

Answering the Call



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

National Adoption Month TOOLKIT 2009

Welcome to National Adoption Month

Dear Friends,

According to the Administration for Children and Families, approximately 496,000 children are in foster care in the United States. While over 60% of the children will return to their parents, the others will require an alternate permanency outcome. Of the children in foster care who will not return home, approximately 130,000 are available for adoption.

More than half of the children waiting for families are children of color, over the age of seven, and brothers and sisters who want to stay together. Statistics indicate that it would take less than 1 percent of the American population to give every waiting child a home! That's what National Adoption Month is all about – spreading awareness to recruit and retain foster and adoptive parents for our nation's waiting children.

National Adoption Month has been observed throughout the United States for many years. Its roots can be traced back to 1976 when the Governor of Massachusetts first proclaimed Adoption Week. Later that year, President Gerald Ford made the observance official. It eventually became a tradition to celebrate Adoption Week in November. As awareness and participation grew, so did the number of states proclaiming the observance.

National Adoption Week became National Adoption Month in 1990. Today, National Adoption Month is celebrated during the month of November throughout the United States. Its purpose is to provide national awareness of the need for adoptive families, to celebrate children and families, and to call our nation to action to ensure safety, permanency and well being for all of our children.

AdoptUsKids, a service of the U.S. Children's Bureau, has created the **National Adoption Month Recruitment & Marketing Toolkit** to help your organization increase awareness about adoption and to help you in your efforts to recruit and retain foster and adoptive parents while promoting National Adoption Month in November. In this kit, you will find a wealth of information on general, targeted and child-specific recruitment and retention, as well as marketing, public relations and advertising strategies. All of these tools will help you generate media coverage, boost community and civic support and increase the number of adoptions in your community. Also available are the National Recruitment Campaign Public Service Announcements (PSAs) created by the Ad Council in partnership with the Children's Bureau and AdoptUsKids to recruit families for the children in foster care. In previous years, these campaigns have targeted recruitment of families for children, for Latino children, sibling groups, and for older children and teens. Those PSAs continue to appear in TV, radio and print media. The 2009 campaign targets families for African American children.

Should you have any questions about the National Adoption Month Campaign or need assistance, please call or email *AdoptUsKids* (1-888-200-4005 or info@adoptuskids.org). Additionally, the National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUsKids (NRCRRFAP) is available to provide free, on-site technical assistance to U.S. States, Territories and Tribes to further develop local recruitment efforts. For more information about these services, email Tamika Williams at tamika@adoptex.org.

Wishing you much success,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen J. Ledesma". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Kathleen J. Ledesma, MSW
National Project Director, *AdoptUsKids*

National Adoption Month Recruitment & Marketing Toolkit

Content Overview

The **National Adoption Month Recruitment & Marketing Toolkit** is designed to assist agencies in promoting November as National Adoption Month. The goal of National Adoption Month is to increase awareness of the need to recruit and retain foster and adoptive parents for our nation's waiting children. The following is an overview of the content provided in this toolkit.

1. *Introduction to Recruitment:* explains the various forms of recruitment and related retention strategies in laying the groundwork for a specific campaign effort.
2. *Marketing & Recruitment:* defines various marketing tools such as brochures, billboards and advertisements and how to use them to support short-term and long-term marketing goals.
3. *Government & Community Support:* provides organizations with information about how to generate community support for the celebration by encouraging local government, opinion leaders and area officials to lobby for the official National Adoption Month proclamation. There is additional information about engaging businesses and organizations in other aspects of the campaign as well.
4. *Media Outreach:* explains the dynamics of public service announcements, public relations and advertising to promote National Adoption Month in the news media. The topics include how to:
 - write and distribute press releases (samples are included in the Appendix) and Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
 - organize press conferences
 - identify and train spokespeople
5. *Planning Special Events:* describes ways to increase the visibility of a campaign through exciting special events.
6. *Evaluating and Recording Success*

1. Introduction to Recruitment

The major goal of National Adoption Month is to support efforts to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families as well as to increase public awareness about children needing foster and adoptive homes. The goal of a recruitment campaign is to increase the audience's awareness of the need for foster and adoptive parents, to connect with their feelings, and to encourage them to act on their new-found knowledge and understanding. In other words, families are encouraged to *learn* about the number of children in need of permanent families; to *feel* by connecting with their emotions (their likes, preferences, convictions, beliefs, and desires); and to *do* by taking action on their knowledge (attending an orientation or inquiring about a child).

Successful child welfare agencies engage in three different types of recruitment: general, targeted and child-specific. All of these recruitment strategies are crucial to increasing the number of prospective foster and adoptive parents. In the following section, discussion will focus on the various types of recruitment. Additionally there will be information regarding the forms of marketing that support these specific recruitment efforts. And finally, strategies for retaining recruited families will be offered.

GENERAL RECRUITMENT: General recruitment focuses on increasing the number of prospective parents from the general population who are willing to foster and/or adopt a child.

There are many ways to reach a general audience. Placing an ad in the yellow pages, displaying a billboard, distributing brochures, broadcasting PSA's, and participating in public events are a few suggestions. The goal of general recruitment is to increase public awareness of specific agencies and organizations, establish credibility, and gain a presence in the community. General recruitment is the foundation for all recruitment efforts. It needs to be ongoing and concurrent with other recruitment efforts such as targeted recruitment.

General recruitment has the advantage of reaching large numbers of people. The percentage of recruited families who actually become foster or adoptive parents will vary from agency to agency. This percentage is contingent on the frequency and efficiency of an agency's recruitment and response efforts.

In the summer of 2004, *The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids* together with the Children's Bureau and the Ad Council launched a National Media Campaign with the message, "You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent. To a child adopted from foster care, just being there makes all the difference." This is an example of a general recruitment campaign. The *AdoptUsKids* media campaign stresses that every adult offers hope as a potential parent. The campaign uses multi-media

public service announcements (PSAs) for television, radio, web and print to address prospective adoptive parents' fears and encourage individuals to realize that they have the ability to be adoptive parents. It is a national call-to-action for prospective parents to adopt children by offering important, accurate information about the foster care system and the adoption process. Agencies are encouraged to adapt the National Media Campaign message to all forms of recruitment.

TARGETED RECRUITMENT: Targeted recruitment focuses on finding parents with specific backgrounds and/or skills to foster and adopt children with special needs, such as complex medical issues. Targeted recruitment can also be used to find foster or adoptive parents for specific groups of children such as teens, sibling groups or those of specific races and/or ethnicities. The Multi-ethnic Placement Act, as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provision, calls for the “diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children” in foster care. Additionally, targeted recruitment campaigns may focus on geographic areas such as specific communities or neighborhoods that have been traditionally under-recruited by agencies or that have many children that need foster or adoptive families.

For this message to be effective, you will need to follow the three steps in targeted recruitment:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Analyzing Data: | Focus on a specific population like teens or ethnic groups most in need of homes. |
| 2. Segmentation: | Determine who is adopting, who isn't and why. |
| 3. Positioning: | Determine the best method for attracting the attention of prospective parents. |

Targeted recruitment plans are driven by data about the children in specific areas who are in the most immediate need of placement. The next step in beginning a targeted recruitment campaign is to gather demographic information about the people in a specific area who are adopting children from the child welfare system -- their ages, incomes, backgrounds, domestic status, etc. With this information, recruitment efforts can be effectively geared to these populations.

By utilizing targeted and child-specific recruitment (which is discussed in the next section), it is possible to develop personal relationships with the targeted families. One strategy might entail going to the places frequented by the target audience. For example, host a brown bag luncheon at a company or trade union to provide information and answer questions about the need for adoptive families. Agency staff and experienced foster and adoptive families can present the information. The goal is for prospective parents to interact with successful foster and adoptive families and agency personnel who can assist them throughout the foster and adoption process.

The following are two examples of targeted recruitment campaigns launched by AdoptUsKids together with the Children's Bureau and the Ad Council. A Spanish language Campaign launched in April 2005 with the tagline, "Todo Nino merece una familia verdadera" (Every Child Deserves a "Real" family). In addition, a campaign focusing on the recruitment of parents for teens launched in June 2006 with a tagline, "You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent. There are thousands of teens in foster care that would love to put up with you."

CHILD-SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT: Child-specific recruitment involves creating an individualized recruitment plan for a specific child. It can involve finding relatives, former foster parents, or other adults who are willing to foster or adopt a child or teen they already know and care about. If this approach is not fruitful, a child-specific recruitment plan that considers the unique and special needs of the child or teen should be used.

The photolisting is an integral component of child-specific recruitment. It provides introductory information about an individual waiting child, coupled with an appealing picture. It is used to target individuals who may be able to respond to the specific needs of the child.

The Collaboration to *AdoptUsKids* has developed a publication as part of its *Answering the Call Series, Lasting Impressions: A Guide to Photolisting Children* (2004, available at www.adoptuskids.org) to assist child welfare practitioners with the important task of writing accurate and appropriate child profiles for the Internet. *Lasting Impressions* details how to write a child profile that will attract potential parents while presenting the child in an honest, original and compassionate manner.

Keep in mind that when writing a child profile, it is never appropriate to breach the featured child's privacy by including embarrassing descriptions that reveal extremely personal details. Accuracy, personalization and respect are crucial. An excellent rule to follow is this: Has the child or teen contributed to and/or read the photolisting and does he or she feel comfortable with this portrayal?

The ultimate goal of child-specific recruitment is to find a family for a specific child, regardless of his or her race, age, gender, health, emotional or behavioral challenges and past distress. Whether the profile appears in an Internet listing, or in the newspaper, the goal is to establish an identity for the child *as a child*, not as another child welfare statistic.

Retaining Recruited Families

In order to be successful, well-designed recruitment plans must be implemented in conjunction with solid retention plans. If an agency does not have a specific budget for foster care/adoption recruitment and retention, it will limit their ability to find and keep families. Creating a strong connection between recruitment efforts and foster/adoption programs will greatly improve retention. To this end, agencies and organizations need to develop retention strategies just as they do for recruitment plans. In fact, the recruitment and retention plans need to be coordinated together. The first step in retention is making a positive first impression.

