

Chapter 6

Section 6: Recruitment for general applicant adoptive families
(and occasionally for long-term foster families)

Recruitment for general applicant adoptive families (and occasionally for long-term foster families)

Recruitment is a critical step in finding prospective permanent families for a child and should be tailored to the specific child. Recruitment gives prospective adoptive families and their adoption workers an opportunity to learn introductory information about waiting children. Recruitment should begin in a timely manner so the child can begin living with their adoptive family as soon as possible. This procedure refers to caseworker activities for children who need adoption recruitment. In some cases, caseworkers may use recruitment tools for children needing permanency, when their relatives and foster family are not available.

The child's caseworker must recruit for adoptive families for legal risk and legally free children when the child's primary plan is adoption and the child:

- I. Does not have a relative resource that the agency is attempting to contact, assess or select;
- II. Does not have an identified current caretaker adoptive resource to be considered;
- III. Has approval for recruitment from the legal assistance specialist from the Child Permanency Program if the child is not legally free; or
- IV. Does not have a prospective resource identified through the Permanency Committee process to consider alone as a prospective a resource with whom the child has an existing relationship per OAR [413-120-0750](#) (5)(b) due to the child's best interests.

In some cases, the caseworker may recruit for children who do not have adoption as the plan, but who need a permanent foster family. In most of these cases, the child's team should maintain a sense of openness to the possibility that the foster family may eventually become more permanent through adoption or guardianship.

The minimum duration of recruitment is 30 days unless there is an approval from the Child Permanency Program assistant program manager or designee for a shorter timeframe.

Documented recruitment efforts are required for a child to be eligible for adoption assistance, except when it would not be in the best interest of the child. The child's caseworker should contact the adoption assistance program coordinator for consultation when uncertain about eligibility requirements. The caseworker should document recruitment efforts and results in ORKids case notes.

Activities before recruitment

Procedure

Before recruitment for waiting general applicant families, the caseworker must work with their supervisor to ensure specific casework tasks have been completed for recruitment readiness. Keep in mind that the department's preference for placement of a child for adoption is with current caretakers, relatives and with siblings.

Also remember recruitment efforts may not consider race, color or national origin of the adoptive family or child, except when the child is an American Indian or Alaska Native child. An Indian child is any unmarried person under age eighteen who is either a member of an American Indian or Alaska Native tribe or is eligible for membership in a tribe and is the biological child of a member of a tribe. See [413-070-0010 to 0030](#) and OAR [Chapter 413, division 115](#).

- I. Before pursuing a nonrelated potential adoptive resource, the caseworker and the caseworker's supervisor must comply with the following requirements:
 - A. Review the department's diligent efforts to identify, contact and place a child or young adult with relatives and to place siblings together as required under OAR [413-070-0060 to 413-070-0087](#); and
 - B. Confirm there are no current department actions to identify or assess a child's relative who has either expressed an interest in and needs to be or currently is being assessed as a potential adoptive resource.
 - C. Confirm there are no department actions to assess a child's current caretaker who has either expressed an interest in and needs to be or currently is being assessed as a potential adoptive resource.
- II. Consider the legal status of the child. There is no need for a court order to be able to recruit. When a child is not fully free for adoption, the legal assistance specialist must:
 - A. Determine when recruitment may begin;
 - B. Determine whether recruitment may begin for a child with extraordinary needs before the department initiates the process to free the child for adoption; and
 - C. Notify the caseworker to begin recruitment efforts.
- III. Ensure the following documents are received by the Central Office Child Permanency Program's seamless support staff person teamed with the legal assistance specialist:
 - A. Father's questionnaire, birth certificate and child adoption summary narrative;
 - B. ICWA documentation; and
 - C. If child is to be separated from other siblings for adoption by a Permanency Committee process, the Permanency Committee Form [0270](#), as applicable.
- IV. Determine the child's current and possible long-term needs in an adoptive family:
 - A. Request input about the knowledge, skills, abilities and commitment a potential adoptive resource needs to best be able to meet the current and lifelong needs of the child from:
 1. Professionals who have worked closely with the child;
 2. Relatives and foster parents; and
 3. The child's attorney, CASA, tribal representative, Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee (RCWAC) representative and foster parent when applicable.
- V. Consider the child's readiness for adoption and discuss this with the supervisor. See the procedure manual's Chapter V, Section 4 "Preparing children for adoption" for more information on this topic.
- VI. Review ICWA information for each child. For children for whom the provisions of ICWA apply, the worker must follow preferences for adoptive placements. Where no different order of preference has been established by

the child's tribe for adoptive placement, the worker must, in the absence of the court's determination that good cause to the contrary exists, give preference to placing the child with:

- A. A member of the child's extended family;
- B. Members of the American Indian or Alaska Native child's tribe; or
- C. Members of other tribes.

