



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

2021 Annual Progress & Services Report

**Targeted Plan – Foster Adoptive Diligent
Recruitment Plan**

2021 Title IV–B Annual Progress and Services Report

X. Targeted Plan

A. Foster/Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

- *Describe the progress and accomplishments in implementing the state's Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan with particular attention to align the work with the state's Adoption Call to Action work.*

A description of the characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

DFPS continues to recognize that diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive homes must generate foster and adoptive families that meet the demographic characteristics of children in care. Demographic data of the characteristics of the children needing foster and adoptive homes is available to all staff through the Data Warehouse reports that are updated monthly. Current demographic information on children and families is being used to establish recruitment targets and track progress. Since August 2017, an annual statewide Foster Care Needs Assessment has been published. HHS provided forecasting data which, in conjunction with an historical analysis of placement practices, provided an assessment of statewide foster care capacity needs. The August 2019 needs assessment is posted on the agency's public website at:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/CPS/documents/2019/2019-08-06_Foster_Care_Needs_Assessment.pdf

A 2020 assessment is currently in development. CPS will continue to use this data to project the locations and types of foster care services needed over the next several years and to help determine an annual procurement schedule. Using the completed needs assessments and other available data, CPS will develop plans to address the substitute care capacity needs in each region. DFPS involves external stakeholders in discussions regarding placements, and their input is included in the development of strategic planning regarding recruitment efforts. Stakeholder meetings will be held in all the regions and include, by invitation: the judiciary, political advocates, universities, faith based groups, child welfare advocates, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Child Care Providers and staff. There will not be a percentage goal established as a result of these findings.

As of August 2019, the following demographic information was available for youth ages 0-17 in substitute care.

Data Source: Data Warehouse cps_sa_04

AGE

0-2 years	3-5 years	6-9 years	10-13 years	14-17 years
28.1 %	19.2%	18.8%	16.3%	17.3%

GENDER

Male: 51.2%	Female: 48.7%
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RACE/ETHNICITY

African American	Hispanic	Anglo	American Indian	Asian	Multiple	Unable to Determine/None Listed
22.6%	40.9%	29.5%	.0012%	.003%	.05%	.01%

CHARACTERISTICS

Physical	Medical	Drug/Alcohol	Emotional	Learning	Sibling	Teen Parent
.006%	3.4%	6.4%	13.6%	13.9%	12%	.002%

Foster and Adoptive Homes by Race/Ethnicity as of August 2019

Home Category	Anglo (#)	Anglo (%)	African American (#)	African American (%)	Hispanic (#)	Hispanic (%)	Native American (#)	Native American (%)	Asian (#)	Asian (%)	Other (#)	Other (%)
Adoptive	226	45.3%	112	22.4%	142	28.5%	0	0%	0	0%	19	3.8%
Foster	147	45.9%	63	19.7%	106	33.1%	0	0%	0	0%	4	1.3%
Foster/ Adoptive	752	52.6%	205	14.3%	358	25.1%	0	0%	0	0%	114	8%

Data Source: Data Warehouse CPS_FAD_03

Specific strategies to reach out to all parts of the community

DFPS is actively participating in the Children’s Bureau Adoption Call to Action and working with community stakeholders to increase capacity and recruit homes for children awaiting permanency. DFPS has participated in Adoption Call to Action state planning meetings with a focus on diligent recruitment. DFPS has developed an Adoption Call to Action plan which has been submitted to the Children’s Bureau and includes action steps to promote awareness, increase capacity, and improve policies and practices surrounding permanency and diligent recruitment.

DFPS remains committed to reaching out to all parts of a community and will continue to work in collaboration with faith-based and community-based organizations to accomplish this goal. DFPS will continue to collaborate with partner child placing agencies on information meetings. DFPS will also continue to collaborate with the Advisory Committee on Promoting Adoption of Minority Children to target areas of need in a community. DFPS has also entered into numerous Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with external partners such as The Way Home, Upbring, Children Awaiting Parents, and Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, that are dedicated to finding adoptive placements for children in DFPS care. A workgroup consisting of internal DFPS staff and external stakeholders has been established to identify areas in need of diligent recruitment initiatives and work with community partners in those areas to expand recruitment efforts.

DFPS participates in Regional Provider Meetings and continues to hold these meetings at least quarterly across Texas. The meetings facilitated open communication between

providers and DFPS, included training and education, and provided information on placement needs of the local region which resulted in Regional Capacity Strategic Plans, which are available on the DFPS website. DFPS and private Child Placing Agencies held foster/adopt inquiry meetings in multiple locations within each region to generate interest in fostering and/or adopting. DFPS Regional Provider Meetings and foster/adopt inquiry meetings will continue to be the emphasis for recruitment over the next several years.

DFPS regional staff continues to work with local media outlets to provide recruitment information to local communities. Campaigns included activities as "A Forever Family," "Wednesday's Child," "The Gift of Love," "Children are a Gift," and Heart Galleries displayed across the state. Giveaways, such as pens and magnets are provided at different events and community stakeholders. DFPS participates in a variety of contracted provider and trade organization meetings across the state. Information regarding the type of placement needs is shared with many of these coalitions/organizations. These efforts are effective and will continue to be the emphasis for recruitment over the next several years. DFPS is working with community partners to identify areas of the state with gaps in local recruitment and expand recruitment efforts to these areas.

DFPS has a reinvigorated collaboration between the faith-based community and the child welfare system in Texas. Further supported by DFPS' Adoption Call to Action plan, DFPS will continue to emphasize this approach over the next five-year period by collaborating with external stakeholders and community partners. Representatives from both systems pledged to work jointly and differently than before in providing service to children, youth and families. The approach developed for collaboration reflects both the faith-based community's mission and the state's commitment to safely reduce the need for foster care through a clearly articulated prevention to permanency model. Another notable recruitment effort is the use of the Adoption Forums facilitated by the Advisory Committee on Promoting Adoption of Minority Children. These Forums are held three to four times a year in different locations across the state. DFPS will continue to participate in these Forums by sharing local, regional and state data to provide a profile of placement needs.

In March 2020, DFPS mailed a Foster Parent Survey to each child placing agency and every verified foster home across the state. DFPS will analyze and use data from the survey to better understand the needs and availability of resources for caregivers across the state in order to develop better ways to support our foster families.

Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child specific information

DFPS uses a variety of information sharing methods to communicate the ongoing need for additional foster and adoptive parents and provide general information to the public. DFPS increased collaboration with faith-based and community-based organizations to share general information. One such collaboration is between DFPS and private child placing agencies conducting joint information meetings. DFPS maximizes the use of internet resources such as the DFPS public website, Facebook, and the DFPS YouTube channel. The DFPS social media policy has been revised to provide staff with additional guidance on the use of social media sites. Data is posted on the public website to share the demographics of children in local areas to educate the general public about placement needs. Through the Adoption Call to Action, DFPS is working with community partners to identify areas of the state with gaps in awareness to the need for homes for children in foster care and expand recruitment efforts to these areas.

The Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) is a primary recruitment avenue for specific children, and each child registered on the exchange is simultaneously registered with A Family for Every Child, Children Awaiting Parents, Adoption.com, Adoption.net, AdoptUSKids, and the local Heart Gallery, if applicable. In 2019, the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange website and “Why Not You” recruitment materials were updated. In alignment with the DFPS Adoption Call to Action plan, DFPS is also partnering with AdoptUSKids to improve the TARE manual and discuss improvements for the TARE website and application. The partnership with AdoptUSKids is also focusing on providing tools and training DFPS staff in creating strength-based narratives. Another focus is also to have youth engagement in their own recruitment and profile writing.

