STATE OF COLORADO

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Roy Romer Governor

Barbara McDonnell Executive Director

Karen Beye Managing Director

Dear Director:

We are pleased to provide you with "Recruitment and Retention Resources: Adoption and Foster Care".

March 26, 1997

For clarity, let us make a few distinctions regarding terminology. **Recruitment** is a series of efforts by agency staff to procure potential foster or adoptive families. Results of these efforts are measurable through the number of brochures/items given to people, number of resulting inquiry calls, and the number of people who complete training as a result of recruitment. Recruitment efforts must be ongoing and consistent.

Retention is any effort by the agency to support existing family resources and strengthen their commitment to and aptitude for meeting the needs of children in the Department's care. Examples include support by the county department, newsletters, rate increases, etc. It is important to keep in mind that retention efforts are as important as recruitment.

Foster and Adoptive parents are a valuable resource to our communities. With the goal of permanency, foster and adoptive parents love, nurture, teach, and support children while they heal their problems and pain.

In this packet you will find resource materials for recruitment, such as sample letters and art work, educational information, articles on special populations and much more. It is our hope that these materials will assist you in both your recruitment and retention efforts.

Our acknowledgments to the following for contributions to this packet: States of Texas and Massachusetts, Denver and Jefferson County Departments of Social Services, and numerous other sources.

We will periodically be sending you more material to assist in your projects and we wish you great success in your efforts to recruit and retain your valued people resources.

Sincerely,

Ballono K'illmore

Barbara Killmore Adoption Program Supervisor Division of Child Welfare Services

Jacqueline Simoth

Jacqueline Sinnett, Administrator Out-Of-Home-Care Division of Child Welfare Services

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Recruitment & Retention Resources:



Adoption Foster Care

Colorado Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services

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NECESSARY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION RECRUITMENT

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National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption Spaulding For Children National Resource Center for Permanency Planning

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Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment

Recruitment of families to care for children and youth is a complex process. It involves the assessment of a variety of factors to inform agency planning and the construction of an effective recruitment strategy. Preliminary planning related to external and internal factors must be addressed in order to reach interested families and actually place children with foster and adoptive parents.

External Factors

The agency must be aware of its reputation in the communities that it serves and from which parents will be recruited. If the perception of the agency is a negative one, people in the community will not respond to recruitment efforts. Regardless of agency auspice, the agency is a part of the child welfare system, and might not have a good reputation in many communities. The television and press have often presented a one-sided view of foster care and child welfare -only reporting failures and not successes. Media coverage about a child who was abused because the system did not respond as expected, or presenting child welfare workers as only removing children from their families does not lead to positive perceptions. Consequently, perceptions will have to be addressed in designing recruitment programs. Strategies involving public relations and building community relationships will be described later in this paper.

Internal Factors

The agency must identify resources needed for the recruitment effort. These resources include the agency's philosophical stance and policies, and staff resources. An agency's policies and procedures, and general philosophical approach to services will have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of recruitment. An agency that views families as resources who are *empowered* throughout the intake and preparation process and prepares and supports families to parent children who have been abused or neglected will get a different result than one that begins screening families out from the initial contact and takes an investigatory approach to assessment and preparation. Agencies serving children of color must determine whether their policies, procedures and practices are *culturally competent*. Accessibility of offices and services to families in targeted communities and staff who are competent to serve the population are important to recruiting and retaining families in the foster care and adoption process. Using staff members who are from the community may enhance this accessibility. Empowerment, competency and accessibility are important from the time of initial contact and throughout the process that results in foster care placement and finalization of adoptions.

Also important are the agency's staff resources. The agency must have a commitment to staff training to ensure that staff have appropriate knowledge and skills needed for recruitment. This includes an understanding of and commitment to the agency's philosophy about bringing families into the process, rather than screening them out. An assessment of external and internal factors is an ongoing process. After an initial organizational assessment is done, and revisions implemented, planning for recruitment can begin.

Recruitment Planning

Organizations must clearly identify the children who need care, are in care, and awaiting foster care or adoptive placements. This is important because recruitment efforts must accurately depict the children who need foster or adoptive families. This information on children should include age, gender, race, ethnicity, health status and history, educational level, special challenges and capabilities, and other relevant descriptors. The population of children coming into child welfare placements has changed in recent years. Children coming into care need many more services and skilled foster parents and adoptive parents. These parents may have to assist children who have experienced sexual abuse, serious child abuse and neglect, or been affected by their parents' substance abuse. A recruitment effort is designed to increase general interest in foster parenting and adoption, and create interest in and support for caring for the specific children served by the

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One general strategy is a public information initiative. This public information component serves to inform the communities of the general need for foster parents and adoptive parents as well as bringing specific children and types of children to the public's attention. A public information strategy might include:

(1) Creating recruitment brochures, posters or booklets for display in community settings such as churches, day care centers, barber shops and beauty shops, medical care facilities, and grocery stores. The construction of these materials may be challenging as an agency attempts to introduce itself, and its services, describe children in need, and describe foster parenting and adoption in an attractive manner that also catches one's attention and communicates accurate information. Graphics, pictures, and wording need to be carefully selected to provide a culturally accurate and inviting message, using the language of the prospective parents.

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2) Developing a media campaign using large posters, billboards, radio spots or television to introduce the need for caregivers, and the agency. Such initiatives often require a partnership between the agency staff, who understand the nature of the children in care and the requirements for foster and adoptive parenting, and public information specialists within the agency and marketing and advertising professionals outside the agency. This partnership might be expanded to include community representatives to increase the probability of a message that is properly targeted to the community. It may be possible to find advertising professionals who will work pro bono or at reduced cost for this family and child-centered campaign.

(3) Exploring opportunities to present the agency's recruitment needs to an audience through community-oriented programming. This would include having staff appear on local media shows to discuss their work. For example, cable television that targets local communities where the demographics meet the needs of the child welfare population is a good recruitment tool, as are local newspapers that target specific communities. Community level programming may be provided free of charge or at reasonable rates. It may also include participating in community fairs, and other events that allow a booth or display or the distribution of materials for social and charitable purposes.

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A public information campaign will accomplish two purposes. First, it identifies a number of persons who are willing to take the next steps to find out about foster care and adoption. Some agencies have found that such campaigns generate a high volume of inquiries but a smaller number of more serious persons. But these are still persons recruited who might not have been identified through other means. The second purpose of public information is to provide a positive picture of foster care and adoption, and of child welfare in general. The negative perceptions, noted as external factors hindering recruitment, can be counterbalanced by positive images and human interest success stories provided by agency representatives through the media, community forums, and popular publications.

In addition to general strategies for recruitment, there can be initiatives that feature specific children in need of homes and parents.

For example, New York's *Family Album* is a booklet that features pictures and brief descriptions of children in need of adoptive families. It is a high quality piece done with much color that portrays the children in a positive way and demonstrates respect for the cultures of the children and a commitment to finding families for them. Such material can be useful when addressing groups that may help let others know about adoption, as well as to groups of people who have expressed an interest in adoption.

Such tools can increase public awareness as well as serve to focus on the needs of actual children waiting to be adopted. Organizations have found that in addition to the public information approach they need to simultaneously use child specific approaches for recruitment. These approaches serve to highlight actual children that personally engage interested families. "Waiting Children" newspaper, television and radio features continue to be effective. Some organizations have also begun to explore paid advertising on radio and television. Free public service announcements may serve a public information purpose, but organizations cannot control when they are played. Consequently, they may not reach the desired audience. Paid advertising allows for selection of particular time slots. Radio advertising can often be purchased at a relatively modest rate.

Another specific child adoption recruitment approach involves a variety of ways that interested families can actually meet children waiting to be adopted. Many agencies or organizations now sponsor adoption parties, picnics or other social events where the children can have fun and interested families can meet children in need of adoptive families. Staff are available to provide materials, answer questions that families may have, and support the children. Such gatherings can give prospective adoptive parents a much better understanding of who these "waiting children" are than does a picture and a written description.

Child specific strategies are more difficult to implement in foster care. It is often not possible to identify specific children before placement is needed and there are confidentiality requirements that might limit an agency's ability to showcase a child in foster care or in need of a foster home. It is possible to discuss types of children in need of care, for example newborns and infants in hospitals whose mothers may have used crack or other substances that placed the child at risk ("boarder babies"). The ability to gain an accurate picture of children in need of foster care and to begin to consider oneself as a child's caregiver may be enhanced by actively involving veteran

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foster parents and introducing them to prospective foster parents. This would allow prospective parents to meet foster parents who could share some of their experences and to meet children who might be similar to children they might be asked to foster.

Another approach for recruitment may be called a community approach. If the organization has been actively engaged with targeted communities, it may collaborate with community leaders, institutions, and organizations to help "spread the word" about children needing foster and adoptive families. This may be done by simply leaving written material with interested individuals and organizations. Formal partnerships can be developed such as that between agencies and African American churches such as in the One Church, One Child programs throughout the nation or Spaulding for Children's Bandele project in which adoption recruitment and parent preparation classes are presented in each of the African American churches participating in the project. Other states and organizations have collaborated with organizations such as the Urban League, local arms of the National Association of Black Social Workers, various labor unions, and fraternal and social organizations with high community visibility and respect.

One final form of recruitment that is one of the most effective is word of mouth. Prospective and present foster parents and adoptive parents can be key to recruitment. Word of mouth is a powerful tool as a prospective foster or adoptive parent may or may not respond to recruitment efforts depending on what they hear from others who have had this contact with the agency. This underscores the importance of an internal agency assessment. Agency policies, procedures, and ways of engaging inquiring families and veteran families set the tone for this natural means of recruitment. The internal organization must be consumer friendly. From the Executive Director to line staff, the agency must be foster parent and adoptive parent friendly. Parents need to be rewarded , respected, and most of all, their opinions need to be heard and valued. A family that has been pleased with the service it received from an agency will let others know this. Many potential resource families contact an agency because their friend, neighbor, or a relative is a foster parent with or adopted through that agency.

Some agencies have formalized this natural recruitment method by involving foster and adoptive parents in their recruitment programs. This involvement includes assisting potential resource families in complex agency applications, telling them about procedures, providing parent training and serving as a support or leading a family to other foster or adoptive families. In addition to extensive use of foster and adoptive parents as informal and volunteer recruiters, some agencies have encouraged their foster parents as recruiters by offering monetary rewards for bringing in friends and family members to be foster parents, or contracting with them as recruiters, supporters, and parent trainers.

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As informal conversations and sharing by foster parents with their own networks is a powerful means of recruitment, the issue of foster parent retention is crucial. Retaining foster parents that have already been recruited is critical because this will reduce the number of new homes needed, and the expense of training new parents, as well as focuses agency attention on the treatment of veteran foster parents. To address recruitment without assessing and improving retention may be potentially self-defeating for an agency. Foster parents need to be treated as valuable agency resources whose significant contribution to children and families is recognized and rewarded in a variety of ways. This respect for veteran parents will engage them as effective informal and

formal recruiters. The satisfied, experienced foster parent is the foundation for any recruitment strategy. The satisfaction of adoptive parents and their role as references for an agency and recruiters for waiting children is also significant.

There are several issues to highlight with regard to foster care and to adoption: (1) the importance of cultural competency in recruitment strategies; (2) the linkages between foster care parenting and becoming an adoptive parent; and (3) the central role of recruitment in agency service delivery.

1. Cultural Competency

With an over representation of children of color in out of home care, the child welfare system must do more to provide culturally competent services to communities of color. Cultural competence respects the culturally-defined needs of the populations served and acknowledges culture as a force that shapes behavior, values and institutions. It recognizes natural support systems such as the family, community, church, and healers in various populations. It acknowledges that the concepts of family and community are different for various cultures and even for subgroups within cultures. (Cross, et.al.)

Within a system cultural competence requires a congruent set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in away that enable that systems to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence calls for the awareness of the dynamics that result from cultural differences and expands cultural knowledge while being vigilant in adapting services to meet culturally unique needs. It requires that staff are committed to providing culturally competent services with an awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, an awareness of their own cultural values, that they understand what occurs in cross-cultural interactions, have basic knowledge of the culture of the people with whom they are working and an ability to adapt practice skills to fit that culture. (Cross, et.al.)

For example, programs such as Tayari and Nuestros Niños in San Diego have been successfully linked to and obtained support from the communities they serve. They have adapted policy, program and practice to meet the needs of children served. Tayari and Nuestros Niños are satellite offices of the San Diego County Adoption program located in the African American and Latino communities with staff representative of those communities. Staff speak the language and dialects spoken in the community. Nuestros Niños has recruitment brochures and posters, applications and other written materials in Spanish.

These agencies, and other programs such as One Church One Child and Friends of Black Children in North Carolina and Tennessee, recognize the strengths of the communities they serve and reach out to leaders in the community. These leaders can serve as gatekeepers to the community. With these leaders sanctioning the agency's recruitment effort, entry into the community is possible. The Institute for Black Parenting in Los Angeles has also worked with community leaders and celebrities as spokespersons for their recruitment efforts. These leaders facilitate the agency's access to people in the community. They can also help to shape policies and procedures that are congruent with the culture and traditions of their communities.

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Such successful programs have worked with institutions in the community that have historically served the communities such as the African American church. Ministers have made it possible for agencies to present the need for resource families to their congregations. In some states press conferences are held at each meeting of the Board of Directors of One Church One Child which bring the media into the communities. The media in turn relay the message that children need families and the ministers support the recruitment effort in the communities they represent. Churches have also sponsored adoption parties in the community.

In order to reach the Latino community in Southwest Detroit, the Michigan Department of Social Services staff have reached out to grass roots organizations in their recruitment effort. A contract for recruitment of foster and adoptive families was developed with such a community organization.

These programs have built upon traditions in their communities whereby families cared for their children by simply taking in other families' children in time of need or through informal adoptions. Programs which build on these traditions let the communities they serve know that in fact there are children from their communities in the system and have explored both blood and non-blood kin as resources for children that come to the agencies' attention. They incorporate the history and language of the culture of these communities into their work and celebrate and seek to preserve the culture of the communities. They recognize the importance of cultural identity for children and children's needs for continuity not only with family but also with the community.

In the area of adoption, successful programs have worked with the knowledge that research has documented: that families of color are meeting the needs of adopted children with special needs, (Rosenthal and Groze) and that families of color do adopt and some groups adopt a rate higher to their representation in the general population than do European Americans. (Mason and Williams)

2. Foster Care and Adoption Linkages

Generally, there has been more of a focus on adoption recruitment but research points out the need for collaboration between foster care and adoption programs. Recruitment efforts successfully used in adoption programs can be used in foster parent recruitment. It is estimated that 40% to 90% of children with special needs are adopted by their foster parents. Foster parent adoptions have been found to be an effective avenue to permanency through adoption for children of color. (Minority Adoptions)

In fact the Westat study indicated two ways of reducing or eliminating the gap between the adoption placement rates of white children and children of color. The gap was reduced in communities with a positive attitude toward the local public adoption agency. Agencies reported efforts to reach out to communities and develop public awareness programs designed to improve community attitudes and knowledge of the adoption process. They had broadened their recruitment efforts to encourage families of color, single persons and modest income families to adopt. The second way the gap between the adoption placement rates of white children and children of color was eliminated was with an active adoption recruitment program in the agency coupled with the presence of a foster family willing to adopt. This was despite the fact that

children of color were less likely to have a foster family interested in adopting them. (The Study of Adoption Services for Waiting Minority and Nonminority Children, Executive Summary).

Certainly if permanency planning is the goal for children, the need to consider foster families as potential adoptive families is apparent. Agencies need families who can accept a child who will be reunited with the family but also who are prepared to adopt the child if the child becomes available for adoption. As agencies do this, they need to consider whether they are making foster care placements appropriate to meet the life long needs of children. These needs include ongoing developmental needs, safety and health needs, a sense of belonging, and family and cultural continuity and connectedness. Many agencies have begun to do joint foster and adoptive parent recruitment and preparation for fostering and adopting. Agencies that consider families as resources for children seek to help these families determine whether they want to act as a foster parent who will work with the agency only to return children to their birth family or move to an adoptive family; whether they could foster a child but be willing to adopt the child if the child becomes available for adoption; are wanting to adopt but are willing to take a child who is not legally free for adoption; or only will consider adopting a child already free for adoption.

If agencies have foster parents that could adopt, but are not, it is important to identify the reasons why this is so. In the past agencies prohibited foster parents from adopting. Today most states have policies that allow foster parents to adopt children who have been in the home for a period of time and have formed an attachment with the foster family. However, there may be agency barriers to foster parent adoptions. For example, foster parents caring for children with complex emotional, developmental or medical needs may be discouraged from adopting because of the state's policy on adoption assistance. The family me be receiving a special foster care rate due to the child's complex needs, but if they adopt, the adoption assistance rate would not exceed the regular foster care rate. Some states have changed such policies so the adoption assistance payment is comparable to the special foster care rate. This has facilitated the adoption of children who otherwise would not have been adopted.

3. Agency Recruitment Initiatives

In order to focus recruitment efforts, recruiters must clearly be aware of the type of children who are in need of foster and adoptive families and the families who are likely to foster and adopt in order to focus recruitment efforts. This means that recruitment must be an integral part of the entire out of home care program. Only in this way is it possible to adapt recruitment efforts in a timely fashion to any changes in the population of children needing services. If there are now younger children entering care, the recruitment program and materials will have to reflect these children. Further, those placing children need to inform the recruitment effort about the types of families that need to be recruited. Historically the middle class, college educated, two parent family has been held out as the ideal family. Research now has begun to confirm what practitioners have known for years. Families with modest incomes, lower educational levels or where there is only one parent, are doing fine as foster and adoptive parents. They may be the parents of choice in many instances. (Rosenthal, Groze, Curiel)

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The integration of recruitment into the total out of home care program emphasizes the need for staff to be ready, willing and able to help viable, committed families through the process. Those staff charged with preparing and assessing families must respond promptly and with a welcoming approach to those families who can become resources for children. Failure to do so undermines recruitment efforts. Families who do not receive such a response will question the agency's sincerity about their stated recruitment objective of finding families for children.

This may begin with the first telephone call a family makes to the agency in response to some recruitment effort. It is crucial that staff who are knowledgeable about the children and the procedures of the agency are available to take these calls. It is particularly important when children are featured in the media or when particular recruitment campaigns are in progress that staff be available when calls come in. There must also be sufficient telephone lines to ensure that calls get through.

In addition, staff who work with the children awaiting adoption must prepare them for any specific child recruitment efforts as well as the children's caretakers so that they can support the child as these efforts are being made. Such preparation requires that the children fully understand the plan for adoption, are willing to participate in recruitment efforts, and that there are no surprises if friends, school mates, teachers or others see the recruitment material. Children must not be given false expectations about the outcome of recruitment efforts, and workers and care takers must be available to support children following recruitment efforts, regardless of outcome.

Staff must be available to begin the preparation and assessment process in a timely fashion following family's initial inquiry. The process and the procedures need to support, educate and engage prospective families in a process of self-assessment that will allow them to make an informed decision about fostering or adopting and about parenting a specific child. Procedures that do not take into account family work schedules or child care needs will not help families get through the process. A process that is lengthy and focuses primarily on difficulties families have faced rather than how they coped with these difficulties or the strengths they have, may discourage families who actually have what it takes to parent a child who has been abused or neglected.

Values and attitudes of practitioners are also important. For example, workers may hold out for a two parent family for a child on their caseload regardless of whether their assessment of the child specifically documents such a need. The two parent family still is a value even though half the children in this country are likely to spend part of their lifetime in a single parent household. A worker's values in this regard can delay or prevent a child from placement with a family who may be well qualified to parent the child.

Workers' attitudes about children's behavior and needs are also important. If the worker is overwhelmed by a child's behavior and questions the ability of the child to live in a family setting or does not understand how a family can care for a child with complex medical or emotional needs, that worker will have difficulty recruiting a family for that child or preparing a family to foster or adopt the child. Training and supportive supervision can help workers to make decisions that go beyond individual perceptions of the complexity of certain children's needs. Peer team work and consultation can also help workers focus on the permanency needs of children, as well as support difficult decisions. Collaboration between professionals of different service systems

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can also assist workers in truly understanding children's medical, emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs as well as becoming familiar with services families may need to access.

Collaboration between agencies and jurisdictions is also necessary. An agency that has a child needing a foster or adoptive family must be willing to place the child with a family prepared by another agency, county, or state. Usually such placements occur when trust has been established between individuals in the various organizations, jurisdictions and agencies. It is critical that agencies explore strategies to establish relationships and network with other organizations that may be resources for children who need families. Statewide, region-wide, or national child welfare conferences help develop networks that allow staff to put faces to names and establish trust. Various networks such as the local consortium of public and private foster care agencies, regular meetings of foster care staff from different counties, local and regional adoption networks such as the Northwest Adoption Exchange, the Rocky Mountain Adoption Exchange, and meetings of representatives for the Interstate Compact for Adoption and Medical Assistance also encourage collaboration. They allow for the development of relationships in which all recognize that such collaboration cannot end at the time of placement. The placing agency has the responsibility to ensure that the family receives services necessary, such as adoption assistance, to support an adoptive placement.

All of this requires commitment from every level of the organization. Staff must have adequate training to prepare and assess children and families for fostering and adopting and to provide support to families. There must be policy and procedures to guide them in their work. Funds must be committed in order for staff to do recruitment and to promptly respond to families who respond to recruitment efforts. Administrators must provide leadership in developing positive working relationships with communities of color and encouraging the development of more culturally competent responses to these communities.

Recruitment and retention efforts cannot be a one time campaign or a two year demonstration project. Recruitment must be ongoing and must be systematized in the child welfare program. It requires the development of skills in marketing and working with the media. Agencies have become aware of the need to involve their public information office in recruitment or to hire public relations staff or consultants.

All recruitment efforts need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Such evaluations must go beyond how many recruitment presentations were made or how many children were featured in how many radio of television spots. Even the numbers of families responding to recruitment efforts or the number of children placed cannot stand alone as measures of effectiveness. Recruitment efforts must be evaluated in the context of the total out of home care program. Recruitment efforts must be guided by objectives established for the total foster care and adoption program that focus on outcomes such as retention of families who enter the process and appropriate placement of children. How many families got through the process is more important than the numbers recruited. The number of children placed for adoption is dependent upon the numbers of children available for adoption, but factors such as how and when children are identified as needing adoption are important issues to be evaluated. The various factors that effect outcomes must be included in evaluations to determine the effectiveness of particular approaches and ways of improving recruitment and retention practices in order to increase

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children's opportunities for permanency whether through reunification with their birth families or adoption.

Summary

In summary, successful foster and adoptive family recruitment does the following:

- ensures necessary preparation of children and their caretakers
- realistically portrays the children who are need foster and adoptive families and advocates for the child
- gains community support and participation and is community-based
- develops as an integral component of the total foster care/adoption program
- takes risks to present waiting children to the public in attempts to achieve permanency for them and recognizes all kinds of families as potential resources for waiting children
- takes advantage of every opportunity to highlight the needs of the children and the process
- obtains commitment from all levels of the organization
- requires regular review for quality improvements and results effectiveness by agency and community persons
- occurs on many levels -- public awareness, public information, in behalf of a specific child or specific children
- facilitates collaboration with various systems and agencies that impact a child's permanence
- requires cultural competence and utilizes the natural community mechanisms to provide the message regarding the need

Agencies which have been found to be successful in placing children of color for adoption have demonstrated cultural competence which is essential to the opportunities available to the disproportionate numbers of children color awaiting adoption. Many of these agencies are also successful in recruiting foster families who reflect the population of children served. Characteristics of these agencies are that they:

- Have staff of the same cultural/racial heritage as the children and families
- Take a welcoming approach to applicants
- Minimize bureaucratic procedures
- Locate offices so they are readily accessible to members of the community and are in the community
- Have persons who are culturally competent and sensitive in decision-making positions in the agency
- Facilitate and encourage community involvement and control in the agency
- Have written materials in the language of the community and staff able to communicate in the language and dialect of the community

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- Seek blood and non-blood kin as potential resource families
- Encourage and support foster parent adoptions

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How Foster Parents Can Help in The Recruitment Process

Foster and adoptive parents are valuable in the recruitment of potential foster and adoptive parents. As a foster parent, you can help in a variety of ways.

- Talk it up! Spread the word about the needs of "all our children." Don't be shy! Make sure friends, neighbors, and members of your church congregation know who you are and what you do.
- Help distribute literature, posters, and other materials in your community or neighborhood. Doctors, dentists, schools, libraries, grocery stores, and banks are often willing to post materials or distribute brochures. The Child Protective Services division of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services can provide brochures, posters, and materials that can be posted or shared with the community.
- Sponsor a home introduction party at your home, church, school, or library. Invite friends, neighbors, and members of your church congregation and ask them to bring along a caring friend. Talk about foster children's needs and what it's like to be a foster parent.
- Host or sponsor an outdoor social event in your backyard or in a school or church yard. You might hold a dessert or ice cream party, a potluck or spaghetti supper, a pie-eating contest, or a horseshoe or softball competition. Events like these can attract media and community attention to the needs of the children and the roles of the foster parents.
- Host an information meeting or panel presentation by foster parents in a church, local bank, school, or library.
- Invite speakers to give presentations. Child Protective Services staff will be happy to give presentations to church or community groups on topics ranging from the prevention of child abuse to foster care and adoption.
- Recognize and honor local foster parents with a picnic, a plaque, a special dinner, tickets to entertainment or sports events, discounts, or gift certificates at local stores.

Texas Department of Protective **PRS** and Regulatory Services

Select a special time of the year to honor and recognize all local foster parents. Dates and holidays that might be appropriate include Valentine's Day; April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month; May, National Foster Care Month; Mothers' Day; Fathers' Day.

Remember: As a foster parent, you are a "walking" advertisement for foster care and the needs of our children. And "word of mouth" is one of the most powerful advertising and recruitment tools. There is something that each and every one of us can do to help make this a better world for all our children!

SECTION 2

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Ass media campaigns can work well to educate people and heighten public awareness about foster care and adoption issues. When launching any media push, remember that most efforts will produce only a short-term effect. For the greatest impact, appeals must be clearly focused, stylistically engaging, carefully targeted, and frequently disseminated.

Decide what messages your group wants to convey—about adoption and about the group—and what communication method has the best chance of reaching your targeted audience [use the check list on pages 2.2 and 2.3 to assess your past efforts and evaluate future possibilities]. Optimize your chances for success by:

- creating clear messages that educate the public about the issue and the agency;
- matching messages to the communication techniques that are best suited to the messages and the identified audiences;
- making sure that your plan encompasses diverse outreach methods so individuals are confronted by a consistent message from many sources;
- · working with local opinion leaders to maximize outreach;
- sustaining the effort through time and repetition; and
- providing thorough follow-up (personal contacts with those who aid in the effort and services for those who respond to the effort).

Before drawing up a list of possible Adoption Month media activities, determine what you hope to realistically achieve through those actions. Keep in mind that a tremendously "successful" media campaign could spell trouble if your group cannot easily handle many additional calls, general information queries, or requests for services. On the other hand, a poorly designed or executed campaign may do nothing more than expend valuable time, money, and energy. Minimize risks by making yourself aware of potential complications and working to avoid them.

Communication efforts often exhibit one or more of the following problems:

- · poorly focused or unfocused messages;
- inadequate reinforcement or a lack of repetition;
- messages that don't pay enough attention to the issue;
- · communication techniques that are not appropriate for the intended audience;
- · overly broad techniques that do not target the intended audience; and
- lack of preparation for handling, preempting, or responding to negative stories or questions.

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MEDIA

Carefully Consider the Audience You Want Your Message to Reach

Decide What You Want To Achieve Before Launching a Media Campaian

MEDIA

What Strategies Have You Used in the Past?

How Well Might These Techniques Work to Raise Awareness during Adoption Month?

(Adapted from Understanding Marketing: Strategies for Child Placement) Potential for Raising Awareness Past Use Communication Technique high low none not at all frequent periodic FORMAL Adoption Parties Adoption Proclamations Advertising Annual Reports Award Presentations Billboards Brochures Calendars Celebrity Endorsements Classified Ads Cultural Events Direct Mail Displays Editorials Events for Children Feature Stories (Magazines/Newspapers) Information Fairs/Tables Leaflets Letters to the Editor Networking with Other Organizations News Conferences Newsletters News Releases Posters Presentations to Small Groups' (Service Clubs, Religious Groups, etc.) Public Service Announcements (PSAs) Public Speaking at Conferences, Public Hearings, Other Formal Settings Publishing Articles and Reports Radio Interviews Radio PSAs

CHECKLIST OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATIONS



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CHECKLIST OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Adapted from Understanding Marketing: Strategies for Child Placement)

Communication Technique	Past Use			Potential for Raising Awareness		
	frequent	periodic	not at all	high	low	none
FORMAL, Continued						
Recognition Ceremonies Serial Publications/News Stories					•	
				0.000		
Signs						
Special Services (church, synagogue, etc.)						
Specialty Advertising						
Talk Shows						and the second
Telephone Listings						
Television Interviews		. 625				
Television PSAs						
Trade Fairs			1			
Videos	1.1					
Waiting Child Programs						
· · ·			The Sector	a state		5. 25
INFORMAL		1 day	1			·
Actions by the Board of Directors						
Furnishings (including artwork)						
Letterhead and Other Stationery						
Name of Organization	2249-22					
Office Location						
Services Offered						
·Signage (general)						
Staff Demographics	1.1	and the second second		Sec. Sec.		
Telephone Protocol						
Word of Mouth						

Everything about an Organization Conveys a Message

MEDIA

Your Media Plan Will Be Influencea by Many Factors

Be aware that every activity will not work equally well for every group. The method that is best for your group will be dictated by such factors as:

- · Resources-money, people, organizational support, talents, time, etc.;
- · Personal and professional contacts and networking abilities;
- Target audience (what activities get noticed by your target audience?); and
- Locale—different cities, states, and provinces offer distinct advantages and challenges (varied political climates, community resources, media outlets, etc.

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The second of

PRINT MEDIA

Though it seems that modern culture is rapidly moving away from paper and rushing into an exclusive love affair with electronic media, newspapers are still influential communication instruments (and some print articles get online, too). From powerful institutions like the Washington Post and Wall Street Journal, to small weekly or monthly neighborhood publications, newspapers reach millions of readers every day.

Some of the smallest papers—especially those that publish a "calendar of events" and are circulated in neighborhoods, or at businesses and schools—may be ideal targets for advertising an Adoption Month event. Rates will generally be lower than at large daily papers, and some smaller papers may also be more receptive to public service announcements, short articles, and letters to the editor. Large papers (with more staff reporters) are better able to directly cover actual events.

Find out how your target publications operate—What types of stories do they use? Which ones are appropriate for the news section, the editorial page, or the family section? Do they have the staff to cover your event and your issue? Maximize your own publicity efforts by identifying and examining story possibilities.

Learn whether the paper writes its own material or prefers submissions— Some newspapers do their own feature writing; others prefer to publish submitted material. Editorials reflect the newspaper's point of view and are usually composed by staff writers. To inspire an editorial on adoption or children's issues, send a concise letter to the editorial page chief which explains your organization's position and tells why that position was taken. Follow up with a call.

Establish contact with media people early on—Start with a phone call introducing yourself, your organization, and your cause. Send an information packet (include your group brochure, newsletter, photos, an adoption "fact sheet," and perhaps adoption-related clippings from papers or magazines), and then follow up with another phone call closer to the target publication date.

Realize that papers cannot guarantee space for your story—Many factors beyond your control (like other news that the editor considers more exciting or important) may keep the newspaper from using your story, letter, or news release. Keep a plan of attack in reserve in case your piece cannot be printed.

WRITING

- · Keep your news releases, letters to the editor, and pitch letters brief.
- Lead off with your main points. Use an explanatory heading and answer key questions ("who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how") in the first paragraph. In the following paragraphs develop the story—background on the plight of waiting children and local efforts to attack the problem. Stay clearly focused, and, if possible, include information about a specific child or family to make the story less abstract.

Your Target Publication and Establish Contact Early

Learn about

MEDIA

Hook Editors with Clearly Focused Writing that Drives Home an Important Message

- Find a local angle, research your article thoroughly, and include interesting quotes where possible. Throw out a "hook" to snag a journalist's interest, and support your thesis with relevant statistics and facts (verified, with sources noted—see pages 2.14–2.17 for a selection of statistics and quotable quotes). Be ready to provide names of additional resource people who are familiar with adoption. Papers with wider circulations are also interested in whether or not your story speaks to larger issues.
- Letters to the editor can convey information or a point of view, but should not be written as news releases. Again, tightly constructed and clearly focused letters are best.

SUBMITTING

. 4. ...

- Give editors plenty of advance notice about your topic and respect the strict deadlines under which every reporter, writer, and editor works. Editors are typically deluged with information every day; if they know about a subject well ahead of press time, chances are greater that they will study and use it.
- Address your material to a specific person, not simply "editor," and cooperate with reporters who are assigned to do a story; offer resources and data [see Section 6, "Adoption Resources," for a listing of U.S. and Canadian contacts].
- Make certain your release is newsworthy. Without a "news peg" your story is a feature, not news, and will be more effective as a stand-alone piece with a human interest focus.
- Don't neglect the columnists. They are typically more sensitive to human interest stories and are constantly looking for new ideas.
- Contact the advertising director or editor to learn whether or not the paper will run a display ad for adoption month. Many newspapers, particularly weeklies and community publications, will place ads for nonprofit organizations free of charge. Introduce your organization and your message, and offer to provide camera-ready material; you are more likely to get a placement with pre-made submissions. Perhaps a graphics company or print shop that you frequent will help you. Be sure to insert your local information number and organization name in the ad.
- Suggest that the paper run a special column featuring waiting children (seek help from your state/provincial or regional exchange).

RADIO

Radio is another good way to advertise Adoption Month activities, or to simply promote public awareness about adoptable children. Some radio stations periodically announce local events, and if your event appeals to the station's core audience, the station may be willing to air information about the event without charge.

• Public service announcements (PSAs) — see samples on page 2.12—may be read live by the announcer or recorded (by the announcer or a local official,

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MEDIA

Respect Deadlines an Offer Availat Resources/ Information Reporters

> Radio PSAs Can Reach a Wide Audience

MEDIA

Television Offers Many Possibilities for Promoting Adoption

celebrity, parent group/agency head, or other) on tape in advance. Verify each station's preference before submitting material. PSAs generally run 10, 20, or 30 seconds, with an occasional 60-second spot. Use the following guidelines:

Number of Words	Length of Spot	
25	10 seconds	
50	20 seconds	
75	30 seconds	

Send your PSA at least ten days before it will to be used. Include a cover letter addressed to the public service director that describes your organization and objective.

• If you can interest the station in an Adoption Month event, or the message behind Adoption Month, you may also be able to schedule a short radio callin show and/or interview piece (see interviewing tips below), longer feature, or series of feature stories on adoption. Contact a station that conducts interviews and news features (public radio stations, for instance) and offer several ideas/options. Suggest that a series of spots on adoption can be segmented from a single taped interview, and name yourself/your organization as a resource.

TELEVISION

Television presents infinite possibilities for promoting Adoption Awareness Month. Generally speaking, it is also the most costly medium to use unless you or your organization is "in demand," or able to take advantage of public service announcements, already scheduled programming, or low-cost/no-cost cable access channels.

• Public affairs staff may be able to help you script and produce public service announcements (PSAs). [The PSAs on page 2.12 can work for radio or television.] When writing the script, include contact information (agency or parent group name and phone number). Word count-to-time ratio is as follows:

Number of Words	Length of Spot
25-35	10 seconds
60-80	30 seconds
150	60 seconds

• Daytime interview shows, both regional and national, abound. Given enough lead time, a local or national show might be willing to produce a program about adoption/waiting children-especially during Adoption Month. In past years, both the "Maury Povich Show" and Sally Jessy Raphael have conducted nationally broadcast shows about adoption. Direct any interested producers to the best possible resource people and families/children.

- If your group works with issues or projects that would fit into the format of a *public affairs program*, contact the program coordinator to discuss a possible adoption show. Offer to provide background and resource people, or suggest a film or book for discussion on the air.
- Some stations (both network affiliates and cable) run *calendars* listing upcoming events. If your local network or cable access station airs a calendar, use it to promote Adoption Month activities.
- Because children are very appealing and important, some stations may be willing to incorporate a *"waiting child" segment* into one of their late afternoon/early evening newscasts during November (and beyond). Such spots commonly run one day each week and feature brief stories about a child or group of children waiting for adoption. If this idea is new to your local station, make sure you can provide the producer with information about adoption and waiting children who have publicity clearances. If you do not have direct access to waiting children, at least provide the station with the name and phone number of a local and/or national resource.
- Local newscasts frequently run *picture stories* concerning significant events in the fields of health and social service. If you are organizing or know of an event, especially one that involves children and is visually engaging, send a news release to the news director well in advance, so the station can cover the story. Follow up with a phone call closer to the proposed air date.
- If your local station features *editorial spots*, ask the station manager if he/she would be willing to air a November statement about adoption and children.

NTERVIEWS

2. 1

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As with any Adoption Month project or event, advance planning and preparation are key to successful interviewing. Whether you schedule a particular interview, or simply anticipate that media representatives may contact you for information, the more you know, the better off you will be. (Portions of the following were adapted from *Facing the Television Camera*, Michael Sheehan Associates, Inc. © 1993.)

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Set the Stage—If a reporter requests an interview, you have the right to decline if you, for whatever reason, believe it is a bad idea. If you agree to talk with a reporter, you have the right to negotiate the time, location, and duration of the interview. Choose a location where you feel comfortable and which complements your point of view. Under most circumstances, no interview should run longer than one hour. Most will be much shorter than that.

Learn about the Interviewer—Or, at the very least, learn as much as you can about the station or paper that employs the reporter. Determine how the station or paper typically approaches social services issues, and read or listen to stories that the reporter covers. Always ask the reporter what type of story he/she is working on, how he/she plans to use your interview, and what other people are being interviewed for the same

1996 NACAC National Adoption Awareness Month Guide

MEDIA

Careful Preparation and Practice Can Lead to Successful Interviews story. Be sure to ask newspaper and television reporters if they plan to take pictures or shoot film during the interview.

Provide Background Information—Brief the interviewer on your organization, its goals, and the issue area you will be discussing. The more you educate the reporter, the more informed his/her questions will be.

Frame the Discussion—Find out what questions will be asked. If you are not able to get a list of questions, get an idea of what subjects will be discussed.

Develop Your Message—Once you find out what issues will be discussed in the interview, decide on one or two main points you want to make and use the tips below to develop your message.

- Keep your message brief. Practice soundbites that are 10 to 15 seconds in length. If your responses are longer, they will likely be edited and possibly distorted.
- Gather a short list of statistics concerning adoption and children in care (nationally or locally)—numbers that might come up in an interview and that can help you drive home your main points. Check to be sure that you are not reinforcing adoption myths [see list of adoption myths/realities on page 2.11].
- Think of stories about real children and families that illustrate the statistics or that strengthen your main message. Stories are ultimately more interesting and will stick with the audience longer than numbers.
- Practice talking about adoption to a lay audience; find ways to avoid child welfare jargon or, if jargon is unavoidable, find ways to clearly and briefly explain what you mean.
- Read the paper or catch an early newscast on the day of your interview. If a relevant news story happens to break that day, you will be better prepared to handle questions about it while still communicating your intended message.
- Plan a strategy for addressing tough questions such as those about negative adoption stories that have gained widespread attention. Try to use such questions as an opportunity for advancing positive stories, or for illustrating how some aspects of the current system (such as court process) could be improved.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Communicate Your Message—Treat the interview as an opportunity to convey your message. Rather than simply answering the questions asked, treat the questions as broader topics and emphasize the points you believe are important.

Be Yourself—Genuine warmth and enthusiasm communicate well. Be friendly rather than formal. If you attempt to change your personal style for the interview, your message may appear insincere or stilted.

Set Limits—Do not allow the interviewer to intimidate you. Some questions do not warrant a response, but never say "No comment." Explain to the reporter why you

Treat Questions as Broader Topics and Make Your Points

MEDIA

Develop

Your Message

hefore the

Interview

cannot respond— "I'm sorry, but that's a personal question." Never say anything off the record; make sure that you would feel comfortable hearing or reading all that you share in the interview.

KNOW THE MEDIUM

Radio stations and newspapers can conduct interviews over the phone or in person. Over the phone, your words, tone of voice, and silences are in the spotlight. In person or on television, your appearance, body language, facial expressions, and eye contact influence the reporter's presentation or the public's view of your story. Here are a few effective strategies for television interviews:

- Prepare a Mock Interview—Have friends or colleagues videotape a mock interview session. Practice communicating your message and answering the most difficult questions. This is good practice even if you are unable to tape the session. Ask others to give you constructive feedback.
- Plan Your Attire—Wear solid, bright colors. Avoid wearing busy patterns, shiny fabrics, wide-brimmed hats, and large, shiny, or noisy jewelry. Remove all loose change from your pockets.
- Pay Attention to Your Appearance on Camera—During the interview, look directly at the reporter, not the camera or your surroundings. Find a comfortable position and remain relatively still, keeping your hands and feet steady and relaxed. Do not appear defensive or rushed during the interview. Take your time and try to enjoy yourself.

FAMILIES AND THE MEDIA

Because real people and true stories are typically more engaging (and thus newsworthy) than a panel of professionals at a press conferences or an educational adoption meeting, you may want to plan some events at which reporters can interview families. Adoption parties, for instance, may attract media attention because the event involves many human interest stories—about children and prospective parents/families.

Before setting up media coverage, select a representative family, parent, or prospective parent for the interview.

- If possible, work with families you know—perhaps people from your parent group or families that have gone through a program at your agency.
- Before making a selection, determine which families (parents *and* children) are willing to share their story and are good at articulating their experience.
- Discuss your choice with other parents and/or professional colleagues. They may have additional information about the family or have an even better idea.

Once you have chosen a family, let them know more about the interview and give them an opportunity to consider the potential benefits and risks before agreeing. On the positive side, interviews can highlight family strengths, influence policy makers' perceptions, and provide information or inspiration to other families in similar

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Prepare Families for Contact with the Media

MEDIA

Think abou Your Appearance in Television Interviews MEDIA

Never Reveal

Anything to

the Media

that You

Do Not Want

Printed or

Broadcast

situations. On the down side, children may be subjected to teasing or other unwanted attention from school mates and friends after an interview. Parents may want to consider how their co-workers or even their children's teachers might react to hearing about the family's personal history.

After a family agrees to the interview, and before members talk to a reporter, thoroughly prepare each family member for the event:

- Share everything you know about the interview, the reporter, and the story.
- If possible, let the family read/watch similar stories that the reporter or station has covered recently.
- Give the family some idea of the reporter's possible line of inquiry. Pose likely questions, and ask the family to practice responding. Going into the interview, families (like all "interviewees") should know what message or messages they want to impart to a wider audience (not to the reporter).
- Pledge your support during the interview (whenever possible, you should be present at the interview).
- Remind the family (and yourself) that neither you nor the family can fully control what the reporter chooses to include in his or her story, or how he or she ultimately chooses to shape the article. The family does, however, have the right to disclose only as much as they choose (they are not obligated to show their faces or provide full names, addresses, the exact circumstances of the children's history, etc.), and the responsibility to share only that which they do not mind seeing in print, hearing on the radio, or watching on television.

FOLLOW-UP

After requesting media coverage for an event, place follow-up calls the day before or the morning of (if the event is scheduled for later in the day). Remind your media contacts when and where the event will take place, why they should come, and who they can talk to while there. Always be prepared to send complete information about the event and your organization (even if you have already) just before and after it happens.

Once you've placed an article in print, or arranged for a program idea, spot announcement, or interview to be broadcast on television or on the radio, share the publication/broadcast date and time with everyone who is involved with your project. Encourage your associates to tune in and let editors/station management know how your colleagues/other parents react to the piece. If you inadvertently misinform a reporter, or if they print information incorrectly, contact the reporter immediately to clarify your message.

After the article is published or the program airs, send a note of appreciation to the editor/station and reporter. In your note, indicate your willingness to be a future source and include ideas for additional interview segments.

If the piece generates calls to you, your group, or your agency, respond kindly and quickly to requests for information or services. Your helpful response is yet another way to give outsiders a favorable impression of your organization and adoption.

Conscientious Follow-up Can Make Your Media

Simi

ADOPTION MYTHS

MYTH/REALITY

Most adoptions are contested.

Less than 1% of finalized adoptions are contested.

Every foster child is waiting for adoption.

Of the approximately 500,000 U.S. foster children, only about 27,000 are legally free for adoption; another 49,000 have a goal of adoption but their parents' rights have not been terminated.

Only young, wealthy, married couples are eligible to adopt.

-

-

Adoption applications are welcomed from older, single, middle class, and minority parents—especially for special needs children.

Adopted children are troublemakers.

Unfortunately, this myth is often portrayed in popular culture and the news. However, as few as 2% of adoptive placements disrupt. While some adopted children have experienced childhood trauma that can affect their ability to trust and attach to adults, many adjust beautifully to their new homes.

All adoptees search.

While reunions between adoptees and their birth parents make good TV talk show stories, they do not reflect the reality of all adoptees. Though some adoptees are interested in finding out more about their birth parents, many have no interest in uncovering that information. This myth reinforces the assumption that adoptees will be incomplete until they have met their birth parents.

Confront Harmful Adoption Myths

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH MEDIA MYTHS

- Send a letter to a publication or program that runs a negative story about adoption.
- Call the reporter or writer of an objectionable piece to express your opinion.
- Write an opinion piece for a local newspaper or magazine.
- Encourage others to write in support of more accurate depictions of adoptive families.

Portions of the above adapted from Beth Waggenspeck, Damaging Images: 4 Media Myths about Adoption, Adoptive Families, November/December 1994

MEDIA

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Organization's name Address, City, State/Province, Zip/Postal Code

FOR RELEASE: Date

CONTACT: Name, Phone number

HUNDREDS OF CHILDREN NEED PERMANENT FAMILIES

During November, families, parent groups, agencies, and other child advocates across North America celebrate National Adoption Awareness Month and work to educate the public about children who wait.

In [state/province], approximately ______ children live in some type of foster care setting. Many have lived most of their lives in this "temporary" situation, and have moved within the child welfare system more times than they care to remember. [A number or percentage] will never return to their birth families. [A number or percentage of those] are legally free for adoption.

These waiting children come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have physical or mental disabilities; some are part of a sibling group; many are of African American or Native American or Spanish heritage; and many are older. Advocates from organizations such as [your group name] are working hard to prove that "there is no such thing as an unadoptable child."

"These statistics," says [group representative name, title], "represent very real children who desperately need families of their own. Because the public is so often unaware of these kids and their needs, we would like to draw special attention to the plight of waiting children during National Adoption Awareness Month in the hopes that we can unite many of these boys and girls with permanent, adoptive parents."

Those who are thinking about adoption should know that, according to [name], adoption has changed significantly over the last thirty years. "You don't have to be married, childless, rich, or own a house to adopt," s/he says. "You DO have to provide a stable, loving home, and be able to help your adoptive child work through issues raised by his/her past."

[Agency/organization name] provides specific information about waiting children and the adoption process in [state/province]. To learn more, contact [name, address, and/or phone number]. Include a Press Release with Your Adoption Month Media Mailings

MEDIA



Rich Ferdinandsen District No. 1 Marjorie E. Clement District No. 2 John P. Stone District No. 3

SAMPLE

Dear Day Care Provider:

As a resident of Jefferson County and as a licensed day care home we would like to notify you of the critical shortage of family foster homes in our community. At this time, we especially need family homes for teen-agers and, in particular, for boys ages six thru eighteen.

We would like for you to consider expanding your care of children to include foster care.

Family foster care is a protective service for children who have experienced physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and/or neglect in their own family, and you could be instrumental in making the difference needed to help them overcome the problems they have experienced.

You can be dual certified to provide for both day care and foster care of children.

We appreciate your valuable service to families as a day care provider and hope you will consider becoming dual certified as a foster/day care home. For more information, you can call me at 271-4068.

Approved:

oga. a. Welson

Joyce A. Wilson, MRC Social Services Supervisor III

PAL/pw

Sincerely. iter a Lege

Peter A. Lege Social Caseworker III Foster Care Unit



Department of Human Services
 Nelson L. Nadeau, M.P.A., Director
 Human Services Facility, 900 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, Colorado 80401-6010
 (303) 277-1388



July 26, 1994

Gary D. Laura **District No. 1 Betty J. Miller District No. 2** John P. Stone **District No. 3**

Toni . President Jefferson County Child Care Association Post Office Box 280853 Lakewood, Colorado 80228

...

SAMPLE

Dear Ms.

We are writing regarding the need for more foster homes in Jefferson County. We would like to enlist your help in this endeavor by asking if you could include the enclosed flyer in your next newsletter as an insert. If so, we will be glad to copy as many as you need and will personally get them to you.

Anything you can do will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Pete A. Lege Social Caseworker III Foster Care Unit

Approved:

Joyce A. Wilson, MRC Social Services Supervisor III Foster Care

PAL/pw





Gary D. Laura District No. 1 Betty J. Miller District No. 2 John P. Stone District No. 3

April 12, 1994

Ms. Mary Lifestyles Editor Rocky Mountain News 400 West Colfax Denver, Colorado 80204

SAMPLE

Dear Ms.

It is my pleasure to inform you that the last public service announcement (copy enclosed) you ran for us last year resulted in several new loving foster homes.

Would you be willing to consider running another one at this time as the need is still critical.

I am enclosing another release which you may want to run, edit, or run the same one as last year.

Again, we thank you for the significant service you have rendered the community in publishing these public service announcements.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Lege Social Caseworker III Foster Care Licensing

Approved:

PAL/ap

Joyce Wilson, MRC Social Services Supervisor III Foster Care Licensing



Department of Human Services Nelson L. Nadeau, M.P.A., Director Human Services Facility, 900 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, Colorado 80401-6010 (303) 271-1388



Gary D. Laura District No. 1 Betty J. Miller District No. 2 John P. Stone District No. 3

July 21, 1994

SAMPle

Ms. Bonnie Denver Post 1560 Broadway Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Ms.

