



Updated FFY 2025-2029 Child and
Family Services Plan
Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent
Recruitment Plan

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**Health and
Human Services**

Background

In 2023, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded the statewide contract for the Recruitment, Retention, Training and Support for Resource families (RTS) to one agency: Four Oaks Family and Children's Services Iowa. HHS is now in their third year of the contract with Four Oaks Family and Children's Services Iowa.

The contracted provider is responsible for the following activities:

- Provide services to recruit and retain resource families that are available to be successfully matched with children who need out-of-home care with a licensed foster family or an approved adoptive family, including support throughout the foster family licensing, re-licensing, adoption approval process, post subsidized guardianship, and adoption processes.
- Coordinate with non-licensed caregivers including relatives to become licensed foster families.
- Provide training required for foster families to receive and maintain their foster home license, and trainings for adoptive parents, kin, and fictive kin caregivers.
- Match children who are placed into care with a resource family that has the skills, training, and ability to meet the children's needs.
- Develop and administer a support program for resource families ensuring that each resource family has a caseworker to contact for all services provided to resource families.
- Develop specialized services to increase statewide capacity to serve teens and those transitioning to adulthood including:
 - Creating and utilizing recruitment material focusing on recruiting families to care for teens.
 - Partnering with Iowa Aftercare and Achieving Maximum Benefits (AMP) which endorse and support fostering teens.
- Maintain a connection to post-subsidized guardianship and post-adopt families, including outreach, supports and services.
- Develop specific plans that include strategies and numerical goals for each of Iowa's five service areas based on the needs of the service area for the following criteria:
 - Families that reflect the race and ethnicity of the children in care in the service area;
 - Families who can take sibling groups of two or more;
 - Families who can parent older children, especially teens;
 - Families who are geographically located to allow children to remain in their neighborhoods and schools;
 - Families who have the skills to care for children who exhibit difficult behaviors or have significant mental health, behavioral, developmental, or medical needs;
 - Families who can provide a continuum of care including respite, short term placements, transitioning children to permanency and adoption;
 - Families who will mentor and work collaboratively with birth parents; and
 - Families who understand the importance of maintaining a child's connections to their family, school, community, and culture and will help maintain those connections.
- Utilize a specialized caseworker model which positions the contractor to select and train staff to roles that meet the individual's interest and ability, and allows staff to be accessible, specially trained, and dedicated where they are needed the most – working directly with the family. The specialized caseworker model will have four distinct program components:

- Recruitment and Retention, Inquiry and Training
- Licensing
- Support
- Centralized Statewide Matching
- Conducting licensing activities for applicants (general/kin/fictive kin), foster families and approval activities for adoptive families including:
 - Providing orientation sessions for interested families;
 - Providing pre-service National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC);
 - Completing all background checks according to state and federal law;
 - Completing an initial home study and all other required paperwork; and
 - Completing renewal activities and updating home studies.
- Providing matching services for children in need of foster home placement. The contractor developed a Centralized Statewide Matching System with a single point of referral. Matching criteria is established based on the needs of each child but may include:
 - Keeping children close to their parents and family members;
 - Keeping siblings together;
 - Keeping children in their home school and neighborhood;
 - The family's ability to parent older children;
 - The family's ability to meet the child's cultural needs;
 - The family's ability to meet the child's emotional and behavioral needs; or
 - The child's permanency goal.
- Providing support services to foster families and pre-adoptive families. The contract requires providers' staff to:
 - Assign one caseworker to a foster family to provide supportive services.
 - Is the family's primary contact for questions and when a need or concern arises.
 - Monitors compliance with rules and corrective action plans to come into compliance when needed.
 - Monitors training completion.
 - Visit a family within 5 days of the first time a child is placed in their home;
 - Contact each family within 3 days of the arrival of a new child;
 - Hold complete and purposeful face-to-face contact every month for a minimum of 30 minutes in length and phone contact each month for a minimum of 10 minutes in length with each resource family and their assigned caseworker when a child is in the home. At least one face-to-face visit each quarter shall include some or all the children placed in the home to observe, coach, and mentor the resource family.
 - Hold complete and purposeful face-to-face contact on a bi-monthly basis for a minimum of 30 minutes in length and virtual or phone contact each month for a minimum of 10 minutes in length in between with each licensed resource family and their assigned support caseworker when a child is not in the home. This includes discussion of issues, training, and the barriers preventing the resource family being matched to a child.
 - Participation in a bridge meeting led by HHS that will be held between birth parents and foster parents. It serves as a starting point for establishing communication and building a relationship.
 - This bridge meeting should occur within five (5) calendar days of placement, when appropriate. (This meeting may count as the required five (5) – day calendar visit following placement if held in the resource family home)

- The contractor shall encourage ongoing meetings and communication between the birth family and foster family to maintain the relationship and keep the lines of communication open.
- Provide support services based on the foster/pre-adoptive family's needs that may include:
 - Providing crisis interventions;
 - Assisting families with the transition of teens to adulthood;
 - Assisting families with the transition of children to permanency through reunification;
 - Partnering, coordinating, and collaborating with other service providers;
 - Providing services in a culturally competent manner;
 - Coordinating and collaborating with service providers to assist families in the transition from foster care to adoption;
 - Assisting families in understanding the difference between foster care and adoption.
- Providing in-service trainings to foster families that are timely, relevant, and intentional to increase a family's skills and abilities to parent children in care.
 - Monitor their training plans and assist in the scheduling of trainings to ensure compliance for renewal.
- Providing post-adoption and subsidized guardianship support to all families who adopted children that receive or are eligible to receive adoption subsidy and families in subsidized guardianship status. Support services are voluntary, and families can self-refer or have HHS staff refer them. Services are free of charge to the family and may be provided in the family's home. Service providers tailor the support services to meet the needs of the family, which may include:
 - Crisis intervention;
 - Helping in developing behavior management plans;
 - Assisting and supporting the family's relationship with the birth family;
 - Advocating for the family with school, HHS, or other service providers; and
 - Assisting families in securing community resources.
 - Providing a resource packet. The packet contents describe local supports and services such as how to access Medicaid and Waiver services for families needing mental health, emotional and behavioral support for children in the home.
 - Monthly Support groups throughout the state
 - Training opportunities for families specific to their needs
- RRTS implemented an outreach plan for Iowa's adoptive parents and guardians to be made aware of post-adoption and subsidized guardianship supports. The outreach plans include such activities as:
 - Providing support groups information, newsletters, contacting adoptive parents and by phone within 4 (four) to 6 (six) months post-permanency.
 - Providing written information to adoptive and subsidized guardianship families explaining the benefits of post adoption and subsidized guardianship services every 6 months post permanency.
 - Providing written information to community referral entities outlining post-adoption and subsidized guardianship support programs.

