

# Recruiting News

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## *Targeted Recruiters Deliver Potent, Cost-Effective Messages*

By Marie Zemler, Coordinator  
Adoption 2002 Support Project

Most recruiters are all too familiar with the mandate to do more, but to do it with less—less time, less staff, less money. While no magic family-finding formula exists, this edition of *Recruiting News* discusses the most cost-effective method of locating foster and adoptive parents for children with special needs: targeted recruitment. Successful targeted recruitment saves time and money by potently delivering a message—addressing a small, carefully selected audience, and speaking to that audience frequently and personally.

Rather than broadly publicizing the need for adoptive families, targeted recruitment focuses on the specific kinds of children and teens who need temporary or permanent homes, as well as the pool of families likely to be interesting in parenting them. Targeted recruiters seek out specific groups of prospective adoptive parents (such as singles, gay and lesbian individuals, empty nesters, churchgoers, people of color, etc.) or find families just for particular groups of children (including teens, those with medical needs, sibling groups of three or more, and children of color).

The directors of programs profiled inside this edition of *Recruiting News* explain the strategies they use (that you can follow) to find special families for children awaiting adoption in their area. Though their target populations differ, two important themes recur in all of their tactics. First, they use data to make decisions. They consider the age, gender, sibling status, and race or ethnic background of the children who need foster or adoptive families. They think about the commonalities in children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Then, with this in mind, they assess their communities. Successful targeted recruiters have an eye for both the characteristics of those who have adopted in the past, and those who are an untapped resource.

Second, all of the featured programs started with a plan—and recruiting was *not* the first step. Program directors first made certain that families who responded to their campaign would be supported from the first call through finalization, and welcomed by everyone from the adoption worker with

## A Waiting Child

Ten-year-old Michael loves video games, *Pokemon* collectibles, animals, and bicycling. He does well in school, especially in his favorite subject, math. McDonald's is his favorite place to eat (he usually orders a Big Mac) but he isn't fussy. A hearty eater, Michael even likes spinach. Michael is also known as a thrifty child. Good budgeting skills recently helped him to save up to buy a new radio with his Christmas money.



**Michael**  
September 9, 1990

Michael has been working hard to modify his anger and acting out behaviors. Diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, intermittent explosive disorder, and developmental reading disorder, he has responded well to medication. Michael's caseworker describes him as a caring, helpful child. At his residential treatment facility, he works hard to earn privileges and prizes for his good behavior.

Since his younger brother was adopted, Michael has been inspired to learn appropriate behaviors and find permanence with an adoptive family of his own. He would like to be the youngest or only child in his new home. A structured, supportive family will need to help Michael adjust as he deals with issues of loss and abandonment. With continued therapy, he will come to develop a trustful bond with his adoptive family. To learn more, contact Elisa Esh of Pennsylvania's Common Sense Adoption Services at 717-766-6449. ✕

whom they have frequent contact, to the member of the board of directors whom they might never meet.

As demands to be cost effective continually increase, strategic planning is key. Targeted recruitment requires thoughtful, sometimes time-consuming, consideration. But when the interests of families who respond match up with the needs of the children who are waiting, the investment is well worth it. ✕

# Social Marketing and Consumer Data Helps Target Families

By Mary Brooks, MBA

*"I can't adopt—after all, I'm single and over 40."*

*"Since I live in an apartment and can't afford a house, I can't adopt."*

*"It's kids who got themselves into big trouble who need help."*

These myths—and more—create real obstacles to permanence for children in the care of public agencies. Agencies that find families for these children are strapped for cash and resources, and become frustrated as they try to spread a broad net to find families. Social workers are asked to develop recruitment plans even if this has never been part of their training. It's time for a different approach.

Child welfare agencies can use the "social marketing" techniques of successful businesses to find potential adoptive parents. Social marketing involves creating programs that "influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society" (Andreasan, *Marketing Social Change*, 1995).

For agencies, the crux of a solid marketing plan is good customer service and public relations. Outreach to members of the community should promote an active appreciation for adoption and the way in which it benefits children, families, and the community at large. With the support of an entire community, agencies can more easily reach out to potential adoptive families.

