The Family Foster Home Over/Under Capacity Report

February 2002

This report contains data collected from each of the thirteen Districts and the Suncoast Region for August 2001 - January 2002
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I. Introduction

The Family Foster Home Over/Under Capacity Report is produced twice per year in a collaborative effort between the Central Office Licensing Specialist and the Licensing staff of each District and the Suncoast Region to assist in providing a statewide snapshot of licensed foster home capacity, determining the Department's ability to meet capacity needs, monitoring compliance with operating procedures and as a self-assessment tool for improvement. The February 2002 report includes data queried from The Interim Child Welfare Services Information System (ICWSIS) on January 4, 2002 as well as information reported by each District and the Suncoast Region regarding licensing trends and recruitment and retention efforts. The next report will be queried in July and published in August 2002.

The homes included in this report are family foster homes, emergency shelter family foster homes and family foster group homes that are licensed and supervised by the Department. Also included in this report are: District One family foster homes from a privatization contract with Homeward Bound, Inc.; and Suncoast Region's Department-supervised family foster homes and Department homes supervised by community-based-care providers.

For future Family Foster Home Over/Under Capacity Reports, we are exploring ways in which to more efficiently and effectively report licensing capacity data. As part of our efforts, we are identifying ways to more effectively incorporate information managed by our community-based-care partners as we continue to privatize foster care and related services in Florida. Our goal is to be able to report data on all family foster homes where dependent children are placed.

II. Foster Home Licensed Capacity (Graph #1)

- There were 4388 family foster, family group and foster/shelter homes as of January, 2002.
- For Distribution By District, please see Graph #2.
- 11% (n=485) of these homes were over licensed capacity.
- 34% (n=1504) of these homes were at licensed capacity.
- 55% (n=2399) of these homes were under licensed capacity.
- 28% (n=1215) of the homes had no foster children placed.
- 3% (n=132) of the homes are listed as inactive.
Comparisons to August 2001 report:
- We added 99 family foster homes.
- There was a decrease of 3% (n=105) in the number of homes that were over licensed capacity.
- The percentage of homes at licensed capacity (34%) remained the same.
- There was an increase of 3% (n=168) in the number of homes under licensed capacity.
- There was a significant increase in the number of homes with no foster children placed, from 19% to 28% (n=405).
- Many of the homes under capacity are reported to be used for respite or are homes limited to specific types of children. Some foster parents specialize in placements of medically or emotionally needy children, which will often result in their homes being under capacity. Other foster parents may be more suited to care for certain groups of children- infants, teens, males, females, etc., which limits the placements made.

III. Distribution of Licensed Capacity (Graphs #3A & B)
- The total licensed bed capacity statewide for this report is 10,840.
  - 60% (n=2614) of the homes are licensed for 1-2 children.
  - 32% (n=1403) of the homes are licensed for 3-4 children.
  - 8% (n=359) of the homes are licensed for 5 children.
  - 0.1% (n=3) of the homes are licensed for more than five children.

Comparisons to August 2001 report:
- We had an increase in bed capacity of 231 beds.
- The number of homes licensed for more than five children significantly decreased, from 28 foster homes to only 3 homes.
- Except for a slight increase from February 2000 to August 2000, there has been a steady decline statewide in the number of homes licensed for more than five since 1999.

IV. Homes with a Total of More than Five Children (Graphs #4A & B)
- 8% (n=353) of the foster homes had more than five total children in the home.
- 44% (n=155) of these homes indicated an appropriate waiver based on the three criteria established by the Department operating procedure.
- 56% (n=198) of these homes did not indicate an appropriate waiver per the guidelines established in CFOP 175-64.
- On Graph 4B, Districts 10 and 12 show no homes with appropriate waivers. However, Central Office staff contacted the districts to verify the ICWSIS data. The districts subsequently corrected ICWSIS. In the corrections, District 10 reported 70% (n=7) homes with appropriate waivers and District 12 reported 56% (n=9) homes with appropriate waivers. When substituting this updated data in the statewide total, there are 48% (n=171) homes with appropriate waivers and 52% without appropriate waivers.
• Distribution of the homes with more than five total children is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Homes</th>
<th>Total Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>172 homes</td>
<td>6 total children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96 homes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>more than 25 total children</td>
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</table>

The safety of children in foster care is one of the major goals identified by the Secretary in the Family Safety Business Plan. One of the objectives to meet this goal is to have no home with a total of more than five children without an appropriate waiver. Per CFOP 175-64, Waivers To Exceed The Maximum Number Of Children In A Substitute Care Home, the current waiver criteria for homes with a total of more than five children are: sibling groups; a teen mother and her child placed together; and a child or sibling group needing placement where one of the siblings had lived or currently lives in the home. The waiver reason must be documented in ICWSIS.

Comparisons to August 2001 report:

• The number of foster homes with a total of more than five children decreased by 26 homes. There were 353 homes with more than five total children in January 2002, which was a decrease from the 379 family foster homes reported in August 2001, 399 homes reported in February 2001 and 455 homes reported in August 2000.
• Of the 353 homes with a total of more than five children, 56% (n=198) of the homes did not document an appropriate waiver in ICWSIS. However, this is an improvement of 2% or twenty-two homes as compared to the August 2001 report.
• The number of foster homes with appropriate waivers increased only 2%. Reporting a significantly greater increase by the August 2002 report should become a priority of every District’s Licensing Units.
• Per this report, 2 foster family homes had eighteen (18) or more total children in the home. District 9 has one home with twenty (20) children and the Suncoast Region has one home with more than twenty-five (25). The August 2001 report also had two homes with a total of more than eighteen (18) and in February 2001, we had three homes with more than eighteen (18) children total.
• 27 foster family homes had a total of more than 10 children living in the home as of January 2002. This number indicates a significant reduction from the 47 family foster homes reported in August 2001 and the 61 family foster homes reported in February 2001.

V. Summary of Licensed Capacity Data

Overall, the data shows improvement in previously reported licensed capacity figures. Since the August 2001 report, we had an increase of 99 family foster homes and 231 beds. There has also been a 3% decrease in the number of homes OVER licensed capacity. Sixty percent of our homes are licensed for one to two children, 32% are licensed for three to four children and only 8% are licensed for five children, which remains constant from the last reporting period. There
was a significant decrease in the number of homes licensed for more than five children, from 28 homes in August 2001 to only 3.

Compliance with and reporting of waivers provided to homes with a total of more than five children are two areas that will require additional improvement action plans by the Districts and the Suncoast Region. Though we had a decrease in the number of homes with a total of more than five children and an increase in the percentage of homes with appropriate waivers, there are still 56% of homes requiring a waiver that do not have a waiver documented in ICWSIS. Concise efforts should be made by licensing staff to ensure that waivers are appropriately requested, approved, logged into ICWSIS and monitored regularly in order to improve our reporting on waivers data by the August 2002 report.

VI. District/Regional Comments

District One:
- The number of homes decreased from 193 homes in June to 187 homes in December.
- The percentage of homes over licensed capacity increased from 7% in June to 11.8% in December.
- The percentage of homes under licensed capacity decreased from 48% in June to 44.9% in December.
- The percentage of homes at licensed capacity decreased from 48% in June to 43.3% in December.
- The number of homes with more than 5 children increased from 6 in June to 8 in December. Two (2) homes did not meet the waiver criteria.

District Two:
- District 2 has experienced about a 10% reduction in the number of foster homes over the last reporting period. There has been a comparable reduction in capacity. This reduction has not affected our service delivery nor required us to have homes with more than five children in them.
- District 2 has conscientiously maintained homes under licensed capacity in order to provide a more stable and home-like environment.
- District 2 does not have any homes licensed for more than a total of five children, nor are there homes with more than five children (with or without waiver).
- In order to utilize more homes, the district is encouraging foster parents to expand their preferences as to age and gender of the children. Additionally, behavior analysts are offering support and training so that foster parents feel more confident in caring for children with hard to manage behaviors.
- The two provider agencies are tasked to recruit in geographic areas where we have identified a need. Their contracts contain new home recruitment quotas. Progress is already evident.

