



FFY 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

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**Health and
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Background

In 2023, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded the statewide contract for the Recruitment, Retention, Training and Support for Resource families (RRTS) to one agency: Four Oaks Family Connections.

The contracted provider is responsible for the following activities:

- Provide services to recruit and retain resource families that are available to be successfully matched with children who need out-of-home care with a licensed foster family or an approved adoptive family, including support throughout the Foster family licensing, re-licensing, adoption approval process, post subsidized guardianship, and adoption processes.
- Coordinate with and recruit non-licensed caregivers including relatives to become licensed foster families.
- Provide training required for foster families to receive and maintain their foster home license, and trainings for adoptive parents, kin, and fictive kin caregivers.
- Match children who are placed into care with a resource family that has the skills, training, and ability to meet the children's needs.
- Develop and administer a support program for resource families ensuring that each resource family has a caseworker to contact for all services provided to resource families.
- Develop specialized services to increase statewide capacity to serve teens and those transitioning to adulthood.
- Maintain a connection to post subsidized guardianship and post adopt families, including outreach, supports and services.
- Develop specific plans that include strategies and numerical goals for each of Iowa's five service areas based on the needs of the service area for the following criteria:
 - Families that reflect the race and ethnicity of the children in care in the service area;
 - Families who can take sibling groups of two or more;
 - Families who can parent older children, especially teens;
 - Families who are geographically located to allow children to remain in their neighborhoods and schools;
 - Families who have the skills to care for children who exhibit difficult behaviors or have significant mental health, behavioral, developmental, or medical needs;
 - Families who can provide a continuum of care including respite, short term placements, transitioning children to permanency and adoption;
 - Families who will mentor and work collaboratively with birth parents; and
 - Families who understand the importance of maintaining a child's connections to their family, school, community, and culture and will help maintain those connections.
- Utilize a specialized caseworker model which positions the contractor to select and train staff to roles that meet the individual's interest and ability, and allows staff to be accessible, specially trained, and dedicated where they are needed the most – working directly with the family. The specialized caseworker model will have four distinct program components:
 - Recruitment and Retention, Inquiry and Training
 - Licensing
 - Support
 - Centralized Statewide Matching
- Conducting licensing activities for applicants (general/kin/fictive kin), foster families and approval activities for adoptive families including:
 - Providing orientation sessions for interested families;
 - Providing pre-service National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC);
 - Completing all background checks according to state and federal law;
 - Completing an initial home study and all other required paperwork; and
 - Completing renewal activities and updating home studies.
- Providing matching services for children in need of foster home placement. The Contractor developed a Centralized Statewide Matching System with a single point of referral. Matching criteria is established based on the needs of each child but may include:
 - Keeping children close to their parents and family members;

- Keeping siblings together;
- Keeping children in their home school and neighborhood;
- The family's ability to parent older children;
- The family's ability to meet the child's cultural needs;
- The family's ability to meet the child's emotional and behavioral needs; or
- The child's permanency goal.
- Providing support services to foster families and pre-adoptive families. The contract requires providers' staff to:
 - Assign one caseworker to a foster family to provide supportive services.
 - Is the family's primary contact for questions and when a need or concern arises.
 - Monitors compliance with rules and corrective action plans to come into compliance when needed.
 - Monitors training completion.
 - Visit a family within 5 days of the first time a child is placed in their home;
 - Contact each family within 3 days of the arrival of a new child;
 - Hold complete and purposeful face-to-face contact every month for a minimum of 30 minutes in length and phone contact each month for a minimum of 10 minutes in length with each resource family and their assigned caseworker when a child is in the home. At least one face-to-face visit each quarter shall include some or all the children placed in the home to observe, coach, and mentor the resource family.
 - Hold complete and purposeful face-to-face contact on a bi-monthly basis for a minimum of 30 minutes in length and virtual or phone contact each month for a minimum of 10 minutes in length in between with each licensed resource family and their assigned support caseworker when a child is not in the home. This includes discussion of issues, training, and the barriers preventing the resource family being matched to a child.
 - Participation in a bridge meeting led by HHS that will be held between birth parents and foster parents. It serves as a starting point for establishing communication and building a relationship.
 - This bridge meeting should occur within five (5) calendar days of placement, when appropriate. (This meeting may count as the required five (5) – day calendar visit following placement if held in the resource family home)
 - The contractor shall encourage ongoing meetings and communication between the birth family and foster family to maintain the relationship and keep the lines of communication open.
 - Provide support services based on the foster/pre-adoptive family's needs that may include:
 - Providing crisis interventions;
 - Assisting families with the transition of teens to adulthood;
 - Assisting families with the transition of children to permanency through reunification;
 - Partnering, coordinating, and collaborating with other service providers;
 - Providing services in a culturally competent manner;
 - Coordinating and collaborating with service providers to assist families in the transition from foster care to adoption;
 - Assisting families in understanding the difference between foster care and adoption.
- Providing in-service trainings to foster families that are timely, relevant, and intentional to increase a family's skills and abilities to parent children in care.
 - Monitor their training plans and assist in the scheduling of trainings to ensure compliance for renewal.
- Providing post-adoption and subsidized guardianship support to all families who adopted children that receive or are eligible to receive adoption subsidy and families in subsidized guardianship status. Support services are voluntary, and families can self-refer or have HHS

staff refer them. Services are free of charge to the family and may be provided in the family's home. Service providers tailor the support services to meet the needs of the family, which may include:

- Crisis intervention;
- Helping in developing behavior management plans;
- Assisting and supporting the family's relationship with the birth family;
- Advocating for the family with school, HHS, or other service providers; and
- Assisting families in securing community resources.
- Providing a resource packet. The packet contents describe local supports and services such as how to access Medicaid and Waiver services for families needing mental health, emotional and behavioral support for children in the home.
- Monthly Support groups throughout the state
- Training opportunities for families specific to their needs
- RRTS implemented an outreach plan for Iowa's adoptive parents and guardians to be made aware of post-adoption and subsidized guardianship supports. The outreach plans include such activities as:
 - Providing support groups information, newsletters, contacting adoptive parents and by phone within 4 (four) to 6 (six) months post-permanency.
 - Providing written information to adoptive and subsidized guardianship families explaining the benefits of post adoption and subsidized guardianship services every 6 months post permanency.
 - Providing written information to community referral entities outlining post-adoption and subsidized guardianship support programs.

