

ONLINE SERVICE COORDINATION FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:

A Direct Outreach Companion Strategy for the “Explore Adoption”
Public Awareness Campaign



Prepared for the FL Executive Office of the Governor
Presented to the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency
Advisory Council, 8/26/2008

ONLINE SERVICE COORDINATION FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

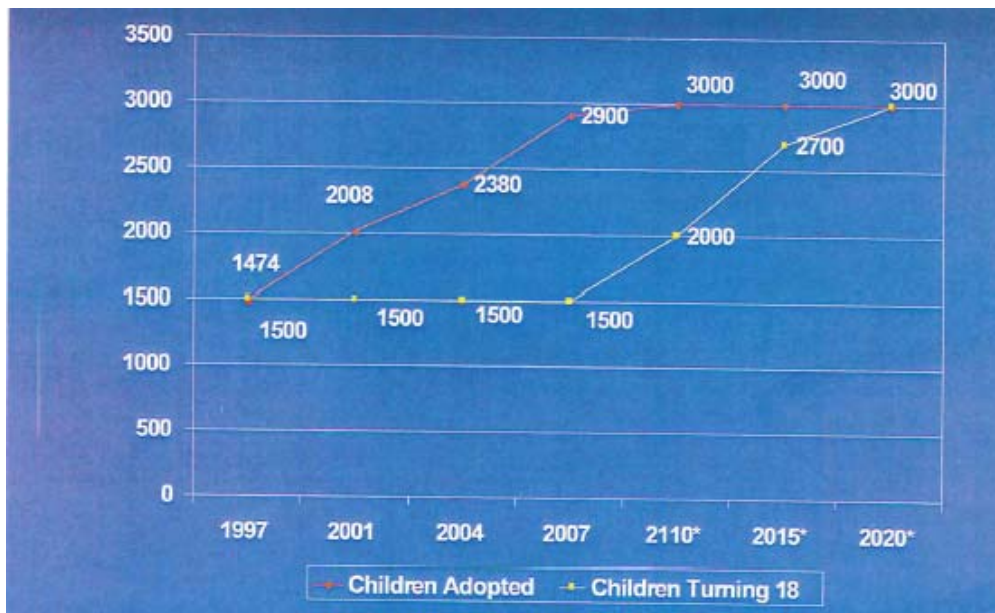
A DIRECT OUTREACH COMPANION STRATEGY FOR THE **EXPLORE ADOPTION** PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Understanding of the Issue

In 2008, Florida’s Governor Charlie Crist and his newly created Office of Adoption and Child Protection—headed by Jim Kallinger, Chief Child Advocate—launched the **Explore Adoption** media campaign. **Explore Adoption** was designed to raise public awareness of the need for adoptive families for Florida’s waiting children, supporting Florida’s ongoing effort to ensure that every waiting child finds safety, permanency and well-being with a supportive forever family.

Child permanency is a top priority of Governor Crist’s administration, and during the Fiscal Year 2007-08, the state of Florida finalized a record 3,674 finalized adoptions. This total is nearly 300 more than the previous record, set back in Fiscal Year 2003-04. The **Explore Adoption** campaign is intended to support the continuation of this trend and has become an integral component of the State’s 18-month and 5-Year Prevention and Permanency Plans.

Figure 1: Finalized Adoptions vs. Children "Aging Out" of Care: 1997 to 2020 Projected¹



¹ Chart provided by the Florida Coalition for Children and based on data from Home Safenet – currently known as Florida Safe Families Network

In the decade since Florida implemented privatized child welfare services, the State has benefitted from a variety of initiatives—ASFA, federal adoption initiatives, etc.—to optimize general adoption. Florida has made impressive advances in general adoption (see chart above) but, like most states, now faces a population of children in care with severe and multiple special needs, such as large sibling groups, medically fragile children, older children and teens, and children with behavioral and emotional disorders. As the chart indicates, the number of children “aging out” of care is projected to increase, and most of these children will possess one or more of the special needs that make them difficult to place for adoption. This makes children with special needs the focus of Florida’s future permanency efforts.

