PARTNERS FOR FOREVER FAMILIES
A Public-Private-University Initiative and Neighborhood-Based Approach[1]

Year 4 Evaluation Report, 2011-2012

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I. Executive Summary

This report is a summary of Year 4 for Partners for Forever Families (the grant and evaluation year runs from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012). The initiative is a Public-Private-University Initiative and a Neighborhood-Based Approach to recruitment, funded by Adoption Opportunities: Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System. The lead agency is Cuyahoga County Division[2] of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) and the project partners are Adoption Network-Cleveland, Beech Brook, Case Western Reserve University and the Neighborhood Collaborative Agencies of East End Neighborhood House, Harvard Community Services Center, Murtis Taylor Human Services System, and University Settlement. Overall, in Year 4, the project kept focus on processes while sharpening the focus on data informed outcomes.

While our numbers do not meet our projected targets by Year 4, there have been developments towards systemic change. One, the new Director of CCDCFS set up an ongoing meeting regarding siblings to establish baselines of how CCDCFS is doing, something that was needed in the first year of the grant so our strategies could have document impact. First we needed data on "siblings" that was not available from SAQWIS, the system used after the grant was initiated. Second, there is Strategic Planning Group (SPG) regarding relatives. The SPG will addresses how CCDCFS staff are letting relatives know about their options and ways that CCDCFS can help kin families. Three, another Strategic Planning Group was established regarding older youth adoption. This group will develop a position paper/guide regarding reconnecting teens to birth families as well as other permanency options. Four, the new Director of CCDCFS established a work group to address broader issues regarding older youth. This work group reports directly to her. Five, a new Quality Improvement Manager has been hired to assist with the initiative to use data to inform decisions. This hire is a doctoral level person with extensive experience in public child welfare.

This report departs from the format used in Years 1 to 3. In this report we still use the major headings for each section as employed in our original recruitment proposal: General Recruitment, Targeted Recruitment, and Child Specific Recruitment. However, we focused on other areas than has been reported previously. It is also important to reiterate that the evaluation report is a collaborative process. Not only is data provided by different people but as the data are summarized, all project staff and the appropriate CCDCFS staff are engaged in helping us understand what the data means to them and how they interpret it. We also let data direct evaluation activities not outlined in the original proposal.

II. Introduction and Overview

Cuyahoga County is located in Northeast Ohio and encompasses the City of Cleveland as well as numerous inner ring and outer ring suburbs. At the time this grant was developed, the overall population of children in foster care had reduced but the children who remained in care were older and had the more complicated histories and difficulties, requiring new methods to promote their need for permanency. The project was initiated in 2008. In 2008, there were 710 children in permanent custody; 272 (38.3%) had no adoption resource identified. In 2009, there were 708 children in permanent custody; 221 (31.2%) had no adoption resource identified. As of July 2010, there were 649 children in permanent custody; 203 (31.3%) had no adoption resource identified. As of August 2011, there were 604 children in permanent custody; 211 (24.9%) had no adoption resource identified.   Over time, a greater percent of child had an adoption resource identified.

At the time the grant was written in 2008, about 37% of children in permanent custody statewide were being adopted in less than 24 months. *Objective one was to increase the percent of children who exited for adoption in less than 24 months in Cuyahoga County (CC) from 25% to match the state's percent of 37% (in 2008) or higher*. In March-August 2012, the State of Ohio had had only 33.4% of all permanent custody cases

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[2] Note name change from Department to Division.

meet the criteria of 24 month or less for adoption.   The CSFR data for CCDCFS for Years 1-3 showed no improvement. Ohio received no dollars from the Adoption Incentive funds to date for all years of the grant.

At the same time the CFSR data has not improved, there has been a tremendous decrease the number of children in care. Figure 1 is point-in-time data provided by CCDCFS on the children in custody of CCDCFS. The data for years 1999-2011 are through the end of the calendar year; the data for 2012 is through the end of June 2012.

Figure 1: Children in Custody of Cuyahoga County Division of Children & Family Services, 1999-2012
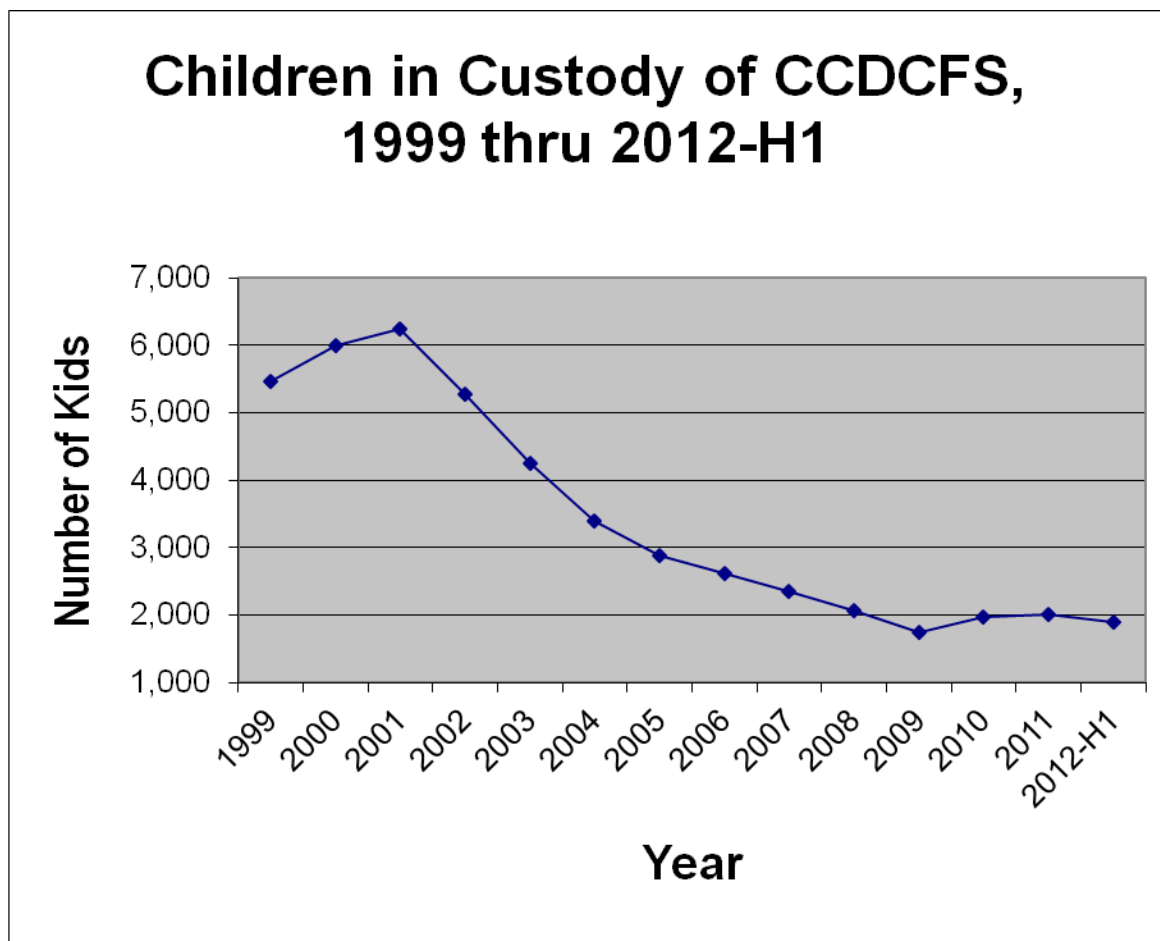
From 1999 to 2009, there was a dramatic decrease in the total number of children in care but then in 2009, a reverse trend started where the census slightly increased. This is the same year that the economy worsened. Based on half-year data for 2012, if the current trend continues, there will be another slight rise in the total number of children in care.

The change in census has resulted in a change in average caseload size for some child welfare workers but the change is variable by department. According to the monthly statistical report of May 2012 provided by CCDCFS Continuous Quality Improvement, the average caseload in May 2011 was 10.6 cases and the average for May 2012 is 12.6 cases for intake workers. At the same time, average caseloads for adoption workers went from 12.8 in May 2011 to 11.5 in May 2012.

Another change to note is that the number of children in Permanent Custody (PC) has decreased from 2001 to 2011 but the percent of adoptions for children in PC has also decreased. In 2001, 37% of PC cases had an adoption placement but this has reduced to 22% of PC cases in 2011. That means that a greater percent of the children were still waiting adoption placement. The decrease was dramatic in the last three years--a time when

several of the large private agencies with strong adoption programs either eliminated or drastically reduced their adoption programming as funding for private agencies for adoptions was virtually eliminated. These data are presented in Table 1.

Table1: Number of children in permanent custody, placed for adoption and finalized 2001-2011

Year	NUMBER OF PC CHILDREN	ADOPTIVE PLACEMENTS DURING YEAR	% OF TOTAL FROM JANUARY 1	ADOPTION FINALIZATIONS DURING YEAR	% OF T0TAL FROM JANUARY 1
2001	2000	736	37%	583	29%
2002	1875	774	41%	741	40%
2003	1675	650	39%	733	44%
2004	1470	595	40%	539	37%
2005	1339	529	40%	508	38%
2006	1099	358	33%	379	35%
2007	932	293	31%	285	31%
2008	782	218	28%	255	33%
2009	716	248	35%	205	29%
2010	688	168	25%	169	25%
2011	653	142	22%	159	24%

In Cuyahoga County when children are adopted, consistently they are most likely to be adopted by their foster parents (71% in 2011). This has implications for recruitment, as will be discussed later in this report.

Table 2 compares the age of the child placed for adoption by the age of the child waiting for adoptive placement for 2011. The data are not collected exactly the same way. The good news is that 12% of the children placed were over the age of 13. About 23% of the children are under age 5 that are in permanent custody but 66% of adoptions are under the age of 5. In contrast, 56% of the children over the age of 12 are in permanent custody but only 12% of the adoptions are children over 12. This suggests that young children are easily placed but it is the older children who continue to wait for an adoptive family.

Table 2: Age of child placed for adoption and in permanent custody

Age of Child	Placed for Adoption (n=142)	Age of Child	In Permanent Custody (n=608)
0-2	39% (n=55)	0 to 1	5% (n=33)
3-5	27% (n=38)	2 to 5	18% (n=109)
6-9	14% (n=20)	6 to 11	215 (n=130)
10-12	8% (n=11)	12 to 14	17% (n=101)
13-15	7% (n=10)	15 and OVER	39% (n=235)
16+	5% (n=8)		

Children placed for adoption were almost split by gender; 49% were females and 51% were males. Children in permanent custody were 46% female and 54% male. Table 3 presents data about the race of the child placed for adoption and in permanent custody. A slightly smaller percent of children of color in permanent custody are placed for adoption and a slightly greater percent of Caucasian children are placed for adoption compared to those in permanent custody.

Table 3: Race of child placed for adoption and in permanent custody

Race of Child	Placed for Adoption (n=142)	In Permanent Custody (n=608)
Black or African American	61% (n=86)	72% (n=436)

White or Caucasian	30% (n=43)	21% (n=130)
Bi-racial/multiracial	9% (n=13)	5% (n=28)

A final part of describing the children in the system is to examine the level of care. The Level of Care approximates the degree of difficulty of the child with Level 1 suggesting minimal special health or mental health needs while Level 6 indicating several needs. These data are presented in Table 4. Half of the children in permanent custody are Level 1 or Level 2.

Table 4: Level of care for children placed for adoption and in permanent custody

	Placed for Adoption (n=142)	In Permanent Custody (n=608)
LEVEL 1	Not provided[3]	27% (n=165)
LEVEL 2	Not provided	24% (n=145)
LEVEL 3	Not provided	16% (n= 97)
LEVEL 4	Not provided	23% (n=142)
LEVEL 5	Not provided	4% (n=27)
LEVEL 6	Not provided	3% (n=17)
NOT AVAILABLE		2% (n=15)

RECRUITMENT

Foster Care & Adoption General Recruitment

The average budget for recruitment materials at DCFS is $50, 0000. Surrounding counties, all smaller, spend up to 3 times as much.

Below is a table that identifies recruitment strategies, key elements of recruitment, the criteria for a child to obtain the strategy, who benefits from the strategy (number of youth served or percent of youth served), responsible worker, and what data says or what data is needed to measure the strategy. Table 5 was developed by the Project Director in collaboration with project partners. It offers a good summary of recruitment efforts. Also, the Recruitment Plan for 2012-2014 was provided by CCDCFS and is included in Appendix A.

Table 5: Recruitment strategies

Strategy	Key elements	Criteria for child to obtain this strategy	Number of youth served or percent of youth served	Worker responsible	What does the data say?	Data needed to measure the strategy
Family Search and Engagement	• Record Mining • Internet Search • Notice to previous families/birth family/extended family • Engagement of Family	• Referral from ongoing units, • Referrals from Permanency Round Table	≈ 68	DCFS Family-Search-& Engagement Unit, intake & ongoing workers	Data not systematically collected since the initiative is relatively new	Referrals completed: Outcomes of referrals completed:
Teen Specialist	• Assessment and planning • Child Preparation • Family Search • Permanency Pacts • Permanency Team Meetings	16 yr olds and older in permanent custody, not currently receiving child-centered recruitment	26	Beech Brook	What are we asking about these kids?	Interviews, protocol paperwork, evaluation
Collaborative	F2F Contract requires:	Youth living in geo	≈7	Who refers youth to	Not enough kids	• Kids in PC

agencies recruitment efforts	• 2 fosterware parties • 3 recruitment events • Participation on RMT & in Pre-Service Training Youth referred for child centered recruitment or building connections for youth in Independent Living Digital Me's, Heart Gallery flash drive, or mobile heart gallery are tools shared with Collabs through the recruitment department. PFFF Collabs working bigger recruitment events/demonstration project	area		their neighborhood Collabs? Collabs work with Recruitment Department on out of the box ideas. No one is responsible for getting them the information on the kids. This is an issue and a barrier.	referred- No one is identified at the agency as the one responsible for getting Collabs names of the kids (either pc kids from adoption or all kids in IL, or all kids in neighborhood in care)	in their GEO • All kids in their GEO • All foster homes in their geo regardless of the agency licensed
Foster To Adopt Unit	• Youth stays with ongoing caseworker • Resource worker helps family adopt youth • Assessment and planning • Child Prep • Finalize prior to transfer	PC youth who have an identified family	210	• Ongoing worker • Foster to Adopt worker	Placements: as of 9/11/12: • 53 finalized[4] • Total referred: 210 • ≈ 50% of those finalize	
Permanency Round Tables	• Intensive review of stuck cases • Range of custody status • Revisiting cases at key points	PPLA, PC children	165 youth	• CW • Supervisor • Master Facilitator	Barriers identified: Youth found connections Connections are formalized:	Evaluation ongoing
Child Centered Recruitment	• Assessment and planning • Child Preparation • Family Search • Digital Me: focused on CCR youth • Lifebook workshops: 4 times a year	Youth with no identified family • Youth in custody 12+ months • Youth with severe medical, emotional, and/or behavioral issues • Multiple placements • Large sibling groups	72 youth on referral	• PC worker, • CCR worker, • PC/IL resource worker	16 placements this year Digital Me's= 15	
Traditional Recruitment Methods	• Fliers • Heart gallery • Mixers	In PC but not over 15 if don't have an identified family	All youth who are truly available = 408	• PC worker • PC IL worker	• Total = 608 • Fliers: 119[5]	• '11 (jn Oct) • 122 placement • 16 CCR

4

5

	• Photo listing • NEOARE • Matching conferences		(608 – 200 [foster to adopt] = 408)		• Heart Gallery: 54 • Mixers:5 8 Photo listing: 124 • NEOARE: 60 potential matches[6]	placement • F2A: 43 placements
Wendy's Wonderful Kids	• Assessment and planning • Child Preparation • Family Search	In PC, 17 youth on referral, non CCR kids	17	• Caring for kids contractor • Adoptions worker once family identified	One apother	
IL PC: Permanency Work	What is done? • Permanency pact meetings. • Adoptions ? • Looking for connections • File mining • Adoptuskids	• No identified family • 15 years of age • In PC	193	PC IL worker	1 modification of custody	• Age out? • With Perm Pact? • Modifications of custody? • Adoptions
On going	• PC kids not transferred • Efforts not known as to how cases are managed or best practice	Caseload: Is it on the permanency report?	PC youth not engaged with F2A	On-going worker		On the permanency report?
Recruitment Department	• General, targeted, child specific recruitment • Community strategies • Digital Me • Heart Gallery • Training • Fingerprinting	For all youth coming into level 1 foster care already in foster care	Youth in agency foster homes: 340	Recruitment department staff		DAWN

What should be apparent from the plan is that there is no specific strategy that will achieve permanency. What is needed, once you believe every child deserves a permanent home, are an array of strategies. The more complicated the child, the greater the number of strategies that are needed.

One of the accomplishments of this year was an improvement in the recording of the source of referral for families interested in foster care/adoption. Table 6 compares source of referral for recruitment as a foster or adoptive family to date in 2012 and compares this data to 2011 data. To date, the two best sources of recruitment are from Family and Relatives (32%) or staff (16%). PFFF activities are their own category this year and account for 3% of referrals. In 2011, the three best sources of referral were also Family and Relatives (35%), staff (16%) and community partners (9.5%). The internet accounts for about 7% of referrals in 2011 and 13% in 2012, almost doubling. It could represent an area of growth for the agency. Compared to the same time in 2011 where 644 referrals had been received, referrals are down.

Table 6: Sources of referral by month for 2012

	Radio	Staff	News-paper	Fos/Adp Parents	TV	Friend &Rel	Faith Based	Recruit-ment	Other Agency	Community Partners	PFFF	Re-Engag	Inter net	TOTAL	2011 TOTALS
January	2	14	1	7	1	39	0	1	16	0	2	0	12	95	115

6

February	0	13	1	4	0	14	0	2	3	7	0	0	22	66	63
March	0	9	0	8	0	17	0	0	4	1	8	0	8	55	126
April	0	13	1	10	2	23	0	1	1	4	3	0	10	68	51
May	0	12	2	18	6	27	0	19	3	17	2	0	5	111	80
June	1	11	0	10	1	39	0	4	2	0	16	7	6	97	109
July	0	20	1	7	0	30	0	5	2	5	8	3	11	92	100
Totals year-to-date	3	92	6	64	10	189	0	32	31	34	39	10	74	584	-
Totals for 2011 during same period	42	104	1	84	27	215	4	51	40	26			50		644

Table 7 presents pre-service training data as of August 2012. The first column counts only families and the second column counts total number of individuals. The good news is that the numbers for 2012 are higher than the numbers for the same time last year (2011). Yet, the completion rate for pre-service training is quite low. In 2011, examining the family data only, 45% completed training and in 2012 only 22% have completed training. This is a dramatic decrease and lead to one of our projects that examined the pre-service training/home study process.

Table 7: Pre-service Data

Month	Families that attended pre-service training	Families that completed pre-service training	Individuals that attended pre-service training	Individuals that completed pre-service training
January	65	3	89	5
February	79	3	90	3
March	65	45	89	60
April	58	3	80	5
May	43	5	58	8
June	32	16	44	22
July	0	0	0	0
TOTALS 2012	342	75	450	103
TOTALS 2011 (same time period)	132	60	181	77

To examine this trend over time, the Recruitment Department provided 14 years of data from referral to licensure. Figure 2 presents this data. The trend for the 14 years is the same as for 2011-2012; over time this includes fewer inquiries, fewer families attending and completing pre-service training and fewer families being licensed. From inquiry to licensure, the percent was 5% in 1998 and 5% in 2012. So, the percent licensed is the same but the yield (in numbers) is greatly different when the number of inquiries changes.
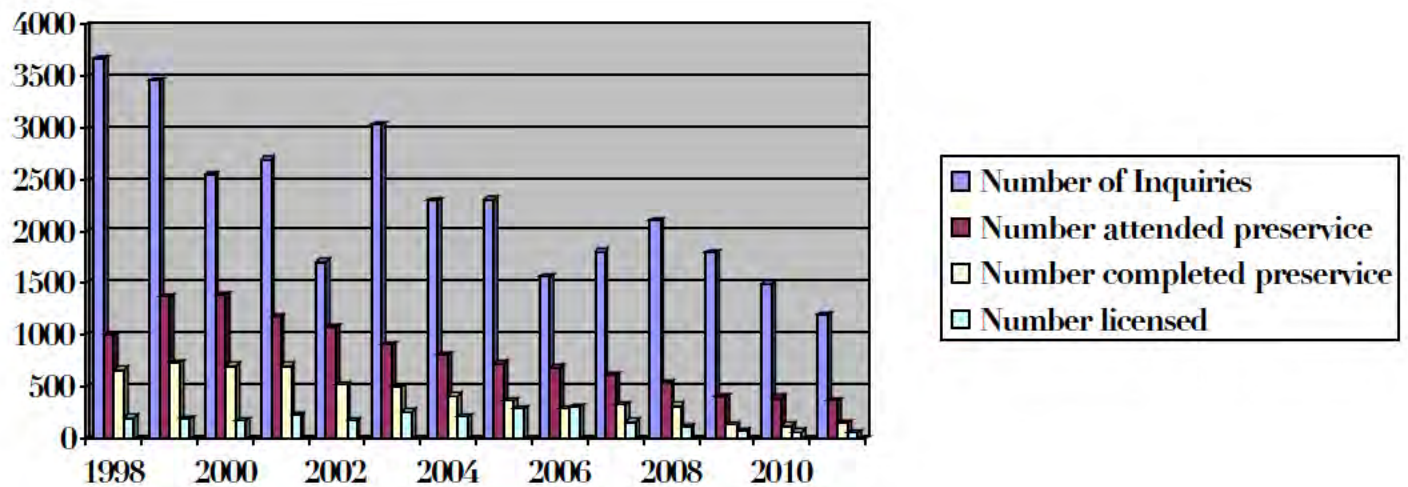
Table 8 compares the total number of applications submitted for fostering, adoption or a dual-licensed by the race of the family for 2012. Compared to applications during the same period in 2011 (81 for fostering, 16 for adopting and 71 for dual licensure), applications are down. This is true both for general and child-specific recruitment.

Table 8: Total Number of Applications Submitted 2012 (year to date) by Race of Applicant								
	FOSTER			ADOPTION			Totals	Dual
	Black	White	Other	Black	White	Other		
January	2	3	0	0	2	1	8	5
February	6	3	0	1	1	0	11	7
March	2	4	1	2	0	1	10	14
April	5	1	1	0	0	1	8	5
May	6	4	0	0	0	0	10	9
June	3	2	0	1	1	0	7	3
July	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
TOTALS 2012	24	17	2	4	5	3	55	43
Totals 2011 during same period	57	21	3	9	5	2	97	71
Foster Total 2012	43			Adoption Total 2012	12			
Foster Total 2011	81			Adoption Total 2011	16			

	FOSTER					ADOPT		
Child Specific Applications								
	INT IND	RELATIVES		NOT PLACED		INT IND	RELATIVES	NOT PLACED
January								
February	0	2				1	1	
March	0	4		5		0	0	
April	0	0		1		0	0	
May	0	3		1		0	0	
June	0	1		1		0	1	
July	0	0		0		0	0	
TOTALS 2012	0	10	0	8	0	1	2	0
TOTALS 2011	1	12		11			5	1

Foster/Adoptive Parents' Home Study and Licensure Process Evaluation[7]

The following part of the Year 4 report examined the experiences of prospective foster and/or adoptive parents (FAP) and those public child welfare agency workers who assisted them through the home study and licensure process (HSP). The purposes was to determine whether barriers existed for prospective FAPs while they were pursing licensure; if so, what were the types of barriers encountered; who encountered them; and did these barriers have any impact on eventual FAP licensure outcomes.

FAP licensure and HSP policies. Foster and adoptive parent licensing criteria is established through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and is mandated via the Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2 (Division of Social Services, Chapter 5101:2-7 Foster Care. In the State of Ohio, both relative (RCGs) and non-relative caregivers (NRCGs) wanting to become licensed FAPs must go through the same approval process. A relative care-giver is an individual who enters the Home Study Process (HSP) with the intent to adopt a specific child of interest-- like a grandchild, niece/nephew, or fictive kin. Non-relative caregivers are those who enter the process with no specific child of interest in mind, but simply wish to adopt or foster.

The 2010 State AFCARS noted that the State of Ohio had far higher foster care adoption rates (76.5%) than the national average (53%); this is likely related to RCGs and NRCGs becoming dually licensed via the "joint approval process" issued by the State of Ohio in 2000 (OAC5101:2-5-20 [A2], CCDCFS Policy 6.02.07 Joint Approval Process, 2000; 2002). Through this process, prospective foster/adoptive parents working towards licensure experience the same rigorous training and investigatory approval process in order to prepare them for both fostering and adopting. There were several reasons the joint approval process was pursued in the State of Ohio: a) to promote more timely permanency options when reunification with birth families were not an option; b) to provide additional options during the concurrent planning process when birth families were facing the termination of parental rights (TPR); even under the gravest maltreatment circumstances, children have extreme stress related to losing the only family they have ever known-- dual licensure can provide greater stability and less stress on the child related to additional placement changes; c) there is greater flexibility for families to transition from fostering a child to permanently adopting them without requiring additional training; d) it encourages a stronger skill set in foster parents caring for children with very unique needs; and e) it promotes a better aligned licensure, training, and placement matching process with prospective parents and children (CCDCFS Policy 6.02.07 Joint Approval Process, 2000; 2002).

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[7] This part of the evaluation was completed by Maureen Riley-Behringer, Jamie Cage & Kate Lodge.

FAPs play a critical role in helping vulnerable children from the public child welfare system cope, heal, and grow following detrimental challenges in early life. Most children entering FAPs' homes have complex care needs related to them suffering from early childhood (birth-age 5 years) maltreatment. For example, many have prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs -or- were victims of early childhood physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and/or neglect (Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2001; Cicchetti, Rogosch, Gunnar, & Toth, 2010; Barnett, Ganiban, & Cicchetti, 1997). Subsequently, many children lose (whether temporarily or permanently) important attachment relationships with birth parents/other primary caregivers (PCGs), detrimentally contributing to the trauma already experienced (Neal, Beek, & Schofield, 2003).

As a result, FAPs are charged with providing more than simple housing and general child-rearing (i.e., shelter, safety, transportation to appointments, academic support) (Dozier et al, 2006a); they must help children pick up the many pieces of their shattered lives by working through complicated physical, emotional, behavioral, and relational issues. These issues typically surface for children, and subsequently their FAPs, after placement in the FAP home. Foster parents also work to buffer temporary separations between children and birth families, support birth parents and children through stressful visitations, and help those children in their care cope when visitations go poorly or reunification attempts fail (Rhodes, Cox, Orme & Coakley, 2006).

The child welfare literature notes that children with these early experiences are often at-risk for many developmental challenges (Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer, & Rosario, 1993; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001; Toth, Cicchetti, Macfie, Rogosch, & Maughan, 2000; Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 2008; Carlson, 1998; Rhodes et al, 2006; Kohl, Edleson, English, & Barth, 2005; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). Maltreated children in the public child welfare system, when compared to demographically similar non-maltreated children outside of the public child welfare system reportedly have higher rates of the following challenges: internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer, & Rosario, 1993; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001; Toth, Cicchetti, Macfie, Rogosch, & Maughan, 2000); insecure and disorganized attachment relationships (Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 2008; Carlson, 1998); clinical depression, suicidal behaviors, physical and mental health issues (Rhodes et al, 2006); cognitive deficits and language delays (Kohl, Edleson, English, & Barth, 2005); and academically problems (Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). Clearly, many children in foster care will have a complex set of care needs that will require sensitive and specialized out-of-home care to stabilize and promote their healing.

