

## Ways To Recruit Foster Parents

While many agencies rely on the media to recruit foster parents and social workers alike, have stated that one of the most effective ways to recruit is by using existing foster parents to get the message out. Other ways to recruit foster parents include:

- Develop partnerships within the community to help you recruit foster parents. For example, ask local houses of worship to help spread the word about children who are in need of safe, loving homes.
- Work with local businesses to promote foster parenting. This can be done by asking them to display posters or flyers at their places of business or including recruitment flyers with employee paychecks. Make presentations to local civic groups or chambers of commerce. Casey Family Programs offers other ideas in their publication, “Working With the Business Community to Recruit Resource Families”(<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Archive/Publications/Partners.htm>)
- Participate in community, state or county fairs and ask foster parents to be there to share their experiences.
- Partner with other agencies to “pool” recruitment efforts and resources.
- Consider forming a network of current and former foster and adoptive families who are available to find and support prospective foster parents. For example, Families for Kids (<http://lcsnw.org/ffk/support.html>) in Washington state, has a network of foster parents who are available to explain what it is like to be a foster and/or adoptive parent and offers support to prospective foster parents during the decision making and licensing processes.
- Work with local-area agencies or your state foster parent association to develop a plan to improve the perceptions of foster care. Unfortunately, the media tends to highlight the negative aspects of foster care.
- Aside from material in this Briefcase, you can take advantage of “May is National Foster Care Month” to promote foster care and your agency. The [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org) website provides a variety of tools that you can use year-round. This FFTA TFC Advocacy Briefcase also offers many resources to build awareness of treatment foster care and promote the positive aspects of foster care.
- Be sure your recruitment staff has an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the communities for which they are recruiting. Effective recruitment techniques will likely differ from one culture to another.
- Make sure that inquiries by prospective foster parents are responded to quickly. Some prospective foster parents have been discouraged when their inquiries were not responded to in a timely manner.

- Be sure that your recruitment messages and efforts are targeted to both men and women. Men should be included in the network of foster parents that assist you with recruiting and supporting prospective foster parents.
- Be clear up front about the types of children (including age groups) that need homes, as well as the thoroughness of the training process.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General Report on [Recruiting Foster Parents](#) highlighted some of the challenges and solutions associated with recruiting foster parents. Some of their recommendations included:

- Target recruitment efforts on parents for children who are the most difficult to place in foster care by tailoring recruitment campaigns to recruit families willing and able to care for these children;
- Use foster parents as facilitators during pre-service foster parent training classes;
- Determine future foster care trends and needs and link to targeted recruitment strategies;
- Develop methods to assess the effectiveness of recruitment efforts (e.g., survey foster parents and establish benchmarks and tracking data);
- Strive to sustain recruitment campaign efforts throughout the year.