District Three:
- The number of homes shown in the last Foster Home Capacity Needs Assessment was considerably higher than our current number. This is explained by the difference in the types of homes counted. In the last report, we also counted medical foster homes (11) as well as foster/adopt homes (29). Overall, the number of homes has not decreased significantly.
(<1%). Our intention is to achieve a net increase in new foster homes of 5% in the district this fiscal year, and we expect to reach that goal.

- The number of homes over capacity has decreased significantly, from 12% last reporting period to 3.2% currently. We expect that number to continue to decrease as we review each home through the waiver process. The number of homes under capacity has increased only slightly, from 61% to 62.9%. We continue to work toward licensing homes with a realistic capacity of the numbers of children a family is willing to care for, while leaving beds available to avoid over-capacity situations and to have respite beds available. The number of homes at capacity is, likewise, similar to that reported last quarter. Last quarter 35% of homes were at capacity, and now 33.9% are.

- We continue to have no homes licensed for more than five children. Three homes that have a total of more than five children do not have an appropriate waiver, meaning they do not meet the criteria of CFOP 175-64. This is a decrease of two homes from the last report.

- We regularly assess whether under-capacity homes would be suitable for children currently living in over-capacity homes. District 3 is very large geographically due to having a number of rural, low-population counties. In some cases, children remain in over-capacity homes because no home in their service area is available and the child has regular visits or appointments that make moving them to another county impractical. Many of the homes which are under capacity have very narrow definitions for the types and ages of children they will accept and are not appropriate for the children needing care at a specific point in time. Finally, our foster parent population has had terrific turnover in the last few years, so many families are still new and learning to foster. As department retention efforts and training improve and as these families gain experience and confidence, they are likely to be willing to open their homes to the types of children who come into care.

- Department licensing staff are currently on target to meet the district goal of 70 new homes for this fiscal year and we expect to exceed the goal. The district contract provider is currently not on target to meet their goal of 47 new homes. This issue is being reviewed by the contract manager responsible for this contract.

- We have entered into a contract with Children’s Home Society to recruit and license 47 homes during fiscal year 2001/02. Ten of these homes are to be specifically for teen placements. This contract is in addition to department licensing counselors’ standards which require 70 new homes during the year and no less than a 5% net increase in the total number of homes.

**District Four:**

- The total number of homes has remained nearly the same.
- The number of homes over licensed capacity has decreased slightly.
- The homes under capacity are the second lowest percentage in the state.
- The homes with children (utilized homes) have increased to the highest percentage in the state. Homes with no children have decreased to the lowest percentage in the state.
- We are visiting over capacity homes on a weekly, bi-weekly and monthly basis to offer support. Over half of our homes are licensed for 1 or 2 as are many in the state. We are constantly evaluating each home to determine if they can be increased in capacity. We are also trying to cull out homes that are inactive, cannot or will not take children.
Suncoast Region:

- The region continues to push for the closure of homes with five or more of their own children. There were previously four homes licensed for more than five children and now there are none.
- The reduction of over-capacity homes run by the Department was a high priority. Over an eight-month period, the total number of homes with greater then ten (10) total children decreased from 15 to 3 and total over-capacity homes dropped from 53 to 36.
- There are fifteen total homes in the region with greater than 10 total children. Twelve are CBC homes (9 Family Continuity, and 3 YMCA). Over capacity in general continues to trend upward over the past eight months with Family Continuity going from 48 over-capacity homes to 89. The YMCA in Manatee County has gone from 13 to 17 since July, while Sarasota and DeSoto counties have remained fairly constant.
- HKI is attempting to develop homes to be used as short-term placements for runaways picked up by law enforcement during non-business hours. These homes will also serve as shelter homes. It is thought this will help eliminate some over-capacity in homes taking teens.
- The percentage of homes with 6 or more children in them with a waiver meeting CFOP 175-64 guidelines increased from 26% in August 2001 to 31% in January 2002. However, 100% of the homes in Hillsborough county, and based on audit results, the majority of CBC controlled homes have administratively approved waivers signed, with the predominant reason being that no other placement exists and/or its in the best interests of the children.
- HKI will have 6 currently licensed child placing agencies sharing the existing departmental homes. This will be under the over-site of Camelot Community Care. They hope that by utilizing existing agencies they will be able to pool resources to enhance recruitment and retention of foster parents.
- HKI is also planning on lowering caseloads of the licensing counselors to have them spend more time doing liaison and supportive work with the foster parents as a means of better retention.

District Seven:

- (Since the report in July, 2001)
- The number of licensed foster homes has decreased from 413 to 388
- Bed capacity has decreased from 981 to 913
- Foster homes over capacity decreased from 73 (18%) to 28 (7.2%)
- Foster homes with more than 5 children decreased from 55 (13%) to 25 (6.4%)
- Foster homes under capacity increased from 183 (44%) to 213 (54.9%)
- Foster Homes at capacity remained almost the same, 157 (38%) to 147 (37.9%)
- CPA foster homes increased from 259 (511 beds) to 264 (531 beds)
- Child Caring Agencies increased from 33 (704 beds) to 35 (721 beds)
- The decrease in the number of licensed foster homes is an area of serious concern. Effective 7/1/01 a complete reconciliation and clean up of our records was completed. This resulted in a paper loss of 26 previously reported foster homes when we obtained a correct number.

District Eight:

- DeSoto and Sarasota counties have merged with former District 5 and District 6 to form the Suncoast Region. This is a major reason for the dramatic decrease in the number of foster homes for District 8 since the August 2001 report.
• Current trend suggests we are losing ground with sufficient foster homes and licensed beds. New Management put in place in November 2001 in our provider agency, should assist in seeing our downward trend. We are keeping a close eye on the progress our provider agency should be making. The current plan for statewide recruitment should also help improve our numbers.
• The number of homes over licensed capacity have increased 2%, homes at capacity have increased 3% and the number of homes under licensed capacity have decreased 5%.
• We have updated our marketing plan from last year with our new community partner, Family Restoration, Inc. This provider is responsible for the recruitment, training, placements and general licensing activities. They assumed total district responsibility on September 1. This transition has caused some disruption to the stability of the foster homes.
• From last year’s focus groups of Foster parents, we developed training for counselors, providers and administrative support staff to sensitize them to foster parents and their needs. This training is ongoing to newly hired staff.

District Nine:
• The majority of homes that are under licensed capacity are the homes that are designated for District 9 Foster/Adopt Pilot Project.
• We continue to support and offer services to our foster homes that are over capacity by contracting with a community-based agency, The Children’s Place. This contract provides for a counselor to visit each over capacity home weekly and to offer necessary services.
• Counselor is encouraged to increase the amount of visits and phone contracts. Foster parents are encouraged to use respite care. There are no regular foster homes licensed for more than 5 children.
• We have reduced the number of above license capacity homes throughout the year. Currently, we do not have any homes that are dual licensed nor do we have homes licensed for more than five children. The Department continues to work with several agencies to open facilities for siblings, pregnant teens and babies.

District Ten:
• Homes over licensed capacity are immediately assessed for capacity increases and restricted to the children in that current placement. With these restrictions, reductions occur through attrition.
• Under-utilized homes are being encouraged to expand their placement preferences to include more of our older children.
• We need additional homes for difficult to place teens and sibling groups. We have a contract with an agency that focuses on sibling group placements. We also have services available through the Nurturing Program to immediately begin in-home therapy to promote bonding as soon as a child is placed.
• Over capacity homes have dramatically decreased because we are generally able to immediately increase the licensed capacity.
• We have implemented a new tracking system that should help reduce the number of homes without appropriate waivers and we no longer license homes for more than 5 foster children.