Children with special needs require a rigorous and highly specialized set of services and supports that go beyond the scope of general adoption placements. The Office of Adoption and Child Protection must plan for a shift in focus to finding specific families with the skills, characteristics, and attitudes necessary to adopt children* with special needs successfully. Public awareness activities such as the **Explore Adoption** campaign are vital components of an effective recruitment strategy, but they must be paired with targeted recruitment that narrows the search for families with the greatest potential to love and care for Florida’s waiting children with special needs.

Targeted Recruitment in Florida

In 2008, 5 Points Technology Group (Five Points) and its partner, the Center for the Support of Families (CSF), worked with Ron Sachs Communications to develop the targeted marketing strategy for the **Explore Adoption** statewide public awareness campaign. To develop the strategy for the campaign, Five Points / CSF created a series of 12 “Family Portraits,” which are psychosocial profiles of adoption target audiences across the state. These portraits were developed to identify media messages to which distinct family types would respond well, and motivate them to contact their local CBC about adoption opportunities. All media created by Ron Sachs Communications for the **Explore Adoption** campaign were developed to appeal to specific target audiences identified through the Family Portraits.

The Executive Office of the Governor (EOG) should be commended for implementing the **Explore Adoption** campaign as the state’s public awareness initiative. However, it will be difficult to capitalize on the value of this investment without a corresponding structure to support direct outreach at the local level. Decisions made to adopt alter the entire family structure, and the most successful placements are made where a.) advocates for adoption live in your community, b.) prospective adoptive parents can have their adoption-related questions answered by a peer, and c.) new adoptive parents feel that they have local support by individuals who care about their experience as well as the permanency of the child. Florida has the ideal network for engaging potential adoptive families through the Community Based Care (CBC) lead agencies, and we encourage the EOG to recognize that providing the CBCs with informational, logistical, and material support in recruitment and retention activities is critical to capitalizing on the public awareness that will be generated through the

Explore Adoption campaign. For that reason, we recommend that the EOG develop a public/private partnership to implement a statewide recruitment and retention resource center for the CBCs, the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Local Planning Teams, and other local stakeholders committed to permanency for Florida's children.

The Case for an Adoption Resource Center in Florida

The Five Points / Center for the Support of Families (CSF) is happy to have begun the initiative for targeted recruitment in Florida by assisting Ron Sachs in the statewide adoption media campaign. The target families that we identified will be most receptive to the media messages designed for this campaign. However, as any lead agency knows, recruitment is done most effectively on a local level. The diversity of populations in Florida is sizable, and to most effectively find homes that will meet the needs of children in the state, the State must consider county level targeted recruitment.

The Five Points / CSF Team has worked with a number of jurisdictions to identify the most ideal families to adopt children in individual counties and regions. Using our proprietary Strategic Recruitment™ methodology, we identify the recruitment needs of individual jurisdictions; identify the characteristics of the families needed to adopt those children; and use local population analysis and cultural data to provide recruiters with maps of neighborhoods where they will find families who will provide the best match for each child or sibling group. Additionally, we provide detailed outreach information to inform recruiters about the best strategies, language, media and tools to specifically target those families.