This means that the worker may specify in the child bulletin that the department will give priority to recruited prospective families who are members of the child's tribe, then members of other American Indian or Alaska Native tribes, and then, if the agency does not seem to have one or more compatible American Indian or Alaska Native prospective families, prospective parents who are not members of a tribe.

Waiting child bulletins and Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange (OARE)

A waiting child bulletin is a recruitment tool to notify department and Special Needs Adoption Coalition (SNAC) adoption workers, approved prospective families and recruiters that a specific child is waiting for an adoptive family. The Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange (OARE) features introductory information and photos of waiting children. OARE is a password-protected website. Waiting Oregon families with approved department or SNAC adoption home studies who are eligible to adopt waiting children in the department's custody also receive permission to use OARE. Find the website at www.OARE-kids.org. Those needing access must register on OARE to get a password.

Posting of the waiting child bulletin on the Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange (OARE) is the minimum level of required recruitment; therefore the posting on OARE is a significant recruitment marker.

To keep information on OARE as current as possible, the caseworker must contact OARE at oare@nwresource.org and the assigned Child Permanency Program staff member responsible for processing bulletins when one of the following has occurred:

- I. Families have been identified for consideration at an adoption selection process and a date for an adoption committee or caseworker selection has been scheduled. The child's status on OARE will be changed to "on hold."
- II. A child has been placed in the adoptive home. The child's status on OARE will be changed to "inactive."

Obtain photos of the child for the waiting child bulletin

The caseworker is responsible for obtaining photos for recruitment. The Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange website allows up to three photos of a child or sibling group to be shown. Digital photos must be of high quality. Consider a closer head shot or head and shoulders shot for the opening page. Additional photos showing the child in full, with different expressions, or doing an activity they like may be used along with the narrative description of the child.

Website recruitment on the computer highlights the beauty of children's photos, as well as the parts that are not so good. As a result, there is greater emphasis on the quality of photos for online use. Generally, for children with significant special needs, older children, minorities and sibling groups, the best practice is to engage in intensive recruitment efforts from the beginning and initial photos are very important. Starting recruitment with high quality photos typically generates more

family interest and conveys respect for children.

The photos should be in focus, clearly show the child and be flattering. The child's eyes should be open. See "Hints" below. The caseworker may take photos, foster parents often have photos, and many local Child Welfare offices may have arrangements with photographers. A free option for a portrait in most locations is a professional volunteer photographer. This is separate from the Heart Gallery. To easily request a photographer, go to the Waiting Child Bulletin form [0425](#) on the form server or to OARE to request the form. Here is the link: www.ODHS.state.or.us/caf/photo_gallery_form.doc. Send the completed form to the designated person in the Child Permanency Program, and that staff member will refer to the appropriate resource.

Reminders about photos for recruitment:

- I. If professional photos are submitted, have written permission/copyright release by the photo studio for any photos to be used for recruitment purposes. Photos from the above website or any Heart Gallery do not require written permission.
- II. Send photos in JPG format. Do not send photocopies or scanned copies of a photo, as these do not reproduce well in other media.
- III. A short video on OARE is also an option.
- IV. Include all siblings being recruited for together in one photo.

Hints from Adopt US Kids website on taking good photos

- I. Take photographs at a time that is convenient for the child. Don't take him out of his favorite class or stop her just as she is going to basketball practice.
- II. Focus on the location for the child's photograph. The easiest and best pictures frequently are outdoors, because there is plenty of light and the child is free to pose in a play area. (Do not have holiday themes or outfits in the photos, as they can make the photo focus too much on the child's waiting time. For instance, a family seeing a bulletin in August may view the Christmas tree behind a sibling group as outdated.)
- III. Let the child pick a favorite outfit and background for the photo. Be sure the child's hair is clean and cared for and the child looks well-groomed.
- IV. Consider taking pictures of the child doing a preferred activity or with a special toy. Keep in mind, however, that the child should be clearly visible in the photo. For example, if a child loves soccer, rather than taking a picture of her playing soccer, take a picture of her in her soccer uniform or holding a soccer ball. Make it fun!
- V. Consider the child's skin tone when picking the background.
- VI. Take close-up photographs of the child (or children if a sibling group) that are face forward, and of the waist or shoulders up.
- VII. Set aside enough time so that you won't feel rushed. Plan to spend at least an hour at the photo session.
- VIII. Shoot many photos – at least 24 shots. This number of photos generally guarantees three or four photos will be acceptable.

