The foundation of the work between the case-worker and the family rests on engagement with the family in the development of the case plan. A well thought-out case plan is essential to achieving timely permanency. All too often however, initial assessments, whether they are structured assessments or the more traditional biopsychosocial assessments, seldom move beyond the beginning stages of case planning.

In a very real sense, the case plan is a road map for the shared work of the caseworker and the family - it asks: “Where are we going and how will we get there?” Resulting from the initial assessment analysis, the case plan (also called the service plan in some states) provides the direction and boundaries of the involvement between the family, the caseworker, and the array of collateral systems. After reaching mutual understanding – if not agreement - about the strengths, behaviors, needs, underlying conditions, and contributing factors producing the child welfare concerns, the caseworker and the family must now resolve how to mobilize their strengths and resources to address these concerns in a way that ensures safety, reduces risk, and supports permanency for children and youth.

Weaving an analysis from the information amassed in the initial assessment process, the caseworker now constructs with the family and other collaborators - a case plan. The problem statements concretized in the initial assessment and analysis now leads the worker toward the development of outcomes and activities that will move the family in the direction of permanency. The message in this part of the process is that while the service plan may require amendment, an initial assessment must precede planning.

In assessing the problem, the social worker must cast his or her net widely - thus pulling in a range of variables to develop the appropriate case plan. Good case plans that promote timely permanency, flow from thorough initial assessments.

The major function of ongoing case assessment is to understand the client system’s problems and to systematically review and revise that understanding when necessary. Working toward this understanding means discerning how and why changes in the client system’s problem are manifested. Assessing the progress toward permanency and ultimately to learn about which permanency outcomes, are most useful when coupled with an understanding about how the progress a family toward the outcomes, are overlapping and interdependent endeavors.

Using the actual data derived from the Final Reports of State Child and Family Services Reviews in several states, without using identifying information about those states, this article focuses on the core elements which must be included in developing competent case planning to facilitate permanency for children and youth in out-of-home care.
How can I gather this information in a feasible way?

Semi-annual case planning conferences ideally bring together all involved parties in the case plan including the child, if they are age appropriate, the youth in care, their family, the case worker, foster parents, law guardians, educational providers, and all other relevant collateral contacts in the case. Culled from the Final Reports from CFSR in several states, listed below are many of the core elements, which should be considered for developing on-going assessments for children and youth via the case planning process:

- Effective case plans identify the strengths and needs of children or youth in out-of-home care
- The plan is a written document which includes all of the required elements: a description of the child or youth’s placement; appropriateness of the placement; a plan for ensuring that the child/teen and family receive services designed to facilitate the return of the child/teen to a safe home or to another permanent placement; the health and educational status of the child/teen; and, when appropriate, a description of the programs and services which will facilitate the youth’s transition from foster care to independent living
- Effective case plans provide both a direction and a reference point of accountability in achieving safety, well-being, and permanency outcomes for the family, and allows for monitoring of caseworker, supervisor, and service providers
- The case plan should be clearly linked to the initial assessment conducted with the child or youth when they first entered placement
- Case plans should address the immediate issue that led to a child’s removal from the home
- The case plan should be completed for every child or youth that remains in placement five days or longer
- Youth, parents, foster parents, law guardians and other significant persons should be invited in writing to participate in the case planning process
- All case review participants should always receive adequate notice of the reviews

- Youth, parents, foster parents, law guardians and other significant persons must be actively engaged in the case planning process
- The responsibility for scheduling and tracking case plans and reviews rests with the county or the state and should be clearly defined
- Transportation to the meetings should be a consideration for youth and parents. Late notices to youth and parents limit their capacity to make transportation arrangements
- Birth parents must be involved in the case plan development, giving special attention to contacting birth fathers and other paternal resources
- Youth and parents should sign their completed case plan after they have been actively engaged in participating in the planning process
- Case planning meetings should be held at times that are convenient for the parents and youth; i.e., after school, on evenings, during the weekends
- Case planning meetings should be rescheduled if the parents or youth cannot attend
- Staff, youth, and parents who cannot attend the case planning session should at a minimum receive copies of the case-planning documentation
- Parents, foster parents, and youth should be made to feel that their input is utilized in determining needs and services
Training and support to enhance recording of essential information in the case plans should be meaningful, individualized and complete. Particular emphasis should be given to health and education information when updating the case plan. Family Decision Meetings (FDMs) have been identified by many states as a hallmark of state case planning practice. The use of FDMs for many cases results in the development of case plans, which identify individual needs and specialized services. Strengths-based planning is also a mechanism for successfully engaging many families in the case planning process.

Efforts to hold FDM Early Safety Meetings early in the case in order to focus on early engagement of the family provides better initial placements for children. Cases involving Native children and youth must ensure that other requirements such as those required by ICWA and ASFA are in place and see to it that there is involvement from tribal members in the case planning process.

Case plans must be updated at a minimum of every six months, preferably utilizing an interdisciplinary team approach to planning. The quality of the case plans is as important as the timeliness of the case plan.

Case plans need to be focused with measurable objectives, which offer specificity and individualization for services. Case plans should contain outcome-oriented goals, not just listed services provided to the child and family.

Case plans should also indicate the progress made toward goals in the case plans.

Since many items are contained in the case plans, it should be clear to everyone involved what tasks are of the highest priority to accomplish before reunification could take place. The linkage of families to collateral resources in the community must be clearly described and documented in the case plan.

The case plans, which are long and cumbersome, reduce the effectiveness of the planning process - keep them clear and succinct.

The quality of periodic reviews has been known to improve case planning outcomes due to smaller case loads and lower staff turnover rates. Casework practices have also been known to improve because of in-service and new worker training, and more effective supervision.

Services to be provided to foster families should be included in the written case plan.

When there are multiple reviews, i.e., child and family specific reviews there needs to be greater coordination between the different review processes to reduce duplication.

How will others involved in the case utilize this information?