Why F/A parents must be well-trained and supported. Dozier, Higley, Albus and Nutter's (2002) research with foster parents and infants stressed the importance that FAPs are well-prepared for challenges that may be ahead when fostering or adopting vulnerable children and continue receiving physical and emotional support during their parenting. They noted that FAPs often face distinctive challenges when parenting children with these maltreatment and loss histories: first, because of poor relationships with early PCGs, children often emotionally and behaviorally push away from their FAPs (Stovall & Dozier, 2000; Tyrrell & Dozier, 1999); second, some FAPs do not respond effectively and clearly to children's signals of needing nurturance (Stovall & Dozier, 2000); third, these children often struggle with expressing when they have the need to be nurtured; and fourth, children's stress systems are physiologically dysregulated and they often have difficulty managing their emotions and behaviors (Fisher, Gunnar, Chamberlain, & Reid, 2000).

Whether providing children's temporary or permanent care, it is integral that FAPs are intellectually and emotionally cognizant of children's specialized needs, are adequately trained, financially capable of supporting them, are highly committed to helping them, and are competent in healthily meeting their own adult needs in order to care well for children (Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2001; Cicchetti, Rogosch, Gunnar, & Toth, 2010). Dozier, Higley, Albus, and Nutter (2002), relayed that unfortunately, many FAPs in the public child welfare system "often do not have the skills necessary to provide such care" (p. 543).

Child welfare agencies' challenges to recruit, train, and retain. Challenges exist for local child welfare agencies across the U. S. to recruit, train, and retain the quality and numbers of FAPs needed to meet the specialized care needs of vulnerable children in care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [UHHS], 2002a; 2002b). Gibbs (2004) explored foster and adoptive parent trends finding an underutilization of

licensed foster homes. Approximately 20% of available licensed foster homes were providing between 60% - 80% of care to children in the public child welfare system and approximately one-third of licensed homes did not have a child placed with them at all.

Casey Family Programs (2000) reported that 20-25% of parents quit fostering each year, and an additional 25% question whether they plan to continue over the next 12 months (Iowa Foster Recruitment and Retention Project, 2002; Rhodes, Orme, & Buehler, 2001; Rhodes, Orme, Cox, & Buehler, 2003), Yet, other studies noted that family preference strongly influenced whether a child was or was not ever placed in a home; for example, homes where a child had never been placed were less willing to accept someone with special needs (Cox et al., 2002), was a teen, or part of a sibling group (Cox, Orme, & Rhodes, 2002; DHHS, 2002a). Most individuals who begin the process of becoming a licensed foster and/or adoptive parent fail to complete the training and HSP (Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006); nationally, of those who do complete the process, nearly 50% quit within a year of fostering their first child (Gibbs, 2004).

How the system can be a stressor to prospective FAPs. The decision to foster or adopt is typically weighed over a number of months for prospective applicants. Once the process begins, it can be stressful and invasive. Prospective FAPs often report feeling extremely stressed and self-conscious when going through licensure and the HSP (Cudmore, 2005). Worried that a past or current miss-step will impact their ability to be licensed, applicants are often extremely vulnerable, feeling as if they are under the microscope of their agency and social worker (Rhodes et al, 2004).

Many prospective FAPs can intellectualize why guidelines for fostering or adopting children are so strict. Yet, the intellectualizing typically cannot negate the anxiety felt about potentially being denied for licensure—the emotional equivalent of being told that they are "unfit" to parent. With these fears, past losses may be raised like infertility. As there is evidence that many applicants seek to foster or adopt while still in a state of mourning about their infertility (Cudmore 2005; Santona & Zavattini, 2005), it is important that those conducting licensing and HSP services are aware of their many vulnerabilities and remain strengths-based in their approach to the licensure and HSP.

Pre-service trainers and HSP workers responsible for assessing applicant FAPs are charged with a heavy responsibility—ensuring that those families licensed are healthy, capable, positive, and responsible caregivers for children who have endured unfathomable past trauma and attachment loss. The public child welfare system has been charged with this same task on a much larger scale, continuously needing to address best-practices relative to the changing needs of children, families, and the cultural topography. Some note a top-down struggle within the public child welfare system to remain strengths-based with children and families. Specific to FAP licensure, Groze (1996, p. 9) noted that over the last 20 years, the public child welfare system has drifted away from a strengths-based approach to licensure and the HSP which used to

> *The home study was used to explore areas in which the family needs assistance to be successful in adopting. Instead, it serves as a source of anxiety for prospective parents by… becoming a vehicle for screening people out of the [foster or] adoption process, a practice that discourages and disqualifies many families who would be good [foster or] adoptive families.*

Why study prospective F/A parent's licensure and HSP experiences? The purpose of this report is to inform, through former FAPs' accounts of their licensure and HSP experiences, what worked well in the process, whether there were existing barriers, who experienced them, and what were individual's first-hand experiences. By studying prospective parents' experiences, it will help inform future prospective parents; and it will also serve as a step towards an updated best-practices guide for State and local agency level policy-makers, parent and agency trainers, resource managers, and social workers-of-record to support prospective parents and children in the public child welfare system.

Research questions:
1. How did levels of satisfaction with the HSP differ between the WG and the CG?
2. How did levels of satisfaction with the HSP differ between RCGs and NRCGs?

3. How did levels of satisfaction with RM services differ between WG and CG?
4. How did levels of satisfaction with RM services differ between RCGs and NRCGs?
5. How did types of barriers encountered in the licensure/HSP differ between WG and the CG?
6. How did types of barriers encountered in the licensure/HSP differ between RCGs and NRCGs?
7. How did the number of barriers differ between WG and the CG?
8. How did the number of barriers differ between RCGs and NRCGs?
9. How did number of barriers relate to applicants outcomes (withdrew or completed) in the HSP?

Methods

Participants

The data was drawn from a cross-sectional dataset (N = 49) that consisted of three groups of participants: prospective FAPs who began but withdrew from the HSP (*Withdrawn Group [WG]*) (*n* = 19); prospective FAPs who completed the HSP and became licensed (*Completed Group [CG]*) (*n* = 18); and Resource Managers (*Resource Managers Group [RMG])* employed by CCDCFS who assisted prospective families through the home study administrative process (*n* = 12). There was no missing data for variables analyzed from the sample. A sample distinction is an oversampling of respondents who were African-American (71.4%) and female (87.8%). Contact information for individuals who either withdrew or completed the HSP between August of 2010 and August of 2011 was provided by a Senior Supervisor (Margaret Shea) of the Home Study Department at CCDCFS.

Measures

Surveys were drafted by the evaluation team of PFFF. Evaluators began quantitative survey design by utilizing a past customer service tool formulated by CCDCFS Deputy Chief McCray; this had been previously used to gain feedback from withdrawn or denied FAP applicants and examined topic areas of interest in the current evaluation. During design of both quantitative and qualitative questions, evaluators consulted agency experts (Senior Supervisors in the Home Study Division at CCDCFS; Deputy Chief McCray) on question pertinence, accuracy in system terminology and process, and questions' readability for populations being interviewed. Following multiple scale revisions with agency experts, a pilot study with 4 participants tested survey questions in December of 2011; minor revisions were made to the tool and study interviews began by January, 2012.

Study recruitment letters were mailed out to potential participants approximately one week in advance to telephone contact by one of two CWRU doctoral students serving on the evaluation team for the PFFF Initiative. Interviewers began phone surveys with the *WG* in January, 2012. Following the *WG* interviews, evaluators felt it was necessary to run a comparison FAP group with individuals who had completed (*CG*) the process to determine whether licensure outcomes influenced participants' reports. Procedures remained the same for both groups with the exception of omitting semi-structured questions for participants' related to reasons for withdrawal; strengths and barriers were reported in both the *WG* and the *CG*s.

Evaluators also gathered additional information from CCDCFS's RMG about their perceptions related to prospective FAP applicants' experiences. Feedback would reflect how accurate RMs' perceptions were about prospective FAPs' experiences as well as serve to inform what inner-systemic process barriers existed (i.e., within CCDCFS; State regulations). Interviews for all three groups' were completed by April, 2012.

The survey contained four sections. First, three initial questions asked participants' to rate their overall satisfaction with aspects of the home study process (i.e., *I felt comfortable speaking with the staff from DCF about the HSP; overall, I was satisfied with the HSP*). Question responses were dichotomized (1 = *Disagree;* 2 = *Agree*) due to a number of small individual cell sizes in the sample. In section two, 12 questions were asked that directly related to applicants' levels of satisfaction with services provided by their RM. Both sections' one and two had participants rate their level of satisfaction on a five-point, Likert-type scale; answer choices ranged from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*) where the greater the number, the greater the level of satisfaction. Question responses were dichotomized (1 = *Disagree;* 2 = *Agree*) due to a small *n*/cell sizes in the sample. In section three, brief definitions of the two types of care givers *("relative"; "non-relative")* were

provided to applicants; relative caregivers were also asked to describe their relation to their child of interest (i.e., *niece; grandchild; friend of family*). Section four asked participants to rate, on a scale from 1 (*Extremely dissatisfied*) to 10 (*Extremely satisfied*), what their level of satisfaction was with the home study experience, to describe (in open-ended format) why they chose the rating that they did, and why they withdrew from the home study process (i.e., *Why <u>specifically</u> did you choose to withdraw from the home study process)*.

Analysis Plan

Chi square analyses were conducted to determine differences between the interview groups related to clarity, comfort with staff, and overall satisfaction with the HSP and RM services. To further predict the odds of whether applicants' type of caregiver status impacted overall scores on these questions, a binary regression analysis was used. It was a two model design; the first contained a control variable, interview type (WG or CG) and the second, the focal (type of caregiver) and control variable. The control variable was entered first in order to partial out the amount of variance it accounted for in risk for individual barriers. Adding type of caregiver second was done in order to identify the additional variance explained by caregiver type.

Direct, binary logistic regression analysis was also used to predict the odds of risk for applicants encountering barriers during the licensure and HSP. It was a two model design; the first contained a control variable, interview type (WG or CG) and the second, the focal (type of caregiver) and control variable. The control variable was entered first in order to partial out the amount of variance it accounted for in risk for individual barriers. Adding type of caregiver second was done in order to identify the additional variance explained by caregiver type.

Univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted to determine adequate cell size. Curran, West, and Finch's (1996) criteria for normal limits was used to determine the magnitude of skewness (< 2) and kurtosis (< 7) for interval or quasi interval level measures. Goodness of fit statistics were examined to determine how well the model did at comparing the predicted probability with the observed probability. The difference in the deviance model looks at whether one model is a better fit than another (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 501). The Nagelkerke pseudo R2 was used to examine the portion of the null deviance accounted for by the set of predictors or strength of association by looking at the inclusion of predictors in comparison to the intercept-only model (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 302). It was chosen over the Cox and Snell pseudo R 2 as the Nagelkerke attains a maximum value of 1.00 and is an adjusted value in relation to the Cox and Snell (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 503). Classification accuracy rates reflect how adequately the model differentiates cases from non-cases (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 518). The SPSS default of 0.50 was used in the analyses. Cohen et al warns that the classification of accuracy should be utilized as an "adjunct to other measures of fit" because poor classification results may exist even with a well-fitting model, particularly when predicting rare events (2003, p. 518-519). Utilizing several models of fit is good practice to avoid violating the assumption of misspecification of the model (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 518).

Results

Descriptive statistics for the sample can be found in *Table 1*. Study completion rates for each group were calculated based on the total number of possible participants that came from lists provided by CCDCFS. Individual groups' completion rates were as follows: the *WG* was 24.3% (*n* = 18); the *CG* was 37% (*n* = 19); and the *RMG* was 100% (*n* = 12). The majority of participants across all groups were female (87.8%) and African-American (71.4%).

Withdrawn group. Respondents were predominantly female and African-American (83.3%). Most did not have a "child of interest" living in the home currently nor during the licensure HSP (94.4%) but 7 (38.9%) noted being financially responsible for other children living in the home. Two had one child (11.1%); four had two children (22.2%); and 1 had four children (5.60%). Seven (38.9%) participants defined themselves as "relative caregivers" with "grandparent" (*n* = 3) being the most common relation to the "child of interest". Other relationships included niece/nephew (*n* = 1); a sibling (*n*= 1); a biological child whom the mother relinquished custody of several years ago (*n* = 1); and a great niece/nephew (*n* = 1). In terms of knowledge of custody status of the child, three participants were unaware (16.7%); three reported children as being in the permanent custody

(PC) of the State (16.7%); and one was in the PC of the state but the child still resided with them. Only one participant reported going up the chain of command at CCDCFS to discuss any challenges experienced during the process (5.60%); three (16.7) did request a follow-up call from Deputy McCray at the end of the interview. *Table 1. Descriptive Statistics by Interview Type.*

Variable	WG $n = 18$ (%)	CG $n = 19$ (%)	RMG $n = 12$ (%)
Gender			
Male	3 (27.3)	1 (6.2)	11 (91.6)
Female	8 (72.7)	15 (93.8)	1 (8.40)
Race/Ethnicity			
African-American	15 (83.3)	12 (63.2)	8 (66.7)
White	3 (16.7)	7 (36.8)	2 (16.7)
Other	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (16.7)
Does the child of interest currently live with you? [1]			
No	17 (94.4)	10 (52.6)	-
Yes	1 (5.60)	9 (47.4)	
Do you have other dependent children living with you currently? [2]			
No	11 (61.1)	17 (89.5)	-
Yes	7 (38.9)	2 (10.5)	
How many dependent children currently live with you?			
None			-
1	11 (61.1)	10 (52.6)	
2	2 (11.1)	8 (42.1)	
3	4 (22.2)	0 (0.00)	
4	1 (5.60)	1 (5.3)	
Type of caregiver			
Non-relative	11 (61.1)	16 (84.2)	-
Relative	7 (38.9)	3 (15.8)	
What relation to you is the child?			
No relation	11 (61.1)	16 (84.2)	
Grandchild	3 (16.7)	0 (0.00)	
Niece/Nephew	1 (5.60)	3 (15.8)	-
Sibling	1 (5.60)	0 (0.00)	
Child	1 (5.60)	0 (0.00)	
Great niece/nephew	1 (5.60)	0 (0.00)	

Note. [1] Those in the CG were significantly more likely than the WG to have a "child of interest" living with them at the time of the interview $\chi^2 = 8.19$, $p = .004$; [2] Those in the WG were more likely than the CG to have other dependent children whose care they are responsible $\chi^2 = 4.04$, $p = 0.04$.

Completed group. Respondents were mostly female (89.5%) and African-American (71.4%). A child was currently placed in the home in 47.4% of the sample but fewer (10.5%) noted being financially responsible for any other children in the home than were those in the Withdrawn group (38.9%). Of those with children placed in the home in the Completed group, 8 had one child (42.1%) and one (5.3%) had four children (22.2%). Three (15.8%) participants defined themselves as "relative caregivers" with "aunt" being the most common relation to the "child of interest" in the home. In terms of knowledge of custody status of the child, 6 noted that the child placed in the home were in the permanent custody of the State (31.6%). Only one participant reported going up the chain of command at CCDCFS to discuss any challenges experienced during the process (5.30%); two (10.5%) did request a follow-up call from deputy, Chief Deputy McCray, at the end of the interview.

Resource managers' group. All but 1 Resource Manager was female (91.4%). Resource Managers ethno-racially defined themselves as African-American (66.7%), White (16.7%) or Other (16.7%). Descriptive statistics indicated significant differences between the WG and CG in terms of the following: the WG had very few children of interest living with them when compared to the CG; and the WG was more likely to have children in their care than were the CG.

The licensure and HSP. Becoming a licensed FAP through CCDCFS in the State of Ohio, applicants must complete the following three steps: pre-service training; completion of the FAP licensure application and criminal background check; and the home study.

Stage one: Pre-service classes. Prospective parents must complete 36 hours of pre-service training which serves as an orientation to the HSP. This orientation is divided into 12, 3 hour sessions which are offered

at various times in order to accommodate prospective parents' schedules. The trainings are the same for prospective parents wanting to foster or adopt; additionally, they are the same for RCGs and NRCGs. Once completed, training certification is valid for up to 12 months. If a prospective family does not complete the full licensure process within 12 months, they are required to repeat their 36 hour pre-service training classes (unless otherwise waived by department chiefs). Training curriculum covers various topics such as, but not limited to, child and adolescent development, the complex needs of children to be placed in their care (i.e., impacts of past maltreatment on children), and/or how foster/adoptive children and families can access resources within and outside of CCDCFS (CCDCFS accessed May 30, 2012 at www.CFS.cuyahogacounty.us).

In terms of participants' feedback about pre-service classes, several reported feeling positively about what they learned in pre-service classes. Most found classes informative, extremely helpful in understanding children's unique needs, as well as learning more about resources available to them via the public child welfare system. Applicants from both WG and the CG noted the following:

- *Every one of them was rewarding. First class, they showed a film about a kid who fell through the cracks, committed suicide. We learned a lot about child development and the agency rules…*

- *I enjoyed all the classes.*

- *The classes were beautiful I learned a lot from them.*

- *I just thought it was very informative even though some of it was repetitive.*

Some prospective FAP saw value in learning about how child maltreatment histories could play out in foster or adoptive homes. For example, "*they provided good information on what to expect with foster children and how to handle situations"*. Yet, others felt that there was too much focus on children's previous exposure to child maltreatment. One respondent noted classes having a "*recurring theme … of horror stories*" and feeling unsettled about being "*investigated*" in the HSP:

- *This or that could go wrong; it made a few of us kind of nervous. They talk about if we would get investigated for something and it was found to be true, they could take your bio kids away from you. We heard a lot about the run-away's, suicides; but not the positives. I think they need to focus on more of the positives. A lot of gloom and doom...*

A few prospective FAPs felt that pre-service trainers spoke to them condescendingly "*like they were talking to children*" -or- *"it wasn't like they were dealing with an adult"*. One participant relayed feeling scrutinized by pre-service staff (i.e., "*looked people up and down"),* and her/his perception that instructors questioned her/his personal understanding of the magnitude of fostering/adopting a child*:*

- *And one person tried to discourage me. She asked why I wanted a child at my age and told me several times that I can't just give the child back. I had to let her know that I am aware that children are not like shoes.*

A number of prospective FAP struggled with why limits were placed on their use of electronic devices during pre-service classes (i.e., *checking email; voice mail; pagers*). For example, one participant noted irritation with his/her instructor said, "*Well, you're not taking this seriously and maybe you shouldn't be here";* such comments from instructors/staff were globalized as being symptomatic of larger problems in the current child welfare system:

- *…a doctor who had to step out of class to take a page was not allowed back in. That later got resolved but I thought that was ridiculous. The bureaucracy says a lot about why they used to have a lot of families and now they don't.*

Another participant responded to perceived political innuendo in pre-service classes. He/she noted the following:

- *They were kind of political about things. I kept hearing how terrible George Bush was by presenters. I'm a conservative. That offended me that it was brought up in every single class. I know its minor, but it certainly can alienate people.*

Participants made suggestions about how future trainings might be modified. For example, one respondent suggested being able to test out of certain classes, given their experience or professional training. One reported that as a…*"nurse practitioner, some of the information was repetitive and I didn't feel like I needed to be in all of the classes".* Another recommended that, especially for those inexperienced in parenting, that a mixture of "Fostering/Adopting 101" and "General Parenting 101" would be helpful for future pre-service classes:

- *What we didn't learn was the actual real life process after you are home. Once they brought "X" here that night, there were lots of things we didn't know. The real life processes was the whole point of it. Assume people don't know things.*

Stage two: The application and criminal background check. Participants are given an application during the first pre-training session. Prospective FAP are instructed to complete, have notarized, and provide copies of other important additional paperwork to CCDCFS staff early in pre-service training. Once all paperwork is pulled together, prospective AFPs go through a 10 minute interview with agency support staff where application materials are gathered for processing. Once turned in, applicants' fingerprints are taken to conduct a criminal background check (also for anyone 18 years of age and older living in their home).

Senior CCDCFS supervisors report that, despite much encouraging by staff throughout the course of training, it is common for families to not complete their application early in the pre-service process (personal communication, J. Wadlington). The application must be complete prior to a home study being scheduled with a RM (CCDCFS accessed May 30, 2012 at www.CFS.cuyahogacounty.us).

Stage three: HSP. And third, following application submission and fingerprinting, the HSP is scheduled; the HSP can reportedly take up to four to six months to complete. The Child Welfare Information Gateway defines that the HSP helps to ensure that children and families are matched well with one another, that foster/adoptive families homes are in compliance of State and local laws, and that training is provided to FAPs about adoption and direction is given regarding available resources for them to access as needed (http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/homestudyreqs.cfm). Applicants, including everyone living in the home, have a series of visits with the home study social worker (RM). Home safety checks are also completed during the RMs' visits. And lengthy interviews with prospective FAPs are conducted to gather additional paperwork so families are in compliance with the Ohio Administrative Code.

For two out of the three statements in survey section one, the RMG's mean scores fell between the WG and the CG (see *Table 2*); this indicates that the RMG was fairly accurate in predicting how applicants would respond to statements. RMGs did forecast that more applicants would disagree with the statement, "*The HSP was explained clearly"* and statistically significant differences were found between the RMG and the CG ($\chi^2 = 7.13$, $p = .028$). No other significant differences were found between the WG and the CG in terms of comfort with CCDCFS staff or overall satisfaction with the HSP.

Table 2. **Mean Scores (Standard Deviations) of Home Study Process**.

Questions	N	Mean *(SD)*	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)

The HSP was explained clearly				
Total	49	1.78 (0.42)	11 (22.4)	38 (77.6)
Withdrawn Group	18	1.83 (0.38)	3 (16.7)	15 (83.3)
Completed Group [1]	19	1.90 (0.32)	2 (10.5)	17 (89.5)
Resource Manager Group	12	1.50 (0.52)	6 (50.0)	6 (50.0)
Comfortable speaking with DCFS staff about HSP				
Total	49	1.84 (0.37)	8 (16.3)	41 (83.7)
Withdrawn Group	18	1.78 (0.43)	4 (22.4)	14 (77.8)
Completed Group	19	1.95 (0.23)	1 (5.30)	18 (94.7)
Resource Manager Group	12	1.75 (0.45)	3 (25.0)	9 (75.0)
Overall, I was satisfied with the HSP				
Total	49	1.57 (0.50)	21 (42.9)	28 (57.1)
Withdrawn Group	18	1.44 (0.51)	10 (55.6)	8 (44.4)
Completed Group	19	1.74 (0.45)	5 (26.3)	14 (73.7)
Resource Manager Group	12	1.50 (0.52)	6 (50.0)	6 (50.0)

Note. HSP = Home Study Process; DCFS = Department of Children and Families; Withdrawn = Applicants who withdrew before completing the HSP; Completed = Applicants who completed the home study process and were approved; Disagree = 1; Agree = 2; [1] The Completed Group reported the HSP as explained more clearly to them than Resource Managers perceived ($p < .05$).

Satisfaction with the RMG. The RM plays an extremely important role with prospective FAP during the HSP. Not only are they required to coordinate the collection of all needed documents, but they must also engage in relationship-building in order to create an environment of openness and trust to discuss highly intimate and personal subjects with applicants.

Those in the WG fairly consistently rated their responses to RM services as the lowest of the three groups, followed by the CG, and lastly the RM group. RMs were asked the same questions regarding RM services delivered to applicant groups; the only difference was that the RMG was asked their perceptions as to how they thought applicants would rate services across the HS department. When comparing the means between the three groups, the RMG had greater difficulty in predicting how each applicant would rate their services specifically; RMs predicted they would receive higher ratings from applicants on 7 out of 10 questions (70%).

Out of 10 possible questions, only two statistically significant differences were found between the WG, the CG, and the RMG. This indicates that applicants in the WG were as likely to receive the same level of services as those in the CG 80% of the time. Where groups differed was that applicants in the WG were significantly more likely to not receive prompt return phone calls ($\chi^2 = 10.16$, p = .006) nor have missed appointments rescheduled by RMs ($\chi^2 = 6.15$, p = .05) when compared the CG counterparts.

A direct logistic regression was performed to determine the impact that the *type of caregiver* had on overall scores for questions related to applicants' ratings from the WG and the CG of RM services. Two significant results were reported regarding RM services: RM Promptly Returns Phone Calls and RM Promptly Reschedules Appointments When Having to Cancel.

Table 3. Applicants' Ratings of Resource Manager Services Compared to Resource Managers' Perceptions of How Their Services Would be Rated by Applicants.

Questions Your resource manager …	N	Mean (SD)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)
Was knowledgeable about HSP and rules				
Total	49	1 86 (0 35)	7 (14 3)	42 (85 7)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 78 (0 43)	4 (57 1)	14 (33 3)
Completed Group	19	1 90 (0 32)	2 (28 6)	17 (40 5)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (14 3)	11 (26 2)
Was courteous and listened to your concerns				
Total	49	1 81 (0 39)	9 (18 8)	39 (81 2)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 72 (0 46)	5 (55 6)	13 (33 3)
Completed Group	19	1 83 (0 38)	3 (33 3)	15 (38 5)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (8 30)	11 (28 2)
Promptly returned your phone calls				
Total	49	1 80 (0 41)	10 (20 4)	39 (79 6)
Withdrawn Group [1]	18	1 56 (0 51)	8 (80 0)	10 (25 6)
	19	1 95 (0 23)	1 (10 0)	18 (46 2)

Completed Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (10 0)	11 (91 7)
Resource Manager Group				
Answered your questions clearly				
Total	49	1 84 (0 37)	8 (16 3)	41 (83 7)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 49 (1 95)	5 (62 5)	13 (31 7)
Completed Group	19	1 90 (0 32)	2 (25 0)	17 (41 5)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (12 5)	11 (91 7)
Assisted with paperwork if you requested help				
Total	49	1 84 (0 37)	8 (16 3)	41 (83 7)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 78 (0 43)	4 (50 0)	14 (34 1)
Completed Group	19	1 90 (0 32)	2 (25 0)	17 (41 5)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 83 (0 39)	2 (25 0)	10 (24 4)
Was supportive during HSP				
Total	49	1 76 (0 44)	12 (24 5)	37 (75 5)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 61 (0 50)	7 (58 3)	11 (29 7)
Completed Group	19	1 79 (0 42)	4 (33 3)	15 (40 5)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (8 30)	11 (29 7)
Kept scheduled appointments				
Total	49	1 84 (0 37)	8 (16 3)	41 (83 7)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 72 (0 46)	5 (62 5)	13 (31 7)
Completed Group	19	1 95 (0 23)	1 (12 5)	18 (43 9)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 83 (0 39)	2 (25 0)	10 (24 4)
Rescheduled promptly if having to cancel a visit				
Total	49	1 69 (0 47)	15 (30 6)	34 (69 4)
Withdrawn Group [2]	18	1 50 (0 51)	9 (60 0)	9 (26 5)
Completed Group	19	1 74 (0 45)	5 (33 3)	14 (41 2)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (6 70)	11 (32 4)
Explained timelines to home study completion				
Total	49	1 80 (0 41)	10 (20 4)	34 (69 4)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 67 (0 49)	9 (60 0)	9 (26 5)
Completed Group	19	1 84 (0 38)	5 (33 3)	14 (41 2)
Resource Manager Group	12	1 92 (0 29)	1 (8 30)	11 (32 4)
Clearly explained why DCFS might deny application				
Total	49	1 86 (0 35)	7 (14 3)	42 (85 7)
Withdrawn Group	18	1 49 (1 95)	5 (71 4)	13 (31 0)
Completed Group	19	1 74 (2 05)	2 (28 6)	17 (40 5)
Resource Manager Group	12	2 00 (0 00)	0 (0 00)	12 (28 6)

Note. *HSP* = Home Study Process; *DCFS* = Department of Children and Families; *Withdrawn* = Applicants who withdrew before completing the HSP; *Completed* = Applicants who completed the home study process and were approved; *Disagree* = 1; *Agree* = 2; [1]The CG reported that they were more likely to receive a prompt return phone call by RM than did the WG group, significance p < .01; the CG was more likely to have cancelled visits by their RM rescheduled more promptly as compared to the WG, significant *p* < .05.

