



FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT RECRUITMENT RETENTION PLAN CFSP

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Children and Family Services
2019-2024 Child and Family Services Plan

Department of Health & Human Services



7. Targeted Plans within the 2020- 2024 CFSP

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

Section 422(b)(7) of the Act requires that the state provide for the diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. For the 2020-2024 CFSP, the Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan should reflect the activities to be conducted over the next five years to ensure that there are foster and adoptive homes that meet the needs of the infants, children, youth, and young adults (including those over the age of 18 who are in foster care) served by the child welfare agency.

In developing the plan, the state should consider its assessment of performance on the CFSR Systemic Factor Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention and ensure that the plan will support improved performance in this area. (Please see section D2 of this PI for information on this item as a systemic factor under the CFSR.)

Nebraska has some significant changes occurring this next year which impacts the Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Retention Plan. The Eastern Service Area will have a new contracted provider, providing the case management services in this area. Nebraska will be collaborating with this new provider, St. Francis regarding the development of the foster and adoptive parent recruitment retention plan, as well as with the other contracted providers that Nebraska has to provide foster care and adoption services. The start of this will be occurring in the fall of 2019 and by June 2020, this group will have established a plan that will be implemented for the next four years. Nebraska is also working with four child placing agencies to develop a contract for Resource Families that will be a pilot in 2020. The goal for this will be to have the Resource Family be a support/mentor, to the biological family who has had their child removed and placed in foster care. The Resource Family will be a support for the biological family by conducting visitation with the family, and may provide ongoing support to the family once the child is reunified with their family.

Nebraska has focused on prevention services the past few years, and will continue to do so in order to prevent the trauma of having the child removed from the home. There are situations, however, the child must be removed due to safety and placed in foster care. Nebraska has focused in the past, and will continue to focus on placing children in relative or kinship foster homes when possible. If a relative or kinship placement is not available, the child must be placed in a licensed foster home. Nebraska has been collaborating through the years with DHHS Foster Care Resource Development Staff, and the Child Placing Agencies that Nebraska contracts with to provide foster care services. Through this collaboration data is shared and communicated regarding the youth in the care and custody of the department. Information is shared regarding their age, reason for removal, ethnic background, diagnosis, and any other information that

is available on the child. Nebraska had identified several goals to work on previously and will continue to focus on some of those goals in the next five years. Goals that Nebraska will continue to work on are the following:

Goals:

- 75% of children will be placed with family (defined as relative) or a person they have a significant relationship with (defined as kinship).
- Relatives and kinship homes will have adequate support and training. Nebraska will focus on training relative and kinship homes who are approved, to have them become licensed. Goal is 50% of approved homes to become licensed by June 2020.
- 65% of children will be placed with a family who resides in the child's original home school district.
- When children cannot be placed with a relative or kinship placement, CFS and the contracted Child Placing Agencies will appropriately match children with foster parents to ensure the foster home is able to meet the needs of the child, and placement stability.
- Develop a statewide foster care recruitment retention plan for the department and the contracted agencies to reach all parts of the community, not to have individual plans via each service area. This will include the new agency, St. Francis, that the department is contracting with to provide casemanagement services in the Eastern Service Area. St. Francis will begin to accept some cases in October 2019, and fully transition all cases in January 2020.

Activities:

- Nebraska has approved TIPS-MAPP and Deciding Together as curriculum to be utilized for Pre Service Training for foster parents.
- Nebraska is developing an online Pre-Service Foster Parent Training that will be available in September 2019 in order to eliminate the barrier for some individuals to attend the face to face to training. Face to face pre-service training and online pre-service training will both be available.
- In collaboration with providers, use data to understand and evaluate causes of "placement disruptions" and denials for placements,' develop strategies to minimize disruptions and denials.
- Asses the need for targeted training for relatives/kinship as placement resources.
- All Child Placing Agencies who the Division of Children and Family Services contracts with will become licensed adoption agencies.
- Nebraska will continue to collaborate with Contracted Child Placing Agencies, Sherwood Foundation, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and "CHAMPS" to develop a statewide foster care recruitment retention plan to reach out to all parts of the community.

