



A Future Oriented Source of Leadership

4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Entries must be received by July 21, 2006

Please see the "**Call for Nominations**" letter for criteria and categories before submitting your entry. Please e-mail the completed nomination form in its original format and any supporting documentation in a Microsoft Word document to kris@ncacdss.org. Nominations may also be faxed to: (919) 786-4019 (attn. Kris Wyatt) or mailed to: NCACDSS, 3824 Barrett Drive, Suite 102, Raleigh, NC 27609. Entries must be received by July 21, 2006.

County Department of Social Services: Rowan County Department of Social Services

Submitted by: Jon Hunter

**Title: Placement Support Coordinator/Recruiter/Trainer/Post Adoption Services
Coordinator.**

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DSS Director Signature: _____

Project Title: Recruiter's Network

County Tier (Please check one): Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3

To determine your county's tier please refer to the attached chart.

Category: (Please only check ONE)

- Advancement in Staff and Leadership Development
- Empowering Clients to Self-Sufficiency
- Innovations in Services to Customers
- Cost Savings Measures and/or Improvements in Efficiency
- Profiles in Community Collaboration

NC ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Please complete the criteria below in the space provided. Answer all questions completely to maximize your score.

1. Project/Program Summary: Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget.

History:

Jon Hunter had an idea for a Recruiters' Network to address needs for expanding opportunities for children, training of staff, and collaborating with adoption professionals. In January 2004, he convened a meeting with two colleagues from Catawba and Davidson counties, to brainstorm. After that session and many telephone and email exchanges, the first official meeting was set for April 29, 2004, at the Rowan County Public Library. The eighteen participants (representing 12 counties) at that meeting officially launched the Recruiters' Network and set dates for quarterly meetings. From the membership, a Planning and Steering Committee was formed to plan and evaluate meetings, trainings, and other activities of the Network. From 2004 to the present, the committee has grown from nine to 14 participants, and membership has increased from 18 to 98, with 41 agencies represented. In addition to DSS staff, representatives from private adoption/foster care agencies are Network members. Jon Hunter has served as coordinator of the Network since its inception, coordinating all communication about Network meetings and Planning Committee Meetings.

Purpose:

Each three-hour meeting includes an educational program based on foster and/or adoptive parent recruiting methods, child specific recruiting methods, and recruitment retention. Programs have included Preventing Teenage Placement Disruptions: Caring for Teenagers in Foster Care, Recruiting for Teens, Creating Creative Child and Family Profiles, Family Recruitment Methods, Post Adoption Services, Foster Parent Retention, Respite Care and Mentoring, Community Based Recruitment, Developing Multi-Media Recruitment Resources, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program, National Adoption Month Celebration Ideas, NC Kids Services, Writing Adoption Assessments for Adoptive Parents, Recruiting Families for RAD Children, Partnering with the Community, Adoptive Child Heart Gallery, Interpreting Special Needs Definitions and Terminology for Families, and Networking with Community Partners.

During the second half of each meeting, social workers share child profiles and family home studies in an effort to match children with families for adoption. Each meeting also provides a time for Recruiters to share recruitment ideas and strategies in an open forum.

As an example of the quality of Network meetings, in August Rev. Wilbert Talley, Director of the National Network of Adoption Advocacy Programs and the Founder of the "One Church, One Child" Program for Virginia, Oklahoma, and Illinois, will lead a training seminar. Sixty-five social workers are registered to attend. A network goal is to begin this program in North Carolina.

Timeline: Meetings are held quarterly.

Budget:

Costs are minimal, with trainers donating their time. Costs for travel, meeting space, printed materials, etc. are absorbed by agencies represented in the meetings. Network meetings are hosted by departments of social services between Greensboro and Charlotte. Some members travel three to four hours each way to attend the meetings.

2. Innovation: Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects?

I am not aware of any other Recruiter Networks available to private and public agency social workers on a regional/state basis where education, peer collaboration, and matching children and families occur. Workers are encouraged to share written materials about their recruitment programs and about children and families. We are the only Recruiters' Network that invites workers from all state public and private adoption agencies.

I have developed a database and email list server of all Network members. The Network members use the email list server to circulate child and family profiles, saving postage and paper costs, as well as broadening opportunities for social workers to attain permanence for children and families.

3. Project Success and Impact: What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration.

The program objectives are:

1. Share successful recruiting strategies to connect foster and adoptive parents with special needs children in the NC Foster Care System.
2. Share information about families who are approved to adopt children.
3. Share information about legal risk placements. (Children who cannot be advertised in public recruitment efforts on the internet)
4. Share information about legally cleared children for whom adoption placements are sought.
5. Present guest speakers for continuing education who can share innovative recruitment techniques.
6. Design and sponsor adoption recruitment social events or gatherings where legally cleared children and approved parents can meet.
7. Provide a forum for discussion, networking, and support for recruiters.

How well were objectives met?

All objectives have been met. The Network has supported permanence for children in the NC Foster Care System. Through the educational programs, recruiters have broadened their knowledge and have developed successful plans and strategies for recruitment in their local communities.

How widespread is the impact?

It is our hope that the Network will continue to provide a forum for social workers to identify families for children who are available for adoption, and to equip, educate, and empower social workers in recruitment techniques that make a difference in achieving permanence for children. It is our goal to continue to be a support system for social workers that recruit for families and children in public and private agencies in North Carolina.

What is the long-term impact?

It is the Planning Committee's goal to continue to offer this Network to all social workers who are working to achieve permanence for children either in foster care, through adoption, or through reunification.

Collaboration with others and its outcome?

There has been collaboration among departments of social services, public and private agencies, and individual professionals who have volunteered their time and expertise to the Network. This collaborative approach serves as a model for other service areas.

4. **Project Effort and Difficulty: How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done?**

The program has grown from eighteen members in 2004 to ninety-eight members in 2006. We have continued to provide continuing education for social workers at no cost to agencies or to the State. We have been fortunate to locate qualified program leaders in each community where our meetings have taken place that are willing to lead a program for the Network for free.

The Internet has significantly empowered the Network's ability to share information about upcoming meetings/events, and profiles of children and families through the cooperation of social workers whose goal is to create permanence for children.

5. **Ability to Replicate Project: Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems?**

The project can be duplicated in a local county area by cooperation and planning between local DSS agencies and local private adoption agencies. The project could also be duplicated regionally. The project requires that one person coordinate the communication, planning and follow-up with host agencies, public relations, and maintaining the membership database.