Successful businesses know that the best prospects look like current customers. By the same token, if agencies hope to recruit more families, they should start by learning more about families who have already adopted. That is just what Ohio Families for Kids (OFFK) did.

## Market Research

OFFK, a nine-county adoption and foster care reform initiative in northeast Ohio, conducted research about foster families and adoptive families with subsidy agreements in Ohio by studying data from the MicroVision Consumer ID Clustering system. The system uses census and aggregate consumer demand data to classify every household in the U.S. into one of 50 unique market segments. Each segment consists of households with similar demographics, interests, purchasing patterns, financial behavior, and demand for products and services.

The MicroVision research identified current Ohio adoptive and foster families, recorded their interests and

behaviors, and learned where they live. From that information, OFFK determined that people in 14 of MicroVision's 50 market segments are more likely than others to become adoptive or foster parents. In-depth information about the media, shopping, and lifestyle preferences of members is available for each of the 14 segments (*see sidebar*).

Families most likely to be successful in public sector adoption or foster care do not have an advanced degree or a high-paying job. People who respond to children's needs do not distinguish between foster care and adoption—these units should be recruiting together! Current foster and adoptive families tend to:

- shop at Wal-Mart and stand-alone discount stores, instead of the mall. That's where we should be advertising, not at the mall displays.
- buy 15+ lottery tickets each month. After all, adoptive families believe that things can get better and are risk-takers. But who has ever placed recruitment material near the lottery sales in the corner store? Maybe we should!
- watch daytime TV. That's good news since daytime television ad space is less expensive than prime or fringe time.
- enjoy sports. Set up a partnership with your high school, college, pro, or semi-pro teams.

## Using Market Research—OFFK

What can agencies do with this research? OFFK developed a targeted direct mail campaign to reach these 14 key segments, and sent a simple three-fold self mailer to potential families. The outside "teaser" copy appealed to the families' interests—thereby increasing the chance that people would open the mailing—and the inside featured specific waiting children and dispelled common myths. For example, the mailing to one segment had outer copy that read: *Open only if you check one or more!*

*Do you enjoy...*

- Having fun with your family?*
- Reading the fashion section of the paper?*
- Going to football, baseball or basketball games?*
- Buying a lottery ticket when you feel lucky?*
- Listening to gospel or urban contemporary radio?*

OFFK included a postage-paid reply card and a toll-free number. Always include a card—in Ohio, two-thirds of respondents returned the card instead of calling! Adoption and foster care

messages can be targeted by geography, or to a particular group of people like faith leaders or key business leaders.

OFFK also used the Children's Defense Fund's Child Watch model to create a tour called *The Journey to a Forever Family: Through the Eyes of a Child*. The 2-hour tour takes a group of people who are not committed to adoption or foster care and exposes them to the reality of

## Preferences of One Population Segment Likely to Adopt:

**Financial Services**  
*Medicare/Medicaid*  
*A first mortgage loan*  
*A non-int checking acct.*  
*A savings account*  
*Veteran's life insurance*  
*U.S. Savings Bonds*

**Media Preferences**  
*Religious/gospel radio*  
*Urban contemp radio*  
*Jazz radio*  
*CNN*  
*The Movie Channel*  
*Read TV/radio listings*

**Purchases**  
*15+ lottery tickets/month*  
*2+ designer jeans*  
*Adidas shoes*  
*35mm cameras*  
*Sega video games*  
*Dance music*  
*Low/no alcohol beer*  
*Fast food burgers*

**Attend**  
*Baseball games*  
*Boxing matches*  
*College football games*  
*Pro basketball games*

the child welfare system for children. Those who went on OFFK's tour visited a group home, a foster home, and an adoptive home. As participants saw, heard, and experienced what happens when the system fails, the importance of permanent homes became painfully clear. Participants also sensed the joy children bring to adoptive and foster families. The tour closed with a call to action; OFFK asked participants to commit to help in some way. After staff from one broadcast TV station took the tour, the station developed 30 child-specific ads that ran both as public service announcements and as part of the evening news every night during November.

