55.
- U.S Department of Health and Human Services [US DHHS], Administration for Children and Families. (1995). A Guide to the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994. Washington, DC: Alice Bussiere, J.D., American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law, National Resource Center on Legal and Court Issues. <[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/pi/pi9523a5.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/pi9523a5.htm)>
- U.S Department of Health and Human Services [US DHHS], Administration for Children and Families. (May 2002a). *Recruiting foster parents*. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General. <<http://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-07-00-00600.pdf>>