

Appendix C: Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan Update

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan Update

The NC DSS Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment (DRR) Plan was submitted on June 30, 2019; it remains in effect.

NC DSS is working with the Capacity Building Center for States to revise the DRR program and plan. The revised DRR plan is slated for submission in March 2023.

Progress and Accomplishments

NC DSS made progress on its targets and identified the need for increasing and retaining the number of licensed foster and adoptive homes that reflect the needs of the children and youth in the foster care system.

NC DSS continues to be successful in the recruitment of foster parents who reflect the racial diversity of children and youth in foster care. The overall number of licensed foster homes indicate a six percent decrease from the previous year. Currently, there were 6,561 licensed foster homes statewide. Regulatory and Licensing will continue its recruitment and retention efforts in alignment with the State's Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion values.

In November 2020, a survey was conducted to determine the reason(s) and characteristics of who was living in congregate care in NC. It was found that of the children placed in non-treatment group care, 24% were age 10 years or younger and 50% were not placed with a sibling. The reason for placement in non-treatment group care is the lack of appropriate foster and kinship placements.

As we emerge from the pandemic, North Carolina is determined to continue the recruitment and retention of resource families to support the needs of child and youth. In efforts to improve the number of quality licensed foster parents, NCDSS has started the process to develop a Statewide Resource Family Recruitment Campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to create a brand and increase public awareness of the need for resource parents to service children and youth in care which will focus on three areas to include recruitment of licensed foster parents for teenagers, sibling groups, and kinship placements. The campaign is tentatively scheduled to begin in December 2022. The

success of the recruitment campaign will be measured through the collection of data of the following elements:

- Number of resource parent inquires
- Newly licensed foster homes
- Kinship
- Teens
- Sibling groups

Below is a table of the number of public and private foster homes in our state.

Table 1. North Carolina Licensed Foster Home as of April 22, 2022

Type of Agency	Total
Public	2,570
Private	3,991
Total	6,561

On September 1, 2021, Session Law 2021-132 was enacted and established new training requirements for current and new foster parents. The law required a module be created and implemented regarding the roles and responsibilities of foster parents in judicial proceedings. On April 18, 2022, the *Court: Roles and Obligations of Foster Parents* was implemented and is a self-paced module available online at FosterNC.org <https://fosteringnc.org/on-demand-courses/>. Starting May 1, 2022, all new foster parents must complete this module and a completion certificate must be a part of the licensing packet. Current foster parents must review this module as part of the re-licensure process.

The importance of foster parents was reinforced with the passing of the Foster Parents' Bill of Rights on October 1, 2021. N.C.G.S. § 131D-10.9C clarifies the role and responsibilities foster parents have in the lives of children and youth in care and the child welfare system.

In April 2022, NCDSS updated the Foster Parent Orientation to ensure that the information provided is current. The revised course is available online at FosteringNC.org <https://fosteringnc.org/on-demand-courses/>. The orientation video is mandatory and the initial step in becoming a licensed foster parent in North Carolina.

Efforts to improve the focus on trauma-informed training for resource parents continued through the partnership with the NC Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH). This past year, the number of trained Resource Parent Curriculum (RPC) providers increased by

thirty-four (34) which exceeded the minimum target of twenty-five (25) providers. This represents a thirty percent (30%) increase in the total number of trained facilitators. An estimated 183 resource parents received the RPC workshop trained by CCFH trained facilitators, compared to approximately 129 in the previous fiscal year. Currently, there are thirty-three (33) counties, including an additional five (5) new counties added this year who have trained RPC providers.

For FY 2023, there will be one cohort. In this cohort there are 32 trainees representing 17 counties. Next year, there will be two cohorts offered to continue to increase the number of trained facilitators across the state. NCDSS will continue its partnership with CCFH.

NCDSS continues to partner with Children's Alliance of Kansas who owns TIPS MAPP and Deciding Together. In addition, Pressly Ridge, PRIDE, CARE and Caring for Our Own are approved pre-service models for licensure. These models meet the training requirement outlined in 10A NCAC 70E .1117. To ensure ongoing compliance, a process will be developed in partnership with the Staff Development team for the evaluation of pre-service models for foster parent.

Establishing permanency for children and youth continues to be in the forefront for NC DSS. In efforts of improving permanency outcomes, two laws were passed. In September 2022, Senate Bill 693: Expedite Child Safety and Permanency was enacted. This bill made several amendments to Juvenile Code regarding abuse, neglect, and dependency laws. N.C.G.S. 7B-505 was amended to require local departments of social services to make diligent efforts to locate adult relatives and other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the child or youth in nonsecure custody within 30 days of removal. If placement with a relative is not possible, the court is authorized to consider placement with non-relatives. N.C.G.S. 7B-906.1(a) was amended so that when a custody has been removed from a parent or caretaker, a permanency planning hearing must be conducted within 90 days from the date of the dispositional hearing. Permanency Planning hearings should be held at least every six months thereafter to review the progress towards permanency.