- Essential to recruiting a family for every child is the belief that there is a family for every child. Recent studies suggest that now more than ever, families are considering adoption. According to the National Adoption Attitudes Survey, sponsored by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in cooperation with the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and Harris Interactive Market Research (2002), nearly 40 percent of American adults, or 81.5 million people, have considered adopting a child. The survey also found that 63 percent of all adults have a very favorable opinion about adoption and 64 percent have experienced adoption within their own families or among close friends.
- In all of the literature on conducting recruitment campaigns, one point is crystal clear: There must be a timely and appropriate inquiry response strategy and agencies must adhere to that strategy! There is only one chance to make a first impression. Therefore, the strategy for handling incoming calls and other forms of inquiry is as important as the actual recruitment campaign. After all, successful recruitment campaigns are measured by the number of inquires and responses to them.
- Each agency should plan a structured and positive response to inquiry calls. The agency must consider if they have enough telephone lines and Internet accessibility so that they can be reached by potential families. Prospective foster and adoptive parents will be nervous when making their initial call. The person they talk to at the agency *must* be genuinely friendly and supportive. If a message is left, the inquiry should receive a call back during the next working day. Agencies must consider if they have enough staff to respond to inquiries. Experienced foster and/or adoptive parents can be great resources to respond to these calls.

In July of 2004, *AdoptUsKids* began using Recruitment Response Teams (RRTs) to respond to the prospective families calling the office after seeing or hearing one of the *AdoptUsKids* PSA's or reading about the National Media Campaign. Each state designated a group to serve as their RRT and it has been the responsibility of the RRTs to respond to the inquiring families in a timely, supportive manner and connect them with a local agency. What *AdoptUsKids* has found is that potential families remain engaged in the process and more families are connecting with agencies and completing home studies. No tool in recruitment is more important than a caring response – that is what prospective families remember.

The second step in retention of families is maintaining is maintaining the positive first impression. To achieve these goals during National Adoption Month and beyond, the following considerations are crucial:

- Are there orientation and training programs scheduled far enough in advance for potential foster or adoptive families to be informed of dates, times and locations at the time of inquiry?
- Are the orientation and training programs as well as appointments with staff available at times convenient for respondents, such as evenings and weekends?
- Are all orientation and application materials readable, nicely copied and appropriate? Current foster and adoptive parents can give constructive feedback on materials.
- When families come to the agency, are they warmly welcomed?
- Are there bilingual staff members available to handle inquiries from non-English speaking families in the community?
- Is child care available for prospective foster and adoptive families when they come to the agency to attend meetings?



- Does agency staff respond to telephone calls and e-mails in a timely fashion?
- Are experienced foster and adoptive families paid to serve as trainers, advocates, or supporters for prospective foster and adoptive families?

- Are there mechanisms in place to support adoptions by foster parents?
- Are prospective adoptive families informed about the availability of adoption assistance and post adoption support?
- Does agency staff help families complete their paperwork, rather than use lack of completion as an indicator of lack of motivation?
- Do agency policies, procedures and staffing patterns support the timely completion of foster care/adoption approval and licensing processes?
- Do agency policies, procedures and staffing patterns support the families once they are approved?

Foster and adoptive parents protect and nurture children in need. They also make some of the best recruiters. The problem in maintaining enough foster and adoptive homes is principally one of retention. According to the National Commission on Family Foster Care (1991), as many as 60 percent of foster parents quit within the first year, when the realities of being a foster parent set in. Reversing this high turnover rate is a major challenge in the child welfare system.

In “Building a Program So Families Come, Stay...and Recruit Others: Keys to Retention” (2000), Jayme Schooler discusses how retaining parents is crucial to ensuring the availability of families for waiting children. She offers the following seven principals for retention:

- 1. *Recruitment response:*** Respond to inquiries in a timely and culturally sensitive manner, providing a full explanation of the application procedure, training schedule, and other expectations.
- 2. *Family assessment process:*** Foster and adoptive parents should participate in a mutual family assessment which encourages them to look at their own abilities, motivations and qualifications in light of the children they hope to foster or adopt. Parents need to understand how they fit into a complex system that includes their family, your agency and the community-at-large.
- 3. *Relevant pre-service training will link content to life experience:*** Provide prospective parents with competency-based, pre-service training that clearly defines the challenges of foster care. You can assist parents with a development plan by

facilitating a strengths-based assessment. This training will allow parents to use the group process and their life experience to assess their qualifications.

- 4. Communication:** Establish positive and productive working relationships with prospective parents, wherein information is mutually shared and caseworker support is readily accessible. Create a mentoring program for new parents by asking current foster and adoptive parents to offer support.
- 5. Clear role definition:** Parents should have a clear understanding of their role as a team member. They should be informed of all of the meetings regarding the child's case and understand that their input is valued and needed by agency staff. Treat them as members of the team in thought, word and action.
- 6. Ongoing training:** Through an assessment process or form, assess the training needs of parents on a yearly basis. Provide opportunities for training or recommend outside resources that are relevant to the requirements of specialized parenting.
- 7. Ongoing support:** Offer parents access to a support network of experienced foster and adoptive parents, caseworkers and professionals to call upon in the event of a challenge or crisis. Also provide regularly planned respite opportunities and connections through mentoring.

In addition to these seven principles, two more retention efforts are crucial to retaining families. The first is recognition. Honor parents in some way, such as in a parent newsletter or with a group activity. If there is funding in the budget host a banquet honoring foster and adoptive parents.

Last but certainly not least, conduct exit meetings. If you know why your parents are leaving, you can make improvements for the future. (For more information see *AdoptUsKids Practitioner's Guide: Getting More Parents for Children from Your Recruitment Efforts*, 2003).

2. Marketing & Recruitment

Long-term Marketing & General Recruitment

Behind any successful recruitment effort is a marketing plan. The marketing plan serves as a map that outlines the various recruitment avenues, including long-term and short-term marketing, public relations, advertising and special events. It also should include marketing outlets that can be utilized for free or at a nominal cost.

A prospective parent may take months, or even years, to decide to foster or adopt a child. Consequently, it is important to use long-term marketing as a part of a general recruitment campaign. Like general recruitment, long-term marketing usually does not yield immediate results. The goal is to “get your name out there” so that prospective parents know who to call when they are ready to foster or adopt a child.

There are many ways to market an agency or organization on a long-term basis. Communications such as brochures, billboards, advertisements, direct mail, flyers, slogans and publicity in print media (newspaper, magazine, and newsletter) and broadcast media (radio, TV, cable) are excellent vehicles to spread awareness about an agency and its services. It is also helpful to seek ongoing support from public officials and opinion leaders.

These techniques in and of themselves may not convince an individual to become a foster or adoptive parent. However, if these strategies are utilized consistently, they will serve as a constant reminder to the public about an agency and its association with foster care and adoption.

Short-term Marketing & Targeted/ Child-Specific Recruitment

Short-term marketing strategies are tactics that are expected to yield immediate and measurable results. These strategies are usually tied to targeted and child-specific recruitment. Short-term marketing may include one-on-one efforts like personalized follow-up with prospective parents, referral bonuses, agency tours, open houses and individual orientations. They also include Internet photolistings and profile advertisements in the newspaper.

Marketing Tools

The following is a description of various marketing tools:

Brochures

A brochure is a written document that details specific information about an agency and its services. It is one of the most important written materials for promoting an organization. Brochures can be used when responding to inquiries. It is also an excellent idea to include them in mailings, place them in the agency's lobby, and leave them at other institutions.

A good brochure should be visually appealing and informative. Even on a limited budget, it is fairly simple to create an acceptable brochure with basic computer programs.

Billboards/Bus Cards

Billboards are another excellent recruitment tool. Although most people are not aware of this fact, billboard space can be negotiated for free. Some outdoor advertising companies will agree to post a billboard free of cost if no one is waiting to purchase the space. If a billboard appears dated or dilapidated, call the number on the board. During the summer and after large political campaigns, outdoor advertising companies often experience a slow season. They may agree to donate billboard space to an organization until a company is ready to rent the space, so they can display a new billboard in place of an old or empty one.

Although there is no guarantee of how long the outdoor advertising company will post an organization's billboard, the free space is worth the solicitation effort. The only cost will be for producing the billboard.

To show appreciation to the outdoor advertising company, consider honoring them with a plaque or award at the next agency event, and/or offer them free advertising space in the next newsletter.

Advertisements

Advertising is usually paid publicity. Forms of advertising include ads in newspapers, magazines and phone books. They also include direct mail, TV and radio commercials, billboards, bus cards and the messages that flash on the movie screen prior to the previews.

Advertising costs will vary based on factors such as the size of an ad or the length of a commercial, where it is appearing (the local newspaper vs. a national magazine), and how long it will appear (an ad that appears once versus a commercial that airs for three months).

Despite its cost, advertising is one of the most valuable recruitment sources. How many times have you looked through the newspaper, or the yellow pages, and decided to call the company with the most colorful or catchy ad?

Display advertisements, whether they are in the form of a poster, print ad, flyer, or billboard, imply a level of credibility, stability and permanence. These are all important qualities to a parent who is considering adopting or fostering a child. When faced with several listings related to the same service, it is natural to be attracted to the agency with the strongest presence.

Promotional Items

Promotional items, also known as giveaways, serve the dual purpose of thanking supporters and spreading awareness. They are useful tools for increasing campaign visibility. It is amazing to think about the number of logo pens or coffee mugs there are in homes and offices these days.

Promotional items usually have a longer shelf life than print or broadcast advertisements. That is not to say that print and broadcast advertisements are less effective modes of communication. However, as part of an overall campaign, promotional items have the potential to serve as long-term marketing tools. Contact an advertising specialty company for a catalog of promotional items that can be imprinted with a specific organization's logo or the campaign slogan for National Adoption Month.

Examples of promotional materials to consider

- ★ **Poster** – Display in your office and give to supporters, businesses, religious institutions and universities.
- ★ **Blank Note Card** – Use for thank you notes and invitations
- ★ **Bookmark** – Use as a giveaway or ask a local bookstore to distribute them along with purchases
- ★ **Flyer/Tray-liners/Placemat** – Use in many ways, as grocery bag stuffers or as tray-liners/placemats at restaurants. Ask permission to hang flyers on bulletin boards at universities and grocery stores
- ★ **Paper Fan** – Use as a giveaway as part of your faith-based campaign outreach
- ★ **Buttons** – Ask supporters to wear the buttons during National Adoption Month.

Other Promotional Item Ideas:

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|---------------|
| ★ t-shirts | ★ key chains | ★ coffee mugs |
| ★ magnets | ★ bags | ★ pens |

3. Generating Governmental & Community Support

One of the most important steps in marketing your local campaign is rallying the support of influential community members such as local political, business, religious, civic and opinion leaders.

