

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **iCARE 365** (The Inter-Agency Community Adoption/Foster Family Recruitment Exchange) project was a multi-faceted diligent recruitment program in Michigan which was designed to recruit, retain, train, utilize, and support a range of resource families for children/youth in Michigan's Child Welfare System with a special focus on youth identified as juvenile sexual offenders, as well as youth placed in psychiatric treatment facilities and residential settings. In addition to the targeted populations mentioned above, the **iCARE 365** project focuses on adolescents, children with disabilities or other physical care needs, African Americans and large sibling groups. The project was implemented in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. At the time of project development, these counties accounted for 40% of the children in care and were already collaborating on a diligent recruitment project with Spaulding.

Overview of Program Model

The **iCARE 365** project is based on the philosophy that recruitment should occur every day. To that end, the project was designed to promote safety, permanence and well-being for Michigan children and to increase positive permanency outcomes for them by: 1) increasing awareness of the need for resource families; 2) improving timely achievement of permanency goals for children; 3) increasing appropriate placement resources for teens, youth identified as juvenile sex offenders, youth in residential treatment settings, youth in psychiatric in-patient settings, children with disabilities or other physical care needs, African Americans and large sibling groups; and, 4) improving customer service and increasing retention rates among newly recruited resource families.

The goals of the project are to:

- 1) Coordinate and integrate Michigan's many plans to recruit, retain, train, and support resources families for children in Michigan's child welfare system into one comprehensive recruitment and retention plan that is flexible enough to accommodate county specific needs.
- 2) Integrate and coordinate the diligent recruitment program with other programs including foster care case planning and permanency planning processes to facilitate concurrent planning activities.
- 3) Evaluate the implementation of the comprehensive diligent recruitment programs to document processes and potential linkages between diligent recruitment and improved outcomes.

iCARE 365 Diligent Recruitment Efforts and Outcomes from October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2015

Total number of inquiries	2,113
Total number of families trained	862
Total number of families licensed	652
Total number of recruitment events	238
Total number of event participants	75,700
Number of foster parents and foster youth participating in events	53 and 49
Brochures and Posters disseminated	31,950 and 1,429
Information cards disseminated	2,175
County specific Displays and Wall poster frames (child specific)	84 and 14
Informational DVD's	942
Community Ambassador Kits disseminated	203
Recruitment Flyers and Tray Liners disseminated	800 and 12,000

Integrated and Coordinated Diligent Recruitment

“Planning A Transition with Hope Home (PATHH)” was the project’s guided transition to permanency model structured to improve permanency outcomes for youth in residential treatment settings. The PATHH model included the implementation of child specific recruitment activities, assisted in improving the coordination of service providers who are or will provide supports to the youth or family and the development of a transition plan. The PATHH model was designed to assist in building cross system partnerships for the transition planning process. During the grant period development and implementation of the PATH-Home study continued with the completion of caregiver, staff and youth interviews for the 5 cases that transitioned from residential.

Rigorous Evaluation

The iCARE 365 evaluation process was guided by the logic model and included both process and outcome components utilizing qualitative and quantitative data. The efforts of the Project Director and Manager contributed greatly to the achievement of intended and unintended outcomes. As a result of their work, there are new collaborations for recruitment efforts with businesses as well as across-systems. The achievement of tri-county AFPRR planning is a major accomplishment that may be associated with iCARE 365 processes. The evaluation team examined 275 events that generated a total of 986 expressions of interest in becoming a foster parent, or on average 3.6 expressions per event. Dividing the total cost by the total numbers of expressions of interest in becoming foster parents results in \$37.675/expression (= \$37,119.95/986) including hypothesized indirect costs. As of July, 2015, the target counties experienced high achievement of homes for youth with disabilities with Oakland County achieving 333% of its licensing goals, Wayne achieving 164% and Macomb achieving 84%. Comparison of achievement across counties requires caution as the processes used for determination of licensing goals are relative to each county

Challenges

The most significant challenge was the closure of Havenwyck Center that impacted the PATHH model for transitioning youth from residential placement.

Significant Events

From October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2015 the project provided:

- 59 faith based events held within the project area, reaching an audience of over 4,200 people.
- disseminated 2,400 joint direct mailers to a targeted market area in western Wayne County.
- worked with Screen Visions to run a 30 second foster care advertisement at 3 local movie theaters.
- sent out letters to 67 schools and 243 PTA’s across the tri-county project area.
- mailed over 1,400 letters to tri-county businesses asking them to partner with the project and promote awareness of the need for foster/adoptive resource homes.
- conducted phone calls (43) to local/national businesses asking them to partner with the project.
- conducted 60 meetings with businesses to discuss project partnerships and disseminate info.
- distributed over 350 3 Minute DVDs titled “Become a Southeastern Michigan Superhero.”
- faxed over 100 businesses/faith-based groups in Western Wayne County to recruit teen homes.
- had brochures and static displays at all 65 Tubby locations and disseminated 6,500 brochures.
- partnered with 12 Wendy’s locations throughout the tri-county area to do targeted, child specific recruitment events and disseminated 14,000 brochures and 12,000 targeted tray liners.
- partnered with 4 pediatric offices to have a display stand and disseminated over 200 brochures.

- disseminated training brochures to 691 day care centers, 104 licensed residential facilities, 66 Head Start / Early On programs and 7 healthcare systems.
- 225 staff members trained and we disseminated 465 brochures and 112 posters to trainees for dissemination within their communities.

II.

Rigorous Evaluation

The iCARE 365 evaluation process was designed to measure the effects of the implementation of the proposed project on safety, permanency and well-being of families in three Michigan counties: (Wayne, Macomb and Oakland Counties). The evaluation was strongly guided by the logic model and included both process and outcome components utilizing qualitative and quantitative data. The process evaluation included a review at two levels: 1) progress of implementation, and 2) quality of implementation. The process evaluation also included a cost study analysis. The outcome aspect of the evaluation process used natural experiment methodology to determine the influence of the project activities on outcomes. For this evaluation study, the I-CARE counties (Macomb, Oakland and Wayne) were compared to counties with similar demographic characteristics, but who are not conducting an integrated and coordinated diligent recruitment effort such as iCARE 365.

Implementation required well-coordinated and systematic effort. The Project management infrastructure, with the Oversight Committee, Advisory Committee and Subcommittees, contributed greatly to the successful implementation of the project.

The iCARE 365 Project team also sought partner/collaborators with interest in children's issues and with whom existing, relevant events could be leveraged. They also established partnerships with high traffic establishments where the audience targeted for recruitment was known to frequent or were likely to attend. Businesses with existing programs aimed in support of furthering efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents, such as Wendy's Wonderful Kids, were actively engaged throughout the Project implementation. Additional examples of business supporters included, The Great Skate, Biggby Coffee and Subway restaurants.

The efforts of the Project Director and Manager contributed greatly to the achievement of intended and unintended outcomes. As a result of their work, there are new collaborations for recruitment efforts with businesses as mentioned above as well as across-systems. (e.g. Private agency partners, Community Mental Health, local tribes and faith-based organizations). The achievement of tri-county AFPRR planning is a major accomplishment that may be associated with iCARE 365 processes.

In terms of the cost study, the evaluation team examined 275 events that generated a total of 986 expressions of interest in becoming a foster parent, or on average 3.6 expressions per event. The maximum number of expressions of interest at a single event was 75 via website activity; the largest number of expressions at a live event was 66 at the International Women's Show hosted by the Tri-County Foster Care Coalition. Dividing the total cost by the total numbers of expressions of interest in becoming foster parents results in \$37.675/expression ($=\$37,119.95/986$) including hypothesized indirect costs.

For the outcome evaluation, selected CFSR indicators and evaluation questions were compared for participating and match counties. Review of these data reveals that there were no consistent trends when comparing project counties to the matched counties for the period FY 2009- FY2013. However, two of the comparison counties, Kent and Washtenaw reported very low to no youth re-entries into foster care for 2013. There were also no meaningful patterns when reviewing the extent to which race of children/youth matched race of foster parent and the number of placements with relatives when reviewing FY2009 – FY 2013 data for participating and match counties. However, when examining the median number of days reduced for length of days in care from FY 2012- FY 2013, Saginaw county data reveals the greatest reduction (n=117 days) followed by Oakland county (n=104 days).

In addition to the CFSR data, the scorecard data of the non-relative foster home licensing progress was reviewed. As of July, 2015, the target counties experienced high achievement of homes for youth with disabilities with Oakland County achieving 333% of its licensing goals, Wayne achieving 164% and Macomb achieving 84%. Comparison of achievement across counties requires caution as the processes used for determination of licensing goals are relative to each county

Parents and staff received a plethora of training during the life of the iCARE 365 project and in all instances, they reported increased knowledge and parenting skills. For example, the results from the reflection feedback form from the Trauma-Informed Parenting training with Dr. James Henry revealed that the majority of participants (92.1%) agreed that to a great extent and quite a bit, the training

enhanced their job or parenting skills. The majority of participants also indicated that the training contributed to their knowledge regarding childhood trauma to a great extent and quite a bit.

During the iCARE 365 project, foster parents of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties were invited to participate in two waves of satisfaction survey. The survey was available for completion through traditional paper and pencil, electronically and telephone interview. Data from the first study included 72 respondents which allowed for the development of subscales in which level of satisfaction was aligned with factors that influence satisfaction. The following were considered positive influences on satisfaction by the respondents as confirmed by statistically significant results:

- The agency's appreciation of their efforts as foster parents.
- Feeling like a team member with the agency.
- Knowledge about what is going on with children in their care.
- Financial support for the children in the foster parent's care.

These findings for this study were submitted to the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment for their work with the State of Michigan for development of the customer-service model.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY, POPULATION AND NEEDS

The State of Michigan - Grantee Organization

At the time of grant application (June 2010), Michigan, like many states across the nation, was experiencing economic challenges lead by the decline of the automobile industry. At that time, Michigan had an unprecedented budget deficit, an unemployment rate that was among the nation's highest, home foreclosures were at historical highs, and it had a major urban city and school system with many financial challenges. The child welfare system was the subject of a lengthy Consent Decree that contained unfunded mandates. The State was being mandated, court ordered, and legislatively

charged to make improvements, correct deficits, and to make immediate changes. This included the Michigan Department of Human Services, the entity that encompasses Michigan's Child Welfare System.

Michigan's Child Welfare System had many of the same problems as other state systems; disproportional numbers of minority children in the system, the lack of sufficient resource families to care for older youth, youth with disabilities, youth with behavioral, psychological or criminal history and sibling groups. There were also systemic problems in processing potential resource families; lengthy times to permanency, and workers with an array of skills and abilities. At that time, an additional problem for the child welfare system was the lack of coordination between departments, programs and plans that were designed to expedite permanency for children.

The State of Child Welfare

The Michigan Child Welfare System is a state-supervised and state-administered child welfare system. Child welfare practice, policy, and fiscal procedures are established at the state level and administered through local county offices. Funding for placement of children in foster care is available from three sources – federal, state, and county. Both the payment mechanism and payment sources may vary for any given child depending on a mix of factors including: the legal status of the child, federal eligibility, and the placement location of the child. These complexities underlying the funding for child welfare services create a particular challenge for public and private stakeholders.

Currently, the state is responsible for over 13,000 children in out of home placement at any given time. Of those children and youth, well over half are housed in either licensed foster family homes or in approved kinship settings. A smaller proportion includes children/youth housed in either independent living settings or being supervised in their own homes. Less than 10% of youth are located in residential, shelter, or group care. The state contracts with a network of private agencies for a range of services for children in out of home care in all service settings. The private network is also responsible for all adoption services in the child welfare system. At any given time, the private network oversees about 45 percent of the children in care.

The private network is comprised of more than 125 foster care placement agencies (PAFC) and child caring institutions (CCIs) with approximately 49 of those agencies located in the project area. They

range in size from smaller single program entities to larger multi-site multiservice organizations. A private provider may have one or more contracts with the state depending on the mix of services it offers.¹

The State of Geography - The Community in Which the Project Takes Place

The I-CARE 365 Project was implemented in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. These three counties are located in southeastern Michigan and were selected because they are urban and contiguous. Together they accounted for 44% of the children in care and at that time, were already collaborating on a diligent recruitment project with Spaulding for Children. Demographic information per county is as follows:

Wayne County, the most populous of Michigan's counties with a population of 1,925,848 per the 2000 census is 54.8% Black, 40.9% White and 5.1% Hispanic with 20.5% of its population below the poverty level. Wayne County encompasses the City of Detroit, which is the State's largest city and has its own child welfare statistics tracked through their Child Placement Network (CPN). The city of Detroit is 81.6% Black, 12.5% White and 5.0% Hispanic and had a 50% illiteracy rate, with 33.8% of its population below the poverty level. In 2008, Detroit had 3,916 confirmed cases of child abuse, 3,202

1 F. Wulczyn and J. Haight, Memorandum, May 20, 2013 – Michigan Child Welfare Performance Based Funding Final Report – February 24, 2014

children were in out-of-home placements and 45.8% of children under 17 were below the poverty level.²

Oakland County has the fourth most prosperous city in the nation - Bloomfield Hills. The county has a poverty rate of 8.6% concentrated primarily in the city of Pontiac and the county's rural areas. It has a population of 1,205,508 with 80.3% White, 12.6% Black and 3.1% Hispanic.

Macomb County has a population of 831,427 with 87.5% White, 7.6% Black and 2.1% Hispanic and is considered a blue collar working community. Macomb County has a poverty rate of 9.4%.

The State of Current Efforts

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHS) recognizes the need to recruit and retain more resource homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care as well as to facilitate permanency in a timely manner. Rated as an area needing improvement in the most recent Child and Family Service Review (CFSR), the project assisted in addressing this need and helped to develop the structure necessary to provide a coordinated and integrated statewide recruitment and retention plan.

At the time of the grant request, a number of projects and efforts were underway to meet the diligent recruitment requirements of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (as amended by the Inter-Ethnic Placement Provisions), the provisions of the Child and Family Service Reviews - Program Improvement Plan (CFSR- PIP), the goals and objectives of the Child and Family Service Plans (CFSP) and provisions of the Settlement Agreement.