Nebraska's diligent recruitment efforts have led to an increase in the number of foster homes with diverse race and ethnicity in December 2018 compared to the same period in

2017 (Chart #1: Active Foster Homes Family Ethnic Group). Recent data also indicate that Nebraska has been able to recruit foster parents with similar race and ethnicity as the youth in foster care except for American Indian and Hispanic Youth (Chart 2: State Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Care and Non-Relative/Kin Foster Homes).

Nebraska continues to work with all of the contracted Child Placing Agencies statewide regarding the recruitment efforts to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of Nebraska’s population. CFS continues to strive to keep children in their home school after removal from their caregivers. There has been an increasing need to recruit foster and adoptive homes for children who are adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18. Many of these youth, due to the trauma they have endured, may act out their trauma in an aggressive manner. Some of the characteristics of children who are in need of a foster or an adoptive home are children who have been out of home for 2+ years, children who have had multiple placements, Native American children, and minority children.

Chart #1: Active Foster Homes Family Ethnic Group

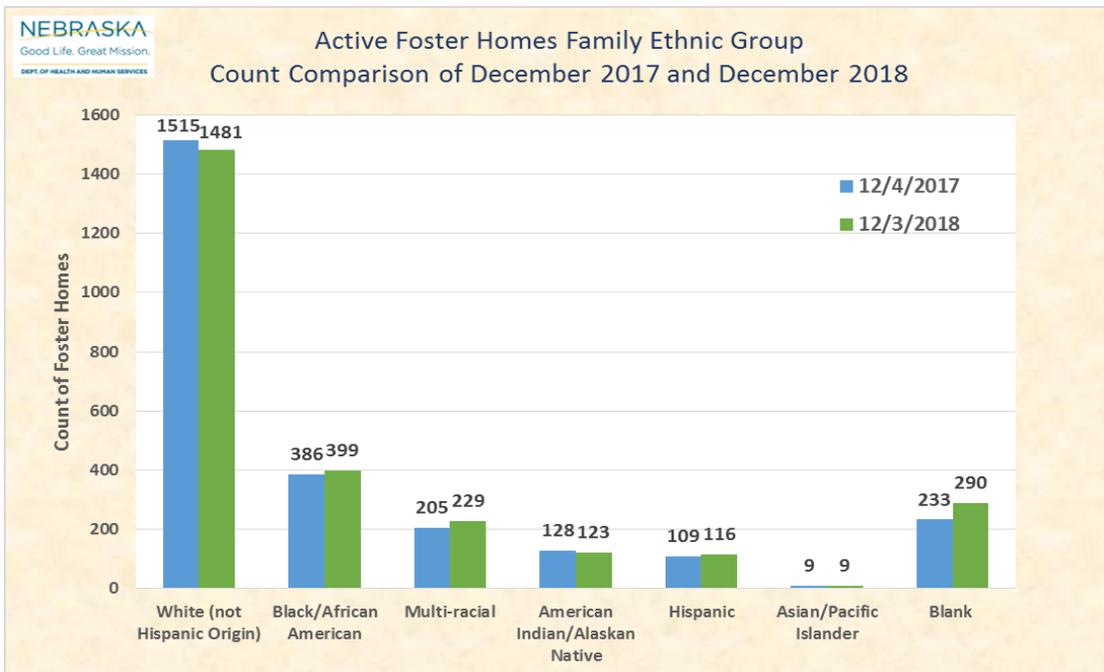
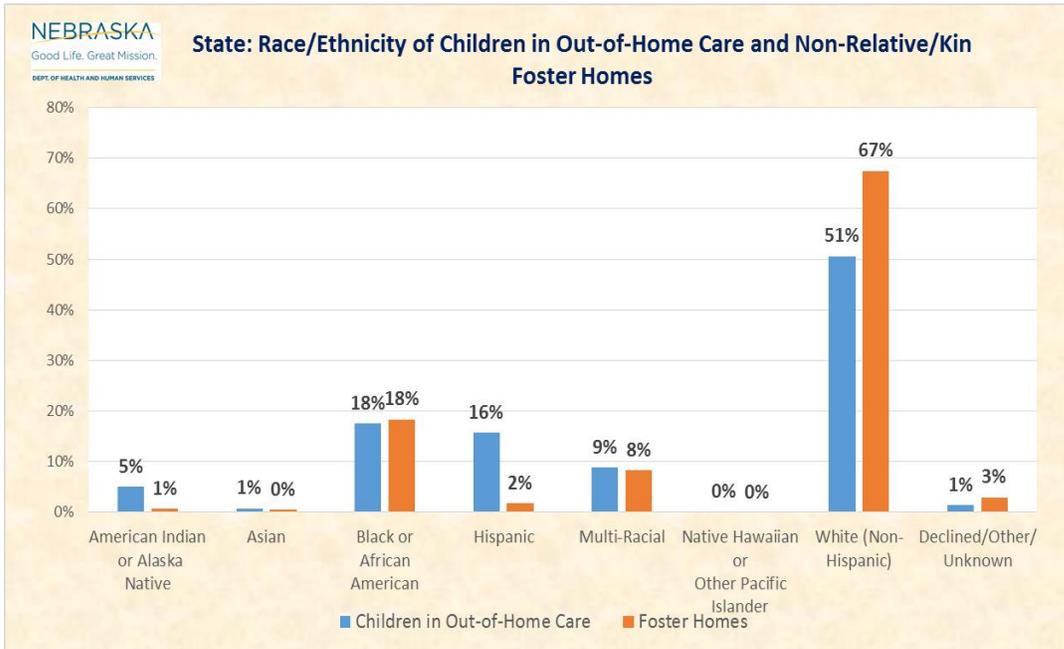
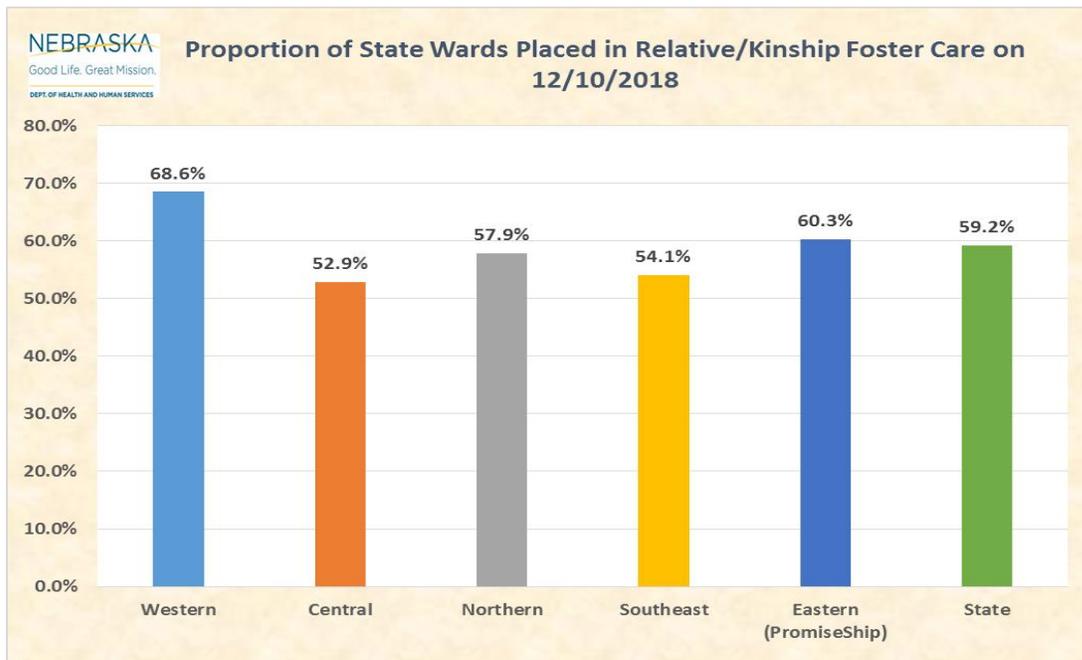


Chart #2: State Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Care and Non-Relative/Kin Foster Homes



Nebraska continues to prioritize placing children, when removed with relatives, or someone who has a significant relationship with the child prior to removal, which is called a kinship placement. There are situations where there is not a relative/kinship home available at the time of removal. DHHS communicates with all contracted Child Placing Agencies at this time in order to find an appropriate placement for the child or children being removed. As of December 10th, 2018, approximately 60% of Nebraska children in Foster Care were placed with relative/kinship and many of these foster parents have similar race/ethnicities as the youth.

Chart #3: Proportion of State Wards Placed in Relative/Kinship Foster Care



The number of youth placed in a relative/kinship foster home as of September 23, 2019 are the following: 199 youth in Western Service Area, 133 youth in Central Service Area, 175 youth in Northern Service Area, 305 youth in Southeast Service Area, and 761 in Eastern Service Area.

