

# EFFECTIVE FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

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# FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

- ❖ States and localities are underutilizing their most effective recruitment tool – current foster parents.
- ❖ Many jurisdictions continue tabling at fairs and implementing general marketing campaigns, despite the fact that these strategies do not provide good return on investment (ROI).

# FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

Media campaigns produce inquiries from prospective foster parents. These inquiries tend to be from people who have limited understanding of fostering.

Many drop out during orientation or after a few training sessions and those that become certified often have narrow criteria for the children they are willing to foster.

As a result, the time and energy put into the inquiries generated by media campaigns produces relatively few foster homes.

The media campaign strategy assumes that there are not enough people who are interested in fostering. This is often not the case.

Instead of increasing inquiries, agencies need to generate more appropriate inquiries and process them more efficiently.

Best practice literature and experience suggest that satisfied caregivers make effective and efficient recruiters with better results than media campaigns. There are many ways to effectively leverage the expertise of experienced foster parents.

# RECRUITMENT BEST PRACTICES

1. Kin-First!
2. Clearly understand the characteristics of children in care (e.g., recruiting foster parents who only want newborns when you have teens to place doesn't help!)
3. Conduct foster home utilization review to understand the status of the current foster home pool (some foster parents may be listed "on the books" but haven't accepted a child in 6 months or a year; this means they aren't a "real" option)
4. Engage seasoned foster parents as recruiters
5. Streamline the recruitment/licensing process and provide support along the way as parents are becoming certified
6. Provide training that prepares foster parents to meet children's needs

# RETENTION BEST PRACTICES

1. Communication and attention to foster parent “customer service” experience (e.g.. Calling FP back timely; providing FP with all appropriate information about children placed; staff supporting FP are knowledgeable about relevant resources, etc.)
2. Support for the relationship between parents and foster parents
3. Access to crisis intervention
4. Opportunities for peer support and exchange among foster parents
5. Support to meet the needs of special populations
6. Respite care
7. Adequate financial support

# NYC “Home Away from Home” Initiative

1. Use data to target recruitment efforts



2. Utilize existing foster parents to recruit additional foster homes.

3. Develop (rather than recruit) homes for teens

7. Set targets and monitor the results

4. Streamline certification process and support prospective foster parents through it

5. Strengthen Customer Service and Supports to Retain Foster Parents.



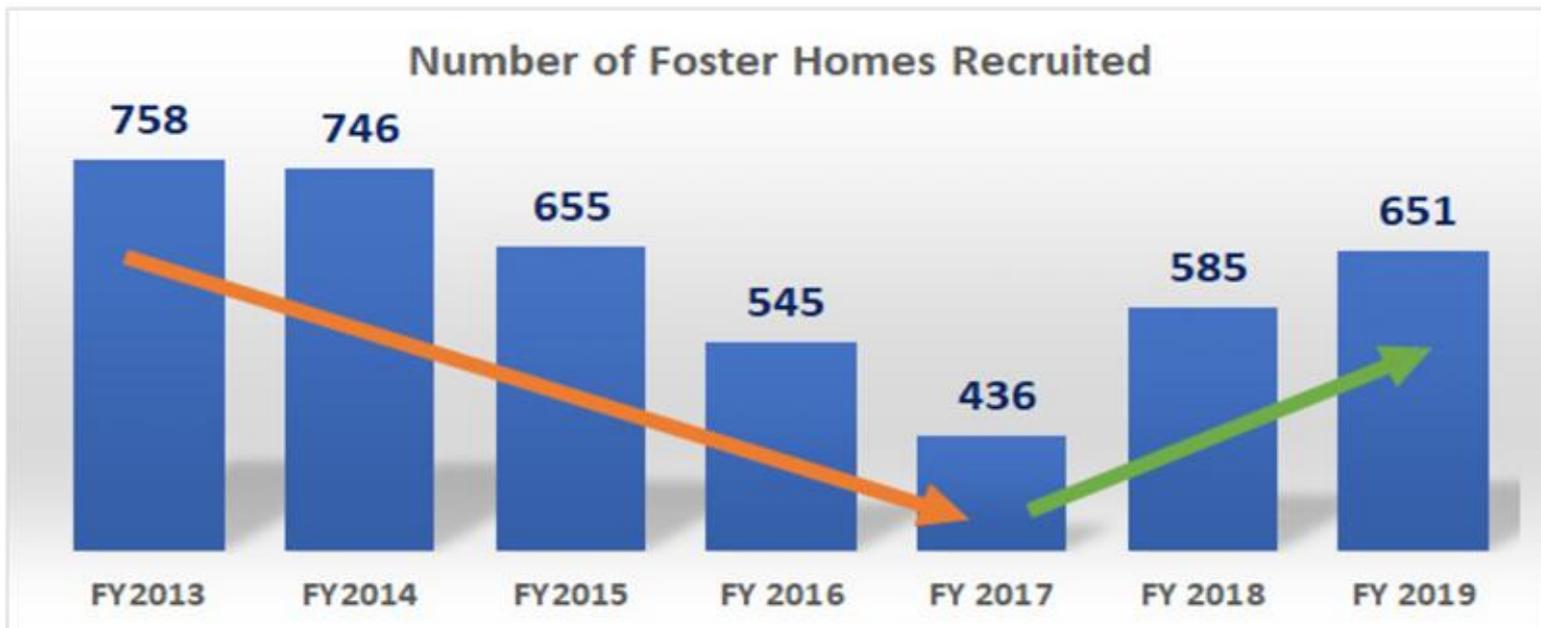
6. One Family One Home  
(Do not place children from different families in the same foster home)

# NYC

## RESULTS:

ACS increased the number of new foster homes recruited by almost 50% from fy 2017 to fy 2019, turning around a previous six-year decline in the number of new foster homes recruited.

FY17-FY19 New Foster Home Recruitment



# BEST PRACTICE RESOURCES

- [Imprint article on NYC](#)
- [NYC Home Away from Home Case Study](#)
- [Foster & Kinship Parent Recruitment and Support Best Practice Inventory](#)
- [Casey Family Programs Recruitment and Retention](#)
- [Child Welfare Playbook on Recruitment](#)

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

I am currently providing jurisdictions with technical assistance and support to implement all of the strategies described in this document.

For more information:

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