



Webinar: Strategies to Recruit Foster Parents for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors

August 20, 2024, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Today's Speaker

Claire Hopkins: Hi, everyone. Welcome to our webinar today. My name is Claire Hopkins. I use she/her pronouns, and I'm a training officer with a focus on child and family services with Switchboard. I am so thrilled to be your speaker for today's webinar because a little bit about my background is that prior to joining Switchboard, I worked for nearly four years at my local resettlement agency in Michigan supporting Unaccompanied Refugee Minors and Unaccompanied Children. In that role, I led our refugee and immigrant foster care recruitment efforts. They're collaborating closely with teams across licensing, marketing, public relations, and our community engagement team.

CH: I'm also passionate about and have experience in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, as well as the LGBTQ+ community. Finally, I hold a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Grand Valley State University.

Learning Objectives

CH: Today, our learning objectives are as follows, and I hope that you'll leave learning a little bit more information. The first learning objective that we'll be covering is gathering and leveraging demographic and motivational data of current URM foster parents. The second is applying community engagement techniques to amplify voices and stories of URMs and foster parents. Then we'll move to determining when and how to use the common and necessary approach of targeted recruitment. Then finally, we will close with—yes, this is a big learning objective, a lot to touch here, but we hope that you will be able to develop accessible, inclusive, equitable, and flexible recruitment approaches.

CH: I want to say before we dive into these learning objectives that while some URM programs and folks on this call, you may already be using some of these strategies, we hope that this foundational webinar encourages you to expand upon current practices, maybe provides valuable reminders of things that you had once had as an idea and something else took over, or offers new insights.

CH: At the end of this webinar, we'll have a chance to hear from you all in the network about what questions you have to continue informing what future Switchboard learning objectives and experiences will look like on this topic, as there is so much that we can cover with recruitment. As a friendly reminder, any topics that are not covered, you can always reach out to me directly or submit a technical assistance request on our website.



1. Gathering and Leveraging Data of Current URM Foster Parents as a Recruitment Approach

Discussion Question

CH: Our first learning objective, we are going to start with gathering and leveraging data. Prior to jumping into what that means, I want to pause and start with one of our favorite things to do, if you've attended any of our webinars or trainings, is Slido. I want to hear from you all. If you are able to, you can join using your web browser at slido.com. Otherwise, pull out your phone, use your camera to scan the QR code, and you should be able to access this Slido question. Which is,

What words or phrases come to mind when you think about recruiting foster parents for URMs?

CH: Difficult. This will show as a word cloud. Things that get stated more than once, that word or that phrase will grow. Difficult, as you can see. This is what I was anticipating. I fully support these feelings. Hard, challenging, language barriers. I was also hoping that there would be some moments of encouraging words in here. I hear perseverance. Yes. Patient. We love to hear that. Transparent. Absolutely. Setting boundaries. I really like that. Cultural protective factors. Not enough families. Never enough families, right? Yes.

CH: You can see what I was hoping that this would show is that we have over 100 folks in the call right now. How many of you have submitted those things? Hard, difficult, challenging, unique. Then we also have these growing ones of love and exciting. I wanted to start with this to create a space and set the tone for this webinar that know that you are not alone in this what can feel like siloed, ambiguous, pressure-heavy, guessing game of how to do recruitment and how to retain families.

Understanding the Data

CH: With that, let's jump and explore maybe some new approaches or tips and tricks to enhance what you're already doing. Bear with me on this one. I know that you may be thinking to yourself, "Data, no thanks. What data? Why is this important? I already have to submit and track so many things with recruitment, retention, placement updates." I hear you. I see you. I respect all of those feelings if you're having any of that pop up.

CH: One of the things that I did as a recruiter is I decided to take these approaches of slowing down and reassessing and evaluating the resources that I already have in the program that I was located in, which started with finding data. Another thing that also led me to this is that I would be doing events where I could submit... "I spoke at a church and there was 200 people there." "There was 60 people at the festival that I attended." "I emailed with 12 faith or spiritual leaders." Those were awesome.

CH: But then when I had to provide how many of those folks moved on to an orientation, to setting up for training, to getting licensed, my percentages, honestly, made me feel like I wasn't a good recruiter because those numbers were small. I tell you this story because I want to explain why we are covering some of the foundational aspects of recruiting. You may be thinking, "This is already stuff I do," which is why I hope that you can hear what I said in the beginning of maybe you can enhance or tweak something if this is relevant information to you.



CH: With all that being said, I'm sure you're ready for me to tell you what the point is about data and explain this slide, which is totally fair. As you see, we'll first cover demographic data, talk about what that might include, what you can use to capture. Then we'll move to motivational data and consider why current foster parents are foster parents. What keeps them fostering? I'll explain to you the benefits and why this data was important and hopefully is important for you. Then, finally, we'll close by a suggestion of how you can collect and leverage this data consistently in your recruitment approaches.

Household Demographics

CH: Step one, demographic data. These are some of the demographics that you probably are already required to capture for your foster parents. I encourage you to think about how are you using that data? A lot of times this data is in a database that is accessible to case managers, to licensors, to placement specialists, and it's not really tailored for someone who is doing recruitment to use in the way that would be most successful for them. You know your program best, you know which ones you are already collecting, areas that maybe you need to take time to gather.

CH: Once you have done this and once you've started to think about how you can use this data, you may find that this is helpful for building retention with families. For example, when you're collecting locations. One of the things that was beneficial for myself when I did this was I was able to categorize current foster families with zip codes that were similar or close with one another so that folks could support each other with carpooling. They could plan hangouts. They also may start talking to somebody else in those community spaces that is interested in fostering.

