

# The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

## Training & Technical Assistance E-Notes

June, 2006

### Recruitment Works/Retention Matters

***"Preventing the unnecessary loss of qualified foster parents would significantly enhance child welfare systems' ability to meet the safety, permanency, and well being outcomes for children in their care."***

A 2005 report sponsored by the U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services, "Understanding Foster Parenting: Using Administrative Data to Explore Retention," examines foster home retention and utilization data in New Mexico, Oregon, and Oklahoma. Written by Laura Radel, DHHS, and Deborah Gibbs, RTI International, the study's findings included:

- Length of service in foster parenting is shorter than many managers would expect. In the three states studied, between 47 and 62 percent of families exited foster parenting within a year of the first placement in their home.
- Foster parent "burn-out" cannot be identified as a factor in length of service. Higher foster home occupancy and higher levels of care for infants, adolescents, and children with special needs were consistently associated with greater length of service.
- Across the three states, a relatively small group carries much of the work of the foster care system. (One-fifth of foster parents provide 60 to 80 percent of all foster care.)

The study recommends staff training to improve the experiences that foster parents have with child welfare agencies. A summary of the study can be downloaded here.

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/05/foster-parenting/execsum.pdf>.

### Inter-jurisdictional Placement Services

Do you have questions about interstate placement requirements and procedures? The website of the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is a great place to start finding answers. [Click here](#) for access to informative documents and to find telephone contact information for each state interstate placement office.

### Tips and Tools

#### Appreciative Inquiry

When conducting focus groups or interviews with stakeholders, try asking what is working so that you can do more of it. Here are some ideas adapted from the Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry by Sue Annis Hammond. Visit [www.thinbook.com](http://www.thinbook.com) for materials you can order.

#### Some Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry

- An organization (or system) is a mystery to be embraced, not a problem to be solved.
- Change can occur by doing more of what works rather than dwelling on what is broken.
- What we focus on becomes our reality therefore, seek to magnify something worthy.
- It is important to value differences, as reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities.
- The language we use creates our reality. It sets a tone and frame of reference.
- The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.

#### How to Do It

• Decide the topic. For example, successful recruitment efforts, successful retention efforts, partnering between the agency and resource parents, etc.

• Create strengths-based questions to explore the topic.

• Use a neutral facilitator and combine resource parents, staff, community members, etc. in group discussion, so they can hear one another's "different realities."

• Determine the common themes and best stories that emerged.

• Apply "what if" to all the common themes. Then write affirmative present-tense statements incorporating the common themes. For example: What if our families have a pleasant experience every time they work with us?

• Then, seek to focus on and reward those things that work to retain resource parents and create safety, permanency and well being for children.

#### Some Sample Questions

- Describe an incident when you or someone you know went the extra mile to provide a parent with what they really wanted when they wanted it. What made it possible?
- Describe your three most important wishes for retention of resource parents.
- Describe a timewhen you were a part of or observed an extra-ordinary display

### Contents

[Recruitment Works Retention Matters](#)  
[Inter-jurisdictional Services](#)  
[Tips and Tools](#)  
[T/TA Highlights](#)  
[R & R Network](#)  
[FYI](#)  
[Subscribe or Forward](#)  
[Contact Us](#)



### Memo from Melody

Welcome to the second edition of the AdoptUsKids Training and Technical Assistance E-Notes! We look forward to having you join us monthly for what we hope will be a useful sharing of information, successes and lessons learned in our mutual efforts to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families.

This month we are proud to announce the launch of the new AdoptUsKids Training and Technical Assistance website at [www.adoptex.org/adoptusa](http://www.adoptex.org/adoptusa). The site highlights promising practices and helpful resources for practitioners and managers. It can also be accessed via the Resource Center button on the AdoptUsKids website, [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org).

At the bottom of this document, you will see a link to email your good recruitment or retention ideas or stories. Please consider sending information on what is working, no matter how big or small. You can also subscribe or email E-Notes to a colleague just below this memo. We need your help to get an effective recruitment and retention information network established.

Thanks for reading!

#### Melody Roe

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

#### Subscribe or Forward

[Click here to subscribe to T/TA E-Notes](#)

[Click here to send this to a friend or colleague](#)

#### 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).

of cooperation between resource parents and staff? What made that possible?

• Describe a time when you were part of a team that had a high level of trust and respect among the members. How was trust and respect communicated? What was your role in achieving this?

## **T/TA Highlights**

Partnering with the states of South Dakota and Florida, AdoptUsKids TA consultants (Kathy Deserly, Judith and John McKenzie in South Dakota; John and Judy in Florida) have experienced some very promising results using "Appreciative Inquiry" methods to facilitate stakeholder input, including resource parents, front-line staff and state and county administrators. Questions were tailored for focus groups and teams in each state to put the spotlight on what is working rather than what is broken. (See Tips and Tools for more information on the Appreciative Inquiry Method.)

South Dakota's goal is to develop capacity to effectively serve Native American children. With the involvement of 184 focus group attendees in 5 cities, the State was able to develop consensus and establish its plans. AdoptUsKids provided follow-up technical assistance in collaboration with the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to facilitate developing a "Collaborative Circle" of State and Tribal leaders to continuously address barriers and implement plans.

Florida requested help to address declining rates of placement stability and retention of foster and adoptive parents. It assembled a technical assistance team of consultants from AdoptUsKids, and the National Child Welfare Resource Centers for Organizational Improvement, Family Centered Practice/ Permanency Planning and Data and Technology. District 1, in the panhandle of Florida, volunteered to be a pilot site for this initiative. Case reviews were conducted by participants from AdoptUsKids, the NRCs and State and District level public and private agency staff.

In late March, eight focus groups were facilitated with 270 stakeholders in District 1 using the appreciative inquiry process. Building on lessons learned and recommendations from the case reviews and focus groups, District 1 has already made significant progress. A major ingredient in this success is a strong partnership between the District 1 state and private agency staff. District 1 is truly living the adage that "recruitment and retention is everybody's business."

## **Recruitment and Retention Network**

The Permanency Partners Program (P3) in Los Angeles County pairs trained Permanency Partners with foster youth in order to identify one or more permanent connections. The goal is either family reunification or moving the child out of long-term foster care and into adoption or legal guardianship. The program began in October of 2004 as a public-private partnership between L.A. County DCFS and Consortium for Children. Key program components include intensive file mining, exploring the youth's life and past connections, and the development of a written agreement regarding the relationship and services needed to achieve permanence. For information contact Tiffany Collins at [collita@dcfs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:collita@dcfs.co.la.ca.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](mailto:melody@adoptex.org).

## **FYI**

### **Save the Date!**

August 3 & 4, 2006: Fourth Foster Care and Adoption Summit for State Foster Care and Adoption Program Managers in San Antonio, TX.

T/TA E-Notes, June 2006

You are subscribed as %%contact-email%%. To unsubscribe please [click here](#).

POWERED BY  
**Campaigner**