

Recruiting News

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Retention Is an Essential Element of Recruitment

*By Marie Zemler, Coordinator,
Adoption 2002 Support Project*

As November—National Adoption Awareness Month—approaches, posters, media stories, and events aimed at recruiting families for waiting children abound. In planning these campaigns, adoption advocates must not forget an essential detail: Without effective retention, all the recruitment efforts money can buy will not result in more families for waiting children.

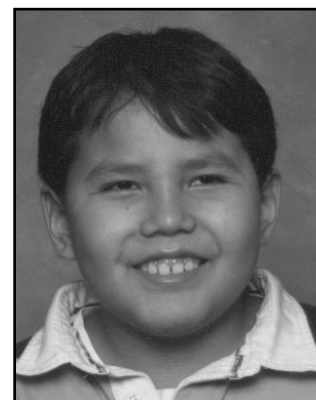
From the initial inquiry, orientation, and pre-adoptive classes, through paperwork, home visits, and criminal background checks, to placement, finalization, and beyond—consistent customer service keeps would-be adoptive parents interested.

Is your agency courteous and responsive to callers? Try this simple test: have a friend call your agency's main telephone number to ask for information on becoming a foster or adoptive parent. Does the friend reach a real person—or must she navigate an automated system and wait for a call back once she leaves a message? Is the person who takes the call friendly and helpful—or curt, business-like, and dismissive? Will your friend learn something about the adoption process, the agency's mission, and the types of children available—or simply be told the information is in the mail? How long must your friend wait to receive a packet? Does it include the steps in the adoption process? Details about waiting children? An invitation to an orientation? Good service and materials can make all the difference.

Truly effective retention, however, goes beyond just a friendly voice on the other end of the phone. Inside are some creative methods to keep parents engaged through the process. We include hints for retaining foster parents—an effective way of “recruiting” adoptive parents—and an exit interview to help you make research-based program improvements. We also highlight a Baltimore City initiative to speed city employees through foster care or adoption licensing and placement; a Toledo, Ohio program designed to reduce disruptions by preparing children through adoption readiness groups; and buddy programs in Nevada and Missouri that help prospective adoptive parents make it through the adoption process. ✕

A Waiting Child

*D*amon, an active 10-year-old of Native American heritage, is a gentle and giving boy who uses humor to connect with others. This inquisitive child likes nature—science is his favorite subject in school—and is generally happy. Damon has recently shown marked improvement in calming himself when agitated.



Damon
June 6, 1990

Damon made huge academic strides in the last school year, especially in reading. Though Damon has an individualized education plan (IEP) and attends class in a self-contained room, he has set his sights on improving his self-control so that he can return to a mainstream setting.

Damon's former foster family says that the most joyous thing about parenting him is his ability to be loving and kind. Though diagnosed with attachment disorder and fetal alcohol effect (FAE), Damon successfully bonded with this family through attachment therapy, and they will be an excellent resource to Damon's adoptive parent(s).

A Native American family would be ideal for Damon, but all interested families are encouraged to inquire about adopting him. Damon would do best as the youngest or only child. While Damon and his older sister will not be placed together, they have a strong connection, and an adoptive family must support continued contact. To learn more, contact Mari Daugherty of North Dakota's Adults Adopting Special Kids at 701-271-3216. ✕

As always, if you find ideas in *Recruiting News* helpful, please make copies and pass them on—articles are not copyrighted because our goal is to share best practices widely. *Recruiting News* is a free publication—call 651-644-3036 or e-mail mariezemler@nacac.org to join the mailing list.

Building a Program So Families Come, Stay... and Recruit Others: Keys to Retention

By Jayne Schooler, adapted from the curriculum *A System in Transition: Examining Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention in the New Millennium*, funded by a grant from the National Foster Parent Association.

“Why are you here?” I asked. Foster and adoptive parents in training replied, “My neighbor is a foster parent, and suggested for years that we think about it,” or “We have three families in our church who are foster parents. They speak highly of the experience.” My informal poll revealed an important insight. Twenty-two of the 30 individuals said a friend or relative brought them to our foster care program.

