

# 4<sup>th</sup> Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

## Category: PCC#1 Tier 2 Profiles in Community Collaboration

### Project Title: MAPP-GPS Collaborative

- 1. Project/Program Summary:** In order to be licensed as a foster or adoptive parent in North Carolina, applicants must complete a 30-hour training program, which is called Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting – Group Preparation and Selection (MAPP-GPS). Edgecombe and Nash are neighboring counties, and both were teaching the 10-week class twice a year for applicants in their own county, which meant that families had to wait as long as six months to enroll in a class. This was an obstacle for families interested in fostering or adopting a specific child and for agencies that needed to place children in permanent homes as quickly as possible. Edgecombe and Nash Counties combined their efforts and developed a schedule which offers the classes and informational/orientation meetings four times per year. Applicants from the two counties are allowed to participate in classes that are convenient for them without regard to their county of residence. For further convenience, at least one class during the year is offered on a Saturday. Both counties continue to be responsible for teaching two sessions of the class, which does not increase their workload or stress level. By combining the two county's classes, the public is offered increased opportunities while county staff and resources are maintained. Additionally, more foster and adoptive homes are licensed due to the timely availability of sessions.
- 2. Innovation:** Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects? County departments of social services are often reluctant to combining efforts due to distribution of workload, sharing of resources, and differences in operation. This program is unique in that it enhances services delivery, increases public access to services, and fosters collaboration between two counties that had previously operated independently relative to foster and adoptive parent training. Additionally, while MAPP-GPS is a state requirement for licensing, this program is not a state initiative, but rather a local one. Once a year, staff from each of the two counties meet to develop the schedule for the upcoming year and to discuss any concerns.
- 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 objective of the collaboration was to offer increased opportunities for foster and adoptive families to be licensed, thereby increasing the number of licensed homes available to children. The main collaboration for this project occurred between Nash and Edgecombe Counties in the development and implementation of the combined classes. However, other agencies and individuals were, and continue to be, involved as collaborative partners in Meeting #9 when a panel discussion is held. This panel includes individuals and agencies that are common to the child welfare system, such as current and past foster and adoptive parents, children who have experienced the foster care/adoption system, members of the Guardian ad Litem program, child welfare attorneys, and social workers. On occasion, birth family members participate as panel members. Also, prospective foster and adoptive couples that live outside the Nash/Edgecombe area often contact our agency to request inclusion into the classes. Because their home counties do not offer the MAPP-GPS program, or offer it only on a limited basis, these couples are looking for an alternative to complete the required program. Our attitude is that MAPP-GPS is an exceptional program which would be beneficial to ANYONE.

Although we must first serve the needs of Nash and Edgecombe county residents, we welcome others to participate if space is available.

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 combined efforts of Nash and Edgecombe Counties have not resulted in any increased use of resources for either county. Some minor obstacles that had to be addressed included the location of classes, the materials required for an increased number of participants, and the referral process. These issues were resolved through an agreement that 1) each county would be responsible for arranging the most convenient location for their residents, with the understanding that other participants, though slightly geographically inconvenienced, would reap the greater benefit of timely access; 2) each county would maintain the same level of expenditure by providing training materials for their residents only (i.e. Family Profiles, class handouts, etc); and 3) each agency would hold orientation/informational meetings for their residents and complete the application process, referring appropriate applicants to the contact person in the county that would be teaching the class.
  
5. **Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems? This project could easily be duplicated in other counties, with the only requirement being that two or more counties have a desire to combine their efforts for a more effective and efficient service delivery to prospective foster/adoptive parents. Open and frequent communication between designated staff persons would assure consistency in the understanding and implementation of the program, thereby minimizing any obstacles or problems that would arise.