Nebraska's priorities continue to be finding and increasing the number of placements with relative/kinship homes when possible, placing siblings together, supporting relationships with the birth family, collaborating with the contracted child placing agencies to recruit foster families that reflect the needs of the youth in foster care, and ensuring the foster parents are supported and prepared to meet the needs of the youth. Nebraska is also focusing on increasing the number of approved relative/kinship homes to become licensed foster homes. Nebraska will utilize child placement and demographic data to assist in identifying areas to focus on recruiting foster and adoptive homes. To continue to make improvement, Nebraska CFS is collaborating with Nebraska Children's Home Foundation (NCFH), and the Sherwood Foundation regarding CHAMPS-Children need amazing parents. CHAMPS is a national policy and communications campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting. CFS Administrators, representatives from NCFH and the Sherwood Foundation attended a conference in Washington DC in January 2019 to discuss CHAMPS and foster care recruitment and retention with other states and the Children's Bureau. CHAMPS is a call to action for a new partnership between foster parents and the state and local agencies

responsible for foster care programs. Nebraska CFS is committed to ensuring that foster parents have the tools, trainings, and support they need to be the amazing parents children deserve. CFS is having discussions with NCFE and the Sherwood Foundation regarding how they would be able to assist the state with our recruitment and retention efforts for foster parents. This group has met with several of the Child Placing Agencies that the department contracts with to discuss this. This group is meeting in October 2019 and will continue to meet and work on developing a Recruitment Retention Plan statewide. This plan will include St. Francis who will be providing case management services in the Eastern Service Area (ESA). St. Francis will begin to transition some cases in the ESA starting October 2019, and the full transition will be in January 2020.

Each of the Foster Care Resource Development (FCRD) Supervisors are conducting local meetings with each one of the contracted Child Placing Agencies in their area to discuss recruitment and retention of Foster and Resource Family Homes. These meetings and discussions will continue to occur. FCRD Supervisors are discussing the need for families that are able to provide care for youth who are 11-18 with a history of trauma that may include aggressive or other behavior issues. There is a need for extra support and supervision for these youth placed in their home that may need to be in their home with no other youth placed in the home at the same time. CFS staff are attending foster care pre-service training in local areas to discuss the benefits and special needs of supporting teenage youth in care. FCRD in the Western part of the state have displayed and distributed informational foster family fliers at local libraries and have collaborated with local school principals to work together to find child specific homes. FCRD workers have sent Christmas cards to their DHHS supported homes to show appreciation. FCRD also personally delivered special monogrammed cups and thank you notes in recognition for foster parents continued dedication and outstanding work in supporting and providing for youth in care. Retention efforts by Agencies include, holding annual picnic's for their foster families and having special events like Foster Parent Night Out at the local YMCA, Foster Parent Informational Nights, Foster Parent Appreciation events, and Agency open houses with family activities. Other efforts include: newsletters, informational booths at community fairs, speaking at local colleges and other community organizations and informational packets to new inquiries who are interested in possibility becoming foster parents. Agencies are also providing specialized conferences, expert panels and training topics to increase foster parent knowledge on youth medical needs, trauma and crisis management and are also reaching out to potential resource family homes via web ads.

The need for Foster and Resource Families and Adoptive Families has been shared via news article, live interviews, Face Book Live interviews to increase community knowledge of the importance of the need to find foster, resource and adoptive family homes who are able to meet the needs of the youth who are in the department's care and custody. Billboards are utilized to post informational messages about the need to recruit

caring family homes for children in need and FCRD staff have posted informational flyers at local business and faith based organizations in rural Nebraska towns. FCRD staff have been utilizing Facebook and Lexis Nexis searches to research and locate relatives, and have been reaching out to work collaboratively with the child's local school and supports within the community. This includes, teachers, coaches, daycare providers, and family friends to find kinship placement and supports. CFS also has a contract with Nebraska Children's Home Society statewide to provide Family Finding Services.