What is an opinion leader? An opinion leader is someone with the stature and influence to sway public opinion. Opinion leaders will help to increase a campaign's visibility and credibility just by lending their names to it or by actively joining your effort.

This section will provide information about how to request support from local governing bodies, as well as from business and religious leaders.

Involving Local Government

Governors, mayors and council members are considered some of the leading opinion leaders in a community. These government officials also are responsible for developing policies and legislation related to adoption and child welfare. Their support is helpful when educating the local government and community about issues related to adoption and foster care. Additionally, their familiarity with a specific organization and its mission can provide assistance with long-term marketing efforts.

The media often seek to cover events attended by government officials. The participation of these officials will attract media attention, resulting in exposure for National Adoption Month as well as local campaigns.

Lobbying for National Adoption Month Proclamation

Most federal, state and municipal governments already have declared November as National Adoption Month. Contact city or state government to learn whether or not November has been declared National Adoption Month in particular places. If not, a sample Participation Letter to Potential Supporters and an accompanying sample Proclamation are included in the Appendix.

Coordinating a Proclamation Signing Ceremony

A Proclamation Signing Ceremony is recommended for attracting

participation from government entities. This type of ceremony also will attract media attention.

Once a city or state has agreed to declare National Adoption Month, the signing of the Proclamation is a newsworthy opportunity to gain media attention.

To coordinate the signing ceremony:

- Interest the mayor, or governor, in participation.



- Agree on a venue for the ceremony. Choose a location such as an agency or a government office. It is recommended that the ceremony include children who have been adopted.
- Schedule a date and time. It is recommended that the signing take place on November 1 so that the event not only launches the local campaign but also gains media attention for National Adoption Month.
- Organize an Adoption Petition Signing Day with the local court. Try to schedule this event for National Adoption Day (www.nationaladoptionday.org).
- Hang a campaign banner in a location highly visible to the camera.
- Prepare a campaign spokesperson to speak on behalf of the organization and the campaign.
- Develop a press release and media advisory about the signing ceremony to launch National Adoption Month, or write about Adoption Petition Signing Day.
- Invite the press to cover the event by distributing a media advisory a week before the ceremony.
- Place follow-up calls to the media.

Upon the event's conclusion, send a thank you letter to the participating elected official(s). Seek their support throughout the month. Maintain contact throughout the year to strengthen an ongoing working relationship.

Involving Local Businesses

Businesses can help organizations reach large and diverse audiences. Ask local businesses to participate in the campaign by:

- ✓ Providing counter or other space for displaying campaign flyers.
- ✓ Hanging posters in their lobbies, patient rooms, cafeterias, lounges, restrooms and other areas visible to patrons and employees.
- ✓ Allowing the organization to have an information booth in their lobby.
- ✓ Allowing the organization to distribute flyers and greet patrons while entering their stores.
- ✓ Adding National Adoption Month information to their websites and/or links to the sponsoring organization and the *AdoptUsKids* website for further information.
- ✓ Placing an ad in their company newsletter.
- ✓ Sponsoring or providing in-kind donations for any planned National Adoption Month Campaign needs.
- ✓ Collecting and sending employee donations to the sponsoring organization or another child welfare agency designated by the sponsoring organization.

Grocery Stores

Grocery stores are highly recommended for reaching large audiences in short periods of time. Here are a few pointers:



- Create a flyer. This flyer can also function as a bag stuffer (it will be necessary to reproduce large quantities of flyers because grocers pack hundreds of bags each day).
- Ask your local grocer(s) to stuff flyers into their grocery bags. Request their commitment for at least one week. If they seem particularly enthusiastic, request their support for the entire month. Keep in mind that it will be necessary to produce enough flyers to last for one month.

- Ask permission to hang campaign posters or flyers on their bulletin boards, located near the entrances/exits of their stores.
- Request permission to set up a storefront table for displaying information. Staff the table with campaign representatives who can answer customer inquiries about foster care and adoption.

Health Clinics

Health clinics are excellent places to recruit prospective parents. Consider how many people fill the waiting rooms at doctor’s offices and hospitals on a daily basis. To pass the time, patients often read brochures, flyers and posters. Since medical professionals have a vested interest in the safety and wellbeing of children, they usually are very receptive to supporting causes related to child welfare.

To involve health care professionals:

- Ask the administrative staff for their support. Request permission to hang a campaign poster and leave flyers about foster care and adoption.
- Brief the medical and administrative staff on foster care and adoption in case patients inquire about the campaign.

Hair Salons

Adults also spend a lot of time in barbershops and beauty salons. To maximize this venue’s potential:



- Ask the owner/manager for support and request permission to hang a campaign poster and leave flyers about foster care and adoption.
- If time permits, brief all employees on foster care and adoption in case their clientele inquire about the campaign.

Restaurants



Placemats and tray liners are an effective way to reach restaurant patrons. To involve restaurants:

- Ask them to use campaign placemat/tray-liners during National Adoption Month.
- Produce placemats/tray-liners in mass quantities.
- Also ask for permission to hang a poster or leave brochures/flyers on the counter.

Religious Institutions

Churches and other faith-based institutions are ideal places for spreading awareness about the need for foster and adoptive parents. Many successful targeted recruitment efforts have been achieved this way. Although the following pointers highlight how to recruit families in churches, they also are applicable to other faith-based organizations. It will be critical to research organizations prior to contacting them in order to determine cultural norms and get permission to come and present information regarding adoption and foster care.

During worship service, parishioners are a captive audience. Follow these pointers for an effective church campaign:

- Target churches with larger congregations to reach a broader audience. Obtain contact information for area churches by purchasing a church guide, contacting a local ecumenical group, or by looking in the Yellow Pages.
- Identify campaign spokespeople to deliver a brief message about foster care or adoption at different church locations every week of National Adoption Month. (Information about how to identify and train campaign spokespeople will be presented in detail later in this document.)
- Brief the spokesperson on what to say and do during his or her visit. Provide talking points tailored for church audiences. Advise the spokespeople to be brief and respect the clergy's order of service.
- Distribute a letter to request campaign participation (a sample letter is included in the Appendix). The letter offers a variety of ways for clergy to participate in the campaign and requests permission for a campaign spokesperson to address the congregation at least once during National Adoption Month.
- Enclose a church announcement with the letter. Ask for the church announcer to read the statement along with the other messages.

- Request the inclusion of a print ad in the weekly program and for the display of posters and brochures in designated common areas.
- After distributing the letters, make follow-up calls. Be responsive. Since clergy have busy schedules, it may be helpful to ask for the name of an additional church contact.
- Consider the potential recruitment opportunities offered by other church events, including those hosted by auxiliaries within the organization. At your discretion, ask that a spokesperson be allowed to speak at these events.
- Paper fans are a unique giveaway item.

Remember to build community relationships. Thank the clergy for his or her participation in the National Adoption Month Campaign.

The publication, *Answering the Call: Finding Common Ground* (see www.adoptuskids.org), is another resource available to help develop partnerships and reciprocal relationships between agencies and communities of faith.

4. Media Outreach

Gaining media attention during National Adoption Month is an effective way to increase awareness about the widespread need for foster and adoptive families. Positive media coverage also will generate excitement about local campaigns for National Adoption Month.

For starters, research the media. Pay close attention to the area news media. Include print and broadcast media as well as bulletin boards, community events and other outlets that are appropriate for disseminating information. Then follow these research steps:

- Set aside ample time to focus on marketing and public relations.



- Make a media list of all newspapers, radio/TV/cable stations in your area. Ask coworkers to bring in their community newspapers to help broaden the media list (the media list is discussed in more detail in the next section). Make sure you focus on media that reaches the audience you want to target.
- Make contact with the media on the list to determine the correct reporter to target (for example the reporter who covers community events.)
- Prepare a press release for distribution (press releases are discussed in more detail in the next section and samples are provided in the Appendix).
- Call the advertising department at radio-stations and ask them to provide their list of news, programs and talk shows.
- Once the station's package arrives, study their programming lists. What is their programming from Monday through Friday?
- Use the program list to determine if the medium offers free airtime for agencies or organizations to discuss community affairs.
- Use the compiled information to analyze the audience of each radio/TV/cable station. Find out who is listening (including their age, income, residence and zip codes), and when.
- Watch the TV programs and listen to the radio shows to get a sense of their tone. Craft a message that suits their programs.

The Press Release

A press release is a written synopsis of a news story idea that is distributed to reporters in order to capture their interest in writing about an organization and its cause. Press releases detail who, what, when, where, how and why. They are generally one page long (about 400 words). Various forms of press releases are included in the Appendix of this manual. They include general press releases about National Adoption Month events, Opinion Editorials (OpEds) and columns, as well as sample press releases about unique foster and adoptive parents.

Although national statistics are included in the press releases, it may be beneficial to include local figures. Feel free to write releases that are specific to a particular agency. For example it may be helpful to focus on upcoming events or the remarkable parents who have adopted children using the agency's services.

Adoption and foster care are newsworthy topics because they are issues that affect the entire community. It is important to declare the widespread appeal of these issues in a press release. The community-at-large generally does not realize how many children – right in their neighborhoods – are in need of safe and healthy homes.

Because media outlets receive hundreds of press releases each day, it is important for the story being submitted to stand out from the others being submitted. Try to make the story idea or message unique so it will be more likely to receive news coverage.

Consider the organization's greatest success stories when brainstorming ideas with co-workers for the press release. An example might be a story about a troubled child who completely turned his or her life around after being adopted by a loving family or about families who have adopted siblings. Write press releases about them. If the stories get printed, they will inspire other prospective parents to foster or adopt. Success stories are excellent recruitment tools.

Assembling a Press Kit

Include the following items in your National Adoption Month Press Kit:

- A press release announcing National Adoption Month.
- Information about the history of National Adoption Month.
- A biographical sketch about the organization's director and/or lead spokesperson.
- A publicity photograph of the lead spokesperson.
- A listing of events and other activities that the organization has planned for the month.
- Organization's brochure or other promotional materials.
- A human interest story about a unique foster or adoptive family and, if possible, their photo.
- A fact sheet of local, state and national adoption statistics.

Press kits are traditionally presented in a standard two-pocket folder. If it is financially feasible, it is striking to print an organization's logo and contact information on the press kit folders. Another option is to collate the information in your agency's existing two-pocket folders.

Produce a sufficient number of press kits for use by the media and agency spokespeople. Keep extras around the agency for visitors to pick up and distribute.

