



**FOSTER AND  
ADOPTIVE  
PARENT  
DILIGENT  
RECRUITMENT  
PLAN**

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**2025-2029**

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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, 2024, DSS had a total of 815 basic foster homes licensed. 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. 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. A needs assessment was conducted in May 2024 to determine recruitment needs for South Dakota's statewide recruitment plan for SFY 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). A set of data elements related to children in care and available foster and adoptive families was gathered and analyzed across the state.

Key considerations in recruiting families continue to be age and race, as of May 31, 2024, there are 70.7% (1,122) of the children in custody between the ages of 0-11 and 73.5% (1,167) of the children and youth in custody being Native American. According to the 2020 United States Census, 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, 2024, DSS had a total of 89 Native American foster homes.

Recruiting families for teenagers remains a challenge. Youth ages 12-18 are 29.3% (465) of the youth in custody; 61.3% (285) of these youth are placed in family settings. CPS and OLA continue to see a trend of youth placed in CPS custody due to developmental disability, 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 requiring specialized care due to medical, mental health, behavioral, and developmental needs. Behavior challenges are the most common reasons foster or pre-adoptive parents request to have a child removed from their home. 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. When foster parents require additional financial supports to meet the child's needs, the Department will provide a specialized monthly stipend for foster care. This specialized rate would require the foster parents to complete additional training related to the child's specific needs. If

the Department determines that the child needs family therapy to stabilize their placement, or if the child has medical, mental/behavioral health, education, social, cultural, or developmental needs, the Department will refer the family to appropriate community supports. These supports may include outpatient mental health therapy, substance use disorder services, targeted services for justice-involved youth, an individual education program, cultural resources, or developmental disability services. Additionally, the Department may refer the foster family to become a licensed treatment foster home, providing enhanced case management, crisis support, person-centered treatment, therapeutic and skill-building groups, counseling, evidence-based assessments, trauma-informed response and interventions, as well as 24/7 foster home support and consultations. The Department may also identify another foster family to provide experience or act as a mentor to the current foster home. 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.

CPS and OLA continue to collaborate with child placement agencies, private adoption agencies, foster families, South Dakota Kids Belong (SDKB), tribal child welfare programs, and faith-based organizations to facilitate recruitment and retention activities across the state. This collaboration is particularly focused on three regions with the greatest need for more foster families. More details can be found below on page six under the Stronger Families Together section.

Recruitment information was disseminated by members of local recruitment collaboratives at several community events in SFY 24 to include:

- Annual Nurse's Association in Aberdeen Conference on October 2, 2023
- The Center for Prevention of Child Maltreatment Conference in Sioux Falls on October 5, 2023
- Christmas Parades in Rapid City and Winner on December 15, 2023
- Lakota Nation Invitational (statewide basketball) in Rapid City on December 13, 2023
- Children's Day in the Capitol in Pierre on January 25, 2024
- Todd County Family Game Night in Mission on March 14, 2024
- Healthy Kids Day, YMCA, in Pierre on April 20, 2024
- Sinte Gleska University, community event in Mission on April 24, 2024
- Health Fair in Winner on June 7, 2024

## Siblings

As of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, there are 150 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 126 sibling groups of 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 is placed with their biological parent who is not caring for the entire sibling group.
- At least one sibling is placed in a kinship care placement who is not caring for the entire sibling group.
- At least one sibling is placed in a preferred ICWA placement who is not caring for the entire sibling group.

- 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

The percentage of split brothers and sisters increased by 1% in SFY 2024 compared to SFY2023, with a total of 37% 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. 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. Data regarding sibling placement was collected in 2020, but the Department did not start collecting this data annually until 2022. There is no data for SFY 2021. Percentage of Split Brothers and Sisters in SFY2020, SFY2022, SFY 2023, and SFY 2024:

Region	2020	2022	2023	2024
1	45%	37%	31%	41%
2	33%	40%	36%	50%
3	55%	41%	43%	35%
4	52%	43%	46%	42%
5	33%	27%	52%	28%
6	22%	31%	32%	33%
7	46%	36%	24%	32%

### Foster Families Race

As of May 31, 2024, of the 815 foster families the two highest races' making up foster families in South Dakota are Native American 10.9% (89) and White 85% (693). The remainder of the breakdown of race: Black 2.8 % (23), Asian .98% (8) and Hawaiian/Pacific .25(2).

