

# Welcome!

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Conference ID: **40517690**

# Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Family Engagement

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## *Using Customer Service Concepts to Recruit and Develop Resource Families*

Webinar | June 11, 2015

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*at AdoptUSKids*

# Welcome and Introductions

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Jill Marshall May, Director

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# Definition of Customer Service

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One definition of customer service:

Customers' perceptions of the way they are treated, the responsiveness of the services provided, and the extent to which they are engaged in teamwork to meet the needs of children and youth.

Your agency may create its own definition.

# Housekeeping

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- This webinar is 90 minutes long, including time at the end for questions and answers.
- We will record this webinar and have it available on the NRCDR website.
- Your lines will be muted during the presentation.
- Interactive—you can ask questions and interact with us using the chat function and by participating in the polls.
- Seeking your feedback—there will be an evaluation at the end of the webinar.

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# Agenda

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- Overview of key concepts: how customer service impacts child welfare systems
- Putting customer service into practice in tribal communities
- Developing and implementing a customer service curriculum in Mississippi
- Resources for strengthening customer service
- Questions and answers

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# **Overview of Key Concepts: How Customer Service Affects Child Welfare Systems**

Maureen Heffernan, Consultant  
National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids



# How “Customer Service” Applies to Child Welfare Practice

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- What do we mean by “customer service” in a child welfare context?
- What are the benefits of a customer service approach?
- Why take a customer service approach to recruitment efforts?
- What terminology that works for you?

# Through a Customer Service Lens: Key Concepts in Engaging and Supporting Kin, Foster, and Adoptive Parents

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- Customer service: everybody's business
- Internal and external customers
- Customer service as a systemic issue
- Customer service standards to operationalize system goals
- Implementation matters

# Poll Question

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# Factors Affecting Foster Parents Continuing to Work with an Agency

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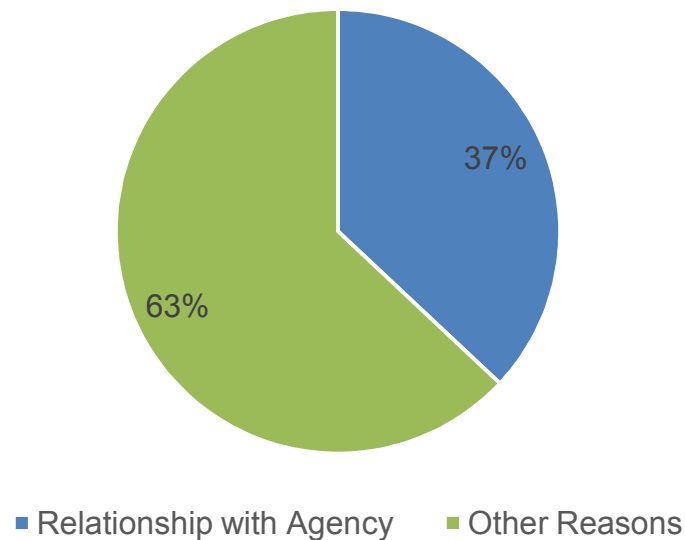
“While foster parents leave the system for a variety of reasons, many leave because they are frustrated and exhausted. They are weary from navigating a foster care system that is difficult and inoperable.”

Rehnquist, J. (2002). Retaining foster parents. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

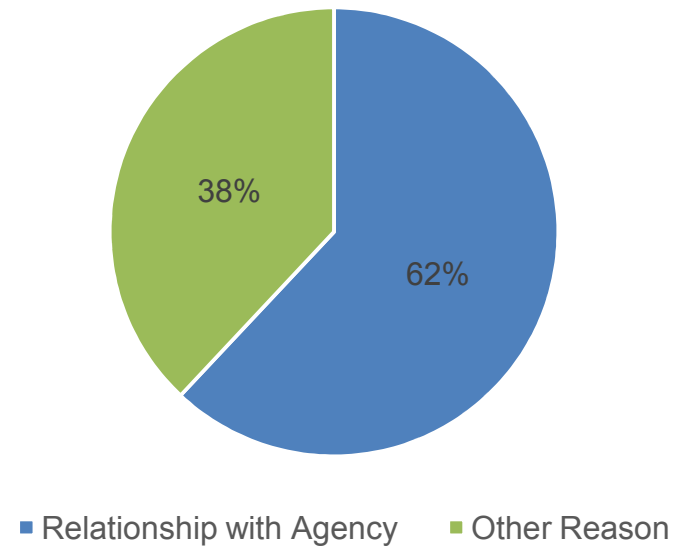
# Agency-Related Reasons Cited as a Reason for Quitting

