

FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Trainer Guide

Continuing Education Practice-Focused Module

TRAINER OUTLINE

FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT and RETENTION

Need for Training: This training was developed as partial fulfillment of the Division of Children and Family Services' Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Even though the PIP has been completed, the training is still applicable for employees involved in recruitment and retention of foster parents. The focus of this training is on concrete strategies for recruiting and retaining foster/adoptive parents. There is a web-based training with a policy focus that supplements this training.

Audience: This training is designed for Family Service Workers (FSWs), supervisors involved in foster care, Area Managers and other appropriate staff of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as identified in the PIP benchmark 3.1.6.

Organization: The Trainer Guide consists of a trainer guide with exercises, copies of the Participant Manual for the trainer's use, trainer resources including PowerPoint presentations (in some training modules), a manual for participants, and handouts. Since this training may be presented to a diverse audience, every effort has been made to include a variety of exercises, handouts and material to enable the trainer to tailor the training to a specific group.

Areas to Emphasize: This training needs to emphasize realistic strategies to recruit and then retain foster parents. Per agreement with DCFS, the initial training will emphasize "hands on" suggestions for recruitment and retention of foster parents. The training on policy specifics will be web based.

Time:

This training is set up for three hours. Modify exercises depending on the group size and the amount of time available.

Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention

Trainer Guide

Course Outline

- I. Introduction**
- II. Recruitment**
 - A. Policy (Quick preview)**
 - B. Foster Family Home County Needs Assessment**
- III. Developing Recruitment and Retention Plans**
 - A. Recruitment Strategies and Activities**
 - B. Retention Strategies and Activities**
- IV. Closing**

SECTION 1 – Introduction

TIME: 30 minutes (9:00-9:30)

Objectives: Participant will

- Become familiar with the trainer(s) and group members.
- Receive an overview of the training structure.
- Recognize the importance of and challenges to effective foster parent recruitment and retention.

Materials

- Participant Manuals
- Whiteboard or
- Name tents (consider stickers or some visual cue or code that can be used to quickly move participants into small groups).
- Sign-in sheets
- Flipchart set up for each small group

I. Introductions

A. Introductions and housekeeping

Introduce yourself to the group and briefly establish your credentials. Quickly review the **training agenda (page 1, Participant Manual)**. Remind participants to sign the attendance sheet in order to get credit for the training.

B. Icebreaker

Purpose

The purpose of this icebreaker is to introduce participants to each other and explore the importance of and challenges of recruiting and retaining foster parents.

Materials

This exercise requires the Participant Manual and something to write with.

Methodology

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4 or 5, preferably with people they do not know well. Use the “codes” on the name tents to quickly divide the large group into smaller groups.
2. Ask the group members to introduce themselves to each other. Skip this step if all members are already acquainted.
3. Ask each small group to discuss among themselves why it is difficult to recruit and retain foster parents. Refer them to **page 2 in the Participant Manual, “What Makes It So Challenging?”** Ask them to make notes on this page.
4. Ask them, as a group, to list three reasons why it is difficult to recruit and retain foster parents on the flipchart. Call time after about seven (7) minutes.
5. Have a spokesperson for each group introduce his/her group’s members (if necessary) and tell his/her group’s responses.
6. As the groups report out, note responses on flipchart or whiteboard that are duplicated or seem to contain a common theme.

Processing

(Make sure these points are covered)

- The number of children entering care is steadily increasing.
- More children with complex problems are entering the system.
- More households have two working parents and therefore have little time to foster.
- Foster parents need more support, training, and respite care.
- Financial reimbursement to parents is low relative to the cost of living.

- The “system” gets a lot of negative publicity.

(The above points are from Chamberlain & Moreland, 1992)

- Agency workers do not always view a foster family as part of the “child welfare team.”
- DCFS is often short staffed and therefore unable to fully support the foster parents.
- Due to a lack of foster homes, it is necessary to place children in homes that are not equipped to meet the child's needs. This in turn leads to multiple disruptions and the foster parent deciding to no longer foster.
- Foster parents get very few rewards or recognition by the agency for caring for foster children.
- Workers are already overwhelmed and find it difficult to incorporate foster parent recruitment into their daily chores.
- Perceived agency financial constraints limit recruitment efforts.