### Social Marketing—NOAS

Started in 1978, Northeast Ohio Adoption Services (NOAS) describes itself as a "specialized agency committed to providing adoption and foster care services for children with special needs." So far, NOAS has successfully found families for more than 850 children. Though their recruiting efforts were clearly successful, NOAS staff recently changed their marketing and recruitment practices to take advantage of social marketing principles.

Like OFFK, NOAS focuses on recruiting prospects—who are identified in MicroVision's 14 key population segments—who are similar to current foster and adoptive parents. They accomplish this by targeting marketing and community collaboration efforts by zip code. By using zip codes, NOAS can cover carefully selected areas with repeated messages designed to dispel pervasive myths that stop people from exploring adoption.

Through its experience, NOAS believes:

- agencies can forge mutually beneficial partnerships with the for-profit sector. Businesses can gain customer loyalty and attract new patrons when the public sees their community spirit, and agencies can gain a new way to raise awareness.
- partnerships break down negative stereotypes about waiting children, and promote greater willingness to help children find permanence.
- agencies need tangible data to make more strategic marketing decisions.

The goal of targeting recruitment and community collaboration by zip code is to have every community member and organization say "yes," "no," or "later" to helping find adoptive and foster families. Not everyone can make a commitment to be an adoptive or foster parent, but everyone can support the cause somehow, either personally or professionally.

NOAS employs a multi-media approach. Billboard locations, specified by zip code, are great for raising awareness about the need for adoptive families. Ironically, those areas less requested by for-profit advertisers (and therefore available to nonprofits) often more closely match the profiles of the families we seek. In addition, NOAS recently held an open house and all businesses in the community were

invited via a postcard mailing. Now everyone in the business community has at least heard of NOAS.

NOAS also trains existing foster and adoptive parents to serve as spokespeople. NOAS provides supplies—including cards that briefly explain the adoption process, list the NOAS toll-free number, and leave a spot for the parent recruiter's contact information—then encourages parents to find and staff events that reach the targeted families. As the for-profit sector knows, a happy customer is your best source for a referral. The same is true for finding other foster and adoptive parents.

One of NOAS' partners, Western Reserve Management (owner/operators of 31 Wendy's restaurants in Ohio) has donated generous proceeds from Valentine Fun Packs for the past two years. Wendy's restaurants have also displayed posters, hosted Adoption Corners in their busiest restaurants, and placed donation boxes in their restaurants. Lake County Enterprises, another Wendy's operator, used NOAS place mats for four months.

Is this narrower, deeper saturation approach successful? Yes! NOAS' next round of training classes is full, even though there was no specific promotion for the class. Inquiries are coming in from a variety of sources, and community members are beginning to know about adoption and NOAS. Community partnerships are expanding. Bus advertising on specific routes in particular zip codes are being investigated. The calendar is filling up with meetings with potential new community partners. Twelve Pizza Hut restaurants are attaching flyers about NOAS and adoption to their take-out boxes during a two-week campaign.

NOAS staff is becoming more comfortable with the idea of marketing. The best news is that the seeds of awareness that are being planted now will bear fruit in the next few years as people considering adoption become ready to actively pursue it.

Research shows that in the nine northeastern counties of Ohio, more than 450,000 families share characteristics with the 14 segments most likely to consider foster care or adoption! So, as target recruitment zip code areas receive the message, agencies can move the campaign to new target areas while maintaining the level of awareness and support in the former zip codes.

The potential to find families for children in the care of public agencies across the U.S. is there. It is up to us to employ the methods that work, like social marketing and targeted community outreach, to deliver the message that moves potential families to action and encourages communities to embrace the need for permanence for all children.

