



South Carolina Department of Social Services  
V. Susan Alford, State Director

Appendix D

**South Carolina  
Department of Social Services  
2016 Annual Progress and Services Report  
Update to the Foster and Adoptive Parent  
Diligent Recruitment Plan  
2015 – 2019  
Child and Family Services Plan**

## **Progress and Accomplishments**

In May 2014, the SCDSS initiated a recruitment contract with Winthrop University to hire five regional recruiters who were to report to the SCDSS Statewide Recruitment Coordinator. Three recruiters were hired for Regions II, III and IV. Interviews were completed for two other recruiters. However, in October 2014, the State Adoption Unit received news that the Winthrop University contract would be ending effective June 30, 2015. The other two recruiters that were to be hired did not accept due to the ending of the Winthrop University contract. The Region II recruiter resigned from the position in April 2015.

In spite of the staffing challenge during FFY 2015, the SCDSS had one statewide event in November 2014. That November "Game Day" event had three potential matches. A second statewide event happened on May 17, a bowling party in Irmo, a city in the Midlands just outside of Columbia. This provided an opportunity for waiting families across the state to interact with legally free children ages 8 yrs. old and up.

One radio interview (WVOC Jonathan Rush and Kelly Nash) and one television interview (On Point with Cynthia Hardy) promoting the need for adoptive families who are willing to take our older youth, medically fragile children and larger sibling groups, were provided during FFY 2015.

State recruiters and State Adoptions Unit staff have also held "Chat and Chill and Tea and Talk" to provide an opportunity for waiting, approved, adoptive families to learn more about the adoption process, ask questions and meet other waiting adoptive families. The Department also utilized families who have gone through the adoption process and finalized to answer questions.

Additionally, recruiters have placed flyers and brochures through communities in Region II, III and IV stating the need for families for our older youth, etc. Ft. Jackson has been recently added to our recruitment stops. A small table has been set up at the Family Advocacy Center with applications from Heartfelt Calling and information about adoption. A recruiter was available on Wednesday mornings on Ft. Jackson during "Family Day" to give information and answer any questions.

Recruiters sent out four quarterly newsletters to families across the state. This newsletter informed families of upcoming events, brief write-ups and pictures of legally free children (not in their region), and resources related to the adoption.

Recruiters also stayed monthly for orientation for new families seeking to adopt. The purpose was to inform families about our older waiting youth in care, medically fragile children and larger sibling groups. The recruiter answered any questions a family may have in regard to the adoption process. Recruiters also held "information sessions" in approved adoptive families' homes in order to recruit new adoptive families. This provided an opportunity for the adoptive family to host other families wanting information and those families to network with a seasoned adoptive family.

During FFY 2014, a pilot Regional Hub for Licensing and Recruitment of Resource Foster and Adoptive Families was operational and continued through FFY 2015, in the SCDSS Region 4, the Pee Dee area. Expanding the Regional Licensing Unit system beyond pilot Regional Licensing Initiative, was one of the primary Progress Benchmarks/Strategies of the Plan. The Regionalized Structure for Resource Family Licensing was not expanded beyond the SCDSS Region 4. Among the challenges to expanding the Regional Licensing Hubs System and improving recruitment of Resource Foster and Adoptive Families, one occurred when the Interim Statewide Director of the Regionalized Resource Family Licensing and Recruitment Hubs resigned by the beginning of the first quarter of FFY 2015. Another SCDSS staff person began serving by the beginning of the second quarter of FFY 2015. This staff person also had the dual responsibility for supervising Intensive Foster Care and Counseling Services in the SCDSS Lowcountry, Region 3. There were some activities during FFY 2015 including: meeting with SCDSS County Directors to discuss the Regional Resource Licensing Hubs; reaching out to meet with the SC Foster Parent Association Presidents in the SCDSS Regions 2 and 3, the Midlands and Lowcountry respectively; a few recruitment

events in SCDSS Region 3; and “Shared Parenting” training events for Resource Foster Families and SCDSS staff in Regions 4 and 3, the Pee Dee and Lowcountry respectively. This new SCDSS leader resigned from the Department during the second quarter of FFY 2015, and a new leader for the initiative was not selected and placed. See the SCDSS Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Plan for the plan for a statewide Director of Resource Family Recruitment and Retention.

Due to the information above, and the information below in the other Strategies and Action Steps, the conclusion is that there were not sufficient implementation supports in place throughout FFY 2015, and so the Strategy and Action Steps were not implemented as intended.

