



# North Carolina Child Welfare 2020-2024 Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**  
Division of Social Services

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## Section I: Overview

### *Introduction*

North Carolina is a state supervised, county administered child welfare system with partially privatized foster home licensing and adoption services. Prospective foster and adoptive families can be licensed as foster families and/or approved as adoptive families by either a county child welfare agency, a licensed child placing agency, or licensed adoption agency. This variation in service provision across the state provides a wide variety of localized licensure and approval options for families. North Carolina does not have a dual foster care/adoption licensure process. For the purposes of this Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, the term “County child welfare agency” includes County Departments of Social Services and consolidated human services agencies.

### *History of Diligent Recruitment and Retention in North Carolina*

North Carolina began development of a new statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan in 2016 in partnership with representatives from county child welfare agencies, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, youth, Guardian Ad Litem staff, and other key stakeholders. Each representative provided input into the development of the North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. The approach was collaborative and structured and was facilitated by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at Adopt US Kids. Critical to this work was envisioning the desired foster and adoptive parent recruitment system and establishing core values.

Information gained through the stakeholder meetings was used by a working group made up of the Division of Social Services (DSS), local County Departments of Social Services, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, and youth currently and formerly in foster care to write and update NC’s Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. The new statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan was first implemented in July 2017.

To best meet the needs of children in the custody of each county child welfare agency and North Carolina’s foster and adoptive families, the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan considers the needs, resources, and structure of each individual county. For that reason, each county was tasked with writing a localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan with technical assistance and resources provided by the North Carolina Division of Social Services. DSS provided county child welfare agencies with a universal template for a localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, as well as supplemental guides and attachments for tracking data and providing best practices. County child welfare agencies received training through webinars and regional meetings on the statewide plan, the county-level localized template, and MEPA requirements. Counties submitted their annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans to the state for review, feedback, and technical assistance as needed. The DSS reviewed each county’s plan, developed a plan for technical assistance with each county, and provided written correspondence to each county when the plan was approved. In July 2018, localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans were successfully implemented in all 100 counties.

North Carolina has provided various statewide diligent recruitment and retention activities for county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies, including webinars, quarterly calls and an annual summit. In May 2019, North Carolina held the first annual Child Welfare Summit on Diligent Recruitment and Retention. The summit was an opportunity for county child welfare agencies and private child placing agency staff to come together to discuss ten key drivers for improving recruitment and retention

outcomes. The key drivers include: data driven; leadership within and across agencies; child-centered; collaboration with families; collaboration with community partners; sustainability; quality customer service; kinship, guardianship, and post-adoption services; MEPA; and, develop and support families. North Carolina continues to focus on implementing a statewide diligent recruitment and retention plan that is data-driven, family experience focused, and flexible to meet the needs of individual communities throughout the state. As a result of a Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) review, the county-level localized template has been updated to ensure MEPA compliance in regard to diligent recruitment and retention. The DSS, in partnership with the DSS Civil Rights Officer and US HHS Office of Civil Rights, coordinated a county child welfare staff training on Civil Rights and MEPA requirements. The updated template was reviewed during this training, in regional supervisor meetings and in a recorded webinar. The updated template will be implemented in October 2019.

### *2020-2024 Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan*

DSS remains committed to increasing the number of well-trained, skilled, and diverse foster and adoptive families in North Carolina. Through the 2020-2024 statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, efforts will focus on the provision of technical assistance to counties for development and implementation of county specific plans as well as statewide initiatives designed to increase the number of available foster and adoptive parents.

Through ongoing technical assistance, DSS will provide county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies with an updated universal template aligned with the three statewide targets to facilitate counties' developing strategies specific to their community to meet the statewide targets.

North Carolina DSS will lead a statewide foster, adoptive, and kinship family recruitment campaign across the state. The campaign will include activities such as statewide matching events, recruitment efforts targeted towards older youth and sibling groups, foster care and adoption awareness month events, and more. DSS will also develop and publish diligent recruitment and retention literature that can be used at the statewide and county level.

## **Section II: Roles and Responsibilities**

### Roles and Responsibilities of State Division of Social Services

The DSS provides state level diligent recruitment and retention activities for county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies including, but not limited to, an annual Child Welfare Summit focusing on recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families, regional meetings, statewide calls, and webinars. The DSS also provides ongoing technical assistance, resources and support to county and private agencies regarding their specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts.

### *Outreach and Child-Specific Recruitment*

The DSSs' NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network is North Carolina's Statewide Diligent Recruitment Entity and the Adoption Exchange Program is available to all North Carolina residents as well as residents of other states. The Adoption Exchange can be accessed at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/adoption-and-foster-care>.

NC Kids manages the following elements of diligent recruitment and retention:

- Provide state-level first point of contact for individuals interested in becoming foster or adoptive families via a general email address and telephone hotline, talking families through the general process of becoming a foster and/or adoptive family in North Carolina.
- Manage and facilitate North Carolina's adoption exchange program, providing targeted child specific recruitment of adoptive homes through online photo listings.
- Conduct preliminary review of approved adoptive family's Preplacement Assessment for initial matching before final matching determination is made by the County child welfare agency.
- Provide diligent recruitment tools such as the NC Kids website, general brochures, fliers, pens, key chains, magnets, and posters for use at the state level and by County and private agencies.
- Provide technical assistance and support to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies regarding general, targeted, and child specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts.
- Provide monitoring and technical assistance support for each county's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan on an annual basis.
- Publish North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan data on an annual basis.

North Carolina's Permanency Innovation Initiative (PII), was launched in 2013 by NC's General Assembly. Under this initiative, a private child placing agency, Children's Home Society, provides services to:

- Improve permanency outcomes for children and youth living in foster care through reunification, guardianship, or adoption; and
- Improve engagement with biological relatives of children in or at risk of entering foster care

These goals are achieved through child specific recruitment efforts utilizing the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model as developed by The Dave Thomas Foundation and Permanency Training Services designed to build the capacity of child welfare professionals and the families supporting youth in foster care.

#### *Cultural Sensitivity, Working with Diverse Communities, and Addressing Linguistic Barriers*

The DSS provides trainings for county child welfare agency staff on working with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations. The trainings include *Child Welfare in North Carolina: Pre-Service* and *Building Cultural Safety*. These trainings include information on cultural sensitivity and working with diverse communities. Information on the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) is covered in the following trainings offered by DSS: *Permanency Planning in Child Welfare Services*, *Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services* and *Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Performance: Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (TIPS-MAPP)*. The DSS and county child welfare agencies take reasonable steps to ensure that people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to the licensure process and foster care and adoption programs. One of the provisions of the Voluntary Compliance Agreement signed with US Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights is that each county child welfare agency develop a Title VI/Limited English Proficiency (LEP) compliance plan to address the needs of this ever-growing population of individuals whose primary language is not English. The DSS provides additional trainings at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/county-staff-information/training#program-compliance> including *Civil Rights Training for County Departments of Social Services*, *Mexican Consulate Webinar*, *Rights of Families with Limited English Proficiency*, *Civil Rights Agency Training*, *NC Division of Social Services Presentation on Interpreter Training*,

and *Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994* (Parts I and II). Additional resources including the Mexican Consulate webinar and brochure and interpreter training resources are also located on this website.

#### *Fee Structure*

Because the North Carolina child welfare system operates as a state supervised and county administered state, each of the 100 counties is required to develop a non-discriminatory fee structure for prospective foster and adoptive families.

