Project MATCH

Making Appropriate & Timely Connections for CHildren

Connections

March 2010

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Four Regions Selected for Interventions

The following four regions were randomly selected for the five interventions approved by the Children's Bureau: The Lakes, Two Rivers, Southern Bluegrass and Eastern Mountain. Each region also is assigned a comparison region for the quasi-experimental design study. The Lakes will be compared with The Cumberlands; Two Rivers will be compared with Salt River Trail; Eastern Mountain will be compared with Northeastern; and Southern Bluegrass will be compared with Northern Bluegrass.

Clustered Random Sampling Used to Identify Intervention and Comparison Regions

A Service of the Children's Bureau

Project MATCH Interventions

In October 2008, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services was awarded a grant from the Children's Bureau regarding the diligent recruitment of homes for children in foster care.

The five year grant, entitled Project MATCH (**M**aking **A**ppropriate and **T**imely Connections for **CH**ildren), is a collaborative initiative with the University of Kentucky, Murray State University, the University of Louisville and Western Kentucky University participating with the cabinet.

The grant is proposing five interventions in The Lakes, Two Rivers, Eastern Mountain and Southern Bluegrass with the remaining regions serving as comparison regions.

The goals of Project MATCH are: 1) increase the pool of resource parents to more accurately reflect each region's out-of-home care (OOHC) population; 2) increase the effectiveness in locating and using appropriate kinship care; 3) fully integrate concurrent planning into permanency planning; and 4) increase inter- and intra-agency communication between public, private, and community stakeholders.

Project MATCH is being conducted in two phases. During Phase I, which ended Sept. 30, 2009, barriers to appropriate child placement, safety, permanency and well-being achievement were thoroughly explored through data analysis and the collection of information from public and private child welfare staff and resource families through the use of focus groups and forums.

One of the important products of Phase I was an extensive literature review that will be used during Phase II for the purposes of effective recruitment and retention of resource families and kinship care families and improving permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

The Phase II plan has been approved by the Children's Bureau. The five interventions approved by the Children's Bureau include:

- ***Targeted and Child Specific Approach to Recruitment***

Experienced resource parents (diligent recruitment specialists) have been hired and trained to engage in targeted recruitment activities in the intervention regions utilizing market segmentation data and best practice research.

- ***Implementation of a Customer Service Model of Resource Parent Recruitment, Selection, Training and Retention***

All recruitment activities conducted by the diligent recruitment specialists will refer interested families to a centralized intake process which will share information on all foster and adoptive agencies in the area. The centralized intake will be coordinated through Murray State University.

- ***Mix and MATCH meetings***

Quarterly sessions will take place in a variety of locations throughout the intervention regions to maximize staff time and travel.

These sessions will include a mixture of public and private agency staff, resource parents, court personnel and placement coordinators and will focus on a productive environment led by a neutral facilitator with a structured agenda.

The sessions will focus on the development of a shared vision of permanency for children in the region and the agenda may include, but not be limited to: identification of regional trends, barriers and strategies to achieving positive outcomes, best practice tips and the opportunity to celebrate permanency successes. Sessions began in January 2010. See page 6 for more details.

CEUs will be offered for all training provided during Mix and MATCH meetings.

- ***Utilization of Respite between Completion of Pre-service Training, Approval and Placement***

To keep families engaged in the approval process as well as to minimize frustration with routine delays, project staff will encourage the use of respite provision by those awaiting final approval as a resource home.

Providing waiting families with the opportunity to receive on-the-job training in preparation for full time care of special needs children; broadening a family's acceptance criteria by caring for teens, sibling groups and/or children with emotional or behavioral needs; and connecting families with experienced resource homes.

- ***Collaboratively Review Permanency Data with the Courts***

Regional and project leadership will work with family and district court judges in addressing barriers to achieving permanency through quarterly reviews of permanency data.

For more information on Project MATCH, contact Mike Grimes at **502.564.2147.**

Family Finding: What It's All About

In July, nationally known consultant Kevin Campbell came to Kentucky to teach child welfare professionals about the Family Finding model.

