

**South Dakota
Department of Social
Services
Division of
Child Protection Services**



**Foster and Adoptive
Parent Diligent
Recruitment Plan 2024**



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Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

Child Protection Services (CPS) and the Office of Licensing and Accreditation (OLA) continue to share the responsibility of the recruitment and retention of foster families in South Dakota.

As of May 31, 2023, DSS had a total of 806 licensed foster homes. CPS and OLA continue to utilize the Family and Children Information System (FACIS) to inform the development of the division's recruitment plan for foster and adoptive parents. FACIS provides real time data such as age, gender, race, and tribal affiliation of children and youth in custody. The data is available by office, region, and statewide, allowing staff to have the data at their fingertips to analyze trends. The FACIS data elements have not yet been implemented to track when brothers and sisters are placed together or separately; however, this information continues to be tracked by the seven CPS Regional Managers. A needs assessment was conducted in May 2023 to determine recruitment needs for South Dakota's statewide recruitment plan for SFY 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024). A set of data elements related to children in care and available foster and adoptive families was gathered and analyzed across the state. Most of the information gathered was available through FACIS, although additional information about specific child needs and families available for placement was gathered by OLA and CPS staff.

Key considerations in recruiting families continue to be age and race, with 72.2% of the children in custody between the ages of 0-11 and 74.4% of the children and youth in custody being Native American, as of May 31, 2023. Native Americans make up 9% of the population in South Dakota, therefore creating a significant challenge to recruit an adequate pool of Native American resource families. As of May 31, 2023, DSS had a total of 89 Native American foster homes. Recruiting families for teenagers remains a challenge. Youth ages 12-18 are 27.7% of the youth in custody; 56.7% of these youth are placed in family settings. CPS and OLA continue to see a trend of youth placed in CPS custody due to mental health and behavioral needs their families cannot meet. It remains especially challenging to locate placement resources for youth discharging from group care or residential treatment. Families are needed with special skills in caring for children with significant developmental delays, significant behavioral needs, genetic disorders, prenatal drug and alcohol effects, drug-addicted newborns, and rare/complex medical diagnoses.

Targeted Recruitment Efforts

Children with Special Medical and Behavioral Needs

CPS and OLA have made efforts to increase the capacity of foster families to meet the needs of children with special medical and behavioral needs. Behavior challenges are the most common reasons foster or pre-adoptive parents request to have a child removed from their home. Trainings offered to foster families include the following: Trust Base Relation Intervention, Beyond Consequences, Conscious Discipline, and Adverse Childhood Experience & Trauma Informed. The training information will be given to families through their Licensing Specialist. Caring for children with medical needs can also be challenging for foster and pre-adoptive parents if they have not had prior experience caring for the child's specific condition, making it difficult to find and maintain a stable foster family placement. When foster or pre-adoptive parents are caring for children with challenging behavioral or medical needs, the family is provided additional training and supports to equip them in providing a safe, consistent, and predictable home for the child until permanency is achieved. The Department continues to advocate for placement stability through team meetings to identify specific supports for children with higher needs. Child

placement agencies provide treatment foster care services, including case management and additional in-home support for the foster parents.

DSS contracts with Lutheran Social Services providing ongoing annual training to include training on culture, child development, trauma informed care, and skills building for caring for youth with special needs.

CPS and OLA continue to collaborate with child placement agencies and private adoption agencies to facilitate recruitment and retention activities. The *Why Not You* recruitment collaboration meets in Rapid City. The collaboration is comprised of CPS, child placement agencies, and private adoption agencies. The group discusses placement trends as well as recruitment and retention strategies in these communities. The *Why Not You* group manages a Facebook page to provide information about recruitment needs in these communities and provides information about upcoming recruitment events. The Rapid City *Why Not You* group in collaboration with *Stronger Families Together*, Fountain Springs Church, and Ellsworth Air Force Base hosted a recruitment event on March 16, 2023. On May 6, 2023, the *Why Not You* group had a booth at the Farmer's Market in Rapid City. The *Why Not You* group, and Fountain Springs Church organized a picnic on June 16, 2023, in Rapid City for all area foster families. Families were encouraged to invite their friends and family interested in learning more about foster care. OLA and CPS also provided recruitment materials at the Child Maltreatment Conference on October 6, 2022. Recruitment materials were given to all current foster families at the time of their annual renewal home visit and their Licensing Specialist discussed the current needs for recruitment at that time.