Trainer’s note: Point out the similarities of the responses and state that the training will address these issues throughout the session. Identify any issues that are clearly outside the scope of the training. Explain that these areas will have to be covered at another time. Tell the participants that today’s training will focus on developing concrete strategies for recruitment and retention of foster homes. DCFS has completed work on the policy on recruitment and retention. Training on the new policy is a web based offering. Obviously, it is impossible to anticipate all the challenges that might surface during this exercise. The trainer must be prepared to shift focus somewhat depending on the group characteristics and concerns.

SECTION II- Recruitment Policy

TIME: 30 Minutes (9:30-10:00)

Objectives: Participants will

- Be able to differentiate between the different types of foster homes recognized in Arkansas.
- Understand that DCFS staff is responsible for recruitment of foster parents.
- Be familiar with the Foster Family Home County Needs Assessment form.
- Learn how to determine where recruitment efforts should focus (based on identified needs identified in the assessment).

Materials

- Participant Manual
- Handout 1, County Family Foster Home Needs Assessment form (draft)

A. Brief Policy Synopsis

Begin this section of the training with a question. “Who knows what the word caveat means?” Reinforce responses that emphasize warning, caution and/or admonition. Policy on recruitment and retention has been developed and promulgated but is always subject to change. Therefore, it may be being revised as the training progresses. So, this training will emphasize the pieces that are least likely to change. As noted earlier, the formal training on the policy and procedures is web based and is available to DCFS staff through the DCFS Portal on the MidSOUTH website (www.midsouth.ualr.edu).

Refer participants to page 3 in the Participant Manual, “Recruitment Policy.” Review the material with the class. The pertinent points are:

1. The Division recognizes 4 types of foster homes:
 - a. Foster Family Homes (non relative)
 - b. Relative Foster Home (kinship only)
 - c. Relative Foster Home (fostering and kinship)
 - d. Provisional Relative Foster Home.
2. All foster homes have to meet the same minimum qualifications and standards set out in PUB 022 and the same training requirements.

3. The Division is responsible for recruiting foster parents. For the foreseeable future, recruitment efforts will be the responsibility of DCFS Staff. Anticipate that this requirement may be felt as burdensome for FSWs and supervisors that are already required to pick up many services that were previously under contract. If **the topic comes up**, confirm that there is some possibility that the Foster Home Recruiter contracts may be reinstated, but in the interim, recruitment efforts will fall to the counties.
4. Each Area will develop a Recruitment Plan. Ask whether anyone in the training has been involved in the development of the recruitment plan in his/her area. If the answer is yes, ask them to share the high points of that discussion with the group. How does the Area plan to address the issue? Do they have staff designated as Recruiters and Foster Home Evaluators? If the answer is no, just give people a heads up that this plan may be in the works in their areas.
5. So, where do I start? Begin the discussion of information a worker will need to have in order to make a recruitment plan. What data is needed? There is space on page 4 in the Participant Manual to make notes on the information needed to make a plan. There is also space on page 5 in the Participant Manual, "Information Mine", to make notes of good ideas they pick up from other participants.
6. Use this last bullet point to segue into a discussion of what workers need to know in order to insure there are:
 - ❖ Enough qualified, trained foster parents that children can be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible.
 - ❖ Enough foster parents of the ethnic and racial diversity to match foster children in the system.
 - ❖ Foster parents who have been recruited and targeted to meet any special needs of children in care or in danger of coming into care.

Questions for discussion might include:

- What is needed in order to make a good plan? For example, to do an accurate case plan, you need an accurate_____. **Emphasize, as always, the need for accurate assessment in order to make a plan that works.**
- In order to make a Recruitment Plan, what do I need to know?
What are the data elements DCFS staff will need to develop their county plans? Basically, they will need to know:
 - **The demographic characteristics of the children they have in care from their counties.**
 - **How many black, white and Hispanic foster homes they have already before they can know where to target their recruitment efforts.**
 - **The types of disabilities, special needs etc., which children from their county are likely to bring into foster care.**
- Where do you go to find out how many foster homes you have in your county? What ages will they take? What is the foster parent's preference on racial or ethnic characteristics? How do you know how many black foster homes or white foster homes are in your county? How do I find out how many black, white and Hispanic children are in foster care in or from my county? **Currently, there is not an on-line report that captures all this information. There is a plan to have one developed (hopefully by December, 2004). Ask for suggestions from the class about how they would go about finding how many foster homes they have that take black children? How many homes take children ages 12-16 years? Are they the same homes? How long do they think it would take to get this information?**
- How accurate is your information?