One of the primary factors for the lower “Strength” rating in Item 6 (Stability of foster Care Placement) was, and remains, the shortage of Resource Foster Family Homes for sibling groups and older children in foster care, in addition to there being a general shortage of Resource Foster Family homes. During FFY 2015, there was less than one (1) Resource Foster Family home available for each child in foster care. The result of this in some situations has been the less than optimal placement options for the children in South Carolina, in terms of placement that well met his/her needs. It has been estimated that the state needs approximately fourteen hundred (1400) additional Resource Foster Family homes to accomplish a ration of one child to one Resource Foster Family home. Therefore, part of the Plan going forward is a Progress Measure/Objective of a net increase of 20% in the number of Resource Foster Families in each SCDSS County Office, SCDSS Region, and statewide.

Due to the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), the SCDSS cannot place children based solely on race. The SCDSS State Adoptions Unit, in 2014-2015 partnered with Allen University/African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Churches across the state to recruit African-American Resource Families. Recruiters have been involved in speaking engagements across the state at the AME Conventions. However, that contract did not produce the activities and outcomes that had been anticipated, and therefore the contract was not renewed for the 2015-2016 period.

According to Linda Love, Director of Social Services, Catawba Indian Nation (CIN), there is a strong reticence on the part of the members of the CIN to remove the child from home to place the child in foster care and/or an adoptive home. This at least partially explains the shortage of Native American Resource Family/Foster and Adoptive Homes in South Carolina. As of 5/1/15, according to the SCDSS CAPSS, there were four (4) Native American primary and secondary caregivers with “Standard” or “Pending” Resource Family Foster Home Licenses. These same Resource Family Homes were also the four (4) Native American primary and secondary caregivers as Resource Family Adoptive Resources in SC.

At the same time, the CIN has indicated that when a child must be removed from the home, their preference is strong that the child be placed in a CIN Family Resource, secondarily in a non-CIN, Native American Resource Family. The Tribe has a strong desire and intention to place the child in a CIN or other Native American Resource Family in order to have the best opportunity to maintain the uniqueness of the Native American culture in the child’s life. To that end, when there is no CIN or other Native American Resource Family relatively near the Reservation with which to place the child, the Tribe has expressed the desire to place the child in a non-Native American Resource Family in a nearer proximity to the Tribe’s Reservation.

Throughout FFY 2015, the SCDSS met four (4) times with the Catawba Indian Nation (CIN) to monitor the 2015-2019 CFSP ICWA-related Objectives, which were later placed into the 2015-2019 CFSP, Strategic Action Plan as Progress Benchmarks / Strategies and Action Steps. The development of the Native American-specific Adoption Recruitment Plan has been in process throughout the year, through these meetings. Pieces of a recruitment plan have been planned and implemented, as seen below. At the same time, through time spent in consultation and collaboration together, it is now time to develop the plan. The development of this plan will be in coordination with the development of the Resource Family Recruitment and Support Plan.

As part of listening and learning what the strategies and action steps of a Native American-specific Resource Family Recruitment plan should be, and also as part implementing early steps in recruitment, on 5/16/15, the first orientation on foster care and adoption in recent memory, was provided on the Catawba Indian Nation (CIN) on the Reservation. Linda Love called it an “historic” event on the Reservation. It was titled “Protecting our Children, Preserving our Heritage”. The SCDSS and “Heartfelt Calling” presented the Resource Family licensing process (inspections, paperwork, background checks, etc.). The State Adoptions Unit presented the need for Resource Adoptive Families should children be unable to be re-unified with family. This was the first of quarterly orientations.

From the 5/16/15 orientation meeting the following information was gathered and indicated the items that need to be addressed as the next immediate steps to be implemented in order to continue making progress in recruitment:

- 1) It may be a challenge as to how many CIN families are able to pass the DHEC and fire inspections.
- 2) Some CIN families may not pass the initial background checks or may be residing with someone who has negative background checks.
- 3) The CIN shared their belief that there is a need for more ICWA training for workers and staff. The CIN would like to see yearly training done in order for everyone to understand the ICWA requirements.
- 4) It was mentioned that perhaps a different set of licensing standards could be applied to those CIN members who wished to become resource or adoptive parents. However, that would be a decision that would have to be made by state office.
- 5) Those present for this information session would like to meet privately and discuss what they could do to maybe support other CIN families on or off the reservation with fostering/adoption.
- 6) Terri Pope contact Laurie Hobbs re CPS Orientation at Reservation. Relay answer to Linda Love to schedule.