#### Roles and Responsibilities of County Child Welfare Agencies

As discussed above, because North Carolina is a state supervised, county administered child welfare system, each county is tasked with writing an annual localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan with the technical assistance and resources provided by the DSS. County-specific plans are submitted by counties annually, due on September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The county-specific plan is comprehensive, data-driven, and includes Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) requirements. In addition to localized plans, county child welfare agencies are required to report data to the DSS on an annual basis, due on September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, using the attached Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B).

A template for a county-level Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (Appendix A) is provided, along with supplemental guides and attachments that are used to track data, provide best practice outcomes, and provide ongoing support to localized efforts. County child welfare agencies receive training through webinars and regional meetings on the statewide plan, county-level localized template, and MEPA requirements. Counties then submit their annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan to the state for review, feedback, and technical assistance as needed. Each County's Plan will be reviewed by the DSS; a plan for technical assistance is created, and written correspondence approving the localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan is provided.

Each County's annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will also serve as their annual MEPA Plan. County-specific plans include, but are not limited to: (a) a description of the characteristics of children and youth for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed in the county; (b) specific strategies to reach all parts of the community; (c) diverse methods of disseminating information about becoming a foster/adoptive parent as well as child specific information; (d) strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/adoptive parents have access to the licensure process, including location and hours of operation; (e) strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations; (f) strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers; (g) non-discriminatory fee structure; and (h) procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for all children needing an adoptive placement. Please reference the County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template and the attached resources for additional guidance and information regarding the overlap between diligent recruitment and retention and the requirements of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act.

#### Roles and Responsibilities of Private Child Placing Agencies

Private child placing agencies are a vital part of NC's child welfare system. Each county child welfare agency is highly encouraged to collaborate with the private child placing agencies that serve children and families in their counties when writing their Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. Many private child placing agencies develop their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan on a regular basis. Private child placing agencies are encouraged to share these detailed plans with the DSS and the counties they serve to promote collaboration and consistency in practice. Private child placing agencies may utilize the

templates provided to inform their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. At a minimum, private child placing agencies who place children in the custody of a county child welfare agency are required to report data to the DSS at the end of each fiscal year using the attached Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B). Monitoring and oversight of private agency foster home licensing and practice is provided by the DSS Licensing and Regulatory staff.

**Section III: State Level Data**

Data Regarding North Carolina’s Children in Foster Care and Foster and Adoptive Families

In addition to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies submitting a completed data profile (Appendix B) annually, the DSS provides a data summary of the statewide characteristics of children in foster care, children legally free for adoption, and licensed foster homes. The table below provides that information in this initial report; the table will be updated annually at the time of submission of the statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan through the Annual Progress and Services Report.

<b>For YTD SFY 2017-2018 CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN FOSTER CARE</b>	<b>N=11,380</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Data Source/As of</b>
Female	5,591	49%	*CSDW June 2018 data month Run 5/30/19
Male	5,789	51%	
Caucasian	5,959	52%	
African American	3,629	31%	
Hispanic	968	8%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	248	2.2%	
Asian	50	0.4%	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	--	
Bi-racial	637	5%	
Other	1	.01%	
Unable to Determine	189	1%	
Ages 0-5	4,424	39%	
Ages 6-10	2,610	23%	
Ages 11-14	1,905	17%	
Ages 15-17	1,718	15%	
Ages 18-21	723	6%	

<b>For YTD FY 2017-2018 CHILDREN WHO EXITED FOSTER CARE</b>	<b>N = 5,822</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Data Source/As of</b>
Female	2,842	49%	*CSDW June 2018 data month Run 5/30/19
Male	2,980	51%	
Caucasian	2,975	51%	
African American	1,648	28%	
Hispanic	448	8%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	180	3%	
Asian	29	0.5%	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	38	0.7%	
Bi-racial	376	6.5%	
Other	59	1.1%	
Unable to Determine	69	1.2%	
Ages 0-5	2,263	39%	
Ages 6-10	1,377	24%	
Ages 11-14	710	12%	
Ages 15-17	723	12%	
Ages 18-21	749	13%	
ICWA-Eligible	6	0.1%	
<b>Reasons for Exit</b>	<b>N = 5,822</b>		
Reunification with Parents or Primary Caretakers	1,593	27%	
Guardianship with a Relative	1,092	19%	
Adoption	1,423	24%	
Guardianship with Court-Approved Caretaker	195	3%	
Custody with Non-Removal Parent or Relative	657	11%	
Custody with Other Court-Approved Caretaker	0	--	
Emancipation	593	10%	
Transfer to Another Agency	94	2%	
Runaway	0	--	
Death of Child	10	0.2%	
ICPC	0	--	
Authority Revoked for Reasons Other than Above	165	2.8%	
Missing Field (blank)	0	--	

