



State of Rhode Island
Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families



2022/2023 STATEWIDE PLAN FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER
FAMILIES

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. System Leadership
3. Recruitment Partners
4. Building on our 2021 Recruitment and Retention Plan
5. Measures of Success
6. Strategies
7. Conclusion
8. Appendix 1: Glossary
9. Appendix 2: Diligent Recruitment Plan
10. Appendix 3: Children's Rights, Inc. Settlement Agreement
11. Appendix 4: Updated Assessment 2021 Recruitment and Retention Plan
12. Appendix 5: 2022/2023 Strategies
13. Appendix 6: Provider Characteristics

Introduction



The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is committed to the goal that all children and youth should be cared for in a safe, supportive family setting. To support this goal, DCYF is focused on partnering with the community, its leaders and organizations who can Be An Anchor for children and families involved in Rhode Island's child welfare system.

Be An Anchor began in 2017 as Rhode Island's comprehensive community engagement campaign to support foster care recruitment and retention. Today, Be An Anchor has grown into DCYF's division wide philosophical approach to how we work with all families. This approach impacts how DCYF supports and holistically wraps around

the families and children we serve. We firmly believe creating relationships with families and caregivers based on a strong commitment to value compassion, communication and integrity set the foundation to create a successful child welfare system.

DCYF recognizes all Resource Families as Anchors to children in care. Resource Families include families caring for a family member or child known to then otherwise known as kinship caregivers, traditional (DCYF) foster families, therapeutic (Private Foster Care Agency) foster families, and pre-adoptive families. The Rhode Island 2022 Statewide Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Families reflects the philosophy and strategic initiatives to ensure that DCYF and its partners are able to recruit a diverse pool of individuals who can Be An Anchor, and that our Anchors are well prepared and supported to care for children. This partner-based plan focuses on four (4) key pillars **our children, our families, our communities, and our commitment.**

System Leadership



The Department of Children, Youth and Families has combined responsibility for child welfare, juvenile justice, children's services, and behavioral

health for the State of Rhode Island. DCYF was established in 1980 and is statutorily designated as the "principal agency of the state to mobilize the human, physical, and financial resources available to plan, develop, and evaluate a comprehensive and integrated statewide program of services designed to ensure the opportunity for children to reach their full potential." ([RI General Law §42-72-5](#))

DCYF's mission is to partner with families and communities to raise safe and healthy children and youth in a caring environment. In this mission, it is the Department's responsibility to be a leader in the statewide efforts to recruit and retain foster families.

The Department's Division of Resource Families was developed in 2017 to effectuate a coordinated system of programs and resources for all of Rhode Island's foster families. The

Division includes units to support the recruitment, training and development, licensing, matching, placement, support, and retention of foster families.

The Rhode Island foster care system is built on a public-private partnership. In this model, DCYF holds contracts with nine (9) Private Foster Care Agencies. The ten (10) entities work together to support all foster homes in the state. If a child requires out-of-home care, and DCYF is not able to identify a suitable kinship caregiver, there are two types of non-kinship foster families:

1. *Traditional Foster Families* who are supported directly through DCYF, and generally care for foster children with typical needs.
2. *Private Agency Foster Families* who are supported by their chosen agency, and generally care for foster children who have higher levels of need with the support of specialty services and clinical supports from the agency.

This mixed-delivery partnership seeks to ensure a diverse pool of foster families who are able to care for all children who require out of home care, while ensuring that foster families receive the supports to help them to be successful in their foster care journey.

Recruitment Partners

The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (<http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/>) partners with a number of entities to support the child welfare system and the recruitment and retention of foster families. The importance of engaging and empowering the voice of children, youth and families served by our system, and who serve our system, is paramount. They are experts, and their knowledge, experiences, views, and ideas must be central to our goals. Government entities contracted private agencies, and other community partners also collaborate closely on this effort.

Government Entities:

1. **Office of the Child Advocate**
<http://www.child-advocate.ri.gov/>



The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) serves as the oversight agency to the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). In this role, the OCA is responsible for monitoring the operation of each unit within the Department to ensure compliance with internal policies and protocols, state law, and federal law. In addition, the OCA monitors data and trends to ensure DCYF operates within the best practices of child welfare and identifies systemic change needs when necessary.

The OCA monitors each child open to DCYF to protect the legal rights of children in State care and to promote policies and practices which ensure that children are safe, that children have permanent and stable families, and that children in out-of-home placements have their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral needs met.

2. Rhode Island Children's Cabinet

<http://www.kids.ri.gov/>



The Children's Cabinet is a committee consisting of state agencies that serve children and families. Together, state agencies collaborate to put families at the center of government services, supports, and programs to ensure that children ages birth to twenty-four can thrive. Previous, RI Governor Gina Raimondo in 2020 charged the Children's Cabinet with increasing third grade reading proficiency in Rhode Island -- a key focus of this effort has been connecting children in DCYF care with the highest quality services and supports, including evidence-based Family Home Visiting and high-quality childcare and Pre-K. More information is available at <http://www.kids.ri.gov/>. Key Partners include: Executive Office of Health and Human Services <http://www.eohhs.ri.gov/>; Department of Human Services <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/>; Department of Health <https://health.ri.gov/>; Department of Education <https://www.ride.ri.gov/>.

Contracted Private Foster Care Agencies:

1. Alliance Human Services, Inc.

<https://www.alliancehhs.org/Foster-Care-Adoption-Rhode-Island>



Alliance Human Services provides foster care services to children and youth with emotional or behavioral disorders, developmental disabilities, are medically fragile, or are in the juvenile justice system. Often, the children we serve have been placed unsuccessfully in homes from other agencies or come from more restrictive settings. Children placed with Alliance experience success through placement stability, and through achieving permanency by returning to their family or other permanent placement that best suits their needs. In order to support these children, we provide ongoing counseling and case coordination. We recruit and train a diverse population of experienced and compassionate adults who, as foster parents, provide homes that are safe, nurturing, and supportive.