Families present stated that they only wish to be resource parents/adoptive parents to CIN and other Native American children in order to keep traditions and their culture alive. The SCDSS Adoption Unit explained MEPA and how that would apply to a family wishing to foster or adopt.

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan included developing methods to assess the effectiveness of recruitment efforts (establish benchmarks and tracking data). Heartfelt Calling is tracked all applications that come from recruiting events, information sessions or churches.

As seen below, in data from the Children’s Bureau, approximately half of all children in foster care more than 12 months had more than two (2) placements.

	<b>South Carolina</b>
<b>Composite 4: Placement Stability While in Foster Care, 2013: South Carolina</b>	
<b>Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, what percentage had two or fewer placement settings?</b>	<b>85.0</b>
<b>Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 12 months, what percentage had two or fewer placement settings?</b>	<b>56.2</b>

*Source: Children’s Bureau*

As reported in the “Assessment of Performance” in this 2016 APSR, data indicators and Quality Assurance Review results indicate the need to address placement stability and recruitment of Resource Foster and Adoptive Families. The updates and changes to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan address these needs.

### **Changes or Updates to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan**

The Foster Adoptive Diligent Recruitment Plan has been changed and updated in a very significant and comprehensive manner. During the second quarter of FFY 2015, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) received a new Director of the Department, Susan Alford. Director Alford made Resource Family Recruitment and Retention one of the Department's priorities. At the direction of Ms. Alford, there is now a new, comprehensive Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Plan for recruitment, licensing, and retention of Resource Foster and Adoptive Families. Effectively, this comprehensive Plan is the Updated Foster and Adoptive Diligent Recruitment Plan. The Progress Benchmark/Strategy and Actions Steps/Task Names of the Plan are listed below.

One of the primary updates and changes to the Foster and Adoptive diligent Recruitment Plan has been to confirm the plan to develop the Regional Resource Family Support Units (RRFSU) to improve recruitment, licensing, and retention of Foster and Adoptive Resource Families. This is a change from contracting this out in Region 1, and having county-based licensing and recruitment elsewhere in SC. The 2015-2019 CFSP and Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan included the RRFSU, so the change and update to the plan was confirming and taking steps to implement the Regional Support Units. These Regional Support Units will be a SCDSS in-house staff operation, and will handle all recruitment, retention, and licensing efforts statewide, through five (5) Regional Support Units in the five (5) SCDSS Regions.

See the 2016 APSR, Goal 3, Objective 1, in the "Update On The Plan For Improvement", and in the "Strategic Action Plan" for further information on the Regional Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Plan.

### **Project Benchmark / Strategy: In process (except as indicated Complete or To be initiated)**

**\*3.1.2:** Develop and implement the Regional Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Plan.

#### **Action Steps. In process.**

**3.1.2a:** Engage NRC to develop a recruitment work plan- draft plan delivered to SCDSS / draft finalized, submitted to ACF for approval.

**3.1.2b1:** Implement Business Process Redesign for initial Licensing procedures- develop new approved application done at Intake, train, and communicate to families.

**3.1.2b2:** Implement Business Process Redesign for initial Licensing procedures- Create a centralized Licensing Tram and standardize home visits.

**3.1.2b3:** Implement Business Process Redesign for initial Licensing procedures- Revise medical and financial forms and standardize "Bootleg Forms".

**3.1.2b4:** Implement Business Process Redesign for initial Licensing procedures- License to cover all age, gender, and capacity restrictions.

**3.1.2b5:** Implement Business Process Redesign for initial Licensing procedures-Employ Fire/DHEC Inspectors

**3.1.2b6:** Implement Business Process Redesign for initial Licensing procedures- Revise the Foster Parenting website.

**3.1.2c1:** Home Studies- redraft contract at end of contract period.

**3.1.2c2:** Home Studies- develop training related to contract contents, including licensing procedures, licensing procedures and requirements, and support piece.

**3.1.2c3:** Home Studies- implement training related to contract contents, including licensing procedures, licensing procedures and requirements, and support piece.

**3.1.2d1:** Address the Fire Inspection requirements for windows and smoke alarms- communicate change to staff.

**3.1.2e1:** Rollout Regional Resource Family Support Units (RRFSU) - Hire State Director for Regional Resource Family Support Units.