For *RM Promptly Returns Phone Calls*, the full model containing all predictors was statistically significant χ^2 (1, N = 37) = 6.40, p < .01, indicating that the model was able to distinguish that those in the WG had the greatest effect on statistical significance. The model as a whole was able to explain between .235 (Cox and Snell R Square) and .351 (Nagalkerke R Square) of the variance and correctly classified 78.4% of cases (see *Table 4*).

Table 4. *Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Satisfaction with Services of the Resource Manager* (Resource Manager Promptly Returned Phone Calls) to Licensure and Completion of the Home Study Process (HSP) in Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Applicants *Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background Variable, Caregiver Type* (*n* = 37)

			Model 1	
Predictor	β	*SE*	*Exp(β)*	95% CI
Constant	3.93	1.40	51.00	
Type of Interview [a]	-2.98	1.18	0.05**	[0.01, 0.51]
Type of Caregiver [b]	-1.16	1.01	0.31	[0.43, 2.27]

Note [a] *Withdrawn* is the reference category for interview 1 = *Completed*; 0 = *Withdrawn* (control). [b] *Non-relative caregiver* is the reference category for type of caregiver 1 = *Relative*; 0 = *Non-relative* (focal). ** Significance *p* < .01.

A direct logistic regression was performed to determine the impact that the *type of caregiver* had on overall scores for questions related to applicants' ratings from the WG and the CG of RM services. The full model containing all predictors was approaching statistical significant χ^2 (2, N = 37) = 3.58, p = .06, indicating

that the model was able to distinguish that those in the WG had the greatest effect on statistical significance and had appointments rescheduled at a lower rate than did the CG. The model as a whole was able to explain between .147 (Cox and Snell R Square) and .201(Nagalkerke R Square) of the variance and correctly classified 62.2% of cases (see *Table 5*).

Table 5. *Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Satisfaction with Services of the Resource Manager* (Resource Manager Promptly Returned Phone Calls) to Licensure and Completion of the Home Study Process (HSP) in Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Applicants *Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background Variable, Caregiver Type* ($n = 37$)

	Model 1			
Predictor	β	*SE*	*Exp(β)*	95% CI
Constant	2.57	1.06	13.03	
Type of Interview [a]	-1.50	0.79	0.22*	[0.05, 1.06]
Type of Caregiver [b]	-1.72	0.97	0.18	[0.27, 1.21]

Note [a] *Withdrawn* is the reference category for interview 1 = *Completed*; 0 = *Withdrawn* (control). [b] *Non-relative caregiver* is the reference category for type of caregiver 1 = *Relative*; 0 = *Non-relative* (focal). ** Significance $p < .06$.

When examining the qualitative data, results indicated that, overall, applicants in both the WG and the CG reported positive experiences with RMs. For example, applicants relayed that RMs prepared them well for the process, that they felt comfortable with them, and enjoyed speaking with them. A number of applicants noted the following responses:

- *They were very knowledgeable and told me everything I needed to know about the experience*

- *He/she explained everything and told me how things worked and what I needed to do.*

- *He/she was very helpful. Well initially I felt intimidated like anyone because your privacy is being violated. But the worker who came out was really good. He/she wasn't judgmental. He/she seemed not to want to overwhelm me. He/she was very detailed.*

- *We had a wonderful social worker who was personable and very knowledgeable. He/she made it a very rewarding experience.*

- *RM was very nice; talked with him/her about other things besides foster care.*

- *RM was very good at softening that [invasiveness] and making us feel comfortable talking about that and having him/her in our home. I still stay in contact with him/her.*

In both the CG and WGs, a few applicants noted difficult relationships with their RM. Some respondents reported feeling challenged by RMs' lack of follow-thru and poor communication. One respondent hypothesized that the difficult relationship with their RM felt more like "*starting off on the wrong foot*". Their responses were as follows:

- *The communication was terrible. One time he/she just didn't show up or he/she would show up late. It was mainly the lack of communication with the worker.*

- *I felt like he/she was against us. Part of it is that I had a very difficult time with him/her on one of his/her first visits. Said to my [partner] that maybe it was a personality thing between us. [Partner] was at the next one and he/she got the same feel.*

Others relayed that they felt their RM was doing the bare minimum job with their HSP and that he/she was difficult to engage with questions that they needed answering.

- *Any time he/she was here, he/she just wanted to ask a couple questions, punch a time clock, have us sign and get out. Never looked through the house. When we asked questions, we were told in absolutely no uncertain*

terms that his/her job is strictly to make sure that our home is safe for children and we are licensed and didn't go any further than that.

- *Said he/she wasn't in charge of training and I must have gotten licensed after the booklets went out. Could go on-line for my answers.*

- *Each interaction with our RM got worse. He/she had a terrible attitude and I really didn't want him/her to come back. He/she had such indifference. Like he/she was just collecting a paycheck.*

Under these circumstances, it is possible that applicants may have confused the HS case worker with the RM. The HS case worker only visits the family to complete the assessment interview related to their HSP. RMs are then introduced to the family following the assessment completion.

Some applicants in both the WG and the CG reported feeling judged and disrespected by their RM. For example,

- *My [partner] and I don't go to church. RM said, "then the child won't go to church is what you're saying". Just judgment after judgment from him/her.*

- *When we said that we wanted to adopt versus foster, he/she responded "Well, we'll see about that" like he/she was threatening us!*

- *I had books sitting on my dresser and was told to "get rid of that crap". I was also told that there better not "be crap" in the shed. I did not like the way that he/she said this and talked to me. I felt like he/she was very condescending and didn't like how he/she talked to me. I teach so I am not getting rid of my books and my [partner] is not getting rid of the tools. It's not worth it.*

- *I have a [adult child] who lives with me and he/she pays rent. RM asked me if my [adult child] pays rent; I told her/him that when he/she is working he/she does. And then the RM leaned over really close and goes "Come on, does he/she really pay rent"? I felt [violated] with my clothes on in my own home and I didn't deserve that.*

Overall satisfaction with the licensure and HSP. Initially, this evaluation only planned to interview those in the WG. As interviews began, the researchers had concerns that applicants in the WG may have difficulty discerning their level of satisfaction with the HSP, independent from whether they completed the process or had a child placed with them. Therefore, the CG was added and applicant groups were later joined by the RMG. There were no statistically significant differences found within or between any of the groups in terms of levels of satisfaction with the licensure and HSP.

Satisfaction with the licensure and HSP is a difficult factor to measure due to the many personal and contextual factors that accompany the applicant. They come to the table with a myriad of personal experiences and motivations for wanting to become FAPs. Each of these is likely to contribute to applicants' levels of vulnerability during the HSP; greater vulnerability may lead to greater anxiety about having their "fitness" for parenting critiqued by the "system", "process", "trainer" "CWR" or "RM". One RCG noted that the licensure and HSP "…*has been a good process"; yet,* he/she also captured the mixed sentiment of having to go through the process for a family member in the first place.

It's best if you [RCG] don't have to be in it at all…that they [child] could stay with their parent. My X was smoking crack. He/she should have asked her family for help, but he's/she's just that type of person. We do what we can for the kids and for X.

Applicants in all three groups were asked to rate their experience with the HSP on a scale of one to 10 (1 = *Extremely Dissatisfied; 10 = Extremely Satisfied*). No significant differences were found between the applicant groups, indicating that licensure outcomes were not a predictor of applicants' levels of satisfaction

with HSP. There was a broad range of ratings across the WG and CG as well as the RCG and NRCGs. In Table 5, the following are ratings paired with comments made by applicants across groups:

Table 5. Examples of Withdrawn and Completed Applicants' Overall Ratings of the Licensure and Home Study Process (Range = 1 - 10; 1 = least satisfied; 10 = most satisfied) Paired with Accompanying Qualitative Comments.

Rating	Comment
10	*Because the lady was open. She didn't make you feel like unwanted; she explained everything; Everything they explained was clear and understandable. They told me what to expect.*
9	*It was done efficiently. A 10 would be perfect and you can't rate anything perfect.*
	I did not go through the completion of the program so I just can't give it a 10. It's a really good program though; I will rate it a 9 because I only had one problem, didn't want to remove the locks on my doors [inside the house].
8	*I thought everyone was real nice to us but we just didn't want to go through it again.*
7	*Once the pre-service training is done the HSP should begin immediately and not a few months later. Everyone should also be on the same page. Supervisors should know what workers are doing so that one person doesn't think you should be done with the process when you're just beginning.*
	Just how long the process took in relation to me handing my paperwork in immediately. It took like 10 months
6	*Process was OK. But, they take the family through a lot of rigid questions I understand why. They are placing children with you and they need to know they are going to be safe. These kids have a lot of issues and families need to know more about them before the kids come into your home. I would know because about X years ago, I had a foster child and didn't get the kind of help from the agency that we needed.*
5	*I wasn't extremely dissatisfied [with the pre-service presenter] She could have had a nicer tone; with other class participants, it was a condescending tone. That could be improved. Everything else was fine.*
	Because I did not know I couldn't complete my home study where I was living at first. I had to redo everything all over again. They did not tell me this at the beginning. By the time I relocated my year was over and I had to start all over again. So I was dissatisfied with that.
4	*It was a calling. Unsure of all the pain; dealing with giving a child back; limitations of the workers; the joy we have received with having a child in our home has outweighed the negative; .prior to foster child entering the picture, wasn't a great experience; thank god that's over with.*
3	*Just unorganized and unstructured*
2	*During the classes there were about 4 professionals, and some of the workers were "nasty" to some of the professionals. It was really noticeable to people in the classroom. I even had a conversation about the different treatment with a classmate.*
1	*Man, I'll tell you, we had no problems doing the 12 classes. But dealing with the personality of the worker, that was the problem. That's why the 1;Because they should be able to tell you whether something like that [criminal record] would be a problem before you go through those classes. And my daughter was real excited about coming to live with me. And that was it. What a waste. I did learn a lot in those classes, though. But the worker told me to go for foster/adopt instead of legal custody. What a waste of my time.*

Applicant-reported barriers and barrier themes. Four specific barriers denoted statistically significant quantitative results: inter-agency communication between departments; poor advice given to applicant by CWR; responsibility for dependent children in applicants' care; and financial stress related to the care/welfare of the child. Other variables with clinical significance (approached statistical significance) deserve additional scrutiny, as they can serve to inform agency policy and practice: Total number of barriers to the licensure and HSP and overall satisfaction with the HSP. Other qualitative themes discussed were the following; unemployment; personal/family are as follows: need for different process for RCGs; PW challenges; criminal record of applicant; HSP too lengthy.

Inter-agency communication challenges. Other applicants noted frustrations with inter-departmental communication problems, particularly stemming from the CWR not forwarding requested paperwork to the RM, even when the RM would follow-up directly with them. A direct logistic regression was performed to determine the impact that the *type of caregiver* had on overall scores for questions related to applicants' ratings from the WG and the CG related to the barrier, *Poor Communication between CCDCFS Departments*. The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant $\chi^2(2, N = 37) = 4.47$, $p = .04$, indicating that the model was able to distinguish that those in the WG when compared to the CG had the greatest effect on statistical significance, reporting that the WG experienced greater accounts of poor inter-agency communication between CCDCFS departments. The model as a whole was able to explain between .152 (Cox and Snell R

Square) and .215 (Nagalkerke R Square) of the variance and correctly classified 70.3% of cases. Differences between the RCGS and NRCGs were insignificant (see *Table 6)*.

Table 6. *Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting the Barrier: Poor Communication between CCDCFS Departments. Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background Variable, Caregiver Type* (*n* = 37)

	Model 1			
Predictor	β	*SE*	*Exp(β)*	95% CI
Constant	0.57	0.85	1.06	
Type of Interview [a]	0.51	0.81	0.17*	[0.34, 8.12]
Type of Caregiver [b]	-1.76	0.83	1.66	[0.33, 0.88]

Note [a] *Withdrawn* is the reference category for interview 1 = *Completed*; 0 = *Withdrawn* (control). [b] *Non-relative caregiver* is the reference category for type of caregiver 1 = *Relative*; 0 = *Non-relative* (focal). ** p < .01.

Significant results between caregiver's groups may relate to RCGs possibly having greater contact with children's CWR, as their relative entering the system typically prompts their application to the FAP licensure and HSP. One RCG responsible for several children in his/her care noted:

- *Because I work, I have to take time from my job to get things taken care of. And their old worker didn't pass certain things on to the home study worker. Some stuff got lost. Like I had to take off work twice to get my fingerprints re-done. The workers lost 2 sets. And things getting lost has happened with the paper work too. Then, because so much time passed, I have had to get each of the kids' physicals re-done. All of that has to happen during my work hours. And the workers don't want to hear about my problems with missing work; but I have rent due, a car note, and other bills that have to be paid. A lot of problems come from the worker getting switch several times. The need to be better at talking to one another.*

Dependent children in my care. Significant results were indicated as a barrier for having dependent children in the applicant's care (see *Table 9*). The applicant group that accounted for the majority of significance in the sample was the WG; they were more likely to have dependent children in their care compared to those in the CG χ^2 (1, N = 37) = 5.11, p = 024. The model as a whole was able to explain between .182 (Cox and Snell R Square) and .281 (Nagalkerke R Square) of the variance and correctly classified 78.4% of cases (see *Table 7)*.

Table 7. *Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Risk for Barrier (Dependent Children in My Care) to Licensure and Completion of the Home Study Process (HSP) in Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Applicants*. Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background
Variable, Caregiver Type (n = 37)

	Model 1			
Predictor	β	*SE*	*Exp(β)*	95% CI
Constant	-3.61	1.38	0.03	
Type of Interview [a]	2.64	1.17	14.04*	[1.42, 138.83]
Type of Caregiver [b]	0.82	1.00	2.27	[0.32, 16.2]

Note [a] *Withdrawn* is the reference category for interview 1 = *Completed*; 0 = *Withdrawn* (control).
[b] *Non-relative caregiver* is the reference category for type of caregiver 1 = *Relative*; 0 = *Non-relative* (focal).
**Significance p < .01.

Poor advice from the CWR. A direct logistic regression was performed to determine the impact that type of caregiver had on overall scores for questions related to the *barrier of poor advice/communication from CWR* in applicants' ratings from the WG and the CG. The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant χ^2 (1, N = 37) = 5.05, p < .05, indicating that the model was able to distinguish that those in the RCG

had the greatest effect on statistical significance. The model as a whole was able to explain between .253 (Cox and Snell R Square) and .407 (Nagalkerke R Square) of the variance and correctly classified 83.8% of cases (see *Table 8*).

Table 8. *Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Risk for Barrier (Case Worker of Record Gave Me Poor Advice) to Licensure and Completion of the Home Study Process (HSP) in Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Applicants* Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background Variable, Caregiver Type (n = 37)

			Model 1	
Predictor	β	SE	Exp(β)	95% CI
Constant	-1.38	1.02	0.10	
Type of Interview [a]	1.90	1.22	6.71	[0.62, 73.05]
Type of Caregiver [b]	-2.29	1.17	0.10*	[0.01, 0.75]

Note [a] *Withdrawn* is the reference category for interview 1 = *Completed*; 0 = *Withdrawn* (control). [b] *Non-relative caregiver* is the reference category for type of caregiver 1 = *Relative*; 0 = *Non-relative* (focal). **Significance $p < .01$.

Applicants who reported receiving poor advice from a CWR were often referencing his/her recommendation for them to go through the FAP licensure versus seeking legal guardianship of a child of interest; this was often mixed with issues related to poor communication. For example:

- *Had I known how much I would have to do, I would have got custody or guardianship of them instead. But the worker said it would be better this way. Because I work, I have to take time from my job to get things taken care of. And their old worker didn't pass certain things on to the home study worker. Some stuff got lost. Like I had to take off work twice to get my fingerprints re-done. The workers lost 2 sets. And things getting lost has happened with the paper work too. Then, because so much time passed, I have had to get each of the kids' physicals re-done. All of that has to happen during my work hours. And the workers don't want to hear about my problems with missing work; but I have rent due, a car note, and other bills that have to be paid. A lot of problems come from the worker getting switch several times. The need to talk to one another.*

Other variables with clinical significance (approached statistical significance) are the total number of barriers to the licensure and HSP and overall satisfaction with the HSP.

Total number of barriers to the licensure and HSP. A univariate analysis of variance was performed to determine the impact that applicant group (WC/CG) and type of caregiver (RCG/NRCG) had on *total numbers of barriers to the* licensure and HSP. Differences between care giver groups approached significance $F = -2.29$ (1, 37) $p = .07$, indicating that RCGs were more likely to experience greater numbers of barriers to the licensure and HSP when compared to NRCGs. No significant differences existed between applicant groups (see *Table 9*).

Table 9. *Summary of Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Variables Predicting Risk for Total Number of Barriers to the Licensure and HSP in Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Applicants.* Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background Variable, Caregiver Type (n = 37)

Variable	DF	F	p
Type of Interview	1	0.88	0.56
Type of Caregiver †	1	-2.29	0.07
Type of Interview x Type of Caregiver	1	.78	0.38

† Approaching statistically significant differences between RCGs ($m = 4.00$) and NRCGs ($m = 1.96$)

Overall satisfaction with the licensure and HSP: Interview type x caregiver type. A direct logistic regression was performed to determine the impact that type of caregiver and applicant group had on overall scores for questions related to the *overall satisfaction with the licensure and HSP* in applicants'. The full model containing all predictors was approaching statistical significant χ^2 (1, N = 37) = 2.77, *p* = .09 where clinical significance indicated that the CG (*m* = 1.74) was more satisfied than the WG (*m* = 1.44), distinguish that those in the CG had the greatest effect on statistical significance. The model as a whole was able to explain between .088 (Cox and Snell R Square) and .118 (Nagalkerke R Square) of the variance and correctly classified 64.9% of cases (see *Table 10*).

Table 10. *Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Overall Satisfaction with the Licensure and HSP in Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent Applicants.* Withdrawn and Completed the HSP, Controlling for Background Variable, Caregiver Type (n = 37)

	Model 1			
Predictor	β	*SE*	*Exp(β)*	95% CI
Constant	.857	.843	2.36	
Type of Interview [a]	-1.21	.725	.299†	[0.72, 1.24]
Type of Caregiver [b]	.206	.799	0.80	[.257, 5.88]

Note [a] *Withdrawn* is the reference category for interview 1 = *Completed*; 0 = *Withdrawn* (control). [b] *Non-relative caregiver* is the reference category for type of caregiver 1 = *Relative*; 0 = *Non-relative* (focal). † Approaching significance, (*p* = .09) CG was significantly more satisfied with the licensure and HSP than was the WG.

Qualitative Comments on Other Barriers

Need for a different process for RCGs and NRCGs. One theme surfaced between RCGS and NRCGs in the qualitative data which may have some impact on applicants' satisfaction with the HSP. Some RCGs noted a need for a different process for RCGs compared to NRCGs. One applicant reported regretting taking the advice of the CWR who encouraged him/her to pursue FAP licensure through the HSP versus taking legal guardianship of their relative. Although not pleased with the HSP, he/she appeared to be able to rate the quality of services/personal feelings about his/her CWR or RM despite outcomes. A single parent responsible for the care of several children at home noted the following challenges:

- *RCG: I am extremely dissatisfied with the process and just want to say to them, "I want you all out of my life". Had they told me it would be all this work, I would have just taken guardianship of them instead.*

  Interviewer: When you answered questions earlier about the HSP and your RM, you seemed to rate experiences with both as more satisfied. Can you tell me more about that?
  RCG: Well the lady that comes to the house, she was real nice and she was helpful with some things. But, I think they are frustrated with me about not getting things done, but I'm doing the best that I can. I am a single parent and I got no help. I just think that the process itself, that they could make it easier than it is for family people. I mean, the kids knew me better than their other [relatives]. And I'm not taking [them] for the money. I know some people do, but I just don't want them going to strangers. They're good kids. I love them.

Challenges with paperwork. Applicants in both the WG and CG noted significant problems with paperwork issues. For example, application forms were found to be unclear for some applicants and confusion/problems erupted when those staff members who were processing applications were not well-informed about regulations (i.e. regarding State regulations):

- *It was a glitch with the paperwork. The [criminal history] form needed to be revised. List the things that you had. Then just below that, it asks for it again in a different way. Well, I listed the DUI again underneath. So 2 people said "yes" and 2 people said "no". So the worker saw it as 2 DUI's versus 1 and they ruled me out. The supervisor said that I should have only listed it once. It doesn't come with an instruction manual.*

Applicants noted, in terms of paperwork glitches, relationships between poor communication, their RM's disorganization, and lack of responsibility-taking for administrative mistakes. In terms of disorganization, a lack of follow-up with applicants as well as problems with disorganization was recurring themes.

- *The paperwork that she needed, either the letters of reference, she said she didn't get them; the communication she was sending to my references, they weren't getting that information.*

When the interviewer asked whether the applicant, her/himself, ever followed-up directly with the RM or those who needed to supply documents for his/her application (i.e., employer) to check whether information was being received, she reported, "*Not always, but sometimes*", further explaining:

- *Like, [he/she] needed proof of employment; by the time [he/she] sent it to me, say it was a Wednesday, [he/she] needed the documents by Friday. The proof of employment form, even though I specified it needing to be set to Human Resources, was only sent to my employer. [he/she] never communicated any of that to me. Then [he/she] would say that she needed it on the next day or two. [He/she] waited until literally the last moment. [He/she] could have given me a call. I was pretty frustrated and just threw my hands up.*

Other applicants noted similar responses, focusing on lost paperwork and RM's responses to their frustrations:

- *[RM] was unstructured… wasn't prompt with things…often lost things, including documents with our social security numbers on them. He/she rudely would call and say he's/she's missing information that he/she never told us he/she needed. He/she waited until the last minute to process paper work and his/her response was, "I have a lot of families I'm working with". When we made it to the crunch time and he/she had to hand everything in, he/she said he/she lost all of the information with my [partner's] interviews on it and we had to redo everything at home. He/she gave us two choices. 1) We do it with him/her or 2) we do it at home on our own. We chose to do it on our own at home and that was awful too because the working of the questions was confusing. He/she kept saying we aren't his/her only families …and it felt like he/she put it back on us as well as on the back burner. Seemed like it was a lie when he/she said he/she lost the information on the computer. I just can't believe that a county system doesn't have a backup.*

- *I'm thinking it could have been more comprehensive and I did not like having to repeat paperwork that I already handed in. I had to do some paperwork twice.*

Criminal record of the applicant. Only two applicants, one in the CG and one in the WG noted that a past criminal record served as a barrier for them during the licensure and HSP. For the individual in the WG, it was unclear as to exactly when she completed her application during the pre-service (whether early or late in the 12 week process); she noted how getting poor advice from staff on this issue not only "wasted her time", but disappointed her [relative]:

- *I told them I had a [criminal] record at the very start; the social workers teaching the classes said it shouldn't' be a problem; but they all wasted my time. I did the whole 12 weeks and they didn't let me know until after I was done that my criminal record wasn't long enough past. They really wasted my time. Had I known this, I wouldn't have done the classes. And I wouldn't have disappointed my [relative], either. He/she was real disappointed.*

Another applicant described his/her perception of how confusion in the wording/structure of the application related to criminal record, inconsistencies in how CCDCFS staff review those applications, and poor advice from pre-service trainers almost cost them their opportunity to become FAPs. This applicant reported asking up front about his/her record and whether it would impact the process:

- *During the first class, I checked out an issue I had with a DUI at the end of YEAR. They kept saying "Write down everything in the application". I talked to the presenters to ask about the DUI. I didn't want us to go through all the classes if the DUI was going to stop us. They told us that it was a misdemeanor and had been over 3 years old, that it should be fine.*

In terms of confusion in wording and structure of the application he/she noted the experience:

- *List the things that you had. Then just below that, it asks for it again in a different way. Well, I listed the DUI again underneath. So 2 people said yes and 2 people said no. So the worker saw it as 2 DUI's versus 1 and they ruled me out. The supervisor said that I should have only listed it once. It doesn't come with an instruction manual.*

Following his/her submission of the application,

- *The 10th class, we turned in the application; I explained the DUI situation. During the 11th class, half way through we get another lady and she says "No, you have to do this and that 3 years from the time that was said and done". We left, and didn't go back. I think, when I asked this question in the first class, they should know their information*

He/she described the emotional impacts of how this experience with the HSP and criminal record issue took its toll. He/she admittedly relayed that he/she did not further pursue this with a supervisor at the time, emotionally backing off due to shame of getting the DUI in the first place and guilt for standing in the way of his partner becoming a parent. When they regained emotional energy, they pushed for more answers.

- *I felt terrible, especially for my {partner]. Bad that I got the DUI in the first place and then they declined us because of the DUI. That was a lot of time to waste and the mental anguish that went with all of this. X called someone at DCFS and they reviewed the DUI issue 5 months later; 4-5 months after X from [another office] called, a new supervisor was taking his time. 'Come down and get your fingerprints, your approved'....by then, we would have to retake all the classes because it was over a year. A supervisor over ruled it; we were also dealing with infertility as well. This caused me and my [partner] a lot of anguish and cost us about a year. [CCDCFS staff] said that that set of questions on the form is ambiguous and that problem has happened before.*

Housing. Barriers that impacted applicants' HSP related to housing did show three main themes: major home repairs needing to be done due to emergency circumstances; conflicting information regarding locks being placed on room doors inside the home; and a lack of adequate bedroom space. Home repairs needed due to emergency circumstances included a house fire (i.e., "*I had a house fire. Lost everything. I withdrew at that point. I put it on hold for now until I get my life back together*") and major damage due to a water line inside the home bursting requiring "*major repairs*".

Another recurring theme related to locks being on the insides of doors in the home. With two applicants, they reported being told to remove the locks; the applicants' were unwilling to do so:

- *I had locks on my doors that I did not want removed and was told that they had to be removed.*

- *We keep a lock on our attic because we have like X grandkids and we don't want them up there and we were told that we had to take the locks off and we have a lock on the room where my [partner] keeps hi/hers tools… [these are] expensive tools and sharp tools that can be harmful. Also the attic doesn't have a finished floor.*

Yet, another applicant interested in fostering/adopting a child under 10 with hard to place special needs relayed that her RM insisted that he/she need to place a lock on the inside of a bathroom door:

- *She just kept asking me "what are you going to do if the child you adopt is sexually active"? Weird stuff like that. She told us we had to put a lock on our bathroom door. Well, I am a stay at home [parent] and I don't believe in putting locks on the bathroom door with young kids in the house. What if they lock themselves in or something?*

Two applicants, both RCGs, noted that adequate space and number of bedrooms were barriers for them. One of these RCGs withdrew and, at least at the time of the interview, had not returned to the HSP; the second was able to move into a home with adequate space and was caring for his/her [relative(s)]:

- *I think the main thing is I have two bedrooms. They want everyone to have their own bedrooms. I gave up my bedroom for them. The boys in one, the girls in the other. I'd be willing to move.*

- *I was originally denied for the HSP because I did not have adequate space. I moved and now I have enough space so I am going through the process again*

Unemployment. Another barrier theme was unemployment. For example, "*I did not want to withdraw, but my home study person [RM] told me that because I lost my job I had to withdraw*" or "I became unemployed during the time I was doing the pre-service classes and they said that I had to be employed."