The RRTS contract is a performance-based contract. Performance measures are the same for each of the five contracts, but baselines and targets are specific to each service area. The performance measures are:

Performance Measure 1 – Stability

Children placed into a licensed foster family home from their removal home or shelter within the quarterly reporting period will experience stability in placement. A child's first placement should be the child's only placement. The contract payment for performance will be based on the percent of a cohort of children who remain in the same licensed foster home 180 days after placement or:

- will have exited the licensed foster home to a trial home visit working towards
- reunification; or
- will have exited to a relative home; or
- will have exited to a fictive kin home; or
- will have exited to a pre-adoptive placement working toward permanency; or
- will have attained permanency through adoption or guardianship or;
- will have exited the emergency foster care placement within 48 hours of placement.

Adding the emergency foster care placement as an option allows the RRTS contractor to still achieve this performance measure as it is more appropriate for a child to go to a temporary foster care placement as they are working on an appropriate long-term match rather than going into a shelter placement.

Contract payment will be made using the following standards (note: the Gold and Silver Standards are mutually exclusive by quarter, and both cannot be earned for the same quarter):

- Gold Standard (payment of 2.5% of quarterly eligible contract value) – Greater than or equal to 85% (previously 93%) of children in family foster care will be stable in their first placement for six (6) months.
- Silver Standard (payment of 1.5% of quarterly eligible contract value) – Greater than or equal to 75% (previously 88%) of children in family foster care will be stable in their placement for six (6) months.

The table below shows the achievement for the past 5 quarters:

Table 1: Stability in Family Foster Care					
Service Area	SFY 2023 Q1 Percentage	SFY 2023 Q2 Percentage	SFY 2023 Q3 Percentage	SFY 2023 Q4 Percentage	SFY 2024 Q1 Percentage
Western	79.1	70.3	95.0	56.3	87.1
Northern	61.1	93.1	80.0	72.7	83.3
Eastern	36.8	35.7	37.5	88.2	60.0
Cedar Rapids	36.8	42.3	78.6	81.3	70.0
Des Moines	67.5	65.9	70.3	65.2	66.7
Data Source: HHS CWIS					



Performance Measure 2 – Recruitment and Retention (Increase in Families of Color)

The contractor shall increase the net number of licensed foster families of color available for matching, relative or fictive kin identified for a specific child or children on an annual basis. The contractor’s net increase in number of licensed foster families of color will be based on:

- the number of licensed foster families of color available for matching relative or fictive kin identified for a specific child or children on July 1st at the beginning of that contract year; and
- the number of licensed foster families of color available for matching relative or fictive kin identified for a specific child or children on June 30th of that same contract year.

The contract payment will be made annually by Service Area in the amount of \$112,067.00 for performance and will be based on the net increases of 5% of families of color that are currently licensed and retained during each contract year.

Table 2a: SFY 2023 (7/1/2022-6/30/2023)			
Target for PM2 Recruitment and Retention of Families of Color			
Baseline	Standard	Target Net Increase	Achieved
36	Gold	46	31
	Silver	43	
20	Gold	31	19
	Silver	28	
16	Gold	24	24
	Silver	22	
53	Gold	61	45
	Silver	59	
69	Gold	87	59
	Silver	83	

SFY 2024 data below will not align with SFY 2023 due to the realignment of Iowa counties that was effective July 1, 2023.

Table 2b: SFY 2024 (7/1/2023-3/31/2024)			
Target for PM2 Recruitment and Retention of Families of Color			
Service Area	Baseline	Increase number	Goal
Western	33	2	35
Northern	30	2	32
Eastern	25	1	26
Cedar Rapids	45	2	47
Des Moines	45	2	47

There is a disproportionate number of licensed foster families for the number of children of color coming into foster care. For SFY 23, using data from the Child Welfare Dashboard, Iowa had 575 children in licensed foster care or adoption presubsidy status who were reported as Black or African American, 19 who were reported Asian, 112 who were reported American Indian or Alaska Native, and 21 who were reported Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

The chart below reflects all families that are licensed for general foster care, child specific and respite only. Families that are available for matching would not include child specific or respite families. Most families that are licensed child specific are licensed less than one year as the goal is to reach permanency and at that time they close their license.

Race Ethnicity	License			
	Grand Totals	Adopt	Foster	Grand Total
SFY20		61	237	298
SFY21		70	246	316
SFY22		67	245	312
SFY23		68	242	310
SFY24		43	209	252

Performance Measure 3 – Path to Licensure

The contractor shall facilitate support for kin and fictive kin caregivers and contribute to the overall number of foster families. The contractor's performance will be measured on whether the family has received a license to provide foster care.

The contractor will receive \$250 for each relative/fictive kin caregiver who becomes licensed within 180 calendar days from the date of the referral from HHS or the Kinship Navigator through the FCS contract.

Table 3a: RRTS Performance Measure 3 – July 2023

	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	4	25	29
FCS Kinship Navigator	0	1	1
Monthly Totals	4	26	30

Table 3b: RRTS Performance Measure 3 – August 2023

	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	2	32	34
FCS Kinship Navigator	1	7	8
Monthly Totals	3	39	42

Table 3c: RRTS Performance Measure 3 – September 2023

	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	2	20	22
FCS Kinship Navigator	2	17	19
Monthly Totals	4	37	41

Performance Measure 4 – Safe in Resource Home

Safety is maintained for children in foster and adoptive care. Statewide data provided by HHS shall be used to determine if Performance Measure 4 has been met. Data will include all children in licensed family foster care or pre-adoptive care at any time during the quarter.

