

# Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System

The purpose of this funding opportunity announcement was to fund multi-faceted diligent recruitment programs for a range of resource families for children in foster care, including kinship, foster, concurrent, and adoptive families. The target population includes any child or youth in a public foster care system.

This synthesis was a collaborative effort by Child Welfare Information Gateway and James Bell Associates.

## Funding Opportunity Announcement

In 2008, the Children's Bureau published a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System. This announcement identified a need for the development and implementation of national adoption and foster care strategies, data systems, interventions, and training and technical assistance to address the fact that "in 22 States, [there is] a need for more culturally diverse homes (e.g., Native American, African-American, and Hispanic)..." In addition, the FOA noted that findings related to the systemic factors in the Child and Family Services Review process revealed that "30 States had no formal process for analyzing the characteristics of the children in foster care in order to formulate a diligent recruitment plan with specific strategies for different communities based on the demographics of the children in foster care from that community. All of these findings support the need to develop more effective programs in support of placing children and youth with families who can provide permanent family connections." (FOA, p. 5-6).

The FOA further identified the key characteristics of successful diligent recruitment models:

- Recruit kinship, foster, and adoptive families in order to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in foster care successfully
- Are multi-faceted and recognize that permanency efforts should begin when a child first enters care
- Provide options and solutions for permanency that include the search for kin, to include family members on both sides of the family, as well as foster and adoptive families with the ability to care and provide for the child and are willing to be involved in concurrent planning
- Include a comprehensive search of the youth's current and past relationships to identify caring individuals willing and able to be adoptive parents or be open to a mutually beneficial and permanent relationship

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In addition, diligent recruitment efforts should “provide information to potential resource families throughout the community about the characteristics and needs of the available children; the nature of kinship care, foster care, and adoption processes; and the supports available to kinship, foster, and adoptive families. This includes the provision of information to the community of natural relationships such as, but not limited to, teachers, mentors, coaches, parents of friends, communities, and extended family members.” (FOA, p. 9)

As stated in the FOA, the purpose of funded projects was to:

1. Implement comprehensive, multifaceted diligent recruitment programs for resource families, including kinship, foster, concurrent, and adoptive families for children and youth served by public child welfare agencies as a means of improving permanency outcomes.
2. Integrate the diligent recruitment program with other agency programs, including foster care case planning and permanency planning processes to facilitate active concurrent planning activities.
3. Evaluate the implementation of the comprehensive diligent recruitment programs to document processes and potential linkages between diligent recruitment and improved outcomes.
4. Develop identifiable sites that other States/locales seeking to implement improved diligent recruitment methods can look to for guidance, insight, and possible replication.

Funding was available for demonstration projects to develop strategies and implementation plans that were innovative, unique, and distinctive in nature. The FOA stated that broad and comprehensive or narrow and targeted models should be relevant, effective, evidence-based, promising practices with strong components that could be replicated and duplicated in other settings.

## FOA Information

FOA Title: Adoption Opportunities: Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in the Foster Care System  
 FOA Number: HHS-2008-ACF-ACYF-CO-0046  
 CFDA Number: 93.652  
 Approved Project Period: 9/30/2008–9/30/13

## Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Grant  
 Anticipated Total Priority Area Funding: \$3,600,000 per budget period  
 Anticipated Number of Awards: 1 to 9  
 Ceiling on Amount of Individual Awards: \$400,000 per budget period  
 Floor on Amount of Individual Awards: None  
 Average Projected Award Amount: \$400,000 per budget period  
 Length of Project Periods: 60-months (5 12-month budget periods)

## Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for grant awards included:

- State governments
- County governments
- Special district governments

## Grantees and Target Population

Note: For ease of reading, projects will be identified by the State abbreviation for the State in which they are located. For example, California’s Roots & Wings project will be referred to as “CA.”

### State: California (CA)

#### Project Title: Roots & Wings

Lead Agency: County of Santa Cruz, California, Human Services Department, Family and Children’s Services,  
 Collaborating Partners: Santa Cruz County Foster Parents Association, Cabrillo College, Children’s Research Center (subcontractor), Lorrie Lutz (subcontractor)  
 Target Population: Children aged 11 and older  
 Award Number: 90CO1035

Contact: County of Santa Cruz, California, Human Services Department, Family and Children’s Services <http://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren.aspx>

Key Grant Activities:

- Outreach to establish new relationships with families who have not yet considered being resource families, along with businesses and public organizations to provide venues for outreach to prospective resource parents
- Community outreach efforts through designated resource family specialists
- Development of a permanency field guide for social workers that outlines the steps of child-specific recruitment
- Photo listings on national and State websites, collaboration with local businesses, and the use of Facebook, public service announcements, and YouTube to recruit resource families and engage youth
- Communication efforts directed at staff in the Santa Cruz Department of Human Services to increase awareness of the needs of resource families
- Establishment of a Permanency Workgroup to guide permanency efforts and address system challenges related to achieving permanency for youth

Project website: <http://santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren/FosterCareandAdoptions/RootsWings.aspx>

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/rootswings/#tab=summary>

**State: Colorado (CO)**

**Project Title: Denver’s Village**

Lead Agency: Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS)

Collaborating Partners: Colorado State Department of Human Services, Fresh Start Organization, Lowry Family Center, Sisters of Color, Denver Indian Family Resource Center, YMCA, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work, Butler Institute

Target Population: African-American, Latino, and Native American children in or at risk of out-of-home placement

Award Number: 90CO1037

Contact: Margaret Booker, [margaret.booker@denvergov.org](mailto:margaret.booker@denvergov.org)

Key Grant Activities:

- Collaboration with key partners to provide resource families with referrals, program services, and evaluation services
- Establishment of integrated foster care support units within the Department of Health and Human Services
- General recruitment and retention strategies, including radio spots, newspaper articles, movie viewings, special trainings, “parents’ night out” events, and participation in other large-scale events, such as PRIDEFEST
- Targeted recruitment to the African-American, Latino, Native American, and LGBT communities
- Development of a resource family database to track the training and licensure of recruited foster and/or adoptive applicants
- Development of recruitment media, including a recruitment video and the “Stand Up for Me” brand and website ([www.standupforme.org](http://www.standupforme.org))
- Development of a customer service training/curriculum

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/denversvillage/#tab=summary>

**State: Kentucky (KY)**

**Project Title: Making Appropriate and Timely Connections for Children (MATCH)**

Lead Agency: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Target Population: Children in out-of-home care

Collaborating Partners: Murray State University, University of Louisville, University of Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky University

Award Number: 90CO1040

Contact: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services <http://chfs.ky.gov/>

## Key Grant Activities:

- Targeted and child-specific recruitment
- Customer service focused on centralized intake, diligent recruitment
- Respite/alternate caregiver training
- Quarterly Regional Peer Consultations; establishment of Advisory Board, including private-child placing agency; establish annual regional training calendar and increase trainings
- Collaborative review of permanency data with the courts; Collaboration with Division of Child Support Enforcement on identification of kinship resources
- Practice change regarding scheduling of SWIFT meetings and referrals
- Use of data to identify barriers, track progress and practice indicators, and promotion of evidence-based decision-making

Project Website: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/kentucky/#tab=summary>

**State: Minnesota (MN)****Project Title: Permanent Families Recruitment Project**

Lead Agency: Ramsey County (Minnesota) Community Human Services Department

Collaborating Partners: Community partners, community-based advisory committees

Target Population: African-American, Latino, and Hispanic/Latino youth 12 and older under State guardianship

Award Number: 90CO1041

Contact: Ramsey County (Minnesota) Community Human Services Department <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/hs/index.htm>

## Key Grant Activities:

- Recruitment strategies and community-based partnerships for recruitment activities
- Establishment of infrastructure and tools to improve processes, including a unified resource family database to track recruitment, training, and licensing activities
- Systems change activities (identify and analyze agency structures that may be barriers to the licensing process, develop a practice model for implementing Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP), etc.
- Training and support for families and youth
- Community outreach and collaborations
- Expanded concurrent planning efforts
- Establishment of youth and African-American advisory groups

Project website: <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/hs/index.htm>

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/rasmeyco/#tab=summary>

**State: Missouri (MO)****Project Title: Missouri Extreme Recruitment Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition**

Lead Agency: Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division

Collaborating Partners: Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies, Saint Louis University, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition, Children's Home Society, Adoption Exchange, 14 additional partner agencies to create a more effective system for MO's children in the custody of the State

Target Population: Youth ages 10–18 who had been in out-of-home care for 15 months or more, resided in the St. Louis region, and did not have an identified permanent resource

Award Number: 90CO1039

Contact: Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/>

## Key Grant Activities:

- Implementation of the Extreme Recruitment™ Model: 12–20 weeks of intensive, multi-faceted recruitment activities by the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition that result in the identification of potential permanency resources. Core strategies include the use of private investigators to identify and contact potential permanency resources and implementing general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment activities concurrently
- Connector Services: Supportive services to help youth and potential adoptive families prepare for permanency and stabilize placements for up to 1 year (e.g., mental health, psychological testing and evaluation, parent education, support groups, and advocacy services)
- Collaboration among 14 public and private agencies and media partners with an advisory group to oversee and provide input regarding project activities
- Kinship care best practice recommendations for workers

Project Website: <http://www.adoptuskids.org/about-us/diligent-recruitment-grantees/extreme-recruitment>

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/missouri-erfacc/#tab=summary>

**State: New York (NY)****Project Title: A Parent for Every Child**

Lead Agency: New York State Office of Children and Family Services

Collaborating Partners: Hillside Children’s Center, Parsons Child and Family Center, You Gotta Believe!

Target Population: Children who reside in a facility licensed or operated by the New York State (NYS) Office of Mental Health, NYS Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, OCFS juvenile justice facilities, and the Office of Children and Family Services. Youth and older youth residing in child welfare residential or congregate care who have a permanency goal other than adoption.

Award Number: 90CO1038

Contact: New York State Office of Children and Family Services <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/>

## Key Grant Activities:

- Targeted recruitment activities and strategies, for example, reaching out to former foster parents or physical therapists who worked with youth
- Child-centered approach for connecting or reconnecting with kin through case record-mining, family finding, family search, and engagement
- General and parent recruitment activities and support including portable studios designed for taping Adoption Chronicle videos of youth, adoption panels/permanency panels, and Internet photo listings
- Workforce training activities: Service Guides of Foster Care, Adoption, Family Support, and Therapeutic Services available by region, “Building Trauma-Competent Healing,” and “The Effects of Trauma on the Development of Youth in the Child Welfare System”
- Cross-system meetings, workshops, trainings, and advisory boards

Project Website: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=A\\_Parent\\_for\\_Every\\_Child.org](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=A_Parent_for_Every_Child.org)

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/pfec/#tab=outcomes>

**State: Ohio (OH)****Project Title: Partners for Forever Families**

Lead Agency: Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS)

Collaborating Partners: Case Western University, Beech Brook, Adoption Network Cleveland, Hough Services Providers Network at the Urban Minority Alcoholism Drug Abuse Outreach Project, Neighborhood Agencies (e.g., East End Neighborhood House, Harvard Community Services Center, Murtis Taylor Human Services System & University Settlement)

Target Population: Older children and sibling groups in out-of-home care

Award Number: 90CO1034

Contact: Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services <http://cfs.cuyahogacounty.us/>

Key Grant Activities:

- Multifaceted resource family recruitment and service program
- Youth engagement strategies (e.g., expanded use of social media and arts events such as plays and singers)
- Family search, engagement, and practice strategies
- Systemic change efforts, such as policy development and work groups to address sustainability, topical issues, and customer service training
- Planning and hosting annual symposia with judges, guardians ad litem, public defenders, adoptive families, and youth in foster care
- Strategic planning groups regarding relatives and older youth to promote lasting changes within the child welfare agency (e.g., a sibling work group under the leadership of CCDDFS staff)

Site Visit Report (PDF): <https://childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/foreverfamilies.pdf.gov/pubpdfs/foreverfamilies.pdf>

### **State: Oklahoma (OK)**

#### **Project Title: Bridge to the Future**

Lead Agency: Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services, Office of Planning, Research, and Statistics

Collaborating Partners: University of Oklahoma Center for Public Management, DHS Office of Community and Faith Engagement, 111 Project, National Center for Diligent Recruitment and AdoptUSKids

Target Population: Foster children statewide (some emphasis on children with special needs and sibling groups)

Award Number: 90CO1033

Contact: Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services, Office of Planning, Research, and Statistics <http://www.okdhs.org/divisionsoffices/cos/oprs/>

Key Grant Activities:

- Resource Family Support Center, including a telephone “warm line” to provide information and support for prospective and active resource families
- Partnerships with internal and external public/private organizations to improve recruitment
- Customer service training for child welfare staff and training for resource families to include the Bridge Resource Parent Training Conferences, and “Customer Service: Valuing our Resource Families...For Our Agency...For Our Partnership...For Our Kids”
- Creation of the Bridge Resource Family Website and using the Friends of Foster Families Facebook page
- Faith-based and county-specific recruitment and retention activities

Project website: [www.okbridgefamilies.com](http://www.okbridgefamilies.com)

Site Visit Report: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/families/bridgetothefuture/#tab=summary>

## **Key Program Interventions, Strategies, and Activities**

As noted above, the FOA stated that grantees were to plan and implement a comprehensive, multifaceted, diligent recruitment program for resource families for children and youth served by public child welfare agencies as a means of improving permanency outcomes and developing systemic change. Through general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment activities, the grantees sought to recruit and support an increasing number of available resource families (relatives/kin) for children in out-of-home care. In addition, through partnerships with various public and private entities (including universities, adoption networks, State child welfare departments, national organizations, local businesses, and community-based/grassroots organizations), grantees sought to implement progressive and effective interventions that would positively impact permanency outcomes for children and youth in care. Several grantees (CA, CO, OK, KY) established relationships and partnerships in

the communities, and others established or expanded partnerships with universities. These partnerships benefited the projects through the creation and development of training programs for staff, support for resource centers, and evaluation activities such as data collection and analysis, survey development, and focus groups.

Key activities and target populations for each project are mentioned under the grantee profiles in the section above. Through these grants, the Children's Bureau grantees were tasked with increasing the number of foster/adoptive homes, including relative and kin homes, through the implementation of effective program models and interventions. The models and interventions implemented by the projects were collaborative in nature and involved a specific division or office within the child welfare agency, if the department was not the lead agency. There were various models implemented by the grantees. For example:

- CO implemented a process that utilized the concept of a community partnership using Community-Based Resource Teams as the primary method to recruit resource families.
  - MO implemented a model that utilized a team of stakeholders and service providers to address general, targeted, and child-specific activities concurrently through a 12–20 week extreme recruitment process to identify permanency resources and provide support to stabilize permanency.
  - NY focused on a child-centered approach, served different/separate parts and regions of the state, and utilized permanency specialists from the partner agencies to work with youth to expedite permanency (to include legal and relational permanency).
  - KY's collaborative model between the public child welfare agency and four universities introduced its interventions to four of KY's nine regions using a quasi-experimental design.
- Models, interventions, and project activities, were varied with some being very broad and others a bit narrower, but several key activities (with examples directly from final reports) were noted.
- **General Recruitment:** General recruitment activities provided information to potential resource families throughout the community about the characteristics and needs of the available children; the nature of kinship care, foster care, and adoption processes; and the supports available to kinship, foster and adoptive families. As part of general recruitment efforts, grantees developed public service announcements, television spots, radio advertisements, and newspaper articles; made presentations in churches and other venues; staffed information booths at community events; hosted movie viewings and "parents night out" events; and planned and hosted special trainings. Through partnerships with local and community businesses, grantees were also able to plan large-scale recruitment events to distribute information, build awareness, and have one-on-one conversations with community leaders. Additionally, many grantees were assisted by people with existing connections and relationships in target communities, such as community liaisons and active resource parents. Grantees also created photo listings, Heart Galleries, and "get-to-know-me" videos to build connections between children and prospective parents. Specific examples of general recruitment activities are noted below:
    - Through a partnership with the faith-based campaign the 111Project (1 Church, 1 Family, 1 Purpose), OK was able to connect with faith-based organizations under the premise that "If every church committed one family for one purpose, we can leave no child without a family." With 6,100 churches in the State, the potential to recruit adoptive homes for children in care is enormous. Orientations and information-sharing meetings have occurred monthly, and a total of 80 churches committed to recruit resource families from their congregations.

- OH enlisted a gospel recording artist to go along with its Mobile Heart Gallery. The artist performed a song specially written in honor of adoption, which was performed during a weekly summer gathering attended by 1,500 people. The event was followed by a Gospelfest at a local church where skits about siblings being adopted were depicted. These activities led to a positive mention in the press.
- NY recorded youth-focused Adoption Chronicles videos, planned adoption panels, adoption exchanges, and youth panels, and conducted outreach through a weekly cable TV show on adopting teens and tweens.
- In MN, Adoption Home Parties were hosted by existing foster parents known as “ambassadors” to provide a networking and information-sharing opportunity to recruit new foster care parents.
- CA partnered with a local coffee shop to promote the Roots & Wings project on coffee sleeves distributed by the business.
- CO’s Stand Up For Me website was utilized as a tool to recruit new families interested in becoming resource families.
- **Targeted Recruitment:** These included recruitment activities targeted specifically at African-American, Latino, and Hispanic populations. Existing resource parents were utilized to target potential resource parents in neighborhoods with high rates of out-of-home placement. In addition, some grantees revised their documentation of recruitment and training processes and procedures to ensure cultural awareness and sensitivity to the needs of different communities. Specific examples of target recruitment efforts are described below:
  - CO targeted recruitment to the African-American, Latino, and Hispanic populations through data-driven, diligent recruitment plans. Community-based Resource Teams included teachers, pastors, spiritual leaders, service providers, and DDHS staff and volunteers.
  - MN established partnerships with organizations in the African-American and Hispanic/Latino communities as part of its recruitment efforts. The collaborations helped organize community barbeques, pancake breakfasts, and networking events on culturally significant days, such as Cinco de Mayo. MN also engaged a consultant to develop community engagement strategies, while community liaisons made access to organizations and community leaders easier. They also helped plan, organize, and host events, and assisted in getting the word out about events by engaging with church leaders, media outlets, and African-American and Latino organizations. In addition, the grantee collaborated with a local TV station that produced several commercials in which foster care youth participated as actors.
  - **Child-Specific Recruitment:** Broadly viewed, child-specific recruitment involves exploration of specific families and relationships and close work with youth to identify existing biological and fictive kin that could be contacted to establish and nurture long-term permanent connections. This process also involves helping youth overcome their fears about adoption or other long-term permanency arrangements. Strategies include developing child-specific recruitment videos and providing intensive supports to resource parents and children while permanency options are explored. Specific examples of child-specific recruitment activities include:
    - KY conducted eco-mapping and file-mining for older siblings and minority youth as a different and creative way to locate kin resources.
    - MO conducted case reviews and developed a family finding checklist. They used investigators, search engines (e.g., free online people finders, zabasearch.com, paid online people finders like privateye.com, and archives.com), law enforcement records, Department of Revenue files, child protection databases, and social networking sites.
    - CO and MN utilized case reviews and record mining to identify current and previous connections for children. Case record reviews helped to identify the barriers that prevented youth from establishing permanency.

- **Training:** All eight grantees implemented training activities of various types as key components of their diligent recruitment projects in content areas such as effective communication strategies, information sharing, recruitment and licensing processes, and overcoming barriers to recruitment and retention. In general, grantees developed separate training programs for resource families and child welfare staff.
  - Training for resource families covered topics such as child welfare processes and services, the license application and approval process, legal issues, trauma-informed care, awareness of the cultural and economic backgrounds of children in care, child disabilities and special needs, and ensuring timely and appropriate medical care. Training for this population also gave service providers the opportunity to learn about the needs and recommendations of potential foster/adoptive parents, as well as to solicit their input on the development of training materials and in-service training sessions. Specific examples include the following:
    - OK organized and planned resource and foster parent conferences and in-service trainings to provide attendees more information about community resources. Information about children in custody, confidentiality issues when using social media, the child welfare agency's expectations of resource families, and other relevant topics were presented.
    - MN worked with the director of a local African-American adoption agency to ensure that resource family training was culturally sensitive and responsive. A six-module training curriculum was eventually developed and presented by an African-American trainer twice a year to prospective African-American resource families and trainees of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Topics covered by the training included common mental health disorders among foster children, reactive attachment disorder, promoting children's/youth's educational success, healthy sexual development, appropriate discipline, preparing a child for a permanent home, and concurrent permanency planning.
    - NY adopted a training curriculum known as Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP)/Group Preparation and Selection. Topics covered included stages of child development, understanding resource parent roles and responsibilities, and understanding a child's biological family. The grantee also developed training for resource parents on caring for children who have experienced trauma, the effects of trauma on youth development, and how to help children overcome traumatic events.
    - Training for child welfare staff and service providers was provided to improve rapport with potential resource families, expand the use of positive customer service techniques, ensure culturally appropriate interactions with families, and improve resource families' perceptions of child welfare services. Specific grantee examples include:
      - OK instituted mandatory online training for all recruitment and licensing staff on valuing and respecting resource families and effective communication methods.
      - MN developed a "spotlight" customer service model that included role-playing, a film depicting exemplary customer service, and guiding principles (using tips, taglines, posters, etc.) to guide staff in their day-to-day interactions with families. Key recruitment materials were also translated into Spanish.
      - OH planned and organized legal symposia for judges, attorneys, and social workers during each year of the grant. The grantee also established learning communities through the development of public-private partnerships with agencies and individuals to promote adoption and the improvement of adoption services and processes. Topics of the symposia included adoption of older youth, adoption of sibling groups, trauma-informed practices, and family search and engagement practices.