Siblings

As of April 30th, 2023, there are 126 sibling groups of brothers and sisters statewide who have at least one sibling who is separated and placed in a different placement. This is compared to 141 brothers and sisters placed in different homes during the same time last year. The most common reasons that a sibling group may be split include:

- At least one sibling requires a higher level of care
- At least one sibling was placed with their biological parent
- At least one sibling was placed in kinship care
- At least one sibling is placed in a preferred ICWA placement
- There is not a resource available to take a large sibling group (4 or more children)
- Siblings need to be separated as one sibling is a danger to the other

However, the percentage of split brothers and sisters remains the same in SFY 2023 as it was in SFY 2020 & SFY2022, with a total of 36% of brothers and sisters split. Monthly assessments identifying opportunities to place brothers and sisters together are required in policy. CPS offers additional supports, including financial support, to assist families willing to keep brothers and sisters together.

Percentage of Split Brothers and Sisters in SFY2020, SFY2022, and SFY 2023

Region	2020	2022	2023
1	45%	37%	31%
2	33%	40%	36%
3	55%	41%	43%
4	52%	43%	46%
5	33%	27%	52%
6	22%	31%	32%
7	46%	36%	24%

Foster Families Race

SFY	Black	Native American	White	Asian	Hawaiian/Pacific
2021	2.4%	10.2%	86.1%	.97%	0
2022	2.8%	11.8%	83.6%	1%	0
2023	3.6%	11%	84.8%	1%	0

Native American and White are the two highest races' making up foster families in South Dakota. As of May 31, 2023, 11% of the foster families in South Dakota are Native American compared to 11.8% the previous year and 84% are White compared to 83.6% the previous year. There was an .8% decrease in Native American foster families licensed from SFY2022 to SFY2023 and a 1.2% increase in White foster families licensed from SFY 2022 to the end of SFY 2023.

Statewide Recruitment Efforts

Data from FACIS as of May 31, 2023, utilized to inform recruitment efforts follows:

Percentage of Children in Custody Statewide by Age Group

Age Group	0-4	5-11	12-15	16-18	19-21
Percentage in Custody	34.9%	37.4 %	15.5%	10.5%	.02%
* Percentage in Family Setting	100.5%	88.4%	63.8%	45.2%	0%

*This number does not include children and youth in trial reunification.

Gender of Children in Custody Statewide

Male	Female
50%	50%

Race of Children in Custody Statewide

Black	Indian	White	Asian	Hawaiian/Pacific	Hispanic
4.2%	74.4%	20.8%	.4%	.0%	6.1%

Tribal Affiliation

Tribal Affiliation: Number of Children in Basic Foster Home Placement

Sisseton Wahpeton	Standing Rock	Crow Creek	Cheyenne River	Lower Brule	Oglala Nation	Rosebud	Flandreau Santee	Yankton
36	40	28	62	34	112	141	0	37

Tribal Affiliation: Number of Children in Basic Foster Home Placement by Region

Region	Sisseton Wahpeton	Standing Rock	Crow Creek	Cheyenne River	Lower Brule	Oglala Nation	Rosebud	Flandreau Santee	Yankton
1	6	1	5	16	3	83	21	0	4
2	0	1	1	1	0	4	0	0	0
3	0	9	0	29	1	2	10	0	0
4	0	0	14	0	19	1	57	0	2
5	12	3	2	1	1	1	12	0	1
6	11	2	4	11	10	16	40	0	12
7	6	0	2	3	0	0	4	0	18

South Dakota is comprised of a diverse population of families from many races and cultures. Native American children and families constitute the highest percentage by race receiving services from Child Protection Services.

Five of the nine Native American tribes in South Dakota license tribal foster homes in their area. Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe each have IV-E agreements and license tribal foster homes. The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe has a Memorandum of Understanding with CPS to license foster homes.

