

The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

Training & Technical Assistance E-Notes

December, 2006

Recruitment Works/Retention Matters

Anecdotal accounts are emerging of youth permanency practitioners finding guidance in a perhaps unexpected place, the substantial knowledge base that exists regarding adoption search and reunion. Such connections acknowledge the parallels between the youth permanency practice of diligent search for birth relatives and the process of search and reunion for adult adoptees and birth parents. The practicalities of searching as well as the etiquette of post-reunion relationships have been fine-tuned through the years by those serving adoption triad members. Youth permanency workers are often unsure of how to find relatives, initiate contact, and develop ongoing relationships. They have found themselves turning to seasoned adoption colleagues for well-informed advice. To-date, these types of partnerships tend to be sporadic and informal yet they offer potential as models for programming, which could utilize the expertise gained in adoption reunion practice to benefit older foster youth.

An overview of adoption search and reunion and a resource listing can be found in ***Searching for Birth Relatives: A Factsheet for Families*** available from the Child Welfare Information Gateway at http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_search.cfm.

Another resource is ***The Adoption Reunion Handbook***, a 2004 publication by Elizabeth Trinder, Julia Feast and David Howe. Based on British research, the book addresses in detail many of the logistical and emotional aspects of adoption search and reunion. An abstract and publishing information can be accessed at <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470094222.html>.

Inter-jurisdictional Placement Services

Information and background materials regarding the proposed new ***Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children*** can be found on the website of the American Public Human Services Association. Items available include the proposed legislative language, status of the legislation by state, data on interstate placements and historical background of the compact. The web address is <http://www.aphsa.org/Policy/icpc2006rewrite.htm>.

Tips and Tools

Newly available from AdoptUsKids is a trainer's guide based on ***Finding a Fit that Will Last a Lifetime***, one of the publications in the *Answering the Call* series. The trainer's guide enlarges the content of the full publication and is designed to build staff skills in the matching and placement decision process.

AdoptUsKids consultants Jackie Pray and Mary Lou Edgar developed the new training curriculum. Mary Lou provided this overview for E-Notes readers:

Although it has traditionally been the task of the caseworker to "match" children with families, prospective parents can play a much larger role in this process. As families become aware of children with whom they feel a connection, a relationship begins to grow. Involving the family in the matching process can foster a stronger sense of responsibility on the part of the prospective parents and creates a process less about matching and

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Memo from Melody

Here we are in December, that busy but wonderful month that finds us reflecting on our many blessings and creating warm memories with our families and others we hold dear. For those of us who share a passion for ensuring every child a permanent family, surely when we count our blessings we must think of each other. I know I am grateful for the opportunities I have had this year to be a part of this important work with you and to meet and learn from so many of my colleagues around the country. Please accept my most sincere wishes for a joyous holiday season and every happiness in 2007.

I know that we share a hope that by the next holiday season we will have helped many more children and youth to have a family with whom they can build a lifetime of memories. All of us connected with AdoptUsKids Training and Technical Assistance look forward to continuing relationships with the states and tribes with which we have already

more about connecting. This curriculum assists caseworkers as they seek to expand the pool of foster and adoptive resource by providing tools and techniques that will encourage more timely, effective, and lasting connections between prospective resource families and children waiting in foster care.

To request a train-the-trainer session and explore how to utilize these materials to further enhance your state's capacity to build lasting connections, contact Melody Roe at (303) 755-4756, ext. 241, or email melody@adoptex.org.

T/TA Highlights

In recent years AdoptUsKids Training and Technical Assistance consultants have worked with a number of states in relation to faith-based resource family recruitment. This month we will highlight one state's experience in developing a faith-based initiative as well as some tips from an experienced technical assistance consultant.

