A message to WWK recruiters and supervisors

Assessment of adoption readiness

Definition:
- Determine the child’s strengths, challenges, desires, and whether the child has needs that should be addressed before moving forward with the adoption process
- Work with the child’s caseworker to assure these needs are met.
- Case file must contain a written assessment of adoption readiness, which should be updated at least quarterly, as part of your child-focused recruitment plan

Goal: To understand the importance of assessing readiness in effort to best prepare for adoption

Learning objectives:
- Able to support the child’s readiness for adoption
- Able to support the family’s readiness for adoption
Youth explained why some teens in care might not want to be adopted. One youth explained she didn’t want to be adopted because adoption is too permanent. “I’m too scared to be adopted because it’s not really something you can back out of if it doesn’t work.”

Finding Forever Families: A Review of the Provincial Adoption System
June 2014

Assessment of adoption readiness

- Assessment of the child occurs before developing the initial recruitment plan and continues throughout your work with the child
- The goal of the assessment is to develop a full picture of the child
- Assessment of adoption readiness and developing strategies to facilitate readiness is a critical, ongoing responsibility of a recruiter

Assessment of adoption readiness

- Child’s strengths, interests, challenges and beliefs about and understanding of adoption
- Birth and medical information
- Family background and social history
- Placement history
- Developmental, educational history and status
- Short and long term support the child may need (Is the current strategy working?)
- Knowledge, skills and attitude required to parent the child
- The nature of the child’s contact and relationship with relatives and siblings and the level of openness desired
Assessment of adoption readiness

- The child
- The case record, current and former caseworkers
- Current and former caregivers
- Family members
- Therapist
- Service providers who have worked with the child or child’s family
- Adults who have played a role in the child’s life: educators, coaches, faith leaders
- Other documentation (school reports, evaluations)

Handout # 8: Initial Adoption Readiness Assessment Tool and Quarterly Update (our assessment template)
Handout # 9: Assessment of Child’s Readiness for Adoption (an additional tool you may want to use)
Handout # 10: Jeremy’s story

How would you gather information to assess Jeremy’s readiness for adoption?

Youth voices: Life after foster care

Five former foster youth - three adopted, two who aged out talk to other youth about the challenges of aging out and why to consider adoption.

Short version 6:42
Long version 44:49
Youth voices: Life after foster care

- How would you use this video with youth?
- What are some of the discussion topics/questions would you use with youth before and after viewing the video?

Assessment of adoption readiness

- Even in cases when the conclusion is that the child is not ready for adoption, that conclusion relates to today.
- The work with the child continues as the child moves forward to reaching readiness.
- **Handout # 11: Strategies to Help Older Youth Consider Adoption**

Helping the older youth see the advantages of adoption

You are working with a 16 year old who has a really good relationship with relatives who live in another state. The youth visits often with the relatives and they are very active in things such as participating in his educational IEP. The youth says he doesn’t need to be adopted to have his relatives in his life and he knows they always will be.

At your table make a list of concrete benefits or advantages to being adopted to share with this youth.

Assessment of adoption readiness

In his book, *The Psychology of Adoption*, Dr. David Brodzinsky writes:

“There is no way we can spare children from the emotional pain associated with adoption-related loss. Children must be allowed to experience the deep emotions associated with the loss in the context of a warm, loving, and supportive environment. They must be allowed to grieve the loss of birthparents; entering their family through the process of relinquishment, etc. Their feelings cannot be trivialized or discredited. By fully feeling, the child will resolve and integrate their loss.”
Assessment of adoption readiness

- Family assessment
  - Willingness and ability to address common issues adoptive families face
  - Willingness and ability to meet the child’s needs

Kim Felder
Former WWK Recruiter

Characteristics of successful adoptive families

- Ability to make a life-time commitment
- Tolerant of value and cultural differences
- Flexible, yet can provide structure for a child
- Have a support system
- Have realistic expectations of the child they adopt
- Are able to celebrate incremental improvements

Additional resources:

Handout # 12a: Family Characteristics Checklist
Handout # 13: Questions for families
How will your assessment of adoption readiness inform the timing and approach for transitioning the child into the adoptive family?

