

## FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

### Introduction

Infants and children and youth from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds need foster and adoptive homes. Michigan's demographic and cultural diversity ranges from northern and rural, to urban southeastern Michigan, and the foster care population is similarly varied. Maintaining an adequate array of adoptive and foster home placements that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care continues to be a top priority. Placement with relatives for foster care and adoption is a strength in Michigan, and the state-administered structure ensures a smooth process for placement of children across county and regional jurisdictions.

At any given time, Michigan has over 13,000 children in foster care and relies on public and private child-placing agencies to find temporary and permanent homes for these children.

Michigan has over 90 contracts with child-placing agencies for foster care case management and 60 contracts with 48 agencies for adoption services that cover all areas of the state and work with potential foster and adoptive parents in a flexible manner to ensure all interested persons have access to agency services regardless of their financial status.

### Child and Family Services Review Round 3

**Item 33; Standards Applied Equally:** Michigan received a rating of Strength based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.

**Item 34; Requirements for Criminal Background Checks:** Michigan received a rating of Strength based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.

**Item 35; Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes:** Michigan received a rating of Area Needing Improvement based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.

**Goal:** MDHHS will ensure best practices for recruitment and retention are used and barriers are addressed as needed.

- **Objective 1:** MDHHS will ensure timely search for prospective parents for children needing adoptive placements, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, if such procedures ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

**Measure:** Number of youth available for adoption without an identified family that are registered with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange within required timeframes.

**Baseline – 2017:** Area needing improvement.

**Benchmarks 2020 – 2024:** Demonstrate improvement each year.

- Youth available for adoption without an identified family are registered with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange.
- Youth available for adoption without an identified family one year after termination of parental rights are referred to an Adoption Resource Consultant.

- **Objective 2:** MDHHS will enhance resource parent engagement, support and development to recruit, prepare and support resource families in their ability to accept placements of children transitioning from congregate care.  
**Measure:** Percentage of children transitioning from congregate care into a foster home or relative placement.  
**Baseline – 2017:** Area needing improvement.  
**Benchmarks 2020 – 2024:** Demonstrate improvement each year.
  - MDHHS is developing a pilot program to test enhanced mentoring as a means to support families who accept placement of youth with complex needs, especially those returning to the community from congregate care. The pilot should begin in FY 2020.
  
- **Objective 3:** MDHHS will enhance resource parent engagement strategies to impact resource parent satisfaction, retention and development.  
**Measure:** Percentage of resource parents reporting satisfaction with their role, their interactions with their agency and with the department.  
**Baseline – 2017:** Area needing improvement.  
**Benchmarks 2020 – 2024:** Demonstrate improvement each year.
  - MDHHS is leading focus groups with foster, adoptive and kinship parents to identify currently existing support strategies and gain a better understanding of the gaps in support programming. Findings will be shared across the state to inform annual Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Plans.
  
- **Objective 4:** MDHHS will enhance resource parent pre-licensure and adoption training to adequately prepare resource families with a baseline of knowledge about the needs of children placed in foster care and/or available for adoption.  
**Measure:** Percentage of resource parents demonstrating increased understanding of the needs of children in foster care, the child welfare system, and processes following completion of training.  
**Baseline – 2017:** Area needing improvement.  
**Benchmarks 2020 – 2024:** Demonstrate improvement each year.
  - MDHHS has contracted with Eastern Michigan University to develop a research driven training curriculum for foster, adoptive and kinship parents. The curriculum is currently being developed with an estimated statewide implementation date of 12/1/2020.

**Item 36; State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements:** Michigan received a rating of Area Needing Improvement based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.

- **Objective:** MDHHS will support safe and timely placement across jurisdictions when such placement is in the best interest of the children.

**Outcome:** Safe and timely placement of children across jurisdictions ensures that the most optimum placements for children are available to them.

**Measure:** Interstate Compact data on percentage of out-of-state placements in Michigan with completed home studies within 60 days of the state's request.

**Baseline - 2017:**

- **CFSR 2018:** Area needing improvement.
- **Interstate Compact 2017:** 55% of home studies were completed within 60 days.

**Benchmarks 2020 – 2024:** Demonstrate improvement each year.

A performance audit of MDHHS's interstate compact programs began in August of 2015, with a final report being issued in December of 2017. Of note was a finding regarding timeliness of home study completion:

### **Finding 2 Title**

Improved monitoring and timely completion of non-expedited home study reports needed for out-of-state placements.

### **Finding 2 Description**

MDHHS needs to improve its monitoring and timely completion of non-expedited home study reports for the proposed out-of-state placements of children within and outside of Michigan. Timely assessment helps states minimize delays and reduce the length of time children remain in potentially less favorable situations.