It is my pleasure to inform you that the last public service announcement (copy enclosed) you ran resulted in several new loving foster homes.

At this time we would like you to consider running another one as the need is still critical.

I am enclosing another release which we would like you to run or edit.

Again, we thank you for the significant service you have rendered the community in publishing these public service announcements.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Lege Social Caseworker III Foster Care Licensing

Approved:

JW/ap

Joyce Wilson, MRC Social Services Supervisor III Foster Care Licensing

Department of Human Services Nelson L. Nadeau, M.P.A., Director Human Services Facility, 900 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, Colorado 80401-6010 (303) 277-1388



Gary D. Laura District No. 1 Betty J. Miller District No. 2 John P. Stone District No. 3

April 27, 1995

Editor Columbine Community Courier 9126 West Bowles Littleton, Colorado 80123

SAMPLE

Dear Editor:

Once again Jefferson County Department of Human Services is asking your help to secure more foster homes for children of all ages.

I am enclosing an article which will give information regarding a new Colorado State Law which was recently enacted. We would like you to run this, or edit as you see fit. If you need more information, you can call Joyce Wilson at 271-4060, or myself at 271-4068.

We appreciate anything you can do.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Lege Social Caseworker III Foster Care Unit

Approved:

Joyce Wilson, MRC Human Services Supervisor III Foster Care Unit

PAL/ap

Department of Human Services Nelson L. Nadeau, M.P.A., Director Human Services Facility, 900 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, Colorado 80401-6010 (303) 277-1388

May 23, 1995

SAMPLE

Dear Pastor:

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1.

As you are aware, the number of children experiencing abuse, molestation, and other trauma has increased. As a result, Jefferson County Department of Human Services is in need of more foster parents. We would appreciate your continuing help on behalf of these children.

Would you again help publicize this need for more foster parents?

I am enclosing some information which can be included in your church newsletter, and if possible announce from the pulpit I would also like to bring some brochures and posters for dissemination to your congregation.

We would appreciate your assistance you can offer in this regard. Please call me at 271-4068 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Lege Social Caseworker III Foster Care Licensing

Approved:

Joyce Wilson, MRC Human Services Supervisor III Foster Care Licensing



PAL/ap

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Asking Churches to Help

(Sample Letter)

Dear Church Leaders:

We need your help to show appreciation to foster parents in your community and get the message out that foster parents are desperately needed.

Foster parents play an enormously vital role in the battle against child abuse and neglect, serving not only the children, but the children's parents and the community.

We believe that religious institutions, because of their broad base, deep historical roots, and accessibility to children, family, neighborhood, and community, often possess a unique capacity to initiate those activities necessary for the promotion of a responsive community child protection system.

To that end, we believe that by working with the churches we can obtain the needed foster care families to nurture and support children and their families in crisis.

In this packet you will find camera-ready artwork, sample presentations, fact sheets, public awareness project ideas and much more for you to start planning for foster care awareness activities. Please contact me for additional information or support.

Texas Department of Protective - PRS and Regulatory Services

Sincerely,

(Your Name) (Title, Organization) (Phone Number)





Submitting A Proposal To Operate A Specialized Group Facility

Anyone wishing to open a specialized group facility in Jefferson County may begin the process by submitting a program proposal.

The proposal should include at least the following information:

The name and qualifications of the individual(s) who will be responsible for the operation of the facility;

The facility address;

A statement of the program's purpose and function;

A description of the program, including the services that will be provided for children, the type of treatment offered and how outcomes will be measured;

A description of the characteristics of the children who will be served by the facility;

A statement describing the facility's plans for engaging the children in social and recreational activities; A sample daily schedule of activities for one week, including weekends and holidays; and

A financial statement which reflects actual and anticipated costs and available resources.

Proposals should be submitted to:

Group Home Coordinator Jefferson County Department of Human Services 900 Jefferson County Parkway Golden, Colorado 80401

Jefferson County Department of Human Services sou Jefferson County Parkway Golden, Colorado 80407 (303) 271-1388 Fax: (303) 271-4444

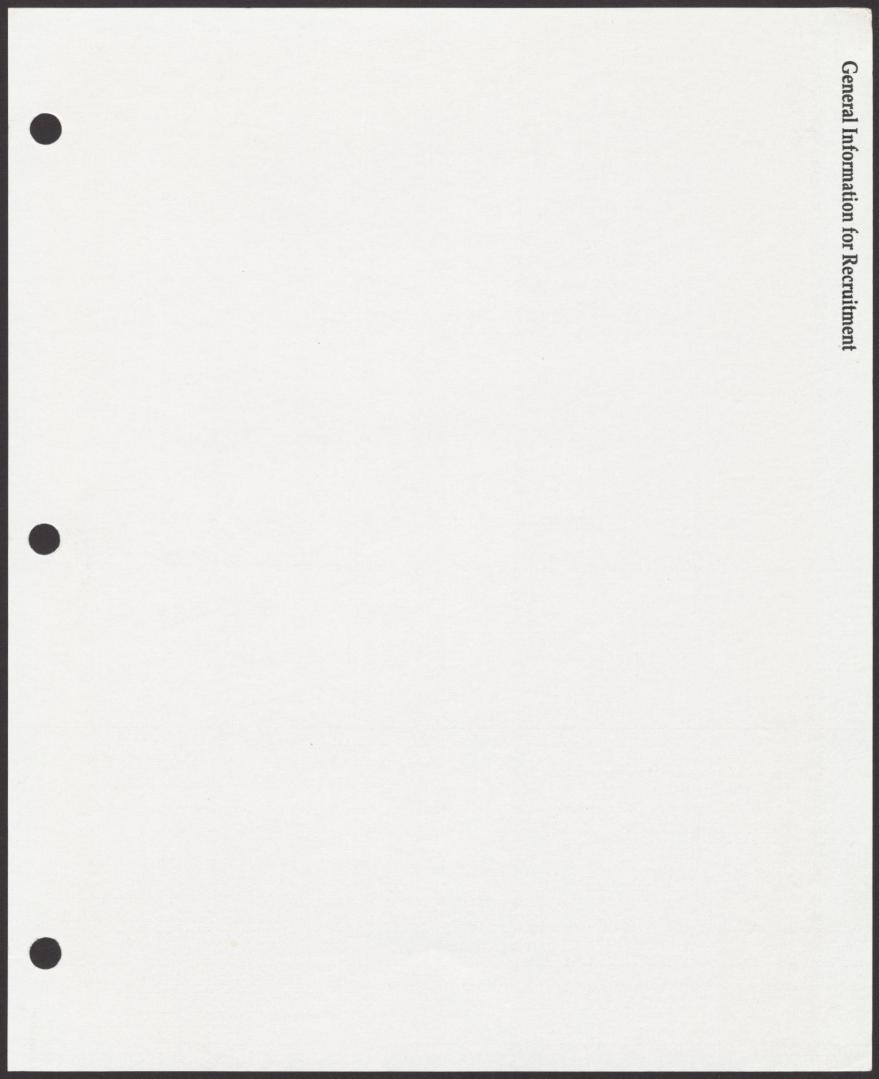
SPECIALIZED GROUP FACILITIES

Providing Youth Care in Jefferson County

8.

Jefferson County Department of Human Services 900 Jefferson County Parkway Golden, Colorado 80401

What Is A Specialized Group Facility?	Who May Operate A Specialized Group Facility?	Who Are the Children Living In Specialized Group Facilities?
A specialized group facility provides 24 hour care for 5 to 12 children between the ages of 3 and 18 years.	A specialized group facility may be operated by group home parents who own or control the facility, are primarily responsible for the care of the children	In Jefferson County there is an ongoing review of the types of children who need placement in specialized group facilities.
Placement in a specialized group facility allows a child to live in a normal community environment and offers the child the opportunity to form non-threatening peer relationships.	and who live in the group home. Alternatively, a specialized group facility may be operated by a governing body. This body has the ultimate authority and responsibility for the operation	While the ages and sex of the children who need group care changes, the characteristics of the children who are placed in specialized group facilities remains constant.
This environment is especially appropriate for children who can function in the community but who are unable to form close relationships with adults.	of the factury. Personnet nired by the governing body are responsible for the care of the children.	Generally, group care is best for children who:
Specialized group facilities are licensed by the State of Colorado. Licensing requirements include: The group home must have at least 35 square feet of floor space for each occupant in the home;	Group home parents may be married or single and may have children of their own. Their own children under the age of 16 count in the total number of children who may live in the group home. Group home parents or personnel must:	Are able to function in the community or who can function in the community with some support and guidance; Can benefit from ongoing interaction with a group of peers;
A bedroom used for one child must have at least 80 square feet of floor space;	Have a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma;	May or may not have contact with their biological family;
Shared bedrooms must have at least 60 square feet of floor space for each child in the room;	Be at least 21 years of age; Provide for the proper physical mental and character	Exhibit behaviors that are unacceptable to their parents or to foster parents;
Children who live in specialized group facilities may not be spanked, nor may they be subjected to physical harm or	development of the children in care; Doseese basis knowledge of child care first aid and good	Need to develop or strengthen relationships with others, usually including members of their own family;
numination;	nutrition;	Have difficulty forming close relationships with adults;
Policies and procedures must be developed and addread up, and Specialized group facilities must comply with applicable building code. fire safety and sanitation regulations.	Have verifiable experience working with children of the age to be cared for in the specialized group facility;	Are developmentally establishing independence from parents and parent figures but who continue to need some guidance and supervision; and
	Have adequate physical stamina to provide care for the children; and	Do not pose a danger to themselves or other members of the group.
	Be free of any illness or communicable disease which would adversely affect the children in care.	



"THE FACTS"

FACES OF ADOPTION URL: http://www.adopt.org/adopt E-Mail: nac@inetcom.net

WHAT IS "FACES OF ADOPTION"?

Faces of Adoption is an exciting new way for families to learn about children waiting to be adopted. This easy-to-use, computerized "photo listing book" located on the World Wide Web of the Internet enables families to read about children who need permanent homes.

WHY SHOULD I BE UTILIZING FACES OF ADOPTION?

* A VALUABLE RECRUITMENT TOOL - Potentially thousands of families interested in adoption can access *Faces of Adoption* on their computer in their home or office. This represents another opportunity for you to recruit potential adoptive families for your waiting children.

* A WEALTH OF INFORMATION - Along with finding out about your waiting children, families can read information on adoption-related topics including: How to Adopt; Issues in Adoption; Book Reviews; Agency Resources; Financial Assistance and Links to Other Adoption Resources on the Internet.

* POTENTIAL PLACEMENTS IN LESS TIME - Center staff will work with unstudied families to move them through the homestudy process quickly. Many of the Families expressing an interest in specific children on "Faces of Adoption" have already been approved to adopt. This translates into great potential resources for your child and with very little of your valuable time and effort being spent recruiting these families.

* EASY-TO-USE - The children you already have registered on the National Adoption Exchange are eligible to be featured on *Faces of Adoption*. There is no charge or limit to the number of children that can be registered. You do not have to have access to the Internet. All you need to do is to fill out a registration form and provide a color picture. If one is not available, you can have one taken free of charge at a Sears Portrait Studio through our "Picture Perfect" program.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

CONTACT:

Sue Flaxman (Project Manager) National Adoption Center 1500 Walnut Street, Suite 701 Philadelphia, PA 19102 (215) 735-9988, (215) 735-9410 (fax)

Where to place promotional materials

- # Beauty shops, barber shops, and restaurants (placemats or menus)
- # Bus placards and bus benches
- Billboards
- Bowling sheets
- Taxis
- Community fairs and special events
- * Hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices
- Local weekly newspapers, ethnic or religious newspapers, free advertiser-supported papers, and organization newsletters
- In telephone bills, utility bills, bank statements, and local employee envelopes
- Family attractions in local community and theme parks
- Local sports events (Request that a foster care message be printed on programs, tickets, or cups, or given as an announcement during half-time.)
- Local businesses (Request that a foster care message be used instead of music for part or all of May while callers are placed on hold.)

Texas Department of Protective PRS and Regulatory Services

Flyers on pizza boxes

Other Places to Promote Foster Care

- F Radio and TV talk show interviews
- Fraternities and sororities
- High school classes
- Advertising agencies



T H I N G S YOU CAN DO TO HELP C H I L D R E N

Bookmarks/Inserts

Printing and distributing a message in a shape and size that can be used as either a bookmark or an insert is an excellent way to create public awareness of the need for foster families.

For example, as a bookmark, the message can reach the public through libraries and book stores. As an insert, the message can be distributed by asking that it be mailed out with bank statements or utility bills, enclosed in church, community, and parent-teacher newsletters, and placed inside bags at grocery stores and other retail businesses.

Upon approval of the project by your organization, appoint a committee to oversee the development and distribution of the bookmarks and inserts.

Use the art work provided in this resource kit.

Contact local print shops to determine which one will provide the best service for the lowest cost.

Develop a distribution plan.

Solicit volunteers to distribute the bookmarks and inserts. High school organizations and athletic teams are excellent sources of enthusiastic volunteers.





Public Awareness Project

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Printing and distributing a message in a shape and size that can be used as either a bookmark or an insert is an excellent way to create public awareness of the need for foster families.

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- 1. Upon approval of the project by your organization, appoint a committee to oversee the development and distribution of the bookmarks and inserts.
- 2. Use the art work provided in this resource kit.
- 3. Contact local print shops to determine which one will provide the best service for the lowest cost.
- 4. Develop a distribution plan. Include information about how many inserts will be needed, how many people will be needed to distribute them, if the inserts will be mailed or physically taken, what locations will the inserts be sent to, and when the inserts will be needed.
- 5. Solicit volunteers to distribute the bookmarks and inserts. High school organizations and athletic teams are excellent sources of enthusiastic volunteers.

Texas Department of Protective Jers and Regulatory Services

Public Awareness Project

Banners

This project is especially effective in smaller cities where banners can be prominently displayed and may be used to:

- increase awareness of the local foster parent association or child protective services / child welfare board,
- honor foster parents for the important work they do, and
- recruit new foster parents.
- 1. Check city ordinances about what you can and can't do. For example, is it permitted to hang a banner in the city? If so, where? What is required to hang a banner? Are there requirements about the size of a banner or how it is made? Will your group need a permit? Will they need to schedule with the city?
- 2. Upon approval of the project by your organization, appoint a committee to oversee its development.
- 3. Contact a local business that produces banners to determine which one will provide the best service for the lowest cost.
- If your group doesn't have adequate funds, ask local merchants or companies to financially support the project.
- 5. The following are suggested messages for a banner. In smaller print beneath the message, include the name of the local foster parent association or child protective service/child welfare board.

There's nothing like a family. Share yours with a foster child.

- Foster parents...the cream of the crop.
- Give 'til it helps. Become a foster parent.
- Foster care...Looking for a few good families
- Be a foster parent. The rewards are out of this world.
- F Invest in your community's future. Become a foster parent.

Texas Department of Protective JRS and Regulatory Services

HIN YOU CAN DO TO HELP



This project is especially effective in smaller cities where banners can be prominently displayed and may to used to:

- increase adoption awareness;
- * increase awareness of the local association, board, or local adoption support group;
- » honor foster parents for the important work they do; and
- » recruit new foster parents.

Check city ordinances about what you can and can't do. For example, is it permitted to hang a banner in the city? Can one be hung in November? If so, where? What is required to hang a banner? Will your group need a permit? Will they need to schedule with the city?

O Upon approval of the project by your organization, appoint a committee to oversee its L development.

2 Contact a local business that produces banners to determine which one will provide J the best service for the lowest cost.

If your group doesn't have adequate funds, ask local merchants or companies to finan-4 cially support the project.

The following are suggested messages for a banner. In smaller print beneath the message, include the name of the local association or board.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month

ADOPTION - DO IT. YOU'LL LYVE IT!



DARE TO LOVE V ADOPT A CHILD. V

Children grow best in families. Adopt.

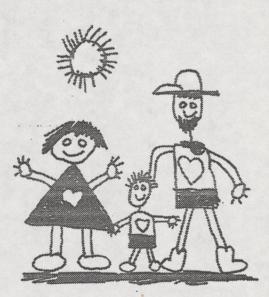
For the experience of a lifetime...adopt!



White Ribbon Campaign

This project involves asking people in the community to promote adoption awareness during the month of November by wearing white ribbon bows. Tell the people that in wearing a white bow: .

- * white represents hope for all those who wait to be adopted and the joy in forming a new family; and
- The bow represents hope for the future and the joy experienced by those who have already shared through adoption.



HELP



Texas Adoption Resource Exchange • Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

Other Ways to Help

"You don't have to Adopt to Help!"

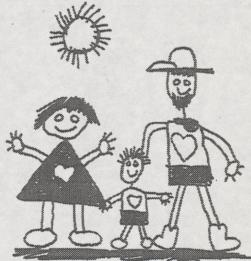
We can all do our part to raise the awareness of children's issues and provide information on the resources and options available to those who want to adopt. The information in this packet will give you a start.

Ways to Help

You can contribute to your local county child welfare board, foster parent association, or council on adoptable children. You may also help these organizations with their annual special fundraising events and other recruitment activities.

Volunteers are Always Welcomed!

- * train others in CPR (if certified) or other areas of expertise;
- help coordinate holiday events;
- help spread the word about us to businesses and churches for small informational presentations;
- distribute posters and brochures during key months of the year such as April ("Child Abuse Prevention Month"), May ("National Foster Care Month"), and November ("National Adoption Awareness Month");
- sponsor a family at the many institutions where our children reside (having a sponsor family to go with on weekends and holidays is helpful to a child); or
- sponsor a child on a caseworker's caseload through birthday and holiday gifts, cards, and letters.





Public Awareness Project

Messages for Publication

The following messages may be distributed for inclusion in local publications such as bulletins or newsletters from churches, community and parent-teacher organizations, employee communications, advocacy groups, and any other special interest group concerned about Texas children. They may also be placed in newspapers. You may wish to include appropriate art work from this resource kit that will draw the readers' attention to the message.

- Foster parents are special people—people like you! Foster parents are single, married, working couples, military personnel, retirees, and of all ages and income brackets. Financial and medical reimbursement is provided. Be a foster parent. Dare to love! Call the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Line at 1-800-233-3405.
- You can make a difference in a child's life. How? By becoming a foster parent. Foster parents provide a temporary home for abused and neglected children. Financial and medical reimbursement is provided. Your home could change a life! Call the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Line at 1-800-233-3405.
- Families helping families—that's what foster parenting is all about. Abused and neglected children in Texas need your help. Become a foster parent. Call the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Line at 1-800-233-3405.
- Thinking about investing? Invest in the future of your community. Become a foster parent. Help children and their families while they heal. Call the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Line at 1-800-233-3405.





YOU GOTTA BELIEVE! THE OLDER CHILD ADOPTION & PERMANENCY MOVEMENT, INC.

1220 NEPTUNE AVENUE SUITE 166 CONEY ISLAND, NY 11224 1-800-601-1779 FAX: 718-769-0051

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NON-TRADITIONAL RECRUITMENT FOR TEENS & PRE-TEENS

by Pat O'Brien Executive Director You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption & Permanency Movement, Inc.

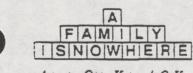
It used to annoy me when I would tell workers whose responsibility it was to recruit homes for teens and pre-teens that there was a permanent home out there for every child who needed one that some of these workers actually disagreed with me. There are people responsible for finding teens and pre-teens homes who are so arrogant that they actually believe that in a world with 4 billion people, a country with 250,000 million people, a State with 16 million people, and a City with 7 million people, that there is actually no one who could offer their home permanently to a given teen or pre-teen in foster care who they were acquainted with.

It didn't strike me until recently that I was wrong. There actually is not an a home out there for every teen or pre-teen who needs one. In a world with 4 billion people, a country with 250,000 million people, a State with 16 million people, and a City with 7 million people there are an **infinite** number of homes out there for every teen or pre-teen who needs one. Our job is simply to find a home.

Everything is perspective. Everything is how you look at it. Perhaps Henry Ford said it best:

If You Think You Can, You Can! If You Think You Can't, You Can't! You're Always Right!

I don't argue with workers any longer who tell me there aren't any homes for a child in their care. I simply tell them they are right! But I make sure I tell them why they are right. And the reason they are right is because that is what they believe. If a worker believes there are no families for any given child, no families will ever be found. It becomes a selffulling prophecy. But I always let the worker know they have the choice. If they simply allowed themselves to believe families are out there, then a family will be found. What they believe will materialize and we suggest



Adopting Older Kids is A-O.K.

that they believe in the positive over the negative. Considering they will be right in whatever they chose to believe, would it not be better to believe there are families out there, rather than that there are not families out there?

And once you believe the families are out there 75% of the job of recruitment is done. That is why we called our movement You Gotta Believe! You can't do the work of recruiting homes for teens and pre-teens without believing first. Then the job of finding families becomes so less complicated and so much easier. This article is meant to be a very concrete, down-to-earth, discussion on how to find families for teens and pre-teens. This article is going to focus on the other 25% of the job, the part that answers the question "How can I find permanent homes for teens and pre-teens in my agency or community once I believe the families are out there?" Lets start first with You Gotta Believe's policy and philosophy regarding recruitment for older children.

YGB's RECRUITMENT POLICY & PHILOSOPHY

You Gotta Believe focuses all of its outreach efforts on attempting to find permanent homes for older foster children specializing in the teen and pre-teen age. When YGB does recruitment, we will make all of our outreach efforts into the communities which have an ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural background similar to the children for whom we are recruiting. Hence, this means that outreach in New York City's Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island where we practice leads us to communities that are predominately African American and Latino.

You Gotta Believe does not encourage or prevent the cross-cultural or cross-racial placement of teens or pre-teens. We do, however, only do outreach in communities who are of like-ethnic background to the children for whom we are recruiting. You Gotta Believe knows that the family most likely to adopt a teen or pre-teen is a family of a like-ethnic background to the child. You Gotta Believe also knows from our own experience that the families who disrupt the least with teens and pre-teens are families who adopt a child from a like-ethnic background Therefore, it is time well spent when we do recruitment to limit our outreach practice to communities that are of likeethnic and like-racial backgrounds to the teens and pre-teens who most need permanent families.

YGB's TWO PRIMARY APPROACHES WHEN REACHING OUT TO THE PUBLIC

You Gotta Believe has two primary approaches when reaching out to the general public:

 We discuss our older child adoption and permanency movement which attempts to prevent homelessness by finding permanent relationships for older foster children. We emphasize teens and pre-teens because those are the children who are closest to their discharge dates. It is our Movement's deeply held belief that young adults

discharged to themselves at 18, 19, 20, or 21 will have a very difficult time preventing their own homelessness if they have no functioning human relationships in their lives upon discharge from the system.

We offer an education experience to the public about what they can do to prevent the homelessness of older foster teens and pre-teens by asking the general public to take our 8 week A-OK (Adopting Older Kids) parent preparation course. We never ask general public to legally or morally@ adopt an older child. We simply ask them to learn about legally or morally adopting older teens and pre-teens by taking our course. No pressure. No commitments except for the commitment to learning.

Many of You Gotta Believe's board members have found that this simple approach has worked very effectively when doing outreach into the community. YGB will offer two options for obtaining this learning experience.

- Individual families will be offered an opportunity to come to our agency to a) take the A-OK course; or
 - Individual community based groups in Brooklyn, Queens, or Staten Island can offer us a minimum of five families interested in learning about adopting teens and pre-teens. We will then bring our A-OK course to that group's church, community center, library, or any other location chosen by the group.

NON-TRADITIONAL RECRUITMENT INNOVATIONS, APPROACHES, AND TECHNIQUES

YGB board members are confident that after about the first two years of our existence most of the referrals of families who want to adopt teens and pre-teens will come from word-of-mouth referrals from families who have used our services. We fully expect and believe that this is where the bulk of referrals to our A-OK course will come from once we become well established in the community that we serve. However, we would like to offer the following approaches to any program that, like us, are not fully established in the community they are currently serving and cannot rely solely on word-of-mouth referrals to get teens and pre-teens placed.

(a)





b)

2)

A moral adoption is when a family provides a permanent home to an older foster teen or pre-teen without regard to whether that child is freed for adoption or not. For instance, there are many older foster children who have not been freed for adoption who have the goal of "Independent Living" and need a permanent family to morally adopt them to prevent their homelessness upon discharge from the foster care system. Because this child is not legally freed for adoption the child cannot be legally adopted. However, this category of children can still have a family morally adopt them by providing them with a permanent home. A family can still claim a child as their own by adopting him or her morally even if the child cannot be adopted legally

#1) THE "FIELD OF DREAMS"/ONE-TO-ONE APPROACH

"If You Build It, They Will Come."

Recent research@ has documented what many YGB board members had know all along: that most people will adopt older special needs children based on a personal contact they had with another person whether that person be an agency staff member or another adoptive parent. With this awareness it is very important to follow the below recruitment strategies because these strategies are based on the "one-to-one personal contact" approach to recruitment. It is based on the deeply held belief that all YGB, or any other agency for that matter, needs to do is exist somewhere and offer its A-OK course and the people will come. And the people will particularly come if we reach out to them in an "up close and personal" way. For example, three "Field of Dreams/ One-To-One " recruitment strategy approaches that have worked quite well for us when we were attempting to get known in a community we were offering our A-OK course in are as follows (note that all three strategies involve our staff setting up opportunities for us to have chance meetings with people while offering them a service at the same time):

a) The Supermarket Grassroots Outreach Approach: In order to get know in any community where we will be offering our 8 week A-OK course it is important for our staff to get to meet the people who live in that community. One of the best ways to get to meet people in a community where we are unknown to the people is to provide a service to the people. The people do not know us, we do not know them, but we can nonetheless get to know each other by simply being present by sharing the same time and space. Hence, one way we will do this is to go to the local supermarket of the neighborhood we will be doing our next course in and ask the owners if we can help the cashiers bag groceries for their customers on at least the four Saturdays prior to our offering an A-OK course in the neighborhood. This will set up many opportunities for our staff to meet local residents and share with them information about the up-coming "A-OK" course.

b) The Parking Angel Outreach Approach: Another way to get known in a community where we will be offering our course will be to provide an outreach service on the busy business streets of that community. One of the primary inconveniences for shoppers in any of a big City's busy business district is that have to put a quarter in the parking meter and not complete their business before the time on the meter expires. We will have YGB staff and volunteers, taking two hour shifts, walking up and down the main business Avenues with parking meters and putting

In a survey conducted by Cornell University entitled "Special Needs Adoption in New York State: A Final Report on Adoptive Parent Survey" written by Rosemary Avery and Daniel Mont in October of 1994 they had found that "what is clear from the results is that the vast majority of parents come to be special needs adoptive parents because they have had some personal contact with either an agency staff member or another adoptive parent. Advertising and the media play only a small role in uniting parents and children... It seems that, while increasing public awareness of the need for adoptive parents through the media might be beneficial, in effect it is the one-to-one personal contact with individuals that is most influential in securing the adoptive home for the child."

quarters in the expired meters of the parkers. After we put the quarter in the meter we will leave a piece of paper that will look very much like a parking ticket under the person's windshield wiper that would read something like this:

Your Friendly "You Gotta Believe Parking Angel" was here and we fed your meter. If the City got here before we did this could have cost you \$35. Would you consider donating \$10 to the Parking Angel Program? Or better yet, how about telling a friend about us. Our information is on the reverse side.

While YGB staff is walking up and down the streets of the busy business district providing this wonderful service, people are bound to stop us and start asking us questions. "Who are you?" and "Why are you doing this.?" might be some logical questions from local inquisitors. Some of the best recruitment can occur in these moments of chance meetings. Using this approach increases the amount of chance meetings we will have with community residents. And, unlike the Parking Violations Bureau staff who will be on the streets as well, local residents will look forward to seeing our staff because we will be providing a meaningful local service to the shoppers in the area.

c) The Doorknob Campaign: One of the areas we will be attempting to get ourselves known in is our home neighborhood of Coney Island. There are thousands of apartment units in Coney Island. We plan on making up about 10,000 flyers that fit on people's doorknobs and go to everyone's doorknob with an announcement that we are in the neighborhood recruiting homes for teens and pre-teens. Also, while we walk doorknob to doorknob we will most likely meet many community residents along the way and engage them in conversation about the program. This is why we will not hire people to place the flyers on the doorknobs. We will only use our own staff and dedicated volunteers who can answer questions about the program in an informative way to anyone who might stop us and ask while we walk the entire community placing the flyers.

#2) THE "A FAMILY ISNOWHERE" APPROACH: OR CHILD SPECIFIC LIFE CYCLE RECRUITMENT.

"A Family Is No Where" or "A Family Is Now Here." Its your choice. Its our choice. Whether we view a family as "now here" in every child's life or "no where" in every child's life is largely a matter of personal choice. As noted earlier, Henry Ford put it best when he said:

> " If you think you can, you can If you think you can't, you can't You're always right!"

Now, to take this statement and apply it to recruiting a family for every child who needs one, one might restate the above phrase to read as follows:

"If you believe a family is now here, a family is now here If you believe a family is no where, a family is no where You will always be right!"

What is in the individual recruiters' mind is really the only thing that matters. If someone believes a family is available for each and every child that needs one, that a family is "now here", a family will be found. However, if one believes that no family can be found, that a family is "no where", you know what is going to materialize for the child: absolutely nothing. Hence, its the person who is charged with the responsibility of finding a home for a child whose attitude matters most. There is no question that an infinite number of families are out their for any given child, the only question is "where is **just one** of those families?" An the answer to this question, more often than not, is that a family can be found "now here" right in the life cycle of the individual child one is recruiting for.

In a paper she delivered at a North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) conference in 1985 entitled "The Leap of Faith: Claiming and Bonding In Adoption" Melanie Tem wrote that even though "there is considerable support for the notion that most of us {people in society in general} have 'attachment' problems to some degree" that "we know that an individual who truly has no attachments does not survive." All children in foster care are alive. Hence, all children in foster care have attachments. They tend not to become homeless and die at way too young an age due to their lack of attachments until after they leave the foster care system. While they remain in foster care they do have attachments. It is the obligation of all of us who recruit homes for the children in our care to identify and reach out to those attachments in the child's life and explore with these persons the possibility of learning about what it might be like to parent the child on a long term permanent basis.

Who are these attachments that are "now here" in a child's life cycle anyway? Consider the following list for the child living in residential treatment centers or group homes (this list, by the way, comes directly from placements this author has made for teenagers in the past):

- The Child's Social Worker
- * The Child's Child Care Workers
- * The Child's Therapist
- Volunteers at the facility child resides
- Maintenance Staff at facility
- Cooking staff at facility
- Administrative staff
- Chaplains/Clergy
- School Teachers
- * School Aides
- Other School Personnel
- Child's Law Guardian or CASA Worker

- Visiting resources such as
 - Former Foster Parents
 - Relatives & Friends
- Unexplored relatives including Paternal relatives
 - For example, the cousin who was 17 When her 3 year old cousin came into Care but who is 28 years old now when Cousin needs at family at 14
 - Long lost relatives remet a birth family funeral
 - Co-residents of facility who aged out and have made it on their own.

Also, consider the following list of persons for children who might currently live in a foster home that is not willing to keep them permanently:

- The Foster Parent's Neighbors
- The Foster Parent's Friends
- The Foster Parent's Relatives
- * The Foster Parent's Pastor
- Members in the Foster Parent's Church
- The foster child's best friend's parents
- The foster child's social worker
- The foster child's therapist
- Unexplored maternal and paternal relatives
- The foster child's teacher
- Other personnel at the child's school such as:
 - Teacher's Aide
 - Maintenance Staff
 - Secretarial/Administrative staff
 - Cafeteria Staff
 - Crossing Guard
 - Security personnel
 - Any other personnel
 - Family members re-met at birth family related
 - funerals the child is allowed to attend.
 - Law Guardians or CASA workers.

Both these lists can go on and on all day. We will stop here to make the point that there could be as many as a dozen people in a child's life circle the child has some attachment to, and relationship with, who may be approached to offer a home to the child. The next crucial step then is how to approach these caring people who are already a part of the teen or pre-teen's life.

a) Approaching Adults Who Are a Part of the Child's Life Cycle. When an agency refers a child to YGB to identify a family for that child that agency will be offered the above child specific life circle recruitment technique. If given permission by the agency, our staff and peer counselors will work with the older child himself, as well as the staff at the agency, to see if we can come up with a family known to the child and who is part of the child's life cycle. Once we identify a potential life cycle resource for the child we must approach this individual prospective family with the utmost sensitivity.

Were we to simply go up to this person and ask "Would you adopt Johnny?", the answer has got to invariably be "no." You see, the person being approached might not be aware that:

Johnny even needed a permanent home until that very moment that you approached him or her.

He or she is eligible to adopt. Most people go around life assuming they do not qualify until someone is very specific with them about the regulations. For instance, there are still many people in the general public who assume they cannot adopt because they are single, or because they only have a one bedroom apartment, or because they don't make enough money. These are all incorrect assumptions.

- * They can adopt a teenager without going bankrupt thanks to New York State's generous subsidy and foster care stipend program which is one of the most generous programs in the country. But no matter what State, a prospective family who does not know about subsidy will most likely consider your State's program generous too.
- * There will be a pre-placement learning and preparation process available to help this person assess whether he or she can bring this child into their household.
- * There will be significant post-placement support available even beyond an adoption finalization should a legal adoption occur, and beyond a placement should a moral adoption occur.

Hence, when we approach the potential resource that is in the child's life circle we will not ask these resources to adopt Johnny at all. All we will do is ask the resource to come in and learn about legally or morally adopting Johnny by taking our eight week A-OK parent preparation course. We know by our own experience that half the people who come forward do move on to make the decision to bring the child permanently into their home. So, if the first person we approach is not able to follow through, generally the second or third person we approach will.

What we want is for people to come forward to explore the possibility of taking in this teen or pre-teen for whom they care so much about. If they decide after taking our course that they cannot commit to a child in the way we are asking, this will be fine with us. We will have the satisfaction of knowing that the person did not outright dismiss the idea but went through a process that helped him or her figure out she could not bring the child into her home. And, who knows? Perhaps this person will become an extra recruiter committed to trying to identify a family for the child. Someone who could speak highly about the process having just gone through it.

b) Certified Prospective Adoptive Parents As Mentors and Volunteers to Children Who Need Families: No matter what we say, there still will be agency workers who insist there are no families in a child's life circle. When their minds are closed to it, it becomes practically impossible to help identify a family from a child's life circle. The worker responsible for recruitment holds a great deal of power over whether we have enough access to a child's life cycle so that we can find a family within that life cycle. Some people are just invested in believing the child has no one in his own life who would possibly come forward for him.

In these situations we can actually create a life cycle resource. For families who have taken our 8 week A-OK course and have become certified to accept a child into their home permanently we can offer these families as mentoring resources and volunteers to the treatment centers where many of the teens and pre-teens we will be trying to place live. Most treatment centers have programs where volunteers come up and take kids out for holidays and weekends. Prospective adoptive parents can do the same as well but for specific children that they may be interested in adopting.

This way of affecting a placement has a variety of advantages. One is the child does not have to know about the interest that the family has in adopting him until after he gets to know the family fairly well as his mentoring family. Also, it gives the adopting family a lot of time with the young person before the young person moves in. They get a chance to really get to know each other even before the "A" word is ever mentioned.

Hence, which ever way its done, a family can always be "now here" in a child's life if we keep our minds open to it.

#3) "LET THE SPIRIT MOVE 'EM" APPROACH

It is crucially important to set up as many opportunities to get waiting children in the same time and space as waiting families. It is equally crucial to set up as many opportunities to get YGB staff in the same time and space as potential adoptive families. We believe that the spirit of human beings sharing the same time and space can lead to magical things happening such as children and families finding each other, or such as a potential family wanting to learn more about our movement by agreeing to come in and take our A-OK course. Hence, YGB will sponsor its own recruitment events as well as participate in a variety of other events that will lead to waiting children being placed or that will lead to new families coming forward to explore the moral and legal adoption of teens and pre-teens by taking YGB's A-OK course. Some of these "let the spirit move 'em" events will include:

a) Events Set Up so Waiting Children and Waiting Families can Have the Opportunity to Meet. There are a variety of events that YGB or any other organization recruiting for children can either sponsor or be a part of that can lead to waiting families and waiting children sharing the same time and space together that very often leads to a placement. Many YGB board members initiated many placements as a result of these events. Some examples of these events include:

I) Annual Christmas/Holiday Parties where waiting families and waiting children get together in the same time and space to have a good time. These are events that do not have to put children on display if organized correctly. Children are simply invited to a Christmas party where they receive gifts, play games, and have a good time with Santa while they interact with adults who happen to be waiting for children.

- II) Other Special Events. YGB board members have been involved in many special events that placed waiting children and waiting families in the same time and space. Some examples of these special events include:
 - Fashion Shows where older waiting children actually fashioned clothing.
 - <u>Poetry Festivals</u> where older waiting children had opportunity to either read original writing they had written, or the writings of their favorite poets.
 - <u>Talent Shows</u> where young people are given an opportunity to share their special talents such as dancing, singing, putting on comedy skits, etc.
 - <u>Softball or basketball games</u> where waiting children are placed on a team and play against perhaps a celebrity team or another team made up of either adults or other young people.

b) Events Set Up So Agency Staff Can Have Opportunity To Share Same Time and Space To Meet Prospective Adoptive Parents.

- I) <u>Adoption Fairs</u>. In municipalities such as New York City, annual adoption fairs are planned to get the entire community out to learn about the children in need of adoptive homes. At these fairs, agencies who have waiting children in their care set up a table and feature pictures and videos of children in need of families. A lot of P.R. is done to get prospective families out and, when this is an annual event, it is the only time of year many agency workers get a chance to meet the people in the general public who have an interest in adopting the variety of children that are available.
- Make presentations at local, statewide, and national conferences that adoptive parents II) and prospective parents attend. This is a great way to get to know the networks of parent led organizations that are out there. If your organization is sincere in its efforts of wanting to work with these groups, it can be of major benefit to you because it will put you in one-to-one contact with people who might want to go to your program to adopt teens and pre-teens. YGB and many of its Board members have presented at a variety of parent-led conferences on issues that we are very familiar with including recruitment, post adoption services, the connection between foster care and homelessness, and the need for humor and laughter in family life. Organizations whose conferences we attended and presented at include: The New York Adoptive Parents Committee, the New York State Citizen's Coalition for Children. The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), and the New York State Foster & Adoptive Parents Association. We have met a number of prospective families at these conferences who came forward to adopt teens and pre-teens through programs we have worked for. In short, develop an area of expertise, create a workshop around it, and offer to present it at local. statewide, and national conferences all in an effort to connect with prospective parents who become "now here" in your own life circle.

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Reach out to every foster and adoptive parent support group in your State and locality III) . who have members in your geographical area. It is essential that your staff have and maintain good rapport with locally based foster and adoptive parents through developing good relationships with the leaders of their support groups and associations. These groups can be a potential source of referrals of families who come to them to adopt teens and pre-teens. If you are fortunate enough to get invited to a support group meeting you should go. Its a privilege to be asked and you can learn a lot as well as meet potential adoptive parents. Many adoptive parents of older children adopt for second and third times. If you are involved with their program they might consider adopting through your agency the next time they decide to adopt. Also, attend any and all events the local groups might invite you to. If they hold a dinner or a picnic make it your business to go. Putting yourself in the presence of the leadership and membership of support groups and associations sends a direct message that you are an okay person and probably someone worth trusting. It is very rare for agency personnel to do this and you will receive a greater-than-your-fair-share of attention from the group as a result of your participation in its activities.

11.

#4) OTHER MORE TRADITION RECRUITMENT APPROACHES

a) Advertising: Funding permitting, your organization should consider advertising about your parent preparation course in local publications that reach out to the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the families you are recruiting. For instance, in New York City YGB would advertise that it is holding an A-OK course and give information as to what it is and where it is in local newspapers that reach a largely African American and Latino readership. We might place advertisement then in newspapers such as the Amsterdam News, the City Sun and el Diario. It is also essential to advertise in your local yellow pages. Our ad simply reads "Come and Learn About Adopting Teens and Pre-Teens." Also, any advertisements we might place will note our offer to bring our course to anyone's community that has five interested families willing to take the 8 week learning experience.

b) Effective Use of Media: We at YGB believes that effective communication with the media is very important in regard to educating the public about the need to place teen and pre-teen foster children into permanent families in order to prevent their homelessness upon discharge from the foster care system. The media, just as most people in society, is not aware of the strong connection between homelessness and foster care. We believe it is our job to make them aware and to offer our solution to the problem as well (i.e. finding permanent homes for teens and pre-teens in foster care.) There are two types of dealings with the media we want to highlight briefly here:

I. <u>Inreach</u>. Inreach is how we define when the media comes to us based on no initiation on our part. The media tends to come to us looking for human interest stories. They may want

to feature waiting children. Or they may want to be put in touch with a family who adopted teens and pre-teens. Or they may simply want to do a story on your program. Or they may want someone on your staff to serve as an expert on a TV or radio show. Or they may want a quote from someone on your staff concerning an issue of the day for a newspaper or magazine article. It is very important that you are responsive to the media's needs assuming you are not compromising anyone's privacy or confidentiality. You should do your best in whatever the forum the media is presenting you with to get the message out that teens and pre-teens need homes to prevent their homelessness upon discharge from the system. When the media is coming to you they usually have time pressures. You acting as expeditiously as possible will serve your organization well and will likely lead to another call from the same media outlet in the future.

II. <u>Outreach</u>: This is where on your own initiative you try to interest the media in your program or an event you are sponsoring. You might for instance want to write a 15 or 30 second public service announcement and send it to every radio station. You will be surprised how many stations will read your PSA. You will also be surprised with how many phone calls you will receive as a result of the PSA. Also, if your organization is planning an event such as an adoption party or any event where waiting children and families will be present, and you want the media's attention, you should send them all a press release. Develop a list of the local contact person at newspapers, T.V. stations, radio stations, and then send it to all of them. This is a good way to get word out that there are people out there adopting teens.

c) Speaking Engagements: YGB will never turn down an invitation to speak about adopting teens and pre-teens. We will go anywhere when asked. We respond positively to all invitations and strongly believe that wherever we go that there may be someone in the audience that might want to adopt after hearing us speak. Anything public you do can turn into a recruitment effort.

d) View Everything You Do As Recruitment and View Everyone On Your Staff as a Recruiter. It is very important that everyone on your staff view everything they do as potential recruitment. This would include the way they answer the phone {PLEASE HAVE A HUMAN VOICE ANSWER YOUR PHONE), to the way they interact with postal staff when they drop mail off at the post office. Even if you have one person whose job is that of "recruiter" make that person the organizer of recruitment but have everyone else on staff believing they are recruiters as well. If anyone calls and is not greeted by a nice human voice they will continue to call around until they find an agency that greets them with a nice human voice.

This article was written by Pat O'Brien, M.S., C.S.W., Executive Director of YOU GOTTA BELIEVE! THE OLDER CHILD ADOPTION & PERMANENCY MOVEMENT, Inc. YGB is an agency that places teens and preteens in foster care into permanent families, without regard to whether they are freed for adoption or not, in order to prevent them from becoming homeless upon discharge from the foster care system. Pat can be reached at 1-800-601-1779 if anyone is interested in speaking with him about any of the contents of this article. You may also fax him at 718-769-0051 or write to him at 1220 Neptune Avenue, Suite #166, Coney Island, N.Y. 11224.



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Parenting the Adopted Adolescent

Inside

How Children Develop

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Most parents worry about their child when he or she reaches adolescence. Will the child who was once easygoing and helpful become moody and disrespectful? Will the child who was fiercely independent when young become a teen who gives in to peer pressure? Will the child who has had a conventional style of dress suddenly color his or her hair purple?

When adopted children reach adolescence, their parents are likely to be anxious and have an additional set of questions. Will the child become confused about his or her identity? Will a sense of abandonment and rejection replace feelings of security and comfort? Is the child behaving in a way that reflects inner turmoil about the past? Each of these questions leads to a larger issue: Will being adopted make adolescence harder for the child?

These questions don't have simple answers. Only a few studies have compared the psychological well-being of adopted adolescents with that of nonadopted adolescents. Some of those studies conclude that having been adopted makes no difference in adolescent behavior. Others suggest that adopted teenagers are more likely than others to experience problems. Experts disagree about the relative importance of the role of parents, the "climate" of the family, and the natural temperament of the teenager as contributors to adolescent problems. There are two points on which they agree, however. (1) Being adopted is an undeniable part of a teen's history and should not be ignored. (2) Adopted adolescents can successfully confront and resolve their special developmental issues.

This factsheet is a guide to parents of adopted teenagers. It focuses on child development, typical adolescent behavior, the special issues of adopted teenagers, the times when parents should become concerned, and the steps parents can take to



make these difficult years more manageable.

How Children Develop

From infancy on, children alternate between bonding with their caregivers and learning to become independent. Infants begin to gain independence by learning to crawl and then walk. As infants become toddlers, they start to give nonverbal and later verbal messages that express their wishes and opinions.

Up to about age 6, children absorb information rapidly, asking questions nonstop. They are able to think about being abandoned, getting lost, or no longer being loved by their parents. They often have trouble telling the difference between reality and fantasy. At the same time, they experience separation from loved ones as they attend preschool or daycare programs and broaden their interests and group of friends.

The inner lives of children take shape between the ages of 6 and 11. From the security of their families, children begin to expand their horizons and participate in more activities away from home. It can be a difficult time. Children must cement their sense of belonging to their family while mastering the knowledge and skills required for independence. It is no wonder that by the time they become teenagers their struggles to form an identity may feel overwhelming and may lead to

perplexing, and sometimes troublesome, behavior.

Typical Adolescent Behavior

Adolescence is a trying time of life for both teenagers and their families. The physical aspects of adolescence—a growth spurt, breast development for girls, a deepening of the voice for boys—are obvious and happen quickly, whereas mental and emotional development may take years.

The main challenge for teenagers is to form their own identity—an achievement not nearly as simple as it sounds. It means, according to adoption experts Kenneth W. Watson and Miriam Reitz, that teenagers must define their values, beliefs, gender identification, career choice, and expectations of themselves.

In forming an identity, most adolescents try on a variety of personas. They look for, imitate, and then reject role models. They examine their families critically-idolizing some people, devaluing others. They shun or embrace family values, traditions, ideas, and religious beliefs. Sometimes they have enormous self-confidence; sometimes they feel at loose ends and think of themselves as utterly worthless. They may believe something one day, and then change their minds and think the opposite the next day. Ultimately, they must come to terms with the big questions: Who am I? Where do I belong?

Teenagers are acutely aware that they are growing away from their families. As they look for ways to demonstrate their individuality, they often take on the values, beliefs, and actions of others their age or of celebrities they admire. Even though they are trying to set themselves apart from their families, they often want to look, act, and dress just like their friends.

Teenagers are still dependent on their parents, however, and may veer back and forth between striking out and staying close. "Parents should realize," write Jerome Smith and Franklin Miroff in their book You're Our Child: The Adoption Experience, "that the adolescent is primarily a child and not an adult, except in the biological sense. Emotionally, he is still as dependent on his parents as always."

It is not surprising, therefore, that disagreements between parents and teenagers occur. Adolescents want independence, yet they are unsure how much freedom they can really handle. Parents want their teens to move toward self-sufficiency but often are reluctant to give up control. Teenagers are confused about their futures, and parents are anxious about who or what their sons and daughters will become.

Adolescents wrestle with issues of sexuality and spend time thinking about and wishing for romantic relationships. Parents worry about their teenagers' choices of partners and friends. Often, parents don't know what advice to give or how to give it.

These kinds of tensions generally characterize the parent-teen relationship. There are additional issues for teens who came to their families through adoption.

Adoption and Adolescence

Adoption adds complexity to parenting adolescents. Adopted teenagers may need extra support in dealing with issues that take on special meaning for them—identity formation, fear of rejection and abandonment, issues of control and autonomy, the feeling of not belonging, and heightened curiosity about the past.

Identity Formation

Identity issues can be difficult for adopted teens because they have two sets of parents. Not knowing about their birthparents can make them question who they really are. It becomes more challenging for them to sort out how they are similar to and different from both sets of parents.

Adopted teenagers may wonder who gave them their particular characteristics. They may want answers to questions their adoptive parents may not be able to provide: Where do I get my artistic talent? Was everyone in my birth family short? What is my ethnic background? Do I have brothers and sisters? Sixteen-year-old Jennifer explains, "I'm trying to figure out what I want to do in my life. But I'm so confused. I can't move ahead with my future when I don't know anything about my past. It's like starting to read a book in the middle. My big family with cousins and aunts and uncles only makes me aware that I'm alone in my situation. It never bothered me when I was younger. But now, for reasons I can't explain, I feel like a puppet without a string, and it's making me miserable."

Some teens may feel more angry at their adoptive parents than they have ever felt before. They may be critical of how their parents helped them adjust to their adoptive status. They may withdraw into themselves or feel they need to stray far from home to find their true identity.

Fear of Abandonment

Jayne Schooler, an adoption professional in Ohio and the author of *Searching for a Past*, writes that it is not unusual for adopted teenagers to fear leaving home. Leaving home is scary for most adolescents, but because adoptees have already suffered the loss of one set of parents, it is even more frightening.

Seventeen-year-old Caroline, for instance, who was adopted as an infant, seemed to have her future well in hand. She was offered a partial scholarship to play field hockey at an out-of-state university, and she planned to pursue a career in teaching. Her parents were eager to help their daughter move on to this next part of her life. However, perplexing changes occurred halfway through Caroline's final semester in high school. She began skipping classes. She was "forgetting" to do her homework. She spent more time than usual alone in her room. When her parents mentioned college, she ran into her bedroom and slammed the door.

At first her parents were puzzled. But they soon became alarmed when her grades dropped and her personality changed. They encouraged her to talk to a family friend who was a clinical psychologist. Several months of therapy helped Caroline and her parents understand that moving away from her family and familiar surroundings scared her. Perhaps if she were at school, her parents would forget about her. Maybe there would be no home to go back to. After all, it had happened before.

At her parents' suggestion, Caroline decided to put her college plans on hold for a year. She and her parents continued to participate in counseling to sort out the issues that were blocking her development.

The Badeaus of Philadelphia are the parents of 20 children, 18 of whom were adopted. They see a number of differences in the way their birth children and adopted children cope with separation. "Now that our birth children are adolescents—one's 12 and one's 14," says Sue Badeau, "we see



that they are already talking about college ... what they want to do when they grow up and how they can't wait to get out of the house! It's the complete opposite for our adopted kids. It seems really difficult for them to imagine themselves as independent people. They seem almost afraid to leave the security of the family."

Issues of Control

The tension between parents who don't want to give up control and the teenager who wants independence is the hallmark of adolescence. This tension may be especially intense for adopted teens who feel that someone else has always made decisions for them: the birthmother made the decision to place them for adoption; the adoptive parents decided whether to accept them. Parents may feel pressure to control their teens, sometimes motivated by concerns that their teens have a predisposition toward antisocial behaviorespecially when their teens' birthparents have a history of alcoholism or drug abuse.

Parents worry, too, about their teens' sexual behavior. What if their son or daughter becomes sexually active, becomes or gets a partner pregnant, or gets AIDS? Adopted girls may have particular concerns about sexuality and motherhood. On the one hand, they have the adoptive mother, frequently infertile, and on the other, the birthmother, who had a baby but chose not to raise the child. How do adoptive parents help their daughters come to terms with these different role models?

Because of their fears, many adoptive parents tighten the reins precisely when their teenagers want more freedom. "Kids see it as 'You don't trust me," says Anne McCabe, postadoption specialist at Tabor Children's Services in Philadelphia and a family therapist in private practice specializing in working with adoptive families. "It can strongly affect the trust level between parents and their teens." McCabe advises that parents and teens work together to identify options for building trust in important areas such as schoolwork, chores, choice of friends, choice of leisure time activities, and curfew. Parents and their teen can come to an agreement on what constitutes trustworthy behavior in each area. They can determine what privileges or consequences will be earned if the teen either demonstrates or doesn't demonstrate the behavior in an identified time frame. Both parties have input, and there are fewer power struggles.

The Feeling of Not Belonging

Teens raised in their birth families can easily see ways in which they are like their family members. Their musical talent comes from their grandmother ... Their father also has red hair ... Everyone in the family wears glasses. Sometimes adopted teens have no such markers, and, in fact, are reminded frequently -that they are different from their nonadopted friends.

This feeling of being different often begins with their physical appearance. Friends frequently look like one of their parents or another relative. Teens who were adopted may not have a relative they resemble. Friends who comment, "You look like your sister," often make an adopted teen even more aware of his or her "outsider" status, even if he or she happens to look like the sister. Sometimes, adopted teenagers won't even correct friends who comment on a family resemblance. It is easier than having to answer the questions that are sure to follow: Who are your real parents? What do they look like? Why didn't they keep you?

"People who note a family resemblance are really trying to say that the child has taken on some of their parents' mannerisms," says McCabe. "In some families, it can become an inside joke. For other children, it can expose a raw nerve."

Teens who have been adopted into a family of a different race (transracial adoption) often feel more alienated from their families than they did when they were younger. They become highly conscious of the obvious physical differences between themselves and their families, and they struggle to integrate their cultural backgrounds into their perceptions of who they are. Some adopted teens may doubt their authenticity as "real"



Adoptive parents can help transracially adopted teens to feel they belong by making sure that the family frequently associates with other adults and children of the same ethnic background as their ... teen. They should celebrate their own and their teen's culture as a part of daily life. They should talk about race and culture often, yet tolerate no ethnically or racially biased remarks from others. For further discussion of these and other suggestions for transracial families, see the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) factsheet, "Transracial and Transcultural Adoption." To increase the feeling of belonging for an adopted teen of the same race as his or her parents but who may look very different, parents should point out any similarities that exist between family members. Statements such as "Everyone in our family loves to sleep late on weekends" or "Dad and you are both such Rolling Stones fans, you're driving me crazy!" should be made whenever appropriate.

The Need to Connect With The Past

As adopted teens mature, they think more about how their lives would have been different if they had not been adopted or if they had been adopted by another family. They frequently wonder who they would have become under other circumstances. For them, the need to try on different personalities is particularly -meaningful. In addition to all of the possibilities life holds, adoptees realize the possibilities that were lost.

For some adopted teenagers, the feelings of loss and abandonment cause them to think and want more information about their original families. Sometimes they are looking for more information about their medical history. Has anyone in their family had allergies? Heart disease? Cancer? Seventeenvear-old Sheila, who developed unexplained skin rashes, always wondered if others in her birth family had the same condition. As 18-year-old Christopher kept reading more articles about the genetic nature of mental illness, he worried that his mood swings might be an indication of manicdepressive illness that could have been present in his birth family. Adopted as a baby, Sally, now 15, savs, "It's impossible for someone who has not been adopted to understand the vacuum created by not knowing where you came from. No matter how much I read or talk to my parents about it I can't fully explain the emptiness I feel."

Some teenagers want to search for their birthparents. Others say they would appreciate having access to medical information, but that they have made peace with their adoptions.

When Teens Were Adopted at an Older Age

Issues for teens adopted at an older age are even more complex. Often they endured abuse or neglect, lived in several foster homes, or moved from relative to relative before finding a permanent family. Their sense of loss and rejection may be intense, and they may suffer from seriously low self-esteem. They also can have severe emotional and behavioral difficulties as a result of early interruptions in the attachment process with their caregivers. It is no wonder that it is hard for them to trust adults-the adults in their early years, for whatever reason, did not meet their emotional needs.

Teens adopted at an older age bring with them memories of times before joining the adoptive family. It is important for them to be allowed to acknowledge those memories and talk about them. Parents of teens adopted at an older age can expect that they and their teens will require professional guidance at some point, or at several points, to help create and maintain healthy family relationships.

When Parents Should Become Concerned ... What They Can Do

Adopted teens may experience strong emotions, especially related to their adoption. It would be unusual for their adopted status not to affect them. A teen's sense of abandonment,



quest for identity, and need for control probably do not have their origin in poor parenting by the adoptive parents.

If a teen decides to search for his or her birthparents, it is not necessarily an indication of a problem. Research indicates that some adoptees simply have a strong need to know about their biological roots. "One of the misconceptions [that adoptive parents have]," says Marshall Schechter, M.D., professor emeritus in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, "is that they have done something to make their child want to search. They haven't. Everyone needs to know that they are part of a continuum of a family ... As more is learned about genetics, scientists are discovering that many talents or personality traits have a genetic basis. So it should not be surprising that teenagers who focus on developing an identity should begin thinking about their origin."

It is more likely that a teen will have problems in families "where the parents insist that adoption is no different from the biological parent-child relationship," says Kenneth Kirby, Ph.D., from the Department of Clinical Psychiatry at Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago. Teens know that it is different. Teens do better when their parents understand their curiosity about their genetic history and allow them to express their grief, anger, and fear.

The following behaviors may indicate a teen is struggling with adoption issues:

- comments about being treated ...unfairly compared to the family's birth children;
- a new problem in school, such as trouble paying attention;
- a sudden preoccupation with the unknown;
- problems with peers; or
- shutting down emotionally and refusing to share feelings.

If your family style is one of open communication, you may be able to deal with these issues without professional help. Educate yourself through books or workshops run by agencies that provide postadoption services. Join an adoptive parent support group, which can be a valuable resource for families. NAIC can refer you to adoptive parent support groups in your area. Support groups also exist for adopted teenagers.

Chances are that if you have not been comfortable discussing adoption issues with your child in the past, it will be difficult to begin now. "The time to start talking about these issues is when children are younger," says MaryLou Edgar, postadoption specialist with Tressler Lutheran Children's Services in Wilmington, Delaware. "Otherwise, your kids know you aren't comfortable with the subject. It's like sex. One talk when your child is 12 isn't enough." Nonetheless, even if these discussions have not taken place earlier, it is up to the parents to initiate them with their teenagers, Edgar advises.

Many families benefit from seeing a therapist who specializes in working with adoptive families. Adoptive family organizations, adoption agencies in your area, and NAIC may be helpful in suggesting knowledgeable therapists. (See the NAIC factsheet, "After Adoption: The Need for Services," for a discussion of the types of therapists. See Addendum II at the end of this factsheet for other tips.)

As with all teens, you should seek professional help if you see any of the following behaviors:

- drug or alcohol abuse;
- a drastic drop in grades or a sharp increase in skipping school;
- withdrawal from family and friends;
- · risk taking; or
- suicide threats or attempt.

If adoption is part of the problem, openly addressing adoption issues will improve the chances that the treatment will be effective. Parents who recognize that their teens have two sets of parents and who don't feel threatened by that fact are more likely to establish a more positive environment for their teens, one that will make them feel more comfortable to express their feelings. "Kids know early on what subjects their parents are uncomfortable discussing and



will avoid them," says McCabe. "Secrets take a lot of energy. When there is freedom to discuss adoption issues, there is much less of a burden on the family."

"There is a significant difference in the way teenagers perceive themselves when they have information about their birth families—ethnic heritage, abilities, education, or just what they looked like," says Marcie Griffen, postadoption counselor at Hope Cottage Adoption Services in Dallas, Texas. "When they know why they were placed for adoption, it tends to help their self-esteem and give them a better sense of who they are."

Sue Badeau understands her children's need to connect with their biological parents. She and her husband Hector agree that openness is important to the well-being of everyone in the adoption triad (adoptive parents, birthparents, and the adopted person). The Badeaus are committed to helping their children discover their roots if and when they want to. Recently, the Badeaus located the birthmother of four of their children: Flora, Sue Ann, Abel, and George. Flora, 13, was having trouble giving up the fantasy that her birthmother was going to come back for them so "they could live happily ever after." Sue and Hector persuaded their children's

birthmother to assist them in helping Flora put her fantasies to rest. The birthmother helped Flora understand why she and her siblings were placed for adoption. Sue Ann was grateful for the chance to have some of her questions answered, but the boys wanted nothing to do with their birthmother at that time. "I keep telling all of my kids that their families did the best that they could," says Sue. "Birthmothers aren't the horrible monsters people make them out to be, but real people who make mistakes."

Conclusion

Adolescence can be a confusing time for teens. Adopted teens may have special issues connected to identity formation, rejection, control, and the need to connect with one's roots. It helps when parents are understanding and supportive. Questions surrounding these issues are not a reflection of adoptive parents' parenting style. Wanting to know about their birth family does not mean that adopted teens are rejecting their adoptive family. If your family has a longstanding history of openness, honesty, and comfort with adoption, chances are that you will be able to help your teen work through adolescence. When openness has not been your family style, or if you see alarming behaviors such as drug use or withdrawal from enjoyable activities, you should seek professional help.

Mental health experts are confident that adopted teens can confront and resolve their developmental issues just as their nonadopted peers do. With the support and understanding of their parents, adopted teens can forge even stronger family bonds that will continue to nurture their future relationships.

Written by Gloria Hochman and Anna Huston of the National Adoption Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 1995.

Addendum I-Research

Although the few research studies on adopted adolescents conducted by psychiatrists and psychologists do not yield conclusive and consistent results, all agree that parents' attitudes are significant in helping their teens to understand adoption. These are some of the major findings of a few of those studies.

Shared Fate: A Theory and Method of Adoptive Relationships. In a book considered to be a classic in adoption literature, author David Kirk describes parents' coping strategies as playing a critical role in their children's lives. Kirk found two main coping strategies, which he called "acknowledgement of differences" and "rejection of differences." Acknowledging differences allows families to view positively their family's and their children's "uniqueness." On the other hand, rejecting differences forces them to act and pretend to feel like all other families, "sacrificing truth and openness in their family relationship." Kirk suggested that a way out of this dilemma is for adoptive parents to acknowledge and work through their own fate as non-child-bearers, while helping their children to resolve the loss of their biological family, so that they all can build on the special nature of their adoptive family bond.

Identity Formation in the Adopted Adolescent. Researchers Leslie M. Stein and Janet L. Hoopes found that there is no difference between the self-image of adopted teenagers and their nonadopted peers. For both groups, the positive perceptions of their family relationships were the best predictors of identity formation and social adjustment.

Growing Up Adopted: A Portrait of Adolescents and Their Families. A study of 715 adoptive families by the Search Institute, a nonprofit, Minneapolis-based organization that conducts research on children and adolescents, found that adopted adolescents are no more likely than other adolescents to suffer from mental health or identity problems. The Institute suggests, however, that the following factors be considered:

- The adopted teenagers studied tended to live in the Midwest, while the nonadopted teenagers lived in diverse geographical regions.
- The study focused on teens adopted as infants. Results could be different for teens who have spent time in foster care and were adopted at an older age.
- The majority of the transracial adoptees were Asian, not African American, with Caucasian families.

Addendum II—Therapists

NAIC has information on file from therapists who specialize in working with adopted adolescents in the following geographic areas:

- Tustin, California
- St. Petersburg, Florida
- Evanston, Illinois
- Brookline, Cambridge, Harvard, and North Reading, Massachusetts
- Farmington Hills, Michigan
- · Marlton, New Jersey
- Bellmore, New York
- Columbus, Ohio
- Exton, Pennsylvania
- Seattle and Bremerton, Washington

There are certainly others-we just haven't received information about them yet. If you are an adolescent specialist or know of one, please let NAIC know. NAIC also has information on other therapists who work with "all members of the adoption triad" as well as adoption agencies and adoptive parent support groups that may also be good sources of therapist recommendations. Contact NAIC at 5640 Nicholson Lane, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20852, (301) 231-6512, fax (301) 984-8527.

Addendum III—Training Programs

Attachment Center at Evergreen P.O. Box 2764 Evergreen, CO 80439 (303) 674-1910 Contact: Paula L. Pickle, L.C.S.W., Executive Director Title: "Is There Such a Thing as Over Attachment?" (includes material on adolescent suicide); "Attachment and Bonding Therapy With Adolescents"



Adopted Child P.O. Box 9362 Moscow, ID 83843 (208) 882-1794; fax (208) 883-8035 Contact: Lois Melina, Editor and Publisher Title: "The Adopted Adolescent"

Today's Families, Inc. 18326 Middlebelt Rd., #8 Livonia, MI 48152-5007 (810) 559-8310 or (810) 559-8334 Contact: Janice Jordan, Executive Director Title: "Parenting the Adolescent Adoptee"

Adoption Support and Enrichment Services 118 Union Ave. Framingham, MA 01701 (508) 875-6603 Contact: Jeffrey R. LaCure, Clinical Director Title: "Understanding Your Adopted Teen"

Child and Family Development Services 1915 Floyd Ave. Richmond, VA 23220 (804) 278-9786 Contact: Carol Dolber McMurray, Child and Family Trainer/Consultant Title: "Adoption and School Issues" (different formats for adoptive parents and teens)

Fostering Families Colorado Human Services Training and Research Institute and Consortium Colorado State University Social Work Department Fort Collins, CO 80523 (303) 491-5567; toll free in Colorado (800) 544-4383; fax (303) 491=2219 Contact: Mona Schatz, Project Director Title: "Parenting the Poorly Attached Teen"

Linda Yellin and Associates, ACSW 27600 Farmington Rd., Ste. 107 Farmington Hills, MI 48334 (810) 489-9570; fax (810) 737-5567 Contact: Linda Yellin, Director Title: "Working With Adolescent Adoptees and Their Families"

Addendum IV—Training Materials (Publications and Audiovisual Materials)

Publications

American Foster Care Resources, Inc. P.O Box 271 King George, VA 22485 (5470) 775-7410; fax (540) 775-3271 My Life Book (1992), Teen's Kit (13 and older) \$6.00 Our Home—Your Home: A Parenting Skill Handbook for Foster Families, Book One, Book Two and Trainer's Guide (1994) "Book One," \$7.50; "Book Two," \$7.50, trainer's guide and a copy of both handbooks, \$45.00.

People Places, Inc. 1215 N. Augusta St. Staunton, VA 24401 (540) 885-8841 The ABC's of In-Home Problem Solving: A Comprehensive Program of Self-Guided Instruction in Work With Troubled Youth In Foster, Adoption, and Birth Family Homes (1989) \$310.00. Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) c/o CSSC 300 Raritan Center Pkwy, Edison, NI 08818-7816 (908) 225-1900 HOMEWORKS: At-Home Training Resources for Foster Parents and Adoptive Parents (1992). Three workbooks entitled "Helping Children and Youth Manage Separation and Loss," "Helping Children and Youth Develop Positive Attachments," and "Helping Children, Youth and Families Manage the Impact of Placement," \$25 for the whole set: \$9.95 for individual workbooks.

Also available from CWLA, The Ultimate Challenge: Foster Parenting in the 1990's (1992), \$995.

North American Council on Adoptable Children 970 Raymond Ave., Ste. 106 St. Paul, MN 55114-1149 (612) 644-3036; fax (612) 644-9848 Family Preservation: The Second Time Around: A Curriculum for Adoptive Families, (1990), \$30. (Request adolescent version.)

Audiovisual Materials

Adopted Child P.O Box 9362 Moscow, ID 83843 (208) 882-1794; fax (208) 883-8035 The Adopted Adolescent (audiocassette; 60 minutes; 1994) \$12.00.



Hope Cottage Adoption Center House of Tomorrow Productions 4209 McKinney Ave., Ste. 200 Dallas, TX 75205 (214) 526-8721; fax (214) 528-7168 The Gift: A Video About and For Adoptive Families (VHS; 24 minutes; 1990) \$19.95 (plus \$2.50 shipping and handling; Texas residents add 8.25% sales tax).

Northwest Media, Inc. P.O. Box 56 Eugene, OR 97440 (503) 343-6636 or (800) 777-6636; fax (503) 343-0177 The Safe Environment for Foster Children, I: Managing Sexual Acting-Out Behaviors (VHS; 40 minutes)

The Safe Environment for Foster Children, II: Understanding and Dealing with Anger (VHS; 40 minutes)

The Safe Environment for Foster Children, III: A Time and Place for Healing (VHS; 40 minutes; 1992) \$295 each (plus \$5 each shipping and handling).

National Child Welfare Resource Center of Organizational Improvement 1 Post Office Square P.O. Box 15010 Portland, ME 04112 (207) 780-5810; fax (207) 780-5817 Adoption: A Lifelong Process (VHS; 30 minutes; 1987) \$40.

Media Guild

11722 Sorrento Valley Rd., Ste. E San Diego, CA 92121-9823 (619) 755-9191 or (800) 866-9191; fax (619) 755-4931 *American Eyes* (VHS; 30 minutes; 1991) \$295. Montana Post Adoption Center, Inc. P.O. Box 634 Helena, MT 59624 (406) 449-3266 *Exploring the Lifetime Issues of Adoption* (VHS; 4 parts, approximately 26 minutes each; 1992) "Growing Up Adopted"; "Open Adoption Alliances"; "Parenting Plus"; and "Making and Maintaining Connections." \$50.

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Guidelines for consideration in adoption of drug-exposed infants and children.

by Ira J. Chasnoff, M.D. One of the phenomena of the current drug epidemic is the relatively heavy use of drugs by women, particularly women of childbearing age. Recent figures from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) estimates the number annually exposed to illicit drugs in-utero to be 500,000 to 700,000. These figures represent 14 to 18 percent of all newborns

With numbers like these, it is easy to understand why it has become more. and more difficult to find an adoptioneligible child who has not been exposed to some type of drug or alcohol during the intrauterine period. Foster and prospective adoptive parents are faced with making a decision affecting their lives and that of a child at a moment's notice.

The National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research and Education (NAPARE) Child Study Center was created to help prospective adoptive and foster parents answer some of these very critical questions.

Over the past three years we have seen over 100 prenatally drug-exposed infants who had been placed in adoptive homes or were awaiting placement. It is our philosophy that the most successful adoption is the best educated adoption, so we encourage prospective parents to get as much information about the child as early as possible. When parents come to the Child Study

Center to talk about the possibility of adopting a drug-exposed child, we spend at least an hour discussing the impact drug exposure may have on the child and on the adoption. We talk about the possible risks for medical and development outcome as well as the risk of exposure to the AIDS virus.

Once the child is born, we evaluate the infant as soon after birth as possible. A full evaluation includes a medical assessment by a pediatrician and a neurobehavioral evaluation by a developmental psychologist. After these assessments we can give the prospective parents concrete information about the child and the risks the family may face in the coming years. This information is based on a research project NAPARE has been conducting with over 400 drug exposed children and their mothers or care givers. Because these children, many of whom are now three and four years old, have been followed since birth (and, in fact, before birth because their mothers were in our drug treatment program) we are bringing to light some important information about how prenatal drug and/or alcohol exposure affects a child's early development.

What are the risk factors prospective parents must consider even before a child is born? There are five important ones:

1. Prematurity. Withdrawal from heroin or use of cocaine increases the possibility that a woman will deliver prematurely (prior to 38 weeks gestation). Premature infants are at risk for respiratory distress, low birth weight, delayed development and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

2. Low birth weight. Even at full term, a drug or alcohol affected infant may be small. Many drugs impede blood flow in the mother's body resulting in the fetus' poor growth. The use of drugs interferes with the mother's appetite drive, so the fetus may be affected by her poor eating habits. Low birth weight can be serious; it is known to be a factor in increased rate of death in the first year. Low birth weight infants that survive and are well-cared for usually catch up in weight and height during their first year.

3. Abruptio placentae. Cocaine affects the tissue of the placenta, weakening its hold on the wall of the newborn. Abruptio placentae is associated with a high rate of stillbirth or brain damage due to lack of oxygen.

4. Congenital malformations. Cocaine and alcohol are the only two drugs found so far that produce anomalies in the child. Alcohol use can result in fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) which is associated with abnormalities in facial structure and malformation of the heart, kidneys, or other organs.. It is also a leading cause of mental retardation. Cocaine is thought to place the infant at increased risk for anomalies of the kidneys, small or large intestine. and limb reduction deformities (missing toes, fingers, arm or leg).

5. Sexually transmitted diseases. Babies whose mothers use cocaine/crack or other drugs are at increased risk for exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. especially syphilis. All states require women to be tested during pregnancy, so it would be unusual to find a baby with congenital syphilis if the mother received prenatal care. However, many addicts do not get prenatal care.

The life-style of addicted women is such that the risk of acquiring the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus associated with AIDS, is great even if the mother did not take drugs intravenously.

With these facts in mind, the next question is what should prospective adoptive parents find out about the child during the early neonatal period?

The infant's birth weight. A normal birth weight (greater than 5 pounds, 8 ounces) decreases overall risk enormously.

Head circumference. Head size reflects interuterine brain growth.

This measurement is a standard part of the examination babies are given immediately after birth. If the head size is small (less than 33 centimeters or 13 inches), the child may be at increased risk for developmental delays. However, remember that drug-exposure does not mean that a child will necessarily be slow or mentally retarded.

A thorough physical examination. Obvious congenital anomalies can be discovered early in the neonatal period. A renal ultra-sound test should be given to make sure the kidneys are not malformed. Tests for syphilis and AIDS. As we mentioned before, a woman is routinely tested for syphilis during her prenatal exams, but if the mother had no care, the baby should be tested. Test for exposure to the HIV virus may be done at delivering physician's discre-tion. If the mother had a test for the HIV antibody in her third trimester of pregnancy and it was negative, there is no need for testing the baby.

If a woman is HIV positive, it is almost certain that the newborn will test HIV positive. This is because the HIV virus and antibody can cross the placenta from the mother to child. In the neonatal stage of an infant's life, it is possible to know if a baby tests positive because of his/her own antibodies or the mother's antibodies.

You can't be sure a baby is truly HIV positive until it is 15 to 18 months old. If by 15 to 18 months, a child has converted from HIV positive to HIV negative, it means the child is not infected. If tests at that age are still positive it means the child has been in-fected with the virus. Approximately 30 to 40 percent of the infants who test HIV-positive at birth will remain positive after 18 months of age and will eventually develop AIDS.

We recommend HIV testing of all pro-spective adoptive infants if the mother was not tested. If a state's confidentially laws prohibit testing an infant prior to taking custody, the testing should be done as soon as custody has been taken.

Neurological and behavioral state. Prospective parents should ask about the baby's behavior. Does he/she cry constantly? Sleep constantly? Go instantly from deep sleep to agitated crying? Interact appropriately with care givers? Respond to cuddling with pleasure? These are important questions because, if the mother's drug use has caused neurological damage and made the child particularly irritable or sleepy, he/she may have difficulty establishing good bonding with caregivers or adapting to its environment. However, there are specific comforting and parenting interventions that will help an infant get beyond this period.

Many foster parents and adoptive parents have gone through long periods with difficult, drug-exposed infants who have eventually become well-adjusted, lovable children.

As these children get older, most can do quite well with appropriate intervention. Even if they are in stable adoptive homes, some will need physical continued on page 10





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Guidelines

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therapy to help with motor development, occupational therapy to help with fine motor development and feeding difficulties, and speech therapy to help with speech and language development.

The children who come to the Child Study Center are evaluated medically and developmentally on a regular basis. At the first sign of a delay or other difficulty, they are referred to appropriate programs for help.

Prospective adoptive parents often ask if drug or alcohol exposed children are adoptable. The answer is yes, definitely in many cases. Parents must realize that the children will require extra attention and extra love. They may have special needs that will require extra money. But parenting a drug or alcohol affected child can be very fulfilling if the parents start out with good information about the child and can get the right support services over the long run. *Copyright 1991. National Association*

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Ira J. Chasnoff, M.D. is president and medical director of NAPARE, the National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research and Education. He is Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, Illinois.

Recently he spoke at the North American Council on Adoptable Children 16th Annual Training Conference.

Letters

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Dear Option of Adoption,

People have told me that time goes fast when you have children, but I can't believe a month has already gone by since I first held Jared in my arms. It's been a wonderfully hectic time and things are going well.

things are going well. Keep up the great work of creating miracles on a daily basis—a friend wisely said it's a miracle of life, but even more a miracle that adoption occurs. You and your staff certainly have a gift for making these miracles happen!

Take care, Shari Boone

Please see our Letters on Open Adoption column for some additional letters.

We would love to hear from you! Drop us a letter today at: the Option of Adoption 504 East Haines Street Philadelphia, PA 19144

Open adoption letters

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agency representative or social worker, just members of two families gathering to celebrate new ideas, and perhaps mourn lost opportunities.

We had arranged We had arranged our plans in the early afternoon. By late in the day, I had begun to reconsider the viability of our meeting.

I half jokingly shared my concerns with Josh's sister Anne and her husband Jim, with whom we were staying; "What if I walk into Shannon's house and people jump out of the closets with guns and won't let me take Max with me when it's time to go?" My brotherin-law (6'6" and solidly built) practically leapt out of his chair; "That's it, I'm going in with you."

I wanted to share you with the family whose roots you share, and yet I was anxious that in doing so, I'd lose you. After four months you were a full member of our family, we were in love with you and you seemed to have adjusted happily to us. I did not want to jeopardize your position in our family.

The early evening passed, while my fears neither increased or diminished. I was determined to follow through on my promise to meet Shannon, however shaky and unsure I felt going into it. ("Be realistic!" I kept repeating to myself. "They, too, have had very little advance warning—not enough time to prepare an ambush.").

Jim drove up Shannon's street at 10:05 p.m. about ten minutes early for our scheduled meeting. We found her home easily, and reassured ourselves by observing the "normality" of the surrounding environment. It was a quiet, misty evening, following a day of early summer flood rains. We waited in the car, knowing Shannon had to arrive home from work, and wanting her to have a brief opportunity to be home before we appeared. After a brief wait, Shannon drove up, bounced out of her car, bounded up the short flight of stairs leading to her front door and disappeared inside.

Watching all this from the obscurity of Jim's car, I felt like a spy in a seedy detective story.

We counted to 60 out loud, then got out of the car, we unbuckled you and Gil from your car seats and proceeded to Shannon's house.

Suddenly it was all so real, I could only keep going. I knocked several times on the door without any response before Jim took over. He peered through the door's high glass window and reported: "Here comes someone. It's her. She's smiling, pretty..." He ducked out of the window and a second later Shannon threw open the door. We were all together- sharing the moment.

Just like our phone call—the ice broke immediately. We hugged each other and completed a round of introductions with your older birth brother, grandmother, and uncle. And then, we were just visiting. The tension was gone. We took pictures and videos, gave the older boys juice and treat, and watched them interact. Most of all, we looked at, played with, and talked about you. We compared notes on your's and Anthony's development, discussed Shannon's pregnancy, gawked and giggled over your beauty, size and responsiveness, tried to figure our what features you got from your birth mom (definitely your cheeks and that sparkle in your eye).

Shannon also talked briefly about her relationship with Reggie, your birth father, and described him.

Visiting your original family, sitting in the comfortable living room of their rambling home. I clearly saw that we had not rescued you from what would've been a hellish life. You would have survived and been loved and cared for had you grown up with your birth family. Your life would have been totally different, no doubt, but you would have managed just fine. This realization caused me to re examine my preconceptions about adoption, already four months into it. In no way could I ever again consider myself or our family as your savior.

So anyway, our visit was a success. And then it was time to leave, I had not anticipated that saying good-bye would be the most difficult part of the evening, I suddenly felt confused as we stood up to gather our accessories. Shannon's mom began crying and I could think of nothing to say. "I'm sorry" and "Please don't cry" occurred to me, What was I sorry for, that I got to take you home? That your birth family had chosen to delegate raising you? I hated facing the sadness. Knowing Shannon had chosen the path of adoption and that our family's involvement flowed from her original decision did nothing to minimize my feeling that I was stealing you away. Did I regret leaving with you? It was hard to remember that I was not the source of their pain and hard to grant them space to acknowledge their grief. I could not escape the reality of their sorrow, and my inability to resolve it. Handling their sadness is not my job, raising you is. And part of that responsibility in-

And part of that responsibility includes maintaining contact with people who love you and want the best for you, regardless of their involvement in your daily life.

> Love, Mom (and Dad)

Dear Ginny (and Josh),

I am sorry it has taken me so long to write, but it has taken me awhile to deal with what I have done. I miss Max so much, but I know I have done the right thing and that he is being well taken care of, and couldn't have had a better

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CARING FOR COCAINE-EXPOSED INFANTS

Parents who are considering adopting an infant exposed to cocaine in utero should be aware that the child may have suffered central nervous system damage. A number of unique characteristics have been observed in cocaine-exposed infants, including irritability and hypersensitivity. The following techniques are suggestions for helping these infants maintain control and improve their tolerance for stimulation.

- Cocaine-exposed infants need more undivided attention than the average baby. Do not allow the infant to become frantic. Early signs that an infant is becoming over-stimulated are yawns, sneezes, motor agitation, color changes, and avoiding eye contact. If this happens, give him/her "time out".
- 2. The use of swaddling and pacifiers is highly recommended (swaddling is wrapping the child in long, narrow strips of cloth or baby blankets). If the infant has escalated into the frantic state, swaddle the child immediately. When he/she is calmer, use a pacifier. If this technique doesn't work, hold the infant closely, in a vertical position, and rock gently. Up and down rocking, as opposed to side to side, appears to be more comforting to most cocaine-exposed infants.
- 3. When the baby is calm, he/she can learn to control body movements. Reswaddle if the signs of overstimulation appear.
- 4. Stimulate the infant gently, interacting with him/her. Because these babies are so cranky and unresponsive, parents are often inclined to leave them to themselves. However, they are often willing to interact a bit after feeding. Interactions will improve the child's tolerance for stimulation and may improve self-control.
- 5. Be especially sensitive to the baby's ability to convey information to you. His/her responses will let you know which mode of stimulation is best (talking, touching, looking, holding). Use one of these modes until you get a response. Then try adding a second stimulus. If you begin to see early signs that the infant is becoming overstimulated, decrease the stimulus. The human face is often too complex a stimulus for the baby to-relate to. Eye contact with caregivers can overwhelm the infant and make hime/her frantic.

It is unclear if these interventions will completely decrease the irritability and hypersensitivity caused by prenatal cocaine exposure. It is clear that committed adoptive parents who are well prepared for the needs of cocaine-exposed infants can be the best intervention the child receives.

(Condensed from "Cocaine Use During Pregnancy: Its Effects on Infant Development and Implications for Adoptive Parents" a copyrighted article by Judith Schaffer, M.A., published by New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children, Inc. Printed with permission. Copies can be ordered from NYS CCC, 614 W. State Street, Ithaca, NY 14850 for \$1.50 (inludes \$.50 postage and handling). Bulk rate for orders of 50 or more copies is \$.30 each copy plus \$4 postage and handling for each 50 copies ordered.



CHILDREN WITH HIV OR AIDS

National experts are predicting that increasing numbers of children within the child welfare system will be diagnosed as testing positive for HIV. Less information is available about pediatric AIDS than for adult onset AIDS. Prospective adoptive families should check with local experts in communicable disease for the most current information about treatment protocols, and with local or regional pediatric AIDS clinics for information regarding care requirements for children.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) occurs when the HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) gradually destroys the body's immune system, leaving it vulnerable to opportunistic, potentially fatal illnesses which would not infect a person with a normally functionning immune system.

What we do know: Most of the pediatric cases of ARC or HIV are due to two sources of infection: 1. intravenous transmission from contaminated blood transfusions or 2. perinatal transmission from an infected mother. Almost all infants born to HIV-infected mothers will test positive to the AIDS antibody test at birth, but less than half of these HIV-positive infants will develop AIDS. Some recent tests show a perinatal transmission rate of approximately 15%.

By 15-18 months of age, infants who lose all trace of HIV antibody should remain clinically well, do not show signs of opportunistic infencts and shift or convert from prositive to negative HIV status. HIV-infected infants will usually generate their own HIV antibodies after the 15-18 month indeterminate period, show evidence of immune deficiency and develop clinical symptoms of AIDS.

Family members can not "catch" AIDS through casual contact such as sharing toys or dinner utensils, kissing, bathing, etc. There has been no documented case of transmission of HIV between members of the same household except from sexual intercourse or sharing of blood-contaminated needles with an infected person.

In infants and young children, families must vigilantly monitor treatable infections and also nutritional needs. Prompt immunizations and avoidance of live viral vaccines is recommended. At the same time, parents must balance the child's need for social interactions with children their own age and involvement in daycare and preschool activities.

For HIV-infected children, if the virus infects the brain, the child may suffer from progressive deterioration of cognitive and motor abilities which will require infant stimulation or special education programs.

National Adoption Information 11426 Rockville Pike Suite 410 Rockville, MD 20852 301-231-6512

TRANSRACIAL AND TRANSCULTURAL ADOPTION

Transracial or transcultural adoption means placing a child who is of one race or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another race or ethnic group. In the United States these terms usually refer to the placement of children of color or children from another country with Caucasian adoptive parents.

People choose to adopt transracially or transculturally for a variety of reasons. Fewer young Caucasian children are available for adoption in the United States than in years past, and some adoption agencies that place Caucasian children do not accept singles or applicants older than 40. Some prospective adoptive parents feel connected to a particular race or culture because of their ancestry or through personal experiences such as travel or military service. Others simply like the idea of reaching out to children in need, no matter where they come from.

Adoption experts have different opinions about this kind of adoption. Some say that children available for adoption should always be placed with a family with at least one parent of the same race or culture as the child. This is so the child can develop a strong racial or cultural identity. These people say that adoption agencies with a strong commitment to working with families of color and that are flexible in their procedures are very successful in recruiting "same race" families. Other experts say that race should not be considered at all when selecting a family for a child. To them, a loving family that can meet the needs of a particular child is all that matters. Still others suggest that after an agency works very hard to recruit a same-race family for a certain period of time but does not find one, the child should be placed with a loving family of any race or culture who can meet the child's needs.

Despite the experts' differing opinions, there are many transracial and transcultural families, and many more will be formed. If you are or wish to be a parent in one of these families, this fact sheet will help you by answering two questions: (1) What should you do to prepare for adopting a child of a race or culture different from yours? and (2) After adoption, what can you do to help your child become a stable, happy, healthy individual, with a strong sense of cultural and racial identity?



How You Can Prepare for a Transracial or Transcultural Adoption

Preparation for adoption is important for anyone thinking about adopting a child. It is even more important for parents considering transracial or transcultural adoption because it will introduce you to all aspects of adoptive parenthood, help you learn about adoption issues, and help you identify the type of child you wish to parent. Any adoption agency that conducts and supervises transracial or transcultural adoptions should provide this important service. If you are undertaking an independent adoption, you should seek counseling and training in these areas. You should also read as many articles and books as you can on the subject. (See the resource list at the end of this fact sheet.)

The following sections describe some issues to consider as you prepare for a transracial or transcultural adoption.

Examine Your Beliefs and Attitudes About Race and Ethnicity

While you may think you know yourself and your family members very well, it is important to examine your beliefs and attitudes about race and ethnicity before adopting a child of another race or culture. Try to think if you have made any assumptions about people because of their race or ethnic group. There are two reasons for this exercise: (1) to check yourself—to be sure this type of adoption will be right for you; and (2) to prepare to be considered "different."

When you adopt a child of another race or culture, it is not only the child who is different. Your family becomes a "different" family. Some people are comfortable with difference. To them, difference is interesting, wonderful, and special. Other people are not so comfortable with difference, and are scared by it. Thus, some friends, family members, acquaintances, and even strangers will rush to your side to support you, while others may make negative comments and stare. During the pre-adoption phase, you should think about how you will respond to the second group in a way that will help your child feel good about himself or herself. (We'll give you some ideas a little later.)

When your child is young, an extra hug and a heart-to-heart talk might be all it takes to help him or her through a difficult situation. While the hugs and the heart-to-heart talks never stop, as your child gets older, you and your child will need more specific coping skills to deal with the racial bias you might face together as a family. Are you ready to fully understand these issues and help your family deal with whatever happens?

Think About Your Lifestyle

Before considering a transracial or transcultural adoption, take a look at your current lifestyle. Do you already live in an integrated neighborhood, so that your child will be able to attend an integrated school? If not, would you consider moving to a new neighborhood? Do you already have friends of different races and ethnic groups? Do you visit one another's homes regularly? Do you attend multicultural festivals? Do you enjoy different kinds of ethnic foods? How much of a leap would it be to start doing some of these things?

It is important for children of color growing up with Caucasian parents to be around adults and children of many ethnic groups, and particularly, to see adult role models who are of the same race or ethnic group. These people can be their friends, teach them about their ethnic heritage, and as they mature, tell them what to expect when they are an adult in your community. Can you make these types of relationships available for your child?

Consider Adopting Siblings

It is always good for siblings to be adopted together. It is no different in the case of transracial or transcultural adoption. Siblings who are adopted together have the security of seeing another person in the family who looks like them. They are able to bring a part of their early history and birth family with them to their adoptive family, which may help them adjust better. And with internationally adopted children, being together might mean they will be able to keep up their native language.

Let's say, then, that you have examined your beliefs and attitudes about race and ethnicity. You have thought about your lifestyle and considered adopting siblings. You are sure you want to adopt a child from another race or culture. What comes next?

How You Can Help Your Child To Become a Stable, Happy, Healthy Individual With a Strong Sense of Racial or Cultural Identity

The seven parenting techniques listed below were compiled from books and articles on adoption and by interviewing experts in transracial and transcultural adoption. Some of these "techniques" are common sense and apply to all adopted children. However, with transracially or transculturally adopted children, these techniques are especially important.

Parents in a transracial or transcultural family should do the following:

- (1) Become intensely invested in parenting;
- (2) Tolerate no racially or ethnically biased remarks;
- (3) Surround yourselves with supportive family and friends;
- (4) Celebrate all cultures;
- (5) Talk about race and culture;
- (6) Expose your child to a variety of experiences so that he or she develops physical and intellectual skills that build self-esteem; and
- (7) Take your child to places where most of the people present are from his or her race or ethnic group.

The next sections provide more information on these techniques.

3

Become Intensely Invested in Parenting

Dr. Larry Schreiber, former president of the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), an umbrella organization for a large number of adoptive parent support groups in the United States and Canada, wrote a column about his transracial adoption experience in the Winter 1991 issue of *Adoptalk*,¹ the NACAC newsletter. He characterizes transracial parenting as a "roller coaster of exaggerated parenting." As a Caucasian adoptive father of African-American, Latino, Korean, Cambodian, East Indian, and Caucasian children, he describes transracial parenting as the most joyous experience of his life. He admits that he doesn't really know what it is like to endure the racially-biased name-calling that his children have experienced, but he was always there for them when they needed to be comforted and to help them get through those difficult times.

Dr. Schreiber says that transracial parenting has both complicated and enriched his life. He had to work hard to help his children develop their cultural pride and self-esteem in a world that sometimes does not understand or is unkind to people from different cultures. However, he believes his children did overcome these difficulties and were able to develop positive cultural identities, mostly because of the help his family received from adoptive parent support groups and from other adults of the same cultural groups as his children.

Ms. RoAnne Elliott is another experienced adoptive parent in an interracial family who has written about the importance of investing in parenting. An African-American woman, Ms. Elliott encourages parents in transracial families to empower themselves and believe strongly that their family belongs together. She writes, "You need the firm knowledge in your heart and in your mind that you are the best parent for your children. This empowerment is key, since you can't parent well if you don't feel confident, competent, and entitled to do so."² She says that being in an interracial family is the opportunity of a lifetime, allowing you to embark on "a journey of personal transformation, growing in your ability to nurture your children along the way. This involves an alert awareness of difference and an optimistic expectation that cultural differences among us will lead to rewarding personal connections and friendships."³

The message, then, is that transracial parenting is not laid-back, catch-as-catch-can parenting. According to these two experienced adoptive parents, the demands are great, but so are the rewards.

¹Schreiber, p. 2.

²Elliott, p. 8.

³Elliott, p. 8.



Tolerate No Racially or Ethnically Biased Remarks

As adoptive parents in an interracial or intercultural family, you should refuse to tolerate any kind of racially or ethnically biased remark made in your presence. This includes remarks about your child's race or ethnic group, other races and ethnic groups, or any other characteristic such as gender, religion, age and physical or other disability. Make it clear that it is not okay to make fun of people who are different, and it is not okay to assume that all people of one group behave the same way.⁴ Teach your children how to handle these remarks, by saying, for instance, "I find your remark offensive. Please don't say that type of thing again," or "Surely you don't mean to be critical, you just don't have experience with . . ." or "You couldn't be deliberately saying such an inappropriate comment in front of a child. You must mean something else."

Try to combat the remarks while giving the person a chance to back off or change what has been said. This way you will teach your child to stand up to bias without starting a fight—which could put your child at risk. In addition, by being gracious and giving others a chance to overcome their bias/ignorance, you can help to change their beliefs and attitudes over time. Positive exchanges about race will always be more helpful than negative ones.

Surround Yourselves With Supportive Family and Friends

While you were thinking about adopting transracially or transculturally, did you find some people in your circle of family and friends who were especially supportive of your plans to become a multicultural family? If so, surround yourself with these people! In addition, seek out other adoptive families, other transracial or multicultural families, and other members of your child's racial or ethnic group. You will be surprised by how helpful many people will want to be, whether it is to show you how to cook an ethnic dish or teach you some words in their language. According to Ms. RoAnne Elliott, "You need a supportive community comprised of many races—those who will be role models and provide inspiration, those who will stimulate your thinking, those who fill your desire for cultural diversity, and those who will challenge you in constructive and respectful ways."⁵

Celebrate All Cultures

As a multicultural family, you should value all cultures. Teach your child that every ethnic group has something worthwhile to contribute, and that diversity is this country's and your family's strength. For example, you might give your Korean daughter a Korean doll, but you might also start a collection for her of dolls of many different racial and ethnic groups. If your child is from South America, go to the Latino festival in your town, but also visit the new Native-American art exhibit, eat at the Greek fair, and dance at the Polish dance

⁵Elliott, p. 8.

⁴Melina, 1988, p. 2.

hall. Incorporate the art, music, drama, literature, clothing, and food of your child's ethnic group and others into your family's daily life.⁶ Invite friends from other cultures to celebrate your holidays and special occasions, and attend their events as well.

The area of religion brings up special concerns. You may wish to take your child to a place of worship in your community where most of the members are from the same ethnic group as your child; for example, you could bring your East Indian child to a Hindu temple or your Russian child to a Russian Orthodox church. What an opportunity to meet people of his ethnic group, find adult role models, and learn the customs of his heritage! However, before you do this, be sure you could be supportive if your child decides to practice that religion. If you have your heart set on raising your child in your own family's religion—one that is different from the religion practiced in the place of worship you will visit—tell your child that the visit is for a cultural, not religious, purpose or perhaps decide not to visit at all. Practically speaking, you can impose your religious practice on your child for only a few years. As an adult, your child will ultimately decide whether to practice, your family's religion at all, and whether it will be one that people of his or her heritage often practice, your family's religion, or yet another one that he or she chooses.

While it is important to teach your child that differences among people are enriching, it is also important to point out similarities. One expert suggests that in an adoptive family the ratio should be two similarities for each difference.⁷ For instance, to a young child you might say, "Your skin is darker than Daddy's, but you like to play music, just like he does, and you both love strawberry ice cream." As much as you want to celebrate your child's distinctive features, he or she also needs to feel a sense of belonging in the family.

Talk About Race and Culture

How has race or culture defined you? What is life like for a Latino person in America? What is life like for a Caucasian person? An African-American person? An Asian person? How are persons of different ethnic groups treated by police officers, restaurant employees, social organizations, or government agencies? What do you think about interracial dating and marriage? As a multicultural family, you need to address these and other racial matters.

Talk about racial issues, even if your child does not bring up the subject. Use natural opportunities, such as a television program or newspaper article that talks about race in some way. Let your child know that you feel comfortable discussing race—the positive aspects as well as the difficult ones. On the positive side, a child of a certain race may be given preferential treatment or special attention. On the other hand, even a young child needs to know that while your family celebrates difference, other families do not know many people

Van Gulden, F.A.C.E. Conference Workshop, 1992.

^{&#}x27;Thorp, p. 36.

who are different. These families are sometimes afraid of what they do not know or understand, and may react at times in unkind ways. It can be difficult to deal with such issues, especially when your child is young and does not yet know that some adults have these negative feelings, but you have to do it. You will help your child become a strong, healthy adult by preparing him or her to stand up in the face of ignorance, bias, or adversity.

Stand behind your children if they are the victim of a racial incident or have problems in your community because of the unkind actions of others. This does not mean you should fight their battles for them, but rather support them and give them the tools to deal with the blows that the world may hand them. Confront racism openly. Discuss it with your friends and family and the supportive multicultural community with which you associate. Rely on adults of color to share their insights with both you and your child. Above all, if your child's feelings are hurt, let him talk about the experience with you, and acknowledge that you understand.

Ms. Lois Melina,⁸ a Caucasian adoptive parent of Korean children and a noted adoption writer, lists five questions for you to ask your child to help him or her deal with problem situations:

- (1) What happened?
- (2) How did that make you feel?
- (3) What did you say or do when that happened?
- (4) If something like that happens again, do you think you will deal with it the same way?
- (5) Would you like me to do something?

It is important to leave the choice of your involvement up to your child. This way, you show that you are available to help, but also that you have confidence in your child's ability to decide when your help is needed.

Expose Your Child to a Variety of Experiences so That He or She Develops Physical and Intellectual Skills That Build Self-Esteem

This parenting technique is important for all children, but it is especially important for children of color. Children of color need every tool possible to build their self-esteem. While society has made strides in overcoming certain biases and forms of discrimination, there remain many subtle and not-so-subtle color or race-related messages that are discouraging and harmful to young egos. Be alert to negative messages that are associated with any race or culture. Point them out as foolish and untrue. Emphasize that each person is unique and that we all bring our own individual strengths and weaknesses into the world. Frequently compliment your child on his or her strengths. Draw attention to the child's

⁸Melina, 1988, pp. 3-4.

ability to solve math problems, play ball, dance, play a musical instrument, ride a bike, take photographs, perform gymnastics, or any other activity that increases confidence. Self-esteem is built on many small successes and lots of acknowledgement. A strong ego will be better able to deal with both the good and the bad elements of society.

As your child gets older, keep in touch with his or her needs: this might mean buying him or her a few of the "in" clothes or enrolling him or her on the popular teams. Stay in tune with your child's natural skills and talents, and do whatever you can to help him or her develop them at each age.

Take Your Child to Places Where Most of the People Present are from His or Her Race or Ethnic Group

If you bring your African-American child to an African-American church, or your Peruvian child to a Latino festival, your child will experience being in a group in which the number of people present of his ethnic group is larger than the number of Caucasians present. Adoptive family support group events are other places where this might happen. Children usually enjoy these events very much. If you adopted a young child from another country, you might consider taking a trip to that country when the child is older and can understand what the trip is all about. Many adoptive families who take such a trip find it to be a wonderful learning experience.⁹

Another benefit of such an experience is that it might be one of the few times when you feel what it is like to be in the minority. This will increase your awareness and ability to understand your child's experience as a minority individual.

For Your Information

Transracial adoption is a "hot" topic in the media and in adoption circles. There is quite a lot of activity in this area of adoption practice. We offer the following brief sections for your information.

Where Can I Find Out More About Transracial or Transcultural Adoption?

The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) often receives questions about which adoption agencies place children transculturally or transracially. The answer is twofold. Intercountry adoption agencies register with the NAIC. Their names often signal the kinds of adoptions they conduct (for example, if they have the word "international" in their name). These agencies are marked with an asterisk in NAIC's *National Adoption Directory*. However, many agencies are not as open about their policy on transracial adoption because of some of the controversial issues surrounding this type of adoption. Ask your local

Pederson, p. 42.

adoption agencies about their policies in this area, especially if you are strongly considering this type of adoption.

Legislation

In early 1994, transracial adoption was the subject of a bill before Congress submitted by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio. After intense debate, the bill passed in May. One positive outcome of the debate is that people who historically have been on opposite sides of the question are beginning to reach some common ground. One point that everyone agrees on is that adults of all cultures need to work together to help adopted children of all cultures reach their highest potential.

