



PARTNERING FOR PERMANENCY

*How Public Information Officers Can Partner
to Promote Adoption from Foster Care*



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR
DILIGENT RECRUITMENT

at AdoptUSKids



HOW PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS CAN PARTNER TO PROMOTE ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

Introduction

As a communications expert, you play an important role in helping the public understand the valuable work that your child welfare agency does to promote and support positive outcomes for children and families in your community. It goes without saying that public information officers (PIOs) must always act within their agency's protocol for interacting with the media. Working within that protocol, you likely have the ability to help raise awareness about the need for adoptive families for children in foster care and to be a key partner with the adoption program staff in your agency by finding permanent families for children waiting for adoption.



Many child welfare and adoption program leaders are seeking new strategies to recruit adoptive families for children in foster care and they may not be comfortable or familiar with working with the media to raise awareness about adoption. By combining your expertise and experience with your colleagues' child welfare expertise, you can plan and implement communication strategies to help achieve permanency for children in foster care who are waiting for adoptive families.

This publication offers strategies around partnership, specifically on how you and your colleagues can partner with each other, the media, and national initiatives to support and supplement your agency's current efforts. This publication is one part of a series of materials aimed at supporting child welfare agencies' efforts to raise awareness of the need for adoptive families for children in foster care. Other publications in the series include:

- [***Media Toolkit for Child Welfare Leaders***](#) (PDF - 549 KB), providing tips and strategies child welfare leaders can use to work effectively with the media and to increase the impact and reach of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative as a way to help raise awareness about adoption both during National Adoption Month and throughout the rest of the year.
- [***Partnering for Permanency: Promoting Adoption through Effective Communication Efforts***](#) (PDF - 498 KB), highlighting the value of increasing the reach and impact of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative as a way to support agencies' efforts to raise awareness about the need for adoptive families for youth in foster care.
- [***Partnering for Permanency: Working with Your Public Information Officer***](#) (PDF - 239 KB), aimed at helping child welfare program leaders understand the role of public information officers and develop effective strategies for partnering with them to raise awareness about adoption.

Goals and Priorities of Adoption and Child Welfare Leaders

Child welfare systems throughout the country have a responsibility to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for all children in foster care. For those children who cannot return safely and permanently home to their birth families, child welfare leaders seek adoptive families who will provide a stable, permanent family that children want and need. With 102,000 children in foster care nationally waiting to be adopted and more than 23,000 youth aging out of foster care each year without a permanent family, child welfare agencies face significant challenges in trying to achieve permanency for all of the children who are waiting to be adopted.

November is designated as National Adoption Month, focusing on raising awareness among the public about the need for permanent, loving families for children in foster care. Many child welfare systems seek to increase their recruitment and public awareness-raising efforts during November, building on recruitment strategies that they use throughout the year. Child welfare leaders have great expertise in serving children and families, but they may not be familiar with successful strategies for proactively working with the media and conducting public awareness campaigns; they also face significant budget and time constraints, making it challenging for them to develop and implement comprehensive media and recruitment campaigns.

With your help, and with access to existing recruitment and public awareness materials, child welfare leaders can increase the effectiveness of their efforts to recruit adoptive families for children in foster care.

The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative

The Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, partners with the Ad Council and AdoptUSKids for an annual series of multimedia public service advertisements (PSAs) promoting the adoption of children from foster care. Each year this award-winning campaign (launched in 2004) releases TV and radio PSAs and other materials such as print ads, web banners, and billboards that help raise awareness about the need for adoptive families and help connect the public with information about adoption from foster care. More information about the campaign is [available on the AdoptUSKids website](#).



PSAs Can Now Be Localized!

For many years, child welfare leaders have asked for an option to localize the public service announcements (PSAs) from the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative, and now it's possible. Child welfare systems can localize some of the PSAs with your agency's contact information, encouraging people to contact you directly and highlighting that your agency is available as a great local resource.

You can request free PSA materials for localization at adoptuskids.adcouncil.org. The site lets you quickly and easily access the media materials you are interested in receiving for your community. Select TV, radio, print, and outdoor materials are all available for localization and use at the local level. The materials will be available when the campaign launches, which is scheduled for January 2014.

For more information on the localization options available for the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative's PSA materials, visit adoptuskids.adcouncil.org, or contact Melissa Otero at motero@adoptuskids.org.

Why Should Our Agency Use the Materials from the Campaign?

Many child welfare agencies want to develop high-quality, effective recruitment campaigns but struggle to find the resources they need to create such a campaign. A cost-effective solution to this challenge is to leverage the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative materials to raise awareness in your community about the need for adoptive families. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative's PSAs:

- Are professionally produced by an industry-leading advertising agency in partnership with Children's Bureau, the Ad Council, and AdoptUSKids.
- Are substantiated by a long-standing creative strategy and extensive research.
- Use humor that resonates well among the target audience of prospective parents as well as with media outlets.
- Offer a fresh creative message that can supplement local advertising/promotional efforts.

This [video case study](#) provides an overview of the professional, research-based approach used in the PSAs and highlights results from the campaign.

For agencies under budget constraints, PSAs are a practical alternative to paid advertising because the advertising time or space is donated by the media. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative's PSA materials are available to agencies and the media free of charge. You can access the materials at adoptuskids.adcouncil.org or contact AdoptUSKids at 888-200-4005 to request materials.