As these comments attest, satisfied foster and adoptive parents are the best recruiters. Does this speak to the strength of our recruitment program? Yes. But it speaks far more clearly to the strength of our retention program.

Read the story in the box above. A troubling question emerges: What type of recruiters will this family be for the foster care and adoption programs in their area? Often, workers view the duties of recruiting foster and adoptive parents as separate from the duties of retaining them. However, national statistics tell us that 64 percent of the children who are adopted out of the child welfare system are adopted by their foster parents. When we are recruiting and retaining foster parents, we are recruiting and retaining potential permanent homes. When we lose foster parents, we are losing potential adoptive parents. This article examines the reasons foster parents leave and offers key principles for building a strong retention program.

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING? LESSONS FROM RESEARCH

Why do foster parents leave our programs? There are two levels of response. The first level involves those reasons that cannot be impacted by a retention program. Foster parents:

- “age out” of the program,
- experience life changes or moves,
- suffer from health problems,
- encounter financial problems, and
- adopt their foster children.

However, these reasons are not documented by research. Literature in the 1970s, ‘80s, and ‘90s told us the same thing.

We had Kelly, now two, in our home for a year and a half. The plan was for the county to get permanent custody, then we would adopt. The caseworker and prosecutor encouraged us, saying, “We are 90 percent sure of winning.”

Two weeks before the court date, our worker informed us that Kelly would be returned to her grandmother in six days. The agency staff had known for weeks, but felt it was best not to tell us. Our shock was indescribable.

The worker picked Kelly up at our home on a cold February morning to return her to her grandparents. We had never met them. She hardly knew them and had no pre-placement visits to their home. The worker asked no questions about Kelly’s likes, dislikes, or schedule. Nothing. They just left.

Our grief was agonizing. I worried about Kelly. Would her grandparents understand her loss? Would she be traumatized by this harsh removal from the parents she had known for 18 months? Who would be there for her?

Phone calls and visits from friends comforted us. We even received a card from her pediatrician. There was one glaring void—no one from the agency acknowledged our loss. We had no support from the ones who should have been there.

As I write this story, now five weeks after Kelly’s departure, we have yet to be contacted. We joined the foster care program with open arms. We truly knew the potential for having our hearts broken. We just were naïve enough to believe that it would not come from those who should have known differently. We have a word of advice for our agency in the future: When a family loves a child and loses her, that loss should be dignified by a response of compassion and respect.

Portrait of a Foster Parent’s Experience

Yet, has much changed? Why do foster parents really give up? The answer lies in three crucial issues:

1. Who are we to you?—Role ambiguity

A primary reason foster parents leave is confusion about who they really are in relationship to the agency. The family in the story above was kept at arms length. They really never knew where they fit in the “team.” Information relayed to them was carefully filtered and sketchy, at best. Many foster parents lack clarity about their responsibilities and find little respect from their agency. In exit surveys and research on role ambiguity, foster parents commonly state:

- We were unclear about what agency social workers expected of us.
- We were never really included in case planning.
- Complete information was kept from us.
- Our input was minimized or treated as trivial.

2. Can you teach us to do the job?—Insufficient training

Foster parents cite additional reasons for leaving the program, including inadequate preparation in the pre-service orientation and the absence of relevant ongoing training. Foster parents related such concerns as:

- The training I received in pre-service did not prepare me for the realities of being a foster parent.
- The children I have in my home have such challenging behavior problems, but the agency does not have any training or resources to help me.
- There was never a system in place to identify my training needs as a foster parent.

3. Will you be there for us?—Little support or connection

The family in the story was new to fostering. They had never loved and lost a child. At the crucial period—as they moved through pain and confusion—the agency’s response was not support, but rather, “You should have expected this!”

