FINDING COMMON GROUND

A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies Working with Communities of Faith

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DEAR COLLEAGUES

In the ongoing national conversation about faith-based social services, people sometimes remark that "the church" was the world's first social service agency. Their point is well-taken.

Communities of faith have always helped the hungry, the hurting, and the disadvantaged. And, throughout human history, wherever there were children in need, communities of faith could be counted on to take care of them. "Faith-based" programs are really nothing new. What is new, however, is the effort across government at all levels to collaborate with religious institutions to address social problems and respond to human needs—especially when it comes to serving children and families.

With an estimated 532,000 American children living in temporary care—and 129,000 who cannot return to their birth parents—the job of finding families for all of them is too big for government alone. We need to build alliances with communities who share our concern for the children and our commitment to building strong families. Communities of faith—organized around missions of healing, hope, and family preservation—have the potential to be ideal partners for child welfare agencies. But partnerships are hard work. And the idea of faith-based partnerships takes some child welfare professionals outside of their comfort zones.

Finding Common Ground is designed to share the art and science of building effective partnerships with communities of faith for the purpose of recruiting and supporting foster and adoptive families for children in out-of-home care. It was developed by *AdoptUSKids* and the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children, both projects of The Children's Bureau, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Through active collaboration, our two organizations will continue to provide up-to-date information, training, and technical assistance to help states build successful faith-based partnerships on behalf of our nation's waiting children.

Cultivating the potential of national and community-based partnerships is an important part of the mission of *AdoptUSKids*. In October 2002, The Children's Bureau entered into a cooperative agreement with The Adoption Exchange Association to implement and direct *AdoptUSKids* to:

- Provide technical assistance and training to states and Indian tribes to enhance their foster and adoptive family recruitment and retention initiatives;
- Devise and implement a national adoptive family recruitment and

retention strategy, including national recruitment campaigns and an annual Recruitment Summit;

- Operate the *AdoptUSKids* website (www.adoptuskids.org);
- Encourage and enhance adoptive family support organizations;
- Conduct a variety of adoption research projects.

In July of 2004, The Children's Bureau and *AdoptUSKids* held the first-ever National Adoption and Foster Care Recruitment Summit specifically designed to bring together child welfare professionals and representatives of communities of faith. Over 1,000 people from all over the country attended, and the excitement and good energy at the conference were palpable. Attendees came away from the meeting feeling that partnerships and collaborative ventures between the two groups were not only possible but, in fact, necessary if we are to fully meet the needs of the children and families. Within weeks of the Summit, states were reporting on solid activities which were underway to begin these partnerships or to enhance already existing collaborations.

Many successful targeted recruitment efforts have already been achieved through our nation's faith communities. This publication was written to share the wisdom of these initiatives and the lessons learned from them so that even more communities of faith can collaborate with child welfare agencies in the future.

We look forward to working with states to learn from and improve practice and outcomes for our children in foster care through these partnership endeavors.

Sincerely yours,

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SECTION I

Background and Introduction

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDEBOOK

In recent years, public officials and human service leaders have paid renewed attention to the potential of faith-based organizations to address society's most pressing problems. With unprecedented numbers of children in the child welfare system, progressive child welfare and faith leaders are collaborating in an urgent, healing mission: to find safe, loving foster and adoptive families for these children, and to help them become part of a caring and supportive community.

This Guidebook, *Finding Common Ground: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies Working with Communities of Faith,* was developed for public and private child welfare agencies and all of their staff who play a role in finding and sustaining foster and adoptive families for waiting children. It is dedicated to agency leaders, supervisors, and practitioners—including families and volunteers—who work so hard to secure safe and caring families for our nation's most vulnerable children. It specifically addresses how child welfare agencies can build collaborative relationships with communities of faith on behalf of families and children.

Why is it important to build these relationships? Communities of faith are especially significant in the human service arena because their beliefs and values call them to take responsibility for one another and to care about their neighbors. Improving the quality of life for families and children is already part of their mission.

In child welfare terminology, partnerships with faith communities are, by definition, "targeted" and/or "child-specific" recruitment initiatives. Agencies are specifically seeking partnerships with those faith communities who will share responsibility for serving the children whose needs require more attention and service than the public child welfare system can provide alone. They are children who have been abused and neglected. They are children of color. They are brothers and sisters who need to be together in

a family. They are youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ). They are teenagers who are "aging out" of the child welfare system with no family connections and no permanent home. Therefore, agencies need to be strategic in seeking partners in communities of faith—seeking out those communities that can meet the challenge.

When the authors refer to "communities of faith," they are talking about churches, synagogues, mosques, inter-denominational groups, and groups of people who are organized, formally or informally, as a spiritual or faith community. (To assist with the flow of the Guidebook, the authors frequently use the word "congregation" generically to mean "community of faith," and sometimes "clergyperson" is used to mean any spiritual leader of a congregation.)

Communities of faith are, and always have been, vibrant sub-communities, essential to the inner workings of any geographic or governmental community. Building relationships with communities of faith is worthwhile but challenging work. It takes soul-searching, legwork, patience, and a willingness to take risks—both personally and as an agency. It requires another way of thinking and doing business—nothing short of a new paradigm for child welfare.

There is a path for your journey, and rewards along the way. This book is intended to guide you along that pathway. There are three main sections to the Guidebook:

Section 1: Provides an historical, philosophical, and ethical context for the delivery of child welfare services in collaboration with communities of faith.

Section 2: Advances an eight-step process for developing collaborative relationships with communities of faith.

Section 3: Identifies key competencies and additional considerations necessary for agencies and practitioners to be effective in their work with faith communities.

In addition, the Guidebook offers many inspiring examples of agency/faith partnerships at various stages of development.

Faith-based collaboration is not a panacea. But it is a creative strategy that can offer hope and a new sense of belonging to our most disenfranchised children and the families who care for them.

Throughout recorded history, communities of faith have always taken responsibility for protecting children whose parents cannot raise them. In most societies, people feel compelled to care for children within their religion and culture. They may adopt children not only as a way to build a family, but also out of their commitment to serve the children of their faith and culture. For groups that have been persecuted, the saying, "Our children are our future," is more than rhetoric; the notion that "it takes a village to raise a child" has historical and cultural resonance.

For Jews still recovering from the ravages of the Holocaust, adopting Jewish children and raising them in the faith is considered a *mitzvah*, or blessing.

The well-established African American tradition of informal adoption or "taking children in" has its roots in the family and kinship patterns of African tribal societies. This way of life survived slavery and reconstruction, and endures today in the African American community—especially the African

American church—in a sense of shared responsibility for the children and the recognition of kinship ties, both biological and fictive.

In some Native American tribal societies, "adoption" in the legal sense is virtually unrecognized. The tribe has both the responsibility and sole authority to raise any Native American child whose parents are unavailable—a way of life that is affirmed by The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

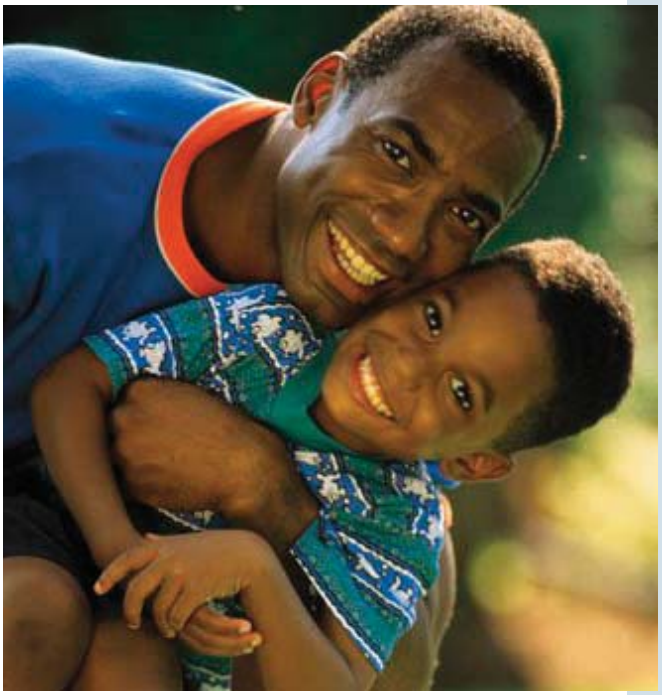
Although legal adoption is not recognized in the Islamic faith, several Koranic revelations support the raising of orphans as an act worthy of admittance to Paradise.

Likewise, in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, many scriptural references instruct Jews and Christians to care for homeless children.

As early as the 7th and 8th Centuries, Christian churches in Europe established "foundling hospitals" to deal with the problem of abandoned babies. By the mid-1400s, the first known orphanage appeared in Italy, and the idea soon spread throughout the western world. In the United States, church- and synagogue-run orphanages proliferated in the 1800s as thousands of immigrant children and families found themselves homeless.

By the 1850s, New York City's orphanages were over-crowded, and the presence of "outcast street children" became a serious social problem. Moved by the plight of these waifs, a Methodist minister named Charles Loring Brace founded the Children's Aid Society of New York in 1853. Under the agency's auspices, homeless children were sent to the Midwest on "orphan trains" to be taken in by Protestant families. As long as the families agreed to feed and clothe the children, send them to school and church, and treat them as their own, they were permitted to adopt.

Simultaneously, church-run orphanages and asylums continued to multiply in the United States. By 1910, an estimated 100,000 American children were living in institutional care.



In 1909, a White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children concluded that children do better in family homes. In 1912, Congress established the United States Children Bureau, first known for its campaigns to reduce infant mortality and eradicate child labor. The Children's Bureau advocated for regulations to protect children in out-of-home care. Working with organizations like the Child Welfare League of America (founded in 1921), the Children's Bureau sought to extend the power of government over child welfare and adoption practices. Together, the two groups established minimum standards to regulate child welfare. By then there had been far too many examples of harsh discipline and substandard living conditions in institutions and boarding schools. Child advocates lobbied for regulation and reform.

In time, faith-based organizations relinquished much of their child welfare role to the government or established separate social service agencies that were governed more centrally by the denomination. Family-based foster care, thought to be better than institutional care, was designated to protect children from abusive or neglectful parents. Until the late 1960s, adoption was rarely an option for children beyond infancy. Adoption agencies had emerged in the 1930s as a service for unmarried mothers and infertile married couples. Typically, the birthmother voluntarily relinquished her parental rights shortly after giving birth (the rights or obligations of unmarried birthfathers were not recognized until the 1970s), and married couples quickly adopted the infants.

Children beyond infancy who needed foster care rarely were adopted. They would either eventually be returned to their birthparents or simply grow up in out-of-home care. In fact, adoption by foster parents was not only

discouraged but often forbidden. Adoption and foster care were seen as two completely separate activities. This has changed entirely today; foster parents are now considered first and seen as the potentially best adoptive resource for a child who cannot return to his or her birth family.

Beginning in the late 1940s, adoption records were sealed. The idea was to protect all of the parties: the birth mother from the shame of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, the adoptive parents from the humiliation of infertility, and the child from the stigma of illegitimacy. But for all its good intentions, "confidentiality" in foster care and adoption had the unintended effect of isolating children from their extended families and communities.

Early standards for foster care and adoption tended to reflect the values and norms of the dominant culture and overlooked the strengths and resources available in communities—particularly communities of color. As a result, community responsibility and authority were diminished. Only in recent years have kinship care and community- and faith-based collaborations been reconsidered by government agencies as potential solutions for children who need out-of-home care.

The history of child welfare is mixed. It has tended to float from one absolute set of beliefs to another, from one approach to the next—just as a pendulum swings. However, if we have learned nothing else, we know that human beings were not meant to be alone. No child can thrive without a sense of belonging—which can only be found in families and communities.

A CASE FOR COLLABORATION

On any given day in the United States, some 532,000 of America's children will need a foster or adoptive family to care for them. The majority of these children are survivors of abuse and neglect, often the casualties of their parents' poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, incarceration, violence, illness, or death. Children stay in foster care an average of three years, with an average of three different placements, though many stay until they "age out" at 18, and some move a dozen times or even more. The average age of the 129,000 children waiting for adoption is eight or older. Nearly 50 percent of waiting children are African American. African American and Latino children stay in the system much longer than Caucasian children and are less likely to return home or be adopted. Many of the children in foster care are members of sibling groups who may be separated from their brothers and sisters when they enter care. These are the children who, all too often, have become isolated from their communities.

Many child welfare professionals feel overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the problem. High caseloads make it difficult for them to give individual children the attention and services they need.

We know that children need families. But where are the families?

Stop in at the Greater Faith Community Church on Wesley Street in Brownwood, Texas, any Sunday morning. You'll find families there—singing and shouting praise, offering what they have for the collection plate, laughing and talking and hugging one another when the prayer service is over.

Or come visit Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station, Virginia any Friday night or Saturday morning—where even the toddlers of this intergenerational congregation are learning to recite the Hebrew prayers—where eyes well up when a 13-year-old boy, with cracking voice, celebrates his Bar Mitzvah with his entire temple family.

> "If you want families, go where the families are. *Go to church!*"
>
> *—Bishop Aaron C. Blake*
> *Pastor, Greater Faith Community Church,*
> *CEO, Harvest Family Life Ministry*
> *Brownwood, Texas*

Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship are where families congregate. They are gathering places, the lifeblood of every community. And when we, in child welfare, share the children's stories with congregations and their leaders, they share our sense of outrage and grief—and resolve.

Faith communities have the potential to be a center of caring and hope for children who have suffered neglect, abuse, and disappointment. And they can support the families who take on the challenge of parenting children who need extra care and attention.

Some of the qualities a faith community can bring:

- People within a congregation share the same belief system and values. Their shared faith experience can provide comfort and support to families in times of crisis.
- Congregations provide an extended family network. Foster and adoptive families often need that support, especially when they are raising children with serious physical, emotional, and/or behavioral problems.
- Children in the child welfare system desperately need to feel a sense of belonging and connection. They can find that sense as a member of a family and a congregation.
- Families recruited through their religious institutions often come to see foster care and adoption as a way of living out their faith, answering a calling, and making a difference in the world.
- In addition to needing a strong community of people to support them, adoptive families sometimes need crisis-intervention services. A church or synagogue can provide a safe, familiar setting for counseling and other professional services, thereby increasing the likelihood that families in crisis will seek out the help they need.

Increasingly, child welfare organizations are working to provide services that are both family-centered and community-based. Faith-based institutions are vital community assets, already playing a significant role in the lives of children and families.

To be effective, child welfare professionals need to recognize that

faith, religion, spirituality, and community life are significant dimensions of human experience and can have a powerful influence on people's well-being. Connecting disenfranchised children and their families to their communities—including communities of faith—is a very good place to begin helping them. When faith communities and social service agencies combine their talents, resources, and commitment to address a common mission, they can begin changing the lives of children.

Example from the field: ***Bennett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church***

In 1997, the grieving wife of a southern Baptist minister prayed for an end to the pain she felt over her mother's death. The answer to her prayers came in a single, unexpected word: "adoption."

Bennett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church—a 200-member congregation in Possum Trot, Texas—would never be the same again. Donna Martin, wife of Reverend W. C. Martin, signed up for state-run classes to become a licensed foster parent. She soon learned of two children, a brother and a sister, who needed a home. At the ages of three and five years old, they'd already been in nine foster homes, branded "too tough to handle."

Not for the Martins. They showered the children with hugs and affirmation, telling them over and over again that they were wanted and needed and loved. It wasn't long before the siblings began to blossom. Other church members witnessed their transformation and wanted to know how they could foster, too. But the 120-mile round trip to Dallas to attend classes was a hardship for many of the congregation's working families. The Martins struck a deal with a state supervisor in the foster care program: If they could get at least ten Bennett Chapel families to sign up, the state would come to conduct the classes in Possum Trot. Twenty-three families showed up. Eighteen of them eventually fostered. To date, 100 children—most of them from a background of abuse and neglect—have found homes with Bennett Chapel families. Of those, more than 80 have been adopted.