The RRTS contract is a performance-based contract. Performance measures are the same for each of the five contracts, but baselines and targets are specific to each service area. The performance measures are:

Performance Measure 1 – Stability

Children placed into a licensed foster family home from their removal home or shelter within the quarterly reporting period will experience stability in placement. A child's first placement should be the child's only placement. The contract payment for performance will be based on the percent of a cohort of children who remain in the same licensed foster home 180 days after placement or:

- will have exited the licensed foster home to a trial home visit working towards reunification; or
- will have exited to a relative home; or
- will have exited to a fictive kin home; or
- will have exited to a pre-adoptive placement working toward permanency; or
- will have attained permanency through adoption or guardianship or;
- will have exited the emergency foster care placement within 48 hours of placement.

Adding the emergency foster care placement as an option allows the RRTS contractor to still achieve this performance measure as it is more appropriate for a child to go to a temporary foster care placement as they are working on an appropriate long-term match rather than going into a shelter placement.

Contract payment will be made using the following standards (note: the Gold and Silver Standards are mutually exclusive by quarter, and both cannot be earned for the same quarter):

- Gold Standard (payment of 2.5% of quarterly eligible contract value) – Greater than or equal to 85% (previously 93%) of children in family foster care will be stable in their first placement for six (6) months.
- Silver Standard (payment of 1.5% of quarterly eligible contract value) – Greater than or equal to 75% (previously 88%) of children in family foster care will be stable in their placement for six (6) months.

The table below shows the achievement for the past 5 quarters:

Table 1: Stability in Family Foster Care					
Service Area	SFY 2024 Q1 Percentage	SFY 2024 Q2 Percentage	SFY 2024 Q3 Percentage	SFY 2024 Q4 Percentage	SFY 2025 Q1 Percentage
Western	87.1	77.3	66.7	80.0	59.3
Northern	83.3	81.3	60.0	87.5	85.0
Eastern	60.0	66.7	66.7	94.4	66.7
Cedar Rapids	70.0	50.0	93.8	86.7	75.0
Des Moines	66.7	55.0	83.3	76.5	60.7
Data Source: HHS CWIS					

There have been extensive efforts to improve child placement stability within HHS and within Four Oaks Foster Care and Adoption. This begins with a higher rate of frequency of supportive contact for resource families with children placed in the home, an early identification of challenges that may cause placement disruption, and a focus on preventing placement disruptions by the HHS personnel and Four Oaks Foster Care and Adoption personnel.



Performance Measure 2 – Recruitment and Retention (Increase in Families of Color)

The contractor shall increase the net number of licensed foster families of color available for matching, relative or fictive kin identified for a specific child or children on an annual basis.

The contractor’s net increase in number of licensed foster families of color will be based on:

- the number of licensed foster families of color available for matching relative or fictive kin identified for a specific child or children on July 1st at the beginning of that contract year; and
- the number of licensed foster families of color available for matching relative or fictive kin identified for a specific child or children on June 30th of that same contract year.

The contract payment will be made annually by Service Area in the amount of \$112,067.00 for performance and will be based on the net increases of 5% of families of color that are currently licensed and retained during each contract year.

Table 2a: SFY 2024 for PM2 Recruitment and Retention of Families of Color				
Service Area	Baseline	Increase number	Goal	Achieved
Western	33	2	35	31
Northern	30	2	32	30
Eastern	25	1	26	18
Cedar Rapids	45	2	47	41
Des Moines	45	2	47	42
Data Source: CareMatch				

Table 2b: SFY 2025 Target for PM2 Recruitment and Retention of Families of Color			
Service Area	Baseline	Increase number	Goal
Western	31	2	33
Northern	30	2	32
Eastern	18	1	19
Cedar Rapids	41	2	43
Des Moines	42	2	44
Data Source: CareMatch			

There is a disproportionate number of licensed foster families for the number of children of color coming into foster care.

The tables below reflect all families that are licensed for general foster care, child specific and respite only. Families that are available for matching would not include child specific or respite families. Most families that are licensed child specific are licensed less than one year as the goal is to reach permanency and at that time they close their license.

*The bolded column reflects foster families								
Table 2c: December 2024 - Total Resource Families by Service Area					Table 2d: December 2024 - Total General Resource Families by License Type			
Resource Families					License Type			
Service Area	Adopt	*Foster	Total		Service Area	Adopt	*Foster	Total
1	61	410	471		1	34	346	380
2	39	295	334		2	12	261	273
3	41	228	269		3	14	189	203
4	39	365	404		4	13	293	306
5	48	330	378		5	19	311	330
Total	228	1628	1856		Total	92	1400	1492
Table 2e: December 2024 - Total Kinship Resource Families by License Type								
License Type								
Service Area	Adopt	*Foster	Total					
1	27	64	91					
2	27	34	61					
3	27	39	66					
4	26	72	98					
5	29	19	48					
Total	136	228	364					
Data Source: CareMatch								

Performance Measure 3 – Path to Licensure

The contractor shall facilitate support for kin and fictive kin caregivers and contribute to the overall number of foster families. The contractor's performance will be measured on whether the family has received a license to provide foster care.

The contractor will receive \$250 for each relative/fictive kin caregiver who becomes licensed within 180 calendar days from the date of the referral from HHS or the Kinship Navigator through the FCS contract.

	Table 3a: RRTS Performance Measure 3 –October 2023 – December 2023		
	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	10	50	60
FCS Kinship Navigator	12	35	47
Monthly Totals	22	85	107

	Table 3b: RRTS Performance Measure 3 –Jan 2024 – March 2024		
	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	12	85	97
FCS Kinship Navigator	19	61	80
Monthly Totals	31	146	177

	Table 3c: RRTS Performance Measure 3 –April 2024 – June 2024		
	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	14	67	81
FCS Kinship Navigator	15	45	60
Monthly Totals	29	112	141

	Table 3d: RRTS Performance Measure 3 –July 2024 – Sept 2024		
	Met	Not Met	Total Referrals
HHS	11	79	90
FCS Kinship Navigator	11	74	85
Monthly Totals	22	153	175

Data Source for Tables 3a-3d: CareMatch

Performance Measure 4 – Safe in Resource Home

Safety is maintained for children in foster and adoptive care. Statewide data provided by HHS shall be used to determine if Performance Measure 4 has been met. Data will include all children in licensed family foster care or pre-adoptive care at any time during the quarter.

PM4 - Ninety-nine (99) percent of children in licensed foster family or pre-adoptive care will be safe from abuse by their foster or pre-adoptive parents.

Payment for achieving this measure is in the amount of \$56,033.50 per quarter for each contract year if the contractor achieves this measure based on statewide data.

