

The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

Training & Technical Assistance E-Notes

August, 2007

Recruitment Works/Retention Matters

The latest publication in the AdoptUsKids *Answering the Call* Series is now available. ***Dollars and Sense: A Guide to Achieving Adoptions Through Public-Private Contracting***, was authored by Madelyn Freundlich, with the input of Kathy Ledesma and others at the Children's Bureau and public and private sector child welfare professionals from across the country.

This one-of-a-kind guidebook has something to offer for those with long experience in contracting for adoption services as well as novices to the process. Topics run the spectrum from defining "purchase of service" to detailed "how to's" of funding and implementation to monitoring and follow-up of contracts. One useful inclusion is a chart listing various types of adoption-related services and specific federal funding streams which may be utilized to support purchase of that service. Several appendices contain tools easily adapted to assist state and local agencies with the contracting process.

Dollars and Sense identifies several key benefits to purchase of service. The most important one: Public/private contracting can make adoption a reality for waiting children and the families who wish to open their homes. In addition, positive results can accrue for the public agency, including:

More timely adoptions, particularly for those children most likely to face challenges in being matched with a family

- Access to highly specialized adoption services
- More effective and targeted use of resources
- Smoother interstate adoptions
- Reduced workload of public agency adoption staff
- An enhanced ability to meet the requirements of the Child and Family Service Reviews

Dollars and Sense: A Guide to Achieving Adoptions Through Public-Private Contracting and others in the *Answering the Call* series are available for download on the AdoptUsKids website at <http://www.adoptuskids.org/resourceCenter/atcPublications.aspx>.

Inter-jurisdictional Placement Services

The State Statute Search function of the Child Welfare Information Gateway has been redesigned to make it even easier to research and locate federal and state laws and policies. It is possible to obtain a general summary for all states, by topic, or to search for the particular requirements of one or more states. Access this user-friendly database at: http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/.

Tips and Tools

Many child welfare systems report having change efforts underway to improve the outcomes experienced by children and families. The challenges of moving from design to implementation are myriad, and may be amplified by a need to find, choose and maintain

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Memo from Melody

Hello to our readers!

We have now completed the first three of the most recent series of Regional Roundtables. The support of the federal Regional office staff in pulling off these meetings has been excellent, as always. Attendance has been high at every site and participants clearly appreciate the opportunity for conversation with colleagues about the successes and challenges of our shared efforts.

A recurring theme at the Roundtable has been the struggle to have enough resource families able and willing to care for the children needing homes. Despite the many improvements in our collective levels of practice, the number of families still falls behind the level of need. To assist in the effort, AdoptUsKids is in the final stages of completing a new tool focusing on Targeted Recruitment. We look forward to piloting this material in a couple of states in the very near future, and will keep you posted on our progress.

an evidence-based approach to the work.

A wealth of interesting resources focusing on implementation of evidence based approaches can be found on the website of The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), operated by the Department of Child & Family Studies, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute of the University of South Florida. NIRN describes itself as having a mission “to close the gap between science and service by improving the science and practice of implementation in relation to evidence-based programs and practices.”

NIRN's website features a useful conceptual discussion of implementation processes, research findings and reports, links to additional resources and a newsletter.

The National Implementation Research Network can be accessed at <http://nirn.fmhi.usf.edu/default.cfm>.

T/TA Highlights

The State of Minnesota is completing its Breakthrough Series Collaborative on the Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families. AdoptUsKids provided Technical Assistance to the series via consultant, Lorrie Lutz. Eight Minnesota counties have been actively involved in testing practice ideas to improve recruitment of resource families, retention of families and involvement of children and families in decision-making. Well over 170 small tests of change have occurred during this 18 month Breakthrough Series. Counties have been excited about both the methodology for rapid testing of small changes, as well as the new ideas for practice improvement that have been tested to recruit and retain resource families. According to a participant from St. Louis County, “We are very impressed by this method and intend to use it as part of how we introduce new practice changes...it is working!”

Recruitment and Retention Network

A new report may serve to inform the efforts of States to meet the needs of African-American children, including the recruitment and retention of resource families.

The Government Accounting Office has released ***African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care***. Factors identified by this report as contributing to over-representation in both entry and exit from care include: poverty; bias and cultural misunderstandings by decision makers; mistrust by families; difficulty in recruiting adoptive parents; reluctance of kin caregivers to terminate parental rights and lack of financial subsidy for guardianships.

States surveyed as part of the study described in the report used a variety of methods to address these issues, including involving families in decisions, building community supports, and broadening the search for relatives to care for children. Specific efforts to reduce length of stay in foster care included diligent search for fathers or paternal kin, recruitment of African American adoptive families and subsidies for guardianships.

Access the report at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf>

Please send us your stories and ideas that have shown results in recruitment, retention and interjurisdictional placements. Email your offerings to melody@adoptex.org.

FYI

The 2007 ***Kids Count Data Book*** produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation is available online at <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/databook.jsp>. *Kids Count* is a data base that tracks key child well-being measures. Data can be accessed in a variety of ways, by state or nationally. The featured theme for this year's book is permanency, as discussed in the

Thanks for reading!

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