

AdoptUsKids presentation to SACWIS Managers conference call 4/23/09

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Project Connect

Developing a Mechanism to Streamline Photolisting of Children on the AdoptUsKids Website

Introduction

AdoptUsKids is pleased to announce a new initiative: **Project Connect**. The objective of Project Connect is to develop a streamlined process to help ensure that all children needing an alternative permanent placement, because they cannot be readily placed within their State or jurisdiction, are photolisted on the AdoptUsKids website so that the children can benefit from the national reach of the AdoptUsKids website. Embedded in this concept is the understanding that there will be program infrastructure, leadership, and data-linked periodic and systematic reviews of those children who are not in a permanent placement and that those reviews will be made through a “permanency lens” to determine which children should be photolisted.

Over the past six and a half years AdoptUsKids, with the support of the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Children’s Bureau (CB) through a cooperative agreement, has managed the statutorily mandated national website for photolisting children. As evidence of AdoptUsKids success:

- As of April 2009, over ten thousand children previously photolisted on the AdoptUsKids website now live in permanent families.
- There are currently more than 4,300 active home studied families registered on the website.

Challenges/Opportunities

- Data from CB’s Adoption and Foster Care Administrative Reporting System (AFCARS) clearly demonstrates that there are many more children needing permanent placements than those currently listed on the www.adoptuskids.org website. There are currently 496,000 children in care with 130,000 of them awaiting adoptive placement. This does not include the children who are in plans of APPLA or LTFC.
- This demonstrates that States are not listing as many children as they could. Even if only 10% those children are considered “hard to place” it would mean 13,000 children would be photolisted on AdoptUsKids.
- States already have most of the data required for AdoptUsKids within their SACWIS system.
- The pool of potential adoptive parents for children in care is a vastly underutilized resource. These families are already approved and willing to care for special needs children. Yet these families are becoming discouraged as when they indicate an interest in a child photolisted on

the AdoptUsKids website, they are often not responded to or are told that it is too difficult to make interstate placements.

- By partnering with the States and other jurisdictions, Project Connect hopes to increase child case registrations by providing a tool to streamline the transfer of specific data from a State's SACWIS database to the AdoptUsKids photolisting website.

Benefits to the State

- Decrease the amount of worker time required to photolist a child on www.adoptuskids.org.
- Increase the amount of worker time available for the real work of placing children.
- Periodically and systematically reviewing children in care could potentially result in increased placements with kin, relatives, a more permanent legal plan with current caregivers, and return to birth families if these reviews are conducted with a permanency focus and ask the correct questions.
- Better CFSR outcomes through more timely placement of children into permanent adoptive families.
- The AdoptUsKids website has been shown to provide: Reduced administrative costs to the State by moving children from foster care to adoption and reducing the overall number of children in care.
 - An increased pool of prospective families for children to help meet ASFA (Adoption and Safe Families Act) requirements.
 - An increased likelihood of placement success by increasing the pool of compatible resource families.

Benefits to the Child

- Increase the pool of potential permanency placement options which will:
 - Increase the child's opportunity to be placed in a permanent adoptive home.
 - Decrease the amount of time in out of home care.

Benefits to the Worker

- Reduce the time that it takes to register each individual child on AdoptUsKids.
- Increase the amount of time the worker will have to focus on direct client contact.
- Potentially reduced caseloads.
- Increased support and direction for permanency planning/decisions.

Next Steps

- Examine the specifications that AdoptUsKids has developed:
<http://www.adoptuskids.org:8020/ChildWebServiceSpecification.doc>
- Contact: Dale Langer, consultant, (wiaaref@hotmail.com) for questions about Project Connect.

State Readiness Factors to Consider

State Responsibilities :

- Learn the requirements and processes associated case management of children photolisted on AdoptUsKids (online training is available).
- Define the process of deciding which children will be photolisted on AdoptUsKids.
- Successful use relies on active management of the child case within the tool
 - Establish a systematic and periodic review process of children in care without a plan of permanency.
 - Use a “permanency filter” to examine those children in care and review their placement status, potential resources for placement, and those who are appropriate for photolisting
- Determine if child photos will be stored in SACWIS and, if not, how the photos will be transmitted to the AdoptUsKids website and updated at least annually.
- Ensure that all children needing placement have current, clear, attractive photos taken timely.