Stronger Families Together

In May 2021, the *Stronger Families Together* initiative was launched to recruit and support foster parents in South Dakota. The initiative includes a focus to recruit foster parents who are able to support family connections and reunification efforts. It is the third year of the *Stronger Families Together* initiative and the following principles continue to be the focus.

- All children deserve to grow up in a family where they are loved and protected.
- Foster families are needed to care for children and support their families when they are experiencing challenges that cause the children to be unsafe.
- Encouragement, support, and services are needed for parent, kinship families, foster families, and adoptive families to provide the best care possible for children.
- Families are needed to provide children a safe, stable, and permanent forever family if they cannot return home.

The following entities across South Dakota continue to work together for *Stronger Families Together*. Governor's Office, DSS, CPS, OLA, South Dakota Kids Belong (SDKB), Tribal child welfare programs, foster and adoptive parents, foster care alumni, business leaders, faith-based organizations, private adoption agencies, and child placement agencies.

Stronger Families Together Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment strategies for year three include the following:

1. Continued messaging of the vision and call to action statewide via news stories, testimonials, websites, social media, and e-mails.
2. Monthly statewide activities, such as social media posts, are scheduled to highlight fostering and adopting throughout 2023 – 2024.
3. A yearly targeted recruitment plan was created with the collaboration of the *Stronger Families Together* steering committee which is reviewed monthly.
4. Targeted regional recruitment activities have occurred and will continue with faith-based and community organizations to provide outreach and up-close opportunities to engage potential foster families. CPS regions for this targeted recruitment are 1 (Rapid City), 3 (Eagle Butte, Mobridge, and Pierre) and 4 (Chamberlain, Winner, and Mission).
5. Recruitment Teams for Regions 1, 3, and 4 were developed to enhance community feedback and collaboration around foster care recruitment and retention.
 - a. The teams are comprised of members from CPS and OLA state offices, the local CPS and OLA offices, regional foster parents, South Dakota Kids Belong (private non-profit), local participants and representatives from the tribes. The recruitment teams meet monthly or as needed.

The goal for the *Stronger Families Together* initiative is to recruit 300 new foster families each year with a four-year goal to recruit a total of 1,200 families.

The Stronger Families Together initiative incorporates the following efforts:

- *Stronger Families Together Website*
 - Features information about the *Stronger Families Together* initiative with action steps for getting involved
 - Videos of people with lived experiences supporting the four principles of *Stronger Families Together* are highlighted. Throughout the year, more videos are added.
 - There is a link to the South Dakota Kids Belong website which highlights children and youth who are free for adoption but do not have an identified adoptive placement. These children participated in the *I Belong Project* through South Dakota Kids Belong which is described later in this report.
 - The website has been updated to highlight the upcoming foster and adoptive parent classes.
 - The website includes a message from Governor Noem expressing her support for the initiative and call to action for more foster and adoptive families in South Dakota.
 - 'Click Here' badge to commit to know more about becoming a foster parent, as well as other updates.

