



Annual Report to the Legislature

Foster and Adoptive Home Placement

RCW 74.13.031 (2)

December 1, 2008

Department of Social & Health Services
Children's Administration
Division of Program & Practice Improvement
PO Box 45710
Olympia, WA 98504-5710
Phone: (360) 902-8400
Fax: (360) 902-7903



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Executive Summary

This report is prepared in compliance with RCW 74.13.031 (2), which requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Children's Administration (CA) to submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on the agency success in:

- (a) Meeting the need for adoptive and foster home placements;*
- (b) Reducing the foster parent turnover rate;*
- (c) Completing home studies for legally free children; and*
- (d) Implementing and operating the passport program required by RCW 74.13.285.*

The report shall include a section entitled "Foster Home Turn-Over, Causes and Recommendations."

During Fiscal Year 2008, CA activities related to recruitment and retention resulted in the following:

(a) *Meeting the need for adoptive and foster home placements:*

- There were 5,875¹ licensed foster homes, of which 1,085² were newly licensed.
- There were 1,462³ licensed minority foster homes at the end of FY 2008, which is a slight increase from FY 2007.
- 1,177⁴ adoptions were finalized.
- Over 70 percent of the adoptions finalized were for children by foster parents.

(b) *Reducing the foster parent turnover rate:*

- Provided statewide support services through contracts with three private agencies.
- Provided training and education opportunities in a variety of ways, including mandatory pre-service training, the annual foster care conference, web-based training, and class room training. In FY 2008,

659 classes were provided and attended by 11,338⁵ participants. Nearly 600 caregivers attended the caregiver conference; 330 foster parents received scholarships to attend the conference, which included hotel, meals and travel expenses.

(c) *Completing home studies for legally free children:*

- Provided adoption services to an average of 1,165 families at any given time, all of whom will have a home study completed prior to the adoption being finalized.

¹ Children's Administration Decision Support Unit; Source CAMIS Licensing download August 2008

² Children's Administration Decision Support Unit; Source CAMIS Licensing download August 2008

³ Children's Administration Decision Support Unit; Source CAMIS Licensing download August 2008

⁴ Children's Administration Decision Support Unit; Source CAMIS Placement download August 2008

⁵ The number represents duplicate participants

(d) *Implementing and operating the Passport Program*⁶:

- Completed 3,317 comprehensive health histories (passports) in FY 2008 on children eligible for the program.

⁶ Passport is now called a Comprehensive Health Report

Foster Care Recruitment

The Children's Administration (CA) utilizes a variety of activities and community resources to recruit foster and adoptive parents across the state. Foster home recruitment targets families interested in providing temporary foster care for children in out-of-home-care.

An adequate pool of foster homes contributes to placement stability for children by providing CA with greater ability to:

- Match a child’s needs with a family who has the necessary strengths and skills to meet those needs;
- Provide a home in a neighborhood and educational district in which a child lives; and
- Increase the ability to place siblings together or close to each other.

Finding families interested in being a foster parent to older youth continues to be a challenge. The average number of beds available to children less than 2 years old is 3.5, while the average number of beds for youth older than the age of 12 is 1.3. The table below displays the average number children in licensed foster care and the average number of beds available by age range in FY 2008.

Age Range:	< 2 years	2-5 Years	6-12 Years	13-17 Years
Number of children in licensed foster homes	908	1,787	2,244	2,412
Average number of beds per child in licensed foster care	3.5	2.4	2.0	1.3

Statewide Foster Care Recruitment

To enhance recruitment and retention opportunities in Washington; contracts were again awarded regionally beginning in April 2008. The contracts are effective for 39 months (just over 3 years); allowing contractors more time to focus on recruitment.

The contracts were awarded to:

- Lutheran Community Services NW (Families for Kids) in Regions 1, 2 and 6;
- Olive Crest (Fostering Together) in Regions 3 and 4; and
- Foster Care Resource Network in Region 5.

The contracts are regionally based and include:

- Combined responsibility for recruitment and retention;
- Regionally defined, specific performance outcome measures established for both recruitment and retention;

- Establishment of Regional Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Collaboration Committees in each region comprised of state and contracted staff that meet monthly to discuss and direct the contracted work.

Statewide Recruitment Strategies

During this past fiscal year, Washington continued to take advantage of free technical assistance provided by **AdoptUsKids**. Using the technical assistance, the statewide recruitment and retention staff changed the focus of recruitment for Washington. Traditionally recruitment has focused solely on generalized recruitment which focuses on getting the message to the masses. It was determined that the new focus would be on targeted recruitment, focusing on potential foster parents who had characteristics similar to “successful” foster parents.

