

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Effective Strategies to Recruit, Engage,
and Support African American Foster,
Adoptive, and Kinship Families*

Children's Bureau's 2011 Policy to Practice
Dialogue
"Making it Work in Child Welfare"



Adopt US Kids

Together we hold their future



Children's
Bureau



Presenters

Stephanie Pettaway

*National Recruitment Fulfillment Campaign Director,
AdoptUSKids*

Ruth McRoy

Evaluator, AdoptUSKids

Sharri Hawkins Black

*Director, National Resource Center for Recruitment and
Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents @
AdoptUSKids*

Overview of Session

- AdoptUSKids: History and Purpose
- Data Trends: Overview of the data on African American children and youth in need of a permanent family
- Findings: Survey findings on strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of families for African American children
- AdoptUSKids: Overview of strategic initiatives to inform and improve child welfare practice with African American foster, adoptive and kinship families
- Next Steps: Discussion of strategies for utilizing these initiatives in your communities and jurisdictions

History and Purpose of AdoptUSKids

Establish and operate, through a cooperative agreement, a multi-faceted national AdoptUSKids program designed to assist States and Tribes in the recruitment and support of foster and adoptive families for children in public foster care

History and Purpose of AdoptUSKids

- In 2002, the Children's Bureau awarded a 5-year cooperative agreement to the Adoption Exchange Association (AEA) to operate AdoptUSKids.
- AEA was awarded a second 5-year cooperative agreement for AdoptUSKids 2007-2012.
- AdoptUSKids is a member of the Children's Bureau's Training & Technical Assistance Network, but in addition to traditional T/TA, provides other recruitment and retention tools and services.