Full disclosure, a core concept of concurrent permanency planning requires that families need to know that all information will be utilized in moving their child or teen toward permanency. Case Reviews are important barometers in evaluating the permanency plan for children and youth in out of home care. The written case plan, in the best possible situation, should be developed by an interdisciplinary team, with extensive youth and family involvement is an integral part of the child or teen’s case record.

Continuously monitoring the quality of these case plans, every six months, at least, insures that those charged with the task of moving a youth or child toward permanency does so in a timely fashion. The case record therefore becomes a valuable resource to tell the story of how a youth or child is moved toward permanency and what efforts have been successful in avoiding the drift and impermanence of foster care.

What do I need to monitor over the course of the work toward promoting permanency?

Social workers working to move children and youth toward permanency know that they need to track many aspects of their work with the child’s family. ASFA clearly outlines time frames attached to efforts toward moving children and youth toward permanency. The primary means of monitoring progress in the on-going assessment process is the use of case progress notes and service plan reviews. There is a great deal of diversity around the nation about what caseworkers monitor but the following is a list of the essential elements which are required:

- Timeliness in moving toward permanency; in 15 of the past 22 months
- Caseworker and child contact
- Caseworker and family contact
- Family, youth, and child involvement in the service plan review process

In the months to come, as more states move through the process of the Child and Family Services Reviews, colleagues will have many opportunities to enhance the quality of the work that we do with children, youth, and families. The lessons learned from Child and Family Services Review Final Reports will prove useful in assisting States in moving toward achieving permanency for all children and youth through skillful case planning.
**Information Gathering**
- organize and review case record
- review available assessments (e.g., psychological, educational, social summaries, court report)
- make a plan to obtain other needed assessments
- list critical questions left unanswered after completing the case review or any questions raised by conflicting information
- list strengths and needs based on information reviewed

**Actively Involving Family & ISP Team Members in the Initial & Ongoing Assessment Process**
- engage family members around issues which are most important to them; causing them the most pain; and most important to the children’s safety
- identify strengths
- identify risks
- identify and prioritize needs and underlying conditions
- establish the desired case outcome or permanency goal

**Preparing the Family & ISP Team Members for the ISP Meeting**
- explain the meeting’s purpose is to develop steps/services to meet previously identified needs
- encourage family participation through articulation of strengths/risk/needs, asking questions, and contributing ideas to the design of services
- determine best date, time, location for the meeting and supports the family needs to attend
- determine who will be invited as team members
- discuss team members’ roles and responsibilities
- discuss confidentiality issues and obtain any needed releases

**The ISP Meeting** (Child & Family Planning Team Meeting)
A. **Make Introductions & Explain Purpose**
- invite everyone to introduce themselves
- explain purpose of confidentiality statement and obtain signatures
- explain purpose of meeting is to develop a plan based on strengths/needs

B. **Summarize Case**
- present a concise verbal summary of the case and current status with emphasis on strengths
- distribute appropriate documents (e.g., assessments, social summaries) when prior family permission has been given

C. **Discuss Strengths/Needs**
- identify strengths/needs may be listed on a flip chart
- explain that some strengths/needs were previously identified with the family
- keep discussion away from services
- discuss applicable policies (e.g., telephone/mail, visiting, behavior management) as needed
- address child’s needs for family contact and maintaining attachments when child is in care
- prioritize and select needs

D. **Develop Goals**
- identify at least one goal for each prioritized risk/need
- determine if goals need to be long-term or short-term
- word the goal so that it describes the desired change in the underlying condition
- discuss when goals may change (e.g., when they are achieved, if a more appropriate match of need/service is necessary, if a more effective method of service delivery is needed)

E. **Brainstorm Strategies For Meeting Goals**
- create an extensive list of possibilities which are not limited by existing services
- remember “natural helpers” (informal supports)
- be visionary and inventive

F. **Select Steps/Services**
- make steps small, measurable, time-limited, built on strengths, and matched to needs
- make some steps accomplishable within 7-10 days so family can experience success quickly
- identify who will accomplish what within specified time frames
- include method, frequency and who is responsible for monitoring implementation
- review steps to clarify team members’ expectations and understanding of responsibilities
- develop crisis plan as needed

G. **Conclude Meeting**
- thank team members for efforts, contributions, and cooperation in developing the plan
- inform team members that the plan will be regularly assessed, and that a copy will be distributed to each team member within 10 working days

**Follow-up Activities**
- complete the written ISP
- distribute the completed ISP to team members
- resolve any discrepancies and/or controversial issues noted by team members

**Monitoring & Evaluation**
- make sure steps/services have been initiated as outlined in the ISP
- regularly assess the ISP with family and team to determine if it is promoting change
- develop and implement a plan for supervisor to monitor oversight of ISP
- reconvene team if steps/services are not effectively meeting needs or are not being completed within specified time frames
- include everyone affected by a proposed change in meetings where the change is discussed
- notify team members ASAP when they are unable to attend meeting and are affected by changes
The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association’s (IFAPA) vision is to provide leadership in Iowa to ensure that every child has a secure, loving and stable family. To this end, in conjunction with other public and private organizations, the Association provides statewide support, training, advocacy and public awareness to recruit and retain quality foster and adoptive families.

The problem in maintaining sufficient foster homes for children in need is principally one of retention. Finding adequate support from their social workers in short supply, numerous foster parents leave the system before their first year of caring for a child is over. According to the National Foster Parent Association, as many as 60% of foster parents quit in the first twelve months when the hard realities of being a foster parent set in.

As foster parents quit, foster children are subject to repeated placements, increasing the likelihood that they will suffer the trauma that often accompanies placement instability. Multiple placements can delay the prospect of reuniting children and youth with their families. The circle of placing a child in one home, then another is a story that makes the goal of “first placement is the last placement”, seem almost unattainable.

This vicious circle can be broken with better recruitment, more adequate foster parent preparation, and higher quality provision of support for foster families. If the role of their foster parent is clarified, and the necessary training and support to bolster that role is provided, finding and keeping qualified foster families can become more of a reality for children and youth in need. From a macro perspective, it is far more cost-effective for a state to retain experienced foster families than to recruit and train new families continuously.