**3.1.2e2:** Rollout RRFSU - Collect detail data for recruitment within school districts.

**3.1.2e3:** Rollout RRFSU - Identify current dedicated staff to transfer.

**3.1.2e4:** Rollout RRFSU - Hire new staff in existing positions.

**3.1.2e5:** Rollout RRFSU- Hire new staff in newly established positions (dependent on budget request).

- 3.1.2e5a: Rollout RRFSU-develop curriculum and Supervisor Manual for OJT.
- 3.1.2e5b: Rollout RRFSU-implement training for all staff hired since 10/1/15.
- 3.1.2f: Rollout RRFSU- Track outcomes.
- 3.1.2g1: Recruitment Goal: Communicate goal of 20% Net increase in Resource Foster Families in each County, Each Region, and statewide.
- 3.1.2g2: Recruitment Goal: Track progress.
- 3.1.2h: Hold ongoing joint recruitment events with GAL.
- 3.1.2i: Collaborate with the Catawba Indian Nation (CIN) to recruit Resource Families- Assess the adoption recruitment needs to be included **in** a Native American-specific Adoption Recruitment Plan. **Complete.**
- 3.1.2i2: Collaborate with the Catawba Indian Nation (CIN) to recruit Resource Families -Develop a written Native American-specific Adoption Recruitment Plan in consultation and coordination with the developing Resource Family Recruitment and Support Plan.
- 3.1.2j: Develop a Faith-Based Adoptions Recruitment Plan. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2j2: Implement a Faith-Based Adoptions Recruitment Plan. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2k1: Recruitment Campaign- Rollout public awareness campaign.
- 3.1.2k2: Recruitment Campaign- Develop strategic plan for recruitment campaign.
- 3.1.2k3: Recruitment Campaign- develop draft recruitment contract with universities and submit to SCDSS Procurement Office for review and posting.
- 3.1.2k4: Recruitment Campaign- recruitment contract posted to MMO.
- 3.1.2l: Develop campaign materials to be used statewide.
- 3.1.2m: Track outcomes and analyze. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2n1: Development of a contract to provide peer-to-peer mentoring for Resource Families
- 3.1.2n2: Peer-to-peer mentoring for Resource Families-Rollout revised format.
- 3.1.2o: Ongoing participation in SCFPA meetings by SCDSS County Directors.
- 3.1.2p1: Training- redraft SCFPA contract to include quality assurance, behavior intervention, trauma-informed care.
- 3.1.2p2: Training- explore evidence-based training for Resource Families. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2q1: Develop feedback loop in the communication plan with Resource Families. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2q2: Develop letter to be sent to Resource Families at initial Licensing.
- 3.1.2q3: Implement letter to be sent to Resource Families at initial Licensing. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2r: Develop PowerPoint for communicating changes for SCFPA (BPR, RRFSU). **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2s: Develop website for Resource Family Recruitment. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.2t: Implement SCDSS Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Communication Matrix.

**Project Benchmark / Strategy. In process.**

- \*3.1.3: Enhance the availability and quality of post-adoption support services.

**Action Steps**

- 3.1.3a: Post-adoption services- Assess the availability and quality of post-adoption support services. **To be initiated.**
- 3.1.3b: Post-adoption services- develop a plan to enhance the availability and quality of post-adoption support services. **To be initiated.**

A part in assisting in the implementation of the Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Plan will be played by the newly formed Child Welfare Improvement Teams (CWIT).

Traditionally, State and County SCDSS offices met with agency partners and advocates to share service-related information, and discuss problems with child welfare service delivery. The CWIT team has added to the traditional function the opportunity to engage in a quality improvement process for addressing performance gaps around the CFSR performance standards.

Launched at the State level in May 2015, the State CWIT team ( the Foster Parent Association, the Foster Care Review Board, the Guardian ad Litem Program, the USC School of Social Work, a Foster Parent Representative, and the USC Children's Law Center) agreed to focus on using the quality improvement process to reduce out-of-county placements, and to recruit, retain and support more quality Resource Foster Families to support more placement stability and, therefore, improve statewide performance on Permanency Outcome One (Children have permanency and stability in their living situation).

Team members agreed to support and facilitate the SCDSS's Resource Family Recruitment and Support Plan by participating in activities locally and at the State level. Through participating in this Plan, they will partner to increase the focus on improving the results around the SCDSS efforts to recruit, retain and support more high quality Resource Foster Families across the state. The State CWIT team members have agreed to support the building of the local CWIT teams by encouraging and supporting local members of the child welfare community to join and actively participate in the CQI process at County CWIT meetings.

The National Resource Center For Diligent Recruitment, did a site visit to assess and evaluate the technical assistance needed in diligent recruitment of resource families on May 28, 2015. This report is due back to the Department in August 2015.