



North American Council on Adoptable Children

Annual Report 2008



Programs & Services



Throughout 2008, NACAC passionately advocated for improved policies to support permanence for foster children, provided support to current and prospective adoptive families, educated professionals and parents about key issues in special needs adoption, and conducted numerous training events for the entire adoption community. These efforts were made possible through the generous contributions of many individuals and organizations.

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Family and Youth Engagement Project

2 During 2008, with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, dozens of birth parents, youth, kinship caregivers, adoptive parents, and other advocates whom NACAC brought to Washington, D.C. built their capacity to advocate for children and families, told legislators their stories, and sought federal child welfare reform.

A key element of our work was lobbying for the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, which became law in October 2008. The bill was guided through Congress by Representatives Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Jerry Weller (R-IL) and Senators Max Baucus (D-MT), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), and Jay Rockefeller (D-WV). (*Senator Grassley is pictured below with executive director Joe Krull and Rob Johnson, a youth*



we brought to D.C. to tout the value of subsidized guardianship.)

The comprehensive bill includes significant support for kinship care (including subsidized guardianship), the gradual de-link of federal adoption assistance eligibility from outdated income standards, support for foster youth after age 18, extension of the adoption incentive program, and much more.

As our program officer at Pew wrote:

This bill would not have been considered, much less passed, without the tireless efforts of NACAC staff and partners in educating the public and policymakers about structural federal financing flaws that work against children leaving foster care for safe, permanent families. NACAC played a vital role in advocating for this legislation by bringing the voices of youth and families to Washington to share personal stories and illustrate how proposed changes would improve the lives of children.

The efforts of the people NACAC brought to Washington truly made a difference. After we arranged a visit with a local adoptive family, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) signed on to legislation that would expand adoption assistance and wrote the following: “This legislation will also increase the financial incentives for families to adopt older children. I recently had the good fortune to meet with Gail Neher and her daughter Alexandria who traveled to Washington, D.C. from Cary Plantation in Northern Maine to advocate for these improvements in our federal adoption assistance programs. Alexandria is celebrating two landmark events: graduation from high school and the finalization of her adoption into the Neher family. She told me how important it is for teenagers in foster care to find a safe, loving and permanent home.”

Breakthrough Series Collaborative

In 2008, NACAC continued to support Casey Family Programs’ Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Improving Educational Continuity and School Stability for Children in Out-of-Home Care. The Collaborative hosted two learning sessions (in March and September) for nine teams from around the country. Each team learned how to improve foster youth’s educational outcomes and implement changes in their communities.



Other Policy Advocacy

NACAC remained committed to educating the public and policymakers about the need to reform the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and the Interethnic Placement Provisions to better serve children of color in foster care. We partnered with other advocacy organizations to provide information about MEPA’s impact on the adoption of children of color and argued for increased attention to recruiting families who reflect the ethnic and racial background of children in foster care. During the year, staff and board members presented on this issue before the Race Matters consortium, the Casey Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare, and the Congressional Black Caucus.

NACAC also remained a strong, committed member of Voice for Adoption, a coalition that advocated for post-adoption support and other crucial reforms in the U.S.

Photos on the bottom of page 3 and the top of page 4 were taken by Andre Chenier at the NACAC conference in Ottawa. Remaining photos were taken by Christina Romo and other NACAC staff at events in 2008.

PARENT LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING

Community Champions Network

In eight communities (Kansas City, Missouri; Los Angeles, California; the province of Ontario; Orlando, Florida; Sacramento, California; Tampa, Florida; Washington, D.C.; and Wisconsin), NACAC's Community Champions Network (CCN) has built strong coalitions of hundreds of individuals who are advocating for post-adoption services in their communities. Funded by Jockey International's Jockey Being Family™ initiative, efforts in these communities have leveraged more than \$2 million in funding for new or enhanced post-adoption services. In Ontario, for example, advocacy helped garner \$1.35 million for regional post-adoption services and \$9,000 for adoption-competency training.

CCN has partnered with the Adoption Council of Canada to create a parent liaison program across all Canadian provinces, selecting and training two parents per province to help start and expand support groups and offer information and referral.