Respondents to a survey on foster parent satisfaction indicated that “to deal with children who have behavioral problems and other day-to-day fostering duties, parents need a high level of support,”* from a variety of sources. Parents voiced concern about the lack of support, commenting:

- I am afraid to ask my case manager for a respite break. Last time I did, I got the feeling that I must not be handling the job correctly.
- When I called my worker to schedule respite, she told me firmly that was something she didn’t do; I would have to arrange it. I don’t know any other foster parents.
- We never see my child’s worker. An aide always comes to pick the child up for visits. The aide can never answer any of my questions.
- Our agency does not encourage our foster parents to exchange phone numbers. If I had someone to call for help, I wouldn’t always have to rely on my worker.
- My worker told me that their director said, “We will have no support groups around here. They just cause problems!”

WHY DO THEY COME AND STAY? SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF RETENTION

Foster parents make our best recruiters. If we are going to have permanent homes for children, we must retain them. The following seven principles will help to assure that when children need families, families will be there.

Coming In: A Positive Experience

Recruitment response: Agencies respond to inquiries in a timely and culturally sensitive manner, providing a full explanation of the application, training schedule, and other expectations. The agency distributes a handbook that fully outlines the process and lists who to contact for questions.

Family assessment process: Foster parents participate in a mutual family assessment, which encourages them to look at their own abilities, motivations, and qualifications in light of the children they hope to foster or adopt.

Prospective parents do not feel a need to guard their thoughts in fear of being turned down.

Relevant pre-service training links content to life experience: Foster parents receive competency-based pre-service training that clearly defines the challenges of foster care. The training allows parents to use the group process and their life experiences to assess their qualifications.

Staying On: A Positive Experience

Communication: Foster parents experience a relationship with the agency that is exemplified by mutual sharing of information and ready access to caseworker support, within the framework of respect and positive regard.

Clear role definition: Foster parents have a clear understanding of their role as a team member. They are informed of all meetings regarding the child’s case, meet the birth parents soon after placement, and understand that their input is valued and needed. They are truly seen and treated as members of the team in thought, word, and deed.

Ongoing training: Foster parents’ training needs are assessed on a yearly basis through an assessment process or form. The agency provides opportunities for training or recommends outside resources that are relevant to the requirements of specialized parenting.

Ongoing support: Foster parents have access to a support network of experienced foster/adoptive parents, caseworkers, and professionals when challenges and crisis occur. Agencies also provide regular planned respite opportunities and connections through mentoring.

Foster care in this country is already in the midst of a potential crisis, and the strains upon the system are becoming greater. In order to assure quality, consistent care and fewer moves for our children, we must retain experienced foster parents. If we are going to find permanent adoptive homes for children, we also must retain foster parents, as they make excellent adoptive parents for children who have experienced trauma, neglect, and separation. For the sake of our children we must retain experienced foster parents who understand the challenges and know what to do.

Jayne Schooler is a trainer with the Institute for Human Services in Columbus, Ohio, and author of three books, including the newly released, Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past. Contact her via e-mail at JayESchool@cs.com or by mail at 506 South Elm Street West, Carrollton, Ohio 45449. ✎

An Agency Exercise

“How do we see the role of foster parents at our agency?” is a pivotal question in the structure and function of an agency’s program. In the left column below, rank the roles listed (from 1–9) to indicate who foster parents are to your agency.

- _____ _____ Homemaker
- _____ _____ Child advocate
- _____ _____ Equal to adoptive parent
- _____ _____ Professional parent
- _____ _____ Glorified baby sitter
- _____ _____ Volunteer
- _____ _____ Team member
- _____ _____ Mentor to birth family
- _____ _____ Transporter

In the right column, rank (from 1–9) what foster parents would say their roles have been in working with the agency. Use the exercise to facilitate a discussion about ways to make the two sets of rankings align more closely.

*Denby, R., Rindfleisch, N., & Bean, G. (1999). “Predictors of foster parents’ satisfaction and intent to continue,” *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp 287-303.