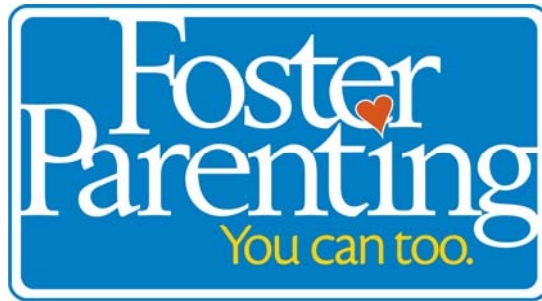
A “successful” foster parent was defined as those who had been licensed for more than three years, and who currently had a child in their care. The three-year criteria was based on Washington’s licensing standard that requires all licensed caregivers to be re-licensed every three years. Based upon this criteria CA provided 1,400 addresses to the marketers.

Through this process we learned what successful foster parents in Washington look like, what appeals to them, and where they get their information. The market analysis identified one million addresses by zip codes to which targeted recruitment could occur. Profiles of successful families in Washington fall into the following five major demographic elements. These families:

- Like outdoor activities
- Drive SUV’s or trucks
- Belong to music clubs
- Like to eat at fast food fish restaurants
- Usually have a dog as a pet

Each region established regional R&R collaboration committees comprised of state staff and community partners interested in promoting foster care recruitment and retention. The committees have begun using these profiles to develop targeted recruitment strategies.

In addition to looking at successful foster families, the statewide recruitment and retention team worked to develop a logo and slogan. Utilizing existing state resources the slogan “Foster Parenting - You can too” was created.



The logo is aimed at adults, is affirmative and can be used in variety of ways. Recruitment tools have been developed incorporating the logo and can include pictures of people representing different targeted communities. Materials are available to contractors and state staff through an online shopping system through the Washington State Department of Printing.

Targeted recruitment continues to use a grassroots recruitment model. This model encourages currently licensed foster families to mentor potential new families as they go through the licensing process. Grassroots recruitment efforts include:

- Using current or former foster parents as recruiters
- Working with faith-based communities
- Working with schools

In addition to the grassroots method of recruitment, the contracted providers use a variety of recruitment strategies including:

- Attending large community events
- Advertising through:
 - Television
 - Radio
 - Local Newspapers
 - Flyers
 - Brochures

Each region uses “Streets and Trips,” a computer software program that can visually show where children have been removed from and where they were placed. These “maps” have been used with community leaders and others as a dramatic way to show how many children have been removed from their geographic areas and where they were placed once removed.

Using the new data developed through the targeted recruitment work, regional collaboration teams are able to identify those areas where there is the greatest need for foster parents. Regional collaboration teams, along with regional Family-to-Family coordinators, have been pivotal in identifying targeted communities in each region.

Statewide Toll-Free Recruitment Number (1-888-KIDS414)

The Statewide Recruitment Information Center (SRIC) was created to handle calls received from the toll-free line and respond to questions from potential families that come through the CA website. To accomplish this task, CA contracted with Northwest Resource Associates (NWR) to respond to callers. NWR has been providing a similar service for the **AdoptUsKids** campaign for six years.

Northwest Resource Associates is also improving a database that was developed to monitor inquiries and make sure that they are sent to the appropriate contractors in the appropriate region to guide families through the licensing process. The database will also generate reports on activities that can be used by CA and recruitment contractors to direct efforts.

Through collaboration with contracted providers and community partners, the state has created a corps of front-line recruiters in communities throughout the state who are able to talk to potential foster parents and who can help build recruitment activities with people they already know in their own communities.

Newly Licensed Homes

Recruitment of new foster homes is a challenge in Washington State and nationally. Recruitment remains difficult for both Children's Administration and private child placing agencies. Recruitment challenges in Washington State are similar to those experienced nationwide:

- Children in out-of-home care are presenting more difficult challenges to foster parents;
- Individuals or families may be reluctant to take on additional responsibilities of raising children if they are uncertain about their own job or economic status;
- An average of seventy percent of the children adopted are adopted by licensed foster parents (this includes relatives who were licensed). Adoption is a positive outcome for children, but also a challenge for placement resources, as foster parents often leave the system when the adoption is complete.

