

FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND SUPPORT (FPRRS)  
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY  
MENU OF STRATEGIES PREPARED BY CWDA/CFPIC

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 15-76

As a result of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) efforts, a detailed CCR Legislative Report was developed and provided to the California Legislature in January 2015. This action plan contained information on current reform improvements made administratively and recommended revisions to improve the continuum of care for juvenile court dependents through legislative action. The report outlined a comprehensive approach to improving the experience and outcomes of children and young adults in foster care. The report, based on over three years of collaboration with county partners and other stakeholders, consists of a series of interdependent recommendations to improve assessments of minors, non-minor dependents (NMD), and families to make more informed and appropriate initial placement decisions, emphasize home-based family care placements, appropriately support those placements with available services, change the goals for congregate (group home) care placements, and increase transparency and accountability for outcomes.

A specific recommendation was made to strengthen foster parent, resource family and relative caregiver retention, recruitment, training requirements and strategies. The recommendation envisions these caregivers to be active partners with public child welfare workers and service providers, and as such must also be provided with the necessary supports to retain them. To support this recommendation, funding has been made available for counties to invest in activities to retain and increase the number of foster parents, relative caregivers and resource families available for placement of court dependent minors and NMDs.

USE OF FUNDS

The funds allocated must be used for activities and services to **retain, recruit, and support** foster parents, relative caregivers, and resource families. Allowable expenditures include, but are not limited to the following:

- Staffing to provide and improve direct services and supports to foster parents, relative caregivers, and resource families;
- Removal of barriers in those areas defined as priorities in the county's FPRRS plan and subsequent reports on outcomes;
- Exceptional child needs not covered by the caregiver-specific rate that would normalize the child's experience, stabilize the placement, or enhance the dependent's wellbeing;
- Child care;

## *Menu of Strategies*

- Intensive relative finding, engagement and navigation efforts; and
- Emerging technological, evidence-informed, or other non-traditional approaches for outreach to potential foster parents, relative caregivers, and resource families.

## TRIBAL COLLABORATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Counties are encouraged to consider its placement needs for tribal youth and collaborate with tribes to ensure needs unique to Native American children in foster care are included.

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## MENU OF STRATEGIES

In order to assist counties in creating their plans, this document provides a menu of strategies may want to consider based on its individual county needs. Some of the strategies are evidence-based, and other are being utilized in California counties with positive results. Whenever possible, references and contact information is shared, or questions may be directed to [dboyer@cwda.org](mailto:dboyer@cwda.org) for further information.

1. RETENTION AND SUPPORT
2. OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES
3. TRAINING
4. LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS
5. INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS
6. COMMUNITY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Note that this list is not exhaustive and counties are encouraged to share additional practices/strategies (send to [dboyer@cwda.org](mailto:dboyer@cwda.org)). Some listed activities are applicable across multiple categories.

## 1. RETENTION AND SUPPORT

- **In-Home Behavioral Supports** - Behavioral intervention is currently used by many foster family agencies operating Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC) programs, and has been used in other state child welfare systems. With the pending implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and AB 403, the use of In-Home Behavioral Support can potentially support a broader range of children and foster caregivers—not just youth with the highest level of need—in any home-based setting. Visit the [CalSWEC website](#) for access to the training webinar and other materials to learn more about how counties can establish these supports locally.
- The **Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)** helps counties to create a culture of partnership between foster caregivers and counties. Since there is no prescriptive, “one size fits all” approach to doing so, QPI works with each county to tailor its recruitment and retention strategies to the needs of that particular community. Counties may consider county staffing needs to successfully implement QPI activities. (<http://www.ylc.org/our-work/action-litigation/quality-foster-care/quality-parenting-initiative/>)
- **The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM)** was developed by the Mockingbird Society in Seattle, WA, and was first established in 2004 as a proof of concept pilot. At its core, the MFM consists of a Hub Home and six to ten foster/kinship families that live within a geographic radius of the Hub Home; together, these homes make up a Constellation. The Hub Home is a licensed foster home that must be able to maintain two open beds 365 days a year and be available to provide support 24/7 to the other families in the Constellation. The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is designed to inherently provide peer support; the MFM is built around an experienced foster parent, known as the Hub Home provider, who is available to support 6-10 other foster families with everything from navigating systems to monthly social gatherings to transporting children for appointments. Together, these families are known as a Constellation. Families within the Constellation receive peer support from the Hub Home provider as well as from the other Constellation families. Check out the [report](#) or visit the [CalSWEC website](#) to view the county webinar and find out how to get started.
- Hire **county staff and/or foster parent mentors** who are available 24/7 to answer questions and otherwise support foster caregivers post-placement. This is one of the biggest sources of frustration amongst foster parents.
- Develop, embrace and support **community liaison/foster parent leaders** who can help counties develop additional resources, such as writing grants and securing additional supports and services from the community (Yolo County).
- Develop **financial support for supplies at initial placement** by providing resource families with a \$ X gift card for a particular store, where the children also get to shop for what they

need to meet their immediate needs. If this is done through a non-profit some stores will waive the sales tax. Identify a foster parent/mentor to accompany new resource families when shopping for additional support (Yolo County).

