

Report to the Legislature

Foster & Adoptive Home Placement

RCW 74.13.031(2)

December 1, 2012

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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 2012, CA activities related to recruitment and retention resulted in the following:

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

- There were 5,253¹ licensed foster homes during FY 2012, of which 1,040 were newly licensed.
- There were 1,458² licensed families of color foster homes at the end of FY 2012.
- 1,293³ adoptions were finalized.

(b) Reducing the foster parent turnover rate:

- Provided statewide support services through contracts with three private agencies: Olive Crest, Lutheran Community Services and the Foster Care Resource Network.

(c) Completing home studies for legally free children:

- Provided adoption home study services to 2,205⁴ families during FY 2012, all of whom will have a home study completed prior to the adoption being finalized.

(d) Implementing and operating the Passport Program⁵:

- Implemented the Fostering Well-Being (FWB) program to improve healthcare services for children in out-of-home care.

¹ Children's Administration Source FamLink Production Query Report (PQR) 863 - July 2012 Licensed Foster Homes

² Children's Administration Source FamLink PQR 863 - July 2012 - Newly Licensed Foster Homes

³ Children's Administration Source FamLink PQR 863- July 2012 - Adoptions Finalized

⁴ Children's Administration Source FamLink PQR 863- July 2012 - Finalized Adoptions

⁵ Passport is now called a Comprehensive Health Report

Foster Family Recruitment

Children's Administration (CA) endeavors to continuously strengthen, improve and diversify recruitment efforts to seek potential foster and adoptive families. We seek a diverse pool of safe, quality families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care, as well as families who are interested in caring for children of varying age, gender, large sibling groups and children with special developmental, behavioral or medical needs.

In May 2012, CA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for one statewide contractor to partner with CA in the recruitment and retention of foster families. Through a new performance-based statewide contract resulting from the RFP, we will emphasize and incentivize recruitment of additional foster families to care for siblings, adolescents, children birth to 3, medically fragile children, and to recruit homes that reflect minority populations.

Recruitment of adequate numbers of these resource families to safely meet the diverse needs of children and youth who must live in out-of-home care is a complex, demanding and on-going process. When potential foster families make an initial inquiry in response to a recruitment message, they have typically seen/heard the recruitment need approximately seven times before they respond. (This is the Marketing Rule of Seven - Northeast Ohio Foster and Adoption Recruitment Services). Recruitment not only involves activities related to family finding; it must include the development of a positive public perception for the agency. Children's Administration's (CA) policies, practices and resources must also demonstrate our agency values and supports caregiver families to be successful in meeting the daily needs of the children they care for.

Children's Administration utilizes contractors, CA staff and community partners to recruit across the three regions. In addition to recruiting for foster families to care for specific populations of children in care, recruitment strategies are designed to recruit resource families both across the state (in both urban and rural areas) as well as in the local neighborhoods where historical data shows the greatest number of children removed from their families and placed in foster care. The new recruitment and retention contract will provide consistency in recruitment issues and also will allow for regionally tailored, specific recruitment needs. Contract staff providing recruitment and retention work must be either current or former foster parents. These "ground troops" are located in their own communities across each region.

CA bases much of its recruitment philosophy on the premise that satisfied supported foster and adoptive parents make the best recruiters of other foster and adoptive parents. This philosophy will also be reflected in the 2013 Foster Family Recruitment and Retention contract.

CA strives to establish an effective, multi-dimensional recruitment strategy to encompass successful recruitment through general, targeted and child specific recruitment efforts. Recruitment must be ongoing, culturally competent tailored to safely meet the needs of the children currently in need of placement, as well as those who may need placement in the future.