CH: You also might find things out about homes that you didn't know without directly asking these questions. For example, asking someone their occupation and their volunteer experience or passions. Maybe you find out that somebody volunteers for a local LGBTQ+ or domestic violence or other nonprofit organization, and you are able to have them take flyers there, connect you with a point of contact to start building relationships or, bear with me, maybe you find someone who does Ubering and Lyft delivering, and you can get creative with that and think, "Hey, we could make a QR code that you have for all of your riders as you are driving them and you have that one-on-one time with them to be like, 'Not only did you get an Uber ride, but you also learned about fostering.'"

CH: Maybe you have them wear a T-shirt that says, "Ask me about refugee foster care." There's so many different things that you can get creative with as you're gathering data or as you're reviewing the data that you already have. We know that retention is super helpful and effective to set the stage for successful recruitment.

Motivational Data

CH: The next set of data that you might consider collecting is motivational data. This includes asking parents that are already foster parents and licensed, how did they hear about this? What led them to becoming a foster parent? Are there spaces that you weren't even aware of that were promoting? For example, did they hear it on the radio and you weren't sure that was out there? I used to have foster parents tell me, "Oh, there's a commercial on the news." I was like, "Oh my gosh, I didn't even know that we were promoting it that way." Once I found that out, I could go check in with our marketing team and see how we could boost that.

CH: Asking them why they've become a foster parent. Did they have any previous knowledge or experience in fostering or with supporting newcomers? What keeps them fostering? Asking them what their initial placement



preference was and then seeing if that has changed. I can't tell you how many times, and I'm sure many of you can relate to this, is folks would tell me, I don't want to welcome teens. I don't feel comfortable with it. I'm nervous. I have young children in the home. I would say, "Fair, that is where you're at right now. Could you consider talking with another foster parent who had this same fear and now loves welcoming teens? Could you consider going through the training and we can do some specialized individualized support for you on how you might welcome teens?" et cetera.

CH: Then what do folks wish they knew about fostering? Maybe this is also helpful with keeping retention going and then also helpful for addressing any barriers for new recruits and new folks. You might learn that there's different methods that you could share in how training is given out. You might learn that it would have been really helpful to have more information on trauma-informed care. Not only is this hearing and caring about your current foster parents, but this information is also helping to share with your other inquiries that you're speaking with.

Benefits of Gathering Data

CH: I've talked a little bit about how the benefits are important of gathering this data, but let's go into a little bit further here. The first we'll talk about is the fact that gathering data, it tracks trends, right? It also tracks trends that may be positive or negative. By this I mean, for example, with the last motivational data that we talked about, what do we wish we would have known?

CH: This might help you proactively identify and change a way to avoid closures. For example, I used to have folks tell me, I wasn't aware that at six months I had to do a renewal and I missed the deadline. We thought those folks may have just not been interested anymore, but it really turned out that they just didn't have access to different timelines. We also know that data helps us identify gaps.

CH: In the previous slide, we touched on how collecting data can help us tell which demographics we may need to focus on. For example, you may find we have a lot of Spanish speaking folks that I didn't realize, or we have youth in the home that are attending Spanish immersion schools. We actually have more support for welcoming URMs who are Spanish speaking than we thought, but you also might find out we could really build up our Swahili-speaking foster parents. We could really build up how we're supporting single caregiver households.

CH: Then, finally, it allows us and helps us to identify strengths of our foster parents. For example, "Wow, I had no idea that you remodeled houses on the side, you fix up cars in your spare time. We actually have a youth who's been at a group home who has been trying to get into something like this. He's very interested in trade skills. Finding that out by gathering data is making me realize that we might have a really good match of a placement for you." If they don't have room for a placement, "Potentially would you be interested in volunteering as a mentor for this youth and they can join you during this?"

CH: You may also say things like, "Wow, your reason for why you became a foster parent was so inspirational. I'd love to highlight your story. I'd love to use that to inspire others and to make others feel comfortable." Things that I would find out like, "Okay, the youth in the home, they mow their lawns in the neighborhood during the summertime. They practice promoting this themselves. Wow, this would be a really great opportunity for youth to practice their independent skill building. Do you think that you'd be open to doing a meet and greet with a youth who is looking for a placement and your son could talk with him about how he does this?"



Benefits of Leveraging Data

CH: Some of these examples do discuss the benefits of leveraging data, but let's keep going deeper with that. Leveraging this data is useful because we can highlight data and patterns. I'm sure if you have not already been asked or told, you will come into this. Folks are going to say things to you like, "Oh, I'm not a foster parent. I don't have what it takes. I'm not old enough or have enough parenting experiences."

CH: Sometimes I would get just straight up asked, "Who fosters?" I'm like, "You, people like you foster." You can say things like, "Actually, we have many parents who, like you, who only wanted younger children. We actually have many parents who are in their seventies and still do this. We have families who travel and still make this work." It can identify those commonalities and it also allows you to highlight areas of need.

CH: If someone says to you, "Oh, well, you don't have any other folks who have a background in this skillset." "Actually, we would really love to build up our ESL experiences in our foster parents so that they can support staff." Or, "We would really love to build up more folks who are involved in the school and you're a teacher. You would really be helping us address an area of need."

CH: It also helps us reframe myths. It allows folks to be able to express their fears, but then you have the opportunity to validate that, normalize that, and then work through that with them. You can say things like, "I don't speak another language. How am I going to do this?" "There's actually a lot of different ways that you can communicate outside of speaking someone's language. I had a foster parent who I think would love to tell you their story about how they went through and labeled everything in the house in Spanish and English so that it was like a whole opportunity for the youth to start learning English, but it also normalized and humanized the experience for the current foster family to try and learn Spanish."

CH: We also do hear things, unfortunately, about "Fostering refugees isn't safe. I don't have enough education on how and why folks flee." This gives us an opportunity to provide education and dismantle those myths and clear up anything that was a barrier to fostering.