Strong support programs & staff provide foster families with 7 essential core elements of retention:

- Appreciation • Respect
- Caregiving Assistance • Crisis Services
- Professional Development
- Emotional Support • Personal Involvement

Iowa’s Foster and Adoptive Parents Association provides support that helps meet these needs through the following programs:

**Support for New and Seasoned Foster & Adoptive Parents**

- Free membership to all Iowa’s foster and adoptive parents
- Welcome Pac containing contact information and News and Views of Iowa, our bi-monthly newsletter
- Publications – written by our professional staff for foster and adoptive parents including material on child abuse assessment, confidentiality, the impact of adoption on children, and bi-weekly legislative bulletin

**Client Based Surveys**

IFAPA conducts numerous client surveys to assist us in identifying ways that we can better serve our constituents. Listed below are some of the things that our foster and adoptive parents asked us to address.

**Program Services**

**Foster & Adoptive Parent Liaisons**

Each liaison or liaison couple provide support to the foster and adoptive parents in their assigned counties. They each have a local telephone number and an 800 # to receive calls from foster or adoptive parents who have needs. The Liaison also assists in establishing and providing support, referrals, training ideas, and even facilitation of the support groups in their assigned counties. We have a liaison in every county.

**Affiliated Support Groups for Foster, Foster/Adopt & Adoption**

Each year IFAPA offers a Support Group Retreat, allowing each support group to send two members to the two-day retreat at no expense. The focus of the retreat is to assist members in organizing, facilitating and arranging training to support their members.
Foster Care Respite Program
The IFAPA Respite Program’s aim is to ease some of the stresses associated with foster parenting by locating temporary care for foster children so parents may enjoy a planned vacation, or to provide them with a guilt-free break.

Foster Allegation Information Resource (FAIR)
The FAIR Program provides an unbiased resource to foster parents who are involved in a child abuse assessment.

Training
IFAPA has excelled in the development of numerous training opportunities for foster and adoptive parents. We cover areas such as Understanding Attachment Disorder, Developing Anger Management Techniques, Dealing with Acting Out Behavior, and understanding Attention Deficit Disorder.

IFAPA Annual State Conference
This yearly event is a training opportunity providing 12 hours of in-service training for foster and adoptive parents. Training topics are based upon requests from foster and adoptive parents throughout the state.

Preventative Practices:
Strategies for Minimizing the Risk of Child Abuse Allegations in Foster Homes
This service was developed to provide foster parents with the education and resources necessary to recognize possible risks in their homes and to keep their family and foster children safe.

Transracial Parenting & Cultural Awareness Training
This training is based upon curriculum provided by the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). The purpose is to educate parents on what it means to parent a child who is from another race or culture. The goal of the training is to help parents make better decisions about their ability (both present and potential) to raise a child of another race, culture or ethnic background.

Respite Training
IFAPA developed a 2-hour training on a variety of foster care respite practice issues. This training educates foster parents and social workers on basic respite information, as well as communication and confidentiality in respite situations.

Adoption Training
Bringing nationally recognized experts to all areas of Iowa, IFAPA provides numerous trainings for adoptive parents.

Recommendations
Based on information gathered from our many years of providing support services for foster and adoptive families we offer the following suggestions to State foster care program managers, local public and private foster care agencies, and foster care associations to augment the support and services available to foster families.

- Develop a state-wide "Foster Parent Tool Kit" to provide foster parents with information about what they can expect from foster care agencies, their role, rights, and protections as foster parents, and procedures for voicing their concerns regarding the children in their care
- Promote the designation of foster parent advocates to work directly with foster parents and the agency to represent the concerns of foster families and give them a "voice" in determining both their best interests and the interests of the children in their care
- Encourage networking and information sharing among foster parents through local and national foster parent associations, support groups, foster parent community newsletters, and agency alerts regarding policy changes
- Establish "clothes closets" to disseminate clothing and provide household necessities to foster parents in an effort to reduce their out-of-pocket expenses and designate funds to cover one-time expenses (e.g., sports equipment)
- Provide opportunities to develop consistent rapport between foster parents and caseworkers
- Promote collaborative efforts by ACF, State agencies, and national organizations to make child-care and respite care services more accessible to foster parents
- Establish local networks of licensed child and respite care providers
- Provide foster parents with information (e.g., foster parent handbooks, manuals) to assist them in navigating the foster care system and accessing dental, medical, and any other needed services
- Provide information to foster parents on how to cope emotionally and financially with investigations of abuse. This can be accomplished by including the information in existing training curriculum, and developing training specifically focused on investigation survival
- Development of outcome-based retention strategies to determine why families choose not to continue fostering
- Development of data tracking tools to collect retention information
- Establishment of benchmarks and performance indicators
- Collection of retention data, and analysis of data

For more information about IAFA, or to obtain any of our numerous publications, you can visit our website at www.iafpa.org or call 800-277-8145.
For a variety of reasons, some families are unable to provide safe environments for children and youth. To protect these children, State child welfare agencies are tasked with the responsibility for separating children considered to be at-risk of abuse or neglect from their families and placing them in foster care. Foster care placements provide children with temporary living arrangements, physical care, emotional support, and other services intended to protect and promote their growth and development until they can be reunited with their families or receive an alternative permanent placement (i.e., adoption or guardianship).

The ideal foster care system would have a sufficient number of foster care families with the skills to meet the needs of the children and youth separated from their families. However, States are experiencing a shortage of families willing and able to provide foster care and a shortage of foster care families willing or able to meet the specific needs of the children in care (e.g., children with disabilities, adolescents, and other special needs children and youth).

This article focuses on the State of New Jersey's efforts to recruit foster care families. A separate article in this issue focuses on the unique aspects of retention of foster care families.

Children need families to love and care for them. When a child or adolescent can no longer live safely with their own family, they need another family to care for them. The Office of Permanency Support for the State of New Jersey developed a recruitment program to help communities find foster and adoptive families to care for children and youth.

