

The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

Training & Technical Assistance E-Notes

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Recruitment Works/Retention Matters

A recent study of foster parents in nine Canadian counties examined motivation, support and retention of foster parents. The research utilized a focus group format which yielded detailed information about the foster parents' perceptions of their experiences as caregivers.

The study participants most commonly described their motivation to foster as resulting from intrinsic or internal factors such as:

- Altruism: (helping children, "making a difference", assisting the agency or responding to the need of a family member);
- Desire for Children in the Home: ("empty nest" issues, foster care as a route to adoption, wishing to increase family size, or "needing to be needed by children"); and
- Benefit to Biological Children (children learn to share and to accept differences)

Few of the foster parents listed extrinsic rewards such as financial compensation to be important in their initial decision to foster, but financial factors related to adequate resources were reported as important aspects of the support needed following placement. As in other studies, the overall availability of agency support was identified as critical to the decision to continue fostering. The foster parents defined support as including emotional support, trust and good communication with workers, respect for foster parents' abilities and opinions, and being considered part of the childcare team.

The researchers concluded that agencies may wish to emphasize in their recruiting efforts the personal or intrinsic rewards that can be found in foster parenting. A recommendation to promote retention included improving supports for fostering, providing accurate information about the foster child, and introducing foster parents to the role gradually.

Inter-jurisdictional Placement Services

An overview of factors related to criminal record checks for prospective resource parents can be found in a recent publication of the Child Welfare Information Gateway. *Criminal Background Checks for Prospective Adoptive and Foster Parents* provides general information on record check requirements and procedures and contains links to a State Statutes Search where the specific laws of each state can be found.

The document is available for free download at http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/background.pdf. The State Statutes Search can be accessed at http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/search/. In addition to background check requirements, the Statutes Search allows state-specific searches on many other topics related to foster care and adoption regulations.

Tips and Tools

A new Kinship Care section has been added to The National Data Analysis System (NDAS)

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Memo from Melody

I have just returned from the final meeting of the Region VIII Youth Permanency Initiative, the focus of this month's T/TA Highlights section. It was great to see the progress that the teams have made -- they've come a long way since we began the Initiative in January 2006. Many thanks to Gary Mallon and his daughter, Leslie Fuller, for sharing their adoption story with us. Despite monthly phone calls and two previous two-day meetings, several of our youth continued to believe - in their hearts - that they were too old to be adopted. By relating the story of Leslie's adoption at age 37, Leslie and Gary provided a real-life example that you are never too old for adoption and several youth were able to openly express their desire to be adopted. Overall, it was inspiring to feel the energy and commitment in the room for carrying forward the work of ensuring a lifelong family connection for every young person. We will be looking to hear of continuing progress from our

operated by Child Welfare League of America. NDAS is a comprehensive repository of data and information on a broad array of child welfare topics and populations.

The Kinship Care material is organized into four categories: Kinship Care Demographics; Kinship Care Funding; Kinship Care Policies; and Kinship Care Providers. For each of these topics, data can be reviewed and compared for one or more states or for the country as a whole. Customizable tables and graphs can also be created. Links are provided to related descriptive information and helpful resources.

The NDAS Kinship Care page can be accessed at http://ndas.cwla.org/data_stats/access/predefined/home.asp?MainTopicID=15.

The study is entitled *The Needs of Foster Parents: A Qualitative Study of Motivation, Support, and Retention*. It is authored by Tracy E. MacGregor, Susan Rodger, Anne L. Cummings, and Alan W. Leschied, and can be found in the September, 2006 issue of *Qualitative Social Work*. An abstract and information on ordering the complete article for a fee can be found at <http://qsw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/5/3/351?rss=1>.

T/TA Highlights

Do You Love Me Now?

The Region VIII Youth Permanency Initiative wrapped up a year-long effort with a meeting in Salt Lake City on January 18 and 19. Teams from El Paso County, Colorado; Montana; Utah and Wyoming gathered to share their successes and lessons learned as well as to plan strategies for continuing their efforts to help the young people in their foster care systems achieve permanency. (See our August and November 2006 issues for information about the project).

Project Manager Susan Daugherty reports that what was most exciting for the adult participants was seeing the way involvement in this Initiative helped the young people on the teams blossom and grow. Susan tells us, "All of them are taking active roles within their systems, taking on leadership roles with other youth and speaking out on issues of importance to them. Their closing presentation touched us all deeply, as we realized that having this opportunity was an important milestone in their lives and that we were privileged to take part in it with them. Their skit, 'Do You Love Me Now?' clearly showed that young people in out-of-home care lack the sense of permanency that comes with knowing someone will care for you no matter what you do."

All the adults left this meeting energized and determined to continue the work of making sure young people do not leave care without permanent lifelong connections to caring adults. Just a few of the many interesting efforts being undertaken include:

- ▮ Sponsoring "Door Opener" meetings at which local businesses help young people learn to navigate through processes such as opening a bank account and interviewing for a job. In the process, community members learn more about the young people in care, and the door is opened for greater involvement, such as mentoring.
- ▮ Presenting information about this Initiative to a variety of individuals including regional and state administrators and community stakeholders. By sharing their successes and excitement, teams hope to spread both the process of systems improvement through small tests of change and the urgency of helping young people achieve permanency.
- ▮ Training caseworkers to talk to adolescents about adoption as a permanency option, rather than believing that teens are "too old."

AdoptUsKids will be working with other members of the Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance Network as we continue to support these efforts.

four pioneering teams.

Keep an eye on the T/TA web pages of adoptuskids.org for a soon-to-be-posted interactive, State-specific spreadsheet that lists information pertinent to five key areas of interjurisdictional placements. This information was requested during the Regional Roundtables last summer. If your State is not represented in the initial spreadsheet, you can still send me your information as I will update the document regularly.

Thanks for reading!

Melody Roe

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Contact Us

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Mary Gambon and Leo Farley from Massachusetts present a session on leadership at the Region VIII Youth Permanency Initiative meeting.

Recruitment and Retention Network

In Alaska, buckets for berry-picking are one of many creative locations found for carefully targeted recruitment messages. The bright yellow plastic buckets carry in English and its Yup'ik translation the slogan, "Become a safety net for children: our most valuable resource!" They are just one visible product of the year-old Native Rural Recruitment Teams (NRRT) Initiative. The NRRT aims to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of the children from Native and/or rural communities in Alaska's child welfare system by recruiting at the local level, tribal and culturally relevant homes for children needing out of home care. Developed by the state's Office of Children's Services, The NRRT focuses on building local partnerships with rural communities and Native tribes.

The NRRT approach includes several components aimed at engaging and supporting resource parents, and is already achieving some concrete success in numbers of licensed families and in the creation of first-ever resource family recognition events in some rural areas. *Izabel Bowers, Social Services Program Coordinator*, points out that the intangible results in improved relationships between the state office and rural and tribal communities have been at least as welcome and substantial as the recruitment results. Additional information on the Native Rural Recruitment Teams can be obtained from Izabel at (907) 465-2218 or by email, Izabel_Bowers@health.state.ak.us.

FYI

Available from the National Conference of State Legislatures, *The Changing Landscape of Federal Child Welfare Financing* discusses recent changes in federal funding legislation and their impact on the states. The document can be accessed at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/federalfinancing.htm>.