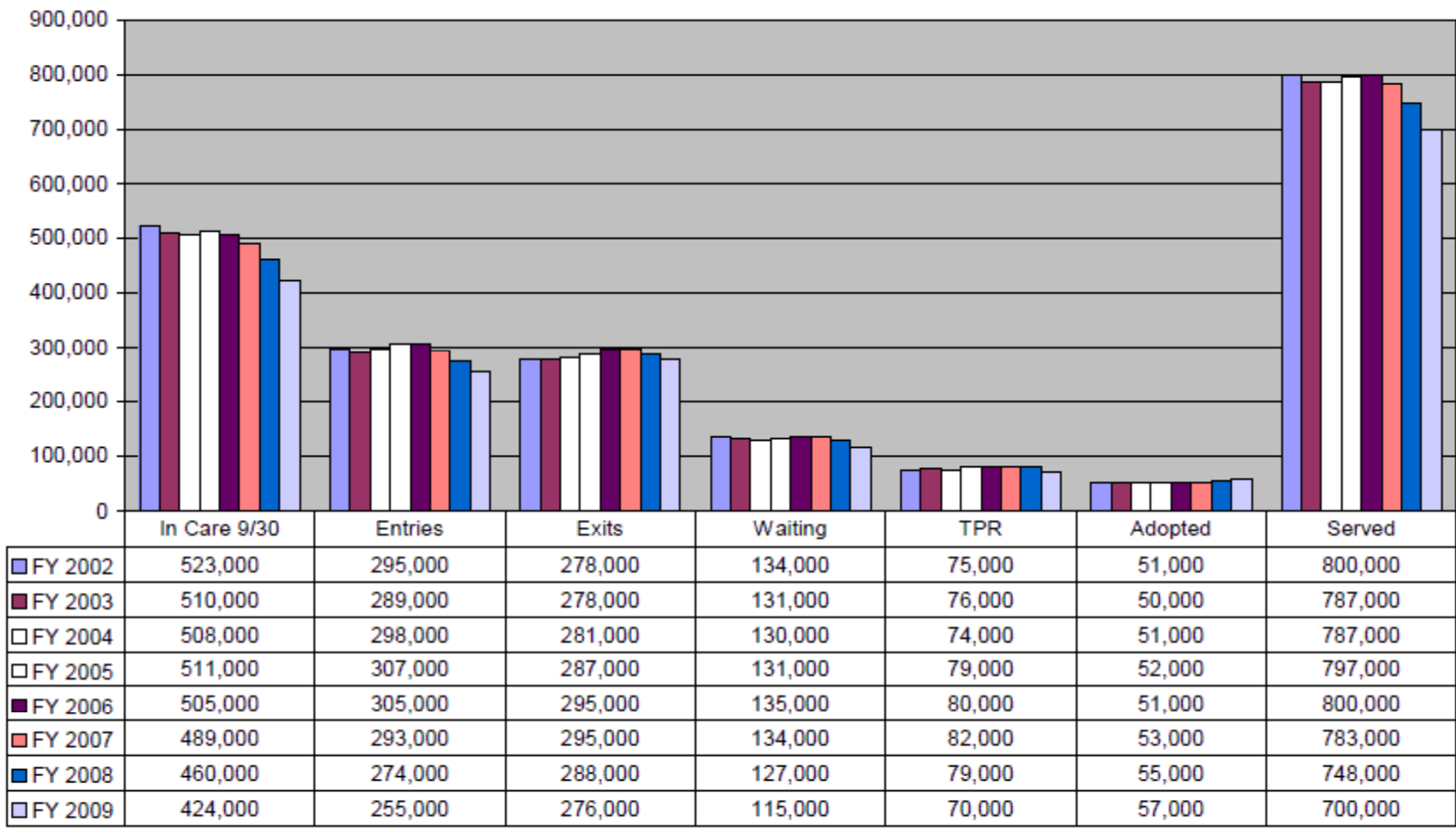
The Mission of AdoptUSKids is Two-Fold

1. To raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system; and
2. To assist U.S. States, Territories and Tribes in their efforts to recruit, retain and connect foster and adoptive families with children awaiting permanency throughout the United States.

AdoptUSKids Key Activities

ADD NEW ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

***Trends in Foster Care and Adoption—FY 2002-FY 2009
 (Based on data submitted by states as of July 29, 2010)
 Source: AFCARS data, U.S. Children's Bureau,
 Administration for Children, Youth and Families***



Children in Foster Care

- In FY 2010, according to the preliminary AFCARS estimates, there were 408,425 children in foster care. Their median age was 9.2.
- The average length of stay of children who exited foster care was 21.7 months.
- 29% percent of the children in care were African American.
- 52% percent of the children in care were males.

Source: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb

African American Children in Care

The percentage of African American youth in care has dropped by 9% in the past decade (38% to 29%)*

*Source AFCARS

Children Adopted in 2010

- According to recent AFCARS estimates, 52,891 children were adopted from foster care in 2010.
- Their average age was 6.4 and 51% were males.
- 90% of the children received an adoption subsidy.
- Average of 13.7 months passed from termination to adoption

Relationship of Adoptive Parents Prior to the Adoption

- 53% were foster parent adoptions
- 32% were relative adoptions
- 15% were non relative adoptions

AFCARS Estimates FY 2010

Structure of Child's Adoptive Family

- 67% Married Couples
- 2% Unmarried Couples
- 28% Single Females
- 3% Single Males

AFCARS Estimates FY 2010

Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Children Adopted From Care

- 43% White
- 24% African American
- 21% Hispanic
- 3% Alaska Native/American Indian

AFCARS Estimates FY 2010

Trends: African American Children Adopted from Foster Care: 1997-2010

Of all children adopted from foster care:

1997:	44% were African American
2001:	35% were African American
2003:	33% were African American
2004:	32% were African American
2005:	30% were African American
2006:	27% were African American
2007:	25% were African American
2008:	25% were African American
2009:	25% were African American
2010	24% were African American

Source: AFCARS

Children and Youth Waiting to be Adopted from Foster Care

107,000 children waiting

- 53% males and 47% Females
- Waiting children have been in continuous foster care an average of 37.3 months.
- Waiting children were an average of 5 when they were removed from their parents or caretakers.
- Average age of waiting children is 8.1
- 64,084 of the waiting children have had their parental rights terminated.

AFCARS Estimates FY 2010

Racial/Ethnic Background of Waiting Children

- 39% White
- 29% Black
- 22% Hispanic
- 2% Alaska Native/ American Indian
- 1% unknown
- 6% Two or more races

AFCARS Estimates FY 2010

Survey of Families and Professionals

Background

Due to the disproportionately high number of African American children needing permanency, we sought to gather data on:

- Strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of African American foster and adoptive families
- To inform the African American component of the AdoptUSKids Capacity Building Initiatives.

Methodology

- Paper surveys distributed to participants in the One Church One Child National Conference in October 2009 and parents attending the Together as Adoptive Parents support group meeting in November 2009.
- Email surveys were sent to directors and staff of Minority Specializing adoption and foster care agencies who primarily serve African American foster and adoptive families.