- *At the time, I was unemployed, and looking for work at the same time. I was receiving unemployment at the time and living with my [parent]. I was also paying my [other parents] rent/utilities with my unemployment check because his/her SSI hadn't kicked in yet. That's just the way it is because I was on unemployment. I even got the certificate from completing all the adoption classes*

Personal/family reasons. Some applicants noted withdrawing from the HSP for what they labeled as *"personal or family reasons"*. When interviewers asked respondents to elaborate, they typically reported caring for a sick parent *(My [parent] was sick and I didn't think I could handle the classes and taking care of her at the same time; my [parent] got diagnosed with X cancer and got real sick real fast. Couldn't work. So I was taking care of things for him/her and going to the foster adoptive parenting classes so I could adopt my [relative]. Just too much"*. One applicant noted that he/she and their spouse withdrew, needing to rethink the commitment:

- *We was doing it, the classes, and then me and my [spouse], we started to talk about it more. And at our age, you see, we thought that maybe we was too old. And then I had to go in and have X surgery; all of a sudden, we just realized that having another child wasn't the right thing for us. That's all.*

HSP took too long. Although the length of the HSP did not appear to produce statistically significant differences for either RCGS or NRCGs in the WG or CG, feedback was provided by participants that may be helpful to CCDCFS staff and pre-service trainers:

- *It was a long process. A lot of paperwork and I think basically what could be done better is if everyone is on the same page in terms of what needs to be done. After the pre-service training the worker should be with the family within a week. I don't think there should be a lapse in time. I think it should be a continuous process with no breaks in between. I had to do triple and double paperwork because paperwork expired. Need to keep it going and at a speedy pace.*
- *The thing I think I didn't like about it was that it was longer than I would have liked it to be. I would have liked the process to be more compact and more comprehensive. It was really long.*
- *It took longer than it should have taken even thought I handed all of my paper work in a timely manner because of missed appointments on my worker's behalf.*

Customer service/chain of command. Applicants were asked, when they mentioned difficult relationships with staff or challenging events when interviewed, whether they ever went up the chain of command at CCDCFS to try and resolve the issue. Most were more passive, reporting that they had not, stating "No, I didn't talk to nobody" or "*No, I'm just waiting to see from the Guardian et litem what we'll do*". When quantitative data was examined, there were no significant differences found on this issue related the WG and CG nor the RCGs or NRCGs. One RCG relayed a sense of disempowerment with the system, even though she spoke with an agency supervisor:

- *I had some supervisor call me who was over the social workers but there was no way to fight. I was small and they were big. Too powerful for me and my [relative]; we didn't have a chance."*

Another applicant who did choose to go up the chain of command noted feelings of apprehension about doing so; he/she worried that if he/she complained, that "it would just go from bad to worse". Although, when he/she did speak with the "chief of that department", he/she reported the following:

- *The chief was very friendly and listened and assured me that we would get something taken care of; said that they don't normally switch RM. But given me voicing my concerns, then she would switch. She asked me to speak with the RM's supervisor. Both were apologetic. Wanted us to be on the agency's side so we could ask others to be foster parents. [The supervisor] asked me to place my concerns in writing so they could follow-up. I have had no contact with her since. I didn't mean to stir a beehive; I just wanted a RM to be the resource that we were supposed to have.*

Do the HSP again? Although not a question pursued quantitatively in the current study, two WG applicants provided qualitative feedback on their willingness to complete the process again when their life circumstances were more conducive:

- *Everyone was really very nice and helpful as far as I got in the process; that's why I'd say a 10. [Interviewer- Would you consider doing the process again if you were employed?]*

  Yes, I would. But, recently my sister moved in with me and she just had a newborn baby, so my circumstances have changed since that time. But I am not closing the door completely on the idea.

- *[Interviewer: Do you think, when things with your home repairs get better, you will reconsider fostering again?]*

  Interviewee: Yes, I might. I think I would have a lot to offer a child now. A stable home. A good upbringing. Love. Yes, I think I would reconsider. I do talk with my RM from time to time even still.
  [Interviewer: So you still keep in touch with your resource manager?]
  Interviewee: Yes, she has called to check on how I'm doing every couple of months. A real nice, professional and kind lady. I like her a lot.

From the perspective of RMs. All 12 RMs agreed that the licensure and HSP is incredibly overwhelming for RCGs. The majority of those interviewed relayed that the CWR does not typically make the process any easier for families, particularly by giving families misinformation, having poor communication with RMs, and not forwarding paperwork. All RMs noted that there has been a huge disconnection in communication between their department and the CWRs; from the RMG prospective, this is serving as a major barrier for children's permanency. Some RMs also noted seeing the end result of the agency's message to discourage guardianship and encourage applicants to become FAPs. Families are feeling pressured by the CWR who often doesn't fully understand the limits and requirements of becoming a FAP. The following are RMs' own words:

- *The worker often says", Hey, you can do foster to adopt". But they often don't understand about criminal backgrounds. Not everyone can complete this process for whatever reason. The ongoing workers are often not aware of what the rules are. They encourage people to still sit through the classes. Then, families are mad. We've tried to get them to understand what it takes to go through the HSP. It is a lack of understanding paired with a lack of education being given.*

- *We've had departmental fairs and meetings downstairs in the lobby to get them to know what it takes. But have us come to a meeting with the family. We can explain the process and they would have a better idea of what is involved. We could go to an SAR meeting but we often don't get invited to the relative SAR. I have been to a few. But not a lot.*
- *See, we aren't the front door. When we get the cases, they have already experienced other DCFS departments. Where things were OK coming from direct services are different then what we can approve or disapprove. Like were the home study police. If the agency overall understood what was required it would help those that we service.*
- *...letting relatives know before they sit through 12 classes what this process entails. For on-going workers to bring us in to talk with families before they go for foster/adopt versus guardianship.*
- *Families are promised things by direct services that we can't validate for them. They are encouraged differently by direct services and then when they come, we get the bad end of it because you have promised the things we can't live up to.*
- *I don't think they are adequately prepared for what the HSP entails. "What do you mean 4-6 months"? On-going workers could be doing more front end work by explaining what options are; kinship approval gets done by on-going workers and families often feel that was their HSP when it wasn't. I think they should be giving families a list of the things they need to start pulling together.*

A number of respondents in the RMG noted significant barriers related to technological issues--- SACWIS. RMs described well how their technology issues trickle down, negatively impacting families working towards permanency; in some cases, this inhibits the completion of the HSP. The following are examples in RMs' own words:

- *The biggest problem is trying to get it done in SACWIS which is a nightmare. It is a series of screens. It's not logical. Separate screens for each question. There not in the same order as the end product. It formats it into the home study form. It doesn't make sense and it makes things unnecessarily hard. Once it's printed out and needs corrections, you have to try to figure out where the screen is that you have to go back to.*

- *The reason they give us so much time is there is so much we do to go through the process. Like entering things into SACWIS. That is one ball of mess to this day. SACWIS is a huge barrier to getting people approved faster. It frustrates me on so many levels, I've lost information, had to retyped it, not user friendly, I forget certain steps, sometimes things are tucked away; I've gotten more comfortable with it over the years, but it's still a problem. That is one of my biggest problems is navigating through SACWIS.*

- *If there was a way that when you went in, that step 1 all has to complete before we move to step 2. It should be chronologic order to not miss a step. Even with SACWIS when you submit for approval, and there is a page given too you about what is missing. No guideline to check with when doing it. Some things don't end up on the page that gets submitted to your supervisor.*

Non-compliance with certification periods. RMs also report frustrations with the pressure to remain in compliance with the 120-180 day certification period. Although most saw the benefits of the parameters being in place, there were recurring themes of this being a larger issue with RCGs who already had the child placed in the home with them. Some RMs were more likely to go that "extra step" to file motions regarding being out of compliance and taking the risk of "getting dinged" in an audit if better for the outcomes of the family.

- *I understand it is 120-180 days, but when you have families trying to say, get the fire department to approve the home, then she had to move and it takes too long. Then we're out of compliance. When we get audited, then we'll get dinged.*

- *But some workers will say tough luck and you have to w/d and start over. If the situation warrants it, then be out of compliance to help families in difficult situation. If they are going to finish someday and not there on a whim.*

Frustrations with applicants' frustrations. Several RMs noted the frustrations they feel with applicants' anxiety and frustration with the process. Most RMs interviewed noted an understanding of why families were anxious, but still felt frustrated with being on the receiving end of families wanting "it done yesterday"; yet other RMs also noted feeling a sense of accomplishment when they see families complete the process and have a child placed with them (i.e., "*They are happy once it's done, but they really want done immediately*").

RCG versus NRCG licensure processes. Several RMs discussed that RCGs truly struggle with why they have to go through the same steps as a stranger to become licensed, when all they want to do is be able to take care of their vulnerable relative. RMs offered their experiences and additional ideas on how to potentially approach the process in a new way to facilitate things better for families:

- *I think it can be very difficult for relative CGS. Majority of cases, the child is placed in the home, and they're not getting financial help, not getting daycare provided/paid for, many are working and have difficulty with the time required; don't feel like they should have to jump through the same hoops as everyone else because it is their family. A lot have already had issues with the agency (on-going worker) They volunteer to take the child when we've asked them and you have to do this, this and this; the on-going SW may ok the home and it is different than what we criteria we have to license them; all the references; utility bills behind in finances; I'm caring for this child for free and you're not helping me. I'm behind because of those added expenses. A lot of them have asked for some kind of abbreviated HSP for just their relative. Many go for legal custody instead but they then can't get any kind of reimbursement. I think there should be a way to reimburse them financially before approval.*

- *Interviewer: Do you think there should be different processes for licensure for RCG and NRCGs?*
- *RM: Yeah, I think there should be. Not sure what should be different. I feel that if my niece was taken from my sister and she was placed in my home, as a relative, I understand how they feel. They feel we are intruding. This is my X. I've known him/her my whole life. An extensive background check should take place. But the process, it should be easier for those who are genuine for those who are appropriate. I'd be a little offended if I was the relative. You're emotionally invested if it's your relative.*

Frustrations about applicants' perceived dishonesty. Some RMs noted the frustrations they feel when they perceive applicants are lying about details noted in their application. The recurring theme related to RMs' frustrations and perceived dishonesty mostly related to applicants not listing criminal histories (or only listing part of the information) as well as prospective FAPs underreporting income when negotiating subsidy.

- *...makes me read between the lines. People think that you are not going to find out things. He/she falsified his/her documents. Was a child perpetrator.*

- *And I give people the benefit of the doubt; sometimes people just don't remember their past histories because they happened so long ago, but if it's something that happed within the 10 years, well, you know.*

- *Went out to the applicant's home and asked about criminal history and said "You don't remember being in a police car?" And finally he/she said, "Yes".*

Workers and supervisors need to be more flexible. RMs also noted the need for their own greater flexibility with families when assisting them in the HSP as well as greater support and flexibility from their supervisors.

- *Some applicants complain that workers aren't flexible; some will go in evening to meet with them.*

- *Some workers require the applicants come here; I go that extra effort if I see that people are trying and getting something to me; we need to be more flexible and a little more hand holding.*

- *Getting items together could be difficult. Supervisors are really focused on dates and paperwork*

- *I wish supervisors would really read what we're doing; [I would like] feedback on what I wrote about the interview*

- *We become so focused on meeting OAC regulations and we lose site of the HSP*

- *Feedback about narratives is usually related to typos versus the depth of the interview. Reading narratives helps you determine who will be a good fit for a child; too much focus on PW dates*

Strength and weakness that CCDCFS won't turn people away. A few RMs noted seeing the practice/philosophy drift that Groze (1993) noted, relaying the challenge between remaining strengths-based in helping families move forward in the HSP or using the HSP to "weed out" applicants. RMs relayed the following:

- *Umm, I just think that our doors are sometimes too open, and we don't refuse. You can say that it is a strength and a weakness. Our doors are open because we do need foster homes. We give everyone a try to see if they meet the standards.*

- *Other departments just place the kid as long as it's safe, they have food in the fridge and a bed we place the kid. But in foster care we go in and we look for everything. The safety audit is a barrier. You can see a tiny whole in the wall that isn't a danger and if we see it then the family has to fix it and we can't place the child. Yet, if it was another department, they would place the child in that home.*

- *Because, again, relatives in my opinion are marginal and have their own issues. All of them should not be foster parents. They do not meet a lot of the state requirements. But I as a worker, I do what I can do to help them keep their relatives. And they become irritable because it's a long process and rules that they don't think should apply to them are applied to them.*

Requesting a new RM. Throughout a number of interviews across groups, issues between applicants and the personalities of CCDCFS staff (RMs or CWRs) continued to surface. Specifically from the RMs perspective, a few RMs noted the importance of empowering families to request a new worker when relationships have started off on the "wrong foot".

- *I think that if a HS worker and an applicant don't hit it off on the right foot, then they should have the right to request another worker. Only goes downhill from there.*

- *No policy on it in the agency. Some supervisors handle it differently and at their own discretion.*

- *Would be empowering for people to know that they could request another worker.*

- *Would be helpful to know families feedback about us, positives and negatives*

Discussion & Recommendations from Home Study Project

Applicant Satisfaction with the HSP

In terms of participant satisfaction, the WG denoted the lowest level of satisfaction with the HSP, followed by the CG and RM groups. These are not surprising results, as those in the WG did not meet their *own* expectations of becoming licensed and subsequently fostering or adopting a child. To a certain degree, the HSP outcome is likely to color an applicant's perceptions of satisfaction with the process.

RM Services

In terms of RM services, an important strength highlighted by the quantitative data was that generally speaking, participants across groups appeared to receive very similar services approximately 80% of the time. This may be an indication that those RMs working directly with prospective parents were more focused on helping applicants through the licensure and HSP than in trying to "rule applicants out" as potential parents (Groze, 1996). Also, those in the CG rated the HSP as being explained to them *more clearly* than RMs perceived. The CG's applicants may have moved more successfully through the licensure/HSP because they received clearer communication from CCDCFS staff -or- applicants may have had personal characteristics that supported their abilities to process/comprehend the information being explained to them by Agency personnel.

Yet, of the three groups, RMs perceived applicants' satisfaction rates as the highest; results indicated that RMs were less aware of applicant's levels of satisfaction 70% of the time. The WG reported RMs as significantly less prompt in returning phone calls /rescheduling cancelled appointments when compared those in the CG. Given experience level/Agency tenure of many of the RMs interviewed, these results may indicate that through much exposure, RMs have developed an unconscious awareness/can pick up on cues/patterns indicative of whether an applicant is *able to* "make it or not". If so, RMs may be subtly/unconsciously disengaging from those applicants, redirecting resources towards applicants with characteristics of completers.

Recommendations: Agency RMs could receive on-going training/supervision about how their own appraisals of prospective parents may impact their practice. Supervisors could do random follow-up calls to prospective parents to assess timeliness of returning calls/rescheduling appointments; RM documentation of attempts to follow-up could be reinforced in staffing.

Barriers for WG

Those in the WG were more likely to experience the following barriers compared to the CG: *challenges with interagency communication* and *dependent children in their care*. These results indicate that when Agency departments do not communicate effectively with one another, it significantly impacts prospective foster/adoptive families in a negative way. The fact that those in the WG had a *greater number of dependent children in their care* may indicate that prospective parents may be having difficulty in completing the pragmatic tasks of the licensure process versus being ineligible for approval and choosing to withdraw before denial. For example, some applicants from the WG denoted experiencing challenges with gathering the same paperwork more than once, like one applicant who needed to get a third set of fingerprints (first two were misplaced by the Agency) and gather new physicals for his/her household. This single-parent/applicant relayed feeling that the CWR/RM did not understand how challenging it was for them to take time off from his/her job to gather items again, subsequently creating financial stress on the household. Some WG applicants withdrew out of sheer frustration with the process.

Recommendations:
1. When made aware of prospective parents with dependent children in their care, an Agency practice could be that this particular status triggers an automatic referral for an adoption navigator. Agency staff could encourage one visit with the navigator so they can provide information about the service, beyond information being presented in pre-service.
2. Greater attention could be paid by RMs and supervisors to those applicants with dependent children in their care to ensure that superficial barriers do not inhibit licensure.

Barriers for RCGs.

RCGs, when compared to NRCGs, were more likely to experience negative outcomes related to *poor advice from their child-of-interest's case worker of record*; they were also more likely to have encountered *greater numbers of barriers in the HSP*. It was apparent from the applicant interviews that several CWR were not familiar with the HSP criterion and guidelines, a fact also reinforced by RMs who relayed having to re-educate several applicants when they arrive in their department. For example, interviews with both WG applicants and RMs relayed that CWRs have directed individuals taking legal guardianship to attend foster/adoptive parent pre-service classes. Prospective parents and RMs relayed the frustration of having

attended all 12 classes when they were not required in the first place. Agency communication appears to be an issue related to pre-service classes for both CWR and pre-service staff. Even if the CWR misdirected applicants, the pre-service staff should still be identifying these individuals early in the process before they sit through classes.

Recommendations: Agency-wide education of the HSP criterion needs to take place, particularly with the Agency's CWR. Communication between CCDCFS must improve.

1. Pre-service staff should immediately identify RCGs early in pre-service. CCDCFS staff could verify in person with all RCGs whether they are taking guardianship or applying for foster/adoptive parent status. Pre-service staff should also follow-up in the computer system as well as the CWR to verify potential applicant's status.

2. HS department staff could complete a one page, laminated information sheet for CWR to hang in their office space; this may help CWR relay the most accurate information to applicants. This could also relay HSP guidelines and contact information for HS department supervisors to answer questions about whether a referral is appropriate.

2. A checklist/form could be devised for CWR to complete and sign off on with potential foster/adoptive parents prior to referring them to pre-service classes.

3. It could be Agency protocol to have a HS department staff/supervisor present for all SAR/concurrent planning/All-about-Me meetings to help applicants be aware of their options (i.e., filing for guardianship; going through the licensure/HSP to become foster/adoptive parents).

4. Posters could be hung within the Agency with this information as well.

Customer Service.

From a customer service standpoint, the two key areas most in need of review are pre-service classes and building a more positive and engaging relationship between staff and applicants. Through the HS evaluation process, evaluators have reviewed incoming results with CCDCFS senior supervisors and Deputy McCray; several self-correcting efforts are already in place via Deputy McCray, Margaret Shea, and Joyce Wadlington. The following recommendations are a combination of evaluators' recommendations paired with self-correcting interventions already spearheaded by CCDCFS.

Recommendations: *Pre-service classes*

1. Challenging dynamics between staff and prospective parents (i.e., use of electronics during pre-service) are less about *what* is being said but *how* it is being said. Further staff training is recommended as to how to address such issues without being offensive or disrespectful.

  a. A Power Point could be presented at the start of pre-service that goes over expectations of prospective parents, staff, and the Agency

  b. This Power Point could also automatically run prior to the start of the first few classes while applicants wait for class to begin to reinforce parameters.

  c. Pre-service staff could discuss the concepts of intellectual learning and emotional learning in one of the first sessions. It is important to place in front of applicants that <u>YOU</u> recognize that they may be thinking and feeling *like you already know this information because you have parented/grand-parented before -or- are a social worker/nurse practitioner who works with children. All of your experiences are extremely valuable and there is a lot of knowledge in this room…you will pull on these and others' experiences, without question!* d. t's talk a bit more about how <u>parenting for the first time/parenting a hurt child after having parented before</u> may be different/counterintuitive to what you might expect. How do you think parenting a child with a 1.) maltreatment history 2.) was exposed to drugs/alcohol in utero 3.) has broken attachment relationships or 4.) has been exposed to domestic violence effect your parenting?

- Engage applicants in further discussion:
- Discuss how pre-service information provides a window into the <u>counterintuitive parenting</u> they will be using, particularly when raising children who have maltreatment histories. It will be different from previous parenting. Once a child is placed with them, the intellectual learning becomes more applicable, leading to emotional learning.
- Ask applicants for examples of when they realized differences between intellectual and emotional learning; use relevant analogies as to when applicants have experienced these "light bulb moments" before in their lives. It will make your discussion more applicable to them when you attach it to previous information already learned in life.
- Ex. "*Can you remember all the advice you received before you became a parent for the first time, all the books you read…etc.? Was the intellectual information enough to prepare you for the emotional nature of what parenting would <u>truly</u> be like…the physical, psychological and emotional aspects of parenting… both the joys and struggles?* Get them to share their experiences with the class. Explain how these experiences relate to what you are presenting in pre-service and how important it is for them to give pre-service classes their full attention (i.e., not use electronic devices) to absorb as much of the material as possible…because it will be applicable!
- The Agency could have a current foster parent talk with new groups; they could reinforce the importance of giving pre-service classes their full attention and its relevance for when a child is in their home.

2. Management could reinforce in staff meetings that CCDCFS staff and trainers should withhold their political or religious opinions, out of respect for prospective parents' personal beliefs; reminder memos could be sent out just prior to the start of a new pre-service session.

3. To present an accurate and effective balance of the successes and challenges of raising children who are fostered and adopted from the Agency, a re-establishment of foster/adoptive panels during pre-service will take place; this will include foster children, foster parents, birth parents, adoptive parents…etc. A recording of a live panel will also be made for future use if the Agency is unable to gather panel members for another session. Hearing about the challenges from other parents/children first could serve as a springboard for further discussions with staff.

<u>Recommendations:</u> *Raising the skill set of Agency staff for more supportive relationships with prospective parents.*

Evaluators reinforced with HS RMs/supervisors the degree of vulnerability expressed by prospective parents in their interviews about the licensure and HSP. Applicants in both groups worried about being rejected by the Agency for licensure -or- the Agency's ability to remove their biological children if, in the HSP, social workers heard or saw something for which they had significant concerns. Such vulnerability in applicants can bring forth anxiety, anger, defensiveness, and a need to be in control of small things in their environments.

When anxious, it is also difficult to process and retain information—this may be particularly challenging in an environment like pre-service where applicants are presented with an abundance of information about the foster/adoption process as well as parenting expectations. This may also help explain applicants' edginess, challenges with retaining information, or controlling behaviors (i.e., complaining about being told they <u>must/must not</u> do something like check electronic devices in class; step out for phone calls…etc).

Anxiety may also play a role in applicants' increased sensitivity to how the Agency's staff members respond towards them; for example, a RM may not intend, in any way, to be disrespectful or too familiar with applicants (i.e., "*Come on, does your grown son/daughter really pay rent*"?), yet the prospective parent may appraise the RM as being judgmental or disrespectful towards them.

1. Department supervisors could assess the skill set of their staff members' who are currently working with prospective parents. Do staff members have appropriate training and personality characteristics to empathically assess such circumstances and be supportive to applicants? Are they able to see the impacts of prospective parents' vulnerability to effectively decrease their anxiety in a respectful and encouraging way?

    a. Videotaping of real or mock sessions is integral to review with ALL staff members. Peer supervision and private supervision with departmental supervisors is integral.
    b. For current/new hires lacking formal social work training where the curriculum enforces strong assessment, mental health training, and practical applications of such skills via field placements, the Agency could provide additional/on-going training, peer mentoring, and strong supervision.

2. Senior managers, M. Shea and J. Wadlington have recommended the following:
    a. Provide on-going Motivational Interviewing trainings that involve role-play for RMs
    b. Have supervisors shadow workers visits on a quarterly basis to assess their strengths and weaknesses with families
    c. Have senior supervisors model engagement skills during visits with families
    d. Distribute and review with staff the booklet designed by J. Wadlington on relationship engagement with families. Cover topics from the booklet each month in staff meetings.
3. Put into place an evaluation plan to monitor all chosen self-correction plans the Agency chooses to implement in order to determine effectiveness; also define alternatives to chosen plans to self-correct if evaluation finds current plans ineffective.

Adoptions

Using the total number of youth in permanent custody, the rate of adoption as presented in Table 9. In 2007, with 676 youth in permanent custody and 293 adoptive placements, the rate is .43. In 2008, with 605 youth in permanent custody and 223 adoptive placements, the rate is .37. In 2009, with 572 youth in permanent custody and 248 adoptive placements, the rate is .43. In 2010, with 635 youth in permanent custody and 168 adoptive placements, the rate is .27. In 2011, with 653 youth in permanent custody and 142adoptive placements, the rate is .22. The rate of adoption is uneven from 2007 to 2011 but overall decreased from the high in 2007 to 2011; it is half the rate in was 5 years earlier. Questions must be raised about the reason.

Table 9: Classification Status of Children in Cuyahoga County Permanent Custody, 2008-2012

	Total number of youth in permanent custody	Total number of youth classified as having no plan	Percent of child considered "available"/with no plan	Total number of children placed for adoption
2007	676	273	40%	293
2008	605	278	46%	223
2009	572	239	42%	248
2010	635	274	33%	168
2011	653	211	25%	142

There are several explanations for the decrease in total number of adoptions and rates of adoption. First, contracts to private agencies to assist with adoptions were so delayed that some agencies refused to move forward on an adoption they were facilitating without a contract. This also led to some agencies closing their adoption programs. The State of Ohio cut adoption funding 75%, from about 1.8 million to $400,000. This funding was used to contract with private agencies. So not only were contracts delayed but they were cut

substantially. Second, the state decreased the amount of subsidy they would provide. This resulted in the county and families being unable to successfully negotiate an adoption subsidy. Some families remained as foster parents because the foster care per diem was higher than the adoption subsidy. There was no doubt they were committed to the child but could not afford to adopt given the difference between the adoption subsidy and foster care per diem. This is similar to the experience late in the 20th century and the reasons subsidies were created, to remove financial barriers to adoption. There is now a reverse incentive to adopt. Third, the economy in the county has been very problematic. Not only did families lose their jobs, a number of them feared losing their job. Most of the foster-to-adopt families are working families; job loss or the fear of job loss decreased families' inclination to adopt. Fourth, fewer permanent custody cases are being filed and fewer are being granted. Any of these factors alone could result in fewer adoptions; together they create a "perfect storm", to the detriment of permanency through adoption.

Arts Community Partnership for General Recruitment

One general recruitment strategy was to develop connections within the arts community to enlist their cooperation with targeted recruitment. The engagement of the arts community was intended initially to increase staff skill at writing narratives and summarizing information about youth for recruitment materials such. In year three, Karamu Theater was approached as a potential resource for collaboration on recruitment. Karamu Theater is a settlement house, with a rich history of multi-cultural (and more recently culturally specific) theater. Their executive director, Mr. Gregory Ashe, is also an adoptive parent of a youth from Cuyahoga County's custody. An article about Mr. Ashe in the Plain Dealer opened the possibility that that we would find a natural champion for the cause of finding families for older youth and sibling groups who were in foster care.

The goal of the collaboration from the agency stand point was to create a play that would work in conjunction with our targeted and general recruitment messages. The piece of work would have to be shown to audiences who could respond to what we framed as a call to action. One of the assumptions of the agency recruitment work is that there are families who will step forward if they are made aware of the need. This play then is conceived as a big calling card- calling on participants to consider life without a permanent family, to consider how they can help change the trajectory that is laid out for the youth in the play. Its potential to reach a larger audience was hoped for.