The primary recruitment form will be the **County Family Foster Home Needs Assessment (CFS-445a and CFS 445b)**. These forms are to be utilized by the County Supervisors or designee to determine the types of foster homes needed in specific county/area. For example, one county may be in extreme need of African American, Hispanic or Asian foster homes. Another area may desperately need foster homes willing to take medically fragile infants. This is an on-going assessment. Pass out **Handout 1, County Family Foster Home Needs Assessment**.

Let participants have a few minutes to look it over.



BREAK

SECTION III – Recruitment and Retention Strategies

TIME: 105 Minutes (10:15-12:00)

Trainer Set –Up Note: While the group is on break, draw this chart on the whiteboard. (Put all the text on the whiteboard, including the explanation of the term.)

Goal: Statement of Objective: Tasks – who does what
where we want to be. Accomplished by (date)

The trainer Guide has suggestions for group composition and topics. The trainer has some leeway depending on group size and challenges identified by the group in the opening exercise.

Objectives: Participants will

- Develop a plan for recruiting foster parents for their counties
- Develop a specific recruitment tool or resource
- Develop specific retentions strategies
- Share their work to increase the available resources

Materials

- Flipchart and markers (or whiteboard and markers)
- Participant Resource Manual
- Sample Foster Parent Recruiter Packet (one per participant)
- Handout 2, Recruitment on a Shoestring – Existing Resources
- Handout 3, Recruitment on a Shoestring – Resources to Develop
- Activity Cards labeled PSA, Flyer and Letter to the Editor, Presentation to Service Organization (make these on 3 x 5 cards)
- Blank paper
- 11th Commandment Video
- Handout 4 – “Service Organization PowerPoint” (Copy PowerPoint to CD – one per participant)

A. Developing the plan

After the break, explain to participants that the group is going to do some preliminary work on developing a recruitment plan and a retention plan, and on developing specific recruitment and retention tools and resources.

Ask the participants to quickly brainstorm answers to the following question: [What resources do we already have for recruitment?](#) List their answers on the whiteboard. Pass out [Handout 2, Recruiting on a Shoestring: Resources We Have and Can Build On](#). Compare the participants' responses to the list. If anyone asks, tell them that this list was composed by State Office personnel that are responsible for developing the state level recruitment plan. Handout 2 resources include:

- Foster parents – our best resource
- Foster Parent and Adoptive Parent Support Groups
- Adoption Coalitions
- Annual Foster Parent Conference (May)
- Area Foster Parent Mini-conferences
- DHS Today Newsletter
- Foster Parent Newsletter
- Foster Pride Newsletter
- DCFS newsletter
- Coordination with adoption recruitment efforts
- Enlist everybody (DHS/DCFS) as part of the recruitment team
- DCFS contractors and vendors

- Businesses
- Courts
- Other DHS Divisions
- Service Agencies
- Continue implementation of Statewide Foster Parent Recruitment Media Campaign
 - ✓ PSA (Public Service Announcements)
 - ✓ Radio
 - ✓ Newspaper

Pass out **Handout 3, Recruiting on a Shoestring: New Resources to Engage and Build On**. It is anticipated that participants may have already identified some of the resources on this list when they did the exercise above because a particular resource from this list may already be available in their counties. Use Handout 3 to transition into the exercises.

A primary goal of this training is to provide participants with some concrete tools and strategies for recruitment and retention. With that goal in mind, in order to save time the “goals” of the plans have been identified for participants. These reflect the broad policy statements of desired outcomes. Refer participants to **page 6 in the Participant Manual, “Developing a Recruitment or Retention Plan.”** There are four (4) broad goal statements:

- Recruit and train enough qualified foster parents to match the racial/ethnic diversity of children in foster care.
- Recruit and train enough qualified foster parents to assure there are homes for foster children with special needs.
- Recruit and train enough qualified foster parents to assure there are homes for teenagers ages 12 to 18-years-old.
- Retain trained and qualified foster parents.

- Trainers should feel free to write another goal on the board for small group work, depending on issues identified in the opening exercises.

For the following exercises, move the class into small groups of five (5) or six (6) participants. Encourage people to group with other people from their county or office. This grouping acknowledges that some strategies will be county-specific depending on needs. Another strategy for group assignments is to ask the group, “Where is your heart – recruitment or retention?” If enough people have a primary interest in retention, they can be assigned to that group.

B. Planning Exercise

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to develop a rudimentary plan to achieve one of the policy –identified goals of recruitment and retention.

Materials

This exercise requires the Participant Manual, a flipchart or whiteboard set up for each small group, and Participant Resources Manual.

Methodology: PHASE 1

1. Assign each small group a goal to work towards. Tell each group they are to identify between two (2) and three (3) objectives and one (1) or two (2) tasks for each objective. Remind them that objectives and tasks are behaviorally specific, measurable statements. The plan must be realistic and feasible.
2. Each group must identify a target population for their intervention. (Obviously the retention group’s target population is foster parents but the group may want to address a portion of that larger population.)
3. Allow ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes to come up with the objectives and tasks.
4. Each group will present its action plan. Be sure to ask them to identify their target audience as they present their plans.

Process the exercise with each group's plan. Group feedback shall include comments as to what action plans are realistic – and/or what should be done to make an action plan feasible and doable. Ask each group to carefully tear the pages out of the participant manuals where they wrote their plans. Have the site secretary make copies of the plans (3-hole punched) for the Participant Resource Manual. In this manner, each county office, represented by the various participants in the groups, can take ideas back to their county supervisors and/or area managers. Move into the next section of the exercise.

Ask group to identify the top five (5) responses, in terms of ability to implement – those most “doable” – and record these on a separate sheet of paper, or whiteboard.

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to develop a specific recruitment tool. Please note: The trainer may need to reassign the retention group to a project, depending on whether or not one of their tasks lends itself to further development.

Materials

This exercise requires all the materials set out above plus the Activity Cards labeled PSA, Flyer and Letter to the Editor, Presentation to Service Organization and blank paper.

Methodology: PHASE 2

1. Have each small group draw an activity card.
2. Once the groups have drawn a card, explain that they will have 15 minutes to develop the activity on their cards. For example, if a group draws the card marked PSA, that group will write a Public Service Announcement for the radio. There is material in the Participant Resource Manual to help them with each type of activity. Ask groups to use the blank paper, where possible, to record their work.
3. Suggestion: If you have a large group and need additional exercises/activities, consider assigning one group to developing a packet of material that they would give to current foster parents for those foster parents to use as a recruiting tool. If the trainer uses this option, have copies of Pubs 22 and 30 available, plus the recruitment brochure developed by MidSOUTH for DCFS (a few copies will be

provided to each site). Provide the sample newspaper article (PRIDE newspaper article from Session Seven).

4. Circulate to answer questions and give directions. Point participants to the guides and samples in the Resource Manual.
5. Call time and have the groups share information. Make copies of the materials developed (3 hole punched) for each participant's Resource Manual.

Processing

Conclude the exercise with a short presentation. Set the stage in the following manner:

- The target audience is a service organization (such as the Junior League). The presentation is very short.
- Begin by showing the video 11th Commandment (Collin Ray – used with permission).
- Follow up with the short PowerPoint Presentation, “Honor Our Children: The Challenge to Foster.” There is a Handout 4 that is just a contact information sheet that accompanies the PowerPoint presentation.
- Participants have a copy of the CD with the PowerPoint and the Handout. Each county office will have a copy of the video tape. The tape can be reproduced as long as it is not modified in any way.

C. Retention Exercise

Spend the last part of the class time on retention activities. Point out to participants that the class has spent a lot of time on developing ideas to recruit foster parents. Using the same small groups, ask participants to make a list of behaviors they can engage in which would help retain foster parents. Likewise, are there behaviors they should avoid? There is space on page 7 in the Participant Manual, “Retaining Foster Parents”, where participants can take notes. Each group should also list its suggestions on the whiteboard or flipchart.

Allow about five (5) minutes for groups to complete this task. As the groups share, note that many of the suggestions are not hard or time consuming. They are in fact, good manners – returning phone calls, keeping foster parents informed, being honest.

Another way to approach this last task would be to verbally present a case scenario from the trainer's own experience. Ask the class to generate a list of ways to support foster parents in the situation described in the scenario. Summarize this exercise with Handout 5, "Retaining Foster Parents."

Before dismissing the class, ask participants to turn to page 8 in the Participant Manual, "Personal Action Plan." Ask participants to make a note of one thing they learned today that they plan to implement when they return to their offices. (They do not need to share this plan.)