In response to numerous requests for adoption-competency training, NACAC has provided 15 training seminars for local CCN parents, providers, and community members on issues including effective advocacy, openness in adoption, effective parenting, adoption-competent mental health services, trauma recovery and brain development, and more.

In the latter part of the year, NACAC began creating new coalitions in Virginia, Colorado, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and St. Louis, Missouri. In each community, NACAC provided training on model post-adoption programs, coalition building, advocacy, and much more. As one participant noted, "The dedication and compassion of [CCN coalition members] have inspired me to keep fighting for my children." Another explained, "The tips and techniques that [the training] has given us cannot be measured."

Parent Group Development

During 2008, Jockey funding also enabled NACAC to empower parents to start more than 20 adoptive parent support groups in their communities.

At a leadership conference in April we also offered training on how to start or enhance a support group to more than 50 emerging and experienced leaders who run more than 66 groups. With the knowledge gained through this training, the leaders will be able to improve post-adoption support to the more than 800 families they serve. As one new group leader noted, "This conference supplied me with that push I needed to step out and finally do what I have been wanting to do for years but was afraid to do. I really feel I have the tools and encouragement I need. I have arrived." Another praised



the event, "It was an honor to be here with you. Please keep up the great work. We're leaving here with a little more passion. Hopefully that same passion will spread throughout our agency and across [Pennsylvania]. The kids are worth it!"

During the year, staff also consulted with leaders of more than 35 support groups about how to enhance their group and thus provide more support to adoptive families who are raising children with special needs.

NACAC, in partnership with the Collaboration to AdoptUsKids, sought to improve the availability of respite care for adoptive families around the U.S. In 2008, we developed and distributed a resource guide that parent group leaders and public agency administrators can use to create respite programs in their communities. As part of this partnership, we also selected 20 parent groups to receive grants to plan and implement



respite care, and offered training to grant recipients and their public agency partners on creating new respite programs. One training participant said about the event: "Thank you for an absolutely wonderful 2 days. This has been an incredible experience."

ADOPTION SUPPORT

Adoption Subsidy Resource Center

With the majority of its funding from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, NACAC's Adoption Subsidy Resource Center provides information, support, training, and advocacy on adoption assistance in the U.S. and Canada. In 2008, NACAC staff and volunteers provided information to more than 16,000 individuals from around North America about the benefits available to children with special needs who are adopted from foster care.

Staff and volunteers provided more than 1,000 of these individuals with in-depth information

and case advocacy to ensure that families have benefits their children need to grow and thrive. For example, a mother in Georgia adopted two siblings, one of whom had reactive attachment disorder. In spite of the child's serious disability, the county was only going to provide the basic adoption subsidy rate. After talking with NACAC staff, the mother was empowered to advocate for the resources her child needs, and the child now receives almost twice as much in assistance as the county initially proposed. The mother thanked our staff

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profusely, “Thank you so very much for helping me out, sending me documentation and giving me the courage to stand up for what Hannah and Jared need. I would have never been able to take the stand without you and others giving me so much support and information.”

Another adoptive parent we served remarked, “NACAC was an invaluable resource; they provided advice, federal and state policies, and court precedents that helped to fully inform our attorney, who had never handled a case like ours before with over 25 years experience. This information allowed him to present the best case possible, which was a good and just outcome for our family.”

In addition, NACAC advocated for improved adoption subsidy policies in four states and nationally during the year, and trained more than 1,300 parents and professionals about adoption assistance.

Minnesota Adoption Support and Preservation

NACAC’s MN ASAP parent support network—funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services—offers peer support from parent liaisons to adoptive parents around the state, and operates and empowers 40 parent support groups.

During the year, the network provided support to more than 1,000 adoptive families and hundreds of adoption professionals through more than 9,000 contacts. These services for families raising children with special needs helped reduce families’ isolation, enhanced their ability to meet their children’s needs, increased families’ stability, and prevented adoption disruptions. In addition, NACAC hosted an Adoption Month event where more than 800 parents and children celebrated adoption from foster care.