- Provide tangible supports to resource families to **support the “normalcy” of foster children** and support activities to alleviate trauma. Examples include: support to participate in school dances and special events, sports activities, therapeutic outlets including purchase of Lifebook or participation in music/dance, participation in pre-school/Transitional Kindergarten for young children, and participation in camps and other activities during the summer/school breaks.
- Provide **direct support** to resources families to enable families and foster children to participate in activities. For example, provide transportation to/from extracurricular activities, to/from court appointments or medical appointments, etc.
- Provide **support for needs and services** such as help with paying for property damage due to behavioral outbursts, clothing, school supplies, etc., or for clothing, school supplies, other needs, particularly for caregivers caring for non-federally eligible children (note: relatives pending approval are not eligible for IVE until the date of approval and thus may have up-front needs for support).
- Establish a contract with a **Furniture Store** for “just in time furniture”. At the time of placement the furniture store will deliver the necessary furniture for the child/youth.
- Collaborate with Foster Family friendly **business establishments** they can put a sign in their window and give foster families a discount. (San Luis Obispo County)
- Set up a private **Facebook** page for families to create an on line “support”/ learning circle (Yolo County). Assign one or more individuals to post and monitor the page, add/delete users, etc. Can be used to ask for donations of clothing or other goods upon initial placement, announce trainings and events, etc. Contact [sjimenez@cwda.org](mailto:sjimenez@cwda.org) or [dboyer@cwda.org](mailto:dboyer@cwda.org) for a CWDA Facebook Resource Guide for counties.
- **Customer Service Approach** – Customers’ perceptions of the way they are treated, the responsiveness of the services provided, and the extent to which they are engaged in teamwork to meet the needs of the children and youth <http://www.adoptuskids.org/assets/files/using-customer-service-concepts-to-enhance-recruitment-and-retention-practices.pdf>
- **Icebreakers** – Create ice breakers for foster parents and birth parents to get to know each other, and the child. Sharing information about the child helps parents feel more at ease with foster parents and foster parents/social workers have better info on how to care for the child.

- **Educational Liaison** – Designate a liaison to support foster parents and social workers to navigate the complex process of IEPs, special education laws, etc. Designate a liaison to ensure foster youth receive educational supports through local schools or to provide ancillary supports and services in collaboration with local foster youth service programs.
- Develop and implement strategies used by several QPI counties, including **Transitions Policies** to reduce child trauma and foster parent angst during transitions and trainings to county staff and caregivers regarding the **information sharing and confidentiality**.
- Engage **Faith based organizations** – for example “Heart Walk with Love Modesto” show cases storyboards at community based events about children in foster care in need of, provides Resource Family support groups broken up into child age groups with free child care so that resource families with like age children can support each other, and “Date Night” where resource families can bring their children for a night of fun activities while the resource parents go out on a “date.” Another example is “**Faith in Motion**” (Riverside, San Bernardino, several other So Cal counties) partner with faith ministries to support foster youth and families, including adopt-a-social worker, mentoring a child or family, hosting/supporting special events, giving a treasure box, etc.
- **Offer paid child care and respite care** to caregivers (or establish a respite care process). Note that AB 403 expands respite care to 14 days, pending the development of State policies.
- Offer **mentorship and support to foster youth** in placement that transcends placements (mentor stays with youth regardless of placement). Also consider developing foster youth **support groups through partnerships with Foster Youth Service programs** at local schools.
- Expand existing effective programs including **Kinship Support Services programs** to support relative caregivers.
- Implement a local **Foster Care Behavioral Training and Support program**, an initiative from QPI-Florida which provides graduated training and support to foster caregivers, from pre-service training on behavioral-based parenting, to advanced training for families, to intensive in-home support to help caregivers gain proficiency in addressing the challenging behaviors of children in their care.