Percentage of Foster Families by Race for SFY 2021, SFY 2022, SFY 2023, and SFY2024

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
2024	2.8%	10.9%	85%	.98%	.25%

The Foster Families race is pulled using the following alphabetical race priority:

1. American Indian
2. Asian
3. Black
4. Nat Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
5. White

When foster families are of different races, the family's racial identity is determined by the race

that comes first alphabetically. For instance, if one parent is listed as American Indian and the other as White, the foster family would be classified as American Indian.

## Statewide Recruitment Efforts

Data from FACIS as of May 31, 2024, 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
<b>Percentage in Custody</b>	35.3% (561)	35.3% (561)	18.2% (289)	10.8% (172)	.3% (4)
<b>* Percentage in Family Setting</b>	99.6% (559)	88.4% (496)	68.9% (199)	49.4% (85)	25% (1)

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

### Gender of Children in Custody Statewide

Male	Female
51.9% (823)	48.1% (764)

### Race of Children in Custody Statewide

Black	Indian	White	Asian	Hawaiian/Pacific	Hispanic
5.8% (92)	73.5 (1,167)	20.2% (320)	.4% (7)	.1% (1)	7% (111)

### 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
25	57	24	56	24	128	183	0	25

*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	1	9	5	16	6	101	34	0	1
2	0	1	1	0	0	3	1	0	0
3	1	11	0	20	0	0	11	0	0
4	1	0	11	0	12	1	62	0	0
5	9	0	1	2	0	1	12	0	0
6	8	1	6	14	6	18	59	0	9

7	5	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	15
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A total of 71 children affiliated with South Dakota Tribes are placed in licensed kinship care across the state.

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 have Tribal-State agreements to license foster homes on their tribal land and services area. They are the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and Crow Creek Sioux Tribe.

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 children and 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 can care for children and support their parents to achieve reunification.

### 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 can support family connections and reunification efforts. It is the fourth 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 SFY 2025 include the following:

1. **Annual Recruitment Plan:** A 12-month plan targeting the greatest recruitment needs in South Dakota is created yearly through the collaboration of the Stronger Families Together

steering committee. This plan is reviewed annually.

2. **Statewide Messaging Coordination:** The Department of Social Services Communications team coordinates the statewide messaging of the vision and call to action through news stories, testimonials, websites, social media, and emails.
3. **Regional Recruitment Workgroups:** Workgroups were established in the three regions with the greatest need for foster homes, based on the ratio of children in care to available foster homes. These regions were identified as Region 1 (Rapid City), Region 3 (Pierre, Mobridge, and Eagle Butte), and Region 4 (Chamberlain, Winner, and Mission). As of May 31, 2024, these three areas continue to have the greatest need.
  - **Region 1:** 5.2 times as many children as foster homes
  - **Region 2:** 1.3 times as many foster homes as children
  - **Region 3:** 2.5 times as many children as foster homes
  - **Region 4:** 5.2 times as many children as foster homes
  - **Region 5:** 1.1 times as many foster homes as children
  - **Region 6:** 1.2 times as many children as foster homes
  - **Region 7:** 1.2 times as many children as foster homes

These teams comprise members from CPS and OLA state offices, local CPS and OLA offices, regional foster parents, South Dakota Kids Belong (private non-profit), community participants, and tribal representatives. The recruitment teams meet monthly or as needed.

4. **Community Collaborations:** Faith-based, business, and nonprofit organizations collaborate with Stronger Families Together to provide outreach and engagement opportunities about foster parenting needs through their existing community relationships.

The Stronger Families Together initiative incorporates the following efforts:

- Stronger Families Together Website.
  - Initiative Overview: Features comprehensive information about the Stronger Families Together initiative, including actionable steps for getting involved.
  - Business Engagement: Offers a tab for business leaders to support their communities and foster families by becoming partners in aiding foster families and children in foster care.
  - Faith Community Involvement: Provides opportunities for faith communities to recruit, retain, and maintain relationships with current and prospective foster and adoptive families.
  - Wrap Around Services Recruitment: Encourages those who may not be ready to become foster parents to support current foster families through services such as providing car repairs, temporary childcare, mentorship, or lawn care.
  - Updated Activation postcard: The activation postcard now reads “To learn more about foster parenting” instead of “Commit to know more.”
  - Lived Experience Videos: Highlights videos of individuals with lived experiences, supporting the four principles of the initiative.
  - Contact Information: Contact details for tribes and child placement agencies who license foster homes are available through the navigation tabs.
  - Adoption Resources: Includes a link to the South Dakota Kids Belong website, showcasing children and youth eligible for adoption who lack identified placements.