Opinion Editorials

Opinion Editorial (OpEd) pages of newspapers include articles written by experts in certain fields. These articles usually offer a viewpoint on current events and/or hot topics. The topic of adoption from foster care is compelling enough for potential inclusion in the OpEds.

Customize an OpEd to your community. Then send it to the editors of the local newspaper (locate the editor's name at the top of the OpEd page in that particular newspaper).

Submitting Pre-written Articles to Community Newspapers

Community papers are usually short staffed and in need of editorial copy and photos to fill their pages. They often accept pre-written articles and photographs from the community, which they are known to reproduce word-for-word. Any of the

sample press releases included in the Appendix can be tailored to a particular organization and modified into pre-written articles for distribution to community papers.

Community papers come in many formats. Some are tabloid-sized papers published weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. Others cater to specific ethnic groups or audiences. Usually, these smaller papers are free to the community.

To obtain weekly coverage during National Adoption Month, call the editors or reporters at community papers. Use a pitch that encourages them to join the effort to increase awareness about foster care and adoption. If they agree to help with the campaign, write and submit four stories for inclusion in their paper every week of National Adoption Month.

Modify the sample press releases and feature releases into articles, or, an agency or organization may submit their own. Preferably, submit a photograph with a caption to accompany the article. Submitting photography increases the chance of a prominent story placement. The photos should feature the person or place that is the subject of the release. Make sure that the individual(s) featured are aware that their photograph(s) will be supplied to the media and obtain signed consent for their publication (see sample “Model Release and Authorization for Use of Photographs” in the Appendix).

Developing Columns

Community papers may request that organizations submit a column about foster care and adoption. Unlike news, columns allow for the author’s opinion. The same procedures for submitting pre-written articles should be followed for submitting columns. With columns, be sure to submit a “head shot” photograph of the author.

Working with Spanish-language Media

If an organization has the capability of reaching out to Spanish language media outlets (i.e. the agency has a spokesperson who is fluent and materials are available in Spanish), consider contacting them in addition to the English-language outlets to promote both the agency and National Adoption Month.

It is important to keep in mind that Spanish-language media operate differently from English-language media. Below are tips for developing a pitch and compiling materials for these outlets.



- Create a specific, tailored plan. Often, the reasons people adopt through the foster care system differ between cultures and communities. It is helpful to personalize information to a specific group or community. Identify and address specific cultural barriers to adoption, rather than simply translating existing materials.
- Identify and utilize relevant spokespeople from the community that is being targeted.
- Take into account different dialects and cultural differences when drafting and distributing materials.
- Spanish-speaking media operate on a slower timeline, be patient and make time for follow up.
- Interviews with reporters are often longer and more in-depth. When scheduling time for interviews, make sure to find out how long the reporter plans to take when interviewing the spokesperson.
- Personal stories and community statistics are both important. Before contacting media and making a pitch, assemble a list of parents to speak about how adopting from foster care has benefited their lives. Additionally, have available statistics that show adoption rates and other relevant information for a specific community.

Compiling a Media List

Reporters are usually assigned to write about specific topics, also known as “beats.” Examples of these topics include business, health care or child welfare. It would be very helpful to include reporters who write about child welfare on your media list; however, assignment editors, news directors, city desks and on-air personalities also help select the news. Consider all of these resources when compiling a media list.

When creating a media list:



- Make a list of newspaper reporters, community paper reporters, and television and radio personalities. Include news bulletins, local magazines, trade magazines and popular newsletters. Local or syndicated columnists may be an excellent way to draw attention to the need for adoptive parents in a specific area. Also research non-traditional forms of media, such as Internet communications (electronic magazines or “e-zines”) because it is common for reporters and journalists to conduct research online.
- Call the news desk of the newspaper or station to obtain the first and last name of the reporter(s) who cover adoption, foster care, and child welfare issues and/or who make decisions about news content. Try to obtain a specific name. Since the media receive hundreds of releases per day, avoid addressing correspondence to general names like “editor” or “assignment desk.” Sending releases to general entities will make a follow-up effort more challenging. Consider using agency interns or volunteers to help update the media list.
- When contacting media offices, tell the operator the reason for the call. For example, when attempting to send a press release about important adoption and foster care issues in the community, tell the operator so that he or she is more cooperative.
- Ask how the reporter prefers to receive press releases (fax versus email) and request information about his or her deadlines.
- Should the operator connect you to the reporter directly, take advantage of the initial phone call to make a personal introduction, to introduce the agency and/or organization and to discuss the issue at hand or the “pitch.” Have the press release readily available when placing the call.
- Create a spreadsheet with the contact name of the reporter, medium name, type of media, address, phone, fax and e-mail. This spreadsheet will become a valuable tool for the campaign as well as for future publicity efforts.

Pitching Stories

Media professionals are interested in writing about news that impacts the entire community. Therefore, the stories provided for National Adoption Month must be current and interesting to their audience.

Begin pitching stories about National Adoption Month approximately two weeks prior to the beginning of November. Reporters prefer to have a long enough lead time to develop a comprehensive article. In some cases, reporters may ask for a call back closer to the date of the event.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Follow this script for pitching a story:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from [Agency Name] to follow up on a press release that I [e-mailed/mailed/faxed] to you on [date]. The press release is about National Adoption Month and how [your city/state] desperately needs foster and adoptive parents. We have more than [specific number] children in our [city/state] awaiting foster care and adoption, and I was hoping to help spread awareness to increase the number of parents willing to foster and adopt them. Did you receive the release?

If Yes

“Great! Do you have any questions? [TRY TO ANSWER THE QUESTION(S). IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ANSWER A QUESTION ON THE SPOT, OFFER TO CALL BACK WITH THE ANSWER.]

“I am pleased that you are interested. May I schedule a time for you to interview [spokesperson name]?”

[SCHEDULE INTERVIEW]

[END CALL]

If No

“May I send you another copy?”

“Do you think that you might be interested in the story?”

“Thank you for your time. It was a pleasure speaking with you.”

[END CALL]

When leaving a voice mail message, be sure to include your name, the agency name, the reason for your call and your phone number.

Securing Television and Radio Coverage

To promote National Adoption Month, pitch the angle to broadcast media in addition to print. Concentrate on targeting news programs and talk shows. Radio news programs usually broadcast during “drive times” or air once every hour. Television news is usually aired in the morning, at noon and twice in the evening.

Radio and television talk shows are good avenues for increasing awareness. Because of their conversational format, it is possible to present more information on radio and television talk shows. There are two basic talk show formats. The first is where the host asks all of the questions. The second is where the host asks some of the questions and responds to incoming phone calls. Some shows are taped and aired at a later time. Other shows air live. As an added bonus, some shows are shown again—especially on cable.

Pitching stories to broadcast media is the same process as pitching stories to print media. Producers are in charge of scheduling guests, usually two to four weeks in advance. Prior to the pitch, listen to the shows and become familiar with their format. Make sure a press release is sent to the appropriate person(s) at the station. Then, place a follow-up call.

Scheduling Spokespeople on Television and Radio Talk Shows

Television and radio news programs have limited time for covering news. Guests have more time to speak during talk shows and less time to speak during interviews. As a result, the station may edit an interview with a spokesperson down to a 20-second statement, also known as a “sound bite.” To maximize the airtime, a spokesperson should be ready to deliver an informative message in the shortest time possible. It is most effective to use a trained spokesperson to speak on talk shows. Spokespeople must be knowledgeable about the topics of foster care and adoption, and they must be prepared to answer challenging questions that may arise during the segment. Training for spokespersons will be covered in the next section of this document.

Seeking Weekly Media Coverage

For continuous publicity, distribute a press release each week during National Adoption Month.

Campaign Spokespeople

Another fundamental step in developing an effective campaign for National Adoption Month is identifying and training spokespeople to conduct media interviews and speaking engagements.

If an organization does not have a designated spokesperson, identify and train a representative to serve as the campaign speaker. Identifying a primary spokesperson will help the public put a face on the campaign. However, one spokesperson may not be enough to honor all of the speaking engagements, especially if several interviews are scheduled on the day of a special event. To avoid missing an opportunity, select and prepare secondary or back-up spokespeople.

This section of the kit will help you identify spokespeople for media interviews and public speaking engagements.

Selecting Spokespeople

The ideal spokesperson is the person at an organization who is the most knowledgeable about issues related to foster care and adoption such as the president and CEO. He or she should possess the following qualities:

- Be personable and at ease when speaking publicly.
- Have a clear, pleasant speaking voice.
- Be an interesting conversationalist.
- Have some public speaking experience and preferably experience talking with the media.
- Have a working knowledge of issues related to foster care and adoption.

Preparing Spokespeople

Spokespeople should be prepared to answer questions about foster care, adoption and National Adoption Month. Encourage them to review the materials contained in the press kit.

When promoting National Adoption Month activities on broadcast media, spokespeople should be prepared to provide a local telephone number for people to call for more information.

Make sure that spokespeople have important information, including addresses and phone numbers, on hand. They should bring the press kit to their interviews for reference. The spokesperson also should receive talking points (included in the Appendix). Develop talking points for the spokesperson prior to each interview.

When scheduling media interviews and speaking engagements, provide the reporter or talk show host with a brief biographical sketch about each spokesperson. The biographical sketch should be about a paragraph long. It should not be a full resume. The biographical sketch should include the credentials that qualify the spokesperson as an expert. The reporter or organization will use the bio to introduce your speaker.

Also make sure that the reporter or talk show host has the complete press kit. He or she will use the information to formulate questions for the interview. The more informed the host, the more compelling the interview with the spokesperson.

AdoptUsKids has media spokesfamilies who are ready and willing to share their foster parent and adoption stories in English and Spanish with the media across the country. Contact Kate at kkirkpatrick@adoptuskids.org for more information.

Advertising

Launching an advertising campaign is an effective way to increase awareness about local National Adoption Month activities. However, paid advertising is usually too expensive for agencies with budget limitations. If an agency does have resources for paid advertising, there are some important things to keep in mind.

Each medium establishes its own advertising rates. For print, rates are based on the medium's circulation, the location of an advertisement (back cover vs. classified section), as well as the size, length and complexity of an advertisement. Broadcast advertising rates are based on the size of the station and number of listeners at a given time (5:30 p.m. vs. 2 a.m.), as well as the length of the commercial.

Contrary to popular belief, television commercials do not necessarily cost more than newspaper advertisements. When investigating cost, it is possible to discover that that advertising on cable is less expensive than purchasing a half page ad in a city's major newspaper.