- IX. Have a familiar person, such as a caseworker or foster parent, present during the photo session to put the child at ease.

Tip

Please avoid these cliché phrases in the bulletin: say hello to [child's name], he is all boy, she is all girl or she is from typical Caucasian culture.

Create a waiting child bulletin

Procedure

The caseworker is to:

- I. Obtain photos. If a child has photos taken by a Heart Gallery volunteer photographer, the worker may use those photos for the child bulletin.
- II. Write the child's bulletin profile using the form CW 425 from the ODHS forms directory. Be sure to enable macros when opening the form. The form has prompts about content describing the child. Find more depth about writing bulletin content on the Adopt US Kids website in the informative guide for caseworkers called Lasting Impressions: A Guide for Photolisting Children at this link. Another useful guide for bulletin narrative content is Making it Right available at this link and on the Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange website.
- III. When writing about a child under 2 years of age, the worker may be challenged with a shorter history, compared to older children. For very young children, the worker strives to make the child come across as a unique individual to prospective families reading the bulletin. Here are some prompts:
 - A. Consider how the child behaves during worker visits. What does the child like to do? How they respond to the foster parent(s). What the child's general temperament? What does the child find interesting? How does the child respond to pets? What makes the child light up? What scares the child? What makes the child laugh? What has the child recently learned to do? If worker does not know child well, ask foster parents, social service assistant, child's attorney, service providers, birth relatives or CASA some of these questions.
 - B. Research developmental stages and tasks for the child's age range and describe how the child has engaged in previous tasks and is currently developing new tasks.
 - C. Think about the child's medical and developmental history and the extended family's genetic history. Describe the type of family likely to be able to meet the child's needs based on current or possible future issues. Examples: she needs a calm, quiet environment due to her level of sensitivity to stimulation, or he will do well with a parent who is able to be attuned to the child's cues, be readily available to help the child self-soothe and work with professionals who can help with attachment.
 - D. Briefly describe elements of the transition, such as the child needing their parent(s) to engage in an intensive concentrated transition time to attach to the new family.
- IV. If the recruitment is for long-term foster care, Use the Long-Term Foster Family Recruitment Referral form in the Appendix for Chapter V, Section 6 to refer a child for a bulletin on OARE. Follow directions on the form.
- V. Send an electronic version of the bulletin and up to three photos to the person in the local Child Welfare office

who is the identified “bulletin approver.” The worker may also send a short video of the child for posting. The worker should send the bulletin approver the child’s last name and case name in the email, but the last name of the child or case name is not included in the actual bulletin.

After ensuring any needed corrections are made in the local office to the bulletin form or photos, the bulletin approver emails an electronic copy of the bulletin and photos to the staff person in the Central Office Child Permanency Program responsible for processing bulletins.

Active retention: Respond to adoption workers of prospective families

After identifying families to consider at an adoption selection process, follow up with all adoption workers who have submitted home studies. Many adoption workers and hopeful waiting families have said this is important for family retention.

- I. Send a confirmation email to the adoption worker that you received the home study. A simple, “Thank you for submitting the [Simpson] family for [children’s first names],” will suffice.
- II. Identify families in categories for consideration. One possible system is to identify families for a selection process, as being “on reserve” in the event one of the originally identified families is no longer being considered, or is not identified for consideration at a selection process. “No thank you” is better for families than hearing nothing.
- III. A simple statement to the adoption workers is sufficient and makes families and adoption workers have a sense of being respected. Follow up with adoption workers about their submitted home studies, by:
 - A. Sending the CF [0409](#), Adoption Home Study Response Checklist; or
 - B. Sending an email to the adoption workers providing the same information as listed in the CF 0409.