- Press Release Plan
 - The DSS Communication Team will continue developing press releases in the third year of the Stronger Families Together initiative to draw attention to monthly themes about the need for more foster and adoptive families in South Dakota and in conjunction with monthly recruitment events.
 - Executive Proclamations by Governor Noem were made for “Kinship Family Appreciation” month, “Adoption Appreciation” month, and “Foster Parent Appreciation” month.
- Social Media
 - Department of Social Services maintains a Facebook page and maintains activity several times each month by posting information to support the *Stronger Families Together* initiative.
 - South Dakota Kids Belong maintains a Facebook page and maintains daily activity with its followers by posting information about fostering and adopting, foster and adoptive family testimonials, and specific recruitment needs in South Dakota.
 - The Secretary of the Department of Social Services and Secretary of the Department of Tribal Relations recorded a video series to educate and support the tribal communities in the recruitment of Native American foster homes. This series was posted on the DSS Facebook page.
 - Social media posts guide the interested public to the *Stronger Families Together* website and a Commit to Know More link. The link is connected to the foster and adoptive parent inquiry coordinator so that contact with anyone interested in knowing more about foster care can be contacted for an inquiry.
- Collaboration with SD Department of Tribal Relations (DTR)
 - DSS and DTR collaboration to develop strategies of engagement with the nine South Dakota tribes for the recruitment of Native American foster and adoptive families.
 - The team has representation from DSS, OLA, and the DTR
 - The following strategies are currently being developed:
 - Development of Stronger Families Together brochures, flyers, posters, and retractable banners geared towards the Native American culture to be used in recruitment activities.
 - Social Media Strategies promoting recruitment of Native American foster and adoptive families. Currently DTR is reposting Stronger Families Together posts on their social media which has a Native American following.
- *Stronger Families Together* Newsletter
 - The first quarterly edition released in May 2023 to the Steering Committee, all DSS staff, tribal programs, and private placement agencies.
 - Collaboration between DSS, OLA, and other child placement agencies in SD.
 - Shows support and provides information for all foster and adoptive families across the state of SD, including families licensed by private and tribal programs.
- Public Service Announcements
 - From November 2021, through December 2022, South Dakota Kids Belong secured public service announcements to support the recruitment of foster and adoptive parents, the principles of the *Stronger Families Together* initiative.
 - The announcements were running on KSLT radio three times a day during peak listening times. KSLT is a faith-based radio station and has a large listening area

which includes Western South Dakota, parts of Wyoming and North Dakota. This includes Rapid City, Pierre, and Eagle Butte, SD which have an identified high need for foster and adoptive homes.

- The voices for the adds included Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden and Second Lady Sandy Rhoden.
- Faith-Based Presentations
 - South Dakota Kids Belong, CPS and OLA have been working together to educate church congregations through the *Belong Sunday Series*, about the need for more foster and adoptive families. During church services, South Dakota Kids Belong provides a sermon with a call to learn about the need for foster and adoptive families in their community and how they can help. A “next steps” meeting is held after the church service to provide more information and activate families who are called to start the foster or adoptive home licensing process. These efforts began Spring 2018 in the Northern Black Hills. The efforts have moved across the state to several other communities in the last three years, such as Sioux Falls, Yankton, and Pierre.
 - As of May 31, 2023, 64 churches across South Dakota have participated in the *Belong Sunday Series*.
- Wrap-Around Services
 - South Dakota Kids Belong is working closely with the faith community and businesses in Sturgis, Deadwood, Hot Springs, Custer, Rapid City, Aberdeen, Yankton, Vermillion and Sioux Falls areas to provide wrap around services to existing families. South Dakota Kids Belong plans to continue to expand wrap around services to all communities across the state.
 - Continued recruitment of wrap-around volunteers occurs at churches across the state as described above. Congregations are called to step forward and provide wrap-around services such as, babysitting, meal preparation, yardwork, and other acts of service for foster families.
 - As of May 31, 2023, there are 311 total wrap-around members and 27 wrap teams supporting foster and adoptive parents.
 - OLA is also identifying families going through the licensing process that would be interested in providing wrap supports for a current foster family. This allows the family a better introduction into foster care.
- Business
 - Businesses are provided an opportunity to support children in foster care, foster families, and adoptive families in their community in the following ways.
 - Helping current foster parents who are employees and educate employees to become foster parents.
 - Fulfilling a dream for a child in care or youth transitioning into adulthood.
 - Create an internship for youth who has or is experiencing the foster care system
 - Leveraging products or services to support foster parents.
 - Partnering with the *I Belong Project* and state-wide initiatives to recruit and retain more than enough safe, loving families in SD.
 - The *Foster Friendly* app was created to connect foster parents with businesses who aim to provide support to foster parents by offering goods and services at a free or discounted cost. The app is available for foster parents to download on iTunes and Google Play. A list of participating businesses is also available on the

Stronger Families Together website. There are currently 144 businesses participating in this across the state.

While each community in South Dakota has their own unique recruitment needs, there are similarities in placement needs statewide. South Dakota recruitment efforts target the following:

1. Native American families to care for Native American children.
2. Families to care for brothers and sisters
3. Families to care for older youth (10-18)
4. Families who can care for children who require specialized care due to behavioral, mental health or medical needs.
5. Families who are able to care for children and support their parents to achieve reunification.