CA will maintain an adequate ratio of licensed foster care beds to children in licensed foster homes. The Braam settlement requires that at least two beds will be available to safely place every child who comes into care. CA exceeded the benchmark for FY 2012, as it has done every year since 2001 (see chart below)

CHILD PLACEMENT CAPACITY

Month	Number of Licensed Homes	Capacity of Licensed Homes	Number of children placed in licensed homes	Ratio
(01)_JUL	5420	12051	4257	2.8
(02)_AUG	5408	12015	4230	2.8
(03)_SEP	5395	11964	4290	2.8
(04)_OCT	5388	11934	4307	2.8
(05)_NOV	5392	11932	4234	2.8
(06)_DEC	5388	11904	4064	2.9
(07)_JAN	5362	11829	4136	2.9
(08)_FEB	5355	11793	4201	2.8
(09)_MAR	5335	11722	4272	2.7
(10)_APR	5335	11707	4265	2.7
(11)_MAY	5333	11687	4330	2.7
(12)_JUN	5330	11661	4368	2.7
SFY12	5370	11850	4246	2.8

General Recruitment

General recruitment broadcasts the need for foster and adoptive parents by building public interest and awareness of the need for foster families. It focuses on drawing in a wide variety of families while setting the stage for more targeted recruitment. General recruitment is most effective when used in combination with other recruitment strategies.

In the Request For Proposals, responders were referred to propose a statewide branding and messaging campaign and they were told they could use the campaign described below or a different one that they proposed. *“Foster Parenting – You Can Too”* is the generalized statewide recruitment branding and messaging plan developed in 2007 and 2008. It is widely recognized in communities and builds upon a consistent message around the state. It is utilized in brochures and pamphlets and other

recruitment mediums. CA continues to use successful recruitment stories in the monthly recruitment Caregiver Connection newsletter.



All three regions celebrated National Foster Care Month in May, hosting events to honor and support foster parents, including foster parent recognition and appreciation activities, and foster dinners.

The 5th Annual “We Are Family Day” was held at Safeco Field May 2012, in partnership with the Seattle Mariners. Foster parents and others were able to purchase discounted tickets and were recognized at the game. Both CA and other private agencies set up recruitment booths at Safeco to hand out information about becoming foster parents. More than 1,200 people attended the 2012 event. Also in attendance were Denise Revels Robinson, the Assistant Secretary for Children’s Administration and Rep. Ruth Kagi, Chair of the House Early Learning and Human Services Committee. Youth in both foster and kinship care spoke at a pre-game ceremony, at which prizes were raffled off. A 16-year-old living in Kinship Care was selected to throw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Updated recruitment information is posted on the CA foster parent internet page. The Northwest Resource Associates (NWRA) handles calls and provides a consistent message and assistance to inquiries statewide. Through a contract with the Children’s Administration, NWRA has established an electronic system (the Statewide Recruitment Information Center), where potential foster parents can fill out an online questionnaire of interest and submit it. The questionnaire is automatically routed to the contractor in the appropriate part of the state, based on geographic information in the questionnaire. The contracted staff then contacts the potential foster parent and helps guide them through the recruitment process.

Approximately 300 electronic inquiries and 60 calls per month are routed through the NWRA system, which has been extended by contract to July 1, 2013. Changes to the contract will allow collection of more data to help inform the work of those working in recruitment and retention.

Targeted Recruitment

CA engaged in targeted recruitment to maintain children in their community or in the same school district. This is accomplished through use of the Family To Family “Neighborhood of Focus” approach, concentrating recruitment resources in those areas where the most children are removed from their homes and the fewest resources are

available for placement to keep children in close proximity to their birth families and their referral school, when it is safe to do so for each child.

Through the performance-based contract, the new contractor will focus on finding safe, quality families for the specific populations of children identified above, as well as emphasizing those neighborhoods where the most children are removed and the fewest resources are available. The new contract will reward performance by setting aside 20 percent of the contract funds for the achievement of specific performance measures outlined in the new contract.

Communication

Foster parents, other caregivers and community partners within the child welfare community served by the monthly Caregiver Connection newsletter produced by CA, which has grown in size since the first monthly issue in March 2004. It contains information about policies, resources and help available to caregivers. It also emphasizes the good work done by many people within the child welfare community through featured stories each month. It is electronically distributed to approximately 4,900 people and reaches about 76% of foster parents. It is sent out through a ListServ CA can use to communicate more quickly with caregivers.