Summary:
- The initial assessment is just that: initial. Assessment continues throughout the case as more information is gathered. It is a dynamic process.
- The written assessment is placed in the case file and updated quarterly. It is not a comprehensive psycho-social assessment, but a summary that describes the child’s understanding about adoption, and his or her preparedness for the recruitment process.

Definition:
- Assure that the child is prepared for adoption.
- During the matching process, assure that the family is adequately prepared to meet the needs of the child.
- Case file should contain information about how the adoption process will be completed, including any requests to the caseworker to provide or arrange needed adoption preparation services.
Adoption preparation

Goal: To understand the importance of adoption preparation for both the child and the family

Learning objectives:
Be able to use adoption preparation tools, describe the differences between child-focused assessment and preparation and other recruitment strategies

Adoption preparation

- Assessment of adoption readiness and preparation for adoption are critical, ongoing responsibilities.
- The goal of preparation for adoption is to:
  - Ensure that the child is emotionally and socially ready to join an adoptive family.
  - Ensure that the family is emotionally and socially ready to adopt a child.
  - Prevent/lessen/prepare for transition issues and crisis

Adoption preparation

Preparing children for adoption depends on the child, the circumstances, the philosophy and techniques of those doing the preparation, and the agency’s approach.

Adoptive panel

Melinda Haggerty

A FOREVER FAMILY
Adoption preparation

- The role of the recruiter in adoption preparation varies by site. It is the responsibility of the recruiter to ensure that both the child and family are prepared.
- Others typically involved:
  - The child’s referring caseworker
  - The child’s therapist
  - The child’s foster parents or other caregivers
  - The prospective adoptive parents

Adoption preparation

**Dr. Darla Henry’s approach: Five questions**

1. Who am I? Identity
2. What happened to me? Loss
3. Where am I going? Attachment
4. How will I get there? Relationships
5. When will I know I belong? Claiming and safety

Adoption preparation

**Graffiti activity**

Resistance to adoption

During transition, it is important to:

- Engage the child
- Listen to the child: the words the child uses and the questions the child asks
- Tell the truth
- Validate the child’s feelings
- Create a safe space
- Realize it’s never too late to go back in time to help a child integrate his or her history
- Help the child understand that pain is part of the process

(Henry, 2005)
Adoption preparation

Other techniques:
- Lifebooks
- Ecomaps
- Lifemaps
- Life paths
- Mobility maps

These tools are designed to help the child explore and better understand their history, identity and loss.

Adoption preparation

Recruiter Taylor Porter shares his approach to preparing the child for adoption:

Adoption preparation

How would you prepare a child in the following situation:
1. The child will be moving in with a relative that the child has not seen for over 6 years.

How would you prepare a child and the family in the following situation:
2. The child has been matched with a family far from where the child lives. The custodial agency says they have no funds to fly the child out to visit the family.

Adoption preparation

Child summary:
- Children need to be prepared for adoption. Do not assume they are ready.
- Dr. Darla Henry’s “3-5-7 model” provides a framework to help children understand where they came from, integrate past experiences, and ready themselves for new families.
- Children also need to be prepared for potential outcomes of diligent search and recruitment efforts.
Adoptive families and the “honeymoon” period

As attachment begins to develop, the child may begin using testing behaviors such as:

- Refusing to use her parents’ names, or be unwilling to offer any physical affection
- Acting out and being disruptive
- Having unusual difficulty with normal life transitions (going to school, bed times, leaving home)

Allen DeLong
Adoptive parent

The recruiter can help adoptive parents to:

- Understand the typical process of “testing”
- Understand the child’s feelings and/or connection to birth family
- Develop respect for the child’s need to maintain some separateness, yet finding ways to facilitating attachment

The recruiter can help adoptive parents to:

- Develop ways to communicate “family rules” and support the child in understanding and complying
- Develop skills to thoughtfully choose how to respond to negative behaviors, instead of reacting
- Understand that words matter, saying “we” need to work on an issue not “you” need to change
- Find professional help if they need it

https://www.pinterest.com/AdoptATeen/
Timing
- Moving too quickly in the adoption process, when the child is not ready, is a factor in disruptions, and is harmful to the child and family.
- When the plan is to go slowly, this may increase the anxiety of the child, adoptive family or the current caregiver who may want to move more quickly.
  - How would you handle this type of situation?
  - How many visits?
  - How do you know when visits should end?

