

AdoptOHIO

Agency Survey Report

**Prepared for
The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Office for Children and Families
Adoption and Kinship Section**

**By
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This agency survey report is being submitted to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) as a product of the evaluation of the *Adopt*Ohio program being conducted by Steven R. Howe and Associates, LLC. The primary author of this report was Erinn Green. For further information, please contact:

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Agency Survey Report

Executive Summary

A survey of adoption agency practices was designed and administered to agencies across the state of Ohio from January 23rd to February 25th, 2003. The survey covered the topics of Recruitment, Best Practices, Collaboration, Marketing and opinions about ODJFS. The survey was administered via the World Wide Web.

Two hundred and seventy-two (272) invitations to participate were sent to all members listed in an email directory of adoption agencies maintained by Steven R. Howe and Associates. One hundred and ten (110) participants, representing 92 different adoption agencies, completed the survey. Responding agencies had locations in 82 of Ohio's 88 counties. This included the public child-serving agencies in 46 of Ohio's counties. Overall, 52 public and 38 private agencies were involved in the survey (some agencies identified themselves as public but declined to give the name of the county).

Recruitment: Professionals ranked foster parents and referrals from other adoptive parents as being the most important sources for finding parents who finalized adoptions within the last year. Professionals ranked children already in the agency's custody, children already placed in the home for foster care, and collaboration with another agency as being the three most important sources in finding children who were adopted.

Best Practices: Agencies were asked to rate their performance on 23 different adoption activities. They rated themselves on a scale from exemplary to below average, with those who considered themselves exemplary describing their practice. Best practice information was summarized from this information. The practice on which most agencies rated themselves as exemplary was responding to initial inquiries from parents, and the practice they rated themselves most often as below average was recruiting a diverse set of parents.

Collaboration: Agencies were asked what other agencies they collaborated with on a regular basis. Seventeen (17) agencies were named five or more times as collaborating agencies. Both public and private agencies reported collaborating with public agencies more than with private agencies. Good and frequent communication was cited most often as the key to good collaboration.

Marketing: Professionals were asked to rate the usefulness of various marketing products in generating interest in adoption and finding suitable matches between waiting children and parents. The promotional items and OAPL

website were rated as the two most useful products. When asked for overall marketing suggestions, respondents wanted the OAPL web and book materials to be more current, the Children's Book to be discontinued and children with an identified placement not to be listed on the OAPL website.

ODJFS: The majority of respondents (70.3%) reported having attended a quarterly or statewide meeting within the past year. Over half (56.8%) found the information presented useful or very useful. Respondents were satisfied with their interactions with ODJFS, as determined by their responses to a series of statements about ODJFS and the services it provides.

Introduction

This survey of adoption agency practices was designed to solicit input from adoption professionals across the state of Ohio. The topics included recruitment, best practices, collaboration, marketing and satisfaction with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. This content was developed through feedback from many adoption professionals about what kinds of information they would like to see from agencies across the state as well as the aspects of adoption they would like to see best practice information collected on. Additionally, the survey was pilot tested by several adoption professionals to ensure that the survey was understandable and easy to complete. The survey was administered via the World Wide Web.

The participant list was taken from the Internet directory of Ohio adoption agencies maintained on the Steven R. Howe and Associates website (www.srhassociates.com). This listing contains contact information for many adoption agencies in Ohio. Two hundred and seventy two (272) invitations to participate were sent out via email. Of these, seven were returned as invalid email addresses. Participants were advised to forward the URL link to the survey to anyone else in or outside their agency they thought would be interested in participating. Therefore, it is not possible to determine how many people overall received the invitation to participate in this survey.

The survey appeared on-line for one month, between the dates of January 23rd and February 25th, 2003. Participants received the initial invitation to participate on January 23rd and those who had not yet responded received a reminder on February 18th. Adaptations were made for respondents who were either unable or unwilling to complete the survey via the Internet. At the participant's request, a hard copy of the survey was faxed to them for completion. Their responses were then entered directly into the web program by the research team.

One hundred and ten (110) participants completed the survey. These individuals represented 92 different agencies. A description of the participants and their agencies appears below.

Organization of Report

This report of the results of the agency survey follows the organization of the survey itself. The first section reports characteristics of the agencies that responded. Following that are sections on Recruitment, Best Practices, Collaboration, Marketing and opinions about the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The report concludes with Recommendations.

Agency Characteristics

Of the 110 surveys completed, 18 included agencies from which two people responded. To ensure that no agency was overrepresented, the answers from agencies responding twice were weighted in a way that jointly counted as one response.

Both public and private agencies completed the survey. These agencies were located in 82 of Ohio’s 88 counties. The six counties not represented were Brown, Carroll, Clinton, Guernsey, Harrison and Tuscarawas.

The public child-serving agencies in 46 of the 88 Ohio counties (52%) were represented. Those responding were Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Clark, Clermont, Coshocton, Defiance, Delaware, Erie, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Fulton, Gallia, Greene, Hancock, Hardin, Hocking, Holmes, Huron, Jefferson, Knox, Lake, Logan, Lorain, Mahoning, Marion, Meigs, Mercer, Monroe, Morrow, Noble, Ottawa, Paulding, Preble, Putnam, Ross, Sandusky, Scioto, Seneca, Stark, Summit, Union, Van Wert, Wayne and Wood.

Participants were asked several questions about their agency and the services that it provides. The answers to these identifying questions follow in Table 1.