District Eleven:
• We have a total of 86 Resource Homes. Most of the homes only accept children ages 0-5 of specific characteristics. Until a specific placement is found, they'll report as under capacity.
• Although Mentor Inc. was recently licensed as a CPA in our district, still most of their placements are from District 10. These clients do not show in our District’s census, “0” occupancy. Consequently, the beds in these foster homes show as vacant when in fact they are not.
• No new children are placed in homes with an outstanding abuse report. It takes 3+ months for a PI Unit to close a case. Meanwhile, these home remain under-capacity.
• Evaluations of children to meet criteria for RGC and the Model Program is currently in process. Those identified as meeting the criteria will be moving into the identified program starting February 1, 2002.
• The Licensing Unit is currently evaluating the possibility of increasing capacity in some of the over capacity homes. There are some homes which capacity has been increased.
• Our district recently lowered all DCF foster, family shelters, and group homes license capacity to a maximum of five. We are examining if any of these foster homes, shelters, and group homes could be considered for a contracted facility. Our Contract Unit has developed a mini orientation to be offered one-on-one to those interested in becoming private providers. Most of the children in these homes were replaced. A few are waiting for the RGC and Model Program to be in effect to be moved accordingly. Children requiring psychiatric or DS placement are on a waiting list for specialty placements.
• We have 55 more homes. Over capacity homes decreased by 4%, at capacity remained the same and under capacity increased 4%.
• We have 33 more homes with no children in the home, however, our capacity increased by 104.
• Capacity 1-2 remains the same, capacity 3-4 increased 1%, capacity 5 increased 1%, capacity 5+ decreased 2%.
• Homes housing 6+ children decreased 6%.
• Homes with an appropriate waiver increased 7%.
• We have “0” inactive homes vs. 4 last period.

District Twelve:
• We continue to deal with needing additional teenage placements. We have been able to get two additional (from our existing homes) homes to take in a teenager during this quarter and one home converted to taking teenagers. These children overall have done well in these placements. CBC is now getting involved in our recruitment and retention efforts during this quarter.
• We are re-developing our Foster Buddie Program, where our children will be matched up with a volunteer who will spend individual time with them. This will not only be good for our children but will server as respite for our foster parents. The licensing and adoption units also took several children for a field trip to Silver Springs, giving our foster parents a break for a day.
• We are meeting with CBC monthly in regards to recruitment and recruitment needs. They are aware that we have a good percentage of homes that are undercapped and they need to use these homes for shelter, overnight, respite and weekend placements. We continue to speak to high schools and when we can, attempt to increase our teenage homes and are, as previously stated working on medically experienced homes for children coming into care via hospital.
District Thirteen:

- The total capacity of homes has increased from 807 to 843. This derived from the increase of new foster homes, increased capacity in some homes, and increased retention of existing homes.
- The District is developing a “Care Team” consisting of a Coordinator, Consultant, Behavior Analyst and a parent liaison to assist in less placement disruptions.
- The District continues to re-evaluate placements options for child (ren) in a foster home over-capacity for possible relative or other placement.
- The District reviews homes on a quarterly basis that have been licensed for a year and with a total capacity of one or two children to determine if capacity increases are feasible.

District Fourteen:

- The majority of under capacity homes are in the category of foster–to-adopt licensed homes or homes we classify as adoptive respite.
- We have initiated a foster home reduction plan wherein staff from placements, licensing, and service units meet to discuss individual plans and services for children currently in over capacity homes. Currently this staffing is chaired by the supervisor of licensing and is conducted on monthly basis.
- Since January 2001 there has been a steady decline in the number children in over capacity homes. For the period March 2001 to December 2001 the number of children in over capacity homes has decreased by 84 children. For the period January 2001 to December 2001 the number homes with a total of more than 5 has also steadily decreased. For the period March 2001 to December 2001 the number of children in homes with a total of more than five has decreased by 39 children.

District Fifteen:

- Teenagers are historically difficult to place. Additionally, we are finding that delinquency judges are placing children in the custody of the department not because of dependency issues but rather due to issues of incorrigibility or family dissent.
- The district follows CFOP 175-64 regarding waivers and over capacity in homes. The 5-child limit is rarely excepted and only in homes with proven track records for short periods of time, until more appropriate placements can be located. The number of waivers needed continues to decrease, as does the number of waivers needed specifically for more than 5 children in a home.
- While the total number of homes has increased, the number of foster families who have surrendered their licenses, combined with those who train to become relative placements for out of state children, medical or strictly adoptive applicants has also increased, creating an illusion that more homes are available than actually are.
- Total number of licensed homes and licensed capacity has increased, however the number of families who have adopted or relinquished their licenses for other reasons continues to skew the licensing figures. District 15’s statistics are congruent with the overall statewide average.
- Percentage of homes with a total child population of more than 5 has been dramatically reduced, despite the increased numbers of children coming into care vs. the number of available beds, primarily due to recent mandate that the District administrator be personally involved in each waiver, and a better awareness of where children are being placed in the district. District 15’s statistics are better than the overall statewide average.
**FEBRUARY 2002**

*Over / At / Under Licensed Capacity By District*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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**STATE TOTALS**

- **Number of LICENSED Family Safety Homes**: 4,388
- **Homes OVER Licensed Capacity**: 11% (n=485)
- **Homes AT Licensed Capacity**: 34% (n=1504)
- **Homes UNDER Licensed Capacity**: 55% (n=2399)
- **Inactive Homes**: 3% (n=132)
- **Homes with NO Children**: 28% (n=1215)

*Data indicating NO Children relates ONLY to foster children. Biological and adopted children already in the foster home are not reflected.*
Family Foster Home Licensed Capacity
February 2002

N=4388

- Under Licensed Capacity: 55% (n=2399)
- At Licensed Capacity: 34% (n=1504)
- Over Licensed Capacity: 11% (n=485)
Family Foster Home Licensed Capacity
February 2002
N=4388

Graph #2
### Distribution of Licensed Capacity By District

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**STATE TOTALS**

| % of Homes Licensed for 0 | 0.2% (n=9) |
| % of Homes Licensed for 1-2 | 60% (n=2614) |
| % of Homes Licensed for 3-4 | 32% (n=1403) |
| % of Homes Licensed for 5 | 8% (n=359) |
| % of Homes Licensed for 6+ | 0.1% (n=3) |
| Total Bed Capacity | 10,840 |

### Total Licensed Capacity By District

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Graph # 3A

Distribution of Licensed Capacity
February 2002

N= 4388

- 1-2 Children: 60% (n=2614)
- 3-4 Children: 32% (n=1403)
- 5 Children: 8% (n=359)

Graph # 3A
Distribution of Licensed Capacity
February 2002

N=4388

Graph # 3B
## Waiver Report By District

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* After corrections in the input of waiver data by Districts 10 and 12, District 10 reported 70% (n=7) homes with appropriate waivers and D12 reported 56% (n=9) homes with appropriate waivers.