The presence of the children has changed the church's personality. Today, the congregation is infused with a spirit of joy, energy, and boisterousness. "This isn't our doing," says Reverend Martin. "This was already ordained, in God's divine plan for us." Now he hopes to spread the word to other churches so they, too, will "catch the vision."

12 PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR AGENCIES

Collaborations between faith-based organizations and social service agencies require a whole new approach to partnership.

All effective partnerships arise out of a common purpose and are built on foundations of trust, openness, and mutual respect. But a faith-based collaboration may also require its partners to overcome fundamental differences in leadership and decision-making protocol, values, rituals, and cultural orientation. Successful partnerships acknowledge and tolerate these differences and work together to build on the strengths of both organizations.

From interviews and focus groups, the authors identified 12 principles to guide practice. They are:

1 Visionary and committed leadership

Collaborative agency leaders show commitment through word and deed. They feel strongly that their organization must become "of the community." They help to make and maintain connections with faith leaders; engage in necessary planning; commit sufficient resources to the program; and assign and support staff who have shown interest, competency, and passion for the work.

2 Shared mission

Successful collaborations find common ground in the respective missions of the partners and create synergy by acting upon that common ground. In child welfare, the mission is to improve the safety, well-being, and permanency outcomes for children and families. Both partners think beyond recruiting resource parents to the potential long-term gains for children and families, which may include emotional and spiritual healing, life-long support, and a sense of belonging to a caring community.

3 Commitment to shared decision-making

The public and/or private social service agency must be willing to give up some of its power and control and be prepared to invest more resources into the partnership than it can reasonably expect in return. Public agencies are accustomed to taking the lead in collaborations because of their legal, funding, and monitoring responsibilities. In a faith-based partnership, the religious institution may take the lead. Either way, child welfare

administrators should identify in advance which policies are strictly non-negotiable and prepare to be flexible and creative with most other decisions and practices.

4 Commitment to reciprocity

The social service agency must be prepared and willing to commit resources and services to the faith community. Reciprocity is a key element of the partnership. It can be tempting to look to the religious institution as a supplier of resources that can help accomplish the work of the agency. Successful child welfare collaborators adopt a different orientation. They come to think of themselves as having the responsibility to also be a resource for the religious institution. It is important to define a common mission and then to talk about ways that the agency can support the congregation and its members.

5 Responsiveness to protocol

Agency leaders and staff must seek to understand and respect the rituals, protocol, and culture of their partnering faith community. The agency must honor the unique role of faith and spirituality in people's lives, the significance of ritual as instrumental in living one's faith, and, above all, the symbolic authority of religious institutions and their spiritual leaders in the community. To engage with a community of faith, the agency leader and/or staff person must gain appropriate entrée, follow protocol, and participate in some important events, congregational services, and other activities of the religious institution.

"It comes down to trust. In the African American community, the church is the authority. For example, African American seniors are more likely to believe what they hear from the pulpit than what they hear from their doctor. If it comes from the pulpit, it's the gospel. If the doctor says it, it's negotiable."

—Reverend Sharon Washington
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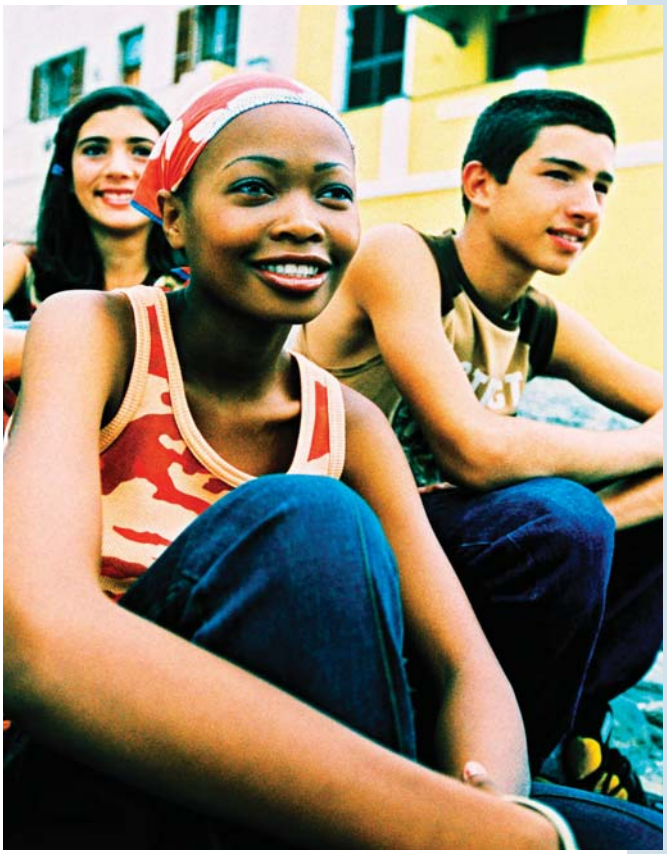
6 Cultural responsiveness

Since African American and Hispanic/Latino children are disproportionately represented in foster care throughout the nation, many of the emerging faith-based partnerships will be with African American and Hispanic/Latino congregations. Child welfare and faith leaders will have to acknowledge and address cultural, sexual orientation, racial, and ethnic differences, including language. Social service agencies also need to understand the reputation of their agency in the community, and be aware of any history that could predispose the community to mistrust the agency in particular or government in general. So these partnerships need to be approached with sensitivity and genuine humility.

7 Realistic expectations

It is important to enter into this relationship with realistic expectations. Typically, there are very limited volunteer resources within a given faith community, and those that do exist are spread very thin. Many congregations that minister to the poor and mostly urban populations may have a strong commitment to the children and families in need, but have fewer resources and volunteers to contribute to the partnership. It is important to recognize the strengths of these organizations and build additional resources into the partnership from the very beginning.



8 Accountability

The social service agency needs to be prepared to shoulder much of the burden of accountability for outcomes

in the partnership. From the very beginning, it is important to delineate the responsibilities of the agency and faith leaders, the paid staff, and the volunteers. The way families are treated will ultimately make or break the partnership. Therefore, it is important to establish solid policies and procedures for responding to inquiring families, to follow through in a timely way, and to keep promises. Likewise, the partnership must establish systems for record-keeping, financial accounting, reporting, and evaluation.

9 Sense of urgency

The agency staff should bring a sense of urgency to the partnership but should not expect the congregation to share the same sense of urgency when it comes to volunteer activity and actions. Staff will need to accommodate congregational schedules—including delays and changes—and respect that volunteers have many other responsibilities and priorities that will compete with the time they can allocate to this project. It is essential that staff exercise good judgment and be accountable but also assume a very patient stance with volunteers.

10 Strengths-based approach

Communities of faith have unique characteristics that are not present in the secular agency or government organization. In fact, each

"A pastor might tell you: 'We sponsor a church in Mexico,' or 'We do a food bank—we don't do foster care.' That's why you have to biblically establish what God said about the children ... If I show you an 8-year-old child whose mother is incarcerated, whose father sexually abused her .. and she lives a block away .. is she the responsibility of the state? Or is she the responsibility of the church? When the children become ours, then we can do something to help them."

—Bishop Aaron C. Blake
Pastor, Greater Faith Community Church
CEO, Harvest Family Life Ministry
Brownwood, Texas

partner brings something to the collaboration that the other partner needs. Partners should focus on the strengths found in both the agency and the faith-based organization, including the strengths that staff and volunteers bring to the effort.

11 Commitment to serve children in out-of-home care

Many agencies view faith-based partnerships primarily as an opportunity to find and serve foster and adoptive families. However, many innovations can occur when the partnership tries new ways to engage waiting children both living within the faith community (for example, children in kinship care) and those who are living in foster homes or residential facilities. Some foster and adoptive parents have noted a "complete turn-around" in formerly depressed and isolated children once they become involved in congregational life. The potential of faith partnerships for improving a child's self-esteem, well-being, and sense of belonging is enormous. These changes can enhance a child's adjustment in care, making it more likely that his or her foster parents will consider adoption. Likewise, the child's visibility in the congregation may increase the chances of a placement occurring within the faith community. As the child's extended congregational family gets to know him or her, the chances of adoption may naturally increase.

12 Innovation and continuous learning

Faith community partnerships are challenging, but they also provide an agency with many opportunities to move its work into the community and to be innovative. This work must start with an assessment of the agency's strengths and vulnerabilities and its willingness to take risks and make commitments to move into a zone of uncertainty. This is not business as usual. Continuous self-examination on the part of the agency can lead to a more effective organizational culture, especially when the agency is open to those teachable—and sometimes painful—moments that add value and hope to the work.

This work is not for the "faint of heart." It is not easy. It is unpredictable. It requires long-term commitment and persistence and a willingness to learn from the faith community. And, many times, it takes practitioners into completely uncharted territory.

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SECTION II

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COLLABORATION

Opportunities to collaborate with faith communities come along in different ways, in varying forms, and often when least expected. There are many examples throughout this Guidebook of a pastor, or faith leader, or member of a faith community reaching out to an agency to express interest in serving children in the child welfare system. These contacts usually come as a result of a personal experience—several actually adopted children themselves—and the conviction that more can be done for children through their faith community.

Sometimes the idea for faith-based partnering is brought to agency leadership by a committed staff person who reaches out to a particular congregation to serve a particular child on his or her caseload.

The idea can start with a grant opportunity, a governor's initiative, or a state legislator's advocacy.

More and more, however, state agency leaders see community- and faith-based partnerships as a viable way to find more resource families—especially in targeted and child-specific recruitment efforts. Many agencies are actively seeking new ways to find resource families for the children whose needs are the most challenging—for example, older children, sibling groups, and children of color. This need has been highlighted as a diligent recruitment issue through the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process.

No matter how the opportunity for a partnership originates, it has become increasingly clear that building and sustaining collaborative relationships is a developmental process that can be learned and repeated. Like all relationships, every collaboration is unique. But certain principles and stages can be generalized, and should help agencies get started.

Defining collaboration

Collaboration has many definitions, but for the purpose of discussing collaborations with faith-based organizations, the following definition is suggested:

A *collaborative* is a voluntary, strategic association of individuals and/or organizations joined together to enhance each other's capacity to achieve a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities, and rewards.

Some potential benefits of collaboration

Well-executed collaborations between child welfare agencies and faith communities can result in mutual benefits for the organizations as well as for the families and children they serve. Collaborations can:

- Strengthen the missions and commitment of both organizations
- Enhance each organization's body of knowledge and skills through exchange of information and experiences
- Deepen understanding of issues
- Build stronger relationships at all levels between organizations
- Allow for more effective use of limited resources
- Increase both organizations' capacity to provide a more comprehensive array of services to children and families

Some potential barriers to collaboration

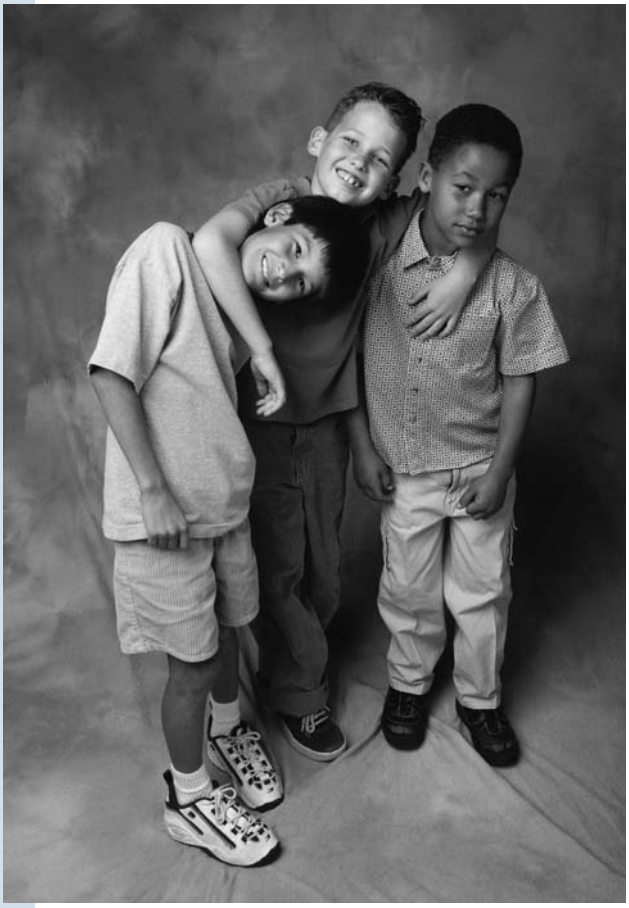
Although collaboration can be very effective, there are many potential barriers that may stand in the way. These issues cannot be underestimated or ignored in exploring and constructing effective collaborative agreements. These are:

- Incompatible beliefs and values and/or methods
- Negative history of relationships with social service agencies
- Limited resources
- Fear that accepting funding or resources will make participation mandatory—not voluntary
- Fear of losing autonomy and control of the organization
- Fear of bureaucratization of procedures
- Fear of losing flexibility and creativity
- An organizational culture and/or a leader's personality that works against collaboration
- Technical complexity
- Geographical complexity
- Lack of mutual respect, understanding, and trust

- Perceived incompetence of partnering agencies or individuals
- Questions of credibility and reputation
- Questions of cultural or faith competence
- Fear of exploitation

These issues—and others—can be a source of unspoken uneasiness and hesitation during early conversations between agency and faith leaders. One child welfare administrator calls them "the elephant in the living room." These concerns must be acknowledged and dealt with before a collaborative effort can move forward.

The following concerns (paraphrased here) were identified by several faith leaders surveyed for this Guidebook as common perceptions and misgivings in communities of faith:



- *If the government comes into my church, it will impose restrictions on me that may compromise the integrity of the Word.*
- *Faith-based organizations don't want to partner with the state because they don't want to be controlled by the state or beholden to the state.*
- *Social workers remove children from their homes and communities.*
- *The government agency approach to relationships is very different from the faith-based approach to relationships. The government approach is not always "user-friendly."*
- *Agencies are too bureaucratic. We don't want to go through all that red tape.*
- *Social service agencies*

just want to use us so they can qualify for faith-based initiative grant money.

- *The last time the government wanted to talk to us, they were doing a study about black families being dysfunctional.*
- *If I accept your offers of help or money, will I be selling my soul to the devil? (What do you really want?)*

For their part, private and public agencies may hesitate to partner with faith communities. Their perceptions and misgivings may include:

- *You can't count on volunteers. They come and go and are unreliable.*
- *Church people won't understand state regulations and protocols and it will be too hard to get them to do the required paperwork.*
- *This work really needs to be done by professionals.*
- *We won't be able to control what they say—too unpredictable.*
- *This partnership could be seen as a violation of the separation of church and state.*
- *If we partner with a church, they will proselytize and try to put a religious spin on everything.*
- *If a faith organization is interested in partnering with us, it is probably just for the money they think they will get.*
- *Churches don't see foster care and adoption as a priority.*

"Can you do it without an agency? No. Can you do it without a church? No. You need the collaboration ... In every collaboration, there's always give and take. My agency needs to bend and flex in order to meet the church in the middle. Likewise, his church (Bishop Aaron Blake's) has been flexible to meet us. Why? Because the mission was important enough to move people out of their places of comfort to a place of discomfort—for the good of the kids."