Table 1: Information on Responding Agencies

	Public	Private	Overall
Number of agencies responding	52	38	92
Percentage of agencies that are <i>Adopt</i> Ohio agencies	69.2%	71.1%	70.0%
Percentage of agencies that do international adoptions	7.7%	36.8%	20%
Average number of full time adoption employees	3.18	5.95	4.39
Average number of applications processed per year	23.5	60.3	39.3
Average number of placements made in past 6 months	14.0	28.8	20.13
Average number of finalizations made in past 6 months	12.5	22.6	16.9
Percentage of finalized adoptions that were international	1.4%	11.3%	5.6%

Participants were also asked what position they held in the agency. Just over a quarter of the agencies (26%) were represented by caseworkers, and an equal number were represented by adoption supervisors. Nineteen percent (19%) of agencies were represented by their director. The remaining 28% of agencies had someone with another position in the agency complete the survey.

Types of Children Finalized in Past year

Respondents were asked several questions about the types of children involved in the adoptions they had finalized in the past year. The first question asked them to identify the percentage of children in each of four age categories, ranging from infants to older children. Next, they were asked how many of the adoptions they had completed in the past year fell into several hard-to-place categories. Private agencies placements included a higher percentage of young children (ages 0-2) than public agencies did. Private agencies also placed a higher percentage of African American children, children with medical or physical disabilities and children with emotional disabilities. The full results of these questions can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Ages and Characteristics of Children Finalized in Past Year

	Public	Private	Overall
Age Categories:			
0-2 years old	23.9%	42.7%	32.4%
3-6 years old	35.8%	17.8%	27.7%
7-11 years old	24.7%	27.1%	25.8%
12 years old and up	15.5%	12.3%	14.1%
Hard-to-place categories:			
Sibling groups of 2-3	33.1%	32.7%	32.9%
Sibling groups of 4 or more	3.5%	3.3%	3.4%
African American children	16.6%	41.7%	27.1%
Children with medical or physical disabilities	17.6%	24.4%	20.5%
Children with emotional disabilities	37.6%	42.7%	39.6%

Recruitment

The next section of the survey asked professionals about recruitment. The questions in this section were designed to get input about how agencies effectively recruit parents who go on to adopt and also how agencies find children who their waiting parents can adopt.

Importance of Various Recruiting Sources in Finding Adoptive Parents

Participants were asked about the effectiveness of various recruitment sources as a means of generating inquiries or finding parents who went on to finalize adoptions within the last year. Respondents were first asked to rate each source on an importance scale, and then asked to pick the one resource that was the single most important source of finding parents who adopted. The responses to the first part of the question can be found in Table 3, and Table 4 lists the categories that participants felt were the most crucial.

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Table 3: Importance of Recruitment Sources in Finding Parents Who Finalized Adoptions

	Critical / Very Important	Important	Somewhat / Not Very Imp.	Not Applicable
Foster parents	74.5%	12.7%	3.6%	9.1%
Referrals from other adoptive parents	61.1%	21.0%	13.8%	4.2%
Parents who called with a general interest in adoption	48.5%	32.3%	14.4%	4.8%
Recruitment efforts by agency staff	44.2%	29.7%	21.8%	4.2%
Referrals from other agencies	40.1%	30.5%	22.2%	7.2%
Parents who called about child listed on OAPL website	37.8%	28.6%	27.6%	6.1%
Relatives interested in kinship adoption	37.7%	16.8%	31.7%	13.8%
Individuals interested in adopting a specific child they know	35.3%	21.6%	35.9%	7.2%
Parents who submitted an interest form on OAPL	29.2%	15.6%	45.8%	9.4%
Parents who called about child listed in Children’s Book	28.6%	22.4%	37.8%	11.2%
Parents who called about child listed in Features Book	23.5%	18.4%	35.7%	22.4%
Parents who found out about adoption on the Internet, but not OAPL	18.6%	18.0%	49.7%	13.8%
Parents who called from the Ohio Adoption Guide	17.4%	24.6%	44.9%	13.2%
Parents listed in the Parents Book	13.4%	15.2%	45.7%	25.6%
Referrals from the Help Me Grow line	9.6%	10.8%	46.1%	33.5%

Table 4: Single Most Important Source in Finding Parents who finalized adoptions

	Number	Percentage
Foster parents	30	40.0%
Parents who called with a general interest in adoption	18	24.0%
Referrals from other adoptive parents	12	16.0%
Parents who called about child listed on OAPL website	4	5.3%
Recruitment efforts by agency staff	3	4.0%
Individuals interested in adopting a specific child they know	2	2.7%
Referrals from other agencies	2	2.7%
Parents who called about child listed in Children’s Book	1	1.3%
Parents who called from the Ohio Adoption Guide	1	1.3%
Parents who submitted an interest form on OAPL	1	1.3%
Relatives interested in kinship adoption	1	1.3%

Importance of Various Sources in Finding Children Who Were Adopted

Participants were next asked about the effectiveness of various sources in finding children who were eventually adopted. The importance rating of these sources can be found in Table 5. Respondents were then asked which resource

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was the single most important source for finding children who were eventually adopted. The ordered listing of those responses can be found in Table 6.