	SFY 2024 Q4			SFY 2025 Q1			SFY 2025 Q2		
Service Area	Children in Foster Care	Children not Subject to Abuse	%	Children in Foster Care	Children not Subject to Abuse	%	Children in Foster Care	Children not Subject to Abuse	%
1 (Western)	382	382	100.00%	387	385	99.4%	402	402	100.00%
2 (Northern)	311	311	100.00%	287	286	99.6%	303	302	99.70%
3 (Eastern)	266	265	99.60%	292	292	100%	279	279	100.00%
4 (Cedar Rapids)	419	418	99.80%	368	368	100%	404	404	100.00%
5 (Des Moines)	355	355	100.00%	439	439	100%	396	396	100.00%
Statewide	1726	1728	99.90%	1773	1770	99.80%	1784	1783	99.90%
Data Source: HHS CWIS									

Performance Measure 5 – Adoptive and Subsidized guardianship Families Will Receive Supportive Services (No payment incentive)

Thirty percent of the families will accept and participate in services offered during required contractor check-ins which is minimally every six months.

The increase seen starting from September 2024 resulted from face-to-face meetings between RRTS caseworkers and Adoption and Permanency Support Caseworkers, which increased the knowledge of the services and the number of staff providing the service.

Table 5: RRTS Performance Measure 5 – Adoptive and Subsidized Guardianship Families Will Receive Supportive Services

	May	June	August	September	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Families Contacted	307	295	460	401	406	412	329	352	296
Parentage of Families receiving Services	12%	10%	10%	41%	41%	40%	32%	33%	29%

Data Source: CareMatch

Performance Measure 6 - Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Resource Parents will be identified and become productive members of Iowa's foster care service array.

Performance Incentive Payment: Contractor will receive \$5,000 for each TFC resource home (up to 5) licensed and actively receiving referrals by March 31, 2024. The contractor will receive \$2500 per additional TFC resource home (up to five more) licensed and actively receiving referrals by June 30, 2025.

As of April 1, 2025, five foster homes are licensed at the TFC level and five are licensed as TFC respite only. Two families are going through the process currently for TFC and three additional families have reached out for more information on the process.

Performance Measure 7 - Youth Served in Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) will reside in a family home with parent or relative upon discharge. (No payment incentive)

At least 50% of the children served in Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) will exit to a parent or relative. Currently, HHS has no way to statistically identify the rate at which a child will reunify or exit to the home of a family member, therefore results may vary, and the measure will be reset based on actual performance.

As of April 1, 2025, one youth has been discharged to a relative pre-adoptive placement following TFC.

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

A description of the characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

HHS provides data to the contractor to determine recruitment and retention goals and targets. Each service area has a recruitment plan based on the needs of their service area, including data specific to that service area. Recruitment and retention targets for specific populations of children may include:

- Teens
- Sibling groups including those with very young children
- Non-white children

- Children with difficult behaviors (physically aggressive, sexual acting out, impulsivity, etc.)
- Children with significant needs (mental health concerns, developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, medically fragile, etc.)

An ongoing challenge continues to be developing foster families who have the skills, ability, and willingness to care for youth coming out of congregate care or PMIC who have difficult behavioral or mental health needs. A Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) model program for Iowa continues to be offered by HHS in the Cedar Rapids Service Area. Cedar Rapids Service Area was initially chosen due to their location and supportive services that include University of Iowa Hospitals and Foundation 2 Crisis Support Services. HHS is exploring how to expand to other service areas and plans to increase the age range from ages 8-13 to ages 7-17.

As of April 1, 2025, there are five approved and trained TFC homes and five approved and trained TFC respite homes. Nine children have been placed in a TFC home. Three have been discharged; two have moved to a pre-adoptive permanency placement and one was disrupted and needed a higher level of care. Currently there are two additional homes in the process of being approved at the TFC level and three that are interested in knowing more about the process. Five children are on the waiting list for a TFC home as of April 1, 2025.

This program was developed in collaboration between HHS' Family Well-Being and Protection, Behavioral Health and Disability Services, and Medicaid divisions. The program emphasizes Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) to support foster care youth at high risk for institutionalization or multiple placements. The array of services identified in the pilot includes the following:

- Behavioral Health Intervention Services (BHIS)
- State plan Habilitation Services
- In-home family therapy
- Applied Behavioral Analysis (as appropriate)
- Crisis Services
- Family Peer Support
- Respite
- The HCBS Waiver that is most appropriate to the child's needs.

The RRTS contractor continues to work to raise public awareness of the need for foster/adoptive homes by utilizing strategic community outreach to establish mutually beneficial relationships with local civic and/or child and family serving organizations as well as influential community members. They place a particular emphasis on working with communities of color that have historically been underrepresented as resource families by building trusting and accountable relationships with influential community members as well as the culturally important institutions within that community, such as faith communities or advocacy organizations.

The data table below represents the number of adoptive families by service area for general adopt only approvals.

Table 6e: Number of Adopt only Families as of 12/31/24			
	Relationship to Child		
SA	General	Kinship	Total
1	34	27	61
2	12	27	39
3	14	27	41
4	13	26	39
5	19	29	48
Total	92	136	228

Data Source for Tables 6a-6e: CareMatch

The data table below represents the number of resource families by service area, male/female, and metro/urban/rural.

Table 6f: Licensed Foster families (Clients) as of 3-12-25 by Service Area, County Size, and Gender					
New Service Area		# of Counties	State		
			Male	Female	Total
			Count	Count	Count
Western	Metro	6	71	52	123
	Urban	21	56	43	99
	Rural	11	11	13	24
	Total	38	138	108	246
Northern	Metro	5	39	50	89
	Urban	14	54	69	123
	Rural	4	3	3	6
	Total	23	96	122	218
Eastern	Metro	2	57	53	110
	Urban	13	40	59	99
	Rural	2	2	1	3
	Total	17	99	113	212
Cedar Rapids	Metro	5	104	107	211
	Urban	9	32	27	59
	Rural	3	5	3	8
	Total	17	141	137	278
Des Moines	Metro	3	169	150	319
	Urban	1	3	3	6
	Total	4	172	153	325
Statewide	Metro	21	440	412	852
	Urban	58	185	201	386
	Rural	20	21	20	41
	Total	99	646	633	1279

Data Source: HHS CWIS

A primary recruitment and retention goal has been to increase the number of resource families (including kinship and fictive kin caregivers) available to accept children coming into care with specific and complex needs. To meet this goal, it has been a primary objective to create community awareness emphasizing the valuable and critical role that resource families play as a resource to help the child and their family. While educating the communities, we also focused on creating a deeper understanding of the impact of trauma and the loss that children experience due to separation from a child's family and community. Emphasis to ensure that siblings are placed together, and family connections are reinforced. The importance of keeping children in their home schools and communities is continually promoted.