When Families Leave: Conducting the Exit Interview

By Jake Terpstra, ACSW

If they hope to retain parents, agencies need to understand what makes their program successful and where they should continue to improve. Use the following questions to conduct an exit interview whenever a family leaves the program. A supervisor or administrator who can act on the information received should conduct the interview. A neutral party—such as a social work student—could also be used, especially in conflictive situations. Interviews are best completed by telephone, although they can be mailed if staff time is an issue.

About you:

- How long did you foster parent?
- How many children did you have at a time?
- How many children did you have total?
- What were the children's ages?

About your preparation:

- How were agency policies explained to you?
- Were expectations addressed (both yours and the agency's)?
- Was your training adequate for the children you had?

About placement:

- Were you fully informed (as much as the worker knew) about the child prior to placement?
- Did you feel free to make a decision to accept or decline the child's placement without fear of negative repercussions if you decided to decline?
- If a child left your care, were you given ample time to help prepare that child? And yourself?
- Did you have an opportunity to contact the child's birth parents?
- Was the child able to maintain contact with siblings?

Recruiters Target City Employees

When asked what they want to be when they grow up, children often answer police officers, fire fighters, or teachers. Under a new recruitment initiative in Baltimore City, the adults who work in these professions will be among those targeted to foster and adopt children. Yvonne Gilchrist, director of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (DSS), had the vision for the program and gathered a committee of city officials and employees as well as social service professionals to write a proposal. The plan has since been embraced by Baltimore City Mayor Martin O'Malley.

Under the initiative, anyone who is a city employee may apply to become a foster and/or adoptive parent through a special recruitment unit established exclusively for them. The head of that unit, Kewanee Smith, explains that following a city employee's initial request for information, a recruiter comes to the work place to make an overview presentation, with her message tailored to the specific site. If even two or three employees at a particular location are interested, pre-service training is held at the work place. Additional trainings are held at a central location on evenings or weekends to accommodate spouses or gather employees from several offices where only one person is interested.

Barriers that traditionally slow families' progress are broken down, as city employees can use their sick time to attend trainings, court hearings, or appointments during the workday. Smith and her fellow staff rapidly process city employees' applications, thus making the time from approval to placement much shorter than it is for the average applicant. Smith has also instituted special "while you wait" activities and calls to keep prospective parents engaged.

City employees are an excellent population for targeted recruitment, as they are gainfully employed, dedicated to public service, and have already successfully passed background checks. Smith's interactions with city employees over the past year of the initiative have confirmed that they are a family-oriented, hard-working, and dependable group—exactly the type of parents DSS is looking for.

Because the city employee initiative lays the foundation for a closer, more responsive relationship between prospective adoptive parents and the agency, DSS is retaining interested city employees at an exceptionally high rate. The excellent service that city employees receive is building a more positive image of the DSS within the community, and Smith anticipates the project will only become more popular and successful in the future.

To learn more, contact Kewanee Smith at 410-361-2214. ✕

About support:

- How often did your worker visit?
- When was the most recent phone call? The most recent visit?
- Did you connect with a "buddy" or mentor through the agency?
- Did you have some flexible funding for incidentals?

About communication:

- Could you talk with a supervisor if you encountered difficulties?
- Did you participate in the preparation of the case plan?

- Did you help with any revisions?
- Were you encouraged to attend all hearings?

Other comments:

- What is the primary reason you decided to stop fostering?
- What might the agency have done differently that would have kept you from leaving?
- How would you describe your overall experience with the agency? ✕

