

families
like yours

2008–2009

RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE OF CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



THE CHALLENGE Expand organizational capacity to recruit and prepare foster and adoptive parents, supporting an increased census within a new practice environment dedicated to timely permanence for all children and youth.

THE SOLUTION Casey Family Services will launch the “Families like Yours” Recruitment Initiative, an agency-wide effort to expand and institutionalize innovative recruitment and cultivation practices and reduce barriers to licensure. This initiative will be supported by an integrated marketing and media campaign and will use a strategic mix of general, targeted and child-specific recruitment activities across the organization and within each division in order to best serve the permanency needs of children and youth referred to Casey.

NEW PRACTICE CREATES A NEED FOR MORE PARENTS

With Casey Family Services' Move to Greater Permanence, the agency shifted from providing long-term foster care to a focus on permanence. As a result, relationships with and expectations of, foster parents have changed. This requires re-imagining how we approach the recruitment of families to parent children receiving services from Casey.

Unprecedented in our history, this shift requires parents to play a variety of roles as “resources” to children and youth needing permanence. For example, parents are needed to:

- Provide time-limited foster care to children with a permanency goal of reunification, supporting them in returning to their birth parents
- Become an adoptive parent or guardian to children and youth following an initial foster care placement
- Provide time-limited foster care to children with a goal of kinship, guardianship or adoption by another family
- Maintain an “extended family” relationship with children and youth who move from their home to join other permanent families
- Support other foster or adoptive families by providing short-term respite care for children or youth

While children and youth are the focus of our work, parents are the foundation. In order to realize our vision — both financially and in practice — we must recruit enough new families to replace those who leave the agency following the adoption of a child and retain enough foster and adoptive families to adequately serve a larger census number.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS

What do we know about the people who become foster or adoptive parents? Research reveals that:

- A top motivation to foster or adopt is the desire to help a child in need — give a child a chance to succeed.
- A desire to help society, and a belief that the prospective foster parent's education or training would make a difference for a vulnerable child, is also a motivating factor for those interested in fostering.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents in Casey's New England study described themselves as somewhat or very familiar with foster care, and 58 percent had thought “a little” about becoming a foster parent.
- Financial constraints were commonly cited as a reason to adopt from foster care rather than from private or international organizations.
- In the New England study, females tend to consider fostering more than males.
- Community involvement and volunteering are predictive of thinking about fostering. In Casey's New England study, high levels of religiosity distinguished those who felt fostering was a likely possibility among those who were already considering fostering.
- Significant numbers of foster parents work in social and human services. In one study, one-fourth of the foster families had a parent who was currently or previously employed in the fields of education or day care.

- Experience as an informal foster parent and knowing other foster parents were highly predictive of thinking seriously about becoming licensed in the New England study. Multiple studies revealed that contact with successful foster parents was an effective recruitment mechanism. Word of mouth is “one of the most effective recruitment tools.”
- Nationally, nearly two-thirds of children and youth adopted from the foster care system are adopted by their foster parents.
- We also know that when using child-specific recruitment, potential parents who would never come forward as a result of a general recruitment ad come forward in response to their connection to a photo or description of an individual child for whom they can see themselves making a difference.
- Many adults with a connection to a child or youth will step forward to make a commitment to that child (when asked, and when provided with preparation and support), even though they have never responded to general media recruitment for foster or adoptive families.

BARRIERS TO FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

Conversely, the following are identified as barriers to fostering and adopting:

- Licensing processes that are universally too long and too complicated
- Concerns that foster children are too difficult, may disrupt the family
- A lack of agency responsiveness and lack of supports, particularly respite care, mentoring with experienced parents, and support groups for new parents and their children
- Fears concerning the child’s family of origin — that they may disrupt the placement; fears about supporting birth family relationships
- Perceived financial burdens, especially in current economic conditions

SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT EFFORTS: AWARENESS AND CULTIVATION

Most recruitment campaigns use some type of general or mass media. Campaigns that continue year-round are considered more effective than periodic campaigns in generating a pool of interested applicants. Research also shows that people think about foster parenting for a year or more and hear messages about foster care three or four times before making an inquiry. *Therefore, the more frequently people are exposed to positive messages about foster parenting, the more inclined they may be to make the first call.*

While media and marketing messages can be effective in bringing in initial calls and inquiries, they must be accompanied by strategies that focus on cultivating prospective parents over a relatively long period of time. Increased initial responses do not necessarily result in a commensurate increase in licensed families.