Michigan's Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP) 2010-2014 had as its goals the use of data to establish a targeted recruitment campaign; to be able to provide information on children entering care on a regular basis to counties for recruiting purposes; to expand community collaboration and faith based initiatives over the next five years; to continue the Michigan Adoption Day and to develop a new

2 Kids Count 2009, 2000 Census, Quick Facts

Statewide, two-year, recruitment plan to target adolescents, sibling groups, and children with disabilities.

At the time of application for the grant, Michigan had accomplished the following:

- Contracted with Michigan State University to complete a needs assessment to identify the availability and types of foster homes to determine if they met current needs.
- Established a new Data Management Unit that would use data to track trends.
- Created a coordinator position in DHS central office to provide technical assistance and support to the local counties - Adoption and Foster Parent Recruitment & Retention (AFPRR) Coordinator.
- Compiled key licensing data and shared it with the local county offices and private agencies.

- Developed a statewide media plan in spring 2010 to increase the awareness of the needs of foster and adoptive children for permanent homes.
- Launched a concurrent planning pilot in Clinton and Gratiot Counties.
- In an effort to facilitate permanency statewide for Michigan children available for adoption without an identified family, the state increased its recruitment efforts through its contracted services with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE).
- Submitted for approval the following Media Plan with its CFSR-PIP for the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents:

Media Plan - Increase the number of adoptive and foster homes through the development of a media campaign that increases awareness of the need for adoptive and foster parents.

- Develop a media coalition group consisting of DHS Office of Communication, private agencies, Michigan Association of Foster Care, Adoptive, and Kinship Parents (MAFAK), former foster care children, and the DHS adoption and foster care recruitment and retention coordinator.
- Work with national and state associations that have established marketing tools to develop a marketing campaign.
- Participate in existing events such as the Heart Gallery, National Adoption Day, Foster Parent Month, and CASA's The Forgotten Children.
- Design public services announcements (PSA) or utilize existing PSAs and advertisements for television and radio.
- Develop posters, brochures, and handouts that focus on the need for foster care families.
- Work with county staffs for media coverage at local events to display the positive sides of foster care parenting and adoption.
- Improve website for Michigan's adoptive and foster care parents.
- Develop a social media campaign using Facebook, Twitter, and DHS podcasts.

The State of Children - Population Served

Target Population: Children in Michigan's Child Welfare System with an emphasis on adolescents, juvenile sex offenders, youth in residential treatment settings, youth in psychiatric in-patient settings, children with disabilities or other physical care needs, African Americans and large sibling groups.

Table 1: Characteristics of Children in Participating Counties

County	Confirmed Cases Child Abuse/Neglect	Children in Foster Care	Ethnicity
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	(3/31/10)				
			African America	White	Other
Wayne	4,913	6,957	5,107	1,165	685
Oakland	1,756	1,883	734	1,029	120
Macomb	1,600	1,537	350	1,064	123
Totals	8,269	10,377	6,191	3,259	928

Adoption - Fiscal year 2009 was a significant year for adoptions in Michigan with 3,030 adoptions finalized, more than any previous year. It is also significant that in FY09 93% of the finalized adoptions occurred in families in which the child was already residing, 46% with foster parents and 47% with relatives. The DHS focus on placing children with relatives or guardians provides an opportunity to maintain a family connection through adoption, or guardianship when reunification is no longer a viable permanency goal. Although 6% of the children adopted in FY 2009 were placed with a newly recruited family, there were hundreds more that needed a family. For those children with a goal of adoption but without an identified family, intensive efforts must be made to recruit that child's permanent home.

At the time of the grant request, Michigan had 6,172 children legally free for adoption with 4,264 with a plan of adoption. Out of 83 counties, Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb County had 1,913 children or 31% of all waiting children. Despite a decline in the number of children entering the foster care system, Michigan had an even larger decline in the number of homes available to care for our children. While adoptions have increased, the number of adoptions for older children in need of a recruited family remains low.

The I-CARE 365 Project targeted its recruitment efforts toward adolescents, youth with behavioral/psychological/criminal histories, large sibling groups, children with disabilities or other physical needs and African American youth.

Adolescents

At the time of the grant request, according to Michigan’s Social Workers Services System (SWSS) database, approximately 29% of the children in a foster care placement in Michigan were adolescents (ages 14 and older). Placement options were markedly different between children ages 0-13 and youth age 14 and older. Children in foster care ages 0-13, were placed with parents, relatives, legal guardians and unrelated caregivers 56% of the time but for older adolescents this type of placement dropped to only 32%. According to the same data, an older adolescent was 16% less likely to be placed in a foster care home and 24% more likely to be placed in non-family setting such as independent living prior to age 18, an emergency shelter home, a community justice center, detention, jail, a private child caring institution (CCI), mental health facility, court treatment facility, boarding school, or go AWOL. SWSS revealed that approximately 1,092 youth in the foster care system at that time resided in a non-family setting.

Table 2 :Living Arrangements of Characteristics on 03/31/2010
Living Arrangements

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Ages	Appr. Number of Children In Care	Percentage of All Children in Care	Approximate Percentage of Children Placed with a Parent, Relative, Legal Guardian, Adoptive Home, or Unrelated Caregiver	Approximate Percentage of Children Placed in a Foster Care Setting	Approximate Percentage of Children In a Non-Family Setting	Approximate Percentage of Children Placed in Independent Living at ages 18 and Older
Ages 0-13	10,962	71%	56%	41%	2%	0%
Ages 14 and older	4,445	29%	32%	25%	26%	17%

The following table summarizes the number of youth in non-family settings and the licensing goals (for all non-kin foster homes and adolescent homes) for FY10 in the urban counties. The urban counties had 76% of the foster youth in non-family settings statewide.

Table 3: Youth in non-family settings and the licensing goals (for all non-kin foster homes and adolescent homes) for FY10 in the urban counties.

County Name	Foster Homes Licensed in FY09	Foster Homes Licensed in FY10 as of 3/31/10	Approximate number of youth (14 and older) placed in a non-family	Target: Number of homes to be licensed for youth (14 &	Target: Number of total additional non-kin

			setting as of 3/31/10	older) in FY10	homes to be licensed in FY10
Genesee	68	28	61	40	76
Ingham	29	14	39	15	32
Kent	86	55	70	40	95
Macomb	77	36	92	50	127
Oakland	79	47	88	34	104
Statewide Totals	1,060	559	1,092	441	1,373

The I-CARE 365 Project made a special effort to develop permanency resources for adolescents in psychiatric, residential treatment and juvenile sex offender programs through the development of its transition model – PATHH – Planning a Transition Home with Hope. We planned to collaborate with Havenwyck Center, part of Havenwyck Hospital which is the largest free standing psychiatric and residential treatment facility in Michigan and located in one of our target counties (Oakland). On average, 20 - 45% of all youth in care at Havenwyck are permanent court wards and have no comprehensive permanency plan. At the time the grant was written, Havenwyck had 36 youth in their residential treatment program of which 7 youth were permanent court wards and 25 youth in their juvenile sexual offender program (Impulse Disorder Program) 5 of which were permanent court wards and in need of a permanent family. During partial implementation of PATHH, Havenwyck Center discontinued its contract with DHS which affected not only implementation of preparing staff through training, it affected the fidelity of the model.

Sibling Groups

At the time of the grant request, the State of Michigan did not capture data regarding the number of children in foster care who were part of a sibling group it was a consensus among the public/private sector that the number was approximately 60-65% of the children in care. The need for more foster care placements for children in sibling groups was evident in the county AFPRR plans and from meetings with both public and private agency staff. At that time, agencies reported that they addressed the need for families who could take sibling groups at recruitment events as well as at trainings. Agencies also reported that they included experienced foster care parents in recruitment activities having them explain the benefits of parenting sibling groups and also had youth assist by telling their story of being separated from siblings and the effects of separation on their lives. With the statewide implementation of MiSACWIS in April 2014, the collection of sibling data is no longer an issue.

Children with Disabilities

At the time of the grant request, the State also did not maintain data on the number of children with disabilities residing in foster care, although it was known to be a significant number. Agencies also reported a shortage of resource families willing to parent children with mental, emotional and physical challenges. As with the sibling group, the implementation of MiSACWIS has addressed the issue of capturing this data. DHS has the ability to collect quality data on the number of children in foster care with disabilities and the type of disabilities. Caseworkers can now uniformly, input disability data initially on a case and update information upon completion of assessments, as needed, throughout the delivery of case services.

African American Children

In 2006, Michigan pulled together a task force to evaluate the over representation of children of color in Michigan's Child Welfare System. According to the Report entitled "Equity, Moving Toward Better Outcomes for All of Michigan's Children," although African American children made up only 17.5% of children in Michigan, they made up 53.2% of the population in foster care. The report also indicated that African American children were more likely to be removed from their homes, less likely to be reunited with their parents and more likely to be in multiple out-of-home placements. In addition, African American youth spend more time in care, were more likely to be adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, be placed in a residential treatment facility, or be waived to adult courts. Recommendations to address these issues included among other things, strengthening the range of

placement options by focusing on recruiting relative caregivers, ensuring that culturally proficient practices are implemented, and building on community support.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM MODEL

Goals/Objectives

Goal 1: To coordinate and integrate Michigan’s many plans to recruit, retain, train, and support resource families for children in Michigan’s child welfare system into one comprehensive recruitment and retention plan that is flexible enough to accommodate county specific needs.

Objectives

1.1 To assess current needs by identifying and reviewing current recruitment plans, all relevant data elements required to develop an informed plan including an analysis of AFCARS, the current pool of available foster, kinship, concurrent, and adoptive placement resources and other county specific data.

1.2 To complete a projection of the type of foster, kinship, concurrent, and adoptive families that may be needed based on data and trends for different characteristics and assessment in Objective 1.1.

1.3 To analyze barriers and current processes of DHS and private agencies to improve customer service and increase retention of prospective foster, concurrent, kinship and adoptive parents to reduce drop-out rates.

1.4 To develop and provide training to prospective foster, kinship, concurrent, and adoptive parents regarding the characteristics, needs, and issues of children who have experienced trauma and removal as well as adoption clinical issues.

1.5 To explore barriers and identify the strengths of utilizing a “customer service” model in Collaboration with AdoptUsKids to retain and respond to kin as well as prospective foster and adoptive parents.

Goal 2: To integrate and coordinate the diligent recruitment program with other programs including foster care case planning and permanency planning processes to facilitate concurrent planning activities.

Objectives

- 2.1** To assess the current status of DHS Licensing regarding the dual license of foster and adoptive homes and determine barriers to implementation in I-CARE 365 Project counties.
- 2.2** To enhance the current “Community Adoption/Foster Recruitment Exchange (CARE)” to include representation from the service communities including business owners, faith based representation, resource families and youth that represent the ethnic and cultural make-up of the communities served.
- 2.3** To identify representatives from relevant DHS programs to form an Advisory Committee to oversee the implementation and integration of the I-CARE 365 Project into current programs.
- 2.4** To assess the current strengths and challenges of the current Concurrent Planning Pilot and identify barriers to its implementation in the I-CARE 365 counties.
- 2.5** To assess and assist I-CARE 365 agencies in using a family-centered model of concurrent planning with families involved in the child welfare system and strategies to improve performances as needed.
- 2.6** To replicate successful elements of the project in other Michigan counties.

Goal 3: To evaluate the implementation of the comprehensive diligent recruitment programs to document processes and potential linkages between diligent recruitment and improved outcomes.

Objectives:

- 3.1** To collect descriptive data on characteristics of individuals and families served, types and nature of needs identified and met, the services provided, measures of client outcomes, child development and well-being.
- 3.2** To evaluate data on client satisfaction, parenting skills, parent/child interaction, cost benefit, service utilization, and any other information required by the Children’s Bureau.

Projected Outcomes:

Using a combination of current AFCARS data, other data available to the State and county and new data capturing elements, we will be able to complete a projection of the types of foster, kinship, concurrent, and adoptive families who may be needed, based on current case trends for different

characteristics of children and youth; assess the current pool of available foster, concurrent, and adoptive placement resources; and analyze barriers presented by the agency or current processes in order to increase the rate of retention of prospective foster, concurrent, or adoptive families and to reduce the dropout rates. Additional outcomes include:

- A data collection process that will support the collection, analysis of data and inform project refinements.
- Increased numbers of foster, adoptive, concurrent homes for children with severe behavior problems, adolescents; children with disabilities or other physical care needs; and large sibling groups.
- Increased numbers of resource families recruited from teachers, social work professionals, day care staff, medical professionals and students, residential treatment staff, mentors, coaches, parents of friends, bridge families, community representatives, community mental health staff, and paternal, maternal and extended family members.
- A decrease in the amount of time it takes from inquiry to home study approval.
- A decrease in the overall amount of time a child waits for permanency.
- An increase in the retention and overall satisfaction of resource families.
- An increase in the involvement of youth in their own recruitment efforts.
- Increased cross-system collaboration and service provision.
- Increased provision of community information re: adoption/foster care.
- Increased community resources for post adoption support.
- Increased training opportunities for DHS and private agency staff.
- Increased guardianship or permanent placement with paternal and maternal relatives.
- An increase in the number of siblings placed in the same home.
- A decrease in the average length of stay for children/youth in care.
- An increase in placement stability as evidenced by two or fewer placements for children/youth in care 12-24 months.