Adoption Readiness Groups Prevent Disruptions

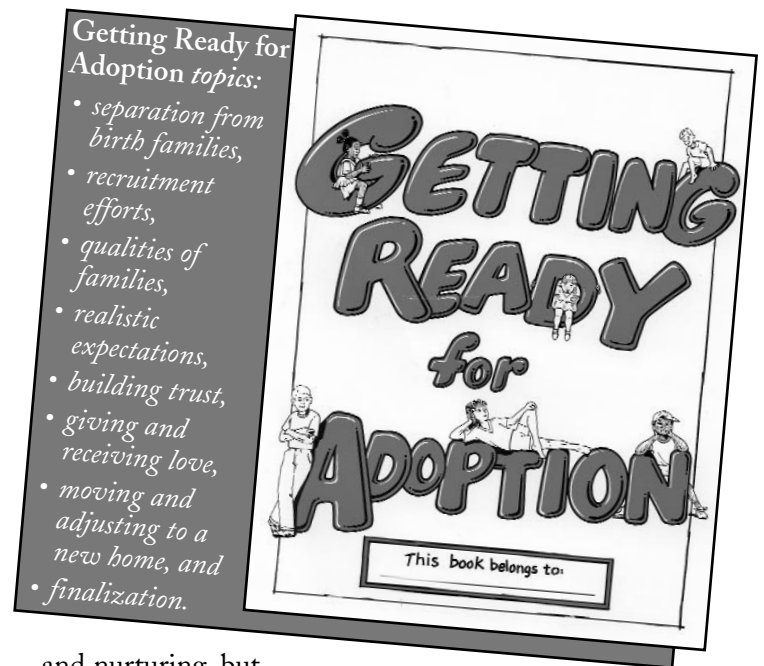
The prospective adoptive parents were enthusiastically recruited. After weeks of training, boards of questions, and months of waiting, they are excited to bring their child home. The child, on the other hand, feels angry—as though he's been kidnapped by strangers. When his negative behaviors escalate, the parents are crushed. The child returns to foster care and the parents leave the program, forever shaken by their experience and certain to share their horror story.

A disrupted adoption is by far the most difficult way to lose a family. Deloise President and her unit of adoption workers in Lucas County, Ohio, needed a creative solution to this painful retention problem. With the belief that “it’s wrong to assume we only need to aggressively find parents,” President has become “equally aggressive in helping kids prepare to be part of their new family system.” For over four years, Lucas County has conducted adoption readiness groups for children ages 7 to 14 whose workers are actively recruiting on their behalf.

Although Lucas County children receive therapy in care, workers noted that the children need extra help to understand and address their unique feelings while waiting for adoption. Using *Getting Ready for Adoption*, published by Adoption World Specialties, Lucas County staff guide two readiness groups per quarter through a wide range of topics (see inset). The book follows nine-year-old David as his social worker helps him to find a family. David appears on a waiting child feature, visits with a family, moves in, fears being returned to foster care, argues with his new little brother, learns to share and love, and ultimately is adopted. Worksheets and exercises help children process their own feelings about adoption.

The book was designed as an individual exercise between a child and worker, but provided an excellent foundation for Lucas County groups. Workers determine the groups size and participants based on children’s ages and personalities, and have successfully composed cohesive groups. The workers are flexible, pacing the lessons of *Getting Ready for Adoption* and adding additional discussion time as seems appropriate for the particular children. Typically groups meet for six or seven sessions.

For President, the investment to develop the program, arrange transportation for the children, and devote staff time to group facilitation is worth it. “Helping children to deal with the baggage they carry is an uphill battle,” she says, “but it is possible.” The Lucas County staff members who facilitate adoption readiness groups are loving



and nurturing, but President notes, “I frankly find support from the other children is often more important.” Children console and encourage each other. Often, one child is able to put into words the same emotions another child struggles to express. When the children see that others share their grief, anger, and inner conflicts surrounding birth families and adoption, they no longer blame themselves.

In addition, since the groups help children discuss the characteristics of families who would suit them best, matching has become easier. Adoption readiness groups “help children to accept their part in making their adoptions work,” and reduce acting out behaviors in the new home. Most importantly, children often come into the group full of anger, saying, “I don’t want to be adopted,” and as the group discusses what it means to have a forever family to return to, they have a change of heart.

