

Chapter III

Funding Your Efforts

If agencies are serious about resource family recruitment and retention they must develop a realistic plan and then adequately fund that plan. In some agencies, this will mean giving those in the agency charged with resource family recruitment and retention a definite budget.

1. Developing a Budget

Develop your own process or use the following table to estimate some of the costs associated with the most common methods for finding and supporting resource families.

R & R Method	Registration or display fee	Printing costs for informational materials (flyers, brochures)	Printing costs for marketing materials (posters, stickers, pens)	Materials for children's activities and/or child-care	Give-aways or door prizes	Advertising in local media	Food and paper supplies
Community Fairs	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00		
General Community Recruitment/Publicity		\$1.00	\$1.00			\$1.00	
Community Education/Public Speaking		\$1.00	\$1.00				
Annual Resource Family Event		\$1.00		\$1.00	\$1.00		\$1.00
Resource Family Meetings/Trainings		\$1.00		\$1.00		\$1.00	\$1.00
Total	\$1.00	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00

In most agencies, the recruitment and retention budget will need to be supplemented by community donations and partnerships. Be creative in thinking about how civic organizations, businesses, churches, and individuals in your community might provide important materials, services, or funding. Below are some possible ideas.

2. Community Partnerships/Sponsorships

Even the smallest counties have numerous community groups with time, talents, and money to dedicate to a worthy cause. Here are some groups that could potentially help DSS agencies in North Carolina:

- **Businesses and Business Groups:** Chamber of Commerce, local business associations (e.g., Realtor's Association, Builder's Association, etc.), large and small retailers from Wal-Mart and Target down to your local main street shops

- **Civic Groups:** Lions Club, Ruritan Club, Kiwanis Club, fraternities and sororities
- **Religious Organizations:** Churches, synagogues, mosques, local clergy associations, and interdenominational service groups
- **Schools:** PTAs, faculty associations, sports teams and booster clubs, individual or group service projects

See Appendix K for a sample letter to community organizations and businesses to invite their involvement in your agency's efforts. While a letter is not enough by itself to begin an active partnership, it's an important first step.

GOLDEN NUGGET!

Don't Know Where to Start with Fundraising in Your Community?

Why not start with your current resource families and staff? Develop a list of the churches, schools, and community groups where you have a personal connection through a resource family or staff member. Ask people to speak to their groups—or to introduce an agency recruiter—to encourage them to partner with DSS.



Often we think of doing community outreach only to recruit resource parents. This misses a large pool of people who might be able to help your recruitment and retention mission immediately in some other way—and who might have an experience that leads them to foster or adopt down the road.

As you plan your goals and activities for the year, think about specific ways community groups might help. Collaborate with other units in your agency who might benefit from community collaboration, such as foster care workers who need resources for birth families. If you can help find a source for volunteer mentors for teens in care, foster care or LINKS workers are more likely to help plan a training event with you on fostering teens. You could involve a panel of LINKS youth in community presentations, who could speak to the need for foster homes for teens and young adults on CARS agreements. The group SAYSO (www.saysoinc.org) is another source of young people accustomed to public speaking and willing and able to advocate for youth in care.

Some ideas might require collaboration within your agency on the use of volunteers. **DON'T GIVE UP!** This can create a resource pool for everyone's benefit. Volunteer Today (<http://www.volunteertoday.com/>) is a helpful resource for information and suggestions about using volunteers.

Ideas for Partnering with Community Groups on Your Program Goals

If Your Goal Is...	Community Groups Could Help by...
Committee of x# of people will meet monthly and will recruit 2 community members in next 3 months	Providing a representative on your recruitment and retention Committee
Conduct survey of foster parents and gather profile data of youth and homes in next 3 months	Providing an office volunteer to make copies and mail out surveys
x# of additional licensed homes in 1 year	Encouraging members of their organization to become resource families; writing an op-ed piece for a local paper about your agency's specific needs; manning an agency table at community events
x# of additional pre-service or in-service classes in 1 year	Providing donations of snacks, paper goods, child-care, etc.

See Chapter VII for more detailed ideas and resources for building and sustaining community partnerships.