### STATE TOTALS - 4,388 Homes

- % of Homes with 6+ TOTAL children: 8% (n=353)
- % of those homes WITH appropriate waivers: 44% (n=155) *48% (n=171) when substituting the corrected figures of D10 and D12

DATA IS BASED ON CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY CFOP 175-64
Family Foster Homes with More Than a Total of Five Children

February 2002

N=353

56% (n=198) do not have appropriate waiver per CFOP 175-64

44% (n=155) have appropriate waiver per CFOP 175-64

Graph # 4A *Homes with appropriate waivers: 48% (n=171) when substituting the corrected figures of D10 (n=+7) and D12 (n=+9)
Graph # 4B

*Homes with appropriate waivers: 171, when substituting the corrected figures of D10 (n=+7) and D12 (n=+9)
VII. Summary of Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Retention and Recruitment of foster homes are priority for the both the Department licensing staff and community based care agencies. In line with strategies to increase the number of foster families, the Department has identified staff at Central Office to work with the districts/region and develop a statewide plan for diligent retention and recruitment. The plan is to supplement and strengthen district/region foster care retention and recruitment efforts with statewide initiatives to help heighten awareness of the need for additional homes on an on-going basis. The new statewide plan is scheduled for implementation in the districts in early July 2002. However, continuous technical assistance is provided to districts including monthly statewide conference calls for foster care retention/recruitment staff with Central Office.

The Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA-IEP) requires states to develop a plan that provides for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. The Plan must include a description of the characteristics of waiting children, specific strategies to reach all parts of the community, diverse methods of disseminating both general and child specific information, strategies for assuring that all-prospective parents have timely access to the home study process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access by all members of the community, strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities, strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers, non-discriminatory fee structures, and procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a waiting child, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures must ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

Listed below are local retention and recruitment initiatives as reported by each district/region:

District One:

The Central Licensing Unit continues to collaborate with Adoptions to increase the number and accessibility of MAPP classes offered. Accelerated all-day sessions held on for four consecutive Saturdays recently concluded in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. Nine training sessions are scheduled for year 2002.

The District Recruitment Task Force has been reorganized. The DCF Recruiter will continue to meet quarterly with recruiters from contracted agencies (Children’s Home Society, CIRCLE, CHIPS, COPE, Florida Baptist Children’s Homes, Catholic Charities) to identify and implement recruitment strategies through networking. As the district moves toward Community Based Care, these meetings will become increasingly important.

Recruitment needs in Okaloosa and Walton Counties are now being discussed at bi-weekly placement meetings. Placement needs are identified for separated siblings and there has been some discussion regarding targeted recruitment. One identified need is for step-down medical foster homes in Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The recruiter initiated contacts with the School of Nursing at the local community college and area hospitals in an effort to recruit foster parents with medial training.

The recruiter continues to make on-going contact with print and broadcast media and churches throughout the District to obtain publicity through Public Service Announcements and Press Releases. The recruiter has made television and radio appearances throughout the reporting period.

The "Give a Child... A Place to Call Home" recruitment campaign concluded. The: 30-second commercial spots were aired on cable and a local television station (WEAR). The commercial opened with a 5-year-old girl holding a
telephone. In the opening line she says, "I wish I had a place to call home." The commercial continues with shots of the child playing and walking hand in hand with foster parents. A voice over speaks to the critical need for foster parents. The commercial ends with a voice over, "Give a Child... A Place to Call Home" and a graphic including the Department's logo and the recruiter's telephone number.

The commercial began airing on cable in Escambia County June 14, 2001. The commercial aired on CNN, TBS, USA, Lifetime, HGTV, Discovery, WTBS, and BET. Funding for the cable spots is being provided through the Foster Parent Support Fund. In addition to the cable, the commercial aired on the local ABC affiliate, WEAR, from June 2001 through October 2001. The Levin & Papantonio Family Foundation paid for the airtime. The estimated value of this advertising is $25,000. Prior to beginning commercial advertising in June 2001, the highest number of inquiries for any month this year was thirty-five (May). The lowest number of inquiries in any month was nineteen (April 2001). Since June 2001, the lowest number of inquiries received in any month was forty (June). The highest number of inquiries received was fifty-eight (August). The Escambia County Pre-service training class held in October was the largest this year. Twenty prospective foster families attended this training. In addition, the Adoptions unit held a weekend class in Santa Rosa County. Four prospective foster families and six prospective adoptive families completed pre-service training.

Flyers and posters were printed to enhance the "Give a Child... A Place to Call Home" campaign. The flyer features a young girl holding a cell phone. The photo was purchased from Photodisc.com. The flyers were distributed to employees of the Santa Rosa and Escambia County School Boards. In addition, flyers and posters have been placed in numerous churches and places of business throughout the District.

Magnets printed with the "Give a Child... A Place to Call Home" slogan has been used as "recruitment tools" at expositions and conferences to raise awareness of the need for foster homes.

The FACES (Families Available for Children in Emergency Shelter) Program continues to pay babysitters to care for foster children (up to 8 hours per month). This funding allows the foster parents to take some time off without using allotted respite days. Production of a commercial highlighting a foster family and their church sponsored support team is still planned but production has been postponed. The target date for production of this commercial is December 2001. This commercial will specifically target churches and will give "real life" examples of how church members can make a difference in the life of children in the community.

The Papa John's recruitment campaign initiated in District 6 was replicated in District One in August 2001. The Department shared a box topper with Papa John's. Forty thousand full-color toppers were distributed at a cost of $660.00. The response from this campaign was minimal.

Presentations have been made to church members and civic groups. In addition, the recruiter has hand delivered recruitment materials to churches and businesses in an effort to be more visible in the community.

There are currently three special initiative counselors to enhance recruitment, recognition and retention. These positions continue to be invaluable in addressing issues between foster parents and the Department and helping foster families in dealing with the emotions involved in reunification. The liaisons are often sounding boards, mediators, and encouragers. The special initiative counselors have access to $2000.00 through Promoting Safe and Stable Families to use for foster parent/child support activities, needs, and supports. Other funds are also available for placement support services, activities and items.

The shelter placement unit continues in operation in our largest county (Escambia) to enhance appropriate placements, and to reduce placement disruptions via provisions of community supports and communication. Weekly meetings between the Licensing Supervisor, placement staff, and the special initiative position have proven invaluable in making the best available placement for children. Okaloosa and Walton counties continue to have one or two persons initiating placements. These persons are extremely knowledgeable of the strengths and weaknesses of foster families and are very supportive. As stated above, bi-weekly placements staffings are now occurring for Okaloosa and Walton County children in an effort to make better placements and to reduce placement disruptions.

Three-hour in-service training sessions are offered twice monthly at local community colleges - one in Escambia County and one in Okaloosa County. Topics for training for the year 2001 include: treatment of lice and parasitic infestation; multi-cultural skin and hair care; working with the biological parent; life books; communicable diseases and universal precautions; grief and loss; stress reduction; and alternatives to physical discipline.
FACES continues to pay for babysitters for foster parents up to eight hours per month. This program, aimed at retention, has been well received by foster parents who enjoy a night or two out per month without using respite hours or paying a babysitter.

Bridgeway Center in Okaloosa County is working with the current Okaloosa/Walton County MAPP class to add a stronger parenting component to an expanded class schedule of 12 weeks, to include stronger emphasis on communication, healthy parenting, attachment disorder, et al. They will also provide pre- and post placement in-home family therapy for first foster placements and discretionary supportive mental health services for existing foster and adoptive homes to prevent disruptions.

A Behavioral Analyst in Escambia County is providing training to prospective foster parents as part of the MAPP curriculum on Parenting Tools for Positive Behavioral Change. Once licensed, the families are encouraged to complete the 10-week course.

District Two:

District 2 has entered into contract with Life Management Centers (2A) and Devereux Foundation (2B) to conduct foster parent recruitment, retention and licensing activities. Each agency has established priorities based on their service area. There was an “Needs Assessment” complete in October 2000 that was used as part of the information included in the Invitation to Negotiate.

District 2 is focusing on 2 specific geographic areas for recruitment.

The two provider agencies are tasked to recruit in geographic areas the district has identified a need. Their contracts contain new home recruitment quotas. Progress is already evident.

District 2 does not have any homes licensed for more than a total of five children, nor are there homes with more than five children (with or without waiver). The district has conscientiously maintained homes under licensed capacity in order to provide a more stable and home-like environment.