### **Recommendation Description**

We recommend that MDHHS improve its monitoring and timely completion of non-expedited home study reports for the proposed out-of-state placements of children within and outside of Michigan.

### **Planned Activities for 2020-2024**

Several efforts are underway to improve timeliness in completion of home studies for incoming requests from other states including:

- MDHHS has begun the process to include Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children functionality in MiSACWIS as well as utilization of an electronic interstate system, the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE). This will allow ticklers and easier monitoring of home study completion.
- More frequent follow-up on incoming cases before they are overdue.
- Creation and use of a centralized Interstate Compact email account to increase efficiency.
- Participation in monthly supervisory calls with MDHHS local office supervisors to provide education and clarification on Interstate Compact requirements, policies and processes, including timely completion of home study reports.

## Reaching Out to All Areas in the Community

The Office of Child Welfare Policy and Programs provided materials and data to each of Michigan's 83 counties to assist them in completing their Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention plans for 2018. Each county received data regarding:

- Demographics of children in care by county.
- Children entering and exiting care by county.
- Total number of foster homes licensed by county.
- Foster home closures by relative and non-related foster homes.
- Data to complete the Foster Home Estimator, a foster home needs assessment tool.

Counties and agencies reviewed the data and Foster Home Estimator results to identify targeted populations. The counties and agencies collaborated to identify non-relative licensing goals and strategies to recruit homes for the targeted populations. Collaboration and planning between the MDHHS county office, private agencies, federally recognized tribes, faith communities and key foster/adoptive/kinship parents is necessary to determine the county's overall recruitment needs and goals and the actions steps required to achieve those goals.

In 2018, each county's licensing goal was analyzed, and monthly targets were established to assist counties in monitoring their progress towards meeting their unrelated licensing goal.

In 2018, MDHHS collected and analyzed trends on new licenses, closed homes and the number of relative homes compared to non-relative homes.

- The Division of Child Welfare Licensing issued 1,862 new foster home licenses, an increase of 30 from 2017.
- Of new licenses, 1,273 accept unrelated placements, a decrease of 26 from 2017.
- On Oct. 1, 2017, there were 6,216 licensed foster homes. One year later, 4,490 of those licensed foster parents remained licensed, which is a 72 percent retention rate and a 2 percent increase from 2017.
- The number of homes that closed was 1,864, a decrease of 33 from 2017.
- Each month, approximately 100 to 200 surveys are sent to foster parents whose foster home closed during the previous month.

The results of the closed home surveys show the majority of homes close voluntarily. The top reasons foster parents closed their license were:

- Adopted the child(ren) placed with them.
- Demands/stress of being a foster parent.
- Family needs.

The chart below details the trend of licensure and closed homes in urban counties:

County	Original Licenses			Closed Homes		
	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Genesee	70	77	80	120	78	70
Kent	115	118	144	178	117	136
Macomb	71	105	115	135	97	102
Oakland	160	149	141	141	124	159
Wayne	216	219	204	246	220	240
<b>Total</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>707</b>

The chart below describes the type of homes (relative and non-relative) opened in urban counties in 2018:

County	Relative	Non-relative	Total
Genesee	31	49	80
Kent	47	97	144
Macomb	43	72	115
Oakland	49	92	141
Wayne	91	113	204
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>684</b>

### Statewide and Regional Recruitment Progress in 2018

- Regional Resource Teams went into effect in 2018. The six Regional Resource Teams are located across the state and provide regional recruitment, retention and training for foster and adoptive parents. Regional Resource Teams focus on recruiting, supporting and developing foster families to meet annual non-relative licensing goals, to retain a higher percentage of existing foster families, to appropriately prepare families for the challenges associated with fostering and to develop existing foster family skills to enable them to foster children with challenging behaviors.
- MDHHS worked with several media venues to execute effective marketing strategies and advertising for recruitment of foster and adoptive parents statewide.
- The 2018 Heart Gallery Opening was held on April 28, 2018 and featured 146 youths who were photographed by 50 photographers from around the state.
- The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange hosted Heart Gallery events statewide.
- MDHHS held its fifth annual Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parent Conference in collaboration with the Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parent Collaborative Council. The conference was held on June 29 and June 30, 2018, and was attended by foster, adoptive and kinship parents from communities throughout the state.
- MDHHS hosted the annual Community Faith-Based Summit on May 18, 2018. Over 60 faith and community leaders and faith/community partners attended the event.
- The Community and Faith-Based Initiative on Foster Care and Adoption collaborated with faith communities throughout the state. This initiative worked with Faith

Communities Coalitions on Foster Care located in 11 different regions.