What's Available from the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative?

You have likely seen the humorous and engaging TV PSAs from the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative featuring the theme, "You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent." In addition to these high-quality TV ads, the campaign has materials available in multiple formats to use for both national and local media opportunities. Media elements include TV, radio, print, outdoor (e.g. billboards), and web banners for websites. With this mix of media materials available, you can explore ways to

Advertisement from the 2012 PSA campaign created by AdoptUSKids and the Ad Council.



partner with various media outlets to reach different target audiences. For example, you can work with a TV station in your area to secure donated space for a 30-second TV PSA, while also working with a local newspaper to encourage a donated print placement.

Options for Localizing the Campaign

For the first time since the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign PSAs have been produced, agencies can localize them by adding local information (e.g., agency name, logo, phone number, web site address, etc.) saving both the time and expense of creating a separate advertising campaign. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative has media materials available for localization in multiple formats, including TV, radio, print, and outdoor materials.

For more information on the localization options available for the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative materials visit adoptuskids.adcouncil.org or contact Melissa Otero at motero@adoptuskids.org.

Key Strategies for Promoting Adoption from Foster Care

With your expertise in developing communication strategies and working with the media, you likely have many ideas for effective strategies your agency can use to promote adoption and support your agency's efforts to recruit adoptive families. The following ideas provide additional options for your agency to consider.

Leverage the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative

By working with media contacts in your area, you can help increase the reach and impact of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative while also helping support your agency's existing recruitment efforts. Encourage local media outlets (e.g., TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, etc.) to run the PSAs available from the campaign. Highlight a few key results from the campaign, letting them know the impact the PSAs can have in helping to find permanent, loving families for children in foster care.

Additionally, the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative now makes it possible to localize the campaign materials, allowing your agency to add local contact information to the PSAs so that people in your community who are interested in learning more about adopting from foster care can contact your agency directly.

Partner With Your Agency's Child Welfare and Adoption Program Leadership

By combining your communication expertise and the expertise of your agency's adoption and child welfare program leaders, you can develop powerful, compelling communication strategies and messages. Child welfare program leaders have a wealth of information about the children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted, such as the kind of families they are hoping to recruit, and the support and resources available to help adoptive families meet children's needs. You can leverage this information to help develop simple, clear messages that will resonate with the public and help find more adoptive families for children in foster care. Working together, you can develop communication strategies that are data-driven and align with specific recruitment needs, ensuring consistent, effective messaging to reach prospective parents.

Partner with Local Media

As you know, the media can be a valuable partner in connecting children with forever families. The media leverages its power to reach key audiences and disseminate important messaging. Child welfare leaders are also valuable partners for the media with their vast knowledge of child welfare and access to experts, spokesfamilies, and data that the media needs to convey a compelling story. The media is interested in accessing this information quickly and easily and informing the public on how this issue impacts the community.



Share Positive Adoption Stories in Your Community

One effective way to help the public become more aware of, and interested in, adoption from foster care is to put a personal face on the experience of adopting children from foster care. By sharing positive adoption stories about local children and families, you can help others see a realistic, personal picture of adoption from foster care, what the children in foster care are like, and how adoption can touch a wide variety of families.

AdoptUSKids can support your efforts to share positive adoptive stories about real families, through the use of media spokesfamilies. These families have been trained on how to share their family stories effectively with the media and are available to put a human face on adoption. Contact AdoptUSKids at info@adoptuskids.org for additional information about available spokesfamilies in your community. In addition to accessing the spokesfamilies that AdoptUSKids has identified and prepared, you can consider developing your own pool of media spokesfamilies. Our [Media Guide](#) (PDF - 1.4 MB) for the AdoptUSKids spokesfamilies provides valuable information that your agency can use to prepare families to speak with the media on behalf of your agency.

Have an Effective Response System in Place

As your agency pursues strategies to raise awareness about adoption and recruit prospective parents — it's crucial to ensure that your agency has the capacity to respond promptly and respectfully to all inquiries. Child welfare agencies sometimes invest significant resources in awareness-raising and recruitment efforts, but fail to prepare for the increased volume of inquiries they receive as a result of their efforts. If prospective adoptive parents experience poor service or don't receive a prompt response, they are not only likely to stop pursuing an adoption from your agency, they will likely tell their family and friends about their negative experience. This kind of negative word-of-mouth can counteract your agency's efforts to encourage others to consider adopting from foster care. Fortunately, there are resources available from the [National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids](#) that can help your agency assess your current response system and increase the effectiveness of your response and retention approach.

Additional Resources

There are additional resources and publications available to support child welfare agencies' efforts to raise awareness about adoption and partner with local media to help recruit adoptive families for children in foster care.

- The [National Adoption Month website](#)
- Tip sheets and resources from AdoptUSKids for how child welfare agencies can [use social media as part of their communication and recruitment efforts](#)
- [*Media Toolkit for Child Welfare Leaders*](#) from AdoptUSKids (PDF - 549 KB)
- Information about how to use [market segmentation](#) to develop data-driven targeted recruitment strategies and how the [National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment \(NRCDR\) at AdoptUSKids](#) can assist you
- [Online Media Toolkit](#) from the National Child Abuse Prevention Month initiative



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More free resources at:

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www.nrcdr.org

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