

Ohio Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan Update APSR Year 1

Progress and Accomplishments in Implementing the Plan

To address the need for qualified resource (foster and kinship) and adoptive families in the state to meet the needs of children and youth coming to the attention of children services agencies several strategies were employed at the Macro, Mezzo, and Micro Systems levels. Each level occurs in tandem and influences the other.

MACRO LEVEL OUTREACH

Statewide Marketing Campaign

During this reporting period, DCY continued the contract with the Ohio Children’s Alliance (OCA) to implement a statewide marketing campaign to increase the number of foster, kinship and adoptive families in the state. The campaign builds on the current [It Takes Heart™](#) campaign launched in 2019, to increase awareness and address the statewide shortage of available resource families. The campaign uses targeted multimedia advertising, including digital ads, billboards, print media, and other methods to gain the attention of Ohioans and includes a [Facebook](#) site.



Since Ohio Children’s Alliance began executing the It Takes Heart™ campaign, they have been conducting research, focus groups, and marketing tests to accumulate proven strategies for recruiting resource families. Their efforts resulted in the creation of regionally tailored Strategy Packets that public and private children service agencies use for recruitment. OCA uses different media tools like digital advertising, image ads on billboards and bulk mailers, and video ads at movie theaters and gas stations to reach as many people as possible.

For FY 2024 Q4 (April - June 2024) OCA reported:

- 182,496 visitors to the It Takes Heart™ website.
- 938 inquiry forms were submitted by individuals interested in foster and/or adoption.

- There were almost 20 million digital ad views.

To provide additional assistance to public and private agencies, OCA continues to offer virtual one-hour Strategy Sessions highlighting different marketing, recruitment, and engagement topics. These sessions are well attended and provide agencies with an opportunity to grow their own recruitment efforts.

Assessors

Public and private agencies identified one of the barriers to certifying/approving an applicant for either foster or adoptive placement was insufficient staff available to initiate and complete the home study process. This resulted in delays in obtaining a home study, licensure and created frustration among some applicants. To respond to this need DCY entered into a contract with Adopt America Network (AAN) to develop the Adoption and Resource Home Assessor Program (ARHAP). PCSAs, private agencies, and Title IV-E Courts can submit a request for initial foster home studies, initial foster and adoption home studies, adoptive home studies, kinship assessments, and interstate compact on the placement of children. ARHAP began assisting agencies and families in early 2022 by providing contract assessor services to requesting agencies by maintaining a pool of certified assessors in every region of the state. DCY covered the cost of the fees related to home study and assessment completion.

The ARHAP contract was intended as a short-term workforce supplement to increase assessor access to address pending kinship home studies and reduce the length of time for certification of foster/adoption homes. This work has supported public and private agencies for three years by completing over 2,000 home studies and kinship assessments. ARHAP will conclude on June 30, 2025.

In 2024, The Assessor training in the State of Ohio changed from a tiered system to a series allowing for a more flexible completion. The Adoption Series Training includes self-directed and in-class education opportunities. The required series contains an additional six hours every two years and a refresher course if an assessor falls out of compliance.

MEZZO LEVEL RESPONSE

Recruitment Plans

DCY requires each agency that provides foster care services to prepare a recruitment plan, pursuant to Administrative Code Rule 5180:2-5-13 that outlines how they will conduct targeted recruitment for families to meet the characteristics of children in their care. These plans include information on:

- How the agency will initiate increased recruitment efforts for any racial or ethnic category of family that is under-represented.
- The general criteria used to determine when the agency will conduct child-specific recruitment strategies for a child and the type of specific recruitment techniques the PCSA, Private Child Placing Agency, or Private Non-custodial Agency will utilize when child-specific recruitment is warranted.

Additionally, for agencies that engage in the provision of adoption services they prepare an Adoption Recruitment Plan, pursuant to Administrative Code Rule 5180:2-48-05 which addresses the following areas:

- Strategies that will be used to reach all parts of the community.
- Methods of disseminating both general and targeted recruitment.
- Strategies for assuring that all prospective adoptive applicants will receive information regarding adoption procedures within seven days of inquiry.
- Strategies for assuring that all applicants have access to the homestudy process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access to all members of the community.
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, ethnic and economic communities.
- Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers between the PCSA, Private Child Placing Agency, or Private Non-custodial Agency and the prospective adoptive applicant(s).
- A description of the characteristics of children in permanent custody or permanent surrender of the agency.
- Identification of the type of specific recruitment techniques the PCSA or Private Child Placing Agency will utilize when child specific recruitment is warranted.
- Fee structure.

Ohio Certification for Agencies and Families (OCAF)/Continuous Certification

DCY, in partnership with the Lieutenant Governor's Office and Innovate Ohio, developed Ohio Certification for Agencies and Families (OCAF) with the goal to make Ohio one of the easiest states to become a foster or adoptive parent. OCAF was developed with the goals of:

- Streamlining the certification process for foster and/or adoptive caregivers.
- Streamlining the certification process for agencies and DCY.
- Improving the accessibility for families to learn about and request to begin the certification process.
- Increasing the number of Ohio's foster and/or adoptive caregivers.
- Improving agencies' access to potential foster and/or adoptive caregivers.

