



State of South Carolina Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Manual

Subject:	730. Recruitment
Chapter:	Foster Family Licensing & Support
Effective Date:	07/21/2016
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	Child Welfare Services Staff

PURPOSE STATEMENT:

For children to thrive while in foster care, families must be available to meet their specific needs. To promote the availability and diversity of foster family homes, this section lays out the policies and procedures related to the recruitment of foster families.

POLICY:

1. No individual shall be denied the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, state of residence, age, disability, political belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Neither of these opportunities shall be delayed on the above basis. All recruitment materials must inform potential foster or adoptive applicants that DSS is prohibited from delaying or denying such opportunities.
2. The agency shall diligently recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in need of foster and adoptive homes.
3. All prospective foster parents with disabilities shall be given full and equal opportunities to become foster parents and shall be entitled to individualized treatment. If necessary to facilitate a full and equal opportunity, foster parents with disabilities shall be entitled to auxiliary aids and services.
4. County Directors and Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support staff, in consultation with Regional Directors, shall develop an annual plan to increase the number of foster homes available for placement of children within each county.
5. Recruitment efforts will emphasize the need for additional homes in order to reduce the number of placement moves of foster children, preserve family relationships and connections, increase the number of siblings placed together, move children from group care into foster homes, and increase the number of homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the state's foster children.
6. The agency shall target certain recruitment efforts to provide appropriate families to those groups of children who have the least availability of foster families, such as older youth and large sibling groups.

7. The agency shall utilize statewide and local data to target specific locations, populations, and communities for effective and efficient recruitment activities.
8. The agency shall, in furtherance of the completion of its diligent recruitment plan, set annual goals for recruitment and retention of foster families. Further, the agency will develop innovative recruitment strategies and partnerships to meet these goals and shall periodically reassess the efficacy of these efforts.
9. The agency shall confirm that those families who respond to recruitment efforts receive a uniform, positive, realistic, and trauma-informed message regarding the realities of becoming a foster parent. At the same time, however, the agency will confirm that all inquiries are met with a welcoming and customer-focused approach.

PROCEDURES:

A. Needs Assessment and Development of Recruitment Plan

1. Needs assessments are the foundation for recruitment and shall inform decisions made regarding campaigns and events. Reports are available from CAPSS using “real time” data (Online Reports) or monthly aggregate data (Batch Reports). Statistical and demographic information for individual counties is also available at the US Census Bureau website (www.census.gov). To determine where resources and time should be spent, recruitment efforts for each county should be based (minimally) upon the following information (note – because recruitment needs and efforts are different, each of the data points should be specified as regular or therapeutic children and homes):
 - a. Number of children in foster care;
 - b. Ages of children in foster care;
 - c. Size of sibling groups in foster care;
 - d. ZIP Codes of children’s family homes from which they were removed;
 - e. Number of licensed foster homes;
 - f. ZIP Codes of licensed foster homes;
 - g. Number of foster children allowed by each home’s license;
 - h. Preferred ages for placement in each home;
 - i. Number of children placed in their county of case management;
 - j. Placement of each child within a sibling group; and
 - k. Foster homes without placement or with available capacity.
2. County Directors and Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support staff shall meet (by phone or in person) annually to develop the annual local recruitment plan.
 - a. County Directors and Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support staff shall establish recruitment priorities based on the greatest need within each county, e.g. older youth needing placement or children in need of bilingual placement.

- b. The recruitment plan should take into consideration the availability of community resources such as volunteers, current foster parents, Foster Parent Association, venues, media, service groups, non-profit organizations, churches, schools, professional associations, etc.

B. Engaging with Community Resources

1. The County Director or designee shall meet routinely with groups within the community to share information and make the foster care placement needs known.
2. The County Director shall inform all local agencies and stakeholders interested in promoting the well-being of children about the need for foster parents and/or volunteers in recruiting foster parents. The information should be based on current data trends within the county.