To learn more, contact Deloise President at 419-213-3395 or Adoption World Specialties at 319-365-3454. ✕

Exchanging Ideas

Tips from the Adoption Exchange Association

Once potential adoptive parents have been identified, many get “lost.” Some ways to encourage prospective adoptive parents to “stick with it” include:

- Connect them with veteran parents (see page 6) and other waiting parents.
- Suggest local parent support or advocacy groups.
- Send a monthly newsletter or fact sheet with updates on programs and activities.
- Ask them to volunteer at the agency or exchange.
- Give them reputable adoption web site addresses with chat rooms.
- Offer them a lending library with adoption-related books and videos.
- Survey current parents to find out what was most helpful during their wait.

No matter which ideas your agency uses, be sure to listen to parents’ concerns and help them identify resources in your community!

Experienced Parents Mentor and Retain New Families

Experienced adoptive parents in Nevada and Missouri take pride in their skills and give back to the community through two mentoring programs operated by The Adoption Exchange. Both programs are designed to retain pre-adoptive families. In Nevada, six experienced parents have been hired as part-time staff to mentor several families; in Missouri, each mentor volunteers to work with one pre-adoptive family.

The role of mentors is to empower families, listen to their successes and struggles, provide resources, and offer non-judgmental support. Since their connection begins early in the process, mentors build a trusting relationship with prospective adoptive parents—helping them navigate the agency and court system as well as providing parenting hints and local resources.

Nevada Buddies

In Nevada, a diverse group of mentors—called buddies—were deliberately recruited by project coordinator Susan Summers. After posting job openings in local papers—including press for communities of color—as well as sending a letter to all Nevada families who receive adoption subsidies, Summers hired six buddies. One can communicate in American Sign Language, another has worked extensively in the HIV field, and a third works with gay and lesbian families. Five of the six buddies have ethnically diverse families.

As the first year of the project ends, each buddy is working with an average of six families. Summers expects buddies will serve about 20 families apiece in coming years. To enroll pre-adoptive families in the program, buddies visit Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) orientation sessions to share their experiences as adoptive parents and inform attendees about the mentor program. Caseworkers distribute brochures to the families they are preparing for adoption, and also refer families who need support to the program. Buddies even recruit prospective adoptive parents by displaying at fairs or community events—some families have mentors before they even attend orientation.

The relationship between buddies and pre-adoptive parents will continue as long as the buddy program exists—even parents who become less connected to their mentors after placement will have somewhere to turn if a crisis occurs.

Summers notes that close relationships both with DCFS and the parents have been central to buddies' success. However, because pre-adoptive parents need to voice their concerns without fear of being rejected, Summers and the buddies adhere to a strict confidentiality policy. Occasionally, confidentiality becomes a concern as the buddies learn about barriers in the system and try to

modify policies without divulging specific incidents, so buddies and DCFS administrators meet quarterly to keep the department informed about areas in need of change. For example, buddies learned that families did not feel informed through the process, especially from the end of pre-adoptive classes until placement. Since a recent meeting, DCFS has been seriously considering a new policy of mailing monthly postcards to each family outlining what has been completed and what is still pending.

Missouri PARTNERS

In Missouri, the state's Division of Family Services (DFS) and private agencies recommended experienced parents who could serve as mentors or PARTNERS (Parents As Resources Through Networking and Encouraging Retention). As the project completes its first year, 20 PARTNER mentors are participating, and project director Tom Mennerick anticipates that he will recruit 50 more volunteers through adoptive family support groups over the next two years.

Since each PARTNER is paired with just one pre-adoptive family, matching is key. LaRhonda Wilson, who trains Missouri's PARTNERS, relies a process their staff calls "half magic, half data" to pair families. They start with demographic information—such as family composition or geographic location—but also rely on impressions from face-to-face meetings.

Although PARTNERS are considered volunteers, they receive a small stipend for their first 15 meetings with a pre-adoptive family. As an extra incentive, if PARTNERS wish to take the family out to lunch or to a sporting event, the program provides gift certificates to cover costs.

Despite the financial assistance, Wilson continually hears, "We're not in this for the money." The PARTNERS enjoy offering the comfort and enlightenment that they had—or wished they would have had—when they were adopting. As an added benefit, some PARTNERS voluntarily attend pre-adoptive training classes to get more parents involved. They are also a source of friendship, support, and resources for one another.

