

Appendix A. State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

1. Characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed:

Currently, the child welfare system in Tennessee is serving 9,113 children in the department's care and custody. Respectfully, 5,123 of those children are males and 3,990 are females; one child's gender is not recorded.

Their age ranges from the following:

| Age Range | Total |
|------------------|--------------|
| 0-4 | 2,594 |
| 5-12 | 2,986 |
| 13-17 | 3,416 |
| 18 and above | 117 |

The majority of the total population is Caucasian, there are 5,970 of the children in care; with the second highest being African-American 2,111. The majority of the children, 80%, are served in family settings by traditional, kin, pre-adoptive, trial home visits, and therapeutic foster parents. When needed to meet the unique treatment needs of children, DCS has residential, congregate care, and hospital settings that serve the population. Over the last few years, DCS increased capacity of foster homes available to children and families by over 600 homes, and DCS continues to assess how to increase more placement and support to relative/kin caregivers. At any given time, DCS has over 20% of children, statewide, placed in the home with relatives.

Below is a table that identifies how DCS is able to recruit foster homes based on the demographics of the children being served by the agency.

| Custody and Foster Parent Race/Ethnicity Comparison as of June 2020 (DCS and Private Provider Homes) | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Race | Custody | Percentage | Primary Caretaker | Percentage |
| White | 5,970 | 65.51% | 3,716 | 70.06% |
| African American | 2,111 | 23.16% | 1,343 | 25.32% |
| Asian | 14 | 0.15% | 9 | 0.17% |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 17 | 0.19% | 4 | 0.08% |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 9 | 0.10% | 3 | 0.06% |
| Unable to Determine/Unknown | 239 | 2.62% | 166 | 3.13% |
| Multi-race | 661 | 7.25% | 32 | 0.60% |
| Multi-race-one race unknown | 92 | 1.01% | 31 | 0.58% |

DCS's goal continues to be one resource home available for every two children in care, and as of May 31, 2020 the Department was exceeding the goal. strategies to maintain or expand the pool further are part of annual plans that include quarterly evaluation. Effective with calendar year 2017, the Department established a standard of recruiting/certifying a minimum of 10% more new foster homes than the number of homes that voluntarily closed in the prior calendar year. The goal was exceeded by more than 30% in 2017, by 27% in 2018, and by 30% in 2019. Effective with state fiscal year 2020, (July 1st-June 30th) the measurement goal was changed from calendar year to state fiscal year. At the end of May 2020, with one month remaining in the state fiscal year, the Department was 18% above the goal.

Tennessee operates a state administered system whereby the Division of Foster Care and Adoption Services provides support to 12 geographic regions that have flexibility in creating their own annual recruitment and retention plans based upon demographic indicators. These, generally, seem to reflect commonalities at a statewide level in terms of needing more homes for teenagers and large sibling groups. Annual regional plans are targeted to the unique needs of each region based upon ethnic/cultural needs, gender needs, etc.

Recruitment efforts and data are addressed quarterly with regional resource home recruitment/support staff during grand regional meetings. Progress is measured in several ways. TFACTS generates demographic information about Resource Homes and custodial children thereby

enabling Region to determine specific resource needs and availability. The Child and Family Service Review process supports measures of assessment and services, functioning, and resourcefulness of Foster Parents. It also measures formal and informal supports available to them and their use of those supports. Between July-October, 2017, the Department engaged the technical support of an Annie E. Casey recruitment consultant to provide training to all foster parent support staff across the state at both the frontline and supervisory/management level as part of providing skill sets to assess recruitment needs, target the needs and support the population recruited. Between November 2019 and January, 2020, the Department again contracted with the AECF consultant to provide follow-up training to the same set of staff to re-enforce best practice in recruitment and retention efforts.

2. Specific recruitment strategies to reach out to all parts of the community (See Regional Recruitment Plans attached to Appendix)

3. Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child specific information

- ✦ Continue to support the Continuous Quality Improvement (sometimes referred to as Quality Practice) teams at the Regional and Central Office level that support recruitment and retention of resource families. These teams include partnership with community stakeholders and existing resource parents.
- ✦ Maintain and continuously update agency web, Facebook, Twitter, and other Social Media accounts to disseminate information to potential, interested community members while continuing to add use of other social media and marketing technology, such as Mail Chimp and Remind.
- ✦ Maintain toll-free telephone line for community members to inquire about becoming resource parents while promoting the department's new web site with an online inquiry option.
- ✦ Continue photo-listing of children in need of adoptive families to the AdoptUsKids website, and timely engagement of families interested in unique children.
- ✦ Support local county recruitment by providing materials for events at the community level including local fairs, educational events, and other opportunities to raise awareness.

4. Strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/ adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that the agencies can be accessed by all members of the community

- ✦ Continue to partner with the IT division to create a listing of all licensed, child-placing agencies that certify/license/approve resource homes on the website that can be accessible for all interested community members, and that include a brief narrative of the agency, logo (if desired), hours of services, and description of approval process, contact information, and links to agency web pages.
- ✦ Update the list of agencies on a semi-annual or as needed basis.

5. Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations

- ✦ Continue to partner with the Training Division to refine and create training opportunities related to client diversity, including socioeconomic and cultural differences.
- ✦ Regularly track training offerings and attendance of staff at relevant trainings, including Cultural Diversity.
- ✦ Partner with local resource parent associations and the Tennessee Foster Care Association to identify any issues and needs.
- ✦ Identify any new opportunities to work within local communities to address unique needs or challenges related to diversity, poverty, or culture.

6. Strategies for dealing with linguistic barrier

- ✦ Maintain a statewide contract for access to interpreters, when needed.
- ✦ Use community stakeholders and internal agency resources to assist clients with linguistic challenges whenever possible.
- ✦ Continue to make forms and other informational tools available in alternative language formats that reflect the greatest need.
- ✦ Identify opportunities to engage different cultures in recruitment and promulgation of information related to the department and its work.
- ✦ When appropriate, encourage existing families to identify an informal support that can translate or interpret.
- ✦ Engage local, regional offices to identify their unique challenges and potential steps to mitigate those. These will be incorporated/identified in their annual recruitment plans.

7. Non-discriminatory fee structures:

8. Continue to provide training, fingerprint/background checks, and home studies to potential resource and relative/kin families at no cost. Likewise, the private providers that DCS contracts with for therapeutic foster care do so at no cost.

9. Procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

- ✦ Continue to ensure that all children get a monthly review of case progress at from the time the agency receives full-guardianship of the child (completed-see FOCUS process), until permanency is attained.
- ✦ Continue to ensure that all children in need of recruitment of an adoptive family have an Individual Recruitment Plan, Archeological Dig of the Case Record, a high-functioning Child and Family Team, and are photo-listed to AdoptUsKids (if the child/youth desires).
- ✦ Utilize contracted service providers to assist in recruitment of families for children, including the recruitment plan, archeological dig, and photo-listing.
- ✦ Provide periodic training to regional staff on MEPA/IEPA.

- ✦ Ensure that all staff are trained on the new process for providing full disclosure to potential adoptive families; (see attached copy of online video utilized for full disclosure options)
- ✦ In partnership with the ICPC Administrator, create clear policy and practice on engaging private, out-of-state agencies for potential adoptive placements (evolving/ongoing)