CH: Finally, we can build connections. In addition to the example about how we can praise families for their skills and inspirations, this also allows foster parents to connect with one another. You may find someone who doesn't have a solid support system outside of their immediate family, and you may be able to connect them with a foster parent that has a similar value when you find out this data. You also may be able to find out somebody who could talk directly with an inquiry who is feeling fearful to move to the next step. It's a lot more comforting to hear it from somebody who's doing the work versus us saying, "You've got it, you can do this," and that matters, and that's important, but being able to really talk through those fears and hear it from a current foster parent helps us make those connections.

Using Surveys to Gather and Leverage Data

CH: To wrap up this learning objective, we'll close by talking about how surveys are helpful to gather and leverage data. Again, you may already have some type of resource for how this is being collected, but I encourage you to also utilize another alternative method, something as simple as Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, whatever it may be, to start collecting this data for current foster parents, because you're always going to have new folks, you're going to have closures, and you want to make sure you have updates on that.



CH: Making sure that you communicate clearly what the survey is, why you're doing it, and how many times they might see it, because this is indeed asking foster parents to do one more thing. Keep it simple, ensure that it's clear and it's accessible. If you have folks that aren't tech savvy, maybe you go through the survey with them with the questions at a home visit, maybe you walk through this with them during a Zoom call.

CH: It's also important to ask foster parents and youth about their preferences in being involved in recruitment and retention. You can add this as a question on the survey. Are you interested in sharing your story? Does your youth want to speak with our recruiter and talk to them about what they would really like to have in a foster parent?

CH: You may consider distributing these after orientations, so you can highlight those fears right away, because after orientations, we may not know why they don't move to the next step. Using a survey that says, giving options like "didn't have enough time," "my family doesn't support this," "financial barrier," this allows you to identify those barriers and see how you can get creative to make sure that licensing and recruitment is accessible.

CH: Keep things consistent. If you're going to distribute a survey in a monthly newsletter, make sure that you continue to do that every month. I learned my lesson here where I had started this idea, and the first time I put it out and I said, you're going to get this monthly, and then I got super busy with other needs, and it didn't go out the next couple months. Then I remembered, went there, put it back in. I had asked a couple of folks like, "Hey, why'd you fill this out the first time and not this next time?" They were honest with me and said, "Well, if we don't think that it's going to be distributed and utilized, we don't want to put our time and effort into filling it out." Stay consistent the best you can.

2. Community Engagement Techniques to Amplify Voices and Stories of URM and Foster Parents

CH: All right, we finished our learning objective number one. Fantastic. Now that we have our data, we understand why it's important to gather it, let's talk about how can we communicate that data through community engagement techniques. There are many different definitions of community engagement, and the content that's going to be discussed in this section should really only be a framework for how you incorporate this into your practice, because every community is different. You know the specifics of your program, you know the audience that you're speaking to best.

CH: I started utilizing and focusing on community engagement and putting time in this, because I often would get, as a recruiter, folks would think that I could find a foster home overnight and I could quick fix the problem, or I would get told things like, "We need 15 more homes by the end of this quarter. You can do that, you're a recruiter, right?" Maybe, [chuckles] if I'm lucky, but also probably not. That's okay.

CH: Again, I encourage folks, when things like this happen, you may not have everyone on board with this approach of slowing down, collecting data, reassessing, but if we're able to do that, we can start to build relationships and implement feedback that we learn into our recruitment and seeing this pay off long-term.



What makes community engagement beneficial?

CH: Why is community engagement beneficial? It's educational, it allows us to clear up those myths, and it allows us to provide education on what our needs are. It's collaborative, meaning that you are genuinely taking and listening to feedback from the communities that you're engaging with, and you're building that trust, which means you're also building rapport. Building rapport, it's sustainable, it's respectful, it's long-term. I mean this as if, for example, you come across a group that's really interested in getting licensed and becoming a foster parent, but it may not be an accessible option for them at this time due to any kind of reason.

CH: Instead of saying, "Well, that community is not worth reaching out to anymore," maybe you offer something different. You form that relationship, you start building that rapport, and it might lead to a different positive opportunity. I ran into this when we were trying to license folks from our Muslim community, and there was a lot of work that needed to be done to create the foundation before having folks just jump to orientation and licensing.

CH: Instead, a group of women from the mosque came up with the idea of volunteering as faith and spiritual liaisons. They became a cleared group of volunteers that were paired with a foster parent who had a Muslim youth in their home, but that home did not identify with that religion and practices. They could text this WhatsApp group, "Where do I find halal meat? How do I make sure that I'm meeting the accurate needs for Ramadan?" It became this opportunity that actually led to people getting licensed over a long period of time because they got to see what fostering was like through this rapport building.

Strategic Planning for Effective Community Engagement: Assess and Reflect

CH: Strategic planning for effective community engagement. We're going to talk about four different ways to do so. First being assess: What communities do you already have relationships with? Reflect: Are those communities what you want to continue engaging with, or are there communities you might be missing?

CH: It can be hard to shift from recruiting away from those longtime supporters. For example, maybe you have a church or a community group that has always supported your work's mission or anything that was needed, but they're not producing foster parents. That doesn't mean that this community is not important to engage with, but you might start to ask yourself, is this group aligned with your current goals and needs for the program?

CH: We know that trends change over time. You may have recruited in one space and they were on board for welcoming that demographic of youth and maybe not anymore. Reflecting on that, are they active supporters? Are they providing support that is resourceful and beneficial? Then start to think through what communities might you be missing? I always encourage folks to think through this like, what do you do? Who do you interact with? Who do you see? What do you see during your day-to-day or weekly time periods?