- Monthly Updates: The website is updated monthly to feature upcoming foster and adoptive parent classes, along with other necessary updates.
- Governor’s Message: Features a message from Governor Noem expressing her support for the initiative and a call to action for more foster and adoptive families in South Dakota.
- Press releases and news stories
  - The DSS Communication Team develops press releases and collaborates with news media 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 are made for “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.
  - Governor Kristi Noem frequently shares posts on her social media platforms, as well as other state and private agencies which increases the reach of the Stronger Families Together messaging.
  - 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.
  - Social media posts guide the interested public to the Stronger Families Together website and a” Learn More about Foster Parenting” 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.
- 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 Oglala Sioux Tribe, and the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe had representation on the team for a time, ending when the people resigned from their positions with their tribes.
  - In SFY 2024, this team developed Stronger Families Together brochures, flyers, posters, and retractable banners geared towards the Native American culture to be used in recruitment activities.
  - Members of the workgroup make ongoing efforts through phone calls, email, and in-person meetings to engage the tribes to appoint representation to this workgroup with DTR, as well as other foster parent recruitment workgroups.
  - 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.
  - Informing and educating the SD tribal communities about the need for more Native American foster families. Hosting recruitment events on and off tribal lands at Native American community events.
  - On September 26, 2023, the DSS and tribes attended the training, ‘Recruitment and Retention of ICWA Preferred Homes’ with national expert, Denise Goodman.
- Public Service Announcements
  - From January 2024, to present, 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 are running on South Dakota Public Broadcasting (SDPB) radio during the 'In the Moment' segment. SDPB is heard throughout the state of South Dakota.
- Foster Parent Tool Kit
  - This is a new recruitment strategy which began in May 2024.
  - A tool kit was developed to equip foster families with the necessary tools and resources to effectively share their experiences, inspire others, and support the recruitment process.
  - The objective is to increase the number of qualified foster families within who share the SFT principals, thus contributing to the growth and sustainability of our foster care community while ensuring the welfare of children in need.
  - The following outcomes are identified to measure progress:
    - An increase in foster/adoptive inquiry numbers
    - An increase in class size of the foster/adoptive parent preservice classes
    - An increase in the number of newly licensed Foster/Adoptive families
    - An increase in Wrap services to support foster families
  - A pilot includes nine families (4514 foster parents) from Region 1, the Rapid City area. Each foster parent received specialized training by the licensing supervisor.
  - On May 27, 2024, the identified foster parents were provided the tool kit which includes promotional recruitment material such as t-shirts, scripts, and business cards to assist foster parents in recruitment efforts.
  - The identified foster parents were provided training in the use of the tool kit along with the identified outcomes to achieve.
  - Quarterly meetings with the foster parents are being held to provide input about the utilization of the tool kit.
  - Progress of this new recruitment strategy will be included in the SFY 2025 APSR.
- Stronger Families Together Newsletter
  - In May 2023, the first quarterly Stronger Families Together newsletter was released. It is shared with the SFT Steering Committee, OLA and CPS staff, tribal programs, and private placement agencies, and distributed to all South Dakota foster families.
  - The newsletter shows support and provides information for all foster and adoptive families across the state of SD, including families licensed by private and tribal programs. Each newsletter highlights the national awareness month the release corresponds to, such as November's, National Adoption Awareness month. It also features a local foster parent, child welfare staff, fostering tips, links to resources

such as the Children's Welfare Information Gateway, and upcoming community trainings.

- Faith-Based Presentations
  - *Foster Friendly Churches*: As of May 31, 2024, there are 13 churches promoted as foster friendly. These churches implement best practices for the recruitment and retention of foster families and are listed in the Foster Friendly App. Foster families can use the app to find these supportive churches in their community.
  - *Foster Friendly Sundays*: As of May 31, 2024, 51 churches across the state have committed to raising awareness about children in foster care. These churches encourage their congregations to engage in the mission of caring for vulnerable children.
- 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, 2024, there are 378 total wrap-around members and 27 wrap teams supporting foster and adoptive parents.
  - The wrap experience provides an introduction to foster care; therefore, wrap-around volunteers are often recruited to become licensed foster parents.
- Foster Friendly Business
  - Businesses and non-profits 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.
  - 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 274 businesses participating in this across the state.
- Youth Bureau of Speakers
  - During this report year, DSS has worked to implement a Youth Bureau of Speakers program to establish, empower and equip youth alumni to confidently and effectively share their lived experiences, insights, and success stories related to their journey through the foster care system. This platform is to provide youth speakers to inspire, educate, and create awareness among stakeholders, service providers, and the community, ultimately foster a more understanding and supporting environment for current foster youth and contributing to the recruitment of more foster families for teenagers.