During his training Mr. Campbell shared the following facts from the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice (2009):

- The number of youth in foster care waiting to be adopted has increased.
- The outcomes for children involved in the system are often not positive.
- 49% of youth aged out of care in 2002-2003 were homeless at some point in the next three years.
- 43% were high school dropouts with a median monthly income of $598.33.
- 37% had children of their own.

Mr. Campbell stressed that while there are some social workers who work under the misconception that teens are unadoptable and/or do not want to be adopted, permanency for teens is a very realistic and attainable goal.

The Family Finding program believes there is a family out there for every child, but we may need to broaden our scope of the meaning of family.

Meaningful connections and lifelong relationships with family do contribute to positive outcomes for children.

During the two-day training, Mr. Campbell demonstrated an Internet search process (US Search), explained the process of file mining (intensive review of case records from case inception to identify kin, fictive kin or others important in the life of the child) and shared an example of mobility mapping.

Participants shared case information, conducted searches and were encouraged to continue the file mining process and try mobility mapping with their youth when they returned to their offices.

As of this publication, a number of success stories have been shared with project staff regarding the identification of positive connections for youth in care who were not known previous to this training.

For more information on Family Finding or to request training please contact Jessica Morris at 859.257.5345 or Phil Kilby at 877.994.9970.

"The Family Finding program believes there is a family out there for every child."

- Kevin Campbell

Partnering with Private Agencies

One of the required components of Project MATCH is working toward a shared vision of permanency for youth with private child care agencies. To ensure our partners are involved in the grant we have initiated several steps:

- Private agency staff have been included as members of the Diligent Recruitment Advisory Board, which meets twice per year.
- Private agency staff and resource parents have received surveys related to barriers and successes in achieving permanency. Contact evaluators Crystal Collins-Camargo (502.852.3174) or Dana Sullivan (270.745.3535) for information on the results.
- Private agency staff were invited to focus groups held in the spring throughout the state to share barriers and successes in achieving permanency;
- Staff of the University of Kentucky and Murray State University met with staff of private agencies in the intervention regions to share information regarding Project MATCH and its goals. If your agency is in one of the intervention regions and you have not been visited, please contact Jennifer Hall 859.257.2186 or Caroline Crump 270.809.6946 to schedule a visit.
- Private agency staff and foster parents are an important part of the Regional Mix and MATCH meetings that began in January 2010.

These sessions will include an hour of relevant training plus time to brainstorm solutions to regional issues and will end with a celebration of regional successes.

Private and public agency staff, resource parents, and court personnel will be involved in the Mix & Match sessions.

Market Segmentation: a targeted recruitment tool

Have you ever wondered why the grocery store clerk asks for your "rewards" card or why the cashier wants to know your zip code when you check out at the outlet store?

It's for research purposes!

Do you realize there is a reason why companies are interested in tracking what we drink, the magazines we read, even the types of hobbies we prefer?

Market research firms conduct studies of thousands of people across the United States looking at thousands of behaviors and demographic predictors, including product purchases (food, clothing, electronics, etc.), lifestyle choices (travel, religion, hobbies, politics, etc.), media choices (TV, radio, books, internet, etc.) and neighborhoods where people live (rural, urban, suburbs, small towns, etc.).

This information is then used to create profiles, which can be used for marketing or recruitment purposes.

As part of our diligent recruitment efforts, we are contracting with Nielsen, a market research firm, to assist us in targeting our recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive families by using market segmentation. Nielsen asserts that every US household falls into one of 66 profiles or segments.

Should we rely on a company with no experience in social work to tell us who to target to be foster and adoptive families?

Shouldn't we use the wisdom of experienced social workers to tell us who would make a good foster or adoptive parent?

The answer is yes to both!

For years experienced social workers have spent time and money recruiting families for children using a general approach.

While this approach to recruitment is good for creating public awareness about the needs of children in our communities, it has not necessarily resulted in an abundance of homes willing to foster or adopt children with severe emotional or physical needs (Special Needs Adoption Program children).