Logic Model:

Program Logic Model I-CARE 365 Purpose	Outcomes			
	Goals	Resources/Inputs	Activities/Outputs	Short-term
To integrate current recruitment efforts into a comprehensive Diligent Recruitment Program for Resource Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established Collaborative Preliminary Campaign Public/Private Partnership Experience Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive Recruitment Retention plan Viable Public/Private relationship Replicable Model of recruitment strategies 	Increased numbers of Resource Families available for children	Better placement options to reduce child's wait for permanent home
To Integrate Diligent Recruitment into other Child Welfare Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established Concurrent planning & Permanency Projects Policy & Procedures requiring diligent recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated effort among departments working for permanency for children Consistent policy & procedures that support permanency for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased cross-systems collaboration & service provision Implementation of philosophy of permanency planning from day child enters care 	If not reunified with family, the Initial placement is the only placement
To Implement a Rigorous Evaluation of Project to document process & linkages between Recruitment & Outcomes	Experienced Evaluator already working with CARE Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A set of comprehensive tools to collect data Data documented results of the successes & challenges of the Project 	Obtain data to document need for Project	Evidence that Project goals & objectives lead to better permanency outcomes for children

I-CARE 365 Service Model:

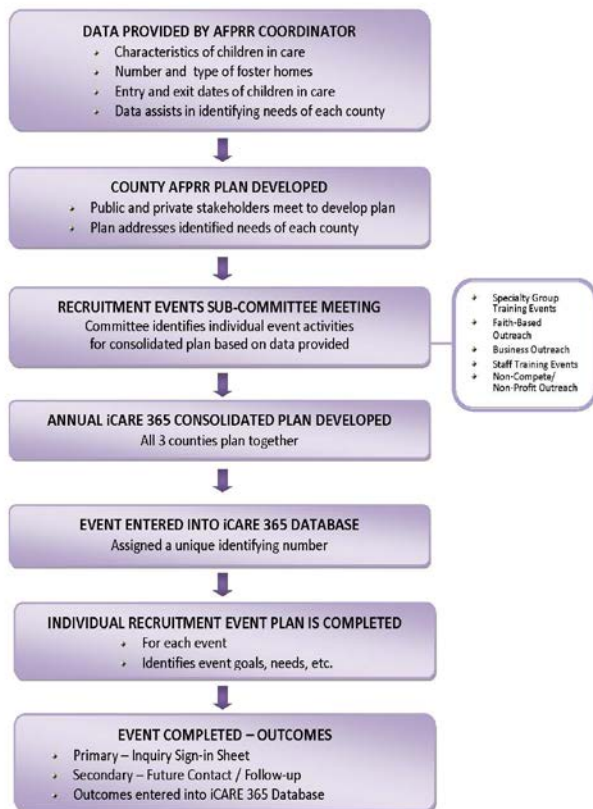
CONSOLIDATED PLANNING – ADOPTION & FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT & RETENTION PLAN (AFPRR)

The recruitment of foster and adoptive parents to meet the unique needs of children in the state's care is an ongoing priority for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHS) and local communities. The need is clear for additional homes for teens, sibling groups, children with disabilities and children waiting for adoption. In response to meeting this need, annually each county and its partner agencies develop a uniform plan for the recruitment and retention of resource homes known as the Adoption and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Plan (AFPRR).

The goal of the AFPRR plan is to design a county specific recruitment and retention plan for foster and adoptive parents based on local data and best practice. The process includes the following:

- 1) Gather local data regarding recruitment, retention, and the foster care population.
- 2) Analyze data to determine the current need in the county.
- 3) Identify and collaborate with local partners and private agencies, including tribal partners, current foster parents, local businesses, and faith communities.
- 4) Design and implement a recruitment plan tailored to the specific needs of the county.
- 5) Design and implement a retention plan to support adoptive and foster care parents.

- 6) Develop an annual budget.
- 7) Submit one plan per county. Dual and tri-counties may submit one plan.



Key Pr

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- Learning about, educating, and engaging targeted communities in recruitment efforts

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- Partnering with existing resource families and youth in care while recruiting new families willing to care for young people, adolescents, and sibling groups
- Being responsive and attentive to the needs, questions, and concerns of resource families
- Explicitly creating opportunities for resource families and birth families to talk to each another about the children in care
- Ensuring strong partnerships with the agency and clear roles for resource families
- Creating many opportunities to listen to the voice of children and youth in care
- Making certain that the perspectives of the resource family are heard in numerous ways
- Finding unique ways to hear the perspectives of birth families and honoring their involvement in the lives of their children^[1]

Building on the many recruitment efforts, using the data collected from AFCARS, SWSS, and local county data bases containing information on resource families and children in care, the I-CARE 365 project developed a Foster and Adoptive Family Recruitment Campaign in the tri-county project area tag lined “I-CARE 365 – Every Child. Every Day.” Based on the premise that recruitment is “everybody’s business” and should occur “365 days a year”, the project sought to improve MDHS’s local visibility, increase public awareness, increase child specific, targeted and general recruitment efforts; and educate the community within the targeted project area of Oakland, Wayne and Macomb Counties. Ultimately the project was created to find more families willing to foster and adopt children and youth in the

[1] http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/BreakthroughSeries_RecruitmentRetention.pdf

targeted project counties. The project engaged in a collaborative planning process required for a successful outcome by including all current DHS permanency focused programs, local recruitment efforts, faith based organizations, businesses, resource networks and organizations to assist in building an awareness campaign.

Using our partners and networks concurrently, we began a methodical outreach to businesses and organizations in the tri-county project area, to identify and form mutual beneficial relationships with partners who would allow us to use their venues for promotional activities and/or recruitment outreach. Our community outreach informed the general public and prospective foster parents about the value of foster care. In addition, it educated the public about the need for resource families for our

targeted population, the roles community members play in helping child placing agencies to meet this need, and the supports community members can provide. The ultimate goals of our outreach efforts were to; 1) increase the number of qualified foster families for the targeted population and 2) retain current foster families.

Local partner groups and/or organizations included churches and other faith-based organizations, community centers, civic organizations, PTAs, community groups, local businesses, county foster care youth serving organizations, foster/adopt parents, foster parent support groups, non-competitor/non-profit organizations, schools, libraries, healthcare centers and local museums all located within the tri-county project area.

Our marketing strategies included 1) general recruitment strategies which helped build public interest and awareness of the need for resource families for children in foster care; 2) targeted recruitment strategies which considered the unique needs of teens, siblings, African American youth, children with disabilities and other mental health needs and 3) child specific strategies for youth needing an adoptive family placement.

Marketing activities used print media that focused on the following:

- Building awareness of the need for resource families
- Our targeted population, e.g.; sibling groups, African American youth, teenagers, and youth with disabilities
- Building partnerships with businesses, other non-competitor / non-profits and faith-based organizations
- Posters, brochures, fact sheets, flyers, handouts, informational videos, direct mailers, faxes, face-to-face presentations
- Disseminating state approved recruitment materials
- Engaging current foster parents and foster care youth in recruitment activities
- Disseminating information on the project website – calendar of events, how to become a foster parent, training events, community contacts, faith-based partnerships, providing business partnerships' website information where recruitment materials were available to the public, etc.

I-CARE 365 Project Database

The project developed a database that captured all the elements of a recruitment event from pre-planning to event completion. Each event was assigned a unique identifying number so that at inquiry, information could be gathered to match applicants to a particular recruitment activity for project outcomes and cost analysis. In addition to tracking event activities, the database tracked applicant inquiry profiles that included first contact, follow up, licensing outcomes, demographics, and what motivated applicants to inquire about becoming a resource parent. The database also captured all the community/business contacts for marketing and outreach.

Faith Based Recruitment Strategies

The project partnered with faith based organizations to develop a faith based recruitment model in the tri-county project area. Churches and other faith-based organizations were ideal locations for educating their memberships about the need for recruiting resource families. In addition to raising awareness of the need for resource homes, faith based organizations provided a venue for foster parent orientation, training and planned recruitment events for targeted and child specific activities.

One Day Event Planning

Faith-based organizations that utilized this planning approach held a one day community recruitment event at their place of worship. During these one day events, various activities would take place that included recruiting foster and adoptive families after/before services, recruiting foster and adoptive families during special events (family days), and/or the posting of recruitment information (posters and brochures) in their churches or facilities. Congregation members were also educated on how to support foster youth and foster families when members were not interested in becoming a licensed foster parent (e.g., provide clothing, camperships, donations, volunteer, etc) .

Partnership Planning

Under this planning approach, a faith-based organization could be involved in one day events, and also expressed an interest in doing more to help the project. Organizations working with this plan

were actively involved in recruiting foster and adoptive homes in both the congregation and in the general community. Additional involvement may have included, holding 2 to 3 one-day events during the year. The key to developing a partnership plan is to identify the key decision maker at the church. This at times is the pastor or reverend but other times it was a lay person or ministry team.

Foster Care Ministry Planning

Many faith-based organizations established foster care as one of their ministries. As a foster care ministry, the organization held community recruitment events on an ongoing basis. Specific ways included: holding one day special events, providing an overview of foster care within the community, getting trained on how to become a foster parent or, holding foster parent orientations and trainings at their place of worship.

Faith Based Outcomes

Over the five year period of the grant, there were 59 faith based events held within the tri-county project area, reaching an audience of over 4,200 people. There were 173 families recruited through these events. There were 27 churches that held one day events, 3 churches that had collaborative partnerships, 2 churches that expressed interest in planning and building foster care ministries, 5 churches that hosted orientation, 3 churches that hosted PRIDE training and 7 churches that had display units for disseminating information about foster care.

Strategies for Creating Partnerships within the Community - Partnering with Businesses

The project developed specific tools to locate and identify businesses within the Detroit Metro Area (Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties) that would be willing to help the project in its efforts to recruit and retain foster and adoptive resource families. These tools were developed to recruit families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of our targeted population who needed a resource home within their communities.

Business Tools and Outcomes

Direct Mailers - The project worked with Biggby Coffee and disseminated 2,400 joint direct mailers to a targeted market area in western Wayne County that included 2,000 residential customers and 400 business contacts. The mailer included information about becoming a foster parent as well as a discount coupon for coffee.

Theater Screens - The project facilitated working with DHS and Screen Visions to run a 30 second foster care advertisement at three local movie theaters (one in each of the targeted counties).

Joint Brochures - The project found that creating joint marketing brochures was the most successful of all business partnerships. The project would meet with local businesses and develop a brochure that contained information about fostercare/adoption and also contained information about the business partner (e.g.; menu, address, coupons, etc). Brochures were developed that represented the targeted group of children the project was recruiting for. For example, if a county was in need of families to take sibling groups, a picture of a sibling group would be on the front panel of the brochure and information regarding placement of siblings and special needs would be included in the content of the brochure. The project disseminated over 20,700 joint recruitment brochures.

Static Displays - The project developed and used both large and small display stands that included pictures of targeted youth and a message regarding the need for resource families. The static displays were equipped with brochure holders to disseminate information about the need for resource families in that area of the county. There are a total of 84 displays across the tri-county area. Twenty-five (25) displays are in Oakland County, thirty-two (32) displays are in Wayne County & twenty-seven (27) displays are in Macomb County. Of those displays, seventy-three (73) displays are placed in businesses, one (1) display placed at an elementary school (Oakland County), one (1) display placed at the Wayne County DHS office, one (1) display placed at the Charles Wright Museum (Wayne County), one (1) display placed at the Masonic Temple (Wayne County) & seven (7) displays placed at churches throughout the Tri-County project area (four in Wayne County, one in Macomb County & two in Oakland County).

Schools & PTA's - The project sent out letters to 67 schools and 243 PTA's across the tri-county project area asking to provide presentations at parent/teacher meetings and/or to place recruitment posters and brochures in their facilities.

Kiwanis Clubs - In Macomb county, our project specialist was the main speaker at a local Kiwanis Club

meeting. Information was disseminated regarding targeted youth within their community and the need for foster and adoptive families for those youth. Those families and members of Kiwanis took recruitment posters and brochures back to their businesses, schools, churches and other community organizations for dissemination.

Marketing Letters Sent - The project mailed over 1,400 letters to tri-county businesses asking them to partner with the project to promote awareness of the need for foster/adoptive resource homes and provided further information on how they could support children and families in care within their communities. A sample of a business “joint flyer” of how their business could partner with the project was also included.

Phone Calls - Phone calls (43) were made to local and national businesses asking them to partner with the project. These calls included the Detroit Tigers, Detroit Lions, The Palace of Auburn Hills, Ford Motor Company, Chrysler Motor Company, Achatz’s Pie Company, Better Maid Chips, Snapple, McDonalds Corporation, Burger King, Five Guy’s Burgers, Little Caesars, Domino’s, Hungry Howies, and Dairy Queen just to name a few.

Face to Face Meetings – Project staff had 60 meetings with businesses to discuss project partnerships and disseminate information on the need for supporting youth in care within their communities.

DVD’s - The project created a 3 Minute DVD titled “Become a Southeastern Michigan Superhero.” Over 350 of these videos were sent out to various businesses in the tri-county project area who requested more information about partnering within their communities. The video highlighted the need to find foster and adoptive homes for African-American children, sibling groups, and teenagers.

Faxed Flyer - A flyer was created and faxed to over 100 businesses and faith-based groups in the targeted area of western Wayne County to assist in recruiting homes for teenagers.

Libraries – Thirty-two (32) posters and 3,200 brochures have been placed at 32 libraries throughout the tri-county project area.

Family YMCA – Seven (7) posters and 350 brochures have been placed at 7 YMCA locations in the tri-county project area.

Roller/Ice Rinks – Seven (7) posters and 350 brochures have been placed in 7 roller skating and ice

skating rinks in the tri-county project area. These venues had offered free or discounted rates for foster and adoptive family recruitment and retention events.

Tubby's - The project has partnered with Tubby's (a franchised sandwich shop in the tri-county area) and had brochures and static displays at all 65 Tubby locations across the project counties. We have disseminated 6,500 joint brochures at these locations.

Wendy's - The project has partnered with 12 Wendy's restaurant locations throughout the tri-county area to do targeted, child specific recruitment events. We have 12 static displays at the locations and have disseminated 14,000 brochures and 12,000 targeted (county specific) tray liners. Since the inception of this partnership in November 2012, five youth have been adopted, five youth have been matched and four youth/families are moving forward with adoption as a result of the child specific recruitment partnership activities.

Pediatric Offices - The project has partnered with 4 pediatric offices to have a display stand and have disseminated over 200 recruitment brochures at these offices.

Community/Business Outreach Outcomes

Over the five year period of the grant, there were 1,306 business outreach efforts (e.g.; restaurants, bowling alleys, TV stations, credit unions, shopping malls, retail stores, dental & medical offices, healthcare systems, salons, florists, veterinary offices, pet shops, banks, credit unions, entertainment and sports complexes, corporations, community colleges, insurance companies) and 49 outreach efforts to other non-competitor / non-profit organizations.