As of January 1, 2025, OCAF is fully implemented for agency certification. It is anticipated that home certifications and approvals will be finalized by the Summer of 2026.

DCY also transitioned to a continuous certification process for public and private agencies (operating residential care, independent living arrangements, recommending foster homes and adoption homes), certified foster homes, and approved adoption homes on January 1, 2025.

MACRO LEVEL OUTREACH*Child Specific Recruitment*Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK)

The Wendy's Wonderful Kids is a national nonprofit public charity that is committed to increasing the number of adoptions. DCY has fully expanded the program to create opportunities for all counties to have a recruiter engage in child-focused recruitment for children in permanent custody or in planned permanent living arrangements.

- As of April 2025, a total of 4,780 youth have been enrolled in Ohio's WWK program.
- Of the children enrolled in WWK, 2,692 children were matched, and 1,830 achieved permanency.

AdoptUSKids Website

- [Ohio's AdoptUS Kids](#) website provides profiles of children waiting for adoption. This has resulted in 167 new children being added and 1,882 new inquiries from potential families. AdoptUSKids has partnered with DCY to increase adoptive families. Forty children were placed in adoptive homes.

Expansion of Youth Centered Permanency Roundtables

Youth Centered Permanency Roundtables (YCPRT) targets the recruitment of youth who are 12 years of age and older. It is currently implemented in 12 PCSAs. Kinnect, as the YCPRT vendor for Ohio, provides coaching, technical assistance, and support to the implementing counties to serve as many eligible youths as possible. During the last biennium, Kinnect supported Ohio's PCSAs workforce challenges by offering a statewide facilitator for 8 of the 12 counties. Adams, Allen, Jackson, Jefferson, Lorain, Marion, Hamilton, and Wood counties have committed to utilizing the Kinnect based Statewide facilitator.

Kinnect provides the PCSA with the YCPRT Values & Meeting Overview Training and facilitates the YCPRT meetings for the selected counties and their youth who are 12 years or older and have been in PCSA custody for 12 months or longer. The counties focus on YCPRT installation, referral process mapping and identification of youth to be served. During SFY 26 and SFY 27, Kinnect plans to offer at least five (5) to ten (10) additional counties the opportunity to utilize the statewide YCPRT facilitator to support the YCPRT practice.

Summary

All foster and adoption recruitment strategies developed and implemented are grounded in knowing, on an ongoing basis, what the characteristics of children in temporary or permanent custody of the state, including the ethnic and racial diversity of our children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. The following tables provided information on Ohio’s children and youth.

2025 recruitment data.

Children and Youth in Temporary Custody

Age Range of Children in Temporary Custody as of May 1, 2025

Age Range	Count of Children	Percentage
Less than 1 Year	1,046	10.61%
1 to 3 Years	2,040	20.69%
4 to 6 Years	1,563	15.85%
7 to 9 Years	1,374	13.94%
10 to 12 Years	1,201	12.18%
13 to 15 Years	1,594	16.17%
16 to 18 Years	1,036	10.51%
19 to 21 Years	5	0.05%
Total	9,859	100.00%

Table 1

Race Value of Children in Temporary Custody as of May 1, 2025

Race Value	Count of Children	Percentage
White	5,120	51.93%
Black/African American	3,146	31.91%
Asian	26	0.26%
Alaskan Native/ American Indian	7	0.071%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	4	0.04%
Multiple Races	1,484	15.05%
Unable To Determine	72	0.73%
Total	9,859	100.00%

Table 2

As evidenced in the information presented in the above tables, the largest number of children in temporary custody are ages 1-3 (20.69%) followed by children between the ages of 13-15 (16.17%), and youth between the ages of 4-6 (15.85%). The racial makeup of children and youth in temporary custody are primarily White (51.93%) and Black/African American (31.91%).

Children and Youth in Permanent Custody or Permanent Surrender

Age Range of Children in Permanent Age Custody or Permanent Surrender as of May 1, 2025

Range	Count of Children	Percentage
Less than 1 Year	51	1.35%
1 to 3 Years	666	17.57%
4 to 6 Years	477	12.58%
7 to 9 Years	469	12.37%
10 to 12 Years	558	14.72%
13 to 15 Years	773	20.39%
16 to 18 Years	721	19.02%
19 to 21 Years	76	2.00%
Total	3,791	100.00%

Table 3

Race Value of Children in Permanent Custody or Permanent Surrender as of May 1, 2025

Race Value	Count of Children	Percentage
White	2,008	52.97%
Black/African-American	1,206	31.81%
Asian	6	0.16%
Alaskan Native/ American Indian	0	0.00%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	2	0.05%
Multiple Races	553	14.59%
Unable To Determine	16	0.42%
Total	3,791	100.00%

Table 4

As evidenced above, the largest number of children in permanent custody are between the ages of 13-15 (20.39%) followed by youth ages 16-18 (19.02%) and ages 1-3 (17.57%). The racial makeup of children and youth in permanent custody or permanent surrender is primarily White (52.97%) and Black/African American (31.81%).

Changes or Additions to the Plan

No changes or additions were needed to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan.