

STATE OF WASHINGTON

Annual Progress and Services Report

Submitted June 2003

SECTION IX

Adoption

Children's Administration  
Department of Social and Health Services

## Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

### *Foster Home Recruitment*

Children's Administration (CA) continued work in 2002 through the Foster Care Improvement Plan (FCIP), as part of the Kids Come First Initiative. The plan includes participation by staff members in CA, Casey Family Programs, foster parents, and other stakeholder groups. Plan goals are to increase the number of newly licensed foster homes while retaining already-licensed foster homes. Primary plan activities are:

- *Targeted recruitment:* CA contracts with Families for Kids - Recruitment Resources (FFK-RR) to perform recruitment activities around Washington state. The two-year contract with FFK-RR was amended in mid-2003 to reflect a new statement of work that arose from three Recruiters Summits sponsored by CA during the spring of 2002. The summits also recommended a central administrative arm be created to help oversee recruitment activities.

Each of the six regional recruitment coordinators for FFK-RR meets monthly with leaders of the regional teams of the FCIP. Regional Needs Assessment and Recruitment Plans were developed in the initial meetings, along with regional work plans to find the right homes for the kinds of children coming into care throughout each region. Progress on the work plan is reviewed at each meeting.

FFK-RR also hired foster parent recruiters throughout the state. These recruiters are current or former foster parents paid a monthly stipend to engage in traditional recruitment activities and to help guide potential foster parents through the recruitment process. By the end of 2002, 41 foster parent recruiters were working throughout the state.

- *Minority Recruitment:* CA allocated \$75,000 from a special trust fund for the recruitment of adoptive and foster homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care in Washington state. Negotiations are underway on the contract. In addition, regions contract with minority recruiters in their areas to meet special needs. CA also has a contract to recruit for potential adoptive families for children with special needs. CA distributed \$50,000 among Tribes and Indian organizations in Washington State to increase the number of tribal foster homes between fall 2002 and June 30, 2003.
- *Support Network Team:* FCIP team recommendations for retention were:
  1. Use the current system of foster parent liaisons to build "hubs" or buddy systems among foster parents. Hubs would involve one foster family at the center of a hub to help coordinate support activities among a number of

other foster families. A buddy system would match a newly licensed foster family with a more experienced family. Both proposals are under review.

2. Similar to the Recruiter Summit recommendation, the Support Network Team recommended a central administrative arm to help oversee support and retention activities. A draft proposal was presented to CA management in late 2002 to combine many recruitment and retention activities into one centralized agency that would contract with CA. This proposal is pending further evaluation.
- *Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC):* A four-member team from Washington state was selected to participate in the Casey Family Programs BSC. The collaborative includes 24 teams from around the country working on ideas to improve the recruitment and retention of resource families. The team chose a pilot site in eastern Washington, set goals, and began using a BSC model where small ideas are tested quickly, then expanded if they prove successful. Among the ideas tested was having regional CA leaders call a small number of foster parents to find out how they are doing and what help they need. Another centered on doing a "windshield tour", a drive through target recruitment areas to identify possible new resources for foster parents. All teams are encouraged to take ideas from other teams and try them in their pilot sites in a nationwide idea-sharing cooperative. Activities are posted on an internal web site for the collaborative.
  - *Leadership Mastery Program:* A five-member team of the FCIP attended four national training sessions through the Leadership Mastery Program sponsored by Casey Family Programs. The FCIP team focused on increasing the number of kinship homes available to children via examination of state laws to see how they could be used to increase kinship homes.
  - *Satisfaction Surveys:* Work continued on a comprehensive, coordinated and consistent surveying system to measure foster parent satisfaction from the time of first inquiry until they exit the system. Using surveys from other states and available through the BSC web site, surveys were written and the specifics of their implementation is being developed. The survey of current foster parents is being readied for pilot in summer 2003. The surveys of potential foster parents and those exiting the system are under review by a committee of union and management.
  - *Respite Policy:* CA adopted and implemented a new respite policy. Its primary elements are "retention respite" for foster parents and standardized rates for respite care providers. Foster parents receive two days per month for respite for all children in their homes. They can bank up to 14 days, which they can use at one time.
  - *Specialized recruitment:* Two efforts began to increase homes among specific populations. One involved licensing and setting aside homes of police officers to

take children on a short-term basis when homes are unavailable late at night and officers have to pick up children who at risk. The second is working with school districts to have teachers and other school district personnel licensed to take children either in their classroom or in their school on a short-term basis while more permanent arrangements can be made. CA and FFK-RR are working on these initiatives in specific communities. If successful, CA hopes to take them statewide.

***Number of licensed foster homes***

<b>Retention</b>	<b>December 31, 2001 Homes</b>	<b>June 30, 2002 Homes</b>	<b>December 31, 2002 Homes</b>	<b>Percent Change in Available Homes (6/01-12/02)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	6,184	6,214	6,281	1.5 %
<b>Region 1</b>	835	854	867	3.8 %
<b>Region 2</b>	755	780	785	3.9 %
<b>Region 3</b>	880	912	914	3.9 %
<b>Region 4</b>	1,185	1,185	1,206	1.8 %
<b>Region 5</b>	1,189	1,117	1,172	(1.4 %)
<b>Region 6</b>	1,340	1,306	1,337	(.02 %)

There was a net increase of + 67 foster homes from December 31, 2001 through December 31, 2002.

***Adoption Recruitment***

Children’s Administration (CA) contracts for specialized recruitment of adoptive families with community agencies in and out-of-state. Child specific recruitment occurs for those children with an identified plan of adoption in addition to generalized recruitment of potential adoptive families.

Recruitment strategies include:

- ◆ child specific recruitment contracts
- ◆ staff participation in adoption consortiums
- ◆ Purchase of Service contracts (see below)
- ◆ Adoption Allotment (see below)
- ◆ discussion of the need for adoptive families at PRIDE training

- ◆ registration of children with the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE)
- ◆ featuring specific children in the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) photo-listing book and/or on the NWAE website.
- ◆ Adoption Incentive Payment Program – see below
- ◆ KIDSFEST, an NWAE sponsored event that provides an opportunity for children and potential adoptive families to meet
- ◆ removal of interjurisdictional barriers

### *Child specific recruitment*

CA developed a specialized recruitment contract in fiscal year 2002 focusing on the placement of 40 children who had been waiting the longest for an adoptive home. The contract specifies collaboration between the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) and six private agencies to provide specialized recruitment for identified children on a fee-for-service basis. By the end of the first year, 26 children were placed into identified permanent homes, with several placements pending. Six of the original 40 children identified were removed from the program after determining that adoption was not the most appropriate plan, the child did not meet the program requirements, or the social worker decided to withdraw the child from the project.

The children in this project are also posted on the NWAE website and the AdoptUSKids website. AdoptUSKids is a project of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau under the direction of the Adoption Exchange Association to identify permanent homes for waiting children. The website allows social workers to input both child and prospective family data. The database electronically searches for families to pursue for placement for specific children, based on the child criteria.

### *Adoption consortiums*

Regional adoption consortiums provide a collaborative staffing process between DSHS and private child placing agencies. These consortiums aid in the matching of children in need of permanent homes with waiting families early in the permanency planning process. The early staffings also identify additional services that children may need, including registration with the adoption exchanges. These staffings continue to support inter-regional linkages on behalf of children.

### *Purchase of Service (POS)*

The Purchase of Service (POS) program is a contracted program out of CA headquarters that provides payment to private agencies to offset the costs for

adoptive placement in and out of state. This service facilitates the placement of children interjurisdictionally without reducing the financial resources at the regional level. Payments under this contract are only made when an eligible child is placed and when the adoption finalization has occurred.

During FY 02, CA received over 60 requests for POS service contracts. The requests have resulted in 20 contracts with private agencies in and out of state. At the time of this report, 22 of the finalized adoptions in FY 02 are children for whom POS contracts were in place. CA will continue to utilize these funds to purchase placement and adoption finalization services for legally free children who have been registered with WARE by in and out of state agencies. This funding is essential in the placement of children that might not otherwise be able to be placed due to fees that an agency may charge for the placement of children.

### *Adoption allotments*

The adoption services program in headquarters provides an additional allotment to the regions to augment recruitment of adoptive homes for legally free children. This enhancement can be utilized for:

- assisting families to finalize adoptions in a timely manner
- locating placement options and facilitating adoptions of hard to place children
- contracting with private agencies to recruit and prepare potential adoptive families through
  - child specific recruitment/placement and finalization
  - home study completion for recruited families, including foster parents
  - life story book compilation
  - adoption finalization paperwork assistance

### *Family Home Study Improvement Project*

During the last fiscal year, the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team for the family home study developed a comprehensive, "build upon" home study for foster care, relative care and adoption. The team also developed new forms and processes to improve customer service while supporting consistency and best practice across the state.