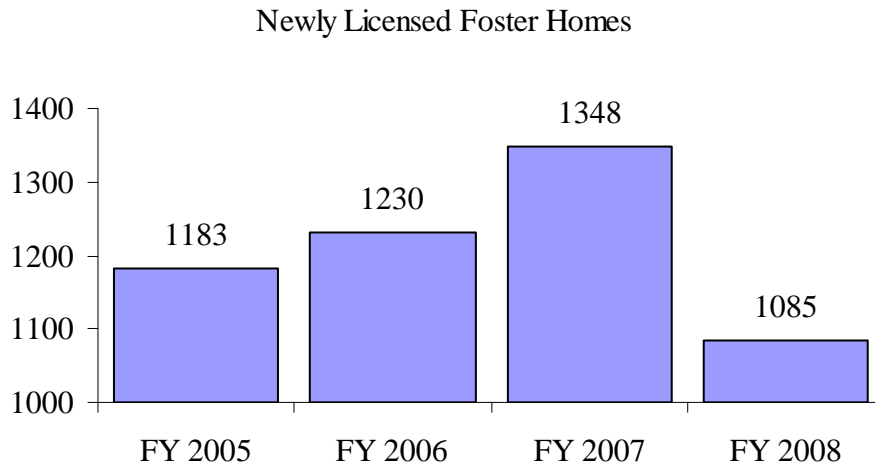
In addition to trends seen nationally, Washington struggled with recruitment because of the implementation of the Adam Walsh Act, which required changes in background checks for caregivers. To better facilitate fingerprinting for caregivers, DSHS contracted with Integrated Biometric Technology (IBT) in July 2008 to provide electronic fingerprinting services across the state. The contract period is for six years and will assist Children's Administration and Aging and Disability Services Administration in fingerprinting individuals who are required to have a fingerprint-based background check.

In the past, fingerprints have been taken by law enforcement agencies or private contractors. Many of these were done using the "finger rolling" technique which resulted in many smudged prints which had to be reprinted. IBT will have 21 fingerprint centers across the state to help expedite the fingerprint process by electronically printing and sending fingerprints through the DSHS

Background Check Central Unit (BCCU) to the Washington State Patrol. The new fingerprinting process will reduce:

- Time it takes to get fingerprinted
- Number of rejected fingerprints
- Workload for law enforcement agencies
- Additional time it takes to send fingerprints through the mail

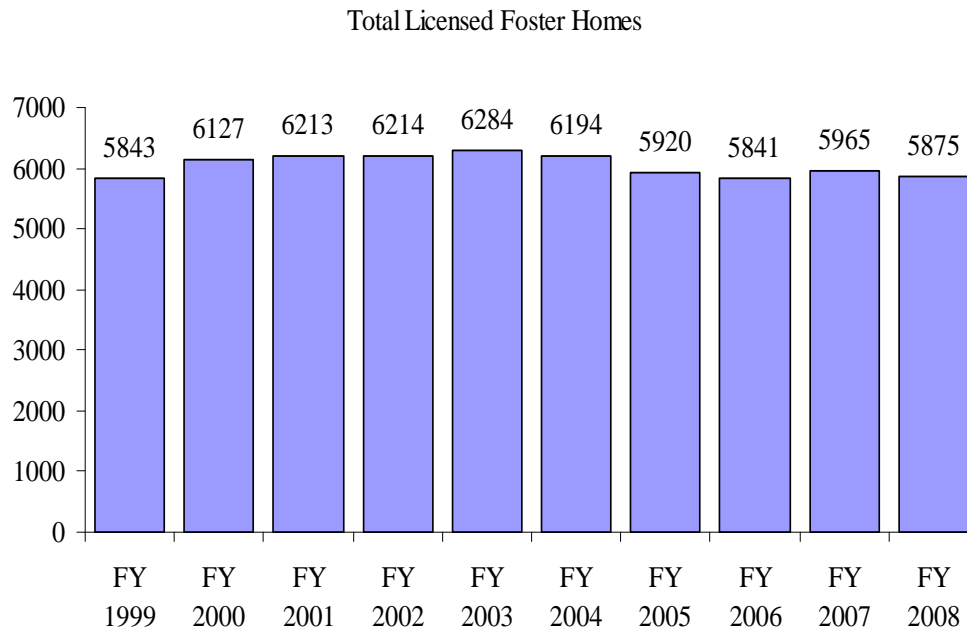
In FY 2008, 1,085⁷ new foster homes were licensed, a decrease from FY 2007. CA believes that the primary reason for this loss is due to the length of time it was taking to complete the fingerprint checks. The diligent recruitment efforts and collaboration among state and private agencies and improved licensing processes through the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) was responsible for the increase in FY 2007. We expect to see similar results again, in BY 2009, since the fingerprint delays have now been addressed.



