Using family-finding models to achieve permanency

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Speakers

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AdoptUSKids mission

Raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system

Assist US states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop and support foster and adoptive families

Our replication efforts: Family-finding models

- Purpose and goals of our family-finding replication work

- Supported by the Children's Bureau

- Replicating four models of family finding along a continuum of approaches

Our replication efforts: Family-finding models

- Working with multiple jurisdictions to replicate family-finding models

- Navigating unique challenges due to the timing of replication efforts

Key concepts in family finding and engagement

Engagement is key, not just finding family

Key concepts in family finding and engagement

- Need to do ongoing family finding and engagement through the time a child is in care

- System change must be part of the conversation—importance of aligning your system

- Youth voice and stories have great power

Family-finding initiative replication models

Model / approach	Replication agency	Brief description
Extreme Family Finding (EFF)	FosterAdopt Connect	*Family Finding:* Team of recruiters and private investigators work to find extended family to establish relational and legal permanency for youth for whom it is typically more difficult to find permanency
In-Depth Profiles (IDP)	Northwest Resource Associates	*Video Profiles:* Creative storytelling and video projects that give older youth the lead voice in finding an adoptive family
I Belong Project (IBP)	America's Kids Belong	*Video Profiles:* High quality videos developed to give youth waiting for permanency a face and voice
Family-engagement approach to permanency (NIPFC)	National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness	*Systems Change:* Support and training to advance permanency for all children and youth, with family finding as a core strategy

Participating states and jurisdictions

Model / approach	Participating states and jurisdictions
Extreme Family Finding	• Adoption Rhode Island; Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families • Adoptions Together; Prince George's County Department of Health and Human Services, MD • TRAC Services for Families; Allegheny County Department of Human Services, PA • FosterAdopt Connect; Kansas Department for Children and Families
In-Depth Profiles	• Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange; Michigan Department of Health and Human Services • Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange; Oregon Department of Human Services
I Belong Project	• Raise the Future; Utah Department of Child and Family Services • Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services • Georgia Department of Human Services
Family-engagement approach to permanency	• Monterey County Family and Children Services, CA • Santa Cruz Probation Department, CA • Butte County Children's Services Division, CA • San Luis Obispo County Child Welfare Services, CA