—Michael Redden
Executive Administrator, New Horizons Residential Treatment Center
Goldthwaite, Texas

Assets of Each of the Collaborating Partners—Figure A

What communities of faith can bring to the table:	What agencies can bring to the table:
■ Families (including prospective foster and adoptive families) who are readily accessible on a weekly basis	■ Children who are available for foster care and adoption
■ Volunteers	■ Orientation and training for families and staff
■ Meeting rooms for orientations, trainings, support groups, etc.	■ Information on agency requirements, standards, and practices
■ Settings for counseling, tutoring, and other one-on-one services	■ Case management, before and after placement
■ A faith community of love, concern, and shared values	■ Coordination of pre-placement and placement services, including home study, family preparation and assessment, paperwork required for licensing, etc.
■ A spiritual leader whom the families know and trust	■ Coordination of post-adoption services, including counseling, support groups, tutoring, after school activities, respite care, etc.
■ An extended spiritual family for help and support in times of crisis	■ On-going training and technical assistance to the faith-based organization
■ Support and nurturing for the families and children throughout the foster care/adoption process	■ Funding and/or fund raising expertise
■ A safe environment for children to heal and families to grow	■ Established relationships with funding sources, including government, corporations, and foundations
■ Community leaders who have corporate, business, and foundation contacts	■ Programs that can best be funded and delivered in a community setting
■ Interest in developing social ministries and finding resources for them	
■ Insights into the needs, hopes, and fears of the community	

What each partner can bring to the table

Despite the challenges inherent in faith partnerships, the potential combined assets of such partnerships can far outweigh the struggle involved in building the relationship. **Figure A** details some of the possible attributes each partner can bring to the table.

Multiple levels and organizational strategies for collaboration

Collaboration between child welfare staff/agencies and communities of faith must occur at several levels. **Figure B** and the accompanying explanations illustrate these levels.

Continuum of Collaboration—Figure B

Work Alone ——— **Full Partnership**

LEVEL 1
Single event/case situation

- Worker/team approaches faith-based organization to assist with a specific case and/or the faith community is already involved with a family
- Organizations function separately
- Communication as needed
- No joint planning required
- Resources separate

LEVEL 2
Coordinated events

- Compatible mission and goals
- Relationships supported by individual organizations
- Event-specific planning
- Established communication channels
- Some shared leadership and risk
- Some shared resources
- Mutual credit

LEVEL 3
Joint venture

Same as "Coordinated events" plus

- Sharing and/or lending resources to achieve outcomes

LEVEL 4
Formalized collaboration

- Shared purpose
- Longer-term projects
- Formal organizational structure
- Comprehensive joint planning
- Many levels of communication
- Project administrative control is shared and/or delegated to designated coordinator
- Shared risk
- Pooled resources
- Organizations share credit and celebrate results

Level 1—Single event/individual case situation

There are many wonderful examples of child welfare workers reaching out to a faith community or its leader to interest them in becoming involved in helping individual children and families. Through family group conferencing, mediation, family-centered practice, and other relatively new child welfare methodologies, a faith leader or member of a congregation might be involved as an advocate or member of a family's circle of support. Likewise, some child welfare workers have reached out to their own or a client family's faith community to seek help placing an individual child or sibling group, often with very positive results. Also, many communities of faith are supporting foster and adoptive families on an everyday basis, without the knowledge of the child welfare agency.

Level 1 involvement of faith-based organizations with adoption and fostering is happening informally every day in America and such stories are important, rich, and give us hope for the potential of more established child

welfare agency/faith community partnerships.

Many of the principles included in this Guidebook are useful for individual child welfare workers, faith community leaders and members, and families who may be involved in recruiting and/or supporting families in faith communities at Level 1. However, the Guidebook content in Section II is more deliberately geared to strategically planned partnerships that could be initiated by the agency or the faith-based organization.

Level 2—Coordinated events

In Level 2, an agency, recruitment unit, or individual might approach a faith community to hold a single recruitment event, make a single presentation, or conduct recruitment activities at a congregational function. These relationships are usually short-term or for the duration of the event or function and usually do not involve the agency's upper management nor require enduring commitments from either party.

Level 3—Joint venture

In Level 3, the characteristics of Level 2 are present, but, in addition, there is a request to make presentations to the congregation or assembly, to have the faith leader make such presentations, and/or to use the congregation's facilities to hold a community recruitment event.

Level 4—Formalized collaboration

In Level 4, there are an established, ongoing project and relationship that stem from a shared mission and purpose. In these intentional and planned partnerships, there are shared goals, objectives, and strategies that involve members of both organizations working together over time.

Example from the field: ***Personal reflection***

Recently while traveling, we had the good fortune of sitting next to a handsome young couple in the airport. They were obviously very much in love and we were touched by the aura about them. We began some small talk. Much to our surprise they said they were on their vacation and leaving their nine children at home with grandma. Clearly, they were not a typical American family.

As we quietly shared our work in adoption and foster care, they unfolded their story. First, they told us they were people of faith. They gave birth to four children. They were in the process of building a new home, when about four years ago they learned about a sibling group of five children who were available for adoption. The children's ages ranged from 7 to 13 when placed, and they had very special needs because of the type of abuse they had experienced. Through prayer and the support of their church, the couple decided to adopt the sibling group. Since then, church members have helped them build an addition on their house and have provided respite care, transportation, and financial contributions. The couple said they feel supported and helped every day by their church, no matter what new challenge or adventure their family faces.

With the help of their "faith inspired" support system, they are coping well and with a tremendous sense of humor. They told us about their successes and their challenges; for example, their 15-year-old son was just suspended indefinitely from school because of inappropriate behavior, despite the fact that he was able to go from failing to mostly A's academically. They have truly "claimed" their "great kids" and so has their faith community, and they seem prepared and rightfully concerned about the challenges ahead. They adopted almost four years ago and are still very optimistic and are people of contagious faith. They proudly showed us their family picture. They look like they always belonged together.

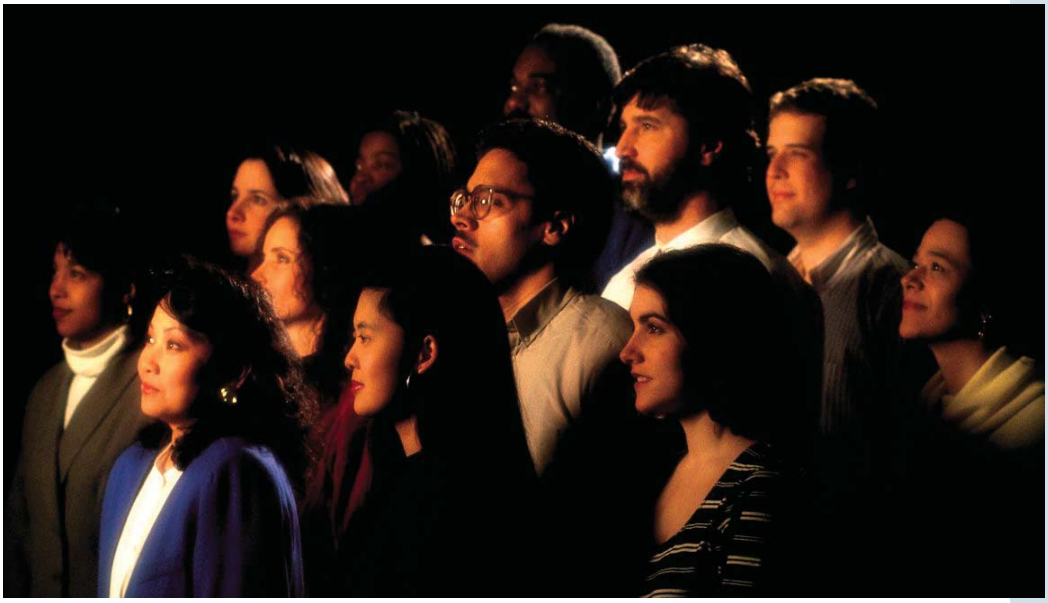
—Judith K. McKenzie
Past CEO, Spaulding for Children
(retired)

FINDING COMMON GROUND

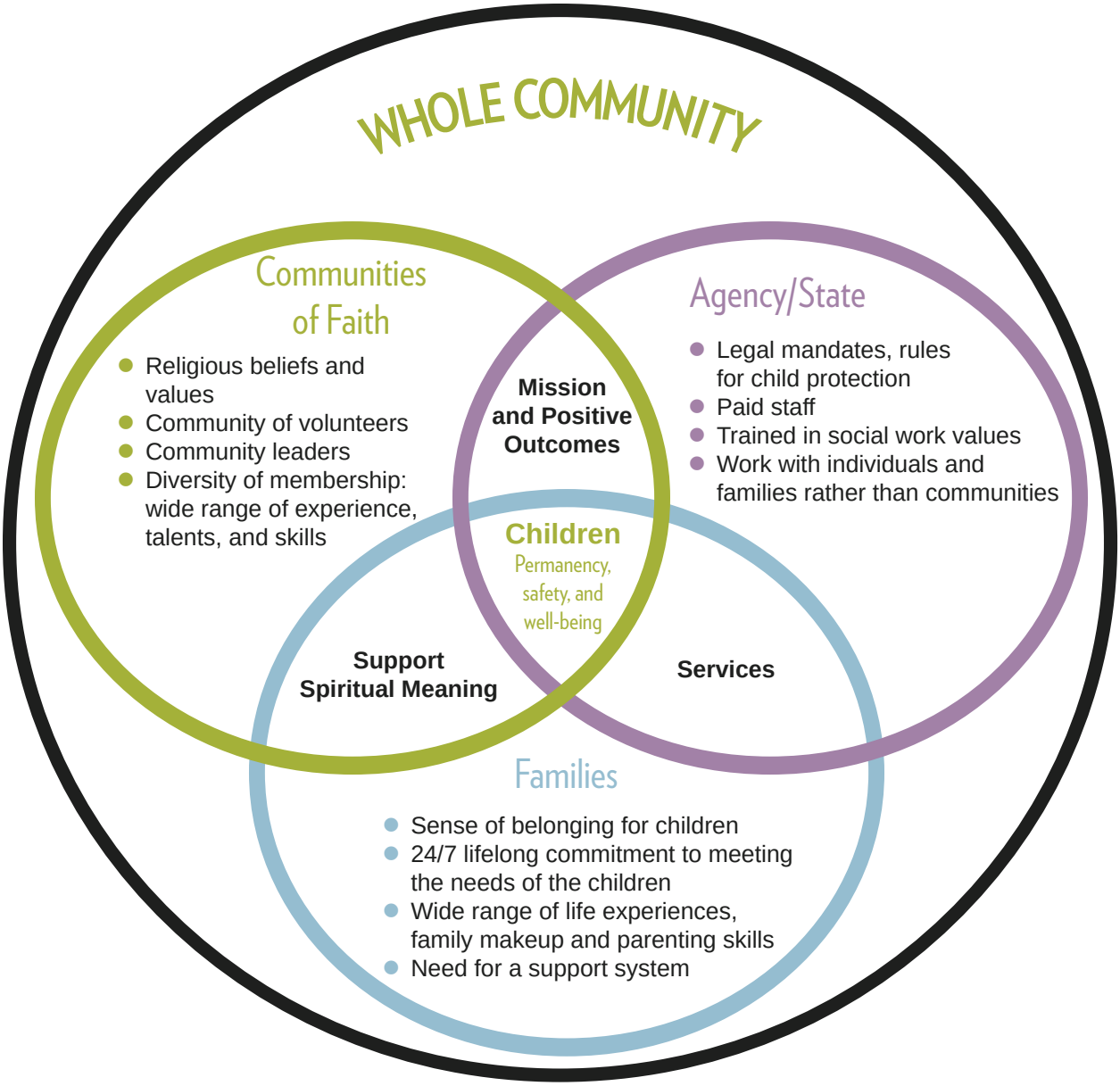
Faith-based collaborations are dynamic—so dynamic, in fact, that the process is difficult to capture on paper. The best we can do is to offer a circle analogy. In Native American spirituality, the circle represents life. When you throw a pebble in a pond, you find the center of a circle: you find where the circle begins and when it hits the shore, where it ends. But then a new circle begins and so on.

Effective collaborations also happen in stages or sometimes in ripples or waves with an overlapping of domains as illustrated in **Figure C**. The three circles in the illustration represent three distinct entities (communities of faith, child welfare agencies, and families), all with their own separate priorities and characteristics but linked by certain common attributes. The illustration shows potential areas of difference, highlighting the fact that the entities have different beliefs, different cultures, different strengths, and different structures. Where the circles intersect is where the entities come together on common ground.

The differences can help reinforce the strengths of the other partner but can also lead to conflict. It is important to understand the implications of these differences and to minimize any conflict they may cause. The key is to find the common ground—in this case, a concern for the permanency, safety, and well-being of children—and to maximize that common ground.



Finding Common Ground – Figure C



The Process of Building

FAITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The process of developing faith community partnerships to achieve the circular alignment described above has been conceptualized as eight overlapping stages of development. Each stage will bring various aspects of the circles into play. This construct is offered as guidance, not to be mistaken for absolute steps to follow sequentially. In fact, many of these processes will be going on simultaneously in the partnership. The stages are derived from interviews and lessons learned from agency and faith community leaders who have actively participated in the creation and implementation of these partnerships. The stages of this journey are as follows:

1 **Making decisions and preliminary plans**—ensuring high level agency commitment; assessing the agency's capacity; preparing the agency to do the work.

2 **Doing the homework**—finding the right fit between and among the partnering organizations.

3 **Developing relationships and commitments with faith leaders**—finding common ground with the faith community leaders and making mutual commitments.

4 **Engaging the faith community**—becoming a presence in the faith community; informing the membership about the children's needs; earning trust and respect.

5 **Implementing recruitment activities**—planning and implementing activities to recruit new families; supporting families through the agency licensing and approval process.

6 **Supporting children and families**—offering ongoing support to resource families, birth families, and their children; connecting the agency's children with the congregation's youth programs.

7 **Celebration and reflection**—celebrating successes, evaluating progress, and documenting lessons learned.

8 **Sustaining and expanding the collaboration**—maintaining ongoing communication and attending to the partnership; finding and sharing resources to sustain these efforts over time.

Each of these stages is described in detail in Section II of this Guidebook. Each stage is organized as follows:

- Checklist of what happens at each stage
- What agencies do to get best results
- What outcomes to look for at each stage

On this journey—and it is a journey, not a destination—there are many pathways. Agencies can start anywhere on the path, but somewhere along the way, the stages of development will need to be visited and, sometimes, re-visited. The stages are intended to be used as guideposts.

Stage 1

MAKING DECISIONS AND PRELIMINARY PLANS

Checklist of what happens at Stage 1:

What the agency leadership does:

- ❑ Identifies the target group of children and families to be served by a faith-based collaboration.
- ❑ Decides whether a faith-based initiative is congruent with the agency's mission, values, and overall strategic plan.
- ❑ Assesses the agency's strengths and challenges that will either support or detract from the initiative.
- ❑ Identifies and commits the resources that are available to support the initiative and identifies any new resources that will need to be developed.
- ❑ Decides whether to purchase services from another agency, engage an independent contractor, hire new staff, or reorganize existing staff.
- ❑ Identifies what will be expected of current staff and develops a plan for internal communication, staff development, and reinforcing new expectations.

What agencies do to get best results:

- Be careful not to over-plan. Don't go in with a program that is already spelled out. Be prepared to develop the program in collaboration with the community of faith.
- Determine your agency's capacity to embrace a faith initiative. Facilitate (or engage someone to facilitate) an honest self-assessment process internally—for key personnel and the agency itself—to determine the agency's strengths, connections, and vulnerabilities in taking on a faith community project.
- Anticipate resistance and be prepared to address it.
- Consider staffing and scheduling implications. For example, in this new arena, practitioners may have to work evenings and weekends. In some collaborations, agency staff work out of the congregation's offices. Be sure that agency policies and individual situations will support these kinds of changes. Or, consider purchasing and/or contracting services.
- Identify people within the agency—staff members, board members, parents, affiliates—and outside of the agency who have strong ties to a particular community of faith. These connections may help agency leadership decide which congregations to approach, and could help the agency gain appropriate entrée when the time is right.