Includes unsatisfactory interactions with workers and agency insensitivity

Former Foster Parents



Foster Parents Planning to Quit



# The Voice of Foster Parents

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*“If workers treated us with respect and kindness we would do anything for them.”*

*- Foster parent focus group participant*

# Poll Question

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# Customer Service Is Everybody's Business

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- Impact on children and youth in care
- Roles of children's caseworker staff, child welfare leaders, and recruitment and foster care staff



# Key Concepts— External and Internal Customers

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**External customers**—people you work with outside the agency

- Judges, court staff, legal professionals
- Private providers
- Prospective foster, adoptive, and kin applicants
- Tribes, states, counties, and other child welfare systems
- Families, youth, and children
- Many more....

# Key Concepts— External and Internal Customers

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**Internal customers**—People you work with throughout your agency

- Supervisors
- Data/IT staff
- Finance staff
- Receptionist, clerical staff
- Staff in other program areas
- Kin, foster, and adoptive parents

# Key Concepts—External and Internal Customers: Kin, Foster, and Adoptive Families Are Both!

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Kin, foster, and adoptive parents play a unique role:

- They have characteristics of both internal and external customers.
- Over time, they progress from being prospects to potential partners to full partners.
- Their role differs based on the status of relationship with agency and dynamics of each case situation.

# Key Concepts—Parallel Processes for Improving Child Welfare Outcomes

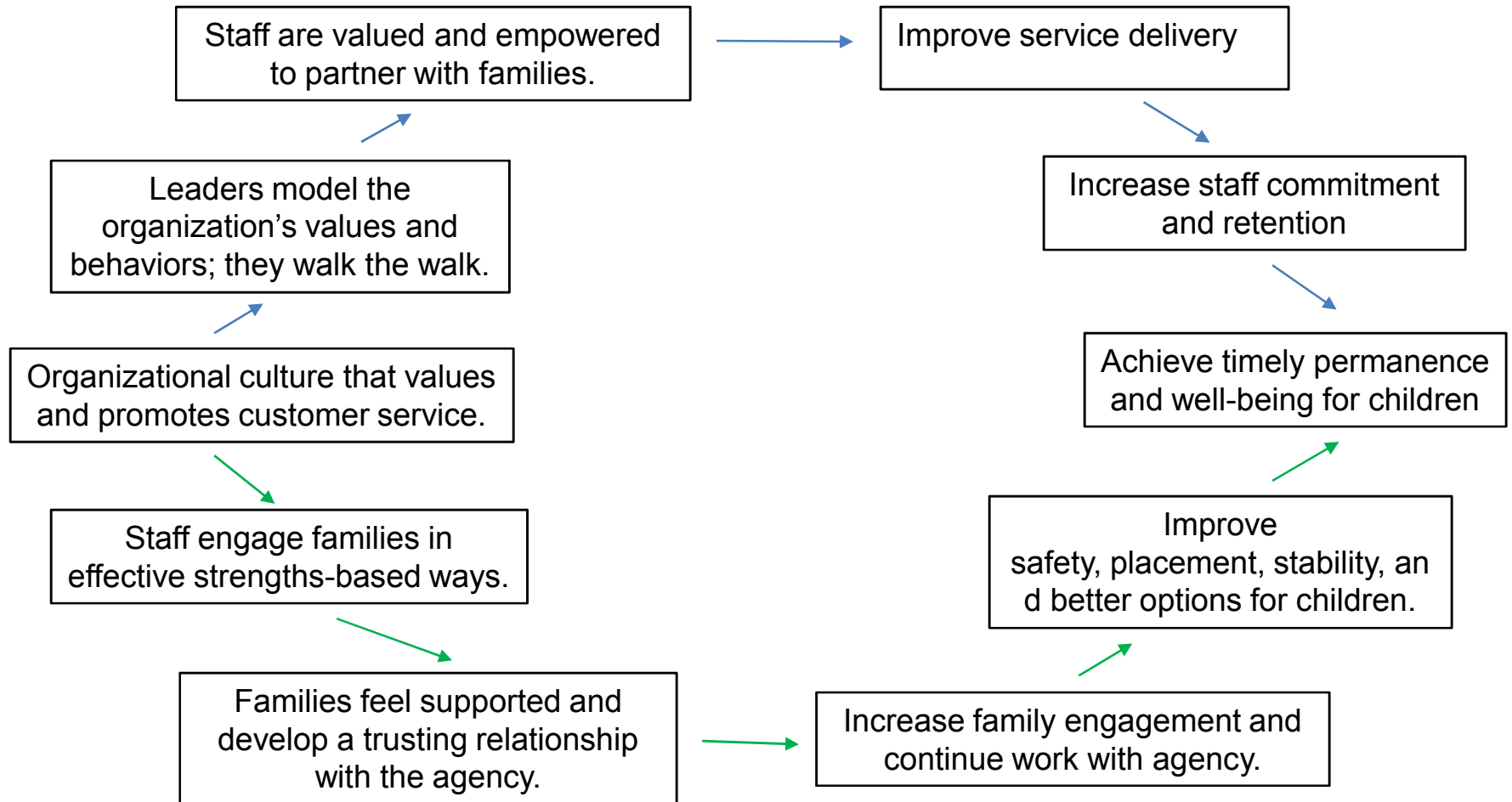
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- To provide good customer service, an organizational culture within the agency should support and facilitate good customer service for both internal and external customers.
- When customer service is modeled by leaders and colleagues, it is more likely that the same principles will be used when staff interact with foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