C. Conclusion

Thank participants. Remind them to complete an evaluation of the session. Dismiss the class.

FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Participant Manual

Continuing Education

**PIP 3.1.6
Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention
Participant Manual
Agenda**

- I. Introduction**
- II. Recruitment**
 - A. Policy (Quick preview)**
 - B. Foster Family Home County Needs Assessment**
- III. Developing Recruitment and Retention Plans**
 - A. Recruitment Strategies and Activities**
 - B. Retention Strategies and Activities**
- IV. Closing**

RECRUITING AND RETAINING FOSTER PARENTS WHAT MAKES IT SO CHALLENGING?

Recruiting Challenges

Retaining Challenges

RECRUITMENT POLICY



The policy is always being revised and updated.
The training addresses those areas least likely to change but.....
Check frequently for updated policy because it may be changing as we speak.

1. The Division recognizes 4 types of foster homes:
 - a. Foster Family Homes (non relative)
 - b. Relative Foster Home (kinship only)
 - c. Relative Foster Home (fostering and kinship)
 - d. Provisional Relative Foster Home.
2. All foster homes have to meet the same minimum qualifications and standards set out in PUB 022 and the same training requirements specified in policy.
3. The Division is responsible for recruiting foster parents. For the foreseeable future, recruitment efforts will be the responsibility of DCFS Staff.
4. Each Area will develop a recruitment plan.
5. So, where do I start?

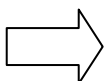
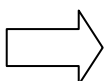
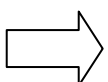
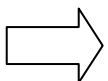
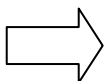
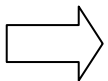
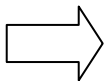
RECRUITMENT PLAN A STRATEGY TO ENSURE THERE ARE ENOUGH

Qualified, trained foster parents that children can be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible.

Foster parents of the ethnic and racial diversity to match foster children in the system.

Foster parents who have been recruited and targeted to meet any special needs of children in care or in danger of coming into care.

Data Needed for the Plan:



INFORMATION MINE

Where Do We Get Information on Foster Children



What “gems of wisdom” did you pick up from other people?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

DEVELOPING A RECRUITMENT/RETENTION PLAN

Goal:

Recruit and train enough qualified foster parents to match the racial/ethnic diversity of children in foster care.

Objectives:

Tasks:

Goal:

Recruit and train enough qualified foster parents to assure there are homes for foster children with special needs.

Objectives:

Tasks:

Goal:

Recruit and train enough qualified foster parents to assure there are homes for teenagers ages 12-18 years old.

Objectives:

Tasks:

Goal:

Retain trained and qualified foster parents.

Objectives:

Tasks:

Retaining Foster Parents

Recruiting and training foster parents is a significant investment for the Division and for the people involved in recruiting and training. If I truly believe that foster parents are part of the “team” that intervenes to make sure children have a safe, permanent home, I will do the following things to help make sure good foster parents stay with the Division.

Things I Can Do

Things I Should Avoid Doing

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

When I get back to my office I will:

Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention

Resource Manual

Guides and Examples

CAUTIONS AND CAVEATS

- **Do not use the name of the foster child in recruitment materials**
- **Do not use pictures of actual foster children in recruitment materials.**
- **You can use pictures of children of employees (with permission).**
- **Get any print materials or public presentation materials approved by the supervisor and Area Manager before releasing the material to the public.**
- **If you have foster parents recruiting for the Division, remind them of these cautions.**
- **Be cautious about including case-specific information that would let someone identify a specific child.**

Tips on Writing a Letter to the Editor

One recruitment strategy is a letter to the editor of the local paper. The letter can be written by an employee by a foster parent or by any individual who is concerned about the need for foster homes.

Personalize the letter to the editor of the publication you are writing.

Tell them exactly why you are writing at the very beginning. For example, I am writing in response to your article on Sept 1, “_” or I am writing to recommend a story on the desperate need for foster families in the Pulaski County area.

Present the strongest arguments first. Think about how to make the topic/letter “attention getting”. How can you make the topic newsworthy?

Appeal to their audience. Who reads this publication?

The letter must be short and easy to read. It should be 150-200 words, no more than 400 words.

It **must** be grammatically correct and words must be spelled correctly.

It should be well thought out. Focus on one main point and make a compelling case.