Clearly, the research shows that connection with an agency over a period of time — sometimes as much as two years — is required. *Recruiters must help prospective parents move from thinking about fostering/adopting to becoming licensed foster or adoptive parents.*

The New England study elucidates the following points about a cultivation process:

- Nearly three-quarters of the respondents who thought about fostering spent some time discussing the idea and seeking further information. Most talked over the idea with friends, coworkers and spouses. Findings suggest that it may be the information-gathering or discussion process that leads some to decide they are more or less likely to follow through with the idea of becoming a foster parent. Therefore, providing information is critical in helping convert those casually interested to those engaged in becoming licensed.
- Although contacting the agency was the least common activity of those considering fostering, this type of contact tended to signify a more serious level of interest. Therefore, the first call is vital, because it shows a stronger interest than normally associated with an initial inquiry. Building a relationship with inquirers from the first call and supporting them through the decision process are critical. Studies suggest that prospects found early personal contact with current foster/adoptive parents and families very helpful in learning about the challenges as well as the rewards of parenting a child in care.

OVERVIEW

This recruitment plan outlines general, targeted and child-specific outreach activities, facilitated by structural and cultural changes within the divisions, accompanied by administrative office coordination and support. Campaign messages include new opportunities for people to parent children in foster care. Recruitment activities will be based on data-driven decisions. The initiative will be bolstered by a traditional broad-based media campaign, community partnerships, collaboration with foster and adoptive parents and youth, and Internet-based technologies.

Data Needed to Enhance Outreach:

To accomplish Casey's goal of a lifetime family for all children in our care and to increase our agency census — that is, the numbers of children referred to our agency for reimbursable foster care services — we need to be clear about the continuum of permanency-focused services we provide. We need to know:

- Who are the children and youth referred to us and why they are coming into care?
- Who is the audience we need to target for prospective foster and adoptive parenting of these kids?
- And finally, what messages will resonate with that audience?

All members of division recruitment teams (mentioned under Strategy One) must have a thorough knowledge of the children and youth for whom they are seeking families. Answers to the following questions will enable us to target our recruitment outreach more effectively.

- Who is being referred to Casey?
- Why did they come into care?
- Were they in congregate care?
- What is the predominant age?

- Do they have physical conditions that require specified treatment or medication?
- What are their behavioral needs?
- Is there a predominant ethnic group?
- What are their permanency goals?

Resource coordinators and others selected in the divisions, with the help of the Communications Department, will conduct preliminary research on their communities and neighborhoods, especially those that have the highest numbers of foster children referrals, noting demographic makeup, special populations, habits and other common identifiers of their communities. This information will be critical in formulating more targeted messages to the audiences that best fit the needs of the kids in our care.

Messages:

While more research in our service areas will help support child-specific and targeted recruitment, research also illustrates that in order to be successful, the overarching theme must resonate with prospective parents. We know that people are motivated to foster when they connect the experience with making a difference in the life of one child. We also know that a barrier to fostering is a concern that a family might not be able to handle the responsibility. They might see themselves as different or less than those who foster. They sometimes believe the children are different as well, so one of the goals of child-specific recruitment is to engage potential parents by portraying the child as a “child” first, and later providing more in-depth information about his or her special needs.

For these reasons, the primary theme of the Casey recruitment campaign is: A Family like Yours. Here are some examples of how the theme would be used: In a child-specific ad, we could write about Billy, with the theme being: Kids like Billy Need Families like Yours. A variation, when we want to focus specifically on older youth populations, might be, A Teen like Billy Needs a Family like Yours. The idea is to connect the possibility of parenting and the need of the youth together. For the Baltimore Division, we would tailor the presentation to: Young Parents like Maria Need Families like Yours, and the image would include the mom and her baby. An alternate line might be Teen Moms like Maria Need a Family like Yours.

While our new expectations of parents may result in a turnover in both placements and placement resources, it also is an exciting opportunity to reach out to families in a new way. Therefore, we have developed two important secondary themes:

- *The Power of Family*: The first lends itself to many phrases and asks, such as “Share the Power of Family” or “Show Billy the Power of Family ... A Family like Yours.” This theme is readily applicable in other message areas, for example, the Power of Teaming or the Power of Partnerships.