- During all Independent Living events to include the workshops and workgroup meetings, there has been discussions with youth and supportive adults on how utilize the youths lived experiences to help recruit foster providers for teenagers through in-person presentations, videos, and the use of social media.
- Throughout the report year, there have been meetings with the Stronger Families Program Specialist, Lutheran Social Services (Community Resource staff) and the Independent Living Specialist to brainstorm event ideas for the Youth Bureau of Speakers. The following events will continue to be ongoing goals and action steps for the upcoming year:
  - Luncheon with Legislatures
  - Presentation to DSS Supervisors and Management
  - Presentation at DSS New Employee training
  - Presentation at a Foster Parent Association meeting
  - Presentation at other private child placement agencies
  - Videos for the Stronger Families website and
  - Pictures and short videos for the Stronger Families social media
- In January 2024, three Young Voices members presented their lived experience to the South Dakota Association of Youth Care Providers (SDAYCA) and have been invited to present to a larger audience on May 10, 2024, to include the SDAYCA, DSS leadership, the Division of Behavioral Health and SD legislators. Four young adults have been recruited for this and future events.
- Also in January 2024, the Independent Living Program Specialist included an article in the Stronger Families Together Newsletter. The theme for the newsletter was 'caring for older youth.' The article highlighted a young man who grew up in the South Dakota foster care system and about his foster providers who provided him support through respite care and who have maintained an ongoing positive connection and support to him through his adult years.

## Learn More About Foster Parenting

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 website. Families can also submit a “Learn More About Foster Parenting” 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 the 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.

The number of individuals and families interested in becoming a licensed foster family has steadily increased from 2022 to 2024. In 2022, there were 609 families who expressed interest in becoming licensed and in 2024, 919 families expressed interest.

More specifically, 467 Learn More about Foster Parenting cards were received statewide from June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024. An additional 371 families unfamiliar with Stronger Families Together called to ask questions about fostering or adopting from June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024. An additional 81 kinship families inquired about becoming licensed foster parents.

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 Learn More about Foster Parenting” 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 359 individuals and/or families in SFY2024 from July 1, 2023- May 31, 2024.

Out of the 359 inquiries below is the breakdown of referral sources:

- DSS Staff: 35% (125)
- Foster or Adoptive Parent: 18% (66)
- DSS Website: 15% (52)
- Friend/Relative: 9% (34)
- Other: 23% (82)  
(Social Media, Adopt Us Kids, South Dakota Kids Belong, ICPS, Other Child Placement Agency)

The average number of days in 2024 from application to licensure was 122 days. We are currently working to enhance systems to capture data throughout the licensing process. This enhancement will allow us to better evaluate the effectiveness across each step of the licensure process.

## Foster Parent Closure

Reasons for foster family closure are also tracked in FACIS to analyze retention patterns. From July 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024, out of all the foster homes licensed, 163 foster families closed their foster care license.

Out of the 163 families below is the breakdown of closure reasons:

- Family changes: 39% (64)
- Adopted a child and no longer fostering: 33% (53)
- Difficulty fostering: 10% (17)
- No reason provided: 6% (10)
- Moved out of state: 5% (8)
- Compliance concerns: 4% (6)
- Health Issues 2% (3)
- Retired from fostering: 1% (2)

The closure data is gathered through exit interviews between the foster family and the Licensing Specialist at the time of closure. The state tracks closure reasons for each fiscal year. Over the last three years, family changes (42%) continue to be the highest reason for closing a license

followed by adopting a child (25%) as the reason for closing their license. Families have an opportunity to complete an exit survey when they close their license and provide additional information including how to improve of the process.

### Foster Parent and Staff Training

DSS contracts with Lutheran Social Services to provide both prelicensure and post-licensure training for foster and adoptive families. The licensure process does not require fees from any individual. Trainings support foster families to take placements of children requiring specialized care. The following themes are including in training: child development, trauma informed care, meeting developmental needs of children surrounding attachment and loss, techniques of managing behaviors, medication management, and culture.

Families are also offered the following trainings: Trust Base Relation Intervention (TBRI), Beyond Consequences, Conscious Discipline, and Adverse Childhood Experience & Trauma Informed. All post-licensure training is given to the families through their Licensing Specialist. The Licensing Specialist works with the family to determine individual training needs depending on the family's knowledge, skills, and the special needs of the children they are caring for. Trainings are offered across the state in a variety of ways including in person, eLearning, and some blended models.

