



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR FOSTER CARE
& PERMANENCY PLANNING**

at the Hunter College
School of Social Work

INFORMATION PACKET: *Child-Specific Recruitment*

By Kristine Schuerger

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INFORMATION PACKET

Child-Specific Recruitment

By Kristine Schuerger, MSW Intern, NRCFCPP

SUMMARY

[Excerpted from: *Targeted Recruitment: The Most Effective Strategy* by Denise Goodman]

"Over the last several years, there has been a growing need for foster and adoptive families. More and more children are entering foster care, and many of them will never return to their birth families. As a result, agencies across North America face the challenge of finding both temporary and permanent homes for children. To meet this challenge, agencies must develop an innovative recruitment system that integrates three types of recruitment activities: general, child-specific, and targeted...

General Recruitment involves reaching mass audiences through media and public outreach programs such as public events, public service announcements on television and radio stations, billboards, foster care and adoption fairs, and booths at county fairs or sporting events. This is the most common recruitment method, but it is the least focused, commonly urging the audience to "open your heart to a child" or "save a young life." Family to Family experience indicates that unsuitable applicants often respond to these methods, using limited staff time. Or, respondents may not be willing to take the particular kinds of children who need families.

General outreach is best when used to increase an agency's public profile and raise community awareness of the continuing need for foster and adoptive families. Perhaps 15 percent of an agency's recruitment budget can be usefully spent on general recruitment.

Child-specific recruitment means developing an individualized plan for a particular child based on the child's background. It may include finding relatives or close friends who will provide a home for a child or teen they already care about. It is often used to find a family for a child with a disability or condition that requires special care. Cooperation from neighborhood service agencies can help recruiters locate an appropriate family. For medically needy children, support groups and associations related to the condition or disease can be an excellent resource.

Each child-specific recruiting case requires individualized planning, which is expensive. But special children deserve special treatment. Recruitment budgets might allocate 25 percent of available funds for this function.

Targeted recruitment focuses on the specific kinds of children and teens in the community who need temporary or permanent homes, as well as the pool of available families."

Contained in this Information Packet you will find:

- ***Innovative Practices***
- ***Best Practice Tips***
- ***Review of Policies and Legislation***
- ***Reference and Suggested Readings***
- ***Web Resources***

Child-Specific Recruitment

Innovative Practices

[taken from: North American Council on Adoptable Children – [Recruitment Update](#)]

The following articles appeared as part of an ongoing column in *Adoptalk*, NACAC's quarterly newsletter.

- [Adoption Love Train Makes Connections: Destination Home](#)
Founder and director of North Carolina's Another Choice for Black Children, Ruth Amerson is dedicated to finding families for children. Through creative recruiting, thoughtful customer service, and inventive matching techniques, Another Choice has placed more than 400 children in seven years. Below, Ruth shares her latest venture—a spring train trip that brought waiting families and children together. To learn more, call Ruth at 704-394-1124...
- [Adoption Store Raises Awareness and Recruits Parents](#)
Last November, hundreds of shoppers at Akron, Ohio's Rolling Acres Mall found themselves drawn to a new store that suddenly appeared between the front entrance and a sporting apparel shop. Like Van's Photo, the retail shop directly across the way, the new store featured enlarged photos of children. Its purpose, however, was not to sell products but to attract parents—adoptive parents for Ohio's waiting children...
- [New Mexico's Heart Gallery Heightens Awareness and Interest](#)
Diane Granito is a foster and adoptive parent recruiter for New Mexico's Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD). Eighteen months ago she assumed responsibility for organizing an unusual recruitment project: getting professional photographers to create artistic portraits of waiting children for a traveling portrait gallery. Through Diane's work, and contributions from co-workers and the community, New Mexico's Heart Gallery exhibit has been a huge success...
- [Finding Families One by One](#)
Bethany Christian Services is a private, not-for-profit adoption and family services agency that operates 72 offices in 30 states. In 1999, six of their Michigan offices received a three-year Adoption Opportunities grant to recruit families for children with special needs. One by One, the program created through support from the grant, was recently named Innovative Program of the Year by the Michigan Federation of Private Child and Family Agencies...
- [Matching Party Connections can Lead to Placements](#)
When Careyn Moore helped Roy, a small boy with a shaved head and a bright smile, create a paper bag puppet at a FunFest party in September 1999, they connected immediately. Careyn and her husband Tom watched Roy and his older brother Kurt play together all afternoon at the festival—an adoption matching party sponsored by Aid to Adoption of Special Kids of Arizona (AASK-AZ). As the couple drove home, they asked themselves, "Did we just meet our kids?"...
- [Creating Families Through Videoconferencing](#)
Lisa Lumpe is an adoption recruitment consultant and co-founder of The Recruitment Solution in Worthington, Ohio. For the past two years she has been helping to unite waiting children and waiting families across the country by coordinating videoconferences. To learn more, contact Lisa at 614-436-8450; fax 614-431-7244...
- [Lessons Learned About Permanency for Teens](#)
In February 1999, the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Four Oaks, Inc., a private nonprofit social services agency, published a final report about Iowa's Permanency for Teens Project. The three-year federally funded demonstration project was a collaborative effort between Four Oaks and the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) aimed at making permanent placements and lasting connections for 30 legally free teens in Iowa. During the project, participants learned a lot about working with teens. This article is adapted from the final report...