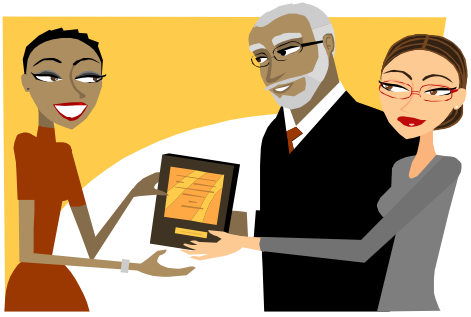
However, if we merge the expertise of experienced social workers (their knowledge of the best type of parent for a special needs child) along with the technology of today (market segmentation), we can identify **who and where** the people who most resemble our most successful resource homes and how we are most likely to get our message to them.

Nielsen created a report that will assist the Project MATCH staff and our diligent recruitment specialist to further refine recruitment efforts in the communities they serve. Currently, we are working with AdoptUsKids consultants to create tailored plans for the intervention regions. We look forward to seeing great results from these targeted efforts!

Mix and MATCH

These meetings will be a great opportunity to review regional data, identify trends, discuss barriers and strategies to positive outcomes, work collaboratively with DCBS and private agency staff, foster parents and community partners as well as provide opportunities to share promising practices in achieving permanency. See the following page for the details of all the upcoming meetings in your region.

AWARD Nominations for Social Worker of the Quarter



AWARD Nominations for Resource Parent of the Quarter

Nominees should:

- Be a public or private agency worker in one of the four intervention regions (The Lakes, Two Rivers, Southern Bluegrass, Eastern Mountain); and
- Be a role model for recruiting, training, and/or providing excellent customer service to our foster parents; or
- Be a role model for working in partnership with and supporting resource parents (foster adoptive and or kinship caregivers); or
- Be innovative when achieving permanency for children. and youth.

Nominees should:

- Be an active foster/adoptive/kinship care parent in one of the four intervention regions; and
- Be a role model for supporting other foster/adoptive/kinship care parents; or
- Be a role model for working in partnership with public and/or private child care agencies; or
- Be a role model for supporting child/youth in placement and supporting permanent placements.

All nominations should include name, contact information, agency name and location, and a short essay about why they are being nominated (250 words or less). Please submit nominations for this quarter to Jessica Morris at jessicamorris@uky.edu by May 3, 2010. Award winners will be recognized each quarter in the Project MATCH newsletter and given a $25 gift certificate.

Project MATCH

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Upcoming Mix & MATCH

Eastern Mountain

March 9th: 9 a.m.— noon EDT at the MSU Post Secondary Building, Room 131 in Prestonsburg
March 18th: 9 a.m.— noon EDT at the KY River ADD Conference Room in Hazard

Two Rivers

March 1st: 9 a.m.— noon CDT at the Drury Inn in Bowling Green
June 7th: 9 a.m.— noon CDT at the Hampton Inn in Bowling Green
March 5th: 9 a.m.— noon CDT at the Owensboro Police Department

Southern Bluegrass

April 6th: 9 a.m.— noon EDT at EKU, Stratton Building, Room 333 in Richmond
April 27th: 9 a.m.— noon EDT at the Chrysalis House Community Center, 1589 Hill Rise Dr., Lexington

The Lakes

April 8th: 9 a.m.— noon CDT at the MSU Regional Campus, Multipurpose Room in Hopkinsville
May 20th: 9 a.m.—noon CDT at the PADD Office in Mayfield

For information about the Mix & MATCH meetings in Eastern Mountain and Southern Bluegrass regions, please contact jessicamorris@uky.edu or 859.257.5345 and about meetings in Two Rivers and The Lakes regions, please contact phil.kilby@murraystate.edu or

Meet the DR Specialists

EASTERN MOUNTAIN
(Big Sandy Side)
Dianna Lawson

EASTERN MOUNTAIN
(Kentucky River Side)
Sheila Neal

SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS
Fayette County
Charisse Gillett, Ph.D.

SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS
RURAL COUNTIES
VACANT

TWO RIVERS
(Green River Side)
VACANT

TWO RIVERS
(Barren River Side)
Becky Johnson

THE LAKES
(Pennyrile Side)
Rusty Morris

THE LAKES
(Purchase Side)
Tamra Dodson

For more information about adoption and foster care please call 1.877.944.9970 or email project.match@murraystate.edu