2. Boys Town New England

<https://www.boystown.org/locations/new-england/Pages/Foster-Family-Service.aspx>



Boys Town Foster Care program includes individualize support to families and children to encourage stability, connection, and healing. All Boys Town foster parents are trained to utilize an evidence-based behavioral program which assists to change behavior and teach emotional regulation. Foster parents are provided with 24-hour on-call support, regular in-home consultation, clinical supports, access to on-going training, licensing support, and opportunities for children and families to connect with one another.

3. Child & Family

<https://childandfamilyri.com/our-services/treatment-foster-care/>



Child & Family's Foster Care Program utilizes a trauma-informed approach with two comprehensive levels of support to provide care to our youth. Our program provides therapeutic support to individuals who require additional resources to achieve success in the home, school, and community. We believe that providing these youth with a consistent and supportive family setting while helping them learn to regulate, feel connected, and build strengths is crucial to their success.

4. Children's Friend

<https://www.cfsri.org/programs-and-services/foster-care/>



When crisis hits a family, it may not be safe for children and their parents to live together. The reasons vary – medical catastrophe, mental illness, substance abuse, and children's behavior problems are just a few. To help the family through the crisis, temporary separation is sometimes necessary. Our foster parents provide a safe, temporary place for children to live while their birth parents confront their problems. Children's Friend takes great care to meet the needs of everyone involved in the experience of fostering children.

5. Communities for People

<https://www.communities-for-people.org/fostercare/>



Communities for People

The Communities for People Families for Children Program (FFC) is a community-based, intensive service using evidence-based and trauma informed practices to support children in or transitioning into foster or pre-adoptive homes referred through DCYF for enhanced support. We serve youth birth to age twenty throughout the State of Rhode Island.

6. Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health

www.devereuxri.org



Devereux Treatment Foster Care (TFC) offers year-round training and 24/7 wrap around, trauma informed support to our foster families as they meet the needs of the youth placed in their home. Our families care for youth from birth to 21 years old. Devereux helps to coordinate treatment services to meet the individual needs of the youth and family. We are invested in supporting every child's permanency plan and collaborate with all treatment team members to advocate for the best interest of the child, while supporting our families on every step of the foster care journey.

7. Family Service of Rhode Island

<https://www.familyserviceri.org/child-and-family-wellbeing>



FSRI provides comprehensive case management and clinical services to foster families as they navigate the foster care and adoption system. We have been serving the RI community for over 125 years! Through the Trauma Systems Therapy (TST) model, we provide weekly in home clinical and case management support to all of our foster families and children. TST is a model used for children and adolescents who have been exposed to trauma. We provide additional TST training to our foster parents to support the youth placed in their home.

8. The Groden Network

<https://grodennetwork.org/fostercare/>



Established in 1993, Groden Center Treatment Foster Care Program (GCTFC) provides treatment level foster care for a diverse population of children and youth with special needs (0-21 years old) and matches them with licensed treatment foster homes across Rhode Island. Our team of Licensed Behavior Analysts, LICSW, and Master level case managers, provide an individualized treatment plan for every child to successfully develop and grow while maintaining connections to their community. GCTFC foster parents are provided with on-going 365/24/7 support and services, specialized training, and supervision, to help meet the child's treatment goals and ensure a successful foster care experience. When you join the GCTFC family, we are with you every step of your foster care journey.

9. NAFI Rhode Island

<https://www.nafiri.org/services/foster-care/>



NAFI's Professional Parent Program provides foster care for children and youth birth to age 21 across RI. NAFI foster care is made up of a proud and diverse community of foster parents who enjoy the collaborative approach that NAFI provides. Each parent is supported by an experienced team of case managers, clinicians, and licensing workers to provide on-going support and supervision; while each child is given opportunities to make memories through year-round activities and events aimed at strengthening our community.

Community Organizations:

1. **The Village for Rhode Island Foster and Adoptive Families** <https://www.rivillage.org/>
2. **Adoption Rhode Island** <http://adoptionri.org/>
3. **Foster Forward** <https://www.fosterforward.net/>
4. **Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families** <https://www.riccf.org/>



Building on our 2021 Recruitment and Retention Plan

The DCYF 2021 Recruitment and Retention plan included a series of activities to diligently build a stronger foundation for the recruitment and retention system. These activities have developed into the below ongoing strategies:

1. Ongoing Right Sizing of Foster Effort that include:
 - a. A new rate structure was established and implemented to ensure that all foster families were provided equitable financial resources to support the needs of the foster child(ren) in their care;
 - b. DCYF hired 14 FTEs to invest to support the recruitment and retention (eight caseworkers, two supervisors, two junior recruiters, one communications specialist (now vacant), and one foster parent trainer);
2. Using federal grant funds, DCYF expanded array of programming to support Kinship and traditional Caregivers including, but not limited to a Peer to Peer Mentoring Programs, Support Groups (contracted through two community organizations) and the Rhode Island Foster Parent Advisory Council;
3. The Division of Resource Families in Partnership with the Division of Contracts and Division of Performance Improvement hold bi-monthly Active Contract Management (ACM) and Weekly Agency Partnership Meetings (APM) with our 9 Private Foster Care Agencies. The goal of these strategic meetings is to:
 - a. support the 9 Private Foster Care Agencies in their efforts to recruit and retain families who are able to support children with higher level of need and;
 - b. Match open for placement families through monthly youth presentations by our Family Service and Foster Care Placement Unit of children and youth in need of foster care placement and;
 - c. to ensure the clinical and case management service delivery standards are consistent and targeted towards children with those higher levels of needs.