- NY conducted family finding and engagement training. The training emphasized tools to identify and connect with family members and other permanency resources to develop plans for the return of children to safe and stable family arrangements, and to support and sustain a permanent network of caring adults for children. Other trainings focused on preparing youth for transition from residential care to independent living.
- CA developed a permanency field guide for social workers that outlines the steps involved in child-specific recruitment.
- **Enhanced Family-Finding Strategies:** Within the category of child-specific recruitment, grantees engaged in a range of enhanced family-finding strategies:
  - Identifying and developing or re-building family/kin relationships that had been disrupted
  - Utilizing financial support from adoption foundations and private foundations to hire family search and engagement staff
  - Developing family engagement units with specialized training in searching for and engaging birth and kinship families
  - Utilizing private investigators to search for family members
  - Collaborating with child support enforcement agencies to identify biological fathers
  - Utilizing search services to find lost relatives of children in care following a termination of parental rights
- **Advisory Boards and Multidisciplinary Groups:** These groups were established by grantees to help develop and guide the completion of project goals and objectives. Several examples are described below:
  - OK and OH created Youth Engagement and Advisory Groups consisting of current and former foster care youth who made presentations in their communities and helped plan events. Audience members of their presentations included GALs, judges, attorneys, and child welfare agency staff.
  - OH's Youth Advisory Group presented at preservice trainings for prospective foster and adoptive parents, and to professionals at symposiums and community forums.
  - OK formed a Stakeholders Advisory Group that informed and reviewed the project's recruitment and retention plans and helped to determine membership in work groups and subcommittees.
  - MN established several culturally responsive advisory groups, including Foster Parents of Color, the Hispanic/Latino Advisory Group, and a Spanish-Speaking Families Committee, which provided regular feedback and recommendations for customer service and system improvement efforts. The project also established regular contact with the Minnesota Office of the Ombudsperson for Families.
  - NY created an Advisory Board that discussed strategies for connecting youth with prospective parents; children's progress towards permanency; and barriers to permanency encountered by staff.
  - KY hosted Regional Peer Consultations to review foster care and adoption data from the different geographic regions in the state, as well as the successes and challenges experienced in the regions.
  - CA formed a Permanency Consultation Group, composed of Roots & Wings staff and recruitment specialists, that brainstormed ways to identify permanent families for children aged 11 and older.
- **System Changes and Process Improvements:** Grantees realized that long-term improvements in resource family recruitment and retention, and ultimately better permanency outcomes of children, would only be possible through the implementation of wide reaching and permanent organizational and system changes. These included changes in recruitment, training, and licensing policies and procedures, as well as child welfare worker practices throughout the application, training, home study, licensure, and postpermanency service continuum. The regular assessment and improvement of these processes was essential to increase worker

responsiveness and follow-up with current and prospective resource families, support and engage families throughout the licensing process, and improve family satisfaction with the recruitment and training system as a whole. Grantees reviewed existing systems and implemented improvements in order to address inefficiencies, limitations, inconsistencies, perceptions, and overall effectiveness. Examples of organizational and system-level improvement efforts are described below:

- NY engaged in cross-system change activities, including meetings and workshops for staff from various partnering organizations (e.g., mental health and disability services, juvenile justice, child welfare and volunteer agencies). The grantee established contacts with management and direct care staff from these organizations to build a network of support in overcoming barriers to permanency.
- MN assessed licensing processes and forms with technical assistance from AdoptUSKids to identify areas in need of improvement. Many forms were revised to eliminate redundant information and were compiled into a single handbook. The initial recruitment and training process was streamlined by combining previously separate informational and orientation meetings into one session, to which intake coordination staff were invited to acquaint families with the persons responsible for the intake and application process. MN also developed a comprehensive unified database, referred to as the Licensing Application Reporting System, to track the entire recruitment, training, and licensing process.
- OH formed work groups to establish performance measurement baselines for permanency within sibling groups. Strategic planning groups were also formed to address older youth adoption and to provide training on key elements of the adoption process. In addition, the grantee hired a performance management administrator to encourage data-driven decision-making.
- MO's Governor established a task force on the recruitment, licensure, and retention of foster and adoptive homes, which led to the series of recommendations for improving the state's child welfare system.
- OK created process improvement teams and developed data dashboards to provide up-to-date information that contributed to the improvement of resource family recruitment, approval, and retention processes.
- **Sustainability:** With the eventual end of their Federal discretionary grant funding, grantees prepared to scale down, modify, or continue project activities in some form. Some grantees planned to build on committed grassroots partnerships that had been forged in their communities. For example, MN reported plans to work with the Council on Black Minnesotans to continue the recruitment campaign focused on the need for foster homes for African-American children. Other grantees identified certain grant initiatives, such as hiring child-specific recruiters and expansion of contracts with local adoption agencies that would allow them to continue their diligent recruitment efforts. Grantees also noted that the ongoing involvement of youth in foster care will assist in sustaining diligent recruitment efforts. Continuing youth participation in training, and continued involvement of agency and project staff in speaking publicly about recruitment and retention will strengthen the interventions already begun through the grants. Several grantees sought to integrate the tenets and philosophy underlying diligent recruitment into routine child welfare system policies, practices, and procedures to further bolster sustainability efforts. Some grantees highlighted the importance of soliciting feedback on an ongoing basis from resource families and community stakeholders in an effort to understand which interventions are working and areas in which activities need to be adjusted. All grantees instituted sustainability efforts, particularly in the final year of their projects, and with that specific focus as part of the grant work, they were successful in maintaining a range of strategies to impact permanency outcomes.

## Overarching Themes

### Common Challenges

As a group, the diligent recruitment grantees faced many of the same challenges with implementing their projects. Some of the more common issues include:

- **Data access:** Lack of access to current data on children and resource families, coupled with incomplete files on children and youth, can make it difficult to form a comprehensive picture of each child's needs with respect to diligent recruitment efforts.
- **Negative perceptions:** Many grantees faced historical distrust in their communities toward foster care and child welfare services in general. This distrust has a negative impact on targeted recruitment activities and demonstrates the need to improve relations among agency staff, resource parents, and other stakeholders.
- **Staff turnover:** Changes in child welfare agency leadership had an impact on the management and implementation of several grants, while repeated losses of project staff impeded efforts to maintain continuity, develop and implement new strategies, and sustain worker morale in the face of heavy workloads.
- **Concurrent planning:** Implementing two permanency plans simultaneously for children in out-of-home placement continues to be a challenging concept for many workers. Many grantees identified a need to increase understanding of concurrent planning through training and development of a best practices curriculum. Finally, some diligent recruitment partners need to be convinced of the importance of actively pursuing concurrent permanency planning.
- **Resource parent licensure:** Development of process improvements and communication strategies are needed to increase the number of potential resource families that start and complete the licensing process.
- **Customer service:** Foster and adoptive parents have sometimes experienced inconsistent, rude, and inefficient customer service. Becoming a resource parent is difficult and emotional and requires licensing workers with excellent customer service skills and a sense of compassion going through the process.

Grantees found that issues with poor customer service had an ongoing negative impact on efforts to recruit and retain resource families.

### Successful Strategies

Despite many challenges, the diligent recruitment grantees reported success with numerous undertakings. Some particularly effective strategies are noted below.

- **Building partnerships and collaborations:** Collaborative partnerships proved to be essential to implementing general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment activities. Referrals, recruitment assistance, material support (e.g., providing space for project events), information dissemination (both via print media and word-of-mouth), support with staff training, and data collection and analysis are just some examples of activities that were made possible through effective partnerships.
- **Faith-based organizations:** Some of the grantees' most effective collaborative efforts occurred through partnerships with faith-based organizations, especially when targeting specific ethnic or cultural populations. Leaders within these organizations are trusted by their communities and therefore serve as important recruitment conduits. Faith-based organizations also provided in-kind support by hosting recruitment events such as informational meetings for prospective resource parents.
- **Enlisting resource parents and foster youth:** Several grantees reported on the effectiveness of engaging foster parents and current and former foster youth in diligent recruitment activities, especially in the geographic or cultural communities to which they belong. Resource parents offer real-world experience in fostering and adopting children involved in the child welfare system, while foster youth are able to share compelling stories of how seeking and finding a permanent home has impacted their lives.

- **Community liaisons:** These individuals, working as permanency specialists or in similar roles, brought unparalleled knowledge regarding their home communities to the grantees' diligent recruitment activities. Their efforts to make connections, organize and attend recruitment events, and maximize the use of grant resources all contributed to the success of the projects.

## Lessons Learned

Grantees shared several lessons for enhancing the diligent recruitment efforts of their own or other child welfare agencies moving forward, such as:

- **Market segmentation:** While a potentially powerful tool, more support and training is needed to help organizations understand and use market segmentation data to target diligent recruitment strategies in an optimal manner. In particular, agencies need assistance with analyzing the data to maximize its potential to identify and recruit potential resource parents. Generally, market segmentation is a marketing strategy which involves dividing a broad target market into subsets of consumers, businesses, or countries who have, or are perceived to have, common needs, interests, and priorities, and then designing and implementing strategies to target them.
- **Understand evidence-informed interventions:** Many grantees reported only rudimentary knowledge of existing evidence-informed programs and practices (EIP) that could be used as part of agencies' diligent recruitment efforts. Through systematic research, organizations engaged in finding homes for children in out-of-home care can identify and leverage relevant interventions to enhance recruitment, training, licensing, and retention activities. Thorough knowledge and application of EIPs can assist in narrowing the scope of project work, keep activities more focused, and ensure that the most effective work practices are integrated throughout the organization.
- **Limit the number of interventions:** Grantees often found that it was preferable to focus on a more limited number of well-defined activities rather than attempt to implement a broader range of initiatives. A narrower focus allowed grantees to see more easily where changes needed to be made, where resources needed to be allocated, and where new actions needed to be taken. Fewer interventions up front allowed grantees to refine, adapt, and more purposefully expand the scope of their service array during later stages of the grant.
- **Engage agency leadership:** Engaging managers and other high-level staff within grantee organizations often proved critical to the success of the grantees' planned interventions. Including key organizational leaders on planning committees, advisory boards, and other decision-making groups ensured that the necessary resources and enforcement authority would be brought to bear to effect the implementation of project activities. In addition, the involvement of agency leadership in diligent recruitment events lent credibility to grant initiatives in the eyes of the public and helped to dispel negative perceptions of child welfare services in the grantees' target communities.