States would incur some costs of data mapping, program enhancement, and data field development. These expenses could be eligible for federal matching funds. There is the possibility of claiming Federal Financial Participation (FFP) for a State’s SACWIS effort to develop this optional interface. This would need to be negotiated with ACYF.

Summary

AdoptUsKids has had great success helping States and other jurisdictions find permanent placements for difficult to place children. The most recent AFCARS data reveals that many of the children who could benefit from national recruitment are not currently photolisted on the AdoptUsKids website.

Tennessee has already begun incorporating Project Connect with its SACWIS system. This is an important pilot with potential ramifications to benefit the country and the field. AdoptUsKids may increase the size of the project in additional States that are interested in piloting the development and testing of the Project Connect project.

Upon a State’s request, AdoptUsKids can readily provide the State with statistics and technical information about its usage of the AdoptUsKids website since 2002 when its services began.

About the AdoptUsKids website

AdoptUsKids is a technically complex, feature rich tool for recruiting and connecting foster and adoptive families with waiting children throughout the United States

- Audience:
 - Foster/Adoption professionals
 - Professional audience (not registered) has access to information and best practices related to recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families

- Registered professionals are associated with an organization and can register and manage child or family cases from the state’s foster/adoption system
- Registered families with a homestudy (login)
 - Self registered or registered by their family worker
- General public (not logged in) introduced to the children through brief profiles and directed toward “Getting Started” and state specific foster/adoption information
- Photolisting of approximately 4300 waiting children (at any one time)
 - Rich Profile (data) for each child includes demographics and child’s preferences regarding an adoptive family
 - Information displayed is tailored to website user roles
 - Sibling groups are fully supported
- Approximately 4200 active registered families (at any one time)
 - Family’s Profile includes both demographic profile, preference for children family is approved to accept, personal narrative written by the family, family’s agency and case worker contact information
 - Family centric functions include:
 - Search for children (profile matching and general)
 - Manage their list of children (in whom they are interested)
 - Make an inquiry to a child’s worker (expressing interest in the child)
- 976 active organizations using the site
 - 3000 professional users (i.e. have logins to the site)
 - Professional functions include:
 - Registering children and/or families
 - Managing those registrations (status, current photo, editing data)
 - Search for and contact worker for families and/or children (profile matching and general)
 - Create a child’s list of potential adoptive families
 - Create a family’s list of suggested children they might be interested in
 - Managing inquiries from a family about a child
 - Administrative functions include:
 - Managing users and locations within an organization
 - Reporting

About the Project Connect web service

Web Services in general:

- Built on HTTP

- Simple, lowest common denominator, interface mechanism
 - Processed as plain text (if HTTPS then plain text is encrypted/decrypted at each end)
 - Especially simple to build using a modern programming framework (e.g. Java or .Net)
- Uses the Request/Response paradigm
 - Like standard HTTP messages both the Request & Response contain a Header and a Body
 - Very similar to an HTTP POST except that the Body is in XML format

Project Connect web service:

- SOAP compliant (SOAP 1.1 or 1.2)
- The dataset is “AdoptUsKids centric”
 - The structure of the datasets matches AdoptUsKids’ structure
 - Field values for “list fields” use AdoptUsKids’ key values (rather than text)
 - Relies on 2 key registered logins within AdoptUsKids:
 - Web Service User
 - unique login per organization using the web service
 - primary security mechanism
 - OwnerEmail
 - See specification for more detail
- Supports a sub-set of the functions available on the website:
 - Add Child Case
 - Update Child Case
 - Add Sibling Group
 - Update Sibling Group
 - Add Worker Contact
 - Contact reference for a Child Case
 - Get Worker Contacts
 - to determine if you need to add one
 - Get List(s)
 - A set of methods for retrieving key/text lists (for list fields)
- Specification available at <http://www.adoptuskids.org:8020/ChildWebServiceSpecification.doc>
- Test URL: <http://www.adoptuskids.org:8020/ChildService.asmx>
 - Returns the list of available methods
 - Click the links to see more technical information