Table 5: Importance of Sources in Finding Children who were Adopted

	Critical / Very Important	Important	Somewhat / Not Very Imp.	Not Applicable
Children already in the agency’s custody	82.7%	12.2%	0.0%	5.1%
Children already placed in home for foster care	71.5%	9.7%	11.5%	7.3%
Collaboration with another agency	49.1%	23.0%	20.6%	7.3%
Children listed on the OAPL website	26.1%	27.3%	29.1%	17.6%
Children listed in the OAPL Children’s Book	19.4%	5.6%	55.6%	19.4%
Children placed in agency’s other services	15.2%	18.8%	32.1%	33.9%
Children listed in an <i>Adopt</i> Ohio Features Book	13.3%	20.0%	40.0%	26.7%
Adoption fairs/parties/mixers	7.3%	12.8%	45.1%	34.8%

Table 6: Single Most Important Source in Finding Children who were Adopted

	Number	Percentage
Children already in the agency’s custody	29	42.0%
Collaboration with another agency	19	27.5%
Children already placed in home for foster care	17	24.6%
Children listed on the OAPL website	3	4.3%
Children listed in an <i>Adopt</i> Ohio Features Book	1	1.4%

Waiting Time to Be Matched

Agencies were asked how long parents wait to be matched with the right child once they make an application and complete the training and home study requirements (even if some placement planning still needs to occur after the match). The length of time parents waited differed greatly depending on if they were working with a public or private agency. A larger percentage of private families waited less than 6 months to be matched (33.1% for private agencies vs. 11.9% for public agencies), and a larger percentage of public families were never matched (13.0% of public families vs. 3.1% of private families). Full results from this question can be found in Table 7.

Table 7: Time Parents Wait from Completion of Home Study until Matched

	Public	Private
Less than 6 months	11.9%	33.1%
6 months to 1 year	35.2%	38.0%
More than one year	39.9%	25.8%
Never matched	13.0%	3.1%

Access to OAPL Website

When asked if their agency had a computer parents can use to search the OAPL website, 70 agencies (76.1%) reported having such a resource. The high percentage ensures that parents have access to the website even if they do not have a home computer.

Best Practices

Respondents were asked to rate their agency’s performance on 23 different activities in the adoption process. They were to rate themselves on a scale from exemplary to below average. Those who rated themselves exemplary were then asked to explain how they were exemplary. This was done in order to collect best practices information from across the state. Information on the percentage of agencies that rated themselves exemplary, average or above, below average, or said that they do not do the activity for each of these practices is summarized below.

Table 8: Percentage of Agencies That Considered Their Practices to Be...

Practice	Exemplary	Average or Above	Below Average	Or Do Not Provide Service
Internal communication within the agency	12.0	85.8	2.2	0.0
Professional development and training for staff	6.1	87.3	5.0	1.6
Generating first-time applications	3.3	86.8	6.6	3.3
Responding to initial inquires from parents	15.9	81.9	1.1	1.1
Recruiting a diverse set of parents	1.7	76.1	20.0	2.2
Stretching families to consider special needs	1.6	68.8	9.3	20.3
Training parents	6.6	87.4	3.8	2.2
Encouraging foster parents to adopt	9.3	76.4	0.0	14.3
Searching for relatives to adopt	3.8	62.7	7.1	26.4
Concurrent planning	3.3	69.2	9.9	17.6
Conducting home studies	8.8	88.5	1.1	1.6
Staying in touch with interested parents	4.4	90.1	3.3	2.2
Finding children that meet needs of parents	1.6	69.3	9.3	19.8
Finding prospective parents that meet needs	2.7	86.9	7.1	3.3
Child-specific recruitment	5.0	62.2	13.9	18.9
Collaborating with other agencies on matches	2.8	83.4	8.8	5.0
Matching	5.5	85.1	0.0	9.4
Preparing children for adoption	1.6	79.2	4.4	14.8
Preparing families for adoption	3.3	95.1	1.1	0.5
Negotiating subsidies	2.2	60.3	8.8	28.7
Distributing PASSS funds	2.7	51.7	2.7	42.9
Providing post-placement supervision	6.6	80.7	5.0	7.7
Providing post-adoption services	7.2	75.7	10.5	6.6

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For those agencies that rated themselves exemplary, their descriptions of the exemplary practices are listed below.

Internal Communication within the Agency

- Consider staff to be partners in the practice of adoption
- Staff is comprised of independent contractors who love what they do and enjoy working on a team
- An atmosphere of mutual respect for each other's lives and workload
- Everyone pitches in to provide the needed services to children and families
- Small agency
- Have interoffice voice mail and email
- Monthly staff meetings
- Nice group of people who all get along, people make an effort to be helpful to each other
- Team includes birth parent counselors, foster care worker, and the adoption workers
- Advocate openness between birth and adoptive parents
- Small staff is in constant communication with each other
- Staff speaks to each other about cases daily
- Optimized practices through the implementation of software across our systems network
- Small agency that communicates with other staff members from intake to protective services
- Hold bi-weekly placement meetings, concurrent planning meetings, matching conferences
- Identify adoption workers as a second worker at the time the agency files for PC
- Have email and adoption liaisons to all regional offices
- Hold pre-permanent commitment staffings with regions
- Use an adoption preparation checklist that helps the on-going children's services unit communicate what has been done prior to transfer to adoption worker
- Small agency where all workers know about all of the children
- Small, familiar staff
- Meet weekly to review each case
- Communicate via phone and face-to-face conversation
- Small, private agency
- See one another often
- Communicate via email, regular meetings, intranet
- Utilize many forms of communication
- Model collaboration among our staff