## Evaluation Highlights and Key Findings

The evaluations of the first cluster of Diligent Recruitment (DR) grantees made important discoveries that can support future work in recruiting resource families. These findings include:

- Hard-to-place children can find homes with concerted recruitment efforts. Despite some difficulties, MO and NY were both able to demonstrate positive impacts on permanency through rigorous child-specific and targeted recruitment combined with public awareness initiatives.
- Recruitment alone is not enough. A "funnel effect" can occur when more families are recruited, yet barriers prevent families from progressing through the licensure process. Systems must have capacity to respond to, train, and license families.

- Systemic barriers to licensure can be overcome. Grantees' evaluations showed that some grantees were able to improve the promptness of response by staff to families' initial inquiries, promote the timeliness of families in achieving licensing milestones, and show success in increasing the overall number of resource families in their States or target communities.
- There is a need to identify effective strategies for the recruitment of African-American foster and adoptive families, and for removing impediments to their licensure.
- The quality of and fidelity to interventions matter. For example, NY observed that its success in supporting permanency (defined as life-long connections as well as legal permanency) eroded over time as the caseloads of permanency workers increased. MO reported that only half of its planned recruitment and permanency strategies were actually implemented, which compromised its ability to improve permanency and stability outcomes among targeted youth.

## Evaluation Designs

The 2008 DR grantees conducted comprehensive evaluations, measuring both process and outcome components. Because a variety of strategies were implemented to achieve a range of specific grantee outcomes directed toward agency practice, recruitment activities, and child/youth outcomes, different evaluation methods were used to measure the implementation of key activities and whether these activities achieved their intended effects. Findings reported in the following sections reflect specific outcomes measured and reported by each grantee in their final evaluation reports. Most grantees conducted evaluations using a mixed methods approach that included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. There were few standardized measures incorporated into the grantees' process evaluations, with the exception of some instruments designed to measure organizational collaboration. The projects' outcome evaluations involved a variety of designs. One grantee utilized an experimental design with random assignment; four grantees reported using quasi-experimental designs involving comparison groups or geographic regions; and three grantees implemented variations of longitudinal or

pre-/post-test designs. One grantee used a standardized assessment instrument—the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)—to assess youth functioning as part of its outcome evaluation. Exhibit 1, Overview of Grantees Evaluations, summarizes each grantee's approach to evaluating its project, including research designs, key process and outcome measures, and data collection tools and methods. In addition, appendix A at the end of this report summarizes output and outcome indicators in key activity areas, such as recruitment and licensure, that were tracked by the grantees, and also identifies which grantees tracked each specific indicator.

## Child and Family Services Review Indicators

With respect to child permanency and placement stability outcomes, almost all grantees used public child welfare information systems as a data source for their outcome measures, including measures used as part of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) process. The Children's Bureau conducts the reviews to ensure conformity with Federal child welfare requirements and to assist States in achieving positive safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. CFSR indicators were commonly used by grantees due to their ready availability in existing child welfare information systems and their relevancy to the goals of the DR grantees' projects. Grantees' use of CFSR indicators is summarized in exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 1: Overview of Grantee Evaluations**

Grantee, Project Name, and Evaluator	Evaluation Design	Key Process Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods	Key Outcome Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods
<p><b>Santa Cruz County Human Services Department (CA)</b>  <b>Roots &amp; Wings</b>                      San Jose State University</p>	<p>Retrospective pretest design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in staff attitudes re: permanency</li> <li>• Shifts in staff confidence in employing best practices in concurrent planning and permanency work</li> <li>• Perceived availability of homes for teens, siblings, and non-English-speaking children</li> <li>• The percentage of family providers reporting using supportive services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff surveys</li> <li>• Caregiver satisfaction survey</li> <li>• Resource home questionnaire</li> <li>• Agency data system to track orientation attendance and licensure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of children in care for 1, 2, or 3 years who have had two or fewer placement moves</li> <li>• Percentage of children in permanent homes within 24 months</li> <li>• Percentage of children still in care at 24 months who attain permanent homes within the next 12 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child welfare data system maintained by University of California at Berkeley and California Department of Social Services</li> </ul>
<p><b>City and County of Denver - Department of Human Services (CO)</b>  <b>Denver's Village</b>                      Butler Institute for Families, University of Denver</p>	<p>Longitudinal comparison of outcomes in Denver and surrounding Colorado counties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation and collaboration via Community-Based Resource Teams</li> <li>• Perceptions and attitudes toward DHS within target communities</li> <li>• Effectiveness of recruiting strategies</li> <li>• Development and use of foster/adoptive family supports</li> <li>• Time to complete certification for foster/adoptive families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress Towards Goal Instrument</li> <li>• Denver County Child Placement Database</li> <li>• Participant observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Resource family surveys</li> <li>• Customer service exit survey</li> <li>• Agency administrative data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of licensed homes (including approved foster homes, dual license, and adoption only)</li> <li>• Distribution of homes that reflect racial/ethnic composition of children in care</li> <li>• Number of kinship homes (paid, certified and nonpaid, noncertified homes)</li> <li>• Rate of children who exit care to permanency</li> <li>• Average length of time in care for children leaving foster care to a permanent home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State child welfare information system (SACWIS)</li> </ul>

Grantee, Project Name, and Evaluator	Evaluation Design	Key Process Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods	Key Outcome Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods
<p><b>Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (KY)</b>  <b>Project MATCH</b>                      University of Louisville</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental design comparing outcomes in intervention and nonintervention regions of the state at multiple time intervals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff awareness and level of involvement in intervention</li> <li>• Number of staff trained</li> <li>• Staff perceptions of training</li> <li>• Attitudinal shifts regarding connections and permanency for children in care</li> <li>• Number of individuals served by Alternative Caregiver Training (ACT); perceptions of ACT</li> <li>• Staff and resource parents' perceptions of permanency barriers</li> <li>• Degree of partnership among public agency staff, private agency staff, and resource families</li> <li>• Number of youth served using child-specific recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statewide staff permanency survey</li> <li>• Training evaluation forms</li> <li>• Qualitative interviews with key stakeholders</li> <li>• Statewide survey of public and private agency staff and resource parents</li> <li>• Wilder Collaboration Factors instrument</li> <li>• Surveys of existing and potential resource parents</li> <li>• Survey of ACT participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of connections established between youth and individuals willing to serve as lifelong connections</li> <li>• Number of new homes approved</li> <li>• Capacity for placement of sibling groups, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino children</li> <li>• New homes approved 0-6 months and 7-13 months after initial inquiry</li> <li>• Proximity of foster care placements to children's birth families</li> <li>• CFSR permanency and stability measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State child welfare information system</li> <li>• Assessments of posttraining knowledge</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ramsey County Community Human Services Department (MN)</b>  <b>Permanent Families Recruitment Project</b>                      Rainbow Research, Inc.</p>	<p>Mixed methods, including periodic surveys and other quantitative and qualitative data collection methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skills in concurrent permanency planning</li> <li>• Percentage of inquiry calls returned within 24 hours</li> <li>• Number, and referral sources of, foster/adoptive parents who make inquiries</li> <li>• Time between inquiry to licensure</li> <li>• Resource family satisfaction</li> <li>• Change in number of resource families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource family satisfaction surveys</li> <li>• Staff posttraining assessments</li> <li>• Youth and foster/adoptive parent focus groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of African-American, Latino, and older youth adopted each year out of total annual adoptions</li> <li>• Median length of time to adoption</li> <li>• Adoption in less than 24 months among African-American children exiting to adoption</li> <li>• Two or fewer placement settings for African-American children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State child welfare information system</li> </ul>

Grantee, Project Name, and Evaluator	Evaluation Design	Key Process Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods	Key Outcome Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods
<p><b>Missouri Department of Social Services (MO)</b>  <b>Extreme Recruitment &amp; Connector Services</b>                      St. Louis University</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental design using a non-randomized comparison group</p>	<p>N A</p>	<p>N A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/proportion of youth matched with a permanent resource</li> <li>• Youth well-being and functioning</li> <li>• Youth connectedness with adults</li> <li>• Mean number of moves between baseline and 12 months</li> <li>• Exits to a permanency through reunification, adoption, guardianship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Support Survey</li> <li>• Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale</li> <li>• State child welfare information system</li> </ul>
<p><b>New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NY)</b>  <b>A Parent for Every Child (PFEC)</b>                      Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago</p>	<p>Experimental design with random assignment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/type of child-specific recruitment events</li> <li>• Youth participation in recruitment activities</li> <li>• Changes in youth receptivity to being adopted</li> <li>• Source of recruitment for potential PFEC families</li> <li>• Number of youth matched to a family member located through the family search method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Interviews with PFEC team members</li> <li>• PFEC database</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children who achieved the longer term project goal of adoption, guardianship, or commitment contract</li> <li>• Number of youth who establish legal or relationship permanency with an identified family member</li> <li>• Number adults matched to PFEC youth by recruitment method</li> <li>• Time to achieve permanency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand-alone PFEC database</li> <li>• State child welfare information system</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (OH)</b>  <b>Partners for Forever Families</b>                      Case Western Reserve University</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental design comparing outcomes over time in intervention and nonintervention regions of the county<sup>1</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and types of recruitment events</li> <li>• Home study process; facilitators and barriers</li> <li>• Description of experiences of youth who have aged out of the system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of administrative data</li> <li>• Surveys of prospective foster/adoptive families</li> <li>• Staff surveys</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of licensed foster/adoptive family applicants who are relatives</li> <li>• Change in adoption rate over time</li> <li>• Number of children exiting to adoption in less than 24 months</li> <li>• Reduced median length of stay</li> <li>• Number of teens in care for ≥24 months that exit to permanency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State child welfare information system</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> OH originally proposed a quasi-experimental evaluation; however, various implementation and evaluation challenges led the grantee to adopt a descriptive evaluation design involving both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Grantee, Project Name, and Evaluator	Evaluation Design	Key Process Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods	Key Outcome Measures	Data Collection Tools/Methods
<p><b>Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OK)</b>  <b>Bridge to the Future Project</b>                      University of Oklahoma</p>	<p>Pre/posttest design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of inquiries</li> <li>• Number of staff completing customer service and MEPA training</li> <li>• Number of resource families completing training courses</li> <li>• Source of referrals for families interested in foster care/adoption</li> <li>• Number and types of families inquiring about foster/adoption</li> <li>• Number of families attending preservice training, completing in-service training, and achieving licensure</li> <li>• Satisfaction of current and preresource parents with licensure process and customer support</li> <li>• Percent of families completing the approval process; families' reasons for dropping out of the application process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Focus groups with current and prospective resource parents, staff, and administrators</li> <li>• Statewide surveys of child welfare specialists, current resource families, and preresource families</li> <li>• Random sample surveys of CWS staff, current families, and preresource families</li> <li>• Posttraining staff surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual number of inquiries and approved homes</li> <li>• Percentage of children exiting out-of-home care in less than 12 months</li> <li>• Percentage of children with fewer than three placements</li> <li>• Percentage of children not reentering out-of-home care</li> <li>• Percentage of children placed in kinship homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State child welfare information system</li> </ul>