Child-Specific Recruitment Practice Tips

Guidelines for Success: Publicizing Waiting Children

“Whether the method is a photolisting book, newspaper column, media feature, Internet posting, or matching party, child-specific publicity is the backbone of recruitment efforts for many harder-to-place children. Child-specific publicity has two goals. First—[as in the Frohock’s case]—it stimulates prospective parents’ interest in a child and results in adoption. Second—and more commonly—it builds public awareness about the need for parents and generates resources for other children in the system...

No hard and fast rules exist about which children to publicize, and some in the child welfare field question the ethics of publicizing specific children at all. For them, photolistings and waiting child features are high-pressure tactics that either violate children’s rights to privacy or mislead prospective families...

At NACAC, we firmly believe that child-specific publicity is a worthwhile endeavor when it allows families to glimpse the unique qualities each child possesses. Nonetheless, we recommend caution when determining which children are prepared to share details about themselves publicly and risk the disappointment of unsuccessful recruitment efforts. Protecting children from further victimization is of the utmost importance.”

Workers Must Carefully Select and Prepare Children for Child-Specific Publicity

SELECTING A CHILD

When selecting children for publicity with the dual goals of family recruitment and heightened public awareness in mind, choose those who are representative of children in care. Publicity for a healthy infant would undoubtedly find a family for the child and inspire lots of calls, but would not generate appropriate resources for other waiting children. After selecting a child, workers must explore the child’s situation before continuing. Essential questions include:

- **Will the child be safe?** If a child comes from a violent birth family, public exposure could be risky. If publicity could lead an angry relative to find and endanger the child, the risks outweigh the benefits.
- **Are relatives or foster parents adopting?** Routinely publicizing children who are going to be adopted by people they know undermines a recruitment campaign. Families respond to publicity because they feel that children need help. If they are taught otherwise, they may lose interest and tell their friends not to bother.
- **Is the child’s caretaker supportive?** Caretakers’ cooperation has a direct bearing on children’s perceptions about public exposure. If the child’s caretaker cannot nurture her during the publicity campaign, select another child – especially for higher-profile venues.
- **Is the child ready for placement?** Although crises are impossible to predict, a child who is completely unprepared for life in a family setting is not well served by public exposure. Hold off on publicity if the child needs intensive therapy instead of an adoptive home. Nonetheless, placement in a treatment program should never exclude a child from recruitment efforts – if the child needs a family to be involved in a slow transition toward adoption, don’t be afraid to ask for that.

PREPARING THE CHILD

A selected child should be developmentally and age-appropriately informed of the benefits and risks of publicity. Share the goals of the exposure--emphasize that the right family may or may not come forward and that the publicity is part of a larger effort to find a home. Preparation

must include an honest discussion of what it will be like for the child to see himself on flyers or on television.

One key to successful recruitment is getting workers and children committed to using publicity alongside other techniques until a family is found--with the understanding that months or years of diligence and patience may be required. Unless the child is unable to understand, always work to secure her cooperation before public exposure. If a child does not feel good about being publicized, the chances for successfully finding and placing her with a family are greatly reduced. Once the child is on board:

- **Share samples of previous efforts.** Give the child an opportunity to view materials about other children of similar age and background. This can reduce fears, spur honest questions, and minimize feelings of isolation.
- **Talk about helping other children.** Tell the child, "We are asking you to appear in publicity because we think you are [charming/mature/funny/outgoing/energetic]. We know that with your help, we can really promote adoption." Frame selection for public exposure as a compliment so the child can take pride in helping others – even if it doesn't find a family for him.
- **Discuss realistic expectations.** The child must understand that months may pass before the right family comes forward, completes a home study, and commits to adopting. Be clear that even if the publicity does not immediately find a good match, it is no reflection on the child's attractiveness, personality, or lovability. Moreover, it does not mean that a home will never be found.
- **Alert adults in the child's support network.** Children may experience anxiety when publicity efforts begin as well as renewed anger at past abuse and fears about adoption. The child's teachers, therapists, and mentors must be prepared to lend extra encouragement.
- **Explore possible reactions.** Help the child to understand that neighbors and classmates may see the publicity. Explain that some don't know much adoption. Role-play what the child will say in response to positive and negative comments from adults or peers.
- **Rehearse what to do or say.** If publicity efforts include an interview, rehearse potential questions and answers. Help the child brainstorm ideas about her interests, best qualities, biggest accomplishments, and desire for a family. If possible, make a practice tape and review it together, giving compliments and making suggestions.
- **Let the child contribute.** Give the child ownership – even a small child can select a favorite location for videotaping or taking photographs. Older children can help with descriptions. If appropriate, ask the child to share the things a prospective family should know.
- **Physically prepare the child.** Help the child to pick comfortable, clean clothes that make him feel confident. Make certain he is fed and rested, avoid scheduling the session during any favorite activities, and select a time when medications are most effective.
- **Accompany the child to session or event.** When possible, the person who prepared the child for publicity should be present for support. A trusted adult can reduce the child's anxiety and advocate for the child should the interviewer or photographer ask any inappropriate questions.

Child-Specific Recruitment Review of Policies and Legislation

[Source: [The White House](#)]

Fact Sheet: Helping Children and Building Families Through Adoption

[7/23/2002]

Helping Children and Building Families Through Adoption

Today's Presidential Action:

President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush announced a new initiative to increase public awareness and encourage Americans to consider adoption of children in foster care.

President Bush announced a new public service advertising campaign, featuring First Lady Laura Bush and actor Bruce Willis, to encourage Americans to adopt children in foster care. The President also tapped Bruce Willis to serve as a national spokesperson for children in foster care.

The President also announced the creation of the first federal and only national web site that focuses on waiting children ? www.AdoptUSKids.org ? that will reduce the geographic barriers and waiting time needed to connect children from across the country with adoptive families. In its first year, it will feature pictures and profiles of over 6,500 children from 46 states who are available for adoption, as well as a database of approved adoptive families.

Background on Today's Presidential Action

More than 130,000 of the 565,000 American children in foster care, ranging in age from toddlers to teenagers, are waiting to be adopted. On average, these children have been in foster care for almost four years. Most of these children have special needs that limit their ability to be adopted, such as being part of a sibling group that wishes to stay together, belonging to a particular ethnic group, or having physical or emotional challenges. These children are adoptable; in fact, in 2000, over 50,000 children in foster care were adopted. But recruiting a family that can meet the special needs of a particular child can be challenging, especially when the right family may live in a different state or county.

President Bush believes that every child in America deserves to live in a safe, permanent and loving family. Today, the President announced:

Adoption Public Service Advertisement (PSA): The adoption PSA will feature the First Lady and actor Bruce Willis. It will also highlight the new website and toll-free number - 866-USA-0660 - for interested families to receive adoption information and be referred to their State adoption specialist. Additionally, President Bush has asked Bruce Willis to serve as a national spokesperson for children in foster care. The public service advertisement can be viewed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/media/200207232-adoption.v.ram>

First Federal Adoption Web Site and Internet Photolisting: AdoptUSKids.org, an Internet adoption photolisting service, will help connect waiting children from across the country with loving adoptive families. The site provides prospective adoptive parents with a private, secure place to communicate interactively with other families and adoption experts - especially useful for families living in rural areas. Social workers will be able to follow inquiries from families approved to adopt and respond to them instantly through the site. AdoptUSKids.org is an initiative of the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services, and it is currently operated by the National Adoption Center.

President Bush's Commitment to Promoting Adoption

Promoting adoption and supporting families who adopt: On January 17, 2002, the President signed the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment Act to help States provide services to promote adoption for children in foster care and provide post-adoption support to families so that they can stay strong and their children reach their potential. The President's FY 03 budget strongly supports the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program with an increase of more than \$130 million over FY 02 levels.

Adoption Tax Credit: The tax relief bill that the President signed last year permanently extends and increases the adoption tax credit from \$5,000 per child to \$10,000 per child for qualified adoption expenses. For special needs adoptions, it increases the credit from \$6,000, for qualified adoption expenses, to \$10,000, regardless of expenses.

For more information on the President's initiatives, please visit

www.whitehouse.gov

[Source: [Children Rights](#)]

THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT AND GEOGRAPHICAL BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

[Click here for Printer-Friendly Version](#)

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) has prompted a number of changes in practice related to permanency planning and adoption. ASFA includes new mandates related to moving forward more quickly to terminate parental rights and free children for adoption and greater use of interjurisdictional resources to ensure that all children in foster care who are freed for adoption are placed with adoptive families. As anticipated, the implementation of ASFA has led to significant increases in the number of children in foster care with adoption as their permanency plan; the number of children freed for adoption through termination of parental rights; and the number of finalized adoptions. The US Department of Health and Human Services estimated that as of March 2000, there were 134,000 children in foster care with a plan of adoption, a significant increase in the number of such children in the mid-1990s.

ASFA Mandates Regarding Adoption and Adoptive Family Recruitment

The growing number of children in foster care whose parents' rights have been or will be terminated as a result of ASFA's mandates highlights the importance of ensuring that there is a pool of well-prepared families ready to adopt these children. With regard to adoptive family recruitment, ASFA provides that:

when reunification is not the appropriate permanency plan for a child, states must make "reasonable efforts" to "place the child in a timely manner" and "complete whatever steps are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child;"

steps taken with regard to adoption as the permanency plan may be "made concurrently with reasonable efforts" to reunify the child with his or her biological family; and

states may, at the time they move forward with petitions to terminate biological parents' rights, "concurrently, . . . identify, recruit, process, and approve a qualified family for adoption."

ASFA also requires that states mobilize additional resources to increase the number of adoptive families. The law states that:

states must "develop plans for the effective use of cross jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children;" and

when the permanency plan for a child is adoption, states must document "the steps the agency is taking to find an adoptive family At a minimum, such documentation shall include child specific recruitment efforts such as the use of State, regional, and national adoption exchanges including electronic exchange systems."

ASFA further directs that "the state shall not delay or deny the placement of a child for adoption when an approved family is available outside of the jurisdiction with responsibility for handling the case of the child." Violation of this provision can subject a state to financial penalties ranging from 2% to 5% of the amount paid in federal dollars to the state for its foster care and adoption assistance services.

State Laws Regarding Geographical Barriers

In response to ASFA, a number of states have enacted legislation to address geographic barriers to adoption. Some states have enacted statutory provisions that prohibit courts and/or adoption agencies from delaying or denying placements for adoption solely on the basis of the family's geographic location out-of-state (California, Illinois) or out-of-county (Missouri). In addition to these requirements, Rhode Island and South Carolina have granted an opportunity for a fair hearing to any individual residing outside their respective states who alleges that the state agency denied or delayed a placement of a child for adoption on the basis of the individual's out-of-state residence. Utah enacted a law that requires the state to develop plans for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children. Finally, several states responded to ASFA by enacting legislation that authorized the jurisdiction to enter into the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (Alaska, Connecticut, District of Columbia, New Jersey, and North Dakota). That Compact provides for uniformity in the provision of subsidies (adoption assistance) and medical assistance under Medicaid when adoptive families move from one state to another.

Child-Specific Recruitment References and Suggested Readings

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Child-Specific Recruitment

Web Resources

[Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption](#)

In July 1992, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (the "Foundation") was established as a public, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The cornerstone was Dave's goal to make adoption work for children and parents. The Foundation formalized Dave and Wendy's commitment to finding families for waiting children across the United States. The Foundation serves as an active voice for the more than 150,000 children in North America's public child welfare system who are waiting for permanent homes and loving families. These kids may be older; part of sibling groups who want to be adopted together; from minority cultures, or physically or mentally challenged. Regardless—they all deserve the love and security of a family.

Video available: [Finding Forever Families; Making the Case for Child-Specific Recruitment.](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Wednesday's Child](#)

Wednesday's Child -- an award-winning program with a proven track record of success -- is a part of the [Freddie Mac Foundation's](#) national campaign to increase adoptions of foster children. Each Wednesday, a child in foster care who is available for adoption is profiled on the local evening news. During a segment hosted by a popular local newscaster, viewers are encouraged to learn more about helping these children find homes, and a phone number is provided. The children who are featured are usually the most difficult to place since they are often older, in sibling groups, and may have health and developmental needs. For these children, this program is often their last chance to find a permanent home and a family.

See: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

CONTACT: 1-800-To-Adopt

[National Adoption Center](#)

In 1982, the Center was selected by the federal government's Department of Health and Human Services to operate a national program to find families for children around the country whose parents could not care for them. The Center developed a national public awareness and recruitment campaign, the centerpiece of which became its national website, **FACES of Adoption**: America's Waiting Children, which featured photographs and descriptions of thousands of children waiting to be adopted. In late July 2002, the **FACES** site was absorbed into a new, national website, **AdoptUSKids**, an initiative of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; it was developed and is being operated by the National Adoption Center.