*An adoptive parent of three children, Ms. Brooks specializes in marketing and recruitment for child welfare agencies. This article is drawn from her experiences working with Ohio Families for Kids as their communications director and as a recruitment consultant to Northeast Ohio Adoption Services. Contact her at 330-434-4713 or marybrooks@juno.com. ✖*

# *Sibling-Friendly Agencies and Practices Keep Children Together*

By Regina M. Kupecky, LSW

**A**lthough the child welfare field emphasizes birth family reunification and kinship adoption, the significance of sibling ties is often glossed over. However, when a joint placement is in the children's best interests, placing siblings together not only reduces the children's losses and preserves kinship ties, it also reduces stressed agencies' adoption costs. Siblings can help each other process the past, remember experiences, and move into the future together.

## Creating a Sibling-Friendly Agency

Part of recruitment is having a sibling-friendly agency. First, educate the *entire* staff about the importance of sibling connections—everyone from the adoption recruiters and workers to the pre-service trainers, supervisors, intake workers, subsidy staff, administrators, foster care departments, and support staff. A clear understanding of sibling connections could eliminate problems that result from separation and lack of visitation in foster care. Everyone must be on board, whether from a sense of child-centered practice, or simply from the fact that placing four children in one home is cheaper than recruiting, educating, and providing post-placement services to four families.

Next, recruit for siblings all through the adoption process:

- **Intake:** That first telephone call from a prospective parent is key to setting up a friendly working relationship. The staff person should mention siblings as an option. Families need time to process new ideas.
- **First mailing:** When information packets go to families, do they mention siblings? Send a few child-specific flyers, at least one featuring a sibling group. For later education packets, the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse ([www.calib.com/naic](http://www.calib.com/naic) or 888-251-0075) has a useful article or Three Rivers Adoption Council (312-471-8722) can share a pamphlet I wrote, called *Siblings are Family, Too*.
- **Pre-service training:** If you don't have a section on siblings, fold it into sections about loss, birth families, or attachment. Be sure that parent panels include at least one family that adopted or fostered a sibling group.

Also consider these on-going sibling-friendly practices:

- If your office displays posters of waiting children, are some of them sibling groups? Newsletter articles should also mention the need for homes for siblings.
- Do all staff members recruit, including secretaries, administrators, and janitors? If they go to churches, YMCAs, stores, or libraries, have they hung sibling-friendly posters?
- When recruiters go out to malls or fairs, do they always post pictures of sibling groups on their display?

- Are workers who complete family assessments talking about sibling groups in a positive way? Do they remind parents that few people adopt one child—families usually come back for more? By taking two or three at once, families eliminate extra paperwork.

No one wakes up one morning, calls an agency, and says "Do you have a sibling group of four children that includes three boys, ages 8–14?" The only way to successfully recruit families for specific children is specific recruitment.

- Siblings need a recruitment plan. List who is doing what and when. Ensure the plan's timely execution.
- A great picture of the sibling group together—especially if the children are touching—is a powerful tool. When separate pictures of each child are shown, it gives parents a feeling they can pick and choose whichever child they want (usually the youngest).
- Sibling groups almost always get the most calls when presented in the media. Feature sibling groups often in newspapers, television features, agency newsletters, posters, or wherever your agency recruits.
- Pre-service training groups are a great place to recruit—all the parents are there to adopt. Ask the trainer if you can have five minutes to present a sibling group. Pass out flyers and show a video of the children together.
- Don't eliminate singles or childless couples. They don't disrupt any more than married or repeat parents.
- Make sure recruiters know about available subsidies. Many parents feel they can't adopt a group because of costs and are reassured to learn of financial assistance.
- When an event such as a recruitment picnic is planned, buy each sibling in the group the same shirt so that prospective parents can spot them all in the crowd. Make sure they eat at the same table or play together.
- Measure success in terms of events, not time. Agencies separate children because "we haven't found a family in five months." But have you tried every recruitment idea once, then again? If so and still no response, then reassess the recruitment plan.

Some sibling groups cannot be placed together. Prior to recruitment, sibling groups' attachments to each other and their primary caretakers as well as their safety when in the same home should be assessed. But with lifebook work and careful preplacement preparation, many more sibling groups can be together than are presently. We have 117,000 children waiting in the United States. If we place them two by two that is only 58,500 homes—if three by three only 39,000 homes. So make your life easier and the children happier. Create a sibling-friendly agency and recruitment practice.