# Poll Question

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## How Staff Are Supported



## How Families Are Supported

# The PRO Framework for Customer Service: A Systemic Perspective



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# 10 Principles of the PRO Framework

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## Processes

1. Good customer service is everyone's business.
2. Listen to the voice of the customer.
3. Use data effectively.



# 10 Principles of the PRO Framework

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## Relationships

- 4. Relationships first
- 5. Partners in service
- 6. Use of power

# 10 Principles of the PRO Framework

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## Organization

- 7. Organizational climate and culture
- 8. Empowering style of leadership
- 9. Meaningful customer service standards

## PRO

- 10. Core competencies for customer service

# Customer Service Standards to Operationalize System Goals

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- Reflect the organization's beliefs and values regarding service delivery and working together
- Help ensure consistent delivery and quality of services
- Are specific to work and roles of various staff members
- Include clear definitions and details on behaviors expected of staff

# Examples of Focus Areas for Customer Service Standards

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- Safety
- Respect and compassion
- Mission
- Authority and power
- Responsiveness and timeliness

# Poll Question

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# Sample Customer Service Standards

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## **Authority and Power**

*Families are provided up-to-date information and engaged in decisions affecting them to the fullest extent possible. Members of the team continually examine their use of power, use of self, and personal biases to prevent inappropriate or unethical use of power and authority in all interactions with families.*

## **Responsiveness and Timeliness**

*All members of the team seek to follow through on commitments and meet timelines, carrying with them a child's sense of time as the standard for providing quality services.*

# Key Considerations in Implementing a Customer Service Approach

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- Understand what implementation science can tell us.
- Plan for an implementation process; include all of the right people/roles from the beginning.
- Invest the time.
- Think about what system elements, policies, etc., currently promote good customer service in your agency or child welfare system. What might stand in the way?
- Connect customer service work to other work.

# What Works Well? What Promotes Success?

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We see child welfare systems have success applying customer service approaches by:

- Prioritizing areas to work on
- Setting, operationalizing, and prioritizing customer service standards
- Understanding and acknowledging how parts of the work are related to each other and affect each other
- Considering cultural competence and understanding what the customer really wants

