



CFSP

2020 – 2024

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment
Plan

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) emerging vision and strategy is to partner with communities and to empower families to raise resilient children who thrive. Strategic goals include:

- Keep children and youth safe, with a focus on the most vulnerable population
- Engage the workforce through an organizational culture of mutual support
- Connect systems and processes to achieve timely permanency
- Contribute to child and family wellbeing by enhancing assessments and interventions
- Eliminate racial and ethnic disparate outcomes within the department

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment plan embraces the vision and strategies of the Department and will focus on partnering with communities and families in the Department's efforts to recruit and retain a diverse population of families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children entering and in DCF care. Foster care and adoption is a critical function of the department, with a primary focus in ensuring children entering care are safe while in care, their well-being needs are met, and that foster and adoptive parents are engaged in timely permanency of their foster or pre-adoptive children. In order to accomplish this, the Department must recruit, train, license, and support family resources to care for the regional and statewide demand of placement requests.

The Connecticut 2016 Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), indicated that the Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes (item 35) was rated as an area needing improvement. Feedback from the CFSR indicated that the recruitment and retention activities lacked clear oversight and coordination and that the State does not assess progress on recruitment efforts and adjust accordingly. The Department is undergoing an organizational change with the foster care structure, which in addition to utilizing a data informed assessment of recruitment needs, will lead to improved recruitment outcomes and compliance with the CSFR standards regarding diligent recruitment.

Characteristics of children in need of foster care and adoptive homes

In order to identify the children in need of foster care, a point in time report was pulled from the Children in Placement (CIP) dashboard. As of March 25, 2019, there were 4362 children in DCF care. The data reviewed was separated by:

1. Number of children in placement
2. Placement Type
3. Age of the children in placement
4. Race and ethnicity of the children in placement
5. Sibling Placements
6. Pre-Adoptive family requests

Number of children in Placement

Region	CIP	%
Region 1	480	11%
Region 2	667	15%
Region 3	883	20%
Region 4	835	19%
Region 5	930	22%
Region 6	567	13%
Grand Total	4362	100%

According to the CIP dashboard, there were 4362 children placed in out of home care as of March 25, 2019. The majority of children placed in out of care are located in regions 3, 4, and 5 (61%). Regions 3 and 5 cover the eastern and western areas of the state and cover a wide geographical area, as compared to the rest of the State.

Placement Type of the children in placement	Count	%
Congregate Care	326	7%
Foster Care	1878	43%
Independent Living	257	6%
Relative Care (Kinship)	1593	37%
Special Study (Fictive Kin)	308	7%
Grand Total	4362	100%

The Department continues to prioritize kinship placements. Relative and fictive kin placements were at 44%, as of March 25, 2019, slightly more than placements with core foster care resources. Despite the department's success with kinship placements, there is still a need to ensure a pool of resources for children placed in non-relative core foster homes, which was at 43%.

Age of the children in placement

Age	CIP	%
<6	1891	43%
>=18	504	12%
13-17	1002	23%
7-12	965	22%
Grand Total	4362	100%

The largest number of children in placement are 6 years old and under. This represents 43% of the total children in placement in the state, followed by youth 13 to 17 years (23%). There may be less adolescents in placement than children 6 and under, but experience has shown that the adolescent population is the most challenging to place due to several factors, including mental and behavior health, involvement in the criminal justice system, and lack of interest by families to accept older youth.

Race and ethnicity of the children in placement

Race/Ethnicity	Count of CIP	%
Hispanic, ANY RACE	1439	33%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE	7	0%
ASIAN	12	0%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	1025	24%
MULTI-RACE	342	8%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN/OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	3	0%
UNKNOWN	50	1%
WHITE	1484	34%
Grand Total	4362	100%

A statewide look of the race/ethnicity of the children in placement shows that White and Hispanic children make up the largest population of children in placement in the state, with Black/African American children representing 24%. Each region will need to do a deeper review of the data, as geography, economic, and other factors may influence the data in each region. The Department will continue to focus efforts on recruitment that reflects the diverse population and placement need of each region.

Siblings placed together
(of those with siblings in out-of-home placement)

Report Time Period: March 1, 2019 - March 31, 2019 (Monthly)

Statewide ROM Report	March 2019	
	Count	%
<u>With sibs in placement</u>	<u>1805</u>	100.00%
<u>Met</u>	<u>1313</u>	72.70%
<u>With all siblings</u>	<u>925</u>	51.20%
<u>With some siblings</u>	<u>388</u>	21.50%
<u>Not Met</u>	<u>492</u>	27.30%
<u>Not with sibs</u>	<u>469</u>	26.00%
<u>In group/institutional care</u>	<u>16</u>	0.90%
<u>Runaway</u>	<u>7</u>	0.40%

The Results Orient Management (ROM) report indicated that out of 1805 siblings in placement in March 2019, 27.3% were not placed together. Despite 72.7% sibling placed together, there continues to be a need to recruit foster families that can take sibling groups.

