



VT-FUTRES
Fostering Understanding To
Reach Educational Success

Recruit and Retain Toolkit, Step 1
Plan and Recruit

Recruitment and Educational Stability: The Why, Who, and How

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Why Is Recruitment So Important for Educational Stability and Well-Being?

A solid [recruitment plan](#) advances educational well-being for children and youth in foster care because it leads a greater variety of resource parents in a given town.

- Having this larger pool of trained families available makes it easier to find a suitable local match for a child. This in turn will allow the child to remain in a familiar school setting where they are more likely to thrive.

When a child comes into custody, the primary focus should be to maintain as much as we can that is familiar to the child, including the people the child may have to live with.

- Placing a child with kin is a priority, but not always possible right away. Resource family recruitment continues to be a very important component of the system so that children can remain in their same school while other pieces of work may be happening.

Building strong relationships with community partners, especially schools, can help DCF staff find possible resource family options. An up-to-date [School Directory](#) helps.

- Often, school personnel are very attached to their students and want to see the child remain in their home school and stay connected to the community where the family is supported.
- Some school personnel have long standing relationships with various community members and may be able to help identify family members or other community members with whom the child has a connection. For example, there might be a previous teacher or coach, a best friend's parent, or someone else local and familiar to the child who would be capable of helping out.

[Family Finding](#) blends very nicely with our recruitment efforts in school.

- The FSD Assessment unit begins this work by asking the family members and the child who is in their family that can be supportive.
- This work continues by asking school personnel to provide FSD workers for emergency contact information which often reveals other family members or neighbors that have a connection to the child now being served by FSD.

Despite our best efforts, there are still times when we must place a child in a foster home unknown to the child.

- It is best practice to place the child in their home school district especially if they have to be with someone unfamiliar to them. A resource family in the child's own school district is likely to know the school schedule and activities and more easily accommodate the child with keeping activities and friends integrated in the child's life.
- If it is impossible to have the child reside in the same town, a neighboring town in close proximity is the next best thing to achieve the same results for the child.





Resource Family Recruitment is Everybody's Job

From the District Director to the person who answers the telephone, family finding and recruitment is everybody at DCF's job.

- Successful DCF offices and their Resource Coordinators encourage all staff and resource parents to be mindful of the need for families wherever they go.
- Other child welfare organizations, local school personnel, and other community partners can also help with the outreach, education, and supportive activities that go into successfully recruiting, engaging, placing and sustaining families for children in care in Vermont.

Here are several ways in which recruitment can be part of everybody's job.

Regardless of what their job is, anyone can volunteer to participate in resource family recruitment projects.

- Being customer-friendly matters. Kin, foster and adoptive parents are the most important resource we have to give the children in need of homes. How they are treated will determine whether they stay in the process and, ultimately, become part of the team.
- Speaking optimistically and honestly of the children who need care and the role of the foster and adoptive parent is vital. Kin, foster and adoptive parents should be provided enough reliable information to make an informed decision about fostering and/or adopting.
- Working to rule people in, not out, of the process. The most ordinary, and sometimes unusual, people have grown into amazing resource parents with training and support.
- Including seasoned foster and adoptive parents to help support new parents through the process.
- Collaborating with other community workers and organizations. Networking with community groups and partnering on family-finding and recruitment efforts can be satisfying, supportive and productive.
- Being a team player. Everybody who has a hand in recruiting and preparing families to foster and adopt can be made to feel that they are part of a team in a very important endeavor. All involved should value, and have a sense of urgency about, the need for well trained and supported families.
- Being sensitive to the prospective foster and adoptive parents' sense of time. The longer it takes to move from step to step, the less likely the family will stay in the process. However, if a parent is treated well and helped to feel part of the team early on, he or she is more likely to stay the course.

This material is adapted from AdoptUSKids. <http://www.adoptuskids.org/for-professionals/free-resources>





Steps for Developing an Annual Recruitment Plan

1. Review Data

- a. Start by reviewing DCF data to learn from which communities children are entering custody, as well as where your current resource families reside.
- b. This information can be obtained in *Management Reports* that can be found on the DCF shared folders. The District Directors in each office can assist with obtaining and reviewing this information with the Resource Coordinator.
- c. Use this data to focus your general recruitment efforts towards the areas with the highest volume of entrants.
- d. Also review your kinship care data and the practices in your office with regard to educational stability and how this impacts on your recruitment strategies. Traditional foster family recruitment should not supersede strong Family Finding work.

2. Build Community Partnerships

- a. School Connections
 - Develop or update [School Directories](#) to capture contact information and expand relationships with school personnel.
- b. [Recruitment and Retention](#) Team
 - Reach out to other organizations that do similar/complementary work with children and form a team to collaborate on family finding, recruitment, training and retention activities.
- c. Collect contact information for other partners in family finding, recruitment and ed. stability efforts.
 - LIT Teams
 - Family Court
 - PINS ([Partners in Service through faith-based organizations](#))

3. Develop Schedule for Annual Recruitment Activities

- a. On the computer or paper, develop [a 12-month calendar](#). Fill in any yearly must-do recruitment activities in your district.
- b. Build or update School Directory (September).
- c. Schedule regular meetings of Recruitment and Retention Team.
- d. Arrange presentations to educate community partners on the importance of educational stability and keeping local kids local. Show how it relates to recruitment.





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- e. Use [FAST FACTS](#), a version of the VT-FUTRES Educational Stability Powerpoint or resources from the [LINKS](#) section of this website. Try for meetings with:
 - School staff - resources include: [Endless Dream curriculum](#) or VT-FUTRES PowerPoint.
 - Legal Community via a Bench Bar presentation - resources include [Bench Bar PowerPoint](#) and the LINKS section of this website.
 - L.I.T team - resources include [LIT PowerPoint](#) and the LINKS section of this website.
 - P.I.N.S. -Partners in Service – Resources include FAST FACTS and video clips from the LINKS section of this website.

