



Segmented Marketing and Resource Parent Recruitment

Project Overview and Preliminary Findings: August 2017

Project History

In 2013, the State of Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) was awarded a five-year federal Diligent Recruitment (DR) grant to implement the Florida Intelligent Recruitment Project (IRP). A collaborative initiative between DCF and three CBC Lead Agencies, Big Bend Community Based Care, Heartland for Children and Kids Central, the IRP seeks to improve out-of-home care options and permanency outcomes for older youth in foster care (aged 9-15) whose parental rights have been terminated for more than one year.

While the award requires IRP partners to assess the alignment of statewide policy, practice and procedure with all components of the Diligent Recruitment framework, the project's major focus is the implementation of research-driven, values and behavior-based approach to segmented marketing to recruit quality foster and adoptive parents for youth in the target population. The process, *Intelligent Imagination™*, was developed by GOLD & Associates and previously deployed for their clients, such as Disney, GEICO, the National Football League and other Fortune 500 organizations. Using this approach, the project team intends to break recruitment 'plateaus' and achieve permanency for some of Florida's most difficult to place foster children.

The project team found foster parents in the targeted area were most likely to:

- Be middle-aged and college educated;
- Have strong-willed "helper" personalities with a heart for children;
- Have raised their own biological children;
- Feel a deep sense of "calling" to care for children who have suffered—usually tied to their personal religious faith; and
- Have often experienced some form of trauma or have been exposed to the child welfare system.

Approach to Segmented Marketing

During project's planning phase, input from partners and stakeholders throughout the state was used to create research instruments for interviewing foster and adoptive parents in each partner's catchment area who had successfully cared for youth in the target population. Data collected by GOLD & Associates was used to: 1) Determine the fundamental motivations of foster and adoptive parents who have successfully cared for children from the target population, as well as those of prospective parents (psychographics); 2) Identify where they were most likely to live, congregate, shop, eat, and worship (demographics and geographics); 3) Identify the most compelling way to communicate the immediate

need for foster and adoptive parents (messaging); and 4) Determine media vehicles most likely to be relied upon by prospects (television, radio, newspaper, etc.). The findings were then verified with a larger statistical online survey among foster and adoptive parents and prospects.

Together, the psychographic, demographic and lifestyle characteristics of successful foster and adoptive parents were used create a market profile and advertising strategy for each Lead Agency.

Project Impact

As the project team enters the final year of the project, results are preliminary, yet encouraging. Post-campaign statistical research indicates marketing approaches stimulating the highest number of responses include:

- Paid media spending that controls the message, raises awareness for the need, combats negative perceptions, and reinforces public/media/community relations efforts; (Partners who dedicated a higher percentage of their FIRP marketing budget on paid media placements achieved a higher prospect response rate than those who spent less.)
- Offline media, as it has produced the highest level of message recall and has pushed respondents to launch an online investigation; and
- Use of visuals showing the children in need (meeting IRP target population demographics), as well as local settings to reinforce how the need exists in the local community.

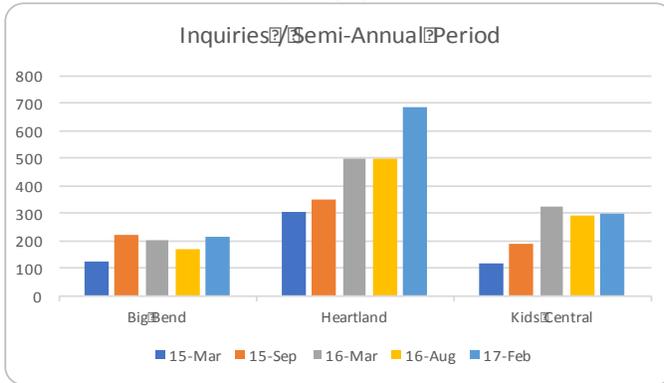
Finally, faith-based marketing has also been effective, especially the use of pastor “champions” to communicate the need to their peers, along with community presentations.

Since implementing their segmented marketing plans, each of the project partners have demonstrated a statistically significant increase to the public’s interest in becoming foster or adoptive parents. Over the past thirty months, Initial inquires across the three sites increased between 69% and 148%.

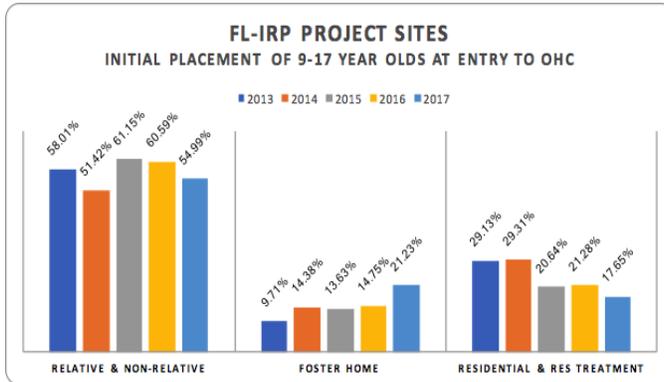
Messaging most likely to resonate and motivate families to foster or adopt contain the following core elements or characteristics:

- It is simple, bold, direct, unencumbered with non-essential information and has a clear call-to action;
- It communicates how the need is local, how it is urgent, and how the target audience is uniquely qualified to help;
- It resonates with the sense of calling felt by high-quality prospects with the desired demographic and psychographic traits;
- It is customized based on the composition of the local market demographics and market conditions;
- It focuses more on the children in need than on the parents who provide the assistance.