Children needing pre-adoptive families

According to Permanency Resource Exchange data for the Calendar year 2018, 540 matching requests for adoptive homes were made by the regions.

Matching Requests for CY 2018:

540 Total Requests

- Region 1 requests: 36
- Region 2 requests: 97
- Region 3 requests: 172
- Region 4 requests: 46
- Region 5 requests: 89
- Region 6 requests: 100

Request separated by race:

- African American: 86
- Caucasian: 235
- Latino: 81
- Multi race: 138

Request separated by age:

- Ages 0-5: 348

- Ages 6-11: 155
- Ages 12-18: 37

Request separated by sibling groups:

- 254 were single children
- 214 children were part of 107 sibling groups of 2
- 48 children were part of 16 sibling groups of 3
- 24 children were part of 6 sibling groups of 4

There were 106 families were registered on the Adoption registry in CY 2018

There were 540 requests for matches. 106 new families were registered during the year and at the end of the year there were 32 active and waiting families.

Of the 540 requests, 125 children were teamed, had a family selected for placement and the match is going forward. Feedback from the regions indicate that there continues to be a need for pre-adoptive families for children under the ages of 5 years, all races, and sibling groups of 2 or more.

Based on review of the statewide data, the Department has identified the following priority recruitment areas:

- Foster home resources that reflect the diverse population of each DCF region
- Foster Home for children 6 and under as well as for adolescents 14 and up
- Foster homes for large sibling groups
- Foster homes for LGBTQ+
- Pre-adoptive homes

Recruitment:

The department's recruitment of foster and adoptive families consists of a statewide plan and 6 targeted recruitment plans for each region. The regional foster care staff recently received training on recruitment and retention of foster/adoptive families, in addition to one on one consultation specific to the recruitment needs of each region, by national foster care expert. The 6 regions are currently updating their targeted recruitment plans to reflect the specific needs of the local and regional areas.

The DCF statewide recruiter continues to coordinate/collaborate with the regional DCF and private child-placing recruitment representatives to review the recruitment plans, share activities, assess efforts, and collaborate on local or statewide initiatives.

Recruitment activities that DCF will continue to conducted:

1. Contracting with a professional advertising/marketing expert/agency to use data to drive recruiting benchmarks, work on targeted recruitment/media campaigns, work with the regions on recruiting for teens, seeking permanency for teens, analyzing data on demographics in the regions and identifying strategies to bring in diverse pool of families that reflects needs in the regions.
2. General Recruitment:
 - Web based and social media resources such as updating the DCF website - www.CTFosterAdopt.com, Google keyword search, and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
 - Open House on weekends/evenings, at family convenience, throughout the state
 - Promote and distribute a signature theme song that identifies with foster care and adoption recruitment

- Utilize multiple radio and TV resources to promote the need and community outreach for foster and adoptive families (e.g. iheart media and radio, WIHS, WTIC, WATR, Spanish speaking radio)
 - Utilize movie theater screen, billboards, and other mass media advertising
 - Public Service announcements and press releases
 - Foster/adoptive parent success stories or articles in local paper and online news sources
 - Community information sessions at local community meetings
 - Fairs and other statewide and local events
3. Targeted recruitment:
- Outreach and engagement with professional organizations such as Connecticut Nursing association, hospitals, etc.
 - Host Heart Gallery displays at various locations in the State
 - Faith based recruitment efforts and engagement
 - Partnership with other state agencies, schools, police, and other groups
 - LGBTQ recruitment and engagement (Chamber of Commerce, Gay pride day events, recruitment information and/or pamphlets for LGBTQ Community)
 - Foster care month appreciation and awareness month, including a statewide press conference, events, and 6 regional appreciation dinners/activities
 - Publish positive outcome articles in local and statewide media resources to highlight and promote foster care and adoption and dispel myths and misconceptions with foster care and adoption
 - The 6 regions are developing targeted recruitment plans, based on the individual needs of each local area office and regions, to be used as a blue print for local targeted recruitment, to be reviewed, shared, and adjusted quarterly by the foster care recruitment staff and leadership.
 - The plans focus on:
 1. Kinship development and recruitment
 2. Recruitment efforts will target adolescents, children under 6 and infants, medically complex, sibling groups, LGBTQ, and families of wide range of race/ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
 3. Focus on retention and post-license training efforts, with a customer service mindset
 4. Target adoptive resource, specifically families that can take children under 6 years
4. Child-Specific:
- The Department continues with child-specific recruitment strategies. In addition to developing the skills and capacity of the foster care staff, the department has also partnered and contracted with community resources to identify families for children and youth needing to achieve permanency. These include:
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) and their recruiters
 - Permanency Planning Services Program (PPSP) contracts with 17 private providers in the state responsible for offering an array of permanency services, including recruitment, assessment, pre-placement services, etc.
 - Therapeutic Foster care providers conduct child-specific recruitment and case mining activities at their assigned regional catchment area

Strategies to reach all parts of community:

The Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families (CAFAF) and DCF partner to recruit and support foster and adoptive families. CAFAF operates the statewide foster care inquiry phone number - 888-KID-HERO, in addition to tracking the inquiries and source of inquiry/interest. According to CAFAF, there were 1869 inquiries from January to December 2018.

