Foster Parents as Recruiters

In November, *Fostering Communications* surveyed foster parents about recruitment in North Dakota. The survey was completed by 157 foster parents ranging in years of service from newly licensed to 38 years as a foster parent! What a wealth of experience we have!

According to the comments (some of them at right) foster parents want to be asked to help with recruitment. What better way to encourage prospective families than by talking with someone who has “walked the walk”? Is your agency utilizing this resource? If not, consider asking foster parents to walk along side your agency in their recruitment efforts. They can assist agency professionals at fairs or presentations. They can speak authentically on behalf of your agency at events in the community, places of worship or as they visit informally with friends. As a part of a professional team, foster parents may need some tools and guidance to enhance their skills. Following templates may be customized and given to foster parent recruiters.

**Useful Tools for Foster Parent Recruiters**

If your foster parents are recruiting for your agency, they may be wondering what to say or not say when talking to others. The attached “Talking Tips” may be duplicated and given out to foster parents.

Tips for Foster Parent Recruiters

To create business cards for your foster parents, use the attached template and customize for each person or for your agency.

Foster Care Business Card Fillable Template

Foster Care Business Card Optional Informational Back

“Having the foster parents recruiting. Not just social workers.”

“Give foster parent recruitment cards like business cards to hand other people if they seem interested. The cards have contact numbers to local social service.”

“Having current foster parents share with them about positives, challenges, and answers questions.”

“Ask current foster parents to visit face to face with neighbors, friends, relatives about becoming licensed.”

“I think the biggest impact would come from word of mouth (from foster parents), I have friends inquiring on the process and what impact fostering has had on my life...lets spread the positive!!”

–Comments from Foster parent recruitment survey in *Fostering Communications* 11/13
Tips for customer service

The key to successful recruitment and retention is relationships. The key to positive relationships is good communication. The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment is a wealth of resources for recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families. Diligent recruitment is a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach for recruiting and retaining foster, adoptive, and kinship families who can meet the needs of children in foster care. The following are several “short read” which you will find helpful. A brief synopsis of each publication is provided before each link.

Five Tips for Customer Service for Phone Interactions

Communication is key to recruiting and retaining families. This useful one-page sheet of five tips for customer service during phone communication with prospective and current foster and adoptive parents.

Five Things You Can Do to Improve Customer Service — Phone Interaction With Families

National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment

The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids is a member of the Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Network. The resource links (at left) are all used with permission from the NRCDR, which can be accessed directly at www.adoptuskids.org/nrcdr

The Resource Center provides free services and materials to support States, Tribes, Territories, and Courts as they recruit foster, adoptive, and kinship families and make lasting systemic changes to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families.