## 2. OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

- **Recruitment Videos** – These are just a few examples of great videos produced by counties recently. These can be shared via social media, with your community partners, or at foster parent orientation events.  
[Humboldt County Video](#)  
[Yolo County Videos](#)  
[Ventura County Video](#) and Ventura’s [info page](#) for interested foster parents

- **Resource Family Approval** – As counties begin to implement the RFA process, consider county staffing needed to perform approvals of county FFH and relative caregivers. Counties where CCL performs licensing should consider having county staff perform the approval process for both FFH and relatives, including the new permanency assessment (similar to adoption home studies. In particular, consider what will be needed to **assist relatives** in meeting additional requirements for approval. For example, relatives will have 90 days to complete the approval process once a child is placed with them on an emergency basis. Some counties are paying county-only funds to support relatives while they complete approval standards. Also, consider county “specialists” to provide direct, in-home training, child care during training, transportation to/from training, and otherwise assisting relatives with accessing required documentation to complete the approval process (San Luis Obispo and San Francisco are good models). QPI held an RFA Webinar that explains the process for foster parents that can be accessed [here](#).
- **Efforts to Outcomes:** Twenty-four counties utilize ETO to track recruitment and retention of resource families which includes the ability to track recruitment from start to finish as well as caregiver assessment and retention assessment tools. The system has the ability to interface with other data for more robust information for county program and planning needs, and efforts are currently underway to add tracking for child and family team activities. There is a \$1,200 licensing fee to utilize ETO, and counties wishing to add user IDs are subject to additional fees. A recorded webinar on ETO can be found [here](#).
- **Up-Front Support:** When a person expresses interest in foster parenting, pair an existing and experienced foster parent with an interested person(s) and offer to answer questions and provide moral support during the licensing/approval process.
- Pay existing foster parents a **bonus/recruitment stipend** when they recruit additional families to serve as foster parents (Los Angeles County)
- **Messaging and Branding** - Messaging to potential foster parents is the first step to recruitment, and it is crucial that the message is a positive one. The general public often has a negative perception of foster parenting, which is a significant barrier to recruiting foster parents. Overcoming any preconceived notions that might be held about foster parenting is necessary in order for individuals to take the first step towards licensure. Casey Family Programs shares these examples in their publication “Effective Practices in Foster Parent Recruitment, Infrastructure, and Retention” (December 2014) ([http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/effective\\_practices\\_in\\_foster\\_parent\\_recruitment\\_and\\_retention.pdf](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/effective_practices_in_foster_parent_recruitment_and_retention.pdf)):

- **Targeted Recruitment**
  - a. Provide foster parents with **business cards** with their personal information – helps them to recruit, and also gives them legitimacy and helps them to identify themselves as a foster parent when talking to teachers, etc.
  - b. **Increasing Native American foster homes** (Mendocino County) contract with a local tribe to host a 1 day event in order to expand outreach and awareness of the need for foster care families in all the surrounding tribes. The event will include speakers discussing foster care education, foster home checklists, foster care options, preparing for the home assessment and foster care paperwork, supportive services and resources available to foster families and a Hopland foster/adoptive parent sharing their personal experience and story.
  - c. Iowa: Using performance-based contracting, Iowa is motivating their private agencies to place children within 20 miles of their home. Therefore, agencies have had to **gain a better understanding of where children are coming from** and target their recruitment in those geographic areas. “Effective Practices in Foster Parent Recruitment, Infrastructure, and Retention” (December 2014))
  - d. Recruit specific professions such as nurses and medical profession (“Effective Practices in Foster Parent Recruitment, Infrastructure, and Retention” (December 2014))
- **The Extreme Recruitment (ER) and 30 Days to Family** model was developed for the Missouri Children’s Division (CD) by a coalition of providers to create urgency around finding foster children a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible. Extreme Recruitment works exclusively with the hardest-to-place children: ages 10-18, sibling groups, children of color, and youth with emotional, developmental, or behavioral concerns, while 30 Days to Family is an up-front intensive relative search, engagement and support strategy that not only searches and finds relatives, it also ensures the relative is supported during the process and post-placement. Both models utilize specialized staff to perform the work (thus assisting the social worker), and the work can be performed by county staff or via contract to a local agency. ([http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Extreme Recruitment](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Extreme%20Recruitment)). Recorded webinar available [here](#).
- **Be a Hero Campaign:** (County: San Bernardino) Prospective adoptive children were matched to their “Heroes” (police chief, fireman, doctor, veterinarian, etc.) and professionally photographed. Photographs were posted on CFS Facebook page with invitations to learn about our resource parent and adoptions program.
- **Taking Care of Business Day:** (County: San Bernardino) For many years, San Bernardino County has kicked off the resource parent application process by offering a “one-stop shop” style of monthly event in the community. Interested prospective resource parents

attend a resource parent orientation and can get assistance filling out an application, and can Live Scan their whole adult family and supports on the spot. Refreshments are served, many questions are answered, and prospective resource parents have a forum to discuss whether or not resource parenting is a good fit for them. Anyone who calls for resource parent information is invited to attend and find out more about what it means to be a resource parent.