PM4 - Ninety-nine (99) percent of children in licensed foster family or pre-adoptive care will be safe from abuse by their foster or pre-adoptive parents.

Payment for achieving this measure is in the amount of \$56,033.50 per quarter for each contract year if the Contractor achieves this measure based on statewide data.

Table 4: RRTS Performance Measure 4 Safe in Resource Home									
Service Area	SFY 2024 Q1			SFY 2024 Q2			SFY 2024 Q3		
	Children in Foster Care	Children not Subject to Abuse	%	Children in Foster Care	Children not Subject to Abuse	%	Children in Foster Care	Children not Subject to Abuse	%
1 (Western)	458	458	100.0%	434	434	100.0%	372	372	100%
2 (Northern)	327	327	100.0%	313	313	100.0%	300	300	100%
3 (Eastern)	298	298	100.0%	277	276	99.6%	277	278	99.6
4 (Cedar Rapids)	404	403	99.8%	386	386	100.0%	420	420	100%
5 (Des Moines)	411	411	100.0%	380	380	100.0%	317	317	100%
Statewide	1898	1897	99.9%	1790	1789	99.9%	1686	1687	99.9%
Data Source: HHS CCWIS									

Performance Measure 5 – Adoptive and Subsidized guardianship Families Will Receive Supportive Services (No payment incentive)

Thirty percent of the families will accept and participate in services offered during required contractor check-ins which is minimally every six months.

Performance Measure 6 - Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Resource Parents will be identified and become productive members of Iowa's foster care service array.

Performance Incentive Payment: Contractor will receive \$5,000 for each TFC Resource home (up to 5) licensed and actively receiving referrals by March 31, 2024. The Contractor will receive \$2500 per additional TFC Resource home (up to five more) licensed and actively receiving referrals by June 30, 2025.

As of 4/1/24 five foster homes are licensed at the TFC level and three are licensed as TFC respite only.

Performance Measure 7 - Youth Served in Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) will reside in a family home with parent or relative upon discharge. (No payment incentive)

At least 50% of the children served in Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) will exit to a parent or relative. Currently, HHS has no way to statistically identify the rate at which a child will reunify or exit to the home of a family member, therefore results may vary, and the measure will be reset based on actual performance.

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

A description of the characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

HHS provides data to the contractor to determine recruitment and retention goals and targets. Each service area has a recruitment plan based on the needs of their service area, including data specific to that service area. Recruitment and retention targets for specific populations of children may include:

- Teens
- Sibling groups including those with very young children
- Non-white children
- Children with difficult behaviors (physically aggressive, sexual acting out, impulsivity, etc.)
- Children with significant needs (mental health concerns, developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, medically fragile, etc.)

An ongoing challenge continues to be developing foster families who have the skills, ability, and willingness to care for youth coming out of congregate care or PMIC who have difficult behavioral or mental health needs. A Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) model program for Iowa was implemented by HHS as a pilot TFC program in December of 2023 in the Cedar Rapids Service Area. Cedar Rapids Service Area was chosen for the site of the pilot due to their location and supportive services that include University of Iowa Hospitals and Foundation 2 Crisis Support Services.

As of April 1, 2024, there are five approved and trained TFC homes and three approved and trained TFC respite homes. Four children have been placed in a TFC home and one is currently being transitioned. Currently, the pilot is targeting youth ages 7-13.

This pilot was designed in collaboration between Family Well-being and Protection, Behavioral Health and Disability Services, and Medicaid. The program emphasizes Medicaid home and community-based services to support foster care youth at high risk for institutionalization or multiple placements. The array of services identified in the pilot includes the following:

- Behavioral Health Intervention Services
- State plan Habilitation Services
- In-home family therapy
- Applied Behavioral Analysis (as appropriate)
- Crisis Services
- Family Peer Support
- Respite
- The HCBS Waiver that is most appropriate to the child's needs.

The RRTS contractor continues to work to raise public awareness of the need for foster/adoptive homes by utilizing strategic community outreach to establish mutually beneficial relationships with local civic and/or child and family serving organizations as well as influential community members. They place a particular emphasis on working with communities of color that have historically been underrepresented as resource families by building trusting and accountable relationships with influential community members as well as the culturally important institutions within that community, such as faith communities or advocacy organizations.

Table 5: Family Foster Homes

Licensed Foster families by Service Area	June 2021 Count	June 2022 Count	June 2023 Count	March 2024 Count
Western	519	478	436	398
Northern	359	341	293	295
Eastern	476	210	214	243
Cedar Rapids	243	445	392	370
Des Moines	552	542	504	327
Totals	2149	2016	1839	1633

A primary recruitment and retention goal has been to increase the number of resource families (including kinship and fictive kin caregivers) available to accept children coming into care with specific and complex needs. To meet this goal, it has been a primary objective to create community awareness emphasizing the valuable and critical role that resource families play as a resource to help the child and their family. While educating the communities, we also focused on creating a deeper understanding of the impact of trauma and the loss that children experience due to separation from a child's family and community. Emphasis to ensure that siblings are placed together, and family connections is reinforced. The importance of keeping children in their home schools and communities is continually promoted.

Having the right foster homes in the right areas at the right time is a challenge. This is especially true for sibling groups of three or more, even if the children are very young. The emphasis of recruiting and retaining families for older children and discouraging families who want to "foster to adopt" very young children resulted in an unintended consequence of not having enough foster families for children ages 0 to 5. Iowa needs foster families for young children in sibling groups who respect and participate in reunification efforts.

RRTS promotes permanency and stability for youth who need forever homes. RRTS staff continues in-person interviews of youth in group home and shelter settings to better understand the needs of the youth as well as to get a better understanding of the child's personality and to provide them "a voice" in what they need in a foster care placement.

RRTS staff have identified and engaged resource families who have positively parented teens, sibling groups, and youth with complex needs, to share their passion for foster parenting and their stories of success. Stories continue to be shared through newspaper as well as through social media on the contractors' Foster Care and Adoption Facebook page to emphasize the ongoing need for families to provide loving and stable homes for youth.