Support Groups

Support groups and hub and spoke groups (one center family as the “hub” facilitating meetings with 8-10 other “spoke” families) remain the backbone of the support system and will continue to serve that role in the new contract. The groups are built and often maintained by the foster parent recruiter liaisons working under contract with CA. The groups provide time for networking, training, sharing of resources and advice and are community based. Small issues receive information and support in the groups, often by veteran foster parents mentoring newer foster parents on process of behavioral/emotional issues they have experienced with children.

The recruiter/liaisons who build and maintain the hubs also serve as the frontline to troubleshoot issues that may arise between foster parents and CA staff. As veterans in the system, they can help guide other foster parents who have questions or are working through difficult system issues.

Newly Licensed Homes

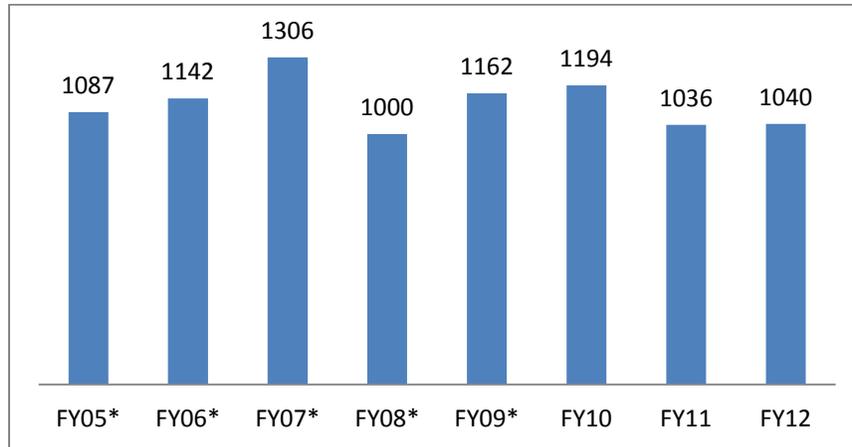
Recruitment of enough and the right types of foster families to meet the child specific needs of children who need out of home care is a challenge in Washington state and nationally. Washington State has similar challenges to those experienced nationwide:

- Some children in out-of-home care are presenting more difficult challenges for 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 70 percent of adopted children are adopted by licensed foster parents (this includes relatives who were licensed). Adoption is a positive outcome for children, but also presents a challenge for placement resources, as a majority of Washington’s foster parents often leave the system when the adoption is complete.

In FY 2012, 1,040 new foster homes were licensed.