Training Specialty Groups as a Recruitment Tool

One of the recruitment premises of the I-CARE 365 project is that the training of specialty groups (e.g.; residential staff, child care providers, educators, nurses, etc.) is a unique strategy for recruiting potential foster parents with existing skills for fostering the targeted populations. We believed that by targeting these professions and providing a combined training and recruitment message we would be able to accomplish these concurrent goals; 1) we would be targeting a group of individuals who have the innate skills and interests that we need in the families who may become resource families, 2) we would raise the awareness of the needs of children/youth in the child welfare system, 3) we would increase the accurateness of the information they have about the issues impacting

children in care and enhance their skill level in providing better services, and 4) we would enlist a number of them to assist in our recruitment efforts targeting these specific groups. The following trainings were offered as part of our targeted recruitment approach: Childhood Trauma, Foster Care / Adoption 101 and Everyday Creativity[®]™.

The project targeted organizations throughout the tri-county project area that serve or come in contact with youth in foster care. The strategy included offering “free training” sessions to their employees and disseminating information regarding the need for resource families. The project disseminated training brochures to 691 day care centers, 104 licensed residential facilities, 66 Head Start / Early On programs and 7 healthcare systems to offer this “win-win” opportunity. There were 225 staff members trained and we disseminated 465 brochures and 112 posters to trainees for dissemination within their communities.

Feedback data collected from the specialty training sessions included inquiries regarding the extent to which these professionals had experience or the ability to foster the I-CARE 365 targeted youth. Data revealed that in many instances, specialty group participants had previously fostered youth of the project target groups, including adolescents, African American children/youth, children/youth with medical needs and youth identified as juvenile sex offenders. Specialty groups also felt that they were able to foster children/youth with cognitive disabilities, adolescents, children/youth that had been in residential treatment settings, large sibling groups, children/youth with medical needs, and African American children/youth. These data provided important information for determining the extent to which specialty group trainings offered the skilled potential resources hypothesized by the I-CARE 365 project. Given that findings of the I-CARE 365 Satisfaction Survey revealed that it takes on average about 10 months from first exposure to recruitment to decision to foster, it is anticipated that these efforts may yet yield potential resources for the targeted groups.

Recruitment Outcomes

Total number of inquiries	2,113
Total number of families trained	862
Total number of families licensed	652
Total number of recruitment events	238

Total number of participants	75,700
Number of foster parents participating in events	53
Number of foster youth participating in events	49
Brochures disseminated	31,950
Posters disseminated	1,429
Information cards disseminated	2,175
Displays	84
Wall poster frames (child specific)	14
Informational DVD's	942
Community Ambassador Kits disseminated	203
Recruitment Flyers disseminated	800
Tray Liners disseminated	12,000

Recruitment Outcomes - Applicant Inquiry Profiles

Applicant inquiries recruited through the I-CARE 365 project reported having the following occupations: 50% were professional positions (e.g.; teachers, social workers, nurses, home health aides, police officers, firefighters, counselors, pastors), 30% non-professional (e.g.; homemakers, retail salespeople, factory workers, secretaries, self-employed) and 13% identified as retired, unemployed or disabled.

How did Applicants Learn About the Need for Becoming a Foster Parent

Applicant inquiries reported having learned about becoming a foster parent through the following: 75% through a community recruitment event, 10% through friends and relatives, 5% through advertisement (billboards, community posters, TV), 6% through foster parents and child welfare workers and 5% through the Internet.

Why did Applicants Contact us to Begin the Process

Applicant inquiries reported that they started the process because: 44% wanted to make a difference, 38% wanted to give back, 11% had a job that exposed them to training and children so they wanted to become involved and 7% were former foster children.

How Long Did They Think About Becoming a Foster Parent

Applicant inquiries reported that they took the following amount of time to “think about” becoming a foster parent:

- 31% thought about it for 4+ years
- 8% for 3 years
- 26% for 2 years
- 17% for 6 – 12 months
- 12% for 3 – 6 months
- 6% for 0 – 3 months.

Why Applicants Believed They Could Become Foster Parents

Applicant inquiries reported the following reasons why they believed they could become foster parents:

- 26% - *“I had parented my own children and knew that I could do a good job raising more children”*
- 20% - *“I had spoken to current foster parents and asked enough questions that I felt I could handle being a foster parent”*
- 17% - *“My job experience has provided me with enough training to feel confident in becoming a foster or adoptive parent”*
- 8% - *“I had experience with helping friends that were foster parents and decided I could do it”*
- 2% - *“I was able to watch and observe another foster family and felt I could do it also”*
- 27% - *Other*

How Many Times were Applicants Exposed to a Message About Fostering

Applicant inquiries reported the following information about exposure to messaging regarding becoming a foster parent:

1 – 2 times = 42%

3 – 5 times = 32%

6 times = 1%

9 times = 6%

12 times = 3%

More than 12 times = 16%

Planning a Transition with Hope Home (PATHH) - Moving Youth from Congregate Care to a Family

One aspect of the I-CARE 365 project was to implement a transition process for 10 youth from the Tri-County project area, who were ready to leave a congregate care placement and move to a family. These 10 youth were identified by the following: 1) they had no identified permanent family placement; 2) they were ready to transition from a residential placement to a family setting and 3) they were in need of transition or re-transition (return to the prior family) services. We would achieve this transition by working with Havenwyck Hospital residential services and piloting the development of an individualized transition planning process for children and youth leaving residential care.

“Planning A Transition with Hope Home (PATHH)” was the project’s guided transition to permanency model structured to improve permanency outcomes for youth in residential treatment settings. The PATHH model included the implementation of child specific recruitment activities, assisted in improving the coordination of service providers who are or will provide supports to the youth or family and the development of a transition plan. The model provided practical guidance to home team members and case workers as they worked with children/youth, community-based and residential care providers to support successful transitions from residential treatment facilities to community placements (treatment foster homes, relatives, guardianships, adoptive home, etc.).

The PATHH model was designed to assist in building cross system partnerships for the transition planning process. A successful transition plan must be thoughtful, comprehensive, and inclusive. To fully realize the idea that residential treatment should be a targeted, intensive short-term treatment intervention, transition plans must be developed and include the collaboration of the youth, out-of-

home placement staff, enhanced resource family and/or family, relative or kin, State child welfare staff, community mental health providers, mentors, school personnel and identified community service agencies. The outcome will be to provide the level of service intensity and duration needed to maintain the youth in a family setting.

Transition planning is critical as children, youth and families develop the supports and responses to issues that seriously impact safety, permanency and well-being. This is complicated by the many complex issues such as trauma, severe emotional disturbances, aggressive behaviors, autism spectrum disorders and mental illness that they may face. Effective transition planning for children and youth must focus on maintaining the gains that have been achieved while in residential treatment and transfer those gains to the next placement. While many youth improve while in residential treatment, their improvements are often “misplaced” when they leave. Establishing an integrated “family” continuum and preparation process are necessary conditions for realistic transition planning for youth.

To assist in planning for family placement, the home team will identify resource families to prepare for placement of these youth to assist in maintaining improved outcomes and prepare the youth for a permanent family placement. The project assisted in providing “enhanced” training to families.

The role of the Enhanced Resource Family (ERF):

- Be open to exploring the possibility of becoming a permanent resource - If necessary, function as a bridge or foundation family
- Assist in child specific recruitment efforts
- Mentors, provides support, provides practice opportunities to prepare the youth for transition as well as prepare the final family
- Participates as a member of the Home Team
- Attends all Family Team Meetings (FTM) and other planning meetings

The PATHH model will yield valuable data for supporting and integrating what is learned from the transition process into the work of the participating counties. The structure of the I-CARE 365 project and transition process facilitated this because:

- The process included involvement and engagement of the key stakeholders: Community Mental Health (CMH), Department of Health & Human Services (DHS) and public and private agencies had a strong collaboration in development and implementation of this transition process.
- The project, as part of its collaborative structure, linked with concurrent efforts and projects in the state to both learn from and share information.
- The I-CARE 365 Oversight Committee monitored the outcomes and disseminated the work to make recommendations for practice and policies.

V. COLLABORATION

The I-CARE 365 (Inter-Agency Community Adoption/Foster Family Recruitment Exchange) project was a collaborative effort between the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – Oakland, Wayne and Macomb County and Spaulding for Children. These three counties are located in southeastern Michigan and were selected as part of the project because they are urban, contiguous, and together they accounted for 44% of the children in care.

Together and individually, these organizations had the requisite experience and expertise with administration, program development, implementation, management, and evaluation of child welfare, foster care, and adoption programs to implement the project. The Oakland County Department of Human Services was the designated grantee, fiduciary, and had provided the position of Project Director to assist in monitoring the progress and direction of the project. The Project Manager, Technical Consultant and Community Support Specialists, were sub-contracted with Spaulding for Children as well as evaluative services sub-contracted to Public Research and Evaluation Services, Inc.

Public Research and Evaluation Services, Inc. (PRES) provided assistance to the I-CARE 365 and conducted a rigorous, objective evaluation of the project as required by the Children’s Bureau. The evaluation plan measured the effects of the implementation of the proposed project on safety, permanency and well-being of families in the three partner counties: (Oakland, Wayne and Macomb Counties). The evaluation included sufficient and appropriate rigor to demonstrate potential linkages between project activities and improved outcomes. It also yielded data that can be compared to, and contrasted with, regional State and national CFSR data.

Prior to the grant, the county partners were collaborating with Spaulding for Children on a diligent recruitment project known as CARE (Community Adoption/Foster Parent Recruitment Exchange). Members of the CARE collaborative included Directors, Managers, Supervisors, Adoption

Recruiters, and licensing workers from both MDHS and Spaulding for Children. At that time, the CARE collaborative was working together to create a recruitment planning process within the tri-county targeted area. The team met quarterly with a leadership conference call to establish an agenda which addressed outstanding issues in the area of recruitment and retention. County Teams, a sub-set of the CARE Collaborative met monthly to implement recruitment plans and strategies to assist in meeting the need for resource families in the tri-county area.

To enhance foster and adoptive family recruitment and retention efforts in the tri-county project area, the I-CARE 365 collaborative included additional informal partnerships with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHS) Faith Based Initiative, Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care, Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK), Adoption Resource Consultants (ARC), Families on the Move (FOTM) foster parent association, the Tri-County Foster Care Coalition and Havenwyck Center.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services Faith Based Initiative

The MDHS Faith Based Initiative was established to support faith-based outreach and initiatives in Michigan. Michigan's Faith Based Initiative encourages and challenges faith based organizations to a **"Call to Action – ALL can do something. MANY can do more. FEW can go beyond."**

The initiative connects faith based organizations to local public and private child welfare agencies to help support, recruit and retain foster/adoptive families. The I-CARE 365 project supported faith based organizations by providing presentations, offering foster parent orientations and PRIDE training to prospective resource families as well as disseminating information on how congregations can support youth and children within their communities.

Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care (FCC)

The I-CARE 365 project worked collaboratively with the Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care (FCC) in the tri-county project area to disseminate recruitment information and provide presentations. The FCC, headed by Reverend Kate Thoresen, FCC coordinator, is a grass roots collaboration that provides a catalyst to educate and motivate congregations to engage in at least one project or program that will support the 13,000 foster children or aging out youth in Michigan.

The goals of the FCC are to: 1) Provide gatherings in which representatives from congregations, organizations and service agencies can hear inspiring speakers and collaborate together; 2) Help

alleviate the suffering of OUR Michigan children in care by asking congregations to partner with a social service agency in a particular project and 3) Encourage congregations to issue calls for potential foster/ adoptive parents, mentors and respite care givers to become licensed and available when needed.¹
<http://www.faithcommunitiescoalition.org/>

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) and Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK)

The I-CARE 365 collaborative also included working with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) and Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) to assist in the child specific recruitment activities of those youth who were involved in the PATHH (Planning a Transition with Hope Home) model of transition planning for youth in congregate care. MARE is a statewide information and referral service for families interested in adopting children from foster care, and for adoption workers looking for homes for these children. WWK - The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is driven by a single goal: finding a loving family for every child waiting in foster care to get adopted. Those youth served by WWK recruiters are 2 times more likely to be adopted as a result of having a WWK recruiter.¹ Each youth identified for adoption in the PATHH case study, were registered on MARE and had a WWK recruiter as part of their "home" team to assist in permanency planning.

Families on the Move (FOTM)

Located in the tri-county project area, FOTM is a foster parent support group serving both public and private child welfare agency foster parents. Established in 1989, FOTM members are active in advocating for the support of families and children involved in the Michigan child welfare system.

FOTM headed by Ms. Veda Thompkins, experienced foster/adopt parent (over 25 years) was very active in providing input for recruitment and retention event planning, supporting recruitment events, improving customer service and planning presentations to help inform perspective parents on the special needs of our targeted population. Ms. Thompkins also participated in the PATHH model of transitioning 2 residential youth into her home. In partnership with the project team, WWK and Adoption Resource Consultant (ARC) program staff, she also helped to coordinate training for licensed foster parents to understand the special needs of older youth transitioning from congregate care to enhance placement resources.

Tri-County Foster Care Coalition

The Tri-County Foster Care Coalition is comprised of agencies that each provide foster care and/or adoption for children within the tri-county area who are unable to remain at home because of neglect and/or abuse by their families. The purpose of the coalition is to: a) Recruit foster, adopt and respite homes using a broad base participation of community, churches, foster parents, adoptive parents, respite parents and private agencies; b) Educate the community on the need for loving, caring <http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/> and supportive, Foster, Adoptive and Respite homes; c) Encourage eligible members of the community to adopt and/or become licensed foster and/or respite parents and d) Maintain a positive presence within communities located in the tri-county area.

Havenwyck Center

Havenwyck Center, part of Havenwyck Hospital which is the largest free standing psychiatric and residential treatment facility in Michigan is located in Auburn Hills, Michigan (Oakland County) which is one the target counties for the grant. At the time the grant was written, on average, 20 - 45% of all youth in care at Havenwyck Center were permanent court wards and had no comprehensive permanency plan.