"I think every worker in every context is dealing with faith in practice. Our own value system, our own faith experience is part of how we respond to people, how we value people, how we think about the problems and the strengths they present to us. Being aware of my own faith experience—how that strengthens or challenges me, how that shapes my thinking and responses to people—that self-awareness is a professional responsibility on my part."

—Helen Harris, LMSW-ACP
Field Education Director, School of Social Work
Baylor University, Waco, Texas

- Talk to other administrators who have done this. Ask what worked, what didn't work, what they wish they had done differently.

- Think small. One agency cannot change the world. But one agency *can* improve the quality of life—one child at a time, one family at a time, one community at a time.

- Identify and involve all internal stakeholders (including staff, board members, advisory councils, resource parents, and others) to get their ideas, involvement, and commitment early on. In addition to shared ownership, this process may yield some unexpected connections and new relationships.

- Talk about the agency's plans and ideas, internally and externally. When leaders allow "faith" to become an open topic, they may discover that they have been surrounded by deacons, choir members, and Sunday school teachers, all along.

What outcomes to look for at Stage 1:

- Agency stakeholders (including staff, volunteers, resource parents, and others) have "bought in" to the idea of faith-based collaboration.
- Staff members know what is expected of them.
- The agency has started to prepare grant applications, RFPs, and contracts, as needed.
- The agency has made a fully informed decision to proceed.

"Since pre-slavery times—going all the way back to Africa—black people had always felt that it was the obligation of the tribe to take in homeless children. Amazingly enough, during slavery and Reconstruction, when family life was really disrupted—and even into the 1920s and '30s—the conviction of tribalism still remained. Practically speaking, what happened in neighborhoods (including the one that I grew up in) was that no child was ever left dangling. If there was sickness or some problem in the home or a death, people in the neighborhood automatically took those children in. That was just an obligation people felt toward the children.

"Then when the welfare state came in, particularly during the Depression years and afterward, African-Americans were told that the government would take over this responsibility .. and all of a sudden we were left with this terrible situation of thousands and thousands of children left to languish in institutions ...

"You can't really say that you love a child and let him languish out here in the street without a home. So the church has the moral authority and obligation to do something about this terrible problem. The onus is on the church. Every church has the obligation to reach out to homeless children."

—Father George Clements
Founder, One Church One Child

Example from the field: ***Bandele, Spaulding for Children***

By 1992, Spaulding for Children already had nearly 25 years' experience serving a predominantly African American population of children and families in Detroit. Spaulding's culturally diverse staff understood the significance and authority of the church in African American community life. Furthermore, the agency's recent experiences in developing the "Cultural Competence in Child Welfare" training curriculum helped lay the groundwork for engaging communities of faith.

The need was great, and the timing was right for Spaulding to initiate a community-based project with African American churches in Detroit to find and support families to adopt children in care. The initiative was called "Bandele," an African boy's name that means "follow me home."

It was clear from the beginning that this would not be business as usual.

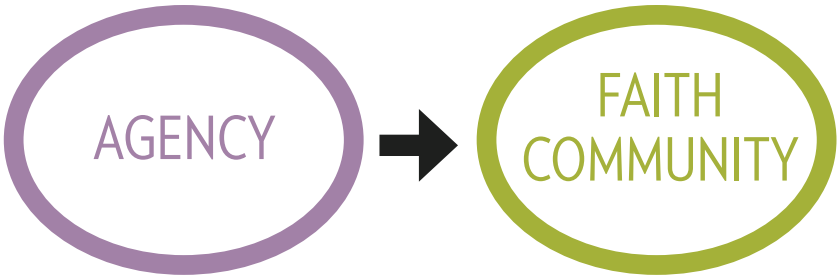
Staff members initiated the idea. Five of the agency's African American social workers and board members reached out to their own churches for preliminary "buy in" and quickly got five letters of support from their pastors. With a plan of action and stakeholder support already secured, Spaulding won a relatively small Adoption Opportunities grant to start the program.

Spaulding staff were assigned as coordinators for each of the partnering churches. Their role was to educate and work with the membership to plan recruitment events and later, to train and prepare prospective foster and adoptive families. One of the participating churches created an original stage play—"The Bandele Play"—which told the story of two boys waiting for adoption. Spaulding brought waiting children into the church community to participate in regular drama classes and then to appear as performers in the play. All of the participating children found permanent families through this effort.

A combination of factors—the pastor preaching the message, the agency presence in the church communities, and the participation of the children—created a synergy that moved families to action.

Stage 2

DOING THE HOMEWORK



Checklist of what happens at Stage 2:

What the agency leadership does:

- ❑ Identifies possible faith partners by starting with the needs of the children and families requiring service.
- ❑ Conducts extensive research to identify communities of faith whose mission, values, and priorities suggest possible interest in this type of initiative.
- ❑ Becomes familiar with the history, basic theology, and organizational structure of the denomination of any prospective faith partner.
- ❑ Explores possible connections to the faith community with agency stakeholders (persons internal and external to the agency).
- ❑ Identifies a cultural guide or guides—someone who can make necessary introductions to the faith community and its leader(s), teach protocol, and help the agency gain appropriate entrée into the particular community.
- ❑ Decides which faith community or communities to approach, identifies the individual who will make the approach, and develops a strategy for how the approach will be made.
- ❑ Prepares information about the agency's history, mission, accomplishments, and values, as well as compelling information about the children and families being served.

What agencies do to get best results:

- As you plan, be aware that the spiritual leader of any congregation you approach must support the initiative if it is going to succeed.

- Be realistic. Congregations have their own missions and priorities. The more closely you can align your agency's goals with these missions and priorities, the more likely you will be to succeed at building an effective partnership.

- Find a "cultural guide"—a member of the congregation or the affiliated faith community who is a well-respected insider and can help you navigate the culture of the congregation. Keep in mind, this person does not have to hold a formal leadership position to be influential in the congregation and community. Find someone the people respect.

- When seeking out a cultural guide, start with the familiar—staff, friends of staff, foster and adoptive parents in your agency, personal acquaintances—anyone who can help the agency gain insight (and, later, entrée) into the congregation or congregations of interest.

- Ask to make presentations to ministerial alliances or other groups to share information and to identify prospective faith partners.

- Conduct research. Libraries, the Internet, the local newspaper's community calendar, even the phone book can provide

"I would try to find someone well-respected in that denomination who knows church etiquette and protocol. In the Baptist church, that might be one of the 'church mothers' .. the women who are wise and get things done. Or I might call up and ask if there is a 'first lady' [pastor's wife] and invite her to tea or lunch."

—Sharen E. Ford
Manager, Permanency Services,
Division of Child Welfare Services
Colorado Department of Human Services

a wealth of information about the history, mission, and activities of area congregations. Many congregations publish newsletters and sponsor websites. These sources offer a lot of information about a congregation's outreach programs, commitments, and focus. Congregations whose programs focus on families and children are good prospects for this kind of collaboration. Thoroughness at this stage will help to determine "goodness of fit."

- Find out how decisions are made. Be aware that there are formal and informal groups within a congregation. In addition to an official board of trustees (or board of deacons, or vestry, or some other structure, depending upon the denomination), most congregations also have service organizations such as ladies' auxiliaries, brotherhood and sisterhood groups, missionary societies, education committees, and other groups that can be extremely influential.

- Learn the history of the particular congregation you are considering. Was it established to welcome one of the community's immigrant groups? Did it originally serve a downtrodden community? Did it play a role in the civil rights movement or a particular war effort? Does it run a food bank? A child care center? Is it engaged in community development? What are its members proud of?

- Select a congregation that seems like a good religious and/or cultural match for the particular children your agency is serving.

- Get a feel for the role of the congregation in the community. For example, some congregations are community hubs. Families may be involved in congregational activities every day of the week, including Bible study, religious school, choir rehearsal, and social events, as well as worship services. Some congregations function as an extended family, with the faith leader and his or her spouse at the head of that family. When people

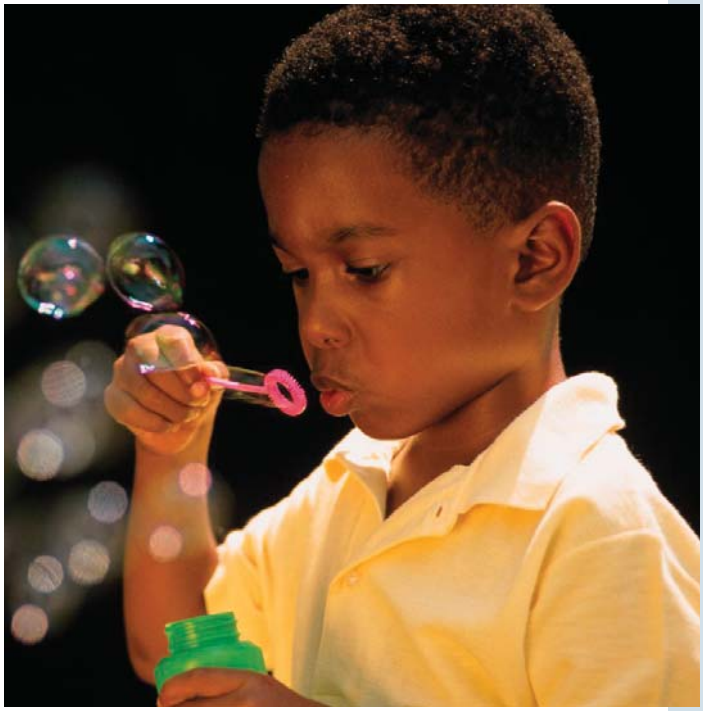
say, "I raised my children in the church," they may literally mean that the church served as a surrogate family.

- Find out where members live. Do they drive in from elsewhere or do they live in the neighborhood? Walk the streets around the congregation and feel the pulse. Eat at a local restaurant. Shop at a local grocery store. Attend a service or community function at the congregation.

- Try to identify foster and adoptive families within the congregation who may have a special interest in helping get the word out. Experienced families can be great allies in a recruitment effort. Keep in mind that some of the families being served by your agency may belong to one of the congregations you are interested in approaching.

- Be prepared with statistics, pictures, stories about the children in care, and the need for foster and adoptive families. Make it personal. Talk about specific children. Describe their life experiences.

- Prepare a brief overview of the agency—its history, mission, accomplishments, capacities, and even some of its frustrations.



What outcomes to look for at Stage 2:

- The agency has identified the congregation(s) it wants to approach and has selected the agency representative (or possibly a clergyperson with whom the agency has worked) who will make the approach.
- The agency has researched the denomination in general and the congregation in particular to determine "goodness of fit."
- The agency has identified a "cultural guide" who can make necessary introductions and teach relevant protocol.

Example from the field: ***One Church, One Child***

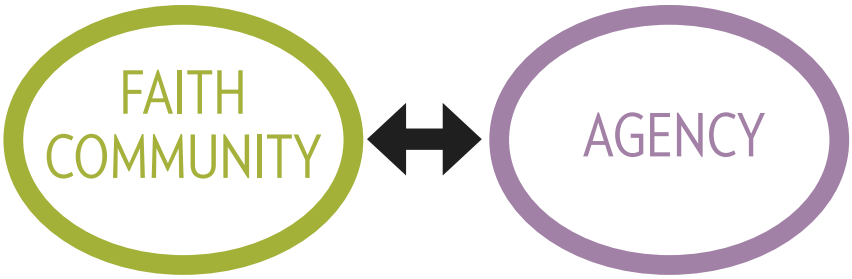
Faith-based recruitment programs can be initiated by a child welfare agency or a community of faith, or both. There is no established "rule" for who makes the first move. And the collaboration between agency and church is not necessarily the first step in the process of faith-based recruitment. Sometimes the partnership develops after a program is already underway. In the case of One Church, One Child, what one man started in his own household spread to his church, his community, and the nation.

One Church, One Child—founded by African American Catholic Priest Father George Clements—has been replicated across the nation 30 times since its inner-city Chicago inception in 1980. Responding to a veritable epidemic of African American children in the child welfare system, Father Clements and Gregory Coler (then director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services) put their heads and hearts together to address the problem. They decided that Clements' parish, Holy Angels, should serve as a prototype for recruiting adoptive families for African American foster children through the African American church. If their experiment worked, they would challenge other African American churches to find at least one family per church to adopt a child.

But first, Father Clements himself made national headlines (and Catholic history) by adopting sons—with the Pope's blessing. Four months later, 69 parish families, following Clements' example, had adopted children of their own. In the organization's first 25 years, 140,000 African American children found permanent homes through One Church, One Child organizations throughout the country.

Stage 3

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMITMENTS WITH FAITH LEADERS



Checklist of what happens at Stage 3:

What the agency leadership does:

- ❑ Meets with the leader or leaders of targeted faith communities to make a presentation and discuss the possibility of collaborating.

What the agency and faith leaders do together:

- ❑ Describe the mission, vision, and values of their organizations.
- ❑ Find common ground and a common purpose from which they define the mission of their collaboration.
- ❑ Acknowledge areas where common ground does not exist and "agree to disagree."
- ❑ Clarify those areas that are non-negotiable (i.e., the "deal breakers").
- ❑ Assess the resources available to the partnership, agree which entity will supply which resources, and decide which resources will still need to be developed.

- ❑ Decide how the program will be administered, who will coordinate the day-to-day activities, and which organization will take the lead.

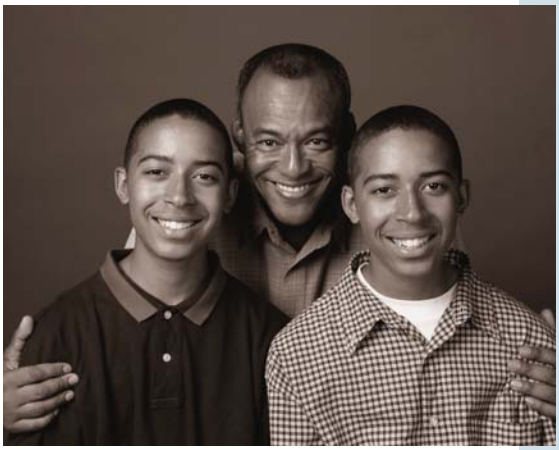
What agencies do to get best results:

- Understand in advance the role and authority of the faith community leader in making decisions in this community.
- Understand that the faith community leader and congregation must "buy in" to the spiritual mandate for the program.
- Gain appropriate entrée, preferably through a personal introduction. If you are making the contact on your own, call the clergyperson's secretary or assistant, or contact the associate clergy and briefly explain your program.
- Understand that priests, ministers, elders, and rabbis are busy. Their foremost concern is serving the needs of their congregation. Do not visit unannounced or expect an instant reply to a phone call or e-mail.
- Respect the faith community leader's privacy. Never try to corner a leader at a social or community event to ask something of him or her.
- Do not ask a faith leader to preach your message, or to incorporate your notes into his or her sermon, or to take up an offering for your cause.
- Avoid thinking of the congregation as an unending supply of free resources to meet your agency's needs. Rather, think of the agency

"There is a protocol for engaging any faith-based organization. You need to know that protocol. You cannot go in and say, 'I'm government, so I know everything.' Don't go in using your social work jargon, because churches have their jargon, too. You could lose each other in miscommunication. Just go in being up front and open and respectful. The language, to me, is respect."

—Sharen E. Ford
Manager, Permanency Services,
Division of Child Welfare Services
Colorado Department of Human Services

as a potential resource for the congregation. In that vein, ask not what the congregation can do for your agency; ask what your agency can do for the congregation.



- Remember to consider the informal organizations within the congregation. Find a group whose activities seem to focus on children and families. This group may be a viable first contact.

- Identify foster or adoptive parents within the congregation and establish a relationship with one or more of them. Experienced parents can be your greatest allies in recruitment.

- Identify fellow child welfare professionals or other social workers within the congregation or on staff. These are the people who "walk in both worlds" and can be great assets to you as you navigate the world of the congregation.