- *New Opportunities for Foster Parents:* This is more thematic than literal. Research shows that many people think of foster care as a broken system, and creating the frame of a new foster care environment, with new opportunities might be a motivation for someone to make the first call to the agency. In print materials and media outreach, the plan is to highlight the many roles people can play in the lives of children and youth in foster care.

Target Audiences:

Ideally, the responsibility to care for vulnerable children falls on the entire community and our marketing efforts should extend to all segments of the eligible population. However, research from the Urban Institute indicates that women characterized by the following demographics are far more likely to foster and adopt children in state care when compared to the general population:

- 30 to 34 years old
- black and Hispanic
- unmarried
- lower-income

Pointing to another prospective group, a 2007 examination by the Urban Institute of gays and lesbians found that an estimated two million are interested in adopting. In addition, same-sex couples who are raising adopted children tend to be older and more educated, and have more economic resources than other adoptive parents.

Providing a more complete picture, Casey Family Programs, in its Breakthrough Series Collaborative, repeatedly speaks to the success of recruitment among faith-based communities. Other target groups include older parents (empty nesters) and people in the helping professions.

The Nine Campaign Strategies

- 1 Expand the responsibility of recruitment and cultivation beyond the resource coordinator, engaging other staff members, foster care alumni, parents and community leaders on an ongoing basis and use data to drive decision making.
- 2 Engage community and corporate partnerships in recruitment drives.
- 3 Involve the youth in care, families (birth and/or foster), and permanency team members in recruitment and in sharing the task of preparing, training and supporting a permanent parent(s) for that child or youth.
- 4 Promote Casey Family Services as a high-quality placement option among state agencies in each division area.

- 5 Examine and streamline the process and time frames of Casey’s pre-service training and licensing, while complying with policy in each division’s respective state agency.
- 6 Re-tool phone protocols and process, maximizing the ability for first inquirers to connect with a live person and to receive a call/visit from an experienced foster or adoptive parent within 48 hours of the inquiry.
- 7 Launch a traditional, multilevel marketing campaign in our service area to raise public awareness of foster and adoptive parenting and encourage the “first call” to a division with a special focus on targeted communities.
- 8 Develop a recruitment section of Casey’s external website, using new media forums to engage prospective parents in peer-to-peer conversations and online platforms for recruitment; and drive traffic from search engines to the Casey website.
- 9 Create a Casey Recruitment Tool Kit containing the information and step-by-step processes needed to achieve the strategies laid out in this plan, as well as best-practice resources from recruitment activities around the nation.

STRATEGY | : Expand the responsibility of recruitment and cultivation beyond the resource coordinator, engaging other staff members, foster care alumni, parents and community leaders on an ongoing basis and use data to drive decision making.

Casey must engage its current foster, adoptive and kinship parents as well as youth and alumni as integral parties in recruitment efforts. Nearly every recruitment model, survey and research study points to experienced parents as critical to successful recruiting. Therefore, Casey must reach out to foster and adoptive parents across the agency in a concerted effort to engage them in this process and provide them with ongoing coordination, resources, tools and support.

Objective: Ongoing foster parent recruitment teams — with significant roles and responsibilities for at least five foster and adoptive parents — will be operating in each division by February 2009.

To develop a committed, energetic, and informed group of current foster, adoptive and kinship parents as well as youth and/or alumni to participate on the recruitment teams, Casey’s Communications Department will do the following:

- Facilitate a process in each division to identify foster, adoptive and kinship parents as well as youth and/or alumni willing to serve.
- Host a regional training session for parent recruiters: one for Connecticut, Maryland and Rhode Island, and another for Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

- Provide recruitment teams with fact sheets, message points, posters, videos, additional tools and promotional materials (from Recruitment Tool Kit, see Strategy Nine).

In addition, Communications will help to develop a framework for oversight, evaluation and compensation of recruitment team members in collaboration with division and agency leadership.

Division leadership can decide how and if to compensate parent recruiters. A \$250 stipend when a referred family becomes licensed already is a policy at Casey. In some successful recruitment projects across the country, agencies hire a foster parent recruiter to lead recruitment teams. Others offer a stipend, or nominal monthly payment to cover expenses, or a combination. But, in nearly every case, those people currently parenting kids in care were powerful motivators for new parents. Current parents are a valuable resource and taking the time to organize them should yield impressive results.