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Data Source/As of</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION</b>	<b>N= 959</b>		*CSDW June 2018 data month Run 5/30/19
<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	
Female	416	43.4%	
Male	543	56.6%	
Caucasian	526	54.9%	
African American	270	28.2%	
Hispanic	58	6.1%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	18	1.9%	
Asian	0	0.0%	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.1%	
Bi-racial	71	7.4%	
Other	8	0.9%	
Unable to Determine	6	0.6%	
Ages 0-5	315	32.9%	
Ages 6-10	252	26.3%	
Ages 11-14	251	26.2%	
Ages 15-17	140	14.6%	
ICWA Eligible	6	0.6%	
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING ACTIVELY RECRUITED FOR BY NC (NC's Adoption Exchange and Photolisting)</b>	<b>Legally Free: 233</b> <b>Legal Risk: 25</b> <b>Hold: 98</b>		*AIMS and *NC FAST 6/1/2019

<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF LICENSED BEDS</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% w/o Special Programs</b>	<b>Data Source/As of</b>
Foster Care (privately licensed)	2,889	20.7%	23.0%	*XPTR 5/30/19
Special Program	1,367	9.8%		
Therapeutic Homes (privately licensed)	4,051	29.1%	32.3%	
Foster Care (county licensed)	5,207	37.4%	41.5%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,923</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		

<b>RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FOSTER FAMILIES (Private Agency Supervised Households)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Exported from *SESSIONS 5/30/19
Caucasian	3,739	78.2%	
African American	939	19.6%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	52	1.1%	
Asian	14	0.3%	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	0.1%	
Multi-racial	28	0.6%	
Unable to Determine	6	0.1%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,783</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
Hispanic or Latino	193	4.0%	
Not Hispanic or Latino	4,590	96.0%	

<b>RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FOSTER FAMILIES (DSS Supervised Households)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Exported from *SESSIONS 5/30/2019
Caucasian	3,344	49.8%	
African American	3,234	48.1%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	72	1.1%	
Asian	17	0.3%	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	0.1%	
Multi-racial	28	0.4%	
Unable to Determine	16	0.2%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,717</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
Hispanic or Latino	253	3.8%	
Not Hispanic or Latino	6,464	96.2%	
Unknown	3,344	49.8%	

*\*Data Sources*

*Child Services Data Warehouse (CSDW):* A data repository that captures information about children and families served through the child welfare system. To access data from the CSDW, the state uses Business Objects, a business intelligence software that provides the business user with more flexibility in defining specifics of a given report.

*Adoption Information Management System (AIMS):* A database that maintains indexed adoption information on all adoptions in the state of North Carolina. The database also houses information on children in foster care who are legally free for adoption and awaiting an adoptive home.

*North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST):* A case management program that uses business processes that enable child welfare staff to spend more time assisting families. The program captures specific data points to assist in evaluating performance.

*X/PTR*: A report distribution system maintained by NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS's) Information Technology Division (ITD). Business users of DSS data provide specifications for reporting needs to ITD, which will then generate a report accessible through Sessions' X/PTR page or through other, more user-friendly "shells", or alternative user interfaces.

*SESSIONS*: Sessions is the Legacy user interface in which county and state users can enter data about services across DSS. These data are stored on the NC DHHS's mainframe computer system.

#### Description of the Characteristics of Children for whom Foster and Adoptive Homes are Needed

Over 11,500 children are in foster care, of which 52% are Caucasian, 32% are African American, 8% are Hispanic, and 8% are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Bi-racial, or other. The largest group of children in foster care (39%) are between the ages of 0-5, followed by children ages 6-10 (23%), children ages 11-14 (17%) and 15-17 (15%). Additionally, 723 young adults, ages 18-20, are participating in North Carolina's extended foster care program, Foster Care 18-21, which makes up 6% of children/youth being served in foster care. In SFY 2017-2018, 5,822 children and youth exited foster care. The largest group was between the ages of 0-5 (39%), followed by children ages 6-10 (24%), children and youth ages 11-14 (12%) and youth ages 15-17 (12%). Of these children and youth, 27% were reunified with their family, 24% were adopted, 22% exited to guardianship with a relative or other court approved caretaker, 11% exited to custody with the non-removal parent or relative, and 10% aged out of foster care at age 18.

As of the end of June 2018, 959 children and youth in foster care were available for adoption. Of those, 55% were Caucasian, 28% were African American, 6% were Hispanic and 11% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Bi-racial, or other. Of the children and youth available for adoption, the largest group (33%) were ages 0-5, followed by children ages 6-10 (26%), children and youth ages 11-14 (26%) and youth ages 15-17 (15%).

#### **Section IV: 2020-2024 Statewide Commitments and Targets for Diligent Recruitment and Retention**

To support North Carolina's values and long-term vision for diligent recruitment and retention, three areas of focus have been identified for the 2020-2024 Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, with a commitment of recruiting and maintaining a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program. All statewide and localized diligent recruitment and retention activities in North Carolina support the following three targets, which are anchored in one or more of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Commitments:

**Commitment:** *Recruit and Maintain a Sufficient Pool of Diverse Families to Meet the Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care*

##### **Target 1:** *Family Response and Engagement System*

State, counties and private child placing agencies will provide quality family experience to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families from initial inquiry through post-placement services.

##### **Target 2:** *Family Capacity Development and Support*

State, counties, and private child placing agencies will provide ongoing capacity development and support of foster, adoptive and kinship families to help meet families’ needs and build on their skills.

**Target 3: Increase the number of licensed kinship placements**

State, counties and private child placing agencies will work in partnership to remove barriers to kinship training and licensure and increase the number of children and youth who are placed in licensed kinship placements and who exit care to guardianship and receive Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) benefits.

The three statewide diligent recruitment and retention targets are grounded in North Carolina’s commitment to safety, permanency and well-being for children, as outlined in the 2020-2024 CFSP. Through diligent recruitment and retention efforts, North Carolina aims to increase stability of foster care placements, achieve permanence for children in a timely manner, provide safe and nurturing environments for children who cannot remain in their own homes, and ensure foster, adoptive and kinship families have what they need to meet the well-being needs of children and youth for whom they are caring.

The following chart outlines the three statewide targets, followed by specific strategies that DSS, county child welfare agencies, and private child placing agencies will complete in order to achieve each target. Because diligent recruitment and retention efforts are made on a statewide level and are specific to local communities, the agency responsible for the strategy is also noted in the chart below.

<b>Diligent Recruitment and Retention Commitment Overview:</b>	
North Carolina will recruit and maintain a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families that reflect the diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed, and who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program.	
Rationale	2015 NC CFSR findings identified the state’s efforts to recruit a sufficient pool of potential foster and adoptive families reflective of the ethnic and racial diversity of children in North Carolina (Item 35) as an area in need of improvement. In addition, the state’s efforts to increase placement stability for children in foster care (Item 4) and efforts to ensure siblings in foster care are placed together (Item 7) were identified as areas in need of improvement.
	1. By 2022, North Carolina will develop a family response and engagement system that offers consistent messaging across the state and focuses on quality family experience to prospective foster, adoptive and kinship families.
	2. By 2022, North Carolina will ensure foster, adoptive, and kinship families are provided with ample opportunity for development, support, and growth in order to build their skills and meet the unique needs of children and youth served by the foster care system.
	3. By 2024, to increase the number of licensed kinship caregivers, North Carolina will implement a training and licensure process specific to the needs of kinship caregivers and the children for whom they care for.