*Ms. Kupecky has spent more than 25 years in the adoption field and frequently presents workshops about siblings, attachment, and preparing children for adoption. She co-authored Adopting The Hurt Child: Hope for Families with Special Needs Kids and works at the Attachment and Bonding Center of Ohio. Contact her at 440-230-1960 ext. 5 or [reginaku@msn.com](mailto:reginaku@msn.com). ✦*

# Laying the Foundation to Welcome Gay and Lesbian Families

by Jill Jacobs

*Everyone with the potential to successfully parent a child in foster care and adoption is entitled to fair and equal consideration regardless of sexual orientation or differing life style or physical appearance.*  
—NACAC Policy Statement

With a rapidly growing number of children awaiting permanency, advocates have increasingly turned to families traditionally overlooked as prospective adoptive parents. Gay and lesbian families, in particular, are being looked to as valuable resources because they bring individual and collective strengths to the adoption of children with special needs. Without an “Ozzie and Harriet” fantasy of what a family should look like, many gay and lesbian individuals and couples are receptive to adopting older children, sibling groups, and children with special needs. Many gay and lesbian families have also experienced adversity in their own lives and bring strength to children who face challenges. While many agencies may welcome gay and lesbian families, gay and lesbian adoption remains controversial in many areas and should be considered carefully by both agencies and families.

Agencies embarking on gay and lesbian adoptions need to begin on the policy level, first obtaining support and acceptance at the highest level. For private agencies, this is with the board of directors; for public agencies, it is with the highest level of management practical. Agency staff should educate their leaders about the need for adoptive families and the value of gay and lesbian parents. A local gay and lesbian community center may be able to help demystify concerns about gay and lesbian families. Sharing the policy statements of well-known and respected organizations, such as NACAC, may also be useful. Agencies are also wise to plan for a negative response from their community. If the issue ever becomes a public controversy, you want to be sure your board/management will support you—both publicly and within the agency.

Simply changing policy is not enough, however. You also need to address some practice issues to actively welcome gay and lesbian families. A cultural competency framework will be of great value. While there are many differences between sexual orientation and culture and ethnicity, there are also some similarities.

The following questions can guide your work. If you answer “no,” you know what you need to do.

- Are gay and lesbian families visible anywhere within your agency? Are pictures of gay and lesbian families featured along with other families in agency materials, or in photographs displayed throughout the premises?
- Does your agency have a welcoming statement to all families? Is it inclusive? Do your forms say “applicant”

- or “parent” or do they still ask for “husband and wife?”
- Is your training inclusive? Are gay and lesbian families depicted in role-plays, in examples, or on parent panels?
- What support services are you able to offer families? Are other gay and lesbian parents available as mentors? Is a support group offered for non-traditional families? Are staff familiar with gay-friendly community resources?

Most importantly, staff members need to be comfortable working with gay and lesbian individuals—this includes the receptionist as well as the social workers. Training is crucial—just as it would be important for staff who were beginning to work with a new cultural group. A gay and lesbian community organization or an individual who conducts diversity training can help.

Staff also need to develop a comfort level and expertise in conducting home studies for gay and lesbian families. How do you evaluate commitment without a marriage certificate? Will the adoptive family’s support system be discounted if its members are not related to the couple by blood or marriage? Will staff be able to understand the infertility-related grief of both gay men and lesbians?

Another part of preparing for gay and lesbian adoptions will be learning and staying abreast of the legal options and barriers for families. Laws vary from state to state and change frequently.

The agency should prepare for complaints from other families who do not approve of gay and lesbian adoption. How will you handle this at trainings, support group meetings, and agency events? All families need to be welcomed into the agency community. If you embark on this journey, be prepared for some discourse.

Only after addressing policy and practice issues can you plan a recruitment strategy to welcome gay and lesbian families to your agency. Unless you are completely prepared for the potential ramifications, do not set up a booth to recruit at your local gay and lesbian pride parade—discretion is of the utmost importance!