**Exhibit 2.A: CFSR Indicators Used by DR Grantees**

Permanency Outcome 1: The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children	CA	CO	KY	MN	MO	NY	OH	OK
<b>Child Permanency, Measure C2.1:</b> Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption, what percent were discharged in fewer than 24 months?	NA	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	X	NA
<b>Child Permanency, Measure C2.2:</b> Of all children discharged to a finalized adoption, what was the median length of stay in foster care in months?	NA	X	NA k	X	NA	NA	X	NA
<b>Child Permanency, Measure C3.1:</b> Of all children in foster care $\geq$ 4 months, what % were discharged to a permanent home?	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	X	NA
<b>Child Permanency, Measure C3.2:</b> Of all children legally free for adoption, what % were discharged to a permanent home?	NA	NA	NA	NA	X	X	NA	NA
<b>Child's Stability of Placement, Measure C4.1:</b> Of all children in foster care >12 months, what % had 2 or fewer placement settings?	X	NA	X	X	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Child's Stability of Placement, Measure C4.2:</b> Of all children in foster care 12-24 months, what % had 2 or fewer placement settings?	X	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	X
<b>Child's Stability of Placement, Measure C4.3:</b> Of all children in foster care >+24 months, what % had 2 or fewer placement settings?	NA	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA

**Exhibit 2.B: CFSR Indicators Used by DR Grantees**

Permanency Outcome 2: The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children	CA	CO	KY	MN	MO	NY	OH	OK
Proximity of foster care placement	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Placement with siblings	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	X
Relative placement	NA	X	X	NA	NA	NA	X	X

## Evaluation Challenges

### Response Rates

Several grantees noted that they were challenged by low response rates. Surveys that were administered at multiple points in time in particular were vulnerable to attrition, sometimes due to difficulties in locating youth for follow-up data collection. KY noted that a very low response rate from potential foster/adoptive parents led them to drop a survey of potential foster/adoptive families, while the lack of centralized lists of parents working with a variety of private agency staff created problems with determining survey response rates.

### Challenges With Implementing Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs

Some grantees encountered challenges with implementing the original research designs for their evaluations, which often compelled them to opt for less rigorous alternatives. MO initially planned to use an experimental design with random assignment, but ultimately shifted to a quasi-experimental study when it realized that youth assigned to the intervention (experimental) group were often blocked from receiving the DR intervention by their multidisciplinary case management teams. This resulted in groups that were not truly random, with the intervention group having greater functional impairment than the control group. CO initially planned an evaluation design that involved comparing outcomes in different regions of the City/County of Denver; however, unclear boundaries between various service regions (i.e., those that did or did not receive DR services) made a comparative study difficult.

### Inability to Assess Relative Effects of Particular Interventions

The most common evaluation challenge reported by grantees was inconsistent implementation of their interventions, which limited their ability to measure the relative effects of particular project activities. KY, for example, reported that some regions of the state opted out of certain components of the project, which, combined with the confounding influence of other child welfare initiatives, made it more difficult to isolate the effects of the grant's activities. CO documented multiple

changes in agency priorities and program activities, which created a context in which the evaluation was constantly attempting to study a "moving target." In addition, delayed or incomplete implementation of some project activities resulted in the collection of baseline data only.

### Data Constraints

State child welfare data related to child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes collected as part of the CFSR process, along with administrative data collected routinely on foster/adoptive homes, were utilized by the majority of grantees. The availability of these data were helpful for grantees as they were able to measure outcomes of interest, such as placement stability and exits to permanency. Limitations included the need to merge numerous data sets, data quality issues, and modifications to state child welfare information systems during the grant project period. Several grantees created stand-alone databases to supplement data available through state or local information systems. These stand-alone systems allowed for the collection of data that were more directly relevant to the grantees' research questions, but could be labor intensive to build and maintain.

### Limitations of Results

It is important to keep the above evaluation challenges in mind as results are discussed later in this document. It is especially critical to note that valid comparisons of outcomes cannot be made among the various DR grantees given the wide variation in their program strategies and target populations, coupled with different evaluative methods and sample sizes. In addition, this summary of findings does not describe every aspect of the grantees' evaluation designs or findings. Rather, the report focuses on evaluation findings regarding which more than one grantee investigated a particular process, where the final reports contained adequately detailed information to allow for aggregation and grouping, and/or where outcomes illuminated issues that were common across multiple projects.

## Grantee Process Evaluations— Summary of Key Findings

### Recruitment and Retention of Foster/Adoptive Families: Evaluation Indicators

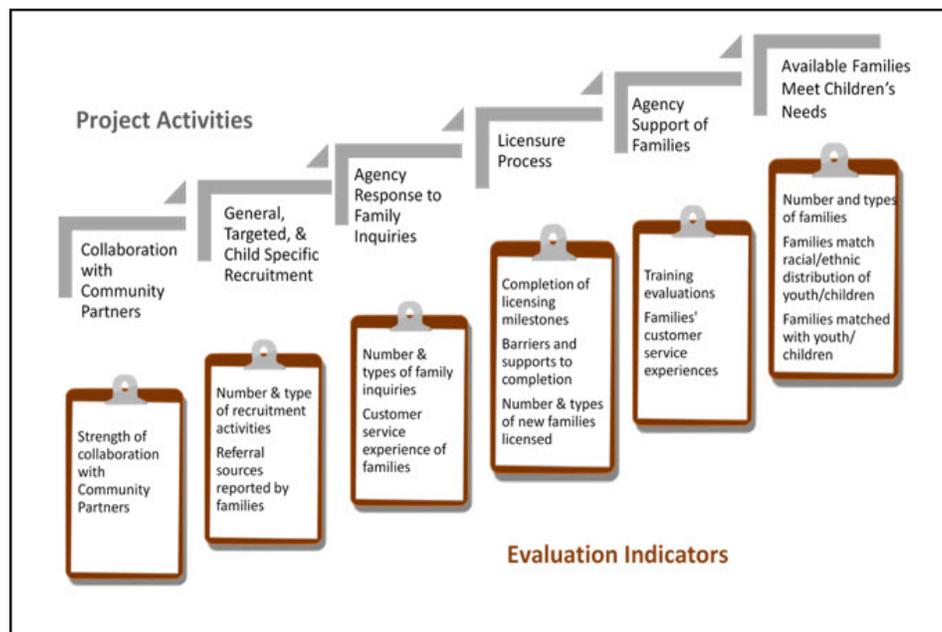
The overall goal of the DR grantees was to better meet the needs of the children and youth in out-of-home care by recruiting and retaining adequate numbers of high quality foster/adoptive families that reflect the needs and diversity of children in care. To accomplish this overarching goal, the grantees implemented activities that fell largely into common categories, although some focused more on certain activities than others depending on their specific project objectives. The grantees' process evaluations assessed progress toward achieving these objectives by tracking indicators of interest within each activity category. Exhibit 3, Project Activities and Indicators, outlines the trajectory of common grant activities and the indicators that were used by at least one grantee to assess program activities and performance.

### Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Families

#### Collaborations and Partnerships

Several grantees focused on measuring the success of newly formed community collaborations that child welfare agencies developed with key community stakeholders to implement and sustain targeted recruitment efforts. Using a tool called the Progress Toward Goal Instrument (PTGI) to assess the collaborative processes of Community-Based Resource Teams (CBRT), CO found that the teams functioned well in terms of the productivity of their meetings, clarifying project goals, and assessing the impact of their work on children and families. Using items from the Wilder Collaboration Factors survey, KY found that its Mix and Match Meetings increased collaboration among project partners throughout the grant period. Other evaluations involved interviews and focus groups to assess the effectiveness of partnerships in developing and expanding recruitment activities.

**Exhibit 3: Project Activities and Indicators**



### **Recruitment Activities**

Projects engaged in a number of recruitment activities, including general, targeted, and child-specific, to build their pools of foster/adoptive families. Ascertaining the effectiveness of these recruitment activities was a focus of several grantees. MN found that, in general, the number of recruitment activities was positively correlated with the number of inquiries, i.e., the greater the number of recruitment activities held the more inquiries the county received from potential resource families. MN also reported that prospective foster/adoptive caregivers often first heard about the opportunity to become a resource family more than one year before making an inquiry about training and licensure; many families needed time to reflect on the commitment of fostering or adopting a child before proceeding further. While all projects conducted general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment efforts, not all of them tracked and reported these activities and results in detail in their final reports. Three projects tracked and reported findings with enough specificity and detail to allow for some comparisons across groups, which are outlined in exhibit 4. These grantees used the referral sources reported by families to investigate which recruitment activities were most likely to produce family inquiries, as described briefly below.

#### ***Internet/Website***

MN found that prospective Latino resource families often reported the Internet as an adoption referral source. Although not illustrated in exhibit 4, CO found that the most common recruitment method identified by prospective families was the Stand Up for Me website, which was part of a successful branding effort by the project.

#### ***TV/Radio***

Television and radio advertisements were not a large source of referrals for OK; however, MN found that traditional media was an effective way to reach the Latino community.

#### ***“Word of Mouth” Referrals***

Referral source categorizations differed across projects, which limits cross-project analysis. OK reported that word of mouth from friends and/or family was reported by almost one-third (32 percent) of resource families as a referral source. Word of mouth referrals reported by MN were an important recruitment channel for African-American families. These types of referrals could be a reflection of both person-to-person connections and an increase in the local community’s awareness of the need for resource families.

**Exhibit 4: Referral Sources by Recruitment Category**

Recruitment Activity	OK <sup>1</sup>	MN <sup>2</sup> Foster Care Inquiries African American	MN <sup>2</sup> Foster Care Inquiries Latino	MN <sup>3</sup> Adoption Inquiries African American	MN <sup>3</sup> Adoption Inquiries Latino	NY <sup>4</sup> Child Level Recruitment
General Recruitment: Internet/website	4%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%
General Recruitment: Radio/television ads	8%	0%	50%	0%	19%	0%
General Recruitment: Recruitment activities by other foster/adoptive parents	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Recruitment: Church-based recruitment	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Recruitment: Other general activities (e.g., community events, gallery)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%
General Recruitment: Other general recruitment efforts by State agency staff	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Targeted Recruitment: Community-specific outreach	0%	0%	0%	34%	25%	0%
Targeted Recruitment: Word of mouth with friends, family, community	32%	42%	14%	14%	19%	0%
Targeted Recruitment: Workplace recruitment (e.g., through a coworker)	0%	0%	0%	19%	6%	0%
Targeted Recruitment: Recruited caregiver "had been thinking about" becoming a resource family	0%	13%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Targeted Recruitment: Recruited caregiver has personal experience with foster care	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Child-Specific Recruitment: Recruited as a kinship family (OK)/Prior connection to youth (NY)	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	16%

Recruitment Activity	OK <sup>1</sup>	MN <sup>2</sup> Foster Care Inquiries African American	MN <sup>2</sup> Foster Care Inquiries Latino	MN <sup>3</sup> Adoption Inquiries African American	MN <sup>3</sup> Adoption Inquiries Latino	NY <sup>4</sup> Child Level Recruitment
Child-Specific Recruitment: Targeted/parent-specific recruitment (e.g., meet and greet events)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%
Child-Specific Recruitment: Internet: Child photo listing	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%
Child-Specific Recruitment: Video adoption chronicles	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%
Child-Specific Recruitment: Family search and engagement	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%

<sup>1</sup> Families responding to survey 2013, n=321.