The form is available in PDF at this [link](#) and in MS Word at this [link](#).
- IV. While receiving home studies, organize the studies in a way that will help you track responses. A system will be beneficial in your communications with adoption workers.

Recruitment for children who need wider exposure: Child-specific recruitment

Many children who are in sibling groups, older children, children of color or children with significant special needs require more extensive recruitment beyond the child bulletin on OARE. The department has valuable assistance to caseworkers for extensive recruitment through a contract with the Special Need Adoption Coalition. The caseworker considers the length of time for recruitment based on the response and the children's special needs. Keep in mind the minimum recruitment is 30 days without Central Office approval to decrease that timeframe. If the caseworker has concerns the recruitment on OARE alone is not sufficient, refer the child for child-specific recruitment. The child's picture and introductory information may be placed in newsletters, recruitment websites and other media. Recruitment options include ads in newspapers, TV spots and regional and national recruitment websites. Each referral for recruitment is individualized to the specific needs of the child or children and the caseworker approves the initial recruitment plan and all updates to that plan.

Procedure

- I. Refer the child to a child-specific recruitment specialist (CSR) at 503-542-2301 or CSR@boysandgirlsaid.org.
- II. Once the child or siblings has been assigned a CSR, meet face-to-face with the CSR. Allow the CSR to read the child's file, including copies of evaluations.
- III. Be responsive to the CSR's requests for information. The recruiter will learn about the child's history, strengths, interests, needs and challenges. Ask people who may have input about the child to assist the recruiter. Those people may include foster parents, therapists, school staff, CASAs, mentors and relatives.
- IV. Give the CSR feedback. From the information provided by the worker and through discussion with the child and important people who know the child, the recruitment specialist will develop an individual recruitment plan (IRP) for each child or sibling group. The caseworker has input on the plan and approves the final plan.
- V. The CSR will actively begin recruitment in Oregon and in most cases, throughout the United States, based on the IRP, unless directed differently.
- VI. The CSR will meet with the child or sibling group and will attend team meetings, when appropriate. The CSR can provide additional support services to the caseworker by helping update child summaries, updating waiting child bulletins, contributing to the Life Story books for each child and screening adoption home studies. The CSR can also provide support to the child or sibling group, the foster family and the adoptive or permanent resource family through the transition.
- VII. Participate in the monthly check-ins with the CSR who will contact the caseworker to determine what recruitment efforts should continue. This can be by email, phone or in person. Be prepared to address the following:
 - A. Report if there is a change in the child's legal status.
 - B. Report any significant changes in the child's needs relevant to recruitment such as new medical problems, severe behavioral changes, significant gains and separation or reunification of siblings.
 - C. If a child's bulletin is no longer active, request the bulletin can be placed on hold. Recruitment can

resume by requesting reactivation through the Central Office Child Permanency Program and OARE as describe above.

- D. If appropriate, due to successful response to recruitment efforts, request that the recruitment end when the child transitions to the permanent family.
- VIII. Accept help from CSRs. The recruiter's main goal is to maximize prospective family interest in the child. The recruiter can help with screening, reading and responding to adoption workers. This can be an enormous help to the caseworker.
- IX. If recruitment has occurred for more than six to eight months and the child has not had an adoptive family selected for them, the caseworker gets new pictures and revises the bulletin to give the child the best recruitment options for an adoptive family.

Worker information: Enhanced recruitment options through child-specific recruitment with the contracted SNAC agency

- I. **The Oregonian** has a weekly waiting child feature accessed through Boys & Girls Aid Society.
- II. **Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAEE) recruitment** is for children with significant special needs. This internet recruitment tool is a website featuring children from northwest states and may be found at this link: www.nwae.org/
- III. **ADOPT US KIDS** is a national internet recruitment tool. To see the website follow this link: www.adoptuskids.org/
- IV. **Wednesday's Child on KOIN News 6 in Portland** features waiting children and is recorded monthly. Jeff Gianola, the host of the program, was awarded a national Angel in Adoption award for his dedication to finding families through this feature.
- V. **Wednesday's Child in Idaho** is enhanced recruitment for children who are older than the age of 8, are a sibling group, have special needs that require broader area recruitment or are on the recruitment track for six months or longer. There are generally two opportunities for recording in a year, summer and winter. The child's caseworker and supervisor give permission for this service as they work with the CSR. The website is www.idahowednesdayschild.org.
- VI. **Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK)** is available in some counties. The WWK recruiters are housed at Boys & Girls Aid Society in Portland and at other some department offices. They work to find matches between children in foster care and potential adoptive families. The WWK recruiter does intensive and specialized recruitment for each child receiving WWK services. This is available to selected children who have very high special needs, are in large sibling groups, are older or for whom other efforts to recruit have been exhausted. The caseload is limited, but the caseworker in a county served by the grant may contact the Boys & Girls Aid adoption coordinator or the Central Office Child Permanency Program adoption placement specialist for information on referral. Support to the child and adoptive or guardianship family is ongoing until finalization, even when the child our sibling group is placed out-of-state.
- VII. **The Oregon Heart Gallery by Boys & Girls Aid and Northwest Heart Gallery by A Family for Every Child**