Statistics

Although available statistics are rough estimates, several sources show that the percentage of transracial or transcultural adoptions in the United States is significant. For example, one source estimates that 1,000 to 2,000 African-American children are adopted by Caucasian families each year.¹⁰ Data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service show that U.S. families adopted 7,088 children from other countries in 1990. This means that there were roughly 8,500 transracial or transcultural adoptions in 1990. In that same year, there were almost 119,000 adoptions of all kinds.¹¹ Since approximately half of the adoptions in any year are stepparent or relative adoptions, in 1990 there were about 59,500 nonrelative adoptions. The percentage of transracial/transcultural adoptions (8,500 of 59,500) then, comes out to more than 14 percent.

Conclusion

Adopting a child of another race or culture can be a richly rewarding choice for many families, although there are also many unique challenges and concerns. Hopefully the information provided in this fact sheet will provide food for thought and become part of the ongoing discussion in your home. The resources listed at the end of this fact sheet should also be helpful. If the NAIC can provide more information, please don't hesitate to contact us at 11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 410, Rockville, MD 20852, (301) 231-6512.

Written by Debra G. Smith, ACSW, Director of the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 1994

¹⁰ Brooks, p. 10.

¹¹ Flango and Flango, p. 317.

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RESOURCES

Magazines/Newsletters

Adoptalk North American Council on Adoptable Children 970 Raymond Ave., Ste. 106 St. Paul, MN 55114-1149 (612) 644-3036

Adopted Child P.O. Box 9362 Moscow, ID 83843 (208) 882-1794

F.A.C.E. Facts Families Adopting Children Everywhere P.O. Box 28058 Northwood Station Baltimore, MD 21239 (410) 488-2656

Interrace Magazine Biracial Child Magazine P.O. Box 12048 Atlanta, GA 30355 (404) 364-9690

OURS 3333 Highway 100 North Minneapolis, MN 55422 (612) 535-4829

Pact Press 3315 Sacramento St., Ste. 239 San Francisco, CA 94118 (415) 221-6957

National Organizations

Adoptive Families of America (AFA) 3333 Highway 100 North Minneapolis, MN 55422 (612) 535-4829 Has many books, toys, etc., of different cultures for sale National Council for Adoption (NCFA) 1930 17th St., N.W. Washington, DC 20009 (202) 328-1200

North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) 970 Raymond Ave., Ste. 106 St. Paul, MN 55114-1149 (612) 644-3036

Note: Each of the above organizations holds conferences in which workshops on relevant topics are audiotaped. For a list of all workshop/tape titles, contact Von Ende Communications, 3211 St. Margaret Dr., Golden Valley, MN 55422 (612) 529-4493.

Latin American Adoptive Families 40 Upland Road Duxbury, MA 02332 (617) 934-6756

People of Every Stripe P.O. Box 12505 Portland, OR 97212 (503) 282-0612

Local Parent Support Groups

There are too many of these to mention here. We have listed a few of the larger, well-known ones. Contact NAIC, AFA, or NACAC for listings of all groups in your state.

Biracial Family Network Box 489 Chicago, IL 60653

Families Adopting Children Everywhere (FACE) P.O. Box 28058 Northwood Station Baltimore, MD 21239 (410) 488-2656

Interracial Family Association of Scattle 2802 33rd Ave. South Seattle, WA 98144 • (206) 764-2746

Interracial Family Circle P.O. Box 53290 Washington, DC 20009 (410) 325-9739



Latin America Parents Association (LAPA) South-Central New Jersey Chapter P.O. Box 2013 Brick, NJ 08723 (908) 249-5600 Northern New Jersey (201) 385-6278; New York (718) 236-8689; Connecticut (203) 721-0197; Washington, DC, Metro Area (301) 431-3407.

Pact, an Adoption Alliance 3315 Sacramento St., Ste. 239 San Francisco, CA 94118 (415) 221-6957

Audiovisual Materials

"Adoption: The Korean Teen Experience" (VHS; 36 minutes; 1984) Contains excerpts from a discussion among teenagers of Korean origin in which they share their experiences of being adopted by American families. Available from Children's Home Society of Minnesota, 2230 Como Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108 (612) 646-6393. Purchase price \$70.00; rental \$30.00 (plus \$4.00 shipping and handling; Minnesota residents add 6.5% sales tax).

"American Eyes" (VHS; 30 minutes; 1991)

Tells the story of a Korean-born 16-year-old boy named John who was adopted by a Caucasian American family at the age of 10 months as he encounters racial prejudice at school and suffers blows to his self-esteem and cultural identity. The tape touches on a number of other topics, including America's pluralistic society, minority rights, and contributions of multiethnic and multiracial groups. Excellent for support groups of families with teenage children adopted from other countries. Available from The Media Guild, 11722 Sorrento Valley Rd., Ste. E, San Diego, CA 92121-9823 (619) 755-9191 or (800) 886-9191, fax (619) 755-4931. \$295.00

"A Candid Talk About Loss in Adoption" (VHS; 38 minutes; 1990)

Discusses losses incurred by adopted persons and the stages of child development related to those losses and shows how adoptive parents can help children understand and deal with issues of loss. Issues of cultural and ethnic identity in transracial adoption are also covered. Features Mary Martin Mason and Deborah Johnson, both adopted persons and adoption professionals. Available from AdopTapes, 4012 Lynn Ave., Edina, MN 55416 (612) 922-1136. \$29.95 (plus \$3.50 shipping and handling).

"A New Life in America" (VHS; 10 minutes; 1991)

Explains how and why Korean adoption works in the United States and what Korean-born children feel and experience as adoptees. Provides an orientation to adoption as a lifelong experience that is helpful for prospective adoptive parents, their extended families, young adoptees, and their classmates. Available from the Children's Home Society of Minnesota, 2230 Como Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108 (612) 646-6393. \$15.00 (plus \$4.00 shipping and handling; Minnesota residents add 6.5% sales tax).

"Raising a Child of a Different Race or Ethnic Background" (audiocassette; 90 minutes; 1990) Covers the issues families face when they decide to adopt transracially or transculturally. Emphasizes the need for families to help their children develop skills to deal with being minorities and a positive attitude toward their race or culture. Available from Adopted Child, P.O. Box 9362, Moscow, ID 83843 (208) 882-1794. \$11.00

"Transracial Adoption: Now That They Are Grown" (audiocassette)

An audiotape of an actual workshop session on transracial adoption as seen through the eyes and experiences of several adult adoptees. Facilitated by Barbara Tremitiere, it presents pertinent questions that help the listener assess the challenges and implications of transracial adoptions. Available from Tremitiere, Ward and Associates, c/o Barbara Tremitiere, 122 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403. \$10.00 (plus \$1.50 shipping and handling).

"Winning at Adoption" (VHS, 120 minutes; 3 audiocassettes, 60, 45, and 90 minutes; 1991) This videotape offers concrete steps prospective adoptive parents can take towards building their families by adoption. Presenters include leading adoption practitioners from all sides of the adoption triad. Areas covered include how to select an agency or attorney, specific strategies for finding a child, making adoption work for both the adoptive and birth families, and adoption as a lifelong process. The audiocassettes cover "Adoption Readiness," "Transcultural/Transracial Adoptions," "Adopting a Child With Special Needs," and "About the Birthfamily." Also includes a 60-page workbook. Package is available from The Family Network, P.O. Box 1995, Studio City, CA 91614-0995 (800) 456-4056. \$88.00 (plus \$5.00 shipping and handling).

Training Programs

Adoptions Together 3837 Farragut Ave. Kensington, MD 20895 (301) 933-7333 Contact: Ellen Singer, Director, Family Resource Center Program Title: "Transracial Adoption"

Association of Black Social Workers Child Adoption, Counseling and Referral Service 1969 Madison Ave., #6 DFL New York, NY 10035-1549 (212) 831-5181 Contact: Leora Neal, Executive Director Program Title: "If Transracial Parenting Happens, How White Parents and the African-American Community Can Work Together"

Black Adoption Services/Three Rivers Adoption Council 307 Fourth Ave., Ste. 710 Pittsburgh, PA 15222-(412) 471-8722 Contact: Program Director Program Title: "Promoting Racial Self-Esteem in Black Children Who Are Transracially Adopted"

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Children's Home Society of Washington Adoption Resource Center 3300 NE 65th St. Seattle, WA 98115 (206) 524-6020 or (800) 456-3339 Contact: Training Director Program Titles: "Interracial Adoption;" "Cross-Cultural Adoption"

Family Resources 1521 Foxhollow Rd. Greensboro, NC 27410 (919) 852-5357 Contacts: Bernard and Joan McNamara, Executive and Associate Directors Program Title: "Transracial Adoption"

Perspectives Press P.O. Box 90318 Indianapolis, IN 46290-0318 (317) 872-3055 Contact: Patricia Irwin Johnston, Publisher and Educator Program Titles: "Embracing Difference"; "Opening Ourselves to New Issues"

Southern Connecticut State University Department of Counseling and School Psychology 501 Crescent Street New Haven, CT 06515 (203) 397-4564 Contact: Dr. Nancy Janus, Professor Program Title: "Adoption Issues Institute"

Linda Yellin and Associates 27600 Farmington Rd., Ste. 107 Farmington Hills, MI 48334 (810) 489-9570 Contact: Linda Yellin, Director

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Program Title: "Education, Information, and Support for Families Who Adopt Children of a Different Religion or Ethnic Group"



NATIONAL ADOPTION INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

ADOPTION AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILD: A GUIDE FOR AGENCIES

The River carried me to Akki, the water carrier. Akki the water carrier lifted me up in the kindness of his heart. Akki the water carrier raised me as his own son.¹

Introduction

This passage from an inscription in the tomb of a Babylonian king, dated 2800 B.C., shows that people have engaged in the practice of informal adoption for many centuries. The tradition of caring for children who had no other place to live was a part of the culture of many ancient peoples.

As it was with ancient peoples, so it is with modern African-Americans. Caring for children in need has been a part of African-American family life for generations. Through the years, thousands of African-American children have been reared by loving, concerned grandparents, aunts, uncles, other relatives, or friends of the family because, for some reason, the children's birth parents were unable to raise them.

This tradition continues today and probably will continue far into the future. Ideally, extended family members or friends could, through this informal method of adoption, care for all children whose birth parents were unable to care for them. Unfortunately, in the 1990's there are so many African-American children in need of permanent families, and our society is so complex, that you who are charged with the care of these children cannot rely on informal arrangements alone.

This factsheet is an attempt to help you in your continuing efforts to recruit and retain African-American adoptive families. It discusses the history of African-American adoption, the most recent statistics concerning African-American children waiting to be adopted, and some techniques that professionals in the field have developed that seem to be successful in recruiting African-American families. At the end of the factsheet, the following resources are provided as appendixes:

Appendix A: Titles for further reading;

¹ Quoted in Alfred Kadushin, Child Welfare Services, 2nd Edition, p. 590.

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- Appendix B: Points to remember when producing materials for ethnic minorities;
- Appendix C: Effective strategies for recruiting minority adoptive families;
- Appendix D: Minority adoptive parent groups in the United States;
- Appendix E: Minority adoption exchanges, agencies, and programs;
- Appendix F: National organizations with an interest in minority adoption;
- Appendix G: National minority organizations—general;
- Appendix H: National minority media; and
- Appendix I: Other National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) minority adoption resources.

African-American Adoption: Where We Stand Now

Our Nation's public adoption agencies currently are seeking adoptive families for approximately 36,000 of the 392,000 children in foster care. More than one-half of the children legally available for adoption are African-American. They range from infants to older children and from those who are healthy to those with severe and multiple disabilities. Many are in a sibling group that needs a home together.

Since 1985, when crack cocaine became a drug of choice in urban communities, the number of African-American babies available for adoption has increased dramatically. Many are healthy but were born to drug-abusing mothers who cannot care for them. Family resources to care for the babies have become less available, and the extended family often cannot serve in its traditional role as the children's safety net. There are more two-parent working families, including grandparents, who often would have been free to serve as caregivers in the past.

The National Adoption Center (NAC) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, maintains statistics on the 1,500 children registered with it who are waiting to be adopted. These statistics reflect the following:

- 67 percent of the children registered are African-American or African-American/Caucasian;
- 50 percent of the African-American children are in sibling groups;
- 54 percent of the African-American children are under the age of 11;

- 16 percent of the African-American children are under the age of 5; and
- 63 percent of the African-American children are boys.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, African-American children tend to stay in foster care far longer than do Caucasian children; almost one-third of the African-American children in foster care have been there for 5 years. A recent study of African-American children in foster care found that although the median length of stay in foster care for all children is approximately 17 months, the majority of African-American children remained in care for well over 2 years. Older minority children also are more likely to leave foster care for more structured, restrictive placements (including group homes, residential treatment centers, detention facilities, and jails) than for adoption.

Another study showed that the longer a child stays in foster care, the less likely he or she is to return to his or her birth parents or to be adopted. Consider Tami and Kevin:

Tami, a Caucasian 4-year-old with multiple handicaps including cerebral palsy and severe mental retardation, became available for adoption in the fall of 1985. Through a match made on the telecommunications network of NAC, a Minnesota family adopted her. Tami was placed in less than 2 years.

Kevin is an 8-year-old African-American child with a mild emotional disability. Despite intensive recruitment, including a television feature, a poster at a shopping mall, and a listing on NAC's network, he is still waiting for a family. It has been 4 years since he became legally free for adoption.

The 1960's and 1970's: A Time of Transition

The need for adoptive families for African-American children is not new. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, although agencies did what they could to educate African-Americans about adoption, African-American families rarely ventured into adoption agencies. African-American families felt uncomfortable and unwelcomed at agencies unfamiliar with the mores and customs of the African-American community and staffed by social workers who were almost always Caucasian. African-Americans had serious concerns about whether they would qualify as adoptive parents, how they would be scrutinized, and whether they could afford the cost of adoption.

Therefore, it was Caucasian families that responded to publicity about the need for homes for African-American children. The Civil Rights Movement had heightened public awareness about the importance of racial harmony, and many Caucasians were convinced that integrating their families was a step in that direction. Adoption across racial lines peaked in 1970. Almost immediately, the National Association of Black Social Workers protested, contending Caucasian parents could not raise African-American children with an appropriate sense of cultural heritage. Even the spate of studies that testified to the success of transracial adoptions did not convince the group's members that such adoptions were not damaging to African-American children. The children, the group said, were still young, and the long-term effects were not yet known.

The controversy about transracial adoption simmers to the present day. Parents and professionals alike have strong feelings about the subject. While some transracial placements still occur, agencies in the 1990's prefer to place a child with a family of the same race or ethnic background, and they recognize that it is their responsibility to reach out to minority families to make them feel more comfortable about formal adoption.

The 1980's and 1990's: Breaking the Barriers

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In the 1980's, after the passage of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272), Federal monies became available for subsidies to parents adopting children who could not be placed otherwise. In addition, the Adoption Opportunities Branch of the Children's Bureau was created to administer discretionary grants to agencies and organizations that developed innovative programs to increase adoptions and provide postadoption services. One area of particular interest was minority adoption.

Agencies wishing to attract minority families reexamined their definitions of acceptable parents. Agencies began to recognize that there is no "model family" and that, in fact, many kinds of family constellations are appropriate and nurturing resources for children. Agency personnel learned to personalize their adoption procedures so that families would stay involved from the first telephone call to the actual placement of a child. Agencies hired African-American social workers, who understood the culture and, in some cases, provided cultural sensitivity training for other social workers who recruited and worked with potential parents. Still, there are many more African-American children available for adoption than there are families waiting to adopt. Agencies are struggling to attract families.

Following are some suggestions for promoting minority adoption in your agency.

Preparing Your Agency

Before you begin a campaign to promote minority adoptions, you must ensure that your agency is prepared. There are two critical components of a successful preparation program:

> There must be a mechanism to respond to inquiries quickly, courteously, and in a way that encourages families to pursue their interest in adoption.

Your staff must be sensitive to the unique customs and mores of the African-American (or other minority) culture, which may differ substantially from those with which a social worker is familiar.

Your Response Mechanism

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There are eight areas to take into consideration as you analyze your response mechanism. These eight areas are listed below.

- 1. Make certain that the person who answers your telephone is warm and welcoming and encourages the caller's interest in adoption.—In many ways, the person answering the telephone is the most important person in the office and can determine whether a person follows through or drops out.
- 2. Develop a procedure for responding to telephone calls or letters.—Will the caller be referred immediately to a social worker, or will the receptionist take a name and telephone number and state that the call will be returned within 2 days? How much information should the receptionist give before taking a name and telephone number or turning the call over to a social worker?
- 3. Be certain that you have enough people available to respond to calls.—Nothing discourages people more at the outset than a continually busy telephone line or an ignored call. If you do not have enough people to take the calls, rearrange your recruitment efforts accordingly.
- 4. Give thought to the kind of response you want the social workers to give.— Develop a system of response—specifying how much screening will be done on the telephone, whether printed information will be offered, and whether the social worker will immediately arrange an interview—and continually reevaluate the system.
- 5. Review all of your informational materials.—Are the materials clear? Are your forms and letters friendly and encouraging? Perhaps you want to create an information packet about the adoption of minority children. You might want to provide factsheets explaining how adoption has changed through the years or describing what adoptive parents should expect as they move through the adoption process. (NAIC's companion minority adoption factsheet for parents might be appropriate, as well as several other of the general adoption factsheets.) Perhaps the packet has too much information and needs to be streamlined. Refer to Appendix B of this factsheet for some specific suggestions on this topic.



When developing your materials, be certain that some of the most frequently asked questions about adoption are answered. These questions include the following:

- Who are the children waiting to be adopted?
- Who can adopt?
- What are agencies looking for in families?
- What will it cost to adopt?
- What is a home study? Why is it needed?
- How long does a home study take?
- Where are the children living while waiting to be adopted?
- How does foster care differ from adoption?
- Can the birth parents come back to take the child?
- How do you begin the adoption process?
- 6. Plan a way to track responses to inquiries.—Sometimes a followup telephone call can maintain a person's interest, answer a question, or encourage a person to continue in the adoption process.
- 7. Build flexibility into your scheduling of appointments.—Agencies hoping to attract minority families must offer flexible appointment times and settings. This includes meeting with families during evening and weekend hours if necessary and at locations that may be more convenient to families.
- 8. Make sure that the messages about fees for adoption are loud and clear.—Families need to hear that:
 - Adoption can be free or very affordable; and
 - Subsidies are available to assist families.

Cultural Sensitivity

Because adoption traditionally has been reserved for Caucasian middle-class families, many standards for determining the suitability of a family do not consider the uniqueness of family life in the African-American culture. Social workers who understand and are sensitive to the traditions and attitudes of African-Americans are better able to make potential adopters comfortable and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses for parenting. A carefully planned and executed recruitment program may be sabotaged, unwittingly, by a well-meaning but culturally naive social worker. Information on cultural sensitivity is available through most of the national organizations listed in Appendix F.

Cultural sensitivity training should include interpersonal communication, including eye contact, voice level, stance, and body space. All facets of the culture under study should be explored, including its fashion, music, visual arts, drama, literature, food, and celebrations.

Some specific issues to be considered include greeting patterns; etiquette around formal relationships; and cultural attitudes about time, authority, and privacy.

Do not forget to consult the minority adoptive parents who have already gone through your agency's adoption process. They can tell agency personnel about the aspects of the adoption process that encouraged or discouraged them.

It helps to understand three powerful traditions in the African-American community:

• The extended family;

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- The demand for respect; and
- Reticence about disclosing personal information.

Extended family.—The extended family is integral to the African-American lifestyle. Often several generations of the same family live together, or other relatives and friends are part of the household. This does not mean that Uncle Joe is not competent to maintain his own household or that Grandmother Harris cannot afford to live on her own. Many African-American homes are multigenerational, and adoption workers need to understand this way of life even though it differs from the nuclear family model with which they may be more familiar.

Respect.—The issue of respect is critical to African-Americans, especially respect from the young. Many African-Americans, for instance, are insulted if addressed by their first names, especially if addressed by someone younger than they are, unless a relationship has been established. African-Americans who have been neighbors for 20, 30, or 40 years often continue to refer to each other as Mrs. Jones and Mr. Smith.

Following is an example of an innocent, well-meaning staff member who offended a potential adopter because she did not understand the issue of respect in the African-American community:

Carol Martin, a 22-year-old Caucasian social worker, was having her first meeting with a 42-year-old African-American, Mary Smith. Ms. Smith had been reading waiting-child features in her local newspaper and had listened to a radio show about adoption. She called to make an appointment one Monday after she read an item about adoption in her church bulletin giving the agency's telephone number.

Ms. Martin greeted Ms. Smith and, in an attempt to be friendly and set a casual tone for the interview, called her Mary. During the meeting, Ms. Martin continually addressed Ms. Smith as Mary. Ms. Smith never objected and remained pleasant, but inside she was angry. She told herself, "I'm old enough to be this girl's mother, and she is calling me by my first name. Who does she think she is? Does she think that just because she's white and has gone to college that she can call me whatever she wants?"



This was the last meeting between Ms. Martin and Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith dropped the idea of adoption.

Personal information.—The tradition of "minding one's own business" is strong in the African-American community. Personal questions from someone who has just been met may be received with distrust. The questions that an agency inevitably must ask when exploring adoption with a potential parent should be approached gently and, perhaps, not at a first meeting. Questions about money, in particular, asked at a first meeting may well send an excellent prospective parent out the door forever.

The Home Study

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The prospect of a home study is frightening to many African-American families. It implies investigation into personal matters such as sexual habits, finances, behavior, family, and friendships. It is important to present the home study to the prospective minority parent as what it is—a series of interviews with a social worker to help the applicant think through his or her capacity to care for a child. It should be explained that since the life of a child is going to be entrusted to the family, certain questions must be asked, and that the questions are not just an attempt to "get into the family's business."

Recruitment

Adoption is a major decision for anyone and will permanently affect the way he or she lives. Therefore, it is unlikely that reading about adoption once in one newspaper, hearing about it once on a radio station, or seeing one poster on adoption at church is going to convince a person to adopt. A series of exposures over time is probably necessary to make someone feel comfortable enough to make the first telephone call to an adoption agency.

The most effective recruitment program saturates a specific community by spreading the word about adoption in a variety of ways—including newspaper articles, speaking engagements, fliers, posters, brochures, public service announcements, radio and television programs, and cooperative ventures with the church. Scattering the message by placing a newspaper article in one area, a poster in another, and a flier in yet another dilutes the impact. Recruitment also should continue throughout the year and not just occur during a particular season.

According to Elaine Arkin's Making Health Communication Programs Work published by the U.S. Public Health Service (see list of readings in Appendix A), an agency should take several steps when implementing a communication (recruitment) campaign: planning and selecting a strategy, selecting channels and materials, developing and pretesting materials, implementing the campaign, assessing effectiveness, and adjusting the program as feedback is received. Specific ideas for minority adoptive parent recruitment are spelled out in Appendix C of this factsheet. In addition, refer to *Making Health Communication Programs Work* for more information on recruitment campaigns.

After Recruitment

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Once a prospective parent has been recruited and has started the adoption process, the agency's job has just begun. That parent has to be supported through placement and finalization. This support includes advocating for the family after the home study has been completed and helping the family in its search for a child. Many potential adopters feel frustrated when they have gone through a home study and then experience agonizing delays finding a child. Over time they often lose hope and stop searching for a child, convinced they will never become adoptive parents. In this way many families are lost as resources for waiting children. On the other hand, more adoptions result when the agency takes an active role in the family's search for a child. Consider the following cases:

Jean P., a single African-American attorney with no children, had been recruited and referred to a local agency. She was interested in adopting two children up to the age of 7. The agency that studied her did not have any sibling groups in that age range. Jean became discouraged as the weeks of waiting turned into months; nearly a year after her home study was completed, she was still without a child. She contacted NAC, which had recruited her, to say she was ready to drop out. NAC staff members encouraged her not to give up and identified several sibling groups from other agencies. Jean soon became the happy parent of two sons, ages 5 and 7. Without this advocacy, Jean would have been lost as a resource for waiting children.

When a family was being sought for African-American siblings Rosemary and Romaine, ages 9 and 10, four families expressed an interest in adopting them. Each family was sent a one-page application form. After 1 month, none of the families had returned the form. A letter was sent to each family explaining that Rosemary and Romaine were still waiting and asking if the staff could be helpful in answering any questions about adoption. Three of the four families responded. All three went on to complete the home study process. One of the families adopted Rosemary and Romaine, and the other two adopted other waiting children. Without followup, these three families would not have become adoptive parents.

A local adoptive parent group is one of the most productive support services an agency can offer to a family who is going through the adoption process. Such a group gives potential adopters a chance to ask questions and exchange information with those who have been through the experience and with whom they can identify. Often families feel more comfortable discussing their fears and anxieties with adoptive parents rather than with social workers, who families feel are in a position to "judge" them.

In Appendix D, all known U.S. minority parent groups and their contact persons are listed. A comprehensive list of parent groups (not necessarily minority based) by State also is available from NAIC.

For more information about postadoption services, contact NAIC for the factsheet "After Adoption: The Need for Services."

Conclusion

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If you have some minority staff members, and if all your staff members make a sincere effort to become culturally sensitive, you should see encouraging results in your minority adoption program. Additionally, if recruitment, adoption home studies, and preplacement and postplacement services are carried out in a culturally appropriate way, your agency will be able to find parents for your waiting minority children. The suggested readings and list of resources that follow also should be helpful.

This factsheet was written by Marty Jones of NAC for NAIC. Additional material was provided by Debra Smith, Director, NAIC.

APPENDIX A: TITLES FOR FURTHER READING

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- "Understanding of Hispanic Culture Essential in Planning Adoption of Hispanic Children." The Roundtable 4, no. 2:5.
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APPENDIX B: POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN PRODUCING MATERIALS FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES

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- Use of language may vary for different cultural groups (i.e., a word may have different meanings to different groups).
- Differences in target groups extend beyond language to include diverse values and customs.
- Different kinds of channels may be credible and most capable of reaching minority audiences.
- Message appeals should be developed separately for each minority group, because their perceived needs, values, and beliefs may differ from others.
- Print materials should be simply written, reinforced with graphics, and pretested. People perceive graphics and illustrations in different ways, just as their language skills differ.
- Use of bilingual materials will ensure that intermediaries and family members who are most comfortable with English can help the reader understand the content.
 - Print materials should never be simply translated from the English; concepts and appeals may differ by culture just as the words do.

Source: Adapted from: Arkin, E. Making Health Communication Programs Work. U.S. Public Health Service, NIH Pub. No. 89-1493, 1989.

APPENDIX C: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING MINORITY ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

When starting a new minority adoptive family recruitment campaign, it is important to spend some time determining goals and objectives. How many families do you want to recruit? How many workers do you have to handle home studies and training? How many children are available for families right now? Do you have enough people to answer the telephone efficiently and effectively?

Next you want to determine your target audience—yes, it is the African-American community, but which portion of it? Think about all the physical, behavioral, and demographic characteristics of the people you want to reach. Physical characteristics include sex, age, and health. Behavioral characteristics encompass the types of media to which people pay attention; organizations to which they belong, especially those within the African-American cultural context; and how people spend their leisure time. Demographic characteristics include occupation, income, educational attainment, marital and family situation, and places of residence and work.

Now you are ready to design the communication strategies, beginning with a unifying strategy statement. You begin with a program objective and target audience, then add the target information to be communicated and the benefit, as perceived by that audience. One slogan that has been used effectively, for instance, in African-American adoptive family recruitment is "Taking Care of Our Own."

Once you have decided on the communication strategies, all program elements should be compatible with these strategies; every program task should contribute to the established objectives and be targeted to the identified audience.

If all staff members assist in the development of the recruitment campaign and decide on a realistic timetable together, the agency then can proceed to the next steps in a unified and goal-directed manner.

The following are more specific suggestions for minority adoptive family recruitment that some agencies have found effective.

Working With the Media

Print Media

Learn which publications serve the minority community. There is usually a major minority publication in every city as well as many small local publications. The local publications are critical media to include in an outreach program because people tend to retain local publications for a week rather than to discard them daily. Because they include neighborhood news, local publications are usually read thoroughly by all members of the family.

It is helpful to establish personal contact with the editors of the smaller publications to familiarize them with your agency and its goals. Frequently, smaller publications have few staff members and are pleased to receive well-written articles, including captioned photographs, to place in the publications with limited editing.

Some ideas for articles about adoption include the following:

- Waiting-child features. This kind of feature focuses on one child (or sibling group) and includes a photograph, details about the child(ren), and an address or telephone number for more information. The National Adoption Center in Philadelphia has an 80 percent success rate among the children it features in such recruitment.
- Feature stories on families who have adopted successfully.
- Stories on the need for homes for waiting children.
- Accomplishments of adoption agency staff members.
- Announcements of workshops and information nights.

Many different kinds of stories with a connection to adoption should be offered to community publications as frequently as possible to give them fresh news and to keep adoption in the minds of the readers.

Electronic Media

Research the local radio and television industry to learn which stations are minority focused. Then contact their public service directors. Because radio stations are especially effective at reaching targeted populations, you should be able to make good use of radio in targeting minority populations.

There are three major types of radio and television productions that can be helpful in spreading the message about the need for adoptive families. These types are:

- Public service announcements (PSA's);
- Interview shows; and
- News shows.

PSA's.—PSA's are usually 30- or 60-second messages explaining the need for adoptive families for minority children and giving a telephone number to call for more information. The message should be clear and to the point and should always end with the name of your agency and a telephone number. It is wise to send several messages to be used over time—each one having some variation. The PSA's should be sent with a letter to the community affairs director explaining that the need for minority adoptive families is an ongoing and serious one and that you would like the station to run the PSA's frequently for as long a time period as possible. If you are located in a fairly large city, you are competing with many other nonprofit organizations for PSA time, so the more interesting and pungent your message is, the more likely that it will be used frequently.

Different radio stations use different forms of PSA's. Some prefer to receive hard copy on a sheet of paper (your letterhead stationery) that an announcer can read on the air; others prefer a reel-to-reel or cassette tape, which means that you will need to get a narrator to record your message before sending it to the stations and that you will have to bear the cost of the tapes themselves. Call the station's public service director and find out his or her preference before sending something in a format the director will not find usable.

With television, if you have money to produce a 30-second video PSA and you produce a good one, stations are likely to use it. However, the cost of developing these is high—often \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a 30-second spot. Instead, you might want to send hard copy with a visual such as a slide depicting the logo of your organization or perhaps a photograph or two of children who are waiting for families. You also may want to investigate the possibility of getting a grant or other funding to produce the PSA. Local professional advertising associations or students often are good sources of inexpensive or free professional expertise, especially if you can convince them that their standing in the community will improve by their participation in a public service campaign.

If you are fortunate enough to produce a video PSA, the same rules for appropriate format that apply to radio apply to television. You must ask station personnel if they prefer 34-, 1-, or 2-inch videotape and if they have the ability to modify the tape if you supply it in a different format. Do not neglect visiting cable and independent television stations as well as the network affiliates when you are trying to get your tape placed on the air. Other tips for developing video PSA's are contained in the box below.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING VIDEO PSA'S
Keep messages short and simple-just one or two key points.
Be sure every word works.
Repeat the main message as many times as possible.
Identify the main issue in the first 10 seconds in an attention-getting way.
Summarize or repeat main point/message at the close.
Superimpose the main point on the screen to reinforce the oral message.
Recommend a specific action.
Present the facts in an accurate, straightforward manner.
Use a memorable slogan, theme, music, or sound effects to aid recall.
Be sure that the message presenter is seen as a credible source of information, whether an authority, celebrity, or target audience representative.
Use only a few characters.
Select an appropriate approach (that is, testimonial, demonstration, or slice-of-life format). Make the message understandable from the visual portrayal alone.
Use positive rather than negative appeals.
Emphasize the solution as well as the problem.
Use a light, humorous approach, if appropriate, but pretest to be sure it works-and does not offend the audience.
Be sure the message, language, and style are considered relevant by the intended audience. Use 30- or 60-second spots to present and repeat complete message; use 10-second spots only for reminders.
If the action is to call or write, show the telephone number or address on the screen for at least 5 seconds, and reinforce orally (telephone calls require less effort than writing for most people).
Check for consistency with campaign messages in other media formats.
Use language and style appropriate for the target audience.
Pretest prior to final production.
Source: Adapted from: Arkin, E. Making Health Communication Programs Work. U.S. Public Health Service, NIH Pub. No. 89-1493, 1989.

Interview shows.—Most radio and television stations have local shows on which they take guests. These shows are frequently pleased to devote a show to adoption. You can bring on the air a combination of people, including an adoptive parent and child who can speak to the difference that the other has made in his or her life, someone who is waiting for a child, a child who is waiting to be adopted, or a professional from your agency. Any combination of these could be suggested to a station, which may want one or all of these people to appear on a show. Try to pick articulate people who will be able to speak comfortably into the microphone and/or before the camera, and in the case of the latter, an attractive appearance also is a plus. It is helpful to make suggestions about the kind of show a station might want to consider and to provide a list of questions that you and your guests are prepared to answer. Some suggestions for show topics are single-parent adoption, open adoption, the adoption of children who are developmentally disabled, or the adoption of siblings.

News shows.—There is hardly a day that an adoption, foster care, or other child welfare issue does not surface in the news. Your agency can establish its credibility by developing resources to comment on these various news issues. Make your agency available to the media when they need you, and you will find the media much more receptive when you need them.

You can also create a special event which is worthy of news coverage in and of itself. In this case, you should send a press release at least a week in advance to the radio and television stations of your choice telling them the who, what, where, when, and whys of the event. Make sure the event location is clearly defined and accessible and that parking is available. In your press release, always include a contact person and telephone numbers where that person can be reached during both daytime and evening hours. Serving refreshments to the media often is a plus, as well as having a celebrity or some other draw that will pique their interest. If you want to attract a television reporter in particular, make sure you have something visually interesting for the camera to shoot, whether it is a group of children singing or just an unusual background where your adoption expert is speaking. If you are aiming for radio coverage, have something interesting for the listener to hear. A telephone at your location is also an advantage, because the reporter can call in the story right on the spot.

With both the print and electronic media, your agency will gain credibility as it becomes a reliable resource for adoption information. Over time, this kind of relationship with the media will work to your advantage and afford you additional opportunities to spread the word about the need for adoptive families.

Nonmedia Recruitment Techniques

Churches

The church historically has had a strong influence in the minority community. During the 1950's, when the Civil Rights Movement began, and during times of strife, the minority community has looked to its churches for strength and direction.

Minority churches should be encouraged to disseminate adoption information among their congregants. This can be as simple as a church accepting a poster for a bulletin board or as complex as a church being part of the One Church One Child program (see later section on this). Between these two extremes are many other possibilities. You can ask the church pastor or members to allow you to do one or all of the following:

- Place stacks of fliers on the church's information table;
- Provide printed inserts for the church's Sunday bulletin;
- Make presentations to church organizations; and
- Enlist church organizations to take on a recruitment project.

Fraternal Organizations/Businesses

Agencies should make contact with fraternal organizations and businesses and arrange to do one or more of the following:

- Present speakers at one of their meetings;
- Insert fliers into mailings to the membership or write an article for the organization's newsletter;
- Have a message from the agency read at one of their meetings;
- Enlist the organization to take on a recruitment project in which it will be responsible for finding a home for one child; and
- Request donations of funds or in-kind services for recruitment materials if the organization cannot get involved in any other way (in-kind services might include printing, photocopying, paper, inexpensive give-away items with the agency's telephone number printed on them, etc.).

Posters

Posters can be invaluable. They should be placed in locations where potential minority parents will see them: supermarkets, libraries, beauty/barber shops, and neighborhood stores. The list of locations is limited only by the imagination.

Festivals

Agencies can participate in minority-oriented festivals, especially those with information booths at which fliers may be available and questions may be answered.

Transportation Systems

In many cities' mass transportation systems, there is space on the buses and trains for advertisements, or car cards. Research can identify routes that traverse minority communities, and car cards can be developed for these routes. There are usually special rates for nonprofit agencies. You will need to develop and print the cards, which can be costly. But the agency will have a captive audience at least twice a day as riders go to and from work.

Adoptive Parents

Adoptive parents are excellent recruiters. These are people who have had the experience and can answer questions for those who are thinking about adoption. An adoptive parent and a staff professional make an excellent team to speak before community organizations or on the air.

One Church One Child

This program, started in Chicago by an African-American priest, Father George Clements, works on the premise that every African-American church should be responsible for finding an adoptive home for one child. Following the example set by Father Clements, who adopted three children, churches throughout the country have encouraged their congregants to work toward the placement of at least one child. Adoption agencies that work with churches often experience outstanding success with placements. Information about the child, including his or her photograph, is circulated, and each person in the church takes an active role in seeking—among church members, friends, or family—an appropriate home for the child. Such programs work best when an agency representative is assigned to work with the church and to encourage activity on the child's behalf. The addresses for the national One Church One Child program and the local affiliates already working in the field are located in Appendix E.

Adopt a Child Today (ACT)

This is a team approach through which an advocate trained by an agency staff member takes on the job of finding a home for a child or sibling group. The advocate, who has been supplied with information and photographs of the child, recruits among friends, relatives, colleagues, and neighbors to find a family for "his" or "her" child.



NATIONAL ADOPTION INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

ADOPTION AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILD: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The River carried me to Akki, the water carrier. Akki the water carrier lifted me up in the kindness of his heart. Akki the water carrier raised me as his own son.¹

Why Is There a Need for Formal Adoption of African-American Children?

This passage from an inscription in the tomb of a Babylonian king shows that caring for needy children has been a tradition since ancient times.

Adoption Facts

- African-American children need homes.
- They are best cared for by African-American families.
- 3. The Government provides financial aid to help African-American families who adopt.

This ancient practice has been incorporated in the modern African-American community. Through the years, thousands of children of color whose birth parents were unable to raise them have been reared by loving, concerned grandparents, aunts, uncles, other relatives, or just friends of the family.

This tradition continues today and probably will continue far into the future. Ideally, extended family members or friends could, through this informal method of adoption, care for all children whose birth parents were unable to care for them. Unfortunately, in the 1990's there are so

many African-American children in need of permanent families, and our society is so complex, that traditional methods of helping them are not adequate for today's needs.

Our Nation's public adoption agencies currently are seeking adoptive families for approximately 36,000 children in foster care. All of these children are legally available for adoption. More than half of them are African-American.

The Federal Government recognizes how important it is for our Nation's African-American children to grow up in loving, nurturing families. With parents who believe in them

¹ Quoted in Alfred Kadushin, Child Welfare Services, 2nd Edition, p. 590.

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and who can provide an appropriate African-American cultural environment, children can be helped to realize their full potential and become adults capable of supporting themselves and of forming loving adult relationships. Therefore, the Government offers financial help to families who are willing to adopt but who may not feel able to meet the long-term needs of a child without this help. These subsidies can be especially beneficial to an adoptive family if a child has any special medical or psychological needs.

The 1960's and 1970's: A Period of Transition

The need for adoptive families for African-American children is not new. There has been a need since the late 1960's and early 1970's. However, African-American families during this time period rarely ventured into adoption agencies. The idea of presenting themselves at agencies where social workers were almost always Caucasian and unfamiliar with the mores and customs of the African-American community made African-American families feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. They had serious concerns about whether they would qualify as adoptive parents, how they would be scrutinized, and whether they could afford the cost of adoption.

It was Caucasian families who stepped forward to adopt African-American children during this time period. The Civil Rights Movement had heightened public awareness about the importance of racial harmony. These families wanted to help, and adoption agencies accepted them.

The practice of placing a child of one race with a family of another race is called *transracial adoption*. There always has been a controversy about transracial adoption, and it continues today. The National Association of Black Social Workers contends that Caucasian parents cannot raise African-American children with an appropriate sense of their cultural heritage. Transracial placements still occur, but most agencies today prefer to place a child with a family of the same race or ethnic background. And they recognize that it is their responsibility to reach out to families of color to make them feel more comfortable about formal adoption.

The 1980's and 1990's: Breaking the Barriers

In the last 10 years, many adoption agencies have been trying to break the barriers that keep African-American families from adopting and to encourage their interest in making homes for African-American children. They are hiring more African-American social workers and are sensitizing other staff members to the uniqueness of family life in the African-American culture. They are learning about the importance of the extended family, the value of respect, and the reluctance everyone has about disclosing personal information. Agencies also have become more flexible about the types of individuals or families they consider to be satisfactory adoptive parents.

Questions About African-American Adoption

The following questions are those most frequently asked by African-Americans about adoption. The answers can help African-American families gain a better understanding of the adoption process.

Who Are the Children Available for Adoption?

Many types of African-American and African-American/Caucasian children are available for adoption. They range from infants to older children and from those who are healthy to those with severe and multiple handicaps. They also include sibling groups who need to be placed together. Some of these children were abused, neglected, or abandoned by their birth parents. In other cases, both of their parents have died. Often, personal and family problems made it impossible for their parents to maintain a home for them.

Some of the older children ("older" means more than 6 years old) have been shuffled from foster home to foster home and have been waiting years for permanent parents. An increasing number of infants come from birth mothers who cannot care for them because they are addicted to drugs. Their grandparents, who might traditionally have been the ones to take the children, in many cases have not been able to help.

Where Are the Children Living While Waiting To Be Adopted?

Infants can sometimes go to an adoptive family directly from the hospital where they were born, depending on the arrangements that are made ahead of time. But most children waiting for permanent families live in foster homes.

Who Can Adopt?

Agencies today will consider single and married applicants. Agency requirements vary, but the age range most acceptable is usually between 25 and 50 and often depends on the age of the child. Most agencies require couples to be married a minimum of 1 to 3 years. Applicants do not have to be experienced parents. They do not have to be a member of a particular religious group. Income requirements are often quite flexible. Some agencies even accept applicants who receive a pension, disability, or public assistance as their sources of income.

What Are Agencies Looking For?

Agencies recognize that many different kinds of people can be loving, effective parents. It is important that people considering adoption be stable and sensitive and able to give a child love, understanding, and patience. Applicants are usually asked to have a physical examination to document that their health permits them to care for a child. Potential parents do not have to own their home. It is not necessarily required that a child have his/her own bedroom, but there should be adequate space for the child in the home.

What Will It Cost To Adopt?

The cost of adoption no longer needs to be a barrier. Agencies differ in the fees they charge; some agencies charge no fees. Some have fees on a sliding scale based on a family's income. For children with special needs, there is often no fee, and subsidies are available to assist with the child's general and medical care. Such subsidies may include a monthly cash payment, medical assistance, and/or a one-time cash grant to offset initial adoption costs.

What Is a Home Study?

A prospective adoptive parent will be asked to participate in a home study to determine his/her eligibility to adopt. During a home study, a social worker from the agency visits the adoptive parent applicant several times, and they discuss together what it will be like to have a new child in the home. The social worker gets to know the family well, so he or she can feel sure the family will love and take care of a child. The family uses these visits to learn from the social worker more details about adopted children's behavior and the exact agency procedures for identifying the particular child that will come to them. Agency social workers receive special training so that they can help African-American families feel comfortable with this interview process. They are more sensitive now to the African-American culture while making their visits.

The home study process varies from agency to agency. Some conduct individual and joint visits with husband and wife; others conduct group home studies with several families at one time. A few agencies ask applicants to provide written information about themselves and their life experiences.

How Long Does a Home Study Take?

The amount of time a home study takes varies depending on the agency's requirements and on the number of families applying for children. Agencies are eager to place children in appropriate families as quickly as possible. The time could range from 3 months to a year, with an average time period being about 6 months.

How Does Foster Care Differ From Adoption?

Foster care is meant to be temporary shelter for children while a permanent plan for their futures is being developed. Adoption means that a child becomes a legal member of a family other than the one to which he or she was born. Children enter foster care with the expectation that they will return to their parents as soon as they are able to take the children back. If that plan fails, children can become legally available for adoption.

Can the Birth Parents Come Back To Take a Child?

When a child is placed through an adoption agency, the parent has given the agency the legal rights to the child through a formal court procedure. It is rare that, once having done this, the parent would reenter the picture. In the much publicized cases where a parent has returned to reclaim his/her child, the adoption was carried out privately through such intermediaries as a physician or an attorney. In these situations, the mother has merely "surrendered" the child but has not relinquished in a formal court proceeding.

There is a growing interest among birth parents and adult adoptees to seek information about each other's well-being. In most States, adoption records are sealed and it is illegal, except by court order, to open these records to anyone, including the birth parent. In some States, information that does not identify the name or specific details of the birth parent may be obtained.

How Do You Begin the Adoption Process?

Check the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Adoption" to see if there are any local adoption agencies. If there are agencies listed, contact them and request information. If there are no agencies listed, the national organizations listed in Appendix D will provide information on request. Adoption information also can be obtained from the local county department of human resources.

Conclusion

African-American people who have adopted are the most enthusiastic advocates. They say adoption is a pleasant and rewarding experience. They found it affordable, and did not experience too much red tape. While there is sometimes a wait until the appropriate child can be "matched" with a family, most adopters insist that the wait has been worth it. They recommend adoption as a way to enrich families' lives and provide a home for a child in whose life they can make a difference.

Many African-American people who adopt once go on to adopt again and again. Their only regret is that they did not adopt sooner. Quila Scott, who with her husband, David, has adopted several children, says, "I can't imagine life without them. I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world."

If you would like to talk to another African-American family who has adopted, consult the list of parent groups listed in Appendix B. The list of these groups appears after the titles for further reading (Appendix A). The contact people provided certainly will be happy to share their adoption experiences with you.

Other resources are listed in the appendixes as well. Appendix C lists a number of adoption agencies that have special adoption programs for families and children of color.

Appendix B lists national organizations with an interest in minority adoption. Appendix E lists other National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) minority adoption resources. NAIC also has a number of other factsheets of a general nature that might be helpful.

If you want to adopt a child

 Call a local adoption agency for information.

 Call a local adoptive parent group for advice and support.

3) Call NAIC for other suggestions.

This guide was written by Marty Jones of the National Adoption Center for the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC). Additional material was provided by Debra Smith, Director, NAIC.

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TRADITIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES AND CONTEMPORARY U.S. SOCIETY: A COMPARISON

der m

By

Charles Horejsi and Joe Pablo

(This article will appear in the Winter 1993 issue of <u>Human Services in the Rural</u> Environment.)

INTRODUCTION

In this article we compare and contrast several of the values and behavioral patterns common to many traditional Native American tribal societies with those pervasive within the economic system, and business or political organizations of American society. We believe this comparison will help the reader become more sensitive to the differences that may exist between the attitudes of Native Americans and those reflected by the agencies and organizations with which they must interact.

It is important that the reader recognize that, at best, we are offering generalizations about both this dominant culture (herein called: "contemporary society") and traditional Native American cultures. Needless to say, many Americans are members of an ethnic group having values and beliefs quite different than the composite picture of the dominant culture presented here. Also, our generalizations concerning Native American culture apply to many, but not all tribes. For instance, they are descriptive of most tribes now living on the high plains (e.g., North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana), but begin to breakdown when applied to tribes of the southwest.

The reader must also realize that the generalizations we offer about Native American cultures are descriptions of traditional beliefs and behavioral patterns. In Native Americans, especially those living in urban areas, have assimilated inficant elements of the dominant culture and all Native Americans are now bicultural to some degree.

As a general rule, those who were raised on an Indian reservation and/or those raised by families who retained the language and traditional tribal ways come the . closest to the traditional end of the bi-cultural continuum. Those raised by less traditional parent figures resemble more closely the dominant culture in terms of values and behavior. There are, however, many exceptions to this generalization.

The generalizations presented below were originally prepared for in-service training sessions that focused on social work with Native American clients. Drafts were circulated among a number of knowledgeable persons and we wish to acknowledge their valuable input concerning tribal cultures.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Some in dominant society are agnostic or atheistic. Some profess a set of religious beliefs but these have little impact on everyday life. Still others are deeply religious and spiritual people.

1

¹The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of:

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Tendency to divide and compartmentalize human experience into various realms of activity much like a <u>Newsweek</u> or <u>Time</u> magazine has separate sections on business politics, economics, entertainment, family, medicine and religion. Consequently, religion and spirituality are often viewed as separate from other aspects of life.

Religious practice is institutionalized and religious activity and ceremony are quite formal. Ritual and many prayers exist in written form. Ceremonies are o: a public nature and may be attended by hundreds of people and even broadcast on TV. God speaks to and guides man through the written word (scripture) and/or through the interpretation of the written word by specially trained religious leaders. Less emphasis on God communicating with man through nature. Much debate about which beliefs are the "right ones". Importance placed on "converting" people to a particular way of thinking.

Formal religious training and ordination are important to establish credibility as a religious leader. An individual studies for and seeks this role.

Traditional Native American Culture: As a people, Native Americans are deeply spiritual and prayerful. People and the world around us were created by and are kept in existence by the acts of a Supreme Being. Consequently, values and beliefs concerning family, children, medicine, work, earthly possessions, etc. all emanate from beliefs about the Creator and a person's relationship to the Creator. All life is sacred. All things, all events, people and all aspects of nature are interrelated and interdependent. Strong beliefs in a world of spirits and their impact on the everyday lives of people.

Religious practice is highly individualized. For example, individuals have their own prayers or songs. Ceremonies are based on oral traditions and mostly private or conducted within a small group. Religious experiences are mystical. The Creator speaks to man through nature and through life experiences.

Spiritual leaders emerge from within the tribe and are recognized because of their ability to assist others and because they are a good model. Elders may nurture the spiritual growth of an individual recognized as having special gifts. Actively seeking a position of religious leadership and any kind of self promotion as a spiritual leader is highly offensive behavior for it destroys whatever spiritual powers or gifts the individual may have been given by the Creator.

It should be noted that many Native Americans are reluctant to discuss their beliefs or religious experiences because of the private nature of these experiences and because they fear others, especially Anglos, will devalue or ridicule their beliefs or worse, steal or misuse their ceremonies.