The most common form of referral is other gay and lesbian families who have had a positive experience with your agency. In addition, gay and lesbian community organizations may have prospective parenting groups or forums that you can attend—become their adoption expert. Contact churches that have gay congregations. Ask a family who has adopted to host an information night for their friends. Most grassroots recruitment strategies will be effective.

Many gay and lesbian families do not know they can adopt and that the process is accessible and friendly to them. Getting the word out will bring permanence to waiting children in your community—and will enrich your agency.

*Ms. Jacobs is executive director of Family Builders by Adoption. Contact her at 510-272-0204 or [jjacobs@familybuilders.org](mailto:jjacobs@familybuilders.org) to learn more.* ✦

# Single Parents Offer Permanence

by Deborah Bass Artis, MSW, and Lessie Bass, DSW

**A**doption advocates remind themselves daily that every child deserves a stable, loving family. But where do we find adoptive parents? One often unnoticed and under-recognized resource is single parents.

Single parents led five percent of all U.S. households in 1970, and nine percent (more than 8.6 million homes) in 1990. Over the past 20 years, single parent adoptions have also steadily and sizably increased—close to 25 percent of children with special needs are adopted by single parents.

Our experience at Children's Home Society of North Carolina tells us that single parent homes are the placement of choice for some children. Single parents have fewer distractions and therefore, time to respond one-on-one to children's needs. For a child who has experienced significant abuse at the hands of just men or just women, a single parent of the opposite sex of the abuser may be easier to bond with. Placement with a single parent can happen faster than with a couple—allowing permanency before therapeutic efforts have healed the child enough to again trust members of the gender that harmed him or her. Sometimes not having a second adult in the home limits conflicts. As one single parent puts it, "What I say goes!"

One challenge in working with singles is that many assume they cannot and will not be allowed to add children to their homes via adoption. The traditional view of parenting—that a child needs a mother and a father for healthy development—still exists among social workers as well. To break down these barriers:

- **Dispel myths.** We always tell single parents that because of lingering stereotypes, they have "two or three extra hoops to jump through" on their way to adoptive parenthood. Workers may ask, "Why isn't she married?" and "Why does he want to be a single dad—are you sure he isn't a sexual predator?" Remind them that marital status is unrelated to parenting ability.
- **Build relationships.** Family workers encounter fewer difficulties "selling" their single parents to the children's workers once all involved get to know each other and trust one another's judgement.
- **Teach singles advocacy skills.** Familiarize singles with the adoption process. Help them identify their strengths and prepare them to articulate why they are the best option for a particular child. Have them research resources and support groups in their area. Knowing how to get what they want and need for a child is a necessity.
- **Make sure all parents, including singles, are welcomed.** Review policies and guidelines—both written

and unwritten—to make sure they don't favor couples. Schedule meetings and trainings in the evening or on weekends to include parents who work.

- **Help single parents think ahead.** For couples, the child care back-up plan is typically the other parent. Singles need a support system of friends and family, but also need services such as extended child care hours, respite, and capable sitters. Ask singles scenarios such as, "What will the child do after school, but before you get off work?," "What will happen if the child gets suspended?," or "How will homework and chores get accomplished before bedtime?" Help develop a realistic financial plan—supplemented by a well-negotiated adoption assistance agreement—to ensure all the health, child care, and basic needs of the family are met.

To recruit single adoptive parents:

- **Advertise in singles magazines, at single groups, or with the local Big Brother/Big Sister Programs.** One single adoptive dad spoke at a meeting of his fellow Big Brother volunteers. Now two more from the group are approved and waiting for placements.
- **Use other single adoptive parents.** Word of mouth is one of the most effective tools. We share our recruitment message with successful adoptive parents then send them out into the community armed with brochure, flyers, and other materials.
- **Develop a monthly social where single adoptive parents invite other singles who are interested in adoption.** Church groups often have singles groups already in place. Whether their mission is social, educational, or both, these groups are excellent places to share our adoption message. Especially in rural areas, church groups are the center of community activity.