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.

Cultural trainings currently offered to foster families include the following:

- Cultural Competency Training Services, training is provided by LSS through the WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project:
  - Part 1- Relating to Norms
  - Part 2- Understanding Values
- Cultural Language Arts Network Classes
  - Intro Dakota – taught by Summer Dumarce
  - Intermediate Dakota- taught by Dawi Huhu Maza
- Positive Indian Parenting Classes
- Indian Child Welfare Act Training presented by CPS Family Services Specialist Supervisor from Watertown, SD.

Propio ONE is an interpreter service utilized by CPS and contract staff when working with a person who speaks another language. Propio ONE allows access to audio and video on-demand interpreting. Propio ONE has 350+ remote interpreting languages. Access to both audio and video for both spoken languages and American Sign Language (ASL) are available. Online foster and adoption training offer closed captioning for the hearing impaired. Lutheran Social Services Community Propio ONE 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 utilizes staff fluent in Lakota language, when available, to assist with interpreter services when needed.

## Adoption Recruitment

South Dakota continues to implement strategies to recruit and match children available for adoption with permanent adoptive families. 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 98 children without an identified adoptive resource as of June 24, 2024. 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 South Dakota Kids Belong (SDKB), a chapter of America's Kids Belong, to recruit adoptive families for specific children. The "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. 199 children participated in an "I Belong" video shoot to assist with targeted adoption recruitment since December 13, 2018. This encompasses the use of high-quality videography and photography, to focus on the strengths and needs of youth and show case their individual personalities. 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, 2024, there have been 199 videos completed on children. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the children who completed videos in 2020 have been placed with adoptive families.

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. Permanency Round Tables has been implemented statewide. A skills training guide for new staff was created and implemented in 2023.

Approximately 35-40 children are consistently assigned to the two full-time Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption recruiters available to CPS. The Wendy's Wonderful Kids is a national program established by the Dave Thomas Foundation; a non-profit organization committed to increasing adoptions of children in foster care waiting to be matched with an adoptive family. Wendy's Wonderful Kids supports the hiring of specialized adoption recruiters who are dedicated to finding permanent families for children in foster care. Target youth are teenagers, children with special needs, and sibling groups. Wendy's Wonderful Kids uses an evidence based, child focused recruitment model to find an adoptive for each child matched with the child's individual needs. The two current Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption recruiter positions are employed by Children's Home Society with additional funding provided by the Dave Thomas Foundation and the

Department of Social Services. CPS is exploring possibilities for expansion of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program with the Dave Thomas Foundation.

With the aim of introducing approved adoptive families to the children that have a plan of adoption and no identified adoptive family, CPS hosted four Virtual Adoption Fair events. The first event was held on November 1, 2021; a second event held on November 14, 2022; a third event held on June 12, 2023; and a fourth event held on November 6, 2023. For each event, each of the seven CPS regions selected youth to present to adoptive families in South Dakota. A virtual presentation was created with adoption caseworkers presenting information on the children with pictures, videos, and descriptions by their adoption caseworkers and those who know the child(ren) well. These presentations allowed the children's personalities to come through and give the child(ren) an opportunity to share information about themselves and their interests. The events shared information about the adoption process and resources available to assist families adopting children with special needs. All approved South Dakota foster and adoptive families were invited to attend, as well as families approved through other private adoption agencies. These Virtual Adoption Fairs have been held each year since its inception. The number of children presented at these events ranged from 13 to 22 children, per event and included brothers and sisters who have a plan to be adopted together. One hundred thirty-three (133) families attended the four events. The number of adoptive families attending started with 67 families at the first event and declined over time with the most current event hosting 22 families. Families were sent a survey after each event to provide opportunity to inquiry about specific children and provide input about the event. Fifty-five (55) of 133 or 41% responded to the survey. Of the responses, all were positive, and families expressed the event was beneficial for them. Thirty-five (35) or 26% responded with interest in learning more about a child featured on the Virtual Adoption Fair event. To date, there have been no children solely matched and placed successfully with an adoptive family because of the Virtual Adoption Fair. However, efforts are currently underway to evaluate how adoptive families can access this information presented at the event in a manner which is consistent with their needs. The aim is that families will be able to access the information on demand and not have to wait for a scheduled biannual event.

Other means of recruitment will be explored to gather alternative methods of recruitment for adoptive children. Stakeholders from CPS, CPA's, adoption agencies, tribes, etc. (include all involved) are involved in fidelity reviews and workgroups related to permanency practice.