The agency held onto editorial control during this work with the playwright. A team of managers read the script and provided feedback to the Karamu leaders. A team of DCFS staff then went to a staged reading and again provided for more feedback. Adjustments were made without compromising the story itself. The enthusiasm of the management staff reading the play and responding to it was palpable- one could observe the phenomenon of this intervention- people felt like this was the one chance to relay the stories they (the managers) are all too familiar with. Because the play is 45 minutes, there are stories that won't be told. There has historically not been an arena that staff, often the vicarious holders of the emotions of the families we serve, could find a voice so that a larger community would be able to hear and consider the circumstances of youth in care. The premier of the play at the Permanency Solutions Legal Symposium had an audience of approximately 250 people. In the audience were judges, lawyers, social workers, community advocates, youth in care and families. The play was positively responded to: we had the tool of an emotionally impactful story to bring to the audience. This created an excitement and emotionally charged atmosphere.

In Year 4, Karamu performed the play 6 times with a total audience of 1060. The Karamu Reality Theater Troupe is accustomed to taking their productions to non-traditional venues. In our case, the hotel ball room was transformed into a theater. The youth who participated in the focus groups were present at the performance and enjoyed having their stories, their words validated by the playwright and the production. The success of the first run of the production has challenged the group to make sure every showing of the play is as impactful with an audience who can respond to this poetic call to action.

Presentations of the play in Year 4 by number of participants

September 2011: Permanency Solutions Legal Symposium, play premiered: 250 people
November 2011: Karamu Theater Adoption Month Production of the play: 150 people
January 2012: Bellfaire Jewish Children's Bureau: 60 (youth and foster parents)
April 2012: Case Western Reserve University Production: 250 people
June 2012: CCDCFS Staff presentation of the play; 100 staff attended
July 2012: Defending Childhood Conference: 250 social workers
September 2012: Community presentation: 50 people

This year, approximately 1100 people saw the play but this might be a duplicate count (people saw the play several times in different venues).

Legal Symposium

One systemic barrier to permanency has been the lack of cross-system understanding and collaboration. The Guardian Ad Litem may not understand or agree with the caseworker; when cases come to court they may not work together on behalf of children but be in opposition.

In Year 3 we reported results of participant evaluation of the Symposium. At the end of the conference, participants were asked to write themselves letters describing how they planned to integrate their learning from the legal symposium into their daily child welfare practices, volunteers were solicited for future phone interviews that would take place in 3 to 6 months post-symposium. Out of 102 participants who completed the evaluation materials, 69 agreed to participate in the phone interviews.   Results from this analysis are not available for this report but will be included in Year 5. Plans are underway to conduct an additional Legal Symposium in the last year of the grant.

Child-Centered Recruitment

Child-centered recruitment refers to the methodology of finding a permanent resource or permanent resources for a specific child. One of the main system interventions used for families in our targeted neighborhood is Adoption Navigation. Adoption Navigators guide families through the adoption process as well as share resources and provide emotional support. The goal of a navigator is to make certain that parents understand the adoption process and feel supported along the way. Navigators provide advocacy for prospective adoptive parents. These services are available to both prospective adoptive and foster parents who are considering adoption. The Adoption Navigator model used in the project was developed by the Adoption Network-Cleveland.

About 14 hours per week is used to staff a "warm line" to support any adoptive families calling for assistance. Adoption Navigators are currently serving 26 families and have served a total of 56 families during the first 4 years of the grant. There have been 2 placements this year and two families obtained barrier funding to promote their adoption. There is a sharp decline from interests expressed at recruiting events to families participating in pre-adoption training and home studies. Many families that initially express interest in adoption subsequently determine they are not ready to adopt. The barriers to adopting are more family barriers than agency or child barriers. Prospective families loose interest, decide against adopting because the type of child they want is not available from the public system, have a criminal background that exudes them from adopting, or have medical/mental health issues that would stop them from adopting. The one agency barrier that is consistently reported is poor customer service—they are not warmly received by staff when they first call, if they call to adopt they are told the agency is not an adoption agency but a foster care agency, or calls are not returned.

Adoption Network Cleveland helps Beech Brook with file mining. This year began with 17 youth files to be mined—which means reading the record and identifying potential people in the record who are connected to the youth. To date, 6 records have been completed, 3 youth are not active, and priorities changed

for 8 of the youth initially identified (they ran away, the youth did not want to be active in the program or the youth already had a significant connection with the birth family). Often, while the record may obtain a name, they are often not full names ("Mrs. Banks" for instance) or include information about how that person is connected to the youth. To get this detailed information requires use of the previous MIS, FACSIS. While initially Adoption Network Cleveland staff had access to FACSIS, they have not had access for most this year. This has been a huge hindrance in effective record mining.

Adoption Network Cleveland has continued community building in the targeted neighborhoods and working with youth. Community building included attending meetings with Collaborative Agencies in the targeted area, speaking engagements in the targeted area, developing new Ambassador sites, hosting events at Beauty Salons/Barber Shops and Ambassador sites, hosting receptions of the Moving Heart Gallery, orienting and coaching youth to speak about their experiences in the system and the need for foster/adoptive families (Youth Speak Out), and hosting a quarterly community advisory committee to PFFF. Details of the events are below.

Collaborative Meetings Attended

Broadway	February 22
Mt. Pleasant	March 7
East End	March 13
Harvard	March 27
Broadway	March 28
Hough	March 30
Broadway	May 23
Hough	July 11
East End	August 21
Mt. Pleasant	September 12

Speaking Engagements (n=12)

Jericho Baptist Church	December 13
Harvard Gospelfest	February 24
GFT Youth Rally	March 1
Sip and See (East End)	March 2
Mt. Pleasant Event	April 13
Emmanuel Church	April 21
Harvard Gospelfest	May 25
Youth Resource Fair	July 12
Covenant Church	July 22
Davis Temple Church	July 29
Hope is Enough Play	September 11
Getting SMART in the Park	September 22

New Ambassador Sites (n=4)

Golden Ciphers	March 7
Calvary Hill C.O.G.I.C.	April 3
Jericho Baptist Church	April 9
Beyond Gospel 216	May 3

Salon Days/Ambassador Events (n=8)

Thanksgiving Dinner (Antioch Church)	November
Harvard Gospelfest	February 24
Lake Erie Barber College	April 7
Mt. Pleasant Awareness (Jericho Church)	April 13
Youth Rally (Emmanuel Church)	April 21
Harvard Gospelfest	May 25
Sometimes Hope is Enough (Calvary Hill)	September 11
Getting SMART (H.O.P. Ministries)	September 22

Moving Heart Gallery Receptions (n=3)

Sometimes Hope Play	April 19
Downtown Library	August 10
Lakewood Library	August 31

Youth Speak Out Training (4 sessions with 35 youth trained)

ANC Training	June 16
ANC Training	November 30
ANC Training	March 27
Purple Project	June 21

Youth Speak Out speaking engagements (n=9)

| Harvard Gospel fest | February 24 |
Jericho Community Awareness	April 13
Sometimes Hope is Enough	April 19
Ambassador Breakfast	May 3
Harvard Gospel fest	May 25
Defending Children/DCFS	July 18
Youth Speak Out Forum	August 9
Sometimes Hope is Enough	September 11
Getting Smart in the Park	September 22

Quarterly Advisory Group Meeting (n=3)

Fatima Family Center	March 20
East End	June 21
University Settlement (Broadway)	September 18

Neighborhood Recruitment

Our plan from the beginning was to work with collaborative agencies in specific neighborhoods to recruit families for older children, sibling groups, and specific children who had some connection in these neighborhoods. Figure 3 is the map of the targeted and comparison neighborhoods. In Year 3, we added a contiguous neighborhood previously in the comparison group as we expanded the project.

Figure 3: Map of Targeted and Comparison Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods (SPAs)
Cleveland, OH (2000)
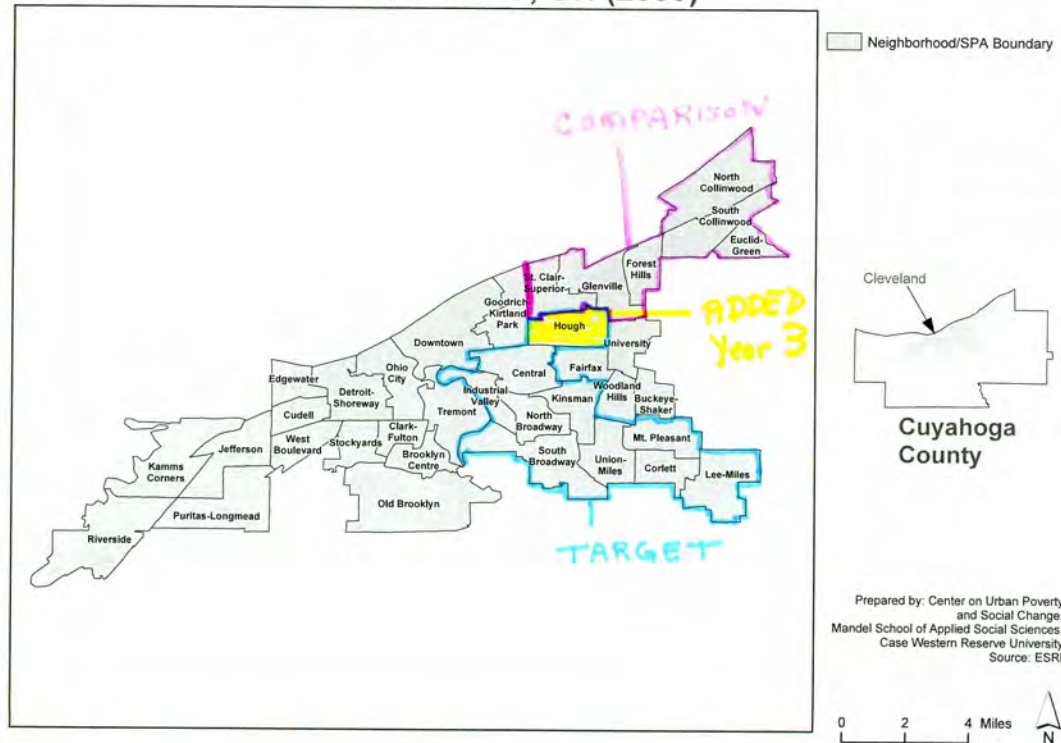
Each of the neighborhood centers were given a performance-based contract to try "out of the box" thinking to recruit foster and adoptive families.

Neighborhood Intervention[8]

This project has targeted specific neighborhoods for project interventions. Using SAQWIS data (case level administrative data provided by CCDCFS), each year we evaluate if the interventions demonstrate effectiveness in the neighborhoods.

In Year 1, we developed baseline data on the children in our targeted and comparison neighborhoods that did not receive the interventions. Year 2 indicated the first year that interventions were introduced in the target neighborhoods. We were limited in all three years' analyses by the data available to us through the Cuyahoga County Department of Child and Family Services (CCDCFS) SAQWIS system. Problems exist with several errors in the dataset (i.e., case duplications, input errors, and inconsistencies in data categorization). Evaluators cleaned and merged (July 2010 – July 2011) the datasets to be analyzed for Year 3; the following tables also provide the baseline data from Years' 1 and 2 data.

There are two sets of data used in these analyses. The first set is data extracted from SAQWIS in June, 2011 that shows the open cases (entry cohort data). The second data set provides information on youth leaving care (exit cohort data). Tables 5 to 10 provide the demographic information of those youth in our target and comparison neighborhood areas for the entry cohort. Tables 11 to 15 provide exit cohort data on youth leaving care from January 2010 to January 2011.

Demographic characteristics between the target and comparison neighborhoods were examined by utilizing the Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) and the two-tailed, Fisher's exact test. The chi-square was implemented when the expected count in each cell of the crosstabulation was greater than or equal to five. If the expected cell count was less than five, the approximation to the chi-square distribution breaks down creating a greater risk for misleading probabilities; the Fisher's exact test is recommended to avoid making type-II errors (Yates, Moore, & McCabe, 1999, p. 734).

Year 1 captured data from January through August 2009, consisting of only an 8 month time frame. Year 1 was limited to 8 months because of difficulties accessing data from the public agency due to transition from one software system (FACIS) to another (SAQWIS) in February, 2009. Year 2 data ran from January 2010 to January 2011 (further referred to as Year 2), Year 3 data was collected between July, 2010 through July, 2011 (further referred to as Year 3), and Year 4 data was collected between August 2011 through August 2012 (further referred to as Year 4).

In Year 3, the Hough geographic neighborhood was moved from a PFFF comparison neighborhood group to a PFFF target neighborhood group. This change marked a redistribution of the number of children in each group, accounting mostly for the increased differences between the numbers of children in the target versus comparison neighborhoods when compared to previous years.

Entry Cohort Data

Significant results from Years' 1, 2, and 3 are provided for review. A summary of Year 4 significant results follow.

Year 1. In Year 1, significant differences were found between target and comparison neighborhoods when examining the number of months that youth were in placement (χ^2 [1]) = 6.59, p = .01). The targeted neighborhoods had fewer children in care than expected (28.6%) for the under 24 months group in contrast to those in the comparison group (71.4%). To determine the magnitude of the significant relationship, the Cramer's φ indicated a weak effect size (V = 0.163) for this relationship. The majority of children in care for both the targeted (93.8%) and comparison (83.5%) neighborhoods were in placement for greater than 24 months.

Year 2. In Year 2, there was a total of 470 youth who had open cases; 260 were in the targeted neighborhoods and 210 were in the comparison neighborhoods. Significant results were found between target and comparison neighborhoods with entry cohort data for current age of youth in foster care (χ^2 [4] = 9.562, p = .048) as well as race (Fisher's Exact Test = 17.641, p < .001). For current age of youth in foster care, the greatest percentage differences were found among older youth. For example, youth ages 16 and older in the

target neighborhood accounted for 23.8% and the comparison neighborhood, 31.0%. Also, percentages of youth ages 11-15 in the target neighborhood (32.7%) was greater than the comparison neighborhood (20.5%) by 12.5%. Although statistically significant, Cramer's φ denoted a weak effect size ($V = 0.143$). Percentages of youth in the target and comparison groups were comparable in size for those in the three younger categories.

A significant relationship existed between race/ethnicity and the target and comparison neighborhoods (two-tailed, Fisher's exact test = 17.641, $p < .001$). A greater percent of African American youths lived in the comparison neighborhoods (95.2%) and a greater percent of White youth in the target neighborhoods (11.9%). Although statistically significant, Cramer's φ noted that the effect size for race was weak ($V = 0.191$).

Year 3. In Year 3, there was a total of 468 youth who had open cases; 237 were in the targeted neighborhoods and 164 were in the comparison neighborhoods. Significant results were found between target and comparison neighborhoods with entry cohort data for current age of youth in foster care ($\chi^2[4] = 11.03$, $p = .027$) as well as race (Fisher's Exact Test = 20.94, $p < .001$).

Although current age of youth was statistically significant, Cramer's φ denoted a weak effect size ($V = 0.153$). Children ages 16 and older noted the greatest percentage difference of 13.4% between target (23.3%) and comparison (36.6%) neighborhood groups. In the 1 through 5 age range, the target neighborhood group (23.5%) accounts for 6.90% more cases than the neighborhood comparison group (16.6%); and percentages of youth ages 11-15 in the target neighborhood (31.1%) was greater than the comparison neighborhood (26.3%) by 4.80%. Percentages of youth in the target and comparison groups were comparable in size for those in the under age 1 and the 6 to 10 year old categories.

In Year 4, there was a total of 616 youth who had open cases; 148 were in the targeted neighborhoods, 75 were in the comparison neighborhoods and 393 fell outside target or comparison neighborhoods. Significant results were found between target and comparison neighborhoods with entry cohort data for race (Fisher's Exact Test = 9.95, $p < .019$); current age of youth in foster care approached significance ($\chi^2[4] = 8.00$, $p = .092$).

Children ages 11 - 15 noted the greatest percentage difference of 14.3% between target (27.0%) and comparison (41.3%) neighborhood groups. In the 1 through 5 age range, the target neighborhood group (18.9%) accounts for 8.20% more cases than the neighborhood comparison group (10.7%); and percentages of youth ages 6 - 10 in the target neighborhood (23.0%) was greater than the comparison neighborhood (13.3%) by 9.70%. Percentages of youth in the target and comparison groups were comparable in size for those in the under age 1 and the 16 and over age categories.

Table 5 presents the age distribution of youth within the target and comparison neighborhoods at the time of the project. The number of youth 11 years of age and older are the majority of children in the public child welfare system waiting for permanency. Children over the age of 11 and older make up 55.4% of the target and 72.0% of the comparison group.

Table 5
Current Age of Youth in Foster Care

Age	Year 1 January 2009 – August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Under 1	3.10% (4)	6.60% (8)	3.50% (9)	2.90% (6)	3.10% (9)	4.00% (7)	2.70% (4)	4.00% (3)
1-5	25.0% (32)	21.5% (26)	20.8% (54)	23.8% (50)	23.5% (69)	16.6% (29)	18.9% (28)	10.7% (8)
6-10	14.8% (19)	26.4% (32)	19.3% (50)	21.9% (46)	19.1% (56)	16.6% (29)	23.0% (34)	13.3% (10)
11-15	28.9% (37)	21.5% (26)	32.7% (85)	20.5% (43)	31.1% (91)	26.3% (46)	27.0% (40)	41.3% (31)
16 and over	28.1% (36)	11.6% (29)	23.8% (62)	31.0% (65)	23.2% (68)	36.6% (64)	28.4% (42)	30.7% (23)
Total:	128	121	260	210	293	175	148	75
Pearson	X² (4) = 7.752,		* X² (4) = 9.562,		*X² (4) = 11.00		†X² (4) = 8.00	

Chi-Square	p = .101	p = .048	p =.027	p =.092

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category
*Significant p < .05; † Approaching significance

Table 6 presents the age that youth in the target and comparison neighborhoods when the child entered public care. The results indicate that in both the target (82.4%, n = 122) and the comparison neighborhoods (84.0%, n=63), the majority of youth entered care when they were ten years of age or younger.

Table 6
Age of Youth When Episode Began

Age	Year 1 January 2009- August 2009		Year 2 January 2010- January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Under 1	26.6% (34)	26.4% (32)	24.6% (64)	27.1% (57)	26.1% (36)	25.9% (22)	25.7% (38)	21.3% (16)
1-5	27.3% (35)	24.8% (30)	28.5% (74)	23.3% (49)	27.5% (38)	20.0% (17)	27.0% (40)	22.7% (17)
6-10	35.9% (46)	35.5% (43)	38.1% (99)	35.2% (74)	37.7% (52)	40.0% (34)	29.7% (44)	40.0% (30)
11-15	10.2% (13)	12.4% (15)	8.80% (23)	12.9% (27)	8.70% (12)	12.9% (11)	17.6% (26)	16.0% (12)
16 and over	0.00% (0)	0.80% (1)	0.00% (0)	1.40% (3)	0.00% (0)	1.20% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
Total:	128	121	283	210	138	85	148	75
Pearson Chi-Square	(Fisher's Exact Test) (4) = 1.455, p = .924		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 6.752, p = .134		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 3.767, p = .427		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 2.41, p = .491	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Table 7 indicates that there were no significant differences found between target and comparison neighborhoods for Year 4 for months in placement under/over 24. During Year 4, the majority of youth were in care for over 24 months (target = 92.6%; comparison = 93.3%).

Table 7
Months of Youth in Placement

Months	Year 1 January 2009 - August 2009		Year 2 January 2010- January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
24 or under	6.30% (8)	16.5% (20)	10.4% (27)	43.3% (91)	16.0% (47)	12.0% (21)	7.40% (11)	6.70% (5)
25 and over	93.8% (120)	83.5% (101)	89.6% (233)	56.7% (119)	84.0% (246)	88.0% (154)	92.6% (137)	93.3% (70)
Total:	(128)	(121)	(260)	(210)	(293)	(175)	(148)	(75)
Pearson Chi-Square	*$X^2(1) = 6.59$, p = .010		$X^2(1) = .131$, p = .718		$X^2(1) = 1.44$, p = .230		$X^2(1) = 0.04$, p = .834	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category
*Significant p < .01

Table 8 presents the gender of youth in foster care. There are 8.20% more males than females being served by the project. There were no significant differences found between groups related to gender.

Table 8
Gender of Youth in Foster Care

Gender	Year 1 January 2009- August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Female	45.3% (71)	42.1% (45)	45.0% (117)	43.3% (91)	47.8% (140)	41.7% (73)	45.9% (68)	46.7% (35)
Male	54.7% (79)	57.9% (75)	55.0% (143)	56.7% (119)	52.2% (153)	58.3% (102)	54.1% (80)	53.3% (40)
Total:	150	120	260	210	293	175	148	75
Pearson Chi-Square	$X^2(1) = 0.253$, $p = .615$		$X^2(1) = 0.131$, $p = .718$		$X^2(1) = 1.630$, $p = .202$		$X^2(1) = 0.01$, $p = .919$	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Table 9 presents data on siblings in foster care. In order to identify siblings, youth with the same case number were assumed to be siblings; however, there may be additional siblings that were not assigned the same case number because they entered the system during different times and did not have the same last name and/or children with the same last name and birth family address were not consistently reported to be siblings. There were no significant differences found between the target and comparison groups for Year 4.

Table 9
Siblings in Foster Care

Siblings in Foster Care	Year 1 January 2009– August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Yes	36.7% (47)	36.4% (44)	34.6% (90)	32.4% (68)	65.9% (193)	61.7% (100)	43.2% (64)	32.0% (24)
No	63.3% (81)	63.6% (77)	65.4% (170)	67.6% (142)	34.1% (108)	38.3% (67)	56.8% (84)	68.0% (51)
Total:	128	121	260	210	293	175	148	75
Pearson Chi-Square	$X^2(1) = 0.003$, $p = 0.954$		$X^2(1) = 0.260$, $p = 0.610$		$X^2(1) = 0.825$, $p = 0.364$		$X^2(1) = 2.63$, $p = 0.105$	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Table 10 indicates that there are mostly African-American youths in care in Year 4 (targeted = 78.4%; comparison = 94.7%). Significant differences were found between the target and comparison neighborhoods in Year 4 (two-tailed, Fisher's exact test = 9.95, $p = .019$). There were a greater percentage of African-American youth in the comparison neighborhood (94.7%) than the target neighborhood (78.4%). There was also a higher percentage of multi-racial (target = 3.40%; comparison = 1.30%) and white youth (target = 16.9%; comparison = 4.00%) when comparing the two neighborhood groups.

Table 10
Race and Ethnicity of Youth in Foster Care by Target & Comparison Neighborhoods

Race & Ethnicity	Year 1 January 2009- August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Black/								

African American	85.2% (109)	91.7% (111)	83.1% (216)	95.2% (200)	80.9% (237)	93.7% (164)	78.4% (116)	94.7 (71)
Multi-racial	4.70%(6)	1.70% (2)	4.60% (12)	1.00% (2)	4.80% (14)	0.60% (1)	3.40% (5)	1.30% (1)
White	9.40% (12)	6.60% (8)	11.9% (31)	3.80% (8)	13.5% (40)	4.00% (7)	16.9% (25)	4.00% (4)
Undetermined	0.80%(1)	0.00% (0)	0.40% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.70% (2)	1.70% (3)	1.40% (2)	0.00% (0)
Total:	150	120	260	210	293	175	148	75
Pearson Chi-Square	(Fisher's Exact Test) = 3.445, *p* = .153		***(Fisher's Exact Test) = 17.641, *p* < .001		***(Fisher's Exact Test) = 20.94, *p* < .001		***(Fisher's Exact Test) = 9.95, *p* < .05	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category
*Significant p < .05; ***Significant p< .001*

Termination Cohort Data.

In Year 4, Table 11 indicates that the majority of youth who exited care had entered foster care when they were less than 10 years old (89.7% in target neighborhoods; 75.0% in comparison neighborhoods). In the target group, 64.1% of children in the Year 4 sample were 5 years of age or younger as compared to 75.0% in the comparison group. The differences were not statistically significant and were similar to the entry cohort data.

Table 11
Ages of Children when Initially Placed in Foster Care

	Year 1 January 2009–August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
Age	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Under 1	40.4% (19)	60.0% (21)	30.0% (3)	75.0% (6)	50.0% (6)	33.3% (2)	43.6% (17)	33.3% (8)
1-5	19.1% (9)	17.1% (6)	30.0% (3)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (3)	33.3% (2)	20.5% (8)	25.0% (6)
6-10	25.5% (12)	11.4% (4)	20.0% (2)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (3)	16.7% (1)	25.6% (10)	16.7% (4)
11-15	14.9% (7)	11.4% (4)	20.0% (2)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	16.7% (1)	10.3% (4)	25.0% (6)
16 and over	0.00% (0)	0.00 (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
Total:	47	35	10	6	12	6	39	24
Pearson's Chi Square	(Fisher's Exact Test) = 3.771, *p* = .285		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 3.739, *p* = .080		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 2.430, *p* = 0.623		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 3.102, *p* = 0.376	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Table 12 provides the age that youth exited care. In Year 4, 71.8% of those children exiting the system from the target neighborhood were under the age of 11 years and 50.0% in the comparison neighborhoods. Differences between children in the target and comparison neighborhoods were not statistically significant.

Table 12
Ages of Children when Exiting Care

	Year 1 January 2009– August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4	
Age	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Under 1	6.40% (3)	17.1% (6)	10.0% (1)	50.0% (4)	16.7% (2)	0.00% (0)	5.10% (2)	0.00% (0)
1-5	25.5% (12)	37.1% (8)	20.0% (2)	25.0% (2)	33.3% (4)	33.3% (2)	46.2% (18)	33.3% (8)

6-10	23.4% (11)	28.6% (10)	20.0% (2)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (3)	33.3% (2)	20.5% (8)	16.7% (4)
11-15	31.9% (15)	11.4% (4)	10.0% (1)	12.5% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	7.70% (3)	8.30% (2)
16 and over	12.8% (6)	5.70% (2)	40.0% (4)	0.00% (0)	25.0% (3)	33.3% (2)	20.5% (8)	41.7% (10)
Total:	47	35	10	8	12	6	39	24
Pearson's Chi Square	(Fisher's Exact Test) = 7.747, *p* = .097		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 5.947, *p* = .203		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 1.217, *p* = 1.00		(Fisher's Exact Test) = 4.27, *p* = 0.370,	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Table 13 presents the gender of the youth leaving foster care. No statistically significant results were reported between children in the target and comparison neighborhoods for Year 4. There were more females leaving foster care in the target neighborhoods (53.8%) than males (46.2%).

Table 13
Gender of Youth Leaving Foster Care

	Year 1 January 2009– August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
Gender	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Female	40.4% (19)	57.1% (20)	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	50.0% (6)	66.7% (4)	53.8% (21)	58.3% (14)
Male	59.6% (28)	42.9% (15)	80.0% (8)	50.0% (4)	50.0% (6)	33.3% (2)	46.2% (18)	41.7% (10)
Total:	47	35	10	8	12	6	39	24
Pearson's Chi Square	X^2 (1) = 2.248, *p* = .134		(Fisher's Exact Test), *p* = .321		(X^2 (1) = 0.450, *p* = .502		X^2 (1) = 0.121, *p* = .728	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Table 14 indicates the number of youth exiting care who have siblings; it is unknown whether the siblings have been placed together or left siblings still within care. Only 45.8% of the youth in the target and comparison groups who left foster care had a sibling in the system. Year 4 results denote approaching significance (Fisher's Exact Test, *p* = 0.08) where 33.3% of children in the target neighborhood had siblings as compared to 12.5% of the comparison group.