<sup>2</sup> "Most frequent" referral sources reported by grantee during entire grant period.

<sup>3</sup> "Most frequent" referral sources reported by grantee during entire grant period.

<sup>4</sup> Families making child-specific inquiries during the entire grant period, n=122.

**Community Outreach Events**

Community-Specific outreach, which involved a combination of information and recruitment sessions hosted and/or sponsored by churches, businesses, and community-based organizations, was an important referral resource for MN’s project. Over one-third of African-American families and one-fourth of Hispanic/Latino families in Ramsey County (MN) heard about adoption opportunities through these types of events.

**Child-specific Recruitment Strategies for Historically Difficult to Place Children**

NY’s PFEC project focused on promoting adult connections and/or the placement of youth who were legally freed for adoption and who had serious physical, emotional, and developmental disabilities that required higher levels of care. Permanency was defined more broadly by the project as connection to a life-long family resource (including relatives and fictive kin), as well as legal guardianship and adoption. The highest percentage of families involved in NY’s project (20 percent) were recruited through video adoption “chronicles.” In addition, a significant proportion of permanent

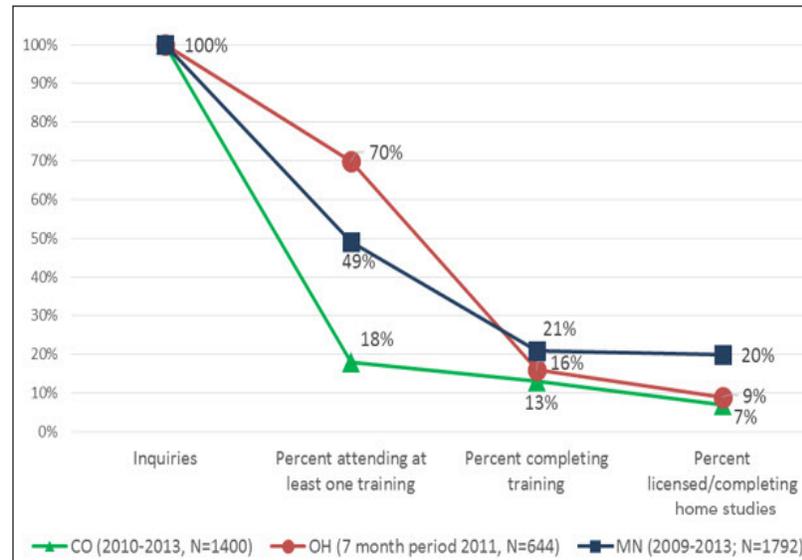
connections were found through family search and engagement strategies (18 percent). Altogether, family search and engagement activities were documented for 29 youth in the intervention group (33 percent). MO’s project incorporated Extreme Recruitment®, a program that encompasses weekly team meetings facilitated by a designated recruitment specialist that focuses on intensive efforts to find and connect enrolled youth with relatives and fictive kin who could serve as permanency resources. The “Extreme Recruiter” worked with a private investigator, who was typically a former police detective, to reconnect youth aged 10 and older with relatives and fictive kin. Of the 83 youth in MO’s intervention group who were provided with Extreme Recruitment® services, 41 were matched with a potential permanent resource; of these 41 youth, 24 were placed with one of the identified matches.

### Progression Through the Licensure Process

Some grantees investigated the progression of families through the attainment of licensure milestones, from initial inquiry to receiving a foster care/adoption license. Exhibit 5, Proportion of Grantees Achieving Licensure Milestones, illustrates the proportions of families completing various milestones in the licensure continuum documented by three DR grantees. As is evident from the chart, there is a pronounced “funneling” effect between initial inquiry and training, with large proportions of families dropping out of the process after attending an initial training session or before completing training. Families that finished training, however, were much more likely to complete a home study and/or receive a license. Investigating the barriers and facilitators to completing the licensure process was a key component of several grantees’ evaluations. Examples from two grantees are described below:

- Families responding to a resource family survey administered by CO reported that supports to the licensure process included helpful workers, informative classes, opportunities for interaction with other resource families, and the helpfulness of the project website. Barriers included too much paperwork, the perception that the process was disorganized, long waits, and lack of communication with the grantee’s child welfare department.
- Among a small set of foster/adoptive families that began the licensing process (n=32), OH found that families with dependent children already in the home were more likely to drop out of the process. In addition, families that experienced poor communication or customer service from county child welfare agency employees (including missed visits and late returned calls) were more likely to drop out.

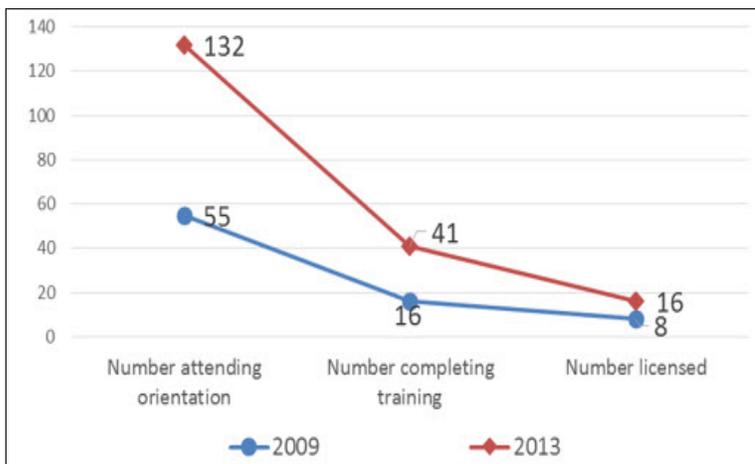
**Exhibit 5: Proportion of Families Achieving Licensure Milestones**



### Improvements in the Licensure Process

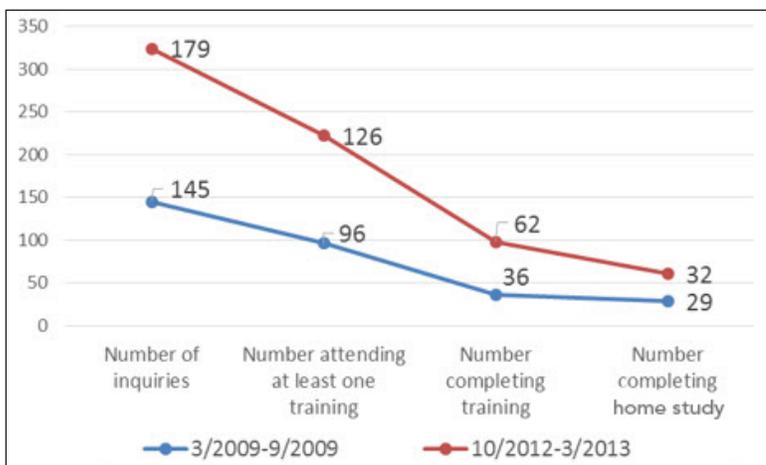
Some projects reported families’ completion of milestones early and later during the grant period to assess changes over time. Exhibits 6 and 7 on the following page illustrate the completion of licensure milestones among two grantees (CA and MN) between 2009 and 2013. Data from the CA project indicate that about 29 percent of families that attended an orientation in 2009 went on to complete training, and of those, about half achieved licensure. By 2013, a similar percentage (31 percent) that attended an orientation proceeded to complete training; however, only 39 percent of this group went on to achieve licensure. Overall, roughly similar proportions of families that attended an initial orientation achieved licensure (14.5 percent in 2009 and 12 percent in 2013). However, the absolute number of families that achieved each milestone was much higher in 2013 than in 2009, with more than twice as many attending an orientation and completing training, and twice as many receiving a license. Interviews with potential foster families indicated that common reasons for not completing the licensure process included general uncertainty about fostering, concerns about additional financial obligations, and concerns about adequate housing.

**Exhibit 6: CA - Number of Families Completing Licensure Milestones**



Similar to CA, MN found that the absolute number of applicants and trainees increased significantly between 2009 and 2013; however, the absolute number of families that completed a home study did not increase as expected. Further analysis revealed that the average number of days from the assignment of a licensing worker to the completion of the home study process actually increased between 2009 and 2012 from 67 days to 104.5 days. In addition, non-relative applicants took twice as long to be assigned a licensing worker than is stipulated under state guidelines (189 days in 2009 and 170 days in 2012, versus the state guideline of 45-90 days). The grantee hypothesized that a lack of agency resources prevented the timely completion of home studies.

**Exhibit 7: MN - Number of Families Completing Licensure Milestones**



**Improvements in Timeliness of Response to Initial Inquiry**

Recognizing the importance of a potential foster/adoptive parent’s first contact with the agency, two grantees (MN and OK) assessed timeliness of response by staff to families’ initial inquiries.

- MN measured the percentage of inquiry calls returned within 24 hours to potential resource families. For foster care inquiries, the return rate within 24 hours increased from 88 percent in 2009 to 100 percent in 2013, and grew from 56 percent to 100 percent for inquiries from potential adoptive parents during the same period. These improvements were facilitated by weekly reports to agency staff supervisors, which included updates on the follow-up to family inquiries by individual caseworkers.
- OK conducted a comparative analysis based on resource family surveys conducted in 2009 and again in 2013. Between these times points, the number of individuals receiving a follow-up contact within one week of an initial inquiry increased by 15 percent.

**Improvements in Timeline and Completion Rates from Inquiry to Licensure**

Several projects noted improvements in the timeliness of families achieving licensing milestones. For example:

- CO reported that the average time from inquiry to approval decreased from 442.7 days in Year 1 of the project to 115.3 days in Year 4, a 74-percent reduction. The average time between completion of training and certification was reduced from 100 days to 62.9 days.
- KY noted a statistically significant increase in the number homes approved between zero and 6 months after an initial inquiry in intervention regions versus comparison regions.
- OK found that its collaboration with the faith-based community through the “111 Project” contributed to much higher proportions of families completing the approval process. In 2011, a total of 110 families inquired about becoming foster/adoptive families through the 111 Project; of these, 60 percent were approved for a license, a rate that was double that observed among non-faith-based applicants (30 percent).