4. In recognition of the financial and work force impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic DCYF now issues COVID 19 enhanced payment for a period of 30 days to all families who have a foster child in their care who has tested positive for COVID 19 through an approved Rhode Island Department of Health Testing Site.
5. Created The Call-to-Action Step Down initiative aimed to step down youth from congregate care and psychiatric hospital programming into a family-based setting. DCYF offers enhanced foster board maintenance payments to families who match with a child ready for step down.
6. Expanded messaging scope, by championing staff and agency partners to engage in being part of recruitment efforts by:
 - a. All Resource families staff updating their email signature to include the Be An Anchor branding and engaging in Departmental social media efforts.
 - b. Executed month-long awareness campaigns for targeted appreciation, awareness, communications, and virtual programming.
 - c. Accumulate branded giveaway materials to incentivize engagement and spread brand awareness
7. Ongoing discussions on developing families who are willing to support LGBTQQIAAP+ youth.
 - a. The department supports ongoing conversations with families throughout the initial licensing and relicensing process regarding their openness to match with child who identify at LGBTQQIAAP+. The Department implements a TIPS MAPP training and home study process that contains supports to foster children who identify as LGBTQQIAAP+. The Department Private Foster Care agency contracts contains language that providers are contracted to support children who are culturally and linguistically diverse which includes youth who identify as LGBTQQIAAP+. The Department implements within the child characteristics an item that identifies if a family is willing to foster youth who identify as LGBTQQIAAP+.

Measures of Success

There are many factors that contribute to our goal where all children and youth are cared for in a safe, supportive family setting. These factors include relationship centered engagement with all resource families, targeted recruitment of new foster families, careful matching processes, strengthened opportunities to highlight family voice, and exceptional support through best practice service delivery and communication. Strategies in all these practice areas contribute to the following:

2022/2023 Recruitment and Retention Plan Performance Measures

To support positive outcomes for the health, safety, well-being and permanency of children and youth in foster care, the DCYF seeks to accomplish the following by June 30, 2023. The special populations listed below were selected based on DCYF research demonstrating that recruiting and licensing families who are open to placements for these special populations face more

challenges than other populations such as children 11 years and younger, without medical, physical and/or behavioral health needs and single child or small sibling groups.

1. License **125** new non-relative foster families by June 30, 2023 and increase the number of foster families who can support **targeted populations to include**;
2. Of the 125 new non-relative licensed foster homes **25** will be open to match with **youth 12 and older**;
3. Of the 125 new non-relative foster families **25%** will be open to match with children/youth who have a **Mental Health or Physical Disability**.
4. Of the 125 new non-relative licensed foster homes **50%** will be licensed to support **sibling placements**;
5. Recruit and onboard **5** new **Emergency Response Program** foster parents who can support Emergency Placement needs of **Children and youth under 12**

The Department’s 2 Year Target Goal June 2020-June 2022 was to recruit and license 100 new non-relative foster families. The Department recruited **198** families between June 2020-June 2022. The data below in Table 1. reflects both the number of families recruited and licensed by DCYF and by the Private Agency Foster Care providers during this timeframe including numbers of families open to placements for adolescents age 12 and older, larger sibling groups and children with special health care\medical needs.

Table 1. Total Number of Recruited and Licensed Families in FY21-FY22 and the Number Retained as of June 30, 2022. (Section 12.3a, b)

Total recruited and licensed homes including target populations	Total recruited and licensed homes FY21-FY22	Among recruited and licensed homes during FY21-FY22, Number retained as of June 30, 2022
Licensed New non-kinship Foster Homes	N 281	N 210
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older.	63	45
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of siblings.	124	89
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability	281	210

Data note: Mental Health or Physical disability characteristics noted as learning\school, medical mild, medical severe, mental health issues, opp/defiant behavior, physical disabled, recent sexual reactive behavior and Intellectual challenges

Table 2. Contains the FY2023 Recruitment and License goals, a total of 125 families recruited and licensed and the number recruited and licensed for each of the population types. The table also contains the number of actively licensed homes total and by population type as of June 30, 2022. A family could be open to more than one population type.

Tables 3 and 4 will be populated subsequent to the 12-month time period ending July 1, 2023.

Table 2. FY2023 Recruitment and License Goals Supplemented (12.3c start date population)

Actively Licensed Homes by Population Type	Number of Total and Population Type as of June 30, 2022	FY23 Recruit and License Goals:
Total Licensed non – kinship Foster Homes	N 522	125 families
Licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older	174	25 families
Licensed families open to placement of siblings	262	62 families
Licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability	505	31 families
Emergency response program licensed foster parents for children 12 years of age or younger	DNA	5 families

Data note: Mental Health or Physical disability characteristics noted as learning \school, medical mild, medical severe, mental health issues, opp/defiant behavior, physical disabled, recent sexual reactive behavior and Intellectual challenges

Tables 3 and 4 are template tables for the data that will be provided as part of the 2023\2024 Foster Care recruitment and retention plan and assessment of the 2022\2023 plan.

Table 3. Recruitment and Retention Data at end of 2022\2023 plan, June 30, 2022-July 1, 2023

12.3.a, b

	2022\2023 Target	Number of new families recruited and licensed July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023	Among number of new families recruited and licensed July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023, the number and percent retained on July 1, 2023
Total Licensed non – kinship Foster Homes	125 families		
Licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older	25 families		
Licensed families open to placement of siblings	62 families		
Licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability	31 families		
Emergency response program licensed foster parents for children 12 years of age or younger	5 families		

Table 4. Total Number of Families at the Beginning and End of the 12-month period, total and by each category 12.3.c

	Number of families at beginning of 12-month July 1, 2022: Total and by Category	Number of families at end of 12-month June 30, 2023 period: Total and by Category
Total Licensed non – kinship Foster Homes		
Licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older		
Licensed families open to placement of siblings		
Licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability		
Emergency response program licensed foster parents for children 12 years of age or younger		

2022/ 2023 Strategies

Our Children; Our Families, Our Communities; Our Commitment

To achieve desired outcomes, our system must remain focused on the needs and perspectives of the families and children we serve. This includes developing strategies through a versatile approach that incorporate family and youth voice and diversity, equity, and inclusion as a core value.