Present who, what, when, where and how. Educate the audience about the issue. Include facts about the topic. Make the audience think.

Write in short paragraphs.

Present solutions and make suggestions about what audience can do.

Avoid personal attacks.

Is the author someone who is credible?

Include your contact information, full name, address, phone number and sign the letter.

The letter is more likely to be published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper. Write the letter as quickly as possible after the story.

Follow up to see if the letter was received.

From

http://www.ran.org/action/toolbox/media_editor.html

and <http://www.publicityadvisor.com/pitchlettertips.html>

Sample Letter to the Editor

Your Name

Address

City, state zip

Phone number

Dear [Name of Editor],

Yesterday, I attended a very important training offering ideas on recruiting and retaining foster parents for children in state custody. I am writing to make an urgent appeal to the community to consider volunteering to foster parent the children in our state who need a home. There is a desperate need for caring, trained families who are willing to foster.

OR

I am writing in response to your article on (date), "Title of the article". I am writing to make an urgent appeal to the community to consider fostering a child in need. There is a desperate need for caring, trained foster families.

The situation is critical. The number of children entering foster care is steadily increasing and more of these children are entering the system with multiple, complex problems. The financial reimbursement to foster parents is low relative to the cost of living. More households have two working parents and therefore have less time to volunteer to foster. Further, the child welfare system is viewed negatively by the general public and many people do not want to become involved in the system as it is perceived.

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and MidSOUTH Training Academy are currently working in partnership to train DCFS staff and foster parents on issues related to recruiting and retaining more foster parents. This training represents a good beginning on the part of DCFS to ensure the health and safety of the children of Arkansas who are in the state's custody due to abuse and/or neglect.

Our community must be made aware of the critical need for trained and willing families to foster. Fostering children is of enormous value to our community and deserves our attention and support. I commend the foster parents who have opened their homes, DCFS for initiating the effort to recruit and retain safe, stable homes for our children, and all of the staff of DCFS for their hard work and commitment to our children.

To find out more about foster parenting a child in need, call your local DCFS office at (phone number) and ask for information about fostering. Or visit the DHS web site at www.state.ar.us/dhs/homepage.

Sincerely,

PSA's (Public Service Announcements)

Many radio and television stations run public service announcements for no charge. These media sources may be particularly willing to run child abuse related PSAs during April (National Child Abuse Prevention Month) or following a national news incident that highlights the need for foster homes. Here are some tips on writing PSAs.

PSA PLACEMENT

- Ascertain how much the media outlet runs PSAs (almost all outlets carry some public service announcements).
- Determine who should receive the PSAs and in what form they want the materials. Most radio and television stations will ask you to send them to their public affairs or public service director, and you may be connected to a recorded message that gives you specific directions for sending your materials. At newspapers and magazines, you probably will be directed to the Advertising Department, because print PSAs usually are treated the same as paid print ads. In fact, print PSAs are often used in place of paid ads that were canceled at the last minute.
- Prepare a list of public affairs directors/others who are responsible for their outlet's public information and education programs.
- Ask to meet with the public affairs director or other responsible person to discuss your program. A face-to-face meeting offers you the best opportunity to present your case for running the PSAs.
- Encourage coalition members to contact the media outlet expressing their interest in the PSAs being run. Sponsorship by a diverse group of well-respected organizations and individuals in the community can have a great effect on a public service director's decision to run a PSA.
- Call the media outlet a few days after sending the materials to see if they have arrived. Ask if they have been reviewed and if the outlet plans to run them. If they have decided to run your PSAs, find out when. If they have not yet reviewed them, find out when you should follow up to determine their interest. This also is a good time to pitch the PSAs again, briefly pointing out their importance to the community and their timeliness.
- If the outlet runs the PSAs, consider inviting the public affairs director to your promotional events.
- Send information, reprints of articles, studies, and other relevant information to your list of public service directors — even if they are not running your PSAs. It keeps them informed about the initiative and helps keep the subject in mind.

Detailed information about securing paid and discounted placement of the *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* PSAs can be found in the "Marketing Materials" section of this toolkit.