- Make contact, if possible, with some of the more influential and well-respected members of the congregation. They will know what day the clergyperson visits people in the hospital or meets with his ministerial alliance. They can advise you when the clergyperson prepares his or her sermon and should not be disturbed. They will tell you how to address the clergyperson, and even what to wear.

- Understand that if the clergyperson is interested in the collaboration, he or she will probably assign someone within the congregation to work with you.

- Address the clergyperson as he or she is addressed by the congregation. If in doubt, ask how he or she should be addressed. It is perfectly appropriate for a Christian visitor to a synagogue to address a rabbi as "Rabbi"; it is appropriate for a Jewish visitor to call a Catholic priest "Father," and so on.

- Keep in mind that a clergyperson is likely to reject any program that seems complicated, requires a lot of paperwork, or could cause discord or confusion among his or her flock.

- Do not tell a pastor what he or she should be doing—or what he or she has failed to do.

- Ask questions. Acknowledge your ignorance.

- Be prepared to educate your faith partner(s) about such social work values as confidentiality, client self-determination, informed consent, and the like.

- Consider identifying an intermediary. Many successful collaborations have found that it is helpful to find someone to serve as a coordinator and liaison between the two organizations. This is a person who knows both the language of the congregation and the language of child welfare—a person who can serve as translator, buffer, and go-between to help the groups understand one another. In some model collaborations, this person might be on the payroll of the child welfare agency, with an office at the congregation's building. Or, the person might be employed by the congregation (for example, as a youth pastor or social worker) and take on the role of coordinator for the recruitment effort with a subsidy from the agency. In yet another model, this person might be an independent agent, with allegiance to neither organization.

> "If you are an agency and you want to work with our church, we need to know: Do you respect and do you honor the theology? Do you respect and acknowledge and honor the covering and headship of that church? .. The agency and the state may have all the legal authority, but I have the authority of the Word."
>
> *—Bishop Aaron C. Blake*
> *Pastor, Greater Faith Community Church*
> *CEO, Harvest Family Life Ministry*
> *Brownwood, Texas*

What outcomes to look for at Stage 3:

- Commitment has been obtained from the clergyperson or other faith community leader to partner with the agency around a shared mission and goals.
- A plan which delineates the roles and responsibilities of the partners has been crafted and agreed upon.
- The faith leader has provided access to and/or has introduced staff or volunteers who will be responsible for the day-to-day work.
- The agency leader has identified and introduced key staff who will do the day-to-day work.
- Both leaders have given their assigned people their charge.

"Don't come in as the 'expert' before getting to know the community. Don't presume what they need. Come in as a student. Find out what they need."

—Reverend Lawrence T. Foster
Pastor, The Calvary Baptist Church
Detroit, Michigan

"This isn't just any old ministry. This is a unique ministry. This is about children. And it's about their children—it's about the community's children. People will take responsibility for this if you can get their ear."

—Mark Morris
Director, Help One Child
Los Altos, California

Example from the field: ***Harvest Family Life Ministry***

Harvest Family Life Ministry was born out of a three-hour lunch meeting between two passionate men: Aaron Blake, Pastor of Greater Faith Community Church of Brownwood, Texas, and Michael Redden, Executive Administrator of New Horizons, an area residential treatment facility. Both men were frustrated that so many children in foster care were slipping through the cracks in the child welfare system. Kids in care had become so invisible that even their school records were disappearing. Blake and Redden knew they had to do something.

Over lunch that day, they sketched out a plan to find permanent families for children. Redden had the kids; Blake had the families. Redden had the licensing authority; Blake had the authority of the Word. The courtship began.

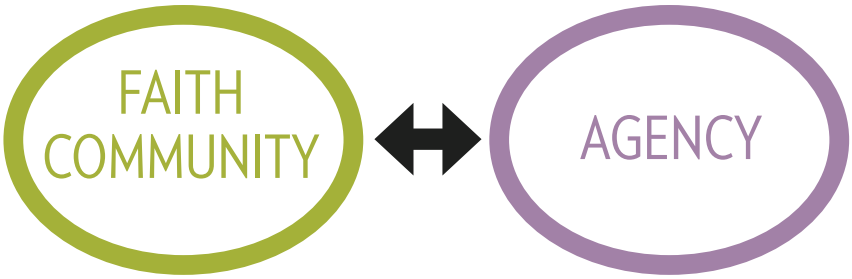
Soon, they formalized their collaboration with the creation of Harvest Family Life Ministry, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Its work began with a call from Pastor Blake's pulpit: "Who will take on the responsibility for helping hurting children?" he roared. "If you will answer the call, come to a meeting on Monday." Five families showed up. The following week, 17 families showed up. Three months later, some 28 families were involved with Harvest Family Life Ministries. Many had already completed their adoptions, with their children already participating fully in the life of the congregation.

But for all their success, they'd barely made a dent in the problem. The broader plan was to take their show on the road, presenting a model for other churches to replicate. In the Harvest model:

1. A two-person team from Harvest (one clergyman, one child welfare worker) visits with a selected pastor to explain the problem and program.
2. Harvest asks permission to make a presentation to that pastor's congregation the following week.
3. The pastor is asked to designate a person within his church to serve as a liaison between Harvest and the church. (This person will serve as an intermediary and coordinator for the recruitment program. Ideally, the partnership would be funded to pay this person's salary.)
4. Harvest arranges to take interested congregants to a residential treatment center to see real children, living with real pain, longing for real families.
5. Harvest follows up with a meeting of interested families. Those who make a commitment will continue to attend weekly meetings until they can be licensed to adopt.

Stage 4

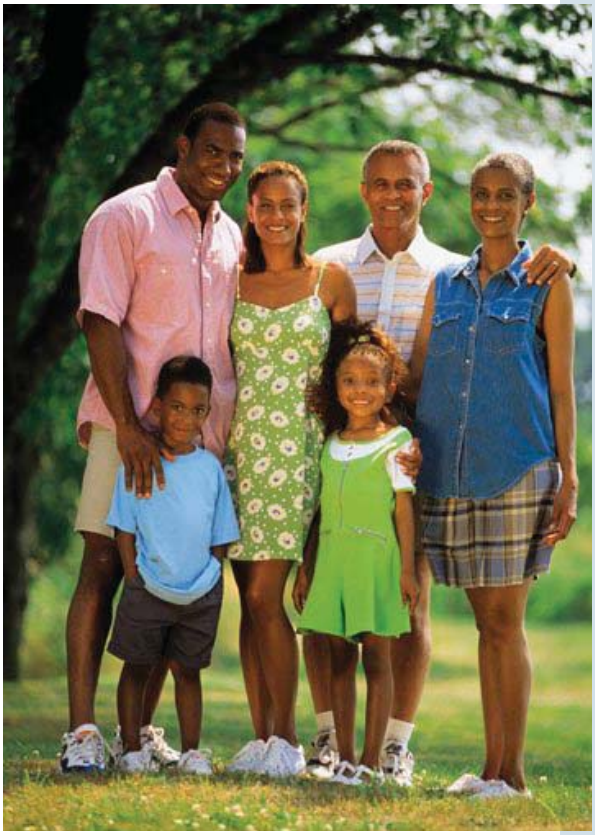
Engaging the Faith Community



Checklist of what happens at Stage 4:

What the agency leadership does:

- ❑ Communicates with staff and stakeholders about the partnership and how it will be implemented.
- ❑ Assigns agency staff and assures that they are trained and mentored in the protocol, culture, and organizational structure of this particular community of faith.



What the faith leader does:

- ❑ Assigns and introduces staff or volunteers to coordinate activities and act as liaison between the two organizations.
- ❑ Makes sure that the congregation's staff receive training and orientation in child welfare issues and understand the policies and procedures of the child welfare agency.

- ❑ Makes sure the congregation's staff and faith community members are fully informed about this child welfare initiative, how the congregation will be collaborating with the agency, and their respective roles in the collaboration.

What the partner's staff and volunteers do together:

- ❑ Develop a plan of action with staff and volunteers assigned to coordinate and implement the program.
- ❑ Make presentations to leaders, service groups, and/or committees within the community of faith, as requested.
- ❑ Bring stakeholders from both organizations to the table and form an advisory committee, if appropriate.
- ❑ Schedule presentations, orientation sessions, and recruitment events, working within the faith organization's calendar and operating procedures.

What agencies do to get best results:

- Early in the relationship, bring a committee or summit of key stakeholders to the table. At this table, ideally, would be the chief administrator of each lead organization (probably the two people who had the initial conversation), key personnel from both organizations who are likely to be involved in the collaboration, volunteer

> "If you really want to get to know us, show up to one of our dinners, come out and visit, become a part of the community. That makes a big difference ... Then, if you really want to work with us, make it so simple that all we have to do is say 'yes' and do it."
>
> *—Reverend Wilbert D. Talley*
> *Pastor, Third United Baptist Church*
> *Richmond, Virginia*

leadership, an intermediary who knows the language and culture of both entities, and at least one foster or adoptive family.

- Show respect and humility. When you visit a house of worship, demonstrate by your demeanor, your attire, and the spirit in which you come that you respect the institution and its spiritual leader. If you are attending a worship service, participate respectfully. You are not expected to pray or read responsively if you are not comfortable doing so, but you are expected to dress appropriately, you should rise when the congregation rises, and you may contribute something to the collection plate.

- Attend congregational services and functions to get to know and be known in the community.

- Plan a kick-off event or service, in which the members of the faith community are officially informed about the collaboration, and the partnership is symbolically sanctioned by congregational and agency leadership.

- When recruiting a coordinator or intermediary for your collaboration, consider hiring and training someone from within the congregation. This is a person who is already known to the community; it also demonstrates the agency's sincerity about involving and supporting the congregation.

Following protocol means ..

- Know whom to go to for specific decisions.
- Adapt to the faith community's schedule, style, and priorities.
- Learn how you should address specific people within the community.
- Know what to wear, under what circumstances.
- Participate respectfully in services, collections, and celebrations.

Keep in mind, every congregation is unique and will have its own protocol to learn and follow.

- Stay consistent. If the work of the collaboration has been delegated to someone other than the initial contact person, follow protocol in introducing that person to the community.

- Train and sensitize all staff who will come into contact with families and other members of the faith community—from the agency receptionist to top administrative staff.

- Always follow the community's protocol and lines of authority when scheduling presentations or events.

- Honor the theology of the faith-based institution. If you agree to partner with a congregation, be aware that theology, religious teachings, and prayer will be part of the process.

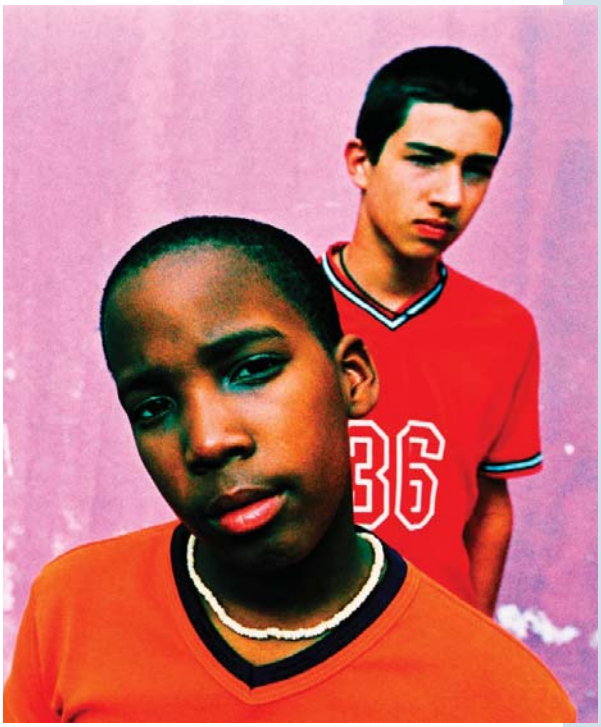
- Be flexible. In a faith-based recruitment program, your activities will most likely take place at the congregation, not at the agency. If most of the congregation's families work from nine to five, you will probably have to do your work from five to nine. Likewise, you will have to plan recruitment events, orientation sessions, trainings, and the like around the congregation's calendar.

- Consider dinner-hour training and orientation sessions to accommodate working families. Offer a light meal, babysitting services for the children of families attending the session, and other gestures of hospitality and welcome.

"I remember once I was invited to attend a Wednesday evening meeting of a men's group at an African American church. I wore a nice blazer and pants that would have been very acceptable for a weeknight meeting at my own church. The next day my staff told me I'd embarrassed them by dressing inappropriately for that community. I was upset, but understood it took a lot of courage for them to tell me this."

—Judith K. McKenzie
Past CEO, Spaulding for Children (retired)

What outcomes to look for at Stage 4:



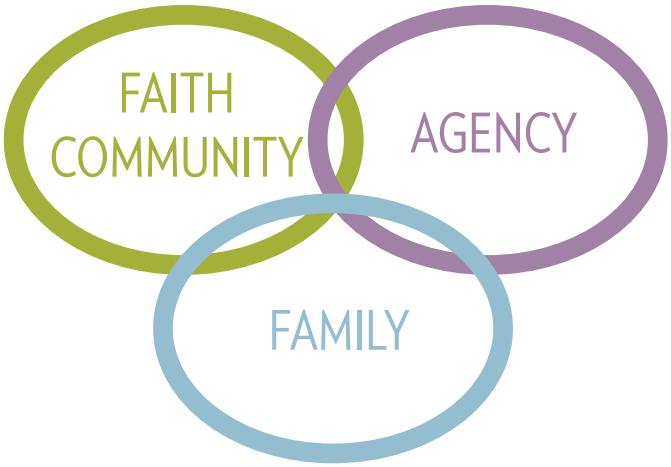
- ●Agency staff have become familiar with the particular community of faith, including its protocol, culture, beliefs and values, decision-making structure, and its various ministries.
- The faith community has become familiar with the agency, including the need for families, the characteristics of children who need services, legal requirements and time frames for foster care and adoption, and the challenges of parenting children who are in the foster care system.
- Staff and/or volunteers from both organizations have been engaged to coordinate the program and carry out the day-to-day activities of the partnership, with roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority clearly defined.

"When I talk, I quote scripture. Why? Because I'm a preacher, and preachers like to talk preacher talk. The agency is going to have to say: 'Well, as long as we do this, this, and this—all the legal stuff—we're going to let him talk his preacher talk.'"

—Bishop Aaron C. Blake
Pastor, Greater Faith Community Church
CEO, Harvest Family Life Ministry
Brownwood, Texas

Stage 5

IMPLEMENTING RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES



Checklist of what happens at Stage 5:

What agency and faith community staff and volunteers do together:

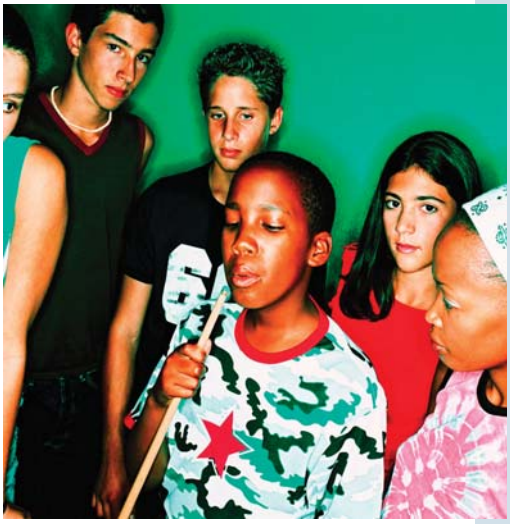
- ❑ Plan and carry out innovative recruitment activities and events.
- ❑ Schedule recruitment activities in the faith community, respecting the congregation's schedule.
- ❑ Plan parent orientation and training on the faith community site to immediately follow recruitment events.
- ❑ Plan and carry out child-specific recruitment activities as appropriate.

What the agency does:

- ❑ Designs the agency's response plan to be sure that families' inquiries are answered in a timely and sensitive manner.
- ❑ Trains all agency staff in expectations related to responding to recruitment events.