Mennerick notes that they still need to "iron out the initial kinks" of the program. The primary challenge has been that pre-adoptive parents are busy attending classes and struggle to find time to meet a mentor. Although PARTNERS sometimes have to make several calls and reschedule appointments to meet the needs of busy and tired parents, they have been patient and continue to enjoy their role.

*To learn more about building a mentoring program, contact Suzanne Dosh, program director of The Adoption Exchange at 800-451-5246 or suzanne@adoptex.org. Susan Summers is at 702-436-6335 and Tom Mennerick can be reached at 314-367-3343. The programs used the book and video *Safe Passage* by Richard Delaney as a foundation. To obtain a copy, contact Wood'N'Barnes Publishing at 405-942-6812. ✦*



“Ask the Expert”

This issue's expert, Ernesto Loperena, is executive director of the New York Council on Adoptable Children (COAC). Recruiting families since 1972, COAC approved and referred 197 families for adoption last year. To learn more, call 212-475-0222 or e-mail coac@erols.org.

Q We are preparing to launch a large media-based recruitment campaign. We have no idea what kind of response to expect. How can we prepare to respond to the results of our efforts?

A With any media campaign, expect a blitz of phone calls during the first 24 hours after any announcement is aired. During that time, have staff available to answer calls, even outside of normal business hours. Sometimes, when caller traffic is unexpectedly high and continues non-stop, the best you can do is try to keep the phone lines open. Get names, addresses, and daytime phone numbers. Then a day or two later, call prospective parents back at a more leisurely pace, when you can respond to their questions in a thorough, individualized manner.

Q My agency loses a large number of prospective adopters between their initial inquiry and the orientation session. What can we do to improve our retention?

A Talk on the phone with each person who makes an inquiry—if someone leaves a message, calling back within 24 hours is critical. Send an invitation to an orientation event as soon as you've talked with a prospective parent—they should always receive something in the mail within a week of their call. If they do not attend the first orientation, call back about a second and third opportunity and mail corresponding invitations. Cap efforts after three tries: you don't want to become a pain, but you do want to make sure families know you are interested in them. Also, inquiries that result from personal appearances are often more fruitful than large-scale media campaigns. When you meet one-on-one, hand out materials immediately, and gear your recruitment message to the particular audience, retention rates are higher.

Q Families we work with frequently become frustrated that it takes so long to adopt. What can we do to help speed up the process? How can we make their wait more comfortable?

A The families need to hear from you. Talk to them realistically about the length of the process. Share time frames. Provide a checklist of required documents and steps. To keep families engaged, you need to be in touch with them constantly—never let more than 30 days elapse between contacts. And never forget to treat families respectfully.

Stay in touch in person as well. Inviting parents to agency events such as adoption fairs or post-adoption seminars can help them get a feel for the issues they will face in the future. And every time they attend an event, they come to know others who are waiting or who have adopted. Then when they finally enter the arena of adoption, they know what to expect.

Most families are waiting due to bureaucratic logjams in the agencies that have the children. To expedite the process, be an aggressive advocate. Ask the agency the tough questions: Why is it taking so long for this family to be given a child? Why is that child still waiting, even after five or more families have been referred? Don't hesitate to pester a bit—call time after time after time if you need to get a response. If that is unsuccessful, seek intervention. Options from state to state, but call supervisors, directors, and commissioners—whomever it takes to make things happen.

Next Up...

Upcoming Trainings, Conferences, and Events

NOVEMBER 17-18 • LETHBRIDGE, AB

Talking Adoption is the 2nd annual adoption conference of the **Family Studies Program of Lethbridge Community College**; Sharon Herman-Loran, 403-320-3314, or Rose-Anne Williams, 403-382-6976.

NOVEMBER 19 • NEW YORK, NY

The **Adoptive Parents Committee (APC)** presents its 20th annual conference—*Adoption...From a Wish to a Family*; 212-304-8479, www.adoptiveparents.org.