PLANNING & OPERATIONS

1. Collaborate with community stakeholders on Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan Revision, and its implementation.
2. Facilitate ongoing Active Contract Management meetings with our Private Agency Foster Care providers with a focus on sharing recruitment and retention DATA and strengthening outcomes for children and families.
3. Expand portfolio of branded resources for coordinated and efficient communication and recruitment efforts.
4. Continue implementation of Binti, the web-based portal for foster care recruitment and licensing, as well as matching.
5. Engage in Active Contract Management to ensure accountability for private agency operations and develop solutions to challenges served in these family settings.
6. Convey all resources available to meet the linguistic needs of foster families
7. Coordination with New England Child Welfare Commissioner's Group of Foster Care Managers to discuss regional challenges and strategies.

RECRUITMENT & AWARENESS

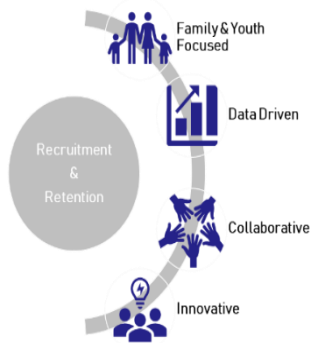
1. Expand messaging scope of Be An Anchor by championing staff to practice the philosophical approach in their daily interactions will all children and families we serve.
2. Support goal awareness through promotion of the 2023 "Rhode to 100 new foster homes" progress.
3. Ongoing timetable of virtual information events to occur every two weeks at family friendly hours, and flexibility for personal meetings.
4. Partner with organizations that support and represent youth in foster care to highlight youth voice.
5. Expand proactive print and digital media outreach, highlighting initiatives and families.
6. Facilitation of Pre Inservice meetings with all recruited families to clarify intention and matching further ensuring we identify families committed to support the needs of our system
7. Ongoing scheduling of preservice TIPS MAPP trainings to ensure an average of two TIPS MAPP sessions to start every other month.

8. Maintain strong workflow for application processes and personal applicant connection/entry conversation.
9. Engage Education System leaders in strengthening partnerships to recruit foster homes and encourage fictive kinship connections.
10. Engage in opportunities to work with local University personnel and Fraternity/ Sorority cohorts on mentoring opportunities
11. Ongoing month-long awareness campaigns for targeted appreciation, awareness, communications, and virtual programming.
 - a. January – National Mentoring Month
 - b. March – National Social Work Month
 - c. April – National Child Abuse Prevention Month
 - d. May – National Foster Care Month; National Mental Health Awareness Month
 - e. June – National Reunification Month
 - f. September – National Kinship Care Month
 - g. November – National Adoption Month
12. Distribute branded giveaway materials to incentivize engagement and spread brand awareness.
13. Re-engagement will all kinship families who have a child who has reunified and or moved to permanency

MATCHING & PLACEMENT

1. Engage in virtual social events to informally connect youth and families.
2. Complete targeted matching reviews for DCYF and Agency families.
3. Engage in new licensed home presentation meetings with licensing and placement teams to clarify matching and recommendations for placement
4. Engage in feedback forums with families who have found success with accepting challenging placements in the effort to duplicate factors of success.
5. Ongoing implementation of call-to-action step down initiative.
6. The department supports ongoing conversations with families throughout the initial licensing and relicensing process regarding their openness to match with child who identify at LGBTQQIAAP+. The Department implements a TIPS MAPP training and home study process that contains supports to foster children who identify as LGBTQQIAAP+. The Department Private Foster Care agency contracts contains language that providers are contracted to support children who are culturally and linguistically diverse which includes youth who identify as LGBTQQIAAP+. The Department implements within the child characteristics an item that identifies if a family is willing to foster youth who identify as LGBTQQIAAP+

SUPPORT & RETENTION



1. Provide ongoing education on the philosophical best practices of foster care for new and existing Division of Resource Families' staff, other DCYF staff, agency, and community partners.
2. Ongoing support of Foster Family Advisory Council with a primary goal of bringing DCYF, foster families, and community stakeholders together to drive system improvement. The format will be developed in partnership with foster families and will aim to be solution focused.
3. Ongoing expansion peer to peer mentoring program, supporting out Anchors for traditional families
4. Develop Comfort Calls implementation plan in the effort to strengthen biological family and resource family engagement. (See appendix 6, no longer applicable)
5. Use enrichment activities and statewide foster care appreciation events to highlight families, create opportunities for family engagement, and increase a natural support network for foster families.
6. In partnership with DCYF Division of Performance Improvement develop a resource family satisfaction survey to be distributed two times per year to gather data and inform Department practice.
7. Continued implementation of Foster Parent College; online resource library for easy access to information and strategies to address challenging situations (articles, resources, videos, etc.).

Conclusion

This current plan reflects a range of ongoing and new strategies to ensure that the work of foster care recruitment and retention is viewed as a continuum, focusing on the full experience of our "Anchors", and ultimately, improving system outcomes.