At our agency, single parents adopt for many of the same reasons as couples—they want to share their lives with a child, provide a loving home, and experience the rewards of parenting. If we believe in and welcome their abilities, these single men and women can become wonderful parents and provide permanent homes for our children.

To learn more, contact Ms. Artis at 800-862-1909 or [dartis2@mindspring.com](mailto:dartis2@mindspring.com). ✕

## Exchanging Ideas *Tips from the Adoption Exchange Association (AEA)*

*Wisconsin's Special Needs Adoption Network (SNAN), an AEA member, recommends two main tactics for recruiting on behalf of special populations. First, show children on the Internet—most net surfers who are interested in adoption eventually find their way to their state's exchange. Once they are there, the site and child listings should give them a good idea about what types of children (with what kinds of special needs) are available. Second, use common sense. Adoption specialist Leah Elston advises, "Treat the singles, the people who live in rural areas, and all potential adoptive parents like gold. If you respect them and treat them well, they will remember it and spread the good news to others. The best recruitment tools are the people out in the community who have adopted before and had good experiences."*

# “Ask the Expert”

*This issue's expert, Denise Goodman, is an independent trainer and consultant on adoptive and foster family recruitment. To learn more, call her at 614-436-6838 or dagphd@aol.com*

**Q** What does targeted recruitment really mean? How is targeted recruitment different from general recruitment or child-specific recruitment?

**A** General recruitment strategies blanket the community with information about the agency and its programs. They provide community education, build awareness, and will result in inquiries; however, these calls may not translate into approved families and placements. Child-specific recruitment requires an individual plan for a child based on his or her skills, abilities, needs, and relationships. Targeted recruitment consists of more focused and narrow strategies. It may target a specific group of children based on their characteristics (such as teens, medically fragile children or sibling groups) or membership in a specific racial or ethnic group. Geographic areas (such as specific communities or neighborhoods that have been traditionally under-recruited) may also be the object of a targeted recruitment campaign.

**Q** We want to start targeted recruitment but see so many possible groups to target. How should our agency decide which populations of families to pursue?

**A** DATA! Data should drive how you target your campaign. Targeted recruitment plans should be based on the children who most need placement now. Gathering statistical information about who adopts the children in your system can also be helpful. Too often, we make decisions based on anecdotal information, what people say is needed, rather than the actual situation.

**Q** My agency had always targeted particular kinds of families, but I know we could do better at targeting populations of children. How can we implement this kind of targeted recruiting?

**A** “Marry” the two strategies. For example, if you are in need of homes for teens, explore what kind of families are interested in teens. Find that information by reviewing the families you’ve previously worked with who have adopted or fostered teens. Who are they? What are their demographics? What do they do for recreation? Do they go to church? What characteristics do they share? This information can help put you in contact with families who are similar.

**Q** We’ve targeted certain groups to receive basic adoption information, posters, and paycheck inserts but want to take our efforts to the next level. What are some creative ways to execute recruitment once a population is selected as the target?

**A** Begin to develop personal relationships with the families whom you are targeting. If you target a company or trade union, host a brown bag lunch to provide information or answer questions. Or identify a family who has fostered or adopted teens or medically fragile children in the past and ask them to host a “family party” at their home for half a dozen of their friends. Agency staff can provide information, gifts, and snacks. The goal is for interested individuals to develop relationships with successful foster/adoptive families and agency personnel who can assist them in applying to adopt or foster and navigating the licensing or home study process. ✈

## Next Up...

### Upcoming Trainings, Conferences, and Events

**JULY 15-18 • ATLANTA, GA**

The Foster Family-Based Treatment Association (FFTA) will hold its 15th Annual Conference on Treatment Foster Care—“Pathways to Excellence;” FFTA, 800-414-3382 ext. 113, 114, or 117, [ffta@ffta.org](mailto:ffta@ffta.org).