Massachusetts is one of the states that has invested considerable energy in developing a faith-based recruitment strategy. Debora Sullivan, the Director of Resource Family Recruitment for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services reports the effort began in earnest following the 2004 AdoptUsKids Summit, *Answering the Call: Partnering with Communities of Faith*. State agency staff and representatives of local faith communities who attended the Summit were inspired to return home and continue their work together. The result was the Massachusetts Inter-Faith Partnership for Children, a collaboration of faith-based organizations and state and contracted adoption and social service agencies which has met regularly since September 2004. The Partnership hosted a statewide faith-based conference in 2005 and is now focusing on building local infrastructure for faith-based recruitment around the state. While developing the program, Massachusetts has received technical assistance from AdoptUsKids, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption (NCWRCA) and has also sought consultation from the Queen Esther Ministry in Hartford, Connecticut.

Debora Sullivan characterizes the faith based partnership as "a very culturally enlightening journey, which takes state workers to places they really haven't gone before." She agreed to share some of the lessons learned so far in Massachusetts:

- ▮ Building partnerships between a government agency and communities of faith takes time and requires carefully laying a foundation before concrete results are seen in recruitment statistics.
- ▮ Myths and previous negative experiences that create discomfort about working with the child welfare system must be addressed. This includes explaining how practice has changed to become more family centered and more engaged with the community than may have been true in the past.
- ▮ Staff need training and support to help them move forward. This involves everything from gaining comfort discussing matters of faith to learning how to let go of power and control in order to operate in a more supportive role.
- ▮ Faith-based collaboration becomes most successful when a religious organization takes ownership of the effort as a ministry.
- ▮ Collegial relationships are enhanced as staff members begin to turn to each other for help in partnering with religious institutions to which other staff members may be connected.
- ▮ Support from the State's federal liaison and agency executives has been invaluable.

Sharen Ford, as a consultant with the NCWRCA, has partnered with AdoptUsKids T/TA consultants to provide technical assistance on faith-based collaborations. Sharen adds the following tips from her experience:

- ▮ Be open in your willingness to partner. Don't limit yourself to working with only one denomination or collaboration model.
- ▮ Allow your faith partners to determine what they can bring to the effort. For

collaborated, and to forming new partnerships with others. It is clear to me that sharing both our successes and our challenges is making a positive difference for all of us. I am eager to see what we can accomplish together in the coming year.

As always, we would love to hear from you with your comments and suggestions regarding E-Notes. Please use the links below to contact us and to forward E-Notes to others who might be interested.

Happy Holidays!

Melody Roe

Director, Technical Assistance/Training for AdoptUsKids
Vice President, The Adoption Exchange Education Center



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Contact Us

For more information about AdoptUsKids Training and Technical Assistance Services, contact Melody Roe at (303) 755-4756, ext. 241, or email melody@adoptex.org.

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instance a church may prefer donating diapers to active recruitment work, but may also be able to create a connection with another congregation that will gladly recruit for families.

- Mind your “P’s & Q’s,” meaning, be sensitive to the norms of your partners and careful to avoid stepping into internal conflicts of the organization.
- Move at your partner’s pace, and be ready to move quickly when your partner is ready.

For additional information, Debora Sullivan may be reached at (617) 748-2239 or Debora.Sullivan@state.ma.us. Sharen Ford may be reached at 303-866-3197 or sharen.ford@state.co.us.

Recruitment and Retention Network

From Oregon comes news about creative partnering with a sports minded segment of the philanthropic community that has resulted in a generous donation to support the state’s Heart Gallery. This year The Heart Gallery was selected as the beneficiary of *The Tommy Moyer Amateur Charity Boxing Event*, described as “Oregon’s elite boxing charity event.” The annual event attracts business leaders, sports celebrities and professional athletes from around the state. Additional information on can be obtained from Deborah Collins, who can be reached at 541-864-8710 or Deborah.Collins@state.or.us.

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

A set of Adoption Data Research Briefs are now available on the website of the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) at http://www.nacac.org/pub_articles.html. Written by Mary Eschelbach Hansen, Ph.D., the briefs are available on several topics and include detailed analysis of AFCARS reports as well as discussion of the historical and practice context of the data.