The piloting of this "build upon" home study was completed in June 2002. Though the pilot was successful and well received around the state, there was concern that the actual time it to complete the written home study took more time, and created a backlog of families waiting for home study completion. CA therefore determined that the piloted home study would not be implemented

statewide and that a new team would meet to develop another "build upon" home study.

### *Adoption exchanges*

During FY 02, CA determined that every child legally available for adoption and not in their identified home of choice would be registered with Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE). This resulted in 325 children being served through WARE.

Children that have not had an identified adoptive family found within 90 days of placement in the WARE photo book, are registered with the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) which produces a photo-listing book with a broader audience. Some of the children featured in this photo-listing book are also listed on the NWAE website ([www.nwae.org](http://www.nwae.org)). During FY 02, 243 children were served through the NWAE photo-listing book with over 100 of these children featured on the NWAE website. CA is evaluating the best way to utilize the AdoptUSkids website.

## **Cross-Jurisdictional Resources**

CA has focused on the placement of children across county lines and through the placement of children in other states via the Purchase of Service and the child specific recruitment contracts. This has resulted in less involvement with the Independent Adoption Center and Team Work for Children to remove barriers to placements.

The border state agreement targeting Child Protective Services investigations and the completion of adoptive home studies in development between Washington and Oregon has been put on hold. Fundamental differences between the states have not been resolved. Oregon would like Washington to allow Oregon staff to perform social work services in Washington; CA declines to do so given the differences between Washington and Oregon laws and lack of assurance that the appropriate state laws would be followed. Both states know that families cross state lines. CA recognizes the need for a mechanism to provide services and investigation options for staff and families. At this time neither state has determined what that mechanism should be or how it should work. Each state will continue to support and assist the investigative process for children and families.

## Adoption Incentive Payment Program

Washington again exceeded the baseline for finalized adoptions for Federal Fiscal Year 2002. Resulting Adoption Incentive funds were used to enhance regional projects designed to increase the number of finalized adoptions in Washington and to again contract with the Office of the Attorney General for an attorney to process the backlog of children waiting for termination hearings in Clark, Cowlitz and Skamania counties. The contract resulted in an increase in the number of termination petitions filed with the court and the number of hearings and or relinquishments.

CA also uses these funds to hire a person to work on changes in the Case And Management Information System (CAMIS) to improve the data input process regarding the legal history and placement of children. These changes will take longer then the funding permits; there is a commitment to continue the work after this funding is depleted.

Staff hired around the state with Adoption Incentive funds provided the following services to children and prospective adoptive families waiting for finalization:

- ♦ adoptive home study
- ♦ disclosure of records
- ♦ completion of the post-placement report
- ♦ completion of a narrative documentary and picture book of a child's life documenting their history while in out of home care (a lifestory book)
- ♦ referral to additional services such as child and family therapy

For the first time since 1996, CA saw a drop in the total number of adoptions finalized during a fiscal year. The Northwest Adoption Exchange, a contracted provider, reported a decrease in the number of hits to its website and the number of phone calls from families inquiring about adoption compared to the same time period for the previous year. This may be connected to a decline in national affect post September 11, 2001. The decline also appears connected to the January 2003 \$10,000 federal tax credit, as field staff statewide reported that families were advised by their legal counsel to wait to finalize their adoptions until after January 1, 2003. Field staff cite additional barriers to adoption finalizations: the court systems are full, adoption hearings are limited to a certain number of cases per month, and some families need additional support services prior to finalization.

In fiscal year 2002, CA finalized 1,053 adoptions. Adoption finalizations for fiscal year 1997 through fiscal year 2002 are:

FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02
631	838	1020	1022	1183	1053

## Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000

Washington continues to serve adopted children and families in need of services through Child Protective Services, Family Reconciliation Services (which provides counseling to families in their own homes), and Child Welfare Services. Additionally, CA continues to maintain a contractor in Vancouver who provides counseling services to any adoptive family facing risk of dissolution in Washington. Last year the contractor provided services to 59 children resulting in 544 hours of services to families. Services include:

- intake
- case management
- medication management
- individual treatment
- group therapy
- family therapy
- telephone support

Families seeking international pre-adoptive services are referred to private agencies. CA is waiting for the final rules of the Hague convention and to learn who will be the certifying authority in Washington State before developing policy changes. In accordance with The Hague Act, each state will have an agency designated to oversee the certification of all agencies and persons facilitating international adoptions. The certification process will provide the necessary procedures and processes for handling adoptions both into and out of the United States.