FAMILY

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: A family is usually defined as bio-parents plus their offspring (i.e. nuclear family). Bio-parents make major family decisions and do not feel obligated to follow wishes of relatives. In fact, husband and wife may resent "interference" by in-laws and other relatives.

Traditional Native American Culture: A family consists of bio-parents and their children, plus grandparents, aunts and uncles. (i.e., extended family). Aunts may be called "mother", uncles may be called "father". A child's cousins may be viewed as his or her brothers and sisters. Grandparents are often key decision-makers and may play a central role in the "parenting" of young children. Other members of extended family may also assume child care responsibilities and discipline children.

When making important decisions, an individual will consult members of the extended family. Much importance is attached to gaining their approval before proceeding. Because so many others need to be consulted, the decision-making process moves slowly.

Much emphasis on maintaining loyalty to and peaceful relations among members of this extended family. Family members are expected to share what they have and take care of others within the family. For example, an individual who has control over jobs feels obligated to hire a relative.

CHILDREN

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Some children are "planned". A child may be viewed as an "accident" or "unwanted" and experienced as an inconvenience or embarrassment. Children belong to the bio-parents who are to take primary responsibility for guiding the child's life. Young adults are expected to "leave home" and become "independent". The use of corporal punishment is fairly common.

Traditional Native American Culture: All children are viewed as gifts from the Creator and valued, regardless of circumstances surrounding their birth. For example, a child born to an unmarried couple is readily accepted. Children belong to the tribe and the extended family, not just to the bio-parents. Consequently, a child can never be an "orphan." Children are viewed as continuing the existence of bio-parents, grandparents of other ancestors. Adult children feel little pressure to "leave home" and establish an independent household. Shaming and teasing are commonly used to control the child.

Persons born with a mental disability are considered to be special people; they are seen as having been especially "touched" by the Creator and capable of speaking to the Creator. Consequently, a person who is developmentally disabled encounters little rejection or stigma within the Native American community.

OLDER PERSONS

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: The energy and "gusto" of youth is highly valued. Elderly people-because they are no longer economically productive-are not valued and are expected to be confused and "old-fashioned". To avoid the appearance of being "old," thousands of dollars are spent on hair dyes, make-up and cosmetic surgery.

Traditional Native American Culture: Elders are held in high esteem and looked to for advice and guidance; they are expected to be wise and understanding. Elders exercise much influence in the decision-making process of others.

LEARNING PROCESS

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Emphasis on formal education, the ability to conceptualize, empiricism and the scientific method. Degrees, certification and other credentials are important in establishing credibility. Emphasis on structuring a child's experiences and activities so child will reach certain "learning objectives". Desire to control what and how the child learns.

Traditional Native American Culture: Emphasis on learning by doing and by watching others (modeling). Intuition and life experience are valued. Children are given considerable freedom so they will learn from both positive and negative consequences of their decisions. Limit setting is infrequent in child rearing.

DEFINITION OF SELF

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Identity in adulthood is tied closely to one's occupation, work organization, formal education and income. Consequently, much emphasis is placed on work-related activities and achievements. Family membership is of secondary importance in assignment of status.

Traditional Native American Culture: Identity is tied to one's family or clan membership. Consequently, much attention to maintaining family relationships; less importance is attached to one's occupation, work role, income, etc.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Assertiveness, directness, eye contact and a firm handshake are signs of a confident, trustworthy person. The "hail and hardy", joking, outgoing, back slapping individual is admired. Business seeks the "can do" and 'aggressive" individual. Making some enemies is necessary in the "climb to the top". Being a "self starter" and the desire to earn money and assume a leadership role are valued qualities. Traditional Native American Culture: Directness and assertiveness are offensive behaviors. In interpersonal relations, the individual is to be patient, humble, quiet and especially respectful toward older people. Much emphasis on maintaining interpersonal harmony, especially within the extended family.

COMPETITION

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Emphasis on competition between individuals but also on being a "team player". It is acceptable for an individual to want to become a "star" and be recognized as outstanding. Self-promotion and some bragging is expected and accepted.

Traditional Native American Culture: Can be fierce competition between groups (e.g. between basketball teams) but individuals should not seek "stardom" nor want to be the center of attention. The team or group can be outstanding but not the individual. Emphasis on "we" rather than "I". Self promotion is viewed with disdain.

MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Emphasis on the acquisition of "things" and on having possessions (i.e., consumerism). People are often judged on the basis of what they own. Possessions are symbols of status. Being "successful" means having economic wealth. Much emphasis on private property and ownership. Thrift and the careful management of one's financial resources is wise and responsible behavior.

Traditional Native American Culture: Sharing and giving are valued more than are getting and keeping. Materialism is viewed as selfishness. The individual who collects many material possessions is viewed with suspicion. (Note: Some tribes have celebrations during which an individual gives away their possessions. Prior to the creation of reservations, the ownership of land was a foreign concept because the Creator gave the earth to all people and therefore, a person cannot "own" creation).

PERSONAL SPACE

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Much emphasis on having and protecting privacy and personal space. A separate space for each family member is highly desired and expected. For example, everyone wants his or her own private room.

Traditional Native American Culture: Compact living and frequent and close contact with others is the norm. The value placed on sharing with others extends to the sharing of a room or house. A person who lives alone is pitied.

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Great emphasis on the exercise of individual rights and on freedom of choice, even if it goes against the wishes of others, including one's parents. Going against the group is to "assert one's rights", to become "independent" and become "one's own person". It is important to "look out for #1". The individual is more important than the group.

Traditional Native American Culture: An individual will look to the extended family and tribal elders for guidance and direction. Decisions are shaped by the preferences of others. Being loyal to the group and avoiding conflict, especially within extended family, is more important than the exercise of personal preference. The group is more important than the individual. However, since the Creator has made the individual, each person has on obligation to express their individuality and be who they are meant to be.

CONTROL

<u>Contemporary Society</u>: Much emphasis on gaining control of people, things and nature. Terms such as "intervention", "planning" and "strategy" reflect the desire to be in control. Some ambivalent feelings about the manipulation of people, but pressuring others is seen as necessary "in order to get things done". It is assumed

that people can and should improve upon nature.

Traditional Native American Culture: Emphasis on living in harmony with nature and adapting to others. To control or manipulate others is offensive behavior. Reluctant to interfere in the lives of other people. Resentment toward those that attempt to impose their will on others. Likely to view life events, including tragic and painful ones, from a spiritual perspective and to see all that happens as "meant to be" and fitting the Creator's plan and purposes.

TIME

Contemporary Society: Time is measured by clock and calendar. Schedules, deadlines and plans are important. "Time is money". To "waste" someone's time or to be late for an appointment is offensive behavior. People are in a "race with time;" there is never enough time to get done all that needs to be done. Thus, it is necessary to "manage" one's time and carefully plan for the future.

Traditional Native American Culture: Time is measured by natural events (e.g., sunrise, first snow, etc.). "Time is a gift from the Creator-an opportunity to discover your life's purpose and experience creation. "Less concern with saving time and planning and more emphasis on living from day-to-day. Having patience, showing respect and caring for others is of more importance than being "on time" as measured by a clock. To break off a discussion in order to keep another appointment is offensive and rude behavior.

SUMMARY

The comparisons presented above illustrate the different ways in which people interact, view and cope with life. The traditional tribal cultures stand in sharp contrast to the values and norms common to so many in modern American society.

The social worker who encounters clients from an ethnic group different from his or her own must strive to respect those differences and recognize that crossultural interaction increases the chances of misunderstandings and misinterpretations in their communication.

Broken Nose (1992) reminds us that "regardless of how much we know about another culture, we can never understand it completely. The professional must be willing to ask the client for help in educating him or her about the culture in a way that is respectful and directed to the issues at hand . . . To understand the cultural heritage of native American clients, non-Indian practitioners must recognize their limitations while seeking information that will allow them to provide effective services. Without such humility, practitioners risk adding another layer of oppression to the burden of peoples who have suffered enough." (p. 384)

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LATINOS AND CHILD WELFARE - VOCES DE LA COMUNIDAD

Executive Summary

At a time when child welfare services are delivered to a growing number of ethnic minority children, surprisingly little is known about the role these services play in the lives of Latino families and children.¹ Even against the backdrop of rising incidents of child abuse and neglect, and an increase in the number of Latino children entering substitute care, child welfare studies fall short of clarifying how the most vulnerable Latino children in the country are being protected and cared for.²

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In general, federally-mandated child tracking efforts at the state level have not been useful in forming a national picture of children in substitute care because of differences in the amount, quality and type of information reported by the various states.3 With the implementation of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), hopefully some of these problems will be addressed. However, a number of problems exist related to tracking Latino children, and it remains unclear how AFCARS has addressed these concerns. For example, Latino children are suspected of being too often miscoded as Caucasian or African American/Black, suggesting the actual number of Latinos in substitute care is underrepresented by administrative data. In addition, an "Other" category is often used in summary reports of Latino and other ethnic minority children. Typically included in this "Other" category are Native Americans, Asian Americans and children whose race or ethnicity are unknown. Consequently, distinguishing the unique Latino experience is not possible.

A current understanding of the Latino child welfare experience at the national level rarely takes into account the fact that the vast majority of the nation's Latino children live primarily in the southwest, California, Florida, Illinois and New York.⁴ As a result, a national perspective which aggregates information from all 50 states is unlikely to accurately reflect the needs of Latino children in areas where they are more concentrated. This leads to another related problem in understandi the child welfare needs of Latinos—there are distinct qualit of life differences among the various Latino subgroups livin in the U.S. due to recency of migration or immigration, soci economic status and other differences. These differences al have important implications for understanding child welfare needs and service provision.

Historically, high foster care placement rates, longer length of stay, bouncing from one placement to another, and poor adoption outcomes characterize the experiences of ethnic minority children.⁵ Again, how this translates into understanding outcomes specific to Latinos, who are rapidly becoming the largest ethnic/racial group in the U.S., is unclear.

As part of the Kellogg Foundation's Families for Kids Initiative, the National Latino Child Welfare Advocacy Gro formed and conducted a multi-methodological study to shec light on the most fundamental question, "What are the curre child welfare needs of Latino children and families?"⁶ Wha makes this study unique is that a concerted effort was made include "voces de la comunidad"—voices of the Latino con munity which includes Latino child welfare service provide and consumers.

THE STUDY

The study focused primarily on six states representing the diversity among the nation's Latino population. These state were California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Texas, representing families of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cub and other Spanish ancestries. Collectively these states make up 40% of all children in the U.S. and 75% of the Latino ch: population.⁷

As part of the study, administrative and other sources of data were collected and summarized from the most up-to-date reports. In addition, an in-depth survey of thirty-eight Latino child welfare service providers was conducted in the selected states. These service providers were identified as individuals who had direct knowledge about, and access to, factual information about Latino children in their state's child welfare system.' Finally, six focus groups comprised of ninety Latino community members, including child welfare consumers, were conducted in the selected states. Participants were invited to the groups to discuss raising Latino children in their community and reflect upon the role of child welfare services in their lives. Group facilitators were recruited from within these communities so that participants could discuss these issues in their preferred language. For comparison, two rural and four urban locations were selected.

RESULTS

From the data:

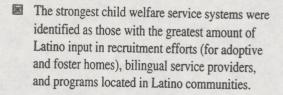
A review of the national data confirmed much of what is widely known in the child welfare arena:

- Latino children currently make up 12% of the nation's child population, reflecting a growth rate approximately seven times higher than non-Latinos.⁸
- In 1994, 9.4% of child abuse and neglect victims in the U.S. were Latino, reflecting a 2.5% rise from the previous year.⁹

- In 1993, 14% of 440,073 children living in outof-home care were Latino¹⁰, but in some states where Latinos were more concentrated, such as Texas and California, the percent was closer to 30%.¹¹
- Latino children entering foster care for the first time will, on average, remain in out-of-home care between 9 months and 2 years.¹²
- The number of Latino children legally free for adoption, and the length of time awaiting adoption are unknown.

From Latino service providers:

- There is a strong belief that family and extended family (which could include close friends) provide much support to children whose safety and security are at risk, although many of these families may not be able to provide the necessary support.
- There are serious obstacles to reporting Latino children for protective services such as fear, lack of knowledge and language barriers.
- The primary sources of referral to protective services are the schools, health care providers and child care facilities.
- While preventive services are available, less than 25% of Latino families referred are estimated to utilize these services.



From focus groups:

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- The greatest concern among participants was not about child welfare, but about preserving the welfare of Latino children who are becoming increasingly exposed to violence, drug/alcohol abuse and crime in neighborhoods and in the local schools.
- There was a strong sense of isolation and lack of community.
- The concern expressed among working mothers was that time spent away from the children left the children vulnerable to many of the social problems they described.
- Child welfare services were seen as impersonal, intimidating and in direct conflict with cultural values.
- In the event a Latino child should be removed from their own home and put into substitute care, participants were very clear that preservation of the family was essential, and preservation of language and culture was imperative.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

From this study, three main needs emerged in response to the original question, "What are the current child welfare needs of Latino children and families?" The first two needs focus on improving the quality of information about Latino children entering the child welfare system of care, and moving Latino participation at all levels of involvement from the periphery to being more central. The third need, which emerged from focus group participants, prompts us to think more holistically about Latino children. That is, participants did not see the current challenge of raising their Latino children as a child welfare system concern but rather a concern that extends beyond the boundaries of child welfare.

In order to establish a national Latino child welfare agenda, knowledge gained from this study supports the following:

Latino children are invisible and unaccounted for:

Recommendations:

- Set standards for accurately identifying and tracking Latino children and hold states accountable to these standards.
- Mandate reporting on Latino children as a separate category.
- Establish a monitoring review board at the national and state levels, made up of Latino child welfare experts.



Latinos must move from exclusion to inclusion:

Recommendations:

- Facilitate the inclusion of Latinos in planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring of child welfare policies, programs and administrative procedures and practices.
- Develop preventive programs focused on strengthening the Latino family.
- Accelerate efforts to reunify Latino children with their families or locate other permanency planning options such as adoption.
- Educate Latino families about community services and, likewise, educate community services workers about Latinos.
- Require training and assistance programs to accommodate language and cultural differences (e.g., Burgos Decree in Illinois).
- Enhance the participation of Latino grassroots organizations at the local, state and national level.

There is a need to focus more on the welfare of the Latino child rather than child welfare:

Recommendations:

- Build more supportive community environments that can assure the safety and security of Latino children.
- Improve the collaboration of children's services.
- Foster linkages between and among the various commitments to children—school, child welfare, the courts, religious facilities, and so on.

This study points the way to critical areas aimed at reducing the risks of abuse and neglect among vulnerable Latino children, and clarifies data limitations for understanding how these children are cared for and protected.

Recent child welfare initiatives, the increasing exposure of Latino children to social problems, and the nation's focus on the health and welfare of children makes this an ideal time for national leaders to step forward and declare that <u>every</u> child has a right to a permanent, loving and nurturing family, and that every family has a right to live in a safe and secure community. This study firmly supports such an effort.

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THE SIBLING BOND: ITS IMPORTANCE IN FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIVE PLACEMENT

The Powerful Sibling Bond

Loss has become all too familiar to 35-year-old Amy. First, it was the loss of her childhood. At nine, because her parents were not capable of caring for her and her younger sister, she became the care giver to six-year-old Anne.

Two years later, she lost her parents and her home. She and Anne were moved by the authorities into foster care after it became clear that their parents could not provide a safe and nurturing environment for them. It was an especially difficult move for Amy, who had to relinquish her "parental" role to her new foster mother.

But the most wrenching loss of all came when Amy was 12. Her social worker believed it would be in her best interest to live in a home with girls her own age. For the first time in her life, she and her sister were separated.

It was devastating for both of them. Amy's self-esteem plummeted because so much of it revolved around her ability to take care of her younger sibling. Anne, too, was destroyed by the move for she no longer had the only constant in her life. Her sister, in addition to being her best friend, had also been her consistent source of advice and approval.

Anne was later adopted by her foster parents and moved with them to another State. The sisters lost touch with each other. They also lost their ability to trust and to form lasting relationships when they became adults.

At 35, Amy says, "I will never forget the day I had to leave my sister. We were both crying, and I felt like the world was a terrible and hostile place. As the months went by, I could feel myself close up. The more I thought about what had happened to me, the more angry and bitter I became. If the social worker who was supposed to be concerned for me had the power to take away my sister, I could never trust anyone again."



Today, Amy and Anne are in contact with each other. They see each other from time to time, but they do not have the close relationship that they might have had they not been separated. Amy lives alone, insists she will never marry, and prefers living a solitary existence where no one can hurt her. Anne has been divorced twice and says that intimate relationships are impossible for her to manage. When someone gets too close, she unconsciously sabotages the relationship.

The story of Amy and Anne demonstrates the powerful bond that exists between siblings and what can happen when it is broken.

Today, mental health experts are beginning to recognize the significance and power of the sibling relationship. It is, they say, longer lasting and more influential than any other, including those with parents, spouse, or children. When it is severed, the fallout can last a lifetime.

"In the past it was assumed that parent-child relationships sowed the seeds of adult behavior, but there is a growing awareness that the interplay between siblings also exerts a powerful life-long force," says Elisabeth Rosenthal in an article published in *The New York Times.* "So, people who spent years on the couch dissecting their relationship with their parents may be chagrined to learn they have more work ahead of them. Some psychologists say they must now probe their relationships with their brothers and sisters."

Dr. Jerry F. Westermeyer of the Department of Psychiatry at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago says, "The sibling relationship has been a neglected topic in social science, especially in adulthood," noting that virtually no research had been done on the topic until the 1980's. "But people are starting to look hard at it now," he says. "It's an important topic and it strikes a chord."

Despite this new burst of knowledge, statistics indicate that more and more brothers and sisters may have to experience the same heartbreak felt by Amy and Anne. Sixty-five to 85 percent of children entering the foster care system have at least one sibling; about 30 percent have four or more. It is often difficult to find families willing to take all of them, and current estimates indicate that 75 percent of sibling groups end up living apart after they enter foster care. For most of them, it means losing the only significant relationship they have known.

How Strong Is the Bond?

The bond between brothers and sisters is unique--it is the longest lasting relationship most people have, longer than the parent/child or husband/wife relationship. While the bonds may wax and wane, a person's lifetime quest for personal identity is undeniably interwoven with his or her siblings.

In early childhood, siblings are constant companions and playmates. Through games and conversations with each other, they learn to interact with the larger community. During adolescence, once-close siblings may temporarily weaken their ties as they exert their individuality and independence. In adulthood, when they have families of their own, the needs of their families usually take precedence over the relationship with each other, but the sibling ties often emerge stronger during this period. Siblings generally want to share their adult struggles and triumphs with each other.

The cycle of the sibling bond comes full circle when the siblings reach old age, after their parents and spouse may be gone and their children are raising children of their own. The bond between them often intensifies as they once again become each other's companions, sometimes living together for the remainder of their lives.

This bond exists in children raised in well-adjusted families, but it is even stronger for brothers and sisters from dysfunctional families. They learn very early to depend on and cooperate with each other to cope with their common problems.

Separating siblings in foster care or through adoption adds to their emotional burden. They have already had to cope with the separation and loss of their parents. If they are then separated from their siblings, they must experience the grieving process all over again.

For many children, this separation will be even more traumatic because, if they have experienced abuse and/or neglect at the hand of their parents, they will often have stronger ties to each other than to their mother or father.

Sometimes, it is only through their siblings that children have been able to gain any positive self-esteem. When they see good qualities in a brother or sister, they are less likely to see themselves as "a bad kid from a bad family." Siblings are often able to reveal to each other parts of themselves that they are reluctant to share with anyone else, thus strengthening the bond between them.

These early ties remain even when siblings are separated in foster care or through adoption. In her book, Adopting the Older Child, Claudia Jewett writes, "Children separated from brothers and sisters may never resolve their feelings of loss, even if there are new brothers and sisters whom they grow to love. There may be more drive in adopted adults to track down their remembered biological siblings than there is to locate their birth parents, so great a hole does the loss of a sibling leave in one's personal history." Many adopted adults desperately want to meet a person who they think might look like them. Seeing similarities between themselves and their biological siblings helps to answer elusive questions they may have about their heritage.

Studies have shown that even babies experience depression when they are separated from their brothers and sisters. In one such study, it was found that a 19-month-old girl was better able to cope with the separation from her parents than from her siblings. The children in this family were placed in different foster homes, resulting in the baby's loss of speech, refusal to eat, withdrawal, and an inability to accept affection. This pattern persisted even after she was reunited with her parents. It was not until her brothers and sisters rejoined the family that this little girl returned to her former behavior.

The media continues to report stories about brothers and sisters who have been separated through adoption and as adults begin a tireless search for each other. One such story involved Eleanor, 39, who searched for her older brother, Jim, 41, who had been separated from her when they were young children. These two children had been extremely close. It was Eleanor's older brother who, when they were first adopted, showed their new parents how to get his sister to eat her vegetables and brush her teeth. It was her big brother who had made the transition into their new family easier for Eleanor. But when Jim showed signs of emotional problems, the adoptive parents returned him to the adoption agency. It was believed to be in everyone's best interest.

Now, 36 years later, the only information Eleanor has found out about her brother is that he had been in a shelter for the homeless. It was believed he had also been in and out of mental institutions.

Unfortunately, the decision to separate the children proved damaging to both of them. Jim's emotional problems worsened, following him through his life, and his sister was traumatized by the loss of her brother.

Today, a greater number of former foster children are searching for their siblings than are searching for their biological parents. They are suing child welfare agencies in order to get them to release information--and they are winning. States and courts have begun to recognize the importance of the sibling relationship--not only biological siblings, but also "psychological" siblings.

"It's a sad commentary that such an action is needed," states Kay Donley Zeigler, a trainer on sibling relationships in adoption at the National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption in Southfield, Michigan, "but it may be that this type of action on the part of former foster children will force social workers to think twice before separating siblings."

Recently, a couple from New Jersey was able to receive an adoption subsidy for adopting a sibling group even though none of the three children was related biologically. These three "sisters" developed their relationship while they were placed in the same foster home--a home they shared for three years.

In similar cases, judges in New York and Massachusetts have ruled that agencies must accept responsibility for the failure of sibling groups to remain together. The Massachusetts decision added that brothers and sisters should be raised together, even half-brothers and sisters, "unless there are compelling reasons for separating them."

Why Are Siblings Separated?

Although it is generally accepted that separating siblings should be the exception, many brothers and sisters are living apart. Some of the reasons will be discussed below. Unfortunately, there are no laws or set rules--the decision to split the family is usually left to the discretion of the child's social worker.

Today with more children entering the child welfare system, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find families willing to accept a sibling group. Hemmed in by budget and time constraints, overburdened caseworkers often feel that they have no other option than to separate the children. They believe that separately the children will stand a better chance of finding a permanent family since there are more families looking to adopt just one child at a time.

Often these sibling groups have come from troubled backgrounds, having suffered abuse and neglect by their biological parents. Their combined problems may seem too severe and numerous for one set of parents. It is thought that placed separately, the children will each receive the undivided attention of their new parents, and this will help each develop to his or her highest potential.

Social workers may also decide to separate siblings if one of them is being victimized by the other, as in the example of Jimmy and Diane.

Jimmy, 11, and Diane, 9, were a close-knit brother and sister who were placed together with a family in New Mexico.

Before the adoption was finalized, Jimmy was found to be abusing his little sister. The soon-to-be adoptive parents frantically contacted the social worker, saying, "We can't tolerate this kind of behavior. We want Jimmy out of our home!"

The social worker immediately acted on the case and removed Jimmy from the home. It was later discovered that Jimmy had been abusing his sister in an earlier placement as well. It was believed that by separating Jimmy from his sister he would "straighten himself out." Only time will tell whether the best interests of the children truly have been served.

Separating siblings may also appear beneficial if the children are so unhappy about being removed from their biological or foster family that the social worker feels they will band together to sabotage their adoption.

Others are separated because of their inability to get along with each other. Sibling rivalry has been a concern of families since Cain slew Abel in the Garden of Eden. Few brothers and sisters are driven to such extremes; yet, sibling rivalry and jealousy remain major causes for separation in foster care and adoption.

As seen in the earlier example of Amy and Anne, separation is also common when one child has difficulty giving up his or her role as "care giver" to the other children. His or her role confusion may result in removal from the home so that the other children can bond with their new family without conflict or interference. Removing the care giver may also appear to be in his best interest, as he can learn to become a child again without the constant reminder of past responsibilities.

Research Findings

Although these reasons for separating siblings may have merit, numerous studies invalidate them. They indicate that separating siblings often delivers inappropriate messages and results in greater problems for children in the long run. Research on siblings reveals the following five points:

1. When children are separated because of sibling rivalry, it teaches them that the way to deal with conflict is to walk away from it, not to work it out. Siblings who remain together learn how to resolve their differences and develop stronger relationships.

2. The responsibility felt by an older child for a younger sibling is not necessarily a negative. It can be used constructively by adoptive parents to help both children develop appropriate roles with each other. The caregiving child can be helped to become a child again and the younger child can learn that adults can be trusted.

3. Even a needy child does not necessarily benefit from being the only child in a family. According to Margaret Ward's study, "Sibling Ties in Foster Care and Adoption Planning," an only child may receive a lot of attention, but the child may also then become for the parents the embodiment of all their hopes and aspirations. The child may be expected to change troublesome behavior sooner than he or she is able.

4. When a sibling is removed from a home because of behavior problems, remaining children get the message that the same thing can happen to them. It reduces their sense of trust in adults.

5. Removing a sibling from a foster or adoptive home because he has abused his brother or sister does not guarantee that the abuse will not continue in another environment. Therapy may be a more appropriate intervention.

Struggling With the Issues of Sibling Relationships

Despite the growing recognition that it is healthier for brothers and sisters to remain together, social workers charged with the responsibility of placing sibling groups still struggle with the difficult reality of finding families willing to accept several children at one time. It is easier to find a family for one child than for a sibling group of six. It is also less costly to search for a family in the immediate area than to stretch across State lines or travel cross-country, which is often required when looking for a family willing to adopt a sibling group. It is also more comfortable for some social workers to place a child with a traditional two-parent family, although single parents and those with alternative lifestyles may be more receptive to adopting a sibling group.

Social workers who are dedicated to keeping siblings together and who are willing to be flexible about prospective adopters can be successful in finding families for them.

For example, large families are often willing to adopt a sibling group of three or four, but these families make some workers uneasy. They worry that the parents may be overburdened and will not be able to give each child enough attention. They wonder whether the household will be too chaotic and at what point the family will be strained beyond its capacity to give quality care.

However, research shows that living in a large family has many benefits.

"Large families teach everybody how to work together," explains Lois Cowen, mother of 15, 10 of whom are adopted. "The older children help the younger children. The children also learn to share. You never hear 'This is mine...you can't have it.' I recently bought the children one play toolbox and one set of play dishes. Each child got a tool and a dish--and was happy."

Parents in large families are less likely to overreact to minor problems-most of which they have experienced in the past.

Large families also tend to have more structure with set guidelines and consequences that are known to everyone. For many children who experienced abuse and neglect, this will be a welcome change from the chaos they faced in their earlier lives.

Children in large families learn to cooperate and share things with people of different personalities and temperaments, helping them to be more flexible about future changes in their world and preparing them for interaction with the wider community.

An agency's determination to keep siblings together must be reflected in its foster and adoptive family recruitment messages. When recruitment highlights sibling groups in a positive manner, families willing to adopt them respond.

The National Adoption Center, for instance, a Philadelphia-based organization that promotes adoption opportunities for children with special needs, feels strongly about placing siblings together. When it conducts publicity campaigns, brothers and sisters are shown together and every effort is made not to separate them. The Center has found that the general public shares its sentiments and believes fervently in preserving the rights of brothers and sisters to grow up together.

Carolyn Johnson, the Center's Executive Director, explains, "Most people are distressed when they hear there is a chance siblings will have to be separated. It is against the natural order of things--and their visceral reaction is that brothers and sisters should stay together. Even a family considering the adoption of only one child will almost always want to adopt his siblings once they are made aware of their existence."

Paddy Noyes, writer of a column featuring children waiting to be adopted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for 23 years says, "Sometimes a worker will tell me that a sibling group won't have a chance of being adopted if we put them *all* in the paper. But I say, 'Let's start with the positive and feature them all.' The results have been that people will adopt the whole group."

Decisionmaking in Sibling Placement

For adoption workers struggling with a decision about the placement of siblings, Kay Donley Zeigler makes these five suggestions:

1. Examine the importance of siblings not only at present but for the child throughout his or her life. Although the child may not be close with a brother or sister now, consider future implications if they are separated.

2. The child's feelings should be considered. Although it is a major decision and not one the child can or should make alone, his or her wishes should be part of the decisionmaking process.

3. The decision about separation should be made by several informed persons, including current and former caretakers, therapists, counselors, teachers, physicians or any others who have played an important role in the children's lives. Explore with them the history and meaning of the sibling relationships.

4. Document all of the reasons for and against separating the children. Making a list will force an examination of the pros and cons. Provide clear documentation of the circumstances leading up to the decision in the event a decision to separate is ever legally challenged.

5. If siblings must be separated, plans for future get-togethers should be initiated immediately. Legally, adoptive parents can override any decision to maintain contact with siblings. They may have problems logistically with the contacts (i.e. they may move out of State, or it may be inconvenient to keep in touch), or they simply may not recognize the importance of maintaining the bond. Social workers should help educate the parents about the value of the relationship. Experience shows that the bond between a child and new parents is strengthened when they confront the issues of sibling relationships together. The child can then see his parent as someone who is sensitive to his or her needs.

"These relationships are sometimes the only semblance of normalcy these children have," says Ms. Donley Zeigler. "When you take away someone's siblings, it's kind of like you're stripping him of everything that he has that makes him feel okay about himself."

"If the idea of the child welfare system is to protect and help children," says Carolyn Johnson, "everyone involved should be careful to carry out that mission and always keep in mind what the best interest of the child truly is."

This article was written by Gloria Hochman, Ellen Feathers-Acuna, and Anna Huston of the National Adoption Center for the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse.

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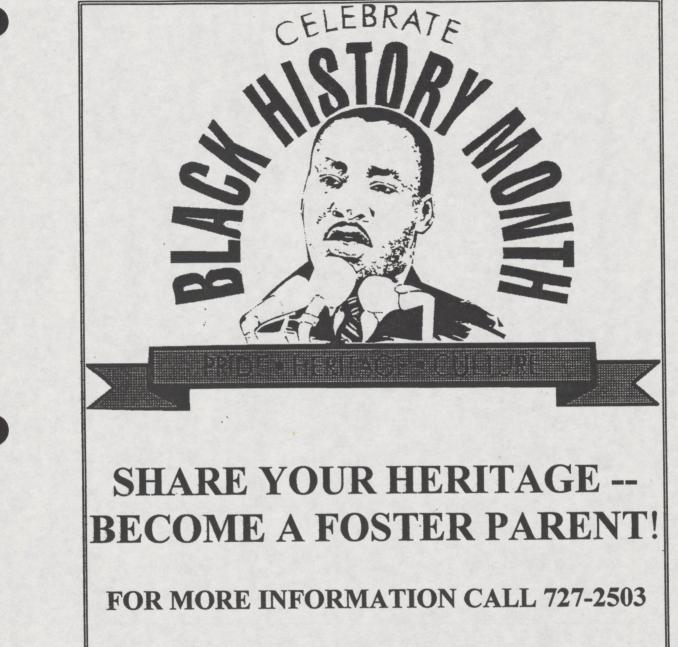
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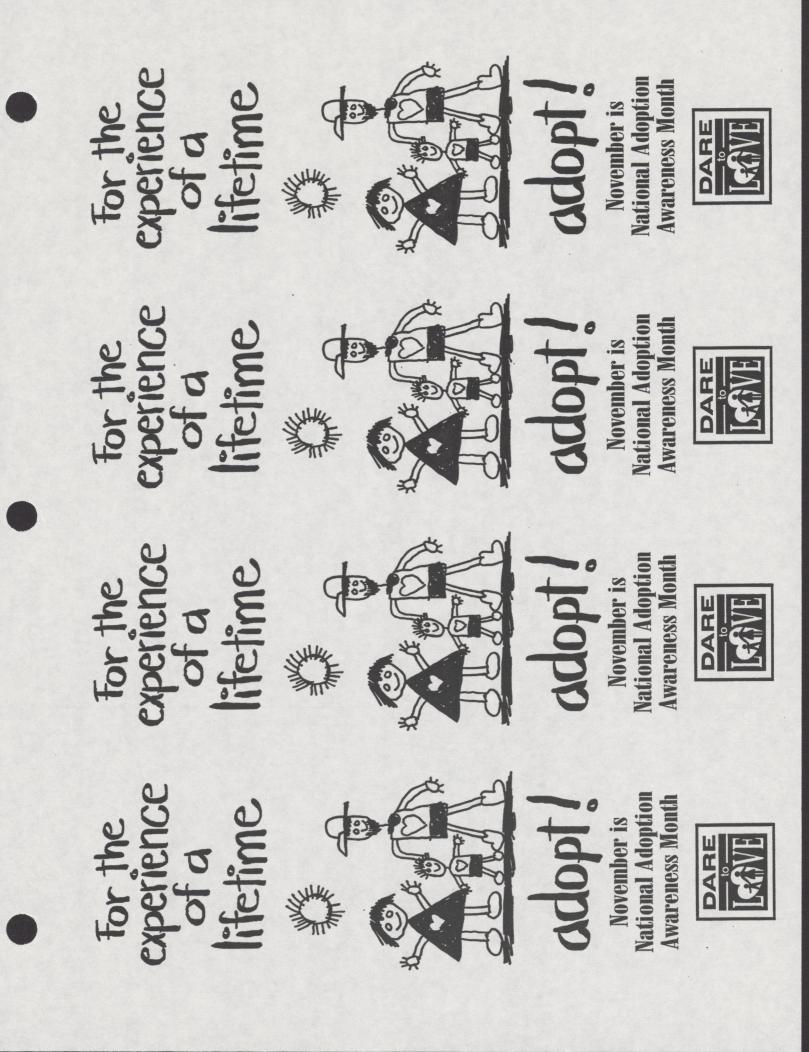
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Successful adoptive parents:

- are comfortable with fact that they might make mistakes
- have extended support networks
- are tolerant of ambivalence and negative feelings of children
- Iove challenges
- have a sense of humor
- are patient
- expect children to progress
- one small step at a time
 - are able to provide structure
- are affectionate
- are willing to use available resources
- are committed
- are emotionally healthy

To learn more about adoption, call the Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Line 1-800-233-3405



Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

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Adoption Inquiry Line



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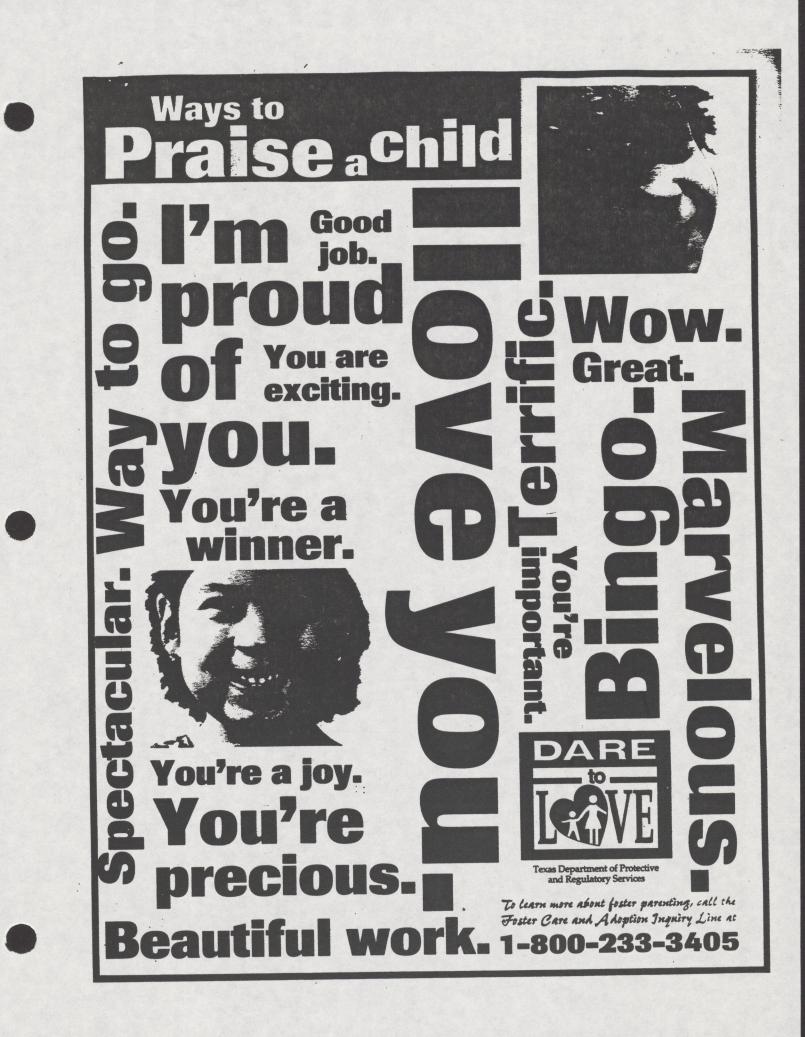
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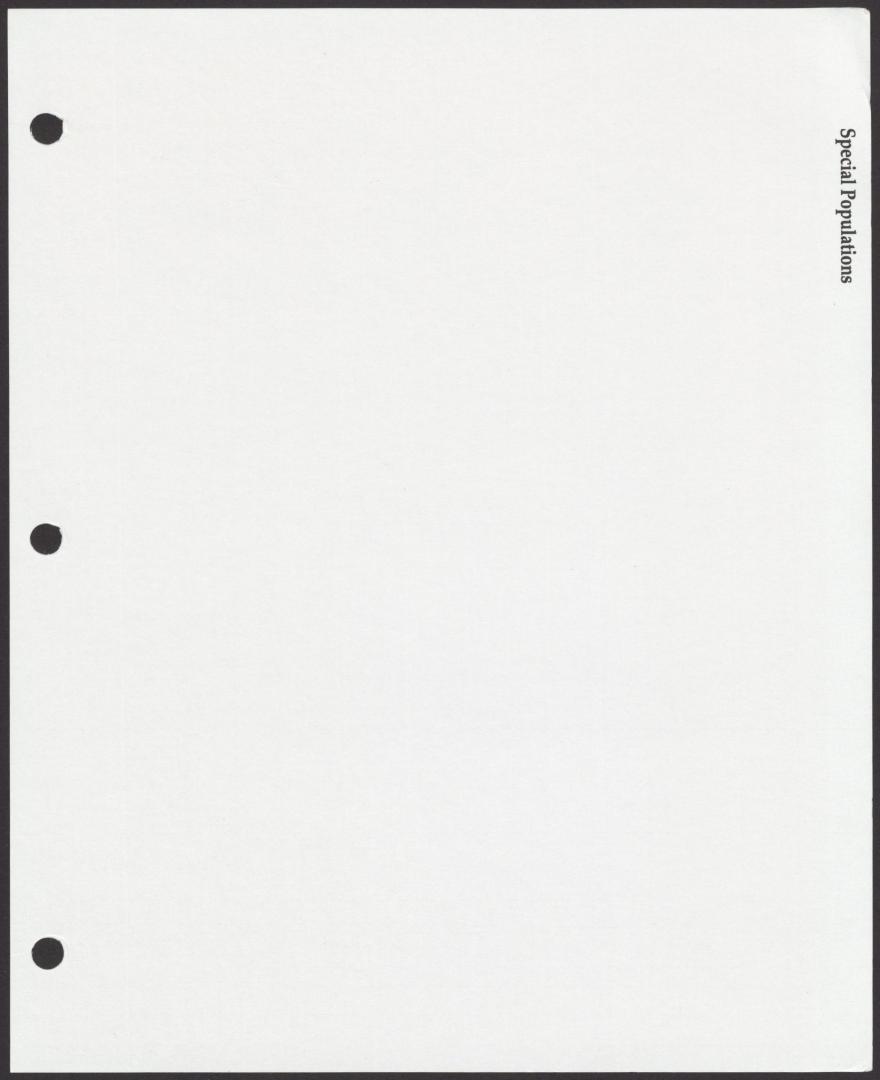
For the experience of a lifetime aa

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Educational Information

DOPTIO

Positive Adoption Language

The following list is an excerpt from Adoption Resources and Information.

The way we talk-and the words we choose-say a lot about what we think and value. When we use positive adoption language, we say that adoption is a way to build a family just as birth is.

Positive adoption language can stop the spread of misconceptions. By using positive adoption language, we educate others about adoption. We choose emotionally "correct" words over emotion-laden words. We speak and write in positive adoption language with the hopes of impacting others so that this language will someday become the norm.

Choose the following, positive adoption language instead of the negative talk that helps perpetuate the myth that adoption is second best. By using positive adoption language, you'll reflect the true nature of adoption, free of innuendo.

Positive Language

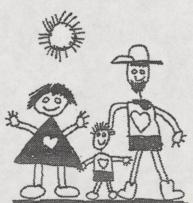


Birth parent **Biological** parent Birth child My child Born to unmarried parents Terminate parental rights Make an adoption plan To parent Waiting child Making contact with Parent International adoption Search Child placed for adoption Court termination Child with special needs Child from abroad Was adopted Two years behind in development (or other descriptive language) Spinabifida, cleft lip, or other specific condition Has disability or is physically challenged Describe specifics-intelligence Divorced Separated from parents or rejected Is taking Ritalin Neurological impairment or describeseizures, spasticity, learning disabled

Negative Language

Real parent Natural parent Own child Adopted child Illegitimate Give up Give away To keep Adoptable child or hard-to-place child Reunion Adoptive parent Foreign adoption Track down parents Unwanted child Child taken away Handicapped child Foreign child Is adopted Retarded

Deformed Handicapped Normal or grade level Broken marriage Deserted or abandoned Hyperactive Brain damaged





Texas Adoption Resource Exchange • Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services



Adopting Children with "Special Needs": A recipe for success

By Susan Badeau

On the bulletin board in my office is a yellowed and tattered index card I have kept since I first found it while in junior high school, with the following "Recipe for Happiness":

2 Heaping Cups Patience 1 Heartful Love

- 2 Handfuls Generosity
- Headful Understanding

Dash of Laughter Grease pan with unconditional commitment. Mix all ingredients well, sifting in support from friends and fami-ly and sprinkling generously with faith. Spread over a period of lifetime. Serves all.

In my adult life as an adoptive parent (19 children) and as an adoption trainer/support worker, I have found that this recipe is guaranteed to provide a fulfilling and rewarding lifetime of success for adoptive parents of children identified as "special needs" How? Please look with me more closely at each of the key ingredients:

I. Patience: The whole adoption process begins with patience. You must patiently investigate the many different adoption options available and the various philosophies, regulations, fees and waiting periods offered by available agencies. Then, with great patience, you begin working your way through the seemingly endless process of paperwork, home visits, classes and other steps on your way to becoming "approved" adoptive parents. Patience is put to a true test while you are waiting to be "matched" with a child who will fit into your home, heart and community.

Finally, you are matched with a child (or siblings...?) and she comes home. Now you must turn patience into both an art form and spiritual exercise! Your child will exhibit many challenging and possibly disturbing behaviors. Change will be slow in coming and regressions will be frequent. People you thought would be supportive will keep their distance—or, worse—encourage you to "give her back." Patience may run thin at times. Sometimes it will seem as though Helen Reddy sang "You and Me Against the World" especially for you and your child. At other times it will seem as though you and your child are against each other. You will be dealing with a network of helping professionals in education, health, mental health and other arenas. Although they are ultimately very helpful, you will need patience beyond belief when dealing with multiple bureaucracies. eligibility criteria, redundant paperwork, appointments at inconvenient times, etc.

Above all, you will need patience in helping your child resolve the many painful issues around separation, loss, abuse, neglect and other traumas she has experienced in her short life. This is not a process that can be rushed. It is not on your timetable. It is both a supreme privilege and challenge to be side by side with your child as she makes this journey into health and wholeness. You must be patient.

II. Love: You must love your child. OK, so this sounds obvious, but there will be times when it will be hard. Your child may not always seem very lovable. She may keep you up at all hours of the night. She may call you names and tell you to hug her or recoil at any motion toward touching her. She may refuse to eat-or eat everything in sight. She may urinate or vomit in very awkward places, creating great embarrassment. She may smoke cigarettes or worse. She may get suspended from school. She may destroy your favorite antique lamp that has been in your family for four generations. She may kill the neighbor's hamster. She may act out sexually. She may become pregnant in her teens. She may try to drop out of school She may not always be very lovable. But you must love this child unconditionally, "...for better or for worse ... " at all times.

III. Generosity-Being able to be freely and cheerfully generous with your time, your emotions and your material resources will help you a great deal as you endeavor to parent special needs children. They do not need to be "spoiled" or "pampered", but they do

need generous acts of kindness at very frequent intervals. There are many wounds to heal. Many broken places to rebuild. Many empty places to fill. Your child needs you to be generous.

You must not spend all of your generosity on your child, however.

If you are married, you must save some for your spouse. The marital relationship is essential to quality parenting and you must patiently and generously nurture this relationship. Time spent together, away from the children is a very precious gift that you must dare not neglect. Remember, it was the two of you before any of them came along!

Finally, you must reserve some generosity for yourself. Don't neglect your friends, your hobbies, your favorite pastimes. Make room for the things that are important to you in your life. Indulge and nurture and pamper yourself on a regular basis. If you mistakenly believe that being generous means living totally selflessly—you will pay a high price. If you "give away" all of yourself, you will soon reach a point when you have nothing left to give. Be generous to yourself,

IV. Understanding-Adoption and parenting require the use of your head-not only your heart. First, seek to learn as much as you can before you adopt. Read books about adoption and child development and special needs parenting. Take classes, workshops, seminars. Attend conferences. Visit facilities where special needs children live. Volunteer to provide respite care for parents who already have children. Attend parent support group meetings.

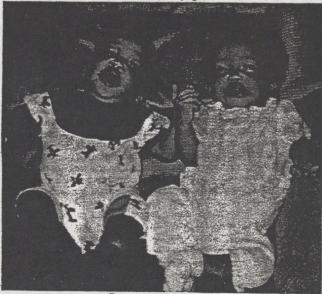
Ask questions-there is no such thing as a stupid question. Learn, process what you have learned and then go back and learn some more

Do not neglect this learning process once you have your children. Finding time to read, attend meetings or conferences or participate in classes will be much harder once you have your child-but it is essential for effective parenting.

Work co-operatively with the others involved with your childteachers, counselor, social workers, doctors, etc. Work together to gain insight and understanding into your child's needs. Most importantly-talk with your child. Listen with your ears, your head and your heart. Some of the adoptable children have been through such severe trauma that it will be a real challenge to understand them. But you must try. Walk a mile in your child's shoes-she needs understanding

V. Laughter-A good sense of humor, and an ability to laugh at oneself are essential characteristics of a parent of "special needs" children. There will be moments when everything seems to be utterly out of control. Laugh. Your kitchen may look like a tomado whirled through. Laugh. Your child may get thrown out of the camp it took you weeks to get her into. Laugh. Your child may decide to "help" you-by unloading all the dirty dishes and putting them away in the cupboards. Laugh. Your child may feed your coveted once a year piece of prime rib to the neighbor's dog. Laugh. Your child may loudly

continued on page 12



Can we move yet?

Adopting children with "special needs"

continued from page 11

tell "family secrets" to her whole class at school. Laugh.

Beyond laughing at life's little calamities, it also helps to really enjoy your kids. Laugh with them as they enjoy silly moments. Play pat-acake with gusto. Sing songs around the table.

Try to learn to dance to the latest rap song (and laugh at the outrageous results!). Giggle together over a joke or a humorous TV show. Let laughter be a more common sound in your home than tears or shouting or groaning. Laughter releases stress and is very cathartic. Laugh alone, laugh together, laugh every day at least once!

VI. Unconditional Commitment-Adoption is a life-long proposition.

Do not enter it half-heartedly. Do not begin with a "we'll give it a try" attitude. You must be in for the long haul.

Each time you adopt, you must be completely committed to that particular child - no matter what, and not at the expense of your other children. And on top of that, you must be able to communicate this commitment to the child (over and over and over ...) The child will more than likely test this commitment in any number of ways and will probably not trust your commitment for quite a while. But it is the essential foundation upon which all bonding and relationshipdevelopment must be built.

Commitment goes beyond commitment to the particular child, however.

It is important to be committed to parenting as your primary role in life for the long-term. It is also critical to be committed to adoption as a first-rate and fulfilling life-style. Commitment to adoption means a willingness to learn about the various issues adoption brings upon family life throughout the years and stages of development.

Unconditional commitment-to your child, to parenting and to adoption-is the anchor that will get you safely through the many storms ahead.

VII. Support-I truly believe that anyone who has the above ingredients (patience, love, generosity, understanding, sense of humor and commitment) can be successful as an adoptive parent to special needs children. But you cannot do it alone! No parent, no matter how well educated, no matter what financial resources they have, no matter how dedicated to parenting-no parent can meet all their child's needs. This axiom becomes even more significant when parenting children with special needs.

You must have supportive people available to you and to your child. You must have a willingness to reach out and tap into those supports regularly. This can include a friend who is willing to let you "vent" on the phone; other adoptive parents who understand what you are going through; special service providers in your community; and specialists that you may consult with on specific occasions.

You may need financial support (adoption subsidies). You may need advocacy support. You may need legal assistance. You may need respite. You may need to rely on some members of your support system quite regularly, while others may only be needed in a moment of crisis. You may need different types of support for different children in your family-and for yourself. You may also have the opportunity to become a support to another adoptive parent—what a privilege! Adoption is not a "do-it-yourself" project. Seek, find, give and

receive support-it is your lifeline!