Sample

67 respondents completed survey

- 31 identified as parents (foster parent and/or adoptive parent)
- 28 identified as professionals (caseworker/social worker, adoptive and/or foster family recruiter, adoption and/or foster care supervisor, or administrator/program director or CEO)
- 8 identified as both parents and professionals. After analysis of this subgroup, they were included in the professional category for analyses

Demographics

- The majority of the respondents who identified themselves as adoptive or foster parents were from the state of Pennsylvania (n=25, 81%).
- The state of residence reported most frequently by professionals was Maryland (n=12, 33%). This was followed by Pennsylvania (n=6, 17%), Florida (n=3, 8%), Georgia (n=2, 6%), North Carolina (n=2, 6%), Texas (n=2, 6%) and Virginia (n=2, 6%).

Key Issues Reported by Parents

- Families lack financial resources to support additional children.
- Families are concerned about the challenges the children needing placement may bring into their family (i.e., behavioral problems, attachment issues, etc.).
- Families do not have the financial resources to complete an adoption in the legal system.

Key Issues Reported by Parents (cont.)

- Families need training about specific challenges that the children face (i.e., trauma, substance abuse, etc.).
- Families are concerned about the challenge of merging adoptive children into families with birth children.

Key Issues Reported by Professionals

- Concerns about the challenges the children needing placement may bring into their family.
- Families do not know the process involved in becoming an adoptive or a foster family.
- Families lack financial resources to support additional children.
- Families are unaware of the fact that there are many waiting African American children who need permanency through adoption.

Key Issues Reported by Professionals (cont.)

- Families don't like the characteristics of children that are waiting.
- Families fear that they are not what the agency is looking for.
- Families don't like the lack of response from agencies.
- Families fear that the agency will withhold child information.
- Workers are not culturally sensitive to African American families.

Key Recommendations from Parents:

- Recruit through churches, connections with current foster and adoptive parents, and TV
- Recruit through agencies
- Recruit parents during and in conjunction with Black History Month activities

Key Recommendations from Parents: (cont.)

- Provide services and support to families, especially adoption subsidies, free or reduced child care, emotional support for parents, medical insurance, post-adoption services, and respite care (both parents' day out and in home services).
- Agencies should have more community involvement, provide financial support for children as they age, provide services during the pre-finalization placement period, and provide transportation for after school activities.

Key Recommendations from Professionals:

- Recruit through churches, word of mouth, connection with current foster and adoptive parents, and TV.
- Recruit through social functions, community newspapers, internet and direct mailings, and family places such as “Chuck-e-Cheese”, movie theatres, fast food restaurants, and bowling alleys.

Key Recommendations from Professionals: (cont.)

- Provide services and support to families, especially adoption subsidies, parent training, post-adoption services, emotional support for parents, mental and behavioral health care, free or reduced child care, medical insurance, and respite care (both parents' day out and in home services).
- Agencies should provide non-judgmental services that are culturally sensitive and adoption competent, provide support groups for parents and youth, and provide lists of appropriate/knowledgeable therapy and child activity resources.

Implications

- This relatively small, yet nationwide sample of professionals from minority specializing agencies and African American foster and adoptive parents, has provided insights about recruitment strategies as well as barriers to African American families seeking to become adoptive or foster parents.
- These data may be useful for agencies planning new recruitment strategies as well as for community organizations and institutions that may want to become involved and encourage African Americans to become adoptive and foster parents.

Implications (cont.)

- It is important to understand the barriers to the recruitment of African American families from the perspectives of parents and professionals in order to make changes to minimize the barriers that prospective parents face.
- Staff who recruit and work with African American foster and adoptive families need training in culturally competent service delivery.

For further information contact:

Ruth G. McRoy, Ph.D.

AdoptUSKids Evaluation Team

r.mcroy@mail.utexas.edu

1-866-471-7372

Photolisting

www.adoptuskids.org

www.adoptuskids.org

Although African American Children are photolisted on and African American families are registered on website

- The challenge is to inspire **more** African American families to use the website to look for a child, and to
- **Encourage** child welfare workers to search the website for the registered families who can parent the children in their caseloads.

www.adoptuskids.org

To meet the challenge:

- the website is being redesigned so that is more **appealing** to families of all races and cultures, and
- more **user friendly** to workers and families

2009 National Ad Campaign Recruitment of African American Families

2009 National Ad Campaign

The Ad Council, in a cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau, developed an Ad Campaign developed the following campaign:

African American



African American Ad Campaign

Goal:

- To **raise awareness** of the need for families for African American children in foster care
- To inform families to visit AdoptUSKids.org
- To point families to the AdoptUSKids.org fulfillment team for **support** and **encouragement** and to **connect** families to the states, tribes and territories

Tip Sheets

Cultural Guide

Tip Sheets

Development

- Interviews with Public & Private Agency Staff
- Focus groups with Foster and Adoptive Parents
- Literature Review

Toolkit

- African American PSAs DVD
- Working with African American Families
- Survey Findings
- 2009 National Data
- Listing of African American Specializing Agencies

Distribution

- Mailed out 300 packets initially
- Received requests for over 1500 packets

African American Workgroup Meeting

African American Workgroup Meeting

Participants

AdoptUSKids

Children's Bureau

African American

Adoptive and Foster parents

Child Placing Agencies Representatives

Organization Representatives

Adult adoptees

Child Welfare social workers

African American Workgroup Meeting

Products planned:

- Published report of the meeting's work
- Curriculum developed for child welfare workers

African American Workgroup Meeting

Workgroup Objectives:

- Improved strategies and services across all elements of AdoptUSKids that support States, Territories and Tribes in their efforts to recruit and retain foster, adoptive and kin families for African American children, including new tools and products that are informed by the workgroup.

African American Workgroup Meeting

Catalyze a sense of collaboration among, and shared ownership and mutual commitment by, child welfare agencies and African American organizations to develop strategies that reduce the disproportionate representation of and improve outcomes for African American children who come into contact with the child welfare system.

African American Workgroup Meeting

Identify specific, concrete and measurable short term action steps to be taken by Workgroup participants with and on behalf of their organizations to impact systemic change by States, Territories and Tribes to improve the recruitment and retention of kin, foster and adoptive families for African American children

African American Workgroup Meeting

Strategies:

- Develop strategies to promote African American adoptions?
- Identify the gaps in service to African American Families?
- Develop opportunities for public child welfare agencies to partner with church communities and other faith based organizations regarding diligent recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive families?
- Enlist African American volunteers to work with/mentor children in the system?
- Assist public child welfare agencies to more effectively connect with and reach into African American communities and organizations to call forth families for children who will have the support of the community behind them?

African American Workgroup Meeting

Expected Outcomes:

- Published Report
- Curriculum
- Community Partnerships
- Teleconferences to monitor progress and to develop additional strategies and products

Training and Technical Assistance

National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUSKids (NRCRRFAP)

The Heart of AdoptUSKids

Is the capacity-building technical assistance provided to States, Territories and Tribes to support their strategic efforts to make systemic changes that improve permanency outcomes for children who come into contact with the public child welfare system.

Purpose of CB' s T/TA Network

Designed to improve child welfare systems

Support States, Territories, and Tribes in achieving sustainable, systemic change

Aimed at improved outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being for families and children

Guiding Principles

- Strengthening Capacity of the Family
- Individual Strength-Based Services
- Cultural & Linguistic Competence
- Family & Youth Involvement
- Community-based Services
- Accountability
- Utilizing Evidence Based & Evidence Informed Training & TA
- Interagency Collaboration

National Resource Centers

Possess topical expertise in assigned areas of child welfare

Respond to T/TA requests from States, Tribes, and Territories across the country

Serve as repositories of knowledge and resources on effective and promising practices in their respective areas of responsibility

NRCRRFAP

- Member of the Children's Bureau T/TA Network
- Provides topical expertise on areas related to the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents

T/TA Services Provided

- **Diligent Recruitment-** improvement in ratios of children to resource parents/families who are available to foster and adopt; show improvement in number of resource families (and ratio of children to families) of color available to foster and adopt
- **Targeted Recruitment-** identification of strategies to engage specific communities
- **Retention & Customer Service-** increase in percentage of families retained and utilized to foster and adopt children in their care

Five fundamental elements of diligent & targeted recruitment



1. Data driven and informed decision making
2. Right messages and media targeted to attract families who reflect the race & ethnicity of children in care
3. Culturally competent
4. Retention obsessive
5. Community based