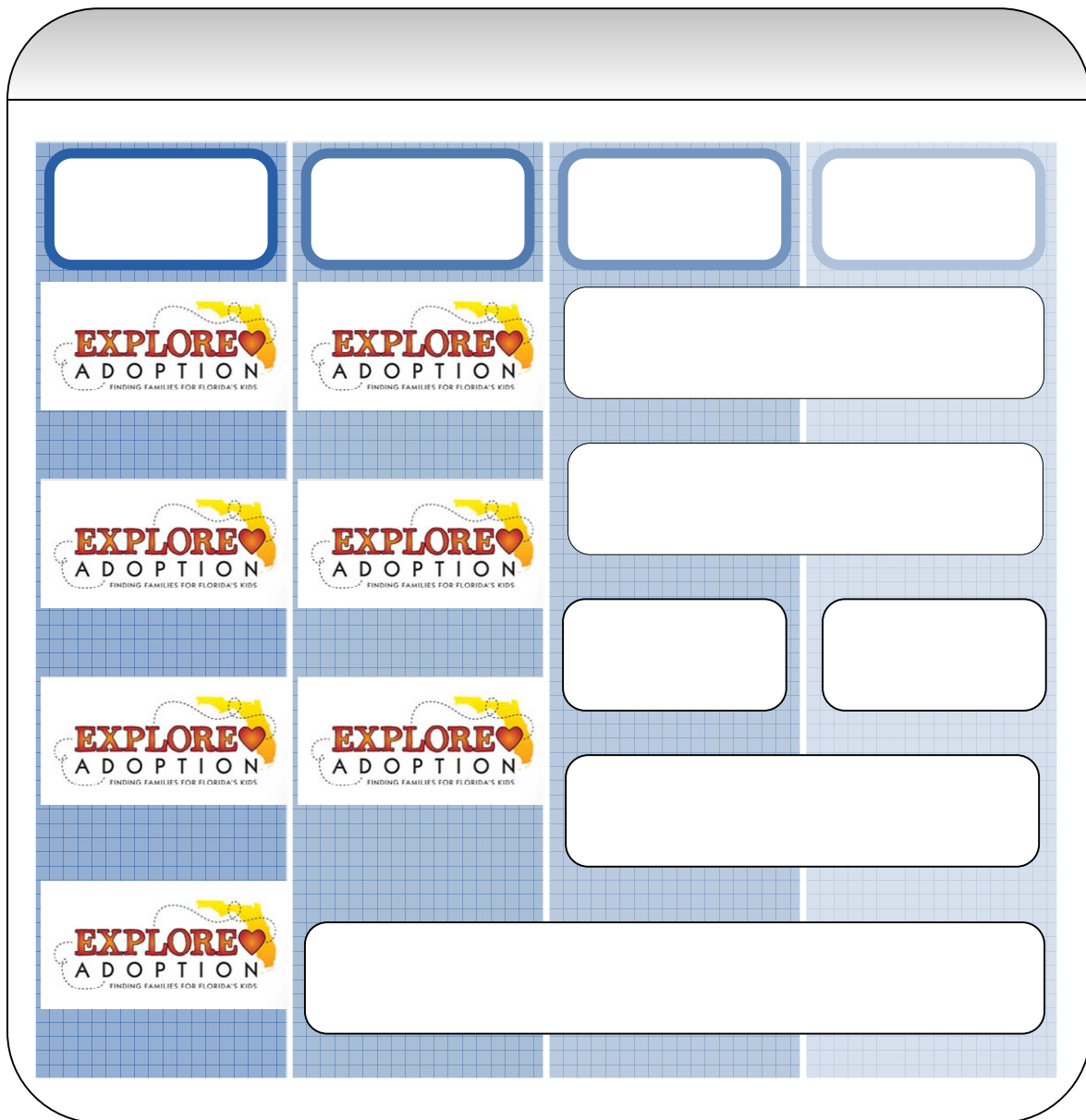
The Five Points / CSF Team specializes in designing outreach and recruitment tools that target ideal adoptive families and educate their communities about the need to adopt. Although effective for general recruitment, these tools are specifically designed to optimize recruitment of families for children with special needs. Each of our tools is tailored to meet the needs of local counties and CBC regional jurisdictions. Each local Strategic Recruitment package includes:

- Population analysis to identify target families that will provide the best care for the children an individual county or local jurisdiction;
- Grassroots activities that can be run by staff, foster parents and local supporters that educate small dynamic groups about the need for adoption and community support in target family neighborhoods;
- Outreach activities and tools that help local agencies partner with businesses, schools, social services, faith based organizations and the medical community;
- Media kits that outline the best media strategies when networking with local newspapers, magazines, radio, television and cable stations; and
- Convenient accessibility to tools and data on the Outreach Service Coordination for Recruitment and Retention (OSCR) Web site.

OSCRR: Online Service Co-ordination for Recruitment and Retention

The Online Service Co-ordination for Recruitment and Retention (OSCRR) application is an online tracking and outreach portal designed to support Florida adoption staff and its partner agencies in creating and implementing social marketing and outreach strategies tailored to local communities. The OSCRR would be integrated into the adoptflorida.org website (*Explore Adoption*), adding targeted and neighborhood specific direct outreach support to the site's existing public awareness functionality.