Havenwyck Center was initially identified as a collaborative partner to work with the PATHH model to transition youth to a permanent family placement. At that time, they had 36 youth in their residential treatment program of which 7 youth were permanent court wards and 25 youth in their juvenile sexual offender program (Impulse Disorder Program) 5 of which were permanent court wards in need of a permanent family.

In October and November 2013, the Havenwyck staff received trauma and transition training in preparation for working with the PATHH model. In December 2013, the project was advised that Havenwyck would be terminating its contract with MDHS and would not be participating in the PATHH project. In March 2014, the Havenwyck Center terminated its' contract with MDHS and closed. The collaborative efforts surrounding the preparation to work the PATHH transition model were terminated. As a result, the project had to shift its referral sources for the PATHH youth and begin to build additional relationships with other residential facilities.

I-CARE 365 Project Committees

The project team had established the use of an Advisory, Oversight and Sub-Committee structure to assist in managing the project. By using this committee structure it allowed the project to address issues at the policy, procedure and practice levels to ensure systemic impact of the project.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee was a newly organized committee to assist the project in coordinating communication, developing and implementing the many plans and processes between and among the various programs and departments that impact permanency for children. They also served as a “barrier busting” function to assist in quickly solving problems or making decisions. Representatives on this committee included DHS representation from Children’s Services, Licensing, Business Service Center, SED Waiver Program, Oakland, Wayne & Macomb County CFS Directors, a representative from the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL), a representative from the Data Management Division, a representative from the Federal Compliance Unit, a representative from the Office of Communications, county Educational Planners, Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative coordinator, county Licensing Supervisors, State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) Director, Oakland County Juvenile Court representative, Foster Care Review Board representative, Michigan Children’s Institute superintendent, Director of the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman, Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) Director, Michigan Federation for Children and Families (MichFed) Director, Faith Communities Coalition Coordinator, Project Evaluator from Public Research and Evaluation Services, Inc. (PRES) and Families on the Move (FOTM) Coordinator - resource parent.

Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee was an existing committee that was repurposed to provide input for the project to oversee the development & administration of the membership of the projects’ sub-committee structure, periodically assess effectiveness & propose modifications to the project, review complaints, disputes or discipline issues raised in the project and develop & review financial procedures for the project. Representatives on the committee were comprised of the private/public collaborative partners that included the County Directors from Oakland, Wayne and Macomb County and the CEO of Spaulding for Children. Other members included the Project Director (OCDHS), Project Manager (Spaulding), Licensing Supervisors from the project counties, SED waiver coordinators from Wayne & Macomb County, technical consultant (Spaulding), Child & Family Services Vice President (Spaulding) and the Project Evaluator from PRES.

Data & Evaluation Sub-Committee

The Data and Evaluation Sub-Committee was a newly formed committee to provide input for project performance evaluation & evaluation of all key I-CARE 365 components, ensure data quality at the project level, monitor all evaluation tasks, review data collected by the project, develop semi-annual reports, ensure the implementation of the complete evaluation plan that measures the effects of the implementation of the project on safety, permanency and well-being of families in Oakland, Wayne & Macomb counties and review data that can be compared to and contrasted with regional, State and national CFSR data. Members of the committee included the Project Evaluator (PRES), Project Manager & technical consultant (Spaulding), DHS AFPRR Coordinator and the 3 county data resource representatives.

Recruitment Events Sub-Committee

The Recruitment Events Sub-Committee was a newly formed committee to provide the development and implementation of a tri-county specific, comprehensive & coordinated adoptive and foster parent recruitment & retention plan (AFPRR). Planning processes would strategize new cost effective, multi-agency & cutting edge approaches to increase the number of foster, adoptive and kinship parents to ensure an adequate pool of resource homes that promote stability for children within the tri-county project area. The committee developed recruitment strategies that included: 1) the involvement of youth in their own recruitment efforts; 2) recruitment activities to match a child's needs with a family who has the necessary strengths and skills to meet those needs; 3) activities to increase the number of resource families for the targeted population of children & youth in the tri-county project area; 4) improving our ability to provide homes in the county or zip code in which a child lives; 5) activities to increase our ability to place siblings together or close to each other and 6) working closely with the Community Outreach and Marketing sub-committee to develop needed tools for recruitment. Members of the committee included the Recruitment Events Community Specialist, Community Outreach Specialist, Project Manager & WWK Supervisor from Spaulding, Project Director, project county DHS licensing supervisors & licensing workers, AFPRR Coordinator, DHS Business Service Center analyst, a representative from MARE, FCC Coordinator and FOTM Coordinator – resource parent.

PR, Marketing & Community Relationship Development Sub-Committee

The PR, Marketing & Community Relationship Development Sub-Committee was a newly formed committee to manage the ongoing recruitment of tri-county organizations, businesses, and individuals to become involved with the project, conduct community presentations to businesses and organizations to enlist their support of the project, develop and oversee implementation of a tri-county awareness, communication and capacity building strategy that fulfills the requirements of the grant, oversee internal/external project communication procedures and processes, coordinate and support implementation of work by the project related to outreach and capacity building, provide feedback on the project website, project information and communication materials and activities, and work closely with the Recruitment Events sub-committee to develop needed tools and supports for targeted recruitment. Members of the committee included the Community Support Specialists, Project Manager and Volunteer Coordinator at Spaulding, representative from the DHS office of communications and a representative from MichFed.

Service Integration/Coordination Sub-Committee

The Service Integration/Coordination Sub-Committee was a newly formed committee that was responsible for coordinating the efforts of programs and services focused on Oakland, Wayne and Macomb county recruitment, retention and permanency for children. The committee brought together service providers in the tri-county area to find solutions and to develop processes of shared responsibility and accountability in dealing with problems of safety, permanence and wellbeing for children in care across the project area. The committee helped to develop the PATHH model of transitioning youth from congregate care to a home setting. Members of the committee included the Project Director, Project Manager, Community Specialists, Adoption Resource Consultant (ARC) Supervisor, DHS Permanency Resource Monitor, DHS Educational Planner, SED Waiver Liaison – CMH, private agency Residential Program Managers, and a representative from CMH Wraparound Programs.

Training & Education Sub-Committee

The Training & Education Sub-Committee was a newly formed committee that assisted in identifying training needs related to the project, developed a training strategy that fulfilled the grant elements, developed and monitored the multi-agency training process to ensure that it met the project and local needs, ensured that the multi-agency training promotes a shared understanding of the tasks, processes, principles, roles & responsibilities for safeguarding permanency for children. Members of the

committee included the Community Specialist, Project Manager & Training Director at Spaulding and DHS Licensing Supervisor (Macomb).

VI. SUSTAINABILITY

It was always intended that the recruitment efforts throughout the I-CARE 365 Project counties, would continue without the support of the grant as there was an established recruitment collaborative prior to.

Prior to the grant, the county partners were collaborating with Spaulding for Children on a diligent recruitment project known as CARE (Community Adoption/Foster Parent Recruitment Exchange). Members of the CARE collaborative included County Directors, Managers, Supervisors, Adoption Recruiters, and licensing workers from Oakland, Wayne & Macomb County DHS and Spaulding for Children. At that time, the CARE collaborative was working together to create a recruitment planning process within the tri-county targeted area. The team met quarterly via a leadership conference call to establish an agenda that addressed outstanding issues in the area of recruitment and retention. The county teams, a sub-set of the CARE Collaborative met monthly to implement recruitment plans and strategies that would assist in meeting the need for resource families in the tri-county area. As a result of this established collaborative, all of the elements of the project were being implemented in some form without funding from the grant, therefore the processes could be refined and/or enhanced from grant activities and easily embedded in policy and practice without additional funding from the State.

The project had met the requirement of legislative and funding mandates therefore it is in the best interests of the State to continue implementing its provisions; County, State, and Private Agency administrative staff are committed to improving permanency, safety and well-being outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

Based on the following, these elements of the project will be sustained after funding ends:

- The Project Director is a State employee whose position is not being funded by the grant; therefore she will continue her recruitment responsibilities after the project ends with no additional expense to the State.
- The annual AFPRR consolidated planning processes are rooted in policy and practice across the state, they are data-driven to meet the targeted needs of each county and have allocated recruitment budgets.

- Bi-monthly recruitment planning meetings with the Tri-County Collaborative will be sustained by allocating staff time to maintain recruitment efforts throughout Oakland, Wayne and Macomb County to meet AFPRR planning goals.
- County licensing/recruitment workers will continue to disseminate brochures to those organizations that have static displays across each county.
- DHS will have representation at the statewide Adoption Oversight Committee as well as the sub-committees on “Recruitment & Training” and “Youth in Residential” to improve permanency outcomes for children in the child welfare system.
- MISACWIS is fully implemented to meet mandates for improving outcomes in the child welfare system and includes licensing database elements for tracking recruitment, training and licensing of resource parents.
- MDHS Faith Based Initiative has been established to support faith based recruitment efforts statewide.
- MiTEAM – Michigan’s Child Welfare Practice Model strengthens the family engagement practice that meets federal outcomes has been fully implemented.
- The Customer Service model is being integrated into the statewide MiTEAM engagement practice.

MDHS Children’s Services has developed a planning and implementation team structure at both the State and County level to oversee and direct strategies that will impact priority and overarching areas of child welfare practice. A Strengthening Our Focus Advisory Council (SOFAC) comprised of MDHS/Children’s Services Agency (CSA) senior staff, and headed by the CSA director, will direct the overall implementation of the initiatives of 12 sub-teams that address issues identified in the following areas:

1. Permanency
2. Safety
3. Well Being: Health
4. Well Being: Education
5. Placement
6. Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention
7. Training
8. Caseloads and Staffing
9. MiTEAM/CQI
10. MiSACWIS
11. Resource Development
12. Communications

I-CARE 365 project activities and outcomes have been disseminated to the following sub-teams:

Placement Sub Team

The Placement sub-team is responsible for the development and implementation of plans related to the key performance indicators on placement of children in unlicensed placements; areas within the MSA pertaining to foster parent licensing, relative licensing, and placement exceptions. Primary strategies include: expansion of MiTEAM and CQI processes; resource development; placement process activities. The Oakland County CSA Director, who had oversight of the I-CARE 365 grant contract with Spaulding for Children, is co-chair of this committee.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention Sub Team

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention sub-team is responsible for plans related to the Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA) pertaining to foster parent licensing and relative licensing as well as retention for all foster family providers. Primary strategies include: expansion of MiTEAM and CQI processes; resource development; and placement process activities. The I-CARE 365 project director is a member of this committee and will continue membership after the grant.

While many of the aspects of the project have been implemented into policy and practice to meet legislative and funding mandates, some strategies will not be sustained at the end of the grant. As part of the grant ending, the contractual relationship with Spaulding for Children will formally end which eliminates the additional recruitment activity planning and follow up by the community specialists.

In preparation for this transition, formal contacts with I-CARE 365 business partners were transferred to the county licensing supervisors for future planning. The project recruitment specialist had provided the county partners with a consolidated outcome plan that captured the projects' successful outreach efforts, lessons learned and collaborative contacts that will assist them in future AFPRR planning strategies.

As a support to the DHS county partners, the recruitment community specialist prepared and organized the Tri-County Coalition to sustain the recruitment outreach and event planning process to maximize the use of human resources in formalizing a sustained recruitment

focus within the tri-county project area. This focus includes leveraging the collaborative relationships that were established during the project period and strategic event planning.

VI. EVALUATION

A. Evaluation Methodology

Public Research and Evaluation Services, Inc. (PRES) under the direction of Sharonlyn Harrison, PhD, provided assistance to the iCARE 365 (The Inter-Agency Community Adoption/Foster Family Recruitment Exchange) for the conduct of a rigorous, objective evaluation of the project as required by the Children's Bureau. The evaluation plan was designed to measure the effects of the implementation of the proposed project on safety, permanency and well-being of families in three Michigan counties: (Wayne, Macomb and Oakland Counties). The evaluation was strongly guided by the logic model and included both process and outcome components utilizing qualitative and quantitative data. The process evaluation included a review at two levels: 1) progress of implementation, and 2) quality of implementation. The *progress of implementation* examined iCARE 365's status in meeting its goals and objectives and its alignment with the logic model. The *quality of implementation* component served a quality assurance function. It examined whether the critical contextual factors of implementation were

in place (e.g., the extent to which it utilized a *customer service model* in collaboration with AdoptUsKids). The process evaluation also assessed the linkages between the collaborative partners and sought to determine how these linkages helped to ensure that the identified needs of children and families were met.

The outcome aspect of the evaluation process used natural experiment methodology to determine the influence of the project activities on outcomes. For this evaluation study, the iCARE counties (Macomb, Oakland and Wayne) were compared to counties with similar demographic characteristics, but who were not conducting an integrated and coordinated diligent recruitment effort as described in this proposal.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children Youth and Families describes evaluation as a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer basic questions about a program and to ensure that those answers are supported by evidence (The Program Manager’s Guide to Evaluation, [www.acf.hhs.gov /programs/opre/other_resrch/pm_guide_eval/reports/pmguide/pmguide_toc.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/other_resrch/pm_guide_eval/reports/pmguide/pmguide_toc.html)). The evaluation questions that facilitated the process and outcome components are included in the following tables. Questions from the CFSR process are included to ensure that this evaluation study included information that could be compared, contrasted to State, Regional and National data.