<b>Target 1: Family Response and Engagement System</b>	
Description	State, counties and private child placing agencies will provide quality family experience to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families from initial inquiry through post-placement services.
Rationale	Findings from the 2015 NC CFSR findings identified the state’s efforts to recruit a sufficient pool of potential foster and adoptive families reflective of the ethnic and racial diversity of children in North Carolina (Item 35) as an area in need of improvement. It is important for

<b>Target 1: Family Response and Engagement System</b>		
	<p>prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive and kinship families to experience consistency in the quality of services received. North Carolina believes that the way families perceive and experience the services provided are central to recruitment and retention. Foster, adoptive and kinship families should always feel respected, valued, heard, cared for, and supported. Similarly, collaboration and communication with community partners and stakeholders are essential to recruitment and retention as well. Providing quality family experience throughout the continuum of services leads to effective and transparent partnerships. Community partners, including but not limited to, private child placing agencies, faith-based organizations, civic groups and family advisory groups, are resources that support recruitment and retention efforts across the state and they share an interest in promoting strong families and communities.</p>	
	Strategies	Who is Responsible
1.	<p><b>1a.</b> Statewide capacity building to assess foster, adoptive, and kinship family’s needs, address gaps in quality family engagement and connect impact to other child welfare system goals such as developing families, improving retention, and placement stability.</p>	<p>DSS County Child Welfare Agencies</p>
	<p><b>1b.</b> Develop a diligent recruitment and retention resource library that will include existing resources such as sample documents and tools as well as additional literature, tip sheets, and brochures to support county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies to improve the engagement and support of families.</p>	<p>DSS County Child Welfare Agencies</p>
	<p><b>1c.</b> Provide quarterly diligent recruitment and retention calls, webinars or state publications to provide topic specific resources, training, and information sharing regarding diligent recruitment and retention to increase communication, information sharing, and collaboration between the DSS, local county child welfare agencies, private child placing agencies, and community stakeholders.</p>	<p>DSS</p>
Benchmarks	<p><b>2020:</b> Establish a family response and engagement team.</p>	
	<p><b>2020:</b> Evaluate current family response practice through regional Diligent Recruitment and Retention and Peer Connection Forums with county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies.</p>	
	<p><b>2021:</b> Develop a statewide family response and engagement system and align practice with statewide practice model, Safety Organized Practice.</p>	
	<p><b>2022:</b> Train and educate county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies on statewide family response system.</p>	
	<p><b>2023:</b> Develop resources regarding quality family response and engagement system and disseminate to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies.</p>	
	<p><b>2024:</b> Facilitate peer connections and information-sharing across the state.</p>	
Metrics	<p>A variety of sources will be used to measure success of Strategy 1 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in calls to the NC Kids statewide hotline about problems with the inquiry, response, and licensing process.</li> <li>• Decrease the time from initial inquiry to licensure for foster families on a statewide level.</li> <li>• The number of agencies and individuals participating in diligent recruitment events.</li> <li>• The number of resource materials in the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Resource Library</li> <li>• The number of requests for and topics of technical assistance made to the Division of Social Services around Diligent Recruitment and Retention.</li> </ul>	