What agencies do to get best results:

- Keep the faith leader informed of recruitment events so that he or she can encourage and reinforce participation from the pulpit and through other means.
- Involve community members and volunteers in the planning and implementation of all recruitment events.
- Consider involving neighborhood schools and community centers in publicizing and reinforcing recruitment events.
- Train staff and volunteers in the use of the *AdoptUSKids* publication entitled *Practitioner's Guide* to help design and improve the agency's response to faith community families who come forward.
- Create a culture where recruitment is everybody's job, from director to receptionist, including current resource families.
- Plan to call in additional staff and volunteers to answer phones following recruitment campaigns or events.
- Be sure that a real person answers the phone when people call in response to a recruitment campaign or event. Train those who answer phones to address most questions so callers don't get bounced from person to person.
- Decide with your faith partner how waiting children will participate in recruitment activities, including getting necessary permissions, preparing children for events, and providing transportation to programs and services when needed.



- Educate faith community volunteers about agency policies and procedures, so that they can support and advocate for families who are going through the process.

- Decide together how families will be notified if they do not meet qualifications to foster or adopt; help prospective foster and adoptive parents get the resources they need to qualify.

- Communicate realistically about time requirements. Be aware that from a family's perspective, even when everything is on track, the process may seem to be moving slowly. Families sometimes make comments like, "If there is such a desperate need for families, why have I waited four months and I still don't have a child?"

- Establish a vehicle for frequent communication with interested families to validate and sustain their interest.

- Be mindful of issues of power, powerlessness, and empowerment as the agency guides families through the foster and adoption process. Make a commitment to involve families in decision-making, and keep them fully informed at every step of the process.[1]

- Be willing to come out and meet with various groups (women's and men's groups, service organizations, etc.) on their time schedule.

- Work within the congregation's schedule of special events to conduct recruitment activities. For example, if the congregation has a children's day or family picnic, ask if the agency can set up an information booth, or assist with one of the activities, or distribute literature.

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[1]*Power* is the capacity to influence the forces that affect one's life for one's own benefit. *Powerlessness* is the inability to obtain or to utilize resources to achieve individual or collective goals. Powerlessness is painful to victims; people who feel powerless behave in ways intended to restore a sense of power. *Empowerment* is the ability and capacity to cope constructively with the forces that undermine and hinder coping; it is the achievement of some reasonable control over one's destiny.
—Adapted from Pinderhughes, Elaine, "Empowerment for Ourselves and Our Clients." *Social Casework, the Journal of Contemporary Social Work*, June 1983.

- Follow up immediately when families come forward. Recruitment events and calls to action from the pulpit can be exciting and inspirational. Families may feel moved to respond. When they do, don't leave them hanging.

What outcomes to look for at Stage 5:

- There is a regular program of targeted and child-specific recruitment activities integrated into the congregation's usual schedule.
- Recruitment activities are jointly conducted by agency and faith volunteers and staff.
- The faith community leader is encouraging participation from the pulpit and through other means.
- Families are being recruited, trained, studied, and approved.
- Families are able to report high satisfaction with the way they are treated by the partnering agency.
- Foster and adoptive placements are occurring.

"To be honest, our best recruitment tool is our families. We have a lot of families that come to us because of somebody else who is already a Child SHARE family ... Our families are such advocates for Child SHARE, many of them just rise to the occasion and really become involved in all aspects of the program .. but I keep hearing that our families are our biggest recruiters."

—Joanne Morris
Project Director, Child SHARE
Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care, Inc.

Example from the field: ***Three Rivers Adoption Council***

Three Rivers Adoption Council (TRAC) is a Pennsylvania consortium of public and private child welfare agencies, and one of the state's two adoption exchanges. TRAC recruits families for African American children, older children, and others who wait the longest in out-of-home care; it then refers prospective families to member agencies for training, licensing, and placement. To support placements, TRAC also provides in-home counseling services, operates a lending library, and offers training on selected adoption topics such as sexual abuse and Reactive Attachment Disorder.

Creative recruitment ideas are part of the organization's culture, an emphasis that is especially important when the effort is child-specific. For example, each month TRAC prints thousands of church bulletin inserts featuring pictures of waiting children. It sponsors a "waiting child" series on syndicated television. And, in preparation for the holiday season, TRAC makes Christmas ornaments out of children's pictures and distributes them to hundreds of public places.

TRAC also distributes thousands of printed bookmarks, hand-held fans, self-adhesive notepads, and coloring books to libraries and restaurants, and passes them out in person at dozens of community events every year. All of the printed items bear the message: *Three Rivers Adoption Council: Because Every Child Needs a Family.*

One of TRAC's most innovative new strategies is to help waiting children develop their own web pages—in effect allowing them to recruit their own families.

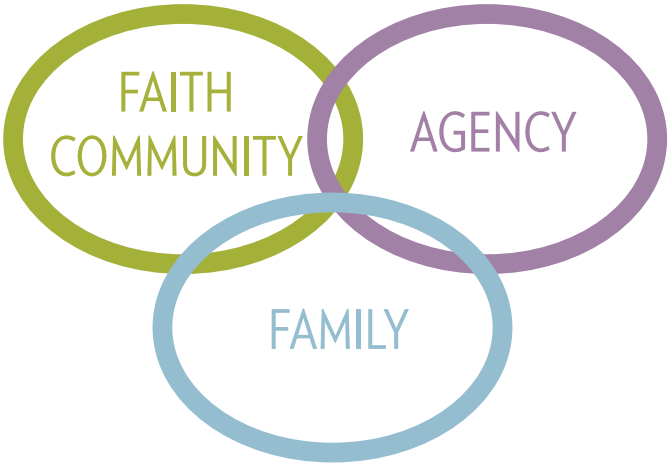
Early in its 26-year history, TRAC learned that communities of faith were particularly responsive to the plight of waiting children. But faith-based recruitment means more than standing up to say a few words at the end of a Sunday morning service, or getting permission to leave a stack of brochures in the lobby.

Executive Director Jacqueline Wilson explains, "Anything the church is doing, we are there. If it's a skating party for teens, we're there. If it's their annual Sunday School picnic, we're there. Missionary luncheons, women's conferences, Wednesday night prayer meetings—we are there. If we are not consistent—if the church feels that we're 'blowing them off'—then we can't expect the church to be consistent. We want them to know we are very serious about our commitment to the kids."

TRAC makes a point of meeting with its participating pastors or their designees at least once a month and involving them in recruitment efforts as much as possible. For example, TRAC asks pastors to sign a letter of endorsement and pass it on to three of their acquaintances in the clergy. And twice a year, the Council holds a catered "ministers' luncheon" at one of the participating churches, to recognize and thank the pastors for their support.

Stage 6

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Checklist of what happens at Stage 6:

What the faith community does:

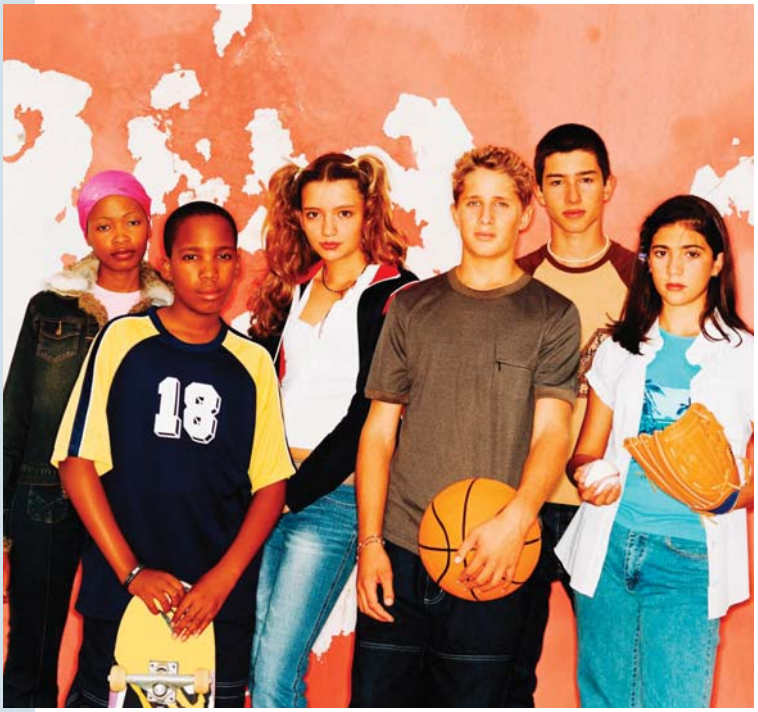
- ❑ Welcomes waiting children into the faith community to become visible and active in congregational life and to improve their self-esteem and sense of belonging.
- ❑ Lends support and assistance to families who are going through the adoptive or foster parenting preparation and licensing process, or who are newly licensed.
- ❑ Offers spiritual, emotional, and concrete support to children and families, including transportation, respite care, tutoring, mentoring, needed clothing, furniture, etc.

What the agency does:

- ❑ Conducts orientation and training sessions for foster and adoptive families in the congregation's building or neighboring community.
- ❑ Delivers post-placement services in the community, including support groups, parenting classes, and counseling, as needed.
- ❑ Delivers educational and other services to members of the faith community.

What agencies do to get best results:

- Conduct orientation, training, and other regular sessions at times and locations that are the most comfortable and convenient for families.
- Plan events that involve the entire family, including the foster or adopted child's new siblings.
- Engage members of the faith community to provide volunteer assistance to foster and adoptive families, including respite care, babysitting, transportation, meals, and financial help.
- Involve waiting children in the faith community's ongoing youth activities. These might include: youth groups, rites of passage programs, talent shows, special classes, community service projects, recreational activities, tutoring, mentoring, and so on. The primary focus is on improving children's connections to the community, their self-esteem, and their overall sense of well-being.



- Think of ways the agency can support the congregation in its services to children and families. For example, invite other families—including kinship care providers and parents struggling with child-rearing issues—to attend groups and parenting classes for their own education and support.

What outcomes to look for at Stage 6:

- Resource families receive support after placement from both the agency and the faith community. Services might include transportation, respite care, support groups, counseling, ongoing training, and special recognition.
- Foster and adopted children—along with their new brothers and sisters—are regarded and treated as full-fledged members of their faith community.
- Children and youth who need families and are targeted for child-specific recruitment are included in ongoing activities for youth in the congregation.
- The child welfare agency is providing parent training, information, referrals, and other services to support children and families who are not members of the "system," but are part of the faith community.

Example from the field: ***Harvest Family Life Ministry***

When a number of children who had been living at New Horizons Ranch were targeted for placement with Greater Faith Community Church families, the wait felt unbearable to them. "We couldn't get families licensed and trained fast enough to meet the needs of the kids," explains Michael Redden, Executive Administrator of New Horizons. So, Bishop Aaron Blake, CEO of Harvest Family Life Ministry (a collaboration between New Horizons and Greater Faith) established a licensed "Transition House" in his own home where the children could live while they waited to move in with their new families.

"These kids are coming into a church family," Bishop Blake explains. "One of the things they love is identifying with the pastor, and if that pastor welcomes them into his own home, even if they're going to eventually move into a different home, it's not like they've been displaced. They don't look at Transition House as another move. They are still in the family. It's like when you're a child and you go to visit your grandma for a while. It's a different feeling altogether."

Example from the field: ***Families for Children, The Council of Churches of the Ozarks***

Families For Children, a program of The Council of Churches of the Ozarks, was established in 1999 to recruit foster families for abused and neglected children in Greene County, Missouri. Recruited families are then trained and licensed by the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS).

With 25 years' experience working for DFS (in the child abuse and neglect unit), Families for Children Director Kate Baldi knew her way around the child welfare system when she started recruiting foster families from within her new organization's 84 member churches. She also knew which community organizations might be interested in helping children, and began to forge alliances with organizations like St. John's Hospital, the Rotary Club, and the Ronald McDonald House.

The job was even more challenging than usual because Missouri's reimbursement to foster families is one of the lowest in the nation. Families For Children, therefore, solicits donations from civic organizations and the business community to finance creative ways to support children and families. For example:

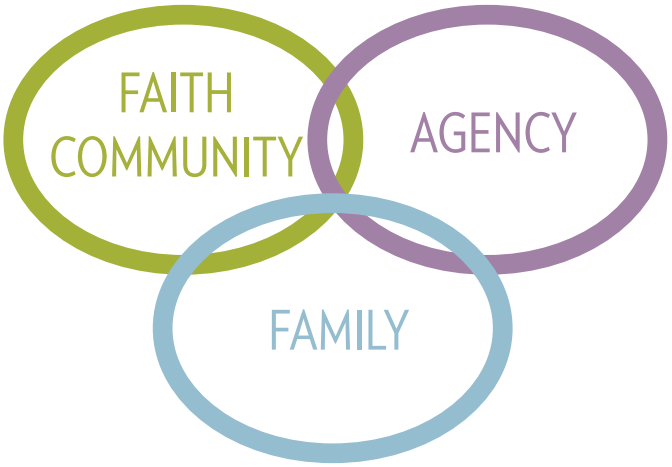
- **Pack a Bag with Love** provides new duffel bags and back packs filled with age-appropriate items for children as they first enter foster care—anywhere from newborn to high school age. "So many children enter foster care with nothing of their own," Baldi explains. "Sometimes the bags and their contents are the first new things they've ever had."

- **The Clothes Closet**, housed at the local Ronald McDonald House, provides three brand new outfits, a new pair of shoes, and a winter coat every year to foster children of all ages. Kale Baldi recalls, "One little boy came into foster care wearing his sister's clothing." The day he visited the Clothes Closet, he found a Kansas City Chiefs jacket. "He was so excited," says Baldi. "His eyes were just like saucers when he saw that."

- **Project Self Esteem** provides special expense money for foster children. "We cover the senior class ring, graduation expenses, prom dress, summer camp, musical instrument rental—you know, things we all want our own kids to have."

Stage 7

CELEBRATION AND REFLECTION



Checklist of what happens at Stage 7:

What the partners do together:

- ❑ Plan and hold celebratory events.
- ❑ Recognize and publicly celebrate the partnership.
- ❑ Ask members of the faith community and the agency for honest feedback and use that feedback to make improvements.
- ❑ Conduct public relations activities and communicate important messages to the broader community and the media.

What the agency does:

- ❑ Tracks and evaluates results, with input from stakeholders, on a regular basis.
- ❑ Assures that data is collected, consistently maintained, analyzed, and used for program improvements.

What agencies do to get best results:

- *Celebrate!* Yes, child placement is serious business, but family-building is also a joyful, exciting, life-affirming experience. Faith partners should plan events that recognize and celebrate progress and accomplishments.

- Find ways to showcase the personalities, talents, and achievements of the congregation's children. Find ways for all of the community's children—foster and adopted children, children targeted for recruitment, and the birth children of congregational families—to participate together in talent shows, youth choirs, stage plays, recitals, and rites of passage programs.

- Encourage and coach children and families to tell their stories to the congregation. This process can serve to validate the children's life experiences, create a bond between the children and their faith community, and inspire members of the congregation to become foster or adoptive parents.

- Take advantage of National Adoption Month or National Adoption Day, both in November, National Foster Care Month in May, and other special occasions to plan celebrations that recognize and reinforce the faith community's contributions to foster care and adoption.
- Involve agency staff in congregational celebrations and rituals. In

addition to keeping staff visible in the community, their participation in congregational events can have the added benefit of refreshing and spiritually invigorating them.

- Establish professional systems for recordkeeping, accounting, tracking, and reporting early in the partnership. This could be one of the areas where the agency provides technical assistance, or it may be a function the partnership contracts out.

- Report back to the faith community on a regular basis: How many families came forward? How many were trained? How many were licensed? How many actually have a child in their home?

- Make sure the recruitment activities are tied to placement outcomes that can be tracked.