⁷ Children's Administration Decision Support Unit; Source CAMIS Licensing download August 2008

Foster Home Turn-Over: Causes & Recommendations

The total number of licensed foster homes includes both the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) and private agency foster homes. The CA's pool of foster homes has remained relatively stable since 1999:



Retention

The licensed foster home retention rate shows relative stability over the last 12 years. The average rate of loss between the first and last year of the three-year licensing cycle has been 31 percent (69 percent of newly licensed homes were still licensed by Year Three). On average, 38 percent of licensed foster homes were retained into a second three-year licensing cycle (into a fourth year). The retention of licensed foster families has been relatively stable since 2000.

There are expected reasons for license closure and they are important in understanding retention challenges. These reasons include:

- The foster parent adopts the child s/he has been caring for;
- The specific child the foster parent became licensed to care for has returned home; and
- The foster parent's personal situation changes (e.g. illness, job change, family commitments).

Reasons for license closure that CA seeks to address include:

- Frustration with the child welfare system; and
- Challenges in coping with child behavior.

Children's Administration uses two key strategies to address these issues 1) training and 2) support.

Foster Parent Training

Foster parent training is an essential part of retention and support. Training and education provides caregivers opportunities to gain additional skills and knowledge to enable them to care for children in out-of-home care. Pre- and in- service foster parent training informs foster parents of system mechanics, helps them with self-care and provides key tools for helping children placed with them.

As Children's Administration implements Solution Based Casework, caregivers were informed and trained on the implications for them as well as for the children and families we serve. Foster Parents received training and support to be part of the team for children and their families in support of their on-going relationships. This training and support included family engagement principles and skills and supports of Solution Based Casework.

A majority of the training for caregivers is provided by the Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI). The staff offer training during the weekdays, weeknights and weekends to meet the needs of caregivers. These training are available to all caregivers, licensed and unlicensed, and are free of charge.

Prior to licensure or adoptive home study approval, families must attend mandatory training. PRIDE pre-service training prior to foster home licensure and/or adoption home study approval. Foster parents are required to take HIV, First Aid, CPR and Blood Borne Pathogens training as part of the licensure requirements.

Specialized Class Room Training

Licensed foster parents are required to complete 36 hours of on-going training within each three-year licensing period. This training is available through specialized class room training. The Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI) provides training on a variety of topics pertaining to parenting, caring for children, and includes required training courses for families caring for sexually aggressive youth or physically aggressive/assaultive youth.

On-Line Training

The Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI) continues to provide and develop specialized training available on-line to foster parents and caregivers to increase accessibility and access to training. Video workshops as well as interactive online training

are available. This allows caregivers to take courses at times that are most convenient to them. Upon completion of the training, caregivers are asked to complete an evaluation that queries their understanding of the workshop material and provides them with a Certificate of Completion. This training is available to anyone accessing the site at the following link <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/onGoingVid.asp>

Children's Administration contracts with Pierce College to provide additional on-line training courses for caregivers. Pierce College provides a wide range of training which compliments CA's training and provides an additional avenue of training options for caregivers.

Training opportunities are advertised through the following means:

- Regional web sites
- CA foster parent web site: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>
- Monthly newsletter sent to all caregivers
- Quarterly mailing of the foster parent training calendar to all caregivers
- Three-page training flyer provided to all social workers, caregivers and participants at meetings.

The following training was provided in FY 2008:

- PRIDE pre-service training
 - 184 classes provided to 3,644 participants
- First Aid and CPR
 - 225 classes provided to 4,198 participants
- In-service classroom training
 - RFTI training: 250 classes provided to 3,496 participants
- In-service on-line training
 - RFTI On-line Web Based training reached 8,984 participants
 - Pierce College on-line training classes reached 428 participants

Annual Conference

The Children's Administration, DSHS administrations and community sponsors support caregivers through the Annual Foster Parent and Caregiver Conference. The 2007 conference was attended by 585 caregivers and over 100 professionals. Over 35 workshops on behavior management, mentoring youth, listening skills and working with Individual Educational Plans within schools were offered. In addition, over 100 caregivers attended a one-day Education Institute the day before the conference.