VIII. Faith—A few years ago, I read the results of a Child Welfare League of America study on Special Needs Adoption. After interviewing and reviewing data on hundreds of adoptive families representing a great diversity of educational and income levels, years of marriage, ethnic and racial backgrounds, geographic locations, etc., they found that the one characteristic all the successful families had in common was faith. Not a particular faith or religion-but a faith that was alive and present in the everyday lives of family members, whether Judaeo-Christian, or another less common religion.

There are many times when nothing seems to make sense. Faith gives meaning. There are times when it all seems unattainable. Faith gives hope. There are times when it all seems overwhelming. Faith gives comfort. There are times of joy you want to share. Faith gives community. There are times of confusions. Faith gives renewal. Faith is the thread that holds all the rest together.

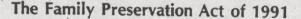
Keep the faith.

Parenting children who have been identified as "special needs" can be challenging, exhausting, frustrating and demanding. But it can also be the most rewarding and joy-filled journey you may ever take, and it is well worth the effort.

Susan Badeau is Executive Director of Rootwings, an adoption resource and exchange in Vermont specializing in children with special needs. Sue and her husband Hector's story has been reported in places from Time Magazine to national television. They are also past winners of the Vermonter of the Year award.

Hey! Watch it!





Earlier this year, The Option of Adoption joined several other agencies and advocacy groups in their support of H.F.2571. Organizations such as NACAC, The Child Welfare League of America, The Children's Defense Fund, and others all agree that that this proposed legislation could have "as great an impact as P.L.96-272 (The Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980)"-NACAC Board of Directors.

In addition to addressing several key areas of concern involving abandoned infants, state accountability, and SSI eligibility, the proposed legislation would earmark \$500 million to services that would include adoption assistance.

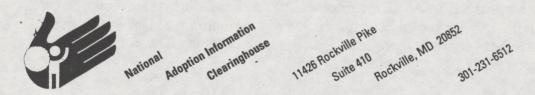
The proposal also includes language that stipulates that the proposed national database on adoptions and foster placements would have to include information on all

children, not just those receiving Title IV-E assistance. The bill also would establish a tax credit equal to 50% of the first \$4,000 of non recurring expenses related to the adoption of a child with special needs. This would replace some of the benefits lost during the Reagan administration's tax overhaul programs of the late 1980's.

The bill also allocates a percentage of funds to demonstration projects (grants) to offer new approaches to issues such as abandoned infant placement, family preservation, family reunification, etc.

We encourage you to write to your congressman to urge passage of this legislation. If you do not know who your congressman is, call your local town hall, city hall, or police department. Then just flood them with letters. Encourage them to push the bill through in its original form.





FOSTER PARENT ADOPTION: WHAT PROFESSIONALS SHOULD KNOW

Introduction

The practice of foster parent adoption is growing. More and more public social service agencies are finding that a child's foster family often is the placement of choice when that child becomes free for adoption. Nowadays, a foster parent willing to adopt is seen as a precious resource. This is especially true when the child or children in question have special needs or are children of color, and when it is evident that a strong feeling of attachment has grown between foster parent and child during the course of the foster care placement.

This factsheet is written for foster care and adoption professionals charged with the responsibility of finding permanent homes for children in foster care who become available for adoption. Another factsheet entitled "Foster Parent Adoption: What Parents Should Know" also is available from the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse.

At the end of this factsheet there are two appendices. The first one is a strengths/needs worksheet to use with foster parents considering adoption. The second is a list of common characteristics of foster parents who have adopted. The appendices are followed by a bibliography for additional reading and a list of organizations with an interest in foster parent adoption.

The increase in foster parent adoptions reflects the growing numbers of public agency adoptions generally. Child welfare professionals have been acting on their conviction that achieving permanency as quickly as possible is the most desirable outcome for children. Federal initiatives that encourage permanency planning (primarily Public Law 96-272, "The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980") have impacted the way foster care casework is performed. Return to birth parents or other relatives is the first goal for children in substitute care. But if return is not possible, leaving children in foster care limbo for many years is unacceptable. Therefore, child welfare professionals—and foster parents—have pushed for hearings on termination of parental rights to occur more quickly, and thus, more children have been made available for adoption.

With the increase in adoption generally, foster parent adoptions in particular have increased because agency workers have become more aware of separation and attachment issues. They now recognize that the attachments between foster parents and children, especially children with special needs, are important and valuable.

Helping Children. Helping Families. bing the Community.

Although foster parent adoption is desirable, it does not necessarily follow that every child in foster care who becomes available for adoption should be adopted by his or her foster parent. Foster parent adoption certainly should be neither automatic nor universal. However, certain agency practices have been shown to encourage foster parents to adopt. This factsheet addresses these practices.

Some Numbers To Consider

Several studies were performed during the 1980's on the prevalence of foster parent adoption among public agencies in the United States. They showed that foster parent adoptions constituted between 40 percent and 80 percent of all adoptive placements with the average being about 60 percent. One study on adoption disruption rates found that although 90 percent of all adoptions were successful (the criterion was that they did not disrupt), 94 percent of foster parent adoptions remained intact. Another study showed that foster parent adoptions were as good as other permanent plans implemented for children, with a reported 88 percent of adopted foster children "doing well."

In the 1990's the number of drug-exposed children entering foster care in the United States is alarming. Some estimate that as many as 20,000 drug-exposed children will enter the foster care system each year. It is likely that from 25 percent to 33 percent of these children will need to be cared for on a permanent basis by persons other than their birth parents. Therefore, as many as 6,600 children each year will need out-of-home care.

Some professionals in the field are calling for a return to congregate or group care for drugexposed children. Others believe that placing these children with specialized foster or adoptive parents who have received the proper training is most appropriate and, not unimportantly, more cost effective. One national adoptive parent organization estimates that using specialized foster or adoptive parents instead of congregate care facilities for drugexposed children could save taxpayers as much as \$550 million per year.

Changes in Agency Practice

As recently as the early 1970's, most public adoption agencies had policies against the practice of foster parent adoption. In fact, many even required foster parents to sign a contract saying they would *never* ask the agency for preference in adoption placement if their foster child should become legally free. However, by the early 1980's, agency thinking about foster parent adoption shifted. Foster parents also became more vocal and began advocating for the right to adopt the children in their home. In 1987 the Child Welfare Institute (CWI) in Atlanta, Georgia, did a survey of public and private adoption agencies in six States and found that virtually all agencies encouraged foster parent adoptions.

Why did agencies in the past discourage foster parent adoptions?

One reason was that workers were afraid foster parents would not work to help reunite a child with his or her birth family if the possibility that they would be able to adopt the child existed. Since family reunification is always the first goal of foster care, workers felt that families who were secretly wishing to adopt a child would either consciously or unconsciously sabotage the reunification effort.

Also, workers felt that if foster parents were allowed to adopt their foster children, they would drop out of the foster care program. Placement workers did not want to lose their good foster parent resources for future children who might come into care.

Another phenomenon working against foster parent adoptions was that workers and supervisors had strong biases and often did not share decisionmaking with foster parents when making placement decisions. Child welfare workers would think, "That family is acceptable for foster care, but for adoption, I want the best possible family for this child." In some cases, this sentiment meant they hoped to find a family better suited to meet a child's longterm emotional needs. Other times, the worker hoped to place the child with a permanent family of a different socioeconomic class (perhaps one more similar to that of the worker).

Additionally, workers felt that long-time foster parents would not be able to change their thinking and perhaps behaviors from those associated with being temporary caretakers to those of permanent and committed parents. Child welfare professionals also were concerned that if foster parents adopted one particular child but continued to be foster parents for other children, the remaining foster children might be affected adversely by that child's adoption.

For these reasons and others, a child who was doing perfectly well living with a certain foster family would be moved to another family when freed for adoption. This other family would have been recruited and prepared specifically as a permanent adoptive family. The foster parents would not even be consulted in this decisionmaking process.

Today the situation has changed almost completely. As mentioned previously, Federal initiatives, including the availability of adoption subsidies, have encouraged foster parent adoption. If a family is having difficulty committing to adoption because of financial concerns, then that barrier is removed. Workers and supervisors have come to grips with their biases and fears with the realization that placing children with special needs in permanent adoptive families is not an easy task. If a foster parent is interested in discussing adoption, chances are the agency is willing to listen. Further, the recognition of the importance of attachment in the lives of children also has played an important role. This issue is discussed in more detail below.

The Role of Attachment

In the late 1970's and early 1980's a new body of literature on the attachment of children in substitute care became widely disseminated. This literature began to describe what workers were seeing in their everyday practice—children in foster care who had experienced multiple moves exhibiting troublesome behavior and having severe emotional problems. These children did not trust anyone and were having difficulties in their interpersonal relationships at home, at school, with their peers, and in the community. For instance, one study during this period showed that growing up for many years in foster care had demonstrable negative effects on children's identity formation and level of self-confidence. Adopted children as adults felt more secure, confident, and better able to cope with life than adults who had been raised in foster homes for many of their childhood years.

Research at this time began to show that without the consistent, permanent presence of at least one caring, nurturing adult in a child's life, that child is at a high risk for psychological harm. Children who do not have one such person essentially feel there is little reason to do well in life. If all the adults in a child's life have rejected, betrayed, or given up on the child (at least in the child's perception), there is no core of self-esteem upon which to build a healthy, happy life. It is difficult for that child to achieve his or her full potential and develop satisfactory adult relationships.

No matter what the circumstances, children view a move to a new home as their fault. They think that they must have done something wrong or that there must be something intrinsically wrong with them. Moving from home to home to home contributes to this downward emotional spiral.

The new thinking growing out of this body of literature, then, is to capitalize on the positive attachment that has taken place within the foster family. If a child is loved by the foster family, has made friends in the neighborhood, has adjusted successfully to the neighborhood school, and is accepted and loved by the extended family and friends of the foster family, and the family is willing to adopt the child, then the child should stay there. In many cases, the child already has lost all those things with regard to his or her birth family. Why should his or her life be disrupted all over again? Why should the child incur a second, or perhaps even a third, set of traumatic losses?

It now has become clear to agencies that foster parent adoption can be beneficial. Realizing that foster care and adoption issues are moving closer and closer together, some agencies that have been preparing foster parents and adoptive parents separately are now moving toward joint training. Workers too are trained to decide whether a child's initial placement should be with a foster or adoptive family. One agency's practice illustrates this trend.

One Agency's Practice

Some social service agencies are now recruiting and training substitute care families with the initial understanding that the families may make a choice as to whether they wish to be considered as foster parents, adoptive parents, or fost/adopt parents. Other terms used for the fost/adopt practice are "flexible family resources," "permanency planning foster parents," or "high risk adoptive parents."

When agencies operate under this philosophy, a child is placed with a certain kind of family depending on the placement goal for that child. A child who very likely will be able to return home to birth parents or relatives is placed with a family who chooses specifically to be a foster family. A child who very likely will not return home but who still must maintain his or her foster care status for a time is placed with a fost/adopt family. In this case, the family will serve as a foster family as long as necessary but will get first preference as a potential adoptive placement if the child becomes available for adoption. A family who only wants to adopt will be recruited for a child whose foster parents, for whatever reason, are not able or willing to adopt the child for whom they have been caring. This potential adoptive family perhaps cannot deal with the ambiguity of foster parenting but is willing to work with the former foster family to make the transition to permanence as smooth as possible.

How do agencies decide at an early point in the placement process whether a child is likely torreturn to birth parents or move on to adoption? In the St. Louis County office of the Missouri Division of Family Services, Maryanne Mica and her staff developed a checklist for this purpose. They knew from their prior experience that when a certain combination of family factors are present, children are more likely to proceed from foster care to adoption. For these children, a fost/adopt parent or a flexible family resource could be identified for initial placement. Some of the factors they identified are:

- A child's sibling has died as a result of abuse or neglect;
- The parents have abandoned their child and have not been located in 45 days;
- The child had returned home and is now returning to foster care as a result of abuse or neglect similar to the circumstances that initially brought him or her into care;
- The child's legal parents signed consent for adoption and cooperated in the planning for adoptive placement; or
 - Both the child's legal and/or biological parents are deceased.

In this agency, these factors and many others are considered by the intake or foster care worker. If he or she feels there is a strong likelihood that a child will move forward to adoption, a meeting is held with the appropriate foster care worker and supervisor, an adoption worker and supervisor, and the agency's legal counsel, if necessary, to decide if indeed a flexible family resource is appropriate. If this group comes to a consensus that placement with a fost/adopt family is the best way to proceed, the group identifies a family and, if possible, a backup family.

The worker who did the original home study on the family makes the initial approach to the family. If the family agrees, the placement is made. If the family does not agree, the worker approaches the backup family. If the backup family does not agree, the group reconvenes and either decides to recruit a new family or reconsiders the decision to place the child with a flexible family resource.

The staff in the agency, then, receives training on the precise case factors that must be present in order to proceed in a certain direction on a case. Each child and family is assessed carefully and thoroughly before that direction is taken.

Training Resources

The reality today is that for a significant number of foster children, their foster care placement becomes their adoptive placement, especially if the children have special needs, are part of a sibling group, are older than 6 years old, or are children of color. Several training curricula have been developed that deal with this reality. Agencies can receive instruction for their workers from the training developers, and then the workers are able to use the training with the agency's prospective parents.

There are two national organizations that have developed several new curricula in the areas of joint foster and adoptive parent preparation and foster parent adoption training. They are CWI in Atlanta, Georgia, and the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption (NRCSNA) in Southfield, Michigan.

The joint foster and adoptive parent preparation curriculum developed by CWI is called the "Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting" or MAPP. CWI also has published a training manual about foster parent adoption called *From Foster Parent to Adoptive Parent: Helping Foster Parents Make an Informed Decision About Adoption*. A resource guidebook accompanies the manual and explains how to use it. The worksheet in Appendix I is a composite of several of the exercises found in the guidebook. The contact at CWI about these curricula is Heather Craig-Oldsen.

The joint foster and adoptive parent preparation curriculum developed by NRCSNA is called "Preparation for Permanency: Joint Orientation to Foster and Adoptive Parenting." In addition, NRCSNA recently completed the production of a comprehensive 6-day video-based worker training in all aspects of special needs adoption called the "Special Needs Adoption Curriculum." A full 2 days of this curriculum is devoted to the topic of foster parent adoption. The contacts at NRCSNA about these curricula are Nancy Burkhalter, Linda Whitfield, or Drenda Lakin.

Both of these national organizations have staff available, for a fee, to travel to a local agency site and train local agency workers in their curricula. Another way to arrange the training is for local agencies to send their staff to the trainers. A number of agencies already have received training from these organizations.

In the last few years, professionals working in local agencies also have written new training curricula in the areas of joint foster and adoptive parent preparation and foster parent adoption. Linda Katz of Lutheran Social Services of Washington-Idaho, working under a Federal grant, published a training curriculum called *Seeing Kids Through to Permanence: Preparing Permanency Planning Foster Parents*. The curriculum has the perspective of preparing foster parents from the beginning as potential permanent resources for children. Winona Boyd of Tabor Children's Services in Philadelphia has written a curriculum called "Transitional Training," which is designed for foster parents who have had a child in their home for a while and are now proceeding to adopt. Its main goal is to help foster parents refocus on specific adoption issues and make the transition from foster care to adoption. This training when copyrighted will also be available to the public.

See the list of organizations at the end of this factsheet for the addresses and telephone numbers of these foster parent adoption experts.

Considerations for Agencies Wanting To Encourage Foster Parent Adoption

If your agency's foster parents are not adopting children in substantial numbers and you want to increase these adoptions, you might want to take a look at your placement policy. Following are important issues to consider.

• Financial matters.—Have financial matters been taken into consideration? Is there an adequate subsidy component in your program so that a family would not be worse off financially if adoption takes place than if it continues as a long-term foster family? A family that absolutely relies on the foster care payment and medicaid coverage to meet a child's needs is not likely to give that up simply to finalize an adoption.

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• Postadoption services.—Are postadoption or postlegal services available through your agency? "Postadoption services" are those provided after a child is considered to be in an adoptive placement but before the adoption is legally finalized. "Postlegal services" are those provided after the finalization of the adoption in court. Perhaps a family worries that all the supportive services that the foster care worker provides will disappear if the family chooses to adopt. Reassurance in the form of a contract for postadoption services will help put these fears to rest. Further, are there adoptive parent support groups and therapists with expertise in adoption issues in your area? Can you connect the family to other foster parent adopters? If you know of these, provide their addresses and telephone numbers to your foster parents considering adoption. Concrete support such as this is indispensable to parents.

• Home study.—Is the adoption home study significantly different from the foster home study? Is the adoption home study time consuming and intimidating? Agencies whose home study formats are the same for both foster care and adoption are able to obtain consent from a larger percentage of foster parents to adopt. The adoption home study process must recognize and acknowledge the foster family's experience with the child. The home study should help prepare the family for the future, acknowledging the child's place in it.

• Initial contact person.—Who asks the foster family if they want to adopt? Research shows that to get the consent of more foster parents to adopt, the person who asks the family about adoption should be the worker who knows the family best and with whom the family feels the highest level of trust. It is preferable, for example, for the long-term foster care worker rather than a newly assigned adoption worker to ask the family about adoption.

• Collaboration and coordination.—Is there collaboration or coordination between foster care and adoption staff? It is important for foster care and adoption staff to be on the same wavelength and work together to achieve permanency for each child in care. Each should know well the foster care and adoption issues that are similar and those that are different. Some smaller agencies even have changed to a model of having one worker take responsibility for a case from entry into care until a decision is made in regard to a permanent placement. The child's status may change from foster care to preadopt to adoption, but the worker stays the same. This provides enormous stability for both the child and the family.

• Staff involvement and continued contact.—Do your staff members stay actively involved in their cases and encourage substantial contact between foster families and birth families? Foster families that decide to adopt generally know more about a child's background from the beginning than families who choose not to adopt. Families that choose to adopt also have had more contact with the agency in general and more caseworker involvement. These families are more likely to feel comfortable talking with their worker about difficult issues and to trust that the worker has fully disclosed pertinent information about the child's history. • Matching.—Is significant effort put into the matching of foster children with the right foster parents at the time of initial placement? Foster parents are more likely to adopt a child to whom they have developed a strong attachment. They are more likely to become attached to a child whom they view as similar to themselves and whose needs they are able to meet fairly easily, even if there are special needs. Parents' stated preferences during the course of the home study for the type of child that they feel best suits them are very important if you think a foster care placement may result in a future adoption.

• Preplacement visits.—Does your staff invest the time and energy in facilitating preplacement visits between children and potential foster families? As noted in Appendix II, "Common Characteristics of Foster Parents Who Have Adopted," older children who have preplacement visits are more likely to be adopted by their foster parents than those who do not visit. That extra bit of preparation for both the child and family increases the development of a positive attachment and can have long lasting positive effects for all concerned.

• Foster family empowerment.—Are foster families empowered to examine their strengths and needs and those of the child, agency, and community to help them determine whether a change from foster parenting to adoption is desirable? Are they given training or any structured assistance to help them make this decision? Do you discuss with families the grieving process, issues of separation and attachment, and the idea of creating a special ceremony or event for the child that will mark the change from foster care to adoption? Have you helped your foster families to understand that they will have to incorporate the child's birth family experiences—and possibly former foster care experiences—into their family life? Are they prepared to honor the child's birth heritage and positive memories, and even consider maintaining some kind of contact with previous significant people, if that is appropriate?

• Child preparation.—Are the children with whom you work adequately prepared for adoption? Does your staff do lifebook work with them? Do the children truly understand the difference between foster care and adoption?

Proper attention to all of these issues has been identified by research and experience as encouraging foster parent adoption.

Conclusion

Foster parent adoption is a fact of life. With proper preparation of children and families, with agency practice that encourages foster parent adoption and empowers families to evaluate their own strengths and needs, and with the availability of postadoption supports, foster parent adoption can be an extremely beneficial way to provide permanence for children. In many cases, foster parent adoption can help interrupt the downward emotional spiral that is associated with moving through the foster care system from home to home.

The practices discussed in this factsheet may represent significant changes in your agency's policy or structure. It may take a series of strategy sessions to determine the best way to accomplish these changes. Perhaps changes can be incorporated gradually rather than all at once. Permanence for more children may well be the result of your efforts.

Acknowledgments

NAIC would like to acknowledge Heather L. Craig-Oldsen of CWI and Linda Whitfield of NRCSNA for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this factsheet.

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Written by Debra G. Smith, A.C.S.W. Director, NAIC

APPENDIX I FROM FOSTER PARENT TO ADOPTIVE PARENT A STRENGTHS AND NEEDS WORKSHEET

This worksheet is designed to be completed by foster parents who are considering adopting a child who has been living with them through a foster care program. If there are two parents, it is helpful for both to complete the worksheet separately and then compare the strengths and needs. Designed as a self-assessment tool, the worksheet should provide some ideas to be discussed with the agency social worker for next steps in the decisionmaking process toward a foster parent adoption. Needs will indicate tasks to be accomplished. Please note that this worksheet touches only a few of the critical issues important to foster parents who are considering adoption. For further exploration of critical tasks, see *Resource Guidebook:* From Foster Parent to Adoptive Parent. This guidebook is published by the Child Welfare Institute. See the list of organizations for its address and telephone number.

Foster Parent Adoption Task	Strengths: (What I have done to accomplish this task.)	Needs: (What I still need to do.)
I have discussed the entire placement history of my child with at least one social worker and believe I have all information that is available.		
I have identified several strengths and several potential problems with this adoption.		
I have discussed ways to solve the potential difficulties with those I consider to be family.		
I have all information that is available about this child's birth family and have determined ways to help this child maintain positive connections with his or her roots.		

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Foster Parent Adoption Task	Strengths: (What I have done to accomplish this task.)	Needs: (What I still need to do.)
I have considered levels of "openness" in adoption and have planned for a level of openness that will meet the needs of this child and work for our family.		
I have discussed the difference between attachment and commitment with those I consider to be family. Those close to me understand that I am making a lifetime commitment to a child who may later in life have challenges and difficulties as a result of early experiences.		
This child has a lifebook which I plan to use to help him or her understand the differences between foster care and adoption as well as to help with developmental grieving.		
I have considered the ways this child expressed loss earlier in life and have anticipated and planned for ways this child may grieve at the time of adoption and at other important milestones during life (developmental grieving).		
I have planned ways to help this child maintain a tie to his or her cultural, racial, or ethnic roots.		
I have planned ways to talk with other children in the family about this adoption, including ways to help the family understand the differences between foster care and adoption.		
I have planned for the future financial and medical needs of this child and have thoroughly discussed subsidy with at least two social workers.		
I have identified people who will support me if I become discouraged.		



Foster Parent Adoption Task	Strengths: (What I have done to accomplish this task.)	Needs: (What I still need to do.)
I am pursuing adoption willingly and at this time do not feel coerced by a loved one or the agency.		
I have talked with at least one family who has adopted through the foster care program.		
I have considered this decision for several months and believe that adoption of this child is important for the well being of this child, my family, and myself.		

APPENDIX II

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER PARENTS WHO HAVE ADOPTED

- Foster family initiates discussion of adoption with the worker and follows through.
- Foster family perceives the child as being similar to the family.
- Foster family perceives a reciprocal affection.
- Child's problems are viewed as having improved over the course of the placement.
- Foster parents can vividly recall their initial reactions to the child.
- Foster parents have uncomplicated reactions of happiness to and acceptance of the child.
- Older children who have preplacement visits are more likely to be adopted by their foster parents than those who do not have preplacement visits.

Source: William Meezan and Joan F. Shireman. Care and Commitment: Foster Parent Adoption Decisions. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.

For Additional Reading

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Organizations With an Interest in Foster Parent Adoption

Child Welfare Institute Heather L. Craig-Oldsen 1365 Peachtree Street, N.E., Suite 700 Atlanta, GA 30309 (404) 876-1934

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Child Welfare League of America 440 First Street, N.W., Suite 310 Washington, DC 20001 (202) 638-2952

Institute for the Study of Children and Families Eastern Michigan University Ypsilanti, MI 48197 (313) 487-0372

Lutheran Social Services of Washington-Idaho Linda Katz 6920 220th Street, S.W. Mountain Lake Terrace, WA 98043 (206) 672-6009

Missouri Division of Family Services St. Louis County Maryanne Mica 9900 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132 (314) 426-8420

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse 11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 410 Rockville, MD 20852 (301) 231-6512 National Foster Parent Association Information and Services Office c/o Gordon Evans 226 Kilts Drive Houston, TX 77024 (713) 467-1850

National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption Linda Whitfield 16250 Northland Drive, Suite 120 Southfield, MI 48075 (313) 443-7080

North American Council on Adoptable Children 1821 University Avenue, Suite N-498 St. Paul, MN 55104 (612) 644-3036

Tabor Children's Services, Inc. Winona P. Boyd 4700 Wissahickon Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19144 (215) 842-4800

National Adoption Information International Adoption Information Glearinghouse 11426 Rockville Pike Suite 410 Rockville, MO 20852 301-231-6512

FOSTER PARENT ADOPTION: WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Introduction

The practice of foster parent adoption is growing. More and more public social service agencies are finding that a child's foster family often is the placement of choice when that child becomes free for adoption. This is especially true when the child or children in question have special needs or are children of color and when a strong feeling of attachment has grown between foster parent and child during the course of the foster care placement.

This factsheet is written for foster parents who are considering adopting one or more of their foster children. The information will also be helpful to a foster parent who already has adopted or to a new foster parent who may be faced with the possibility of adoption sometime in the future. Another factsheet entitled "Foster Parent Adoption: What Professionals Should Know" also is available from the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC).

This factsheet will discuss some of the issues to think about as you consider adopting your foster child or children. It includes a worksheet to use in conjunction with your agency social worker to guide you through the decisionmaking process. At the end of this factsheet are a list of references for further information and a list of organizations with an interest in foster parent adoption.

Issues to Consider

In many ways, when a child lives in your home with you, life is not terribly different if he or she is officially a foster child or an adopted child. The day-to-day tasks involved in child rearing remain the same. There are meals to cook, clothes to wash, outings to plan, lessons to supervise, hugs to savor, conversations to share, discipline to administer, a mind to stimulate, talents to develop, values to instill, and ambitions to encourage. During the course of living, growing, learning, and playing together, you are very likely to become attached to the child placed with you. So what is the big deal if you decide to adopt? It is just more of the same, right? Well, yes, but also, no.

Of course, there are many differences between foster care and adoption, ranging from the trivial to the significant. After a child is adopted and postplacement visits have taken place, a social worker will no longer come by your home to visit. The child will have your last name. You will not have to share authority with an agency—decisions about school, medical treatment, religious practice, and a myriad of other parenting matters can be made without



someone looking over your shoulder. The child will inherit from you and is entitled to a share of your estate equal to that of any of your other children. You will be financially responsible for the child's welfare until he or she reaches the age of majority, and you will be liable for his or her actions should he or she be involved in a legal dispute.

Over and above these practical matters, you will have to deal with emotional issues as well. Because the child has experienced loss, he or she will go through the grieving process, perhaps over and over again at certain critical times in his or her development. This is called *developmental grieving*. You will become acquainted with the stages of grief and the behavior that goes along with each stage. The denial, anger, and depression stages all have predictable patterns of behavior that you soon will be able to recognize, if you do not already.

You also will be learning about the concept of *entitlement*—the awareness that this child is now your child and that you have the right to discipline, love, and care for this child, totally and permanently. You will have a stake in this child's future, and this child will have a stake in yours.

When you adopt your foster child, especially if the child has been with you for an extended period of time, both you and the child's social worker should help the child to understand the significance of the change in status. The child's lifebook, a personalized account of his or her birth and placement history, may be an important tool in facilitating this understanding. It is very important that you mark or celebrate the change from foster care to adoption in some symbolic fashion, so that the child really perceives the difference. Children who have been moved around a lot may not really understand what all the fuss is about, but it should be made clear that adoption is a major life event. A special party, a family ceremony, even the sending of formal announcements are all possible ways of marking the adoption. Ask your child and other family members what they would like to do to commemorate this milestone.

When you adopt your foster child, you will have to incorporate the child's birth family experiences and background—and possibly former foster care experiences—into your family life. You must honor the child's birth heritage and positive memories and build upon them. If past experiences involved abuse or neglect, especially sexual abuse, you should receive special training to understand how those experiences can affect a child in later stages of development. If the child will have contact with birth or former foster family members, you should consider how visiting or corresponding will work within the context of your family.

Availability of Resources

If you adopt a child who has special needs—either as a result of genetics, his or her placement experiences, or a combination of these two factors—you will be dealing with these issues for an extended period of time. Adoption subsidies can help with the financial aspects of raising children with special needs, but you also need to know what other resources will be accessible to you. Some of the resources you should investigate include the following: Postadoption services.—Are postadoption services available from your agency? Ask your social worker.

- Support groups.—Are there groups in your area for adoptive parents or organized around the particular special need that your child has? Research your community.
- Counselors or therapists.—Are there counselors in your area who have expertise in older child or special needs adoption? Do they accept medicaid?
- Other foster parent adopters.—How do other foster parents who have adopted through your agency feel about the support they have received? Talk to them.
- Family and friends.—Consult your immediate and extended family members, and other important people in your life. Do they support your decision to adopt? Will they stand behind you unflaggingly if there are problems in this adoption that are not solvable overnight? If they do not, can you still handle it?

Ultimately you alone or you and your spouse are going to be responsible for this child, but knowing that there are some identifiable supports may make that responsibility a little easier to bear.

Mutual Assessment

The central issue in changing from the role of foster parent to that of an adoptive parent is that of redefining your *attachment* to the child that came about through daily living as a full lifetime *commitment*. Are you ready, willing, and able to see this child through to adulthood and to afford him or her all of the opportunities—and burdens—that being a member of your family entails? Can you see this child being a part of your life long into the future? To do this, you and your agency social worker should examine the strengths and needs of your family, agency, and community and evaluate the impact of adding this particular child, with his or her particular strengths and needs, to your family on a permanent basis. This is what making an informed adoption decision is all about.

Hopefully, your agency will walk you through the process of evaluating the strengths and needs of the child and your family to see whether permanent placement with you is in all of your best interests. The attached worksheet will help you consider your personal adoption readiness.

Conclusion

If you do adopt, be aware that there is a large adoptive parent and professional support network in this country. You definitely will not be alone. As we noted earlier, foster parent adoptions are happening more and more frequently. There are adoptive family support groups all over the country that provide a forum for discussion, friendship, and mutual assistance. Adoption conferences on the local, regional, and national levels offer additional learning opportunities. Literature on many relevant topics is available to you, including other publications from NAIC. More and more professionals and agencies are developing expertise in the area of postadoption services. All of this means that if you have an occasional rough period along the way, knowledgeable and empathetic people can help you through it.

Acknowledgments

NAIC would like to acknowledge Heather L. Craig-Oldsen of the Child Welfare Institute and Linda Whitfield of the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this factsheet.

Written by Debra Smith, A.C.S.W. Director, NAIC

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I have identified several strengths and several potential problems with this adoption.		
I have discussed ways to solve the potential difficulties with those I consider to be family.		
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I have talked with at least one family who has adopted through the foster care program.		c
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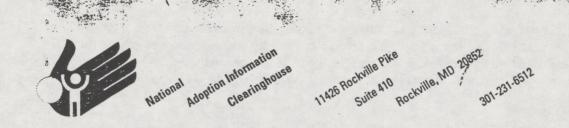
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North American Council on Adoptable Children 1821 University Avenue, Suite N-498 St. Paul, MN 55104 (612) 644-3036



ADOPTION AND THE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT: What Parents Can Expect at Different Ages

Now that you have adopted a child and life is beginning to settle down, you may find your thoughts moving to the future. When shall I tell my child that s/he is adopted? How will s/he feel about it? At what point will s/he want more information? What will s/he want to know from me? How can I help my child feel comfortable about being adopted?

Whether children are adopted as infants or when they are older, whether they are healthy or have physical or psychological problems, their adoption is bound to influence their development. You need to understand how and why.

Learning about the developmental stages of children and what can be expected in each stage is important to all new parents. When your child has been adopted, there are additional considerations. In these pages, we will be looking at specific issues—separation, loss, anger, grief, and identity—and show how they are expressed as your adopted child grows up. Some of these issues will be obvious in all stages of development; others surface at specific times. The more thoroughly you can understand how your child behaves and why, the more likely it is that you can be supportive and help your child to grow up with healthy self-esteem and the knowledge that s/he is loved.

While the stages described below correspond generally to a child's chronological age, your child's development may vary significantly. Some children progress more quickly from one stage to another; others may continue certain behaviors long past the time you would have expected. Still others may be substantially delayed in entering and moving through new stages. Many characteristics of adolescence, for instance, may not even appear until your child's twenties and may persist until your child's identity has formed.

The First Year

The primary task of a baby is to develop a sense of trust in the world and come to view it as a place that is predictable and reliable. Infants accomplish this through attachment to their caretakers. During their early months, children have an inborn capacity to "bond" to ensure their survival. They express it through sucking, feeding, smiling, and cooing, behaviors which, ideally, stimulate loving responses from their parents (or caretakers). These pleasant interactions and the parent's or parents' consistent attention form the parent-child bond and the foundation for a child's sense of trust.



During this period, a consistently nurturing and tension-free environment makes a child feel secure. The most valuable thing you can do is to show, through attention and affection, that you love your child and that your child can depend on you. If you generally respond to your child's cries, s/he will learn trust. If you hug and smile at your child, s/he will learn to feel content.

Although the need to attach continues for a long time, the process of separation also begins in the first year of a child's life. A milestone is reached when children learn to separate from their parents by crawling and then by walking. At the same time, babies often become fearful of separation. Psychological separation begins too: babies start, non-verbally, to express their own wishes and opinions. Many experts in child development view early childhood as a series of alternating attachment and separation phases that establish the child as an independent person who can relate happily to family members and friends, and be capable of having intimate relationships with others.

The Second Year

Toddlers continue the attachment and separation cycle in more sophisticated ways in the second year. They learn to tell you how they feel by reaching their arms out to you and protesting vigorously when you must leave them. Anxiety about separating from you heightens, and they may begin to express anger. During this stage, when you must guide and protect your child, you become a "no" sayer. It is not surprising that your child becomes frustrated and shows it in new ways. Helpless crying usually comes first. Later your child may exhibit aggressive behavior such as throwing things, hitting, pushing, biting, and pinching. Much of this behavior is directed toward you but some is directed at the child's peers. Such behavior often puzzles and frightens parents. You may wonder if your child is normal. Adoptive parents often worry that an unknown genetic trait is surfacing or that the "orneriness" has something to do with the adoption. Sometimes they think ahead to the teenage years and wonder if these are early warnings of trouble ahead.

It helps to know that this kind of behavior is typical of toddlers, who have conflicting wishes about their push toward autonomy and their anxiety about separating from you. Almost all children go through a "me do it myself" phase, accompanied by temper tantrums and toilet training battles. Handling tantrums, setting limits, and encouraging language development and the expression of feelings consume most of your time and patience.

In the first 2 years, the stages of attachment, the beginnings of separation, and the expression of anger and aggressiveness probably are the same whether your child is adopted or not. Even in homes where the word "adoption" has been used frequently and the child can pronounce it or even say, "I'm Susie, I was adopted from Chicago," the words have little meaning. What is especially important is that your adopted child has the opportunity to pass through the attachment and early separation stages in the same way as a child born to you.

When older babies or children are adopted, their capacity to form relationships may have been disturbed. A series of caretakers and broken attachments through the first months of a child's life can complicate adjustment and compromise the ability to develop trust. You may need to work much harder to let your child know that you care and that you will always be there. Even if your baby received nurturing care before joining your family, s/he can still benefit from your understanding the significance of attachment and the importance of loving interaction.

If you adopt cross-culturally, it will be helpful for you to learn about attachment behavior in *that* culture. Consider for instance a family who had adopted a 7-month-old Asian baby. When the baby cried, she could not be comforted by holding; she would only quiet down if she were laid on the floor near her mother and spoken to softly. Once she became calmer, she would crawl into her mother's lap for a hug.

There is another example of a baby adopted from Peru who needed to sleep with an adult for the first few months following adoption. His new crib went unused until he was 15 months old, when his parents were able to help him adjust to sleeping alone.

Children who are adopted when they are older usually follow the same attachment and separation paths as other children, but possibly in a different time sequence. This gives you the opportunity to make up for what might have been lost or damaged in earlier relationships.

The first 2 years are crucial to personality development and dramatically influence a child's future. As you grow into your roles as parents, your children also will grow into their place in your family.

Age Two to Six-Identity, Feelings, and Fears in the Preschool Years

If you thought a lot was happening in your child's development in the first 2 years, you will find that the preschool years are filled with activity and nonstop questions. Once children learn to speak, they need only a partner, and the world becomes theirs for the asking and telling. This is when parents begin to feel pressure to explain adoption to their children. It is also when children's ears are wide open to adult conversation and they take in so much more than adults once thought they could. Parents are busy answering as best they can questions such as why the sky is blue, why leaves fall off the trees, why people are different colors, how birds fly, and why a baby brother cannot join the family right now. The more comfortable parents are in trying to answer questions honestly, the more encouraged their children will be to learn. A lack of interest in learning often results from having questions met with too many "I don't knows" or the obvious indifference of parents to their children's curiosity.

Sometimes parents feel so embarrassed about not knowing all the answers to their child's questions or are so afraid of giving the "wrong" answer that they ignore a question or change the subject. In doing so, they often miss a chance to discuss critical feelings with their children. For instance, a little girl visiting a museum with her father asked him why a woman in a painting was crying. She wanted him to pick her up so she could see the painting better, but he felt uncomfortable, took her hand, and moved on. This would have been a good opportunity to discuss why people are sad sometimes and why the little girl thought the woman in the painting was sad.

Children between 2 and 5 years of age have fears, especially about being abandoned, getting lost, or no longer being loved by their parents. They also engage in "magical" thinking and do not distinguish reliably between reality and fantasy. They may be afraid of giants, monsters, witches, or wild animals.

Children in this age group become increasingly familiar with separations from loved ones, often because they are attending daycare or preschool programs. They also make new friends outside their family, and their interests broaden. At the same time, they notice that their parents do not know everything and cannot control everything that happens to them. This can be frightening because it threatens their sense of security.

As you observe your children and others, you will notice that both boys and girls imitate their parents' nurturing and care-taking activities. They carry, feed, change, and put to bed their dolls and stuffed animals. They kiss them and sometimes throw them or hit them. They are mimicking attachment and separation behaviors. If a baby enters the family, many 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds insist that it is *their* baby, that they "borned" it or "adopted" it. Sometimes a girl will tell you that it is her baby and that Daddy is the father. A little boy might say that he is going to "marry Mommy when Daddy grows up and dies." If you listen, you will see that your child is trying to make sense of the relationships in the family and to find a way to express the strong emotions of love, hate, and jealousy.

It is puzzling for children to understand why mom and dad get to sleep together while they have to sleep with two trucks and a bunny. You are witnessing what is known as the Electra complex in girls and the Oedipal complex in boys. Little girls may feel jealous of their mothers' grownup relationship with their fathers. They experience a mix of feelings which includes wanting to marry Daddy but feeling competitive and fearful that they will not "measure up." Little boys may want to be mommy's partner in everything and show off their developing "manliness." They do not understand why Daddy should be included but worry that Daddy will be upset with them for the way they feel. All of this behavior is normal for children this age.

There is also an aggressive, competitive side to this stage. You may notice behavior that is challenging, stubborn, and argumentative, usually directed toward the same-sex parent. Girls argue with their mothers about what to wear, what toys to leave at home, and who is the boss of the baby. Boys want to talk about what they will do when they grow up, and even in the most peaceful of families, they will turn all sorts of items into weapons which they yearn to use on the draperies, the baby, and, in frequent moments of frustration and anger, on Daddy.

These behaviors are part of children's working out their awareness of their smallness and insignificance compared to their parents and their urges toward autonomy and independence. They want to be big but also want the benefits of infancy. If they cannot be Mommy or Daddy's partner, they want to be their "lap babies."

Gradually, the intensity of these feelings abates. Children's love for their parents allows them to reconcile the Oedipal or Electra complex by eventually exchanging the wish to marry the parent of the opposite sex for the more realistic desire to grow up to be like the parent of the same sex. Some version of this scenario occurs in most children, even those raised by a single parent. Sometimes the behavior is expressed directly; other times it is subtle, recognizable only through recalling dreams or in pretend play.

Children who have been traumatized or abused may not show the kind of behavior described here. They may be seductive or fearful, uncertain about the appropriateness of being affectionate, or show symptoms associated with sexual abuse. These children need special help from their parents and possibly from a skilled therapist before they can feel safe enough to express loving or sexual feelings in their new families. The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) factsheet entitled "Parenting the Sexually Abused Child" is helpful in such cases.

During the preschool years, you may want to respond to your child with humor and tactfully explain that when your child grows up, s/he will find someone just like Mommy or Daddy. Adopted children inevitably wonder to which Mommy and Daddy you are referring. Some researchers believe that this is not the appropriate time to emphasize a child's birth family (Wieder, Schecter). It is difficult enough for children to find their place in the family (as the youngest child, the oldest, etc.) and to come to terms with their gender without having to ponder the meaning of birth parents. It probably is not even possible for a child this age to understand this concept yet.

The Facts of Life: Where Do I Come From? How Did I Get Here?

Most 3- to 6-year-olds do not yet understand the meaning of "being born." If they watch "Sesame Street" or "Mr. Rogers" on television, they may have learned something about how animals are born, and more recently, about how babies are born. They may then start to ask questions about this fascinating subject. Although parents traditionally are nervous about discussing the facts of life with young children, the children usually are curious, unembarrassed, and eager for information. This is a perfect opportunity to introduce the subject of where babies come from, how they get here, and how families are formed. This information is a valuable stepping stone in helping your child understand the concept of adoption. It is a time, too, that may awaken painful memories about your own infertility if that was the reason you chose adoption. Discussing birth and the creation of families with your child can be an enriching—and freeing—experience for the whole family.

At this time, adoptive parents must determine what and when they will tell their children about their adoption. Many adoption workers advise parents to introduce the word "adoption" as early as possible so that it becomes a comfortable part of a child's vocabulary and to tell a child, between the ages of 2 and 4 that s/he is adopted. However, some child welfare experts believe that when children are placed for adoption before the age of 2 and are of the same race as the parents, there probably is little to be gained by telling them about their adoption until they are at least 4 or 5 years old. Before that time, they will hear the words but will not understand the concept.

Dr. Steven Nickman, author of the article "Losses in Adoption: The Need for Dialogue," suggests that the ideal time for telling children about their adoption appears to be between the ages of 6 and 8. By the time children are 6 years old, they usually feel established enough in

their family not to feel threatened by learning about adoption. Dr. Nickman believes that preschool children still have fears about the loss of their parents and their love and that telling them at that time is too risky. In addition, there is some question about whether a child under 6 years of age can understand the meaning of adoption and be able cognitively to work through the losses implied by learning that s/he was born into a different family.

Although it is obvious to adults, young children often believe that they are either adopted or born. It is important, when telling them about their adoption, to help them understand that they were born first—and that all children, adopted or not—are conceived and born in the same way. The birth came first, then the adoption.

Waiting until adolescence to reveal a child's adoption to him or her is not recommended. "Disclosure at that time can be devastating to children's self-esteem," says Dr. Nickman, "and to their faith in their parents."

Children Who Are Adopted When They Are Older or Who Are of a Different Race

Children who have been adopted when they are older than 2 or when they are of a different race from their adoptive parents need to be told about their adoption earlier. With older children, who bring with them memories of a past, failure to acknowledge those memories and to have a chance to talk about them can reinforce the attachment problems inherent in shifts in caretakers early in life. In these cases, parents should "work to safeguard the continuity of the child's experience by reminding him or her of his earlier living situation from time to time, still bearing in mind that too frequent reminders might arouse fears of losing his present home," Dr. Nickman suggests.

If your adopted child is of a different race or has very different physical features from your family, you must be cognizant of signs that s/he is aware of the difference. Your child may have noticed it, or someone else may have commented on it. You will want to explain to your child that the birth process is the same for everyone but acknowledge that people in different cultures have distinguishing physical features and their own rich heritage. Sometimes children who look different from the rest of their family need to be assured that their parents love them and intend to keep them.

For children with developmental disabilities, explanations about birth may be simplified or adjusted to match their ability to comprehend. When children have expressed no interest in the subject, it may be that they are not yet able to benefit from a discussion about it.

In any case, it takes years of periodic returns to the subject of adoption before your children will fully grasp its meaning. Meanwhile, it is most important that you provide an environment that nourishes and encourages learning and the understanding of all important family issues, such as love and aggression, hate and jealousy, sex and marriage, illness and death. At least two studies (Kirk, Hoopes and Stein) suggest that adopted adolescents were better adjusted if they came from families where all emotional issues including adoption were discussed among family members beginning in early childhood.

Children who learn early that it is all right to ask questions and be curious usually carry this behavior over to school and develop a sense of mastery over their lives. That is why both attachment and separation behaviors should be encouraged and endured patiently by parents. Both are necessary for children to create their identity and to develop and sustain intimate relationships.

Preschoolers' reactions to adoption are almost entirely affected by the way their parents feel about the adoption and the way they handle it with their children. Children of preschool age will be as excited about the story of their adoptions as other children are by the story of their births. To help make your children feel connected and an important part of the family, share with them the excitement that you felt when you received the telephone call about them, the frantic trip to pick them up, and how thrilled everyone in the family was to meet them. As time goes on and bonds of trust build, your children will be able to make sense of their unique adoption stories.

Elementary School Years: Further Steps in Separation and Identity Formation

Adoption studies of children in this stage of life are contradictory. While some say that adopted children experience no more psychological problems than nonadopted children (Hoopes and Stein), others find that teachers and parents report more personality and behavior problems and find adopted children to be more dependent, tense, fearful, and hostile (Lindholm and Touliatos, Brodzinsky).

In general, children who have been adopted are well within the normal range academically and emotionally; however, emotional and academic problems may be greater if children were adopted after 9 months of age or if they had multiple placements before being adopted. Since these children are at greater risk of having attachment problems, their families should consider early intervention and treatment services similar to those available for other adopted children with special needs.

Middle childhood has often been described as a blissful period when children play and visit grandparents, get involved in interesting activities, and have few responsibilities or worries. Nonetheless, as adults we know from our own experiences, that there is a different side to this period between the ages of 6 and 11. The more worrisome serious period is usually experienced in children's inner lives, as indicated by their dreams and fantasies. There their feelings are played out about themselves and their families, their wish to belong outside of the family circle, to have attributes that make others admire them and seek them out, and their contrasting fears that they are dumb, ugly, mean, and useless.

At the same time, their horizons are expanding and they are ready to learn from school, friends, and other adventures outside of their homes. Competitive games and team projects attract them and make them nervous; they search everything and everyone for signs that they are loved and acceptable, while worrying that bad things might happen to pay them back for their seemingly evil deeds and thoughts.

The chief task of elementary school-aged children is to master all of the facts, ideas, and skills that will equip them to progress toward adolescence and independent life. During this time, children are supposed to consolidate their identification with parents and cement their sense of belonging to their family.

It is no wonder that in such a state, even without contemporary pressures resulting from divorce or other family disruptions, that emotional and behavioral problems frequently beset elementary school-aged children. Common problems include hyperactivity, poor school performance, low self-esteem, aggression, defiance, stubbornness, troubled relationships with brothers and sisters, friends, and parents, lack of confidence, fearfulness, sadness, depression, and loneliness. Adoptive parents wonder whether and how much these problems are caused or influenced by adoption or a history of faulty attachment.

Smith and Miroff state in their book, You're Our Child: The Adoption Experience, "It is extremely important, and also reassuring, to realize that the most common source of problems are developmental changes which follow a child from infancy to adulthood, not the fact that the child was or was not adopted."

Why Was I Given Away? Loss and Grief in Adoption

Loss is a feeling that runs through the lives of children who have been adopted. It shows itself in different ways at different stages of their lives. But knowing that their birth parents made an adoption plan for them, and then not hearing a lot of information about the birth parents, often makes adopted children feel devalued and affects their self-esteem. Sometimes they feel as though their status in society is ambiguous.

The full emotional impact of that loss comes to children, usually between the ages of 7 and 12, when they are capable of understanding more about the concept of being adopted. It happens because they live more in the world outside of their families and are more tuned in to the world inside their heads. While this is a giant step toward self-reliance, it leaves parents in a quandry about when and how much adoption information to share, and uncertain about whether their child is wanting or dreading to hear it. It is especially difficult at this time to decide what to do or say to children who do not inquire about their birth parents.

Although it may feel awkward, it sometimes helps to think back to your child's life and death questions during the preschool years and introduce the subject yourself. You might preface your conversation with what you would say to an adult. For example, "I just want you to know that if you want to talk about your adoption, I'd be glad to" or "You haven't asked much about it lately, and I thought, now that you're older, you might be thinking about it in a more grownup way." Such an introduction gets across to children that you are interested in talking about the subject and that you are aware of their getting older and more sophisticated in their thinking. In any case, your willingness to "connect" with your children about their adoptions and not to deny the difference between being adopted and being born into a family can help them grieve this important loss.

You can help your children work through their loss if you can be nondefensive about their adoption as well as sensitive to how much they want or need to talk about it at a given time. Do not, however, place undue emphasis on the adoption, as this is likely to make children feel painfully self-conscious about it. But if facts and feelings about adoption are not discussed at all, children's fantasies about their backgrounds may be acted out unconsciously, thus carrying out their unconscious self-identification as an unworthy person. Once they have understood the biological facts of life, and something about the social and cultural aspects of family life in their community, children of elementary school age begin to imagine things about their birth parents. One 7-year-old asked if her birth mother looked like their 15-year-old neighbor. An 8-year-old boy asked if his birth father could have been a friend of the family. A 9-year-old reported to her mother that she was looking in the shopping malls for a woman who had a nose like hers.