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Professional Development and Training Opportunities for Staff

- Regional RTC is housed at our agency, makes training easily accessible
- RTC staff canvas training needs regularly and respond to requests for specific training
- Administration approves attendance at adoption specific conferences
- Offer numerous trainings on campus
- Bring in well-known speakers
- Do specific trainings geared to staff development
- Monthly adoption seminars
- Hold six general practice seminars per year
- Never a problem to get CEUs
- Attend outside trainings
- Have a professional development specialist who tracks training opportunities for staff
- There are funds allocated for professional development
- A tracking system is established with guidelines for corrective action planning
- Federal grants pay to bring in national speakers on a regular basis
- Agency has a training committee
- HR department monitors training needs and progress throughout the year
- Adoption and foster care staff receive training every month on relevant topics
- Continually offer training opportunities to all levels of staff and foster/adopt homes
- Send staff and foster parents to national conferences
- Staff participate in presentations at state and national conferences
- All staff required to receive 40 hours of training annually
- Training department which tracks and develops curriculum material to be offered throughout organization
- Staff development is part of mission in providing quality services

Generating First Time Applicants

- Agency has a low recruitment budget, do all recruiting by word of mouth and collaboration with other agencies
- Time spent with initial calls, honest answers and training methods encourage parents to apply for a home assessment
- Advertise in many related print sources
- Place banners at websites and track internet performance
- Conduct multiple seminars throughout the county each weekend
- Do lots of outreach collaboration with churches, etc.

Responding to Initial Inquiries from Parents

- Send out informational packets by the next business day
- Contact parents to follow up if they have received the packet
- Phone calls are answered within 24 hours of the initial call
- Calls are made in the evening or at the most convenient time for the family
- Average time spent talking with a prospective adoptive family and answering questions is 45 minutes to an hour
- A packet of information is sent to the family within two days
- All questions are answered when parents first call

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- Informational packet is sent out the same day of the call
- All email inquiries monitored 7 days a week and responded to within 12 hours (usually within 12 hours)
- All phone inquiries are responded to and an information packet is mailed within 24 hours
- All inquiries are responded to within two days
- Families that do not respond to an initial invitation to an informational meeting are followed up with
- A client speaks with an adoption assessor immediately or within the next business day
- Respond within the same day to clarify parent's preferences
- If interested in adopting a special needs child, an informational packet containing the Ohio Adoption Guide, information about our agency, information about the OAPL website and a copy of the pre-service training schedule is mailed to parents the same day
- Refer parents to other agencies if not interested in adopting a child in our service population
- Inquiries are responded to within 48 hours
- Recruit only foster parents
- Return phone calls promptly
- Take caller's information and enter it directly into the computer
- Label is generated based on information and an information packet is sent
- Two calls are made to follow-up on each packet
- Respond within 24 hours of all inquiries
- Will email or send literature with very little lag time
- All inquiry calls come through a hotline that is accessed daily by staff
- Response to all calls is made within 48 hours by a call or letter
- Pre-service and home study process are discussed and family's questions are answered
- Family is put on list to be notified of next 3 pre-service training events
- Talk to caller and send information the same day in most cases
- Both support and professional staff have a preset timeline to respond to inquiries
- Internal reviews ensure these standards are met
- Inquiry call is put through directly to a worker or supervisor
- Parents' questions are answered
- Inquiry log documents where the parent heard of the program
- Packet of information and application is sent within 3 days
- If application is not received, a follow up letter and survey are sent
- Social workers are "on coverage" every day to talk to prospective families when they call
- Inquiry packets are sent within one day of the call
- Follow-up calls are made to families who have inquired but not applied

**Recruiting a
Diverse Set of
Parents**

- We do recruitment activities to reach many cultures

**Stretching
Families to
Consider Children
with Special
Needs**

- With developmental matching, when explained and used correctly, you do not need to stretch families
- Throughout the process we encourage people to stretch their parameters of consideration of behaviorally challenged children
- Encouraging families to foster adopt makes for a natural evolution process as they fall in love with difficult to parent children with high needs

Training Parents

- Understand importance of commitment from parents, but yet the time frame that the parents have in their life and jobs
- Created a weekend training that enables parents to get all training in 3 days
- Applicants are housed together for several days which gives staff an opportunity to become closely acquainted with the families and determine their training and support needs
- Close support network among applicants
- Trainers have many years of experience in the field
- Long term post adoption specialist continues the training with each month's support group
- Each group session has a tutorial session covering topics that address the specific needs of the participating families
- Have coordinated a yearly tri-state adoption conference for 13 years
- Parents and staff are given the opportunity to attend training presented by national experts in the field of adoption
- Training is specific by type of adoption
- Group process involving videos, assigned reading, discussion and guest speakers
- Material is often updated
- Facilitated by a LISW
- 12 hours total training
- Consistent offerings
- Excellent communications and training calendars
- In-house and contracted trainers
- Training facilities

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Encouraging Foster Parents to Adopt