Table 14
Youth Leaving Foster Care who have Siblings within System

	Year 1 January 2009- August 2009		Year 2 January 2010-January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
Siblings in Foster Care	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Yes	29.8% (14)	28.6% (10)	30.0% (3)	25.0% (2)	8.30% (1)	16.7% (1)	33.3% (13)	12.5% (3)
No	70.2% (33)	71.4% (25)	70.0% (7)	75.0% (6)	91.7% (11)	83.3% (5)	66.7% (26)	87.5% (21)
Total:	47	35	10	8	12	6	39	24
Pearson's Chi Square	X^2 (1) = .014, *p* = .905		(Fisher's Exact Test), *p* = 1.00		(Fisher's Exact Test), *p* = 1.00		(†Fisher's Exact Test), *p* = 0.08	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category; †*Approaching significance*

Table 15 indicates the majority of youth exiting the system are African-American (87.2% in the target and 95.8% in the comparison neighborhoods) or white (10.3% in target neighborhood). No statistical significance was found between the target and comparison groups in terms of race.

Table 15
Race and Ethnicity of Youth Leaving Foster Care by Target & Comparison Neighborhoods

Race & Ethnicity	Year 1 January 2009- August 2009		Year 2 January 2010- January 2011		Year 3 July 2010- July 2011		Year 4 August 2011- August 2012	
	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison	Target	Comparison
Black/ African American	70.2% (33)	85.7% (30)	100% (10)	87.5% (7)	75.0% (9)	83.3% (5)	87.2% (34)	95.8% (23)
Multi-racial	2.10% (1)	2.90% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	25.0% (3)	0.00% (0)	2.60% (1)	4.20% (1)
White	27.7% (13)	11.4% (4)	0.00% (0)	12.5% (1)	0.00% (0)	16.7% (1)	10.3% (4)	0.00% (0)
Undetermined	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
Total:	47	35	10	8	12	6	39	24
Pearson's Chi Square	(Fisher's Exact Test) = 3.419, p = .153		(Fisher's Exact Test), p = .444		(Fisher's Exact Test), = 2.939, p = 0.191		(Fisher's Exact Test), = 2.71, p = 0.259	

[1] Values in parentheses equal actual number of children in category

Children Specific Recruitment: Teen Cases

As part of the permanency planning process, our teen specialist from Beech Brook works with current supports in the youth's life to form a permanency planning team. Team members may include foster parents; foster care networks and/or group home and residential staff; Neighborhood Agencies, CCDCFS staff, educators, coaches, friends and their families, and other people important in the teen's life, as identified by the teen. As the teen specialist identifies permanency resources, she refers to the Adoption Navigators those people who are interested in providing permanency through foster/adopt. System of Care Supervisors in the neighborhood will additionally assist with identifying barriers to licensure and getting youth or families needed services in their community.

Our goal was to work with 25% of youth who emancipate each year (approximately 38 out of 150) and work with a relative resource family before the youth leave care for a total of 152 youth from Years 2-5, with an estimated 38 youth per year. At the end of Year 4, 21 cases are part of PFFF. Thirteen of these cases are very active, 6 are not active and 2 youth have been discharged from the program. One of the lessons learned since the project was initiated is that even youth without a permanent connection do not want to be engaged in permanency planning. Some are not encouraged to participate by their child welfare workers and others report they know they plans and don't want or need help. This year the project tried to touch more youth but not as intensively, leaving more of the case management of with the child welfare worker. We were naïve in the amount of time it really takes to engage an older youth and plan for connection; as such, we have had to adjust the number of youth that can be realistically served by the project.

Overview of Services

Permanency planning services included meeting with clients, contacting and having conversations with permanency resources such as former foster/adoptive families, bio family, siblings, therapists, teacher's, case managers from private agencies that are supervising the foster care placements, mentors and current foster parents/staff. The Beech Brook Permanency Youth Specialist (PYS) supports sibling and birth parent relationships, strengthening the connection and bond as some kids and families have been separated for years.

D

D is 19 years old. He was recently emancipated from CCDCFS custody. He had the good fortune to land in an excellent foster home for the past 7 years. His foster mom was a teacher's aide in the school he was attending and when she found out that he was in need of a foster home she stepped to the plate and asked CCDCFS to place him in her home. She was already a licensed foster parent (along with her husband).

D had a relatively stable placement until he was about 17 years old. He then began to have some "acting out" in the form of breaking curfew, staying out overnight (AWOL), experimenting with drugs/alcohol, and missing important appointments. He also had involvement with juvenile court and then adult court for several stealing incidents and curfew violations. This was frustrating to the foster parents, however, they responded as most parents would… they made sure D was referred to appropriate services such as New Directions, therapy, mentoring, and they stuck with him.

I began working with D about a year ago as he was starting his senior year. He wanted to attend Cuyahoga Community College and major in business. As he began to discuss his permanency plan with me over a year ago, he realized that his foster parents were his best permanency resource. Both of his own parents are deceased and his adult siblings are not able to offer him a stable residence. They struggle themselves financially and otherwise. They are however, available to him for visits.

D graduated from high school in June 2012. His foster parents, realizing his need for a stable permanent residence offered him the option of staying on in their home and paying rent with is college bound and ETV money. They also made a contract with D about their expectations if he is live in the home as they continue to foster younger children. They also expect him to save money for his own apartment someday and they monitor this closely. Thus far, about two months into this plan, things are going well.

This is a success story due to:
1. Youth had excellent committed foster parents (they were not able to adopt for personal reasons)
2. Youth had a stable foster placement over the course of many years where he felt wanted, respected, and nurtured.
3. Foster parents engaged with the youth as if he were their own. Very active foster father established strong bond with youth. Strong relationships within foster family.
4. Youth has stable, welcoming semi supervised home to live in as he begins to deal with adult responsibilities such as college, transportation, budgeting, banking

S

S is 19 years old. She was emancipated from CCDCFS custody in January 2012 following two foster care placements and one IL placement in a scattered sight apartment. I have been working with her since she was a junior in high school. She was at South High at the time and in a two year vocational program for cosmetology. She loved it and had some strong relationships with her teachers in this program.

After her junior year, South High School was closed permanently and S was transferred to East Tech High School. They did not have a similar program. S was unable to continue her preparation for a career in cosmetology. This was extremely disappointing to her.

S had her first foster care placement with a relative and the placement lasted about 7-8 years. During her senior year of high school, foster mom asked for her removal due to behavior issues (fighting) in the home with her bio half sister. She moved to another home for several months before graduating from high school in June 2011 and moving to an IL scattered site apartment through Bellefaire.

S worked hard with me to develop a permanency plan. She engaged both of her former foster moms to be a part of the plan as well as her aunts and cousins.

S managed in the apartment fairly well while she was being supported by Bellefaire. She enrolled in cosmetology school and seemed to enjoy it. She struggled with budgeting her money… she would loan

friends/relatives money and her bus pass. She would share her food stamp card, her cell phone, etc. with her boyfriend and then have no way to communicate with school, social worker etc. She was always scrounging but she managed.

When she was emancipated from custody things took a downward turn. She began receiving College Bound and ETV money. She continued to make poor decisions about the money. She spent the money or loaned it out before I had a chance to discuss it with her. She was always behind in her rent, but thanks to a wonderful landlord, she was not evicted.

In February 2012 she was two months pregnant and her boyfriend that was around and in her apartment all the time prior to this, all of sudden became very low profile. S continued to go to school but she struggled the rest of the spring and summer. She did not feel well and the heat of this past summer really made her pregnancy difficult.

In August 2012 her lease was up and she had to move. She could not afford the apartment anymore. She was "couch surfing" for the entire month. She was staying alternately with her cousins, her former foster mom, her baby's father and his cousins and his new girlfriend (also pregnant with his child). Her baby was born one month early on August 27, 2012 and was considered premature.

Thankfully, S's former foster mom allowed her to move in with her baby when they were discharged from the hospital and has provided her with a safe and secure home for this past month. She expects S to move on this month.

I took S to the YWCA-NIA program several times right before she gave birth to assist her in applying and being accepted to their program which provides secure housing in spacious apartments on site and case management services to homeless young women ages 18-24. They have special services for young parents. It seemed like an ideal program for S.

S has decided she does not want to participate in this program and is planning to lease an apartment with her cousin who has a one year old daughter. They are moving next week.

This is S's story… not success and not a failure, but a troubling one. S has permanency "people" resources but she is completely on her own financially and is depending on College Bound and ETV for all of her income (she had applied for jobs last spring but did not have a working phone at the time to get calls about her applications).

Her permanency resources ask her for money…. gas money to drive her to doctor appointments, money to repair things in their home etc. I have encouraged S to say "NO". This is difficult for her.

M

M is a discharged client having been part of my PFFF caseload for about two years ending in January 2012, six months after his emancipation from CCDCFS custody.

M had a series of placements starting from a very young age in foster homes, group homes, and IL program. He was separated from his siblings who were then adopted by their foster parents. Adoptive parents were concerned about M's influence on his younger siblings and discouraged contact. He was briefly placed with his grandma who planned to adopt him, however that never happened and the placement disrupted. For a few years afterward M did not have any contact with his grandma.

I first met M when he was living at Youth Re-Entry in an IL program. He was very much alone in the world. He kept in touch with one aunt in Cleveland. He worked with me on a permanency plan and we recruited his aunt, grandma, and his bio mom via phone (she lives out of state) to be part of the plan. His bio father is deceased.

Toward the end of his custody, at his request, CCDCFS allowed him to take a bus to Illinois to visit his mom. The visit did not go well and M ended up leaving his mom's house and staying with a relative for the remainder of the trip.

M graduated from high school in June 2011. Upon emancipation, M was enrolled at Cuyahoga Community College but had nowhere to live. I encouraged him to apply for housing at the Opportunity House however M declined this as he did not want to follow the rules and was not prepared to pass a required drug test for admission.

He has been "couch surfing" for over a year. He has stayed with his aunt, grandma, and friends with nothing being permanent. He did not make it in college probably due to lack of a stable residence and the stress involved in that. He does not have any specific skills and has not worked. He had College Bound and ETV for the 2011-12 school year but no longer has that means of support. He does not have a consistent working phone or bus pass. He does have food stamps. He is scrounging.

The lack of a consistent strong adult support system has interfered with this young man's ability to make it outside the system. He did fairly well when he was in it. He does not have any parents, substitute parents, or significant adult to assist him. He feels fortunate that he is able to sleep on their couches and not in a homeless shelter.

Sustainability

<u>Learning Community</u>.

As part of our contract for the Partners for Forever Families grant, Adoption Network Cleveland (ANC) coordinated a series of Learning Communities that took place throughout 2012. The Learning Communities were set up as a series of educational opportunities that grant partners and community members could attend. Topics were chosen by both the Legal Symposium Planning Committee and the Partners for Forever Families Steering Committee. A list of topics of educational desires of CCDCFS adoption staff was also used in the planning. Topics that held the most broad interest were chosen.

CEUs and certificates of attendance (for foster parents) were free for participants. ANC sought to partner with the Guardian Ad Litem program to offer CLEs for attorneys but were unable to work it out to do so. Workshops were held in a variety of locations which included Adoption Network Cleveland, Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court and the West Side Community House. The offerings were publicized through flyers and email. Legal Symposium Planning Committee, PFFF Steering Committee and CCDCFS agency representatives were asked for forward the emails and flyers to their constituents.

Attendance varied at the workshops. Participants included county social workers, private agency social workers, foster parents, adoptive parents, Neighborhood Collaborative workers and, for the last offering, a few teenage foster youth and two representatives of the Ohio Attorney General's office. The final workshop "Challenges Faced by Aging Out Youth" was by far the most popular. Reasons for this may include: long lead time between when the workshop was planned and help which was used to increase marketing, out of town trainer who is popular and well respected, or partnering with the West Side Community House to offer the workshop a second time on the same day.

ANC partnered with the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program to be able to pay trainers for their time for the sessions to which that applied. Workshop evaluation included the participants completing the OCWTP workshop evaluation tool. All workshops rated in the excellent to very good range. Summaries of the evaluations for each offering are available upon request.

Sessions included:
1. Financial Resources Available to Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families
   Presenter: Tracey Brichacek, MSSA
   An introduction to the various forms of pre- and post-adoptive financial assistance to families
   Date: Friday, February 24, 2012
   Time: 11:30 am to 1:00 pm (Brown Bag Lunch)
   Location: Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, 9300 Quincy Avenue, Jury Assembly Room, Second Floor
   Attendance: 12

2. Working with Families Raising Children with Histories of Pre-Adoptive Trauma
   Presenter: Maureen Riley-Behringer, MSSA, LISW
   This training helps adoption professionals and adoptive parents learn ways to facilitate understanding of the impact of pre-adoptive trauma and loss on their child, adult relationship/marriage and family life.
   Date: Friday, March 16, 2012
   Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
   Location: Adoption Network Cleveland, 4614 Prospect Avenue, Suite 550
   Attendance: 8

3. Case Review Process of Engaging Youth and Concurrent Planning
   Presenters: Christopher Cabot, LSW, MPA and Lara Parks, Senior Supervisor of the Case Review Department
   In this brown bag lunch we will review the team decision making case review process at CCDCFS, including important components such as engaging youth and developing solid concurrent plans.
   Date: Wednesday, April 11, 2012
   Time: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm (Brown Bag Lunch)
   Location: Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, 9300 Quincy Avenue, Jury Assembly Room, Second Floor
   Cancelled due to low registration

4. Sustaining Adoptions
   Presenter: Zoe Breen Wood, MSW
   Come learn about ways to keep adoptions of youth and sibling groups from foster care strong and healthy.
   Date: Friday, May 18, 2012
   Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
   Location: Adoption Network Cleveland, 4614 Prospect Avenue, Suite 550, Cleveland, OH
   Attendance: 8

5. Family Search and Engagement/Child Centered Recruitment
   Presenter: Maureen Heffernan and Betsie Norris
   Looking for connections for youth in foster care is key to finding permanency. The best connections are often family or those known to the child. This workshop will provide an overview of how and why this needs to be done throughout the life of a case.
   Date: Tuesday, June 12, 2012
   Time: 1:00 to 4:00 pm
   Location: Adoption Network Cleveland, 4614 Prospect Avenue, Suite 550, Cleveland, OH
   Attendance: 8

6. Challenges Faced by Aging-out Youth
   Presenter: Lisa Dickson
   Led by a former foster youth, this workshop explores barriers and resources related to emancipating foster youth during their journey into young adulthood.
   Date: Wednesday, September 19, 2012
   Workshop offered twice, in two different locations:
   Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
   Location: Adoption Network Cleveland, 4614 Prospect Avenue, Suite 550, Cleveland, OH
   Time: 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm
   Location: West Side Community House, 9300 Lorain Avenue, Cleveland, OH

Part of sustaining PFFF was to make sure there were professionals in the community who gained knowledge about the various issues encountered by other youth and sibling group. Building a learning community is one way to sustain the grant.

Neighborhood Collaboratives/Non-DCFS Agencies

1. Collaboration with Neighborhood Collabs: With CCDCFS and other Collabs; communication has been strengthened and we want that to continue; should have quarterly meetings so we stay on the same page; continue to promote the support of families together; continue to actively identify ambassadors in the community to promote the delivery of the permanency message; sustain via collaboration; need to continue to have the funds to do recruitment; to allow for specific recruitment strategies to be partnered with areas outside the target; messaging to educate our communities of the needs identified by the grant; monthly/quarterly forum is held for these types of report-outs to occur; sharpen the contracts around recruitment with Collabs

2. Digital Me's/Heart Gallery: children are best at telling their stories; get them out in the public eye and use with outreach activities; increase the numbers of Digital Me's/Heart Gallery

3. Navigators: Continue to have the services of the adoption navigator

4. Legal Symposium- will be important to find ways to continue building bridges and increase communication between agencies and courts; grant to provide funding to continue this and find a champion to take this on

5. Case Management for Aging-out Teens : For the first year they are on their own for transition support;

6. Family Search & Engagement/Fatherhood Initiative- FSE and file mining for youth in care

7. Customer service on-going work for all

8. Any activity that has been successful at recruiting adoptive parents- (i.e., Youth Speak-out; Digital Me's… etc); youth engagement in recruitment (i.e., Speak at Pre-service; Collabs)

CCDCFS

1. Community-based based diligent recruitment; supporting potential foster/adoptive families in those neighborhoods

2. Funding- Funding for relatives and others during the home study process; to retain C. Kaufmann and her incredible work with the youth assigned to her; Digital Me's; a skilled community worker with recruitment experience/education

3. Care, support, and permanency connections for older youth becoming independent and self-supporting

4. Would like to see services provided under the grant to be offered to more youth in foster care (i.e., residential care) as some were ruled-out due to a supposed duplication of services; however some youth, while seeming to have a permanency plan, had these plans fall-through upon separation from the system

5. An on-going focus of strategic planning.

6. Re-design reports from recruitment

    III. **Conclusion**

       As a conclusion to Year 4, we are listing the successes identified by the PFFF partners.

Neighborhood Collaboratives/Non-DCFS Agencies
1. Increase in community knowledge about the need for adoption, kinship care, foster care and permanency

2. Faith-based Connections: With local churches committed to their communities' children providing long-term assistance in finding permanency; increase awareness regarding sibling groups

3. Heart Gallery & Digital Me's- To relay the need for adoption, fostering, kinship, and mentoring; increased quality/quantity; Getting the Heart Gallery back out there and integrating the Digital Me's

4. Neighborhood Collabs: Identified 10 families who now have completed foster/adoptive parent licensures and are willing to adopt; child-centered approaches in the Collabs; collaboration with other Collabs to pool resources and present the play in both areas; funding to purchase marketing materials to support discussions points while recruiting; secured funding through the grant to assist a family through this process; our neighborhoods have shown an increase in the number of people interested in adoption

5. ANC & Adoption Navigators: More integrated in neighborhood events; 25 active families being worked with; Learning Communities offered 6 high quality workshops on requested topics; Youth speak out- relatable and creative approach

6. Teen Specialist- Every youth on caseload has at least 1 on-going connection with bio/adoptive family; no youth has ended up in a homeless shelter since emancipation; successful about educating foster parents about the importance of "sticking by" the youth they have fostered on the long-term

7. Karamu as a new partner and the youth engagement around this project

8. Home study evaluation

9. Early strategic planning groups take-off

CCDCFS
1. Family Search & Engagement- Promotion at the "front door"; integration of FSE work into the overall agency strategic planning; obtained Accurint/Lexis Nexus to be used in the entire agency as a FSE tool; making connections with family members for children in the system for a long time

2. Home-study/Pre-service- The data used in surveying Pre-service Training, ongoing home study activity with foster homes; shows how staff needs to be oriented towards clinical work in understanding, responding and development of our clients; printed material/funding for relatives going through the home study process; community partners looking deeper into recruitment and retention of families as they come in the front door of the agency

3. <u>Emancipating Youth:</u> Permanency planning services provided to youth emancipating from care; he support and linkage to higher education and housing; re-engagement of birth family to youth when appropriate

4. <u>Community-based Activities:</u> Having community partners implement and track out-of-the-box recruitment strategies; were awesome from a PR standpoint as well as results with youth; Much progress related to strategic planning to change policies and practices within the agency

5. <u>Recruitment Department staff</u> - Work with the PFFF areas in the development of knowledge, reporting, and development skills in preparing their out-of-the-box recruitment and bi-annual plans; re-working community reports to make data understandable, meaningful, and useable for the agency, the neighborhoods, and CWRU.

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Appendix A

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Plan Name Effective Period

2012-2014 What Every Child Needs...Family Recruitment Plan 05/01/2012 - 04/30/2014

Goals

> Number of Projected Inquiries - 1,500

> Number of Children to be Placed - 244

> Number of Planned Recruitment Events - 100

> Number of Families to be Approved/Certified - 100

Additional Comments

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) believes in providing support and resources for it's existing foster and adoptive families. They are our largest referral source. If they have their needs met and feel supported, they will continue to spread the word. Foster/adoptive families are supported through Cluster Support groups, continuing training/development and the support of resource managers who are assigned specifically to to manage the foster homes.

We also know that a large percent of our foster/adoptive families are relative caregivers. They continue to need training and support. During this time period, the agency will continue to evaluate what is working and identify opportunities for growth and development.

Agency Fee Structure

There are no fees for foster care certification or adoption approval through Cuyahoga County. There is also no fee for BCI/FBI fingerprints during the application/homestudy process.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Community Strategies

CCDCFS will maintain a full-time Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment Department; the duties of which will include the planning and implementation of a comprehensive recruitment plan to be approved by the agency Director and submitted to the state by May 1st of every other year in the even numbered years. The recruitment plan will include but not be limited to a campaign developed and implemented to recruit for foster/adoptive families to meet the needs of the population of children CCDCFS has in custody. The plan includes, but is not limited to participation at community events and activities, the development of brochures, pamphlets and flyers, responding to inquiries, foster/adoption nights, adoption mixers/events, faith based activities and grass roots community outreach efforts in the communities from which our children are being removed. Recruitment priorities shall be established biannually. CCDCFS's recruitment priorities during this time period have been established based on the following:

1. Child Demographics: The children who need temporary or permanent homes range in age from 0-18 years, 77% are African-American. Frequently, the children are older youth or part of a sibling group. Due to histories of abuse and neglect, the children are likely to possess some degree of physical, social, emotional, cognitive problems/or developmental delay, and require specialized care to meet their needs, ranging from traditional care to specialized and therapeutic care.

2. Current geographic distribution of client cases and the distribution of licensed CCDCFS foster/adoptive homes.

The community will be made aware of CCDCFS's need to recruit foster and adoptive families for the population of children who need temporary and permanent placements. This will be accomplished utilizing a diverse multi-faceted outreach campaign including, but not limited to, a variety of media strategy (print, radio and television), special events and adoption mixers, public speaking engagements, in home parties, displays, billboards, literature distribution, the CCDCFS website and the Adopt US Kids website.

Recruitment Strategies:

1. Community Partner Recruitment/Retention: CCDCFS contracts with Neighborhood Community Collaborative Partners in which recruitment is a deliverable. Each community partner has a written recruitment and retention plan for the next 2 years that focuses on general and targeted recruitment strategies to recruit families to meet the needs of specific groups such as adolescents, minority children from birth to 18 years old, medically-fragile or emotionally disturbed children and sibling groups within each of their neighborhoods. CCDCFS convenes quarterly meeting with the Collaboratives. As part of these recruitment management team meetings, updates are provided and "lessons learned" are shared. CCDCFS will approve each plan and meet regularly on an individual basis with each Collaborative to discuss our recruitment plans for implementation & progress reports. PIO's in recruitment are assigned to each collaborative. Through partnerships with our Community Partners throughout Cuyahoga County, targeted recruitment efforts in each community focus on local businesses, organizations, churches, schools, council wards, newspapers and residents to participate in the belief that Recruitment is Everyone's Business. We need to create an awareness of our children's needs and educate the community on their needs before we can recruit families to come to make that first call to 216-881-5775 (our recruitment line). We will have a variety of posters, stand up displays and material to place in local establishments, churches, schools etc. Countywide recruitment efforts include but are not limited to the following:

A. Partnering with Cuyahoga County libraries and city libraries through Cuyahoga County to display our recruitment material or host the Moving Hearts Gallery.

B. Partnering with the YMCA's throughout Cuyahoga County to display our recruitment information at each branch and support our

families and youth through events, memberships etc.

C. Partnering with Fire Stations throughout Cuyahoga County to host "Dinner Time". Our Community partners are contacting fire stations asking to present information to them during dinner and they will bring dessert.

D. The foster/adoptive family incentive referral program: existing foster/adoptive families refer other families to become foster and adoptive parents. When the prospective family inquires and attends session #1 of training, the referring family will receive a gift card. If the prospective family submits an application, the referring family receives another gift card. The key element is that the prospective family has to identify the family who recruited them in our database or on their application. The community partners work with a recruitment PIO to track these families.

E. Foster/adoptive parties: these parties are two hours in length and consist of information, games, prizes and a light snack. Our existing foster/adoptive families invite potential families to their home, place of worship, community center etc. CCDCFS and our community partners will provide the invitation, games, information, prizes etc. Potential families who attend the party are sent information via mail as well as contacted by our community partners for follow up. The goal is to keep the potential families engaged and supported from the first time they receive the information about foster care and adoption.

F. Community Events and activities: CCDCFS will partner with contracted community partners to have information and collaterals at events and activities in the neighborhood from which our children are being removed. For example, local fairs, health fairs, homedays, family fun days, promotional events etc.

2. Faith-based recruitment efforts: In 2012, we are developing strategies around faith based recruitment efforts. We have 2013 and 2014 to implement these strategies. Our faith based institutions are an untapped resource for our children and families. Through these relationships, it is the intention that these places of worship will then agree to display recruitment posters or allow stories or

RECRUITMENT PLAN

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ads in their newsletters, bulletins etc. host the heart gallery, assist our aging out youth. Members of the congregations may be recruited to take on a recruitment activity at their place of worship. We may even make a connection by utilizing our foster/adoptive families in these recruitment efforts. Statistics show that foster/adoptive families are the best referral source for new foster/adoptive families. In the past, we have invited our families to participate on community panels, sit at tables at events, share their experience and journey via local newspapers, media interviews and our Recruitment DVD. Asking them to make a connection to their place of worship is an untapped resource. Our community partners are hosting Gospels Fests and faith dinners in their communities as well. This is a developing strategy over the next two years.

3. Engaging youth both in PC and those who have aged out to speak at Foster Parent 101 as well as events throughout Cuyahoga County to share their experiences and tell their stories. Actually being able to hear from the youth makes an emotional connection that staff can not. There is no one better to speak about the needs of our youth than our youth.

4. The utilization of the CCDCFS recruitment DVD, "What Every Child Needs...Family" throughout the community. The recruitment DVD features two foster/adoptive families who have parented both siblings and older youth. The DVD also features youth who were in the custody of CCDCFS, some were adopted and some aged out of custody and were not adopted. We also use "Digital Me's" DVD that are child specific recruitment tools at pre service training and countywide recruitment events. Digital Me's are video presentations created by youth and staff. They feature youth available for adoption who want to be adopted. The Digital Me features the youth articulating their likes, dislikes, interests and what they are looking for in a family. They personalize youth and actively involve youth in their own recruitment efforts.

5. Moving Hearts Gallery will travel throughout Cuyahoga County featuring our children/youth available for adoption. Each gallery can feature 14-22 children/youth as well as in their own words, what they are looking for in a family and why they want a family. We are targeting libraries, malls, museums, theaters, banks, conference centers, cafes, colleges and universities etc.

6. Child specific recruitment activities shall be conducted for children in permanent custody for whom adoption is the plan and a family has not yet been identified. This shall be accomplished through the production of flyers, through events which permit prospective parents to meet waiting children (mixers), with the use of the Adopt US Kids website and the Moving Hearts Gallery. The CCDCFS website features photos as well as Digital Me's of waiting youth. Diligent efforts will be made to recruit prospective families in the communities from which the children are being removed. (This is also explained in detail under adoption matching efforts.)

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Description of Children in the County and State
Please note: statistics are based on 2011.

As of December 2011, there were approximately 1,991 children in custody. 77% of the children were black and 56% were males. There are 615 children in Permanent Custody. We continually recruit for family and theraputic foster homes by distributing

literature for both types of level of care. We continually recruit for adoptive families for our waiting children especially those children and youth with no identified families. We partner with our community collaborative partners as well as our contracted private providers. Our placement department is in constant communication with resource managers and adoption workers.