The Family First Preservation Services Act (Family First) continues to significantly impact family foster care. Foster families will be needed to keep children from entering residential care, and to care for children leaving residential care. Relative and fictive kin placements are becoming licensed for foster care so that they can receive all the resources and supportive services that licensed homes currently receive and foster families who will partner with and mentor a child's family to fully support reunification will also be an increased focus of recruitment and retention. Kinship Navigator and the Kinship Caregiver Stipend are also two ways to support relative and fictive kin families prior to their foster care licensure.

The Foster Parent Mentor Program was rolled out January 2024. This program specializes in one-on-one, short-term, intensive coaching relationships, which provide newly approved foster parents emotional encouragement, skill reinforcement, and parenting strategies unique to providing out-of-home care to enhance the quality of care provided and stabilize placements. The goal is for up to forty homes be identified and trained as mentors as well as expand the program to support kin and adoptive families by December 31, 2024.

The Foster and Adoptive Advisory Council of Iowa continues to develop into an essential collaborator as the voice for resource families of Iowa. Members of the council are to consider participation as a minimum with a one-year time commitment, bi-monthly phone/Zoom conference calls, and follow up time to volunteer to research items requested. The advisory council group was developed to be diverse and represent all areas of foster/adoptive/kin care. Urban and rural, seasoned, and new, and culture/families of color/LGBTQI+ and disabilities were also considered.

The advisory council's current priorities include:

- Advocating for greater access to quality dental care for children in foster care and those who have been adopted.
- Creating and improving a multi-tiered approach to communication from HHS and Four Oaks to foster and adoptive families.
- Recruitment for prospective foster families and champion current foster and adoptive families.

HHS strongly supports keeping children within their families and will continue to encourage more relative caregivers in becoming licensed foster parents. Licensure brings increased financial assistance, concrete supports, and training that unlicensed caregivers do not receive. HHS only waives non-safety standards for relatives to promote licensing. HHS is currently in the process of developing a work group to begin the discussion/development of a separate set of licensing or approval standards for relative or kinship foster family homes in response to ACYF-CB-PI-23-10. These new standards would be different from the standards used for non-relative foster family homes.

The Kinship Caregiver and Kinship Navigator Programs both began on July 1, 2021. Both programs continue to be very successful in supporting kin/fictive kin families. All relative/fictive kin placements are eligible for the Kinship Caregiver Program once a relative or fictive kin child has been legally placed in their home. The kinship caregiver will receive a payment of up to \$310/month (\$10/day) for a period of up to six months. During these six months, HHS will work in collaboration with RRTS contractors, to expedite the licensing process for the kinship caregiver while maintaining consistency in licensing standards for all foster families. Families do not have to participate in the licensing process to receive the kinship caregiver payment, but it is highly encouraged so that the family can receive the supports licensed foster parents receive such as clothing allowance, child care, respite and support groups. The Kinship Navigator Program supports kinship caregiver families through HHS's Family Centered Services (FCS) Contract. Kinship caregivers are eligible for this program for up to four months. The kinship specialist will assist the caregiver with emotional and concrete supports. They will also assist the family with connecting to agencies for financial and childcare assistance.

The RRTS contractor works collaboratively with the FCS contractors providing the Kinship Navigator programs. They meet routinely to address kinship caregiver licensing process, program needs, and potential barriers to becoming licensed. HHS licensing staff are also invited to participate in these meetings to help keep the process moving for the kinship caregivers.

The RRTS contractor receives age, race and ethnicity data for every child who exited or entered a foster home each week. The RRTS contractor also uses a database called Care Match that records demographic information on foster and adoptive families and on children placed in foster or adoptive homes. They use this data when developing service area specific recruitment plans.

The most recent data regarding race and ethnicity for the children in family foster care are in Table 6 below. The population of all children in foster care in Iowa reflects the following statewide demographics.

Table 6: Children in Licensed Foster Family Care by Age and Gender

Licensed Foster families (Clients) as of 3-22-24 by Service Area, County Size, Age and Gender		# of Counties	Age 0-02			Age 03-05			Age 06-08		
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
			Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Western	Metro	6	13	22	35	18	16	34	8	12	20
	Urban	21	17	10	27	11	8	19	7	9	16
	Rural	11	2	4	6	3	3	6	2	0	2
	Total	38	32	36	68	32	27	59	17	21	38
Northern	Metro	5	21	14	35	5	6	11	5	8	13
	Urban	14	22	17	39	12	13	25	11	14	25
	Rural	4	3	6	9	4	2	6	1	1	2
	Total	23	46	37	83	21	21	42	17	23	40
Eastern	Metro	2	14	14	28	11	9	20	8	4	12
	Urban	13	24	19	43	14	15	29	10	9	19
	Rural	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	17	38	33	71	25	24	49	18	13	31
Cedar Rapids	Metro	5	36	32	68	24	23	47	14	14	28
	Urban	9	14	7	21	6	7	13	6	7	13
	Rural	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	17	50	39	89	30	30	60	21	21	42
Des Moines	Metro	3	43	31	74	26	20	46	22	15	37
	Urban	1	2	0	2	1	2	3	1	2	3
	Total	4	45	31	76	27	22	49	23	17	40
Statewide	Metro	21	127	113	240	84	74	158	57	53	110
	Urban	58	79	53	132	44	45	89	35	41	76
	Rural	20	5	10	15	7	5	12	4	1	5
	Total	99	211	176	387	135	124	259	96	95	191