- Highest percentage group for adoption, majority of adoptions are foster parent adoptions
- Discussed throughout the life of the case and at application and training of foster parents
- Train foster and adoptive parents together
- Make generous subsidy arrangements to minimize the difference between foster care reimbursement and adoption subsidy
- Foster-to-adopt program that allows adoptive parents to foster and then adopt so that the child does not have to move from one home to the other
- Work closely with foster parents from the beginning in regards to concurrent planning
- Most foster parents are interested in adoption
- Most families have a dual home study for both foster care and adoption
- Most foster parents end up adopting a child in their home
- We rarely have to look for another adoptive family for children
- Most foster parents are also adoptive parents
- Many support services are provided to help them, including respite care and mileage reimbursement for medical and other appointments
- Foster parents are asked first if they want to adopt
- Work from the very beginning for dual licensing/approval as as both adoptive and foster parents
- Strongly emphasize commitment to creating a sense of permanency while joining efforts with other agencies to significantly reduce the number of waiting children
- Concept is presented in pre-service trainings that the agency is a foster-to-adopt agency for treatment foster children
- Support foster parents who believe they are ready to face a number of challenges
- We are a residential treatment/foster care provider that offers a continuum of care appropriate to the child's need
- Support foster parents by providing information consultation and services that focus on meeting the needs of the youth

Searching for Relatives to Adopt

- We are a support organization and a lot of what we do is help people search for relatives
- A Federal Opportunities Grant "Two Ways Home" is a leader in locating relatives
- Only have 7 children in traditional foster homes because children's services is doing such a good job finding relatives
- Search for relatives to care for children before they enter foster care
- Work under the Family Centered Neighborhood Based model

Concurrent Planning

- All cases have a supplemental plan within the guidelines with no exceptions
- We are an "open adoption" agency that fosters concurrent planning

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- Checklist helps workers plan who are going to do what tasks prior to the case transfer to adoption workers

Conducting Home Studies

- Home studies are completed within 34 months of initial application
- Assessors do a very thorough, detailed narrative
- Done in a timely manner and in accordance with ODJFS rules
- Have not had home studies returned for incomplete information
- Take the time to really get to know our families
- Thoroughness
- An assessor is quickly assigned
- Wait for completion is minimized due to organizational skills of the paperwork
- Home studies are prepared by LISW workers
- Reviewed and discussed by staff of 5 before approval
- Specific to type of adoption desired
- Experienced professionals who have devoted most of our career to this field
- Home studies are completed from many hours of interviewing and getting to each of the questions asked per individual
- Well written and fully complete
- Any other worker reading the home study will truly come to know the individuals
- Are 3840 pages and full of information and conversation
- Can tell that time was spent with the family

Staying in Touch with Interested Parents

- Understand that adoption has to be done on the families own time
- Make follow up calls to make sure parents have received all the answers to their questions
- Offer services whenever they are ready to proceed
- Method of being supportive but not pushy has led to calls and applications from families that have inquired 18 months before
- Our workers live and work in their own small communities
- We encourage ongoing contact with out clients, birth parents and adoptive parents
- An “open adoption” agency that fosters ongoing contact long before and after finalization
- Mail cards for our parties, seminars and local events to interested parents
- Call parents twice from the time a packet is sent until after it has been received
- Intake person stays in contact with families until they complete education classes
- Parents comment that the intake person’s encouragement keeps them going while they were in the ‘thinking about adopting’ phase

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Finding Children that Meet the Needs of Prospective Parents

- We are very realistic in presenting the children to the families
- Our families are very realistic in what they can handle
- Parents are well trained and understand that they are going to be parenting children with developmental stages that are not typical
- Use Developmental Matching

Finding Prospective Parents that Meet the Needs of Waiting Children

- Closely review the background of the parent, their needs and appearance

Child Specific Recruitment

- Successful in finding several homes by thinking outside the box and believing we could locate homes for older children
- Work with public agencies who refer children to us to develop a child specific recruitment plan
- Work with older children whose foster parents are not planning to adopt them
- Get to know child, are accountable for developing a family for the child, solve problem and are involved in the child's treatment to get them ready to be successful in a family
- Look for families who give children a reason to be successful in treatment

Collaborating with Other Agencies on Matches

- Have several small surrounding counties who refer adoptive families to us for recruitment
- Have several large counties who refer children

Matching

- Use developmental matching
- Have less than a 1% disruption rate in 6 years
- "Open adoption" policy and practice
- Matching requires that birth parents interview and choose parents
- Ongoing contact is encouraged
- Birth parents and adoptive parents establish a relationship that is supportive to the triad
- Adoption services are voluntary
- Birthparents assist in selecting an adoptive family

Preparing Children for Adoption

- We talk to the children and work very closely with the custodial, public agency to help the child develop realistic expectations about family life
- We are available to families in the crucial initial months of placement
- We work hard to get services in place prior to placement and we respect and empower families to be their own best advocates for their children
- We give children clear messages that their new parents are their parents!!

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Preparing Families for Adoption

- Working as a team, we go through every step of the process together
- The family is in control of every step
- By knowing what comes next, the families are prepared for the process
- Support groups for waiting families provide continuing education, contacts with post adoption specialists and families who have finalized who can answer questions
- Interactions of waiting, post placement and post finalization families are invaluable for helping the waiting family understand what the profiles mean, what developmental levels and special needs they can best parent
- Each family receives individual instruction/counseling by LISW worker
- Families receive training specific to their type of adoption
- Families get referrals to needed resources

Negotiating Subsidies

- We believe that finances should not interfere with the adoption of children and negotiate generous subsidies
- We believe that every child deserves a permanent family and we will do whatever is necessary to secure that end for our children
- Staff has been asked to train other counties
- Have computerized records
- Have developed federal and state guidelines
- Help families apply and know what the law states
- Support families if they need to request a state hearing

Distributing PASSS Funds

- Keep families informed
- One of the leaders in PASSS program from beginning
- Pitched original idea to the state adoption unit
- Among first agencies to use full allotment
- Promote PASSS to a great extent
- Creative in funding and creative in brainstorming services to assist families in healing their children and staying sane at the same time
- Each adoptive parents is made aware of the PASSS funding prior to finalization
- Have a therapist locally who is well trained in Attachment and Bonding issues and sees our adoptive families through the use of PASSS
- Evaluate each PASSS application thoroughly
- Make other agencies aware of our ability to use PASSS funding

Providing Post Placement Supervision

- We are a family, staff is always available
- Families know how to contact us 24/7, but are encouraged to parent their children
- Provide support groups, referral services, and plain one-on-one talking when needed
- Goes beyond the monthly visit
- A support system of staff and other families is established

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- Proactive in continuing training at visits, newsletter and support groups
- Resources are offered, staff works to establish needed services when placement is anticipated
- In-home supervision and phone contact
- All families sign a contract to attend an adoption support group at least once a month
- Formal post adoption program since 1990
- Program was recognized by President Clinton
- Have full time post adoption caseworker
- Offer crisis intervention, audio/video/book resources on parenting and adoption, respite camps, respite care, train respite providers, promote PASSS, assist with school problems, arrange adoption related training
- Philosophy is that the post placement period is a time of learning and adjusting for everyone
- Coach parents and support them as they are finding their way with their new child
- Play an educational resource role but also empower the family to make decisions
- Work hard to learn all we can about the child prior to placement
- Do best to promote growth, skills of the parents, confidence, attachment and supports for life

Providing Post Adoption Services

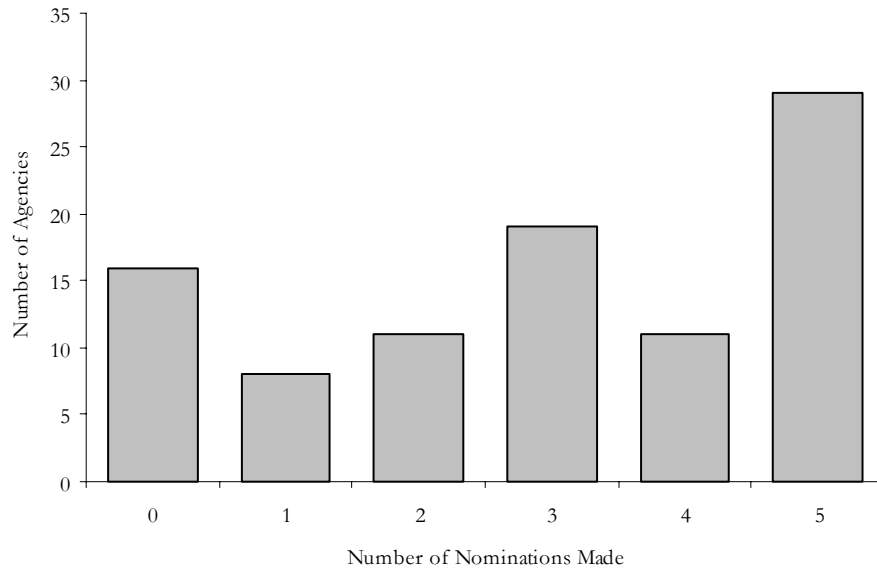
- Post adoption begins at inquiry, that is our philosophy and practice
- Each family may continue attendance at support groups where they learn issues and resources
- Have a post-adoption specialist available via phone or email
- List of resources is continually updated
- Families have already established informal buddy family relationships through support groups
- Hold a weekly support group for adoptive parents that provides additional training, support, networking, etc.
- Formal post-adoption program since 1990
- Program was recognized by President Clinton
- Have a full time post adoption caseworker
- Offer crisis intervention, audio/video/book resources on parenting and adoption, respite camps, respite care, train respite providers, promote PASSS, assist with school problems, arrange adoption related training, etc.
- Have an excellent post-adoption program is housed within the agency
- Take referrals from other agencies

Collaboration

Number of Collaborating Agencies

Agencies were asked to list the agencies that they collaborate with most frequently on home studies, matches or placements. They were able to name up to five agencies. The frequency distribution below (Chart 1) illustrates how many collaboration partners each agency listed.

Chart 1: Number of other agencies collaborated with



Most Nominated Agencies

The seventeen agencies that were mentioned by other agencies five or more times appear in Table 9 (next page). In addition, nine agencies were nominated by four other agencies, twelve were nominated by three other agencies, twenty agencies were nominated by two others, and 44 were nominated once.

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Table 9: Agencies most collaborated with

	Number of Nominations
Cuyahoga County PCSA	22
Franklin County PCSA	18
Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio	17
Northeast Ohio Adoption Services (NOAS)	12
A Child’s Waiting Foster Care and Adoption Program	11
Adopt America Network	10
A Place To Call Home, Inc.	9
Montgomery County PCSA	9
Summit County PCSA	8
Fairfield County DJFS/PCSA	7
Catholic Social Services of Southwest Ohio	6
Geauga County DJFS/PCSA/CSEA	6
Hamilton County DJFS/PCSA/CSEA	6
Richland County PCSA	6
Clermont County DJFS/PCSA/CSEA	5
Stark County DJFS/PCSA	5

Public and Private Collaboration

Public agencies were asked if they had been involved with another public agency within the last two years to complete a placement. They were then asked if they had been involved with a private agency in making a placement during the same period. Private agencies were asked the same questions. Both public and private agencies reported collaborating with public agencies more than with private agencies. Interestingly, private agencies reported working with other private agencies more than public agencies reported collaborating with private agencies. Table 10 shows the full results.