Public Service Announcements

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are announcements made by the media on behalf of non-profit organizations and/or worthy causes. For organizations under budget constraints, PSAs are a practical alternative to paid advertising because the advertising time or space is donated by the media organizations. The *AdoptUsKids* campaign materials are available to organizations and media free of charge. Agencies can add their name and logo to the AdoptUsKids' PSAs.



Most media allocate donated time or space for PSAs from non-profit organizations. However, these donated messages are usually printed in more obscure places, or are aired at off-peak times. Prime space is usually reserved for paying advertisers. Nonetheless, the PSA is still a productive form of advertising. Since non-profit organizations compete for the limited spots available, you need to submit your PSA request six weeks prior to the desired print or air date.

Plan to hand-deliver PSAs to all targeted newspapers and stations including the cable stations which feature community calendars. Personal delivery and follow-up are key components to getting a PSA the attention that it deserves. Schedule a meeting, research stations for "hooks" or connections to issue (i.e. president of station adopted, etc.)

Radio PSAs

- Use an *AdoptUsKids* PSA or write one catered to a specific community.
- PSAs are usually 60-, 30-, 20- or 10-seconds in length. A 60-second PSA is usually 150 to 175 words.
- Produce PSAs in multiple lengths for radio and television. Fifteen second spots are popular for radio.
- Offer to partner with on-air talent or feature station logos.
- Call the station to request the name and contact information for the person in charge of PSAs, usually the Promotions Director or Community Relations Director.



- Send a letter requesting donated airtime and enclose the PSAs. The Promotions Director will want to approve the content.
- If the radio station has not responded to an inquiry within two weeks or so, place a follow-up call.
- Be prepared to pitch the campaign when the follow-up call is made.
- If there has not been a response to inquiries, go to the station and ask to speak with the Promotions Director or the Community Relations Director. Bring a promotional gift such as a mug filled with candy or logo items. When the promotions director has a face to associate with the promotion, it is more likely that air time will be provided. The promoters often will read the PSAs for their favorite causes first and sometimes the disc jockeys will make commentary afterwards.
- If the Promotions Director agrees to broadcast your PSAs, he or she may request a spokesperson from the organization to visit the studio to produce the spot.
- Always remember to thank the media for their consideration and/or participation.

Television PSAs

➤ The procedure for submission is the same as radio. If the Promotions Director agrees to air the PSAs, he or she may request a spokesperson to appear in the spot. There may also be a request for children to be included as that provides visual appeal.



- Provide the station with the organization's logo and contact information for inclusion in spot.
- It also is common for one of the station's news personalities to produce the spot. In that instance, he or she will likely read the submitted PSA verbatim and include the station's name as a supporter of the campaign. This is often referred to as "Live Announcer Copy."
- Produce PSAs in multiple lengths. Twenty second spots are popular for television.

Newspaper/Newsletter PSAs



- For newspaper PSAs, consider submitting one of the AdoptUsKids print ads.
- The procedure for submitting a PSA for print placement is the same as submitting one for broadcast.
- Submit the ad to newspapers via e-mail or on a CD.
- Ad sizes will vary depending on the size of the periodical. In many cases, newspapers will reformat your ad free of charge or you can offer to re-size.
- Popular sizes for standard newsletters are: a full-page ad (8-1/2" x 11"), half page ad (4-1/4" x 11") and a quarter page ad (4-1/4" x 5-1/2"). For newspapers: 13' x 21 (full page), 5-3/4" x 10-1/2" (three column), 3-3/4" x 3-1/2" (two column), and 2-1/16 x 2" (one column).
- Provide the station with the organization's logo and contact information for inclusion in spot.

Billboard & Bus Card PSAs

- Follow the procedures outlined in radio PSAs.
- If the organization does not have access to a graphic designer, the outdoor advertising company will handle the logo addition and/or design changes.
- For bus cards, call the area transit authority to find out what company they utilize to produce bus advertisements.
- Although your organization may be awarded free billboard or bus card space, there is still a requirement to pay for the production and installation of the billboard or bus card. Nonetheless, this type of promotion represents a large savings to any organization.
- Outdoor advertising companies need at least one month to reserve space, produce the artwork and put the billboard into rotation for installation. When approaching individual companies ask about their specific deadlines.

5. Planning Special Events

Coordinating a Press Conference

Press conferences are designed to gather the media for an important announcement. To attract media attention, the announcement must be newsworthy.

A kick-off event, such as a press conference or rally, will draw attention to the campaign at the beginning of the month. If there is other compelling news about foster care and adoption, consider presenting it in a press conference format or host an energetic rally. It is also possible to combine a press conference and rally into one informative and festive affair.

In planning a press conference:

- Develop a press release about the campaign and related events.
- Select a visually appealing venue for the press conference, such as the home of an existing foster or adoptive family.
- Schedule speakers for the formal presentation. Provide talking points.
- Rehearse questions with the speakers so they are prepared for media inquiries.
- Use the podium, banner and welcome.



- Decorate the press conference with posters, banners, podiums signs and other eye-catching displays.
- Consider inviting children and their families. Personal stories are key, as well as local data or statistics.
- Provide light refreshments, if budget permits.
- Rent audiovisual equipment. For better sound quality, broadcast media will want to plug their microphones into a Multi-Box, which is a box that attaches to the podium to accommodate microphones from multiple members of the press. This device allows a signal to be directed to multiple recipients. Many radio and TV journalists prefer it.

- Develop and distribute a media advisory.
- Place follow-up calls to determine the media's interest in attending your press conference.
- Conduct a rehearsal and a walk-through at the site.
- Hire a photographer.

Coordinating an Awards Ceremony

Following National Adoption Month, thanking the individuals, families, co-workers, government officials, businesses and other child welfare organizations for their support is an excellent idea. An awards ceremony is a perfect way to publicly recognize their efforts. Following are a few tips on coordinating an awards ceremony:

- Decide whether the ceremony will be formal or informal.
- Determine the date, time and place for the event.
- Select and notify the honorees.
- Compile a guest list consisting of local dignitaries such as government, business, religious, community and civic leaders as well as advocates of child service organizations, heads of philanthropic organizations, local benefactors as well as an agency's general mailing list.
- Design and produce an invitation. Mail it at least **four to six weeks** prior to the event date.
- Handle logistics (catering, seating assignments, photography, audiovisual needs, décor, entertainment, photography).
- Produce signage such as a banner, welcome sign and podium sign.

- Secure participants for the awards ceremony. Participants may include the mayor, an organization’s child welfare director, CEO, or another respected figure in the industry. If possible, consider recruiting a local celebrity, such as a television personality, to serve as emcee.
- Create a presentation script or “run-of-show” that identifies the master of ceremonies, the individual who will welcome guests, the person who will provide background on the organization, the keynote speaker (if there is one) and the individuals who will be introducing the awardees and presenting the awards.
- Develop a program that outlines the presentation and includes information about the awardees. Photos of awardees also may be included.
- Use or modify the talking points included in the Appendix.
- Invite the media to cover the event.
- Assign staff to supervise logistics on the day of the event.

Other Campaign Event Ideas

There are many other types of events for promoting National Adoption Month as well as ongoing efforts to support foster care and adoption.

Examples include:

- **adoption fairs to recruit prospective families**
- **workshops and seminars**
- **an agency open house**
- **candlelight vigils for waiting children**
- **adoption finalizations at the state capitol**
- **adoption finalization day in court (www.NationalAdoptionDay.org)**
- **Heart Galleries (www.adoptuskids.org)**



Additionally, attending industry recruitment fairs and trade shows is an excellent way to reach prospective parents and promote the National Adoption Month Campaign. Non-profit organizations can usually participate in trade shows for free or at a nominal cost. Stay alert to new events and

operations that are just getting started. Event program coordinators will want all vendor spaces filled and most likely will welcome participation from agencies. Possibly these venues will welcome organizations that want to participate at a reduced cost. It is worth asking if they will.

Create an event calendar much like a media list. Distribute a memo to colleagues asking them to bring in local newspapers and information about events within their communities. Sunday newspapers are filled with major happenings—from fairs to charitable events. Include a variety of events on the media list.

Look for non-traditional events such as trade shows and PTA meetings. Consider every place where families gather, including fitness centers, libraries, schools, medical facilities, restaurants and retail establishments. A PTA meeting, for example, may only have a handful of parents in attendance, but these parents already are committed to bettering the lives of children and are leaders in their community.

In addition to checking the calendar listings in newspapers, ask about future events.. Find out what community and charitable organizations your colleagues are involved in and ask them to spread awareness on your agency's behalf.

As previously discussed, establish partnerships with community organizations, religious institutions, and schools. Call each of them to obtain a listing of activities and events.

Promoting Campaign Events

To promote National Adoption Month events, distribute a press release far enough in advance for reporters to run pre-stories. Pre-coverage in the form of a new story or calendar listing will help spread awareness and boost attendance.

Reporters may want to attend a specific event in order to cover it on the news that day or to write a post-story. Invite the media with a media advisory. Fax or e-mail the advisory. Then, follow up.

Make sure to take photographs during events. These photographs can be submitted with a post-story to a community newspaper. Community newspapers are often short-staffed and may find it difficult – if not impossible – to dispatch their own photographer and reporter to your event.

As previously discussed, community papers are receptive to receiving news about local affairs, including post-stories about events. Update the original press release so it presents a recap,

including the number of people who attended the event. Enclose a photograph that captures the event's essence, with a caption that includes the full names of the people pictured and the cities in which they reside (especially when sending a post-story to one of their community papers).

When a reporter attends an event, it is helpful to direct them to the spokesperson and assist them in obtaining interesting footage. This footage is often referred to as "B Roll" in the industry, which refers to video and sound that the station uses to paint a visual picture of the story.

6. Evaluating and Reporting Success

Focus the final phase of the campaign on evaluating how well things went. Being able to assess which tactics worked best will assist organizations as they make more informed marketing decisions in the future. Organizations will also be able to determine whether or not they reached their goal of increasing prospective foster and adoptive families.

Throughout the month of November, record the success of each National Adoption Month initiative. Document the amount of press received, the number of people who attended events, the community leaders who joined the campaign, the number of speaking engagements fulfilled, the public service space that was donated, and the number of families recruited and the number of distributed giveaway items. This information will help evaluate the overall success of your campaign.

If you have questions or need assistance contact *AdoptUsKids*:

1.888.200.2005 • 1.410.933.5700 • info@adoptuskids.org

En Español: 1.877.236.7831 • www.adopte1.org

Adoption Exchange Association • 8015 Corporate Drive, Suite C • Baltimore, MD 21236.