CH: Are you dropping your youth off at school? Are you participating in adult education programs? Do you go to the library? Do you attend a gym or maybe a group exercise class? Do you go to local sporting events or concerts? What grocery shops, restaurants, coffee shops do you go to? All of those places are effective spaces to recruit in, and you might be missing some of those less familiar ideas of groups to recruit in.

CH: Additionally, you might consider spaces like social services agencies. Again, you may be able to say, "You already have this skillset of supporting survivors of human trafficking. It would be really great if I could do an



info meeting to your staff to help them learn more about some of the ways that they could support URMs who may have survived this background.”

CH: It’s always important to partner with black and indigenous people of color and small businesses. This is a great way to support each other’s mission and find a way to eventually recruit in those. Thinking through family-friendly events. Does your local park host story times in the park? What playgrounds are available for you to potentially leave flyers at? Dog parks often have little boards that you can post things onto, plus those people are also parents in some capacity. Connecting with the resources you have already. Current foster parents, current staff.

CH: Staff who may have previously worked there, you may be able to grab them before they leave and say, “Hey, now that you’re not working here, you can get licensed.” Connecting with, I learned this recently from someone in our community of practice, but connecting with other agencies and asking their staff if they want to become foster parents.

Strategic Planning for Effective Community Engagement: Plan and Initiate

CH: The next components of strategic planning for community engagement include planning and then, of course, initiating that plan. Planning starts by organizing the communities that you have identified. I know for me, that this was a doozy to go through and figure out which organizations am I going to be building, repairing relationships, or maintaining relationships.

CH: On the next slide, you can see that there’s a couple of opportunities for how we might go through this. After you’ve organized those communities into that space, because we do know that there may be some repairing, for example, recruiting in the LGBTQ+ community might be an area where you have to take some time to repair recruiting and, excuse me, recruiting in other spaces where you may need to go over myths or miseducation.

CH: Taking that time to really organize it, and then once you do that, consider what your program’s capacity is to interact and engage with these communities. Set clear timelines that feel achievable to you. Make sure that you set aside priorities. Are you going to be doing an email once a week? Are you asking this group to host an event? Are you asking them to post on their social media? Have that be something that’s planned out, that you stick to and can go back to.

CH: Finally, identify any support that you will need to help complete this plan. Do you need to use other voices? Do you need to provide an incentive to have foster parents included in how you’re going to do this?

CH: Then, of course, once you plan, we’ll move on to initiating. You’ll do this by... first suggestion is to decide again, like I just said, are you the one that should be delivering this message and the need for foster parents? Do you need to potentially connect with someone in the community who is already an established and respected leader? Do you need to connect with a previous point of contact that maybe you were working with someone from a school district, but now they have moved on, so you need to address a new contact?

CH: Determine what that community’s interest and capacity is to support recruitment and retention. Is this taking the time to provide education? Is it collaborative by doing an event together? Is it something that is completely outside of becoming a foster parent? You may find ways to do this based on what your program is and what your community is.



CH: To wrap this all up, you'll now see how the circle has come together in the next slide for strategic planning. Again, just a review of the basic foundations for community engagement to assess the communities that you already have, reflect on if those are resourceful or if you can start tapping into other areas. Plan how you are going to use community engagement strategies, and then initiate, and keep it consistent, and try new methods if those that you have done didn't work for you.

Discussion Question

CH: I want to close this section with another Slido activity. I'm curious from you all if through this learning objective section of community engagement,

Are there any new community spaces or groups that came to your mind that you might want to connect with moving forward from this webinar?

CH: Again, you can join at slido.com, or you can go ahead and pull out your phone and scan the QR code with your camera.

[pause]

CH: Schools, absolutely. Group bike rides, I love that. That's becoming, I think that's growing a bit. Those are things that you can follow. I know Facebook might be a little bit outdated, but folks still post a lot of things going on in their events on Facebook. Smaller businesses, local gyms, Spanish immersion programs, veterans. I hadn't thought about that. That's a great idea. Museums. Yes, absolutely. Museums are hosting so many cultural, historic monuments or showcases. That is an awesome idea to partner with. Community centers, parent meetups. Yes, yes. Diversity, equity, and inclusion groups. Beautiful.

CH: Thank you all so much for those responses. I hope that you continue to generate new ideas, or this may have been a reminder to follow up with one of the groups that you have already identified in your recruitment plan.

3. Targeted Recruitment Approaches: Determining When and How to Use Them

Discussion Question

CH: All right, targeted recruitment approaches. I've got another Slido back to back for y'all. I want to know and hear, what does this mean to y'all?

What does targeted recruitment mean? What does it look like to you, and what does it look like to your program?

CH: I know for myself, I have my own definition of this, but I'd love to see how this is generated throughout all of your ideas as well. I appreciate y'all bearing through the back-to-back Slido.

CH: Recruiting on a focus group. Knowing the needs of your kids and actively seeking families with parents who can match those needs. Absolutely. Being intentional. Yes. Targeting a specific group. Geographical location.



That's a great way to... one of the approaches to use in targeted recruitment. Data driven. Child-specific recruitment. Oh, I wish I could keep up with all of these. These are so good. Refers to a focused approach to attracting candidates for specific roles and identifying and reaching out to a particular group. You've got it. Absolutely. Purposeful. Intentional. Specific. You can see some of these commonalities that y'all are submitting, which is really great.

When is targeted recruitment used?

CH: This also aligns really well with what we're going to be covering in our next section here in this learning objective. I want to note that targeted recruitment is extremely important, but if you start by going through targeted recruitment and you don't have an infrastructure built for how you're going to be able to license that group, you may have wasted time and energy, and that's the last thing I want y'all to do.

CH: For example, if you notice that you need to start recruiting for Spanish-speaking families, but you only have Spanish-speaking case managers and you go through and you change all of your marketing flyers into Spanish, but then you don't have somebody to answer the phone when they call or to reply to the email, or you have to quickly ask someone to translate it, that approach can be a little bit misguided. And it's not that it's not important. It just takes time to build that foundation and then it's super successful.