Table 4: Process Evaluation Information

Process Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Procedure	Evaluation Participants
To what extent is there fidelity to the logic model?	Meeting and project observation	iCARE 365 Project Team
What linkages between the collaborative partners helped to ensure that the identified needs of children and families were met?	Project Manager's Report	iCARE 365 Project Team
How was increased cross-systems collaboration and service provision achieved?	Project Manager's Report	iCARE 365 Project Team
How was increased provision of adoption information/re: adoption/foster care achieved?	Project Manager's Report	iCARE 365 Project Team
What, if any, features of the program contributed to achievement of intended and unintended outcomes?	Project Manager's Report	iCARE 365 Project Team
To what extent was this collaborative effort of a cost-benefit?	iCARE 365 Data-base	Recruitment event attendees

Table 5: Outcome Evaluation Information

Outcome Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Procedure	Evaluation Participants	Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis
<p><i>Measure C.1.4:</i> Of all children who were discharged from foster care to reunification in the 12-month period prior to FY, what percent re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of discharge?</p>	State AFCARS Data	Participating and Match Counties	Descriptive Statistics
<p><i>Measure C2.2:</i> Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the 12-month target, what was the median length of stay in foster care in months from the date of latest removal from home to the date of discharge to adoption? (51 States)</p>	State AFCARS Data	Participating and Match Counties	Descriptive Statistics
<p>By what percentages have the racial and ethnic distribution of approved foster homes changed to more closely mirror the racial and ethnic distribution of children and youth in foster care?</p>	State AFCARS Data	Participating and Match Counties	Descriptive Statistics
<p>By what percentages have the racial and ethnic distribution of approved adoptive homes either awaiting placement of a child or awaiting finalization changed to more closely mirror the racial and ethnic distribution of children and youth in foster care awaiting adoptive placement?</p>	State AFCARS Data	Participating and Match Counties	Descriptive Statistics

Outcome Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Procedure	Evaluation Participants	Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis
By what percentage has the number of placements with relatives increased?	State AFCARS Data	Participating and Match Counties	Descriptive Statistics
To what extent was there a decrease in the average length of stay for children/youth in care?	State AFCARS Data	Participating and Match Counties	Descriptive Statistics
To what extent were there increased numbers of foster, adoptive, homes for children with severe behavior problems, adolescents; children with disabilities or other physical care needs and large sibling groups?	State AFCARS Data	Participating Counties	Descriptive Statistics

Commented [SH1]: Is this redundant?

Outcome Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Procedure	Evaluation Participants	Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis
What percentage of families inquiring about relative care, foster, concurrent or adoptive licensure received a call within five working days, and by what percentage has this increased?	Statewide Foster/ Adoptive database	Individuals inquiring to the State	Descriptive Statistics
To what extent did participants' parenting skills improve?	Training Reflection Feedback Forms	iCARE 365 training participants	Descriptive Statistics
To what extent were families satisfied with services provided?	Satisfaction Survey	Foster Families in Participating Counties and Spaulding for Children	Descriptive Statistics and Factor Analysis

VII. Process Evaluation Results

A logic model was developed for the iCARE 365 project to ensure that it stayed on target during planning and implementation. Monthly evaluation meetings involved a review of the logic model as part of the progress review. The iCARE 365 initiative adhered to the logic model throughout the implementation of the project.

Implementation required well-coordinated and systematic efforts. The Project management infrastructure, with the Oversight Committee, Advisory Committee and Subcommittees, contributed greatly to the successful implementation of the project.

The iCARE 365 Project team also sought partner/collaborators with interest in children's issues and with whom existing, relevant events could be leveraged. They also established partnerships with high traffic establishments where the audience targeted for recruitment was known to frequent or were likely to attend. Businesses with existing programs aimed in support of furthering efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents, such as Wendy's Wonderful Kids, were actively engaged throughout the Project implementation. Examples of other business supporters included the Great Skate, Biggby Coffee and Subway restaurants.

The efforts of the Project Director and Manager contributed greatly to the achievement of intended and unintended outcomes. As a result of their work, there are new collaborations for recruitment efforts with businesses as mentioned above as well as across-systems. (e.g. Private agency partners, Community Mental Health, local tribes and faith-based organizations). The achievement of tri-county AFPRR planning is a major accomplishment that may be associated with iCARE 365.

Study of Recruitment Costs

A cost analysis of recruitment costs was conducted based on the Children's Bureau "Cost Analysis in Program Evaluation: A Guide for Child Welfare Researchers and Service Providers" (2013). However, due to data limitations, the study was deemed complete after the completion of step 5, estimate total costs. A cost effectiveness calculation was also carried out with respect to the cost of generating interest in becoming foster parents.

The perspective taken for the cost study is from the viewpoint of the implementing organization. Based on the ingredient method, pecuniary costs are divided into the following categories: direct personnel costs, direct non-personnel costs, and indirect costs. The ingredient method recommended by the Children's Bureau is appropriate and applicable to costing the project interventions.

To quantify the costs the 'ingredient method' per the Children's Bureau framework, was applied. In this method, the following steps are to be taken: itemize resources including staff time and non-staff-time resources, collect data on resource costs, value resources, and estimate costs of individual components. In particular, the objective was to calculate project costs of meetings and events. Thus only treatment related cost data was collected and calculated.

Resource allocation data was collected by the client for each meeting/activity. The resources for which data were provided are the number of recruitment materials provided at each meeting/activity. A total of 16,145 pieces of recruitment material were distributed at 275 meetings/activities. Data on staff time in terms of hours spent were not presented.

The information provided on recruitment materials was insufficient to place a value on those materials. The value of staff time used in each recruitment event was provided to PRES. The total value of staff time was \$30,933.29.

Indirect costs are quantified by using the indirect cost rate implicit in the federally approved budget. Using a hypothetical indirect rate of 20% applied to \$30,933.29 in direct costs results in hypothetical indirect costs of \$6,186.66. Total costs equal the sum of direct and indirect costs. These are \$37,119.95

Cost Effectiveness

The 275 events generated a total of 986 expressions of interest in becoming a foster parent, or on average 3.6 expressions per event. The maximum number of expressions of interest at a single event was 75 via website activity; the largest number of expressions at a live event was 66 at the International Women's Show hosted by the Tri-County Foster Care Coalition. Dividing the total cost by the total numbers of expressions of interest in becoming foster parents results in \$37.675/expression (= \$37,119.95/986) including hypothesized indirect costs.

VIII. Outcome Evaluation Results

Results of the Natural Experiment

The US Census county level data on population characteristics and economic data, (e.g. total subdivision population size, proportion of total subdivision population size who are non-white, proportion of households with no wages or salaries, proportion of households on public assistance and/or SSI, proportion of family households with adoption) was used to determine the closest match for participating counties for the natural experiment. Data for the participating and match counties on the CFSR and other evaluation questions are provided below in the graphs and tables. Review of these data reveals that there were no consistent trends when comparing project counties to the matched counties for the period FY 2009- FY2013. However, two of the comparison counties, Kent and Washtenaw reported very low to no re-entries for 2013. There were also no meaningful patterns when reviewing the extent to which race of children/youth matched race of foster parent and the number of placements with relatives when reviewing FY2009 – FY 2013 data for participating and match counties. However, when examining the median number of days reduced for length of days in care from FY 2012- FY 2013, Saginaw county data reveals the greatest reduction (n=117 days) followed by Oakland county (n=104 days).

Table 5: Percent of Children who Re-entered Foster Care in Less than 12 months from the Date of Discharge

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011 (County Estimated)	FY2012	FY2013
Kent	0.6%	3.1%	4.3%	5.4%	0.9%
Macomb	1.7%	5.6%	3.7%	1.8%	2.6%
Oakland	1.1%	0.3%	0.7%	1.1%	2.8%
Saginaw	2.7%	2.1%	3.8%	5.5%	4.1%
Washtenaw	0.0%	5.6%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Wayne	6.8%	3.4%	2.6%	1.8%	2.3%
Statewide	6.6%	3.8%	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%

Graph 1: Percent of Children who Re-entered Foster Care in Less than 12 months from the Date of Discharge

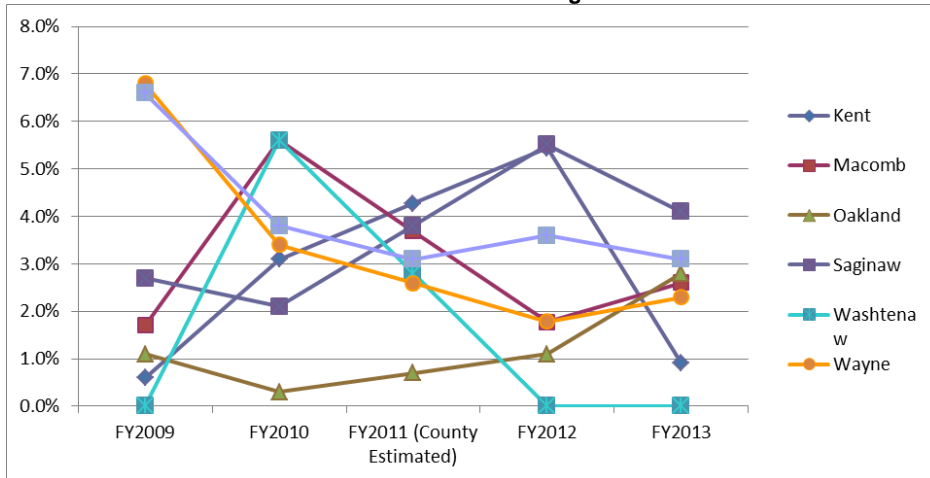


Table 6: Median Days Which the Length of Time in Care has Been Reduced for Children Leaving Foster Care to a Permanent Placement

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
Kent	602	702	637	651	687
Macomb	597	587	682	676	659
Oakland	664	677	757	645	541
Saginaw	470	338	343	516	399
Washtenaw	639	687	581	616	788
Wayne	771	683	750	786	777
Statewide	642	626	596	607	563

Graph 2: Median Days In Care For Children Leaving Foster Care (by fiscal year) to Permanent Placement (in Percentage)

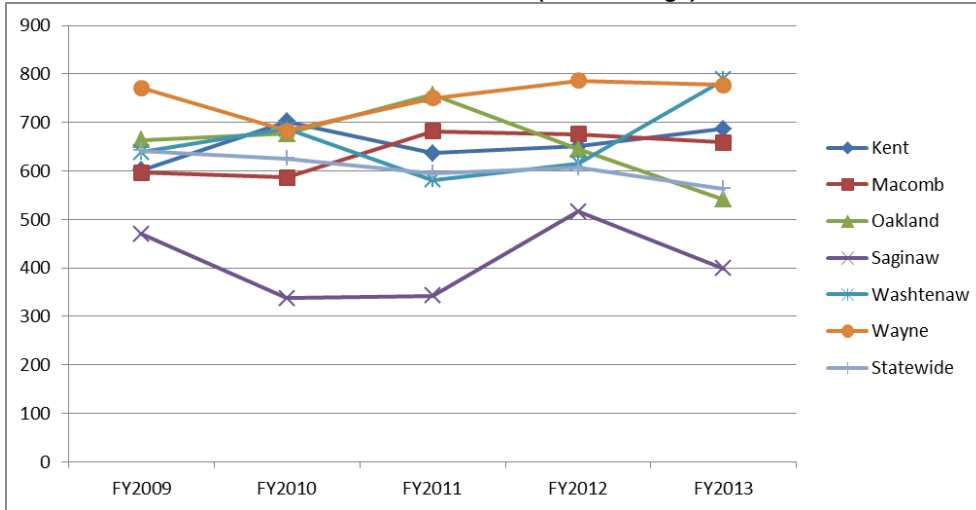


Table 7: Relative Home and Foster Home - Percent of Cases Where Race of Child Matches Race of Foster Parent

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
Kent	65.2%	66.6%	64.0%	66.3%	65.5%
Macomb	60.7%	62.5%	64.1%	63.7%	63.9%
Oakland	57.7%	56.0%	58.6%	61.3%	59.6%
Saginaw	65.2%	66.6%	62.2%	60.8%	57.1%
Washtenaw	63.4%	59.5%	66.3%	65.6%	63.8%
Wayne	51.1%	52.6%	53.3%	54.4%	56.5%
Statewide	59.2%	60.5%	61.3%	62.3%	63.4%

Graph 3: Relative and Foster Home - Percent of Cases Where Race of Child Matches Race of At Least One Relative/Foster Parent

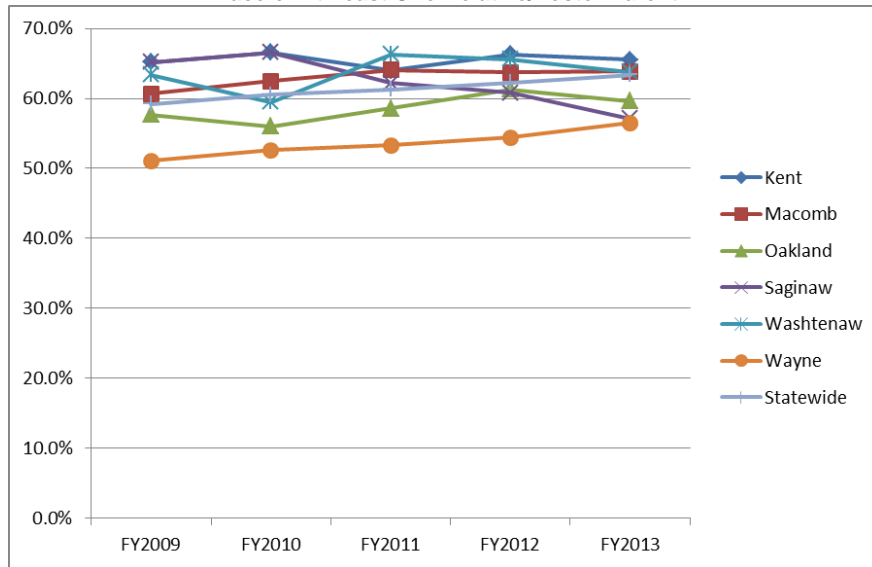


Table 8: Foster Home Only - Percent of Cases Where Race of Child Matches Race of Foster Parent

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
Kent	67.1%	70.3%	69.3%	67.2%	66.0%
Macomb	67.0%	66.7%	66.7%	65.6%	64.2%
Oakland	63.1%	62.4%	63.4%	65.3%	59.9%
Saginaw	65.8%	69.4%	56.5%	63.1%	58.2%
Washtenaw	66.0%	67.2%	70.5%	69.3%	64.5%
Wayne	50.3%	53.1%	54.0%	54.8%	57.8%
Statewide	62.8%	64.2%	63.9%	65.2%	65.6%

Graph 4: Foster Home Only - Percent of Cases Where Race of Child Matches Race of At Least One Foster Parent