DFPS staff participates in recruitment activities during existing national recognition months, such as Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, Foster Care Month in May, and National Adoption Month in November. As part of the increased faith-based collaboration, DFPS emphasized participation in special events such as Go Blue day and Blue Sunday. These efforts will continue to expand over the next several years. Various community recruitment activities, including information meetings, adoption fairs and expositions, match parties, and print and electronic media stories on television and radio, continue. A video depicting what foster and adoptive children wish for was developed for use in future events to encourage families to consider fostering and adopting. The video is on the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange website home page and the DFPS YouTube channel for ease of access. DFPS created strategies to ensure that all prospective foster and adoptive parents have access to agencies they can rely upon to become verified and approved, including the expansion of locations and hours of services that can be accessed by all members of the community. Contact information, designated by region, for partner Child Placing Agencies and for CPS recruitment staff are shared on the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange website, maintained and accessible to the general public. Prospective families who contact the tollfree Foster and Adoption Inquiry line will be informed of Child Placing Agency information. Information packets provided to prospective foster and adoptive families include a list of partner Child Placing Agencies in the area. DFPS staff and Child Placing Agencies have a shared commitment to continue collaborative information meetings.

Strategies to build capacity and achieve permanency for children in foster care through the Children's Bureau Adoption Call to Action.

DFPS has developed an Adoption Call to Action plan in partnership with the Children's Bureau with the primary goals of increasing the number of consummations and decreasing the time to permanency through adoption. DFPS is actively participating in state team planning meetings. This allows DFPS to hear strategies from other states to help with ideas on recruitment. DFPS is also hosting state team planning meetings with external stakeholders and community partners to identify areas of need and develop an action plan specific to local community needs. DFPS is also partnering with the National Training Initiative (NTI) to roll out an adoption competency training statewide. This training will provide staff with better adoption knowledge to assist children in finding permanency through adoptions.

Additionally, DFPS is partnering with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS) to implement the Adoption Competency training through NTI to not only DFPS staff but also child-placing agency staff. This partnership allows all professionals in the child welfare continuum to begin speaking the same language around adoption and permanency. DFPS and TACFS launched the program to two pilot areas in Texas. These areas will provide feedback throughout their experience to ensure that the statewide launch is successful. By having both child-placing agency and DFPS involvement, the goal is for children and families to be educated and prepared for adoption.

Other initiatives focus on enhancing recruitment at the local level using a collaborative approach with external stakeholders, community partners, and faith-based organizations, in addition to enhancing training for prospective foster and adoptive parents, internal staff, and community partners. Additionally, DFPS continues to use a data driven approach to identify areas for improvement and gaps in capacity and recruitment.

Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic variations

DFPS increases the cultural competence of staff through multiple training opportunities and has a sustainable means to continue this practice. All new caseworkers are required to participate in "Knowing Who You Are: Racial and Ethnic Identity Training" during basic skills development training. A new version of "Knowing Who You Are" for supervisors and managers was implemented and delivered upon request. CPS is aware that there is a need for greater exposure to information regarding socio-economic variations in cultures through training. This awareness led to collaboration between CPS and the DFPS Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence to develop courses on working with African American and Latino families and a course on "Working with families Who Are Impoverished" for child welfare caseworkers. The Missouri Community Action Poverty Simulation is delivered to internal and external stakeholders. CPS developed and implemented a course for caseworkers to enhance knowledge of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Future projects include development and implementation of courses related to working with African American and Latino families. These trainings will be offered to all staff to increase the cultural competence of staff.

During FY 2019, CPS staff used knowledge of disparity in the child welfare system and Trauma Informed Care to create a tool for understanding how Trauma and Disproportionality are connected. Two sessions, totaling six hours, were piloted and well-received. DFPS intends to use this approach over the next several years to enrich the understanding of root causes for Trauma and Disparity.

Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers

DFPS recognizes that prospective foster and adoptive parents may encounter some linguistic barriers. The agency connects families as needed with an interpreter by phone or in person or a staff who speaks the family's primary language. Information is shared with staff on how to request sign language interpreters as needed and a message was placed on the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange website to ensure that prospective families know that they can contact Recruitment staff to request a sign language interpreter. When possible, DFPS continues to seek prospective staff and contract agencies who have the skills to communicate with families in diverse ways and through multiple languages.

Non-discriminatory fee structures

DFPS does not charge a fee to prospective families and only contracts with agencies that are governed by strict minimum standards requirements related to fees.