3. Grants

DSS agencies can receive grants from a wide range of funders, often without completing lengthy applications. Here are some resources for finding grants:

- **The Foundation Center** (<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/>)
Provides a comprehensive directory of grant providers by state; also provides free and low-cost online training on finding and applying for grants.
- **National Network of Adoption Advocacy Programs: One Church-One Child** (<http://www.nnaap-ococ.org/minigrantmain.htm>)
Provides mini-grants of \$10,000 – \$15,000 to child welfare agencies for new or existing One Church - One Child programs (see Chapter VII for more information). Also provides training and technical assistance on grant-writing.

GOLDEN NUGGET!

How to Find or Apply for a Grant

Look for someone in your agency or community who has experience with grant writing to serve on your recruitment and retention committee. Local nonprofit organizations and colleges often have this expertise.



4. Use of NC's Special Children Adoption Fund

North Carolina's Special Children Adoption Fund was created to find safe adoptive homes for hard-to-place children who are living in or likely to be placed in foster homes or institutions. The Fund is intended to secure adoptive homes for more children than would otherwise be possible within the limitations of existing financial resources and to enhance the adoption services program in this state. The Fund is performance-based: payments are only made after a Decree of Adoption has been issued.

The Special Children Adoption Fund can be used to recruit and train prospective adoptive families.

Allowable uses of the fund include the direct provision or purchase by contract of services included in the definitions of Adoption Services (code 010), Adoption Recruitment (code 011), Adoption Case Management (code 012), Child-Specific Recruitment, Assessment and Training of Adoptive Parents (code 013), and Post-Adoption Case Management (code 016). Examples of allowable uses are:

- Recruitment and training of prospective adoptive families for individual foster children or for foster children as a group
- Pre-placement assessments of prospective adoptive families, including assessments by private adoption agencies in other states
- Preparing children for adoption (preparation support groups, life books, etc.);
- Legal or court-related services to expedite the adoption process
- Post-adoption services for adoptive families
- Adoption service staff to expedite the adoption process for foster children and assure a timely response to all families who indicate an interest in adopting a child in foster care
- Child-specific recruitment, assessment, and training of adoptive parents, including relatives
- Cost-allocated share of equipment that will directly benefit the adoption program (note that the standard rules of purchasing equipment and vehicles apply)

To learn more about the use of NC's Special Children Adoption Fund, go to <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/dcdl/childrenservices/2001pdf/CS-41-2001.pdf>

5. Fundraising

Every little bit counts. If your agency has difficulty funding its resource family recruitment and retention plan, consider fundraising. Have you ever thought of working with your county foster parent association, a faith community, or a nonprofit organization in your community to hold a bake sale or yard sale to support resource family recruitment and retention efforts? In addition to raising funds, this can be a great way to build community ownership of your program and your outcomes and to highlight the good things your agency does for your community.

6. Where Should the Money Go?

Where should you spend the precious dollars you have at your disposal when it comes to recruiting and retaining resource families?

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2002) assessed the three main kinds of recruitment and concluded that they're all valuable, but they're not equally valuable. Here are their recommendations:

- 1. General Recruitment:** events, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), billboards, foster care/adoption fairs, booths and events.
 - Least focused and least effective for bringing in likely resource parents
 - Gets some unsuitable applicants
 - Good for raising agency's profile, broadening community awareness
 - Spend 15% of your recruitment budget here
- 2. Child-Specific Recruitment:** find a relative or close friend or canvas support groups, especially for children with special needs (e.g., hearing impaired).
 - Expensive. Should be 25% of recruitment budget
- 3. Targeted Recruitment:** look at needs of the young people in your custody, then look at the pool of available homes.
 - Understand needs/traits of children (groups of youth entering care)
 - Assess your community: look at data, look at successful foster families you know
 - If you pitch the message right, Wednesday's Child can be targeted and effective
 - This should be 60% of your budget

Where Should the Money Go?

Recruitment Approach	Suggested Portion of Your R & R Budget
General	15%
Child-Specific	25%
Targeted	60%

Source: AECF, 2002

To learn more about general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment, consult Chapters VIII, IX, and X of this guide.