HHS strongly supports keeping children within their families and will continue to encourage more relative caregivers in becoming licensed foster parents. HHS has worked in collaboration with Four Oaks to design and implement an expedited kinship approval process. This has allowed for a smooth design process and implementation at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Currently, kin and fictive kin families must complete the general foster care licensing process which can take from 6-8 months. With the expedited licensing process for kin the families will be approved within 60-90 days of placement and brings increased financial assistance, concrete supports, and training that unlicensed caregivers do not receive. HHS continues to waive non-safety standards for relatives to promote licensure and approval. These approval standards for relative or kinship foster family homes are in response to ACYF-CB-PI-23-10.

The Kinship Caregiver and Kinship Navigator Programs both began on July 1, 2021. Both programs continue to be very successful in supporting kin/fictive kin families. All relative/fictive kin placements are eligible for the Kinship Caregiver Program once a relative or fictive kin child has been legally placed in their home. The kinship caregiver currently receives a payment of up to \$310/month (\$10/day) for a period of up to six months. During these six months, HHS works in collaboration with the RRTS contractor, to expedite the licensing process for the kinship caregiver while maintaining consistency in licensing standards for all foster families. Families do not have to participate in the licensing process to receive the kinship caregiver payment, but it is highly encouraged so that the family can receive the supports licensed foster parents receive such as clothing allowance, childcare, respite and support groups.

The Kinship Caregiver Program is currently funded by 100% state dollars. Effective April 1, 2025, this program will be transitioned to TANF funding. Due to this change, the kin caregivers will receive an increase to the basic foster care rate based on the age of the child placed in their home for a period of four months.

Table 7: State of Iowa Rates as of 7/1/2024	
Age of Child	Basic Daily Rate
0 - 5 years	\$17.62
6 -11	\$18.32
12 -15	\$20.06
16 - 20	\$20.32

Data Source: HHS

The Kinship Navigator Program supports kinship caregiver families through HHS's Family Centered Services (FCS) Contract. Kinship caregivers are eligible for this program for up to four months. The kinship specialist will assist the caregiver with emotional and concrete supports. They will also assist the family with connecting to agencies for financial and childcare assistance.

The RRTS contractor works collaboratively with the FCS contractors providing the Kinship Navigator programs. They meet routinely to address kinship caregiver licensing process, program needs, and potential barriers to becoming licensed. HHS licensing staff are also invited to participate in these meetings to help keep the process moving for the kinship caregivers.

Table 8: December 2024 - Total Kinship Resource Families by License Type			
License Type			
Service Area	Adopt	Foster	Total
1	27	64	91
2	27	34	61
3	27	39	66
4	26	72	98
5	29	19	48
Total	136	228	364
Data Source: CareMatch			

Having the right foster homes in the right areas at the right time is a challenge. This is especially true for sibling groups of three or more, even if the children are very young. The emphasis of recruiting and retaining families for older children and discouraging families who want to “foster to adopt” very young children resulted in an unintended consequence of not having enough foster families for children ages 0 to 5. Iowa needs foster families for young children in sibling groups who respect and participate in reunification efforts.

RRTS promotes permanency and stability for youth who need forever homes. RRTS staff continues in-person interviews of youth in group home and shelter settings to better understand the needs of the youth as well as to get a better understanding of the child's personality and to provide them “a voice” in what they need in a foster care placement. RRTS has now also expanded these interviews to PMIC settings as well when there is an active match referral.

RRTS staff have identified and engaged resource families who have positively parented teens, sibling groups, and youth with complex needs, to share their passion for foster parenting and their stories of success. Stories continue to be shared through newspaper as well as through social media on the contractors' Foster Care and Adoption Facebook page to emphasize the ongoing need for families to provide loving and stable homes for youth.

The Family First Preservation Services Act (Family First) continues to significantly impact family foster care. Foster families will be needed to keep children from entering residential care, and to care for children leaving residential care. Relative and fictive kin placements are becoming licensed for foster care so that they can receive all the resources and supportive services that licensed homes currently receive and foster families who will partner with and mentor a child’s family to fully support reunification will also be an increased focus of recruitment and retention. Kinship Navigator and the Kinship Caregiver Stipend are also two ways to support relative and fictive kin families prior to their foster care licensure.

The Foster Parent Mentor Program rolled out January 2024. This program specializes in one-on-one, short-term, intensive coaching relationships, which provide newly approved foster parents emotional encouragement, skill reinforcement, and parenting strategies unique to providing out-of-home care to enhance the quality of care provided and stabilize placements. The goal was for up to forty homes to be identified and trained as mentors as well as expand the program to support kin and adoptive families by December 31, 2024. As of April 1, 2025, there are approximately 40 homes trained as mentors.

The Foster and Adoptive Advisory Council of Iowa continues to develop into an essential collaborator as the voice for resource families of Iowa. The group is independent from HHS or Four Oaks and is self-driven in determining areas of focus and topics to be addressed. Members of the council are to consider participation as a minimum with a one-year time commitment, bi-monthly phone/Zoom conference calls, and follow up time to volunteer to research items requested. The advisory council group was developed to be diverse and represent all areas of foster/adoptive/kin care. Urban and rural, seasoned, and new, and culture/families of color and disabilities were also considered.

The advisory council’s priorities continue to include:

- Advocating for greater access to quality dental care for children in foster care and those who have been adopted.
- Recruitment for prospective foster families and champion current foster and adoptive families.

The RRTS contractor receives age, race and ethnicity data for every child who exited or entered a foster home each week. The RRTS contractor also uses a database called Care Match that records demographic information on foster and adoptive families and on children placed in foster or adoptive homes. They use this data when developing service area specific recruitment plans.

The most recent data regarding age, race and ethnicity for the children in family foster care are in Tables 9a and 9b below. The population of all children in foster care in Iowa reflects the following statewide demographics.

Table 9a: FY24 Race/Ethnicity of Child Referred		
HHS SA	Child's Race/Ethnicity	Count of Child's Race/Ethnicity
1	African American/Black	63
	American Indian/Alaska Native	47
	Caucasian/White	389
	Declined	23

Table 9a: FY24 Race/Ethnicity of Child Referred		
HHS SA	Child's Race/Ethnicity	Count of Child's Race/Ethnicity
	Hispanic/Latino	36
	Multi Racial	18
	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2
	Other	25
2	African American/Black	70
	Caucasian/White	285
	Declined	9
	Hispanic/Latino	23
	Multi Racial	17
	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	12
	Other	12
3	African American/Black	112
	Asian	3
	Caucasian/White	209
	Declined	2
	Hispanic/Latino	3
	Multi Racial	23
	Other	9
4	African American/Black	132
	American Indian/Alaska Native	6
	Caucasian/White	334
	Declined	7
	Hispanic/Latino	6
	Multi Racial	44
	Other	33
5	African American/Black	131
	Asian	1
	Caucasian/White	197
	Declined	6
	Hispanic/Latino	48
	Multi Racial	42
	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	4
	Other	16
Grand Total		2399

Table 9b: FY24 Referrals by Age Range.		
HHS SA	Age Range	Count of Age Range
1	0-5 yrs	199
	6-12 yrs	219
	13+ yrs	185
2	0-5 yrs	173
	6-12 yrs	131
	13+ yrs	124
3	0-5 yrs	186
	6-12 yrs	106
	13+ yrs	69
4	0-5 yrs	253
	6-12 yrs	190
	13+ yrs	119
5	0-5 yrs	152
	6-12 yrs	165
	13+ yrs	128
Grand Total		2399

Data Source for Tables 9a and 9b: CareMatch

Specific strategies to reach out to all parts of the community.