Assessment of Training Needs

CA contracted with Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center for two surveys:

- A broad-based telephone interview survey of a random sample of 2,400 licensed and unlicensed caregivers (relative and non-relative). This survey focused on caregiver views on training, support, information sharing and participation in

planning and decision-making related to children in their care. Survey results can be found at : <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/general/fostersurvey.asp>

- A mailed survey to unlicensed caregivers was conducted in April 2007 asking them about their training needs. The unlicensed caregivers had the option to complete the survey on-line or by return mail.

The results of both surveys are used to identify training needs and assist in the development of training available for all caregivers.

Teamwork

The RFTI trainers support on-going outreach and support to caregivers by developing innovative ways to meet families' needs. RFTI Trainers teamed with their community partners to offer additional training and sharing of information. During FY 2008 some activities included:

- Expanding opportunities and invitations to unlicensed caregivers to attend all training by sending them regional flyers of upcoming trainings in each region.
- Teaming with community partners to offer additional training and sharing of information.
- "Video day" in local offices for caregivers to come and watch educational videos followed up with a facilitated discussion. Foster Parents receive training credit for viewing these videos.
- Supporting local recruitment and retention contractors by participating in support meetings
- Attending the quarterly regional and statewide consultation meetings with foster parents. These meetings identified concerns of foster parents and recommendations for developing positive outcomes.
- Participating in support groups for relatives caring for children not involved in CA, sharing information on resources and behavior issues.
- Developing a Spanish speaking Pre-Service Training, CPR/First Aid Classes, and materials in Spanish.
- Sending RFTI quarterly training catalogue to unlicensed caregivers inviting them to all trainings, free of charge.
- Inviting all caregivers to use the lending libraries maintained by the regional trainers.

Foster Parent Support

The Division of Licensed Resources staff continues to provide health and safety checks on ten percent of licensed foster homes each year. These contacts are an opportunity for CA to identify and provide individualized support.

Children's Administration continues to offer two days of respite per month to foster parents. A maximum of two weeks can be accumulated.

The Children's Administration contracts for support services through regional performance based contracts. Each contractor must develop a plan for retention that includes support systems for foster families and relative caregivers. These support systems fall into one of the following categories:

- A hub is one family at the center of several foster families facilitating monthly meetings and bringing the families together to share resources, ideas, respite and training.
- A support group is foster parents meeting together regularly to connect and network.
- A buddy system is the pairing of a veteran foster parent/family with a new foster parent/family. Sometimes, these individual pairings occur through a hub-type arrangement or support group.
- Mentoring partners an experienced foster parent with an applicant through the licensing process.

The number of support groups varies over time; on average, there are approximately 50 or more groups statewide. Each support group consists of eight to ten families. The support groups have been used to provide training hours to meet licensing requirements.

Additional contracted support providers are:

- **After Hours Support Line:** A statewide after-hours line provides resource information and referral and crisis support.
- **Foster Intervention and Retention Support Team (FIRST):** Neutral, third party support for licensed foster parents undergoing a DLR/CPS investigation is available 24 hours a day.
- **Contracts have been executed in the regions for critical support services to foster parents caring for sexually reactive children, physically assaultive children or children with other high risk behaviors via:**
 - In-home case management;
 - Short-term therapeutic and educational interventions using evidence-based practices, specifically Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Behavioral Chain Analysis;
 - 24-hour a day support for those homes receiving the services.

Additionally, CA creates and mails out a monthly Foster Parent informative newsletter is mailed to all foster parents, guardians of dependent children and unlicensed caregivers.

1624 Quarterly Consultation Meetings

ESHB 1624 requires DSHS to convene consultation groups to address and identify ways to improve communication between foster parents, Foster Parent Association of Washington, and Children's Administration. The purpose of the quarterly regional and statewide consultation groups is to improve communication centered on recruitment and retention of foster homes, effective foster parent training, and enhancing children's lives in care. Each region has selected two foster parents to represent their region at the statewide meetings. There have been 24 regional meetings and four statewide quarterly meetings since

November 2007. Regional meetings are rotated throughout each region and each region has an opportunity to host the quarterly statewide meeting.

Summary

Increasing and maintaining the pool of licensed foster homes is challenged by the emotional and financial costs of caring for children as a volunteer. In a world with fewer stay at home parents and where most families have complex, busy lives, fostering is often seen as out of reach. CA's new recruitment plan, Foster Parenting, You Can Too, is addressing this misconception with a targeted recruitment campaign.