Additionally, free on-site technical assistance is available to state agencies in order to support ongoing recruitment efforts.

Appendix

Adoption & Foster Care Resources on the Web	ii
National Adoption Month Campaign Kick off Press Release	iii
Sample General National Adoption Month Event Press Release	v
Sample General National Adoption Month Event Media Advisory	vi
Sample Spanish Media Matte Release & English translation	vii
Sample: Letter to pitch spokespeople to media	ix
Backgrounder	x
Sample Campaign Talking Points	xi
Model Release and Authorization for Use of Photographs	xii
Sample Participation Letter to Potential Business/Government /School/Community Supporters	xiii
Sample Proclamation	xiv
Sample OpEd on Special Needs	xv
Sample Church Announcement	xvi
Community Calendar Listing	xvii
Drop-In Article	xviii
Glossary	xix
References	xxi

Adoption & Foster Care Resources on the Web

AdoptUsKids publications in the *Answering the Call* series (download online at adoptuskids.org):

- *Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers*
- *Practitioner's Guide: Getting More Parents for Children From Your Recruitment Efforts*
- *Family Pocket Guide* (for families entering the adoption and foster care process) Available in English and Spanish
- *Lasting Impressions: A Guide for Photolisting Children*
- *Finding Common Ground: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies Working with Communities of Faith*
- *Finding a Fit that Will Last a Lifetime: A Guide to Connecting Adoptive Families with Waiting Children*
- *Wherever My Family Is: That's Home – Adoption Services for Military Families*
- *Dollars and Sense: A Guide to Achieving Adoptions Through Public-Private Contracting*
- *Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption from Foster Care: Perspectives of Families & Staff*
- *Improving Adoption Practices: Parents & Caseworkers Talk About Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption and Foster Care (video)*
- *ICPC Receiving State Checklist and ICPC Sending State Checklist*
- *Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura (Our Family, Our Culture): Promoting & Supporting Latino Families in Adoption and Foster Care*
- *Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Respite Care in Your Community*

RESOURCES

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov

This important website provides a comprehensive listing of foster care and adoption resources by State. Copy and paste this link into your browser and then specify the State for which you would like to view these resources:

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/index.cfm?event=viewSearchForm>

National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Families at AdoptUsKids

www.adoptuskids.org

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Statistics

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars

National Resource Center for Adoption

www.nrcadoption.org

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp

North American Council on Adoptable Children

www.nacac.org

National Indian Child Welfare Association

www.nicwa.org

Adoption Exchange Association

www.adoptea.org

[Sample: National Adoption Month Campaign Kick off Press Release]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Name, Agency Name, Contact Phone Number

[AGENCY NAME] Joins National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign to Increase the Number of Adoptions in [STATE/COUNTY/CITY NAME]

[NUMBER] of Children in [STATE/COUNTY/CITY NAME] Available for Adoption from Foster Care

CITY, STATE - (Month, Day, Year) - This November, [AGENCY NAME] will join thousands of individuals, government agencies and child advocacy organizations across the nation in promoting the National Adoption Month 2009 campaign. The goal of the campaign “Answering the Call: You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent” is to spread awareness to recruit and retain foster and adoptive parents for our nation’s waiting children.

Since 1990, the nation has proclaimed November as National Adoption Month to focus attention on the children in the child welfare system waiting for placement with families. There are approximately 496,000 children currently in foster care, 130,000 of whom are waiting for permanent families [STATE/LOCAL DATA CAN BE USED]. Of the children in need of adoption, 31 percent are African-American and 43 percent are over the age of 8.

To help raise awareness of the need for adoptive parents, this year during National Adoption Month, a public service advertising campaign from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Ad Council, and AdoptUsKids is running on television, in print outlets, and on radio stations around the country. The PSAs encourage prospective parents to realize that they “don’t have to be perfect to be a perfect parent” by addressing prospective adoptive parents’ fears and reassuring them that they have the ability to be adoptive parents.

In addition, to reach the Hispanic community, the first-ever national Spanish-language public service advertising campaign devoted to the issue of adopting from foster care was launched in March 2005, with a subsequent Spanish-language campaign introduced in 2007. The most recent Spanish-language PSAs, also running during National Adoption Month in November, address parents’ perceived barriers to adoption through foster care. There are currently more than 17,000 Hispanic children waiting to be adopted from the foster care system.

Throughout the month of November, [AGENCY NAME] is encouraging families to become foster or adoptive parents by hosting [NUMBER OF] recruitment open houses at the homes of existing foster and adoptive families. The open houses will provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere for prospective parents to interact with real-life foster and adoptive families, in hopes that they too will consider bringing a child into their homes.

“[STATE/COUNTY/CITY NAME] has [X NUMBER] of children in need of adoption,” [said SPOKESPERSON]. “They want a place to call home and a loving family to call their own. This November, remember that you do not have to be perfect to be a really terrific parent to a child from foster care. Consider adoption and give a child something that every child deserves: a home.”

For more information about the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign or [AGENCY NAME], call [AGENCY NUMBER] or visit www.AdoptUsKids.org. (OR INSERT LOCAL WEB SITE)
Since [DATE OF INCEPTION], [AGENCY NAME] has provided foster and adoption services to families in [LIST SERVICE AREA]. [AGENCY NAME] also offers support services that include [LIST OTHER SERVICES.] For more information, call [PHONE NUMBER/CONTACT INFORMATION].

###

[Sample: General National Adoption Month Event Press Release]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Name, Agency Name, Contact Phone Number

**[AGENCY NAME] Hosts [EVENT NAME]
to Promote National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign
“You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be A Perfect Parent”**

[CITY, STATE] – [MONTH, DAY, YEAR] – [AGENCY NAME] is hosting [EVENT NAME] as part of the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign. The goal of the campaign, “Answering the Call: You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be A Perfect Parent,” is to promote awareness of the problem of children waiting for permanent homes and to recruit and retain foster and adoptive parents for these children.

[DESCRIPTION OF EVENT]

Last year, more than 50,000 children around the country were placed in permanent homes as a result of similar events and other efforts to achieve adoption for children in foster care. (CAN USE LOCAL RESULTS INSTEAD)

“[AGENCY NAME or STATE/CITY/COUNTY] has [ESTIMATED NUMBER] children waiting to be adopted,” said [AGENCY SPOKESPERSON]. “We hope that [NAME OF EVENT] in conjunction with the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign will help us reach an increased number of potential adoptive parents with the message that you do not have to be perfect to be a really terrific parent. Consider adoption and give a child something that every child deserves, a permanent, loving home.”

Since 1990, the nation officially has proclaimed November as National Adoption Month in order to focus attention on the number of children in the child welfare system waiting to for permanent homes. There are approximately 496,000 children in the United States’ foster care system; 130,000 of them are available to be adopted.

This year, National Adoption Month will be further highlighted with public service advertising campaigns from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children’s Bureau and *AdoptUsKids* in partnership with the Ad Council, currently appearing on television, in print outlets, on the Internet and on radio stations around the country. The ads, appearing in both English and Spanish-language media outlets, address prospective adoptive parents’ fears and encourage individuals to realize that they have the ability to be parents to a child from foster care. There are also *AdoptUsKids* websites with more information in English (www.AdoptUsKids.org) and Spanish (www.adopte1.org) as well as toll free hotlines that can answer your questions in English (1-888-200-4005) or Spanish (1-877-ADOPTe1).

For more information about the [STATE/CITY/COUNTY] event or [AGENCY NAME], call [CONTACT] at [NUMBER].

###

[Sample: General National Adoption Month Event Media Advisory]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Name, Agency Name, Contact Phone Number

Media Advisory

**[AGENCY NAME] Hosts [EVENT NAME]
to Promote National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign:
“Answering the Call: You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be A Perfect Parent”**

WHO: [AGENCY NAME] is hosting [EVENT NAME] as part of the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign, named “Answering the Call: “You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent.” The goal of the campaign is to spread awareness of the needs of children waiting for adoption and to recruit and retain foster and adoptive parents.

[AGENCY NAME or STATE/CITY/COUNTY] has [ESTIMATED NUMBER] children who are waiting to be adopted by loving families. [NAME OF EVENT] will help [AGENCY] reach prospective parents and help place more children in permanent, loving homes.

Participants include:
[LIST EVENT PARTICIPANTS]

WHEN: [DAY, MONTH, DATE, YEAR]

WHERE: [LOCATION NAME, ADDRESS, CITY, STATE]

CONTACT: For more information about the event, National Adoption Month or [AGENCY NAME], call [AGENCY CONTACT] at [PHONE NUMBER] or visit [AGENCY WEB SITE].

BACKGROUND: Since 1990, the nation has proclaimed November as National Adoption Month to focus attention on the need for finding permanent loving homes for children in foster care. There are approximately 496,000 children currently in foster care and 130,000 are waiting for permanent families [STATE/LOCAL DATA CAN BE USED]. Of the children in need of adoption, 31 percent are African American and 43 percent are over the age of 8. [STATE/LOCAL DATA CAN BE USED]

Since [DATE OR INCEPTION], [AGENCY NAME] has provided foster and adoption services to families in

[LIST SERVICE AREA]. [AGENCY NAME] also offers support services that include [LIST OTHER SERVICES.] For more information, call [PHONE NUMBER/CONTACT INFORMATION].

###

Ayudando a niños en necesidad: Construyendo familias mediante la adopción

Todo niño merece un hogar permanente y una familia llena de amor. Desafortunadamente, para muchos niños del sistema de cuidado tutelar o Foster Care (de crianza por el estado), un hogar permanente que les brinde apoyo no es una realidad. Hoy en día, hay 496,000 niños en cuidado tutelar (de crianza por el estado), de los cuales más de 90,000 son hispanos. Un total de 130,000 niños están esperando ser adoptados y la mayoría de ellos tiene más de ocho años.

El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos (H.H.S. por sus siglas en inglés) de los Estados Unidos está lanzando una campaña nacional de servicio público en español para atender la necesidad de poder encontrar familias adoptivas para niños en cuidado tutelar (de crianza por el estado). La campaña, a través de múltiples medios de comunicación, es parte de una iniciativa multicultural de cinco años conocida como La Colaboración para Adoptar Niños de los Estados Unidos (The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids), que está dirigida a reclutar nuevas familias para niños en cuidado tutelar que esperan por ser adoptados. Una versión en inglés de esta campaña se lanzó en julio de 2004.