### 3. TRAINING

- [Fosterparentcollege.com](http://Fosterparentcollege.com) – CDSS will soon (by 10/2016) have a formal agreement with Fosterparentcollege.com to provide on-line training access to all resource families statewide (including county-based and FFA-based caregivers). Counties/agencies will be able to customize the training modules, can directly message caregivers, and provide county/agency-specific information sent directly via email notifications to their caregivers! Information will be sent to counties shortly, in the meantime please contact [dboyer@cwda.org](mailto:dboyer@cwda.org) with any questions.
- Provide caregivers with access to additional training opportunities, including information about **Just in Time Training** developed by the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI). These webinars are available to any caregiver on demand (<http://www.qpicalifornia.org/pages/Video.shtml>).
- For caregivers with limited access to on-line resources, develop an **iPad lending library** to allow caregivers to complete training and access other resources.
- **Share access to on-line training and supports**, including **FOCUS on Foster Families** which is an app designed to support foster youth and their caregivers. Through candid video interviews and online tools, FOCUS on Foster Families helps users improve their skills related to communication, emotional regulation, problem solving, and goal setting. <http://nfrc.ucla.edu/focus-on-foster-families>
- **Train foster parents to be mentors** to provide in-home or support-group based training.
- Offer **support to foster parents to participate in trainings**, support groups, meetings, etc. (SF offers child care). Ask foster parents what they need to participate in trainings.
- Caregivers often must cope with their own grief and loss, and need support to address their own trauma. Consider providing caregivers with **training, support groups and other opportunities address trauma**. One resource is A Home Within <http://ahomewithin.org/vision-and-mission/>, a service available to foster youth and caregivers or other adults to help address and ameliorate trauma.

### 4. LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

- **Easter Egg Hunt, Annual Back to School Backpack, and Holiday Celebrations:** (County: Stanislaus). We collaborate with our local Foster Parent Association to host three large events for Relative/MREFM and Licensed Resource Families and the foster children they care for. Food, games hosted by the County Staff, prizes, gifts and a jump house are also provided. The backpack event supplies all of the children in attendance a backpack full of school supplies, as well as shoes and sometimes school uniforms.
- **Foster Parent Education and Appreciation Event:** (County: Stanislaus). This last May we collaborated with Modesto's Junior College's Foster Kinship Care Education Program and advisory board to host an event where over 20 different community based organizations and services had booths where Resource Families could learn about the services available in the county. Food was provided, County Employees hosted carnival games for the children, music was provided, and raffle prizes that were donated were raffled off for the families and children.
- **Heart Walk with Love Modesto (faith based organization):** (County: Stanislaus). Partnered with Love Modesto to provide storyboards from real cases to display at a community based event to raise awareness about children in foster care in need of permanency.

#### 5. INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

- **Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained (KEEP)** is an intervention designed to provide caregivers with effective tools and strategies for managing children's behavior. KEEP is targeted towards caregivers of children 4-12 years old, particularly those that display externalizing behaviors, and is delivered in a group format. The curriculum frames the caregiver's role as being a key agent of change with opportunities to alter the life course trajectories of the children placed with them. San Diego County reduces potential roadblocks to participation in their evidence-based kin and foster parent training intervention, KEEP, by scheduling group sessions at times and locations that are convenient for caregivers. Before the training even begins, the facilitator visits the home of each caregiver to build rapport and fill out paperwork with them. In addition, KEEP provides a \$15 transportation stipend for each session, and provides refreshments and child care as well. If a caregiver is unable to attend one of the sessions, then the facilitator or co-facilitator will go to their home to provide a make-up session. ([California Evidence Based Clearing House: http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keeping-foster-and-kin-parents-supported-and-trained/](http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keeping-foster-and-kin-parents-supported-and-trained/)) (<http://www.keepfostering.org/>)

#### 6. COMMUNITY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES: Engage specific communities, tribes, neighborhoods, etc.

- **Increasing Native American foster homes:** Mendocino County Family & Children's Services did a contract with the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians to host a 1 day event which will be held in October 2015 in order to expand outreach and awareness of the need for foster

care families which will hopefully lead to increased Native American foster homes in Mendocino County. The event will include speakers discussing foster care education, foster home checklists, foster care options, preparing for the home assessment and foster care paperwork, supportive services and resources available to foster families and a Hopland foster/adoptive parent sharing their personal experience and story. Hopland has invited the other 9 Mendocino County tribes to participate as well as the local FFAs.

- **Develop community based recruitment teams** – build pools of resource families specific to a geographic region who reflect the racial and ethnic characteristics of the children and youth in your care.
  - Example: Denver’s Village ([http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Denvers\\_Village](http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-grantees/2008-grantees/story?k=Denvers_Village))
- More publications and resources: <http://www.nrcdr.org/diverse-populations/tools-and-resources>

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment  
<http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment>

Casey Family Programs Effective Practices in Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention (2014)  
[http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/effective\\_practices\\_in\\_foster\\_parent\\_recruitment\\_and\\_retention.pdf](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/effective_practices_in_foster_parent_recruitment_and_retention.pdf)