MN ASAP’s support network also helps children find the permanent families they need and deserve, as the following story illustrates:

Marilyn, an elder from the White Earth reservation, had been a foster mother for many years when four-year-old Brandi was placed with her. After some time, Marilyn discovered that the child was actually a granddaughter she never knew existed. Brandi has Down syndrome and other special needs, and



Marilyn searched for training and support to help her meet those needs.

When tribal and county workers realized Brandi couldn’t return home, they wanted to place her for adoption. Marilyn loved Brandi and wanted to adopt her, but was concerned about losing services that could help Brandi. Then she connected with the MN ASAP Native American community liaison, who explained the resources available in adoption (including medical care, respite care, special assistant services) and made sure Marilyn could make the decision that was best for Brandi. The liaison also connected Marilyn with other adoptive parents who can share information and support when Marilyn struggles to meet Brandi’s needs. In January, Marilyn adopted Brandi and calls her “granddaughter daughter.” She stays in touch with the NACAC liaison, and says, “I don’t know if I would have adopted if I didn’t have all these services and supports.”

The Harambee Village at NACAC

Harambee Village offers families who are raising African American children support and information to help their children develop a strong, positive identity and to ensure that they understand and can respond to the challenges of being a transracial family. To achieve these goals, Harambee hosts family villages (support groups for parents with culturally relevant activities for children), special events, and training. These services are made possible through contracts with Children’s Home Society and Family Services and HOPE Adoption and Family Services International, plus a General Mills Celebrating Communities of Color grant.

During 2008, we offered 34 villages serving more than 100 families as well as several special cultural events such as a Mother’s Day celebration, a Kwanzaa celebration, and a Juneteenth gathering. Harambee also held 14 events where youth built connections in the African American community. A conference in March provided training to 59 professionals and 161 parents, plus special programming to 105 youth.

Although designed for children and youth, the children’s programming meets other needs as well. As one Harambee mother explained: “Our daughter, adopted at the age of ten months, now age 37, is developmentally delayed with autistic behaviors.... Her disabilities are sometimes a challenge, and Harambee has gone out of its way to help find ways to



assist her in this most unusual endeavor in an age-appropriate way that meshes not only with her intellectual, emotional, and social abilities, but also in a way that is positive for the individuals with whom she comes in contact.”

Another Harambee family makes great efforts to connect their five- and two-year-old African American children with their community of origin. Steve and JoAnn drive more than three hours twice a month to bring them to Harambee events. Since becoming involved with Harambee, the family has also joined an African American church and built strong relationships with African American mentors for the children.

Recruitment Response Team

As the Collaboration to AdoptUsKids' Minnesota Recruitment Response Team through March 2008, NACAC offered support, provided adoption information, and made agency referrals to prospective adopters recruited by the AdoptUsKids campaign.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

Annual Conference

The NACAC conference in Ottawa, Ontario served more than 750 adoptive parents, adoption professionals, and others committed to achieving permanence for children in foster care. The conference is one of the few such events in North America that brings parents and professionals together to learn from one another.

During the four-day event, co-sponsored by the Adoption Council of Canada, participants attended almost 100 educational sessions where they learned how to better support children with special needs, recruit and prepare permanent families for kids, replicate model programs, change the system to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families, and much more.

As one attendee noted, “As an adoptive parent and a professional in the field, the conference was excellent, refreshing and uplifting.” Another participant agreed, “Conference content is excellent. And the organisation is exceptional. Seamless, intact, and this is no easy feat! Congrats to all organisers.”

With funding from Jockey Being Family™, NACAC gave scholarships to 28 conference attendees. One raved, “There are not words to describe all I have learned and the friends I made.... Wow. I can't wait for Ohio. The whole conference was wonderful. Thank you NACAC and Jockey for making my attendance possible.”



Other Training Opportunities

NACAC also offered training to thousands of adoption community members during the year on topics such as parent group development, adoption assistance, transracial parenting, and adoption competence.