The goals of our recruitment program are to:

- Find foster and adoptive homes for children and youth in need of care
- Involve foster and adoptive families in the recruitment of other foster and adoptive families
- Keep siblings together in foster and adoptive placements
- Keep children and youth in their home communities
- Reduce other changes in children's lives as they are separated from their families
- Promote permanency for children and youth

The activities of the Office of Permanency Support for the State of New Jersey Recruitment Program represent a multifaceted approach to foster parent recruitment including:

- General recruitment activities
- Recruitment activities specifically targeted to meet the needs of the population of children in foster care
- Recruitment targeted to specific areas or communities

A brief discussion of each follows:

**General Recruitment**

The recruitment activities carried out by the New Jersey Statewide Recruitment Coordinator are key components of the general recruitment effort. During 2001, the Statewide Recruitment Coordinator, with the assistance of regional recruitment staff, attended several statewide conferences and conventions. From April to December 2001, staff presented display tables, literature and made personal contact at several venues where large groups of professionals gathered. We focused our general recruitment efforts at major conferences such as: the New Jersey Nurses Convention; the National Social Workers Conference; the School Social Workers Conference; the Gospel Jamboree; the annual conference of the New Jersey Education Association Convention and the Child Welfare League of America's Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference. Our staff gave away thousands of posters, brochures, magnets, and an assortment of other recruitment materials.

In addition to participating in conference and participation at conventions of statewide scope, the Statewide Recruitment Coordinator, provided displays, literature and made personal contact at local events including neighborhood Church events; at health fairs in sponsored by Sororities like the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; at local Day Care Conferences, and at the Children's Health Fair held annually in Monmouth County, New Jersey.

The Statewide Recruitment Coordinator took advantage of opportunities to utilize media resources as well. During the year, staff from the New Jersey Foster and Adoptive Family Recruitment office participated in the taping of several television programs in an effort to reach a wider audience of potential families.
The Coordinator and two foster parents (who are in many cases, our best recruiters) took part in taping a segment of "Images/Imagenes," a public television program focused on issues of particular interest to the Latino population in New Jersey. Foster parents and professional staff also participated in a taping of a local News segment entitled "Defying Age." The segment features individuals over the age of 40 who embark on new ventures; in this case, the topic was encouraging those over age 40 to consider becoming foster or adoptive parents for a child or youth in need of a family.

Print, television, transit, billboard, and sports event advertising are a centerpiece of general recruitment efforts. Recruitment ads appeared in 32 New Jersey newspapers and 1 magazine. New Jersey Network TV ran over 156 television ads that aired statewide. Foster parent recruitment ads - several are reproduced here in this article - utilizing real children, not models, appeared on 1,000 public bus exteriors and 175 interiors. Our Foster Family recruitment message was also displayed on 35 billboards located throughout the state. Recruitment ads also appeared in programs distributed at games played by two New Jersey based minor league baseball teams, the Newark Bears and Trenton Thunder - both venues draw huge audiences and therefore huge numbers of potential foster and adoptive families.

All of the activities are planned, discussed and coordinated at Statewide Recruitment Meeting, held quarterly throughout the year and attended by New Jersey Department of Youth and Family Services recruitment staff and supervisors.

A new addition to our New Jersey recruitment strategy was developed in 2001, a foster care mascot "Buddy the Foster Care Bear." Buddy attends all major recruitment and retention events and has become quite popular and is instrumental in attracting event participants of all ages to the recruitment tables. Because Buddy is so large and cuddly, he attracts a great deal of attention at events. In many cases he is the "hook" that draws people to talk with our staff about the possibility of becoming foster or adoptive parents.

The general recruitment campaign in 2001 concluded with ads for recruiting foster parents for boarder babies appearing in newspapers covering the Metropolitan area of the state.

Recruitment Targeted to Specific Population of Children in Foster Care

During 2000, a campaign was launched to specially recruit foster parents interested in caring for "boarder babies" as Essex county had the largest number of boarder babies in the Newark area. The project began with the selection of a campaign theme. Foster parents and children of staff were assembled to pose for the new ad and the photography shoot was scheduled for May. The campaign was kicked off in October at a luncheon held at University Hospital in Newark. During the luncheon, the new recruitment campaign images were unveiled to invited guess including local clergy, community members, and the media. The kick-off event launched an intensive campaign that included distribution of posters, brochures, and church fans. The new campaign image was also displayed on bus shelters, billboards, and Shopping Mall displays throughout the Newark area. Our print ads appeared in newspapers throughout the area.

Recruitment Targeted to Specific Communities/Areas

In 2000, regional recruitment staff designated specific communities or areas for which targeted recruitment campaign would be planned.

A targeted recruitment campaign was executed for Cape May County (our most southern region) that included the purchase of 90 ads aired on cable television stations, 6 ads in regional newspaper and 90 radio spots. Cape May was considered untapped ground because very few foster parents came from this area. Targeted campaigns were also launched in Passaic and Bergen Counties (countries where large numbers of Latino families reside and a large number of children were entering foster care) that included the purchase of 232 ads on 3 cable stations and a total of 16 ads appearing in 4 local newspapers. Recruitment ads in these communities appeared in 2 Spanish language newspapers, 24 times on local cable stations, and 21 times on 2 radio stations.

A third targeted campaign was aimed at Perth Amboy, early in the summer, as this is a vacation spot for many families. Similarly, the fourth campaign was launched, at the request of a judge, in Ocean County and Hamilton Township in July and August to maximize our draw on families vacationing for the summer at the beach. Our recruitment ads displayed for a total of 24 weeks in movie theaters in those two areas were very successful.
Other Opportunities

Staff utilized any event possible to convey our Foster/Adoptive Family Recruitment Message. We have been successful in utilizing some public/private partnerships ventures in recruitment. The New Jersey Division for Youth and Families partnered with the Prudential Insurance Company of America in an event to kick-off the "Backpack Challenge". Individuals living and working in the City of Trenton and surrounding areas were encouraged to contribute backpacks filled with personal and gift items for children entering foster care. The kick-off event was held on the steps of Trenton City Hall provided staff with the opportunity to attract positive media coverage about Foster Care in New Jersey and encouraged community interest by setting up a recruitment table. We also make sure at outdoor events to have our Recruitment Winnebago parked at a highly visible location to draw potential families.