- The Community and Faith-Based Advisory Council continued to promote foster care and adoption and identified ways faith communities could assist in enhancing services to children and families served by MDHHS. The council is comprised of five members with at least three being members of the clergy. The council meets quarterly.
- The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange held “meet and greet” recruitment events that provided an environment for families to meet children available for adoption without an identified adoptive family.
- The template for the Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Plans was revised for 2019 to include additional information about event goals and expected collaboration.

## **Using Foster and Adoptive Parents for Recruitment**

### **Progress in 2018**

- The Foster Care Navigator program assisted families who inquired about becoming licensed foster parents. Foster care navigators helped families navigate the licensing process, locate resources and understand the licensing rules and needs of children in foster care.
- Each year, over 2,000 new family inquiries are received through the Foster Care Navigator program, of which over 150 families are actively engaged in Foster Care Navigator services and working toward foster parent licensure at any given time.
- Navigators through the Foster Care Navigator program are a resource for mentoring and supporting relatives seeking to undergo the licensing process.
- The Foster Care Navigator program was included in the Regional Resource Team contracts. This allowed navigators to assist families in each region of the state.
- MDHHS continued to co-lead the Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parent Collaborative Council. The council is a collaboration of MDHHS, tribes and parent-led organizations whose focus is to connect foster, adoptive and kinship parents to resources, education and training.

## **Addressing Barriers to Adoption**

### **Progress in 2018**

- Beginning in January 2017 and continuing in 2018, MDHHS began a collaboration with the adoption resource consultants and the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange to look at 49 youth who were photo listed with the exchange without an identified family for over four years.
  - The group reviewed information regarding the 49 youth, including length of time since termination, placement history, type of placement, assigned adoption agency and assigned adoption worker to identify trends.
  - The group met bi-monthly to review barriers to achieving permanency.
  - To achieve permanency for youth involved in Project 49, the group enlisted the help of permanency resource monitors and community mental health liaisons.
  - Since the group’s inception, 22 of the 49 youth have achieved permanency.

- MDHHS continued to provide post-adoption services statewide in 2018 through eight regional contracts. Post-adoption services include case management, family support and support groups, coordination of community services, information and referral. Beginning in 2016, post-adoption services hosted annual conferences in their regions to support and educate adoptive parents.
- The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange's Match Support Program is a statewide service for families who have been matched with a child from the exchange website and who are in the process adoption. The Match Support Program has specialists who provide up to 90 days of services to families by providing them with referrals to support groups, educational opportunities and other referrals to helpful community resources.
- Adoption navigators host quarterly Waiting Family Forums for families who have been approved to adopt and/or those in the home study process. The forums are an opportunity for the families to learn what happens to their inquiries on a youth after they submit them, what they can do to make the most of the wait time, learn ways to strengthen their inquiries, tips on how to effectively advocate for their family and meet other families waiting to adopt.
- Adoption navigators are experienced adoptive parents who offer guidance and personal knowledge to potential adoptive families. Adoption navigator services continued to be provided through the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange.
- In partnership with Casey Family Programs, the adoption program office conducted Rapid Permanency Reviews in February 2018. Rapid Permanency Reviews are designed to look at systematic barriers and bottlenecks during the adoption process. During the February 2018 review, the focus was children who were available for adoption and who were on "hold" with an identified family for greater than 12 months without achieving permanency. The review looked at 153 cases of children whose commitments were in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, Monroe and St. Clair county courts.
  - Of the 153 cases reviewed, 103 achieved permanency through adoption, 12 had a permanency goal change to a goal other than adoption and 38 continue to be tracked monthly.

### **Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Parents for Diverse Youth**

At any given time, Michigan has approximately 13,500 children in foster care and relies on public and private child placing agencies to help find temporary and permanent homes for these children. Adoption agencies match recruitment efforts to community needs, including addressing language barriers to facilitate the licensing and adoption process.

### **Progress in 2018**

- The Office of Child Welfare Policy and Programs held a two-day conference for adoption, licensing and foster care staff from agencies throughout the state. The conference included training on engaging relative and non-relative caregivers, developing thorough assessments, common licensing rule issues, enhancing caregiver support, support for LGBTQ children, addressing children's educational needs and permanency.

- Technical assistance is provided by AdoptUSKids to increase Michigan's pool of foster, adoptive and relative families and improve the satisfaction of families.
- The Office of Child Welfare Policy and Programs held a two-day conference for adoption workers, supervisors, adoption resource consultants, post adoption resource center staff, and others involved in the adoption process. The conference included training on trauma, mental health, Michigan's adoption assistance programs, cross-racial adoptions, Central Adoption Registry, successful transitions, making adoptions last and recruitment strategies.