

Instant Family: Tips for Child Welfare Systems

The new movie *Instant Family* which tells the story of one family adopting three children from foster care, may raise awareness of the need for resource families and lead to a heightened interest among some viewers in learning more about foster care and adoption.

We've created this tip sheet to help you prepare for possible increases in the number of families inquiring about foster or adoptive parenting and consider ways to leverage this opportunity for your recruitment, training, and support efforts with families.

Response system considerations and tips

Here are some ways to prepare for a possible increase in inquiries and things to consider:

- Give your response system staff talking points to help them be prepared for questions or comments they may receive related to the movie. Make sure they have data and information available about youth in care generally, including teens and sibling groups.
- Some prospective parents may reach out to you with questions specifically about the movie (e.g., the accuracy of the movie's portrayal, should children should see the movie, etc.). Develop responses to anticipated questions so that your staff responding to inquiries (and the rest of your workforce) are prepared to provide a consistent response.
- People inquiring about foster care or adoption who were prompted to call from seeing the movie may not know much more about foster care or adoption. Be prepared to engage with people with a wide variety of knowledge and familiarity with foster care and adoption and who may be newly motivated to explore foster care and adoption from having seen the movie.
- Prepare for the possibility of increased inquiries through all of your communication channels (e.g., phone, website, email, social media) in the first few months of the release.
- Coordinate with your response system staff—and partnering agencies, if relevant—about how to handle possible needs for increased capacity to keep up with the inquiries.
- People who see the movie may be motivated to take some sort of action to help children. You may find it helpful to develop a brief list or a handout with ideas for various ways that people can help locally, especially if they're not sure whether they want to pursue foster or adoptive parenting. Consider listing ideas for volunteering, donating needed items for children in foster care, exploring becoming a mentor, etc. You can also refer people to the [list of ways to help](#) on adoptuskids.org.

- Review our tip sheet *Making the Most of Your Recruitment Efforts: Effective Response System Strategies* for additional ideas and strategies for effective ways to respond to inquiring families.

Using *Instant Family* as a tool for recruitment, development, and support

The new movie *Instant Family* can be a useful tool in your child welfare system's approaches for recruiting, developing, and supporting families. We encourage you to explore creative ways to make use of the movie with prospective and current foster and adoptive families. Here are some ideas for how you could incorporate the movie into your efforts:

- Coordinate with movie theaters that are showing the movie to have information and materials (e.g., recruitment brochures or fliers) and displays available at the theater to reach potential foster and adoptive families. Explore options for having informational tables or booths at the movie theater—including representatives of any private agency partners who work with foster or adoptive families—to talk with people attending the movie and to provide additional information about foster care and adoption.
- Explore options for holding orientation sessions or community discussions in connection with the movie (e.g., combine a screening of the movie with a discussion after the movie).
- Consider hosting a special screening of *Instant Family* for prospective and current foster and adoptive families.
- For prospective families going through the pre-service training process, you could combine the movie screening with a facilitated discussion about what thoughts, questions, and emotions the movie raised for people. This discussion can also provide an opportunity to highlight key ideas for prospective parents to consider (e.g., how they would handle various parenting situations), ideas for ongoing preparation for becoming a foster or adoptive parent, and forms of support available to families.
- For current foster and adoptive families, you could create a respite opportunity for parents—a parents night out—to see the movie with other foster and adoptive parents, while providing child care or another movie for children to see while their parents see *Instant Family*. (Given the content and experiences of characters in the film, we recommend against having children or youth see the movie, especially if they have been in foster care or adopted, as the movie may trigger traumatic memories.)
- Explore ways to leverage the movie as a training opportunity, both for people in the pre-service training phase and for current parents. Encourage people to see the movie and reflect on their reactions. You could also provide discussion questions for people to consider and talk about with their support networks and/or other prospective and current parents to help them continue developing their knowledge and parenting approaches.
- Share ideas with parent groups about organizing group outings to see the movie, encouraging

prospective parents to see the movie, and other ways that parent groups could leverage the movie.

- Offer a combined event for workers and parents with a facilitated discussion to help parents and workers understand each other's experiences better.

Coordinating with your workforce on the movie

Here are a few additional considerations for engaging workers around *Instant Family*:

- Explore the possibility of partnering with theaters to provide workers the opportunity to see the movie as an extra or thank-you experience.
 - Consider options for using the movie as a training tool for workers (e.g., having them see the movie and then discuss their reactions, ideas for their work, family experiences).
- Help workers be prepared to talk with youth about the movie if they bring it up, or to help families with talking with youth about it. (*Given the content and experiences of characters in the film, we recommend against having children or youth see the movie, especially if they have been in foster care or been adopted, because the movie may trigger traumatic memories, but we recognize that older youth may decide to see the movie on their own.*)

Contact us at consultation@adoptuskids.org if you'd like assistance exploring how to prepare your response system or strategizing about ways to connect your recruitment, training, or family support efforts to the release of *Instant Family*.



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