

AR DCFS/CALL Partnership Talking Points

1. The Need
 - a. Recruitment of quality foster and adoptive homes
 - b. Ability of foster children to remain in original county as appropriate
 - c. Support of foster families
2. The Intent of the CALL
 - a. To recruit, train and support quality foster and adoptive families
 - b. To recruit foster families based on individual county needs
 - i. County-specific data used
 1. Characteristics of foster children
 - c. To recruit adoptive families based on children waiting
 - i. Statewide data used
 - d. The CALL is not an agency
 - i. A non-profit organization which supports AR DCFS
 - ii. Approved families are DCFS families
 - iii. Distinguishing between CALL and private providers
3. Challenges
 - a. DCFS Orientation
 - i. Educating the CALL on child welfare
 - b. Training-changing the format
 - i. Based on feedback
 - ii. Length of time
 - iii. Capacity issues
 - c. Managing traditionally recruited families
 - d. Balancing responsibilities shared by the CALL and DCFS
 - e. Adhering to the model
4. Strengths
 - a. The CALL's TOT
 - i. DCFS' support
 - b. Monthly state-level meetings
 - c. The CALL's ability to support families
 - i. Through the approval process
 - ii. After approval
 - d. Lowering the percentage of children placed outside of their original county
 - e. 25% of current, open foster homes are CALL-recruited
5. Positive Communication
 - a. Monthly meetings state level and county level are imperative to success
 - b. Adhering to the model that works
 - c. Educating the faith-based community on child welfare issues/needs/goals-reality
 - d. Language differences
 - i. Terminology
 1. They say "orphan" we say "foster child"
 - e. Shifting the mission from their "calling" to being all about the kids and families we serve
 - f. Ongoing commitment to the partnership

Talking Points for Questions

1. How to unite diverse faith communities for the common cause of protecting children and meeting agency outcomes
 - a. The partnership between AR DCFS and the CALL encompasses several different Christian denominations. Educating the faith-based communities through the CALL regarding the child welfare system, protection of children, and the reality that there are foster children within every denomination helps to unite these churches under one cause: the children.
 - b. In order to maintain children within their familiar backgrounds, it is vital to recruit foster parents from every denomination. However, recruitment practices will differ among these denominations such as recruiting families from African American churches vs. Catholic churches.

2. How to begin the partnership between the faith community and government agencies/private agency
 - a. In Arkansas, the CALL approached DCFS and asked what they could do to help our child welfare system. The single most effective game-changer would be more foster homes. We explained that recruiting more quality foster homes would affect places for children to stay while in care, worker retention, financial costs, reunification efforts, etc. Through conversations regarding what AR DCFS needs would be (characteristics of children who need placements, etc), the partnership was able to collaborate on strategies to recruit more foster homes. Over time, our partnership has evolved to include mentoring programs and biological family support as well.
 - b. When individuals or a group wish to start the CALL in their county, there are a series of steps in place that must be followed in order to lay a solid foundation for retention. The CALL requires volunteers to be recruited, trainings to occur, fund-raising, and the formation of a steering committee prior to launching the CALL in a county.

3. Changing the internal culture of the agency and to ensure a successful launch
 - a. Historically, child welfare agencies have been rather rigid in decision-making and not easily adaptable to change. In Arkansas, the partnership with the CALL was difficult for some agency staff for several reasons such as accepting the CALL's religious "calling", learning how to best work together, reducing the "more work" mentality, and clarifying roles and responsibilities. Support from the Division Director helps facilitate the "top down" support. The creation of my role as Statewide DCFS Liaison to the CALL has also assisted in modeling how a state agency and faith-based initiative can work together.

4. Recruitment of faith based members and families
 - a. In one sense, recruitment of faith-based families can be easier because of the "calling" these families feel to make a difference. However, the education of these families on the child welfare system, case goals, etc. can be a challenge when families may not understand why reunification should be supported, why biological families should be respected and viewed as vital team members, etc.
 - b. When these CALL-recruited families are approved, they are a DCFS foster family, not a CALL foster family. This clarification unites all recruited foster families under one name and organization, leveling all playing fields and decreasing bias.

5. Training and support strategies
 - a. Through agreements within an MOU, AR DCFS allows the CALL to offer their own Pride training to recruited families. The CALL requires the same 27 hours of training that traditionally recruited families receive. However, DCFS allows the CALL to offer that training in a different time frame. The Pride model is followed and requirements remain the same, but the CALL offers the training in a 2 weekend format. Allowing a different format produces positive and negative effects.
 - i. Negative- families may want to go through the CALL because the training is "quicker"
 - ii. Negative- a lot of information is given in a short period of time

- iii. Positive- the CALL offers this training to their recruited families at no cost to the families or DCFS
 - iv. Positive- support is available to these families by the CALL volunteers, which can be difficult for DCFS to offer
 - b. The CALL is not an agency, therefore they support DCFS as a partner.
- 6. Addressing the challenges of partnerships and continuing the relationship through difficult times
 - a. Through our partnership, DCFS and the CALL have learned to navigate relationships among agency staff, CALL volunteers, and recruited families.
 - b. Role clarification has tremendously impacted the success of the partnership.
 - i. MOU- helps keep goals and roles clear
 - ii. Open communication regarding responsibilities highly affects success
 - 1. Who does what?
 - 2. Meeting on local levels when field staff or CALL volunteers change
- 7. Improving outcomes for children by utilizing the community of which they belong
 - a. Our partnership with the CALL has improved outcomes by:
 - i. The CALL's training of recruited families
 - ii. The CALL offering support to ALL families
 - 1. CALL Mall
 - 2. Support groups
 - 3. Mentor programs
 - iii. Not only focusing on recruiting foster and adoptive parents
 - 1. "Not everyone is called to foster or adopt, but everyone is called to care"