In order to utilize more homes, the district is encouraging foster parents to expand their preferences as to age and gender of the children. Additionally, behavior analysts are offering support and training so that foster parents feel more confident in caring for children with hard to manage behaviors.

Current recruitment and retention efforts include conducting a positive marketing campaign, developing a Recruitment/Retention advisory board, assuring telephone access and responsiveness, continuing assessment of departmental placement needs, and developing a marketing plan.

Retention efforts include conducting needs assessment with/for each foster parent. This will be reviewed at quarterly home visits with the foster parents, assessing telephone access and responsiveness, developing respite agreements, participation in and support of foster parent associations, exploring development of a foster parent assistance program to provide support for the foster parents’ emotional needs.

District Three:

During FY 2001/2, the licensing unit’s goal is to get the message about the need for foster homes to the widest possible audience. The district developed a campaign motto: “Open Your Home, Share Your Love, Shape a Child,” and have used this on multi-media recruitment materials.

The district used foster parent support funds to run 60 television spots on TV20, the ABC network affiliate that covers 10 of our 11 counties (Hamilton is not covered) in District 3. This TV station also covers a number of counties in District 13. The advertisements ran from August 20 through the end of November 2001, and the station also ran free spots during non-primetime hours. The four advertisements shown targeted foster homes for either sibling groups or teens. All the ads were eye-catching: two were funny, and two were dramatic and moving.
ads ran during prime time and were aired during such shows as Good Morning America, Oprah, CBS Evening News, and a Walt Disney Special. The district anticipated a large number of calls, but did not receive the expected response. Only one of the counties that comprise our 11-county district received substantial response from the ads. In Alachua County, seven families who completed MAPP training attributed the television ads as influencing them to become foster parents. District 13 did not gather statistics, but reported that their calls did not increase substantially either. Given the substantial expenditure of funds for this media campaign ($10,000), the return was judged to be negligible. The ads did not generate homes from the ten rural counties targeted. What the ads did do, however, was provide a positive Department presence in the community. Additionally, experience has shown that many families think about fostering for a year or more before they take action, so this campaign may have a longer-lasting impact that will be difficult to measure.

The district also used foster parent support funds to have posters and flyers developed for distribution throughout the district. Staff coordinated the design with similar materials already in existence for adoption and One Church One Child initiatives in District 3. Statistics as to their success cannot be accurately assessed. Particularly, one teacher indicated an interest in foster parenting after seeing a poster in the teacher’s lounge. Again, the district believes these materials are providing a positive community presence and may be generating interest that we will realize some time down the road. Cost for the posters was $2,688 and $4,468 for brochures.

One of the more successful recruiting tools appears to be attendance with exhibits at community events such as the Kids Fest and Build-a-Village Kids Fair held in Gainesville, as well as the Business Expo and the Crab Festival in Palatka. Giveaways and brochures have been handed out. The district ordered large numbers of bottles of bubbles, with the motto, the Department logo, and phone number printed on them. Cost for these materials was $1,768. At one event, a volunteer face painter was used. These events seemed very effective in bringing children and their families to the booths, and a number of families expressed much interest and stated they had not been aware of the need for foster families.

The greatest source of referrals for new foster parents consists of foster parents themselves. It is estimated that existing foster parents recruit 80 percent of the new foster parents.

Recruitment is managed from the program office, with one staff member and the supervisor carrying primary responsibility. Staff identify specific needs for their areas of responsibility. A district MAPP class schedule has been developed for the year, with a goal that no family should have to wait more than 60 days for a class to begin in, or near, their locale. In Live Oak (Suwannee, Hamilton, and Lafayette Counties), Lake City (Columbia and Union Counties), Palatka (Putnam and Bradford Counties), and Trenton (Dixie, Levy, and Gilchrist Counties), one counselor in each location is responsible for recruiting and training potential foster parents and for completing the initial licensure as well as relicensure packets according to the standards set forth in the Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, and department Operating Procedures. In Gainesville (Alachua County), one staff member handles relicensing only. The other three counselors do recruitment, training and new licensing, while also each having additional part-time responsibilities, including licensing child placing/child caring agencies, foster parent training, and recruitment.

The department has also contracted with Children’s Home Society (CHS) to recruit and initially license family foster homes for the department. There are three staff members and one supervisor. Each is assigned an area of responsibility and works with the local DCF licensing staff to recruit and license homes.

Each of the licensing staff is responsible to work with the department’s recruiter to assist in development of specialized recruitment in the assigned areas. The department’s recruiter then compiles each of the recruitment activities into a single recruitment plan for the district. The recruitment plan is updated quarterly.

District Four:

District 4 is working with a nationally recognized advertising agency to develop campaign products such as posters and brochures. Staff are distributing thousands of bookmarks to businesses, libraries and bookstores across the district. The district has used the media, print, billboards, and television to further our message. The plan is to campaign using foster and adoptive parents as well as staff to help recruit families. Recruiting information has been mailed to schools, churches, businesses and daycares.
The district has assisted with many events throughout the year to help support foster parents and foster parent support groups. The district has assisted in initiating foster parent associations throughout the district and has been available to help these organizations through the use of staff as liaisons. Retention and Recruitment (R&R) Staff have been available to foster parents to assist with their needs, offer advice and make needed referrals. R&R staff have been visiting foster parents who are over licensed capacity.

The district has had numerous fund raising events during the year to help defray the costs of the annual foster parent appreciation banquet. The budget this year is $8000. The district raised money during the year to assist foster parent associations with events such as the fall festival, honor roll banquet and back to school party.

The most important retention work involves the department’s relationship with the foster parents. They trust department to tell the truth and to assist them when they need help. The licensing unit, placement staff and the R&R counselors are talking to foster parents on a daily basis to try to make their life easier with the children they have in the

Suncoast Region:

The district has taken every opportunity to have a presence at community gatherings. Some such annual events include The Good Community Fair, All About Kids Back to School Bash, four different civic groups annual picnics, Earth Day Celebrations, Government in the Sunshine Day, Say No to Drugs Kids Day, Gwaveen Family Day, Martin Luther King City Celebration, Temple Terrace Community Care Days, Brandon Kiwanis Kids Day and many more that are one time events such as community centennials and health fairs. Usually two staff attend and set up two display tables at each event. One table is filled with information to hand out and an invitation to sign up for orientation. The other table has photos and short bios of children currently available for adoption.

An Innovative Teen Recruitment Program (ONE TEEN ONE FAMILY) was a piloted seminar to teach teens what the requirements are to foster and to empower them to recruit for themselves and their friends in foster care.

NBC affiliate station Channel 8’s news anchor donated narration of 2 30-second PSA’s that have been showing regularly. These PSA’s feature their female evening news anchor. WB38 is running teen specific 30-second advertising spots during prime time. Verizion Americast a Pinellas cable network donated 100 prime time 30-second ad slots. The district is playing PSA’s targeting the need for teen homes.

Over 100 teen specific ads aired on area major market radio stations during July these will continue to run as PSA’s on a space available basis for the remainder of the year. JO 101 FM has hosted two one-hour talk shows a year, one each for foster care and adoptions. WTMP’s primary daytime announcer is a former foster child. He has created two 30-second PSA’s and has made a commitment to play them regularly. Radio Disney will continue to make and play, for 30 days each year, a PSA for foster and adoptive families. Buccaneer’s Radio Network has 20 stations statewide and are airing 22 30-second spots during Buccaneer games. Radio 101 is doing 10 30-second spots on Sports Radio for a total of 140 spots.

Eller Billboards provided 34 teen specific billboards over a six county area. The billboard are up for one month minimally, each spaced out over a six month period. Junior Posters provided 45 street level teen recruitment billboards up in Hillsborough and Pinellas for a minimum of 30 days each over the next 6 months. Fourteen bus benches with a teen recruitment message were distributed in three counties for six months. Sixty banners were put up at recreation facilities and parks.

