



CDSS

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January 21, 2011

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-08-11

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
COUNTY AB 2129 PROJECT COORDINATORS OF CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES
CALIFORNIA STATE CARE PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION
ALL COUNTY FISCAL OFFICERS

SUBJECT: RESOURCE FAMILY RECRUITMENT TRAINING AND RETENTION
SURVEY BEST PRACTICES

REFERENCE: ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) I-36-09 DATED
MAY 7, 2009

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

The purpose of this ACIN is to provide examples of the best practices submitted by counties in response to the Resource Family Recruitment Training and Retention Survey for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2007/08. This survey was initiated in 2001 to replace annual county plans and supports the Foster Parent Training and Recruitment allocations provided in Welfare and Institutions Code section 903.8 (AB 2129 Chapter 1089, Statutes of 1993).

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Child and Youth Permanency Branch issued ACIN I-36-09 to administer the annual Resource Family Recruitment Training and Retention Survey, which asked for county practices and accomplishments during SFY 2007/08. Fifty-one counties reported for resource family recruitment, training and retention activities during SFY 2007/08 and submitted program information and data pertaining to these activities in the online survey. Seven counties utilized Foster Family Agency (FFA) to conduct activities related to resource families and therefore did not submit data. An FFA is an organization engaged in recruiting, certifying, training and providing professional support to foster parents and finding homes for temporary or permanent placement of children who require that level of care as an alternative to group home care. Many FFA are also licensed as adoption agencies and can support a smooth transition to adoption when reunification is no longer an option.

Based on results of the county survey, the following were identified as best practices for the recruitment and retention of resource families:

Resource Family Recruitment Methods

By far the single most effective and common method identified by counties to recruit resource families was by word-of-mouth through other resource families and friends. Additionally, both the internet and advertisements were also identified as effective alternatives to word-of-mouth. Having toll-free telephone lines to receive calls from prospective resource families and bilingual staff dedicated to resource family recruitment was also indicated as effective methods of recruitment.

Placement Availability

Responding counties reported that youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, youth with special needs, and adolescents with substance abuse issues continued to be the most difficult groups to place with resource families. Counties indicated that specialized recruitments for potential resource families for placement of children of specific age groups or special needs (such as physical or psychological challenges, learning disabilities or substance abuse) were the most effective means of recruiting families.

Strategies to Improve Retention

The following are strategies used by counties to improve the retention of resource families:

- Establish resource family appreciation events;
- Conduct resource family training or initiating self-directed training;
- Conduct advisory board meetings to resolve issues;
- Create resource family centers;
- Establish resource family support groups;
- Share information via resource family newsletters;
- Establish a database to track the number of active resource families and
- Establish timeframes or deadlines for staff responses to inquiries from resource parents.

Training and Support:

Many counties indicated that they provided pre and post-service training beyond that which was statutorily required, and many provided child care for families attending this training. Counties collaborated with either resource family organizations or colleges to improve recruitment, training and retention. This collaboration included advisory meetings, training workshops and meetings with foster parent associations.

Support to resource families was provided in the form of respite care funded through the Specialized Care Incentive and Assistance Program. In addition, some counties provided support to resource families through resource family mentoring programs.

Examples of Innovative County Activities

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning (LGBTQ) Community outreach.¹ One county collaborated with LGBTQ community partners to hold events at a local restaurant to recruit resource families. This strengthened the relationship between the county and the community. In addition, county staff distributed postcards at the annual Los Angeles Gay Pride parade.
- Hospital Days.² – One county achieved some success in working with local hospitals to recruit medical staff with experience with special needs children. At hospital functions recruitment staff talked about the children who were available for foster care placement or adoption and passed out flyers. Many of these medical staff expressed relief that they would be able to become resource families, as they had previously thought it would be a conflict of interest to do so.
- “Taking Care of Business Day.”³ Two counties held these events in communities with high child welfare services entry rates, and both reported this as being a good recruitment tool. At these events potential resource families could complete most foster parent paperwork, including licensing applications.
- Targeted Recruitment.⁴ Counties engaged in specialized recruitment efforts to recruit resource families with special emphasis on language and cultural identity, pregnant youth, deaf or hearing impaired youth, children and youth with special physical, learning and mental needs and sibling groups.

A comprehensive report of county practices can be found in the [Resource Family Recruitment, Training and Retention Annual Report, July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008](#).

Should you have further questions or comments regarding this ACIN or the Annual Report, please contact Lyn Stueve, of the Recruitment Network Development Unit, at (916) 657-3329 or via e-mail at lynette.stueve@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

KAREN B. GUNDERSON, Chief
Child and Youth Permanency Branch
Children and Family Services Division

¹ Resource Family Recruitment, Training and Retention Survey-Los Angeles County.

² Ibid.

³ Resource Family Recruitment, Training and Retention Survey- Kern, San Bernardino Counties.

⁴ Resource Family Recruitment, Training and Retention Survey – San Bernardino, Orange, Sacramento, Shasta, Mendocino, Marin Counties.