CH: The two spaces that I saw targeted recruitment was when we had a need for specialized placements, meaning we had a placement fall through last night and we need to make sure she's safe in a new home today. Or this family put in their two weeks and we really need a family that is open to handling and welcoming and supporting youth with higher medical needs or behavioral needs. The other is when you are targeting those communities—which you all provided responses in the Slido, which is awesome—when you target communities for recruitment that match the needs and identities of youth.

Using Targeted Recruitment for Therapeutic and Treatment Foster Care and Specialized Needs

CH: Let's talk about those in specifics. The first being using targeted recruitment for therapeutic and treatment foster care or any of those specialized needs. It's important to note that recruiting for these homes is absolutely vital, and I absolutely think that this should be a priority that you're using in your recruitment planning. I just want to talk through a little bit how it might feel like a lot of pressure to have to do it quickly in those examples that I shared previously.

CH: Start by determining what's your reality as a recruiter or recruitment staff to actually be able to identify a new foster home and to license that home in time of needing that quick replacement. Consider the pressure that this might put on that home. There were a few times that it was quite fruitful in finding a new foster home, and they started as an independent living home to welcome the youth and then became licensed. Because unintentionally we had praised them so much, we heard this from someone else that you are so good in this area and you have all of the skill sets, but then when it was really challenging and things weren't going as smoothly as they hoped, they ended up closing their license because they felt like they couldn't do what they were brought on to do.

CH: Which means stay confident in those decisions. If you are approached with one of those immediate needs as a recruitment or recruitment staff, stay confident in that. You know what works best for your programs. You know how it takes time to be able to build foster homes that can welcome these needs. Start by using existing



resources. Can you look in your volunteer mentor pool? Can you collaborate with your current foster homes and the community supports that you've identified to support a family or a youth?

CH: If you have access to the unaccompanied children's program or domestic foster care program, could you consider doing a borrowed bed? Maybe you reach out to your closed foster homes or those that just provide respite.

Using Targeted Recruitment to Identify Specific Communities

CH: Then the second one is using that targeted recruitment to identify specific communities. This is used, as I've said a few times, using this for the long-term benefits. Targeted recruitment is really what we're doing by building the foundation of gathering data, assessing motivational data from foster parents, as well as receiving feedback through community engagement.

CH: I did intentionally place this targeted recruitment section after those because I want to make sure that folks are set up for success with how you go about this. Friendly reminder here, and repeated theme, that this won't happen overnight. Give yourself grace. And that might mean that your inquiry numbers look a bit low for a few months, but you can explain your method and your approach to your licensing staff or contractors as needed. Of course, you can always explore different emergency approaches as needed. There are situations where you will have to explore how you're going to do this response approach that makes sure that youth have a home.

4. Recruitment Approaches: Making Them Accessible, Inclusive, Equitable, and Flexible Using Diverse Marketing Methods

Discussion Question

CH: Our final learning objective we have reached. Again, we are going to go ahead and start it off with a Slido because there are so many different definitions and meanings and values behind what accessibility, inclusivity, equitable, and flexibility mean. I'd love to hear from you. When you hear all of this, what does this look like as you are thinking through recruitment approaches?

What do accessible, inclusive, equitable, and flexible recruitment approaches mean and look like to you?

CH: Language access to application forms. Absolutely, yes. Translating those documents. We'll talk a little bit in our marketing section next about best practices for that.

[pause]

CH: Digital and physical application forms. That's a great point as well, moving towards having an option for folks to fill those out either way. Reaching sometimes overlooked populations. Absolutely. Thinking through what's the reasoning for why that may be difficult to license? Is it because of the way that... the reality of the way our system is set up? How can we go about those barriers and lessen them?



CH: Technology-based everything. Not ignoring certain groups based on biases. I really appreciate that answer. Mutual learning-based. Yes. Listening, encountering the other to see what they need and how to best meet them where they are at. Beautiful. Offering in-person support and conversations. I really appreciate these ideas, and they so value or follow the things that we've been talking about and the things that we'll continue talking about.

CH: This is going to be a big section, as we said. Give yourself some grace today and as you continue to implement and think through recruitment strategies. Here are some tips for when you're thinking through marketing. In this section, we're going to focus specifically on making marketing and the licensing process accessible, equitable, inclusive, and flexible.

Marketing Strategies

CH: First, we have making sure that we're reflecting diversity and realistic expectations. Advocating with your team to make sure that you have the right age group being on flyers. Making sure that you have a variety of different family dynamics. One person, two person, folks from the LGBTQ+ community. Making sure that races and ethnicities are matching the current population of youth that are being welcomed. Also, being clear about what the licensing process will look like. Making sure that there's not any unknowns and gauging when there might be some hesitancy there.

CH: Furthermore, making sure that you avoid tokenizing or using exploitive imagery. I think a lot of times what used to work was that emotional pull factor that you... the sad images of youth and things like that, about trying to get folks in, pulling on those heartstrings. Something that I found with our teams that I was working with was that this works for a specific generation, but not necessarily the generations that are arriving now. Being able to be flexible in that.

CH: Tailor to your audience. Know who you're speaking with. If a lot of your messages do have notes of faith or religion or verses on your flyers, if you're trying to recruit in the Muslim community, you may want to work with someone from that community to learn what would be most effective to include as those things to grab folks' attention.

CH: Be creative. Yes, technology is a huge plus, and we really hope to continue exploring resources for how we can offer digital marketing strategies and whatnot, but start thinking through different ideas. I used to drop cards everywhere that had a QR code on it. During Halloween or different months of celebration, cultural-wise, I would make those cards reflect the celebration that was taking place. Getting creative with how you do that and use different methods to do so. You may consider hosting a Q&A session, doing a Facebook Live, an Instagram Live with another foster parent. You may consider having a news article put out or hosting a movie screening as a recruitment event, hosting a screening of a documentary that highlights refugee and immigrant stories or anything else that might be moving.