Figure 2: OSCRR Framework Model (Integration with *Explore Adoption* Site)



As indicated in the graphic above, there are four domains to the OSCRR concept, each created for a specific user group:

- Public Inquiries;
- Family Mentors;
- Agency Recruitment Specialists; and
- Adoptive Families.

The ***Explore Adoption*** site has already been engineered to address the functions in the Public Inquiries and Adoptive Families domains, so the 5PTG/CSF team will focus efforts on developing the following OSCRR features and integrating them with the ***Explore Adoption*** site:

Prospective Family Preparation

Educating families about the need to adopt children with special needs is essential when potential parents are considering adoption. Though many initially intend to adopt babies, families may consider adopting older children, sibling groups, children from minority backgrounds or children with mental, emotional and physical needs if they become educated about these children who require caring families to adopt them.

OSCRR will process information gathered through the newsletter registration form about qualities that potential parents have by having them answer a short survey that gathers data about characteristics correlated with ideal care for children with special needs (experience with teens; medical knowledge; experience with children with emotional, psychological, and behavioral special needs; other languages spoken; cultural background; etc.). The results of this survey can be viewed by the local recruiter.

In this same page, potential parents can list their preferences (age, demographics, etc.) of the type of child(ren) they have interest in adopting. The OSCRR Home Page will feature a new waiting child each month and potential adoptive families can click on photo-listings of this and other waiting children to learn more about the child. These listings will include an audio and/or video recording of the child with information on the child's interests and any special needs.

The information submitted when families register for the account will be placed in a database and **automatically matched** against the profiles of registered children that are active on the Web site. Links to these profiles will be displayed on the prospective adoptive parent's *OSCRRMATCH* account page. If the parent indicates that they are interested in a particular child, an email containing the requestor's contact details and the name of the child is automatically sent to the worker responsible for that child's case. Prospective parents will be able to update their match criteria at any time, allowing them to see different groups of children in their *OSCRRMATCH* accounts. Families will also be prompted to access appropriate information links to any issues or special needs that the child may have (for example, if a child is medically fragile, the

user will be presented with links to information on medical supports available to adoptive families in Florida).

Community-Based Organizations Agencies

Links to organizations that support adoptive parents and adoption agencies such as the Florida Heart Gallery, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, and the AdoptUSKids will be included on the OSCRR site. Recruitment and Retention Team specialists will be able to access regional recruitment plans, an activity calendar, and resources for their clients including regional resource guides and recruitment and retention brochures and outreach materials.

Other Public Audiences

In addition to reaching potential and current foster and/or adoptive families, the OSCRR Web site will contain information for businesses, individuals, civic groups, and others who want to support foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention. These groups can sign up to host listed recruitment events for their staff or organization; volunteer for recruitment or retention activities; and receive printed materials and promotional items for their offices. The site will also include helpful ideas that these groups can use to support adoption and foster care such as offering a discount on clothes, food, or other items for new foster and adoptive families.

Family Mentors and Agency Recruitment Specialists

Targeted Recruitment Module

OSCRR will be the key delivery tool for targeted recruitment information. As families enter in inquiry information, it will be stored in a recruitment and retention database that will be populated with any existing data regarding current or potential families. The Five Points / CSF Team will analyze this data and then upload targeted recruitment plans into a GIS map-driven application that will allow the user to survey their entire circuit neighborhood by neighborhood. Click on a neighborhood and the report view window will display information about the families living there: demographics, media and consumer preferences, life stage, social group, and family makeup and the best methods for targeted outreach. Recruitment and retention staff will also be able to download and print informational materials with messaging that will resonate with the selected target audience.

Lead agency recruitment and retention staff will have access to a continuum of tools and information that will assist their outreach efforts. In addition to information on ideal family types, location maps and outreach strategies to effectively reach these populations, staff will find a list of activity ideas and useful tools to generate effective recruitment events in their communities. The Five Points / CSF Team will update the information, data, maps and tools on a regular basis. Contact information will be available for individual county requests and support.