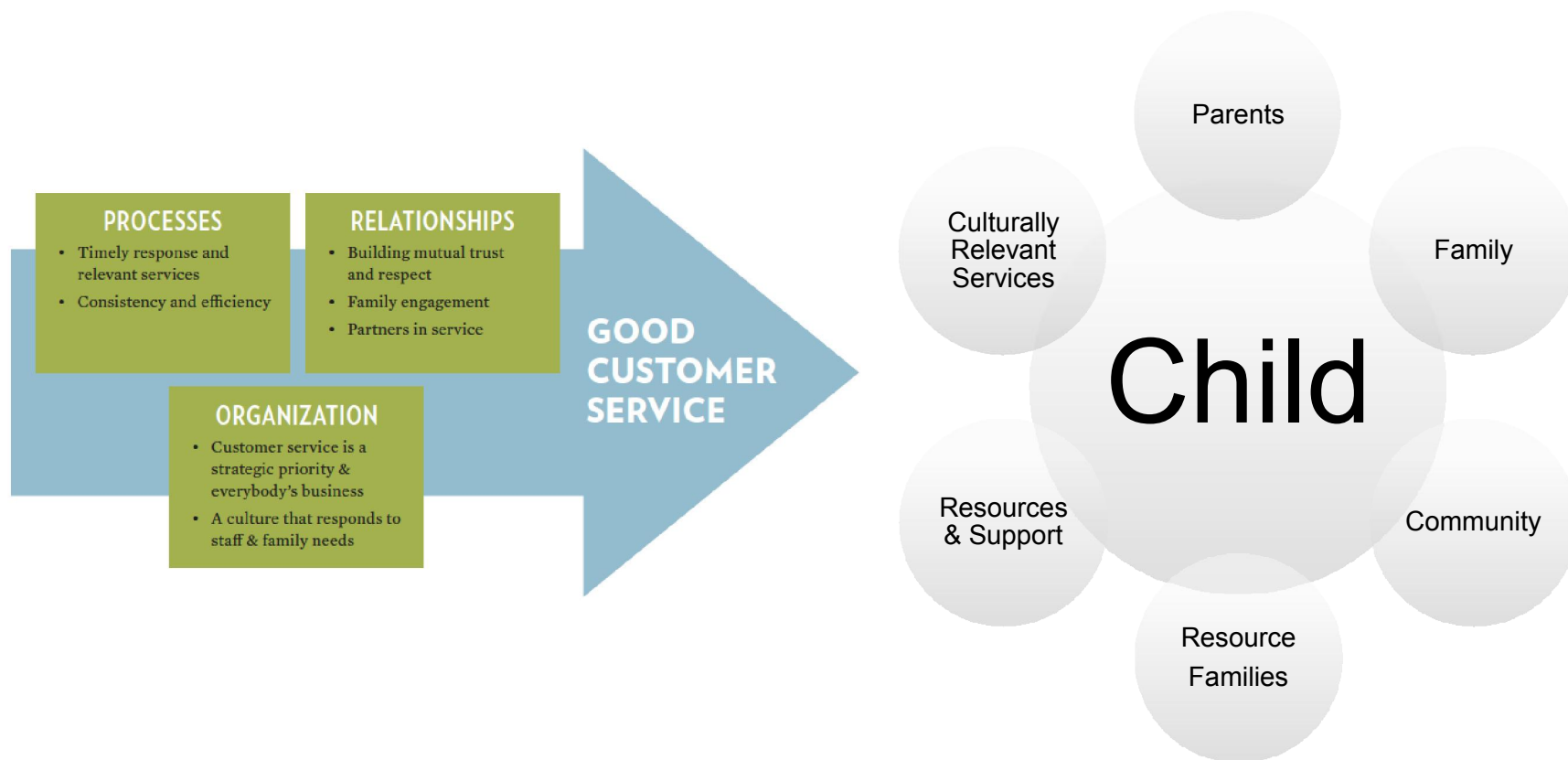


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# Putting Customer Service into Practice in Tribal Communities

Rebekah “Becky” Main, Tribal Child Welfare Specialist  
National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids

# Putting Customer Service Concepts into Practice in Tribal Communities



# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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**Processes:** Good customer service is everyone's business.

Example:

- Everyone has a valuable role in their family and community.

# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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**Processes:** Listening to the voice of the customer

Listening to internal and external customers and responding by expanding opportunities for children, families, staff, and the community can result in stronger communication, better coordination of services, informed decision-making, increased flexibility, and more culturally relevant services.

Examples:

- Listening to what the resource family needs to meet the needs of a child or youth in their care.
- Being flexible so that services can accommodate a family's needs.

# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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## **Relationships:** Relationships first

Encouraging respectful treatment of all clients, community, staff, and other stakeholders.

### Examples:

- Understanding the children and families.
- Supervisors and staff working in partnership.
- If this was your child or grandchild, how would you like them to be treated?

# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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## **Relationships:** Relationships first

Additional examples:

- Communication and teamwork to provide supportive services that are respectful of relationships and family ties and responsive to emerging needs.
- Building a relationship with the community through holding engaging events, sharing information about the role of the agency, and providing resources.

# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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## **Relationships:** Partners in service

### Examples:

- Cross training staff allows for prompt response.
- Family group decision-making engages, supports, and empowers staff and families, fosters teamwork, and streamlines efforts for placement preferences.

# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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**Relationships:** Use of power

Examples:

- Improved transparency
- Talking in language of strengths and concerns



# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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**Organization:** Organizational climate and culture

Examples:

- Develop policies and procedures that support culturally relevant practice and strong customer service. This provides staff with an environment conducive to providing high-quality customer service and can support resource families in meeting the needs of children and youth in care.
- Offer ongoing opportunities for staff development.

# Principles of the PRO Framework in Tribal Communities

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## Organization

Empowering style of leadership

Examples:

- Supervisors can support ongoing staff development and empowerment by encouraging best thinking in their staff.
- Staff can engage in team decision-making where everyone's input is valued and they can support one another.

# Cultural Values and Customer Service

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Staff can be developed according to cultural values that also overlap into the delivery of tribal child welfare services and good customer service from the front end of prevention to post-permanency.

- Culturally relevant approaches to child welfare practice and customer service can be integrated into policy and procedures and the services that are provided.
- Recognition of a family's cultural background in order to provide relevant services can be key to assisting and supporting all families (children, their families, and resource families).

# Contact Information

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# Developing and Implementing a Customer Service Curriculum in Mississippi

Angie McLeod Williams, Director of Permanency  
Mississippi Department of Human Services  
Family & Children's Services

# Poll Question

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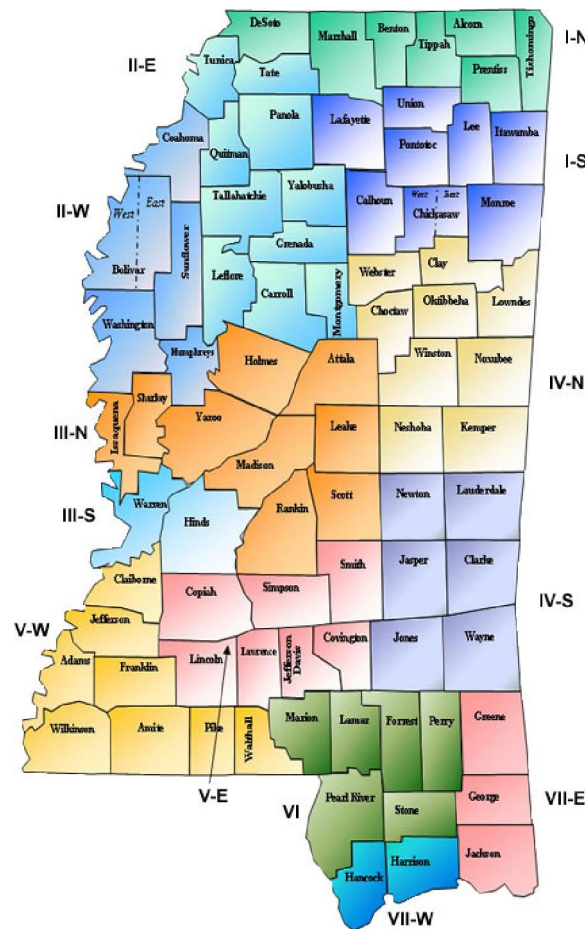


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# Mississippi Regional Map



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This workshop was created through a collaboration between MDHS and AdoptUSKids and was developed as part of a diligent recruitment and retention grant (MS GRITS).

Workshop curriculum developed by:

Jessica T. Michael, LMSW, MS GRITS project director

Meredith M. Mayo, MDHS graduate social work intern, University of Alabama



The Diligent Recruitment & Retention Grant is funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant 90-CO-1052.





# 7 Belief Statements

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MDHS believes:

- People are innately good and want to do their best work.
- Building relationships in our workplaces, with our customers, and in our lives is a primary goal.
- We always have choices in how we act and respond.
- Everyone can make a difference, no matter what their job or position in the agency.

## 7 Belief Statements (continued)

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MDHS believes:

- Lifelong learning, creative thinking, and the gift of appreciation help us to be our best selves.
- Enthusiasm is contagious.
- We can all find meaning in our work, and we are all here to serve. (Barbara Glanz)

# Defining Our Customers

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Who are the customers in child welfare?