To be successful, these strategies must be implemented thoughtfully, and with the collaborative work of stakeholders at all levels of the system, and with an accountability focus on key benchmarks for success

This work must be done using a data-driven approach, with a targeted focus on engaging and empowering the voices of children and families, in the ongoing pursuit to ensure that **all children and youth are cared for in a safe and supportive family setting**

Appendix 1: Glossary

1. Kinship Caregiver – A kinship caregiver is someone who is known to the child and has been identified as someone who can provide foster care. There are two types of kinship caregivers:
 - a. Relative Kinship – a family member to the child (often a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or adult sibling)
 - b. Fictive Kinship – someone who has a relationship with the child but not as family (often a teacher, coach, neighbor, or family friend)
2. Traditional Foster Families – Foster families who are supported directly through DCYF, and generally care for foster children with typical needs.
3. Private Agency Foster Families – Foster families who are supported by their chosen agency, and generally care for foster children who have higher levels of need with the support of specialty services and clinical supports from the agency.
4. Resource Family – This term is inclusive and often used when referring to all types of foster families. Kinship caregivers, traditional foster families, and Private Foster Care Agency foster families are all critical partners for the child welfare system because they provide care for children who cannot live safely at home.
5. Be An Anchor – Rhode Island’s community engagement strategy to support foster care recruitment and retention. Our Resource Families are “anchors” for children in DCYF care. It is critical that our “anchors” can care for children/youth in a safe and reliable family setting that is well supported and able to care for the child’s individual needs.
6. Rhode to 100 – DCYF’s current foster care recruitment campaign. DCYF must have the right plan in place to recruit a diverse pool of individuals who can Be An Anchor for all children and youth in DCYF care.
7. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) – A CANS assessment is a multi-purpose tool developed for children’s services. Versions of the CANS are currently used in all 50 states in not only child welfare, but also, mental health, juvenile justice, and early intervention applications. The tool is used to support decision making. It helps to identify the level of care and service planning a child or youth might need.
8. Level of Need (LON) - An assessment tool DCYF uses for all children and youth requiring out-of-home care. The goal of the LON assessment is to clearly identify what each child’s needs are, what type of homes would be a best fit for their needs, and what services might be needed for that child. The LON assessment tool is the cornerstone of the foster care system.
9. Level of Need Tier Score (Tier Score)– The Tier Score is determined by the LON assessment tool. The LON identifies the intensity of services needed and determines the rate that will be reimbursed to a private foster care agency and the agency’s or Department’s foster home on behalf of a child initially placed with them in out-of-home care. There is a five-tiered foster care structure, with the LON assessment indicating a Tier 1 through Tier 5 score, commensurate with the child’s needs through this assessment. A Tier 1 score is meant to identify children and youth with lower needs, a Tier 5 is meant to identify children and youth with higher needs.

Appendix 2: Rhode Island 2020-2024 Diligent Recruitment Plan

In accordance with the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994, as amended, the delay or denial of any adoption or placement in foster care due to the race, color, or national origin of the child or the foster or adoptive parents is prohibited. It also requires States to provide for diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom homes are needed. To meet MEPA's diligent efforts requirements, States must have a comprehensive plan that includes:

1. A description of the characteristics of waiting children;
2. Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community;
3. Diverse methods of disseminating both general and child-specific information;
4. Strategies for assuring that all prospective parents have access to the home study process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access by all members of the community;
5. Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities;
6. Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers;
7. Procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement; and
8. Non-discriminatory fee structures.

State agencies are required to submit a five-year, comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) that outlines initiatives and activities the State, tribe, or Territory will carry out in administering programs and services to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

While the elements above are reflected through the 2021 Statewide Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Families, the specifics of the required Rhode Island 2020 – 2024 Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan can be found at: <https://fosteringchamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/RI-Foster-and-Adoptive-Parent-Recruitment-Plan-2020-2024.pdf>

Appendix 3: Children's Rights, Inc. Settlement Agreement

The Department is responsible for adhere to the following recruitments related to a recruitment and retention plan:

Section 12. Foster Home Array

- 12.1 DCYF will develop an annual recruitment and retention plan for foster homes in consultation with the Monitoring Team. The plan shall include:*
- a Targets for number of foster homes, including targets for special populations, for example adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities and medically fragile children, relevant during the period of the plan; and*
 - b Foster home retention strategies, such as respite homes, enhanced foster parent training opportunities, and increased visitation with foster parents.*
- 12.2 DCYF shall implement the annual recruitment and retention plan and make diligent efforts to meet the targets set forth therein, including requests for any additional resources required to meet them.*
- 12.3 DCYF shall conduct an annual assessment of implementation of the plan over the preceding twelve months to identify any systemic factors that may have contributed to any shortfall in recruitment. DCYF shall publish and make publicly available an annual report setting forth the findings of the assessment including: (a) the numbers of homes recruited and retained by category, (b) the actual number of homes recruited in each of these categories during the twelve month implementation period, and (c) the total number of homes available for child placement in each of the categories at the beginning and end of the twelve month implementation period, and making recommendations for corrective actions to assure sufficient recruitment and retention of homes under the plan.*
- 12.4 Once all of the Commitments in Sections 1-10 of this Agreement have been deemed to be satisfied and the Court no longer has jurisdiction over those other Commitments then the Commitment contained in Section 12 shall also be deemed to be satisfied and the Court will not have jurisdiction over DCYF with respect to Section 12, or the Commitments contained in Sections 12.1 through 12.3.*

Appendix 4: Updated Assessment for the 2021/2022 Recruitment and Retention Plan June 30, 2022

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is committed to the goal that all children and youth should be cared for in a safe, supportive family setting. To support this goal, DCYF is focused on partnering with the community, its leaders and organizations who can **Be An Anchor** for children and families involved in Rhode Island's child welfare system.

Be An Anchor began in 2017 as Rhode Island's comprehensive community engagement campaign to support foster care recruitment and retention. As we reflect on 2021's Recruitment and Retention plan it is important to note; Be An Anchor has grown into DCYF's division wide philosophical approach to how we work with all families. The core pillars, **Our Children, Our Families, Our Communities and Our Commitment**, of Be An Anchor impact how we holistically view, support and wrap around the families and children we serve.