Recruitment staff also attended the follow-up event later in the year when the backpacks were actually collected from a location on the pedestrian mall in the state Capitol. Once again staff took the opportunity to host a recruitment table and made sure to have the Recruitment Winnebago at that site.

Results

Inquiries to the toll-free number jumped to 6,353 in 2000, from 4,202 in 1999. After the initial impact of the targeted campaigns the inquiries fell to 4,884 in 2001. Inquiries to the website shot to 746 in 2001 from 69 in 1999. Figures to date for 2002 are 509.

Some Tips for Colleagues Recruiting Foster & Adoptive Families

All children and youth have one thing in common, they want to be part of a permanent family. Colleagues who are charged with moving children and youth toward permanency have a challenging job in finding committed and loving families for children in need. State and local agencies reviewing their current recruitment efforts may want to consider some of the following suggestions:

- Target recruitment efforts on parents for children who are over-represented by the population of children in foster care by tailoring recruitment campaigns to accommodate different ethnicities
- Be relentless in your quest to find committed homes for children and youth
- Use every opportunity which presents itself to "talk up" the need for homes
- Be wide in your search, do not rule out possible families which may be seen as "non-traditional"
- Consider offering stipends to foster parents for successfully recruiting other foster families
- Use foster parents as facilitators during pre-service foster parent training classes
- Work collaboratively among foster care agencies to develop innovative recruitment methods
- Develop partnerships with faith-based organizations to heighten community awareness of foster care needs and foster parenting opportunities
- Determine future foster care trends and needs
- Determine recruitment goals necessary to meet the current and future needs of children in foster care (e.g., adolescents and physically or mentally disabled)
- Develop methods to assess the success and effectiveness of recruitment efforts (e.g., survey foster parents and establish benchmarks and tracking data);
- Strive to sustain recruitment campaign efforts throughout the year
- Allow foster care agencies to recruit outside of their communities to maintain a steady influx of new prospective foster families.

For more information on New Jersey's Recruitment Efforts, visit our website at www.njfostercare.org or call Vinette Tate at 1-877-NJ-Foster.
Inter-State Placement: Impact on Time to Permanency for Children in the Public Foster Care System

by Penelope L. Maza, Ph.D.
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With the current emphasis on outcomes in child welfare, particularly permanency and the time it takes to achieve it, increased attention needs to be paid to children in the public foster care system who are placed across state lines. Data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) provide a first look at permanency issues for children in these circumstances compared to children placed in-state. The analyses which follow utilize data from 45 states from the FY 2000 annual AFCARS foster care database. On September 30, 2000, in these 45 states there were: 524,000 children in foster care of which 22,000 were in out-of-state placements. Of the 258,000 children who exited care during FY 2000 in those states, 12,000 exited from out-of-state placements. Based on analyses of these data, it is estimated that on any day, approximately 5% of the children in foster care are in out-of-state placements.

Children in out-of-state placements have different demographic characteristics from children in in-state placements. They are more likely than children in in-state placements to be African American (49% vs. 39%) and less likely to be White (37% vs. 41%) or Hispanic (10% vs. 16%). They are also over a median year older than children in in-state placements (11.9 years vs. 10.4 years). Children exiting from out-of-state placements were a median of three years younger than children exiting care from in-state placements when they were removed from home (5.1 years vs. 8.2 years), but were only a median of one younger when they exited care (9.2 years vs. 10.2 years).

In the area of permanency, children in out-of-state placements are similar to children in in-state placements in that approximately three-fourths are in placement settings that are likely to result in permanency (pre-adoptive home, or foster family care with or without a relative). However, children in out-of-state placements are more likely than children in in-state placements to be in relative foster homes (42% vs. 25%) or pre-adoptive homes (11% vs. 4%).

Although both groups are in placement settings likely to result in permanency, their permanency goals differ. Children in out-of-state placements are less likely than children in in-state placements to have a goal of reunification (27% vs. 42%) and more likely to have a goal of living with relatives (9% vs. 5%), adoption (23% vs. 18%) or emancipation (15% vs. 5%). And finally, children in out-of-state placements are three and a half times more likely to be discharged to adoption (51% vs. 14%), and one-third as likely to be discharged to reunification (22% vs. 60%) as children in in-state placements.

Although many children in out-of-state placements achieve permanency, it takes longer for children in out-of-state placements to achieve it than for children in in-state placements. Children exiting care whose last placement had been out-of-state spent over a median of three times longer in care than children in in-state placements (36 months vs. 11 months); over five times longer from removal to the beginning of their last placement setting, which for out-of-state placements is assumed to the point at which they went out-of-state (31 months vs. 6 months); and three and a half times shorter from the beginning of their last placement setting to exit (8 months vs. 29 months). Finally, children exiting care whose last placement had been out-of-state had overall longer median lengths of stay to exit than children in in-state placements for the five most frequent discharge reasons:

- **REUNIFICATION** (13 months vs. 5 months)
- **LIVE WITH RELATIVES** (15 months vs. 8 months)
- **ADOPTION** (48 months vs. 36 months)
- **EMANCIPATION** (56 months vs. 40 months)
- **GUARDIANSHIP** (35 months vs. 27 months)

In response to the discussion of these data at conferences, the audiences have proposed a number of factors which may be influencing these longer lengths of stay for children placed across state lines. The factors identified so far fall into four general categories:
Administrative burden, e.g. real or perceived cumbersome provisions of the Inter-State Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) which leads to workers avoiding it at all costs
Beliefs about what constitutes “good practice”, i.e. interpretation of the “close proximity” provision in federal law
Financing, i.e. which state pays for what for children placed across state lines
Miscommunication across states, e.g. lack of clarity about which types of homestudies are needed.

