

## **RHODE ISLAND**

### **FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN 2020- 2024**

The mission of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) is “to partner with families and communities to raise safe and healthy children and youth in a caring environment.” A critical component of our Agency’s mission is our commitment to supporting a robust array of family-based placements (kinship, foster and adoptive homes) collectively known as Resource Families for children in our state care. The Department has several important goals pertaining to Resource Families for children and youth in its care.

The goals are as follows:

- Increase availability of Resource Families for children/youth needing out-of-home care;
- Increase the number of skilled Resource Families to care for teens;
- Increase the number of competent Resource Families for sibling groups, children with emotional and behavioral needs or disabilities, LGBTQ youth, and/or children/youth of color and/or ethnically/linguistically diverse populations, including the number of Spanish speaking families, and medically fragile children;
- Increase the proportion of children and youth in family-based settings with a particular focus on ensuring proportionality across race and ethnicity;
- Increase timely licensure of Resource Families;
- Improve Resource Family retention and satisfaction both pre-and post-placement;
- Enhance matches between children/youth and Resource Families;
- Reduce placement disruptions and increase placement stability by providing supportive services and in-service training for all families;
- Increase permanency for children/youth in DCYF care;
- Promote safety and well-being and support permanency.

There are currently approximately 1600 children in family based foster care, of these, approximately 500 children are in non-kinship placements. As of 05/17/2019 the Department had 846 licensed Resource Families (243 DCYF Resource Family Homes; 199 DCYF relative; and 404 private agency specialized); 93 homes pending licensing renewal; and 819 pending first time licenses (427 relatives; 392 DCYF and CPA homes.) (Data Source: Licensing Checklist)

#### **A description of the characteristics of waiting children.**

Demographic information (as of 05/20/2019) indicates that there are 3809 children active with DCYF (6345 including subsidized and unsubsidized adoptions). Of these, 64% are White; 16% are African American; 1% is Asian; 1% is American Indian; 1% are of Unknown race and 17% are Multiracial). 25% of the active children are listed as Hispanic. (Data Source: Active Youth)

Of the 1578 children residing in foster care placements (relative, non-relative generic, and private agency specialized foster care) 67% are White; 15% are African American; 1% is Asian; 1% is American Indian; 14% are multi-racial and 2% are "unknown". 27% of the children in foster home placements are of Hispanic heritage. (Data Source: Permanency Report)

### **Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community.**

In April 2019 the Department released a Request for Proposal seeking innovative strategies for community outreach and demonstration of strong partnerships with local community agencies. The Department will work closely with community partners to identify best recruitment messaging and practices. This includes a focused outreach to a broad group of community organizations to educate them about the need for Resource Families and the role of foster care and adoption in child welfare. The Department will engage in general and targeted recruitment planning that facilitates placement of children/youth with Resource Families able to take placement of older youth, Spanish-speaking youth, LGBTQ youth, youth with complex medical needs and disabilities. This includes: host and facilitate statewide information sessions for prospective Resource Families; distribute information materials in various forms such as social media, traditional media, or in-person; attend ongoing recruitment efforts and events; facilitate community wide agency provider fairs for prospective and current Resource Families. In addition, using removal and re-entry data the Department has identified the states “Urban Core” as an area of focus for the 2020-2024 recruitment plan. The Urban core includes the communities of:

1. Central Falls
2. Newport
3. Pawtucket
4. Providence
5. Woonsocket

Goal objectives are intended to strengthen Family Search and Engagement, increase the availability of Resource Families in the child’s/youths’ community of origin, promote awareness, volunteer opportunities and school-based community recruitment efforts.

### **Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child specific information.**

Diversified and collaborative recruitment strategies in coordination with our community partners include general, targeted and child-specific recruitment, with a focus on Resource Family homes for older youth and children with a range of medical and behavior health needs. The Department will continue to host feedback forums with current and previous Resource Families structured to support high quality recruitment and retention delivery. Feedback collected from these forums has informed multi levels of practice change including an increased focus on improving licensing timelines, recruitment initiatives and target recruitment campaigns. An example of an initiative that began this year and will continue through to the next recruitment plan include older youth and increased trauma focused tailored pre-service and post service training for Resource Families.

Providing up to date resources will also continue to be a high priority of the Department. In April 2019 the Department’s website was redesigned to provide a user-friendly experience. Included in the design are a Resource Family Portal to include general recruitment information, frequently asked questions, recruitment events, information sessions, support opportunities, video and community trainings.

**Strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/ adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that the agencies can be accessed by all members of the community;**

The Department provides information on our website, to ensure all prospective foster/adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that agencies can be accessed by all members of the community. The Department's recruitment team and contracted Child Placing Agencies are expected to engage in recruitment activities during family friendly hours, including evenings and weekends; Provide interested Resource Families with preliminary information via telephone, e-mail, printed and web-based material and access to interpreting services ensuring cultural competency and goal success.

### **Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations.**

Training on Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Diversity, and Working with Culturally Diverse Populations is offered regularly. The Department has a strong commitment to the success of its workforce by implementing a series of cross training and collaboration opportunities throughout the calendar year. The Department has made Racial Equity & Inclusion one its three values in our 3-year workforce Development Plan. Over the next 3-year period the Department will be working with other states and consultants on researching, developing and implementing a series of initiatives to include:

- Staff awareness and development (Implicit Bias)
- Preparing for an All Staff training on Racial Equity
- Safety Culture in the work place
- Implementation of strategies from the 2017 agency wide Cultural Awareness survey
- Revision of Workforce Development's racial equity training program

### **Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers.**

DCYF works in close partnership with our Child Placing Agencies to support the linguistic needs and preference of our Resource Families. The Department and our community partners have increased staffing capacity to accommodate linguistic recruitment needs. The Department also has a contract with the Center for South East Asians for services of the RI Language Bank which provides for the hiring of interpreters for a large number of foreign languages as needed. Linguistic concerns have not posed barriers to the foster home recruitment / licensing process.

### **Procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that 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.**

All families who wish to adopt through the Department, first must become licensed as a Foster/Adoptive Parent. Families who wish to adopt are often able to be matched with a child in need of a permanent home resulting in an adoptive placement. Families who wish to adopt are informed of the legal path of a case, as well as the population of children the Department is working to match with an adoptive family. The process of matching can happen in many ways. Child Placing Agencies and Adoption RI understand timely matching and placement are a priority of the Department across settings. To assist inform the process for Resource Families our Child Placing Agencies support our families from inquiry through licensing, training and to placement of the matched adoptive child/youth. ARI in collaboration with national and state

organizations host a variety of information sessions, community engagement activities and recruitment events focused on successful matching and placement stability.

**Non-discriminatory fee structures.**

There is no fee attached to providing short term support or permanency to a child in Rhode Island through foster care or adoption.