All staff is able to access all public and press materials. In addition, they can use sophisticated *OSCRRFinder* tools to help organize and execute their daily recruitment

activities. *OSCRRFinder* will include a password protected area where recruitment and retention staff can record information on families who are inquiring about adoption. *OSCRRFinder* will capture basic demographic information on the family, their interest in adoption and a checklist on what sources led them to their inquiry. In addition, this tool will allow recruitment and retention staff to record follow-up contacts and track the families' movement through the approval and placement process and record reasons why families decide to end the process. Staff can generate a series of summary reports will prove helpful when analyzing trends in recruitment.

Profile Builder Module

Included in the proposed design for the OSCRR Web site is a module that enables staff and even approved older children available for adoption to build and manage customized photo listing profile pages. The Profile Builder will allow authorized users to load pictures, text, and multimedia files to a child's page. These functions will be built so that non-technical administrative staff can load the information, and that staff will not have to use the services of a programmer to load materials. We anticipate the Profile Builder will enable lead agency staff even the children themselves to help keep all profile updates fresh and allow for approval-and-load times within hours.

The OSCRR Administration module security will ensure that after each child's photo listing profile page is updated, either the OSCRR Coordinator or the child's case manager must approve the content before the page can be displayed on the Web site. Likewise, when it is necessary to remove a child's photo listing profile from the OSCRR Web site, the Outreach Coordinator or child's case worker can do so through the Administration module.

Promotional Item Shopping Cart Module

The agencies can sign up to receive promotional items for outreach events and submit their upcoming activities for inclusion in the activity calendar. When this module is chosen, recruiters can enter in request forms for promotional items to be used at outreach events. The requests can be sent to a local staff member who manages distribution, or Five Points / CSF Team can be contracted to produce order and arrange delivery of promotional items.

Adoptive Families

Current adoptive families can visit the OSCRR Web site to learn more about available resources and supports in their communities. Families will select their region on a clickable map to get a complete listing of social services, mental health, health, and material supports available in their regions.

Online Training Module

This module will allow adoptive families to register for trainings, and access online training that meet approval and continuing education requirements. The Five Points / CSF Team will upload any video trainings used by local agencies, and will be available

to develop online training modules that meet state requirements and include evaluations to inform training offerings and improvements.

So How Can This All Be Accomplished: Public/Private Partnership

A Public-private partnership (PPP) can be described as government service and / or private business venture which is funded and operated through a partnership of government and one or more private sector companies. The Five Points / CSF Team in partnership with the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection provides a unique opportunity, as a public private partnership, to develop funding options for the OSCRR concept to assist in recruitment and retention of adoptive families for the State of Florida’s children.

A PPP will allow our collective teams to appropriately research, request, and earn outside funding sources. We are requesting the approval and cooperation of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection to develop a public-private partnership to pursue numerous funding opportunities.

Funding Sources

During our long history of working in the field of child welfare and Strategic Recruitment, the Five Points / CSF Team have built strong relationships with a number of organizations dedicated to supporting adoption services. The Five Points/ CSF Team is interested in exploring and expanding existing partnerships with the following public and private sources to help fund the recruitment opportunities listed in this paper.

Foundation Name	Description
National Adoption Center	The National Adoption Center expands adoption opportunities for children living in foster care throughout the United States, and is a resource to families and to agencies who seek the permanency of caring homes for children. NAC hosts the Wednesday’s Child Site and FACES.
Child Welfare League of America	CWLA is an association of nearly 800 public and private nonprofit agencies that assist more than 3.5 million abused and neglected children and their families each year with a range of services.
Dave Thomas Foundation	Foundation supporting education, outreach and support to adoption with the goal of dramatically increasing the number of adoptions of waiting children in North America.
The Casey Foundation	By making grants and providing direct services, the Casey Foundation strives to address the challenges in the child welfare system and ensure that all children, regardless of age, race, culture, national origin, special need or complex circumstances, have a lifelong connection to a caring, supportive family
Adoption.com	Adoption.com is an online warehouse of adoption resources, support agencies and services.
The Mentor Adoption Network	MENTOR is an integrated network of community-based residential and nonresidential providers who provide individualized services for children with therapeutic needs.