Licensed Foster families (Clients) as of 3-22-24 by Service Area, County Size, Age and Gender		# of Counties	Age 09-11			Age 12-14			Age 15-18		
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
			Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Western	Metro	6	10	8	18	5	1	6	9	5	14
	Urban	21	8	13	21	9	8	17	7	14	21
	Rural	11	6	2	8	0	2	2	1	3	4
	Total	38	24	23	47	14	11	25	17	22	39
Northern	Metro	5	2	8	10	0	2	2	7	10	17
	Urban	14	5	4	9	2	6	8	6	10	16
	Rural	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	23	7	12	19	2	8	10	14	20	34
Eastern	Metro	2	4	3	7	2	4	6	2	3	5
	Urban	13	3	7	10	5	5	10	3	8	11
	Rural	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2
	Total	17	7	10	17	8	9	17	6	12	18
CedarRapids	Metro	5	9	18	27	11	11	22	10	11	21
	Urban	9	7	5	12	2	3	5	2	5	7
	Rural	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
	Total	17	16	23	39	14	14	28	13	16	29
DesMoines	Metro	3	10	12	22	9	14	23	11	15	26
	Urban	1	1	3	4	2	1	3	0	0	0
	Total	4	11	15	26	11	15	26	11	15	26
Statewide	Metro	21	35	49	84	27	32	59	39	44	83
	Urban	58	24	32	56	20	23	43	18	37	55
	Rural	20	6	2	8	2	2	4	4	4	8
	Total	99	65	83	148	49	57	106	61	85	146

Licensed Foster families (Clients) as of 3-22-24 by Service Area, County Size, Age and Gender		# of Counties	Age 19+			State		
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
			Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Western	Metro	6	0	0	0	63	64	127
	Urban	21	0	0	0	59	62	121
	Rural	11	1	0	1	15	14	29
	Total	38	1	0	1	137	140	277
Northern	Metro	5	0	1	1	40	49	89
	Urban	14	0	0	0	58	64	122
	Rural	4	0	0	0	9	9	18
	Total	23	0	1	1	107	122	229
Eastern	Metro	2	0	0	0	41	37	78
	Urban	13	0	0	0	59	63	122
	Rural	2	0	0	0	2	1	3
	Total	17	0	0	0	102	101	203
CedarRapids	Metro	5	0	0	0	104	109	213
	Urban	9	0	0	0	37	34	71
	Rural	3	0	0	0	3	0	3
	Total	17	0	0	0	144	143	287
DesMoines	Metro	3	0	0	0	121	107	228
	Urban	1	0	0	0	7	8	15
	Total	4	0	0	0	128	115	243
Statewide	Metro	21	0	1	1	369	366	735
	Urban	58	0	0	0	220	231	451
	Rural	20	1	0	1	29	24	53
	Total	99	1	1	2	618	621	1239

The most recent data regarding the ethnicity for the children in family foster care by Service Area are in tables below:

Table 7: Children in Licensed Family Foster Care as of 3/22/24 by Service Area and Race									
Licensed Foster families (Clients) as of 3-22-24 by Service Area, County Size, Age and Gender		# of Counties	Race						
			American Indian and Alaska Native	African American	Two or more Races	White	Asian	Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander	Unable
			Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Western	Metro	6	20	10	8	81	0	7	1
	Urban	21	10	8	6	93	0	4	0
	Rural	11	1	0	0	28	0	0	0
	Total	38	31	18	14	202	0	11	1
Northern	Metro	5	0	20	4	62	2	0	1
	Urban	14	1	16	3	97	2	1	2
	Rural	4	0	3	0	15	0	0	0
	Total	23	1	39	7	174	4	1	3
Eastern	Metro	2	0	20	9	47	1	0	1
	Urban	13	0	16	8	97	0	0	1
	Rural	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
	Total	17	0	36	17	147	1	0	2
CedarRapids	Metro	5	3	53	27	126	0	2	2
	Urban	9	4	1	6	56	1	2	1
	Rural	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
	Total	17	7	54	33	185	1	4	3
DesMoines	Metro	3	0	45	38	135	3	0	7
	Urban	1	0	0	0	14	0	0	1
	Total	4	0	45	38	149	3	0	8
Total	Metro	21	23	148	86	451	6	9	12
	Urban	58	15	41	23	357	3	7	5
	Rural	20	1	3	0	49	0	0	0
	Total	99	39	192	109	857	9	16	17

Table 8: Children in Licensed Family Foster Care as of 3/22/24 by Service Area and Ethnicity

Licensed Foster families (Clients) as of 3-22-24 by Service Area, County Size, Age and Gender		# of Counties	Ethnicity
			Hispanic
			Count
Western	Metro	6	26
	Urban	21	14
	Rural	11	1
	Total	38	41
Northern	Metro	5	10
	Urban	14	19
	Rural	4	5
	Total	23	34
Eastern	Metro	2	12
	Urban	13	6
	Rural	2	0
	Total	17	18
CedarRapids	Metro	5	17
	Urban	9	2
	Rural	3	0
	Total	17	19
DesMoines	Metro	3	38
	Urban	1	0
	Total	4	38
Total	Metro	21	103
	Urban	58	41
	Rural	20	6
	Total	99	150

Specific strategies to reach out to all parts of the community.

Service area recruitment plans cover the entire area; however, prioritized areas are identified based on the demographics and geographic location of children coming into care. Service areas analyze data to determine which geographic locations children are removed from and prioritize those areas to have a sufficient number of foster/adoptive families, while also recruiting throughout the area.

Research and experience show the best form of recruitment is family to family. RRTS staff consistently engage current foster and adoptive parents to act as ambassadors for foster care in their home communities. Ambassadors use their personal and professional networks to raise awareness of the need for foster families in their communities.

Strategies common to all service areas include:

- Engaging faith-based organizations and houses of worship in all communities, especially non-white communities;
- Partnering with local media outlets, especially families of color;
- Partnering with local businesses and civic organizations;
- Reaching out to schools, childcare providers, and other agencies that serve families;

- Family to family resources such as “tool kits” with recruitment information, and educating current foster families on the needs in their own communities to assist in outreach;
- Partnering with schools to provide information on foster and adoptive parenting in children’s Virtual Backpacks;
- Use of social media such as Facebook to provide information both publicly and through designated groups;
- Collaborating with community partners to host National Adoption Month and National Foster Care Month activities; and
- Partnering with Pridefest organizers to raise awareness of the need for foster families for LGBTQI+ children in care as well as to recruit prospective foster and adoptive parents from the LGBTQI+ community.