Table 10: Involvement with another agency to complete a placement

	Public Agency Respondents	Private Agency Respondents
Collaborate with Public	80.7%	83.5%
Collaborate with Private	56.1%	59.5%

Keys to Collaboration

Respondents were asked to describe something their agency or another agency does that makes it easy to collaborate. The responses and percentages of the 66 agencies that responded are below:

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- Good and frequent communication (24%)
- Attending regular meetings, either a collaborative of agencies or a regional or state meeting, that focus on collaboration (11%)
- Looking to privates to provide the pre and post services that we do not have the time or capacity to offer (9%)
- Working with agencies willing to share information and be open about the case (8%)
- A personal, established relationship with a worker in another agency (6%)
- Knowing another agency does quality work (6%)
- Trusting another agency and knowing they are honest (5%)
- Being and working with other experienced workers (5%)
- Agencies with a history of working together (3%)
- Sharing a common commitment to children (3%)
- Developing and signing an interagency placement agreement to outline the responsibility of each agency (3%)
- Adoption fairs (2%)
- Handing out fliers (2%)
- Good people skills—being polite and friendly (2%)
- Being easy to work with (2%)
- Having sound ethical practices (2%)
- Holding realistic expectations (2%)
- Being willing to share resources such as trainings, information, and post-adoption services (2%)
- Having a contract to provide services to another agency's families (2%)
- Valuing collaboration (2%)

Barriers to Collaboration

Adoption professionals were next asked what their agency or another agency does that makes it difficult to collaborate with them. Thirty nine barriers to collaboration were mentioned, which are listed below:

- Poor communication (31%)
- Trying to be proprietary in a situation that calls for cooperation (13%) “There seems to be a very competitive attitude that exists in Ohio...agencies tend not to be willing to see others as resources.”
- Not sharing information (10%)
- Not including the other agency in the process (8%)
- County agencies often use their own homes without even considering another agency's families (5%)
- Poor quality of work from another agency (5%)
- Not completing the work in a timely manner (5%)
- Not being open to sharing families (3%)
- Not releasing home studies (3%)
- Listing children who are not really available for adoption (3%)
- Difficulty in subsidy negotiation (3%)
- Rigid procedures that cannot be changed (3%)

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- A lack of consistency across the state (3%)
- “It seems like every county in Ohio does things differently. Sometimes large county agencies do things differently even within their departments.”
- Lack of trust from agency to agency (3%)
- Disrespect for adoptive parents (3%)

Marketing

Usefulness of Marketing Materials

Respondents were asked how useful various marketing products of *AdoptOhio* are for generating interest and finding suitable matches between waiting children and parents. Professionals rated the promotional items and OAPL website as being the two most useful products, and the Features Books and Children’s Books as being the least useful. See Table 11 for the complete results.

Table 11: Usefulness of Marketing Items

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not very Useful	Don’t Use	Don’t Know
Promotional Items	33.3%	27.3%	22.7%	12.1%	3.0%	1.5%
OAPL Website	24.6%	20.1%	21.8%	18.4%	13.4%	1.7%
Media Spots	11.0%	18.1%	26.4%	12.1%	15.9%	16.5%
Features Books	8.8%	15.9%	28.0%	31.9%	9.3%	6.0%
Children’s Book	6.0%	15.9%	20.9%	41.2%	13.7%	2.2%

Future Feature Book Theme Ideas

When asked, respondents had a few suggestions for themes of future Feature Books. All of those who commented wanted the focus to remain on the more difficult to place children. Teenagers needing permanence, extremely behaviorally challenged children, and large sibling groups were all mentioned. One respondent asked that they continue to be children who are representative of many children in the system. Another idea was to focus on foster parents who have adopted.

Overall Marketing Suggestions

Respondents were next asked for comments or suggestions about the marketing aspects of *AdoptOhio* overall. Twenty-nine (29) professionals made suggestions. Those suggestions, with the percentage of the overall comments that they represent, are listed below:

- Website and related materials should be more current (28%)
- Discontinue Children’s Photo Listing Book; it is a waste of effort (21%)
- Children who already have a placement identified should not be listed in any of the publications where parents can see them (21%)

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“Families who are already frustrated after years of infertility also get further frustrated when they search files only to find that these children are all taken as well. Keep them off the web and out of the book!”

- Website is an excellent tool, much easier to use than the printed materials (7%)
- Children’s Book is useful as an educational tool to demonstrate how many older and minority children are waiting for adoption (3%)
- Process to register a child in the OAPL publications and website takes too long (3%)
- Media spots should state the characteristics of waiting children and include the actual average ages (3%)
“Anytime there is a big media push for adoption in Ohio, we get numerous calls to adopt an “older” child of 1-3 years old. People need to hear actual ages that are considered “older” in the public system.”
- Include TV time for child specific recruitment (3%)
- Use billboards (3%)
- Sponsor adoption mixers (3%)
- Develop a quarterly video on waiting children (3%)

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Quarterly and Statewide Meetings

Just over seventy percent (70.3%) of agencies had been represented at a quarterly or statewide meeting within the past year. The respondents who had attended were asked how useful the information presented at the meeting was. Over half of those attending (56.8%) found the information useful or very useful and only 5.6% said that the information presented was not at all useful.