Commit to Know More

The State contracts with a private agency, Lutheran Social Services, to carry out foster and adoptive family inquiry processes, foster parent trainings, and to conduct initial home studies. Through the contract, an Inquiry Coordinator responds to families interested in learning more about fostering and adopting as well as completes the inquiry process with families who are ready to start the foster home licensing or adoption approval process. Phone and e-mail contact information for the Inquiry Coordinator is listed on the DSS and Stronger Families Together websites. Families can also submit a “Commit to Know More” postcard on the Stronger Families Together website or fill out a postcard at a recruitment event to learn more about becoming a foster parent. When a “Commit to Know More” postcard is received, it is forwarded to the Inquiry Coordinator to respond and provide information. Families may also contact the local CPS or OLA offices to be connected to the Inquiry Coordinator.

There were 289 Commit to Know More Cards received statewide from June 1, 2022 – May 31, 2023.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7
88	19	27	34	25	117	36

An additional 272 families unfamiliar with *Stronger Families Together* called to ask questions about fostering or adopting from June 1, 2022 – May 31, 2023.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7
73	18	14	27	19	94	27

An additional 84 kinship families inquired about becoming licensed foster parents.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7
44	13	4	2	2	18	1

The FACIS inquiry screen tracks the referral source when families complete an inquiry to begin the foster family licensing or adoption approval process. The inquiry coordinator contacts all individuals who submit a Commit to Know More Card to provide additional information and answer

questions about their interest in becoming a foster or adoptive family. If an individual or family remains interested in starting the licensing process after the initial contact, the inquiry coordinator completes a more in-depth inquiry process between the agency and the prospective foster and adoptive family to determine next steps. The inquiry process was completed with 489 individuals and/or families in SFY2023 from July 1, 2022- May 31, 2023. The most common recruitment referral sources reported in SFY2023 from July 1, 2022- May31, 2023 included:

- DSS Staff: 36%
- DSS Website: 19%
- Foster or Adoptive Parent: 10%
- Friend/Relative: 6%

Reasons for foster family closure are also tracked in FACIS to analyze retention patterns. From July 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023, 220 foster families closed their foster care license. The most common reasons for foster family closure were:

- Family changes: 40%
- Adopted a child and no longer fostering: 29%
- Difficulty fostering: 10%
- Moved out of state: 6%
- No reason provided: 5 %
- Compliance concerns: 5%
- Retired from fostering: 4%
- Health issues: 2%

Training

South Dakota is comprised of a diverse population of families from many races and cultures. Native American children and families constitute the highest percentage by race receiving services from Child Protection Services. CPS staff are required to complete the Foster and Adoptive Parent training as part of their CPS Certification Training. The Foster and Adoptive Parent training curriculum includes information about respecting cultural diversity to meet children's needs and strengthen family connections. Six hours of training in cultural consciousness continues to be required as part of the CPS Certification training for newly hired Family Services Specialists, Licensing Specialists, and Supervisors. The training is facilitated by the Indian Child Welfare Act Program Specialist. The Department of Social Services also continues to provide Cultural Diversity training at the annual New Employee Day training held for all new Department employees.

Interpreters and Interpretalk may be utilized in each office, as needed. Interpretalk is a dial-in interpreter service that provides translation services in real time. Online foster and adoption training offer closed captioning for the hearing impaired. Lutheran Social Services Community Interpreter Service provides trained on-call interpreters in more than 40 languages and has 45 years of experience working with refugee and immigrant families. CPS and OLA also utilize American Sign Language interpreters as needed. CPS also had a staff member who speaks fluent Lakota and can assist with interpreter services when needed.