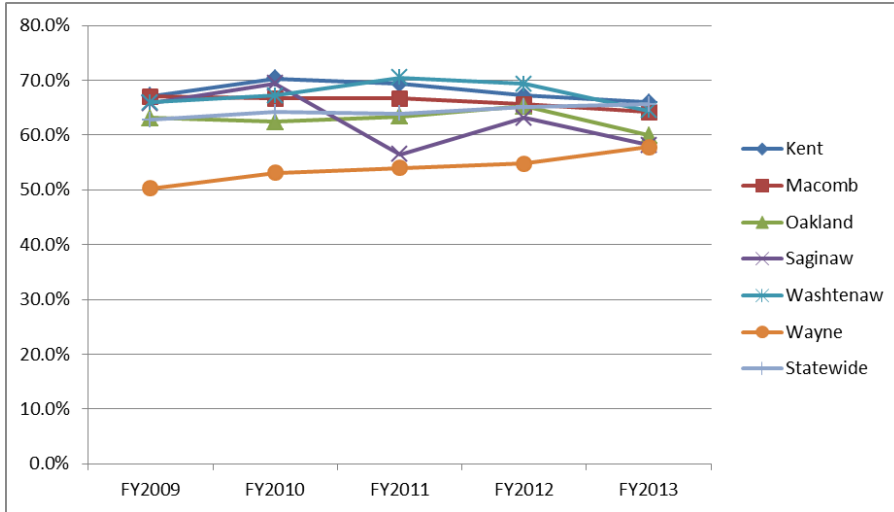


Table 9: Adoptive Home - Percent of Cases Where Race of Child Matches Race of Adoptive Parent

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
Kent	56.8%	61.3%	61.1%	61.1%	51.9%
Macomb	57.8%	59.3%	61.7%	55.7%	63.0%
Oakland	49.4%	64.3%	58.7%	62.3%	66.0%
Saginaw	58.6%	63.6%	38.5%	65.4%	42.9%
Washtenaw	23.8%	62.1%	65.0%	50.0%	70.3%
Wayne	54.5%	49.3%	57.7%	57.3%	48.1%
Statewide	55.8%	58.8%	58.9%	59.4%	59.0%

Graph 5: Adoptive Home - Percent of Cases Where Race of Child Matches Race of At Least One Adoptive Parent

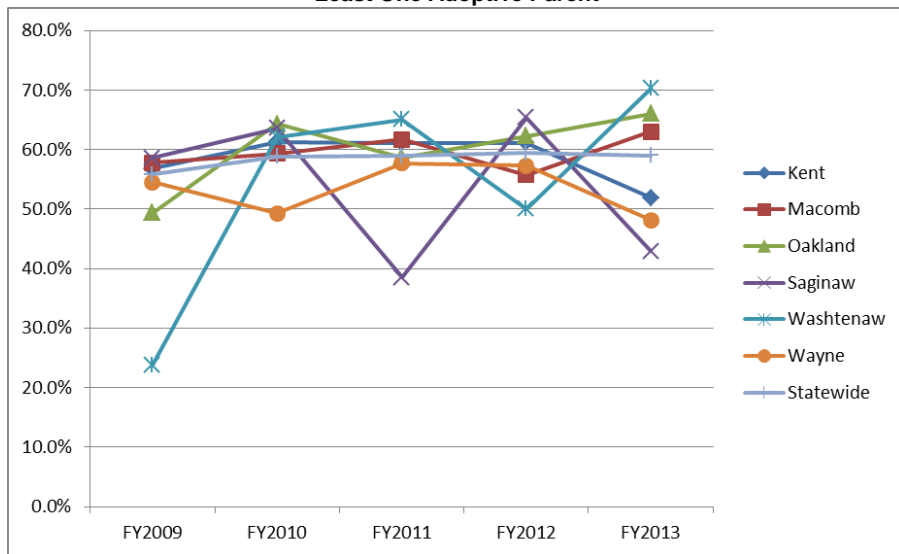
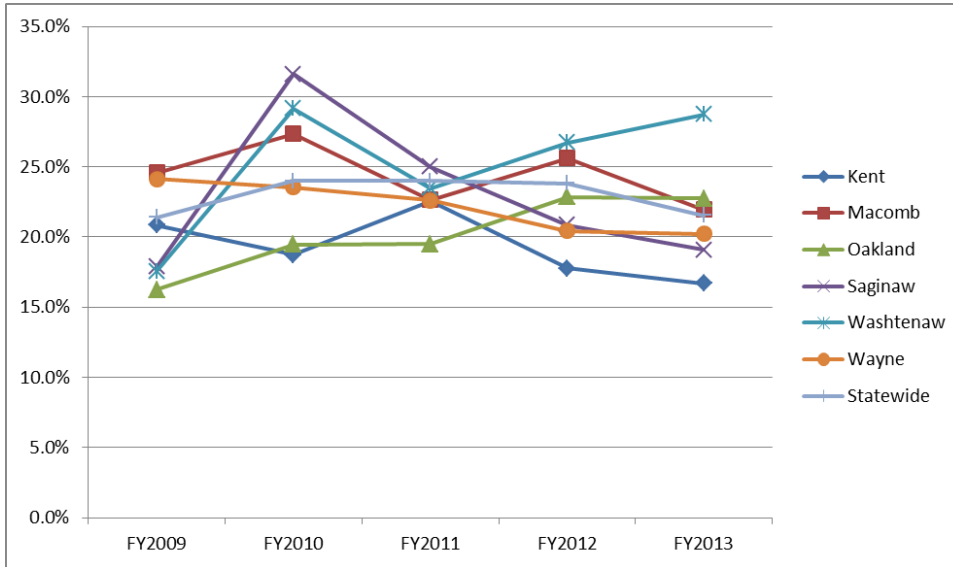


Table 10: Percentage by Which Number of Placements with Relatives Increased

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
Kent	20.9%	18.7%	22.6%	17.8%	16.7%
Macomb	24.6%	27.3%	22.7%	25.6%	22.0%
Oakland	16.2%	19.5%	19.5%	22.8%	22.7%
Saginaw	17.9%	31.6%	25.0%	20.8%	19.1%
Washtenaw	17.6%	29.1%	23.5%	26.7%	28.7%
Wayne	24.1%	23.5%	22.6%	20.4%	20.2%
Statewide	21.4%	24.0%	24.0%	23.8%	21.5%

Graph 6: Percent of Cases With One or More Relative Placements During Fiscal Year



Score Card Results on the Numbers of Foster Homes for the iCARE 365 Target Groups

Each month, Business Service Center 5 of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services provided a *scorecard* of the non-relative foster home licensing progress. As of July, 2015, the *scorecard* revealed that the target counties had achieved the following cumulative licensing goals (See Table 7 below). It is worthy of note that the target counties experienced high achievement of homes for youth with disabilities with Oakland County achieving 333% of its licensing goals, Wayne achieving 164% and Macomb achieving 84%. Comparison of achievement across counties requires caution as the processes used for determination of licensing goals are relative to each county.

Table 7: Percentage of Non-Relative Licensing Achieved for Foster Homes Overall and Adolescents, Siblings and Youth with Disabilities

County	Non-Relative Foster Home Goal	Cumulative # of Foster Homes licensed	% of Non-Relative Foster Home Goal Achieved	Non-Relative Adolescent Foster Home Goal	Cumulative # licensed for adolescents	% of Non-Relative Adolescent Foster Home Goal Achieved	Non-Relative Sibling Foster Home Goal	Cumulative # licensed for siblings	% of Non-Relative Sibling Foster Home Goal Achieved	Non-Relative Foster Home for children with disabilities Goal	Cumulative # licensed for children with disabilities	% of Non-Relative Foster Home for children with disabilities Goal Achieved
Macomb	76	53	70%	25	8	32%	38	32	83%	38	32	84%
Oakland	70	69	99%	55	10	18%	15	38	253%	12	40	333%
Wayne	172	78	45%	35	10	29%	56	38	68%	28	46	164%

Review of Return Calls to Interest Inquiries

During FY 2013, the AFPRR Coordinator provided preliminary findings from the Statewide Foster/Adoptive database to the project regarding the response rate for individual indicating an interest in foster care of adoption. These results revealed that:

- 98% of families, (n=1981) for Foster Care Navigator Program (FCNP) were contacted within 1 business day of initial inquiry
- 81% of families, (n=2620) for Juvenile Justice Online Technology were contacted within 1 business day after initial inquiry

Only 1% (FNCP) and 10% (JJOLT) of the families were contacted 5 or more days after initial inquiry. These findings reveal impressive response times to individuals seeking information about foster care or adoption.

Parents and Staff Report Improved Skills

Parents and staff received a plethora of training during the life of the project and in all instances, they reported increased knowledge and parenting skills. For example, the results from the reflection feedback form from the Trauma-Informed Parenting training with Dr. James Henry revealed that the majority of participants (92.1%) agreed that *to a great extent* and *quite a bit*, the training enhanced their job or parenting skills. Many participants also indicated that the training contributed to their knowledge regarding childhood trauma *to a great extent* and *quite a bit*. Table 8 presents these results.

Table 8: Perceived Knowledge or Skill Gain from Trauma-Informed Parenting Training

	To A Great Extent	Quite A Bit	Somewhat	A Little Bit	Not At All	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	n=
The importance of understanding trauma for children	70.5	28.2	1.3	.0	.0	78
Trauma and the brain	70.1	26.0	3.9	.0	.0	77
Complex trauma and how it affects behavior	71.8	26.9	1.3	.0	.0	78
How to recognize secondary trauma	49.3	40.0	9.3	1.3	.0	75
How resource parents are essential to developing resiliency in children	57.3	34.7	8.0	.0	.0	75
Interventions for addressing the needs of children experiencing or those that have experienced trauma	59.7	27.8	11.1	1.4	.0	72

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of knowledge/awareness (i.e., high, medium or low), before and after the training, regarding specific topics addressed in the training. For all of the topics, a moderate to substantial percentage of respondents (68.8% - 85.9%) reported perceived increases in terms of having high knowledge/awareness regarding trauma related topics when comparing their pre status to their post status. These results are presented in Figure 1 and Table 9 below.

**Figure 1: Trauma Training with Dr. James Henry:
High Pre/Post Knowledge/Awareness Levels**

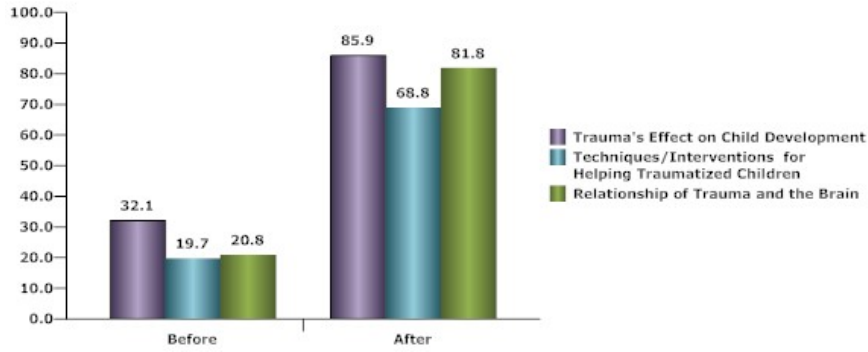


Table 9: Pre and Post Perceptions of Knowledge and Awareness for Trauma Training with Dr. James Henry	High Before	High After
	%	%
About trauma and its effects on child development was/is: (n=78)	32.1	85.9
Of techniques/interventions for helping children who are experiencing or have experienced trauma was/is: (n=76/77)	19.7	68.8
Of the relationship of trauma and the brain was/is: (n=77)	20.8	81.8

Satisfaction Survey

Foster parents of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties were invited to participate in the survey through an invitation letter that was mailed to them by the iCARE 365 Project Manager. The letter explained the purpose of the survey and offered respondents the opportunity to enter into a drawing for a \$50.00 gift card. The survey was available for completion through traditional paper and pencil, electronically and telephone interview. The survey was provided in two Waves: 2013 (n=72) and 2015 (n=32). There were no significant differences between these two Waves except that the first wave had a larger number of respondents and thus allowed for more complex analyses. Therefore, findings of the Wave 1 study are provided in this report and included:

- The sample of 72 respondents included 7 males (9.7%), 63 females (87.5%), and 2 not specified (2.8%). In the sample of 70 with satisfaction data, males made up 10% and females 90% of that sample. The majority of the respondents were white (62.5%).
- For analysis purposes, the Race/Ethnicity variable was collapsed into two categories: White and Non-White. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of satisfaction.
- The number of different children fostered since becoming a foster parent ranged from 0 to 300, with a mean of 11.74 and a median of 3. The number of different children fostered in the last year ranged from 0 to 15, with a mean of 1.97 and a median of 1.00. Respondents reported that they had been foster parents 1 – 336.00 months (28 years), with a mean of 65.5 months and a median of 36 months.
- When asked to tell the type of resource family they were, 40.6% reported that they were foster parents, 34.4% indicated that they were both foster and adoptive parents, 17.2% were kinship foster parents and 4.7% indicated that they were adoptive parents. There was 1.6% each of kinship adoptive parents and guardians.
- In terms of the agencies providing services to these satisfaction survey respondents, 91.3% reported that they received services from the Department of Human Services and 4.2% received services from Private Agencies and Other Agencies, respectively.
- Three items on the survey dealt specifically with satisfaction and were presented as follows:
 - Q59j: Training and preparation experience: Was satisfied with the opportunity to participate in ongoing annual training: Q59 used a 5-point rating scale with 1 = strongly agree ... 5 = strongly disagree.
 - Q67: How satisfied are you with foster parent support services received in last year? Q67 used a 5-point rating scale with 1 = very satisfied ... 5 = very dissatisfied.
 - Q80: Overall, how satisfied are you as a foster parent with your agency. Q80 used a 5-point rating scale with 1 = very satisfied ... 5 = very unsatisfied.
- These items were used to develop a satisfaction index that allowed for the relationship between actual satisfaction and the influences on satisfaction to be examined using three different methods.
 - Comparison of the overall index of satisfaction to the type of influence (i.e., positive, negative, or not at all).
 - Analysis of influence as a dichotomy: that is positive influence or not a positive influence against each of the three areas of the index, (i.e., Training, Support and Agency).
 - Analysis of how the items that were rated as positive influences impacted respondents' level of satisfaction in each of the three areas.