Targeted Recruitment

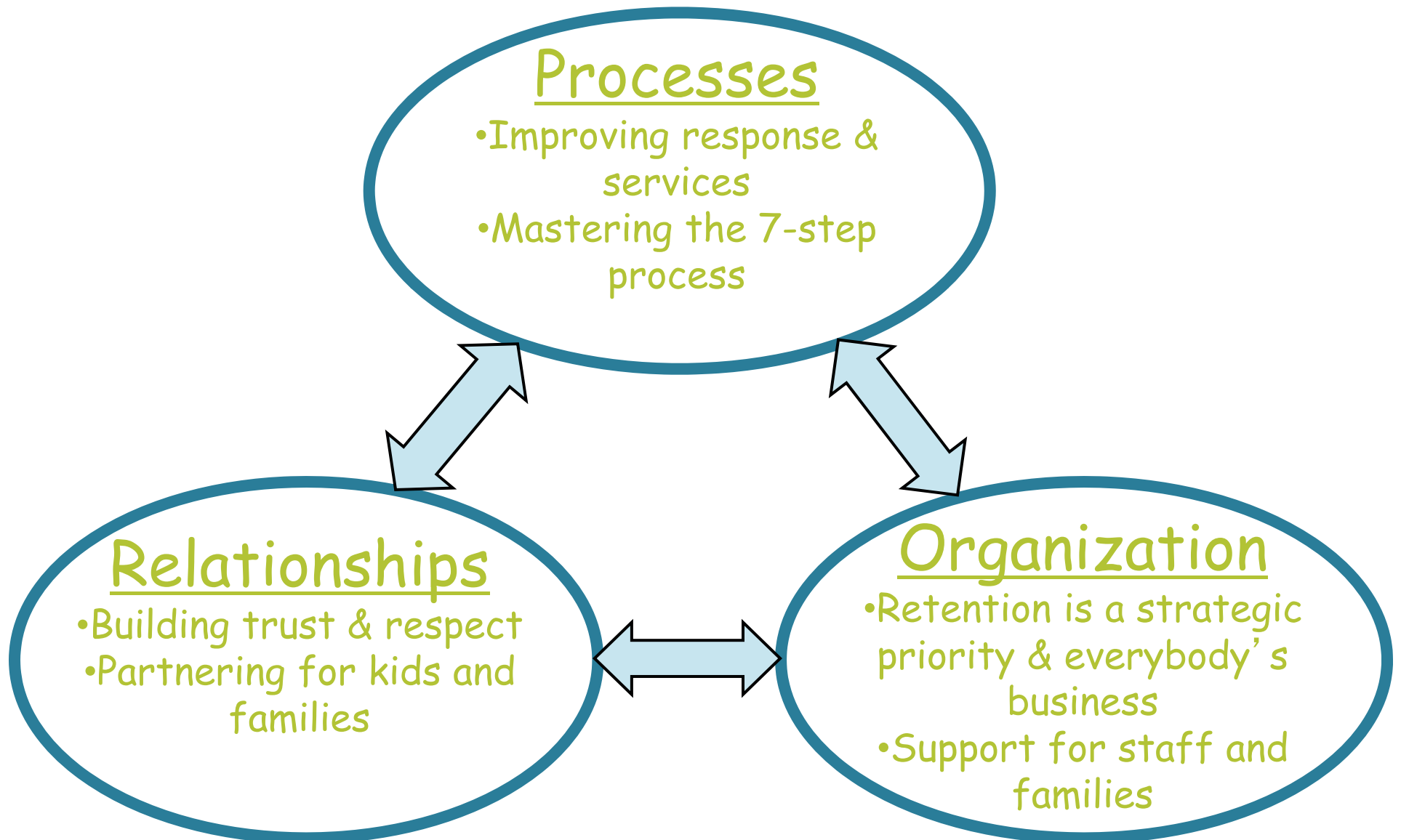
- Targeted recruitment is the process by which States, tribes, and agencies strategically focus recruitment efforts in neighborhoods and communities where families who are most likely to foster and adopt children in care can be found.