RRTS contractors also identified service area specific partners to assist in planning retention activities as well as to provide donations of funds and goods.

Examples of these activities include:

Western Service Area –

Four Oaks Family Connections has been cultivating a relationship with Centro Latino of Iowa. This is a social services agency in Council Bluffs. They have been working to inform and enhance their outreach to the Latino Community. Four Oaks staff participated in the Latino Festival in September to promote the need for families and to engage with other local agencies that also serve families in the Latino Community.

Four Oaks Family Connections RRTS staff engaged in a Meet and Greet with Share My Smile to understand more about the agency and how they can enhance partnership to build family to family recruitment in Southwest Iowa and to increase Appreciation /Support events for existing foster families.

The western service area has created new social media groups for foster families to aid in finding respite, learn about training opportunities and support groups in the area.

Four Oaks Family Connections continues to collaborate with Setting Anchors and Kings and Queens to help educate the groups on training needs as well share their information with our families about support opportunities.

RRTS staff in the Sioux City area continue to attend the CINCF (Community Initiative for Native Children and Families) meetings monthly to share information relating to the need for native families to become licensed to care for Native American children who need out-of-home placement. One caseworker has been identified to allow our services to be more culturally responsive and provide support while working with Native American families. Each month a Native American Orientation is scheduled in Sioux City specifically for families interested in caring for Native American youth.

Northern Service Area -

Christ Community Church in Ames, Iowa invited Four Oaks to participate in their community service series. The Recruitment & Retention Coordinator recorded a podcast on September 6, 2023, which will be posted on their website. Four Oaks was highlighted during a Sunday morning service on October 29, 2023, which was followed up by an information session held on November 12, 2023, as it relates to foster care and adoption.

The Recruitment and Retention Coordinator also attended the Cerro Gordo planning committee and passed out flyers to raise the awareness of foster care in Iowa.

On July 19, 2023, Four Oaks Family Connections presented to the Blackhawk County Interagency Group regarding the need for foster and adoptive families. The Recruitment and Retention Coordinator attended the National Night Out in Mason City and collaborated with the Four Oaks

Integrated Health Home team at the booth. There were many families that attended, and flyers were handed out as well as gifts.

Recruitment and Retention also had a booth at the Back-to-School Block Party in August of 2023 in Mason City. Many flyers were handed out and gifts were passed out to those in attendance as well.

Eastern Service Area –

Four Oaks Family Connections was able to work with the General Manager of their local baseball team, Clinton Lumber Kings. The Lumber Kings donated free tickets to foster and adoptive families wanting to attend an appreciation outing. On July 23, 2023, seven local families joined the crowd of over 600 attendees to enjoy the game. During the game, several advertisements were announced informing the crowd about the need of foster homes in Clinton County and how they can get more information. They also had an information table displaying flyers at the front gate entry way. Several people stopped to ask questions.

On July 24, 2023, Four Oaks Family Connections was able to present a lunch and learn in-person to Group Benefit Solutions in Clinton. Several employees were in attendance and information was shared on the process of becoming a foster and adoptive parent as well as how individuals can get involved and support those foster families in the community.

Four Oaks Family Connections partnered with United Way and several other nonprofits and businesses to collect school supplies on several different days and times during the months of July and August 2023. Through these efforts, all children K-5th grade in Clinton County were supplied with all their school supplies for free. This included all foster and adoptive children located in Clinton County.

Four Oaks Family Connections joined forces with the Clinton Public Library for a Tie Blanket party and foster care informational on August 12, 2023. Community members could sign up to make a tie blanket that would be donated to a local child entering foster care. While they were making the blankets, information was shared about the need for foster and adoptive families, how they could start the process and how they could support local foster children and families. There were 20 families present and 20 blankets made.

Cedar Rapids Service Area –

On July 18, 2023, the Recruitment and Retention Coordinator met with the Oskaloosa Chapter to share about the steps to becoming a foster family and the needs here in the state of Iowa. Attendance was over 20 and many members had questions about the steps to becoming a foster family.

On July 14, 2023, Four Oaks staff along with many other community members gathered at Bloomsbury Farm to celebrate and the ribbon cutting for the upcoming fall season. The corn maze was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Four Oaks. In addition, Chelsey's Dream Foundation, a charity based in Anamosa, funded a celebration for foster families on September 23, 2023.

On September 17, 2023, the RRTS attended the International Festival in Marion. This event was well attended by a variety of diverse groups in the Cedar Rapids area. Many connections were made with different individuals about the need for culturally diverse foster families. RRTS also met with Melissa Sternhagen, a pastor at St. Paul Church in Oskaloosa, IA. Melissa and her congregation believe that no matter who you are, all are welcome at their church. Melissa was excited to learn and understand more about the need for LGBTQ acceptant families. From this meeting Four Oaks planned future events to share more insight into the need.

Over 2600 people came to the Cedar Rapids Pride event that was held July 8th. Four Oaks had the opportunity to connect with prospective foster parents considering foster care. Four Oaks RRTS partnered with Four Oaks Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator and had tables along with a foster family ambassador who helped distribute fliers and answer any questions families may have.

Des Moines Service Area –

Savannah Bananas, a traveling entertainment baseball league, invited Four Oaks Family Connections to participate in their non-profit, “Bananas Foster.” Savannah Bananas played in front of a sold-out crowd (13,000 people) at Principal Park on August 25-26, 2023. Representatives from Bananas Foster asked Family Connections to select two families to highlight during the fourth inning of each game and shared a little about their stories during the game. Each family received free “VIB” (very important banana) tickets for the whole family, Savannah Bananas jerseys and merchandise, flowers, and an opportunity to interact with the players and go into the dugout. Both families described this event as “the best thing we have ever done together as a family.”

