



Project MATCH

Making Appropriate & Timely Connections for Children

Based on the results of surveys and focus groups involving state and private agency staff and resource families, the Project MATCH implementation team identified five interventions that would become the primary focus of the diligent recruitment grant. These interventions are all related to the objectives that the Children's Bureau requires to be met by all funded projects. Those interventions are:

- **Dedicated Recruitment**-Survey results indicated that staff do not have adequate time to focus on the recruitment of new resource homes particularly targeted and child specific recruitment that will result in homes that will take special needs children. Several tools are being used to increase recruitment efforts in the intervention regions. These include Family Finding, which is a nationally known model of locating and developing lifelong family connections for the "loneliest" children in out of home care; File mining provides a thorough review of the case records to identify any individuals that a child might have had in the past, who might serve as a resource or connection in the future; Market segmentation research identifies households that can be targeted that are most "like" our current successful resource homes. Child specific recruitment will allow us to conduct particular activities that will look for permanency options for specific children. If our efforts at increased recruitment through dedicated staff are successful, we will experience an increase in families making contact for more information regarding foster care and adoption. These families will be served through our centralized intake.
- **Implementation of a Customer Service Model**-All recruitment activities and materials will refer interested families to a centralized intake located at Murray State University. Staff of MSU will share information on all foster and adoptive agencies in the area and answer questions for parents on a regular basis to keep them engaged in the approval process. MSU staff will also work with parents to troubleshoot and resolve issues that hinder them from moving forward with the process. Parents who participate in the training and approval process will be encouraged to participate in the Alternative Caregiver Training program.
- **Utilization Alternate Caregiver Training between Completion of Pre-service Training, Approval and Placement**-To keep families engaged in the approval process as well as to minimize frustration with routine delays, project staff will encourage the use the Alternative Caregiver Training program (ACT) by those awaiting final approval as a resource home. This 3-5 hour experience provide waiting families with the opportunity to receive on the job training in preparation for full time care of special needs children. As parents complete feedback surveys, data regarding recruitment, customer service, retention and other relevant topics will be shared with stakeholders.
- **Increased Communication**-Mix and MATCHs are quarterly consultation/training sessions designed to increase inter-agency and intra-agency communication among stakeholders in permanency efforts for children. They include an equal mixture of public and private staff and parents and will focus on an action planning process designed to develop a shared vision of permanency for children in the region. As a result of actions implemented by the Mix and MATCHs barriers to achieving permanency will be identified.
- **Data Sharing with the Courts**-Central office and regional Leadership will work with family and district court judges in addressing barriers to achieving permanency through the sharing of regional and county based permanency data. Court personnel will be made aware of regional trends and barriers to achieving permanency for children.