CH: Lunch and Learns are often already happening in schools and other spaces, and so seeing if you can pop in and have a moment to present when those are taking place. Tap into what you have available. We've talked about this a lot of using your foster parents, but make it easy for them. Have something available, a flyer that says, "Here are the steps to become a foster parent," or "Here's why I foster." Something that is really easy that they don't have to think about having it be another task as a foster parent that they can just give out to tell their story.



Marketing Language

CH: We'll then talk about marketing language. A lot of folks mentioned making sure that documents are translated, and I love that and I love that we're thinking through that. I also want to encourage making sure that that language is understandable to your audience. I will forever be haunted by the fact that it took trial and error for me. I had translated, become a foster parent in English to Spanish for a while, months that I'd used at recruitment events until finally one of our staff came up and said, "We don't use that word in our communication. No one knows what your flyer says." So, making sure that you are asking what reaches your audience, "What language do you use? How can we adapt it to still be on our branding as an organization, but also making sure that we're reaching who we want to reach?"

CH: You may also need to use different language to reach different generations. There's different motivations for different generations and there's different values. Spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to reach the van life millennials. A lot of folks in those generations are not getting married or having children right away. What's inspiring to them? What reaches them? That was using those positive stories, those documentaries, and highlighting that, yes, you can travel, you can do these things—making sure that you are addressing who you're talking to.

CH: Finally, considering who should be presenting the material. We've talked about this a few times, but a lot of times it might make more sense to have a point of contact that's already well known in the community to be talking through why it's important to consider becoming a foster parent.

Why is it important to create accessible, inclusive, equitable, and flexible licensing processes?

CH: Finally here, talking about making the licensing process... Why is it important to have a licensing process that is accessible, inclusive, equitable, and flexible? If your recruitment approaches and values are not reflective and consistent of the tedious process of licensing, then you might be at risk to lose folks after you just spent a lot of time recruiting. Because licensing can be long, it can be intense, unfamiliar, in another language, it might be triggering. We think about the questions that we have to ask folks. You need to have staff and processes that are modeling accessibility, flexibility to ensure retention and access to get licensed.

CH: This could look like a lot of different things. Again, with the licensing process, we want to be honest, but we also want to make it accessible. Making sure that the steps are clear. You may not need to include everything about an orientation in your flyer or everything about the licensing process in those initial first steps. Be very clear about "These are the steps that you have to take, and I am going to be by your side to help you through those each at each one."

CH: Making sure that the point of contact that you give out knows that they're the point of contact. If you are saying, "Oh this question might not be something I can answer, but one of our licensing staff can," making sure you let that staff member know that they might be reached out to by an inquiry.

CH: Adapt to the population that you are licensing. Here being mindful and empathetic and adaptable to specifically newcomer and SOGIE—sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression—minorities is really important. It's often a big step for them to consider going through this process. I've heard things such as a fear of working with child protective services, fear of law enforcement involvement. I was licensing a group of Congolese folks, and on the home study packet, it asked if they have any guns in the home, which is common, and that was extremely triggering to folks. Noticing those things ahead of time and being mindful about how



you can adapt those type of questions when you might be eliciting any trauma trigger. Normalize those fears for folks. Yes, it is a lot, but yes, it is possible because we have all of these foster parents that you can use with the data that you collected to identify and normalize those fears.

CH: You may consider different ways to minimize barriers. If this is something that your program is able to do, there was often times where folks may be living in a one-bedroom apartment and we were able to find resources in the community for them to move into a two-bedroom apartment. A volunteer team helped them with that.

CH: Requests for interpreters and translators. Requests that you might need an extended licensing time. The fact is that it's a hard process for many folks and takes a while for many folks, but if this is somebody who English is not their first, second, or third language, or foster care is something completely new, the process may take longer.

CH: Make sure that you are always taking those notes, utilizing the experiences that you're having to enhance future recruitment efforts. I know this sounds obvious, but every time I didn't take a note on how something went, I forgot. Having a list, just things that went well for this session, things that didn't go well, just something that you can have that's accessible.

CH: Of course, do not discriminate. Our policies that we have to follow, the URM policies for recruitment, retention, and placement, we cannot be discriminating against folks. Think through how you can implement and uphold anti-discrimination policies. We've got a lot of great resources on that. Ask questions, submit a TA request to see if there are areas that you're running into, how we can work together to improve that.

Sample Monthly Recruitment Plan

CH: After all of that information, you might be thinking, "Cool, great. That sounds really good, but I have nowhere where—I don't know where to start." I didn't know where to start either. I did create a little bit of a... at Switchboard, we created a little bit of a sample recruitment plan. Totally just an idea. Again, adapt this to what your program needs, but some of the things you might consider into this category of community engagement and foster parent inquiries.

CH: Set a goal to engage with one to three new community contacts that you've identified after collecting that data where your gaps are. Set a goal that you'll follow up with them and any inquiries two times a month. Check in with your current families that are in process. Maybe you suggest holding a meeting with your licensing team. Making sure that you have things documented and kept up to date. These are all great places to start as a recruitment plan.

CH: You may then look into recruitment events that you can host. You could consider hosting two to three recruitment events, which also could include community events, meaning that there was already something taking place in the community that you wanted to partner with, whether it was a festival or a book reading, a movie screening. Then host two to four virtual or in-person actual orientations, information meetings. Try and post into different newsletters or bulletins. Attend meetings to build that collaborative and rapport through community engagement. Again, document, document, document. This will help you improve your efforts. It will show you different trends and gaps as you're going into the next month.