NC DSS continues to use Diligent Recruitment and Retention (DRR) plans to enhance statewide recruitment and retention efforts. In efforts to improve the effectiveness of the DRR plan, the Capacity Building Center for States completed an evaluation of the program in February 2022. A workplan was developed based on the information gleaned from the evaluation. In March 2022, the Children's Bureau approved NC DSS' workplan for the revision of the DRR program and plan. The revised plan will focus on the recruitment and retention of family-like placements for sibling groups and teenagers along with kinship placements (licensed and non-licensed). The revised DRR program and plan will be implemented in March 2023.

NC DSS continues to partner with Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina (FFA NC). The organization receives financial support and is committed to training, recruitment, and retention of resource families. Understanding the importance of foster families for teens, FFA NC assisted in planning, facilitating, and presenting at the Teaming with Teens Summit held in February 2022. NC DSS representatives presented on LINKS resources, services, and educational funding benefits. The event was open to child welfare professionals, resource families, kinship families, and teens/young adults in foster care. The table below depicts the activities sponsored by FFA for foster families:

Table 2. FFA NC Activities in Support of Resource Families

Dates	Activity Provided	Topic	Participants
June 17, 2021,	Webinar	New Federal Guidelines	61
September 24, 2021,	Virtual Training	Regional Resource Support Groups	27
September 27, 2021,	Virtual Webinar	Child Tax Credit	74
October 11, 2021	Virtual Training	Resource Parenting Curriculum Training	34
January 4, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	Exploring how to partner- synergy	7
January 7, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	FFA of NC Teen Summit planning	11
January 10, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	Meeting with Kinship Providers to address their needs	31
January 24, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	FFA of NC Teen Summit Check in	17
January 27, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	FFA of NC Teen Summit Dry Run	27
February 1, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	Need for Therapeutic Foster Parents	2
February 5 th and 10 th 2022	Virtual Training	Teen Summit	274
February 17, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	FFA of NC Debriefing of the Teen Summit	23
February 22, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	Health Blue/BCBS discussion @funding needs for foster parents	7
February 28, 2022,	Virtual Meeting	UNC ESSA – how foster parents can offer support in the ESSA meetings	9

Effort continues to work on increasing the number of licensed kinship placements. Technical assistance continues to be provided to local departments of social services regarding the licensure. Administrative Code 10 NCAC 70L.0102 allows NCDSS to waive licensing rule(s) to individuals seeking licensure pursuant to G.S. 131D, Article 1A. The Licensing Authority must indicate another method to meet the rule(s) to maintain the health, safety, and well-being of children and youth being served.

As of April 2022, the number of licensed kinship placements increased from the previous fiscal year. The table below shows that NCDSS continues to make progress in this area.

Table 3. New Kinship Licenses during the FFY

	FFY 2016-17	FFY 2017-18	FFY 2018-19	FFY 2019-20	FFY 2020-21
Total New Licenses	1,763	1,833	1,958	1,861	1,590
Identified as a kinship placement	85	93	163	196	148
% of new licenses that had kinship placements	4.82%	5.07%	8.32%	10.53%	9.31%

In March 2022, NCDSS provided two *Kinship First* informational webinars for local departments of social services to discuss the importance of kinship placement and additional technical assistance was provided regarding the licensure waivers for kinship providers. In honor of Kinship Care Month in September, NC DSS presented the *Permanency Matters: Valuing the Importance of Kinship Families* to public and private agencies and key stakeholders. Information about Caring For Our Own (CFOO) was discussed to increase awareness and utilization of the pre-service training for kinship providers. Currently, Children’s Home Society, Beaufort County DSS, Mitchell County DSS, Catawba County DSS, Chatham DSS, and Methodist Children’s Home are authorized to train CFOO.

The Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) is in the process of conducting the Kinship Fit and Feasibility study. HRSI has requested feedback from the Permanency Design Team, which includes representation from public and private agencies, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Child Welfare Family Advisory Council, Foster Family Alliance of NC, youth with lived experience and the NC Court system. The information received will assist in identifying gaps, services, and the needs of kinship families. HSRI is scheduled to provide recommendations on three Kinship Navigator models for statewide implementation by July 31, 2022.

North Carolina used funding from the Kinship Navigator grant to extend the contract with Children's Home Society (CHS) to expand the number of Caring For Our Own (CFOO) classes. This FFY, CHS held nineteen (19) classes which totaled one-hundred thirty-three (133) families or two-hundred five (205) individuals who participated in the classes. Kinship providers who complete CFOO and decide to become licensed, the families have the option to become licensed through CHS or with the local department of social services. NC DSS continues to work with CHS to develop and implement a tracking system to determine the number of families who become licensed upon completion of the course however are licensed through the local department of social services.

Regarding the Permanency Innovation Initiative (PII), the child-specific recruitment services are still being conducted by our community partner, Children's Home Society.