Adoption preparation

Transitioning
- Attachment
  - Activities for families aimed at developing attachment
  - What types of activities might you suggest?

Adoption preparation

Addressing the needs is different in different communities.
Does the community have:
- Many services and supports that can be mobilized to meet the child's therapeutic needs?
- Few services and supports?
- Existing therapeutic services, but child's needs are not being met?
What are services like in your community?
Adoption preparation

It is the role of the recruiter to ensure families are supported through the transition period

How can you support families through the transition period and/or through a crisis?

???

Adoption preparation

Have you worked with children and families whose adoptive placements disrupted and the child returned to foster care?

???

How is preparation different after a previous adoption dissolved?

Consider this

Everyone who is intimately involved in a disruption or dissolution bears the weight of tremendous guilt, grief, loss, and trauma. Even so, we must go on; the adoption community must keep working to promote successful adoptions. At the same time, we must talk openly and honestly about the realities of disruption. To achieve goals for placing more older children and preventing disruptions, we must learn all we can both from adoptions that succeed and those that come undone. And when an adoption disrupts, we must also accept our responsibilities for helping traumatized parents and children to heal.

NACAC website

Part B:

Recruitment plan

Customize comprehensive plan to find adoptive family based on child’s needs
**The recruitment plan**

**Definition:**

- Customized recruitment plan for children defined by their needs, not existing strategies
- Children provide ongoing input and make decisions about their own recruitment plans as appropriate

**Goal:** To understand the interconnected aspects of a recruitment plan

**Learning objectives:**

- Describe at least 5 strategies that can be implemented as part of a child's recruitment plan
- Describe the role of the recruiter in recruiting, selecting and supporting adoptive families for the children on his or her caseload.

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**General recruitment:** "General public, you should adopt a child from foster care!"

**Child-specific recruitment:** "General public, look at these pictures and brief descriptions of youth available for adoption. Pick the one you like."

**Targeted recruitment:** "Latino festival attendees, look at pictures and a description of Latino youth in foster care. Do you see one you would like to adopt?"

**Child-focused recruitment:** "Mrs. Jones, I understand you know Joey. Are you aware he is available for adoption? Will you become part of our team to find the right family for him?"

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**Child-focused = strangers last!**
Why does the child-focused model **not** include internet photo-listings, media profiles of children, public photography displays or displays that are open to the general public?

**The recruitment plan**

An effective recruitment plan is individualized; you should not be able to remove one child’s name and automatically insert another.

**Child-focused recruitment**

Lets talk about matching events

- WWK funds can no longer be used for match events
- If your agency wants your WWK youth to participate, you can attend to support your youth
- Some recruiters attend matching events without their youth to meet parents that might be a good match or to expand the youth’s network
- Smaller, more individually child focused activities that provide opportunities for the child to build relationships with potential families can be paid for with grant funds.

**The recruitment plan**

- Recruitment is always on the recruiter’s mind as he or she reviews the child’s case record, carries out diligent search activities, and makes the initial assessment of adoption readiness
- When the initial recruitment plan is developed, typically, the recruiter will have conducted the case record review, met with the child’s caseworker, and met with the child
The recruitment plan

- The initial plan and quarterly updates must provide detailed documentation of the recruiter’s plans for people identified through diligent search including who will be contacted, the contacts made and the outcomes of those efforts.
- Non child-focused recruitment activities (public displays, internet postings, match events) can be documented on the recruitment plan, they may not be the only or initial recruitment methods used.

The recruitment plan

- The child should provide ongoing input and make decisions about his or her recruitment plan
- The initial recruitment plan must be finalized within 90 days of referral
- The plan needs to be reviewed regularly and updated quarterly

Initial Recruitment Plan

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<th>Child(ren)’s name(s)</th>
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Team members

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>CASA/GAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
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<td>Mental Health Provider</td>
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Have current caregivers been ruled out as an adoptive placement?  Yes  No

Please explain:

Sandy Sertyn
WWK Recruiter
The recruitment plan

Handout 14: A completed initial recruitment plan

Review this completed initial recruitment plan.

Questions? Comments?

Recruitment activities:

- Find and engage the child’s family member who keeps the family reunion contact list
- Search for both maternal and paternal relatives
- Ask about new people in the child’s circle as well as people from the child’s past
- Be allies with the staff in charge of the required training for foster and adoptive families

What other good activities have you used?