are recruitment options for children with approval from the child's caseworker. The Heart Gallery is a unique opportunity for children to have their portraits taken by professional photographers to recruit families. The photos are publicly displayed in Heart Gallery exhibits that move around the state. Workers, supervisors and children can read about the Heart Gallery at this [link](#) at Adopt US Kids (look for Oregon and then Heart Gallery).

Criteria for Heart Gallery recruitment:

- A. Sibling groups who need more efforts for recruitment;
- B. Minority children of any age; or
- C. Children with high needs who need additional recruitment.

Approval is through the supervisor and child's caseworker if the child meets the above criteria. Referral is by email through the designated Central Office Child Permanency Program staff member who processes the waiting child bulletins. Find the referral form in the appendix of this chapter.

Ending recruitment

When the caseworker is ready for recruitment to end, the caseworker notifies the Central Office Child Permanency staff as discussed above in the subsection on OARE. Recruitment is automatically ended when the appropriate adoption selection report has been received in Central Office. In instances where the caseworker is recruiting for a young child and is inundated with home studies, the worker may, with supervisor approval, contact the Central Office Child Permanency Program staff person to request the bulletin status be changed to inactive when they have sufficient families (one to three in number) for adoption selection. In most other cases, the receipt of the adoption selection report will change the status from active to inactive.

The supervisor's role

- I. Help caseworker select the best recruitment options, tailored to the child's characteristics and the child's ability to handle certain recruitment methods.
- II. Ensure the bulletin photos for children with higher needs are high quality and as appealing as possible.
- III. Assist the caseworker determine and approve additional recruitment methods beyond the OARE child bulletin, as needed.
- IV. Review the narrative content of the waiting child bulletin for children with higher special needs. Make sure that the content is compliant with MEPA/IPA and ICWA as applicable for the child.
- V. For very young children, make sure that the bulletin content describes the child and is not generic.
- VI. Assist the worker in their plan to read studies received through recruitment. Encourage the worker to use the child-specific recruitment specialist to screen, read and respond to home studies if there is recruitment beyond the use of OARE.
- VII. Help the worker decide the appropriateness of adoption as a permanent plan if recruitment efforts do not result in appropriate families.
- VIII. Discuss, in rare circumstances, cases in which a child has a significant relationship with a resource when it may be in the child's best interest to consider a single general applicant, rather than multiple general applicant

families. This is done with permission of the legal assistance specialist and adoption placement specialist.

References

OARs

- IX. Determining the Appropriateness of Adoption as Permanency Plan for a Child, [OAR 413-110-0300 to 0360](#)
- X. Sibling Adoption Placement Planning, [OAR 413-110-0100 to 0150](#)
- XI. Multiethnic Placements, [OAR 413-070-0010 to 0030](#)
- XII. Search for and Engagement of Relatives, [OAR 413-070-0000 to 0974](#)
- XIII. Identification and Consideration of Potential Adoptive Resources, [OAR 413-120-0700 to 0760](#)
- XIV. Adoption Assistance, [OAR 413-130-0000 to 0130](#)

Forms

- I. Permanency Committee form 270
<http://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/CE0270.doc>
- II. CF1270, ICWA Eligibility
<http://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/CE1270.pdf>
- III. CF 418 Father(s) Questionnaire
<http://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/CE0418.doc>
- IV. CF 425, Waiting Child Bulletin
<http://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/CE0425.doc>

Appendices

- I. Heart Gallery Application Form
- II. Long-Term Foster Family Recruitment Referral form