NEWLY LICENSED FOSTER HOMES BY STATE FISCAL YEAR⁶

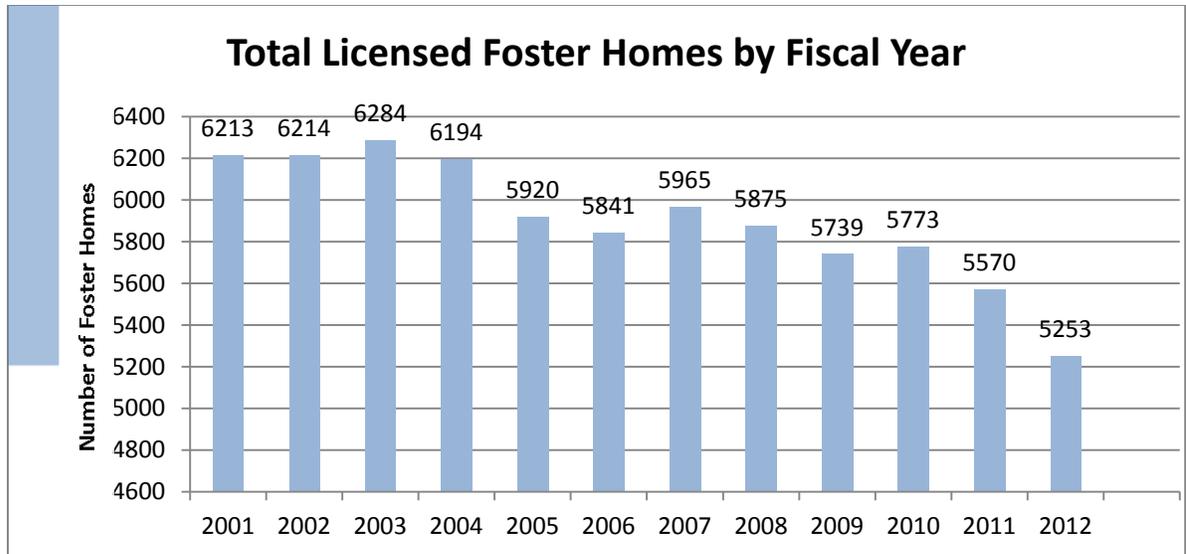


**Note: The SFY11 report displayed incorrect data for SFY 05 - 09. Counts of new foster homes from SFY05 - SFY08 included duplication. The SFY12 report corrects these errors.*

⁶ All counts re-developed 7/13/12. Source: Famlink Production Data Warehouse Data include DLR licensed, adoptive home and other provider types. Counts identify first foster home license date where application was not incomplete or withdrawn.

Foster Home Turn-Over: Causes & Recommendations

There continues to be fluctuation in the total number of licensed foster homes in Washington during the fiscal year. It is believed that some of the reasons for the fluctuation are due to the changes in the economy, environment and increases in relative placements, which are not required to be licensed. The table below represents the total number of foster homes licensed at the end of the state fiscal year.



Retention

The chart on the next page shows the retention of homes remaining licensed since 2005. The licensed foster home retention rate has been shown to be consistent through the first and second years of being licensed 97.2% to 94.4%. The third and fourth years the retention rate decreases significantly from 65.6 to 38.1. The largest contributing factor to the decline in the 3rd and 4th years is most likely due to the strong permanency efforts focus in FY10 and FY11 which led to a record number of completed adoptions (3,212) in a 2-year period for Washington State. The most common factor of families leaving the foster care system is after an adoption is finalized those homes no longer decide to remain licensed.

LICENSED FOSTER HOME RETENTION BY YEAR FIRST LICENSED⁷

FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12
1087	1029	880	713	467	385	326	212
100.0%	94.7%	81.0%	65.6%	43.0%	35.4%	30.0%	19.5%
	1142	1095	945	796	462	370	302
	100.0%	95.9%	82.7%	69.7%	40.5%	32.4%	26.4%
		1306	1233	1070	887	497	399
		100.0%	94.4%	81.9%	67.9%	38.1%	30.6%
			1000	967	837	693	387
			100.0%	96.7%	83.7%	69.3%	38.7%
				1162	1130	982	813
				100.0%	97.2%	84.5%	70.0%
					1194	1159	1009
					100.0%	97.1%	84.5%
						1036	1000
						100.0%	96.5%
							1040
							100.0%

Legend
1st yr
2nd yr
3rd yr
4th yr
5th yr
6th yr
7th yr
8th yr

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

- The foster parent completes the adoption or guardianship of a child in their home.
- The specific child the foster parent became licensed to care for has returned home.
- The foster parent’s personal goals change (e.g. illness, job change, family commitments).
- The foster parent did not respond to renewal notices and the foster home license is subsequently closed.

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) Increased and Enhanced Foster Training through Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, partnership with University of Washington and Eastern Washington University

⁷ All counts re-developed 7/13/12. Source: FamLink Production Data Warehouse where application was not incomplete or withdrawn data include DLR licensed adoptive home and other provider types. Counts identify first foster home license date.

2) Support, through 2012 recruitment and retention contract provider, quarterly statewide 1624 meetings, annual foster parent survey results

1624 Quarterly Consultation Meetings

Every quarter since October 2007, Children’s Administration (CA) has met to consult with foster parents and representatives of the Foster Parents’ Association of Washington State (FPAWS). The “1624 Consultation Team” was established in response to ESHB 1624 enacted in 2007. Based on an amended charter approved in 2012, the team was formally renamed the “Children’s Administration Foster Parent Consultation Team (CAFPT). The CAFPT team meets quarterly in two locations within each region (mirroring the old six regions); to ensure the foster parent voice is heard in all areas throughout the state, as related to legislative directive on issues, concerns and activities. At the regional meetings, nominations and elections identify two foster parents from six areas (totaling 12 representatives) to join with CA staff and two representatives from FPAWS at the quarterly state CAFPT meeting to discuss issues with statewide impacts. Due to continuing budget constraints, the quarterly statewide CAFPT meetings are convened through video/teleconference.