Targeted Recruitment Methods

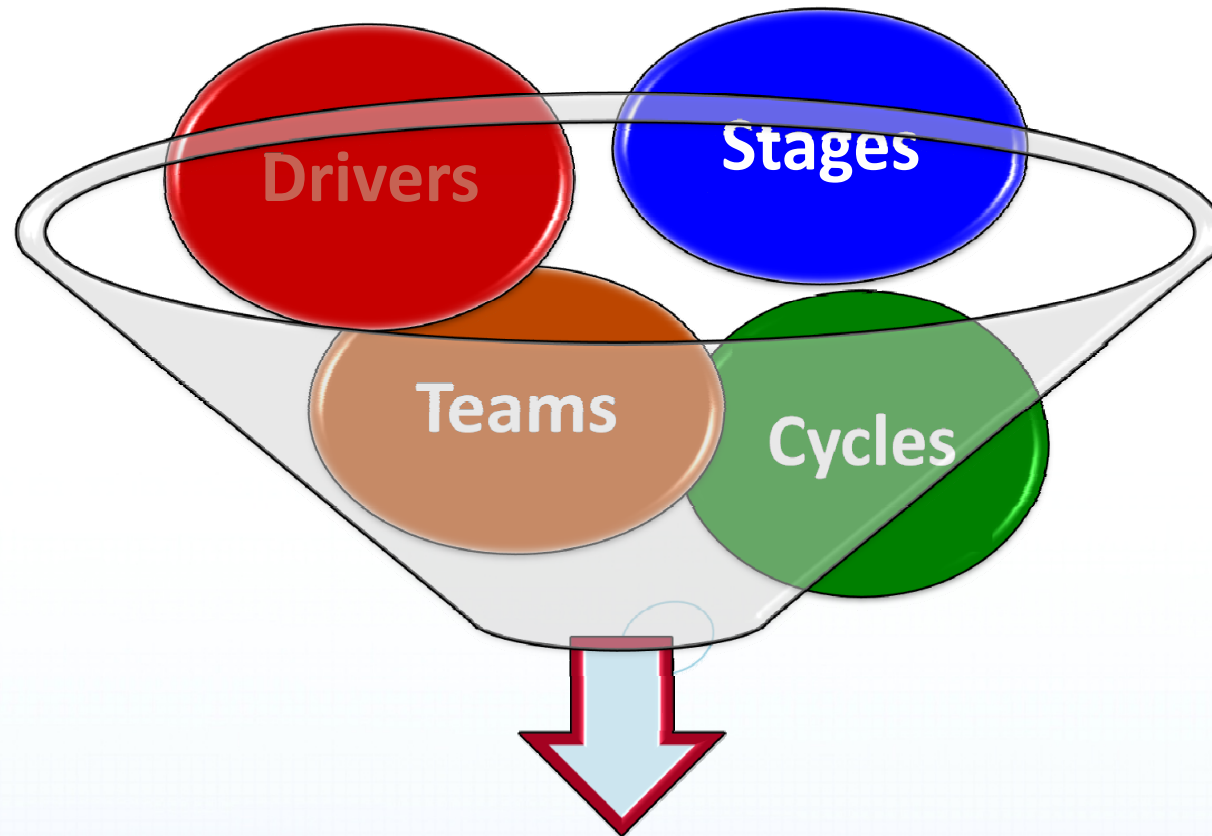
- Referrals from existing foster/adoptive parents
- Faith Based
- Family-to-Family and other community based methods
- Military Families
- Market Segmentation
- Geo-mapping to show where children come from and resource families are clustered

Retention Model for Families



Building Capacity and Substantive Change

Implementation Frameworks



Implementation

Applying Frameworks

The value of frameworks is

- To promote the ability to generalize beyond the immediate project or initiative
- To enhance communication among partners (e.g. better understanding of one another)
- To more easily share and apply improvements
- To increase the relevance of the “lessons learned”

Overall Challenge

Science to Service Gap

- What is known often is not what is adopted to help children, families, and caregivers

Implementation Gap

- There are no clear pathways to implementation
- What is adopted often is not used with fidelity and good effect
- What is implemented often disappears with time and staff turnover

Summary

Stage related activities prepare the system for a successful change process

Competence needs to be developed and sustained

- Selection, training, coaching, fidelity measures help change and support new practitioner behavior and skills

Organizations and systems need to change

- Data systems need to be used to make decisions
- Facilitative administrative practices & systems interventions create hospitable environments
- Policy enables new practice but practice needs to inform policy

Accessing AdoptUSKids Services

- T/TA is intended to build capacity for States, Tribes and Territories to improve child and family outcomes
- No wrong door for States/Tribes/Territories accessing T/TA
- T/TA is free, available on-site, and customized
- Tailored to be culturally appropriate
- Many other services available in addition to formal, on-site T/TA

For more information

Stephanie Pettaway

**National Recruitment Campaign Fulfillment Director,
AdoptUSKids**

spettaway@adoptuskids.org

410.931.0907

Sharri Hawkins Black

Director, NRCRRFAP @ AdoptUSKids

sharri@adoptex.org

303.755.4756



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