**JULY 9-10 • LOUISVILLE, KY**

JKM Training, Inc. will hold its training program, “Cultural Diversity Issues in Crisis Behavior Management;” JKM Training, Inc., 717-960-0457, [jkm@pa.net](mailto:jkm@pa.net), [www.jkmtraining.com](http://www.jkmtraining.com).

**JULY 25-27 • CHICAGO, IL**

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) announces its third National Kinship Care Conference—“Sustaining Kinship Ties: Permanency and Beyond;” CWLA, 202-638-2952, [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org).

**AUGUST 14-16 • SAN DIEGO, CA**

The National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS) will hold its Residential Child Care Worker Training; NRCYS, 918-660-3700, [www.nrcys.ou.edu](http://www.nrcys.ou.edu).

# Bulletin Board

## NACAC CONFERENCE INCLUDES RECRUITMENT TRACK

From August 2–5, 2001 the North American Council on Adoptable Children will host its 27th annual conference, “Creating Ties that Bind,” at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. More than 125 workshop sessions, divided into 16 tracks, cover a broad range of adoption and foster care topics.

The conference will feature a track on the recruitment and retention of permanent families, including an institute on community partnerships. Other workshop topics include using child-specific recruitment, hosting ethical, well-planned adoption parties, conducting public relations campaigns on a shoestring budget, finding homes for teenagers, partnering with the faith community, managing public/private partnerships, keeping siblings together, using technology, facilitating interjurisdictional placements, and preparing parents and children for adoption.

To receive a conference registration booklet, including information on fees, travel, and accommodations, contact NACAC at 651-644-3036 or [info@nacac.org](mailto:info@nacac.org). Information is also available on the web at [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org).

*“Being adopted is better because you’ve got a family that’s yours. In the group home, they did love you, but not in that way. They looked out for you that you didn’t get hurt—that kind of love. This love is like love for your life. I feel it.”*

*—a 14 year old,  
adopted at age 10 after  
time in a group home*

### ***Report Focuses on Successful Foster Placements***

In *Lighting the Way: Attracting and Supporting Foster Families* (2000), Casey Family Program’s National Center for Resource Family Support draws from scholarly research as well as interviews with foster parents, child welfare experts, and practitioners to create ten broad principles for promoting stable foster placements. The report presents promising approaches to foster parent recruitment and retention and creative solutions to real-life dilemmas encountered by practitioners in the foster care system. Contact the Casey Family Program at 206-282-7300 to order the report or visit [www.casey.org/cnc](http://www.casey.org/cnc) to download a free copy. ✧

### ***Document Addresses Children’s Mental Health***

Prepared by Maria Woolverton, Jan McCarthy, Sara Schibanoff, and Rhoda Schulzinger, *Welfare Reform: Exploring Opportunities for Addressing Children’s Mental Health and Child Welfare Issues* (2000) examines how aspects of the 1996 welfare reform legislation are affecting children and families with mental health needs, including families involved in the child welfare system. Issues covered include parts of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and options for child and family outcomes. To order a copy call 202-687-5000 or e-mail [deaconm@georgetown.edu](mailto:deaconm@georgetown.edu). ✧

### ***Magazine Targets Foster Parents and Workers***

*Fostering Families TODAY*, a new bimonthly publication from the publishers of *Adoption Today Magazine*, addresses issues that affect children, parents, and professionals involved with foster care and domestic adoption. The magazine includes both expert professional advice as well as articles from and about seasoned foster and adoptive parents. To order, call 888-924-6736 or visit [www.fosteringfamilies.com](http://www.fosteringfamilies.com). ✧

### ***Publication Gives Practical Advice***

Prepared by the Girls and Boys Town’s Foster Family Services Program, *Foster Care Solutions* (2001) is a publication aimed at giving advice, techniques, and support to both new and experienced foster parents so that they can give the best care possible to their children. Topics covered include safe environments, cultural differences, emotional issues, and preparing for family transitions. Order from the Girls and Boys Town Press at 800-282-6657 or visit [www.girlsandboystown.org/btpress](http://www.girlsandboystown.org/btpress). ✧

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