Two video/teleconference sites are located in each region for the statewide meeting. Audio conference calling is also available for foster parents who are unable to travel to the video/teleconference sites. Between statewide meetings two conference calls are held: one to debrief and clarify issues from the last meeting and one to build the agenda for the upcoming meeting. These conference calls also offer an opportunity to share information on issues resolved between quarterly meetings.

CAFPT meetings focus on identified issues to improve recruitment and retention of foster homes, effective foster parent training, enhancing children’s lives in care and the commitment to strengthen communications between foster parents and CA, and to identify and resolve issues of concern. At the end of 2011, team members produced a list of team achievements and outcomes since 2007 which included:

- The Travel Reimbursement Policy was clarified and a retroactive reimbursement period for foster parents was implemented for those who had received incorrect information.
- The Rate Assessment process was clarified and Rate Assessor positions were established in each of the regions.
- Multiple policies were reviewed, clarified and shared with foster parents.
- The Caregiver Connection, the monthly foster parent newsletter, and the Foster Parent Listserv have become essential and active resources in sharing important information quickly with caregivers.
- Collaboration with the Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI) has been enhanced.
- Successful teaming occurred with the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) to improve DLR/CPS investigations for foster parents in the development of the

brochure: *“Child Protective Services Investigations in State Regulated Care”* and in developing a pamphlet on frequently asked questions about DLR/CPS investigations.

- New efforts were implemented to ensure all caregivers have information about the important role they play in a child’s court hearings and shared planning meetings.
- Medical issues related to children in foster care were addressed to improve access, information and utilization for caregivers.

Currently the CA Assistant Secretary, the Director of Field Operations, the Director of the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), the three CA Regional Administrators and any others as directed by the CA Assistant Secretary, represent CA at the quarterly statewide meeting. State meetings are co-facilitated by a foster parent and a representative of CA.

Including the regional and statewide meetings and conference calls, 36 meetings are planned for State Fiscal Year 2013.

Camp to Belong

Camp to Belong is a non-profit camp that provides a five-day summer camp experience for siblings separated from each other due to foster care or other out-of-home care arrangements. The Washington camp is part of a national Camp to Belong network. The events at camp are designed to increase bonding between siblings to keep them connected in what will likely be their longest life relationship. Children’s Administration provides key financial and administrative support to help reconnect the siblings at the camp. CA works with its private partner, Foster Family Connections, which provides considerable logistical support, raises private money and directs the camp in August. In 2012, Washington sent 100 kids to camp at Miracle Ranch in Port Orchard, the largest number of campers at any of the Camp to Belong camps for the third year in a row.

Summary of Recruitment and Retention Activities

Increasing and maintaining a pool of safe, caring, quality 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. The approach of generalized and targeted recruitment, along with strong support of current foster parents, creates a multi-pronged strategy for successful foster care recruitment and retention.

Adoption Recruitment

On average, seventy percent of children in foster care in Washington who are adopted are adopted by their foster parents. Adoption is a social and legally permanent measure for children that provides a lifetime commitment; it is not a temporary arrangement between individuals. 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 very thorough and requires dealing with difficult issues in order for the adoption home 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
- Making placement decisions with known and available information
- Critically assessing a family’s willingness and ability to meet the child’s needs not their own needs
- Making placement decisions that are in the best interests of the child both now and in the future.

Not all families are able to be an adoptive resource for children. Prospective adoptive families must have an approved pre-placement (adoptive home study) report prior to being considered an adoptive family. Department staff uses many tools and critical thinking to make a recommendation of approved or denied. Using shared planning, the department makes critical assessments regarding the best interest of the child and prospective families.

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.