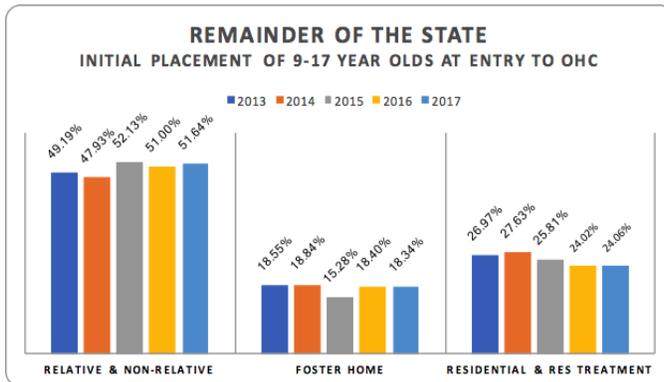
Project partners have varied in their ability to convert inquiries into licensed foster or approved adoptive homes. However, it appears this result reflects the lead agency’s capacity to handle this increase and effectively engage recruited families through the entire training and licensing process. Kids



Central has demonstrated the greatest success, posting a 290% increase in recruitment since 2013. It is important to note, however, that the agency expended significant effort prior to the grant to streamline and improve multiple aspects of their recruitment, home study, training and licensing workflow. The agency was also positioned and prepared to implement their segmented marketing plan twelve months before earlier than the other partners.



Collectively, project partners have demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their ability to place youth in the target population in a least restrictive setting at the time of removal. Initial placements into foster care have increased, while placement into residential care & treatment have declined. They also have a slightly higher percent of youth placed in relative & nonrelative settings. When comparing 2013 data to 2017 (IRP Sites to the



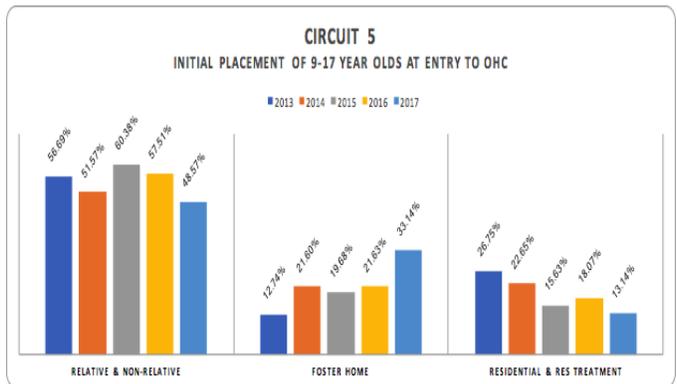
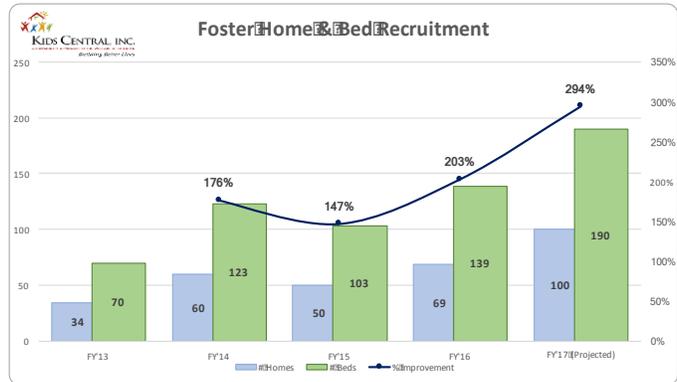
remainder of the state) using a chi-squared analysis ($p < .05$), the IRP sites show a significant change in their ability to place youth in less restrictive settings, while the remainder of the state has not experienced a significant change in performance.

Additional Systemic Changes

Project partners have also made changes surrounding their approach to recruiting resource parents. To some degree, each partner has modified aspects of their recruitment and licensing workflow in an effort to improve efficiencies and expedite the process. They also report emphasizing the need for resource parents willing to care for older youth during orientation sessions and training classes. The degree to which these changes may have influenced recruiting outcomes is difficult to assess.

Conclusion

Based on changes to inquiries, recruitment volume and initial placement settings, segmented marketing plans implemented by IRP partners appear to significantly improve the ability of these agencies to place youth in least restrictive settings. Though the long-term impact of these recruitment efforts on permanency continue to be assessed, it is clear the use of segmented marketing can play a key role in improving multiple aspects of foster and adoptive parent recruitment.



Learn More

For more information about the Florida Intensive Recruitment Project and how its findings can benefit your foster and adoptive parent recruitment efforts, please contact Aimee Gandy of Kids Central at (352) 873-6332.

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