Tips on Writing a PSA “Pitch Letter”

Each day, the nation’s radio and television stations, newspapers, and magazines are deluged with requests for free time or space for public service announcements (PSAs). Organizations, large and small, write, call and visit media outlets to encourage the media to give their program or announcement special attention. Most of these PSAs are not selected and the reasons are many and varied. Among the most important reasons are poor message design and irrelevant subject matter. According to surveys of broadcasters, they use three primary criteria in selecting PSAs: sponsorship, relevance of the message to the community, and message design. Quality concerns range from muddy messages to poor execution. Subject problems include topics that are of little interest to the general public or are too complex to lend themselves to brief delivery.

In addition, some well-produced, relevant ads receive less attention than they deserve because of poor presentation to the media outlet. For your *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* initiative to succeed, your effort is necessary. The subject matter certainly is important to the people in your community — cleaner air and less traffic congestion benefits just about everyone. Yours is a local program — something highly desirable to the media — with national support. The PSAs are well-executed. They are based on careful, thorough research and have excellent production value.

A key step in bringing the program to the public in your community entails writing a letter to radio and television stations and to local newspapers and magazines promoting its placement — a “pitch letter.” A pitch letter is nothing more than a strong letter that tells your story and sells it to the media. A sample PSA pitch letter is provided in this section. Whether you adapt this sample or write your own, be sure to cover the following points:

- Keep it brief, no more than one page.
- Get to the point quickly but engagingly.
- Show how and why the issue is important to the people in your community.
- Explain who is supporting the program.
- Indicate that it is timely, e.g., the program is timed to coincide with “Clean Air Month,” the beginning of the summer ozone season.
- Indicate that the creative strategy and execution were guided by careful market research conducted in 17 pilot and demonstration communities.
- Underscore that the actions suggested in the broadcast and print PSAs are easy to take, and will lead to improved air quality and reduced traffic congestion.
- Ask that the ads be aired/printed.
- Mention that you will be contacting them to follow up on your request.

Sample Print/Broadcast PSA Pitch Letter

Date

Ms. Jane Friendly
Public Affairs Director
Anytown Newspaper, WANY TV/WANY-AM Radio
Anytown, USA 12345

Dear Ms. Friendly:

What does dropping off the kids, running by the bank, and picking up the dinner have to do with cleaner air? Trip chaining — combining errands into one, sensible trip — is just one of the many actions you can take that help improve the quality of our air. Not many people understand how their travel behavior affects traffic congestion and air quality, which is why the *(name of coalition and/or coordinating organization)* needs your help to launch *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*, a public education and partnership-building program in the *(community name)* area. The program kick-off coincides with Clean Air Month (May) and the beginning of the summer ozone season.

(Insert sentence with local specifics that discusses why the program is important to the area, e.g., non-attainment, etc.) Because of our commitment to informing the public about issues that affect the community, *(community name)* has joined a national education program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which focuses on a variety of individual actions that can make a difference in traffic congestion and air quality. These steps are easy to take and fit into busy schedules without major inconveniences.

We are concerned about our environment and the quality of life in our community and believe it is critically important to let the public know that they can make a difference, and that changes do not need to be drastic to have an effect. In fact, many people are already taking actions that help to reduce pollution and traffic congestion. The enclosed *(print/television/radio)* PSAs celebrate this participation as well as build awareness of the connection between travel behavior and air quality. Extensive research has guided the tone and manner of the PSAs, in that many people feel they can accept suggestions about making minor changes. *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*, the tagline of the PSAs, reflects the fact that we all can be part of the solution.

We urge you to air these PSAs so that the citizens of our community learn about the issues and how they can make a difference. I would appreciate a chance to discuss this initiative with you, and will call you next week to set up a time that is convenient for you.

Sincerely,

(Name of coordinator or influential local spokesperson)

SAMPLE PSA

Target Audience:

Want to make a difference in a child's life? There are several _____ children in _____ County in abusive and/or neglectful situations. They have been separated from their families and are in need of safe, secure, stable home environments. Those numbers are steadily increasing. The Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, is recruiting those interested in becoming foster parents to children in the 12-18 year-old age range. These children need a family home life as much or more than younger children. If you are interested in opening your heart and your home to one or more of these children, please contact the Division at (XXX) XXX-XXXX for training and recruitment information. Again that number is (XXX) XXX-XXXX. We here at FM 100 are proud to be a part of the community!



Are you looking for a rewarding way to spend your time and do something meaningful with your life?

Do you enjoy being with children?

Have you thought about becoming a foster family?

Increasing numbers of children are placed in foster care because it is unsafe for them to remain in their family home. These children need caregivers to provide a family life until it is safe to return home or a permanent placement is found.