Objective: Twice a year, Communications will produce new information documents (post card, flyer) that divisions will send to each foster and adoptive parent, encouraging him or her to identify or refer potential parents to our agency. When appropriate, those who make referrals might be used to connect recruiters with the prospective parent.

Objective: With support from Field Operations, divisions will establish a formal “buddy parent” effort for prospective parents to support cultivation and facilitate the licensing process by January 2009.

A Casey foster or adoptive parent (ideally a member of the recruitment team, but not exclusively) should follow up with initial callers. From that connection, the parent, with Casey’s help, will keep that person on an “active” list, inviting him or her to agency picnics, to neighborhood get-togethers with other foster or adoptive families, or to other relevant events. After preliminary conversations, these interested parties should be exposed to some of the youth in care — either through a Casey heart gallery event, audio/ video presentations, or through personal meetings with youth. Ideally, a “buddy parent” will be assigned to every prospective foster or adoptive parent who has attended at least one information session. The “buddy parent” will serve as the prospective parent’s peer mentor throughout the pre-training and licensing process.

These “buddy parents” may also follow up with inquiries that are received through television and radio advertising. For example, buddies might:

- Make personal calls and/or visits to inquirers within 48 hours of the inquiry
- Host a coffee or informal party in their homes or at Casey divisions
- Invite prospective families to relevant Casey or community events where they can meet other families who are currently providing foster care or respite care, or have adopted kids from care

Objective: With guidance from Field Operations, Planning & Policy, and Communications, each division will include one or more youths in the recruitment teams. These could be youths currently receiving services from Casey (foster care or post-adopt) or alumni of care, including members of the United Foster Alumni Association (UFAA) or other groups, such as the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Foster Club, or Foster Care Alumni of America. Youth will be selected to represent the range of permanency experiences. Youth recruiters will be involved in ongoing outreach efforts by February 2009.

Engaging the dedication and energy of young people currently and formerly in care should be a priority for recruitment teams. Recruiting foster and adoptive parents is one of the goals articulated by Casey’s foster alumni group, United Foster Alumni Association (UFAA), and to that end, appropriate Casey staff will meet with youth members to outline ways in which alumni can facilitate and enhance recruitment.

Youth representatives — from any of the groups above — can be trained in their respective division areas to help cultivate prospective parents, appear at information gatherings, make follow-up phone calls, and help “Casey kids” in care to create their own recruitment strategies. Division recruitment teams should facilitate the training, with support from Communications staff. Alumni youth recruiters also can play a critical role in helping kids in care — especially teens and older youth — to “get behind the no” in their permanency journey.

Longer term, experienced youth recruiters can facilitate the involvement of current children and youth in Casey care and those who have been adopted by Casey families in recruitment efforts.

STRATEGY ··· Engage community and corporate partnerships in recruitment drives.
2 ···

Each division will complete at least one recruitment collaboration through a business or major community partnership by March 2009.

Objective: Identify corporate business partner or other relevant organization before the end of December 2008.

Recruitment team members — or other designated Casey staff — will research their division areas to select appropriate potential partners — businesses, faith-based organizations, schools or other. Who is the biggest employer in the area? Which companies already have demonstrated a commitment to the community? Is there a large faith-based organization with a strong incentive to strengthen its community? If there is a neighborhood from which a large number of children are placed into care, perhaps a school in that area would be amenable to collaborate in finding families.

Once the division has identified a partner, select Casey staff/recruiters (at least two) will meet with the appropriate company/organization representative, introducing Casey, the need for committed families and how Casey supports them, and providing information on how the company will benefit (the Power of Partnerships)! Although the benefits to the partner organization are important to elucidate, the targeted company/organization will need to value community involvement in order to become an effective partner. Benefits to the company may include:

- Employee retention
- Enhanced positive image in the community — the retailer that values families
- Customer loyalty

Examples in the corporate world include Wendy’s, whose Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption has been responsible for thousands of children being adopted across the nation; and in New England, Hannaford Bros. has increased employee retention rates dramatically through its partnership with First Jobs Maine.