Desafortunadamente, ideas mal concebidas sobre el costo y los retos del proceso de adopción han evitado que algunos padres intenten la adopción como una opción para construir una familia. Esta campaña ha sido diseñada para eliminar algunas de las barreras específicas en contra de la adopción que existen en la comunidad hispana. La campaña enfatiza la disponibilidad de información en español y la asistencia que se provee a lo largo del proceso de adopción”.

El asunto

A pesar de haber miles de familias adoptivas potenciales, muchas no se involucran en el proceso de adopción por temor a no poder sobrellevar la tarea de ser padre de un niño adoptado o porque creen que el proceso de adopción es costoso y difícil de manejar. La verdad es que el costo de adoptar niños del sistema de cuidado tutelar (de crianza por el estado) es mínimo, o ninguno, y los padres pueden recibir apoyo en forma de adiestramiento, subsidios para la adopción y del Medicaid.

La campaña

La campaña actual de anuncios de servicio público en español fue desarrollada por la Administración de Niños y Familias de H.H.S. en asociación con el Concilio de Publicidad (The Advertising Council), y AdoptUsKids. La campaña de anuncios de servicio público lleva el tema: “Completa la vida de un niño; completa la tuya.” Se enfoca en barreras específicas que evitan que muchos en la comunidad hispana adopten niños de cuidado tutelar (de crianza por el estado), emite un llamado a la acción para que las familias consideren adoptar un niño de cuidado tutelar (de crianza por el estado), y correrá en tiempo y espacio de anuncios donados por los medios de comunicación.

Para más información en español sobre la campaña o para saber más sobre cómo adoptar un niño de cuidado tutelar, llame al 1-877-ADOPTe1 o visite www.adopte1.org

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

Helping Children in Need: Building Families Through Adoption

Every child deserves a permanent home and a loving family. Unfortunately, for too many children in the foster care system a supportive, permanent home is not an immediate reality. Today, there are 496,000 children in foster care, of which more than 90,000 are Hispanic. A total of 130,000 children are waiting to be adopted, and the majority of them are age of eight and over.

The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is launching a national Spanish language public service advertising (PSA) campaign to address the need for adoptive families for children in foster care. The multi-media campaign is part of HHS' five-year, multi-cultural initiative called AdoptUsKids, which focuses on recruiting new families for children in foster care waiting to be adopted. An English language campaign launched in July 2004.

Unfortunately, misperceptions about the costs and challenges of the adoption process have prevented some parents from pursuing adoption as an option to build a family. This campaign has been designed to address some of the specific barriers to adoption that exist in the Hispanic community. The campaign emphasizes the availability of information in Spanish and the assistance that is provided throughout the adoption process.

The Issue

Although there are thousands of suitable parents, many do not engage in the adoptive process for fear that they are not up to the task of parenting an adopted child or because they think the adoption process is costly and unmanageable. The truth is that there is usually little or no cost to adopt children from the foster care system, and parents can receive support in the form of training, adoption subsidies and Medicaid.

The Campaign

The PSA campaign was developed by HHS' Administration for Children and Families in partnership with The Advertising Council, and AdoptUsKids. The PSAs carry the theme, "Fulfill the life of a child; fulfill yours." They address specific barriers that prevent many in the Hispanic community from adopting a child from foster care, issue a call-to-action for families to consider adopting a child from foster care and run in advertising time and space donated by the media.

For more information in Spanish about the campaign or to learn about adopting a child from foster care, call 1-877-ADOPT1 or visit www.adopt1.org.

[Sample: Letter to pitch spokespeople to media]

Print on Your Organization's Letterhead or send by email

[DATE]

Contact Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear [CONTACT]:

[STATE/COUNTY/CITY] has [X NUMBER] of children waiting to be adopted from foster care. Children who are not placed in permanent homes are less likely to graduate from high school and are at greater risk for homelessness, jail time and reliance on welfare than those with permanent families. We need your help to encourage prospective parents to adopt children from foster care.

This November [AGENCY NAME] will join together with thousands of individuals, government agencies and child advocacy organizations across the nation to promote the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign in an effort to find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

Called "Answering the Call: You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be A Perfect Parent," the campaign's goal is to spread awareness on the issue of adoption from foster care and to increase the number of foster and adoptive parents in our community and nation and to convince prospective parents that you do not have to be perfect to be a really terrific parent to a child from foster care.

[AGENCY NAME] has spokespeople available to speak to the importance of finding homes for the thousands/hundreds of children awaiting permanent families in [STATE/COUNTY/CITY]. We would appreciate the opportunity to bring these important messages to the [MEDIA OUTLET NAME]'s audience.

We will be in touch by telephone, however, if you have questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me directly. We also encourage you to visit *AdoptUsKids* online at www.AdoptUsKids.org / [LOCAL WEB SITE].

Thank you for your consideration.

[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]
[PHONE #/EMAIL]

[Backgrounder]

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Over 275,000 children in the United States enter the foster care system each year. While the majority of these children will be returned to their parents, an alternate permanency outcome must be sought for those who are unable to return home.

Since 1990, the nation officially has proclaimed November as National Adoption Month to focus attention on the number of children in the child welfare system waiting to be placed in permanent homes.

Presently there are about 496,000 children in the foster care system; approximately 130,000 of them are waiting to be adopted.

To help raise awareness of the need for adoptive parents, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families and *AdoptUsKids*, in partnership with the Ad Council created three public service advertising campaigns. The ads first premiered in English in July 2004 in Spanish in March 2005. A second Spanish-language campaign was introduced in 2007 and still appears on television, in print outlets, on the Internet and on radio stations around the country. The Spanish-language campaign encourages Latino families to "fulfill the life of a child; fulfill yours." An English-language campaign that was introduced in 2008 encourages prospective adoptive parents to consider adopting teenagers from foster care. The 2009 campaign highlights the need for adoptive families for African American children in foster care. All of the English-language campaigns, which assure prospective adoptive parents that they "don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent," speak to a common fear expressed by people contemplating adoption, and replacing that with confidence that adoption is a good way to build a family.

In addition, a comprehensive Web site, www.AdoptUsKids.org (www.Adopte1.org in Spanish), provides background information on how to become an adoptive parent and features children from across the United States who are waiting for permanent, loving homes. The purpose of the site is to link eligible children with parents and to promote national recruitment efforts to reach parents for children awaiting adoption.

For more information about National Adoption Month or to find out more about providing a permanent, loving home for a child in foster care, log on to *AdoptUsKids* the website or call the campaign's toll-free number at 1-888-200-4005. For Spanish dial 1-877-ADOPTe1.

[Sample: Talking Points]

- GREET THE AUDIENCE
- ON BEHALF OF [AGENCY NAME], MY NAME IS [YOUR NAME]. I'M HERE TO REMIND YOU THAT NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH.
- THIS YEAR, WE ARE ASKING YOU TO JOIN THE NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH 2009 CAMPAIGN TO SPREAD AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF WAITING CHILDREN AND TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY AND NATION.
- THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN IS "ANSWERING THE CALL: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT TO BE A PERFECT PARENT." IT IS DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO FAMILIES WILLING TO PROVIDE PERMANENT, LOVING HOMES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED.
- FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS, NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH HAS BEEN OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES TO BRING ATTENTION TO THE PLIGHT OF WAITING CHILDREN AND TO ENGAGE EVERYONE'S HELP.
- IN THE UNITED STATES, THERE ARE 496,000 CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.
- MORE THAN 130,000 OF THEM NEED ADOPTIVE FAMILIES. [REGIONAL DATA ALSO CAN BE USED].
- THEY NEED YOUR SUPPORT. I ENCOURAGE [THE GROUP BEING ADDRESSED] TO OPEN YOUR HEARTS AND HOMES TO [STATE/COUNTY/CITY'S] CHILDREN. THEY NEED A PLACE TO CALL HOME AND TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES.
- THIS NOVEMBER, REMEMBER YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE PERFECT TO BE A REALLY TERRIFIC PARENT. CONSIDER ADOPTION. AND GIVE A CHILD SOMETHING THAT EVERY CHILD DESERVES - A PERMANENT, LOVING HOME.
- FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ADOPTING A CHILD, CALL [AGENCY NAME, AGENCY NUMBER] OR VISIT ***ADOPTUsKIDS***.ORG.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

[Model Release and Authorization for Use of Photographs]

I grant [AGENCY NAME] the right to distribute photograph(s) of me and/or _____ (child's name) to the media for the purpose of publication, and the right to individually reprint or reuse the photograph(s) at their discretion, for any reason and without limitation, including use for official publicity and/or advertising. Publicity and advertising may include (but are not limited to) press kits, publications, newsletters, videos, advertisements, collaterals, digital media and web sites.

These photograph(s) can be used in whole or in part, alone or in conjunction with other photographs. I grant [AGENCY NAME] permission to publish my name, or the name of my child, in connection with the said photograph(s).

I hereby release [AGENCY NAME] from any claims or actions that may arise from the usage of this photography, including invasion of privacy and libel. I understand that I/my child will not be monetarily compensated for the use of these photographs.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Model Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

**[Sample: Participation Letter to Potential
Business/Government/School/Community/Other Supporters]**

Print on Your Organization's Letterhead

[DATE]

Contact Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear [CONTACT]:

This Thanksgiving season, remember the 130,000 children who are in need of adoption. They have no permanent family with whom to celebrate the holiday.

Many of these children are teenagers and children with physical, emotional, behavioral or learning challenges. Some have been neglected, abandoned, abused and/or exposed to drugs and alcohol. Others are brothers and sisters who want to remain in the same household. Of the children in need of adoption, 31 percent are African-American and 43 percent are over the age of 8.

All of these children need your support.

November is National Adoption Month. [STATE/COUNTY/CITY/AGENCY] is asking you to join thousands of individuals, government agencies, and child advocacy organizations across the nation in promoting the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign. Named "Answering the Call: You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent," the campaign's goal is to spread awareness of the needs of children waiting to be adopted and to increase the number of foster and adoptive parents in our community and nation.

It would be a great benefit to the campaign if you would agree to [MAKE SPECIFIC REQUEST HERE].

Enclosed is background information about the campaign. We thank you in advance for your consideration of this important national observance. We are confident that increased awareness will help find loving families for all children in foster care. Every child deserves a permanent home. Your participation in this effort will greatly contribute to the accomplishment of this worthwhile goal.

For more information about National Adoption Month or to confirm your support, please call us at [AGENCY NUMBER].