Print media included press packets featuring all of the districts print material and fact sheets with sufficient information upon request about the need for homes and was presented to press and community leaders contacted by staff.

Papa John’s Pizza box topper campaign included the distribution of 180,000 topers from seven Hillsborough locations over a six month period.
District Seven:

The district routinely reviews the population reports from ICWSIS to compare previously conducted surveys of placement counselors. Critical placement needs are consistently part of the recruitment message. Even the foster and adoptive parents who assist in MAPP training and speaking engagements are chosen, in part, for their ability to advocate for older children, sibling groups and children from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The Chiles Study, (Florida Foster Care Recruitment and Retention) is also being used as a resource for recruitment planning. This study and other district materials were given to the advertising agency that has created a new campaign to follow up last year’s A Home for Every Child campaign. This campaign kicks off in February.

Retention efforts include Partnership & Training meetings held on a monthly basis to provide a place for Foster Parents and Department staff to discuss training, changes and problems; Essential Parenting Tools for Positive Behavior Change training offered by PDC is ongoing and classes are filling to capacity on a regular basis; Positive Behavior Change Program by USF is currently being implemented; two positions are assigned the responsibility of Foster Parent Liaison. They continue to provide support and facilitate communication between the Department and foster parents; licensing staff conduct quarterly home visits on all licensed foster homes; regular institutional staffings between Protective Investigations, Placement Licensing and the Program Office have been implemented. This should improve communications and reduce the time between a report and resolution, a committee has begun working on updating and revising the Foster Parent Handbook; and implementation of the Family Assessment Format will help eliminate duplication and streamline the process when parents move between foster home licensing and adoptions.

District Eight:

District strategies to educate communities, for the purpose of recruitment, of the need for foster/adoptive parents in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades Counties include creating a newsletter for foster parent information and recruitment and develop and editorial board including foster parents; utilizing and distributing professional brochures from Tallahassee; participation in Biannual media events - May/November; recruiting bilingual homes and Hispanic trainers; ongoing participation in community events with display and brochures; developing recruitment materials in different languages; continual utilization of the Fact Sheet; developing a Web page for foster parent recruitment purposes; utilizing the business cards and buttons developed for recruitment; and continuing the Speaker’s Bureau.

Strategies to improve the image of foster parenting and emphasize their role as professional partners in the foster care system include obtaining corporate sponsorship to underwrite TV and print advertising focusing on foster/adoptive parents pending 501C 3 status; utilization of recruitment video and edit for Family Restoration; using 1-800-89Family for Recruitment efforts; providing 24/7 support for foster parents; when appropriate, involving foster parents in decision making; and developing all occasion note cards with both logos, to provide personalized support to Foster Parents.

Strategies to solicit support from Community providers, community groups, civic and religious organizations and other foster parents include utilizing Hispanic Community sponsors to assist with ways to recruit Spanish-speaking foster families; developing a foster parent task force for recruitment; continuing survey spot for existing foster parents to provide names and addresses of prospective foster parents; periodically providing them recruitment business cards to distribute; continuing to advertise in local publications regularly, (i.e. Parenting News, etc.); organizing Celebrity Memorabilia Auction and football jamboree; and communicating with different organizations for recruitment purposes.

Strategies to analyze retention issues and improve the foster care program to establish a stronger relationship between foster/adoptive families and the Florida department of Children and Families and Family Restoration include continuing surveys of foster parents who have left the program (DCF); FRI foster parent liaisons call foster parents 24 hours after placements and periodically thereafter to strengthen support; identifying all email addresses of foster parents for communications and encourage foster parents to email concerns; continuing the use of foster parent liaisons from DCF and FRI to address foster parent concerns; identifying foster families interested in a “foster buddy or mentoring system” through each county to support other foster parents; developing a team of mentors;
developing foster parent “liaisons” in each county to assist in resolving complaints from foster parents and to provide support. (FRI); continuing efforts to sensitize staff on the importance of communicating with foster parents; developing gift certificates donations to support Foster Parent “Welcome bags”; continuing a strategy to target recruitment of respite providers for foster parents; reinstating “Circle” meetings – (Foster parent support meetings in geographic areas); continuing Foster Parent Appreciation dinners; and continuing holiday event activities and enhancements, (i.e. Easter Egg hunt, parades, etc.).

District Nine:

Continued partnership with the Foster Parents’ Recruitment Coalition through community-based efforts for recruiting foster parents include the following ” Boo at the Zoo” - A family event held at Dreher Park Zoo in West Palm Beach; WPTV, Channel 5 held a weeklong media blitz with videos featuring current foster homes and parents, and highlighted individual children. These events also include a live phone bank of staff who took inquiries and answer questions concerning the opportunities of fostering our children.

Many festivals such at the West Palm Beach’s famous Sunfest, Lake Worth Civic Festival; Public schools and other private agencies’ resource fairs information booths and displays at the various shopping malls throughout the county; religious festivals, the annual South Florida Fair in suburban West Palm Beach, and many PSA’s in county-wide local newspapers, media advertisements, and community service group presentations.

The district continues to meet monthly and work in partnership with community agencies to discuss and plan for placement needs for the children. The Placement Unit periodically meets with the District Licensing unit to discuss the need of recruitment for more homes.

The district continues to support and offer services to foster homes that are over capacity by contracting with a community-based agency, The Children’s Place. This contract provides for a counselor to visit each over-capacity home weekly and to offer necessary services.

Counselor is encouraged to increase the number of visits and phone contracts. Foster parents are encouraged to use respite care. There are no regular foster homes licensed for more than 5 children. All homes that have more than five children have the appropriate waivers on file in their Licensing files. These waivers are also maintained and tracked by the Placement Unit. We continued to monitor homes under licensed capacity to determine if their census can be increased in the future.

Attendance by Foster Parent Liaison at monthly foster parent association meetings which are held in the northern, southern and western parts of Palm Beach County. New information is disseminated, the foster parents air concerns, and questions are answered. Foster parent handbooks have been updated and distributed to all foster parents. Child Resource Records have been prepared for each child to enable foster parents to have more information on the children. Birthday cards are mailed out to each foster parent monthly as well as holiday greetings. The Foster Parent Liaison and Placement Unit staff offer information and referral services. Foster parents are invited to attend state and national foster Parents conferences (expenses paid by the Department). Foster Parent Appreciation month was celebrated by delivery of fresh flowers to each foster home as well as an appreciation brunch

District Ten:

The district has a concentrated campaign with the goal of reaching all potential prospective parents within the Broward County School System, dispersing recruitment medium to all staff, groups (PTA, etc.) & parents affiliated with targeted schools, in the GIS report. The district will disperse recruitment medium through the Broward County Libraries to Increase Community Awareness of need. Targeted areas include South, Central and North Broward Libraries. Efforts include dispersing recruitment posters, through a concentrated campaign with Publix Supermarket Inc., with the goal of reaching potential prospective parents who visit all of Broward County’s 63 Publix Super Markets. The Broward County Blood Bank is used to increase community awareness need through dispersement of recruitment medium to Community Blood Donors. Broward County is the targeted area. The Faith Based Organizations are used to increase community awareness need through disbursement of recruitment medium to members. Targeted areas include zip codes as identified by the GIs report.
Homevisits provide face to face orientations to prospective foster parent(s). Efforts to increase orientation participation includes providing individual meetings at times convenient for the applicants. Targeted areas include zip codes identified by the GIS report.

Retention efforts include creation and implementation of a database to track inquiries, orientation attendees, M.A.P.P. enrollment and graduation. Development of a M.A.P.P. Dropout Survey will assist the district in ascertaining why prospective foster parents drop out of M.A.P.P.