See: [What We Do](#), [National Adoption Center eZine](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[AdoptUSKids.org](#)

AdoptUSKids is a national database of children awaiting adoption and families approved to adopt. The **AdoptUSKids** website allows families to search for children and workers to search for families throughout the United States. The site also includes comprehensive adoption information for families and many features to assist social workers.

AdoptUSKids is an initiative of the Children's Bureau; it was developed and is being operated by the National Adoption Center.

See: [Resource Library](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[American Foster Care Resources, Inc.](#)

American Foster Care Resources, Inc., founded in 1983, is a nonprofit, tax exempt corporation dedicated to the research, development and production of informational and educational resources for and about family foster care. As a resource service, AFCR works to increase awareness of available resources, to create and maintain resource networks, and address identified knowledge and service gaps.

See: [Foster Home Recruitment Resources](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[The Adoption Exchange Association](#)

The AEA connects representatives of state, regional & national adoption exchanges....placement agencies...parents...child welfare professionals...and concerned citizens across the United States. The AEA provides a forum which promotes the exchange of ideas and strategies, collaboration on

issues of mutual interest, and increased effectiveness in utilizing resources to provide waiting children permanent homes.

See Program: *Adopt Air* is an Adoption Exchange Association (AEA) program offered in collaboration with Mercy Medical Airlift and The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption to all AEA members. It gives adoption exchanges and placement agencies throughout the country the ability to arrange for children to fly up to 1,000 miles from their place of departure to attend adoption parties; be videotaped for TV recruitment; travel to meet prospective parents or for placement visits.

[North American Council on Adoptable Children](#)

With funding from the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service from 1998 through early 2002, NACAC developed an extensive array of resources to help adoption and foster care professionals recruit and retain adoptive families. Here you can read [newsletters and articles](#) that can help you create a recruitment strategy, find families for teens, use new technologies, or overcome cross-jurisdictional barriers.

See: [Policy Statement : Child-Specific Recruitment](#),

Newsletter: [Recruitment News](#)

- ☞ Targeted Recruitment (June 2001)
- ☞ Collaboration (February 2001)
- ☞ Child-Specific Publicity (June 2000)
- ☞ Technology (February 2000)
- ☞ Cross-Jurisdictional Placement (December 1999)
- ☞ Families for Teens (Summer 1999)

[Child Welfare League of America](#)

The Child Welfare League of America is the nation's oldest and largest membership-based child welfare organization. We are committed to engaging people everywhere in promoting the well-being of children, youth, and their families, and protecting every child from harm.

See: [Implementing Two Key Provisions of ASFA](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Aid to Adoption of Special Kids](#)

AASK-AZ believes that every child deserves a permanent, loving and culturally sensitive family. We endeavor to place waiting children with foster and adoptive families who are well equipped to provide for the medical, psychological and social needs of each child.

See: [Recruitment Efforts](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[National Adoption Exchanges](#)

Children Awaiting Parents

700 Exchange St.
Rochester, NY 14608
716-232-5110

[\[http://www.ggw.org/cap\]](http://www.ggw.org/cap)

National Adoption Center

1500 Walnut st., Suite 701
Philadelphia, PA 19102
800-862-3678

[\[http://www.adopt.org/adopt\]](http://www.adopt.org/adopt)

Jewish Children's Adoption Network

P.O. Box 16544
Denver, CO 16544
303-755-4756

[\[http://www.users.uswest.net/~jcan\]](http://www.users.uswest.net/~jcan)

Adopt America Network

1025 N. Reynolds Rd.
Toledo, OH 43615
419-534-3350

[\[http://www.adoptamerica.org/\]](http://www.adoptamerica.org/)

Regional Exchanges

The Adoption Exchange

14232 E. Evans Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014
303-755-4756

[<http://www.adoptex.org/>]

NW Adoption Exchange

600 Stewart St., #1313
Seattle, WA 98101
206-292-0082

[<http://www.jetcity.com/~nwa>]

South Eastern Exchange of the U.S.

P.O. Box 1453
Greenville, SC 29602-1453
864-242-0460

State Exchanges

Contact: **National Adoption Information Clearinghouse**

P.O. Box 1182
Washington, DC 20013-1182
888-251-0075

www.calib.com/naic

[[State Child Welfare Agency and Photolisting Webpages](#)]