- External customers (anyone we do business with)
- Internal customers (anyone within the agency)

# Mississippi's Customer Service Principles

## “The 5 Rs”

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### Responsive

- Reacting in a timely manner to meet responsibilities to address identified needs

### Reliable

- Being honest and trustworthy in all interactions with customers and meeting commitments

# Mississippi's Customer Service Principles

## “The 5 R's”(continued)

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### Respectful

- Interacting with customers in a way that makes them feel valued and promotes dignity and self-worth

### Relationships

- Valuing the role of every family, child, and staff member and working together as a team to achieve positive outcomes

### Recognition

- Showing appreciation for the contributions of each team member openly and frequently

# Session I

## Customer Service Basics

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We are responsive!

- Responsiveness in practice:
  - Phone calls/emails are returned in a timely manner.
  - Worker meets the customer's needs—makes sure needs (if appropriate) are met.
  - When workers don't know the answer, they say they don't know, but will find out (and do, and then answer later).
  - Worker answers the customer's questions or tries to find the answer; tells the customer, "I will find out for you."

# More Basics

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Factors that create a negative impression:

- Making the customer wait
- Not answering the phone promptly
- Not saying “please” and/or “thank you”
- Speaking loudly or condescendingly
- Making faces, frowning, acting distant, not smiling
- Looking disheveled or like you don’t care about your appearance
- A poor handshake
- Focusing on another task while addressing or servicing a customer

# Customer Service and Resource Families

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Whose job is it to support resource families?

- The cultural divide
  - Frontline staff <>resource staff
  - Unfortunately, when this divide is present, many resource families do not receive the information, support, and follow-up they need to maintain placements and continue to foster or adopt.
  - The direct result: resource family turnover, more disrupted placements, greater negative impact on children, and fewer homes available for them.



# Resource Families: Partners, Not Employees

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Resource families do have a job to do; however, they do not “work” for MDHS. We are not their boss.

Resource families are partners who join with MDHS in the pursuit of welfare for children and their birth families.

Multiple roles:

- Nurture children in care until they can be reunited with their parents
- Work with birth family towards reunification
- Serve as members of the team working closely with MDHS
- May eventually adopt the children into their home

# How Resource Families Affect CFSR Outcomes

CFSR Item	The Resource Family Role
Safety Outcome 1: Children are protected from abuse and neglect.	Resource families provide safe, nurturing homes for children in care.
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living arrangements.	Resource families maintain children in their home despite great challenges and sometimes minimal services. They provide stability and support. Often adopt after TPR.
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	Resource families facilitate contact with family members, often provide homes for sibling groups, and maintain life books and other historical documents for children.
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	Resource families can provide crucial modeling and mentoring for birth parents. Partnerships in parenting are vital in achieving more timely and successful reunification.
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	Resource families often identify educational problems and serve as front-line responders for children and schools.
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive appropriate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	Resource families often identify medical and emotional problems and serve as front-line responders for children and treatment providers.

# Lessons Learned

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- Good customer service must be a priority from the top down, at all levels of the agency.
- Data is important in establishing the need for good customer service.
- Good relationships and good communication between frontline staff and resource staff are a must.

# Project Highlights and Products

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- Customer service workshop facilitators manual
- Simple truths of service slideshow
- Tracking form to capture inquiries on resource families
- Survey templates:
  - Foster parent survey (phone) to help in developing services to support foster parents
  - Staff survey around effective recruitment resources

<http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2010-grantees/story?k=diligent-recruitment-and-retention-grant>

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# Resources to Strengthen Customer Service



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# Resources to Strengthen Customer Service



Many publications, tools and tips are available on the NRCDR website.

[nr cdr.org](http://nr cdr.org)