As of July 2, 2012, there were 1,296⁸ legally free children with a permanent plan of adoption. Over half of the children are in placement with a permanent adoptive family and are awaiting finalization of their adoption.

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

⁸ Children’s Administration; Source: FamLink PQR 863 - July 2012 Legally Free Children Foster and Adoptive Home Placement
December 1, 2012

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 three 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.

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.

The children listed on the WAREKids website include children where concurrent planning is occurring and those who may not yet be legally available 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 2012 there were 167⁹ new children registered with WARE for a total of 360¹⁰ children served during the year. During this past year, 157¹¹ 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 696¹² children throughout the fiscal year; this number fluctuates as new children are registered. At the end of the fourth quarter, 108¹³ children were placed with permanent families, 26¹⁴ are on hold with potential pending placements, and 125¹⁵ 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

⁹ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹⁰ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹¹ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹² Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹³ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹⁴ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹⁵ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

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 caregivers 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 2012, 47¹⁶ children were enrolled in the program, 17¹⁷ children were placed with adoptive families, 21¹⁸ children are still waiting to be matched with a family, and 5¹⁹ children were withdrawn at the request and/or in consultation with social workers.

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 children served is:²⁰

Children in Child Specific Recruitment FY 2012	
Age in Years	Number of Children/Youth Enrolled
0-7	8
8-12	14
13-18	25
Total	47

Children in Child Specific Recruitment in FY 2011	
Age in Years	Number of Children/Youth Enrolled
0-7	6
8-12	20
13-18	30
Total	56

¹⁶ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹⁷ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹⁸ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

¹⁹ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual report for Fiscal Year 2012

²⁰ Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE); Source Annual Specialized Recruitment (SRP) report for Fiscal Year 2012

Purchase of Service

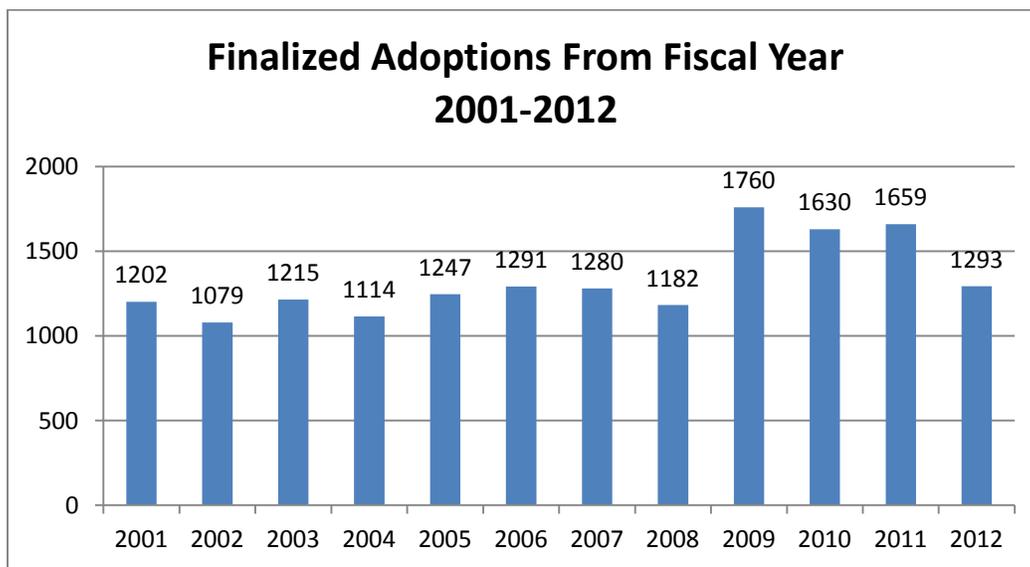
The Purchase of Service (POS) program is a successful means to pay for post-placement supervision for hard to place children placed with adoptive families until the adoption is finalized. The POS program was designed in the late 1980s and provides funding to private agencies in and out of Washington State to offset the cost of recruitment, training, transitioning and supervision of adoptive placements for eligible children. This program is considered adoption recruitment and is IV-E reimbursable. Child eligibility is based upon WARE registration, 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. Contracts are outcome 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.