<b>Target 1: Family Response and Engagement System</b>	
Staff Training, Technical Assistance, and Evaluation/Research	<p>Staff Training: Information is provided through quarterly diligent recruitment and retention calls, webinars, and the annual Child Welfare Summit.</p> <p>Technical Assistance: Counties and private agencies are supported through the NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Exchange and the DSS Regulatory and Licensing team.</p> <p>Evaluation: DSS in partnership with Adopt US Kids will evaluate North Carolina's current family response practice and implement a system that is consistent, family experience focused, engaging and supportive of families, and grounded in North Carolina's practice model, Safety Organized Practice.</p>
Implementation Supports	<p>This target will be driven by NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Exchange and DSS Regulatory and Licensing staff. It will also be supported by Adopt US Kids.</p> <p>Implementation supports needed include the evaluation of North Carolina's current family response system and implementation of a consistent and family experienced focused system. Technical assistance to educate county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies on a consistent family response system will also be needed.</p>

<b>Target 2: Family Capacity Development and Support</b>		
Description	State, counties, and private child placing agencies are able to provide ongoing capacity development and support of foster, adoptive, and kinship families to help meet families' needs and build on their skills.	
Rationale	Findings from the 2015 NC CFSR identified the state's efforts to address the needs and services to children, parents, and foster parents (Item 12) as an area in need of improvement. The development and support of foster, adoptive and kinship families involves skill-building and helping families feel comfortable and able to meet children's needs. By strengthening families' skill-sets, you increase their capacity to appropriately meet each child's specific needs while also strengthening their relationship with the agency. By actively and continually developing foster, adoptive, and kinship families, they are able to meet the needs of the children and youth they are parenting. Truly effective support is integrated into efforts to develop families from their first point of contact with the child welfare agency. Ensuring a robust recruitment and retention program with development and support tailored to families' needs will result in positive relationships and will achieve the best outcomes for children, youth and families.	
	Strategies	Who is Responsible
Strategies	<b>2a.</b> Provide resources regarding development and support of families to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies.	DSS
	<b>2b.</b> Ongoing use of webinars, in-person events and state publications to provide topic specific resources, training, and information sharing regarding the development and support of families.	DSS
	<b>2c.</b> Provide learning and developmental opportunities for foster, adoptive and kinship families that supports and builds their skills, so they are equipped to meet the needs of children and youth served in foster care.	County Child Welfare Agencies Private Child Placing Agencies
Benchmarks	<b>2020:</b> Develop resources regarding the development and support of families and disseminate to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies.	
	<b>2020:</b> Increase the number of certified Resource Parent Curriculum (RPC) facilitators in North Carolina by a minimum of 25.	
	<b>2021:</b> Develop training and technical assistance plan to provide county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies resources and build capacity in agencies to develop and support foster, adoptive and kinship families.	

<b>Target 2: Family Capacity Development and Support</b>	
	<p><b>2022:</b> Develop a specific in-service training plan for foster, adoptive, and kinship families to provide ongoing training, skill-building, and support.</p> <p><b>2023:</b> All foster and adoptive families in NC are trained in Resource Parent Curriculum (RPC).</p>
Metrics	<p>A variety of sources will be used to measure success of Strategy 3 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of agencies, individuals, and families participating in diligent recruitment and retention events</li> <li>• The number of learning and developmental events held by county child welfare agencies and private agencies</li> <li>• Decrease in the number of placement moves (not towards permanency) among children and youth in foster care</li> </ul>
Staff Training, Technical Assistance, and Evaluation/Research	<p>Staff Training: Information is provided through quarterly diligent recruitment and retention calls, webinars, and the annual Child Welfare Summit.</p> <p>Technical Assistance: Counties and private agencies are supported through the NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Exchange and the DSS Regulatory and Licensing team.</p>
Implementation Supports	<p>This target will be driven by NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Exchange in partnership with DSS Regulatory and Licensing staff. It will also be supported by Adopt US Kids.</p> <p>Implementation supports needed include the development of a specific in-service training plan for foster, adoptive, and kinship families to provide ongoing training, skill-building, and support as well as the development of a dual licensure process for foster families and adoptive families who are interested in adopting children and youth from foster care.</p>