DCYF recognizes all Resource Families as Anchors to children in care. Resource Families include families caring for a family member or child known to then otherwise known as kinship caregivers, traditional (DCYF) foster families, therapeutic (Private Foster Care Agency) foster families, and pre-adoptive families. The Rhode Island 2021 Statewide Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Families reflects the philosophy and strategic initiatives to ensure that DCYF and its partners are able to recruit a diverse pool of individuals who can Be An Anchor, and that our Anchors are well prepared and supported to care for children.

With each recruitment plan we reflect on the recent challenges and successes of both the Rhode Island child welfare system and those of our child welfare partners across the country. What we know to be true is that each system faces universal challenges, and these must be acknowledged in order for ongoing recruitment and retention efforts to be successful. These include:

1. The child welfare system is complicated and has many stakeholders, however, some foster families express that their opinions and contributions to a child's team are not consistently valued. The system is imperfect, but **efforts must be made to continually educate system staff and other stakeholders about best practices in foster care, and further, family and youth voice must be central to inform larger system change and improve retention efforts.**
2. Foster families are sometimes frustrated due to communication challenges among the members of a child's team. It is **vital for our system to build in the time and value related to keeping foster families informed. The relationships with foster families are crucial.**
3. Families of color are overrepresented in the child welfare system, and while efforts must be made to address this disproportionality, a simultaneous effort must be made to ensure that the diversity of our resource families must represent the races, ethnicities, spoken languages, cultures, identities, geographies, and experiences of the children, youth and families we serve. **Diversity, equity, and inclusion must be valued in our system practice and perspective.**
4. There are times where a child is placed with a foster family that may not be well-prepared to care for that child's specific needs. As a result, foster families are often disengaged after an ineffective matching process. **Open dialogue must occur with families from the onset of the recruitment process to ensure a full understanding of a family's expectations,**

needs, and abilities, in order to set them up for success in their match and care of children.

5. The child welfare system focuses heavily on the needs of children, youth and families served by the Department, it is **important to ensure that our supports for foster families are also responsive to their individual needs.**
6. There are often negative public connotations about the child welfare system. **Desired outcomes, success stories, prevention and support programming must be proactively shared to highlight the positive impact of the system to the community.**

To address these known challenges the 2021 Recruitment and Retention plan included a series of activities to diligently build a stronger foundation for the recruitment and retention system. These activities have developed into the below ongoing strategies:

8. Ongoing Right Sizing of Foster Effort that include:
 - a. A new rate structure was established and implemented to ensure that all foster families were provided equitable financial resources to support the needs of the foster child(ren) in their care;
 - b. DCYF hired 14 FTEs to invest to support the recruitment and retention (eight caseworkers, two supervisors, two junior recruiters, one communications specialist (now vacant), and one foster parent trainer);
9. Using federal grant funds, DCYF expanded array of programming to support Kinship and traditional Caregivers including, but not limited to: a Peer to Peer Mentoring Programs, Support Groups (contracted through two community organizations) and the Rhode Island Foster Parent Advisory Council;
10. The Division of Resource Families in Partnership with the Division of Contracts and DATA Performance Improvement team hold bi-monthly Active Contract Management (ACM) and Weekly Agency Partnership Meetings (APM) with our 10 Private Foster Care Agencies. The goal of these strategic meetings is to:
 - a. support the 10 Private Foster Care Agencies in their efforts to recruit and retain families who are able to support children with higher level of need and;
 - b. Match open for placement families through monthly youth presentations by our Family Service and Foster Care Placement Unit of children and youth in need of foster care placement and;
 - c. to ensure the clinical and case management service delivery standards are consistent and targeted towards children with those higher levels of needs.
11. In recognition of the financial and work force impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic DCYF now issues COVID 19 enhanced payment for a period of 30 days to all families who have a foster child in their care who has tested positive for COVID 19 through an approved Rhode Island Department of Health Testing Site.
12. Created The Call-to-Action Step Down initiative aimed to step down youth from congregate care and psychiatric hospital programming into a family-based setting. DCYF offers enhanced foster board maintenance payments to families who match with a child ready for step down.
 - a. Note: As of May 1, 2022 thirteen (13) youth stepped down from a psychiatric or congregate care setting into a foster home as a result of the Call to Action initiative.

13. Expanded messaging scope, by championing staff and agency partners to engage in being part of recruitment efforts by:
 - a. All Resource families staff updating their email signature to include the Be An Anchor branding and engaging in Departmental social media efforts.
 - b. Executed month-long awareness campaigns for targeted appreciation, awareness, communications, and virtual programming.
 - c. Accumulate branded giveaway materials to incentivize engagement and spread brand awareness.
 - d. Produced and launched “I am an Anchored” and “I was Anchored” videos featuring foster families and former foster youth.
14. Provide education on the philosophical best practices of foster care for new and existing Division of Resource Families’ staff, other DCYF staff, agency and community partners.

These investments and diligent efforts have contributed to direct improvements of the health of the 2021/2022 foster home service array.

Performance Measures

There are many factors that contribute to our goal where all children and youth are cared for in a safe, supportive family setting. These factors include specialized engagement with kinship caregivers, recruitment of new foster families, improved education and development of foster families, careful matching processes, opportunities to share family voice, and exceptional support through communication and services. Strategies in all these practice areas contribute to the following performance measures specific to Rhode Island’s DCYF statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan.

Table A. provides a contextual data on the total number of foster homes recruited SFY21-22 by DCYF and Private Foster Care Agency as well as the three main subcategories associated with greater challenges for recruitment. Additionally included is a more detailed breakdown of the subcategory mental and physical disability characteristics.