- In the first method, foster parents responded to a list of factors that may influence their satisfaction. For each of these items they indicated whether the factor was a positive influence, negative influence, or not a factor. The following were considered positive influences on satisfaction by the respondents as confirmed by statistically significant results:
 - The agency's appreciation of their efforts as foster parents.
 - Feeling like a team member with the agency.
 - Knowledge about what is going on with children in their care.
 - Financial support for the children in the foster parent's care.

Major Changes Made to the Evaluation Plan

During each semi-annual period, the evaluation team was instructed to report on challenges to the evaluation process and any changes that were made. Overall, iCARE 365 remained true to the evaluation design. The two most significant changes were the addition of the Serious Emotional Disturbance Waiver Focus Groups and the refinement of the evaluation questions. As the team determined that a needs assessment more closely reflective of the target audiences would be of greatest worth to project development, the SED study was designed and conducted. Secondly, in that the State of Michigan was undergoing significant changes in terms of enhancing its child welfare system, many of the data components were part of new structure and transition. Therefore, multiple project data requests were reduced and simplified to those that would enable iCARE 365 to have information regarding the outcomes that might be associated with its efforts.

APPENDICES

Michigan Resource Parent Focus Groups

September & October, 2014

Background and Overview of Process (NRCDR)

Background

The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (NRCDR) is currently providing technical assistance to the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) to assist in the development of a customer service model to strengthen recruitment and support of resource families and increase the satisfaction of these families with the manner in which services are delivered by Michigan public and private child welfare agencies. The work will be accomplished by collaborating with DHS and its practice model consultants to integrate customer service concepts into the implementation of the state's enhanced practice model. To inform this process with information on the experiences of resource families (kin, foster and adoptive families), DHS and NRCDR collaborated to plan a series of focus groups with resource families around the state.

The NRCDR staff and consultants providing technical assistance are Marie Youngpeter, Jill May and Maureen Heffernan.

Overview of Resource Parent Focus Groups

NRCDR facilitated a total of 10 sessions with resource families during September and October, 2014. The first and largest group occurred on 9/12/14 at the statewide resource parent conference. Nine additional sessions were held during the week of 10-6 to 10/10/14. Invitations were extended to families licensed by both DHS and private agencies, and sessions were offered at geographically diverse locations throughout the state. During each focus group the participants were assured that the information obtained would be reported back to DHS in order to strengthen the state's program to recruit and support resource families. They were informed that the comments would be reported in a way that was not individually identifiable. The consultants also told each group that we would recommend that DHS share with them a summary of the information collected in the focus groups and let them know how the information is being used.

Organization and Analysis of Focus Group Material

The notes from each session were first coded to identify how the responses reflected the four components of the Enhanced MiTeam Practice Model: teaming, engagement, assessment and mentoring. This way of categorizing the comments was not accomplished with "scientific" precision, but it did work well as a way to organize the large amount of notes that were collected.

Some comments were also coded in a two additional categories to indicate that they addressed broader agency/systemic and support issues than the four practice model components.

Based on the notes, strengths and challenges were then outlined for each of the practice model components and for agency/systemic and support factors.

In addition, it became clear that when the notes from all 10 sessions were considered as a whole, a relatively small number of common themes emerged across all of the focus groups. These were compiled as a “Summary of Key Themes”.

As a result of this process, the following documents have been created and will be provided to DHS by the NRCDR:

- Summary of Key Themes
- Strengths and Challenges Identified by Resource Parents: Practice Model Components and Agency/Systemic Factors (We recommend this document be shared with focus group participants.)
- Notes from each focus group session, coded as described above

Michigan Resource Parent Focus Groups

Summary of Key Themes

Commitment & Partnership

The resource families we heard from presented as strongly committed to the wellbeing of the children they serve and to their caregiving role. Most expressed a strong willingness to work collaboratively with their child welfare agency. With the exception of a few resource parents who appeared embittered by difficult events, the resource parents we met evidenced a good understanding of the challenges facing the child welfare system and its staff and a desire to work in partnership to solve problems and strengthen the system.

Positive Relationships with Licensing Staff

When asked to identify examples of good support and responsiveness from their agency, many of the resource parents highlighted the services they had received from licensing staff. Most described their initial recruitment and licensing process as a positive experience, and continued to view licensing staff as helpful and supportive to the present time. It should be noted however, that despite the satisfaction with licensing staff *relationships*, many did not feel properly

prepared for the resource parenting role by the education provided in the pre-service period or after licensing.

Challenges in Relationships with Caseworkers

The families gave mixed reviews of their relationship with caseworkers. The challenges that the resource parents described often referred to problems in responsiveness or communication with children's workers. On the other hand, many expressed awareness that caseworkers can be overwhelmed by the demands of their jobs including paperwork, which was observed to have increased to such a point that it negated the benefits of the decrease experienced in caseload sizes.

Needs for Education and Skill Development

Another theme that seemed to resonate for many was a sense that they were not well prepared for their caregiving role. While most seemed to find PRIDE pre-service training to be valuable, they also found it to be insufficient education for what was to come. Some experienced resource parents shared that they were PRIDE co-trainers and made it a point to try to strengthen the value of the sessions they presented by bringing in real life examples and guidance. The consultants observed that more opportunities for ongoing skill development would help resource parents to address the difficulties they described in such areas as relationships with birth parents, challenging child behaviors, and working effectively with professionals and systems.

Peer Support Efforts

In many of the locations, resource parents were active in support groups, some agency led, but many led independently by resource families. We also heard about online support groups and other self-advocacy efforts. In every location we visited there were resource parents who were engaged in supporting and developing other families through formal or informal support groups or individual mentoring.

Limited Engagement as Team Members

Resource parents almost across the board expressed the desire to have a voice in the planning for children in their care, but relatively few reported consistent and meaningful engagement with the formal team meeting process. There was considerable variation as to whether resource parents were aware of family team meetings or aware of the MiTeam concept. Some reported receiving plan documents including tasks they had been assigned but to which they had no input. Although there were a number of examples of resource parents who felt well engaged as part of the service team at both county and private agencies, these situations were the exception in the groups we encountered. Overall, the sense was that intentional inclusion of resource parent perspectives and skills in the child and family assessment and planning process was not a

common practice. Beyond the agency team, the experiences that resource parents had with courts and other systems was mixed. Some described regular court attendance and being directly asked for their testimony, while others were unaware that they could provide information to the legal process.

Gaps in Support

The degree to which resource parents felt concrete or emotional support in their caregiving roles was another area with variability by agency, and perhaps, even by caseworker. However, some common difficulties were heard. These included:

- The timeliness and adequacy of reimbursement or funding for services and the availability of concrete supports such as respite or services needed for the child: Several described going into their own and often limited resources to pay for medicine, respite or other services for which agency funding was unavailable or delayed. Regarding the recent difficulties in payment due to the SACWIS system transition, some families are continuing to experience delays. Some reported going months with no reimbursement. Others were grateful that their agencies arranged some funding with local dollars.
- Perceived lack of respect for the needs and functioning of their own families: This was experienced as a lack of flexibility in meeting rigorous demands related to scheduling and transportation, and limited financial support when trips of many hours or miles are needed to obtain services or medical treatment.
- Special Investigations: Many who had experienced an investigation found the process to be more painful and isolating than would be necessary to assure child safety. Some reported long delays in learning the nature of the complaint, and most said they would have benefited from general information to explain the process and emotional support from someone at the agency since the staff they had come to rely on were unavailable to them during the investigation period.

Overall, there was a sense that many kin, foster and adoptive parents experience the system as one in which they find little empathy for the challenges into which they and their families are immersed on a daily basis.

Michigan Resource Parent Focus Groups
Strengths and Challenges Identified by Resource Parents

Structure of this Document

Strengths and challenges described during the series of resource parent focus groups are organized into six categories: The first four groupings reflect the components of the MiTeam Practice Model – **Teaming, Engagement, Assessment and Mentoring**. Two additional groupings describe other factors addressed by the resource parents, **Agency/Systemic** and **Support** factors.

Teaming

Strengths

- Foster parents are interested and willing to participate in team meetings
- Team meetings are occurring in some areas of the state
- Team meetings have utilized skilled and neutral facilitators to help keep the focus on moving the meeting forward
- Team meetings have been experienced as effective when held as a collaborative process toward the best interest of the child.
- Foster parents who have been able to be involved in the team meeting and provide input have been able to develop relationships with bio families and have a stronger sense of how to support the plan.
- Foster parents who received timely notice of court hearings were more likely to attend and have an opportunity to share information about what has been going on with the child.

Challenges

- Team meetings have been experienced by some as more of a mandate rather than a process by which to develop a plan toward achieving permanency
- Team meetings, when held, tend to be around removal or placement and did not consistently occur throughout the life of the case
- Some foster parents have been discouraged from attending team meetings, do not receive timely notice of team meetings and in some cases only learned about the team meeting after it was held.
- Foster parents who have been able to attend a team meeting sometimes leave the meeting not clear on their role in supporting the case plan
- Involvement of the foster parent in the team meeting and case planning has been experienced as not being an expectation, but a choice of either the worker or parent.

- Some foster parents experience the agency as treating them like a caretaker/babysitter for the child rather than a member of the team who can provide insight into the needs of the child.

Engagement

Strengths

- Foster parents' experiences with licensing staff has been engaging, responsive and supportive through the licensing process
- Foster parents have experienced supportive relationships with caseworkers who have an understanding of the needs of children and families and have respect for the foster parent's role and value in supporting permanency planning for children placed in their home.
- Foster parents have experienced some workers as being readily accessible, responsive and supporting of both the needs of the child and of the foster family.
- Some foster parents experienced workers as willing to explore and consider the family's schedule when arranging meetings or visits.
- Foster parents who experienced open, honest and regular communication felt more engaged and understanding of the challenges involved in cases and the work of the caseworker.

Challenges

- Foster parents experience inconsistencies in the communication and ability to access the child's caseworker as they often get voice mail, calls are unreturned, or they are not clear as to who to contact for specific situations.
- Foster parents experience inconsistencies in the delivery of services and supports depending on the agency they are with
- Foster parents do not always receive requested supportive services to meet the needs of the child when it comes to health care, transportation, and activities.
- Foster parents do not always received timely notice of team meetings, child or caseworker visits or cancellations, and court hearings.
- Foster parents receive limited information about the child or the activities in case planning and are not always asked for their input
- Foster parents are not involved in policy changes that impact their family or the care that they provide to children placed in the home
- Foster parents do not always experience the agency as respectful of their family and the needs that they may have in the placement or removal of a child from their home
- Foster Parents have limited, if any, support around grief and loss experienced by the removal of a child placed in the home.

Assessment

Strengths

- Some foster parents have been asked to share their experiences and concerns about children in the home toward helping to address the child's needs and supporting case planning making them feel valued in providing useful information.
- Foster parents take initiative in researching behavioral and medical needs of children placed in the home and seek out resources to meet the needs
- Some caseworkers are viewed as comfortable with developing a relationship with the foster parents to learn and share information that supports planning

Challenges

- Foster parents perceive that their input and concerns are minimized or not considered at all.
- Foster Parents receive limited information about children and bio families upon placement and are not provided updates as information is available or how the case is progressing
- Foster parents have encountered case workers who are unfamiliar with the child's needs and behaviors
- Foster parents relate the process of maltreatment investigations (special investigations) being very traumatic for both the child and foster family

Mentoring

Strengths

- Foster parents recognize case workers are overwhelmed and help to guide new staff which contributes to developing better working relationships.
- Foster parent support groups and advocacy is available either formally or informally in the individual areas and are a place where foster parents learn how to maneuver through the system and develop strategies for meeting the needs of the children.

Challenges

- Some agencies are in conflict with one another and there is inconsistency in the administering of policies and practice and the support received from various agencies.
- Foster parents are not always clear on the expectations and mandates of the agency and their role in supporting the child's plan
- There is inconsistency in the familiarity and enforcement of policy and procedures by caseworkers

- Foster parents are not familiar or involved in the development of policies that affect them or the children in their home such as the process of special investigations, family teaming, payment processes, etc.

Agency/Systemic

Strengths

- Foster parents indicated that caseloads appear to be much lower
- Foster parents have experienced some agencies to be responsive to the needs of the child as well as the foster parents
- Some foster parents expressed that there has been positive changes resulting from reform

Challenges

- Paperwork seems to have increased significantly as well as an increase in the number of rules to be followed
- Workers need more training, specifically on the effects of trauma and special populations
- Supervisory support for caseworkers is inconsistent
- High turnover rate of caseworkers in some areas resulting in a case having multiple workers which may result in multiple transitions and inconsistency in case progress
- Inconsistency in practice and support between agencies
- SACWIS and payment system results are challenging and have resulted in delayed or no payments
- PRIDE training does not adequately prepare foster families for real situations
- Birth parents given too many chances for the sake of reunification that delays permanency for children
- The foster parents experience the process for special investigations as punitive and judging
- DHS is not transparent and some foster parents experience the system as secretive or misleading
- Day care and flexibility in babysitting arrangements

Supports

Strengths

- Some foster parents have experienced individual support from their agency
- Foster parent support groups initiated by foster parents in many areas of the state
- Some caseworkers provide personal contact information for after hours and will respond to calls promptly

- Foster parents experience support from workers through return calls and the use of texting as a means of communication
- Some foster parents have experienced prompt follow up after a placement to inquire about needs
- Some foster families have experienced support through Foster Care Navigators

Challenges

- Need foster parent peer support statewide
- Post adoptive services needed in many areas
- Timely reimbursement and payment needed to support needs of children
- Transportation support needed, especially when foster families have multiple children
- Grief and loss support not available for foster parents when children leave the home
- Services not always available in close proximity
- Training on serving special needs of children and availability of specialized homes
- Understanding of policies that impact foster parents and children, specifically around special investigations and FTM's
- Foster parent support before, during and after approval
- Respite for families caring for children with high needs
- Liaison or Ombudsman for foster, adoption, and kinship families
- Resources for kinship families