

Improving RECRUITMENT OUTCOMES

11 Things a Practitioner Can Do

1 Be customer-friendly in your approach.

Foster and adoptive parents are the most important resource we have to provide for the children we serve. How you treat them will determine whether they stay in the process and, ultimately, become part of your team. Try to put yourself in their shoes at every stage of the process. How would you like to be treated?

2 Be informed about local, State, and national recruitment initiative and calendar.

This information will help you schedule your work so you can be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to the possibility of an influx of inquiries, as well as inform families you talk with at event, classes, in the course of work and people you meet in your community.

3 Look for ways to participate in your agency's community recruitment projects, regardless of what your job is.

From the agency director to the person who answers the telephone, recruitment is everybody's business! Successful agencies encourage all staff and resource parents to be mindful of the need for families wherever they go and help out with recruitment.

4 Know the characteristics and needs of the children in your area who needs foster and adoptive parents.

Speak optimistically and honestly about the children who need care and the role of the foster and adoptive parent. As prospective parents go through the process, continue to provide them with reliable information to make informed decisions about fostering and adopting, including full disclosure regarding the children, their needs and the service needs of the birth families. Respect the parents / Give them the opportunity to explore areas where they may have doubts. Trust their ability to make good decisions for themselves. This can be done at all stages of the process.

5 Be knowledgeable about all of the steps in the continuum from recruitment through to placement and post-placement support.

Prospective parents will have lots of questions. Be prepared to answer them whether you are answering the phone, providing training, or doing a home visit. Promise to get back with answers to questions you can't respond to on the spot, and then follow through with this promise!

6 Work to rule people in, not out of the process.

It is important that the practitioner realize that the most ordinary, and sometimes unusual, people have grown into amazing resource parents with training and support. Most of the time parents present themselves to the agency for an altruistic purpose. They have passion and emotion about this. Our challenge is to learn how to maintain that passion and turn it into informed and sustained commitment.

7 Utilize seasoned foster and adoptive parents whenever possible to help support new parents through the process.

Many agencies are partnering with their resource parents and/or parent groups to help in recruiting. Parents handle initial inquiries, participate in home visits, are part of the training team and provide support to new parents during the process. Agencies that do this are modeling the team process from day one.

8 Identify and collaborate with other community partners and organizations.

Networking with community groups and partnering on recruitment efforts can be satisfying, supportive and productive for the practitioner. Faith based and community-based organizations that endorse your efforts can bring new families to your door. These organizations can also provide space and resources to make your orientation and training meetings more accessible to parents. You are likely to get better attendance as a result.

9 Be a team player.

Everybody who has a hand in recruiting and preparing families to foster and adopt can be made to feel that they are part of a team in a very important endeavor. This is a complex process that involves handoffs from recruiter to trainer, to family assessment worker, to placement worker, etc. All involved should have the same value system and a sense of urgency about completing the work as soon as possible.

10 Be sensitive to the prospective foster and adoptive parents' sense of time.

The longer it takes to move from step to step, the less likely the family will stay in the process. However, if a parent is treated well and helped to feel part of the team early on, he/she is more likely to stay the course. It is important to be honest about the reasons for delays when they occur and to help the parent use this time in productive ways, e.g., involve them with other foster, adoptive or kinship parents, or enlist them to provide respite care.

11 Understand your role in and the importance of tracking and evaluation to improve recruitment outcomes.

Organizations that are customer-oriented are beginning to look at the quality of their interactions with resource families at every stage of the process. They need cooperation from people on the "front line" to get good data and feedback.



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