<b>Target 3: Increase the number of licensed kinship caregivers</b>		
Description	DSS, counties and private child placing agencies will work in partnership to remove barriers to kinship training and licensure and increase the number of children and youth who are placed in licensed kinship placements and who exit care to guardianship and receive Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) benefits.	
Rationale	Findings from the 2015 NC CFSR identified the state's efforts to place children and youth with relatives (Item 10) is an area in need of improvement. Kinship placements are more likely to be stable when kinship providers have received kinship-specific training and feel better equipped to meet the needs of the children for whom they are caring. Providing training, family-centered principles, and cultural sensitivity to kinship providers will lead to improved outcomes for children and families served by the foster care system including placement stability, siblings remaining together, ongoing connections with birth and extended families and the community, and preservation of cultural identity. Licensed kinship providers are able to receive foster care payments to offset the cost of caring for children in their home. Kinship providers are also more likely to provide a permanent placement for children whom they are caring for when the child is unable to return home.	
	Strategies	Who is Responsible
Strategies	<b>3a.</b> Develop a statewide training and licensure process that is kinship-specific and meets the unique needs of relatives caring for children and youth in foster care.	DSS County Child Welfare Agencies Private Child Placing Agencies
	<b>3b.</b> Provide educational materials, tools, training, and technical assistance to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies regarding kinship licensure, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) and the benefits of kinship care.	DSS
	<b>3c.</b> Educate kinship caregivers about the licensing process and the related financial support and benefits offered, and	County Child Welfare Agencies

<b>Target 3: Increase the number of licensed kinship caregivers</b>		
	educate kinship caregivers, children and youth about the KinGAP.	Private Child Placing Agencies
Benchmarks	<p><b>2020:</b> Begin a formal evaluation process on the effectiveness of guardianship and kinship educational materials disseminated in SFY 2019-2020.</p> <p><b>2021:</b> Completion of formal evaluation regarding guardianship and kinship educational materials and the evaluation of Children’s Home Society of New Jersey’s Kinship Navigator Model for feasibility in North Carolina.</p> <p><b>2022:</b> Policy and practice changes based on evaluation of guardianship and kinship educational materials and Kinship Navigator.</p> <p><b>2023:</b> North Carolina state statute and child welfare policy changes to improve kinship training and licensure.</p> <p><b>2024:</b> A sustainable training and licensure process specific to kinship caregivers will be developed and implemented across the state.</p>	
Metrics	<p>A variety of sources will be used to measure success of Strategy 3 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a statewide kinship training and licensure process</li> <li>• The number kinship caregivers completing the training and licensure process</li> <li>• The number of children and youth exiting foster care to guardianship and receiving KinGAP benefits</li> <li>• An increase in kinship placement stability</li> </ul>	
Staff Training, Technical Assistance, and Evaluation/Research	<p>Staff Training: Information is provided through quarterly diligent recruitment and retention calls, webinars, and the annual Child Welfare Summit. Information is also provided through educational materials for child welfare professionals, kinship families, and youth in foster care. Additional training will be needed on the specific licensure process for kinship families once developed.</p> <p>Technical Assistance: Counties and private agencies are supported through the NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Exchange and the DSS Regulatory and Licensing team.</p> <p>Evaluation/Research: DSS, in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work and Children’s Home Society of North Carolina, is currently piloting a kinship caregiver training, “Caring for Our Own”, in four counties. The evaluation of this pilot will inform statewide implementation of a kinship specific training and licensure process.</p>	
Implementation Supports	<p>This target will be driven by DSS in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work and Children’s Home Society of North Carolina.</p> <p>Implementation supports needed include changes to North Carolina state statute, administrative rule, and policy as well as the development of a kinship specific training and licensure process for relatives and other kin caring for children who are served by the foster care system.</p>	