### **Improvements in Customer Satisfaction**

Customer service improvement efforts were assessed by a number of grantees through surveys and interviews with current and former foster and adoptive parents. By exploring the needs and perspectives of resource families, the grantees sought to improve agency responsiveness and provide supportive services in an effort to retain these families as ongoing foster care and adoption resources for children in out-of-home placement. Several examples of findings from the grantees' data collection efforts in this area are highlighted below.

- MN conducted two telephone customer satisfaction surveys of resource family applicants. Results indicated a 10-percent improvement in satisfaction between 2010 and 2011 for survey items related to caseworker timeliness, communication, and assistance with paperwork. However, one-fifth of respondents noted that placement workers did not conduct face-to-face visits on at least a monthly basis, and one-fifth reported that they did not receive a copy of their child's case plan.
- OK conducted a comparative analysis of surveys administered in 2009 and 2013. Between these years, respondents reported improvements in knowledge about CW services, knowledge about the foster care/ adoption application process, and support from the state child welfare agency. Negative perceptions of the agency decreased by 8 percent, the number of individuals reporting difficulty getting their fingerprints processed correctly decreased by 19 percent, and the number of respondents who were satisfied with their overall customer service experience during the licensure process increased by 24 percent.
- CO administered annual exit surveys between 2010 and 2014 to resource families when a child exited their home. Overall opinions regarding the child welfare agency and caseworkers did not change during these years, although fewer respondents reported over time that they had received accurate and timely information about the child/ren in their care and family service plans. This finding was further corroborated by written comments provided by families.
- KY administered a statewide survey of agency staff and resource parents at two time intervals. In the intervention regions, staff ratings of trust, communication, shared vision, and shared resources among child welfare agency staff, private agency staff, and resource families increased significantly between the first and second survey administrations. Resource families' ratings also increased significantly between the two administrations, although overall satisfaction scores remained low.

### **Resource Family Supports**

In addition to studying resource families' overall satisfaction with the recruitment and licensing process, CA and MN looked specifically at the success of their efforts to provide ongoing training and support services to families. Key findings from these grantees in this area are summarized below.

- CA found that 62 percent of its current families were working with resource family mentors, 51 percent had used respite care, and 67 percent had participated in support groups. Challenges reported by families included meeting the needs of children with special needs or behavioral issues, coordinating multiple services received by children in their care, and communication with service providers.
- CA compared kin and non-kin resource parents' satisfaction and experiences. Kin caregivers were more likely to be older and caring for siblings, and less likely to have other adults or spouses in the home. Kin caregivers were more likely to report that they received adequate information about the child at the time of placement. Both kin and non-kin resource parents described similar experiences with support services, stressing the benefit of receiving primary services such as economic assistance, emotional support, education and training, and ongoing communication with the child welfare agency.

- MN offered training to resource parents on Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP), with mixed results. Post-training, 46 percent of parents reported that they understood the definition of CPP, and only 31 percent reported that they understood their roles and responsibilities. Training sessions that focused on parenting issues and were taught by a foster/adoptive caregiver were more generally successful, with 83 percent of participants agreeing that the sessions were useful. Participants noted in particular the value of these caregiver-led sessions in facilitating peer learning and networking.
- Child welfare agency staff in MN reported an increased understanding of the definition of CPP (50 percent versus 80 percent post-training). In addition, almost half (48 percent) reported being somewhat prepared to implement CPP while 42 percent felt strongly prepared. Fifty-four percent reported a strong understanding of their role and responsibilities with respect to CPP, while 43 percent reported some understanding.

### Shifts in Agency Staff Attitudes, Knowledge, and Practice

Some projects focused on shifting caseworkers' attitudes and knowledge related to children's need for permanency. Evaluation results from three grantees illustrate the results of these efforts.

- A staff survey administered by CA at three points in time found that staff attitudes shifted to support permanency alternatives besides reunification, for which caseworkers had always demonstrated a strong preference. Staff confidence in employing best practices in concurrent planning and permanency work also increased after implementation of the grantee's project.
- KY conducted qualitative interviews with key stakeholders—including public/private agency staff, resource parents, child welfare agency administrators, and project staff—over three time periods. Results indicated a philosophical shift among respondents in thinking about the importance of meaningful and lifelong connections for children, as well as more emphasis overall on the achievement of permanency. In contrast, a statewide survey conducted of child welfare staff located in both intervention and comparison regions indicated that intervention region staff reported low awareness and low perceived involvement in the project. In addition, many survey respondents in the intervention region did not express confidence in the effectiveness of strategies to promote permanency generally or in the potential impact of the grantee's project specifically.
- CO reported an increase in the number of licensed homes in Denver County, which grew from 962 to 1,750 by the end of the project. This grantee also noted an increase in the percentage of children placed with kin over the project period, rising from 23.9 percent in 2008 to 38.2 percent in 2013.
- KY reported that growth in the number of approved new homes was higher in intervention regions than in comparison regions and that the difference was statistically significant; however, tremendous variance was observed in the number of new homes across the study period.
- In OK, the total number of homes grew from 2,798 in 2009 to 3,601 by the end of the project, an increase of nearly 30 percent. Specifically, approved foster homes increased from 1,974 to 2,622, while adoptive homes increased from 824 to 979.

## Outcome Evaluations—Summary of Key Findings

### Number of Foster/Adoptive Families

Several grantees reported success in increasing the overall number of resource families in their states or target communities. Examples from three grantees are summarized below.

## **Number of Families Reflecting Ethnic/Racial Diversity of Children**

Some grantees strove to increase the demographic diversity of their resource family pools to better reflect the diversity of their foster care populations, particularly in terms of race/ethnicity. Exhibit 8 summarizes results from two grantees with respect to the recruitment of families that mirror the ethnic/racial diversity of children in out-of-home placement.

In CO, African-American family representation declined slightly. Persons of color in dual-licensed homes continued to be underrepresented, although a small improvement for Latino families was noted. OK was able to slightly improve the ratio of Latino and American Indian families; however, the representation of African-American families declined slightly both in terms of foster/dual licensed homes and adoptive homes.

KY and MN also conducted analyses of resource families' racial/ethnic distribution. In KY, intervention regions increased their capacity for the placement of Latino children. Comparison regions increased their capacity for placing African-American children; however, the capacity of intervention regions to place African-American children actually decreased during the grant period. MN observed no increase in the supply of newly licensed African-American homes. A number of contextual factors, including high unemployment rates among African-Americans in the county and the closure of a private adoption agency that served African-American families, may have contributed to this outcome.

**Exhibit 8: Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Resource Homes vs. Children in Care**

Percent of Resource Homes by Race/Ethnicity	CO Before Project	CO After Project	CO Percent Change	OK* Before Project	OK* After Project	OK* Percent Change
Percent of Foster/Dual Licensed Homes: White/Caucasian	52.5%	45%	-7.5%	68.5%	70.4%	+1.9%
Percent of Foster/Dual Licensed Homes: African-American/Black	19.5%	18.5%	-1.0%	18.1%	13.6%	-4.5%
Percent of Foster/Dual Licensed Homes: Hispanic/Latino	7.6%	18.1%	+10.5%	5.6%	7.0%	+1.4%
Percent of Foster/Dual Licensed Homes: Native American/Indian	1.7%	0.7%	-1%	12.7%	15.4%	+2.7%
Percent of Licensed Adoptive Homes: White/Caucasian	53.5%	50.7%	-2.8%	77.5%	77.6%	+0.1%
Percent of Licensed Adoptive Homes: African-American/Black	23.3%	23.6%	+0.03%	9.9%	8.2%	-1.7%
Percent of Licensed Adoptive Homes: Hispanic/Latino	11.7%	14.2%	+2.5%	5.9%	9.1%	+3.2%

\*Race/ethnicity could be reported in more than one category; totals >100%

## Child Permanency

As noted earlier, most grantees used existing CFSR indicators to track and report findings on key permanency and placement stability outcomes; findings from several grantees in the area of permanency are summarized in exhibit 9, Child Permanency Indicators. Most projects reported some success in improving permanency for their target populations. MN documented positive changes for African-American youth; specifically, the percentage of waiting African-American children adopted in less than 24 months increased from 14.3 percent in 2008 to nearly 27 percent in 2012. Out of all finalized adoptions, the proportion of children increased from 48.2 percent in 2008 to an average of 60.3 percent between 2009 and 2012. In addition, the proportion of waiting older youth (age 12 to 17) who were adopted increased from 6.6 percent in 2008 to 14.3 percent by the end of the project.

MO compared permanency outcomes among youth receiving intervention services with outcomes observed among youth receiving standard case management services at 12 months post-enrollment and at the end of the grant period (permanency included exits to adoption, guardianship, and pre-adoptive placements). A larger proportion of intervention youth achieved permanency than did comparison group youth at both

12 months and at the end of the project. This difference was statistically significant at the 12-month observation point; while permanency rates were still higher for the intervention group at the end of the grant, the difference had narrowed and was not statistically significant. NY defined permanency more broadly to include both legal permanency (adoption or guardianship) and non-legally binding arrangements, such as permanency pacts and commitment letters. While youth in the intervention group were more likely to achieve any form of permanency, there were no significant differences between the intervention and control groups in achieving legal permanency (adoption or guardianship). In CO, the median length of stay until finalized adoption nearly doubled over the grant period from 26 months in 2008 to 50.9 months in 2012. While not tied to a specific CFSR indicator, OH found no differences in adoption rates between children in the intervention and comparison regions of the county.

**Exhibit 9: Child Permanency Indicators**

CFSR Indicator	CO	MN	MO	NY
Measure C2.1: Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months?	N A	Increase for African-American youth from 14.3 percent in 2008 to 26.9 percent in 2012	N A	N A
Measure C2.2: Of all children discharged to a finalized adoption, what was the median length of stay in foster care in months?	Increased from 26 months in 2008 to 50.9 months in 2012	For African-American children, decreased from 20.5 months in 2008 to 17.2 months in 2012	N A	N A
Measure C3.2: Of all children legally free for adoption, what percentage were discharged to a permanent home?	N A	N A	12 percent of the intervention group compared to 8 percent of the comparison group at the end of the project	14 percent of the intervention group compared to 5 percent of the control group at the end of the project

### Placement Stability

As indicated in exhibit 10, Placement Stability Indicators, improvements in placement stability were not consistent across the DR grantees. In MN, placement stability declined for African-American children in care between 12-24 months, but showed some improvement among African-American children in placement for 2 years or more. In KY, placement stability improved moderately among children in placement for more than 12 months between 2008 and 2012 who resided in the project's intervention regions; however, stability also improved among children residing in comparison regions and remained higher in both observation years. Stability levels appeared largely unchanged in OK.