Family-finding process and replication evaluation

AdoptUSKids Evaluation Team

- Ruth G. McRoy, PhD

- Susan Ayers-Lopez, MEd

- Michelle Steinley-Bumgarner, MA

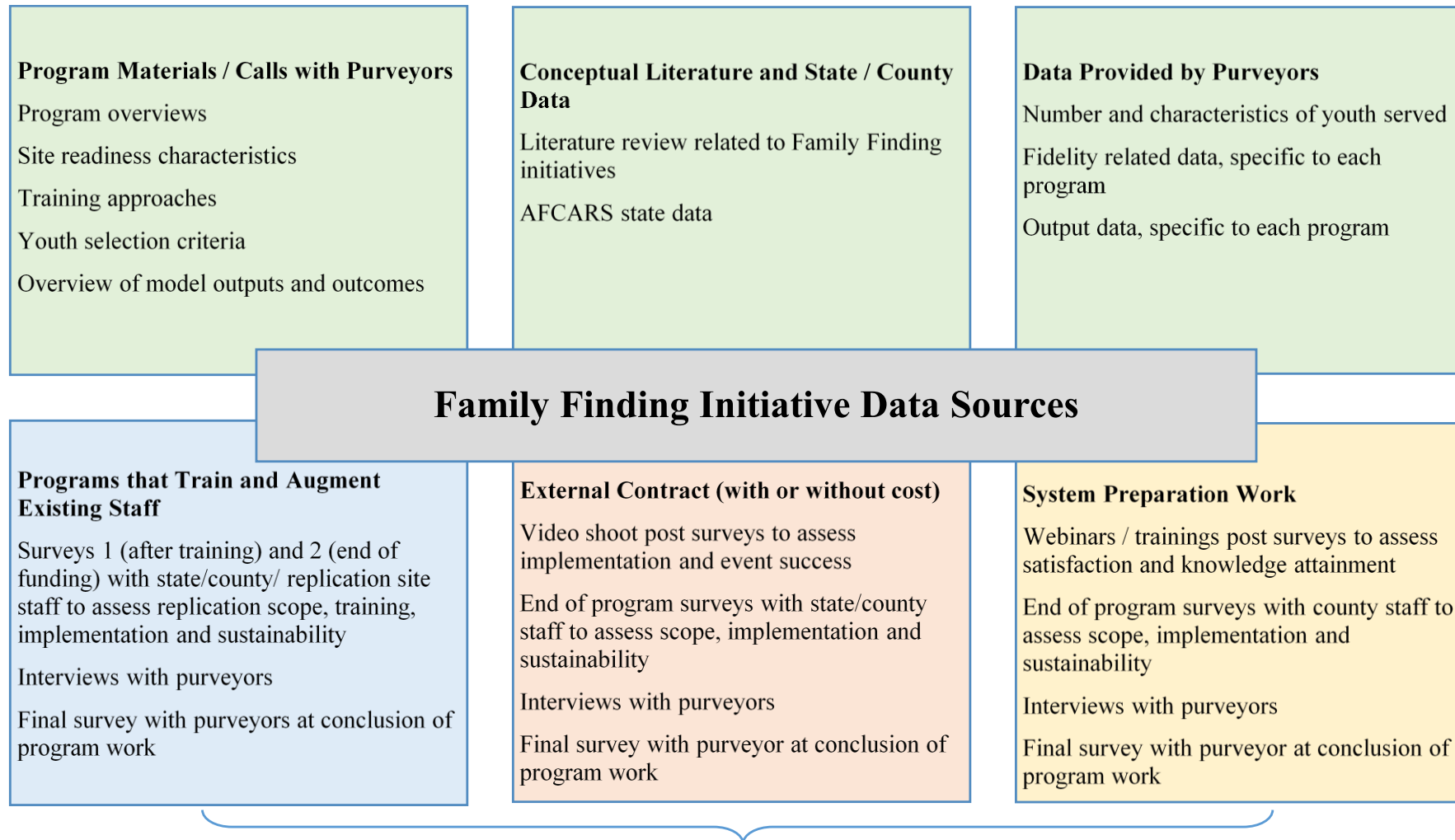- Patricia A. Cody, PhD

- Sahitya Neeli, MBA

Evaluation of family finding

- February 2020: AdoptUSKids began work with four purveyors to conduct replication activities of their four models that have shown promise in addressing the goals of the Adoption Call to Action.

- The overarching goals of this evaluation were to:
  - Understand the replication process for each model
  - Identify barriers to replication
  - Understand the success factors in replication

- In an effort to compare data across programs, the evaluation strategy was designed to collect similar data from each model, when possible.

Evaluation data sources

Data Collection Methods for All Programs

Program Materials / Calls with Purveyors

Program overviews

Site readiness characteristics

Training approaches

Youth selection criteria

Overview of model outputs and outcomes

Conceptual Literature and State / County Data

Literature review related to Family Finding initiatives

AFCARS state data

Data Provided by Purveyors

Number and characteristics of youth served

Fidelity related data, specific to each program

Output data, specific to each program

Family Finding Initiative Data Sources

Programs that Train and Augment Existing Staff

Surveys 1 (after training) and 2 (end of funding) with state/county/ replication site staff to assess replication scope, training, implementation and sustainability

Interviews with purveyors

Final survey with purveyors at conclusion of program work

External Contract (with or without cost)

Video shoot post surveys to assess implementation and event success

End of program surveys with state/county staff to assess scope, implementation and sustainability

Interviews with purveyors

Final survey with purveyor at conclusion of program work

System Preparation Work

Webinars / trainings post surveys to assess satisfaction and knowledge attainment

End of program surveys with county staff to assess scope, implementation and sustainability

Interviews with purveyors

Final survey with purveyor at conclusion of program work

Program-Specific Data Collection Methods

Site readiness and implementation

- ► System-level readiness

- ► Agency-level readiness

- ► Staff-level readiness

- ► Sustainability – continual considerations

When site readiness is not fully assessed and implementation factors are not regularly addressed, barriers become more difficult to overcome.

System level: Readiness & implementation

► Commitment to family finding and youth engagement:

  • Policy

  • System and practice values

  • Leadership support / sense of urgency

► Current youth permanency work in the state / jurisdiction:

  • Build on the work that is currently being done

  • Coordinate efforts across agencies

► Placement goals:

  • Adoption only?

  • Legal guardianship?

  • Kinship placement?

System level: Readiness & implementation

► Court partnership: support of family court judges

► Community partnership: connection to community for support

► System readiness criteria: planning and assessment

System level: Lessons learned

► Public agency needs to provide a program purveyor with full picture of existing work around family finding / youth engagement.

► Program purveyor needs to fully understand the policies and practices in the state / jurisdiction.

Agency level: Readiness & implementation

► Philosophy that all youth, regardless of characteristics and needs, deserve permanency

► Priority on youth engagement

► Public / private agency partnership:

- Program purveyors need to fully understand the relationships between private agencies and the state.

- Program purveyors need to be fully aware of all programs being implemented in the agency, whether they are similar or different from their program.

Agency level: Readiness & implementation

► Availability of needed resources:

- Case record access
- Staff access
- Youth access (foster homes, group homes, etc.)

► Technology capability of the agency:

- Virtual capability
- Required software or other technology support

► Willingness and resources to train staff:

- Program implementation staff
- Other staff involved with youth

Agency level: Success factors

► Ability **of** agency staff to think outside of the box

► Team approach / working with others committed to finding permanency

  • Implementation invigorated and inspired staff who were already passionate about their work

Agency level: Lessons learned

► Training needs to include everyone involved with the youth, not just the staff implementing a new program

► Shadowing or partnering during training on a new model to facilitate learning

Staff level: Readiness & implementation

► Commitment to family finding

► Commitment to youth engagement

► Staff skill and knowledge about family finding and youth engagement:

- Willingness to learn
- Willingness to think outside of the box
- Skills to learn required technology for model

Staff level: Success factors

► Experienced staff with supportive supervisors

- Know the system well and can maximize new opportunity

► Ability to adapt to virtual work

- Unexpected benefits

Staff level: Lessons learned

► Adequate time should be provided **so that** staff can embrace philosophical or conceptual shifts in the work.

► Materials and manuals need to have very specific steps for new staff to be able to use and refer to.

Sustainability considerations

► Early and ongoing discussion

► System and policy issues that intersect with family-finding and youth engagement models

► Funding considerations

► Public / private partnerships

► Training materials and support tools

► Ongoing model fidelity:

  • Inclusion criteria

  • Program components

► Ongoing program evaluation / data collection

Questions & answers

Resources

- [“I Belong Project Gives Children a Face and a Voice”](#)

- [“Going to the Extreme to Find Children’s Families”](#)

- [“Engaging Youth in Writing Photolisting Narratives”](#)

Next steps

- Read more on our website: professionals.adoptuskids.org/

- Join us for our next webinar on family-finding models: August 24

- Complete our evaluation survey

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