The length of time associated with placements across state lines serves as a testament to the complexity of the process and also the careful way in which it is implemented. However, this greater length of time to permanency also can have negative consequences for children. Therefore, the current emphasis on decreasing the length of time to permanency needs to be weighed against the administrative and other issues which, in fact, lengthen stays for children placed across state lines. All of the factors that influence the extended lengths of stay for children placed across state lines need to be explored to determine which, if any, could be addressed to shorten the length of stay to exit for these children.

The interpretations, recommendations and conclusions in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect or represent the view of the Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, or the Department of Health and Human Services

The NRCFCPP is focused on assisting States in response to the Child and Family Services Review process by providing technical assistance, training, and information services in the broad areas of permanency and systemic factors in the following areas:
- Concurrent Permanency Planning
- Recruitment & Retention of Resource Families: Respite Care, Dual Licensure Issues, Post-Permanency Services
- Child/Family Visiting & Family Development
- Maintaining Connections: Sibling Issues
- Working with Birth Families to Promote Reunification
- Working to Connect Birth & Foster Parents
- Relative Care as a Permanency Option
- Engaging Fathers: Diligent Search with Paternal Resources
- Disproportionality of Children & Youth of Color in Foster Care
- Overuse of Long Term Foster Care: Path-ways to Permanency for Older Adolescents
- Promoting Competent Practice in Case Planning & Implementation
- Placement Stability
- Health & Mental Health Care Issues for Children and Youth in Foster Care
- Safe & Stable Families Act (SSFA)
- Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)
- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- Inter-Ethnic Placement Act (IEPA)

These systemic changes encompass a variety of issues for children and youth in foster care.

The NRCFCPP is committed to increasing the capacity and resources of State, Tribal, and other publicly supported child welfare agencies to achieve permanency for youth and children in out-of-home care. To do this, we advocate for a mix of…
- family-centered & strengths/needs-based practice approaches
- community-based service delivery
- cultural competency & respect for all families
- open & inclusive practice
- non-adversarial approaches to problem-solving & decision-making
- concurrent rather than sequential consideration of all permanency options

For more info, call 212/452-7053 or...

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The NRCFCPP helps States, Territories & Tribes respond to policy and systemic changes in child welfare brought about by implementation of federal legislation, including:
- Adoption & Safe Families Act (ASFA)
- John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (Chafee Act)
Developing Structured Decision Making Procedures for Foster Care

In an effort to provide more effective services to families with children placed in foster care, Michigan’s Family Independence Agency (FIA) worked with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency to design and implement structured decision making (SDM) procedures for foster care. The Foster Care SDM case management system was piloted in several sites in December of 1997. This project followed a successful previous effort to develop and implement SDM case management procedures for FIA in-home child protective service (CPS) operations. A comprehensive evaluation of the Child Protective Services SDM was completed in 1995 and indicated that SDM assessment and case management procedures had improved case opening decisions and encouraged more effective service delivery to high risk families. As a result, pilot counties that employed it had significantly reduced subsequent maltreatment reports and substantiations among the families they served. Given these positive findings, FIA proceeded to develop and implement similar procedures for out of home placement cases.

Overview of Structured Decision Making (SDM) Case Management

The model is designed to improve the effectiveness of child protective service and foster care service delivery systems. The objective is to reduce abuse and neglect, expedite permanency for children in placement and promote the positive development of children. In order to achieve these objectives, SDM seeks to improve case assessment and decision making in the field. It is comprehensive case management system which is used at each major decision point in a child welfare case. The SDM assessments completed by workers in the field are linked directly to service planning, workload standards and agency planning and budgeting. The system provides guidance to workers for case decision making and data to managers for agency planning and program evaluation.

The following SDM assessments are employed in both CPS and FC to ensure that every worker addresses specific issues in every case:

- Priority response assessment to determine which referrals to investigate and how quickly the agency responds to abuse and neglect complaints
- Safety assessment to determine the threat of immediate harm in a CPS investigation
- A research-based risk assessment completed at the close of an investigation to estimate the likelihood of future abuse and/or neglect and guide the decision to open a case for protective service intervention and to establish the number of contacts a worker must make, at a minimum, in a case
- Standardized assessments of strengths and needs for families and children that evaluate twenty-four life domain areas and guide case planning and service plan monitoring
- Periodic reassessments of child/family safety, risk, and needs
- Reunification assessment that guides the decision to reunify a child with his or her family or to change the permanency planning goal

Michigan Foster Care SDM

Michigan’s foster care services are provided by 82 county social service agencies which may serve cases directly with their own child welfare staff or enter into Purchase of Service (POS) agreements with private agencies. Many counties use a combination of direct service and POS to provide foster care services. The agency’s 650 foster care workers, and at least an equal number of private agency workers, make the difficult decisions that begin with the assignment of a new placement case and end at case closure. It is critical that agency staff conduct assessments and make decisions in a consistent and equitable manner that helps them deliver appropriate services to protect children from further harm.
The FIA’s objectives for the SDM foster care pilot initiative were:

1) to develop case management procedures which expedite agency efforts to achieve permanency for children entering foster care placement;
2) to provide a prototype design for a new foster care case management information system; and 3) to help FIA comply with the expectations of the 1997 federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA).

The SDM foster care pilot included Wayne County (Detroit metropolitan area), which serves nearly 50% of the children in foster care, and nine additional counties. In addition, the pilot included four private agencies providing foster care under POS contracts, two operate in Wayne County and two in other outstate counties. The pilot design made it possible to evaluate the case management procedures in both POS and direct service delivery settings. County and POS agency staff in the SDM pilot were trained in late Fall 1997 and began using SDM procedures to assess cases by December 1997.

Public and private agency foster care workers develop an initial service plan (ISP) for achieving permanency within 30 days of a child’s entry into out of home placement. Regular progress reviews are conducted and an updated service plan (USP) is completed every 90 days while the child is in placement.