Count of Children in PC in 2011: 615

Age Children/Youth Count(%)

0-1 231 (5%)

2-5 113 (18%)

6-9 84 (14%)

10-13 101 (16%)

14-17 207 (34%)

18-20 79 (13%)

21+ 0 (0%)

Male 344 (56%)

Female 271 (44%)

American Indian/Alaskan Native 3 (.5%) Hispanic 29 (5%)

Black 472 (77%) NonHispanic 561 (91%)

White 128 (21%) Unable to determine 25 (4%)

Unable to determine 4 (.5%)

Unknown 8 (1%)

Developmental Characteristics/Level of care...

We had 615 children in PC in 2011 and 95% identify with as having a physical, emotional and or mental health special need. SACWIS doesn't track OAPL characterirstics by level of severe, moderate or none so we can not provide that data as we have in the past.

The number of children who were in PC less than 12 months was 172 in which statistics by race and gender are similar to the above, but there were more children in the the age group between 2-5 years of age and those youth 14-17 years of age which is a light shift from 2009 when the 2-5 years of age group was the highest number of children coming into permanent custody. There are 443 children that have been in PC longer than 12 months and the largest population of youth is the 14-17 years old age range with the other statistics mirroring those from above based on race, gender and developmental needs of the children.

Promising is that in a comparison of length in time between PC and Adoptive placement status over the last 5 years, the placement time in months has continually decreased. The average length of time in months in 2006 was 9.8months, the lowest in the past 10 years. In 2007 the average length of time in PC custody until put on adoptive placement dropped to 9 months, in 2008 it was 7 months and in 2009 it decreased to 5.7 months. In 2010, there was a slight increase in the number of months in PC until put on adoptive placement to 12%, but in 2011, the percentage dropped to 9%. Over all 5 years even though the decrease was continual for all races, there were several months longer between PC and adoptive placement status for black children compared to white children from 2006 through 2009 and then in 2010 and 2011, the number of months in PC increased for whit children 2 more months than black children. From 2006 through 2011 the average time in PC until placed on Adoptive placement for white and black children has been decreasing overall. As we grow and develop our Child Centered Recruitment efforts, our numbers decrease for custodies, placements and time from PC to being placed on adoptive placement status.

The level of care depends on the developmental needs of the children and youth in care. These needs appear to be primarily housed amongst those children and youth in PC with no identified families.

In 2011, 92% of those participants in pre service submitted an application for fostercare and adoption. We licensed 47 new foster and adoptive families and approved 13 adopt only homes which is 43% of those who submitted applications. We also closed 115 foster/adoptive homes, many due to adoption.

Waiting Adoptive Families in 2011: 146 which is a decrease from 2009 when we had 316 approved adoptive families.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

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Race

Black 88(60%)

White 45(31%)

Unable to determine 13(9%)

American Indian 0 (0%)

Ethnicity

Hispanic 10 (7%)

Non Hispanic 136 (93%)

In a comparison between the number of waiting children by race, there is a significant difference in the number of waiting black children at 77% compared to the number of waiting families who are black at 60%. Within the comparison between white children waiting to be adopted, at 21% compared to 31% families waiting to adopt who are white. Those statistics are reversed. We have to increase the number of African American families to be reflective of the number of waiting African American children. Our agency has consistantly done this through recruitment efforts in the communities from which our children are being removed. In the past there was Federal and state Allocations set aside specifically to recruit African American adoptive families, but since 2010, there has not been funding specifically set aside for these efforts. In the past, we were able to run large media campaigns to assist with our grass roots efforts.

Overall, the number of children in custody has decreased as well as the number of children in permanent custody over the 10 years but significantly over the last five years. We must continue to recruit within the communities from which our children are being removed as well as use targeted recruitment efforts for those children waiting to be adopted, especially those older youth and sibling groups.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Home Study & Pre-Service Training Strategies (Out of County)

Prospective foster parents will be recruited from neighborhoods from which the children are being removed within Cuyahoga County. Additionally, we will license families who reside in the contiguous counties of Geauga, Lorain, Summit, Lake, Portage and Medina Counties. Families from other counties who contact CCDCFS will be referred to their own Public Children's Service Agency (PCSA).

Prospective adoptive applicants will be recruited from Cuyahoga County. Approved adoptive families will be recruited statewide and nationwide for the purpose of adopting waiting children. Families from other counties outside of our 6 contiguous counties will be referred to their residential county for adoption approval of their home study.

Pre-Service Training is scheduled continually throughout the year with training rounds available on specific mornings and evenings during the week. Classes are held at the agency and in the community. There is no admittance into class after the start time scheduled for that class. Pre-Service training is valid for 12 months from the time the prospective applicants begin their first session of training in order to submit their application for foster care/adoption. Prospective applicants will be mandated to take Pre service training again in order to submit an application for foster care/adoption if their Pre service training is expired. Prospective applicants are allowed to begin a round of Pre service training up until session # 3. Applicants wanting to register after session#3 are referred to the next new scheduled round. A schedule for upcoming pre service training rounds is sent to all inquiries as well as reminder cards for attendance. The training schedule is also posted on the Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services' web page (www.cfs.cuyahogacounty.us).

Recruitment and Pre service Orientation training materials/packets explain information regarding but not limited to requirements to become a foster/adoptive parent, agency and community resources and support, waiting children's characteristics, the Ohio Administrative Code rules for licensing and or approving foster/adoptive homes and the paperwork for submission to begin the home study process for both programs. Information includes statements regarding falsification on the application and during the home study process and for those families planning to adopt and currently have five or more children residing in the home, a large family assessment will be performed on that family.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Home Study Assurance Strategies

All Home-study Assessors will adhere to the requirements set forth by the Ohio Administrative Code as it pertains to Foster Care and Adoption, and all applicable Agency policies and procedures. Homestudy resource managers work a variable work schedule to accommodate the needs of the applicants. Applicants are provided contact information for all departments in the foster/adoptive family handbook provided to all inquiries, applicants and a family as well as community resources and supports on the first night of pre service training. We have units housed within neighborhood resource centers. We also have homestudy staff available to participants during pre service training. Homestudy staff and supervisors provide contact information in writing including, but not limited to their name, phone number (voicemail 24 hours) email address and address of building location.

1) All Applications for Child Placement received by CCDCFS will be reviewed by a Resource Department Supervisor prior to being assigned to a home-study Assessor.

2) The home-study Assessor will send an introductory letter to the applicant within seven (7) days of receiving the case.

3) The home-study Assessor will make Face to Face contact with the applicant, in the applicant's home within fourteen (14) days of receiving the case assignment. This visit will include:

a) an initial safety assessment of the home

b) a discussion regarding any areas of concern

c) a discussion regarding all required paperwork, including a review of the Document Checklist

d) a discussion detailing what the process of the home-study will entail

4) The home-study Assessor will request (3) unrelated references and two (2) related references (as documented in the 1691). This will be completed by mailing the requests within 30 days of receiving the case. The agency will also obtain additional references if the applicant was previously certified as a foster caregiver or provided care and supervision of children.

5) All household members over the age of four (4) years MUST be interviewed. At least one of the interviews with each household

member MUST take place within the home.

6) A minimum of three (3) visits must take place in the home during the course of the homestudy.

7) When the home-study involves relatives and the child is already placed in the home, the home-study Assessor will schedule a Family Team Meeting with the child's Social Worker and the family within thirty (30) days of receiving the case.

8) The Assessor may request additional information be provided by the Applicant if:

a) an applicant or household member has suffered a serious illness or injury with the past year; or;

b) the Assessor determines it to be necessary to ensure the safety, health, or care of any foster child who may be placed in the home.

9) When the placement of a foster or adoptive child brings the number of children residing in the home to a total of five (5) or more, including biological, kinship, foster, and adoptive children, the Assessor shall complete the JFS01530 Multiple Children / Large Family Assessment and attach it to the completed JFS 01673 Assessment For Child Placement for adoption only.

10) The last visit to the home MUST occur within thirty (30) days prior to the transfer of the case to the Ongoing Resource Manager unless the Ongoing Resource Manager was the Assessor completing the home-study.

11) All home-studies will be completed within 120 days of the case assignment. Any need to extend the completion date will be approved by the Supervisor.

12) If the Applicant decides to voluntarily withdraw at any point during the homestudy process the Assessor will provide the applicant with a Voluntary Withdrawal form and close the case within thirty (30) days of receiving the withdrawal.

13) Prior to returning an application to a family, the Assessor will photocopy the application, detach the homework section, cross off each individual page of the original application and return it to the family. Assessor will include a letter documenting the decision to return the application and the reasons why. The applicant will also be notified that their Pre-service Training Certificate is valid for 12 months from the start date of class.

14) Any decision to formally deny an application for child placement will be in accordance with OAC section 5101:2-5-26 and will include the following: (please notes: if there are children in custody placed in the aplicnats homes; or, the applicants are potential placement for a child(dren), a team meeting must be called prior to the team meeting which wil be scheduled by the resource manager. this meeting will review all the issues surrounding the case.

a. Notification to the applicant will be documented on the JFS 01315 Notification of Denial of Initial Certification, Recertification or Revocation of a Foster Home Certificate.

b. Notification to the applicant will be sent via regular and certified U.S.Mail.

c. Notification will include the reason for the decision to recommend denial of initial certification and the specific law or rules with which the applicant is allegedly not in compliance.

d. Notification of the decision to recommend denial of initial certification shall also include the method for requesting an appeal via CCDCFS Policy 6.02.06 Problem Resolution with Foster/Adoptive/Relative Caregivers.

e. Notification to the applicant will also include a statement to the fact that the final decision to deny the initial certification will be made by ODJFS.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

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15) Applications submitted for Adoption Approval Only which are thought to be knowingly falsified are subject to the requirements of agency policy 6.03.03 Falsification of Adoptive Application/Home-study.

16) ALL cases submitted for Supervisory review will include the Home-study Completion Checklist and will be formatted in the appropriate manner.

17) ALL Applicants recommended for licensure will be informed by the Assessor of the requirement to complete Foster Parent 101 training prior to the placement of any foster child in the home. Newly licensed homes will be registered for this training by the Ongoing Resource Manager.

References:

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-7-02

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-20

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-21

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-22

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-28

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-33-13

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-48-09

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-48-12

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Inquiry Response Procedures

Prospective adoptive applicants will be recruited from Cuyahoga County. Approved adoptive families will be recruited statewide and nationwide for the purpose of adopting waiting children.

The Recruitment Department will not screen out foster and adoptive applicants prior to Pre service Orientation training based on a family's race, ethnicity, national origin, culture, age, handicap, religion, color creed or geographic location. We do not ask nor do we request this information at the time of inquiry.

The Recruitment Dept. provides all inquiries with the same information and requirements to become a foster and adoptive parent(s). We provide a cover letter and the PIO's business card with every packet effective February 2012.

All of our material is available on line as well via the Children and Family Services web page, cfs.cuyahogacounty.us. Individuals may view all of our material as well as our Moving Hearts Gallery(waiting children/youth) and if they want to complete an inquiry form online, they may do so. The inquiry form then is emailed to all Recruitment PIO's and supervisor. We enter their information into our two databases, contact the individual via phone as well as mail out our foster/adoptive packets including our pre service schedules for the upcoming rounds. Our pre service schedule is available online too.

There are no fees for foster care certification or adoption approval.

The Recruitment Department will be accessible to the community by phone during regular working hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday). A voice mail system will be available to the public at other times. Interested persons may also have faceto-face contact with Recruitment Staff during regular working hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday), except on Thursday, when the hours are 1:00 PM-9:00 PM. Recruitment Staff may be seen at other times by appointment.

Interpreters are available for a wide variety of foreign languages, including American Sign Language, to assist with recruitment, the home study and training activities. In addition, a Bi-Lingual (Spanish) staff member is in the Recruitment Department. The Recruitment department is available to answer questions from inquirers or direct questions to a supervisor if they are unable to answer questions.

CCDCFS Recruitment Department will track all inquiries on a control card and then enter information into SACWIS and DAWN. Every phone call, inquiry made, information sent, invitation to class, class attended and completed, application made and follow-up/reminder card sent is tracked in SACWIS and DAWN.

Information and requirements are sent within seven days of inquiry including information on the characteristics of waiting children, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, developmental, emotional and physical needs of waiting children (1-12months of age and waiting children over 12 months of age) and the CCDCFS Statement on policy of Non-Discrimination.

Recruitment and Pre service Orientation training materials/packets explain information regarding but not limited to requirements to become a foster/adoptive parent, agency and community resources and support, waiting children's
characteristics, the Ohio Administrative Code rules for licensing and or approving foster/adoptive families and the paperwork needed for submission to begin the home study process. Information includes statements regarding falsification on the application and during the home study process and for those families planning to adopt and currently have five or more children residing in the home, a large family assessment will be performed on that family.

Linguistic Barriers Strategies

The Recruitment Department will be accessible to the community by phone during regular working hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday), 24 hour voicemail is available to the public at other times. Interested persons may also have face-to-face contact with Recruitment Staff during regular working hours (8:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday), except on Thursday, the time is extended until 8:30 pm. Recruitment Staff may be seen at other times by appointment. Interpreters are available for a wide variety of foreign languages (through the Language Bank), including American Sign Language, to assist with recruitment, home study and training activities. The Ohio relay number is provided on the recruitment material. In addition, Bi-Lingual (Spanish) staff is housed in the Recruitment Department. The Recruitment department staff is available to answer questions from inquirers or they may direct questions to a supervisor if they are unable to answer questions.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Methods of Disseminating Recruitment Information and Activities

Cuyahoga County utilizes diverse methods for both general, targeted and child centered recruitment for foster/adoptive families. General Recruitment: Cuyahoga County has branded recruitment material to build name recognition in the community. Our consistent message, "What Every Child Needs...Family" is featured on all recruitment material, brochures, collaterals, print ads in newspapers, news letters etc, radio spots and television commercials and on our Children and Family Services web page.

The Recruitment Department:

All of the Recruitment material is available on line, via the recruitment line and at local communities partners settlement houses. We have implemented some practice around keeping participants engaged once they contact our agency and/or begin pre service training.

In 2012, we have implemented a cover letter that is mailed out with the foster/adoptive packets sent to all inquiries. This letter thanks the prospective applicant for inquiring and connects the PIO they spoke to with the letter/contact information inside. This letter adds a personal connection for the inquirer.

Prospective foster/adoptive applicants are welcomed at the front door by a supervisor and Public Information Officers from Recruitment. We have made small modifications so participants feel welcomed, for example, a candy bowl and smile at the front door to welcome and thank everyone for coming into training as they walk through the front door. They are directed where to sign in

by the same person as well. Staff from home studies and adoptions are at Pre-Service to answer questions and interview participants at the time of application. New in 2012 will be a one hour session at different points in training that will give extra detail regarding the application and home study. It will also allow for Q/A which we can not always cover during the 36 hour curriculum. We have listened to participants comments and from those comments are implementing strategies to keep them engaged. We recognize this process alone is very intimidating and intrusive but we are hoping that these small additions will help ease their minds and make for a relaxing atmosphere.

Effective April 2012, the Recruitment supervisor will be randomly contacting inquiries from our database with a 5 question survey around customer service from the PIO's in the recruitment department. The survey answers will be tracked in DAWN. Survey results will be utilized to inform strategies to enhance engagement.

We have also added detailed activity coding into our database DAWN to track re-engagement of previous inquiries, relative caregivers, and engagement from our community partners. We have added coding to track previously licensed families, foster/adoptive children applying to be foster/adoptive families, people who have viewed the heart gallery, our customer service surveys etc.

We added detailed messaging to our phone lines to provide prospective foster/adoptive families with information while they wait or before they leave a voicemail. We also have added a special events line in addition to our recruitment phone number.

Recruitment:

Targeted Recruitment throughout the neighborhoods from which children in custody are being removed happens through a partnership with community collaboratives. It is based on the needs of the child or children, keeping siblings together and older youth. Materials and messaging are spread through a grass roots effort including but not limited to neighborhood blitzes, mass mailings through utility bills, posters/displays in local establishments housed in these communities, foster/adoption nights held in the community, adoption mixers as well as established events held in the community in which we may have a table or information.

We continuously build relationships with local media in order to feature children and youth waiting to be adopted through stories in the newspaper or on air interviews on the radio or even segments on the local TV stations. In 2012 we have local TV talent interviewing our youth in care and agency staff and running the interviews on TV and Radio or in the newspaper. Press releases are continuously sent out for foster parent month, adoption month, and other events/activities when applicable.

We are utilizing the youth who are waiting to be adopted and those youth who have not been adopted to represent the voice of youth articulating what type of family they need or wish they would have had through a speaker's bureau, "Digital Me's" and other opportunities. The inclusion of youth voice is key to recruitment efforts.

Through our community partners, we are utilizing our existing foster/adoptive families to recruit in the community by offering incentives when they refer another family to become a foster/adoptive parent. Faith based recruitment efforts with captive audiences (congregations) through events and activities such as Gospel Fests are a main focus for the next two years.

By strengthening relationships with the network agencies and recruiting together, prospective families can choose the type of home

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study they wish to complete for family or specialized foster care and adoption. Information is distributed for all of the types of foster homes we have and for adoption.

Child Centered Recruitment through specialized units housed in the adoption's department continues to be a cornerstone of our child centered efforts. The work of the unit is primarily centred around older youth.

We would like to contract with local media outlets including but not limited to radio and TV for recruitment efforts in 2013- 2014. These efforts include commercials featuring our youth and families, on air interviews, webpage links/banners and promotional events.

Community events and activities within the communities from which our children are being removed.

Heart galleries will travel throughout Cuyahoga County featuring children's photos who are waiting to be adopted as well what they need in a family in their own words. These galleries will be on line via the Cuyahoga County Webpage as well.

Please also see community strategies. Many of these efforts overlap.

Staff Training Strategies

All members of the Recruitment, Resources and Adoptions Departments are trained to work effectively with diverse cultural, racial and economic communities. Training takes place through attendance at staff meetings, supervision, mentoring, training seminars and the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program.

All adoption and resources' staff are adoption assessors as well.

(See CCDCFS Policy No. 6.03.01 ÷ Adoption Policy)

(See ODJFS Services Manual Section 5101:2-5-13 & 5101:2-48-05)

Statement of Assurance

CCDCFS does not delay or deny any person the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent based on race, color, national origin, handicap, age, religion, creed or ethnicity. All the recruitment activities and materials will be in compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act 42 U.S.C.A.1996(B), as amended (MEPA), The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (5101:2-42-48 to 5101:2-42-58 of the Administrative Code), 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, as amended, and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. (Reference the CDCFS Recruitment policy number 6.02.01)

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Timely Search/Match Procedures

The agency has an adoption policy in place as well as there are numerous recruitment efforts made to search for families for waiting children/youth in the PC of the agency.

1. Adopt US Kids web page.

NOTE: CCDCFS Adoption Coordinators will maintain records of approved homestudies received from any other agencies in the same manner as our own agency approved homestudies.

2. The Adoption Fair: The Adoption Department brings together the public and private agencies once a year to present information on services, waiting families and waiting children. We advertise the Fair through the media.

3. Adoption Mixers:Mixers are held to bring waiting children into a structured enviroment to meet waiting families. They are held three to four times a year at various sites in the community that include fun activities for the families and children. We also are going to pilot an activity focused on just on teens in 2009-2010. We would like to hold it at a large sports center where prospective adoptive families can participate in activities with the teens that the teens enjoy such as basketball, volly ball and/or skating.

4. The Adoption Appreciation/Awareness Event: Event held once a year in November for waiting families and waiting children and is an appreciation and awareness event. The state sends out photographers and skilled writers. The waiting children's photos and bios are taken and featured in the State Feature Books and Calendar throughout the year.

5. Countywide Recruitment Event: There is a need for countywide recruitment events designed to keep the awareness in the community for our teens and/or sibling groups in custody who need families, specifically those in the permanent custody of CFS. The public responds to existing families and the young adults who live this every day. We will host countywide recruitment events to educate and sometimes reeducate the families of Cuyahoga County about the need for families who can meet the needs of our children in care.

CFS will partner with contracted providers, our neighborhood community partners through our Family to Family contracts as well as Adoption Network for these events to be a success.

As part of that plan, we continuosly review our strategies and methods and dig deeper into what works in the communities for Recruitment efforts for our teens and sibling groups. We look at who our families are, what their demographics are and what makes them parent our children everyday. We want to ensure who our target audience truly is and should be. We also identify and evaluate barriers to our families which may prevent them from applying to be licensed and or approved. We will address the most prevalent barriers with our neighborhood sites, our rules, regulations and policies.

6. Child Centered Recruitment unit work: We have developed a specialized unit within CCDCFS for Child Centered Recruitment, in addition to their PC workers. These units thoroughly review case records and history to locate and evaluate relationships these children had with suitable adults for possible placement.

7. Cuyahoga County Webpage for Children and Family Services houses a "Heart Gallery" featuring photos of our children/youth available for adoption. In addition, we have captured in the words from the youth what they are looking for in a family and what family means to them.

8. Moving Hearts Gallery: the mobile traveling version of the above photo gallery of waiting children scheduled to travel through neighborhoods of Cuyahoga County.

9. The "What Every Child Needs...Family" Recruitment DVD. This DVD captures success stories of adoptive families who have fostered/adopted siblings and older youth.

Adoption Matching Conferences Per OAC rule 5101: 2-48-16

(G) The PCSA or PCPA shall conduct a pre-adoptive staffing according to the following: No later than forty-five days after the execution of the permanent surrender or of the file stamp date of the permanent custody order.

(J) The PCSA or PCPA shall document the pre-adoptive staffing on the JFS 01690 "Documentation of the Pre-adoptive Staffing

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Plan Name Effective Period

2012-2014 What Every Child Needs...Family Recruitment Plan 05/01/2012 - 04/30/2014

Goals

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and Updates" (rev. 12/2006) and maintain the form in the child's adoptive case record. Within fifteen days after the pre-adoptive staffing, the PCSA or PCPA shall also distribute the JFS 01690 to assessors in the agency who complete adoption homestudies.

(M) A PCSA or PCPA shall hold the initial matching conference according to the following: within ninety days of the execution

of the permanent surrender or the file stamp date of the permanent custody order, unless the order is under appeal. If the order is under appeal, the agency may hold a matching conference prior to the issuance of the final decision. If the order is under appeal the agency shall hold the initial matching conference no later than ninety days after the issuance of the final decision.

(1) Within ninety days of the execution of the permanent surrender of the file stamp date of the permanent custody order, unless the order is under appeal.

(2) If the order is under appeal, the agency may hold a matching conference prior to the issuance of the final decision. If the order is under appeal, the agency shall hold the initial matching conference no later than ninety days after the issuance of the final decision.

(S) The PCSA or PCPA shall document each matching conference on the JFS 01689 during the matching conference.

(W) Subsequent matching conferences shall be held for the child, except as referenced in paragraph (Y) of this rule, at least once every ninety days following the initial matching conference. Thirty days prior to each matching conference, the JFS 01690 shall be updated and made available to all adoption assessors responsible for the completion of adoptive homestudies, and on the statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) as available.

(Y) Subsequent matching conferences are not required when:

(1) The child has been matched with an adoptive family in a matching conference. and signatures of the adoptive parent(s) and applicable agencies have been completed on the JFS 01654 "Adoptive Placement Agreement" (rev. 10/2001).

(2) The child is age eighteen years old or older.

(3) The child's custody changes to a status other than permanent custody.

We have a PAS/AMC Schedule and tracking system in place.

SIGNATURE Date Signed

SIGNATURE Date Signed

SIGNATURE Date Signed

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Additional Comments

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) believes in providing support and resources for it's existing foster and adoptive families. They are our largest referral source. If they have their needs met and feel supported, they will continue to spread the word. Foster/adoptive families are supported through Cluster Support groups, continuing training/development and the support of resource managers who are assigned specifically to to manage the foster homes.

We also know that a large percent of our foster/adoptive families are relative caregivers. They continue to need training and support. During this time period, the agency will continue to evaluate what is working and identify opportunities for growth and development.

Agency Fee Structure

There are no fees for foster care certification or adoption approval through Cuyahoga County. There is also no fee for BCI/FBI fingerprints during the application/homestudy process.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Community Strategies

CCDCFS will maintain a full-time Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment Department; the duties of which will include the planning and implementation of a comprehensive recruitment plan to be approved by the agency Director and submitted to the state by May 1st of every other year in the even numbered years. The recruitment plan will include but not be limited to a campaign developed and implemented to recruit for foster/adoptive families to meet the needs of the population of children CCDCFS has in custody. The plan includes, but is not limited to participation at community events and activities, the development of brochures, pamphlets and flyers, responding to inquiries, foster/adoption nights, adoption mixers/events, faith based activities and grass roots community outreach efforts in the communities from which our children are being removed. Recruitment priorities shall be established biannually. CCDCFS's recruitment priorities during this time period have been established based on the following:

1. Child Demographics: The children who need temporary or permanent homes range in age from 0-18 years, 77% are African-American. Frequently, the children are older youth or part of a sibling group. Due to histories of abuse and neglect, the children are likely to possess some degree of physical, social, emotional, cognitive problems/or developmental delay, and require specialized care to meet their needs, ranging from traditional care to specialized and therapeutic care.

2. Current geographic distribution of client cases and the distribution of licensed CCDCFS foster/adoptive homes.

The community will be made aware of CCDCFS's need to recruit foster and adoptive families for the population of children who need temporary and permanent placements. This will be accomplished utilizing a diverse multi-faceted outreach campaign

including, but not limited to, a variety of media strategy (print, radio and television), special events and adoption mixers, public speaking engagements, in home parties, displays, billboards, literature distribution, the CCDCFS website and the Adopt US Kids website.

Recruitment Strategies:

1. Community Partner Recruitment/Retention: CCDCFS contracts with Neighborhood Community Collaborative Partners in which recruitment is a deliverable. Each community partner has a written recruitment and retention plan for the next 2 years that focuses on general and targeted recruitment strategies to recruit families to meet the needs of specific groups such as adolescents, minority children from birth to 18 years old, medically-fragile or emotionally disturbed children and sibling groups within each of their neighborhoods. CCDCFS convenes quarterly meeting with the Collaboratives. As part of these recruitment management team meetings, updates are provided and "lessons learned" are shared. CCDCFS will approve each plan and meet regularly on an individual basis with each Collaborative to discuss our recruitment plans for implementation & progress reports. PIO's in recruitment are assigned to each collaborative. Through partnerships with our Community Partners throughout Cuyahoga County, targeted recruitment efforts in each community focus on local businesses, organizations, churches, schools, council wards, newspapers and residents to participate in the belief that Recruitment is Everyone's Business. We need to create an awareness of our children's needs and educate the community on their needs before we can recruit families to come to make that first call to 216-881-5775 (our recruitment line). We will have a variety of posters, stand up displays and material to place in local establishments, churches, schools etc. Countywide recruitment efforts include but are not limited to the following:

A. Partnering with Cuyahoga County libraries and city libraries through Cuyahoga County to display our recruitment material or host the Moving Hearts Gallery.

B. Partnering with the YMCA's throughout Cuyahoga County to display our recruitment information at each branch and support our families and youth through events, memberships etc.

C. Partnering with Fire Stations throughout Cuyahoga County to host "Dinner Time". Our Community partners are contacting fire stations asking to present information to them during dinner and they will bring dessert.

D. The foster/adoptive family incentive referral program: existing foster/adoptive families refer other families to become foster and adoptive parents. When the prospective family inquires and attends session #1 of training, the referring family will receive a gift card. If the prospective family submits an application, the referring family receives another gift card. The key element is that the prospective family has to identify the family who recruited them in our database or on their application. The community partners work with a recruitment PIO to track these families.