Summary:

- Recruitment plans are unique to the child
- Initial plan completed within 90 days (template available on the intranet)
- Reviewed and updated quarterly
- The child plays a major role

Using Handouts #15 and #15a, list out the potential contacts in the 4 different sections entitled:

- Potential contacts from file review and caseworker interview
- Potential contacts from the child
- Potential contacts from electronic searches
- Potential contacts from network or other sources
Supervisors are critical to the quality and success of the child-focused recruitment model.

- We understand you have many other roles and programs you manage.
Supervision

- Groups of recruiters: List at least 5 things you want from your supervisor
- Groups of supervisors: List at least 5 things you think recruiters want from supervisors

Studies found staff expect the following from supervisors:

- Keep them informed about program/agency policy, including any changes in policy
- Monitor their work to make sure that it is in compliance with program/agency policy
- Coordinate the work of staff so that they can achieve their objectives
- Help them develop new skills
- Be available for consultation on difficult cases

Framework for child welfare supervision identifies three key roles for supervisors:

- Educational supervision: Addressing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to do the job effectively
- Supportive supervision: Improving worker morale and job satisfaction, and giving staff a sense of worth as professionals, and security in their performance
- Administrative supervision: Ensuring adherence to policy, procedures and oversight to ensure accountability and effectiveness

Supervision

Supervisors play critical roles in the education of recruiters:
- Starts the first day on the job and is woven into the online learning modules
- The primary focus is on the staff person’s knowledge, attitude and skills required to do the job
- The primary goal is to provide knowledge and to upgrade skills

Administrative supervision

- The administrative function of supervision focuses on providing staff with resources and the structure they need to do their jobs well.
- Key tasks typically associated with administrative supervision are:
  - Recruit, hire, and induct staff
  - Have a plan including how workloads will be assigned, how available resources will be allocated so that staff can complete work effectively and in a timely way

Supervision

- Primary goal of supportive supervision is to improve staff performance by reducing job-related stress and potential for burnout and increasing motivation, job satisfaction, and job commitment
- Provides opportunities to succeed with chances to function more independently as competence grows
- Helps strengthen capacity to handle job stresses by using a range of supportive techniques
- Communicating support for the staff members

Administrative supervision

Key tasks typically associated with administrative supervision are:
- Assign, delegate and coordinate the work
- Monitor, review and evaluate staff performance
- Communicate information and feedback
- Advocate for staff within the agency and with other agencies
- Be an administrative “buffer”
- Be an agent for change and a community liaison
- Take disciplinary action when needed
Administrative supervision

Recruiters’ work schedules often involve evening and weekend hours – visiting youth/families; participating in a variety of activities that do not fit into an 8-5 schedule. We have found when recruiters are able to work in a flexible environment, they are more likely to be happier and productive.

Database

- The WWK/Child-focused recruitment database is managed by Child Trends
- Next training – details to be disseminated soon
- Complete database forms (once submitted you will get a handbook and login information)
- Recruiter database submission by the 7th of each month
- Supervisor key indicators review of recruiter’s database submission by the 15th of each month

Key indicator report

What does the Key Indicator report in 16 tell you?

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Key indicator report

- The key indicator report is an important supervision tool for reviewing the recruiter’s child-focused recruitment performance
- Please see the Supervisor Checklist (Handout 16) which identifies the data supervisors should review and verify
- Handout 16 sample Key Indicator Reports
- At your table review the two reports and discuss the performance of the recruiters
Database

- For technical questions about the database, contact the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids database helpline, 800-217-6741 or wwksupport@childtrends.org.
- To get answers to specific questions about the database, refer to the glossary in the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids database handbook, or call the program staff at Dave Thomas Foundation For Adoption, 800-ASK-DTFA (800-275-3832).
- Child Trends database webinar (This training is on the Intranet/Reporting & Database section)

Integration of the child-focused recruitment model

Expert panel:
- Divide into groups and review a component of the model. You can use the PowerPoint handout, notes, group’s experiences, etc.
- In your small group, discuss the component and be prepared to describe and present the component to the larger group.

Evaluation and bike rack

Clear the bike rack

Please complete your evaluation

Summary and closing

- Additional questions?
- Closure
- Evaluations

THANK YOU!