Although preschoolers want to hear how they were adopted and entered their homes, older children discover the reality that their birth mother relinquished them for adoption and ask why. Just as preschoolers try to make sense of reproduction by developing their own theories and mixing them with what their parents told them, older children try to reconcile their own theories with the available facts. What they learn produces a gamut of emotions ranging from incredulity to sadness, disappointment, anger, and guilt. Children may not express these feelings, but they have to be acknowledged, lived with, and digested before they develop a new understanding of adoption and themselves.

Some researchers think that children must grieve for the loss of the birth parents much in the same way that infertile couples grieve for the loss of a biological baby. Some children feel that they were given up because there was something wrong with them or because they were bad. Some become fearful that they will hurt their adoptive parents' feelings or make them angry if they want to find out more about their birth parents. Where preschoolers would often be quite open about expressing these feelings, older children have a greater sense of privacy and are not sure that their parents can tolerate their questions or feelings. Older children may, therefore, keep much more to themselves.

A common situation in children of this age, which you may recall from your own elementary school days, is imagining that they had been adopted or kidnapped from another set of parents who were usually better in every way than their own. These parents might have been rich, or even royalty, and they did not make you take vitamins, eat spinach, go to bed at 9 p.m., or refuse to let you watch MTV. When life at home was unpleasant, we could daydream about this "better" family to soothe our angry or sad feelings.

These fantasies provide an outlet for times when children are infuriated or disappointed by their parents, and when they do not know how to cope with their anger toward them. Usually, as a child recognizes that love and hate, anger and affection, can be felt toward people without ruining the relationship completely (i.e., the preschooler's—"I won't be your best friend any more" changes to the 8-year-old's, "I'm so mad at Jenny that I won't sit near her at music today"), these thoughts of another family fade. Then your children can continue to identify with your characteristics, activities, and values.

The fantasy world of the adopted child is complicated by the existence of the birth parents, and is influenced by whatever information is available about them. Sometimes the facts make it more difficult for children to idealize their birth parents or put pressure on them to "choose" to "be just like" or "totally unlike" one or the other set of parents.

Psychological Identification

If your child has had several homes before yours, there is often a brief honeymoon period where s/he will try to be perfect to ensure your love. But soon the sense of loss, hurt, and anger surfaces. Your child may, consciously or not, break your rules, steal, lie, or act out physically or sexually. The child's message is "I'm going to leave here anyway, so I'd better make sure I don't get too close" or "Families don't last, and I'm angry about that."

You will need to help your children build trust and gain confidence that you will not abandon them. Part of that job is helping your children to develop the psychological identification that distinguishes them as individuals.

What is this identification process that is so critical to success and confidence in later life? It takes us back to the initial attachment process, when it is important for babies to make an emotional connection that shape their personalities and make them someone who is a unique individual as well as a member of a particular family.

During the elementary school-age years, children's identity comes from a combination of their genetic heritage, their experience with their families, and what happens to them as they try to find their place in the wider world. They want to be like their peers and their families.

The creation of a family tree, a common elementary school assignment which asks children to construct a portrait of their geographical, ethnic, historical, and birth connections, offers an opportunity and a challenge to the adoptive family. This assignment will bring to the surface knowledge and ignorance about your child's background and legitimize discussion of family facts and secrets.

If there has been openness about adoption and a sensitivity to not insisting on discussing adoption when a child is not receptive, parents will be able to discover from their child what can and cannot be included in the family tree assignment. A 10-year-old, after moving to a new school, said she would like to be the one to decide whether to tell new classmates that she was adopted, because now she was the boss of that information. Is it farfetched to think that a 10-year-old is old enough to be "boss" of her adoptive information? At this age, the child's selfesteem will flourish if she can feel her parents trust her as she learns and masters new facts about herself and the world.

Sometimes during the elementary school years, before or after the family tree experience, children learn about heredity, genes, and "blood relationships." At this time, the adopted child realizes at the highest cognitive and emotional level so far, the differences between biological and adoptive relationships. Reactions to this information are probably as varied as the children and include feelings of relief, a sense of enlightenment, heightened interest in learning more about birth parents, denial of any interest, or feelings of loss and grief.

Remember that all adopted children have feelings about their adoption, and that many times in their development they will struggle with why their birth parents made an adoption plan for them. You can help your children by letting them know that they are not alone in these feelings and that it is all right with you if they express them and try to get explanations for what puzzles or troubles them. The more open family discussions have been from the beginning of verbal communication, the more likely it is that communication will continue no matter how intense or complex the subject becomes.

You may also want to remind yourself and your child that learning about adoption, like learning about life, is an ongoing adventure that you want to share with your child as much as you can, but that you understand that some of this learning has to be pursued alone as well. At this point, your child is old enough to choose the pace at which s/he wants to consider these new ideas. However, you as parents, are still in a position to guide, instruct, and set limits. A 9-yearold who wants, suddenly, to look for her birth mother the day after a fight over bedtime can be told that Mom feels she has to do some maturing before she is ready for that step.

Since these are the years when youngsters appear to seriously confront the "sad side" of relinquishment and adoption, opportunities to meet with and talk to other adoptees their age, as well as with adolescent and adult adoptees, are beneficial. It helps children see a bit into their own futures.

Foreign adoptees can benefit from cross-cultural experiences appropriate to elementary school-aged children. Some children are thrilled to attend an adoption family camp or summer program. Others prefer to process their feelings within their adoptive families or even alone. The more sensitive to your child's feelings you can be, and the more experience you and your child have in discussing feelings together, the more consoling and comforting you can be to each other. You will then survive and eventually triumph over this period of self-discovery and grieving.

Adolescence-Who Am I And Where Am I Going?

No sooner do your children begin to understand the wonders of biology than their own bodies begin the surge of growth toward puberty and the awesome stage of adolescence. Adolescence, for all its newness—it was not considered a distinct stage of life until after the first World War—has quickly acquired a reputation as a difficult and trying period for children and parents. Physical growth changes the person from a child to an adult, in preparation for procreation, but mental and emotional development may take years to catch up with the body. Adolescents' behavior is in transition and not fixed; their feelings about the world and their place in it are tentative and changeable, like a chameleon's.

The adolescent's primary task is to establish a secure sense of identity; the process is arduous, timeconsuming, and intense. Establishing a stable identity includes being able to live and work on one's own, to maintain a comfortable position in one's family, and to become a contributing citizen in one's community.

It is the nature of all adolescents, adopted or not, to question everything and everyone. It is also in their parents' nature to worry about their children's futures and their own survival in this period. Almost everyone agrees that, although often extremely difficult, open communication can smooth the process.

Adolescence is a time of trying on and choosing in all aspects of life. Two major aspects of adult identity formation will be choice of work and choice of a partner to love. Teenagers look

for and imitate role models. They critically examine their family members (as they did in elementary school), peers, teachers, and all the other heroes and anti-heroes the culture offers from rock musicians and movie stars, to ball players and politicians, to grandparents and peers' older brothers and sisters. They idolize and devalue people, ideas, and religious concepts. They often bond tightly with peers in small groups that are intolerant of all outsiders. They vacillate between criticism of others and harsh self-criticism. They are sometimes supremely self-confident and often in the depths of despair about their abilities and future success.

If normal adolescence involves a crisis in identity, it stands to reason that adopted teenagers will face additional complications because of what some have called "genealogical bewilderment" (Sants). The fact that the adoptee has two sets of parents raises more complicated questions about ancestral history now that intellectual development has assumed adult proportions. The search for possible identification figures may cause the adolescent to fantasize more about birth parents, become interested in specific facts about birth relatives, or wish to search for or meet them.

Although all adopted adolescents have to struggle to integrate their fantasies and future goals with their actual potential and realities, foreign, biracial, and other cross-cultural adoptees (as well as teenagers with physical or emotional disabilities) have additional challenges. They may suffer more from what Erik Erikson calls "identity diffusion," i.e., feelings of aimlessness, fragmentation, or alienation. They may appear outwardly more angry at adoptive parents, and more critical of what their parents did or did not do to help them adjust to their adoptive status. They may withdraw more into themselves, or conversely feel they need to "set off to see the world" in hopes of finding their true identity.

Adolescents often express their reactions to loss by rebelling against parental standards. Knowing that they have a different origin contributes to their need to define themselves autonomously. According to Dr. Nickman, "An adopted son or daughter cannot be expected to be a conformist. If he is, he may be inhibiting an important part of himself for the sake of basic security or out of a sense of guilt or responsibility to his adopters."

It probably helps a child to be told by adoptive parents that they understand their son or daughter's need to take control of his or her own life, and that they stand ready to assist in any way that they can, including giving their blessing to a child who needs to "to go it alone" for a while. Of course, a youngster under 17 years of age might be asked to wait until s/he could realistically manage in whatever environment would be encountered.

Searching

Current adoption practice has mixed opinions about whether, when, how, and with whose help, adoptees should look for more information about or try to initiate a reunion with birth parents. Information on this process is available through NAIC. Adoptive parents tend to think about their children's wish to search when they first adopt, and again when confronted with their angry toddlers. The topic resurfaces in adolescence, either raised directly by the child, or when rebellious, defiant behavior such as threats to run away, makes parents wonder if their child is wanting or needing to contact a birth parent. It takes a parent with sturdy self-esteem and more

confidence than most of us have to withstand the stony silences and stormy confrontations with teenagers in turmoil.

Parents are often tempted to escape perhaps by abandoning their teenagers who are having toddler-like tantrums, but you and your family will benefit more if you remain calm, stand up for the values you have taught, and continue communication efforts. For some adolescents, searching can be useful, while for many, the urgent activities and decisions of daily life are so pressing that they feel uninterested in or unable to confront such a heavy emotional undertaking. Waiting till they have reached adulthood when their lives will be more settled may be better for the latter group.

Anger, Sex, and Aggression-Again!

Adopted adolescents have the same trouble searching for a comfortable identity as do nonadoptees. Problems involving aggression, sexual activities and pregnancy, delinquency and substance abuse, social isolation and depression are the most common ones faced by teenagers and their families. Although there appear to be more adoptees percentage-wise in adolescent psychiatric treatment programs than nonadoptees, the majority of these patients tend to be the multiply placed children whose problems stem from a variety of sources, often the least of which is their adoption.

Although sexual identity is an issue for all adolescents, adopted girls have the additional burden of conflicting views of motherhood and sexuality. On one hand there is their perhaps infertile adoptive mother and, on the other, the fertility of their birth mother who did get pregnant and chose not to keep her baby, or possibly had her child taken away from her.

No matter how open communication has been, it is often next to impossible for adolescents to discuss their feelings about sex with their parents. Additionally, the adopted girl, unless she has close friends who are adopted as well, would have difficulty finding an ear understanding and sophisticated enough for this discussion. This may be a time to encourage meeting with other adopted teenagers, either through an organized group or informally, to provide your child with support for some of these sticky issues. Looking for solutions outside of the family is also appropriate for an adolescent for whom one major developmental task is to learn to separate and live independently.

As adolescents move toward greater autonomy, a parent's most difficult task is to create a delicate balance of "to love and let go." Although there are many times when you could encourage your toddler—"me do it myself"—or elementary school-aged child to "try things alone" or learn a new skill, an adolescent needs to assert his/her independence by establishing differences from you, and real distance. The adolescent needs to *take* his or her independence or autonomy, rather than *be given it*.

This often means a period of estrangement, lessened communication, or outright strife. You may want to listen and talk to your friends who have weathered adolescence with their biological children to note the similarities, and as you have tried to do all along, to understand the differences, acknowledge them, and try to work on them with your child. No matter how much you wanted to be parents, there are many times during the years of child rearing when you might ask, sometimes in humor, and sometimes in sadness, "Why did I ever sign up for this job?" Sometimes you can only reply feebly, "Well, it sure makes life interesting." But finally, you must have faith that the bonding that occurred in the early years between you and your child, the trust that has built as s/he grew up, and the communication that you have established, will come full circle and provide rich and rewarding relationships for you and your adult children.

ADDENDUM

When You Need Help

In the last 15 years increasing interest and research in child development and parenting has given adoption more attention. Until recently, once a child was placed for adoption by an agency, little else was offered about general child development or rearing; and if the adoption was a private one, there were no professional helpers. Adoptive parents tried to educate themselves through Dr. Benjamin Spock's 1945 edition of *Baby and Child Care* which offers helpful but brief guidance about adoption.

Now, in addition to the NAIC located in Rockville, Maryland and the National Adoption Center (NAC) located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, there are State and local organizations and programs sponsored by adoption agencies that provide parenting education and other "postadoption" services. Workshops, conferences, and seminars keep parents current with knowledge in the field. There are also support and self-help groups that offer educational and social activities.

The goals of these services are to support and maintain healthy family life, to prevent problems through education, and to make counseling and mental health services available as soon as problems appear. For a list of these agencies, please contact the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse at (301) 231-6512 or the National Adoption Center at 1 (800) TO-ADOPT or (215) 735-9988 in Pennsylvania.

How Do You Know You Need Help?

Usually a parent notices that something is wrong, either in the family atmosphere or in a family member. If you have educated yourself about normal child behavior at different ages, chances are you will find yourself questioning behavior in your child that seems out of the ordinary. Sometimes, a teacher, relative, or friend asks if you have noticed a problem. Perhaps your child seems unduly sad or anxious, unable to concentrate, is angry or flies off the handle for no obvious reason. You may see behavior that is unusual or not characteristic of your child; sometimes it is the increasing degree of a certain behavior that is troubling.

Perhaps there has been an upsetting event or change, such as a move or loss of job for you or your spouse. Children react to any parental problems that threaten their security. Elementary school-aged children tend to have problems around school; often that is the setting where problems are noticed. Adolescents tend to have identity concerns and authority struggles with their parents or other adults.

All of these possibilities can occur in any family. The adoptive family has the added concern of trying to decide whether or not it is an adoption issue that is troubling the child. If the child is over 6 years of age, it is usually impossible to distinguish adoption from other psychological, social, and educational issues. Treatment must evaluate the child and family and should consider his or her stage of development and the nature of the child's relationship with you (and sometimes with his or her birth parents).

Finding Help

Before seeking professional counseling, use your parenting skills to discover if you can help your child yourself by listening, talking, or making changes in the environment. If you feel your child cannot communicate with you or that your relationship might be part of the problem, it is wise to seek outside assistance.

Because it is so difficult to disentangle adoptive issues from those of normal development, especially once the child has reached elementary school-age, the adoptive family can benefit from professional helpers who have experience working with adoptive families. There are many varieties of therapy, and advantages and disadvantages to each. Sometimes the whole family needs to be involved in therapy. Sometimes your adopted child needs to deal with problems alone.

Ask your agency social worker, a friend with adopted children, your pediatrician, a representative from an adoptive parent support group, your local mental health center, or your local family service agency for recommendations of appropriate helping professionals. You can also contact the NAIC or NAC for referrals.

This article was written for the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse by Elaine Frank, M.S.W. and edited by Gloria Hochman. Ms. Frank is cofounder of After Adoption, a Philadelphia program that specializes in postadoption services. She is also on the Child Psychiatry faculty at the Medical College of Pennsylvania. Ms. Hochman is Director of Communications for the National Adoption Center and an award-winning writer about children and family issues.

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BENFITS OF THE TEAM APPROACH

There are many benefits of the team approach. As your agency further implements the concepts of partnership and teamwork, you will noticed some significant changes, particularly in the areas of mutual respect and role clarity. Often agencies find that implementation of the team approach produces improved service delivery, with increased permanency for children through family reunification and adoption. Some of the benefits identified by agencies practicing the team approach include the following:

- Foster parent satisfaction
- Foster parent retention
- Mutual support and respect
- Less disruptions of placements
- More time spent in productive planning
- Less time spent in "putting out fires"
- Better coordination of services
- Increases foster parents ability to handle special needs children
- More variety of opinion makes better decisions
- Reduces manipulation or "triangulation" by clients
- Worker does not feel "caught in the middle"
- Service becomes more family oriented
- Both team members become more oriented to professional growth
- Reduction in conflict between workers and foster parents

Tips on Parenting

- When children begin shouting, lower your own voice and talk softly, quietly repeating their name over and over in a reassuring way. This not only prevents you from escalating the conflict and losing control yourself, but it also gives time for children to regain their composure.
- When children say, "I can't," it really means "I won't." Remind children of times in the past when they were able to do the same or similar things. Express confidence that they can do the task at hand.
- When children say, "You can't make me," agree with them, but tell them that you can and will reward people who follow rules and enforce consequences for people who break rules.
- When children try to get their way, don't give in. Instead, tell them that you don't like and will not respond to those types of behavior. Try to teach them the difference between being assertive and aggressive.
- Resort to rules. When children break rules, be consistent in how you enforce consequences and tell children that you regret that they chose to break rules.
- Use "time out." When children start to get out of control, insist that they take a brief time out until they can calmly discuss the problem and demonstrate self-control.
- Use direct appeal to stop negative behavior. For example, say in a calm but firm voice, "Stop throwing sand," or "Get out of the sandbox and play elsewhere."
- According to one survey of teenagers, they want a mother who is not a best friend, but a parent who sets limits and helps them grow and learn to make decisions on their own. They want a dad to be financially responsible and be home at least some of the time. They want both parents to give them guidance and direction, but want room to grow, and the ability to make choices and even mistakes. They prefer parents to say, "Making this mistake was a good learning experience" rather than, "I told you that wouldn't work." They want privacy, a safe place, and the courtesy of a knock at the door before parents enter their room. They want a warm, loving, respectful, safe, happy, law abiding, neat family with two parents and pets.

Adapted from "Cognitive and Behavioral Strategies that work with Children who have Attachment Problems" by Sam Bell, ACSW, CSW-ACP, Youth and Family Enrichment Center, Tyler, Texas and "From the Adolescent's Perspective: Staying Mentally Healthy" by Betty Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, Parenting in the '90s: 91-92 edition.

Texas Department of Protective Ars and Regulatory Services

TIPS FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

CHILDREN HAVE QUESTIONS. ANSWER THEM.

START WITH WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE AND WHY

CHILDREN NEED TIME TO ADJUST TO A NEW SITUATION, YOU CAN HELP THEM GET STARTED BY LETTING THEM KNOW ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT AND IMMEDIATE THINGS THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THEIR WELL-BEING.

During a pre-placement visit and/or during the placement visit, make time to answer the questions that have to do with the child's primary physical needs.

WHO

.....will stay with me most of the time?

.....will be my brothers and sisters?

.....can I talk to if I have a problem?

..... is responsible for washing the dishes?

WHAT

.....needs to be left alone?

.....can I play with?

.....school will I be going to?

.....do I do with all this stuff I brought with me?

.....are the "house rules"?

.....can I snack on?

WHEN

.....is bed time/bath time/can I have friends over?

.....do we eat?

.....does mom/dad get home?

.....do I get my picture up on the mantle, just like you guys?

WHERE

..... is the bathroom?

.....do we eat?

.....will I sleep?

.....do I put my stuff?

.....can I wrestle and make a mess, and not get yelled at?

NAMES

With few exceptions, allow children to choose what they wish to be called. "Birth family" nick-names, tribal, clan or ceremonial names are just as important as any other name.

LET CHILDREN EXPRESS FEELINGS

It is important to allow, even help, an adopted child express feelings or worries. Give straight-forward answers to placement questions whenever possible. Don't try to fool the child.

ALLOW ADOPTED CHILDREN TO TALK ABOUT NATURAL/BIRTH FAMILY

If an adopted child needs to talk about the natural (or "birth") family, allow this. Answer as many questions as you can at the child's level of comprehension. Be sure to talk openly and honestly about the situation that preceded adoption.

Talking about "all those other parents" they've had is OK too.

MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

Some things that are discussed in private do not need to be known publicly. Rather, they should be worked on between the child and the adoptive parent(s).

DISCIPLINE

Proper discipline involves letting the child know exactly what they did **right or wrong**. Discipline should involve **rewards and restrictions** rather than physical punishment. If physical punishment becomes necessary, the same methods should be used on each occasion; it should not be more harsh on one child than another.

"MY STUFF"

Adopted children are like everyone else. They have certain individual belongings. There should be a place for them. How about a picture on the wall, a toy box, or a "little wall-hammock" for personal "stuff" or their own coat rack, dressing chair, etc.

PERSONAL SPACE

Each individual has their own "personal space". Some children require much physical contact, while others like to maintain their distance. Each is appropriate. Cultural teachings should be taken into account.

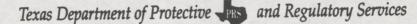


Community Service Opportunities

25 Ways You Can Help

You can support children in the state's care in any of the following ways:

- Give a soft fuzzy toy to a child who has been removed from home.
- Help recruit foster and adoptive parents in your church or synagogue. Find out if there's a "One Church, One Child" program in your area and get your congregation involved.
- # Host a baby shower to collect items for needy infants and children.
- Fold a fund-raiser to buy school supplies for foster children.
- Volunteer to do clerical work at a Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services office.
- Freach potentially abusive parents how to discipline their children without using physical violence.
- Get your church, synagogue, civic organization, or fellow employees to start a resource room ("Rainbow Room") to provide diapers, clothing, toys, books, and formula to ease the transition for children who must be removed from their homes.
- Collect holiday and birthday gifts for foster children in your area.
- Provide transportation to a mother and her child to therapy sessions.
- Have your organization adopt a Child Protective Services caseworker and provide selected items for families in need.
- Have your business donate money or make in-kind contributions to a non-profit organization that works to prevent child abuse.
- * Use newsletters from your workplace or other organization to publish information about foster care.
- Have your organization provide day-care scholarships for children of low-income parents. Ask your fellow employees to give their business cards to Child Protective Services caseworkers as a pledge to grant one request on behalf of a child.
- Have your business or workplace establish or review "family friendly" policies, such as benefits, day care, maternity or paternity leave, and any other policies that focus on employees' families.
- Flan an adult education program in your congregation to inform people about the needs of children.
- Form a "carpenters guild" in your congregation and repair homes of disadvantaged families to make them more livable for children.
- Find out if there are CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), Family Outreach, or Children's Advocacy Centers in your area. If there are, get involved and volunteer. If not, explore with Child Protective Services staff the feasibility of starting one of these projects.



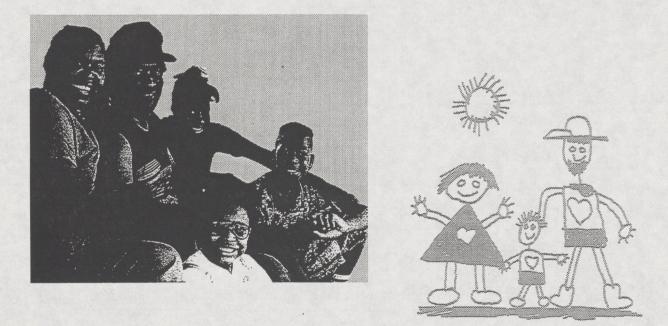
A D O P T I O N INFORMATION

Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families

Successful adoptive families:

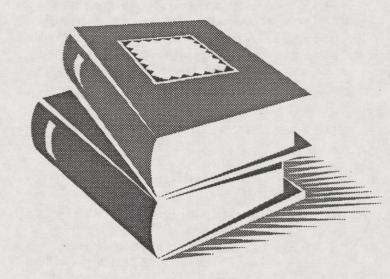
- V have a good sense of humor
- V have tolerance for negative feelings
- Con't have predetermined expectations
- i are flexible and able to cope with rejection
- ¥ know how to use resources and ask for support
- are able to provide structure
- Ve have the ability to meet personal needs
- are comfortable with the fact that they may make mistakes
- * have guts, endurance, commitment, and faith
- are full of affection

Adapted from *Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families*, Spaulding for Children, Copyright 1989





Additional Resources



Foster Family Care Resource Update

1997

American Foster Care Resources, Inc.

#9610 Kinship Care: A Manual for Families ... provides a fourteen topical-chaptered text offering in-service instruction on fourteen issues common to the kincare parenting experience. The skills-based content of each chapter is equivalent to material covered during one to two hours of face-to-face\group training. Kinship Care: A Manual for Families may be used as the text in group instruction or as independent study. 72 pages. **#9611 - \$9.50 Ea., 10+ Copies - \$8.20 Ea.**

Complimentary Certificates of Completion are provided with each order of ten or more manuals.

#9611 Kinship Care: Trainer's Guide ... A Trainer's Guide was developed to aid the trainer in presenting the curriculum in a group training format. The Trainer's Guide comes complete with step-by-step instructions, exercises and overhead transparency masters which may be used to create trainer's aids when presenting **Kinship Care** in a group training environment. The Trainer's Guide lends itself to a variety of training methods for the trainer. The Trainer's Guide includes one copy **Kinship Care: A Manual for Families**, a content outline for the **Manual**, with a set of overhead transparency masters and a generic certificate of course completion. In addition, the Trainer's Guide provides a series of chapter specific self-tests which may be distributed with each manual and can serve as a hand-in/mail-in-to-the-agency for training credit. Loose-leaf format, three ring binder. **#9611 - \$50.00 Ea.**

Foster Home Recruitment Resources

#9709 The Road to Quality Foster Care: A Comprehensive Recruitment Manual

Revised and re-issued in 1997 -

Individuals, committees and task forces charged with the responsibility for recruiting foster family homes are usually faced with creating something from nothing. They must learn as they go, belatedly succeed through trial and error, and piece together whatever they can from scattered and incomplete resources. It is a tribute to their ingenuity that a number of highly successful recruitment programs have been implemented.

It is probably safe to say that at some time during a recruiter's experience they wonder if someone hadn't done this before and if somewhere there wasn't a source that pulled together all the pieces of the recruitment process. There is such a resource! The Road to Quality Foster Care: A Comprehensive Recruitment Manual presents in a single volume all the elements of public relations, planning, recruitment research and evaluation, needs assessment and proposal development necessary for successful recruitment. The manual also includes suggestions, tricks of the trade and pitfalls to avoid – all drawing from the experiences of successful recruiters. The manual guides the reader through an actual planning process resulting in a program that can be implemented immediately.

#9709 \$50.00 Ea.

#218 "How to Prepare a Press Kit" Kit

In addition to a twenty-four page monograph: *Public Relations Tools for Human Service Providers: The Press Kit* - each kit contains: Generic Feature Story; 3 Generic Backgrounders; Cover Letter; PSA; Media Contact File Form; and, Biographical Information Form. The "kit" is an informational package presenting a guide and ready-made forms for your foster family home recruitment program press kit preparation. **#218 - \$15.00 Ea.**

#230 The Foster Home Recruiter's Notebook and Planning Guide

- for the family foster home recruiter this notebook and planning guide presents a place to start. Utilizing a monthly recruitment plan format, the recruiter is able to set specific goals and establish measurable steps for accomplishing recruitment objectives; to ensure that recruitment activities are varied to reach the entire community; to enlist the participation of additional community resource persons; to maximize results and opportunities by systematic planning; and, to provide feedback and evaluation of your recruitment program. The notebook includes a generic planning guide with two example monthly recruitment reports; the notebook also includes a comprehensive listing of recruitment activities and events which could become the focus of your recruitment planning. As a sample planning format which includes a list of children to be served, the target audience and specific action steps. The Recruiter's Notebook and Planning Guide supplements the Comprehensive Recruitment Manual by offering specific planning examples. **#230 - \$20.00 Ea.**

#231 The "How to Establish and Maintain a Speaker's Bureau" Kit

- The "Kit" includes a short monograph on the "why" and "how to" of establishing a speaker's bureau, a guide to effective public speaking and a series of generic "starter" letters and forms for the recruiter's use: thank you letters to speakers, speaker profile forms, speaker's follow-up form, fact sheet about foster care, speaker's bureau log, telephone log and referral card and samples of a wish list and press releases. The forms are generic and suitable for photocopying to use in maintaining your speakers bureau. **#231 - \$15.00 Ea.**

#232 Recognition and Retention - Sustaining an effective awards program

... this monograph presents a formula for increased retention of current foster homes through an on-going recognition/awards program. Sponsored either by the agency or by the local foster parent group, a formal awards program offers positive strokes and support for frequently frustrated and under-recognized service providers. The monograph includes a series of certificates for your use and a comprehensive format for implementing a successful recognition-awards program for foster families and foster care program volunteers. #232 - \$3.50 Ea.

#331 Getting Ready to Recruit

... offers the foster home recruiter specific suggestions and concepts in designing a foster home recruitment program. Establishing the "recruitment attitude", Getting Ready to Recruit guides the reader through the diagnostic phase of recruitment program design: defining roles and responsibilities, defining wants and needs, clarifying program definitions, and, evaluating your resources and program support. Getting Ready to Recruit supports the recruiter in designing a foster home recruitment program that has a clear definition of where its going and how its going to get there. **#331 - #3.50 Ea**.

#332 Organizing Recruitment Efforts

... is a workbook designed to assist the foster home recruiter in successfully implementing their foster home recruitment program. "The most creative, innovative, adequately funded and fully supported recruitment effort can be done-in by disorganization." Organizing Recruitment Efforts discusses selection and scheduling of recruitment activities, record keeping systems, task timetables, twelve month master calendars and three month working calendars, and, ten tips to help you manage your time. In a workbook format, Organizing Recruitment Efforts includes an assortment of blank forms, perforated for easy removal, as planning aids for the recruiter. **#332 - \$6.50 Ea.**

#M048 An Advocate's Media Guide

- successful advocacy presupposes a purposeful campaign of public relations and public education; this brief monograph offers a few tips on working with, and through, the media. Successful communications with, and support from, the media can be the cornerstone of your personal or organizational efforts. **#M048 - \$2.50 Ea.**

#235 As Many As You Need, An Approach to Recruiting Foster Families

The myth that "You just can't get enough foster families" is just that – a myth. Your agency can have as many foster families as it needs. As Many As You Need describes the successful recruiting experiences of Counseling and Care Services of Pennsylvania. Specializing in children with special needs, Counseling and Care presents its common sense model of foster family recruitment – from making contact to preparation for placement **#235 \$6.50 Ea.**

#320 Consider Foster Parenting...

Designed as a mailer insert, Consider Foster Parenting ... presents a general introduction to foster care and foster parenting; what foster care is, why the program is necessary, why some children need out-of-home placement, and, a brief outline of qualities and qualifications universally standard for fostering. Each flyer includes a "For further information" block on the reverse for agency stamp or imprint information; the flyer is 8 X 4 inches, printed two sided/two color. \$.30 Ea.;Pk\50: \$11.00; Pk\100: \$20.00; Pk\500: \$90.00

#321 Some Facts About Foster Parenting ...

Also designed as a mailer insert, Some Facts About Foster Parenting ... is an eight page booklet offering a comprehensive overview of the foster care program, a detailed description of foster parenting - the role and responsibilities, the challenges, rewards and expectations. Some Facts About Foster Parenting ... includes a "For further information" block on the reverse cover for agency stamp or imprint information; the flyer is 8 X 4 inches, eight pages, printed two color. \$.75 Ea.; Pk\25: \$16.50; Pk\50: \$30.50; Pk\100: \$56.00.

#233 Straight Talk About Family Foster Care - Serious Questions ... Candid Answers

- Using a question and answer format in a series of five interviews with foster parents, advocates and practitioners, Shane Hills presents a comprehensive picture of family foster care that focuses on the day-to-day, nitty-gritty learning through living that exemplifies the fostering experience. As a recruitment or orientation tool, *Straight Talk* provides years of experience in addressing the gamut of issues to be faced by the new, or soon to be, foster family - motivation, the relationships with agency, workers and courts, attachment and bonding, adoption, the positive and the not so positive realities of family foster care ... all presented in honest discussion of some tough issues. **#233 - \$4.50 Ea., 25 + \$3.75 Ea., 100+ \$3.30 Ea.**

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Catalog of Audiovisual Materials on Adoption

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1996

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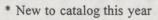
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Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Awareness: Bridging the Gap Between Families and Providers

Service providers across the United States interact with children, families and other professionals from an ever widening variety of cultural. linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds, suggesting a growing need for cultural competency training. Many staff development models that address diversity emphasize the importance of learning culturally specific information including communication patterns, health and illness beliefs and behaviors, religious practices, symbols, and rituals (Stewart, 1991: Like, 1991: Nkongho, 1992). Generally, it has been assumed that knowing about specific cultures and groups makes it easier to respect and appreciate differences and to interact effectively with persons from other cultures. However, onehour presentations and occasional classes do not adequately address the growing need for cultural education (Pahnos, 1992; Marvel, Grow & Morphew, 1993). The challenge of understanding diversity and becoming culturally competent does not stop with learning the "do's and don'ts" of a specific cultural group.

The authors of this article came together as a team by participating in a CRAFT* (Culturally Responsive and Family Focused Training) program designed for early childhood professionals and parents of children with special needs. This training made it clear that developing cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness is extremely complex and an ongoing process. The process begins with the provider understanding his or her own personal history and how it influences his/her perceptions. Literature increasingly reflects the importance of family structure, gender roles, and beliefs and

"Culture can include how people live, role expectations, child rearing practices, attitudes about time or money, definitions of achievement, concepts of beauty, art, music, food, and a host of other things. Nonetheless, culture is only one element of who a person is."

values—not only as they relate to clients/ families, but also as factors that providers bring to the encounter, and how this may influence service delivery.

Second, the provider must begin the process of understanding how similar and/or different factors may influence the perceptions of the client/family. This may include, but is not limited to, becoming more knowledgeable about specific cultural norms and practices. The third step involves the process of finding common ground between the provider's and the client's perceptions which allows the provider to start an appropriate and effective intervention. Thus it is important that cultural awareness training programs offer insight into how service providers can go beyond the cultural chasm between their own unique identity and the clients' distinctly different identities. This article describes a process that uses the Diversity Wheel (a tool developed by the Oakland CRAFT team) to look at these three steps.

Diversity Wheel

rom childhood, we learn to look at people's differences primarily through cultural or racial identities-e.g., this is an Asian family, she is African American, they are Italian. Each cultural/ethnic identification suggests a set of generalized expectations covering religion, styles of communication, attitudes about family relationships, and types of careers or businesses. Culture can include how people live, role expectations, child rearing practices, attitudes about time or money. definitions of achievement, concepts of beauty, art, music, food, and a host of other things. Nonetheless, culture is only one element of who a person is.

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One way to help identify the myriad factors which define an individual's uniqueness is by using the Diversity Wheel. This tool was developed to help gain a better understanding of the many factors which shape each unique individual. The Diversity Wheel (see Illustration on p. 3) lists seventeen factors which may influence values, behaviors, ideas, and interpretations of situations. The user of the Diversity Wheel can examine how each of the sections on the Wheel pertains to an individual. To use the Wheel effectively to gain self understanding (or understanding of the client), the provider should, for each section of the wheel, ask: What are my (or my client's) significant experiences, beliefs and emotional attachments in this area? How do they affect how I (my client) view the world and how I (the client) interact with others? In what ways might these experiences, beliefs, and emotional attachments play an unconscious role in how I (the client) perceive others? This is a process that a provider needs to do thoroughly once and then periodically as she/he goes through significant life experiences and changes.

Some factors on the wheel (e.g., education and class status) may change at different points in life as a person gets older and has different life experiences. Identified areas on the wheel at age 20, for instance, may look different at age 50. Some factors (e.g., gender and race) are dimensions we are born with and cannot easily change.

Given the many spokes on the Diversity Wheel, it would be limiting to see either ourselves or others only through the eves of culture (one aspect of the wheel). Other factors profoundly influence who we are and contribute to our experiences and perceptions of others. For example, our socio-economic status not only influences our standard of living, but also the neighborhood in which we live, our access to health care and possibilities for future planning. Although our cultural identity may affect some of these, other factors, like age, immigration status and primary language, may also impact our experiences and world view.

Self Awareness

Self perception plays a major role in our ability to provide services. As providers of service, particularly in diverse communities, it is critical that we have a clear understanding of who we are as individuals. Experiences and life stories guide interactions, expectations and biases. By using the Diversity Wheel, we can begin to identify our uniqueness and begin to understand how we experience others. With this process of self awareness, we may identify personal beliefs underlying our expected behaviors of others (Pope-Davis, Prieto, Whitaker, & Pope-Davis, 1993). We each have individual reactions based on our own histories and characteristics. Recognizing this, we can then begin to see others for their unique qualities and the diversity within their group.

Uniqueness of the Client or Family

When meeting with professionals, clients bring with them their values and ideas based on their personal histories. Even though two individuals may share a cultural identity, other factors may cause them to respond differently to the same situation. To illustrate this point, a member of our CRAFT team is a Jewish woman from a small town in the eastern United States. She had a friend who attended the same elementary school, worshipped at the same synagogue, and whose family was from the same economic group. Their physical appearance was similar, they wore similar clothes, and had the same accents. The significant difference between these girls was that one was from a family that was first generation in the United States having survived World War II in Europe. The other girl was second generation; her parents were born in this country. This fact shaped how the families of both of these girls responded to many life decisions including trust in the government, familial relationships, and faith in future endeavors. In this instance, invisible differences shaped and differentiated two girls who were otherwise very similar.

In looking at what creates the uniqueness of individuals, it would be inaccurate

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to allow any one person to represent a particular cultural group, or to allow our experiences with an individual to create expectations of what the next experience will be like. For instance, a provider met a client who was a single parent released from prison a few years ago and living on welfare with an abusive boyfriend. The provider expected that this would be a high risk situation, since her experience with ex-convicts had always been discouraging. In her experience, people who had been in prison were not well educated, had low self-esteem, and did not make use of available resources. She had difficult times establishing regular visits with these clients, and often felt she was being conned by them. The provider's doubts about this parent proved to be false. Not only did this parent complete her AA degree, but she ended the abusive relationship, obtained a job, and maintained custody of her children.

Bridging the Gap

Bridging the gap between families and providers starts with knowing what the provider brings into the families' homesbeing aware of biases and agendas, and being able to contain these issues while remaining open for new perceptions. Biases form the basis for expectations, and these expectations influence judgments about families or clients. For example, the most common child rearing task of feeding a baby is laden with cultural and individual values: dependence vs. independence, cleanliness vs. exploration, control vs. choice. Someone who values independence may feel it is important to use feeding time as an opportunity for the child to master the skill of feeding; wasted food may not be a big issue. Self feeding may be different for a family who is without resources and does not have enough food from month to month, or for a family who is concerned about neatness or how much food is consumed.

It is important to pay attention to personal feelings, discomforts and uncertainties when working with families. These discomforts can be indications that the provider is in fact experiencing value differences with the family. Not attending



to these feelings may compromise the quality of service and lose the familyfocused approach.

Part of forming a partnership with families and working together is a dance. learning when to lead, when to follow, finding a rhythm, keeping in step. Sometimes toes get stepped on. Acknowledging mistakes and learning to talk about them with families is sometimes difficult for professionals, but it is crucial if we are to truly work together.

Bridging the gap is a complex process that takes time. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Many families may appreciate the opportunity to talk about themselves. Consider it a sign of progress when a family can engage in conversation about cultural and individual differences. It is critical, however, to not assume that there is a clear understanding of each other because the client has had a few discussions with you.

Having a family focused approach is crucial in supporting families and providing services. A tool like the Diversity Wheel can help establish what is important to a family and why. If health care, food or unpaid bills are a family priority, it may be difficult for parents to attend to their child's speech therapy needs. Even when providing interventions specific to the child, parents may be more concerned about their child's ability to self feed or entertain him/herself than in the ability to do puzzles or have good transitional movements. Knowing how to listen to what parents feel they need involves knowing what issues you as a provider bring into their home.

Conclusion

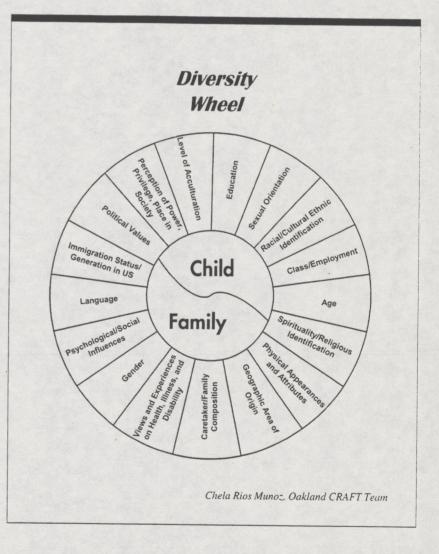
Working successfully with clients/ families requires a family focused approach which includes being culturally sensitive and having a heightened awareness of diversity. Having culture specific information is only a small part of developing an alliance with clients and families. Understanding the concept of diversity is an ongoing, evolving process. This process includes understanding self, understanding the uniqueness of the client/families, and finding a meeting ground between the values and priorities of the family and of the provider. There is always much to learn, and in that learning mistakes will be made. The process outlined in this article is just a starting place. The integration of these concepts into provider/client interactions forms a basis for culturally sensitive. family focused service delivery.

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* CRAFT is a training program administered by the Department of Special Education. California State University. Northridge

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3

Good Bets: A Resource Review

The Diversity Tool Kit

L. Gardenswartz and A. Rowe, 1995. Available from HR Press, PO Box 28, Fredonia, NY 14063, (800) 444-7139.

This kit is designed to aid and enhance the efforts of diversity practitioners and trainers. It contains a collection of reproducible training materials, instruments and exercises, and is divided into ten sections: trainer and facilitator guidelines; dealing with prejudice; understanding culture and its impact on the job; communication skills for a diversity environment; team building with a diverse staff; interviewing, recruiting, and retaining employees from different backgrounds; coaching, mentoring, and career development with a diverse staff; warm-up, mixers, energizers, and closures; diversity resources; and sample training agendas. Cost: \$300.

Race, Ethnicity and Self: Identity in Multicultural Perspective

E.P. Salett & D.R. Koslow (Eds.), 1994. 224 pages. Available from the National MultiCultural Institute, 3000 Connecticut Avenue, NW. Suite 438, Washington, DC 20008, (202) 438-0700.

This book examines the impact of race and ethnicity on individual identity development in the U.S. Issues addressed include: the concept of self across cultures, the relationship of power and dominance to attitudes of race, and the challenges of a biracial heritage. Cost: \$19.95.

Developing Diversity Training for the Workplace: A Guide for Trainers

L. N. Nile, 1994. 290 pages. Available from the National MultiCultural Institute, 3000 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 438, Washington, DC 20008. (202) 483-0700.

This manual for diversity trainers addresses issues such as managing personal hot buttons and working effectively in a diverse training team. It also includes a trainer readiness self-assessment, elements of a one-day workshop, lecturettes, exercises, copy for transparencies, hand-outs, a bibliography and references to resource material. Cost: \$149.95.

Managing Multiculturalism in Substance **Abuse Services**

J.U. Gordon (Ed.), 1994. 262 pages. Available from Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320, (805) 499-9774.

This book examines the history, demographics, drug-use patterns, customs, beliefs, and communication styles of five major racial/cultural groups in relation to current substance abuse treatment, prevention, and intervention strategies. The chapters provide diverse applications of a multicultural approach throughout the continuum of alcohol and drug abuse services. Cost: \$25.50.

Culturally Responsive Services for Children and Families: A Training Manual for Health and Education Service Providers Pathways to Understanding Project, 1993. 99

pages. Available from Southwest Communications Resources, PO Box 788, Bernalillo, NM 87004. (505) 867-3396; Fax (505) 867-3398.

Designed as a tool for training service providers, this manual presents culturally responsive methods for providing services to Native American children with special health care needs and their families. Two video tapes supplement the information and activities in the manual. Cost: \$35.95; Videotapes \$35.95 each.

Counseling Across Cultures

P.B. Pederson, J.G. Draguns, W.J. Lonner, and J.E. Trimble (Eds.), 1996. 373 pages. Available from Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320, (805) 499-9774.

This updated volume comprehensively examines culture in the counseling process and the effectiveness of intercultural counseling. Contributors highlight work with a variety of cultural groups in discussions about the cultural context of assessment and intervention in counseling. Cost: \$23.95.

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire: A Manual for Users

J.L. Mason, 1995. 40 pages. Available from Portland State University, Publications Coordinator, Research and Training Center, PO Box 751. Portland, OR 97207-0751, (503) 725-4175; e-mail: schmitd@rri.pdx.edu

This instrument is designed to help children and family agencies assess cross-cultural strengths and weaknesses within their organizations. It will also aid in the design of specific training activities or interventions. Cost: \$8.00.

Assessing and Treating Culturally Diverse **Clients: A Practical Guide**

F.A. Paniagua, 1994. 141 pages. Available from Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320, (805) 499-9774.

This book provides clinical suggestions for working with African American, Hispanic, Amer can Indian, and Asian clients. Topics addressed include: cultural variables that may affect assessment, treatment and epidemiological mental healt data across groups; the application of culturally specific data; biased measures; and important factors to consider in the treatment of clients. Cost: \$17.95.



Handbook of Multicultural Counseling

J.G. Ponterotto, J.M. Casas, L.A. Suzuki & C.M. Alexander (Eds.), 1995. 679 pages. Available from Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320, (805) 499-9774.

This handbook presents recent advances in theory, research, practice and training in multicul tural counseling. It is divided into seven sections which include: strategies for practice, theory and models of racial and ethnic identity development, historical perspectives, supervision and training, research in racial/ethnic identity, and emerging trends. Cost: \$36.00.

Developing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Guide for Working with Young Children and Their Families

E. W. Lynch and M. J. Hanson, 1995. 404 pages. Available from Paul Brookes Publishing Co., PO Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624, (410) 337-9580; Fax (410) 337-3539.

This practical guide examines the role that culture plays in families' and professionals' beliefs, values, and behaviors; explores the difficulties involved in adapting to a different culture; and provides strategies for effective cross-cultural interactions with families with infants, preschoolers, and young children who may have, or be at-risk for, disability or chronic illnesses. Its contributors represent various ethnic, cultural, and language groups, offering an examination of families whose roots are: Native American, Latino, Asian, Philipino, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Island, Middle Eastern, African American and Anglo-American. Cost: \$35.00.

Please see page 14.

THE SOURCE

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Cultural Competence in Women's Alcohol and Drug Programs: Addressing Cultural **Diversity in Recovery**

C. Woll, 1995. 28 pages. Available from The California Women's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Dependencies, 14622 Victory Blvd., Suite 100, Van Nuys, CA 91411, (818) 376-0470 (Voice/TDD); Fax (818) 376-1307.

This is one of a series of training booklets designed to augment cultural competence when working with women who have different beliefs, customs and behaviors. Topics covered include cultural variations and the benefits and challenges of working with diverse staff and diverse populations. Cost: \$5.00 (requested donation).

Parents' Cultural Belief Systems: Their Origins, Expressions, and Consequences

S. Harkness & C.M. Super (Eds.), 1995. 500 pages. Available from Guilford Publications, Dept. R6, 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012. (800) 365-7006.

This book brings together perspectives from several different disciplines to create a multifaceted view of parents' cultural beliefs systemstheir origins in culturally constructed parental experience, their expressions in parental practices, and their consequences for children's health and development. Cost: \$60.00.

Culture and Attachment: Perceptions of the Child in Context

R.L. Harwood, J.G. Miller, & N.L. Irizarry, 1995. 169 pages. Available from Guilford Publications. Dept. R6, 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012, (800) 365-7006.

This book explains the relationship between culture and attachment. It examines attachment from the perspective of culture and then evaluates two different cultures (Anglo and Puerto Rican) from the perspective of attachment. It also uses traditional quantitative methods to examine cultural differences in what is perceived as good behavior in children. Cost: \$28.95.

Working with Children in Family Preservation: A Guide for Respite Providers

P. Chambers and A. Argueta, 1996. 84 pages. Available from Family Support Services of the Bay Area, 554 Grand Ave., Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 834-2443.

This manual is designed as a guide to help respite providers understand the kinds of families typically served by family preservation programs, the kind of services they receive, the particular issues of these families, and the skills and attitudes needed to provide respite for their children. Cost: \$24 (discount for orders of 5 or more).

The Prevention Report

The National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice, University of Iowa, School of Social Work, Room 112 North Hall, Iowa City, Iowa 52242, (319) 335-2200; Fax (319) 335-2204.

This free newsletter is published twice yearly. The Spring 1996 issue focuses on different aspects of culture, and distinguishes between cultural awareness, diversity, and competence. For further information, please contact Jan Lanning at the above address.

The Evaluation Exchange: Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and **Family Services**

Harvard Family Research Project, 38 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2357, (617) 495-9108; Fax (617) 495-8594.

This quarterly newsletter provides a forum for evaluators to share their knowledge on key issues in evaluating family support programs and systems reform initiatives. Regular features highlight innovative approaches to solving common evaluation problems.

If Only We Had Talked: Parents Creating a Videotape Legacy for Children

S. Taylor-Brown and L. Wiener, 1996. 45 minutes. Available from PAL Productions, 108 Crossman Terrace, Rochester, NY 14620-1830, (716) 461-5138.

This video illustrates an approach to making remembrance videotapes for loved ones. Videotapes offer parents (and others) an opportunity to document in their own words what they want their children and loved ones to know and remember. Footage of tapes made by parents is included. Cost: \$39.95.

Developing Cultural Competence

Spaulding for Children, 1995. 18 minutes. Available from The Center Source, National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, 16250 Northland Drive, Suite 120, Southfield, MI 48075, (810) 443-7080.

This video defines culture and cultural competence from various perspectives, and outlines the five basic steps in the developmental process of making one's practice culturally competent: awareness and acceptance of difference; self assessment; development of cultural knowledge; understanding the dynamics of differences; and adapting services. Practitioners and administrators from various cultural groups offer examples from their own practice. Cost: \$95.00.

Engaging Culturally Diverse Communities Spaulding for Children, 1995. 13 minutes. Available from The Center Source, National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, 16250 Northland Drive, Suite 120, Southfield, MI 48075, (810) 443-7080.

This video presents a framework for working effectively with culturally diverse communities. It includes short segments that define and illustrate successful strategies used in actual practice. Individuals share examples of how they have used the framework in their work with culturally diverse communities. Cost: \$95.00.

Recruitment and Retention of African **American Families**

Spaulding for Children, 1995. 17 minutes. Available from The Center Source, National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption. 16250 Northland Drive, Suite 120, Southfield. MI 48075, (810) 443-7080.