Adoption Recruitment

Adoption is not a temporary arrangement between individuals; it is a lifetime social and legal protective measure for children. Adoption for many is not an easy journey; it comes with many unanswered questions, good intentions and is not for everyone. CA staff must have the skills to delicately handle difficult issues and in some cases assist families to understand that love is not enough and that perhaps adoption is not the best plan for them. Adoptive parents must go through an assessment that is often intrusive and requires dealing with difficult issues in order for the adoption home study evaluator to determine the fitness of the applicant (RCW 26.33.190).

There are many factors to consider when choosing a family that can “best meet the needs of a child” on a lifetime basis. It requires keeping the best interests of the child as the focal point of adoption. It requires making placement decisions with known and available information as to which family is the best fit for a particular child. CA uses a shared decision making process to match adoptive parents with children with a plan of adoption.

Adoption Recruitment Activities

CA undertakes a variety of activities to recruit adoptive families for waiting children. These activities include hosting consortiums, specific recruitment contracts with community partners, and the use of local and national adoption exchanges.

At the end of FY 2008, there were 2,042⁸ legally free children with a permanent plan of adoption. Over half of these children (1,404) are placed in the home we expect them to be adopted. 638 children according to data in CAMIS are not yet placed with a permanent family. In the past two years, CA has reviewed these children’s status. During this process, we learned that many of the children who were listed as not being in their home of choice in fact were placed with a permanent family. However, limitations in the CAMIS system do not allow this data to be updated until an actual placement move triggers the change. For those children who had been placed with their permanent family, there was no way to go back and activate the indicator showing the child is with the permanent family.

Adoption Consortiums

Adoption consortiums are often the first step in recruitment for a child in need of a permanent adoptive family when the birth family and the current caregiver are not a permanent resource. An adoption consortium is a staffing that brings together both state and private agency staff to provide information about a child or children, learn about waiting adoptive families and learn about additional recruitment options. These consortiums occur in all six regions and build relationships with community partners and inter-regional linkages on behalf of children. For some children this is the only level of recruitment needed; for those whom an adoption consortium does not result in a match, adoption exchanges are used.

⁸ CAMIS Legally Free Children Report July 2008

Local and National Adoption Exchanges

The Children's Administration contracts with the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE), to provide adoption recruitment through the use of local and national adoption exchanges. The Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE) is a Washington State only recruitment resource. WARE provides a secure website that is password protected for CA staff and private adoption agency staff to recruit and match children with approved adoptive families. This website provides current information on children in need of an adoptive family and on approved adoptive families.

WARE distributes a photo-listing book that is distributed to Washington State private agencies and CA social work staff who provide adoption services for children and families. The book provides a picture and a brief description of each child and is only accessed by social workers or families that have an approved adoptive home study. The children listed in the WARE book or on the WAREKids website include children that have a plan of adoption. Some of these children may not yet be legally free for adoption. CA staff is required to register all children who have a permanent plan of adoption and are not in an identified adoptive home.

During FY 2008 there were 213 new children registered with WARE for a total of 429 children registered during the year. During this past year, 167 children registered with WARE were placed with permanent families.

Children who are registered with WARE for more than 90 days and are legally free are registered with the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) website www.nwae.org which provides recruitment on a national level. NWAE served 139 new children for 269 children in FY 2008; 105 of these children were placed with permanent families, 36 are on hold with potential pending placements, 35 children were withdrawn, and 93 children are still in need of matching with a family.

Child Specific Recruitment

Children's Administration contracts with NWAE to provide comprehensive recruitment activities for children who need an adoptive family and for whom other recruitment activities have not been successful. NWAE subcontracts with six to seven private child placing agencies, forming a partnership to provide this child specific recruitment program, known as Specialized Adoption Recruitment Program (SARP).

Child specific recruitment includes gaining a full understanding of the child's needs through discussion with the current and past caregiver's including relatives, to determine if they might be a resource for the child. Focused, individualized and persistent recruitment can and does work for children who are considered the hardest to place.

In FY 2008, 67 children were enrolled in the program, 25 children were placed with adoptive families, 14 children had placements pending, 11 children were withdrawn at the

request and/or in consultation with social workers, and 17 children are still waiting to be matched with a family.

Child specific recruitment continues to increase the probability of finding a permanent adoptive family for children where regular recruitment methods have failed.

A breakdown by age for the 67 children served is:

Children in Child Specific Recruitment	
Age in Years	Number of Children/youth Enrolled
0-7	18
8-12	27
13-18	22
Total	67

Of the 17 children waiting to be matched with a family, ten children are between the ages of 8 - 12 years old and 4 are over the age of 13.

