



PARTNERING FOR PERMANENCY

*Promoting Adoption through Effective
Communication Efforts*



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR
DILIGENT RECRUITMENT

at AdoptUSKids



PROMOTING ADOPTION THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Introduction

Your agency likely faces daily demands and constraints as you work to raise awareness about adoption from foster care and recruit adoptive parents for children in foster care. Fortunately, we can help you access existing and free resources your agency can use to support and supplement your existing recruitment and awareness-raising efforts. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative,¹ funded by the Children's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is designed to support your efforts to raise awareness in your communities about the need for adoptive families.

This publication highlights specific strategies your agency can use to leverage resources and expertise to build on existing efforts as you raise awareness about adoption both during National Adoption Month and throughout the year.

Use the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative to Support Your Work

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's Public Service Announcements (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 with the target audience of prospective parents as well as with media outlets.
- Offer a fresh creative message that can supplement local advertising and promotional efforts.



Billboard from the 2011 PSA campaign created by AdoptUSKids and the Ad Council.

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- 1 The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative is a project of the U.S. Children's Bureau, operated by the Adoption Exchange Association, in collaboration with the Ad Council. The initiative's goals for the 2013 – 2017 funding period are:
1. Achieve a measurable change in public perceptions about adopting children from the foster care system
 2. Increase the number of potential adoptive families inquiring about adoption
 3. Increase the number of children, especially older children, adopted from foster care
 4. Strengthen the AdoptUSKids response system that supports States in managing the increased volume of inquiries due to the new media materials and national public service advertising campaign
 5. Increase the measurable penetration into the local markets of each State of the multi-media campaign
 6. Realize a measurable increase in the utilization of emerging social media strategies in States



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.

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 PSA materials are available to agencies and media free of charge. Materials are available at adoptuskids.adcouncil.org, or contact AdoptUSKids at 888-200-4005 to request materials.

Localizing the Campaign Materials

Child welfare agencies can now localize the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative materials by adding their agency's contact information (such as agency name, website and logo) to the PSA materials. This localization option allows you to use the high-quality, free campaign materials while also encouraging audiences to contact your agency directly, saving both the time and money required to develop your own recruitment campaign.

Partner to Increase the Effectiveness of Your Communication Efforts

As we often see in child welfare work, partnering helps to achieve much more than individual efforts. Your work to raise public awareness about adoption and recruit adoptive families can benefit greatly from the expertise and access of professionals outside of the child welfare field, including those who are experts in communications and the media.

Partner with Your Agency's Public Information Officer²

Your agency — or the broader agency that the child welfare agency is part of — has at least one staff member responsible for managing public communications and media relations. This position is often called the public information officer (PIO), but the position may have a different name (e.g., communications director, public information coordinator, etc.). Your PIO is skilled at developing and implementing communications strategies to help inform the public about your agency's work, key accomplishments, and important messages for the general public. The PIO also has expertise in working with the media, both to respond to media inquiries and to proactively encourage the media to cover specific topics and issues, such as adoption and foster care. A partnership between child welfare program leaders and a PIO can help develop thoughtful, data-driven

² Before you approach the PIO, learn about your agency's current protocol for interacting with your agency's PIO, so you can be sure that you follow the protocol. If your agency's protocol doesn't permit certain staff positions (e.g., the adoption program manager, foster care manager, etc.) to approach the PIO directly to solicit their help with promoting positive stories, talk with your supervisor to find out how you might pursue a new approach without violating established protocols.



You don't
have to be
perfect to
be a
perfect parent.

888-200-4005 / AdoptUSKids.org



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

adoption recruitment and public awareness strategies that will support your efforts to achieve permanency for children in foster care. For more ideas about working with your agency's PIO, see our tip sheet, [***Partnering for Permanency: Working with Your Public Information Officer***](#) (PDF - 239 KB).

Partner with the Media and Other Key Stakeholders

Looking outside of your agency, there are media outlets and community groups who can help increase the reach and impact of your agency's messages, whether you're using the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative materials, or your own recruitment campaign materials. Media outlets are interested in helping raise public awareness about important issues that affect the local community; by partnering with the media you can inform the public on stories and issues that are of interest to them while also supporting your agency's efforts to raise awareness about the need for adoptive families for children in foster care.

Use Multiple Communication Strategies

As you know, reaching your target audiences for adoption recruitment and public awareness efforts requires using multiple strategies and communication channels. Using traditional media — including TV, radio, and newspapers — is still an effective way to reach certain target audiences. In addition to using traditional media, many child welfare agencies are also using social media strategies to reach and engage with both prospective and current adoptive parents, as well as to connect with other stakeholders and community partners.

As you develop your strategies for raising awareness about adoption and recruiting adoptive parents, think about which communication channels will be the most effective for reaching the specific audiences you want to reach. For example, TV channels that are popular with families might be an effective way to reach one segment of your target audience, and using Facebook might be an effective way for your agency to engage and support prospective adoptive parents after an initial inquiry. By using multiple strategies and communication vehicles, you can tailor your messages and approaches to fit your audience and align with your goals for each phase of communication.³

³ If your agency is interested in developing targeted recruitment campaigns using a data-driven approach, contact the [National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment \(NRCDR\)](#) at AdoptUSKids.org to find out more about our technical assistance on [market segmentation](#).

Ensure You Have the Capacity to Respond to Increased Inquiries

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 often invest significant resources in awareness-raising and recruitment efforts, but fail to prepare for the increased response they receive as a result of their efforts. If prospective adoptive parents experience poor service, or do not 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 adoption from foster care. Fortunately, there are resources available from the [National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment \(NRCDR\) at AdoptUSKids](#) that can help your agency assess your current response system and develop an effective response and retention approach.

Additional Resources

This publication offers ideas for how you and your colleagues can partner with each other, the media, and national initiatives in order to support and supplement current efforts to promote adoption. This publication is one part of a series of materials aimed at support child welfare agencies' efforts to raise awareness of the need for adoptive families for children in foster care. The other publications in this series are:

- [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: How Public Information Officers Can Partner to Promote Adoption from Foster Care](#) (PDF - 469 KB), a publication for public information officers or communications directors in child welfare agencies with ideas for how they can help raise awareness about the need for adoptive families
- [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

We have a collection of resources on [using social media in recruitment and retention](#), including:

- A tool to help your agency assess which social media platform, if any, to use to recruit and engage with prospective and current families
- Introductory-level guides to using Facebook and Twitter
- Guides on strategies and best practices for using Facebook and Twitter to engage with families



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

You may also find the following resources helpful as you develop strategies to raise awareness about adoption and ensure that you have a strong response system to handle the increased inquiries about adoption.

- [***Is Your Response System Family Friendly?***](#) (PDF – 131 KB): An agency self-assessment tool examining how well your response system meets the needs of families throughout the foster and adoptive parent recruitment process.
- [***Using Customer Service Concepts to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Practices***](#) (PDF – 852 KB): This publication provides child welfare agency leaders with an overview of customer service concepts that can help with recruitment and retention of foster, adoptive, and kinship families. It also serves as a guide for agency leaders in assessing, developing, and implementing relevant policies and practices to support good customer service.



More free resources at:
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www.nrcdr.org

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