This video presents a discussion of successful strategies used by community-based organizations to reach African American families. It offers a step-by-step guide for "getting the word out" to the community, explores retention issues, and discusses what must happen to maintain families through the process. A second video, Recruitment and Retention of Hispanic/Latino Families, addresses the same issues as they apply to Hispanic/Latino families. Cost: \$95.00 each.

Office of Minority Health Resource Center PO Box 37337, Washington, DC 20013-7337. (800) 444-6472; Fax (301) 589-0884.

The Office of Minority Health (OMH) Resource Center, a nationwide service of the Department of Health and Human Services, provides information, publications, and referral services on minority health. Information specialists are available to conduct database searches on topics such as funding sources, minority media. data and statistics, and programs, organizations and literature. Their newsletter, "Closing The Gap," covers minority health issues, funding opportunities, and other topics. They also produce a pocket guide to minority health throughout the country. All services offered are free.

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building Foster Parenting Skills

Walk a Mile in My Shoes: A Book About Biological Parents for Foster Parents and Social Workers

Judith A.B. Lee and Danielle Nisivoccia

This book will help foster parents and caseworkers "get into the shoes" of biological parents. Foster parents may use it as a self-help guide. Workers will find it helps attune them to the tasks both foster and biological parents face. Agencies will find it especially effective for use in the separate and joint training of caseworkers and foster parents and for use by teachers and students in learning about biological families.

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HOMEWORKS: At-Home Training Resources for Foster Parents and Adoptive Parents

Eileen Mayers Pasztor, Maureen Leighton, and Wendy Whiting Blome

This series of three, interactive, self-instructional workbooks can be used individually or in collaboration with a social worker. Ideas and information are presented, and then the foster parent or adoptive parent can respond by answering questions or completing worksheets relating the

presented information to specific children in their care. HOMEWORKS includes these three workbooks:

Helping Children and Youths Manage Separation and Loss - provides basic information about separation, loss, and the grieving process to help the foster parent or adoptive parent understand the loss history of the child in their care, its affect on growth and development, and ways to help the child cope with angry or sad feelings and behaviors.

Helping Children and Youths Develop Positive Attachments - offers general background on how children form attachments and ways to help the child develop and maintain positive attachments to their foster or adoptive parents.

Helping Children, Youths, and Families Manage the Impact of Placement - shows how foster parents and adoptive parents can integrate a new child into their family and minimize the risk of placement disruption. 1991/Set of 3 Booklets/#4476

\$25.00

\$18.00

Conversations No. 1-2-3 To: Foster Parents From: Mary Reistroffer

Known to - and welcomed by - tens of thousands of foster parents, Professor Reistroffer is the rare professional who can teach in the language of plain, yet lively talk. Each of the "Conversations" illustrates the recurrent everyday dilemmas of foster parent life and shows how they can be handled with skill and ease.

No. 1 — What You Always Wanted To Discuss About Foster Care But Didn't Have The Chance Or The Time To Bring Up

No. 2 — What's So Special About Teenagers!

No. 3 - Foster Parents And Social Workers: On The Job Together Complete set of three booklets/#9796

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE: Foster Parenting in the 1990s (A Video Training Curriculum)

Produced by Robert P. Conte and the San Felipe del Rio Foundation Written by Susan Shadburne

These video-enhanced training resources provide all the materials needed to implement an 18-hour basic inservice training program for contemporary family foster parenting. The set includes a curriculum, five docu-drama videos, and a set of 25 Resource Workbooks for participants.

Designed to be delivered in a six-week, three-hour-per-week format, the curriculum teaches basic family foster parenting tasks identified by the National Commission on Family Foster Care as essential for family foster parenting.

Each session is enhanced by a powerful docu-drama that realistically portrays the challenge of effectively fostering children and youths who have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse; alcohol and drug exposure and use, neglect, and multiple placements.

The Six Training Sessions are organized as follows:

Session 1: Getting Ready for "The Ultimate Challenge"

Docu-drama #1:"A Job With a Heart" (22 min.)

This video traces the history of family foster parenting in the United Sta to the professional role of foster parents as they work with children and y have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, alcohol/drug exposure neglect, and multiple placements.

Session 2: The Essential Task of Protecting and Nurturing Children an

Docu-drama #2: "Annie - One of the Lucky Ones" (37 min.)

This video takes a powerful look at the issues involved in caring for th abused child. This video shows how Annie's foster parents address import from making a family decision to take Annie and her sister, to working social worker to support visiting and family reunification.

Session 3: The Essential Task of Addressing Developmental Delays and Developmental Needs

THE ULTIMATE

LENGE videos are

separately, and are :

only when purcha-

complete Training

Curriculum.

Session 4: The Essential Task of Promoting Self-Esteem, Family Relationships, Cultural Identity and Permanency

Docu-drama #3: "Pain Beneath the Rage"

This drama examines a youth's first experience with positive parenting and shows how her foster parents

address adolescent sexuality, the struggle for independence, birth family and the effective use of community resources. and on the same cassette

Docu-drama #4: "My Home, My Castle"

This video addresses issues related to attachment and bonding, drug invo and foster parent adoption. Central themes are the importance of prepari families with realistic expectations, and the need for culturally responsive

Session 5: The Essential Task of Preparing Children and Youths for Posi Relationships and Responsibilities

Session 6: The Essential Task of Teamwork

Docu-drama #5: "Teamwork - An Enormous Challenge" (32 min.) This final drama shows the need for teamwork among foster parents, social teachers, therapists, and the importance of community resources in children, youths, and families who need family foster care services. 1992/Complete set of 4 VHS cassettes containing 5 docu-dramas with Trainer's Guide and 25 Resource Workbooks/#4212

HIV/AIDS Concerns

Meeting the Challenge of HIV Infection in Family Foster

Medically fragile children - including those with HIV infection - sometin out-of-home-care. The difficult decisions that must be made on behalf children are grave, serious and threaten to overwhelm an already straine services system.

These guidelines are based upon current medical knowledge of and legal ments related to HIV infection. They integrate these requirements with sour welfare practices and are intended as a reference to the components neces developing a family foster care response to this challenge. 1991/0-87868-440-9/#4409



With Loving Arms

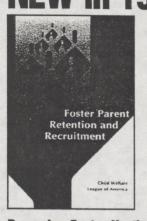
With Loving Arms is an honest and courageous port three foster families caring for HIV-infected child allowing the viewer to see the everyday care of tl dren, these foster families have helped to dimin mystique and the fear of HIV transmission.

This 18-minute video will educate agency exec managers, practitioners, boards of directors, caregive child advocates about the epidemiology of the dise:

the need for loving stable home environments. Includes a discussion guide. 1989/#3925



Examine the Variety of Resources from CWLA's Family Foster Care Library FREE for 15 Days! NEW in 1995!



Foster Parent Retention and Recruitment: State of the Art in **Practice and Policy**

Eileen Mayers Pasztor and Suzan F. Wynne Practical and effective strategies for foster parent recruitment and retention characterize this new CWLA monograph. Readers will find a thorough review of the pertinent literature and a summary of specific findings as they relate to important agency issues and concerns

1995/0-87868-576-6/#5766 \$12.95

Preparing Foster

Youths for Adult

Living: Proceedings

Research Conference

Edited by Edmund V. Mech

and loan R. Rycraft

of an Invitational

Preparing Foster Youths for Adult Living: Proceedings of an Invitational Research Conference

Edited by Edmund V. Mech and Joan R. Rycraft This book of papers from the CWLA/University of Illinois Invitational Research Conference on Preparing Foster Youths for Adult Living, held in September, 1993, offers new perspectives in the area of preparing foster youths for the transition to early adulthood. Contents include reports from roundtable panels, along with conference presenta-

tions and conference abstracts on such topics as Readiness Assessment, Outcome Research, Mentoring Relationships, Program Development, and Public Policy Issues. Research investigators and program specialists review, analyze, and assess current research activity and establish a direction for future research. 1995/0-87868-593-6/#5936

\$14.95

\$14 50

CWLA Standards of Excellence for Family Foster Care

1995/0-87868-464-6/#4646

"A Research Agenda For Child Welfare" **CHILD WELFARE Journal. Volume 73, Number 5**

Edited by Patrick A. Curtis, CWLA Director of Research

This special issue of CHILD WELFARE, CWLA's 74-year-old scholarly journal, identifies the critical gaps in child welfare knowledge gained from the study of atrisk children and families. The social science research experts represented in this issue of the journal reviewed existing knowledge, formulated a research agenda in their respective areas of expertise, and identified research priorities.

Designed as an "action document" and prepared from a cogent, multidisciplinary perspective, this agenda challenges commonly held beliefs and calls on policy makers and administrators to examine what they're doing for children and families and make decisions based on facts instead of assumptions.

Selected Articles: New Challenges and Opportunities in Child Welfare Outcomes and Information Technologies; Societal Interventions to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect; Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect; Child Protective Services; Risk Assessment as a Practice Method in Child Protective Services; A Reorientation to Knowledge Development in Family Preservation Services; Family Reunification; The Health Care Needs of Children in Foster Care; A Foster Care Research Agenda for the 90's; Kinship Care; Treatment Foster Care Services; Research Priorities for Residential Group Care; Foster Youths in Transition; Adoption Research; Is Child Maltreatment a Leading Cause of Delinquency? 1994/#5715

\$10.00

"Lessons From the Past" CHILD WELFARE Journal, Volume 74, Number 1

Edited by Eve Smith and Lisa Merkel-Holguin

Lessons From the Past, a special issue of CHILD WELFARE commemor. Child Welfare League of America's 75th anniversary, endeavors to illus importance of, and stimulate interest in, child welfare history; demonst linkages between historical and current child welfare practice and po encourages researchers to include child welfare history in their research tives

The 15 articles in the collection cover a range of social conditions, public and approaches to solving problems. The carefully selected topics explore issue underscore the importance of recovering past events and themes still for today's child welfare field. History offers many examples of practices t direct import for those who struggle to support children.

Selected Articles: Bring Back the Orphanages? What Policymakers of T Learn from the Past; Child Welfare in Fiction and Fact; The Dilemma i Children from Child Labor, The Child Welfare Response to Youth Viol-Homelessness; An Outrage to Common Decency; From Indenture to Foste History of Placing-Out; From Family Duty to Family Policy; Adop Disclosure of Family Information; Operation Brown Baby; Factors an. Leading to the Passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act; The Evolution Advocacy in the Child Welfare State, 1945-72. 1995/#5723

Issues in Gay and Lesbian Adoption

Proceedings of the Fourth Peirce-Warwick Adoption Symposium

In February, 1994, the Peirce-Warwick Adoption Symposium focused on gay and lesbian adoption, a topic chosen because of the keen public, pro and media interest in the topic and suprisingly little specific social polic public or private nonprofit agencies operating adoption programs. The cha to dispel the many myths and fears about gay and lesbian adoption and tc sound policy based on available research, legal, and practice knowledge.

The symposium provided an opportunity for issues and concerns to be i and for a framework for policy development to be discussed. Presenters a policy, legal and research issues. Participants, who included practitioners a policymakers, discussed the major questions and concerns that must be through policy and the need for further research focused on the adoption of by gay or lesbian individuals.

This book includes papers extracted from the symposium presentation include the major points covered in the presentations and provide an ove the entire symposium.

1995/0-87868-598-7/#5987

Accessing Federal Adoption Subsidies After Legalization

Tim O'Hanlon

This book describes how recent changes in the federal Title IV-E adoption a program provide an opportunity for adoptive families who are struggling to medical and psychological needs of their children to receive badly needed and medical assistance.

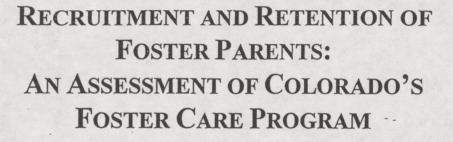
Parents who wish to petition for adoption assistance after a final decree found eligible if information exists that was not available to the adoptive the time of adoption.

This guide is designed to help adoptive families apply for adoption assista finalization and retroactive adoption assistance payments, regardless of th of residence.

1995/0-87868-569-3/#5693







Executive Summary

American Humane Association 63 Inverness Drive East Englewood, CO 80112

303/792-9900

Children's Division

AMERICAN

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Child Protection, Treatment and Resource Development Program Supervisor Child Welfare Services, Department of Human Services Project Coordinator

Community Advisory Committee on the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Care Providers (Members participating in the study are listed below.)

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D.J. Ida Gladys Johnson Carol Kelly Phyllis Lee Terry Lopez-Guzman Tillie Marmolejo Nels & Bonnie McNulty Shirley Mueller Charles Perez Wellington "Duke" Warren

SPECIAL APPRECIATION GOES TO THE FOSTER PARENTS AND COUNTY DEPARTMENT AND CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCY STAFF WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEYS.

Executive Summary on the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents: An Assessment of Colorado's Foster Care Program

To ensure caring and qualified foster homes are available to the skyrocketing number of children in need of out-home-placement, the Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS) contracted with the Children's Division of the American Humane Association (AHA) to conduct two studies to determine what, if any, factors affect the recruitment and retention of foster parents. Special efforts were made to gather information concerning the recruitment and retention of foster parents of color and foster parents who care for children with special needs. The first of the two studies examined the foster care program implemented by county departments of social services (county departments), and the second study examined the program as implemented by child placement agencies (c.p.a.).¹ Both of these studies were conducted between February and June of 1995. Information was gathered from foster parents certified by county departments and c.p.a. as well as from staff members employed by these agencies. The research methodology can be found at the end of the Executive Summary.

A total of 298 foster parents participated in the study along with 52 county departments and 24 private child placement agencies.

A. Study Findings

Section I: Overall Foster Parent Satisfaction

1. Improve certain areas of recruitment and retention.

Overall, c.p.a. foster parents were happier with their program than county department foster parents by 24 to 26%.² The three areas in which county foster parents were less satisfied included: financial compensation, provision of support services, and building relationships between agency staff and foster parents.

2. Examine and address factors that affect county certified foster parent satisfaction by agency.

Foster parents in the small counties were not as satisfied as foster parents in medium and, in some cases, large counties. Smaller counties' foster parents were less satisfied with the pre- and inservice training they received. The foster parents in the medium-sized counties appear to be the most satisfied overall. Foster parents in the large counties felt "sometimes happy" about relationship building, being a member of a professional team, and the provision of support services as compared to foster parents in medium counties feeling "usually happy" about these indicators.

page 1

¹ In-depth findings from the two studies are found in Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents Certified by Child Placement Agencies: An Assessment of the Foster Care Program, and Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents Certified by County Department Agencies: An Assessment of the Foster Care Program. ² Based on a comparison of combined "usually happy" and "very happy" ratings.

3. County departments need to address those factors that result in foster parents of color being less satisfied than nonminority foster parents.

The data revealed that foster parents of color were less satisfied than nonminority foster parents in several areas: building relationships with staff; being part of a professional team; the provision of support services; access to enough information about a child; and financial compensation.

Section II: Practice Strengths

As is common to all programs, there are both strengths and room for improvement. This subsection highlights some of the strengths and encourages the reader to review the full reports.

The studies revealed that many children in foster care have a variety of special needs. Findings show that overall, county departments and c.p.a. are doing a good job of finding quality foster parents for these children, which can be a difficult and time-consuming task. Staff appear to be doing an adequate job of providing foster parents with enough information on agency practices and policies and financial compensation rates. Staff also help prospective foster parents assess their ability to care for children with special needs. For example, c.p.a. staff reported that 23% of prospective foster parents decided that foster parenting was not appropriate for them and 21% of potential foster parents recruited through county agencies arrived at the same decision.

Overall, foster parents certified by county departments and c.p.a. were happy with the foster care programs. After becoming foster parents, over 50% of them rated their training experience as "good" to "excellent" in a number of areas. Over 80% of the county department foster parents reported at or above the "somewhat happy" level of satisfaction in all but two of the recruitment and retention categories. Those two exceptions were being provided with enough and timely information about the child and adequate financial compensation. Among c.p.a. foster parents, ratings in all areas of recruitment and retention categories revealed that over 90% of them are at or above the "somewhat" happy level. Like their county department counterparts, c.p.a. parents were less satisfied when it came to being provided with enough and timely information about the child and financial compensation. County staff reported that barriers to providing supportive services included internal factors, such as lack of funding and staff.

Section III: Detailed Recommendations and Key Findings

The recommendations in this more detailed summary are divided into the following three sections:

- 1. Foster parent recruitment.
- 2. Foster parent training.

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3. Foster parent support and retention.

Foster Parent Recruitment

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1. Agencies should be aware of the reasons individuals become foster parents as they have implications for recruitment, training, ongoing support, and retention. These reasons should guide the interactions between staff and foster parents. In addition, recruitment language should highlight the reasons foster parents choose to enter fostering.

For the most part, there was agreement between agency staff and foster parents on the most frequently cited reasons for foster parenting. Those reasons are helping children, supporting the community, and adoption. Also, since 85% of county certified foster parents and 96% of county staff mentioned adoptive parenting as a top reason, many concepts of the fost-adopt programs should be explored for incorporation into current recruitment practices.

2. The techniques agencies use to recruit foster parents should compliment how foster parents learn about fostering. Specific recruitment techniques should be implemented to recruit families of color, Spanish-speaking families, nonreaders, and families for children with special needs.

A majority of the foster parents stated that they learned about foster parenting through friends, relatives, and other foster parents. Focusing on techniques that support the sharing of information on foster parenting in these ways is important. Agencies should increase their use of foster parents as recruiters as well as develop specific recruitment techniques to recruit families of color, Spanish-speaking families, nonreaders, and families for children with special needs. For example, agencies should print materials in Spanish and have minority recruiters, some of whom are foster parents.

3. County departments and c.p.a. should actively recruit and employ more professionals of color. Agencies should pay particular attention to the provision of supports for minority foster parents and to providing cultural competency training for staff.

There were substantial differences between the race/ethnicity of foster families, agency staff, and children in the custody of counties and c.p.a.. For example, 89% of county department staff and 81% of c.p.a. staff most involved in foster parenting were Caucasian.

In comparison to nonminority foster parents, minority county department foster parents reported that they did not receive phone calls from agency staff as quickly, felt staff were not as accessible, that their ideas and suggestions were not respected, and that decisions were not based on their thoughts. The major issues minority c.p.a. foster parents identified were not receiving enough and current information about children and that their ideas and suggestions were not respected as often as nonminority foster parents.

4. The racial/ethnic breakdown between foster parents and children in foster care was similar for county departments but needs improvement for c.p.a. Agencies should place children of color with foster parents of color when it is in the best interest of the children.

The ratio of African American foster families (17%) to foster children (17%) is equivalent for county departments. The county departments also have a greater percentage of Hispanic/Latino foster parents (26%) than the percentage of Hispanic/Latino children in foster care (22%).

page 3

However, c.p.a. have fewer African American (5%) and Hispanic/Latino (9%) foster parents than children of color in care--12% African American and 19% Hispanic/Latino.

5. Agencies must recognize that an increasing number of families have two working adults. This phenomena should impact the frequency and types of resources agencies provide to families.

Fifty-three (53) percent of the county department foster parents who completed the survey reported that they were employed or looking for employment and 87% of their spouses were also employed. Forty-two (42) percent of c.p.a. foster parents who completed the survey were employed or looking for work and 84% of their spouses were also employed.

6. Some county departments are slow to respond to inquiries and to meet with prospective families about foster parenting.³

Thirty-five (35) percent of the foster parents living in small-sized county departments were never invited to a prospective foster parenting meeting. In addition, 23% of all foster parents, who completed the survey, reported "never" receiving an initial assessment of their ability to meet agency and licensing requirements (prior to their first training).

Twenty-nine (29) percent of the foster parents in medium-sized counties reported that they were not visited by a foster care recruiter (prior to their first training).

Small- and large-sized county departments were slow in conducting initial assessments of families' abilities to meet agency and licensing requirements; assessments generally taking more than one month.

Foster Parent Training

1

1. Conduct honest orientations with foster parents, providing them with a real picture of the children needing homes as well as the training they will require to handle situations.

According to foster parents, the children they provided care for had a variety of special needs. Exposure to alcohol and drugs, special education, and mental health were the most frequently cited needs of these children. Foster parents identified emotional disturbances and disruptive/argumentative behaviors as the main behavioral issues of children in foster care. The likelihood of children having a myriad of special needs and exhibiting various behavioral issues demonstrates the significance of preservice training for foster parents.

³ This study used DHS's guidelines, based on population, to categorize county size. See Agency Profile section in the <u>Recruitment and</u> <u>Retention of Foster Parents Certified by County Department Agencies: An Assessment of the Foster Care Program for details.</u>

- - -

2. Implement a preservice training, accompanied by an assessment process in which foster parents and agencies decide foster parents' ability to care for children with special needs/behavioral issues.

It cannot be assumed that foster parents are able to nurture and care for children who have experienced abuse/neglect without extensive and comprehensive preservice and in-service training. Implementation of such services will likely lead to increased foster parent retention and satisfaction.

3. Ensure that foster parents receive preservice training in a number of areas considered by child welfare research to be critical.

At least 45% of county department foster parents and 35% of c.p.a. foster parents reported that they did not receive "enough" information on cultural sensitivity; working with birth parents; caring for children with special needs; issues of separation, loss, and attachment; and helping children deal with abuse and neglect.

4. Provide, promote, and support foster parent in-service training because preservice training does not provide foster parents with all of the skills and knowledge required to care for children in foster care.

While 58% of county departments offered in-service training more than once a year, 31% of foster parents had not attended in the past two years. Ninety-six percent of the c.p.a. offered in-service training more than once a year; however, 20% of the foster parents had not attended in-service training in the past two years.

5. Increase the practice of including foster parents in planning trainings as well as having them serve as trainers.

Eighty-five (85) percent of c.p.a. foster parents and 89% of county department foster parents reported not receiving training from other foster parents.

Foster parents suggested three ways to increase their participation in trainings: providing child care; making the meeting locations and times convenient; and specific training addressing concerns they have about working with children with behavioral problems.

Foster Parent Support and Retention

1. Ensure that foster parents receive the level of support they need. Besides creating a quality program, foster parent satisfaction is critical since they are an important recruitment resource.

Foster parents generally rated their receipt of services lower than what staff identified as their ability to provide such services. The results call upon agencies to improve the level of supports given to foster parents, re-evaluate their ability to provide foster parents with enough information about the children placed with them, and to include foster parents in placement planning--a practice which is critical to the professional team philosophy of foster parenting.

page 5

2. Agencies should periodically revisit with each foster parent the importance and prioritization of support services.

There were mismatches between the service needs of foster parents and what staff believed foster parents needed. Services that foster families viewed as "very to extremely" important were foster parent mentoring services, financial awards, and liability insurance, which they reported as not being available.

3. Treating foster parents as a member of the professional team by various agency activities such as involving them in decisions and case activities that affect the child.

Seventy-four (74) percent of c.p.a. and 73% of county department foster parents were not involved in children's case planning. In addition, 84% of c.p.a. and county department foster parents did not participate in agency policy decisions. Specific ways in which foster parents wanted to be included were: having staff respect their ideas; having access to information on training, policy, and practice; being heard in court; meetings with staff; and receiving mentoring from other foster parents.

4. Institute a formal exit interview process for foster parents who leave and use the information gathered for ongoing program development.

Currently, only 12% of the county departments and 46% of c.p.a. conducted exit interviews with foster parents. An exit process will help agencies identify organizational barriers and strengths in foster parent retention.

Conclusion: The following quotes from foster parents of color are offered as a conclusion.

"To recruit foster parents of color consider conducting more advertisements - stressing the need to match children by race. Also, always be there for them!" -- Hispanic/Latino foster mother

"What I like most about foster caring is to be able to help the child and prepare them for their future." -- Hispanic/Latino foster mother

"Foster parents of color need to be treated as a member of the professional team and offer support groups for foster parents of color." -- African-American foster mother

"To improve training for foster parents, let foster parents provide more first-hand input." --Hispanic/Latino foster father

"I appreciated my caseworker calling during the time the investigation and paperwork were being done to let us know the status." -- Hispanic/Latino foster mother

"Give full support to foster parents after recruitment and placement because word-of-mouth of a satisfied foster parent is the best recruiting tool." -- African-American foster mother

- - -

B. Research Methodology

I. Survey Development: Based on an extensive literature review, knowledge gathered from discussions with DHS staff, and insights from members of Colorado's Community Advisory Committee for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents, AHA developed two complimentary surveys: one for use with foster parents and the other for use with staff.

The foster parent and agency surveys contained a core set of common questions. The core set of questions gathered information on the following topics: reasons individuals became foster parents; information provided to foster parents in pre- and in-service trainings; the frequency, nature and importance of services offered to foster parents; adequacy of financial subsidies to foster parents; and the nature of the relationship between the agency staff and foster parents.

II. Sampling, Mailing, and Response Rates: Foster Parents: Starting with 3,601 families who were, or had been, foster parents certified by the county departments and c.p.a. between October 1, 1993, and March 31, 1995, a random sample of 1,000 were surveyed. AHA used a stratified random sampling procedure with County certified foster parents in which all 311 families of color were selected for participation and the remaining 339 families were randomly chosen. Of 1,034 c.p.a. families, 350 were randomly selected. The response rate for county foster parents was 29% with 50% of the 184 respondents being families of color. The response rate for c.p.a. foster parents was 36% with 20% of the 114 respondents being families of color.

Agency Survey: The 63 County Departments of Human Services and counties were divided into three size categories: large (11 counties); medium (20 counties); and small (30 counties)⁴. Larger counties received three survey packets while medium-sized counties were mailed two survey packets and one survey packet was mailed to each of the small-sized counties. This approach ensured receipt of feedback from various professionals since both foster care coordinators and line staff were asked to complete the survey in large and medium-sized counties and the County Directors were targeted in smaller counties. The response rate was 83%.

DHS also provided AHA with a list of 101 c.p.a. operating in Colorado. From that list, 51 agencies were randomly selected. Each agency received two survey packets. The director was requested to complete one of the surveys and forward the other to a child placement supervisor or line worker. The response rate for c.p.a. was 49%.

⁴ Some counties are combined by the State as they have a single DHS Director.

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The Impact of Financial Compensation, Benefits, and Supports on Foster Parent Retention and Recruitment

by Kathy Barbell, CWLA Director of Foster Care

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

- In 1993, 449,000 children were in foster care. 75% or 337,000 were in family foster care placements.
- Children in care increased by 61% between 1984 and 1993.
- In 1985, there were 147,000 foster homes and 276,000 children in care. In 1994, there were 125,000 foster homes and an estimated 450,000 children in care.
- Foster Homes are licensed for fewer children today then they were prior to 1985. We need even more foster homes to maintain the same number of foster care slots or beds.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DECREASE IN FOSTER HOMES

Economic Issues

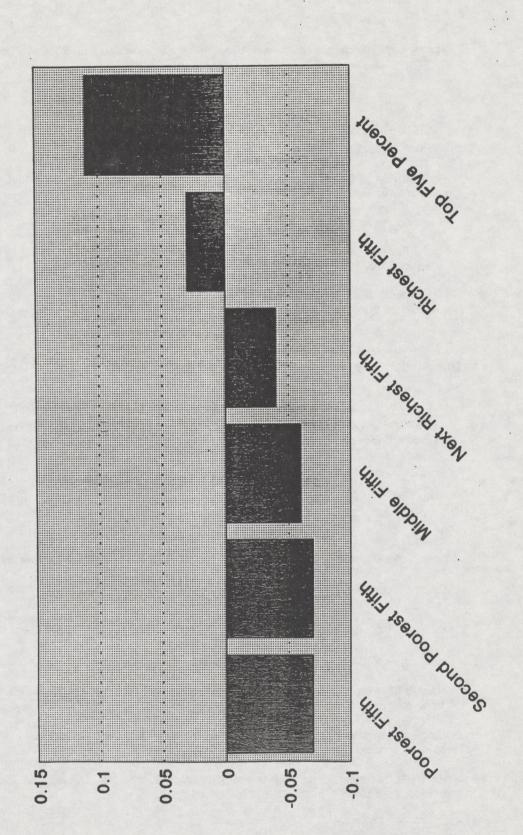
- In 1990, the U.S. experienced a recession. 80% of American households have not recovered from the recession and their median incomes is actually below what it was in 1989.
- According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
 - the average income oft the bottom fifth of households in 1994 was \$7762--7.5% below its level in 1989;
 - the average income of the middle fifth remained \$2,185, or 6.3%, below its 1989 level, at \$32,385 in 1994;
 - even the next-to-top fifth suffered a loss--its average income fell \$1897 to \$50,395 in 1994, which was a drop of 3.6%;
 - by contrast, the average income of the top fifth climbed by more than \$1,000 to \$105,945 in 1994; and
 - the average income of the top 5% rose by at least \$7,000, reaching \$183,044 in 1994

The Economy and Foster Parents

- Studies have consistently shown that most foster parents are in the low to lower middle income ranges.
- Studies show that only 7.2% of foster parents want to foster as a way to increase their families' income.
- Reality is that most foster parents and potential foster parents have less real income today to meet their families needs then they did in 1989.



Changes in Average Household Income 1989-1994



Center on Budget and Policy Prioities - 10/95 Child Welfare League of America

- For some foster parents adding to the family by fostering can create a financial hardship.
- 22% of foster parents report the reasons for leaving is economics.
- APWA survey of states' foster care maintenance rates shows that the average foster care rate in 1994 was \$329 (for 2 year olds). The range was from \$588/mo. in Alaska to \$161 in West Virginia.
- The survey also showed the rate decreased in 5 states and stayed the same in 25 states from 1993 to 1994.
- The average maintenance payment of a nine year old child in 1991 was \$292/month and the USDA estimate for raising a child at a moderate level was \$475/month.
- The estimated annual expenditure on a child in 1993 in a middle income, two parent family was \$6,870 or \$572/mo.
- Maintenance rates are typically lower than the true costs of providing routine care for a child, and foster parents often make up the difference.

The Children in Foster Care

- The population of children needing foster care today is a factor in foster parent retention and recruitment.
- Alcohol and drug abuse are factors in the placement of more than 75% of the children.
- Between 1984 and 1990 there was a 12% increase in the number of children in foster care because of their own handicap or disability.
- 58% of young children in foster care have serious health problems.
- Conservative estimates are that 30% of the children in care have severe emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems, including conduct disorders, depression, difficulty in school and impaired social relationships.
- Estimates are that between 85% and 97% of the children in foster care also have siblings in care, but estimates are that only 25% are placed together.
- Children of color comprise 61% of all children in care, but the majority of foster parents are white.
- Youth between 13 and 18 years of age are 1/3 of the population in foster care, but only comprise 12% of the U.S. population.
- 15% of foster homes licensed after 1985 are specialized foster homes.
- 51% of foster parents who left fostering stated a foster child related problem as the reason.

Supports and Benefits for Foster Parents

- 64% of foster parents said the reason for leaving was due to agency related problems--poor communication with the foster care worker; insensitivity of the agency to foster family needs; and a lack of supports such as respite care, mentors/buddies, day care, and training.
- 73% of respondents to a Wisconsin/CWLA survey reported that providing liability insurance is an aid to retention , 94% reported that respite care has a positive impact on retention.
- Insufficient reimbursement, the changed needs of today's children in foster care, and the lack of supports and positive recognition are interrelated factors which result in foster parents leaving fostering and fewer new parents interested and willing to become foster parents.

CWLA NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FOSTER CARE

- National Advisory Committee on Foster Care was created by CWLA in March 1995.
- Committee is made up of executive directors and foster care managers from CWLA's public and voluntary sector members.
- Committee identified many issues associated with the retention and recruitment of foster parents and advised CWLA to address them.
- The committee's concerns coupled with the frequency of telephone and on-site consultation requests on these issues resulted in a decision to survey the membership.

CWLA Survey

- Purpose was to provide and updated national picture of family foster care. Questions were asked on regular and treatment foster care services related to --financial compensation
 - --benefits(health, liability, etc.)
 - --supports to foster families
- Also collected demographics on foster parents and children in care, health and mental services to children, sibling placement issues, levels of care and step down policies.
- Wanted to have aggregated data on trends and a data base on specific agency programs and contact persons.

Survey Methodology

- Written Survey Questionnaire was sent to 450 CWLA members on 1/30/96. So far we have a 50% response rate and will increase that prior to compiling the final results.
- We wanted to know if agencies enhanced the minimum maintenance rate to regular and treatment foster parents based on
 - age of the child
 - special needs of the child
 - special training of the foster parent

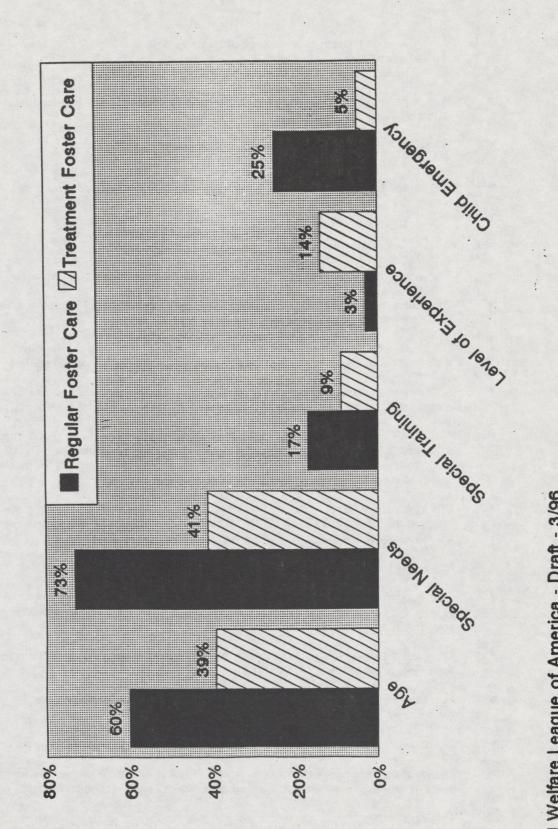
- level and length of experience of foster parents
- an emergency placement
- other factors
- We wanted to know what, if any, agencies provide regular and/or treatment foster parents with a supplemental payment such as stipend or salary.
- We wanted to know whether benefits such as health, liability, and disability insurance are provided.
- We wanted to know what supports such as respite, day care, buddies/mentors, etc. are provided.

RESULTS

- The preliminary results which follow are based on the responses of 91 voluntary agencies.
- The minimum maintenance rate for the regular foster parents is \$416/mo. and for treatment foster parents it is \$940/mo.
- The average monthly regular foster care maintenance rate paid by the voluntary agencies in the sample is higher than the rate paid by public agencies--\$416/mo. compared to \$329/mo.
- Agencies tend to increase the regular foster care maintenance rates because of age and special needs of the child, foster parent specialized training, and for emergency placements.
- Almost 1/4 of the agencies provide a supplemental payment in the form of a stipend to regular foster parents and almost 1/3 do so for treatment foster parents. (The definition of supplement payment used in the survey was--a payment above and beyond the minimum maintenance rate and the enhanced maintenance rate.)
- One agency, Northeast Adoption Services in Warren, Ohio, pays treatment foster parents a salary of \$5.50 to \$7.00 per hour for attending training, treatment team meetings, school IEP meetings, and work groups with other parents.
- No regular foster parents received a salary.
- Most agencies that provide enhanced maintenance rates and/or supplemental payments believe these payments positively impact recruitment, retention, cooperation, and services provided by foster parents.
- Most foster parents--regular and treatment--do not receive any insurance coverage or retirement benefits.
- Less than a third of regular and treatment foster parents have liability insurance provided by the agency.
- Agencies are providing an array of supports to regular and treatment foster parents.
- The most common supports for both groups of foster parents are in-service training, preservice training, out-of-home respite, support groups, and recognition events.

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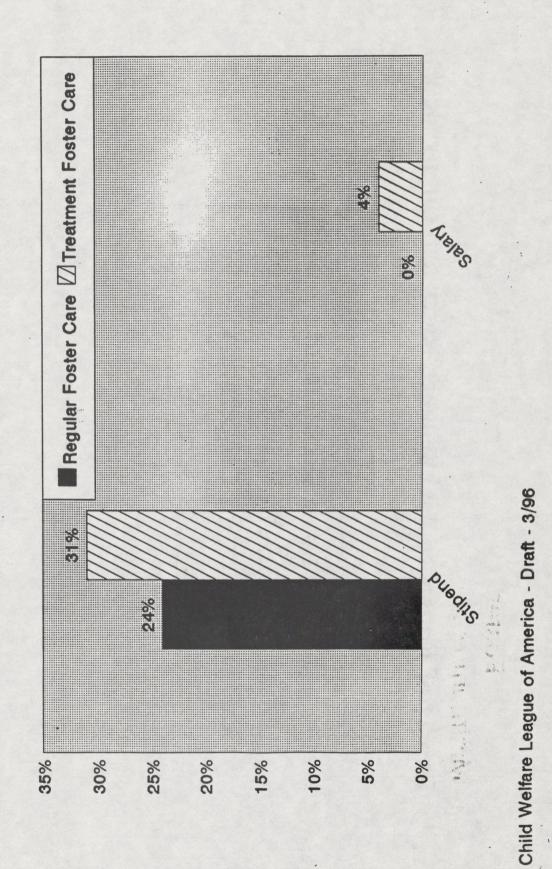
Minimum Maintenance Rates based on Specific Factors Foster Care Agencies that Enhance the N=91



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Foster Care Agencies that Provide Forms of Supplemental Payments N = 91



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Impact of Enhanced Maintenance Rates and Supplemental Payments

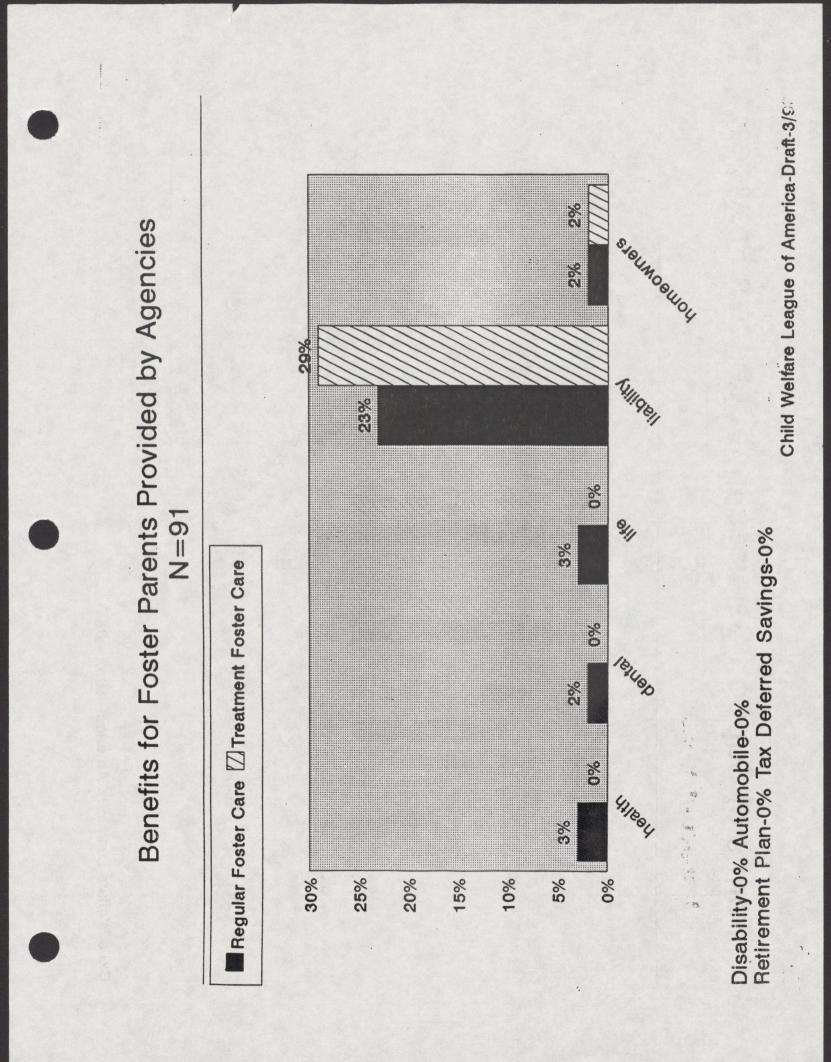
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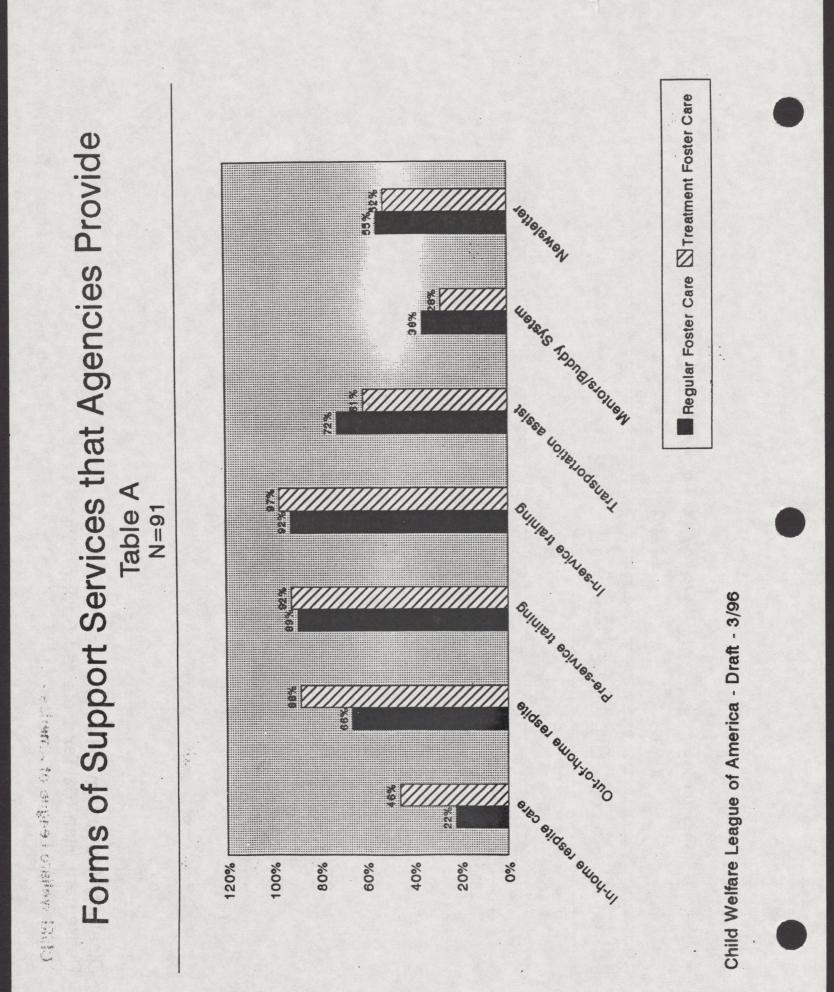
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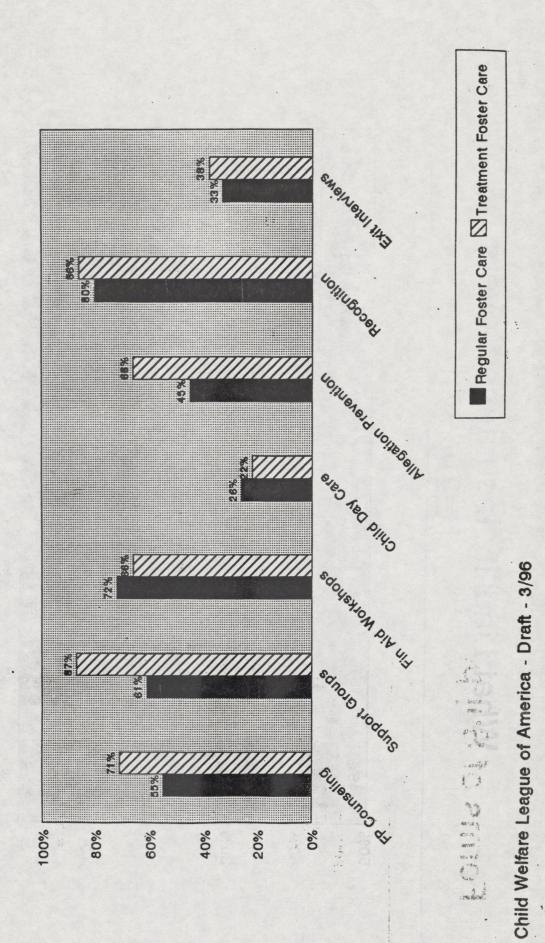
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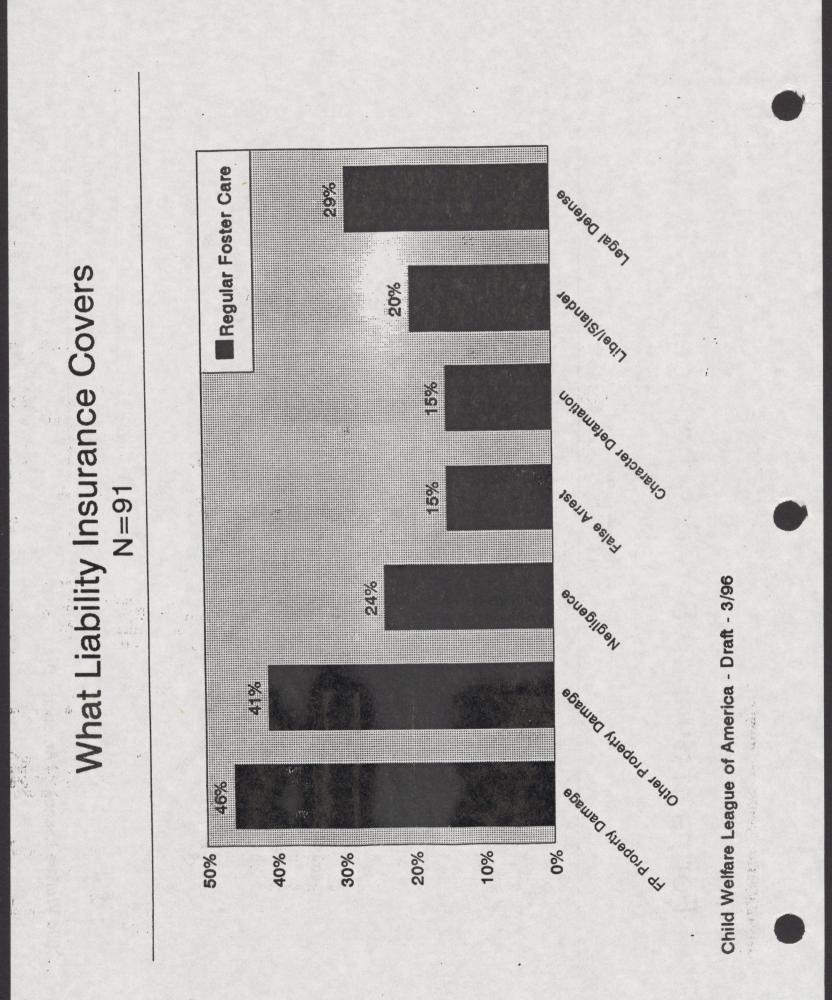




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Forms of Support Services that Agencies Provide Table B N = 91





- Liability insurance is only provided to 23% of the regular foster parents and to 29% of the treatment foster parents.
- 55% of regular foster parents and 32% of treatment foster parents must pay for their liability insurance.
- Most regular foster parents with liability insurance do not have coverage for damage to their property by the child in care, damage to other's property, negligence, false arrest, character defamation, libel/slander, or legal defense.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULTS

- Regular foster parents, who typically have low or lower middle income levels, are likely not being reimbursed for the true costs of caring for foster children.
- Enhanced maintenance rates, treatment maintenance rates, and supplemental payments reduce or eliminate foster parents using their families' resources to meet the needs of children in care.
- Foster parents may need benefits such as health insurance, liability insurance, and disability insurance that are most likely not provided by the agency. In the case of liability insurance, even if it is provided, the coverage is limited and may not protect the foster parents from financial loss and hardship.
- Agencies are providing supports to foster parents, but the interrelationship of inadequate financial compensation and lack of benefits may be contributing to retention and recruitment problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Agencies may need to closely examine their foster care population to learn if the children placed with regular foster parents are significantly different from those placed with treatment foster parents. Regular foster parents may leave fostering because they believe they are fostering children with the same needs as children placed with treatment foster parents who receive a much higher maintenance rate and more frequently receive supplemental payments.
- The actual cost of fostering needs to be determined. The feasibility of doing this should be explored with the USDA and other funders.
- Agencies can determine their retention rate and their costs for recruiting, training, and assessing new foster parents. It may be more cost effective to redirect funds to financial compensation, benefits, and/or supports for current foster parents rather than spending it on bringing in new foster parents who may quickly leave fostering.
- Redirection of financial resources could take many forms
 - enhanced maintenance rates based on training, level of expertise, and/or
 - achievement of performance outcomes for a child in care
 - supplemental payments such as stipends or salaries
 - collaborate with other agencies on training programs to maximize financial

resources

- access the need and interest of foster parents for certain benefits and try to provide them through the agency and/or look for other organizations to partner with, such as local, state and the national foster parent association
- Look for ways to impact the costs of fostering that don't involve agency funds. Examples
 getting foster parents access to food banks
 - gift certificates from large chain stores such as Wal-Mart for foster parents who recruit new foster parents
 - negotiate discounts with stores for foster parents on items they need to accommodate a large family

Operationalize the agency's support and respect for foster parents as team members by ensuring that all training for agency staff and foster parents is based on the value and belief system which sees foster parents as team members in providing foster care services and bringing about permanency for children

- training social workers and foster parents together
- ensuring that foster parent training is competency based so that foster parents are trained on how to do what they have to do to be effective
- holding team or case planning meeting with foster parents present; use conference calling if they cannot physically attend
- using technology such as e-mail add voice mail boxes to keep communication flowing to and from foster parents
- pairing foster parents together as buddies and/or mentors

- sending an invitation from the executive director to all new foster parents to visit the agency, see the operations, and meet the staff
- having foster parents involved in agency committees such as planning, placement, etc.
 - providing a parking space for foster parents so they can more easily bring children to and from the agency's offices

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