Service area recruitment plans cover the entire area; however, prioritized areas are identified based on the demographics and geographic location of children coming into care. Service areas analyze data to determine which geographic locations children are removed from and prioritize those areas to have a sufficient number of foster/adoptive families, while also recruiting throughout the area.

Research and experience show the best form of recruitment is family to family. RRTS staff consistently engage current foster and adoptive parents to act as ambassadors for foster care in their home communities. Ambassadors use their personal and professional networks to raise awareness of the need for foster families in their communities.

Strategies common to all service areas continue to include:

- Engaging faith-based organizations and houses of worship in all communities, especially non-white communities;
- Partnering with local media outlets, especially families of color;
- Partnering with local businesses and civic organizations;
- Reaching out to schools, childcare providers, and other agencies that serve families;
- Family to family resources such as “tool kits” with recruitment information, and educating current foster families on the needs in their own communities to assist in outreach;
- Partnering with schools to provide information on foster and adoptive parenting in children’s Virtual Backpacks;
- Use of social media such as Facebook to provide information both publicly and through designated groups; and

- Collaborating with community partners to host National Adoption Month and National Foster Care Month activities.

HHS leadership has instituted a practice of holding open foster/adoptive parent town hall meetings once every other month in the evening. These town halls are jointly facilitated between HHS leadership, Foster Squad-a private advocacy and resource organization, and Four Oaks Foster Care and Adoption. These town halls are used to provide relevant updates and information to foster/adoptive families while also providing foster/adoptive parents an opportunity to ask questions and express ideas/concerns about child welfare system performance. This is a statewide initiative.

RRTS contractors also identified service area specific partners to assist in planning retention activities as well as to provide donations of funds and goods.

Examples of these activities include:

Western Service Area:

Efforts made to recruit/support families of color include but are not limited to the following:

- A Bilingual (Spanish/English) staff member was hired to provide casework services as well as ten hours a week of recruitment. Spanish speaking families will be able to attend orientations in Spanish as well ongoing support.
- Four Oaks has partnered with the Urban Native Center to regularly host a Cultural Connection Group that provides education and recruitment efforts related to Native American populations in the area.
- Faces of Siouxland Multicultural Fair.
- Native Children Need Native Families dinner event

The following appreciation/retention events to encourage foster families and to help them build a sense of community included the following:

- Five Operation Santa parties, where every child was able to submit a holiday wish list, and donors were found to shop for those gifts.
- Five Summer appreciation events were held in the Western Service area.
- Adoption Day Celebration
- Easter egg hunt
- Setting Anchors support Group

Four Oaks continued recruitment efforts through presentations and information tables at community events, among other service providers, to businesses and faith-based organizations. Examples of these efforts include but are not limited to CPPC meetings, presentation to educators, presentation to Bethel Baptist Church, Flyers distributed to 128 churches.

Media efforts for recruitment included the Pocahontas Record-Democrat Newspaper, KCHE radio, and Spanish interview with La Prensa, KCSI, KDSN Radio.

Northern Service Area:

Four Oaks continued recruitment efforts through presentations and information tables at community events, among other service providers, to businesses and faith-based organizations. Examples of these efforts include but are not limited to the following:

- Table at Daddy Daughter dance in Clear Lake

- Presentations at: Faith Baptist Church in Mason City, Kiwanis clubs, Zion Lutheran Church in Clear Lake, Harvest Baptist Church in Ft. Dodge, Rotary club, One City in Waterloo, Christ Community Church in Ames, Foster the Family, Black Hawk County Interagency presentation
- 32 yard signs were distributed throughout the service area
- A float in the Ft. Dodge Frontier Days Parade
- Booth at National Night out in Mason City

Efforts to recruit families of color in the Northern Service Area included but were not limited the following:

- Diversity Council continues to advise on recruitment and retention efforts. A flyer was created highlighting the disparity of licensed foster families of color compared to children of color being referred.
- Efforts were made but were unfruitful to contact the following organizations – LaLuz, Centro Cultural, UCC.

Appreciation/Retention efforts in the Northern Service Area included but were not limited to the following:

- Six summer appreciation events. Held at camps, YMCA's Parks and Churches. Offering fun activities for all ages.
- Support Group at The Hub in Clear Lake.
- Operation Santa in five locations throughout the Service Area.

Media efforts included featuring foster care on several Northern Iowa TV, Radio, and written publications. Examples include but are not limited to: KCMR radio interview.

Eastern Service Area:

Recruiters continue to engage the community through presentations to businesses, colleges and community organizations. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- Several CPPC groups. Presenting at Modern Woodmen of America, Clark College, Lunch and learn for insurance company, Core Vans, flyers posted at the Rusty Barrell community outreach event, presented to the Clinton Auto Club, participated in Let's Connect meeting in Davenport, Resource Fair in Keokuk, Clinton County nonprofit summit, Presentation to Alta Vista schools, Arsenal Island Expo Fair, presentation to United way of Clinton Board, homeschooling co-op in Jackson County, Presented to sterling Bank Staff in Clinton, Foster outreach expo in Jessup, information table at Dewit farmers Market. Lunch and learn for the US Army on Arsenal Island. Presentations at Rotary Clubs and Libraries.
- Faith Based organizations were also engaged in recruitment including presentations to churches and pastors. Examples of those efforts include but are not limited to:
 - Flyers at Bethel Presbyterian in West Union, Presentation at St. John's Lutheran in St. Donatist, St. Ann Catholic Church in Long Grove, First United Presbyterian in Clinton, First Baptist Church sunshine girls, presentation to Hope City Church in Clinton, Bethel Church congregation, Grace United Methodist Church in Oelwein, and Women's Lutheran society of Iowa at Zion Church.

Efforts made to recruit families of color and other specific demographics include the following:

- Recruitment materials featuring the need for families of color
- Hosted Resource table at 2500 Marketplace.

- Distributed flyers at the Multicultural Center in Dubuque County.
- Attended Juneteenth event in Clinton County.
- Distributed flyers and spoke to staff about recruitment efforts at the Lighthouse and AEA to identify families that specialize in children with special needs.
- Hosted quarterly meetings with our Diversity Council.
- Hosted Resource table at several back-to-school events throughout the service area.

