

**4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards
Nomination Form**

**Category: ISC#11 Tier 2
Innovations In Services to Customers**

Project Title: FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT BUILDING

I. Project History

1.

Our project was to create an area for Wayne County DSS to support our foster care and adoption programs that would be set apart and aside from DSS county property. This has been a dream of social workers for many years as we believed the building would be of great value for our foster care and adoption population.

Some of our foster parents and social workers searched diligently for the appropriate property. A second floor office building with ten rooms, located in downtown Goldsboro was identified. This was sufficient space for three visiting rooms to be used for family reunification, a kitchen, two bathrooms, a play room, an office, a clothing room meeting and training room, and storage areas.

2. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to provide an area that will be customer friendly for our families and their children. This is to provide a place for family reunification visitation which includes a place to prepare meals and snacks and to have a dining area for the families to spend some quality time through sharing during a meal time. There is also a play area for children to use during visits as well as for children of parents who are attending trainings and foster care meetings and adoption support group meetings. The building is also used for planning sessions and brainstorming with social workers and foster parents. This area is also used for staff meetings

as well as training in other areas of social work interests and needs. There is also a large room for clothing which is accessible to all social workers who have just placed children in care as well as for children who have been in foster care for an extended period of time. This is also available to families who

have adopted children. The training room is used for information meetings prior to new MAPP classes. At this time, the area is not large enough to accommodate the MAPP training which is usually a large class due to doing only two MAPP training classes each year. This Foster/Adoptive Parent Building is in very close proximity to the Wayne County Court House if visits are scheduled after the parents attend court reviews etc.

This area offers much privacy to families who are working toward reunification. There is not the same stigma that families feel when they come to DSS to visit; this provides a neutral setting for them and a more family oriented atmosphere. This arrangement is more conducive to implementing the shared parenting aspect of the MRS track.

The storage areas consist of baby items as needed by foster and adoptive parents. There are cribs, high chairs, bouncy seats, play pens, and many other items. There is a supply of diapers as well as clothing.

The agency has received lots of support from the community in donated clothing, furniture, hygiene items and toys. We only accept new or very gently used items.

There are toiletry items for children of all ages.

3. This particular location was selected in the fall of 2004, was renovated with new paint, cleaned carpet, and one of the bathrooms was made to be handicap accessible. The facility was furnished by foster and adoptive parents with lamps, tables, lounge chairs, kitchen items, and office equipment.

The meeting areas have been in full use since the summer of 2005.

4. The budget for this project has been challenging to say the least. For the past two years, our adoption staff has been able to pay the rent from the Special Adoption Fund since all of our foster children are potential adoptive children. Our adoptive children have all the same opportunities after their adoptions are finalized. The Foster Parent Association has been working on several money-making projects as well as has the Adoption Support group. The groups are working diligently on getting the non-profit status that is needed

before grants can be written. The rent is renewable annually. The two groups previously mentioned work together to pay utilities, insurance etc.

II. Innovation

1. We feel that this project is unique in that we are not aware of any other agency in our area having this type of facility. Similar projects have been sponsored by other community agencies, but our project is different in that its primary purpose and main goal is to cater to these children during one of the most traumatic times of their lives. This also gives the foster parents unity and builds a rapport that strengthens the organization. This in turn helps to empower biological parents and other family members to be able to better transition children back into the home if that is the plan for the child.

III. Project Success and Impact

1. The objective of this project was to provide a place for foster and adoptive children and their families (whether biological, adoptive or foster parents) to meet in a friendly environment to meet personal needs in a family setting.
2. The objectives have been extremely well met in that the building has been used consistently by foster parents, adoptive parents, social workers, and Guardians-ad-Litem. The area has been used for visits, clothing, hygiene items, meetings, trainings and social events. There have been over sixty visits between foster children and their families since January of 2006. There has been a six week Domestic Violence training class held in the conference room. The training was done by the Lighthouse of Wayne County, a domestic violence facility. There were nine social workers who completed the training. The outcome has been positive.

Some of our adoptive children and older foster children have been very helpful in arrangement of clothing and in keeping the play area straight which gives them a feeling of responsibility and ownership.

3. The anticipated long-term impact is hopefully that the Foster/Adoptive Building will continue to grow in the usage and availability to the children of our county and to the community.
4. This project did not directly involve any other agencies in the beginning, but other organizations are becoming involved. The Civitan Club is prepared to donate many needed items. The community is becoming more involved with donations as a result of coverage by the local newspaper, the Goldsboro News Argus and a local radio station, WGBR. Greenwood TSA Club made and donated two bookcases for books, movies, and selected toys.

Our agency is now working with 4-H to partnership with them for their providing some of their special programs to the foster and adoptive children during meetings and trainings. Our being able to work with them is definitely positive.

IV. Project Effort and Difficulty

1. The program with the efforts of many foster and adoptive parents and several social workers has definitely had limited resources. The group has made efforts to get assistance from other organizations and civic groups as well as trying to organize viable money making projects. At this point, efforts are being made to obtain their 501(C)(3), non profit status, in order to write grants to apply for assistance.
2. There were the obstacles of how to get financing to begin this project and how to get started with the renovations, how to get the painting done, how to get the carpet cleaned, how to get furniture for the visitations and for the conference room. The members of the Foster Parent Association bought some furnishings with their own personal money and got donations from other individuals. A committee had to work out the amount of monthly rent, how to pay utilities, and how to get insurance. Several of the foster parents and social workers and relatives worked together to install shelving and arrange clothing.

The biggest challenge was that many of the staff at DSS did not think this project would work because in the past, other members of the Foster Parent Association had tried to have a clothing area which never was successful.

V. Ability to Replicate Project

This project can be duplicated in other counties if everyone takes a supportive position to work together in an united effort. The community can get involved and get much satisfaction out of knowing they have made a difference in a child's life. Every child needs and deserves the opportunity to be treated as someone special.