

# The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

Training & Technical Assistance E-Notes  
October, 2006

## Forward E-Notes to a Friend or Colleague!

Please help us share E-Notes with others by copying and emailing the following link to a friend or colleague:

<http://www.adoptex.org/adoptusa/enotessignup.html>

Thank you and thanks again for reading!

## Recruitment Works/Retention Matters

*"Being adopted was like someone handing me a map and a flashlight. I feel like I can accomplish anything now."*

These are the words of Nancy O'Reilly at the National Convening on Youth Permanence sponsored in September by the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services. Ms. O'Reilly is a young adult college student who entered foster care at age 14. She was adopted at the age of 24 by Patricia O'Reilly who was her social worker while she was in foster care.

While the "map" to permanency provided by adoption is not the only option desired by older foster youth, the need for relationship and belonging are universal. A recent study on run away behavior in substitute care poignantly highlights themes related to family ties and other relationships among reasons for youth who leave placement without permission. The 2005 study by Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago is the largest to date on this subject. Three main and interrelated motivations for running were identified:

### ▮ Connections with family

*"Many of the youth described their biological families as exerting a distinct emotional pull on them. In some cases, this was manifest in the urge to reconnect or stay connected."*

### ▮ Connections with caseworkers and other professionals

*"Many youth attempted to recreate family in various ways in order to access the sense of connectedness, support, and guidance they needed. Some reached out to caseworkers or foster parents. Some young people expected caseworkers to become extensions of their families and defined "good" caseworkers as those who really cared about them and looked out for them."*

### ▮ Drive for autonomy and normalcy

*"Like other teens, foster youth experience the drive for autonomy and for progressively greater freedom. Unlike other teens, their environment often offers little safety for experimentation and little flexibility to accommodate individual preferences. They are, moreover, often missing the linchpin of normalcy that is assumed to offer some inoculation against the hazards of the street—a nurturing and supportive family."*

The study is entitled *Youth Who Run Away from Substitute Care* and is authored by Mark Courtney, Ada Skyles, Gina Miranda, Andrew Zinn, Eboni Howard, and Robert M. Goerge. An abstract and access to an issue brief and the full report can be found on the Chapin Hall website at [http://www.chapinhall.org/article\\_abstract.aspx?ar=1382](http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1382).

## Contents:

[Forward E-Notes](#)  
[Recruitment Works/  
Retention Matters](#)  
[Tips and Tools](#)  
[T/TA Highlights](#)  
[R&R Network](#)  
[FYI](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[Print This Issue](#)



## Memo from Melody

Welcome to this early fall edition of E-Notes. We are delighted when we receive feedback from our readers and hope you will continue to stay in touch with your comments and suggestions.

Many thanks to all of the States who provided their interjurisdictional placement information as requested by the Children's Bureau via the Regional Roundtables. Your contributions mean we can look forward to the creation of an online database which will allow for quicker identification of State-specific resources and regulations.

Achieving Youth Permanence was the primary theme of the Regional Roundtables as young people at risk of "aging out" without family ties continues to be a particularly strong concern all across the country. Tested strategies, new ideas and collegial support for change were a part of the discussions at each meeting. This month E-Notes contributes to the discussion on older youth in care by highlighting

---

## Tips and Tools

*The Basics of Adoption Practice: A Bulletin for Professionals* is a recent publication of the Child Welfare Information Gateway. The bulletin provides a quick yet comprehensive overview of essential elements of current adoption practice.

Topics addressed in the publication include: Types of Adoption; Family Assessment; Child Assessment; Birth Parent Involvement; Openness in Adoption; Matching Children and Families; Sharing Information with Families; Involving Youth in Their Placements; Placing Children With Families; Prefinalization Services; and Postadoption Services. Relevant federal legislation is also summarized including The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).

The document is 13 pages in length and can be accessed at [http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_basicsbulletin/f\\_basicsbulletin1.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_basicsbulletin/f_basicsbulletin1.cfm). The bulletin can be printed, emailed or ordered for mail delivery at no cost.

---

## T/TA Highlights

The state of Missouri recently fine-tuned its approach to recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families, with technical assistance support from AdoptUsKids Consultant, Lorrie Lutz. The work began with the creation of a set of practice principles to guide the State's activities. The principles focused on issues such as the importance of birth families and foster families partnering for children; honoring the perspectives of all team members; ensuring a child's connection to kin, culture and community; the need for a child to have a permanent connection to a family; and providing for the voice of youth in service planning and placement decisions. In addition, the State:

- Examined and revised recruitment messages and pre-service training to ensure that they were compelling and in sync with the agency's values and practices;
- Created "talking points" for staff who answer calls to promote a consistent and welcoming response to prospective resource families;
- Updated the informational packet for inquiring families including the addition of engaging messages from foster families, birth families and youth in care;
- Standardized information and data collected at intake to track and evaluate the effectiveness of the agency's recruitment and retention practices;
- Created new forms for sharing child and family information; and
- Developed in-person interview strategies to encourage existing resource families to consider sibling groups and adolescents.

To learn more about Missouri's work and their new products and improved response system, contact Bonnie Washeck at [Bonnie.R.Washeck@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Bonnie.R.Washeck@dss.mo.gov). For more information about AdoptUsKids T/TA services, contact Melody Roe.

---

## Recruitment and Retention Network

*Adoption Day at the Mall* is an example not only of a highly successful recruitment event but of the collaboration by multiple systems and organizations which made it possible. Sponsored by Adoption Rhode Island, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Rhode Island Family Court, the event was held at a local mall in conjunction with Rhode Island's first National Adoption Day. Seventeen foster and adoption agencies from around the state staffed booths with representatives who fielded questions and distributed program information. Face painters helped create a fun family atmosphere. "This was a terrific event. Everyone worked together, from the court system to DCYF and all the private agencies. I know at our booth we talked to many people and

a recent Chapin Hall study on youth who run away. The report challenges us to find ways to meet the need for lasting relationships which young people express in both words and behavior.

Better meeting the placement needs of children of all ages has been a recent focus for the State of Missouri, also. See our 'T/TA Highlights' section for news about their efforts to enhance their approach to recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.

Finally, warmest wishes to all of you as you are preparing for your National Adoption Month activities. Please send me some updates on what you will be doing so that we can share your good ideas with other readers.

Please use the links below to contact us and to forward E-Notes to others who might be interested.

Thanks for reading!

### Melody Roe

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



## 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](mailto:melody@adoptex.org).

## Print This Issue

For a printer-friendly version of E-Notes, [click here!](#)

to DCYF and all the private agencies. I know at our booth we talked to many people and had a good time," said Bernie Hicks with Adoption Rhode Island. For more information, contact Bernie Hicks at [bhicks916@aol.com](mailto:bhicks916@aol.com).

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

---

## FYI

Look to E-Notes next month for a preview of the soon-to-be-released AdoptUsKids' guide, *Answering the Call: Wherever My Family Is: That's Home! Adoption Services for Military Families – A Reference Guide for Practitioners*.