Corinthian Baptist Church, a primarily African American Church is making a coordinated effort with Family Connections, two additional African American Churches and another pastor who works with several Latino churches. Corinthian Baptist Church has committed to making an announcement in front of their congregation on a Sunday morning and following it up with an information session and a display table that will be present at the churches for several months. They have asked other churches to commit to the same thing. Corinthian Baptist, in partnership with the Polk County Chapter of the Women in NAACP are also hosting a “Bundle up our Kids” drive where they are collecting new hats, gloves, and scarves that will be made available to families at the upcoming holiday appreciation event. If enough families show interest in getting licensed Four Oaks has offered to host an NTDC (pre-service) class at their building located in Downtown Des Moines.

RRTS gave a speech at the Harrell Scholarship Banquet, which was held at Corinthian Baptist Church. Linda Harrell and her husband fostered for a long time and this scholarship fund was established when he passed away. The scholarship is awarded to high school seniors of color who were previously or presently in foster care. Over 100 people were in attendance.

In July 2023, the Des Moines Service Area received the final shipment of bikes donated by Dewy Auto Group. In total, Dewy Auto Group Donated 175 bikes that were distributed directly to children and youth in the Des Moines Service Area! Dewy Auto Group ordered these bikes in bulk from Wal-Mart and their employees assembled them. When families registered to receive bikes, there were many requests for larger sizes/adult bikes for teens and they were willing to meet that need.

The Polk County Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) has been inactive in recent months due to their limited staff, but it resumed in September of 2023 and the Four Oaks Recruitment and Retention Coordinator was the presenter at their first meeting. RRTS shared about the need for more foster families in Central Iowa and about ways that we partner with other organizations.

Retention Efforts Statewide:

Four Oaks Family Connections has started several Virtual Support Groups including:

- A support group for the LGBTQIA Community of Foster Parents, Children and Allies (Statewide) on the 2nd Thursday of the month from 7pm-8pm,
- A support group for the Latino Community of Foster Parents/Children in Spanish Language monthly on the 3rd Thursday from 7pm-8pm,
- A general foster support group for general resource families on the second Monday of the month from 8-9pm.
- Other support groups not targeted to specific affinity groups have been established or maintained throughout the state.

The Director of Marketing for the Iowa chain of Papa John’s Pizza is a current Foster Parent Ambassador. Papa Johns donated all the pizza for the Central Iowa Foster Parent Appreciation event and delivered it directly to the event free of charge. They also donated 150 cards good for one free single topping large pizza which were distributed throughout the service areas. Papa Johns also committed to running a special May-August 2023 promotion on specific food purchases and donated

a portion of each sale to Four Oaks Family Connections. Over \$7000 dollars was raised during the duration of the campaign. The funds will be used to offer food and activities at support groups.

All Service Areas spent the first quarter building service-area-specific Cultural Advisory Councils which host their first meeting during the second quarter. The Cultural Advisory Councils will be tasked with assisting and monitoring resource family recruitment and retention efforts. Additionally, Four Oaks Family Connections is in the process of recruiting/training Mentor Resource families. Mentors began mentoring less experienced resource families in January 2024.

Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child specific information

Recruitment plans combine general recruitment activities with targeted recruitment activities based on the needs of the service area. Examples of general recruitment activities are:

- Recruitment teams engage local media outlets by providing staff or resource families for interviews;
- Use of print and electronic media for general recruitment such as the use of public service announcements (PSAs), and promotions for upcoming events;
- Providing brochures and conducting presentations to businesses, churches, childcare centers, medical facilities or other entities who serve families;
- Providing information in children's virtual backpacks;
- Conducting presentations at cultural, faith based, service organizations, schools, and other community organizations.

The RRTS contractor has continued to focus on options for engaging the community and creating a strong message of the need for resource families who can care for children while working to engage the child's birth family. Community awareness of the trauma needs of children and an understanding of ACES has promoted a new approach while recruiting resource families. The RRTS contractor has used the following options to recruit potential resource families:

- Bi-monthly newsletters to licensed resource families with messaging relating to their value in helping children and families.
- Continued organic growth of the Foster Care and Adoption Facebook page.
- Family to family recruitment and engagement opportunities are used whenever possible (during recruitment, orientation, pre-service, peer support, training etc.). Resource families are provided with recruitment materials to share in their communities.
- Spotlighting foster and adoption success stories to educate the public through variety of media options.

The most successful recruitment tool has been to continue with our family-to-family approach in recruitment of resource families.

RRTS contractors also provide information to HHS on families interested in adoption when a child's current caregivers are not a permanency option. HHS is often not aware of families only approved to adopt. These families provide profile information to the RRTS contractors who then assist HHS in matching a child in need of permanency with a family who can meet the child's needs.

Four Oaks continues to have a contract with Wendy's Wonderful Kids to help in finding adoptive homes for children in need of permanency through two statewide recruiters. Adoption staff can refer a child who needs a permanent family when other options have been exhausted.

Strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/ adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that the agencies can be accessed by all members of the community.

The RRTS contractor has a website and a toll-free number for any prospective foster or adoptive family to contact to receive information and to enroll in an orientation. Orientations occur in groups and individually to explain the licensing/approval process, begin the record check process, and enroll families in pre-service training. The contract requires pre-service training to be available to interested families within 60 days of completing orientation and within 60 miles of the family’s home. Families may choose to attend later trainings due to preference or scheduling, or training in another area if space is available.

RRTS contractors began using the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) for pre-service training on July 1, 2022. Below is the number of trainings held in each service area from May 2023 through April 2024:

Table 9: Pre-Service Training Held May 2023- April 2024	
SA	Number of NTDC Trainings
Western	10
Northern	11
Eastern	10
Cedar Rapids	10
Des Moines	11
Total	52
Data Source: CareMatch Training Schedule	

Pre-service trainings occur in various locations in each service area to meet the contract requirement that prospective families receive training within 60 miles of their home. HHS and contractors continued discussing a plan for a mix of virtual and in-person pre-service training options; at this time most trainings continue to be in-person.