While being a foster parent to a child separated from his or her family is challenging, providing nurture and care for these children in need is incredibly gratifying. Foster parenting is a serious commitment!

For more information on becoming a foster parent and welcoming a child into your family, contact 501-682-8542 or visit our website at www.state.ar.us/dhs/sgChildren.html



Family Foster Home Needs Assessment (By County)

County: _____ Supervisor: _____ Date Completed: _____

Instructions: To complete the following grid, enter the total number of homes in the left column and then select the check box under each category heading that applies to the number you entered. The example listed in the grid below represents what you would enter if you needed:

4 homes that would accept black children of any gender, who are between the ages 12 to 15, who may be part of a sibling group of any number, who may have behavioral problems.

1 home that would accept a male child with no siblings of any race, any age who had sexually acted out.

[illegible]

If you have any foster home needs that cannot be identified in the grid above, please describe the number and type of homes needs in narrative form below. Please be specific.

Handout 2

RECRUITING ON A SHOESTRING RESOURCE WE ALREADY HAVE AND CAN BUILD ON

Task 3.1.8 Develop recruitment plan for the specific needs outlined in the Foster Family Needs Assessment for each county, area, and statewide.

Date of achievement 9-1-04

Suggestions from P.I.P Subgroup

- Foster Parents – our best resource
- Foster Parent and Adoptive Parent Support Groups
- Adoption Coalitions
- Annual Foster Parent Conference (May)
- Area Foster Parent Mini-conferences
- DHS Today Newsletter
- Foster Parent Newsletter
- Foster Pride Newsletter
- DCFS newsletter
- Coordination with adoption recruitment efforts
- Enlist everybody (DHS/DCFS) as part of the recruitment team
- DCFS contractors and vendors
- Businesses
- Courts
- Other DHS Divisions/Other State Departments (Dept of Health)
- Service Agencies
- Continue implementation of Statewide Foster Parent Recruitment Media Campaign
 - ✓ PSA (Public Service Announcements)
 - ✓ Radio
 - ✓ Newspaper

HANDOUT 3

RECRUITING ON A SHOESTRING NEW RESOURCES TO ENGAGE AND BUILD ON

Task 3.1.8 Develop recruitment plan for the specific needs outlined in the Foster Family Needs Assessment for each county, area, and statewide.

Date of achievement 9-1-04

Suggestions from P.I.P Subgroup

- Church bulletins – communicate through a church member
- Schools/PTAs/Colleges
 - ✓ High school students with community service requirements
 - ✓ College students with field experience requirements
- Conferences
 - ✓ CASA
 - ✓ Mental Health
 - ✓ State Employees Association
 - ✓ Juvenile Justice
 - ✓ MidSOUTH Child Abuse
- Newsletters
 - ✓ Union/Corporate
 - ✓ DYS
- Professional, social, and civic organizations

HANDOUT 4

**FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A FOSTER
PARENT**

Contact the Division of Children and Family Services

County Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Contact Person: _____

**(Delete this line if the county does not have a
designated contact person)**

Or

Go to www.state.ar.us/dhs/homepage.

Put “foster care” in the search pane.

Handout 5

RETAINING FOSTER PARENTS

Recruiting and training foster parents is a significant investment for the Division and for the people involved in recruiting and training. If I truly believe that foster parents are part of the “team” that intervenes to make sure children have a safe, permanent home, I will do the following things to help make sure good foster parents stay with the Division.

I Will

Return phone calls.

Include foster parents in agency decisions.

Advocate and support increases in funding for foster parents.

Complete paperwork timely so that foster parents get paid.

Return phone calls.

Really listen to what the foster parent has to say about the child.

Make myself available for on-going supervision, monitoring and consultation.

Inform foster parents of community resources.

Provide respite and or day care services.

Return phone calls.

Provide recognition and honor for a hard job well done.

Other suggestions from class:

I Will Not

Misrepresent a child – make it sound better than it is

Keep the foster parents in the dark about court orders or recommended treatment.

Drop a child off and never come back.

Discount the foster parent’s information.

Consider myself the expert on this child or children.

Ask for input and then blow it off.

Ignore foster parents’ feelings of loss when a child returns home or a placement disrupts.

“Guilt” a foster parent into taking a child with problems they cannot handle because I need a placement.

Other suggestions from class:

