Family Connection Grant Project
Abstract/Summary

Grantee Name: Four Oaks Family and Children’s Services
Grantee City and State: Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Grant Project Title: Families for Iowa’s Children
Family Connection Program Area: Family-finding

Summary of Grant Project:

Families for Iowa’s Children (FIC) uses search technologies and family-centered practices to reconnect children entering foster care with family members and natural supports during and after their time in foster care. FIC staff search for and engage relatives and natural supports as potential placement resources and permanency resources in the event that reunification is ruled out and/or for support to the child while in foster care and following care.

FIC partners are: Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCS), Iowa Children’s Justice, the University of Iowa, and Meskwaki Family Services. FIC is operated in twenty-six counties in two Iowa areas: Ames (mid-state) and Cedar Rapids (eastern Iowa). The target population is children (ages 0-17) who enter (or re-enter) family foster care. Family finding and engagement begins immediately upon random assignment. Over the three-years of the project, FIC serves 200 children.

The FIC program refines a Four Oak’s family finding and engagement pilot implemented in 2007 and leverages the resources of a current Iowa KidsNet Recruitment and Retention statewide contract with DHS. The model includes strong court collaboration at all stages of planning and implementation, is operated in geographic sites with diverse populations, including a tribal settlement, allowing evaluation from a racial/cultural perspective. All stages of the project are guided by a diverse Advisory Board.

Project Goals: children will more often be placed with relatives; have larger numbers of family members/natural supports identified; have more frequent family team meetings attended by larger numbers of family members/natural supports; have more contact with their workers; have more frequent visits with their parents and siblings; and receive more home visits. Long term results for FIC children include: a lower average length of stay in foster care, lower recurrence of maltreatment, lower rates of reentry to care, and higher rates of family permanency.

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