E. Foster/adoptive parties: these parties are two hours in length and consist of information, games, prizes and a light snack. Our existing foster/adoptive families invite potential families to their home, place of worship, community center etc. CCDCFS and our community partners will provide the invitation, games, information, prizes etc. Potential families who attend the party are sent information via mail as well as contacted by our community partners for follow up. The goal is to keep the potential families engaged and supported from the first time they receive the information about foster care and adoption.

F. Community Events and activities: CCDCFS will partner with contracted community partners to have information and collaterals at events and activities in the neighborhood from which our children are being removed. For example, local fairs, health fairs, homedays, family fun days, promotional events etc.

2. Faith-based recruitment efforts: In 2012, we are developing strategies around faith based recruitment efforts. We have 2013 and 2014 to implement these strategies. Our faith based institutions are an untapped resource for our children and families. Through these relationships, it is the intention that these places of worship will then agree to display recruitment posters or allow stories or

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ads in their newsletters, bulletins etc. host the heart gallery, assist our aging out youth. Members of the congregations may be recruited to take on a recruitment activity at their place of worship. We may even make a connection by utilizing our foster/adoptive families in these recruitment efforts. Statistics show that foster/adoptive families are the best referral source for new foster/adoptive families. In the past, we have invited our families to participate on community panels, sit at tables at events, share their experience and journey via local newspapers, media interviews and our Recruitment DVD. Asking them to make a connection to their place of worship is an untapped resource. Our community partners are hosting Gospels Fests and faith dinners in their communities as well. This is a developing strategy over the next two years.

3. Engaging youth both in PC and those who have aged out to speak at Foster Parent 101 as well as events throughout Cuyahoga County to share their experiences and tell their stories. Actually being able to hear from the youth makes an emotional connection that staff can not. There is no one better to speak about the needs of our youth than our youth.

4. The utilization of the CCDCFS recruitment DVD, "What Every Child Needs...Family" throughout the community. The recruitment DVD features two foster/adoptive families who have parented both siblings and older youth. The DVD also features

youth who were in the custody of CCDCFS, some were adopted and some aged out of custody and were not adopted. We also use "Digital Me's" DVD that are child specific recruitment tools at pre service training and countywide recruitment events. Digital Me's are video presentations created by youth and staff. They feature youth available for adoption who want to be adopted. The Digital Me features the youth articulating their likes, dislikes, interests and what they are looking for in a family. They personalize youth and actively involve youth in their own recruitment efforts.

5. Moving Hearts Gallery will travel throughout Cuyahoga County featuring our children/youth available for adoption. Each gallery can feature 14-22 children/youth as well as in their own words, what they are looking for in a family and why they want a family. We are targeting libraries, malls, museums, theaters, banks, conference centers, cafes, colleges and universities etc.

6. Child specific recruitment activities shall be conducted for children in permanent custody for whom adoption is the plan and a family has not yet been identified. This shall be accomplished through the production of flyers, through events which permit prospective parents to meet waiting children (mixers), with the use of the Adopt US Kids website and the Moving Hearts Gallery. The CCDCFS website features photos as well as Digital Me's of waiting youth. Diligent efforts will be made to recruit prospective families in the communities from which the children are being removed. (This is also explained in detail under adoption matching efforts.)

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Description of Children in the County and State

Please note: statistics are based on 2011.

As of December 2011, there were approximately 1,991 children in custody. 77% of the children were black and 56% were males. There are 615 children in Permanent Custody. We continually recruit for family and therapuetic foster homes by distributing literature for both types of level of care. We continually recruit for adoptive families for our waiting children especially those children and youth with no identified families. We partner with our community collaborative partners as well as our contracted private providers. Our placement department is in constant communication with resource managers and adoption workers.

Count of Children in PC in 2011: 615

Age Children/Youth Count(%)

0-1 231 (5%)

2-5 113 (18%)

6-9 84 (14%)

10-13 101 (16%)

14-17 207 (34%)

18-20 79 (13%)

21+ 0 (0%)

Male 344 (56%)

Female 271 (44%)

American Indian/Alaskan Native 3 (.5%) Hispanic 29 (5%)

Black 472 (77%) NonHispanic 561 (91%)

White 128 (21%) Unable to determine 25 (4%)

Unable to determine 4 (.5%)

Unknown 8 (1%)

Developmental Characteristics/Level of care...

We had 615 children in PC in 2011 and 95% identify with as having a physical, emotional and or mental health special need. SACWIS doesn't track OAPL characterirstics by level of severe, moderate or none so we can not provide that data as we have in the past.

The number of children who were in PC less than 12 months was 172 in which statistics by race and gender are similar to the above, but there were more children in the the age group between 2-5 years of age and those youth 14-17 years of age which is a light shift from 2009 when the 2-5 years of age group was the highest number of children coming into permanent custody. There are 443 children that have been in PC longer than 12 months and the largest population of youth is the 14-17 years old age range with the other statistics mirroring those from above based on race, gender and developmental needs of the children.

Promising is that in a comparison of length in time between PC and Adoptive placement status over the last 5 years, the placement time in months has continually decreased. The average length of time in months in 2006 was 9.8months, the lowest in the past 10 years. In 2007 the average length of time in PC custody until put on adoptive placement dropped to 9 months, in 2008 it was 7 months and in 2009 it decreased to 5.7 months. In 2010, there was a slight increase in the number of months in PC until put on adoptive placement to 12%, but in 2011, the percentage dropped to 9%. Over all 5 years even though the decrease was continual for all races, there were several months longer between PC and adoptive placement status for black children compared to white children from 2006 through 2009 and then in 2010 and 2011, the number of months in PC increased for whit children 2 more months than black children. From 2006 through 2011 the average time in PC until placed on Adoptive placement for white and black children has been decreasing overall. As we grow and develop our Child Centered Recruitment efforts, our numbers decrease for custodies, placements and time from PC to being placed on adoptive placement status.

The level of care depends on the developmental needs of the children and youth in care. These needs appear to be primarily housed amongst those children and youth in PC with no identified families.

In 2011, 92% of those participants in pre service submitted an application for fostercare and adoption. We licensed 47 new foster and adoptive families and approved 13 adopt only homes which is 43% of those who submitted applications. We also closed 115 foster/adoptive homes, many due to adoption.

Waiting Adoptive Families in 2011: 146 which is a decrease from 2009 when we had 316 approved adoptive families.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

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Race

Black 88(60%)

White 45(31%)

Unable to determine 13(9%)

American Indian 0 (0%)

Ethnicity

Hispanic 10 (7%)

Non Hispanic 136 (93%)

In a comparison between the number of waiting children by race, there is a significant difference in the number of waiting black children at 77% compared to the number of waiting families who are black at 60%. Within the comparison between white children waiting to be adopted, at 21% compared to 31% families waiting to adopt who are white. Those statistics are reversed. We have to increase the number of African American families to be reflective of the number of waiting African American children. Our agency has consistantly done this through recruitment efforts in the communities from which our children are being removed. In the past there was Federal and state Allocations set aside specifically to recruit African American adoptive families, but since 2010, there has not been funding specifically set aside for these efforts. In the past, we were able to run large media campaigns to assist with our grass roots efforts.

Overall, the number of children in custody has decreased as well as the number of children in permanent custody over the 10 years but significantly over the last five years. We must continue to recruit within the communities from which our children are being removed as well as use targeted recruitment efforts for those children waiting to be adopted, especially those older youth and sibling groups.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Home Study & Pre-Service Training Strategies (Out of County)

Prospective foster parents will be recruited from neighborhoods from which the children are being removed within Cuyahoga County. Additionally, we will license families who reside in the contiguous counties of Geauga, Lorain, Summit, Lake, Portage and Medina Counties. Families from other counties who contact CCDCFS will be referred to their own Public Children's Service Agency (PCSA).

Prospective adoptive applicants will be recruited from Cuyahoga County. Approved adoptive families will be recruited statewide and nationwide for the purpose of adopting waiting children. Families from other counties outside of our 6 contiguous counties will be referred to their residential county for adoption approval of their home study.

Pre-Service Training is scheduled continually throughout the year with training rounds available on specific mornings and evenings during the week. Classes are held at the agency and in the community. There is no admittance into class after the start time scheduled for that class. Pre-Service training is valid for 12 months from the time the prospective applicants begin their first session of training in order to submit their application for foster care/adoption. Prospective applicants will be mandated to take Pre service training again in order to submit an application for foster care/adoption if their Pre service training is expired. Prospective applicants are allowed to begin a round of Pre service training up until session # 3. Applicants wanting to register after session#3 are referred to the next new scheduled round. A schedule for upcoming pre service training rounds is sent to all inquiries as well as reminder cards for attendance. The training schedule is also posted on the Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services' web page (www.cfs.cuyahogacounty.us).

Recruitment and Pre service Orientation training materials/packets explain information regarding but not limited to requirements to become a foster/adoptive parent, agency and community resources and support, waiting children's characteristics, the Ohio Administrative Code rules for licensing and or approving foster/adoptive homes and the paperwork for submission to begin the home study process for both programs. Information includes statements regarding falsification on the application and during the home study process and for those families planning to adopt and currently have five or more children residing in the home, a large family assessment will be performed on that family.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Home Study Assurance Strategies

All Home-study Assessors will adhere to the requirements set forth by the Ohio Administrative Code as it pertains to Foster Care and Adoption, and all applicable Agency policies and procedures. Homestudy resource managers work a variable work schedule to accommodate the needs of the applicants. Applicants are provided contact information for all departments in the foster/adoptive family handbook provided to all inquiries, applicants and a family as well as community resources and supports on the first night of pre service training. We have units housed within neighborhood resource centers. We also have homestudy staff available to participants during pre service training. Homestudy staff and supervisors provide contact information in writing including, but not limited to their name, phone number (voicemail 24 hours) email address and address of building location.

1) All Applications for Child Placement received by CCDCFS will be reviewed by a Resource Department Supervisor prior to being assigned to a home-study Assessor.

2) The home-study Assessor will send an introductory letter to the applicant within seven (7) days of receiving the case.

3) The home-study Assessor will make Face to Face contact with the applicant, in the applicant's home within fourteen (14) days of receiving the case assignment. This visit will include:

a) an initial safety assessment of the home

b) a discussion regarding any areas of concern

c) a discussion regarding all required paperwork, including a review of the Document Checklist

d) a discussion detailing what the process of the home-study will entail

4) The home-study Assessor will request (3) unrelated references and two (2) related references (as documented in the 1691). This will be completed by mailing the requests within 30 days of receiving the case. The agency will also obtain additional references if the applicant was previously certified as a foster caregiver or provided care and supervision of children.

5) All household members over the age of four (4) years MUST be interviewed. At least one of the interviews with each household member MUST take place within the home.

6) A minimum of three (3) visits must take place in the home during the course of the homestudy.

7) When the home-study involves relatives and the child is already placed in the home, the home-study Assessor will schedule a Family Team Meeting with the child's Social Worker and the family within thirty (30) days of receiving the case.

8) The Assessor may request additional information be provided by the Applicant if:

a) an applicant or household member has suffered a serious illness or injury with the past year; or;

b) the Assessor determines it to be necessary to ensure the safety, health, or care of any foster child who may be placed in the home.

9) When the placement of a foster or adoptive child brings the number of children residing in the home to a total of five (5) or more, including biological, kinship, foster, and adoptive children, the Assessor shall complete the JFS01530 Multiple Children / Large Family Assessment and attach it to the completed JFS 01673 Assessment For Child Placement for adoption only.

10) The last visit to the home MUST occur within thirty (30) days prior to the transfer of the case to the Ongoing Resource Manager unless the Ongoing Resource Manager was the Assessor completing the home-study.

11) All home-studies will be completed within 120 days of the case assignment. Any need to extend the completion date will be approved by the Supervisor.

12) If the Applicant decides to voluntarily withdraw at any point during the homestudy process the Assessor will provide the applicant with a Voluntary Withdrawal form and close the case within thirty (30) days of receiving the withdrawal.

13) Prior to returning an application to a family, the Assessor will photocopy the application, detach the homework section, cross off each individual page of the original application and return it to the family. Assessor will include a letter documenting the decision to return the application and the reasons why. The applicant will also be notified that their Pre-service Training Certificate is valid for 12 months from the start date of class.

14) Any decision to formally deny an application for child placement will be in accordance with OAC section 5101:2-5-26 and will include the following: (please notes: if there are children in custody placed in the aplicnats homes; or, the applicants are potential placement for a child(dren), a team meeting must be called prior to the team meeting which wil be scheduled by the resource manager. this meeting will review all the issues surrounding the case.

a. Notification to the applicant will be documented on the JFS 01315 Notification of Denial of Initial Certification, Recertification or Revocation of a Foster Home Certificate.

b. Notification to the applicant will be sent via regular and certified U.S.Mail.

c. Notification will include the reason for the decision to recommend denial of initial certification and the specific law or rules with which the applicant is allegedly not in compliance.

d. Notification of the decision to recommend denial of initial certification shall also include the method for requesting an appeal via CCDCFS Policy 6.02.06 Problem Resolution with Foster/Adoptive/Relative Caregivers.

e. Notification to the applicant will also include a statement to the fact that the final decision to deny the initial certification will be made by ODJFS.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

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15) Applications submitted for Adoption Approval Only which are thought to be knowingly falsified are subject to the requirements of agency policy 6.03.03 Falsification of Adoptive Application/Home-study.

16) ALL cases submitted for Supervisory review will include the Home-study Completion Checklist and will be formatted in the appropriate manner.

17) ALL Applicants recommended for licensure will be informed by the Assessor of the requirement to complete Foster Parent 101 training prior to the placement of any foster child in the home. Newly licensed homes will be registered for this training by the Ongoing Resource Manager.

References:

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-7-02

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-20

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-21

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-22

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-5-28

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-33-13

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-48-09

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-48-12

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Inquiry Response Procedures

Prospective adoptive applicants will be recruited from Cuyahoga County. Approved adoptive families will be recruited statewide and nationwide for the purpose of adopting waiting children.

The Recruitment Department will not screen out foster and adoptive applicants prior to Pre service Orientation training based on a family's race, ethnicity, national origin, culture, age, handicap, religion, color creed or geographic location. We do not ask nor do we request this information at the time of inquiry.

The Recruitment Dept. provides all inquiries with the same information and requirements to become a foster and adoptive parent(s). We provide a cover letter and the PIO's business card with every packet effective February 2012.

All of our material is available on line as well via the Children and Family Services web page, cfs.cuyahogacounty.us. Individuals may view all of our material as well as our Moving Hearts Gallery(waiting children/youth) and if they want to complete an inquiry form online, they may do so. The inquiry form then is emailed to all Recruitment PIO's and supervisor. We enter their information into our two databases, contact the individual via phone as well as mail out our foster/adoptive packets including our pre service schedules for the upcoming rounds. Our pre service schedule is available online too.

There are no fees for foster care certification or adoption approval.

The Recruitment Department will be accessible to the community by phone during regular working hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday). A voice mail system will be available to the public at other times. Interested persons may also have face-to-face contact with Recruitment Staff during regular working hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday), except on Thursday, when the hours are 1:00 PM-9:00 PM. Recruitment Staff may be seen at other times by appointment.

Interpreters are available for a wide variety of foreign languages, including American Sign Language, to assist with recruitment, the home study and training activities. In addition, a Bi-Lingual (Spanish) staff member is in the Recruitment Department. The Recruitment department is available to answer questions from inquirers or direct questions to a supervisor if they are unable to answer questions.

CCDCFS Recruitment Department will track all inquiries on a control card and then enter information into SACWIS and DAWN. Every phone call, inquiry made, information sent, invitation to class, class attended and completed, application made and follow-up/ reminder card sent is tracked in SACWIS and DAWN.

Information and requirements are sent within seven days of inquiry including information on the characteristics of waiting children, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, developmental, emotional and physical needs of waiting children (1-12months of age and waiting children over 12 months of age) and the CCDCFS Statement on policy of Non-Discrimination.

Recruitment and Pre service Orientation training materials/packets explain information regarding but not limited to requirements to become a foster/adoptive parent, agency and community resources and support, waiting children's

characteristics, the Ohio Administrative Code rules for licensing and or approving foster/adoptive families and the paperwork needed for submission to begin the home study process. Information includes statements regarding falsification on the application and during the home study process and for those families planning to adopt and currently have five or more children residing in the home, a large family assessment will be performed on that family.

Linguistic Barriers Strategies

The Recruitment Department will be accessible to the community by phone during regular working hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday), 24 hour voicemail is available to the public at other times. Interested persons may also have face-to-face contact with Recruitment Staff during regular working hours (8:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday), except on Thursday, the time is extended until 8:30 pm. Recruitment Staff may be seen at other times by appointment. Interpreters are available for a wide variety of foreign languages (through the Language Bank), including American Sign Language, to assist with recruitment, home

study and training activities. The Ohio relay number is provided on the recruitment material. In addition, Bi-Lingual (Spanish) staff is housed in the Recruitment Department. The Recruitment department staff is available to answer questions from inquirers or they may direct questions to a supervisor if they are unable to answer questions.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Methods of Disseminating Recruitment Information and Activities

Cuyahoga County utilizes diverse methods for both general, targeted and child centered recruitment for foster/adoptive families.

General Recruitment: Cuyahoga County has branded recruitment material to build name recognition in the community. Our consistent message, "What Every Child Needs...Family" is featured on all recruitment material, brochures, collaterals, print ads in newspapers, news letters etc, radio spots and television commercials and on our Children and Family Services web page.

The Recruitment Department:

All of the Recruitment material is available on line, via the recruitment line and at local communities partners settlement houses. We have implemented some practice around keeping participants engaged once they contact our agency and/or begin pre service training.

In 2012, we have implemented a cover letter that is mailed out with the foster/adoptive packets sent to all inquiries. This letter thanks the prospective applicant for inquiring and connects the PIO they spoke to with the letter/contact information inside. This letter adds a personal connection for the inquirer.

Prospective foster/adoptive applicants are welcomed at the front door by a supervisor and Public Information Officers from Recruitment. We have made small modifications so participants feel welcomed, for example, a candy bowl and smile at the front door to welcome and thank everyone for coming into training as they walk through the front door. They are directed where to sign in by the same person as well. Staff from home studies and adoptions are at Pre-Service to answer questions and interview participants at the time of application. New in 2012 will be a one hour session at different points in training that will give extra detail regarding the application and home study. It will also allow for Q/A which we can not always cover during the 36 hour curriculum. We have listened to participants comments and from those comments are implementing strategies to keep them engaged. We recognize this process alone is very intimidating and intrusive but we are hoping that these small additions will help ease their minds and make for a relaxing atmosphere.

Effective April 2012, the Recruitment supervisor will be randomly contacting inquiries from our database with a 5 question survey around customer service from the PIO's in the recruitment department. The survey answers will be tracked in DAWN. Survey results will be utilized to inform strategies to enhance engagement.

We have also added detailed activity coding into our database DAWN to track re-engagement of previous inquiries, relative caregivers, and engagement from our community partners. We have added coding to track previously licensed families, foster/adoptive children applying to be foster/adoptive families, people who have viewed the heart gallery, our customer service surveys etc.

We added detailed messaging to our phone lines to provide prospective foster/adoptive families with information while they wait or before they leave a voicemail. We also have added a special events line in addition to our recruitment phone number.

Recruitment:

Targeted Recruitment throughout the neighborhoods from which children in custody are being removed happens through a partnership with community collaboratives. It is based on the needs of the child or children, keeping siblings together and older youth. Materials and messaging are spread through a grass roots effort including but not limited to neighborhood blitzes, mass mailings through utility bills, posters/displays in local establishments housed in these communities, foster/adoption nights held in the community, adoption mixers as well as established events held in the community in which we may have a table or information.

We continuously build relationships with local media in order to feature children and youth waiting to be adopted through stories in the newspaper or on air interviews on the radio or even segments on the local TV stations. In 2012 we have local TV talent interviewing our youth in care and agency staff and running the interviews on TV and Radio or in the newspaper. Press releases are continuously sent out for foster parent month, adoption month, and other events/activities when applicable.

We are utilizing the youth who are waiting to be adopted and those youth who have not been adopted to represent the voice of youth articulating what type of family they need or wish they would have had through a speaker's bureau, "Digital Me's" and other opportunities. The inclusion of youth voice is key to recruitment efforts.

Through our community partners, we are utilizing our existing foster/adoptive families to recruit in the community by offering incentives when they refer another family to become a foster/adoptive parent. Faith based recruitment efforts with captive audiences (congregations) through events and activities such as Gospel Fests are a main focus for the next two years.

By strengthening relationships with the network agencies and recruiting together, prospective families can choose the type of home

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Plan Name Effective Period

2012-2014 What Every Child Needs...Family Recruitment Plan 05/01/2012 - 04/30/2014

Goals

> Number of Projected Inquiries - 1,500

> Number of Children to be Placed - 244

> Number of Planned Recruitment Events - 100

> Number of Families to be Approved/Certified - 100

study they wish to complete for family or specialized foster care and adoption. Information is distributed for all of the types of foster homes we have and for adoption.

Child Centered Recruitment through specialized units housed in the adoption's department continues to be a cornerstone of our child centered efforts. The work of the unit is primarily centred around older youth.

We would like to contract with local media outlets including but not limited to radio and TV for recruitment efforts in 2013- 2014. These efforts include commercials featuring our youth and families, on air interviews, webpage links/banners and promotional events.

Community events and activities within the communities from which our children are being removed.

Heart galleries will travel throughout Cuyahoga County featuring children's photos who are waiting to be adopted as well what they need in a family in their own words. These galleries will be on line via the Cuyahoga County Webpage as well.

Please also see community strategies. Many of these efforts overlap.

Staff Training Strategies

All members of the Recruitment, Resources and Adoptions Departments are trained to work effectively with diverse cultural, racial and economic communities. Training takes place through attendance at staff meetings, supervision, mentoring, training seminars and the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program.

All adoption and resources' staff are adoption assessors as well.

(See CCDCFS Policy No. 6.03.01 ÷ Adoption Policy)

(See ODJFS Services Manual Section 5101:2-5-13 & 5101:2-48-05)

Statement of Assurance

CCDCFS does not delay or deny any person the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent based on race, color, national origin, handicap, age, religion, creed or ethnicity. All the recruitment activities and materials will be in compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act 42 U.S.C.A.1996(B), as amended (MEPA), The Indian Child Welfare Act

of 1978 (5101:2-42-48 to 5101:2-42-58 of the Administrative Code), 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, as amended, and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. (Reference the CDCFS Recruitment policy number 6.02.01)

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Timely Search/Match Procedures

The agency has an adoption policy in place as well as there are numerous recruitment efforts made to search for families for waiting children/youth in the PC of the agency.

1. Adopt US Kids web page.

NOTE: CCDCFS Adoption Coordinators will maintain records of approved homestudies received from any other agencies in the same manner as our own agency approved homestudies.

2. The Adoption Fair: The Adoption Department brings together the public and private agencies once a year to present information on services, waiting families and waiting children. We advertise the Fair through the media.

3. Adoption Mixers:Mixers are held to bring waiting children into a structured enviroment to meet waiting families. They are held three to four times a year at various sites in the community that include fun activities for the families and children. We also are going to pilot an activity focused on just on teens in 2009-2010. We would like to hold it at a large sports center where prospective adoptive families can participate in activities with the teens that the teens enjoy such as basketball, volly ball and/or skating.

4. The Adoption Appreciation/Awareness Event: Event held once a year in November for waiting families and waiting children and is an appreciation and awareness event. The state sends out photographers and skilled writers. The waiting children's photos and bios are taken and featured in the State Feature Books and Calendar throughout the year.

5. Countywide Recruitment Event: There is a need for countywide recruitment events designed to keep the awareness in the community for our teens and/or sibling groups in custody who need families, specifically those in the permanent custody of CFS. The public responds to existing families and the young adults who live this every day. We will host countywide recruitment events to educate and sometimes reeducate the families of Cuyahoga County about the need for families who can meet the needs of our children in care.

CFS will partner with contracted providers, our neighborhood community partners through our Family to Family contracts as well as Adoption Network for these events to be a success.

As part of that plan, we continuosly review our strategies and methods and dig deeper into what works in the communities for Recruitment efforts for our teens and sibling groups. We look at who our families are, what their demographics are and what makes them parent our children everyday. We want to ensure who our target audience truly is and should be. We also identify and evaluate barriers to our families which may prevent them from applying to be licensed and or approved. We will address the most prevalent barriers with our neighborhood sites, our rules, regulations and policies.

6. Child Centered Recruitment unit work: We have developed a specialized unit within CCDCFS for Child Centered Recruitment, in addition to their PC workers. These units thoroughly review case records and history to locate and evaluate relationships these children had with suitable adults for possible placement.

7. Cuyahoga County Webpage for Children and Family Services houses a "Heart Gallery" featuring photos of our children/youth available for adoption. In addition, we have captured in the words from the youth what they are looking for in a family and what family means to them.

8. Moving Hearts Gallery: the mobile traveling version of the above photo gallery of waiting children scheduled to travel through neighborhoods of Cuyahoga County.

9. The "What Every Child Needs...Family" Recruitment DVD. This DVD captures success stories of adoptive families who have fostered/adopted siblings and older youth.

Adoption Matching Conferences Per OAC rule 5101: 2-48-16

(G) The PCSA or PCPA shall conduct a pre-adoptive staffing according to the following: No later than forty-five days after the execution of the permanent surrender or of the file stamp date of the permanent custody order.

(J) The PCSA or PCPA shall document the pre-adoptive staffing on the JFS 01690 "Documentation of the Pre-adoptive Staffing

RECRUITMENT PLAN

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and Updates" (rev. 12/2006) and maintain the form in the child's adoptive case record. Within fifteen days after the pre-adoptive staffing, the PCSA or PCPA shall also distribute the JFS 01690 to assessors in the agency who complete adoption homestudies.

(M) A PCSA or PCPA shall hold the initial matching conference according to the following: within ninety days of the execution of the permanent surrender or the file stamp date of the permanent custody order, unless the order is under appeal. If the order is under appeal, the agency may hold a matching conference prior to the issuance of the final decision. If the order is under appeal the agency shall hold the initial matching conference no later than ninety days after the issuance of the final decision.

(1) Within ninety days of the execution of the permanent surrender of the file stamp date of the permanent custody order, unless the order is under appeal.

(2) If the order is under appeal, the agency may hold a matching conference prior to the issuance of the final decision. If the order is under appeal, the agency shall hold the initial matching conference no later than ninety days after the issuance of the final decision.

(S) The PCSA or PCPA shall document each matching conference on the JFS 01689 during the matching conference.

(W) Subsequent matching conferences shall be held for the child, except as referenced in paragraph (Y) of this rule, at least once every ninety days following the initial matching conference. Thirty days prior to each matching conference, the JFS 01690 shall be updated and made available to all adoption assessors responsible for the completion of adoptive homestudies, and on the statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) as available.

(Y) Subsequent matching conferences are not required when:

(1) The child has been matched with an adoptive family in a matching conference. and signatures of the adoptive parent(s) and applicable agencies have been completed on the JFS 01654 "Adoptive Placement Agreement" (rev. 10/2001).

(2) The child is age eighteen years old or older.

(3) The child's custody changes to a status other than permanent custody.

We have a PAS/AMC Schedule and tracking system in place.

SIGNATURE Date Signed

SIGNATURE Date Signed

SIGNATURE Date Signed