Purchase of Service

The Purchase of Service (POS) program continues to be a successful means for recruitment of adoptive families for hard to place children. The program was designed in the late 1980's and provides funding to private agencies in and out of the state of Washington to offset the cost of recruitment, training, transitioning and supervision of adoptive placements for eligible children. Eligibility is based upon the child being registered with WARE, and the length of time they are registered prior to identification and placement with an adoptive family.

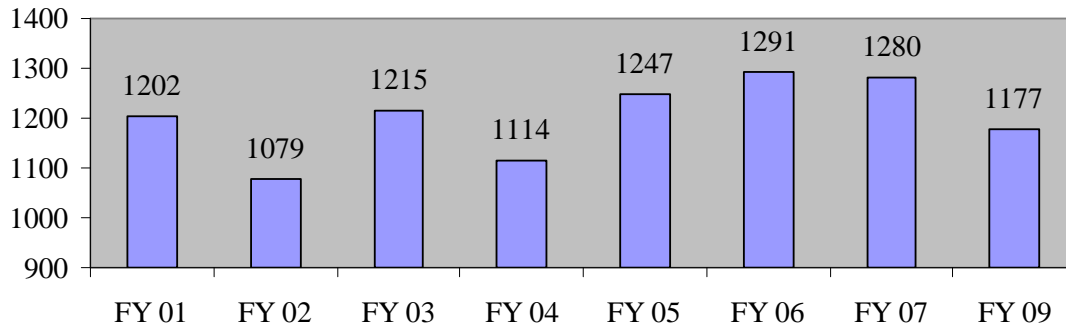
CA develops individual contracts for each eligible child placed. The contracts are performance based and allow for two payments, one for the adoptive placement and one for the finalization of the adoption. If a child disrupts from the placement, the second payment is not paid. The POS program is an avenue to access adoptive placements for children when an appropriate family has been located through a private agency in Washington State or nationally.

In FY 2008, 61 children were referred to the program which resulted in 43 specific contracts for adoptive placements. Four adoptions have been finalized during this fiscal year and the remaining children are pending adoption finalization.

Finalized Adoptions

The Children's Administration (CA) continues to make every effort to establish permanency for children unable to return to the care and custody of their birth parents through adoption, third party custody, dependency guardianship and long-term care agreements with foster parents or relatives. Permanency through adoption was established for 1,177 children in the care and custody of CA during Fiscal Year 2008⁹.

Finalized Adoptions



There continues to be a high number of legally free children, 2,042, in need of permanency, even though CA continues to complete over 1,000 adoptions annually. Reasons for legally free children remaining in out of home care are:

- Current caregiver has been identified as a potential permanent family but an adoptive home study has not been completed.
- Child and family may need services to stabilize a placement prior to finalizing an adoption.
- Completing the Child's Family Medical and Social Background, disclosure with the adoptive family is time intensive.
- Though recruitment efforts are underway a permanent family has not yet been identified for a child, youth or sibling group.
- Preparing and transitioning children into permanent adoptive families involves several factors. Including:
 - Age of the child or youth
 - Needs of the child (educational, medical, emotional)
 - Proximity of adoptive family to child's current placement
 - ICPC regulations and contracting issues
- Children are not ready for adoption due to mental health and/or behavioral issues
- Children with a higher level of needs and issues (emotional or behavioral) are harder to find a permanent family.
- Some youth and adoptive families are more frequently inquiring about the pros and cons of delaying adoption finalization in order take advantage of newly publicized

⁹ Children's Administration Decision Support Unit; Source CAMIS Placement Legal actions download August 2008

college assistance programs. Some program's eligibility is determined by the youth's age at time of adoption.

Summary

CA continues to focus on achieving permanency for children in foster care. In FY 2009, CA is striving to achieve permanency through adoption for an additional 399 children. To meet this goal, CA has allocated additional FTE's to increase adoptions and has received support from the union to contract out for adoption home studies in two regions. CA plans to continue the specialized adoption recruitment program that focuses on recruitment for youth where families have not been found through other recruitment venues.

Home Studies for Legally Free Children

The Children's Administration provides adoption services to many families throughout the year; the number of families receiving adoptions services is determined by looking at a point in time. In July 2008 there were 1,165 open cases to families receiving adoption services. Some children are adopted by families that had services provided by a private agency. Some children are placed with adoptive families that receive services through a private child placing agency either in Washington or in another state.