Appreciation/Retention Efforts include the following:

- Appreciation and foster parent community activities in 2024 included collaboration with My G.E.A.R Outreach for Drive-In Movie Night in Delmar, Fun Station trampoline park Quad Cities, Back to School Baches for Clinton, Jackson and Dubuque, May Appreciation Picnic and Pool Parties in 5 areas to cover all SA3 counties. Partnered with Beauty Amidst the Ashes for a giveaway of 100 bikes. Adoption Celebration event for Scott County.

Media efforts included featuring foster care on several Eastern Iowa TV and radio stations. Additional examples include but are not limited to Mac 94.7, Moody Radio 89.3, Quad Cities Live KWQC, Living Local KHBFB, KGCW, and KLJB, Radio Dubuque AM 1370, and FM 92.9. Also was featured on the podcast "Grow and Connect".

Cedar Rapids Service Area:

- Community Presentations— Oskaloosa Chapter, Iowa City Corridor Community Action, Jasper Educator Retirees, CPPC – Linn County, Wapello County Health, Wapello County Health, Iowa City Rotary, CPPC, Bloomfield Rotary
- Faith-based organization presentations – Met with Pastor at St. Paul Church, Oskaloosa, met with a group of pastors in Wapello County, presented to Central Church in Oskaloosa (500 people)
- Information tables – Freemont Days, Ottumwa back to school rally, Trunk or treating events, Alburnett Schools, Texas Roadhouse fundraiser, CR Prevention Resource Fair, Ottumwa YMCA resource fair, Cleavland Elementary School Carnival

Efforts made to recruit families of color and other specific demographics include the following:

- International Festival in Cedar Rapids
- Ottumwa Diversity Conference
- Juneteenth in CR

Appreciation/Retention efforts in the Cedar Rapids Service Area included but were not limited to the following:

- Bloomsbury Farms
- Iowa Children's Museum – free entry for foster families.
- Support groups - Oskaloosa, Grinnell, Cedar Rapids, Ottumwa, Iowa City and virtual options
- Summer and holiday appreciation events – Cedar Rapids, Washington, Ottumwa and Grinnell

Media efforts included interviews with KCRG Mental Health minute, KYOU -Ottumwa, z102.9 Radio interview, KNIA KRLS Radio station interview, Steve Shettler Media, and Thunder County Radio.

Des Moines Service Area:

- Faith based presentations at several churches, conferences, and groups of pastors.
- Foster Care recruitment was featured at a Savannah Bananas Game at Principal Park

Efforts made to recruit families of color include the following:

- Recruitment materials featuring the need for families of color
- I'll Make me a world event in DSM,
- Partnered with the NAACP to attend Juneteenth event.
- Partnered with Corinthian Baptist church (primarily African American congregation) to do information sessions. Four Oaks was a speaker at their scholarship banquet for AA youth in foster care attending college.
- Active in the coalition of Latino Service Providers.

Appreciation/Retention Efforts include the following:

- Appreciation and foster parent community activities in 2024 included All Things Foster event, Operation Santa, Pool Day, and access to the Des Moines performing arts community ticket program

Media efforts included featuring foster care in several Central Iowa TV, radio, magazine and online publications. (Examples include Hello Iowa, 107.1, Prevention Magazine, Iowa Living Magazine, K-LOVE, DSM Parent).

Statewide Recruitment and Retention Efforts:

- Recruitment efforts:
 - Social media (Meta) and Spotify ads during foster care month (May) and Adoption Month (November)
 - Proclamation signings
 - Together we care event at Applebee's stores across Iowa
- Retention efforts:
 - Mentor Program
 - Support groups - Spanish support groups offered half of the year
 - Newsletter
 - Diversity Council

Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child specific information

Recruitment plans combine general recruitment activities with targeted recruitment activities based on the needs of the service area. Examples of general recruitment activities are:

- Recruitment teams engage local media outlets by providing staff or resource families for interviews;
- Use of print and electronic media for general recruitment such as the use of public service announcements (PSAs), and promotions for upcoming events;
- Providing brochures and conducting presentations to businesses, churches, childcare centers, medical facilities or other entities who serve families;
- Providing information in children's virtual backpacks;
- Conducting presentations at cultural, faith based, service organizations, schools, and other community organizations.

The RRTS contractor has continued to focus on options for engaging the community and creating a strong message of the need for resource families who can care for children while

working to engage the child's birth family. Community awareness of the trauma needs of children and an understanding of ACES has promoted a new approach while recruiting resource families. The RRTS contractor has used the following options to recruit potential resource families:

- Bi-monthly newsletters to licensed resource families with messaging relating to their value in helping children and families.
- Continued organic growth of the Foster Care and Adoption Facebook page.
- Family to family recruitment and engagement opportunities are used whenever possible (during recruitment, orientation, pre-service, peer support, training etc.). Resource families are provided with recruitment materials to share in their communities.
- Spotlighting foster and adoption success stories to educate the public through variety of media options.

The most successful recruitment tool has been to continue with our family-to-family approach in recruitment of resource families.

RRTS contractors also provide information to HHS on families interested in adoption when a child's current caregivers are not a permanency option. HHS is often not aware of families only approved to adopt. These families provide profile information to the RRTS contractors who then assist HHS in matching a child in need of permanency with a family who can meet the child's needs.

Iowa has partnered with The Reel Hope Project, a non-profit organization that helps children in foster care find permanency families through adoption. The goal is to make a video for all youth who are experiencing foster care and awaiting an adoptive home. Each reel is provided free of charge as a recruitment resource for prospective adoptive families. To date, Iowa has helped make 15 Reel Hope Videos and six children have been matched due to these videos.

Four Oaks continues to have a contract with Wendy's Wonderful Kids to help in finding adoptive homes for children in need of permanency through two statewide recruiters. Adoption staff can refer a child who needs a permanent family when other options have been exhausted.

Strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/ adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that the agencies can be accessed by all members of the community.

The RRTS contractor has a website and a toll-free number for any prospective foster or adoptive family to contact to receive information and to enroll in an orientation. Orientations occur in groups and individually to explain the licensing/approval process, begin the record check process, and enroll families in pre-service training. The contract requires pre-service training to be available to interested families within 60 days of completing orientation and within 60 miles of the family's home. Families may choose to attend later trainings due to preference or scheduling, or training in another area if space is available.

RRTS contractors began using the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) for pre-service training on July 1, 2022. Below is the number of trainings held in each service area from May 2024 through April 2025:

Table 10: Pre-Service Training Held May 2024- April 2025	
SA	Number of NTDC Trainings
Western	9
Northern	11
Eastern	11
Cedar Rapids	12
Des Moines	11
Total	52
Data Source: CareMatch Training Schedule	

The use of the NTDC curriculum appears to have resulted in resource families who have realistic expectations for foster care and adoption and who understand their role within the child welfare framework.