Meeting Agenda Requests

Respondents were asked what they would like to see on the agenda at the quarterly and state *AdoptOhio* meetings. Forty eight suggestions were made and are listed below:

- Updates on *AdoptOhio* procedures and rule and law changes (17%)
- How to strengthen collaboration between public and private agencies (8%)
- Plans for the future of *AdoptOhio* and what is happening at the state level with adoption (8%)
- Have a two-tiered agenda that includes the basics for those who are new to the system and a more advanced track of topics for those who are more experienced (6%)
- “The meetings tend to focus on the new workers by just having the same issues presented. We need to go to the next step. Give us more information that is useful to our knowledge level.”
- Training on subsidy negotiation (6%)
- Training on child specific recruitment (6%)
- Training on PASSS funding (4%)
- Ideas on retaining prospective parents after their initial inquiry (4%)
- Opportunity to collaborate and share literature on children in need of a placement (2%)
- Training on foster care (2%)

- Training on MEPA (2%)
- Training on transracial adoptions (2%)
- Training on completing new forms (2%)
- Training on navigating OAPL (2%)
- Training on listing a child on OAPL (2%)
- Training on using FACSIS (2%)
- Training on interviewing skills (2%)
- Training on matching skills (2%)
- Recruitment activity ideas (2%)
- Discussions of best practices in adoption (2%)
- Information on practices developed from Federal Adoption Opportunities grants (2%)
- Updates on the status of state RFPs (2%)
- Status of the FRED system (2%)
- Reviewing the SWAN model from Pennsylvania (2%)
- Include more relevant information for private agencies (2%)
- Compile a list of all area adoption support groups (2%)

Meeting Logistics Requests

Respondents were asked for suggestions about the logistics of the quarterly and statewide *AdoptOhio* meetings. Twenty-five respondents made comments about how the meetings could be improved. These comments are summarized below:

- Keep meetings where they are—church is easy to find and close to restaurants (24%)
- Hold regional meetings instead of statewide meetings (20%)
- Rotate meetings around the state so they are not always in Columbus (20%)
- Use the Internet or videoconferencing for meetings to cut down on the amount of travel that people have (20%)
- Do not move the meetings to downtown Columbus (20%)
- Coordinate (or even combine) state meetings with other adoption meetings so that less driving is involved (8%)
- Set yearly calendar for all meetings to ensure time to plan ahead (4%)
- Hold meetings in a facility that has separate rooms for breakout sessions (4%)
- Send a summary of meetings to those unable to attend (4%)

Satisfaction with Services

Professionals were then asked to respond to several statements about ODJFS and say if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, strongly disagreed or did not know. They were questioned about various services and about ODJFS in general. Overall, respondents tended to be satisfied with the job ODJFS was doing. The results to each question can be found in Table 12.

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Table 12: Satisfaction with ODJFS

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
I do not receive critical information that ODJFS sends out about <i>AdoptOhio</i>	7.8%	23.4%	25.0%	35.9%	7.8%
I know who to contact at ODJFS if I have a question that someone in my agency cannot answer	40.6%	39.1%	14.1%	4.7%	1.6%
I have contacted ODJFS regarding an <i>AdoptOhio</i> question and received no response to my question	12.3%	15.4%	21.5%	41.5%	9.2%
ODJFS is making <i>AdoptOhio</i> a better program	21.9%	42.2%	15.6%	4.7%	15.6%
The ODJFS help desk connects me with the people or information that I need	14.1%	34.4%	14.1%	6.3%	31.3%
ODJFS keeps me updated on policy changes that pertain to <i>AdoptOhio</i>	24.6%	44.6%	12.3%	10.8%	7.7%

Additional Comments

Participants were given the opportunity to make further comments about the system in general. Eleven comments were made. Those remarks are summarized below:

- Things are going well with the *AdoptOhio* program (27%)
“I feel like ODJFS and the agencies are now working better together. It used to be that finding fault with agencies made ODJFS feel like they were doing their job. Now, I feel more of a partnership—when the agencies do well, it reflects well on them, too.”
- Adoption rules and forms should be readily locatable, downloadable and easy to submit via the web (18%)
- Facilitate the sharing of instruments between agencies for tracking financial and placement *AdoptOhio* data (9%)
- It is unusual to find someone at ODJFS who answers their phone or responds to messages (9%)

- The state is easy to work with—phone calls and emails are always returned promptly (9%)
- There is an unnecessary delay between the time information is submitted on a child and when they are posted to the web (9%)
- Counties need to be more cooperative in matching children with private agencies (9%)
- Training for adoption workers needs to be accessible to private agencies as well as public agencies (9%)

Recommendations

- Discontinue publication of Children’s Book
- Remove children with identified matches from the OAPL website and other marketing publications
- Ensure OAPL website is updated on a regular basis
- Include rules and forms on the ODJFS website in readily downloadable form and make forms easy to submit via the web
- Facilitate collaboration between public and private agencies
- Include tracks in quarterly and state meetings—sessions both on basics and more advanced topics
- Disseminate best practice information at quarterly and state meetings
- Include training opportunities on specific topics at quarterly and state meetings
- Look into feasibility of holding regional meetings or rotating meeting locations to different parts of the state
- Coordinate quarterly and state meetings with other scheduled meetings so those from out of town only have to make one trip