Table A. Appendix 4: Total Number of new foster homes recruited and licensed, by Special Population, by DCYF and Private Foster Care Agencies During SFY21-22

Status as of June 30, 2022		
Target: In SFY21-22. license 200 new foster homes	Since the start of SFY21, DCYF has licensed a total of 281 new non-kinship foster homes	
Total recruited and licensed homes including target populations	DCYF	Private Agency Foster Care
Licensed New non – kinship Foster Homes	N 198	N 83
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older.	45 (22.7%)	18 (21.7)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of siblings.	105 (53.0%)	19 (22.9)

Table A. Appendix 4 - Continued

Total recruited and licensed homes including target populations	DCYF	Private Agency Foster Care
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability		
	<i>Data note: Mental Health or Physical disability characteristics noted as learning\school, medical mild, medical severe, mental health issues, opp/defiant behavior, physical disabled, recent sexual reactive behavior, and Intellectual challenges</i>	
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Learning/School Issues	176 (88.9%)	70 (84.3%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Mild Medical Issues	176 (88.9%)	56 (67.5%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health Issues	154 (77.8%)	12 (14.5%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Oppositional/Defiant Behavior	152 (76.8%)	51 (61.4%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Recently Sexual Reactive Behavior	9 (4.6%)	2 (2.4%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Physical Challenges	6 (3%)	2 (2.4%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Severe Medical Issues	6 (3%)	1 (1.2%)
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Intellectually Challenges	43 (21.7%)	8 (9.6%)

Data Source: RICHIST

Per Settlement Item 12, DCYF shall publish and make publicly available an annual report setting forth the findings of the assessment including: (a) the numbers of homes recruited and retained by category, (b) the actual number of homes recruited in each of these categories during the twelve-month implementation period, and (c) the total number of homes available for child placement in each of the categories at the beginning and end of the twelve-month implementation period

Table 1. provides the number of new foster homes recruited and licensed, total and by special population, in SFY21-22 and among those recruited and licensed, the number that were retained at the end of the SFY21-22 time period. This table meets the Settlement 12.3. a, b. Table 1a. is the same as table 1 on page 9.

Table 1a. Total Number of Recruited and Licensed Families in FY21-FY22 and the Number Retained as of June 30, 2022. (Section 12.3a, b)

Total recruited and licensed homes including target populations	Total recruited and licensed homes FY21-FY22	Among recruited and licensed homes during FY21-FY22, Number retained as of June 30, 2022
Licensed New non-kinship Foster Homes	N 281	N 210
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older.	63	45
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of siblings.	124	89
Recruited and licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability	281	210

Data Source: RICHIST

Table 1b provides data on the total number of active licensed foster homes available for child placement and by child category at the beginning of the 12-month period and at the end of the 12-month period. This table meets the Settlement 12.3.c.

Table 1b. Total number of actively licensed foster homes, and by child category at the start of the 12-month period and the end of the 12-month period (12.3.c)

Actively Licensed Homes by Population Type	Number of Total and Population Type as of June 30, 2021	Number of Total and Population Type as of June 30, 2022
Total Licensed non – kinship Foster Homes	N 540	N 522
Licensed families open to placement of children 12 years of age or older	208	174
Licensed families open to placement of siblings	280	262
Licensed families open to placement of children who have Mental Health or physical disability	496	505
Emergency response program licensed foster parents for children 12 years of age or younger	DNA	DNA

The 2021 Recruitment and Retention Plan Conclusion

The 2021 Recruitment and Retention Plan highlighted a range of strategies to ensure that the work of foster care recruitment and retention is viewed as a continuum, focusing on the full experience of our “Anchors”, ultimately improving outcomes for children in care. We believe the success demonstrated in the recruitment of 281 new foster homes is contributed to the strategic effort to collaborate with our stakeholders at all levels of the system.

We know for DCYF to be successful in creating family-based opportunities for children we must continue to focus our efforts on the recruitment, development and retention of families who feel well prepared to support our most vulnerable children. Further, for children to feel safe and successful we must ensure we have a holistically prepared child welfare system equipped best practice resources and strong public private partnerships to meet the needs of all children in care.

DCYF is committed to continuing the efforts highlighted in this assessment into 2022/2023 through using DATA to inform process and working collaboratively with our stakeholders to strengthen the foster home service array for all children in need of a family-based setting. Additionally, DCYF will continue our commitment to the philosophical approach of Be An Anchor by empowering the voices of children and families, valuing feedback, and creating opportunities for impactful investments in the recruitment, development, matching and support of all resource families.

Appendix 5: 2022/2023 Strategies

2022\2023 Strategy	Process Measure with Annual Plan
Planning & Operations	
Collaborate with community stakeholders on Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan Revision, and its implementation.	1. Meeting dates, agenda
Facilitate ongoing Active Contract Management meetings with our Private Agency Foster Care providers with a focus on sharing recruitment and retention DATA and strengthening outcomes for children and families.	1. ACM meeting dates, presentation documents, any next steps\action steps
Expand portfolio of branded resources for coordinated and efficient communication and recruitment efforts.	1. Expanded portfolio with branded resources, date, portfolio of resources
Continue implementation of Binti, the web-based portal for foster care recruitment and licensing, as well as matching.	1. Status update of implementation and dates. 2. Binti scope of work 3. Number of families recruited and licensed (this is already in the outcomes) and number of families matched\child in placement
Engage in Active Contract Management to ensure accountability for private agency operations and develop solutions to challenges served in these family settings.	1. ACM meeting dates, presentation documents, any next steps\action steps as applicable
Convey all resources available to meet the linguistic needs of foster families	1. Summary of resources\linguistic resource manual 2. % of families whose primary language is not English
Coordination with New England Child Welfare Commissioner’s Group of Foster Care Managers to discuss regional challenges and strategies.	1. Meeting dates, times
Recruitment & Awareness	
Expand messaging scope of Be An Anchor by championing staff to practice the philosophical approach in their daily interactions will all children and families we serve.	1. Training manual that includes championing Be An Anchor (PowerPoint)
Support goal awareness through promotion of the 2023 “Rhode to 100 new foster homes” progress.	1. Social media posts, dates of agency partnerships where recruitment is discussed (Tuesday meeting), agenda
Ongoing timetable of virtual information events to occur every two weeks at family friendly hours, and flexibility for personal meetings.	1. Meeting dates
Partner with organizations that support and represent youth in foster care to highlight youth voice.	1. FELA training dates, Number and list of partner organizations
Expand proactive print and digital media outreach, highlighting initiatives and families.	1. Products of the outreach media expansion, dates ordered
Facilitation of Pre Inservice meetings with all recruited families to clarify intention and matching further ensuring	1. Meeting dates