Pre-service trainings occur in various locations in each service area to meet the contract requirement that prospective families receive training within 60 miles of their home. HHS and contractors continued discussing a plan for a mix of virtual and in-person pre-service training options; at this time most trainings continue to be in-person.

Each service area offers ongoing training several times a month. The RRTS contractor allow families from other areas to attend training when there is space available. This allows flexibility for families to find training in another service area that may be closer, more convenient, and specific to a skill or information the family needs. The contractor's website lists the trainings with information on how to register. The offering of on-going virtual trainings for foster parents continues to be offered moving forward in addition to in-person trainings.

Four Oaks Family and Children's Services Iowa has continued training, coaching, and providing quality improvement for caseworkers to improve their on-going discussion with resource families regarding the importance of in-service training, identifying, and recommending training topics that are relevant to each individual resource families experience with caregiving, and documenting those discussions thoroughly. Four Oaks' foster care and adoption staff, with the direction of HHS, has emphasized the importance of training for skill development of resource families. Training topics/classes are discussed with resource families at every face-to-face visit and documented in the progress note. Four Oaks' foster care and adoption trainers are also ready to assist resource families by providing resources or conducting training 1:1 with families to assist those families in parenting a child with needs/behaviors that have been difficult for the placement family to navigate through. This has resulted in overall improvement in our caseworker's constant engagement with resource families on the topic of training, better documentation of that engagement, and more diligent tracking of the training resource families have obtained.

Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations.

For additional information on HHS staff training on working with diverse communities, please see *Iowa's Updated FFY 2025-2029 Training Plan*.

Contractor staff receive ongoing training provided by experts or specialists in areas of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Examples of these trainings include representatives from refugee communities who discuss the culture specific to their homeland.

Contractor staff are all required to take the Human Need for Belonging training by ALIA. This training addresses socio-economic variations. Additionally, all RRTS staff are required to take Cultural Competence, Harassment in the Workplace, Addressing Racial Trauma in Behavioral Health, Trauma Informed Care, Understanding Human Trafficking, which addresses the cultural, racial, and socio-economic variation education for staff. Four Oaks also offers RRTS staff specific Native American and customary tribal adoption trainings.

Personnel changes at the local tribal level will require re-establishing a relationship with tribal leaders to work collaboratively to recruit families who identify as Native American. There has been steady progress during the past year in connecting with the Meskwaki Nation. Four Oaks RRTS has conducted at least one orientation onsite and has been invited to participate in community events and provide recruitment literature. Meskwaki Family Services (MFS) was previously working with Four Oaks staff to offer pre-service training. They have not offered Native American trainings this past reporting period. Four Oaks is currently working towards a transition towards NTDC Native American classes and will coordinate with MFS. The Omaha and Winnebago tribes in the western part of the state have recently cooperated in initiatives such as the cultural connection group in which non-Native American foster families caring for Native American children can learn about Native American culture and ways they can keep a child connected to their culture.

The RRTS contractor also engages African American, and Latino foster and adoptive parents to act as Ambassadors. Ambassadors are the face of foster parenting and participate in presentations, outreach, training, and other recruitment and retention activities. The RRTS contractor also continues to work to have employed recruiters of diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

Recruiting families of Latino descent has become more challenging recently as many potential applicants may have a person residing in the home who does not have documented residency, and those potential candidates are leery of becoming involved in any local, state, or federal government activity which might reveal the status of individuals in the home resulting in contact with immigration authorities.

Strategies for Dealing with Linguistic Barriers

Children in foster care are at an increased risk for language delays and disorders, and foster parents can play a significant role in preventing delays in early language development. Foster parents are encouraged to promote a child's language development and RRTS's role is to educate caregivers and connect the foster parent with community support and resources that will assist with any language delays or disorders.

There are several factors that play a role in supporting a foster child with linguistic barriers. A few examples include:

- Providing a stable and nurturing environment
- Providing emotional support and understanding
- Advocacy and collaboration
- Facilitating therapeutic interventions
- Education and continuous learning

Four Oaks Family and Children's Services Iowa continues efforts to recruit families who are of similar race, ethnicity, or language group of the children in care. They network with local NAACP groups, association meetings, and other community groups. Spanish language recruitment, outreach, and language appropriate orientation sessions continue to be consistent throughout each fiscal year. RRTS has added to the number of RRTS team members who are bilingual Spanish/English speakers to further ease the licensing/approval process for applicants whose primary language is Spanish.

An area of improvement needed is to identify and adopt technology which can help children in care who are not English-proficient communicate with foster families who are not proficient in the child's language. Four Oaks has a contract with a language line company for employees, but there is difficulty in making this available 24/7 for non-employee foster parents. Technology such as translation headphones/ear buds is now more widely available and less expensive than in previous years, and Four Oaks along with HHS will explore the possibility of purchasing and providing these translation items which will also improve foster/adoptive parent ability to communicate with the child's birth family and other important emotional connections.

Four Oaks and HHS typically are very successful in locating and utilizing interpretation and translation services for court hearings, training classes, and other official activities. However, there are language groups or dialects that are much harder to locate within Iowa because of the dearth of individuals in Iowa who speak the language/dialect needed. Language lines have been helpful, but in at least one case HHS and Four Oaks had to seek interpretation services from outside of Iowa due to the rare nature of the language/dialect needed for a specific family providing kinship care.

HHS will continue to search for solutions to these barriers.

Non-discriminatory fee structures

Families who apply to become foster parents or adoptive parents through the HHS are not charged any fees for a home study or to attend pre-service training. The recruitment and retention contract includes the cost of record checks and home studies. Families must take CPR and First Aid training prior to initial licensure and must keep their certification current after licensure. Families also may have fees for water testing in rural areas. Families receive a \$100.00 stipend each year to help cover the costs of required ongoing training. Therapeutic Foster Care families receive a \$500 stipend each year to help cover the costs of ongoing training necessary for this higher level of care. However, most of the training offered by the RRTS contractors is free.

Procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

HHS is responsible for selecting the adoptive family that will best meet the needs of the child, not the race or ethnicity of the family in relation to the child. Transracial adoptions are common, and children do not wait for a home based on the race or ethnicity.

Children in need of an adoptive home have their photos listed on the Iowa Adoption Exchange on the Four Oaks Family and Children's Services Iowa websites, as well as on

the Adopt US Kids website. A child must be registered on the Iowa exchange within 60 days of termination of parental rights unless the child meets a deferral reason. Reasons to defer a child are:

- The child is in an adoptive placement.
- The child's foster parents or another person with a significant relationship is being considered as the adoptive family.
- The child needs diagnostic study or testing to clarify the child's needs and provide an adequate description of them which is limited to 90 days.
- The child receives medical care or mental health treatment, and the child's care or treatment provider determined that meeting prospective adoptive parents is not in the child's best interest and deferral is limited to 120 days.
- The child is 14 years of age or older and will not consent to an adoptive plan, and the consequences of not being adopted have been explained to the child.
- The termination of parental rights is under appeal by the birth parents and foster parents or other persons with a significant relationship continue to be considered as the prospective adoptive family.