In FY 2012, 59 children were referred to the program which resulted in 48 child specific contracts for adoptive placements. Seventeen children have had their adoption finalized during the 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 1,293 children in the care and custody of CA during Fiscal Year 2012. The decrease seen in finalized adoptions between 2011 and 2012 is most likely due to the strong focus on establishing permanency that began in 2009. The number of finalized adoptions for 2012 is consistent with the numbers from 2001-2008, prior to the permanency push.



There continues to be a high number of legally free children, 1,296 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.
- Prospective adoptive family is not willing and able to meet the specific needs of a child and a new placement needs to be identified.
- 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 and require more intense recruitment work to find an adoptive 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 college assistance programs. The eligibility requirements for some programs are determined by the youth's age at time of adoption.
- There is a continual fluctuation in numbers as children achieve permanency through adoption and new children are becoming legally free.

Summary

CA continues to focus on achieving permanency for children in foster care. There continued to be focus on permanency through adoption in FY 2012 that resulted in 1,293 children achieving permanency. The goal of the agency continues to be developing permanency plans that are in the best interests of a child. There have been several children in the past couple of years that have been waiting for adoption for several years and were able to finally have a family to call their own. Each child remains the central element in adoption decision making.

Home Studies for Legally Free Children

The Children's Administration provides adoption services to many families throughout the year; the number of families receiving adoption services is determined by looking at a point in time. There were 2,205 families that had an adoptive home study completed through Children's Administration in FY 2012. Some children are adopted by families that have 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, which requires making a critical assessment regarding an applicant's:
 - Willingness and capacity to meet a child's needs
 - Belief that a child will do well in life
 - Understanding of the impact of positive day-to-day experiences can have on a child
 - Character, suitability and fitness to parent a special needs child
 - Recognition of their own limitations and challenges in parenting a special needs child
 - Openness to be flexible and seek out resources to meet needs of child and family
- Child identification
- Transition support for successful placement
- Post-placement services to the child and family
- Assistance with adoption finalization and application for Adoption Support

The goal of the Children's Administration 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. The home study process consists of several phases, including:

- Information gathering
- Assessing the information you learn
- Review what makes you curious
- Address concerns
- What were the circumstances of the situation
- What did they learn, what changed
- When did they learn it
- Responsibility (owning up to their role in the issue)
- What would they do if the same situation occurred again
- Assessment of what you learned
- Evaluating what you learn that leads to a critical assessment and recommendation

The home study utilizes many tools to make the critical assessment, including:

- 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

Fostering Well-Being Program

Overview & History

The Fostering Well-Being (FWB) program is a collaborative effort between the Health Care Authority, the Aging and Disability Services Administration, and Children's Administration. Fostering Well-Being uses a person-centered health model to address the comprehensive healthcare needs of children in out-of-home placement and better aligns the department's resources to improve health outcomes for these children.

The Major Components to the Program

- Medical ID cards issued to all children in out-of-home placement within three (3) working days of placement notification.
- CHLD Profile Immunization information reports mailed to caregivers within three (3) working days of placement notification.
- Medical records requested for the last two (2) years for all children in out-of-home placement for more than 30 days and uploaded into FamLink.
- Fostering Well-Being program managers and clinical nurse advisors are available for care coordination as well as consultation with social workers and caregivers regarding individual health questions and concerns.
- Six (6) Regional Medical Consultants continue to be a vital link for social workers, caregivers, and local medical communities.
- Healthcare reports mailed to caregivers of children under age 13 within three (3) working days of initial placement notification. (Fall 2011)
- Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis & Treatment (EPSDT) or Well-Child Exam reminders sent to caregivers. (Fall 2011)
- Health education materials mailed to caregivers for children with certain health conditions. (Fall 2011)
- A single nurse is assigned to oversee and coordinate healthcare of medically fragile children in foster care.
- Complete case reviews of medically fragile children to ensure they are connected to on-going and appropriate health care services that address their medically fragile conditions.
- In FY 2011, the Fostering Well-Being Care Coordination Unit provided services to 869 children.