Objective: Develop a framework for the recruitment drive with the company, building in presentations to employees, brown-bag lunch forums with current foster/adoptive parents and youth, and employee incentives.

Objective: Solidify the partnership. Meet regularly with employees; invite them to Casey for information sessions or informal gatherings/receptions where they can meet Casey staff and families. Utilize child-specific materials, such as profiles with images, videos and lifebooks, to engage prospective parents. As parents move through the qualifying process, make sure their “buddy parent” is there to support them.

More details on the steps needed to build this type of partnership will be included in the Casey Recruitment Toolkit.

STRATEGY : Involve the youth in care, families (birth and/or foster), and permanency team
3 : members in recruitment and in sharing the task of preparing, training and supporting a
 : permanent parent(s) for that child or youth.

Objective: Social workers and permanency team facilitators, with youth’s guidance and with sensitivity to his or her individual needs, will employ innovative practice approaches to help the youth identify prospective lifetime parents.

Use of the BEST tool, USSearch and other family-finding tools, “getting behind the no,” and calling in UFAA members or other Casey youth mentors, working with the child/youth to write their own

recruitment profile, develop a video/power point about themselves for potential families, etc., are some ways these efforts can produce positive results.

Objective: Led by Field Operations, all social work staff throughout the agency will demonstrate the use of family-finding tools and have the necessary skills as outlined in the Case Practice Standards Manual to use these resources effectively.

Objective: Permanency team facilitator will request that each team member come to a meeting with a list of people whom they feel comfortable contacting to introduce the idea of becoming a permanent parent for the child/youth. The team members will play whatever role they can — such as talking to individuals in their church, synagogue or mosque/extended family/neighborhood, etc.; holding a “fosterware” party or “dessert/coffee” hour in their homes with a group of friends/acquaintances to hear specifically about this child/youth; putting a recruitment flyer with photo/profile in their church Sunday bulletin; or talking with potential parents who respond to child-specific recruitment for this child, to list only a few steps that can produce results. Team members should be encouraged to generate their own creative ideas for reaching out to identify forever families.

Objective: When family finding or a team identifies a potential parenting resource, the division will connect the prospective parent (when clinically appropriate, and not as the first contact) with an experienced foster and adoptive parent as part of the “buddy” or mentor effort outlined in Strategy One. The “buddy parent” will be assigned to the prospective parent for the duration of the training and/or licensing process and will make himself/herself available to answer any questions or concerns the prospective parent may have. Note: the “buddy parent” may be the initial team member, when appropriate.

Objective: The division recruitment team will be available to support the permanency team in finding child-specific recruitment resources when appropriate.

A particular child or youth may be featured in a written profile, a photo or a video as the recruiter seeks prospective parents who connect with that young person. The Heart Gallery is an example of child-specific recruitment. At Casey, some divisions have created profiles of specific kids and taken these to adoption agency matching parties. Often, people will connect with the face or the story of one child and then the process of introducing them begins.

Recruitment teams are encouraged to generate new and creative ideas for using child-specific tools in other venues as well, including online. Communications will support these efforts by setting up and overseeing photo-shoots, helping to prepare profiles and videos, and responding to division needs in this arena as they arise.

STRATEGY
4

⋮ Promote Casey Family Services as a high-quality placement option among state agencies
⋮ in each division area.
⋮

Objective: Educate middle managers at public child welfare agencies on our new permanency framework and promote the agency as a positive placement option for children and youth.

Objective: Facilitated by Planning & Policy and division leadership, each division will have held at least two meetings with supervisor-level public child welfare staffers by May 2009. Communications and recruitment teams can provide materials as needed to support these sessions.

As Casey has changed its practice, it seems an appropriate time to meet with supervisors of case workers, who make referrals to the agency. In these conversations, Casey staff should determine what would be helpful to the state agency. One suggestion: a weekly email highlighting openings or information about populations we might be able to serve particularly well; weekly or biweekly eblasts inviting relevant state department staff to visit our website section on recruitment where they can view profiles and read about Casey parents. Communications will work with agency leadership to devise creative new ways to promote our availability and desire to accept more referrals.

STRATEGY
5

⋮ Examine and streamline the process and timeframes of Casey's pre-service training and
⋮ licensing, while complying with policy in each division's respective state agency.
⋮

Objective: Led by Field Operations and division directors, Casey will reduce the time from application to licensure as much as possible while still meeting all appropriate licensing and accreditation standards. Creating online training modules and combining with other agency trainings are two suggestions for accomplishing this goal.