C. Recruitment Strategies, Activities, and Events

1. Each County Director should be aware of the needs of the foster children in his/her county. Recruitment events and planning are primarily managed by the Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support unit but in conjunction with and on the advice of the County Director. County DSS staff should be made available to volunteer at recruitment events.
2. Recruitment initiatives must be developed with the goal of placing children in homes within their communities and neighborhoods to facilitate continuity in the children's lives as well as to promote family and sibling connections while the biological family works toward reunification with removed children (if appropriate).
3. DSS regulations support diligent recruitment of potential foster parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children within each county for whom foster homes are needed. The use of diligent recruitment does not imply that race, color, national origin, or disability can be used to deny or delay licensing or placement.
4. Recruitment strategies used by the county staff should include at least following:
 - a. Acknowledging the contributions of foster families;
 - b. Using the media toolkit and branding images supplied by DSS Office of Communications and External Affairs for posters, brochures, and media promotions;
 - c. Engaging local government entities to support recruitment efforts;
 - d. Identifying and preparing DSS county staff to speak at community meetings on behalf of the County Director;
 - e. Meeting with local religious leaders to enlist support within congregations;

- f. Communicating with foster parents regularly and developing an understanding of why some homes have fewer placements than others; and
 - g. Attending county Foster Parent Association meetings on a regular basis.
- 5. Recruitment strategies used by the Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support staff shall include at least the following:
 - a. Acknowledging the contributions of foster families by correspondence and through publications such as newsletters and media awareness;
 - b. Planning and attending local recruitment events;
 - c. Coordinating events with local community partners who are child/family-focused;
 - d. Regularly speaking to service and civic organizations, school associations, church groups, etc.;
 - e. Initiating recruitment strategies on a planned, ongoing basis, including booths at local fairs and festivals, signs and brochures placed in appropriate child-friendly businesses, broadcast media interviews, etc.; and
 - f. Ensuring staff representation at all county Foster Parent Association meetings within the region.
- 6. Recruitment strategies used by the DSS State Office and management should include at least the following:
 - a. Initiating dialogue between the agency and child welfare partners regarding efforts to jointly recruit quality foster homes;
 - b. Holding regular meetings of stakeholders to address concerns and observations regarding foster home recruitment;
 - c. Seeking partnerships from agencies and businesses not directly involved with child welfare;
 - d. Entering into and maintaining contracts with entities to support recruitment efforts and events;
 - e. Coordinating all media and public awareness campaigns;
 - f. Aligning all recruitment to the mission of the agency and ongoing compliance with federal guidelines;
 - g. Ensuring staff are trained to perform all recruitment activities; and
 - h. Providing budget oversight and financial support for recruitment activities.
- 7. When foster parents are needed to assist the agency with recruitment efforts, the FSC shall discuss with the family their willingness and availability to participate in recruitment events, media promotions, and/or interviews for a variety of media sources.
 - a. Foster children shall not be identified or used in any such recruitment efforts.

- b. Biological and/or adopted children of a foster family will only be used in recruitment efforts with the parents' knowledge and consent.

D. Documentation

- Copy of recruitment plan
- Contacts with families, community members, and recruitment partners
- Inquires from prospective foster families
- Referrals from Foster Parent Association and internet services

E. Collaboration

- Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support Staff
- Regional Directors
- County Directors
- State Director and State Office Designees
- State Leadership of Non-Profit Organizations
- Community Stakeholders
- SC Foster Parent Association/local affiliates

F. Legal Citations

- Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and Interethnic Adoption Provisions
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(18): general mandates
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 622(b)(7): diligent recruitment
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 674 & 45 C.F.R. § 1355.38: enforcement
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 1996b: Title VI violations
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 2000a et seq.: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- The Americans with Disabilities Act
 - 29 U.S.C.A. § 794: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - 29 U.S.C.A. § 705(20)-(21): Section 504 definition of disability
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 12102: ADA definition of disability
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 12103: ADA definition of auxiliary aids and services
 - 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 12131-12134: ADA Title II, Public Services
 - 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 12181-12189: ADA Title III, Public Accommodations
 - 28 C.F.R. § 35.101 et seq.: ADA Title II regulations
 - 28 C.F.R. § 36.101 et seq.: ADA Title IV regulations
 - 28 C.F.R. § 42.501 et seq.: Section 504 DOJ regulations
 - 45 C.F.R. § 84.1 et seq.: Section 504 DHHS regulations