MO's analysis of placement stability is not included in the table because it did not use comparable CFSR indicators for this outcome. Rather, the grantee analyzed the median number of placement moves and found a median number of three moves among children in the intervention group versus a median of only two moves for children in the control group. The grantee theorized that intervention group youth may have experienced more instability because resource family supports were not implemented

as originally planned. While intervention youth may have had more potential permanency resources identified (e.g., kin and fictive kin), the unavailability of supportive services made it more difficult to take full advantage of these resources.

CA reported improvements in stability indicators. The grantee reported percentages of children in foster care less than 12 months, and percentages of children in foster care 12-24 months with two or fewer placements increased over time. More specific findings regarding these numbers were not provided in the final report.

**Exhibit 10: Placement Stability Indicators\***

CFSR Indicator	KY	MN	OK
<b>Measure C4.1:</b> Of all children in foster care >12 months, what percentage had two or fewer placement settings?	Intervention group improved slightly from 60.84 percent in 2008 to 65.06 percent in 2012.  Control group improved from 64.48 percent in 2008 to 72.25 percent in 2012	Increase for African-American youth from 14.3 percent in 2008 to 26.9 percent in 2012	N A
<b>Measure C4.2:</b> Of all children in foster care 12-24 months, what percentage had two or fewer placement settings?	N A	For African-American children, it decreased from 59.7 percent in 2008 to 41 percent in 2012.	73.9 percent in 2009 to 74.7 percent in 2013
<b>Measure C4.3:</b> Of all children in foster care >+24 months, what percentage had two or fewer placement settings?	N A	For African-American children, it increased from 29.9 percent in 2008 to 35.8 percent in 2012	N A

\*This table reflects projects that used the above indicators and reported results in sufficient detail and in a similar enough format to allow for grouping of findings.

## Family Connections

Several grantees examined the impact of their projects on maintaining or improving family connections, for example, in terms of the proximity of a child's placement to his/her birth home or home community, placements with siblings, and placement with relatives. KY observed negative outcomes both in terms of placement proximity and relative placements. With respect to relative placements, the proportion of placements with relatives in intervention regions declined at statistically significant levels from about 82 percent of all placements to 66 percent by the end of the project. Comparison regions also experienced a decline in the proportion of relative placements from 78 percent to about 73 percent, although this drop was not statistically significant. In contrast, OK observed a notable increase in the statewide proportion of placements with relatives, increasing from about one-quarter of all placements in 2009 to 40 percent in 2013. CO experienced a similar positive trend, with the proportion of relative placements growing from about one-quarter of all county placements in 2008 to 38 percent in 2012. OH also reported success with increasing the number of relative applicants; the proportion of relatives who applied to be licensed foster care givers or approved for adoption increased from 21 percent in Year 3 to 35 percent in Year 5. With respect to sibling placements, OK reported marked improvements during the course of its project, with the percentage of siblings placed together with a goal of adoption increasing from 69 percent in 2010 to 91 percent in 2013, and the percentage in foster care generally who were placed with siblings grew from 60 percent to 90 percent during the same time period.

Some projects actively sought feedback from current and prospective resource families regarding strategies for promoting improved family connections. For example, MN conducted resource family satisfaction surveys via telephone in 2010 and 2011; when asked about their licensing worker, 20 percent of respondents reported that they were not offered the opportunity to foster or adopt a sibling group or an older youth.

## Child/Youth Well-Being Outcomes

MO's evaluation included an assessment of changes in youth well-being over time, specifically with respect to social supports for youth and psychological/life functioning. In terms of social supports, the grantee observed that intervention youth increasingly chose biological/kin permanency supports and decreasingly chose paid (non-kin) permanency supports over time, a trend that was not observed for youth in the comparison group; however, the differences between the groups were not statistically significant. The Child and Adolescent Functioning Assessment Scale (CAFAS) was administered to intervention youth at baseline, 5 months post-baseline, and 12 months post-baseline. By 5 months post-baseline, intervention youth improved significantly in all CAFAS domains; by 12 months, the intervention group's improvements were maintained on the CAFAS Total Score and in five of the instrument's domains (School, Home Environment, Behavior, Mood, and Self-harm).

A corollary to the discussion of youths' general well-being and functioning is their attitude toward adoption as a permanency alternative. NY assessed the willingness of youth enrolled in its PFEC project to consider being adopted. Four of the 10 PFEC-assigned youth who initially refused to be adopted changed their perspectives; and by the end of the project, they reported being willing to consider adoption. In contrast, none of the 26 youth in the control group who initially refused to be adopted shifted their attitudes toward acceptance of adoption as a permanency option. Although these numbers are small, this finding suggests that it is possible to increase the receptiveness of older children to adoption through ongoing and intensive outreach and dialogue.

## Evaluation Lessons Learned

The findings summarized above point to several recommendations and lessons learned with respect to the evaluation of similar DR projects.

- Performance data collected as part of project evaluations can provide valuable feedback that improves recruitment and casework practices. For example, some grantees found that providing supervisors with reports on the timeliness of staff call-back rates created an accountability mechanism that improved customer service and the satisfaction of prospective resource families with the recruitment process.
- Data triangulation, when possible, can confirm or provide a basis for the further analysis of evaluation findings. For example, administrative data collected by CA showed no clear changes in rates of placement with siblings; this finding was in contrast to worker perceptions of easier placements of sibling groups reported via a staff survey.
- Measuring the relative effects of interventions was challenging due to uneven implementation of strategies and the confounding influence of other child welfare initiatives.
- The majority of grantees utilized state child welfare data related to child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes collected as part of the CFSR process, along with administrative data collected routinely on foster/adoptive homes. While the availability of these data was helpful for grantees as they were able to measure changes in related outcomes of interest, limitations included the need to merge numerous data sets, data quality issues, and modifications to state child welfare information systems during the grant period.
- Several grantees created stand-alone databases to supplement data available through state or local information systems. These databases facilitated the collection of data that were more directly relevant to the grantees' research questions but could be labor intensive to build and maintain.

- Low response rates were a challenge for a number of grantees, particularly for surveys administered over multiple points in time. Careful consideration of strategies for obtaining adequate response rates is needed to ensure sufficient sample sizes for planned analyses.

### Suggested citation:

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2016). *Diligent recruitment of families for children in the foster care system*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

## Appendix A: Indicators

List of Indicators Used in Final Evaluation Reports to Assess Project Processes and Outcomes

Indicators Included in Final Evaluation Reports of Diligent Recruitment Grantee	Projects Using Indicators (N=8)
<b>Provider Skills &amp; Practices</b>	<b>CA, KY, MN</b>
Number of staff trained	KY, OK
Agency staff shift in attitudes	CA, KY
Agency staff skills change	KY, MN
Agency staff practices changes	MN, OK
<b>Recruitment Activities</b>	<b>CO, KY, OH, MN, NY</b>
Agency collaboration w/community partners in recruitment efforts	CO, KY
Number/types of general recruitment activities	CO, KY, OH, OK
Number/types of targeted recruitment activities	CO, OH
Number/types of child-specific recruitment activities	NY, OH
Youth participation in recruitment activities	NY
Effectiveness of general recruitment activities	CO, MN, OK
Effectiveness of targeted recruitment activities	CO
Effectiveness of targeted child-specific recruitment strategies	NY
Source of referrals reported by foster/adoptive families	CO, OK, MN
<b>Recruitment of Families</b>	<b>CA, CO, KY, MN, OH, OK</b>
Time from hearing about fostering/adopting to inquiry	MN
Number of families inquiring about becoming foster/adoptive families	OK
Number of families inquiring about becoming foster/adoptive families matching racial/ethnic distribution of children in care	MN
Number of families inquiring that indicate willingness to work with specific populations (siblings, teens, behavioral needs)	MN
Number of kin/relative inquiries about becoming foster/adoptive families	OH, MN
Number of families meeting licensing milestones	OK, MN
Time families take to move through licensure process	CO, KY, MN
Family satisfaction, supports and barriers during licensing process	CO, OK, MN, OH
Number of newly licensed families	CO, KY

Indicators Included in Final Evaluation Reports of Diligent Recruitment Grantee	Projects Using Indicators (N = 8)
Number of newly licensed families reflecting ethnic/racial diversity of children	MN
Number of licensed families willing to serve hard to place populations	CA
Number of families that match cultural characteristics of children	CO, KY, MN
<b>Retention of Families</b>	<b>CA, CO, KY, MN</b>
Identification of resource families' needs	CA
Increased supports for resource/foster families	CO, KY, CA
Resource parents and provider partnership	KY
Resource parents' knowledge and skills	KY, MN
Current families' satisfaction with agency practice	CA, CO, MN
Resource families' perception of barriers to permanency	KY
Pool/number of open foster/adoptive homes	OK
<b>Children/Youth Permanency and Well-Being</b>	<b>CA, CO, KY, MO, MN, NY, OH</b>
Perception of permanency barriers	KY
Number of children served	KY
Number of family connections made for child/youth	KY, NY
Number of families matched as a permanent resource for child/youth	NY
Social support of youth	MO
Child/youth well-being	MO, OH
Youth receptivity to adoption/permanency	NY
Overall number of open homes	OK
Kinship home placement	CO
Proximity of foster care placement	KY
Placement with siblings	CA
Placement stability	CA, KY, MO, MN
Timeliness to permanency	CA, CO, NY, MN
Permanency rates	CO, MO, NY
Adoption rates	OH, MN

## Appendix B: Grantee Products

### Manuals and Guidelines

CO: Denver County Customer Service Standards, Guiding Principles, and Behaviors: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Denvers\\_Village](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Denvers_Village)

MO: Extreme Recruitment Manual: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Extreme\\_Recruitment](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Extreme_Recruitment)

OK: Guiding Principles for Oklahoma Bridge Resource Families: <http://www.okbridgefamilies.com/training/>

### Presentations

KY: Promising Practices in Resource Parent Recruitment Presentation: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

KY: Promising Practices in Resource Parent Retention Presentation: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

KY: Strategies for Improving Customer Service Presentation: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

MN: Permanent Families Recruitment Project presentation: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Permanent\\_Families\\_Recruitment\\_Project](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Permanent_Families_Recruitment_Project)

### Training

OK: Online Training Courses (7 different topics): <http://www.okbridgefamilies.com/training/>

OK: Foster Parent College: <http://www.okbridgefamilies.com/training/>

### Outreach

KY: Promising Practices in Foster Parent Retention Leaflet [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

KY: Targeted Recruitment Leaflet: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

KY: Strategies for Improving Customer Service Leaflet: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project\\_MATCH](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Project_MATCH)

MN: Permanent Families Recruitment Project brochure: [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Permanent\\_Families\\_Recruitment\\_Project](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Permanent_Families_Recruitment_Project)

OH: Outreach Tools: (church fan, street kiosk sign, poster): [http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Partners\\_for\\_Forever\\_Families](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Partners_for_Forever_Families)



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