District Eleven:

Some of the District’s successful recruitment/retention activities include but are not limited to the ability to print out the monthly Child-In-Care Report indicating the population of children coming into care in any given month. The information provided (includes but is not limited to the gender, age and child’s race) assists in conducting targeted recruitment activities. Partnerships with two radio stations to air our plea for families for our targeted population.

Creation and distribution to administration of an internal monthly MAPP activities flyer outlining the orientations, pre-service and in-service trainings.

The “Strive for Five Campaign” that resulted from the services retained by an advertising agency resulted in only a few prospective adoptive families indicating an interest in our children. Some of the marketing strategies used by this agency consisted of moving billboards and message on benches and city buses regarding our need for foster and adoptive families.

PSAs were aired several times on one gospel radio station. Movie theatre PSA displayed on screen while you are waiting for the movie to commence. This PSA ran for one month during the month of July in three major theatres in Miami-Dade County. Distribution of foster and adoption flyers (door-to-door) in neighborhoods wherein many of the children in care in our district are being removed from. Partnership with a provider to assist in recruiting foster and adoptive families for the Department. The Recruitment and Retention Workgroup will be meeting again on February 1, 2002.

The dissemination of a quarterly newsletter entitled, A Foster Parent Connection to foster families. This newsletter provides pertinent information to foster parents, e.g.: upcoming activities in the community, families recommended as foster parents for the last three months, changes/updates in district policies or procedures, in-service trainings available, and a plea for foster and adoptive families to meet the district’s targeted needs. This newsletter serves as a recruitment and retention tool, particularly as it has been proven that foster parents are our best recruiters.

Fingerprinting machine installed in the MAPP Unit so to facilitate and expedite the initial licensing process of our families. The MAPP Unit has the ability to run local criminal checks and view/print Caretaker Screens on prospective foster and adoptive families. These strategies assist in the retention of our families, particularly since the initial licensing phase can be a very lengthy process given the timeframe it takes for fingerprint clearances to come back. Prospective families can become very frustrated, particularly if the prints come back illegible.

Bilingual Staff in the MAPP Unit: Family Support Worker to Family Services Counselor. This enables us to conduct Orientations and the GPS/MAPP Pre-Service Training sessions in Spanish. Thus, we are not only able to meet the needs of the Hispanic children coming into care in the district but accommodate those Hispanic families interested in helping our children on a temporary or permanent basis. Due to our having bilingual staff, we are also able to conduct In-Service Training sessions in Spanish. This assists in the retention of our Hispanic foster homes.

Attendance and participation at the monthly MENTORING MEETINGS (comprised of foster and adoptive parents) so to seek out possible recruitment leads and secure retention. Also, a stipend given to families for the successful completion of the 15-hour Positive Parenting In-Service Training. This assists in foster parent retention and ensures that quality care is being given to our children.

The implementation of the 30-hour Positive Parenting Behavioral Program. Although, this is a requirement for those foster parents receiving an enhanced board rate, it is open to all foster parents. With this training’s implementation, we are assisting foster parents in providing continued quality care to our children, assisting in preventing the possible removal of our child from that placement, and in foster parent retention.
Dissemination of the In-Service Training Calendar to our foster parents delineating available training sessions in topics that will assist our foster parents in continuing to provide quality care to our children. Some of the topics include but are not limited to: Fostering the Sexually Abused Child, Sexual Aggressors/Victims, HIV/AIDS, CPR/Water Safety, etc. The availability of this calendar also assists in foster parent retention.

As a retention tool, Prospective Foster and Adoptive Families are given a Resource Packet at the culmination of the GPS/MAPP Pre-Service Training. The Packet contains the following information: Respite Care Handbook, Fact Sheets, Operating Procedures (e.g., CF-OP 175-28 Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse), Training Guides/Handbooks, State Institutional Claims (Claim Form and the correspondent Operating Procedure (175-60), and an Emergency Contact Listing.

District Twelve:

District 12 continues to deal with needing additional teenage placements. Staff have been able to get two additional (from our existing homes) homes to take in a teenager during this quarter and one home converted to taking teenagers. These children overall have done well in these placements. CBC is now getting involved in recruitment and retention efforts during this quarter. The licensing and adoption units took several children for a field trip to Silver Springs, giving foster parents a break for a day. This served as a retention effort. The district is re-developing the Foster Buddie Program, where children will be matched up with a volunteer who will spend individual time with them. This will not only be good for our children but will serve as respite.

District Thirteen:

Current recruitment efforts include outreach to potential foster parents through the school system (PTA); Speakers Bureau of foster parents and counselors at local churches; media entities through newspaper, radio and television advertisement; conducting MAPP classes in five counties; home visits conducted prior to MAPP to the prospective families to familiarize the families with the overall process they will experience and answer any questions they may have; recruitment 1-877 hotline; community activities at festivals, flea markets and fairs and distributing recruitment flyers; and targeting the adult community for short term fostering such as respite and 30-day stays.

Retention efforts include conducting home visits to newly licensed foster parents within 30-45 days of initial placement in home; completion of the exit interview tool by foster parents who decide to not re-license; distribution of the quarterly foster parent newsletter to keep foster parents abreast of district activities, policies and procedural changes; conducting quarterly meetings with foster parent association presidents; holding a monthly meeting with foster parents to discuss recruitment and retention inputs; scheduling and coordinating the Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet in May; identifying a Foster Parent of the Quarter and Year in each county; responding to foster parent issues and concerns in a timely manner; conducting a minimum of 2 visits per year with foster parents; addition of Certified Behavior Analysts to specifically work with foster parents; and the availability of Positive Parenting Training to foster parents through PDC and the Behavior Analysts.

District Fourteen:

District 14 is in the process of developing and implementing a District centralized placement, licensing and recruitment plan. This centralized plan will focus on the needs of children throughout the district and a reallocation of staff to meet those identified needs. The district has begun the identification process in looking at the number of beds available in the district, kinds of bed available (foster, foster to adopt, adopt respite, medical, and facilities, medical, DS, and therapeutic) and children in care. The district began an analysis in January 2002 of children who are placed each month to determine how many children are new placements or replacements, age, race and sex. The district is discussing two possibilities for recruitment; one with a private marketing firm and the other with the addition of a recruitment/retention staff position. Currently the district has no staff specifically dedicated to recruitment and retention; other than case manager who also are responsible for licensing and relicensing. The district continues to utilize quarterly visits to all licensed foster homes in order to provide support and assess the providers capacity to provide for children in the home. Effective December 2001, the district has a foster parent liaison to identify and resolve concerns of foster and adoptive parents.
Retention efforts include quarterly visits to foster parents, respite baby-sitting, positive parenting and services of behavioral analyst, foster home reduction plans, foster parent appreciation lunches and springs festival, Christmas angels for presents to children in foster care and the foster parent liaison.

District Fifteen:

District’s Foster Care Recruitment included a partnership with Waldenbooks/Borders. A recruitment drive with this partner allows the district to distribute recruitment information from booths at the Indian River & Jensen Beach malls and from the stores themselves, and it generates financial contributions for the district’s Welfare Fund. Waldenbooks agreed to donate a percentage of sales from books sold during a two-week period. We set up a booth for the start of the project & were available in the mall to answer questions about foster parenting. Bookmarks generate inquiries.

Radio recruitment project with WQCS. The Fort Pierce based radio station began a recruitment project with the district. Short bios of children and families who have fostered them are produced and then aired on the station, which is heard throughout the four counties. Faxed press releases and public information announcements are distributed to all local media to coincide with this project.

Wednesday’s Child a monthly cable show in Vero Beach featuring children available for adoption. Ongoing relationship with local press and radio media has given the district freedom to use the airwaves and press to recruit. Press Releases, Public Service Announcements in Treasure Coast Parenting Magazine Column and Scripps Howard (3 newspapers in all) donated advertising space.