2022\2023 Strategy	Process Measure with Annual Plan
we identify families committed to support the needs of our system	
Ongoing scheduling of preservice TIPS MAPP trainings to ensure an average of two TIPS MAPP sessions to start every other month.	1. Training dates, curriculum
Maintain strong workflow for application processes and personal applicant connection/entry conversation.	1. Licensing Playbook
Engage Education System leaders in strengthening partnerships to recruit foster homes and encourage fictive kinship connections.	1. Meeting dates and\or correspondence with Education System 2. Strategies implemented where applicable
Engage in opportunities to work with local University personnel and Fraternity/ Sorority cohorts on mentoring opportunities	1. Meeting dates and\or correspondence with Education System 2. Strategies implemented where applicable
Ongoing month-long awareness campaigns for targeted appreciation, awareness, communications, and virtual programming.	1. Link to social media postings, trainings when applicable 2. Calendar of events
Distribute branded giveaway materials to incentivize engagement and spread brand awareness.	1. Dates of events, list of materials distributed
Re-engagement will all kinship families who have a child who has reunified and or moved to permanency	The Department will develop a DOP that describes the mechanism wherein all Kinship families will be asked if they would become a resource family before closing. Within the DOP a mechanism to monitor the data.
Matching & Placement	
Engage in virtual social events to informally connect youth and families.	1. Dates of events 2. Number of connections made
Complete targeted matching reviews for DCYF and Agency families.	1. Number of targeted matching reviews completed
Engage in new licensed home presentation meetings with licensing and placement teams to clarify matching and recommendations for placement	1. Dates of presentation meetings
Engage in feedback forums with families who have found success with accepting challenging placements in the effort to duplicate factors of success.	1. Dates of feedback forums 2. Summary of successes
Ongoing implementation of call-to-action step down initiative.	1. Milestones and dates, and workplan if available
Develop a mechanism to collect from foster families their willingness to foster a child who is LGBTQIAAP+.	1. The mechanism is developed and the data from the on-set of development is generated. (Developed January 2022)

2022\2023 Strategy	Process Measure with Annual Plan
Support & Retention	
Provide ongoing education on the philosophical best practices of foster care for new and existing Division of Resource Families' staff, other DCYF staff, agency and community partners.	1. Dates of education\informational meetings
Ongoing support of Foster Family Advisory Council with a primary goal of bringing DCYF, foster families, and community stakeholders together to drive system improvement. The format will be developed in partnership with foster families and will aim to be solution focused.	1. Dates of foster family advisory council meetings
Ongoing expansion peer to peer mentoring program, supporting our Anchors for traditional families	1. Number of peer mentors, number of families working with peer mentors
Use enrichment activities and statewide foster care appreciation events to highlight families, create opportunities for family engagement, and increase a natural support network for foster families.	1. Dates of events
In partnership with DCYF Division of Performance Improvement develop a resource family satisfaction survey to be distributed two times per year to gather data and inform Department practice.	1. Survey 2. Survey results including response rate
Continued implementation of Foster Parent College; online resource library for easy access to information and strategies to address challenging situations (articles, resources, videos, etc.).	1. Milestones achieved, workplan 2. Number of resources
Data outlined in 2022 \2023 plan outcomes Section 12	
Proposed supplemental data elements	
<p>List of all licensed foster family providers in 2022\2023 and the children in those placements during that time period, start and end of the 12-month period.</p> <p>For those children placed at the start of the 12 month period (first day of the 12 month period), and last day of the 12-month period the following information: Child Names, demographics (DOB, race, ethnicity, family\case city and state, placement start date, federal categories of disability).</p> <p>At the start of the 12 month period (first day of the 12 month period), and last day of the 12-month period the following information: Foster parent's names, demographics (race, ethnicity, family city and state), and open to foster child by their child characteristics.</p>	

Appendix 6: Provider Characteristics

The table below contains all the RICHIST categories of child characteristics families select from for which they are willing to foster and the percent of active licensed providers by characteristic types at the end of the 12-month period.

Provider Characteristics	Percentage of Active Licensed Providers by Characteristic Type as of June 30, 2023 (duplicated)
Males	
Females	
Either Gender	
0-2 Age Range	
3-5 Age Range	
6-10 Age Range	
11-18 Age Range	
0-18 Age Range	
Oppositional/Defiant Behavior	
Learning/School Issues	
Medical (Mild)	
Medical (Severe)	
Intellectually Challenged	
Mental Health Issues	
Physically Disabled	
Recent Sexually Reactive Behaviors	
Aggressive or Assaultive Behaviors	
Alcohol/Drug Exposure	
Alcohol/Drug Use	
CSEC	
History of Neglect	
History of Sexual Abuse	
LGBTQ	
Non-ambulatory	
No Categories Accepted	