The major features of foster care SDM include:

1. Structured assessments for developing the Initial Service Plan (ISP). Within 30 days of a child’s entry into foster care, workers use a structured assessment to systematically evaluate the strengths and treatment needs of family caregivers and each child. These assessments were designed to identify the barriers to reunification of the child with the family, identify critical service needs of the child and to guide workers in developing an effective and focused initial service plan to address the barriers and child needs.

2. Reunification Assessment for developing the Updated Service Plan (USP) and assessing parenting time and the reduction of risk to the children. After completion of the Initial Service Plan and treatment goals and objectives, a reunification assessment is conducted at 90-day intervals to evaluate progress towards the case plan goals. At each USP review, workers systematically evaluate family progress in addressing the identified barriers to reunification, and also assess parenting time (visitation). This information is used to amend the service plan and expedite case management decisions to achieve reunification, adoption, or another viable permanency planning goals for the child.

The reunification assessment includes these components:

- An evaluation of the family’s progress in reducing the barriers to reunification identified in the service plan (i.e., substance abuse, parental skill deficits, etc.)
- An objective assessment of the parenting time (parental visitation) that includes frequency and quality of interaction in the preceding 90-day period.
- When progress in reducing barriers to reunification and parenting time warrants consideration of reunification, a family safety assessment is completed to help workers evaluate the danger of harm prior to any return of the child and to plan the supportive service interventions necessary to protect the child and support the family after reunification.
- Clear policies for using the reunification assessment findings to expedite permanency within the guidelines recommended by the ASFA. For example, if a family has made poor progress in reducing barriers (risk) and/or parenting time is poor for two assessment periods, the policy guideline requires a change of the permanency planning goal from return home.

To evaluate the impact of SDM on foster care cases in Michigan, each pilot county was matched to a comparison county using a variety of social, economic, and child welfare practice indices. Large cohorts of children entering foster care in both the pilot and comparison counties were then identified and each case was tracked over a 15-month follow-up period. Since both groups were subject to the same changes in law or policy which occurred during the follow-up period, differences in outcomes between the groups could be attributed to SDM. A synopsis of study findings is presented below.

Evaluation Findings

As an initial evaluation step, children entering foster care during a pre-SDM implementation operating period were observed in both pilot and comparison counties. During this time frame, comparison counties had a slightly better record of moving children to permanency than the counties selected to pilot SDM. Fifteen months after the case opening date, comparison counties had achieved permanency for 4% more of the children entering care than the pilot counties. Since this difference was not statistically significant, comparison and pilot counties appear to have been achieving permanency for children entering foster care at approximately the same rate before SDM was implemented.
After SDM was implemented, permanency outcomes were observed for a new cohort of children entering care. During the post-implementation period, pilot counties moved a significantly higher proportion of children to permanency than the comparison counties (see Figure 1). Figure 2 shows the types of permanency observed.

**In the SDM pilot counties:**
- A higher proportion of children returned home
- A higher proportion of children had parental rights terminated
- A higher proportion of children were placed with permanent legal guardians
- The study also found that permanency rates attained for African American children in Michigan matched those attained for Whites

As a result of the pilot and outcome evaluation, SDM has been implemented statewide in foster care and CPS. Michigan is proceeding to improve its utility to both workers and supervisors by incorporating SDM into the State Automated Child Welfare Information System.

It is noteworthy that Michigan’s non-SDM counties also produced high rates of permanency for children placed in foster care. In effect, SDM, in conjunction with the strong foundation already in place in Michigan improved the effectiveness of a service delivery system that was already functioning very well.

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**New Publications**

The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work has as part of its mission to disseminate information in the form of print publications (books, magazines, journals, special reports), videos, PowerPoint presentations, and other resources to increase the capacity of child welfare agencies to provide children with safe, permanent families in supportive communities.

Our Center staff receives numerous publications every week from all over the country and we thought it might be interesting for our readers to know what new publications have recently come out. Please contact us with any information needs at karyn.lee@hunter.cuny.edu or call 212/452-7433.

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**BOOKS**

*What Works in Child Welfare*

Presenting a body of research addressing what works in child welfare, the book is divided into six main sections family preservation and support services, child protective services, out-of-home care, adoption, childcare, and services for adolescents. Each section contains information on what works, conflicting evidence, cost effectiveness, and a summary table.

*Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare*
*by Dorothy Roberts*

Basic Books (www.basicbooks.com)

In a new book, Dorothy Roberts suggests that the disproportionate representation of Black children in the child welfare system is a social crisis. She believes that Black children are too quickly removed from their homes, placed into the foster care system, and then freed for adoption. In a strong approach, she compares this kind of racially motivated action, by well-meaning people on both sides of the political fence, to slavery, which wrenched children away from their parents and destroyed black families.

*Adoption Nation*
*by Adam Pertman*

Basic Books (www.basicbooks.com)

This book explores the pros and cons involved in adoption. Pertman, an adoptive father provides suggestions to make the adoption process less perilous and remove policy obstacles, which keep children from entering permanent homes as soon as possible.

*Child Welfare, Journal of Policy Program and Practice*
*edited by Gerald P. Mallon & Bogart Leashore*

Special Issue, Contemporary Issues in Permanency Planning, Child Welfare League of America (www.cwla.org/pubs)

This special issue is a comprehensive examination and investigation of permanency planning experiences of for children and youth in out-of-home care. Filled with multiple perspectives this issue provides grist for further discussion by practitioners and policymakers.
**VIDEOS**

**Outside Looking In: Transracial Adoption in America**
Phil Bertelsen (1hr)
To order a copy of the video, contact Big Mouth Productions 646-230-6228 or (www.bigmouthproductions.com)
This video takes a closer look at how these families are faring from a personal point of view—his adoption as a black child into a white family. It covers his adoption as a 4-year-old boy in the 1970s by a New Jersey couple who had already adopted children from other races and had biological children. The film also chronicles the adoption in 2001 of a two-month-old African American infant named David by a white Chicago-area couple.