Adoption services provided by CA to adoptive families include:

- Completion of adoptive home studies, if one has not been done privately
- Child identification
- Transition support for successful placement
- Post-placement services to the child and family
- Assistance with adoption finalization and application for Adoption Support

Children's Administration goal is to complete an adoption home study within 90 days of a completed application. The actual amount of time it takes to complete an adoptive home study involves a variety of factors. These factors include:

- Completion of pre-service training
- Completion of criminal history background check including fingerprint check
- Completion of child abuse and neglect check in and out of state when required
- Completion of adoption paperwork
- References returned to the agency

Passport Program

Implementing the Passport Program

The Passport Program was established in 1998 and continues to be a collaborative program between the Children's Administration, other DSHS administrations, and the local public health jurisdictions statewide.

In 2006, new referral criteria were developed by CA, shifting the focus so that children birth to age 18 years, with existing complex health needs, receive a comprehensive health report through the Passport Program. This change was made to better serve children where the service was most critical and to develop consistency across the state. Since the inception of the program in 1998, each region developed their own criteria to determine which children received a "passport."

Operating the Passport Program

Current Referral Criteria

Current eligibility criteria are based on risk factors that identify children and youth who are in greatest need of the services of the Foster Care Public Health Nurse (FCPHN). During the first 30 days of placement, screening specialists review the risk indicators. If any of the risk indicators are present, the screening specialist makes a referral directly to the FCPHN who then determines if the child needs a comprehensive health report or other health related services. The child may also be identified at any time during placement by the assigned social worker, or caregiver, as needing the services of the FCPHN. After consultation with the FCPHN, a determination is made regarding eligibility for services.

Foster Care Public Health Nurse Services (FCPHN)

Foster care public health nurses are contracted to develop a comprehensive health report for eligible children. Public health nurses research and collect health information from birth to present for each child referred. The public health nurse provides a comprehensive report of the child's history, including results from the Child Health and Education Track (CHET) screening report, and a summary of the child's current health status. This report is provided to the assigned social worker and the child's caregiver, along with nursing recommendations, training/consultation, and anticipatory guidance regarding the child's health needs.

Specific responsibilities of the foster care public health nurse include:

- Identifying, gathering, interpreting and compiling all available health history information on referred children into the CAMIS Passport module (or replacement model)
- Alerting the child's social worker immediately upon identification of any significant health issues requiring follow-up prior to completion of the product
- Consulting with the social worker or care provider upon request when a health concern is identified or health-related information and materials are needed
- Facilitating assessment, education and referral to health services, as needed or requested

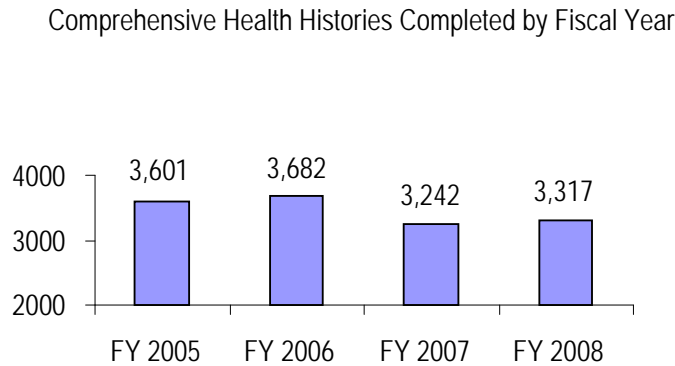
- Providing a signed health report and recommendations and all obtained medical records to the assigned social worker within five days of completion,
- Providing a signed health report and recommendations to the caregiver

The FCPHNs are regularly asked to help with medical record interpretations, researching or interpreting immunization histories, and providing health education information on a wide variety of topics.

Results

The changes implemented by Children’s Administration in FY 2006 continue to impact the number of enrolled children; however, the changes did help to better serve those children and youth who have identified complex medical and mental health needs. During FY 2008, there were 3,317 comprehensive health histories and recommendation letters completed. The average length of time to complete a comprehensive health report currently takes between 15 -18 hours.

The chart below provides information on the number of Comprehensive Health Histories completed for the past three fiscal years^{10 11}.



The Passport Program continues to improve the identification of children who can benefit most from the program. Although there has been a reduction in the number of children served; CA and the FCPHN are now providing services to the children most in need of the service.

¹⁰ Children’s Administration Passport Hand count

¹¹ Referral criteria changed in FY 07 data prior to this year reflects a broader referral criteria