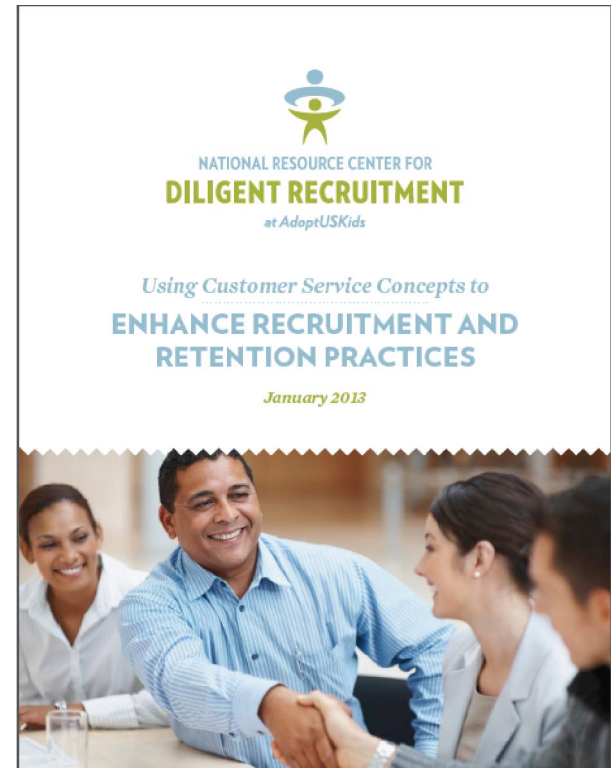


# Publications

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- *Using Customer Service Concepts to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Practices*

[http://nr cdr.org/\\_assets/files/using-customer-service-concepts-to-enhance-recruitment-and-retention-practices.pdf](http://nr cdr.org/_assets/files/using-customer-service-concepts-to-enhance-recruitment-and-retention-practices.pdf)

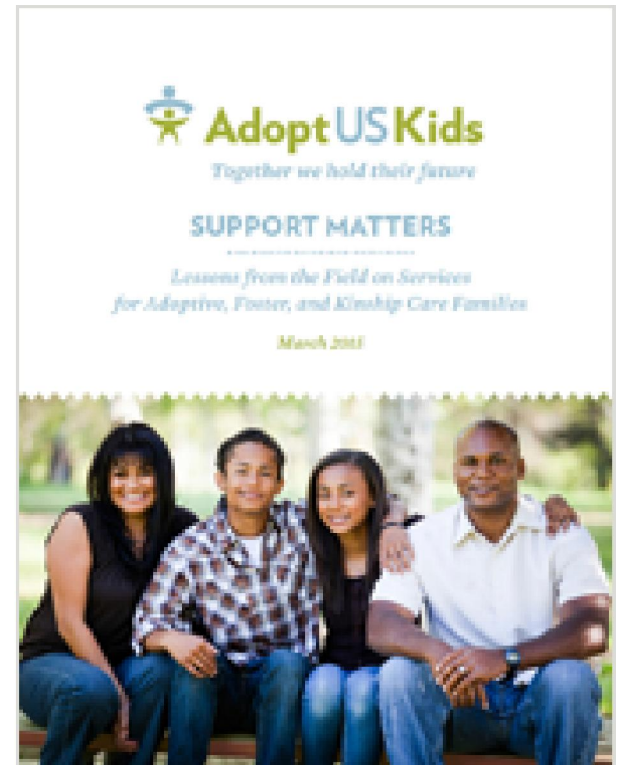


# Publications

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- *Support Matters: Lessons from the Field on Services for Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Care Families*

<http://nrcdr.org/develop-and-support-families/support-matters>





# Data Resources

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- *Data-driven Recruitment: Key Data Elements on Foster and Adoptive Families*

<http://www.nrcdr.org/assets/files/NRCDR-org/data-driven-recruitment-110514.pdf>

- *Webinar: Data-driven Diligent Recruitment: Partnering and Prioritizing to Strengthen Your System's Use of Data*

<http://www.nrcdr.org/news-and-e-notes/story?k=NRCDR-Webinar>

# Diligent Recruitment Grantees

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## Diligent Recruitment Grantees ▼

Highlights & Lessons Learned

2013 Grantees

2010 Grantees

2008 Grantees

<http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees>



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# Tip Sheets

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- *Five Things You Can Do to Improve Customer Service—*

## *Phone Interaction with Families*

[http://www.nrcdr.org/\\_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/five-things-you-can-do-customer-service-phone-interaction.pdf](http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/five-things-you-can-do-customer-service-phone-interaction.pdf)

- *10 Things You Can Do to Improve Customer Service—*

## *Prospective Parent Orientation Sessions*

[http://www.nrcdr.org/\\_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/10-things-you-can-do-to-improve-customer-services.pdf](http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/10-things-you-can-do-to-improve-customer-services.pdf)

- *Every Month Is Customer Service Month*

[http://www.nrcdr.org/\\_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/every-month-is-customer-service-month.pdf](http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/every-month-is-customer-service-month.pdf)



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## Contact the NRCDR

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To learn more about how we can help:

[www.nrcdr.org](http://www.nrcdr.org)  
[nrcdr@adoptuskids.org](mailto:nrcdr@adoptuskids.org)  
(303) 726-0198

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## Questions and Answers



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