When CFS is placing a child or youth in a foster family home, information is provided to the family, showing current contracted Child Placing Agencies to the family in which they connect with. FCRD staff also personally reach out to families to give them a choice in working with particular agencies that the potential foster or resource family might be interested in. The FCRD staff are also providing CFS staff information to become familiar with the different types of services and supports that are available through DHHS and also provide information on the support that agencies can offer to families. Nebraska Foster and Adoption Parent Association (NFAPA) manages a toll free number for the department for persons who are seeking information regarding foster care or adoption. NFAPA provides the person with information regarding foster care, adoption, and mails them information regarding all contracted Child Placing Agencies who are providing services in the specific area of the state that the person lives. NFAPA also serves as a point of contact for inquiries through Adopt US Kids. NFAPA is contracted to work with and mentor foster families. When a home is connected with a Child Placing Agency, that agency will provide support to them while they have a placement of a foster child. That agency has 24/7 access in the event of a crisis situation. All foster homes are also provided a specific individual to provide support to them. Other strategies utilized to communicate to the community about foster care and adoption, and the child placing agencies in the state are through the following:

- Television ads
- Radio ads
- Billboards
- Flyers
- Community Events
- Websites
- Social Media.

Foster Care Resource Development staff are participating in local community trainings and engaging with community stake holders to seek knowledge in cultural, racial and socio economic variations of the children and families needing placement and resources. Webinar trainings are also utilized by staff to increase knowledge on cultural diversity

that includes the wide array of backgrounds that encompasses ethnicity, race gender and religion. Trauma informed care training will continue to occur, in order for the staff to understand the trauma’s effect on children, as it relates to their cultural identity.

Nebraska is exploring the possibilities to fill open local Foster Care Resource Development positions with bi-lingual staff. FCRD Supervisors collaborate with local agencies on their recruitment efforts to hire bi-lingual staff to meet the cultural and ethnic diversity needs of the families we serve. Nebraska has a list of approved interpreters to utilize when the need arises while working with potential foster and resource families. There are a few of the contracted Child Placing Agencies who have employees that speak another language such as Spanish and will continue to explore having bilingual employees. Information regarding foster care and adoption is available in writing in Spanish at this time.

All foster and resource families are compensated consistently statewide. The Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility (NCR) Assessment Tool that was developed in 2014 in partnership with stakeholders and other community partners through the Foster Care Rate Committee. The NCR tool was implemented in July 2014, and all relative, kinship, and licensed homes are compensated, based on the use of this assessment tool, which is based on the age of the child or youth and also takes into consideration what the foster parent is doing in order to meet the needs of that child. The NCR has three levels currently, Essential, Enhanced, and Intensive Levels. In July 2019, DHHS approved a 2% increase in the foster care rates that go to the foster parents, as well as a 2% increase for the administrative rate that goes to the agency who is providing support to the home. The daily rates that foster parents receive effective July 1, 2019 are as follows:

Age:	Essential Parenting:	Enhanced Parenting:	Intensive Parenting:
0-5	\$20.40	\$28.05	\$35.70
6-11	\$23.46	\$31.11	\$38.76
12-18	\$25.50	\$33.15	\$40.80

The Foster Care Rate Committee continues to meet and will be making recommendations to the Nebraska Children’s Commission in 2020 regarding any rate changes, and any changes to the language in the tool. The Foster Care Rate Committee currently consists of individuals from Child Placing Agencies, Foster Parents, NFAPA, Voices for Children, and DHHS staff.

Nebraska utilizes the following resources for the timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement:

- Contracting with the Nebraska Heart Gallery for posting state wards information from Nebraska showing our children who are available for adoption on the Nebraska Heart Gallery website exchange.

- DHHS contracts with Nebraska Children’s Home Society for Family Finding services. This resource has assisted DHHS in locating relatives to provide permanency to children and youth in the care and custody of DHHS.
 - DHHS also utilizes Wendy’s Wonderful Kids to assist with recruitment in locating timely permanency for children.
 - As mentioned in other sections of the CFSP, DHHS has the goal for a training implementation plan to begin in January 2020 specific to further educate staff about adoption, in hopes of continuing to improve timely permanency for children. DHHS intends to obtain the training model for additional Adoption Competency Training. The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) is making the training available to states September 30, 2019.
 - DHHS has developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for agencies to bid on and propose what information should be included in a Foster Care Home Study and an Adoption Home Study. There will be changes implemented statewide in 2020 regarding the Home Study and Adoption Home Study Templates. These changes are to assist in identifying a better match when placing children in a foster home and/or an adoptive home.
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