

INTRODUCTION

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, through its signature Wendy's Wonderful Kids program, has developed and tested a Child-Focused Recruitment Model to find adoptive families for children and youth most likely to age out of the foster care system. A five-year control group evaluation determined that children served by this evidence-based model are up to three times more likely to be adopted, especially older youth and those with mental health challenges.

Effective, aggressive and accountable recruitment activities are critical to the success of Wendy's Wonderful Kids. Rather than casting the broad net of general awareness and recruitment campaigns or defaulting to internet photo listings, media profiles of children or public photography displays, Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption professionals (recruiters) are expected to be agents of change in the lives of the children for whom they are recruiting by managing an appropriate caseload and employing an intensive and exhaustive **Child-Focused Recruitment Model**.

GOAL

Find an appropriate, permanent and loving adoptive family for each child waiting in the foster care system.

=====

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS CASELOAD

Recruiters must be committed to making adoption work for all children on their caseload.

1. **Caseload size:** The required number of children being actively recruited for is 12-15, while 20-25 total children may be on the caseload in the status types below.
2. **Status of children**
 - a. **Active status:** At any given time, the recruiter must be intensively implementing the components of the Child-Focused recruitment model, *actively recruiting* for 12-15 children who are not matched with families. When a child is added to the caseload, they are initially placed in "active" status. The recruiter must have monthly face-to-face contact with the child. Once a child is matched with a family, they can no longer be on active status.
 - b. **Monitoring status:** The recruiter may also be monitoring children who need additional preparation before the adoption finalizes or before active recruitment continues. The recruiter must have monthly contact with the child. These cases are not counted as part of the required 12-15 active caseload.
 - c. **Inactive status:** A child may be considered part of the caseload, but inactive if the recruiter cannot have contact with the child during the pre-adoptive placement or active recruitment is on hold.

NOTE: Regardless of the child's status, the recruiter must have monthly contact with the child's caseworker.

3. **Removing children from the caseload:** The recruiter must have Grants Manager approval before closing a case. A closing summary should be included in the WWK file and provided to the custodial agency with the reason for closure noted. The recruiter should follow agency policy regarding closed files.
 - a. A child *will* be removed from the caseload when the child's adoption has been finalized, the court has granted legal guardianship, reunification, or customary adoption has occurred.
 - b. A child *may* be removed from the caseload if the recruiter no longer has access to the child and the child's files. For example, the child ages out of foster care *and* his or her case is closed, or the recruiter is denied access to the child.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS CHILD

Children on your caseload *must*:

1. Be in the public foster care system
2. Be without a current identified adoptive family

Children on your caseload *may*:

1. Be freed for adoption
2. Have a goal or concurrent plan for adoption
3. Not be freed for adoption and in *Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement*
4. Be members of a sibling group
5. Have had previous recruitment efforts
6. Have had unsuccessful adoptive placements
7. Be in varying stages of adoption preparedness
8. Be opposed to adoption
9. Have special physical, emotional, developmental and educational needs

No child may be denied access to your caseload based on race, color, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, and any other characteristics protected by applicable law.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS RECRUITED FAMILY

A Wendy's Wonderful Kids family is any family matched with a child on your caseload regardless of how the family was identified or recruited.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS MATCH

The child is considered matched when the sanctioning authority at the child's custodial agency officially approves going forward with an adoption. The matched family must also be in agreement.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS ADOPTION

An adoption is considered finalized when the court issues a final adoption decree. Legal guardianship/ custody or customary adoptions (this terminology may vary from state to state) must be entered in the Child Trends database.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS RECRUITER will:

1. Implement the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Child-Focused Recruitment Model.
2. Be hired by and report to the contracted agency and abide by the contracted agency's policies and procedures regarding time and place of work, supervision, reporting, confidentiality and all other aspects of employment.
3. Assure that necessary authorizations are secured to utilize photos of Wendy's Wonderful Kids children, in line with the Child-Focused Recruitment Model as permitted by the custodial agency.
4. Attend educational opportunities provided by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption including, but not limited to: classroom training, online modules, database training, webinars, and the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Summit hosted by the Foundation.
5. Enter accurate data monthly into the Child Trends database.
6. Participate in evaluation activities as directed by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.
7. Adhere to the *Marketing and Communications Style Guide* provided by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

NOTE: The recruiter's responsibilities should adhere to the components of the Child-Focused Recruitment Model as noted in the contract.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS SITE will:

1. Be a non-profit charitable organization in good standing or a public child welfare custodial agency.
2. Have documentation with the state or county custodial agency enabling access to the child, to his/her case files and clinical services as needed.
3. Hire a full-time Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter whose sole responsibility will be to facilitate the matches of children with appropriate families by utilizing the Child-Focused Recruitment model. Sites may employ part-time recruiters with the approval of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.
4. Provide the Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter with office space and necessary equipment as needed.
5. Provide required supervision, training and support to the Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter.
6. Meet annual goals for the number of Wendy's Wonderful Kids children matched with permanent families.
7. Submit all written and electronic program related grant reports as specified by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in the contract including the submission of monthly data in the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Database, and have ongoing contact with their Foundation Grants Manager (including site visits).
8. Create, manage and report all financial and budget related activities as specified by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in the contract.
9. Participate in evaluation activities as directed by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption or the designated research entity.
10. Adhere to the *Marketing and Communications Style Guide* provided by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.
11. Alert the Foundation to a crisis as outlined in the crisis communications guidelines in the contract.
12. Alert the Foundation if contacted by local Wendy's representatives to participate in Wendy's-related activities.

WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS CHILD-FOCUSED RECRUITMENT MODEL

The Child-Focused Recruitment Model is to focus exhaustively on an individual child's history, experiences and needs in order to find an appropriate adoptive family. Tactics of the Child-Focused Recruitment Model include:

1. **Initial child referral:** The initial child referral component includes introducing the Child-Focused Recruitment model to the custodial agency and/or the child's caseworker, gathering initial referral information, meeting with the caseworker for further information, establishing a date to begin review of the child's case file and scheduling an initial meeting with the child. The WWK case files should include proof of referral and the date the referral was made.
2. **Relationship with child:** Meet with the child in person monthly, at a minimum, to develop trust and openness, to facilitate the assessment of the child's adoption readiness, to prepare the child for adoption and to develop a recruitment plan. The best practice time frame from accepting the referral to case record review and initial meeting with the child is 30 days. The WWK case file should include case notes or contact logs to record significant details about your contact with the child.
3. **Case record review:** Conduct an in-depth review of the existing custodial case file. An initial exhaustive case record review may take several days, and in most cases the recruiter will revisit the record in the future. The recruiter is expected to document the date and reason the child entered the system, child's most recent assessments, chronological placement history, significant services provided (past and present), identification of needed services, next court date and all significant people in the child's life, past and present. The best practice time frame for completion of the initial case record review is 30 days from accepting the referral. The WWK case file should include evidence of a file review.
4. **Assessment of adoption readiness:** Determine the child's strengths, challenges, desires, preparedness for adoption and whether the child has needs that should be addressed before moving forward with the adoption process. A written assessment must be developed initially and updated quarterly to enhance the child-focused recruitment plan. The best practice time frame is for this assessment to be completed within 90 days of accepting the referral. It is to be completed before completing the initial recruitment plan. This is a summary describing the child's understanding and feelings about adoption and must be included in the WWK case file.
5. **Adoption preparation:** Ensure that the child is prepared for adoption and the recruitment process. Most recruiters use materials or tools such as handouts, lifebooks, workbooks and/or activities for youth including support groups, etc. During the matching process, ensure that the pre-adoptive family is adequately prepared to meet the needs of the youth. If you are not directly providing preparation work with the youth and/or family, you must ensure that someone else is providing that service. The WWK case file should contain information about how the adoption preparation is completed, including any requests made to the caseworker to provide or arrange needed adoption preparation services.
6. **Network-building:** Meet with people close to and knowledgeable about the child (caseworker, foster parent, attorney, CASA volunteer, teacher, therapist, relative, mentor, faith-based representative, extracurricular activity leader, best friend's family, etc.). Regular and ongoing contact with persons close to and knowledgeable about the child will help facilitate recruitment activities. Monthly contact with the child's caseworker is expected and essential. The WWK case file should include case notes or contact logs to record significant details about your contacts with people in the child's network. This should be documented on the recruitment plan as well.
7. **Recruitment plan:** Based on the file review, diligent search, interviews with significant adults in the network, the input of the child and the assessment of the child's adoption readiness, develop a child-focused recruitment plan. Enhance the existing recruitment plan quarterly until the youth is matched with a pre-adoptive family. The best practice time frame for completion of an initial recruitment plan is 90 days from accepting the referral. The WWK case file should include the recruitment plan, noting details of the potential adoptive resources identified, located and contacted.
8. **Diligent search:** Implement the ongoing and intensive process of identifying, locating and contacting persons with whom the child already has or had a bond or positive relationship. Conduct aggressive follow-up with identified contacts, with the knowledge and approval of the child's caseworker. Use every tool at your disposal, including the exhaustive case record review, online search tools, and conversation with the child, relatives, birth parents, other connections and the child's worker. The WWK case file should include evidence of diligent search.

The chart below contrasts the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Child-Focused recruitment activities with practices that represent standard operating procedure in many child welfare jurisdictions.

Recruitment Activity	Child-Focused Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model	Common Practice
<i>Initial Child Referral</i>	Initiate contact and maintain ongoing communication with child's caseworker	Summary of child's history only
<i>Relationship with Child</i>	Regular and ongoing contact fosters trust and openness	Contact with child limited
<i>Case record review</i>	Comprehensive review essential element of Child-Focused Recruitment Model	Summary of child's history only
<i>Assessment of adoption readiness</i>	Must be addressed by recruiter prior to development of recruitment plan	Not typically the job of the caseworker, and not always addressed by child's team
<i>Adoption Preparation</i>	Ongoing process of educating child and responding to their emotional needs; educating adoptive parents as appropriate	Assumed to have been completed when recruitment begins
<i>Network Building</i>	Regular and ongoing contact with persons close to and knowledgeable about the child	Minimal involvement beyond approval of recruitment activities
<i>Recruitment plan</i>	Customized recruitment plan for children defined by their needs not by existing strategies; children provide ongoing input and make decisions about their own recruitment plans as appropriate	Existing recruitment tools used for children as appropriate; reliance on public displays of children
<i>Diligent search</i>	Ongoing and intensive process of identifying, locating, and contacting persons with whom the child already has or had a bond or positive relationship	Assumed to have been completed when recruitment begins

NOTE: In addition to the above components, we are aware that many agencies utilize general public adoption recruitment efforts, such as internet photo listings and media profiles. However, these tactics are not part of the Child-Focused Recruitment Model and not accepted as either the initial or predominant recruitment activity.