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]

Enclosures

[Sample: Proclamation]

Today, there are 496,000 children in the United States foster care system. Approximately, 130,000 children in foster care are in need of adoptive homes and [X NUMBER] live in [STATE/COUNTY]. This November marks the seventeenth annual National Adoption Month. Our task is to find permanent homes for all of our children. Every child in America, every child in [STATE/COUNTY] deserves a permanent, loving family and home.

WHEREAS finding families is our goal for waiting children in [STATE/COUNTY].

WHEREAS many of these children have physical, emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

WHEREAS many of these children are brothers and sisters who want to grow up together.

WHEREAS in [YEAR], [NUMBER] of children in [STATE/COUNTY] were adopted from foster care.

WHEREAS in [YEAR], [NUMBER] children from foster care in [STATE/COUNTY] are awaiting loving, permanent families.

WHEREAS every child deserves a place to call home.

I, [NAME OF MAYOR/GOVERNOR] of [CITY/STATE/COUNTY] do hereby proclaim on [DATE OF PROCLATION] that the month of November is officially National Adoption Month in [CITY, STATE, and COUNTY].

National Adoption Month is an opportunity to spread awareness on behalf of the [NUMBER] of children in [STATE/COUNTY] who are waiting for a loving family.

In honor of National Adoption Month, I encourage the community, businesses, groups, schools, faith-based organizations, and families to help secure permanent, loving homes for each and every child in [CITY/STATE/COUNTY] regardless of race, age, gender, health, emotional or behavioral challenge or past distress.

Signed _____

Date _____

[Sample: Op-ed] Wanted: Everyday Heroes

There are 130,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted in the United States. 43% of these children are over the age of eight; approximately half of them are African American or Hispanic. In fact, older African American boys on average wait the longest for adoption. While every child wants a permanent home with a loving parent, that wish may not come true for some of these children; those who do not get permanent homes often lead troubled lives. Research shows they are less likely to graduate from high school, and face greater risks for homelessness, imprisonment, and reliance on welfare than the rest of the population.

Unfortunately, some people believe that to become an adoptive parent, they have to be perfect. There is no doubt that adopting a child from foster care can be very challenging indeed, but as a public service advertisement on adoption says, “You don’t have to be perfect to be a perfect parent.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is demonstrating its commitment to finding families for the children who are waiting. Four years ago HHS launched a far-reaching project to help match kids with permanent parents. One facet of this project is a national photolisting website, www.adoptuskids.org. It has featured pictures and short biographies of over 27,000 children in need of adoption. Since the website’s inception, more than 11,000 children have been placed with adoptive families.

Many people do not know that there is usually little or no cost to adopt children from the foster care system. Also, training is available to help new parents through the adoption process and to prepare them for an addition to their family. On top of these incentives, a one-time federal tax credit of up to \$10,500 is available for adoptive parents that qualify for it. Moreover, many children are eligible to receive Medicaid to help cover any medical costs as well as a monthly adoption assistance payment. Some States offer tax credits and some employers offer financial assistance to families that adopt children from foster care.

This year during National Adoption Month please visit adoptuskids.org (OR LOCAL WEB SITE) or call 1-888-200-4005 for more information on how you can help provide a child from foster care a permanent loving home.

###

[Church Announcement]

Today, there are 130,000 children in foster care who are in need of permanent, loving homes, and we need your help. Thirty one percent of the children waiting are African American, and 43 percent are over the age of 8. Many are brothers and sisters who want to grow up together.

We invite you to join [AGENCY NAME] in the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign to spread awareness and increase the number of foster and adoptive parents in our community and nation. This November, remember that you do not have to be perfect to be a really terrific parent to a child from foster care. Consider adoption and give a child something that every child deserves—a loving, permanent home.

For more information, please call [CONTACT] at [NUMBER] or visit www.AdoptUsKids.org. (OR INSERT LOCAL WEB SITE)

[Community Calendar Listing]

Print on Your Organization's Letterhead

[DATE]

Contact Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Community Calendar Editor:

This November [AGENCY NAME] will join together with thousands of individuals, government agencies and child advocacy organizations across the nation to promote the National Adoption Month 2009 Campaign in an effort to find permanent, loving homes for children from foster care.

Nationwide there are 496,000 children in foster care, and 130,000 of them are waiting to be placed with permanent families. Here in [STATE/COUNTY/CITY] there are [X NUMBER] of children waiting to be adopted in foster care.

[AGENCY NAME] asks for your help in raising awareness of the need for parents for children in foster care. Please include the following notices in your community calendar listing for events related to National Adoption Month.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

National Adoption Month is celebrated every November throughout the United States by government agencies, child advocacy organizations and families across the nation. Its purpose is to provide national awareness, celebrate children and families, and call the nation to action to find families for children from foster care. Presently, there are about 496,000 children in the foster care system; approximately 130,000 of them are waiting to be adopted. (CAN SUBSTITUTE LOCAL INFORMATION). Organizations including [AGENCY NAME/AGENCIES] will sponsor events during the month of November to provide information for prospective parents about adopting a child from foster care. Scheduled events include:

- [LIST EVENTS]

For more information, please call [LOCAL NUMBER] or visit [LOCAL WEB SITE].

[Drop In Article]

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT TO BE A PERFECT PARENT

Today there are 496,000 children in the United States' foster care system, and 130,000 of them are waiting to be placed in a permanent, loving home. This November marks the nineteenth annual National Adoption Month, and communities around the country are coming together to mark the month with activities and events to encourage the adoption of children from foster care.

To help raise awareness of the need for adoptive parents, this year during National Adoption Month a public service advertising campaign from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, AdoptUsKids and the Ad Council is running on television, in print outlets, and on radio stations around the country. The ads encourage prospective parents to realize that they "don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent," by addressing prospective adoptive parents' fears and convincing them that they have the ability to be adoptive parents. Previous AdoptUsKids media campaigns, which include general recruitment and recruitment of adoptive families for teens in foster care, continue to be widely played in the media. The 2009 campaign, debuting on November 1, focused on the need for adoptive families for the approximately 40,000 African American children and youth in foster care who are waiting for adoptive families.

In addition, to reach the Hispanic community, the first-ever national Spanish-language public service advertising campaign devoted to the issue of adopting from foster care was launched in March 2005. A subsequent Spanish-language campaign was introduced in 2007 with the theme, "Fulfill the Life of a Child; Fulfill Yours." This campaign, which will continue to be aired during National Adoption Month in November, addresses parents' perceived barriers to adoption through foster care. There are currently more than 17,000 Hispanic children waiting to be adopted from the foster care system.

AdoptUsKids

[CITY/TOWN/STATE] will mark National Adoption Month by [INSERT DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL ACTIVITIES] in an effort to encourage the adoption of the [NUMBER] children available for adoption from foster care in [CITY/TOWN/STATE]

For more information about getting involved in National Adoption Month or to find out more about providing a permanent, loving home for a child in foster care, log onto www.AdoptUsKids.org or call 1-888-200-4005. (OR INSERT LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION)

Glossary

Advertising: The activity of attracting public attention to a product or business, through announcements in print, broadcast, or electronic media.

Broadcast media: Any form of broadcast or aired communication such as television, radio, cable and film.

Child-specific recruitment: Strategy for recruiting parents and families for specific children.

Column: An article that presents an author's opinion.

Feature story: An article written from a human interest perspective.

General recruitment: Strategy for recruiting from the general population to increase the prospective foster and adoptive parent pool.

Long-term marketing: Marketing that focuses on establishing and strengthening overall name recognition, visibility, reputation and presence.

Media: General term that refers to all forms of print and broadcast communications. The term "medium" refers to one specific form of communication, such as television or newspaper.

Press conference: An event that gathers the media together for an important announcement.

Press kit: A kit (usually a two-pocket folder) that contains a press release about a specific topic, event, or issue, as well as related information that reporters may use for covering a story.

Press release: A written synopsis of a news story idea that is distributed to reporters in order to interest them in writing about an organization, topic, or issue.

Print media: Any form of printed communication such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters, bulletins and books.

Proclamation: An official declaration, usually made by a governmental official.

Public relations: Increasing public awareness, understanding and goodwill towards an issue, person or company.

Public Service Announcement (PSA): Brief messages to the public to encourage positive social change in the community, education or health and safety. These messages are printed

or aired in donated space by the media. PSA space or airtime is usually reserved for non-profit organizations.

Media alert: A shortened version of a press release that is usually distributed to reporters to announce a specific event, such as a press conference.

Media list: A list of reporters and their contact information used for distributing press releases.

Opinion Editorial (OpEds): OpEds are printed or televised editorials written by experts in certain fields. They offer a viewpoint on current events and/or important topics.

Short-term marketing: Marketing that focuses on yielding immediate, measurable results.

Targeted recruitment: Strategy for recruiting parents and families to meet the needs of specific groups of children.

References

AdoptUsKids publications:

- *Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers*
- *Practitioner’s Guide: Getting More Parents for Children From Your Recruitment Efforts*
- *Family Pocket Guide* (for families entering the adoption and foster care process) Available in English and Spanish
- *Lasting Impressions: A Guide for Photolisting Children*
- *Finding Common Ground: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies Working with Communities of Faith*
- *Finding a Fit that Will Last a Lifetime: A Guide to Connecting Adoptive Families with Waiting Children*
- *Wherever My Family Is: That’s Home – Adoption Services for Military Families*
- *Dollars and Sense: A Guide to Achieving Adoptions Through Public-Private Contracting*
- *Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption from Foster Care: Perspectives of Families & Staff*
- *Improving Adoption Practices: Parents & Caseworkers Talk About Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption and Foster Care* (video)
- *ICPC Receiving State Checklist and ICPC Sending State Checklist*
- *Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura (Our Family, Our Culture): Promoting & Supporting Latino Families in Adoption and Foster Care*
- *Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Respite Care in Your Community*

Visit Child Welfare Information Gateway at www.childwelfare.gov for additional information and resources pertaining to adoption from foster care. **Child Welfare Information Gateway** provides access to information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families. Visit often for the latest on a wide range of topics from prevention to permanency, including child welfare, child abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption. Child Welfare Information Gateway is a service of the [Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#).



The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids
Adoption Exchange Association
8015 Corporate Drive, Suite C • Baltimore, MD 21236
1.888.200.4005 • 410.933.5700 • www.adoptuskids.org
En Español: 1.877.236.7831 • www.adopte1.org



*Funded through a Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CQ002*