

Foster Parent Recruitment Plan 2025-2029





Table of Contents

Mission

Executive Summary

Recruitment Unit Focus Areas, Goals, and Strategies



MISSION

The Recruitment Unit is responsible for engaging a diverse pool of potential applicants who reflect the demographics of MDCPS foster children. MDCPS is dedicated to *Finding Families & Finding Hope* for the foster children of Mississippi.

The characteristics of foster children and youth for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed consists of sibling groups, teenagers ages 13-17, pregnant and parenting teens/mothers, older teens/adults ages 17-20, and special needs children and youth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services created the Foster Parent Recruitment Unit in April 2022. The Recruitment Unit staff is divided into three regions (North, Central, and South) who are specifically responsible for the implementation of this strategic plan. During the Period Under Review, MDCPS Licensure was tasked with licensing 486 new non-relative homes. The Licensure Unit licensed 477 new non-relative homes during the PUR.

The Unit works closely with interagency and community stakeholders in multiple ways, including strategic planning, co-hosting events to attract foster/adoptive parent applicants. Within MDCPS, the Unit works with Licensure, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Heart Gallery, Foster Parent Liaisons, and ICPC to identify children and youth in need of a foster and adoptive home placement. Wendy's Wonderful Kids and the Heart Gallery are utilized when prospective parents are needed for a child needing adoptive placement.

The Recruitment Unit strives to develop innovative ways to attract applicants. The most utilized method of attracting applicants has been the use of community events; however, community events have not yielded the desired outcomes, so this plan has been updated to include robust strategies and metrics. The Unit has an expanded social media platform, as well as developing engaging video products to attract applicants; however, an updated marketing campaign is needed to reach and recruit mainstream and diverse foster families for foster children/youth.



RECRUITMENT UNIT FOCUS AREAS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

Goal #1:

- ***Establish a diverse pool of foster/adoptive homes that reflect the foster care population and that is sufficient to meet the demands for homes that will care for difficult to place children/youth—sibling groups, teenagers (13-17), pregnant/parenting teen mothers, older teens (17-20), and high-risk special needs children/youth.***

Objectives for Goal #1:

- Recruit at least 200 foster homes for sibling groups for potential licensing within the next 16 months.
- Recruit at least 200 foster homes for teenagers for potential licensing (13-17) within the next 16 months.
- Recruit at least twenty-one (21) foster homes for pregnant/parenting teens for potential licensing within the next 16 months.
- Recruit at least twenty (20) licensed foster homes for older teens (17-21) for potential licensing within the next 16 months.
- Recruit at least 100 foster homes for children/youth with high-risk special needs for potential licensing within the next 16 months.

Strategies for Goal #1:

- Engage current foster parents of difficult to place children/youth in targeted recruitment and retention efforts.
- Engage potential foster parents in targeted recruitment efforts for difficult to place children/youth.
- Assess and encourage existing foster families designated as 0-5 to broaden their age range, to increase total capacity when possible, and to accept placement of difficult to place children/youth.
- Purposefully and intentionally recruit diverse foster families, including families from mainstream and non-traditional communities that reflect current foster child demographics and placement needs.
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Actions for Goal #1:

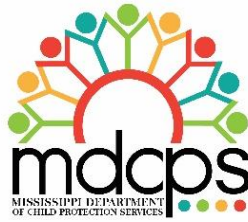
- Engage the foster parent of a sibling group, teenager, pregnant/parenting teen to speak at foster parent appreciation events. (May 2025)
 - Collaborate with MDCPS Marketing Department to develop a marketing campaign to recruit diverse foster families for difficult to place children/youth (to include social media, television, etc). (September 2024)
 - Recruitment Specialists will develop a quarterly/annual calendar of events to include in-person and virtual events. (July 31, 2024). This also includes any materials, deposits, etc. needing to be purchased.
 - Enlist foster parents to attend scheduled recruitment events, speak at local churches, civic groups, etc. with Recruitment Specialist each quarter.
 - Recruitment Specialists will facilitate at least three (3) recruitment events each quarter.
 - Recruitment Specialists will schedule at least nine (9) speaking events at local churches, civic groups, etc. each quarter.
 - Recruitment Specialists will collaborate with Licensure Specialists to assess existing foster homes to increase their age range, to increase total capacity and/or to accept difficult to place children/youth, at least quarterly.
 - During any encounter with families, Recruitment Staff will provide written information and referrals for all agencies that license foster and adoptive parents, including the agencies, types of services provided, locations, and hours of operation.
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Goal #2:

- ***Increase involvement of current foster parents and MDCPS staff in the recruitment process.***

Objectives for Goal #2:

- With the assistance of Licensure Specialists/Supervisors, the Recruitment Specialists will cultivate relationships with diverse foster parents in each Service Area and will facilitate quarterly focus groups to discuss recruitment needs.
- The input gathered during the quarterly focus groups will drive the development of monthly recruitment action plans for each quarter in each Service Area and will identify tasks for both the Recruitment Specialist and the identified Foster Parent(s).



Strategies for Goal #2:

- Identify 10-15 foster parents per service area to be involved in quarterly focus groups.
- Engage Foster Parents in planning and strategic planning meetings to establish goals, set an annual calendar, establish the length of time for membership in the focus groups, and establish a rotation for current/new Foster Parents involved in planning and activities.
- At the beginning of each new quarter, the Recruitment Specialist will review the previous quarter's activities and facilitate feedback on activities. After review and feedback, the Recruitment Specialist will provide updates on data, trends, and needs to the Foster Parent Focus Group and the group will plan the next quarter's activities.

Actions for Goal #2:

- Identify and engage 10-15 key foster parents to participate in focus groups.
- Engage the identified foster parents to select locations, to identify length of time needed for meetings, and to establish dates/times for the focus groups.
- With input from Foster Parents, the Recruitment Specialist will establish an annual calendar of meetings and that will be shared with all participants.
- Determine whether snacks/meals and childcare will be needed for focus group meetings.
- Develop a structured agenda with current data, trends, and recruitment needs to guide the focus group in developing plans within each service area.
- At the beginning of each new quarter, the Recruitment Specialist will provide an updated agenda, allow time for review and feedback of activities, review current data, and incorporate all information to develop the monthly activities for the next quarter.
- The Recruitment Specialist and Supervisor will review membership with the focus groups annually and develop a plan for existing Foster Parent members to exit the group and to make plans to add new Foster Parent members to be added to the focus group.

Goal #3:

- **Establish and promote Foster Parent Support Groups in each identified region.**



Objectives for Goal #3:

- Identify specific counties where Foster Parent Support Groups need to be developed.
- Hold quarterly meetings with Licensure, Safety, and Well-Being/Permanency Staff to discuss needs and identify Foster Parents that are interested in facilitating Support Groups.

Strategies for Goal #3:

- The Recruitment Team will utilize current data to identify specific needs for Foster Parent Support Groups.
- The Recruitment Team will seek feedback from current Foster Parent Support Group leaders to guide the development and implementation of new Support Groups.
- The Recruitment Team will seek feedback from current Foster Parent Support Group leaders to develop strategies to increase participation in monthly Support Group meetings.

Actions for Goal #3:

- Identify key Support Group leaders to be part of a quarterly focus group to identify needs and strategies to develop new Support Groups.
- Utilize the quarterly meetings to develop plans to grow participation and involvement in Foster Parent Support Groups.

Goal #4:

- **Increase training opportunities and resources for Recruitment Staff working with diverse communities and with families experiencing language barriers.**

Strategies for Goal #4:

- The Recruitment Team will collaborate with the Professional Development Unit for staff training related to working with diverse communities, including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations.
- The Recruitment Team will collaborate with the MDCPS Interpret Unit for assistance in developing strategies and translation assistance for all applicants with language barriers.
- The Recruitment Team will collaborate with Leadership to identify funding sources and non-discriminatory fee structures for interpreter services.



Actions:

- Collaborate with Professional Development Unit regarding curriculum for working with diverse populations and develop annual training plans.
- Establish quarterly meetings with the Interpreter Unit to discuss strategies, resources, and areas for improvement.
- Annual meetings with leadership to discuss fiscal year funding for interpreter services and non-discriminatory fee structures.