Increasing the speed at which people are brought to licensure was a suggestion from a joint meeting with resource coordinators and division directors. Agency processes in licensing parents also was a common barrier to parents who were interested in adopting, according to research.

STRATEGY
6

Re-tool phone protocols and process, maximizing the ability for first inquirers to connect with a live person and to receive a call/visit from an experienced foster or adoptive parent within 48 hours of the inquiry.

Objective: Led by Communications and Field Operations, with guidance from administrative coordinators from the divisions, Casey will explore improved methods for handling phone inquiries from prospective foster and adoptive parents, with the intent of maximizing the opportunity for human contact.

This effort will include researching options for outsourcing — and training — phone operators who can be available for extended hours, for example, during the week, from 7 a.m. until 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. until 10 p.m. and also during weekends; exploring the viability of one agency phone number with options for a caller to press a key for the division in their geographic area (during normal work hours); making sure Casey has appropriate options in Spanish.

In addition, we will create a uniform phone log sheet that will allow parent recruiters and relevant Casey workers to maximize follow-up efforts with first-time callers.

STRATEGY
7

Launch a traditional, multilevel marketing campaign in our service area to raise public awareness of foster and adoptive parenting and encourage the “first call” to a division with a special focus on targeted communities.

Objective: A series of three, 30-second public service announcements produced by Communications and using the “Families like Yours” theme will run on television in our New England service areas starting in December 2008 and running for one to three months, depending on costs.

Television reaches large numbers of people. Typically, television is referred to as a “reach” medium. According to the New England research, 76 percent of the respondents recalled hearing stories about foster children or foster parents in the news, with 45 percent saying they had seen an ad about foster care on television and 17 percent saying they heard an ad on radio. Results indicated that foster parent advertising and recruitment efforts did raise awareness of a significant portion of the population and increase the interest of about a third of those who were exposed to these messages.

As preparation for the PSA, Communications is re-analyzing media markets and will hold face-to-face meetings with media account executives. Depending on the outlet, television buys might also include complementary promotions, such as web advertising on station sites.

The television campaign will include Univision and Telemundo stations where appropriate.

Objective: Concurrent with the launch of the television campaign, more than 50,000 bookmarks and posters with the recruitment theme will be distributed throughout our service area to promote the agency's toll-free number and website. (Bookmarks for the Baltimore market will have a tailored theme, as described in the Messages section, page 5; posters will be produced in Spanish to accommodate Spanish-speaking target communities).

Helping to connect interested prospects with information, Communications will produce 50,000 bookmarks for divisions to distribute at local libraries, schools, bookstores and other community venues.

In addition, Communications will produce posters for recruitment team members to distribute at:

- bus stops and train stations
- supermarkets
- schools
- churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based locations
- community events such as fairs, bazaars, appropriate conferences, sports events, walk-a-thons, to name a few
- community organizations serving gay and lesbian, Hispanic and African-American communities

Objective: Following the television campaign, a series of 60-second radio spots produced by Communications featuring the “Families like Yours” theme, as well as value-added promotions with stations will run in our service areas starting in March, for three months.

Radio will follow television advertising and be connected to local awareness and public will-building efforts held by the parent recruitment teams. We will utilize the persuasive powers of popular radio personalities to rally people to the fact that there are thousands of kids in their communities who need and deserve families just like theirs. In addition to the radio spots, the following value-added promotions will be negotiated with stations:

- Live broadcasts from malls, fitness centers, sports events and other venues where families are likely to be. The live broadcasts can be used to interview kids who have found lifetime families and their parents, who can talk about the challenges, the rewards and the “new opportunities” for parenting and caring for kids in care. “Families like These” posters will be visible at all remote broadcast locations. (Hispanic radio stations will be contacted.)
- Special recognition for those who attend an information session. Radio promotions often partner with local businesses that can offer coupons or gift certificates, which Casey can give to those who attend their first information session.

- Interviews — live from remote locations, and recorded on local public interest radio programs — with Casey division leadership and staff that dispel the myths of fostering or adopting a child in care. Interviewees will highlight our themes, talking about sharing the Power of Family and what the Power of Family can do.