RRTS Contractors work with HHS staff to arrange photos for registration on Adopt US Kids and to photo list children on the respective websites. HHS staff is responsible for referring children for photo listing. RRTS staff list children on the state and nation exchanges.

RRTS manage an ongoing list of children in need of adoptive placement. These referrals come from HHS workers. This list is used to present children to prospective adoptive families during support visits by the RRTS worker.

As stated above, Iowa has partnered with The Reel Hope Project. HHS workers make referrals directly to Reel Hope and make arrangement for the reels to be completed. The Reels are provided to RRTS staff to potentially use for recruitment efforts on platforms such as Adopt US Kids and the state exchange.

Please see Appendix 1 below for strategies and activities to develop this Diligent Recruitment Plan.

Appendix 1: Strategies and Activities to Develop Diligent Recruitment Plan

Goal: Increase statewide capacity in family foster care through recruitment and retention efforts.			
Year	Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
FFY 25 (10/1/24- 9/30/25)	Use targeted recruitment efforts to increase the number of resource families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase use of diversity councils to advise and assist with recruitment efforts ▪ Utilize existing diversity councils to create recruitment plans targeting families of color, bi/multi-lingual families, and families with specialized expertise (i.e. Medically fragile and or mental health/behavioral challenges) ▪ Continue Therapeutic Foster Care Pilot in Cedar Rapids Service Area. ▪ Improve data collection from recruitment activities through licensure (what activities are successful and track when a family becomes licensed following an activity) 	<p>By the end of the first quarter of FFY 25 recruitment plans will be submitted by RRTS and approved by HHS.</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: All Recruitment and Retention Plans were submitted to HHS by Four Oaks on 8/12/24 and HHS approved.</p> <p>Improved inquiry data collection process will be implemented on 7/1/24 and evaluated for effectiveness 1/1/25. Re-evaluated 6/30/25.</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: Revisions prior to 7/1/24 in Care Match has given Four Oaks (RRTS contractor) the ability to track responses to inquiries regarding foster care licensure. Additionally, Four Oaks has identified a specific staff person to contact all families that inquire regarding foster care licensure but did not proceed with the licensure process.</p>

Goal: Increase statewide capacity in family foster care through recruitment and retention efforts.

Year	Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
FFY 25 (10/1/24-9/30/25) continued	<p>Improve Retention by implementing and expanding a peer Mentoring program.</p> <p>Develop expedited Kinship licensing process</p> <p>Prioritize recommendations from the workgroup for implementation of alternate licensing process for kin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase number of peer mentors by targeting withdrawing or retired foster parents. ▪ Conduct vetting, outreach and training of experienced kinship and adoptive caregivers to increase the number of peer mentors for adoptive and kinship families. ▪ Alternative licensing work group will review existing licensing process as well as other states who currently have separate process for kin. ▪ Begin process of any pre-files necessary for legislative code changes. 	<p>Monitor results/progress of TFC pilot at designated intervals.</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: The TFC program continues to be evaluated monthly and is currently in the process of expansion to include youth ages 7-17 and youth referrals outside of the CRSA. Forms and policy is also currently under review for updates.</p> <p>Recruit, vet and train 10 kinship and adoptive peer mentors by 12/31/24.</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: Four Oaks currently has 40 peer mentors.</p> <p>KFC Work group finalizes recommended licensing process.</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: KFC Work groups have finalized plans for a 7/1/25 roll out of the expedited process. This includes Communication, Training, Forms,</p>

Goal: Increase statewide capacity in family foster care through recruitment and retention efforts.

Year	Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create administrative rules and update current foster care manual to support the new kinship licensing process. ▪ Training RRTS/HHS staff on the newly developed kinship licensing process. ▪ Develop an implementation timeline. ▪ Develop tools, training, and communication to implement recommendations. 	<p>Approval/Denial/Renewal processes, and Home Study format. These finalized plans will be presented to HHS leadership on 3/26/25.</p> <p>Request/receive approval for emergency rule making.</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: Federal approval has been given to Iowa HHS to implement the Kinship Navigator. The Foster Care Kinship process has recently been developed as well as the development of the Kinship Manual. Rule approval will be sought in Fall of 2025.</p> <p>Utilize ESPER program to update existing rules/create new rules</p> <p>UPDATE 3/19/25: Approval will be sought in Fall of 2025.</p> <p>Documents and training completed according to the implementation timeline.</p>

Goal: Increase statewide capacity in family foster care through recruitment and retention efforts.

Year	Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
			UPDATE 3/19/25: Currently the KFC Workgroup is on schedule with the timeline established.
FFY 26 (10/1/25-9/30/26) FFY 26 (10/1/25-9/30/26) continued	Therapeutic Foster Care – Prioritize recommendations from Design Team for implementation statewide. Continue to monitor progress toward identified outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline data to determine progress Develop an implementation timeline. Establish baseline data to determine progress of TFC pilot. Revise annual recruitment and retention plans as needed to meet goals. Review data to assess effectiveness of strategies Make modifications to the plan and strategies based on assessment of progress. Hold quarterly meetings in each service area to address strengths, needs, and strategies to improve performance 	<p>Monitor results/progress of TFC pilot.</p> <p>Increased stability in family foster care from the baseline.</p>
FFY 2027 (10/1/2026 to 9/30/2027)	Continue to monitor progress toward identified outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise annual recruitment and retention plans as needed to meet goals. Review data to assess effectiveness of strategies 	Increased stability in family foster care from the baseline.

Goal: Increase statewide capacity in family foster care through recruitment and retention efforts.

Year	Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make modifications to the plan and strategies based on assessment of progress. Hold quarterly meetings in each service area to address strengths, needs, and strategies to improve performance. 	
FFY 2028 (10/1/27 to 9/30/28)	Continue to monitor progress toward identified outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise annual recruitment and retention plans as needed to meet goals. Review data to assess effectiveness of strategies Make modifications to the plan and strategies based on assessment of progress. Hold quarterly meetings in each service area to address strengths, needs, and strategies to improve performance. 	Increased stability in family foster care from the baseline.

Goal: Increase statewide capacity in family foster care through recruitment and retention efforts.

Year	Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
FFY 2029 (10/1/28 to 9/30/29)	Continue to monitor progress toward identified outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Revise annual recruitment and retention plans as needed to meet goals.▪ Review data to assess effectiveness of strategies▪ Make modifications to the plan and strategies based on assessment of progress.▪ Hold quarterly meetings in each service area to address strengths, needs, and strategies to improve performance.	Increased stability in family foster care from the baseline.