Number of Inquiries by Region

Region	Inquires
1	288
2	250
3	277
4	473
5	323
6	258
Total	1869

According to the data, inquiries are received evenly throughout the regions, with the most coming from region 4, which is located central in Connecticut.

Type of Inquiry

Interest	Inquires
AD	159
FC	1085
FC/AD	452
Respite	42
Unsure	131
Grand Total	1869

Strategies to reach all parts of the community include:

- Using foster parents as recruiters, having them discuss the need at support groups, in their community, at their church, schools, and other locations that they attend. Foster parent word of mouth is a highly effective resources for recruitment. The Department offers a finder's fee incentive to licensed families called the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP). A licensed family will receive \$500 per family that they recruit and becomes licensed by the department.
- The Department is using child placement and demographic data to identify areas to focus on recruitment. Examples include identifying the communities where the children are coming from.
- Foster care community collaborative are community groups composed of foster parents, families, community providers, and youth, focused on recruitment, retention, and outreach. They hold open houses, recruitment events, and other activities in the community in order to raise awareness and outreach.
- Website and social media efforts by the Department and partner agencies (CTfosteradopt Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).
- Statewide and local radio and television advertising and programing.
- Regional and local newspapers and online news advertising.
- DCF hosts at least 3 or more open house or foster care presentations in each region at least once a month. The open houses are located in different locations in the community throughout the state.
- Presentations at faith based organizations and brochure distribution to parishioners have been a great resource for awareness and outreach.
- Community foster parent month and adoption awareness month Kick-off events in May and November.

- Diverse methods of disseminating general information about being foster parent and child specific information

According to the CAFAF data of calendar year 2018, callers to the Kid-Hero line identified the following as the sources for information about foster and adoptive care.

KID-HERO report from CAFAF – Jan to Dec 2018

Source of Inquiry	Count
Adopt US Kids	12
Billboard	3
Brochure (Flyer)	12
CAFAF	1
Church	9
Collaborative	2
DCF	6
DSS	1
email/bin	578
Family/friend – Non-FP	90
Foster Parents	15
Heart Gallery	8
Info Line	5
Internet	467
Liaison	5
Newspaper	8
Other	34
Own Interest	6
Radio	13
Recruitment Activity	61
Social Worker	147
Telephone	19
Television	10
Walk-in	69
WebSite	112
Wednesday's Child	2
Word of mouth	138
Work	36
Grand Total	1869

Based on the data, the internet/email/website is a significant source of information on the needs for foster care and adoption. The second source is word of mouth or referrals by either a foster parent, social worker, or family/friend. The data also shows opportunities for improving and increasing outreach on the foster care/adoption need in Connecticut.

Access to licensing:

The department's licensing requirements are governed by Foster and Prospective Adoptive Families regulations Sections 17a-145-130 through 17a-145-160. The regulations require foster or adoptive families to be licensed by the Department.

Families recruited go through a very thorough mutual assessment process. Steps to becoming licensed for foster care or adoption are as follows:

- Initial Inquiry
- Open House attendance
- Background checks
- Personal interview and site visit to the family home
- Tips-Mapp (Trauma informed pre-service training)
- Mutual assessment and home study process
- License of the foster/adoptive family

Strategies for training staff to work in diverse communities:

Through the Academy for Workforce Development and additional technical assistance from consultants and other initiatives, the Department continues to prepare the staff to work in diverse communities. Strategies include:

- Pre-service Training for Staff
- In-Service Training for Staff
- Professional Staff Development and Staff Training
- Webinars
- Technical Assistance, consultation, training on racial justice
- Training on understanding data on disproportionality and disparity
- Partnership and training by Robin P. McHaelen, Executive Director of True Colors, Inc. - LGBTQ
- Racial Justice, fatherhood engagement, and CAFAF statewide conferences
- Meeting with the Academy for Workforce to development to develop trainings specific to foster care staff

Examples of trainings offered by Academy for Workforce Development:

- Cultural Humility and Implicit Bias in Our Practice
- From Cultural Competence To Cultural Humility: Identifying Key Skills In Addressing Racial Bias In Child Welfare Practice
- When Pink and Blue are Not Enough: Working with Transgender Youth and Families
- Working with Transgender and Gender-Diverse Youth and their Families

Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers:

- Office of Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice offers support and guidance to staff dealing with linguistic barriers and other challenges
- The DCF website lists Authorized Interpreters and Translators services, including sign language
- Regions offer Spanish speaking open houses and pre-service trainings
- Regions survey foster families and regional staff of the top 5 languages spoken in each region to inform planning and needs
- Foster care forms have been translated into Spanish
- Staff to use Connecticut demographic data to determine the most prevalent languages spoken by families in the state.
- Regions have requested priority/preference to fill foster care staff vacant positions with bilingual staff to meet the needs of the areas

Non-discriminatory fee structures:

Foster care reimbursement is outlined under DCF Policy Volume 1 – Administration

Chapter 2 Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Administration – Fiscal Services Division 2-2.

DCF operates with a reimbursement structure that implements standard per diem rates for expenses incurred on behalf of a child, except those children who qualify for the exceptional foster care rate. The basis for the per diem rates is based on the age of the child and the current section of the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) “Expenditures on Children by Families” entitled “Estimated Annual Expenditures on a Child by Husband-Wife Families, Urban Northeast” for a family in the middle-income bracket.

The expenditures listed below on behalf of a child are included in the basic foster care reimbursement rate:

Category	
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shelter • house furnishings and equipment • utilities
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dining out at restaurants; • school meals; and • food and non-alcoholic beverages purchased at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grocery stores; • convenience stores; and • Specialty stores.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the net outlay for the purchase of new and used vehicles; • vehicle finance charges; • gasoline and motor oil; • maintenance and repairs; • insurance; • reasonable travel to remain in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement (school of origin); • public transportation; and • routine transportation to before and after school activities.
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children’s apparel items such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ shirts, pants, dresses and suits; ○ footwear; and ○ winter apparel, including overcoat and boots; • clothing services such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ dry cleaning ○ alteration and repair; and ○ storage.
Education, Child Care and Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elementary and high school tuition, books and supplies; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ daycare tuition and supplies; ○ babysitting; ○ personal care items; ○ entertainment; and ○ reading material.
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spending allowance; • music, dance and other lessons, such as karate; • driver education classes; • school uniforms;

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summer camp; • vacations; • vocational and trade school supplies; and • recreational equipment. |
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Timely search for prospective parents:

The Permanency Resource Exchange is charged with maintaining a registry of all children legally free for adoption in Connecticut per Connecticut General Statute 17a-43. Additional work done by Permanency Resource Exchange Staff include:

- Maintaining a registry of families approved for adoption.
- Referring appropriate home studies (matching a family's request for a child to the children available) to area offices that are requesting adoptive and "legal risk" families for children who are free for adoption or who need a permanent home while the legal work is completed.
- Conducting specialized recruitment efforts on behalf of Connecticut's children who are waiting to be adopted that include the annual Heart Gallery, listings on the national exchange, participation in ADOPT US KIDS and aggressive outreach efforts to other states-participating in inter-jurisdictional adoption.
- Providing technical assistance to area offices and participating in permanency planning teams.
- Responding on behalf of the Commissioner to correspondence from agencies and individuals interested in Connecticut's adoption laws and the Department's adoption program.
- Maintaining all closed adoption records.
- Processing subsidized adoption finalizations for the Commissioner's signature.
- Providing information to adult adoptees - see "Adult Adoption Search"
- Maintaining the "Adoption Reunion Registry" and the "Medical Information Registry" for adopted children.
- Answering questions from the general public regarding Connecticut's adoption laws and processes.
- Managing the College Assistance Program.
- Managing The Permanency Placement Services Program contracts.

Adult Adoption Search - Connecticut Search Law:

Connecticut Search Law provides birth parents, birth relatives, adult adoptees, adults formerly in foster care, and adoptive parents with access to certain information contained in adoption files. According to Connecticut Search Law (Connecticut General Statutes, §§ 45a-743 through 45a-757) adult adoptees, adults formerly in foster care for whom the state of Connecticut had been appointed the statutory parent, and adoptive parents have access to certain information contained in adoption files, which is most often referred to as non-identifying and medical information.

Birth parents have the ability to update information regarding their medical history that is contained in their child's adoption file.

Additionally, adult adoptees, adults formerly in foster care, birth parents and birth relatives have the ability to conduct a search for their birth family members who are 18 and older through the agency that completed their adoption or the termination of their parental rights.

Moving forward:

Over the next six months, the Department administration will finalize the organizational assessment. Staff and providers connected to foster care efforts will develop specific recruitment goals with detailed benchmarks and

performance targets. The department plans on leveraging subject matter experts throughout fiscal year 2020 to develop detailed plans that will be implemented over the life of the CFSP 2020-2024. Consultation and technical assistance will focus on recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of families that reflect the diversity of children and youth in the Department's care.