- Become an advocate for families who want to help children but need help to qualify. For example, if the home needs a back porch, or fire escape, or extra bedroom, the congregation may mobilize volunteers to do the work so the family can qualify.

- Interview (or survey) members of the faith community who "drop out" of the process as well as those who attend training and perhaps get licensed but don't go on to foster or adopt. Find out what happened. Ask the clergyperson for his or her impressions. Think about what the agency might do differently now and in the future to improve retention.

- Develop experienced foster and adoptive families to assist with recruitment, training, and retention efforts.

- Recognize the contributions of individuals in the community of faith as well as any donations made by community sponsors. Hold volunteer recognition events, give awards, make proclamations, write thank-you notes, present small gifts, take pictures, and acknowledge people every way you can.

What outcomes to look for at Stage 7:

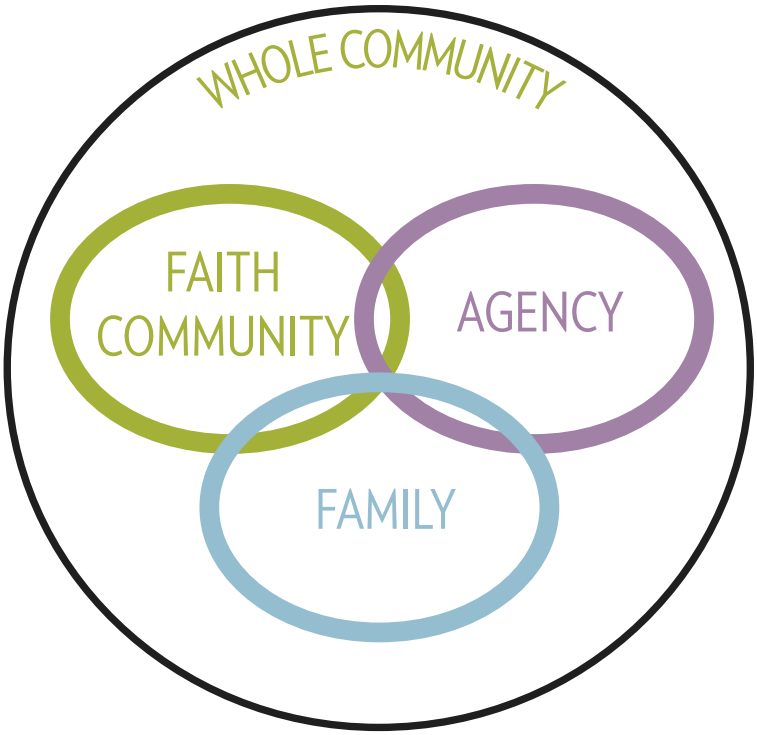
- Agency and faith staff and volunteers are actively engaged in planning faith community events, rituals, and other activities to mark progress and celebrate accomplishments.
- An evaluation plan has been devised and agency staff are collecting data to be analyzed and acted upon to improve the collaboration.
- A public relations plan is in place and being actively implemented.

"We tend to evaluate our recruitment activities with 'a good time was had by all'-type reports. It's not enough to know how many people attended and how many people called. I want to know how many people got licensed as a result of all of this ado. I want to know how many people adopted children ... That's the kind of outcome reporting I think we need to hold ourselves to. Otherwise, you are just throwing a party."

—Diane DeLeonardo
Statewide Recruitment Coordinator
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Stage 8

SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING THE COLLABORATION



Checklist of what happens at Stage 8:

What the partners do together:

- ❑ Hold regular stakeholder advisory board meetings to make decisions and keep lines of communication open between the two organizations.
- ❑ Make sure that leaders of the agency and faith organization are regularly informed of progress and challenges and involved whenever appropriate.
- ❑ Develop a plan for the future of the collaboration.
- ❑ Establish a distinct identity for the collaboration, complete with name, logo, letterhead, and mission statement.
- ❑ Identify and seek out additional needed resources, including funding, in-kind contributions, personnel, equipment, space, etc.

- ❑ Make plans to replicate the process or model, internally and/or externally, and decide whether and how to expand the program to other faith organizations in the community and beyond.

What agencies do to get best results:

- Continue to recruit and train paid and volunteer personnel to carry out the activities of the collaboration; provide training and other professional development opportunities to existing staff, including resource parents.
- Strategize ways to raise money to keep the collaboration going. Consider establishing a fund-raising committee and/or soliciting volunteer help from a fund-raising professional.
- Provide training and technical assistance in such areas as grantsmanship, fund raising, marketing, and event planning. If the agency cannot provide the training and technical assistance, consider contracting the help or soliciting volunteer services from professionals in these areas.
- Recognize the importance of communicating with stakeholders and the broader community. Develop ways to market the collaboration and its services. Consider establishing a marketing task force and/or soliciting short-term volunteer help from public relations or marketing professionals.

- Continue to facilitate and nurture an honest, open relationship between the agency and the community of faith.
- Conduct "reality checks" on a regular

basis to evaluate and fine tune the program continually.

- Be conscious and intentional about the agency's commitment to reciprocity. The agency should never "use up" the congregation's resources, but should plan thoughtfully to provide the program with adequate resources. If the collaboration does use the congregation's resources, think of ways to replace them.

- Consider ways to augment the recruitment program with other services. For example, with technical assistance and support from the agency, a congregation might establish permanent programs such as parenting centers, after school programs, a child care cooperative and the like.

> "Until your program has been so successful in meeting its mission that your services are no longer needed, consider your work in sustainability as simply a way of being."
>
> *—National Service Resource Center, A service of the Corporation for National & Community Service*

What outcomes to look for at Stage 8:

- The partners have reaffirmed their commitment to the collaboration and have developed a plan for sustaining and expanding the program.
- Paid and volunteer staff are being trained and developed to carry out the activities of the collaboration.
- An effective communication plan is in place between the agency and faith community leaders, between organizations, within the child welfare system, and with media outlets in the broader community.
- The partnership is looking toward the future and has put into place a plan to generate funds and/or other resources.

SECTION III

Key Competencies and

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Child welfare agencies working within communities of faith to recruit foster and adoptive families already have a built-in advantage. When the spiritual leader has embraced the idea of foster care and adoption, when the congregation's families have stepped forward to help children, and when the congregation has begun to think of itself as a foster and adoptive community, there is fertile ground for developing resource families. Presentations to the congregation and reminders from the pulpit, coupled with "word of mouth" encouragement from families, can create a momentum that results in many placements for children.

In areas across the nation where faith-based collaborations are working, child welfare leaders have come to see their efforts as far more than just a recruitment strategy or publicity event. Indeed, faith community collaborations, at their best, are committed relationships with the potential to provide long-term solutions for tens of thousands of America's waiting children.

To find, cultivate, and sustain relationships with communities of faith takes creativity, flexibility, patience, and trust. Like any worthwhile relationship, it is hard work. To be effective, agencies and practitioners will have to equip themselves with a whole new set of skills, competencies, and even expectations. But if carefully crafted and conscientiously tended, the relationships they build can make a world of difference for children.

Section III provides an overview of the competencies and characteristics that can lead to success for agencies, practitioners, partnerships, and families. Many of the materials presented in this section either summarize or expand upon information introduced earlier in the Guidebook and may be duplicated to use as handouts.

> "Some congregations become communities for foster families who might otherwise not take on the task. So you get not only a foster family but a foster community."
>
> *—Diana Garland*
> *Chair, School of Social Work*
> *Baylor University*
> *Waco, Texas*

Five Critical Elements of

SUCCESSFUL FAITH-BASED RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

The following is a list of five critical elements of successful faith-based recruitment efforts. The elements are unique to faith-based or community-based collaborations. What is notable about the list is that it suggests a shift from a traditional, agency-driven model of recruitment to a model in which the community takes the lead. This does not imply that requisite steps in the process are overlooked, or that standards are relaxed. It simply means that the people who will live with the plans and decisions are actually *making* the plans and decisions.

1 The partnership is predicated on a shared commitment to support children and families within the community of faith. Therefore, everything happens within the congregation's culture, at the congregation's pace, and on the congregation's terms. The agency's role is to facilitate and support the process, not to "run" the program.

2 Planning is a continuous, flexible, and inclusive process, driven by the program's primary stakeholders—that is, by members of the faith community. The child welfare agency understands that the extent to which members of the community are involved in the planning and execution of recruitment activities determines the extent to which the activities will succeed.

3 The partners retain their unique identities while respectfully acknowledging their differences. At the same time, they both humbly appreciate that neither entity could carry out faith-based recruitment without the other. They collaborate because their shared mission is compelling, and they know they can accomplish more, together, than they could separately. Each partner brings something to the table that the other partner would not otherwise possess and could not acquire on its own. In short, they need each other.

4 The agency understands that families who are recruited from faith-based institutions are motivated by their faith. To recognize and nurture this motivation, the agency's assessment takes into account the family's connections to the community of faith. Placement workers explore the potential of that community to serve as a support system, extended family, and source of assistance in times of need.

5 Both the agency leader and the faith leader are champions of the collaboration and program. They "sell" their vision to stakeholders, staff, and the broader community. The program becomes a priority, not a sideline. As such, administrators see to it that there are adequate resources (both human and financial), sufficient time to do the job, and qualified, motivated personnel to carry it out.

Example from the field: ***Child SHARE***

Child SHARE (Shelter Homes: A Rescue Effort), founded in 1985 in Los Angeles County, is charged with finding safe, temporary homes for young survivors of abuse and neglect. The idea is to minimize the children's trauma by keeping them out of emergency shelters and placing them in loving homes instead. Child SHARE is not a child placing agency, but rather a "go-between," charged with recruiting foster families from 350 participating churches for children who need emergency foster care. Child SHARE provides the recruitment, training, and support; the state and private child welfare agencies do the licensing.

It is not surprising that church-going families answered the call and became foster parents. What is unusual is their level of commitment. Experienced Child SHARE foster parents have become the organization's most enthusiastic recruiters. Families tell other families how powerful and affirming their experience has been, and before they know it another family has joined the ranks.

In an effort to keep children's moves to a minimum, Child SHARE asks families to keep their foster children with them until the children can either return home or be adopted. In exchange for the families' commitment, Child SHARE showers them with love, support, resources, and tools—even gift baskets for the kids and their own state-funded respite provider. Hand-picked by the church from which the foster family was recruited, the respite providers have proved crucial to the emotional well-being of families helping traumatized children.

Each month, the agency's upbeat online newsletter is filled with training opportunities, social activities, words of gratitude and encouragement, prayer requests, and many moving stories about children who are thriving in families. As a result, Child SHARE families adopt their foster children at a rate that is twice the national average.

The Child SHARE model has been so successful that several other states have adopted it.

Framework for Working with

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Culture has been defined as "the dynamic pattern of learned behaviors, values, and beliefs exhibited by a group of people who share historical and geographical proximity." In many respects, a community of faith can be seen as a culture unto itself. Accordingly, many of the principles that apply to cultural competence also apply to "faith competence." The framework for working cross-culturally can be adapted to working with communities of faith, as follows:

1 **Do your homework.**

- Assess your organization's mission and practice related to working with communities of faith. Know your strengths and challenges and be open about them.
- Familiarize yourself with the beliefs, values, organizational structure, personality, and priorities of the congregation(s) you want to approach.
- Gather and prepare to present information about your agency and the children in care.

2 **Gain appropriate entrée.**

Identify people on staff, in stakeholder groups, or in the community who can make introductions and vouch for you and your organization.

3 **Develop relationships and collaborative networks.**

Identify a shared mission so compelling that it overshadows differences and even historic mistrust. Realistically assess your agency's reputation in the community. How do members of the faith community view child welfare agencies in general and your agency in particular? How can you strengthen these relationships by including those leaders in your endeavors and volunteering to work for theirs? How can you build trust?

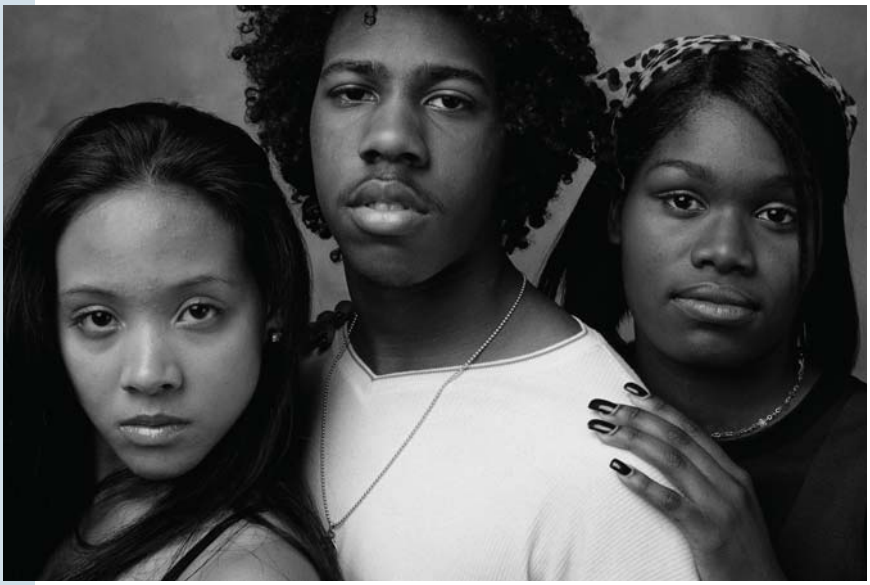
4 **Follow protocol.**

Learn and observe protocol. Find out in advance how visitors are expected to conduct themselves in the community of faith you will be visiting. Specifically:

- Find out how to address faith leaders and members of the congregation.
- Know what to wear.
- Learn the appropriate channels for communicating requests and information.
- Find out what is expected during religious services (including participation, collections, etc.).

5 Acknowledge the reciprocal nature of relationships.
Think in terms of what the community of faith can gain by collaborating with the child welfare agency. A social service agency that wants to engage a congregation should position itself as a facilitator, supporting the faith-based organization's mission to serve—or, in religious terminology, minister to—families and children. Avoid thinking of the congregation as a resource to fill the agency's needs.

Adapted from Lakin, Drenda S., et al. *The Cultural Competence in Child Welfare Curriculum.* The National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children, 1995.



DEVELOPING FAITH COMPETENCE

"Faith competence"—or competence in working with faith communities—can be defined as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency, or among professionals, that enables the system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-faith situations."

Elements of faith competence include:

- An awareness and acceptance of cultural and faith differences.
- Respect and appreciation for other cultural and faith practices.
- An awareness of one's own beliefs, practices, and faith-based values.
- An understanding of what occurs in cross-faith interactions.
- A basic knowledge about the faith and culture of the people with whom one is working.
- The ability to adapt practice skills to fit the faith and culture of the people with whom one is working.

Adapted from Cross, Terry L., et al. *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children Who Are Severely Emotionally Disturbed.* CAASP Technical Assistance Center, Georgetown University, 1989.

Dodson, Jualyyne E. *An Afrocentric Educational Manual: Toward A Non-Deficit Perspective in Services to Families and Children*. Center for Continuing Education, University of Tennessee, 1983.

