Foster and Adoptive Recruitment and Retention Plan
12/1/09

OMNI Behavioral Health consistently seeks new foster homes to meet the needs of foster youth in the Omaha area. We seek families of all areas in the metropolitan area including foster homes that are diverse and that can meet the needs of all cultures and school districts/neighborhoods in the area. We have a wide variety of foster homes currently and they have been significant in helping us to recruit more foster homes. We have identified areas that remain lacking with regard to foster care recruitment efforts and have developed a plan to meet those recruitment needs.

The recruitment efforts will be focused on families that are able and willing to place teenagers as well as areas of the city where we are in need of foster homes.

The focus on teenagers involves seeking parents that are active where teens congregate. We will contact the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Community Centers, Hope Center, etc. to leave brochures and information about the program. We will also ask for the ability to speak to groups such as Parent, Student, and Teacher Associations at high schools.

OMNI has recently advertised on television with a commercial that focuses on the teen population and did receive numerous calls of interest in providing foster care for older youth. We followed up with those calls of interest and have more homes interested in the older population. The plan is to meet with the above organizations and continue the push for foster parents that interested in teens.

The identified areas of the city that need more foster homes include District 66, the midtown areas of Liberty and Field Club Elementary Schools and Norris Middle School, and the South and Southwest areas including Millard, Bellevue, Papillion, and Ralston. We plan to contact churches and schools in those areas about leaving brochures, getting on church bulletins, or speaking to groups at the churches and schools. We will advertise in smaller newspapers such as the “Thrifty Nickel” or those community newspapers. OMNI regularly purchases brochures, “sticky notes,” pens, etc. to get our name out and keep the idea of foster care on the minds of the public.

In addition to focusing on teens and particular areas of the city, we continue to promote the referral of foster parents by our own foster parents with a referral payment of $100 per family that completes training and accepts placement. We currently have about 120 families in Omaha. Fifty-two percent are African American and 44% are Caucasian. The remaining are Hispanic or a mixture of different cultures. We have had good experiences with friends, family, co-workers that have been referred by our current foster families. We plan to encourage current families to engage us with other community organizations that they are involved with such as churches and community organizations.

Individual organizations have never been able to recruit family foster care placements, as this was the responsibility of Health and Human Services. In addition, all of our foster homes were required to be licensed foster homes. With this change, the plan is to actively recruit relatives or family resources in order to place youth within their own

extended family or others who are familiar with them. Once referrals are made, OMNI will investigate the appropriateness of any of these family resource homes or relatives and complete the necessary steps to have them become approved or licensed homes. As always we assist in meeting the needs of foster youth in any foster placement by assessing those needs and developing or finding resources to meet those needs. This includes all areas including school, tutoring, mentoring, independent living resources, etc.

Foster youth are matched with foster homes other than relatives or family resources by considering a variety of factors. Location is important to keep them in the same school, neighborhood, and near friends and family. Their culture and identification with a culture or religion is also considered. Of course their behaviors and needs are taken into consideration and whether or not a family is able to meet their needs based on those needs is essential. Children need to be placed where they are safe and others are safe as well.

All licensed foster homes with OMNI receive the initial pre-service training, previously PRIDE and now PS-MAPP. Relatives and kin-care providers will also receive similar training, although less intensive. Their focus will remain more on the needs of their relative placements and the requirements of the caregivers. Licensed foster homes take a variety of foster youth and need to be well trained in all types of youth. Kin youth will be much more specific to that particular youth or children. Ongoing training is essential for all foster care providers. When there are particular problems or needs identified, then individualized training needs to occur either through the foster care specialist or other professional involved in the case. In addition, foster parents are provided the opportunity to engage in the ongoing training that is provided quarterly. This includes all topics ranging from safety restraints, the juvenile court system, or health related needs. Our monthly newsletter also provides information about on-line training and other resources that are available.

OMNI's foster parents remain foster parents on average for 43 months, over three and a half years. The most common reason for leaving involves just opting out of providing foster care, most likely feeling that they had provided enough and needing a break. Some of these families returned after several years feeling ready to go again. Having adopted was another common reason for discontinuing foster care, having a full house. OMNI attempts to support their homes as much as possible so they do not decide to stop fostering and feel that they get the needed services. We are available to them all of the time and meet with them regularly to assure that their needs are being met.

Ways that we assist in this process is providing respite at least monthly, more if necessary. We also provide training/support groups quarterly so that families also feel supported by other foster families. We provide a monthly newsletter to keep them up to date on any changes and training that is available. OMNI has two foster parent appreciation parties a year for the foster parents that include places such as Valla's Pumpkin Patch and Amazing Pizza Machine. OMNI has free passes to the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo, Durham Museum, and Children's Museum, as well as special deals at Coco Key Water Resort. These are all ways to keep foster families invested in the program and to show the appreciation for them. OMNI will continue to provide these services and will ask in the next satisfaction survey in what other ways we can assist them. The surveys have been an effective way to assess further needs of foster parents. We will follow up with results of the survey of foster parents.