For every adoption that occurs in Washington State, an adoption data card is completed as required by state law. The Department of Health (DOH) maintained data on all adoptions in Washington until 1995, in accordance with Revised Code Washington (RCW) 26.33.300, which is still in effect. In 1996 DOH separated from the Department of Social and Health Services and quit maintaining this information.

As a result all the data cards were sent to CA, which was not equipped to maintain the data. CA did not have a database for this information, the means of inputting and maintaining the information, or staff available for the input. In 2001 CA created a database. Staffing levels limit the entry of the information into the system.

CA continues to struggle with getting the Adoption Data cards input into the database. Funding and staffing levels do not permit the routine inputting of this data. Progress on input was made through the use of volunteers from the Washington State "WorkFirst" program for 6 months in this reporting period.

## **Disruptions/Dissolutions**

The adoption data cards described earlier were not intended to provide data on disruptions and/or dissolutions in the state. Electronic data input will occur via our Case Assignment and Management Information Systems (CAMIS) program. CAMIS completed the creation of the required fields and testing is underway. The fields should be available to staff by the end of the summer 2003.

Children's Administration is able to obtain information on the number of children who are receiving adoption subsidy that reenter care. As of December 31, 2002, 48 children who were receiving adoption subsidy were placed in foster care. Of the 48 children, 32 came into care during calendar year 2002 and seven (7) children returned to the care of the adoptive parent. We do not have access to information on children in care from international adoptions.

## Addendum to Adoption: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Submitted April 2004

Data is available for the licensed capacity of foster homes by race/ethnicity of foster parent and by the race/ethnicity of children in care. "Capacity" does not equate to availability, however, as foster parents are not required to accept the number of children for which they are licensed. Foster families often chose to temporarily decline placements because of such issues as family medical problems or the need to "recharge" between placements. Many families never intend to accept the maximum number of children they are licensed for, but are willing to have children on a respite basis for other families.

FY03\_Children in Open Placements & Capacity in Active Foster Homes

HISPANIC	RACE	Data	Capacity	Children
No	African American	Number	1512	898
		Percent	10.36%	11.9%
	Asian/Pac Islander	Number	333	74
		Percent	2.28%	1.0%
	Caucasian	Number	10591	4496
		Percent	72.57%	59.5%
	Multi	Number	23	476
		Percent	0.16%	6.3%
	Native American	Number	899	589
		Percent	6.16%	7.8%
	Other	Number	157	44
		Percent	1.08%	0.6%
	Unreported	Number	27	91
		Percent	0.20%	1.2%
Non Hispanic by Race Count			13542	6668
Percent			92.79%	88.2%
Yes	African American	Number	26	63
		Percent	0.18%	0.8%
	Asian/Pac Islander	Number	4	
		Percent	0.03%	0.1%
	Caucasian	Number	313	452
		Percent	2.14%	6.0%
	Multi	Number	6	51
		Percent	0.04%	0.7%
	Native American	Number	22	87
		Percent	0.15%	1.2%
	Other	Number	510	226
		Percent	3.49%	3.0%
	Unreported	Number	98	5
		Percent	0.67%	0.1%
Hispanic by Race Count			979	890
Percent			6.71%	11.8%
Unreported	Unreported	Number	74	0
		Percent	0.51%	0.0%
Unreported Count			74	0
Percent			0.51%	0.0%
Total			14595	7558
Percent			100.00%	100.0%

Source: CAMIS Placement & Licensing files -November 2003.

**Addendum to Adoption: Disruptions/Dissolutions**  
Submitted April 2004

**CAMIS modifications to collect information on adopted children placed in out of home care were implemented October 1, 2003 following a lengthy testing process. This data will be included in our 2004 report.**

Data currently available on adopted children placed in out of home care is limited to those on adoption support. The adoption support program receives monthly reports on children receiving adoption support funds who are subsequently placed in out of home care. Based upon the report for the month ending 9/30/03, there were 26 children receiving adoption support funds placed during FY 03, with a total of 45 such children in care.