- f. Consider any annual or special events in your community/district where you want to have a recruitment presence.
 - Farmers Markets
 - Field Days
 - Special community days i.e. Octoberfest, 4th of July, Memorial Day
 - Concerts
 - Fairs
 - Home Shows
 - Town Meetings
 - School activities

- g. Press Releases and Using the Media
 - Update District Section of the DCF Website
 - Use Toolkit press release templates for school and religious organization newsletters. (Found in Recruitment and Retention Steps 1 and Steps 4.)
 - Submit press releases to local papers, newsletters or community websites for specific occasions.
 - May – [National Foster Care Month](#)
 - [To celebrate a specific foster parent](#)

- h. Child Specific Recruitment
 - Building relationships with school and community partners ensures that they are on board to help brainstorm placement possibilities when a child coming into custody needs a home.
 - Target child specific recruitment on the DCF web site.
 - Target child specific recruitment in the schools beginning with the I/A unit.
 - Work with Community Partner Agency Team if appropriate.





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- i. Seek referrals from current foster and kinship families.
 - At least twice a year, ask current foster and kinship families if they know of anyone else who might be interested in caring for a child through DCF.
 - Explain the importance of keeping local kids local for educational stability and well-being. Share [FAST FACTS](#)
 - Educate and work with your kinship care families. They may need additional concrete assistance.





Sample Resource Family Recruitment Calendar

MONTH	ACTIVITIES
SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team meeting or work to generate new team. - Update district page on the DCF website
OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Connect with PINS Partners – discuss Holidays - Present to school staff and other partners
NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Plan for Holiday Party - Present to school staff and other partners - Have presence at fall events
DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Host Holiday Party - Great time to thank Resource Parents
JANUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Plan for spring events – Foster Care Month, VFAFA, Home Shows, Town Mtg., etc.
FEBRUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Present to school partners
MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Town Meeting - VFAFA Conference – send out post-conference press release
APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - National Child Abuse Month – consider PR/letter to editor - Plan for May - National Foster Care Month - write letters, articles. Send those that need to be in early. Plan any events.
MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Send out National Foster Care Month press releases that have not yet gone out. - Nat'l Foster Care Month event
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Resource family picnic?
JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Booth at summer event, Fair, Farmers Market, etc. - RC Retreat to develop plan for the year. - Contact schools regarding school directory information. - Schedule meetings with current
AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-disciplinary Team Mtg. - Booth at summer event, Fair, Farmers Market, etc. - Build/update School Directory





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Media Policy for Recruitment

Part of a Resource Coordinator's role is to spread the word about the need for Foster families in their district. In addition to word of mouth this can be done through formal media or through small local publications such as newsletters and bulletins.

The Rock the GRADES Toolkit provides several sample press releases and letters. Please remember that any press releases or Letters to the Editor that go to larger media outlets such as newspapers, radio and TV, must be run by the Marketing Officer at the Commissioner's Office. This includes the templates in the Rock the GRADES Toolkit as the focus message that the commissioner's office wishes to communicate may change over time.

PR pieces submitted to non-commercial publications such as school newsletters, faith-group bulletins, or community group communications don't need to be vetted each time, but it is probably a good idea to run a sample by the Marketing Officer. The current Marketing Officer is Lynn Bruce. Lynn.Bruce@state.vt.us

For more information about the Media Relations policy for DCF, visit the policy hosted on the intranet: <http://intra.dcf.state.vt.us/policies-protocols/Media%20Relations.pdf>





Working With Your Partners in Service (P.I.N.S. Partners)

PINS Partners are an invaluable resource to each district. These are teams of civic-minded volunteers from local groups with a goal to support area children. Many PINS Partners are from faith-based organizations while a few are from banks and other businesses. These are very giving, caring individuals who want to serve children in some peripheral way.

How do PINS help? Often they will offer financial resources that will be directly applied to children, such as a summer camp or special activities. With some education about our system, PINS partners are willing to offer free space for events or trainings and they are sometimes willing to donate money or food towards a Retention Activity. In addition to financial support, DCF staff are always looking for transporters and respite providers to help us out with meeting the educational needs of the children and youth in care. Traditionally PINS Partners are very eager to provide any support within reason.

PINS Partners are also amazing recruiters for our system. Most PINS Partners are willing to put letters or articles in their weekly bulletin or newsletter. May is an especially good time to work with PINS Partners on acknowledging Resource Families and providing a tool for recruitment. Some PINS partners will hold events specific to Mothers or Fathers Days to honor our Resource Families and provide specific goods for foster families. A baby shower or hosting a dinner is common activities in May. Often they are willing to solicit for funding to secure gas cards to initially offset the cost of the transportation needs.

Another traditional PINS activity has been supporting **Back to School Backpacks for kids**. This is the type of donation that volunteers can easily get behind and is a good way to involve a new group.

Up until 2011, the PINS Program had a liaison who worked out of DCF and helped facilitate connections between organizations and DCF districts. While this position no longer exists, many of the former relationships endure. Resource Coordinators are also encouraged to build new connections on their own. There are often community groups looking for a way to get involved and they are pleased to learn that the PINS Program exists. **It is helpful if you can share a specific, concrete need** that they can publicize to in their organization. For example:

- \$150 is needed to buy a child new school clothes.
- We would like to host a party. Can we use your church hall?
- We have a family that needs help with Christmas. Here's what would be appreciated...