Teacher Recruitment Drive - Recruitment fliers distributed via the school systems to more than 5,000 teachers in the area. Increased inquires from school system employees and their relatives.

A specific recruitment drive in rural Okeechobee County, including: A City Proclamation making June - Foster Parent Appreciation month, “Foster a Child” posted on business marquees throughout town, Recruitment tray liners at McDonalds’ raised an awareness in the community for additional foster families. Resulted in a 51% increase in inquiries from Okeechobee County. 3 MAPP classes produced another 12 foster families, after screening and selection out processes were complete. Interest generated continues to compel additional classes, in an area previously known for not fostering.

Christmas sponsorship drive. ‘Adopt a Family’ - This drive revised the way the district collects toys for children at Christmas. Businesses were asked to sponsor foster families so that no child is left out and no child receives more than another in the same home. This drive will help spread the district's recruitment message by creating solid, personal relationships among participating businesses, the district and our families. The drive was an ambitious undertaking that required many, many hours to accomplish, but in the end produced surprisingly good results, providing gifts the children really wanted, to every family that was interested in participating— at no expense to foster parents, as well as other supports, intended to carry on throughout the year by the adopting business.

Making Christmas Bright. A partnership with Vero Beach Broadcasters serves both as a toy collection campaign and as recruitment tool for the district as more than $40,000 in advertising was donated for both purposes. Fast Graphics of Stuart donated full color recruitment bookmarks on an as needed basis. They are being distributed to bookstores, libraries and schools throughout the district.

As the District moves into 2002, additional recruitment activities are being initiated or expanded including a partnership with Hair Cuttery to donate a haircut to a foster care child for each cut sold during a period of time, just before school starts; coordination of a shoe drive through the local school systems to ask children to bring in new/used shoes for children in need in efforts to raise public awareness of children in need of loving homes; and a United Way School Supply campaign to help provide school supplies for foster care children as well as raise awareness.
Hibiscus Children’s Center:

Central Data Collection. Inquiry calls are now being directed to Hibiscus Children’s Center and Children’s Home Society to ensure prospective parents’ calls are not lost. Return calls are required within 48 hours. This has already increased the number of inquiries in the district – perhaps it is the perception of the public with non-profit organizations taking the lead in recruiting foster families.

Recruitment efforts include:

Three PSA’s which run on local TV stations.
Newspaper advertisements in Okeechobee, Indian River and Martin counties.
Flyers circulated by the YMCA at all of their locations. Flyers at public libraries, major stores, IRCC campuses in the three counties.
Information is published in PULSE the Martin Memorial Health System Newsletter once every two or three months.
Information is published about the recruitment program in local church bulletins approximately every three months.
The same information is published in local grade/middle school newsletters.
Appearances on a local TV show and on a local radio broadcast. We routinely incorporate our program into a standard Hibiscus Children’s Center presentation everywhere we speak as an agency.
In the month of Feb. Treasure Coast Mall in Martin will distribute 10,000 tray liners in the food court, have us on the Marquee and include us in the table centerpiece advertisements.
Participated in one-on-one Church visits in Martin and Indian River County, distributing flyers and meeting people, and distributed flyers in Wal-Mart IR and Toys-R-Us in Martin County in December, 2001.
The Okeechobee School Board included recruitment information in their newsletter to all employees.

MAPP classes, families recruited, and licensed (July – December 2001):

Conducted eight MAPP classes, graduating 36 families.
Of the graduates, five families licensed by DCF and 10-12 more families are in the process of having their packets finalized for submission.

The above outline does not reflect the many resource projects created and executed to lend valuable support to existing foster families. These projects are important to note because they serve as retention tools and foster good feelings between the parents and the district. This in turn makes foster families more eager to recruit on behalf of the district, as we are seeing in Okeechobee. The following is a list of those projects:

Recruitment efforts:

Outreach efforts in District 15 include commercials on channel 5, during the Today Show
The Courier Newspaper featured a sibling group and two individual children in the newspaper
Interview on WWFR, 91.7FM information about our program was given
Participated in the planning and attended the Willie Gary Picnic
Outreach efforts at the Friday Fest in Ft. Pierce
Attended the Kids of the Treasure Coast Conference
Handed out flyers at the Indian River and Treasure Coast Mall
MAPP classes held at the Miracle Prayer Temple and co-facilitated with Hibiscus House in Martin County
Local counties and cities contacted for proclamations for National Adoption Month. Proclamations were received from St. Lucie, Martin, and Indian River County and the City of Ft. Pierce and Port St. Lucie
Preparations invitations, magnets, flyers, and informative materials for Open House and the actual Open House.
Spoke to the Kiwanis Club in Indian River County
Outreach to following businesses and churches:
Winn Dixie Hobe Sound  Winn Dixie Port Salerno
Bank of America  St. Lukes
Publix Cove Road  Salerno Road Baptist Church
Bethel Lutheran  Holy Family Catholic Church
First Baptist  St. Marks
Hobe Sound Bible  Children’s Medical Services

Martin Luther King Festival Ft. Pierce handed out information

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Retention efforts include the following:

Begin meeting monthly with the four foster parent association president’s to assist with issues that surface during the month for foster parents generally and specifically.

Bimonthly newsletter to foster parents throughout the district, including therapeutic and medical.

Foster Parent Appreciation Cruise. A day cruise designed to give foster parents the day off, and network with other parents in the district. Although only a limited number of foster parents attended, the response was positive, and the statewide FPA recognized the district for its efforts. This year, the district needs to provide babysitting activities for all foster care children so more parents will attend.

Foster Parent Appreciation Picnic 2001 was the first time we tried to bring foster parents district wide together. It gave parents an opportunity to get together and provided the children with fun, outdoor activities in a supervised setting. The picnic was well attended and the response was positive.

Kids Hope of the Treasure Coast. A program established utilizing Ounce funds to meet quality of life requests for foster care children, including class rings, prom gowns, school pictures and yearbooks at no cost to the foster family.

This Special Opportunity Source (SOS) is a partnership between the district and St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Ft. Pierce. This partnership enables the district to benefit from 501c 3 status, allowing us to vie for grants and claim donations from foundations. For example, the “Dr. Laura” foundation donated more than 100 duffel bags stuffed with toys, toiletries and clothes for children coming into care or moving without sufficient luggage/ accessories.

Local fairs and rodeo associations are being asked to provide admission tickets and ride tickets to all members of a foster home, including biological and adoptive children, so the family can enjoy a day at the fair, and foster parents feel their contribution is being reciprocated in some ways.

Easter Baskets and Valentine Baskets are being donated by local churches to foster families.

Summer Camp Campaign. To ensure all foster children and as many protective supervision clients with summer camp activities. In 2001, the local WAGES board heard of our need, and donated $80,000 to meet the total need.

Okeechobee City Proclamation recognizing foster parents in the important role they play in the lives of the children of Okeechobee.

Christmas sponsorship drive. ‘Adopt a Family’ - This drive revised the way the district collects toys for children at Christmas. Businesses were asked to sponsor foster families.

The drive was, in the end, surprisingly successful, providing gifts, as well as other supports to foster families wanting to participate. The supplemental reward is that the business have committed to following the throughout the year by ‘adopting’ them.

Making Christmas Bright. A partnership with Vero Beach Broadcasters serves both as a toy collection campaign and as recruitment tool for the district. More than $40,000 in advertising was donated for both purposes.

Children’s Home Society

In December they had their first Waiting Families meeting. They will be holding these meetings quarterly. The next meeting will be held on February 7th at 6:00pm. CHS is working on arranging the Post-Adoptive Support Groups for families in all four counties.