Cultural trainings are being offered to current foster families. Examples of these include the following trainings:

- Keeping Cultural Connections for Youth in Foster Care, presented by the ICWA Program Specialist
- South Dakota Public Broadcasting Workshop-Native American Resources presented by Education Specialist Steven Rokusek
- Language and Oral History Training presented by Sequoia Crosswhite, the Cultural Relations Advisor from the Children’s Home Society residential facility in Rapid City, SD
- Great Plains Tribal Leaders Health Board Trainings:
 - Indigenous Trauma Informed Healing
 - Ikotomi Story, “Calling Back Our Fathers”
- Medicine Wheel Training presented by Sharon Ward
- Indian Child Welfare Act Training presented by CPS Family Services Specialist Supervisor from Watertown, SD.
- Celebrating Native American Culture presented by Kevin Locke (Sioux Falls only)

Adoption Call to Action

South Dakota continues to implement strategies to recruit and match children available for adoption with permanent adoptive families.

South Dakota continues to utilize national adoption matching websites such as AdoptUSKids and Raise the Future to identify potential adoptive families who are waiting for children legally cleared for adoption and no identified adoptive resource.

CPS continues to partner with SDKB, a chapter of America’s Kids Belong, to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families. As mentioned previously, CPS has launched a statewide initiative, *Stronger Families Together*, to drive this effort forward. A Steering Committee has been established between CPS, South Dakota Kids Belong, private child placement agencies, tribal, foster/adoptive parents, and foster youth alumnus which meets on a monthly basis to discuss progress and next steps of recruitment and retention plans.

Permanency Roundtables is a strategy CPS began implementing in 2017 to address timely placement with a permanent family for children in out of home care. Progress related to this strategy is included in the Permanency Outcomes section of the APSR report.

Starting in December 2019, SD began tracking children with the plan of adoption, who have no identified adoptive resource. This information is reported by Regional Managers monthly. Demographic information is part of the tracking form, so data can be used to develop recruitment strategies matching the children who are available for adoption.

There are 96 children without an identified adoptive resource as of June 16, 2023. Thirty-eight children have been assigned to the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids recruiters and 167 children participated in an “I Belong” video shoot to assist with adoption recruitment since December 13, 2018. Permanency Round Tables has been implemented statewide. Region one was the final Region to implement Permanency Round Tables in their region. A skills training guide for new staff was created and implemented in 2023.

CPS is exploring possibilities for expansion of the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids program with the Dave Thomas Foundation. The Stronger Families Together initiative incorporated the following efforts:

- *I Belong* Project

- Gives a face and voice to children eligible for adoption and no adoptive family identified. South Dakota Kids Belong has put together a team to create videos of waiting children. The videos capture the child's personality, interests, and the child's input about their adoption plan. The videos can be used in a variety of ways, depending on an individual child and circumstances. The videos can be linked to the child's profile on adoption exchange websites, featured on the South Dakota Kids Facebook page, shared with specific adoptive families, or other child-specific recruitment strategies.
- The first videos were created January 2019.
- As of June 1, 2023, there have been 167 videos completed on children. Eighty-two percent of the children who completed videos in 2020 have been placed with potential adoptive families.
- First Virtual Adoption Fair held on November 1, 2021
 - 15 children were featured, all but three children were part of sibling groups.
 - 67 licensed adoptive families and 23 child welfare professionals were in attendance.
 - 17 families responded to the survey sent out at the end of the Virtual Adoption.
 - 9 of the families responded there was a particular child or sibling group they wanted more information on.
 - All 17 of the responses specific to the event were positive and expressed it was a good use of their time.
- Second Virtual Adoption Fair held on November 14, 2022
 - 13 children were featured, there was one sibling group of 3 children and the rest were individual children.
 - 25 licensed adoptive families and 30 child welfare and other professionals were in attendance.
 - 9 families responded to the survey sent out at the end of the Virtual Adoption
 - 6 of the families responded there was a particular child or sibling group they wanted more information on.
 - All 9 responses specific to the event were positive and expressed a desire to attend another Virtual Adoption Fair in the future.
- Third Virtual Adoption Fair held on June 12, 2023
 - 16 children were featured, all but 3 were part of sibling groups.
 - 19 licensed adoptive families and 27 child welfare and other professionals were in attendance.
 - Survey results have not been compiled yet.
- The plan moving forward is to hold the Virtual Adoption Fair annually.

Stakeholders from CPS, CPA's, adoption agencies, tribes, etc (include all involved) are involved in fidelity reviews and workgroups related to permanency practice.