In the fall, for example, we trained 24 adoptive parents, child welfare professionals, mental health clinicians, and court personnel from the Tampa, Florida area how to provide adoption-competent services to adopted children and their families. These individuals are now prepared to train others and will thus expand the availability of adoption-competent services in the entire community. Several noted in evaluations that they now can address adoptive family dynamics, are better prepared to serve adoptive families, and understand the mental health and feelings of adopted children.

Trained presenters have certified 51 community providers in the new competency model and agency staff have worked with 260 families so far this year.

Sharing Information

NACAC continues to report and publish some of the best adoption-related information in North America. Our quarterly newsletter, *Adoptalk*, is distributed—in print and electronically—to almost 3,000 individuals in the U.S., Canada, and beyond. As an advocate in the South Carolina governor's office said, “...*Adoptalk* is my very favorite professional publication—y'all always get it right and give me information we really need to do a better job for our kids and families.”

An adoptive parent complimented our effort to go green by distributing the newsletter electronically, “I love the new on-line format. Great articles on siblings and FASD. NACAC rocks!”

NACAC staff and volunteers also helped hundreds of prospective adopters find the information they need to navigate the adoption process. In 2008, the NACAC web site provided in-depth information on adoption issues to more than 20,000 individuals each month.

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SPECIAL EVENTS

NACAC continues to experience growth in our two annual special events, AdoptWalk and the Voices from the Heart gala. On May 17, 2008, nearly 300 participants enjoyed AdoptWalk's sunny stroll around Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis. More than 15 adoption organization teams joined individuals and families to make the event a great success—raising a record \$30,000 this year. Parents, children, and adoption advocates truly enjoyed the event, which is fun for all. As one mother told us, “It's our family's favorite day of the year except Christmas!”

The 2008 Voices from the Heart gala on November 22 honored Paul Singer, Senior Vice President/Chief Information Officer of SuperValu, and Minnesota State Legislator Kathy Tingelstad for their tireless efforts on behalf of waiting children and adoptive families. Gala attendees enjoyed a festive evening and together raised \$35,000 to support NACAC's vital programs.

Donors & Finances



The steadfast support of our donors makes it possible for NACAC to provide essential services and support to children and families. We thank you for your continuing generosity and belief in our mission. In addition to the donors listed below, many state and federal employees donated through workplace giving programs. While we cannot acknowledge all workplace donors by name, we deeply appreciate their gifts.

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Debra Steigerwaldt Waller Foundation for Adoption, WI
Target Corporation, MN

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The Clark Family, MA, *in honor of adoptive families everywhere*
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Donors (up to \$99)

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PLANNED GIVING

One sentence in your will can make a significant difference for waiting children and adoptive families:

“I give and bequeath to the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114, the sum of ____ dollars (or ____ percent of my estate) to be used for its general purposes.”

*These donors gave in memory of Victor Kroll.

2008 FINANCES

Income

Foundation Funding	\$785,159
Government Grants and Contracts	\$344,413
Other Contracts and Training Fees	\$538,385
Conference Income	\$205,590
Contributions	\$131,032
Membership Fees	\$75,679
Special Events (net)	\$40,536
Interest/Investment Income	-\$73,491
Sales of Goods/Publications (net)	\$3,163
Other	\$4,922
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,055,388

Expenses

Public Education (includes conference)	\$424,830
Public Policy Education and Advocacy	\$324,509
MN ASAP	\$323,700
Breakthrough Series	\$225,288
Parent Group Support	\$222,798
Adoption Subsidy Resource Center	\$131,066
Family and Youth Engagement Project	\$111,840
Harambee Village at NACAC	\$110,659
Community Champions Network	\$84,952
AdoptUsKids Recruitment Response	\$4,275
Management	\$159,088
Fundraising	\$123,774
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,246,779

Balance Sheet

Excess of Income over Expenses	-\$124,599
Fund Balance—January 1, 2008	\$550,400
Fund Balance—December 31, 2008	\$359,009
Cash & Investments—December 31, 2008	\$641,165

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NACAC's efforts to support vulnerable children and families were made possible due to the efforts of dedicated, engaged board members, staff, and volunteers.

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