Objective: To support the media campaign, Communications will produce sample ads for newspapers and program booklets, sample radio copy, sample radio and TV spots, organizational newsletters (aimed at professionals, such as nurses or teachers, or at target audiences, such as gays and lesbians, for example), child-specific materials, tips on cultivation, and transit advertising. All materials will reflect the campaign’s main themes. They will represent one main section of the Recruitment Tool

To support child-specific recruitment efforts, qualified division staff can tailor flyers with a Casey child or youth’s image and short profile, using the “Kids like These” campaign theme. The child’s name can be substituted in the theme line. This keeps our message consistent, while supporting child-specific activities.

STRATEGY : Develop a recruitment section of Casey’s external website, using new media forums
8 : to engage prospective parents in peer-to-peer conversations and online platforms for
 : recruitment; drive traffic from search engines to the Casey website.

Objective: The website’s main navigation bar will have a “Kids Need You!” option that will take the visitor directly to the organization’s recruitment section.

Objective: The organization will utilize blogs and other new media technologies to extend the conversation with key audiences on the need of foster children for families. Divisions are encouraged to create their own Facebook pages.

Objective: Create and develop information and web-based cultivation activities that will increase lead generation among parenting prospects early in the decision-making process, increase the activation of long-term leads to licensed foster and adoptive families, and increase the conversion of formerly licensed parents from other agencies to Casey.

We will segment our appeal to each of the three market prospects (casually interested, very interested and already licensed) and will have information targeted to each group on the website. Additional information can be available for other targeted communities. There will be multiple opportunities for people to connect right away with current Casey foster and adoptive parents, share their personal information, and begin a relationship with the agency. Web-based, automated, and personalized outreach will occur at points throughout the year to implement a longer-term relationship-building strategy.

Objective: Using organic search optimization and paid search efforts, Casey will be established as the lead search engine result for foster parenting in our service areas.

Objective: Air Casey's 30-second television spot on You Tube; conduct a viral video campaign on You Tube, using youth-produced videos (with consultation from Foster Club).

STRATEGY : Create a Casey Recruitment Tool Kit containing the information and step-by-step
9 : processes needed to achieve the strategies laid out in this plan, as well as best-practice
: resources from recruitment activities around the nation.

Objective: Compile specific recruitment tools submitted by each of the Casey division resource coordinators and best recruitment practices around the country into two sections of the Recruitment Tool Kit.

Objective: Produce the section of the tool kit that contains print materials, fact sheets, cultivation process tips, radio and television copy, sample print ads and all supporting material for the "Families like Yours" campaign.

SOURCES

“Answering the Call: Barriers and Success Factors in Adoption from Foster Care,” the Adoption Exchange Association, the Collaboration to AdoptUSKids, November, 2007); Contra Costa County, CA “Kids Like Maria” campaign; Breakthrough Series Collaborative, Casey Family Programs, 2002; Families for Kids, Lutheran Community Services, Bremerton, WA; “Public Interest in Foster Parenting: A New England Survey,” November 5, 2004, University of New Hampshire and Casey Family Services; “Child Specific Recruitment, Ohio’s Promising Practices, March 2006, Adopt Ohio Kids, prepared by Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc. Portland, ME; Focus (FFTA Newsletter), “Marketing for Foster Parents Based on Research,” Spring, 2007; *A Community Outreach Handbook for Recruiting Foster Parents*, by Kathy Barbell and Lisa Sheikh, CWLA Press; websites: www.ehsd.org (Contra Costa County, Dept. of Employment and Human Services); aecf.org/family2family; casey.org.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Public Interest in Foster Parenting: A New England Survey, Casey Family Services and University of New Hampshire, November 2004.
- ² “Answering the Call: Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption from Foster Care,” The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids, November 2007.
- ³ PATH, North Dakota, from Foster Family Treatment Association Focus Newsletter, Spring 2007.
- ⁴ “Answering the Call,” “PATH,” and Families for Kids, Lutheran Community Services, Washington region.

Casey Family Services was the direct services agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation for more than 36 years, providing innovative child welfare practice models such as Lifelong Families throughout New England and in Baltimore, Maryland. For more information about the Lifelong Families model for foster care reform, visit www.aecf.org/lifelongfamilies.