Each service area offers ongoing training several times a month. The RRTS contractor allow families from other areas to attend training when there is space available. This allows flexibility for families to find training in another service area that may be closer, more convenient, and specific to a skill or information the family needs. The contractor’s website lists the trainings with information on how to register. The offering of on-going virtual trainings for foster parents continues to be offered moving forward in addition to in-person trainings.

Four Oaks Family Connections has continued training, coaching, and providing Quality Improvement for Caseworkers to improve their on-going discussion with resource families regarding the importance of in-service training, identifying, and recommending training topics that are relevant to each individual Resource families experience with caregiving, and documenting those discussions thoroughly. This has resulted in overall improvement in our caseworker’s constant engagement with resource families on the topic of training, better documentation of that engagement, and more diligent tracking of the training resource families have obtained.

Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations.

For additional information on HHS staff training on working with diverse communities, please see *Iowa's FFY 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), Training Plan*.

Contractor staff receive ongoing training provided by experts or specialists in areas of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Examples of these trainings include LGBTQI+ training by an advocacy and educational organization or representatives from refugee communities who discuss the culture specific to their homeland.

Four Oaks Family Connections staff are members of the statewide Cultural Equity Alliance and participate in localized Breakthrough Series Collaborative groups working to address disparity and disproportionality in child welfare. Additionally, Four Oaks Family Connections works closely with the Iowa State University Child Welfare Training and Research Project to host and conduct Racial Equity Learning Exchanges to community members, resource families, child welfare professionals and stakeholders. Each of these efforts provide meaningful and substantive opportunities to not only recruit additional resource families, but to participate in activities that promote child stability and resource family retention.

Contractor staff are all required to take the Human Need for Belonging training by ALIA. This training addresses socio-economic variations. Additionally, all RRTS staff are required to take Cultural Competence, Harassment in the Workplace, Addressing Racial Trauma in Behavioral Health, Trauma Informed Care, Understanding Human Trafficking, working more effectively with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth which addresses the cultural, racial, and socio-economic variation education for staff. Four Oaks also offers RRTS staff specific Native American and customary tribal adoption trainings.

Meskwaki Family Services (MFS) was previously working with Four Oaks staff to offer pre-service training. They have not offered Native American trainings this past reporting period. Four Oaks is currently working towards a transition towards NTDC Native American classes and will coordinate with MFS.

The RRTS contractor also engages African American, Latino, and LGTBQI+ foster and adoptive parents to act as Ambassadors. Ambassadors are the face of foster parenting and participate in presentations, outreach, training, and other recruitment and retention activities. The RRTS contractor also continues to work to have employed recruiters of diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

Strategies for Dealing with Linguistic Barriers

Children in foster care are at an increased risk for language delays and disorders, and foster parents can play a significant role in preventing delays in early language development. Foster parents are encouraged to promote a child's language development and RRTS's role is to educate caregivers and connect the foster parent with community support and resources that will assist with any language delays or disorders.

There are several factors that play a role in supporting a foster child with linguistic barriers. A few examples include:

- Providing a stable and nurturing environment
- Providing emotional support and understanding
- Advocacy and Collaboration

- Facilitating therapeutic interventions
- Education and continuous learning

Four Oaks Family Connections continues efforts to recruit families who are of similar race, ethnicity, or language group of the children in care. They network with local NAACP groups, association meetings, and other community groups. Spanish language recruitment, outreach, and language appropriate orientation sessions continue to be consistent throughout each fiscal year. RRTS has added to the number of RRTS team members who are bilingual Spanish/English speakers to further ease the licensing/approval process for applicants whose primary language is Spanish.

There has been an increased difficulty in locating and utilizing interpretation/translation services for very specific language groups. The most notably difficult language group we have struggled with is Chuukese and have had to go to the closest state (Colorado) with a Chuukese speaker. HHS will continue to search for solutions to these barriers.

Non-discriminatory fee structures

Families who apply to become foster parents or adoptive parents through the HHS are not charged any fees for a home study or to attend pre-service training. The recruitment and retention contract includes the cost of record checks and home studies. Families must take CPR and First Aid training prior to initial licensure and must keep their certification current after licensure. Families also may have fees for water testing in rural areas. Families receive a \$100.00 stipend each year to help cover the costs of required ongoing training. However, most of the training offered by the RRTS contractors is free.

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.

HHS is responsible for selecting the adoptive family that will best meet the needs of the child, not the race or ethnicity of the family in relation to the child. Transracial adoptions are common, and children do not wait for a home based on the race or ethnicity.

Children in need of an adoptive home have their photos listed on the Iowa Adoption Exchange on the Four Oaks Family Connections websites, as well as on the AdoptUSKids website. A child must be registered on the Iowa exchange within 60 days of termination of parental rights unless the child meets a deferral reason. Reasons to defer a child are:

- The child is in an adoptive placement.
- The child's foster parents or another person with a significant relationship is being considered as the adoptive family.
- The child needs diagnostic study or testing to clarify the child's needs and provide an adequate description of them which is limited to 90 days.
- The child receives medical care or mental health treatment, and the child's care or treatment provider determined that meeting prospective adoptive parents is not in the child's best interest and deferral is limited to 120 days.
- The child is 14 years of age or older and will not consent to an adoptive plan, and the consequences of not being adopted have been explained to the child.
- The termination of parental rights is under appeal by the birth parents and foster parents or other persons with a significant relationship continue to be considered as the prospective adoptive family.

RRTS Contractors work with HHS staff to arrange photos for registration on AdoptUSKids and to photo list children on the respective websites. HHS staff is responsible for referring children for photo listing. RRTS staff list children on the state and nation exchanges.

RRTS manage an ongoing list of children in need of adoptive placement. These referrals come from HHS workers. This list is used to present children to prospective adoptive families during support visits by the RRTS worker.

HHS workers make referrals directly to Reel Hope and make arrangement for the reels to be completed. The Reels are provided to RRTS staff to potentially use for recruitment efforts on platforms such as AdoptUSKids and the state exchange.

Please see *Attachment 6A1: Strategies and Activities to Develop Diligent Recruitment Plan*.