Qualities of

SUCCESSFUL CROSS-FAITH PRACTITIONERS

There are a number of personality traits and professional qualities that tend to show up in people who are particularly successful doing cross-cultural and cross-faith work. No one administrator or practitioner has every one of the characteristics on this list, but most or all of them can be developed and cultivated over time. They are:

- The ability to separate one's own beliefs, biases, and experiences from the issue at hand.
- Humility.
- Genuine respect and appreciation for different faiths and cultures.
- The ability to recognize and appreciate another person's faith as a potential source of strength and resilience.
- An understanding of the relevance and power of faith and spirituality in people's lives.
- An awareness and acceptance of the unique role of the spiritual leader in a community of faith and the broader community.
- The ability to adapt to different styles of worship and celebration.
- The ability to feel comfortable being "different" in a variety of cultural, faith and diverse community settings.
- The ability to fit in and "go with the flow."
- Culturally responsive conversational and listening skills, including the ability to listen actively, put people at ease, and admit one's ignorance, and ask questions when something is unclear or confusing.
- A willingness to learn and appropriately use the unique language of a community of faith.
- A willingness to learn and follow a community's protocol.
- Flexibility and patience with time and work schedules.
- An open and non-judgmental style.
- A strengths-based perspective.
- A sense of urgency about achieving outcomes for children.
- The desire and capacity to teach and learn.
- Openness to the possibility of spiritual renewal and growth.
- Curiosity about different beliefs and practices and the willingness to learn more.
- A "can do" attitude and the ability to come up with creative ways around obstacles.
- A passion for child welfare work.

Characteristics of

SUCCESSFUL RESOURCE FAMILIES

In a congregational setting, families who come forward to parent foster children are often motivated by faith. It is important to acknowledge this faith-based motivation as a strength.

When making presentations to a community of faith—or in conversation with your faith partner—talk about the characteristics of successful resource parents. Many of the identified qualities and strengths of successful foster and adoptive parents are likely to be present in the congregation's families. When considering the following characteristics, think of ways they might relate to a person's faith, or how they could be enhanced by the support of a faith community.

1 Tolerance for ambivalent feelings

Successful resource families keep going when "the warm, mushy feelings" are gone. They do not judge themselves too harshly for experiencing negative feelings toward the child and/or the child's birth family. They understand that they may feel angry without acting on that anger. They have empathy for both the child and the birth family.

2 Firm and controlling qualities

They are comfortable giving direction and providing structure for their children. As the adults in the family, they take charge of the relationship in a strong and caring way. They try to anticipate behaviors, correct negative behaviors early, and offer praise and physical affection. They are not deterred by a child's protest or withdrawal.

3 Flexible expectations

They have realistic, flexible expectations of themselves and their foster or adopted children. They do not try to change or "fix" the children, but help them to succeed, on their own terms, by acknowledging small steps toward goals. They demonstrate flexibility and patience in their expectations about the outcome of the placement.

> "My experience in working with the state was that really our most successful, dedicated foster families came from the local churches."
>
> *—Kate Baldi*
> *Director, Families for Children*
> *Council of Churches of the Ozarks*

4 Tolerance for rejection
They are able to withstand "testing" behaviors by their foster or adoptive children, including hurtful, angry, rejecting behaviors. They do not take it personally if the child is rejecting, because they recognize the rejection as the child's fear of closeness. They realize that the child's connection to the birth family, former foster families, and others does not translate to rejection of their new parents.

5 Ability to delay parental gratification
They are aware that their relationship with their foster or adoptive children may not be reciprocal. They can give nurturance without receiving much in return. They can postpone their own rewards and separate the child's behavior from their worthiness as parents.

6 Sense of humor
They are able to use humor to cope with the stress that can result from parenting foster and adoptive children. They can laugh and vent feelings, finding humor in daily exchanges and experiences.

7 Ability to meet personal needs
They know how to take care of themselves. They refuse to be martyrs, and they recognize that taking personal time as a couple and as individuals is necessary. They take breaks from the child, using respite care and other resources to do this.

8 Ability to use resources
They seek and accept help. They learn how to identify and access help and support. They may do this on a formal or informal basis, taking advantage of everything from self-help support groups to professionally facilitated therapy. They let others into their family system to get the additional support they need.

9 Flexible family roles

They share the responsibility of parenting and nurturing. They look to the total family system—including extended family and community—to find solutions to problems. Parents are able to detect signs of "burnout" in their partner, and share the care-giving role. Such flexibility greatly increases the likelihood of success.

10 Spirituality

Resource families often possess a spiritual or religious belief that calls them to help others. They have acquired a sense of meaning and basic satisfaction with where they are in life. This orientation can help families cope with the challenging behaviors of their children. They also typically have a faith community that can offer concrete help such as respite care and support groups.

Adapted from the videotape, "Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families," from *The Special Needs Adoption Curriculum,* The National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children, 1989. Concepts adapted from Katz, Linda, "Parental Stress and Factors for Success in Older Child Adoption." *Child Welfare*, LXV, 6, November-December 1986, pp. 569-578.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT RECRUITMENT

As a faith-based recruitment effort expands to involve additional communities of faith and, possibly, additional child welfare agencies, the partners will need to find additional ways to communicate the message, make the children visible, and inspire families to respond.

States, agencies, and communities of faith have developed dozens of ideas for effective recruitment campaigns and activities. Many of the best ideas emerge out of planning sessions, where many people brainstorm together. No two campaigns are exactly alike. But successful recruiters say that all successful programs have one thing in common: involvement from the community.

Several publications will help child welfare agencies plan and implement recruitment events and campaigns. Please refer to the National Adoption Month Campaign Recruitment & Marketing Kit (produced by *The AdoptUSKids*) and the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption at Spaulding for Children (both services of the Children's Bureau) for a wealth of information on general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment and retention, as well as marketing, public relations, and advertising strategies.

In addition, *AdoptUSKids* has published five booklets about recruitment. See inside back cover for additional information on these publications.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD:

Promising Practices in

FAITH-BASED COLLABORATION

Bandele

Spaulding for Children
16250 Northland Drive, Suite 120
Southfield, MI 48075
Contact person: Addie Williams, CEO
Phone: (248) 443-7080
E-mail: awilliams@spaulding.org
Website: www.spaulding.org

Spaulding for Children—a Detroit-area child placement agency—partnered with 15 African American churches and 15 child welfare agencies during the 1990s to find permanent families for the children who were "least well served" by the child welfare system. The Bandele project (named after the African boy's name meaning "follow me home" or "born away from home") demonstrated that communities of faith are not only a good resource for recruitment, but that they also can help waiting children make friends, develop self-esteem, and explore artistic talents.

Unique program features:
- Brings agencies together that might otherwise be in competition
- Showcases the personalities and talents of waiting children
- Designed to be self-sustaining

Bennett Chapel's Saving a Generation Ministry

Bennett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
P.O. Box 243
Shelbyville, TX 75973
Contact person: W. C. Martin, Pastor
Phone: (936) 591-0042
E-mail: rmartin@bcministry.org
Website: www.bcministry.org

Members of Bennett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, located in a remote Texas area known as Possum Trot, have provided foster and adoptive homes for more than 100 abused and neglected children since 1997. The pastor, Reverend W. C. Martin, and his wife, Donna, set the example by adopting two children and fostering two others, then arranging for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to train prospective resource parents at the church, rather than Dallas. The close-knit Bennett Chapel church community has served as a support group, extended family, and recruiter for dozens of families.

Unique program features:
- Gained national media exposure with appearances on *Oprah, Good Morning America, The 700 Club*, and in *People* magazine
- Has had success with many children considered "too tough to handle"
- Has established adoption and foster care as a primary mission of the church

Child SHARE
National Office

1544 W. Glenoaks Boulevard
Glendale, CA 91201
Contact person: Joanne Feldmeth, Executive Director
Phone: (818) 243-4450
E-mail: jfeldmeth@childshare.org
Website: www.childshare.org

Child SHARE of Oklahoma

Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care, Inc.
1501 NW 24th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73106
Contact person: Joanne Morris
Phone: (918) 583-9506
E-mail: joanne.morris@franceswillardhome.com
Website: www.circleofcare.org

Child SHARE of New Mexico

The Ranches, Families for Children
6209 Hendrix N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87110
Contact person: Sherri Sollars
Phone: (505) 881-4200
Website: www.theranches.org

Child SHARE (Shelter Homes: A Rescue Effort), founded in 1985 in Los Angeles County, finds foster, respite, and adoptive families and volunteers through an ecumenical network of over 400 local congregations (30 denominations). The program provides a wide range of church-based volunteer projects to support families. Child SHARE provides the recruitment, training, and support; the state and private child placing agencies do the licensing.

Unique program features:

- Replicated in California, New Mexico and Oklahoma
- Asks families to commit to keeping the children until they can return home or be adopted
- Offers intensive support to foster families, including respite care
- Has a program that works with the deaf faith community to find American Sign Language fluent foster and adoptive parents for abused deaf children

Faith-Based Partnership for Adoption

10125 Verree Road
Philadelphia, PA 19116
Contact person: Irma Graham
Phone: (215) 698-1061
Website: www.jfcsphil.org/faith_adopt.htm

Philadelphia's Faith-Based Partnership for Adoption—a coalition of area faith-based social service and child welfare organizations—is dedicated to making area churches and synagogues aware of the desperate need for foster and adoptive families. The coalition holds forums with congregations, neighborhood groups, and businesses to educate the community about waiting children and to promote interfaith dialogue about the responsibility of congregations to help develop foster and adoptive homes. Each member agency (Bethanna, Bethany Christian Services, Catholic Social Services, Episcopal Community Services, Jewish Family and Children's Services of Greater Philadelphia, Lutheran Children and Family Services, and Methodist Services for Children and Families) targets a minimum of two large congregations to participate in the partnership.

Faith Communities for Families and Children

The Youth Law Center
830 Childs Way, Suite 104
Los Angeles, CA 90089
Contact person: Carole Shauffer, Executive Director
Phone: (323) 815-0128
Website: www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/religion_online/families/

The Youth Law Center was established in 1978 to protect abused and at-risk children, especially those living apart from their families in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Faith Communities for Families and Children (FCFC), sponsored by the Youth Law Center, is a coalition of religious leaders in Los Angeles, brought together by their commitment to ensure that children who cannot live with their birth families maintain ties to their communities, their brothers and sisters, and their schools. FCFC is committed to helping children in out-of-home care find other loving families to nurture them and keep them safe. FCFC trains and licenses foster parents in participating congregations so that their homes will be available when and if children in their community require out-of-home placement.

Unique program features:

- Takes proactive steps to keep foster children in their own communities by preparing families in advance
- Brings together multiple agencies
- Strives to keep abused and neglected children in their own neighborhoods, schools, and churches

Families for Children

Council of Churches of the Ozarks
627 North Glenstone
Springfield, MO 65802
Contact person: Kate Baldi, Director
Phone: (417) 862-3586 ext. 3008
E-mail: ccozarks@ccozarks.org
Website: www.ccozarks.org

Families for Children, a project of the Council of Churches of the Ozarks, recruits foster families from within its 84 member churches for abused and neglected children in Greene County, Missouri. Recruited families are then trained and licensed by the Missouri Division of Family Services. Families for Children supports foster and adoptive families by providing children with donated backpacks, clothing, and cash for incidentals.

Unique program features:
- Forms alliances with other nonprofit community organizations to provide essentials for children
- Forms alliances with area businesses and corporations
- Recruits from existing member base of 84 churches

FamilyLife's Hope for Orphans

5800 Ranch Drive
Little Rock, AR 72223
Contact person: Doug Martin
Phone: 1-800-404-5052 ext. 2512
E-mail: dmartin@familylife.com
Website: www.familylife.com

FamilyLife's Hope for Orphans program is a faith-based recruitment initiative established to encourage Christian families to consider adoption. Using scripture as its authority, the program asserts that church communities have responsibility for orphans. To equip families to meet that responsibility, Hope for Orphans provides information, workshops, support services, and guidance throughout the adoption process—all from a Christian perspective.

Unique program features:
- Conducts "If You Were Mine" educational adoption workshops
- Serves children in need of families—both internationally and domestically
- Sees itself as a "connecting resource" for families

Harvest Family Life Ministry

Greater Faith Community Church
417 Wesley Street
Brownwood, TX 76801
Contact person: Bishop Aaron C. Blake, Sr., CEO
Phone: (325) 643-1320
E-mail: gfcc_bishopblake@yahoo.com

Harvest Family Life Ministry is a collaboration between Greater Faith Community Church of Brownwood, Texas, and New Horizons Ranch and Center, Inc., a residential treatment facility in Goldthwaite, Texas. Through a faith-based, 501(c)(3) nonprofit venture, Harvest Family Life recruits foster and adoptive families through Texas churches, then supervises their training, certification and support before and after placement.

Unique program features:
- Wrap-around services to sustain placements
- A two-person lay/clergy team makes presentations to pastors
- Model that can be replicated

Help One Child

858 University Avenue
Los Altos, CA 94024
Contact person: Mark Morris, Director
(650) 917-1210
E-mail: info@helponechild.org
Website: www.helponechild.org

Patterned after Child SHARE, California-based Help One Child seeks to develop foster communities within area congregations by recruiting foster parents and soliciting support services for foster parents (such as babysitting, respite care, transportation, or prayer) from other church members. Once foster families have been licensed, Help One Child provides support services that prepare them either to adopt the children in their care or participate in the children's transition back to birth parents or an adoptive family.

Unique program features:
- Uses foster parents and other volunteers to recruit families from congregations
- Supports foster parents to play a long-term role in children's lives, either through adoption or a healing relationship that extends beyond the child's current and/or next placement
- Relies on some 500 volunteer hours per month

The Jewish Children's Adoption Network (JCAN)

P.O. Box 147016
Denver, CO 80214
Contact persons: Steve and Vicki Krausz
Phone: (303) 573-8113
E-mail: jcan@qwest.net • Website: www.starsofdavid.org/jcan.html

The Jewish Children's Adoption Network (JCAN) was founded in 1990 to find Jewish families for Jewish children, so their religion and heritage would not be lost. Many of the more than 1,000 Jewish children placed have "special needs," including developmental and physical disabilities, emotional issues, and drug- or alcohol-exposure. Recruitment of Jewish families is mostly by word-of-mouth through the staff's connections with Jewish family service agencies, organizations, adoptive parents, social workers, attorneys, birth parents, and rabbis. JCAN's directors have found that when Jewish children are placed in their religious community, other families become more receptive to adopting children with special needs.

Unique program features:

- Acts not as a child placing agency but as "match maker"
- The only Jewish adoption exchange in the Western hemisphere
- In addition to finding Jewish homes for Jewish children, also assists members of the adoption triad in the "search" process

One Church One Child Program

Department of Children & Family Services
10 W. 35th Street, 2nd floor
Chicago, IL 60616
Contact person: Addie Hudson, Associate Deputy Director of External Affairs
Phone: (312) 328-2109
E-mail: ahudson@idcfs.state.il.us • Website: www.ococil.org

One Church, One Child is a national adoption education and recruitment project founded in 1980 by Father George Clements, an African American Roman Catholic Chicago priest who made national headlines by becoming the first priest in the U.S. to adopt a child. The program's stated mission is for "each church in the Black community to find at least one family to adopt at least one waiting child or sibling group." Since 1980, more than 140,000 children have been adopted as a result of the partnership between One Church One Child recruitment programs and state child welfare adoption units in 31 states.

Unique program features:

- Partnership initiated by an African American Roman Catholic priest who adopted sons with the Pope's approval
- Replicated 30 times throughout the United States
- First and longest-running formalized collaboration between a church and state social service agency for the purpose of foster care and adoption

Three Rivers Adoption Council (TRAC)

307 Fourth Avenue, Suite 710
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Contact person: Jacqueline Wilson
Phone: (412) 471-8722
E-mail: jwilson@3riversadopt.org
Website: www.3riversadopt.org

Three Rivers Adoption Council (TRAC) is a Pennsylvania consortium of public and private child welfare agencies and one of the state's two adoption exchanges. TRAC has established long-term relationships with faith-based organizations to recruit and support foster and adoptive families. TRAC recruits families for African American children, older children, and others who wait the longest in out-of-home care. It then refers prospective families to member agencies for training, licensing, and placement. To support placements, TRAC also provides in-home counseling services, operates a lending library, and offers training on selected adoption topics such as sexual abuse and reactive attachment disorder.

Unique program features:

- Creative recruitment strategies
- Child-specific recruitment strategies (including personalized websites created by waiting children)
- Sustained relationships with participating churches

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