CH: Then finally, think through what's available to you internally. You might distribute a foster parent newsletter that also goes out to your staff. A lot of staff aren't aware of what the entire recruitment process looks like, what the licensing process looks like. You may share opportunities, events coming up that staff can either attend to learn. You could offer an incentive, bring a friend or a family member to learn with you and attend at this recruitment event. You can count that as your own training hours.

CH: You may implement some virtual calendar, assuming that many of us are in this virtual space now, so that if a staff member gets asked, "Oh, I do want to learn. How can I do that?" they could easily access, "Looks like we have an info meeting or an open house coming up on the 12th." Consider scheduling monthly marketing and public relation meetings, talking through what your digital marketing would look like, what your campaign ads may look like, how you're going to elevate to higher news outlets in the community. Having that standing is really helpful just to provide updates and be able to say, "Hey, this flyer works really well, but I'd like to adapt it to next time talk about recruiting teens."

Closing Tips and Tricks

CH: Then finally, we have some wrap-up closing tips and tricks. Again, this is a lot of information that we went over today, and I so appreciate you all being here and learning with us together. With that, I want to leave you with a reminder that you do know your program best, and I encourage you to advocate for its needs. It might feel uncomfortable to be the first person to advocate for a new need, or you might feel alone as the only recruiter or small team, but I encourage you to stay confident that you do know what's best and that if things go wrong, that is a-okay as well because you'll learn from that.

CH: Don't give up when things don't go perfectly. Remember why you're doing this work. A lot of times we can get lost in the amount of homes that we have to have licensed. We get lost in the data. We get lost in just the day to day. Remembering that your work that you're putting in is ensuring that youth are placed and welcomed into homes. Document, document, document. Find a system that works well for you. Stay consistent and reliable. Make sure that you follow up. Again, this is an easy, an obvious thing, but those follow-ups sometimes get pushed behind. Set reminders for yourself.

CH: Lastly, ask someone to foster. See what happens. I was on an airplane recently and I asked the guy next to me if he'd ever heard about fostering. It was random and awkward, but now one more person knows about welcoming and fostering Unaccompanied Refugee Minors. Even if it doesn't go well, what's the loss there? See what happens.

Q&A

CH: With that, I want to thank you again. We're going to move into questions that folks may have. I am excited to hear from you all. If you can drop those into the chat, and then I'm going to ask my colleague, my supervisor, Jenna, to help me facilitate some of these questions.

Jenna Christie-Tabron: Hi, Claire. Yes, you have several questions that came through in the Q&A. Some were answered, but would love for you to be able to expand upon the responses, one of which you touched on briefly in one of your examples, but someone asked,



Can you share some ideas on some outreach efforts to reach to community members from the Islamic community and immigrant families?

JCT: They are having significant challenges in their area. Wanting to know how they can bring in families from those two categories.

CH: Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much, Jenna, for sharing that. Thank you for that question. I will always be happy to expand further on these topics, just as another plug through a TA request, if I don't quite give you everything you were looking for. One of the things that you might want to consider is connecting with an Islamic or Muslim organization outside of the local mosques.

CH: Something that was beneficial for our programming at the time when I was working there was to establish a relationship with somebody who attended, or maybe as a volunteer there. We also started, I reached out to the teachers at the school that's often a part of the mosque, because it was really hard to just jump in, especially working for my previous organization was faith-based and Christian-based. You have to come in saying, "Hey, I totally understand I'm coming in as an outsider. I'm asking something that might not be super familiar with your community." Start by normalizing that and see if you can connect with maybe one or two people to start sharing what's with their own community in the mosque.

CH: This took for me a few months to build that relationship. I ended up being able to connect with several of our local imams and work with them to deliver an orientation to the members in their community. They went through and talked about how—because adoption is common, but fostering is not—they went through and talked about the correlation of that and how their values would actually still be supporting their religion and their practices. I think coming from them was really beneficial, and we followed up. We started having youth who did identify in those communities attend mosques weekly. We started building transportation there. We started supporting the events that were going on. Eventually that led to several folks getting licensed from those communities. Hopefully something in that reaches, yes.

JCT: Thank you, Claire. You have another question:

As a brand new employee or recruiter, where can I start to educate myself about the foster care system or licensing information, et cetera?

CH: Yes, absolutely. I will say that it's probably best to start looking through ORR's, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, their policies, and they have a great outline on what the URM program is, who's eligible, all those things. Then I would encourage you to look at your state's policy for their foster care requirements. Your state will have the different requirements specifically for you on the steps to get licensed, who can be licensed, what the home requirements are. I am wondering if potentially one of my colleagues could drop in the chat a resource to ORR's website. Then again, I would encourage you to start locally and check out your state policy as well.

JCT: Thank you, Claire. That actually also answered the next question that came through, wonderful. We do have a third question that also came in, wondering about covering trainings, maybe in other languages.



Do you have any insight or any resource as to how you can get trainings, like ORR trainings in different languages, or how do you navigate if you have maybe a Spanish-speaking family that is looking to foster? What are any tips, some advice or resources to work with those families?

CH: Sure, absolutely. Some of the things that come to my mind for that is if your program does have an internal translation and interpreter program, of course, reaching out to them. Something else maybe to consider is offering, if you have a smaller-capacity program, can you offer incentives to staff or volunteers or others that may speak those languages?

CH: There's functions on Zoom where you can enable closed captioning. I had done orientations with those closed captions available, and then they can actually, it's hard for me to explain, I'm sorry. On Zoom, there's functions where you can actually have people go into their own room and hear it in their own language, which was really helpful as long as folks were tech savvy. Other options might be having things translated through external community resources. We do have at Switchboard some resources on translation and interpreting apps that you can use. Those are the things that come to my mind right now.