**Why Can’t We Be a Family Again?**
(20 mins) Roger Weisberg & Murray Nossel
Public Policy Productions, Inc.
P.O. Box 650, Palisades, NY 10964
(845) 398-2119

**REPORTS**

**Family Preservation: A Case Study of Indian Tribal Practice**
John Horse, Cecilia Martinez, Priscilla Day
National Indian Child Welfare Association
Casey Family Programs (www.casey.org)
This case study of the Anika, Hidatsa, and Mandan Tribes in North Dakota examines the landscape of family preservation outside Public Law 83-280 state and the integrity of the model where multiple systems complement each other.

**A Framework for Quality Assurance in Child Welfare**
Mary O’Brien, Peter Watson
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
1-800-Help Kid (www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/research/natchildwel)
This publication contains all the main elements for child welfare agencies that are considering creating or energizing existing quality assurance systems. The framework presented was developed based on examples from present quality assurance efforts in state child welfare agencies. It contains implementation steps and examples for application within an agency.

**Expediting Permanency for Abandoned Infants: Guidelines for State Policies & Procedures**
National Abandoned Infants Resource Center (www.socrates.berkeley.edu/~aiarc)
(510) 643-8390
This monograph examines the issue of infants and young children abandoned or at risk of abandonment by parents in the U.S. It (1) reviews state policies and practice, (2) makes recommendations about definitions of permanency, time frames and procedures for terminating parental rights, and (3) identifies promising practices to expedite permanency for infants and young children who are abandoned or at risk of abandonment.

**Adoption and Adolescents: A Handbook for Preparing Adolescents for Adoption**
Virginia Sturgeon
(www.sturgeon@inf.net) (859) 299-2749
This handbook is designed to assist practitioners working with adolescents freed for adoption. It outlines the steps needed to plan for the future and to help them achieve their highest potential.

**Employment Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning & Evaluation, University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children (www.chapin.uchicago.edu)
This report provides information on the employment outcomes of children exiting foster care in California, Illinois and South Carolina during the mid 1990’s. The report addresses three primary areas: patterns of employment and the amount of earnings, comparison with youth of similar ages in low-income families, sociodemographic characteristics and foster care service experiences related to the patterns of employment.

**Health Care for Teens in Care**
Karen Allene Howze, Esq. (202) 662-1720
Published by American Bar Association on Children and the Law, this is a new excellent resource written for judges. The section on

**Concurrent Planning Video Series**
Lutheran Social Services of Washington & Idaho (www.lssnw.org)
These series of videos—Child Behaviors, Foster Parents Speak, Open Adoption, Visits, Working with Birth Parents—were developed to train child welfare professionals, foster parents and relatives caring for children in the child welfare system. They are an excellent resource for those interested in training on the topic.

**Finding Forever Families: Making the Case for Child Specific Recruitment**
(35 mins) 1-800-askdtfa
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (davethomasfoundationforadoption.com)
Adopted children, administrators, workers and advocates from across the country discuss the importance of adoption for adolescents and young adults and share successful strategies for finding homes and matching children with families.

**Understanding Adolescent development is particularly informative. This is a must, not just for judges for whom it was written, but for all child welfare professionals interested in the health care of youth in foster care.**

**Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care:**
Perspectives from Judges & Program Specialists
Melissa Litchfield, Sophia Gatowski & Maureen McKissick
Published by The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (775) 327-5300 or e-mail ppp@ppnjfcj.org
Describing the results of an extensive survey, this very fine report seeks to increase the capacity of judges, child welfare workers and educators to better assist youth in foster care in meeting educational goals.

**Improving the Odds for the Healthy Development of Young Children in Foster Care**
Sheryl Dicker, Elissa Gordon & Jan Knitzer
Building Systems to Support the Healthy Emotional Development of Young Children
Jan Knitzer
(212) 304-7100 or e-mail www.nccp.org
These two reports are part of a series published by The National Center for Children in Poverty at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. Both are excellent resources for those professionals interested in focusing on the well-being of children and families. Both are jam packed with wonderful recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.
Hunter College  
School of Social Work  
Child Welfare Lecture Series

On April 29th Professor Ruth G. McRoy, Associate Dean for Research & Director of the Center for Social Work Research and the Ruby Lee Piester Centennial Professor in Services to Children & Families at the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin delivered the Hunter School of Social Work Child Welfare Lecture. Professor McRoy, a recognized expert in the area of the over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system, focused her lecture on this area.

In an effort to provide current information to our constituents, The NRCFCPP has copies of Professor McRoy’s presentation in both printed transcript and Power Point formats. If you would like copies of these, they can be downloaded from our web site at www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp or you can obtain print copies of them by e-mailing Karyn.Lee@hunter.cuny.edu or calling (212) 452-7433.

On September 26th Dr. James Garbarino will be our featured speaker at the next Hunter School of Social Work Child Welfare Lecture. Dr. Garbarino is Co-Director, Family Life Development Center and Elizabeth Lee Vincent Professor of Human Development at Cornell University. Dr. Garbarino is recognized nationally for his significant contributions to the protection of children. Books he has authored or edited include: And Words Can Hurt Forever: Protecting Adolescents from Bullying, Harassment, and Emotional Violence at School (in press for 2002); Parents Under Siege: Why You Are the Solution, Not the Problem, in Your Child’s Life (2001); Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them (1999).

Dr. Garbarino has served as consultant or advisor to a wide range of organizations, including the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, the American Medical Association, the National Black Child Development Institute, the National Resource Center for Children in Poverty, Childwatch International Research Network, and the FBI. In 1991 he undertook missions for UNICEF to assess the impact of the Gulf War upon children in Kuwait and Iraq, and has served as a consultant for programs serving Vietnamese, Bosnian and Croatian children.

His presentation will focus on issues of violence in the lives of children and youth.

For information on this event, contact Karyn Lee via e-mail at Karyn.Lee@hunter.cuny.edu or by phoning her at (212) 452-7433.