JANUARY 11-13 • SAN JUAN, PR

Reenergized Recruitment: Are You Ready? is the biennial conference of the **Adoption Exchange Association (AEA)**; Meredith McMorris, 303-755-2806, meredith@adoptex.org.

JANUARY 26-31 • SAN ANTONIO, TX

Reclaiming Youth International and the Life Space Crisis Intervention Institute offer a *Youth in Crisis Training*; 800-647-5244 or 605-336-4620, reclaim@inst.augie.edu, www.reclaiming.com.

Bulletin Board

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

The year 2000 marks the 10th anniversary of National Adoption Awareness Month observances. Once again, advocates around the country plan to use the month to heighten adoption awareness. For the first time, Adoption Month will include a **National Adoption Saturday** on November 18, at which time—thanks to the help of dozens of volunteer attorneys around the country—hundreds of adoptions will be finalized in each of several major U.S. cities. To learn about the project, contact Amy Pellman of the Alliance for Children's Rights at 213-368-6010.

NACAC has published a 1999/2000 *National Adoption Awareness Month Guide* with information about organizing events, informing schools, involving the community, working with the media, and using adoption information. New for 2000, our *Resource Update* includes a list of national adoption organizations, state-specific web sites featuring pictures of waiting children, and stories of successful past events. NACAC is also distributing Adoption Month posters featuring waiting children from 46 states and the District of Columbia. Limited numbers of these items are available. Contact NACAC at 651-644-3036 or info@nacac.org to order, or visit www.nacac.org to learn more.

"If I had been adopted, I would have had a family. I would have got a better education. I would have had parents who loved me, who would try anything to help—like a family should be. I would be a much stronger person, because today I'm dealing with a lot of stuff, and I feel I don't have anybody to help me get through the hard times."

—Christine, age 21
11 years in foster care

Book Offers Adoption Information to Singles

A single adoptive mother and co-director of the Adoption Network, author Lee Varon discusses different types of adoption, the home study process, and ways for singles to afford adoption in *Adopting on Your Own: The Complete Guide to Adopting as a Single Parent* (2000). From answering common questions, to exploring the realities of adoption, to addressing the needs of adopted children, the book presents a comprehensive look at adoption for prospective single parents. Helpful exercises and "things to do" end each section, and the appendix lists adoption resources. *Adopting on Your Own* is available in bookstores and through online booksellers. ✨

Report Addresses Permanency for Adolescents

Permanency Planning: Creating Life Long Connections; What Does It Mean for Adolescents? (2000) discusses meeting the needs of adolescents in foster care and identifying permanent support for them. The report is written and compiled by Kristi Charles and Jennifer Nelson at the National Resource Center for Youth Development. Some of the content is drawn from an August 1999 Adolescent Permanency Think Tank hosted by the organization. To obtain a copy, contact James Walker at the National Resource Center for Youth Services at 918-585-2986 or at jmwalker@ou.edu; web: www.nrcys.ou.edu. ✨

Pamphlet Series Examines Adoption Issues

Produced by Adoptive Families Together (AFT), each pamphlet in the *AFT Presents* series (2000) offers concise information on a particular adoption issue. Titles include: "Adopted Children in Education Settings," "Interviewing Children's Therapists," "Advocacy and Negotiating the System," and "Tips for Adoptive Parents, Volume I." Additional pamphlets will be developed on a quarterly basis. To order, contact AFT at 617-57-ADOPT or visit www.adoptivefamilies.org. ✨

Recruiting Workshops Are Available in Audio

Audiotapes of workshops delivered by leading adoption and recruitment experts at the 2000 NACAC conference, "The Future for Children Is Families," are now available. Topics include matching activities, public-private partnerships, geographic barriers, teen adoptions, home studies for nontraditional families, adoption preparation, retention, kinship care, sibling groups, adoption plans, and much more. To order, contact Von Ende Communications at 320-589-1092 or bdvonende@juno.com. ✨

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