JCT: All right, thanks, Claire. Could you also maybe further elaborate? We provided a response to this question, but happy to hear more of your insight:

How does it look to recruit foster parents who are working? We're talking about parents who have dual income households. How is it that they're managing to foster, to take care of the foster children to their appointments? How do they approach all of the competing demands that they have?

CH: Sure, yes, great question. Again, my response will be from my experience, and so I do encourage you to look through what your requirements are for your state and for your program. Some of the things that I would share with foster parents who had this family dynamic was most youth in URM programming are teens. For my program, it was okay for youth to stay home if their case manager, therapist, foster parents all involved deemed that appropriate. That's also a really good space with the gathering data if you realize that you have other foster parents or volunteers in that area. Maybe those folks that are working those full-time jobs, they might be able to have somebody who's already licensed or already cleared to have the youth over while they are working.

CH: You may want to provide different opportunities for trainings to be completed, for orientations and whatnot. One thing that worked for me is I would host one in the morning, I would host one during lunchtime, and then I would host one in the evening, and finally one on a weekend. I would rotate those for different months to accommodate folks that have those schedules.

CH: We also had moved all of our training to be more, what's it called? E-learning courses that Switchboard also does, but we had moved those as options for folks who wanted to, who couldn't make them live and wanted to do that on their own time. Yes, I think I'll leave that there, and if there's anything else that pops into my mind while we are on the call together, I'll definitely share more ideas.

JCT: All right, Claire, another question came through:

What was your most successful recruitment tool? Were they info sessions, networking, events, or flyers, none of the above, something else?



CH: Oh, man. I was asked this a lot, and I always feel bad saying, “Well, it depends.” It depended on the audience, and it depended on the trends and the youth that were in the pipeline. I really stand by community engagement being a tool that helped leverage and made targeted recruitment successful for me. It took a little bit more work to make sure that I was following up, having engagement, building relationships. If we had extra donations or an event going on and wanted to promote another business or nonprofit, that really was what was the most beneficial because I was able to create unique recruitment tools and ideas after connecting with folks.

CH: For example, we had a recruitment event for open gym with a church that had a gym going, and we had on the big screen that they had just a loop of testimony of foster parents talking about their experiences that was playing in a separate room where folks could come and play basketball, but then they could also go in the other room and have it be a little bit more of an informal setting. “All of the above,” I guess, is my answer, and maintaining patience and grace for yourself and not giving up.

JCT: All right. Thanks, Claire. Our final question is,

[Will Switchboard be developing more resources like this?](#)

CH: I sure hope so. As long as we keep hearing from you all that this is a need, which is a perfect segue. I’d love to hear from you to see what would be most helpful on this topic to continue learning about so that Switchboard can consider those and make these learning experiences available to you. Thank you for that last question. Great segue, helping out the webinar here.

Discussion Question

CH: Last Slido, pals. Pulling out your camera on your phone, scanning a QR code, or joining at slido.com and helping us learn:

[What specific topics related to URM foster parent recruitment would you most like to see addressed by future Switchboard learning experiences?](#)

[pause]

CH: Outreach, engaging partners and strategies with ECBOs, absolutely. Practical examples of recruitment that every staff can help with. Yes, I hear and see this and I respect, I appreciate this being brought up as the hope is that we can deliver, create more opportunities that are a little bit more specific than this foundational webinar. Thank you.

CH: Retention, examples of recruitment events. Addressing all of the training requirements and how to... so, retaining. I’m hearing retaining a lot in different ways through these submissions.

CH: Placing LGBTQ+ youth in Catholic or faith-based organizations, absolutely. How to support different fundings and the capacity that folks have. I think that’s a great idea.

CH: I’m curious, too, if folks would like to see maybe things about recruiting for teens or recruiting in other areas that may be identified as targeted recruitment spaces. Different cultures, religions, how to handle difficult questions and negative perspectives on the refugee community. Yes, absolutely. Thank you for sharing



that. That is something that's very real and that we face in this space. To be able to provide a resource on that, I'm hearing, would be helpful.

CH: Addressing language barriers, cultural orientations for foster parents and youth. Great. These are all really helpful for us.

Conclusion

Feedback Survey

CH: On that note, continuing to help us out so that we can help you, please ask that you go ahead and scan this QR code one more time, or you can look in the chat as we have posted the survey link. Before we share our recommended resources, like I said, we'd love to ask you to help us so that we can help you in the long term. This survey is so important to us, and it will help us improve future trainings. It's three questions long and only takes 30 seconds to complete. Please take 30 seconds now to complete this survey so that we can have the most beneficial information.

[pause]

CH: Thank you all for bringing your attention to completing that feedback section for us. Again, you can find that link in the chat.

Recommended Resources

CH: Here we have some recommended resources. We have some resources that are available on the Switchboard website. Shoutout to my colleague, Rosalie, who has dropped those in the chat for you as well. Just different inspiring stories. You can find the Office of Refugee Resettlement URM Policy. This guide is going to be really helpful for some of those questions that were brought up about specifics. Then we have some more specific options about recruiting in different areas.

Reviewing Learning Objectives

CH: Closing out now, we hope that you are able to complete these learning objectives as you go into your work, which is gather and leverage demographic and motivational data of those current foster homes you have to enhance recruitment efforts. Apply community engagement techniques to amplify voices, stories of URMs and foster parents. Determine when and how to effectively use targeted recruitment approaches. Finally, develop accessible, inclusive, equitable, and flexible recruitment approaches using different diverse communication and marketing methods.

Stay Connected

CH: For more training and technical assistance, you can stay connected with Switchboard. You can email us at switchboard@rescue.org or visit us at SwitchboardTA.org and follow us on social media at SwitchboardTA. On behalf of all of us at Switchboard, thank you so much for learning with us today. I really look forward and hope to see you again soon.



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