I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of the Community, Population and Needs
Missouri’s Diligent Recruitment Grant provided services in four counties in the St. Louis region: St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, and Jefferson County. The target population was youth ages 10-18 who had been in out of home care fifteen months or more, resided in the St. Louis region, and did not have an identified permanent resource.

At the conclusion of the grant period, the local statistics had greatly improved:

- 39% decrease in youth in out-of-home care in the St. Louis region from 2008 to 2013
- 55% increase in the number and proportion of youth in relative/kinship care in the St. Louis region from 2008 to 2013

Overview of the Program Model
The Missouri Diligent Recruitment project services were to be provided in two stages by two different local, private nonprofits:

1. Extreme Recruitment® - 12-20 weeks of intensive multi-faceted recruitment that results in the identification of a potential permanency resource; provided by Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition (the Coalition). Key components of the model included the use of private investigators for family finding and implementing general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment concurrently. The Extreme Recruitment recruiters met weekly with the youth’s team to work closely on preparing the youth for permanency and identify as many options for permanency as possible.

2. “Connector Services” - supportive services to help the youth and the potential adoptive parent prepare for permanency and stabilize the placement for up to one year; provided by Children’s Home Society.

Collaboration
Two organizations provided intervention programming and a third implemented general recruitment campaigns. 14 public and private agencies participated in programming, and an advisory group oversaw and provided input.

Sustainability
There is a growing movement to integrate Extreme Recruitment®, and similar programs, into child welfare services throughout the state of Missouri, nationally, and internationally. Six communities in the United States and Canada are replicating the Extreme Recruitment® model, and the program information has been presented at 19 conferences or program sites.

In Missouri, legislation passed in 2013 (SB 47) to broaden the definition of kin for guardianship subsidy in the State of Missouri. Governor Nixon appointed a statewide Task Force on Recruitment, Licensure and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Homes; it made recommendations to improve Missouri’s child welfare system, two of which relate directly to the progress initiated by Extreme Recruitment®:

- Increase focus on use of relatives and kin by intensifying early efforts to identify relative placement options and exploring models of diligent search.
- Explore for possible statewide replication the use of innovative approaches such as team decision making, diligent recruitment, and expanded privatization of resourcing functions.
The Coalition obtained funding to continue the Extreme Recruitment® program in St. Louis and a second nonprofit agency is expanding the program in Kansas City. The Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition also created and is expanding a new program called 30 Days to Family™ which focuses on family search, engagement, and placement efforts for youth entering out-of-home care.

Evaluation
An experimental design was planned; however, a quasi-experimental study was implemented due to groups that were not truly random, functional impairment levels that were not equivalent at baseline, small sample size, and attrition. The results, therefore, while positive, are not conclusive.

The Intervention group realized numerous positive outcomes, including higher rates of permanency and pre-permanency, improvement in well-being as indicated by CAFAS scores, and an increase in the number of biological persons identified by the youth as who is most supportive of him/her (as opposed to paid persons). Positive effects reduced over time.

Conclusions
There were several challenges encountered during the grant, including:

- Intervention services were provided to only 83 youth:
  - A very high number of youth originally thought to be eligible for program inclusion were later deemed ineligible;
  - Contract difficulties led to disruption and cessation of intervention youth enrollments for eight months, and difficulty in ramping back up; and
  - Other enrollment difficulties occurred, such as a two month period during which the pool of eligible youth was depleted.
- The intervention and control groups were not equivalent as a result of a procedure that permitted a youth’s team to determine whether or not to enroll in the intervention.
- Only one-half of the program model was regularly provided to youth. Connector Services were routinely not provided because private nonprofits providing foster care case management services under Missouri’s partially privatized system felt that these services were duplicative and so did not schedule services.

Although only a portion of the project was implemented and in spite of challenges and lower rates of reconnection and permanency than hoped, the data and findings suggest that this intervention is worthy of additional study. Conclusions include:

- Well-being increases when youth are reconnected with relatives and kin.
- Positive effects reduced over time, highlighting the fact that Connector Services were not provided. The return to “business as usual” had negative effects.

Additionally, the overall premises and philosophical tenets of the program have been largely incorporated into Missouri’s child welfare system and so there is significant sustainability.

Recommendations
Several recommendations were made, including that further attention be paid to the value of reconnections, how they impact a child’s well-being, even if placement and permanency are not options.
II. OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY, POPULATION AND NEEDS

Description of the Grantee Organization

The Missouri Department of Social Services Children’s Division operates the state’s social services and is the official grantee. There are five (5) program divisions in the Department of Social Services:

- Children’s Division: Responsible for adoption, foster care, child abuse and neglect hotline, family center services and Intensive In-Home services statewide.
- Family Support Services: Provides Food Stamps, Child Support Enforcement, Temporary Assistant for Needy Families (TANF), Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, and Eligibility Determination for MO Health Net and MO Health Net for Kids.
- MO Health Net Division: Provides MO Health Net services for Families, Kids, Pregnant Women and infants, Blind, Elderly and Disabled, and MoRx.
- Division of Youth Services: Provides services for youth in the Juvenile Justice system.
- Division of Finance and Administrative Services: Handles Finance and Administrative Services and General Services.

Children’s Division was the lead agency for the Diligent Recruitment Grant. Children’s Division partnered with several organizations on the Diligent Recruitment grant:

1. Missouri Coalition of Children’s Agencies (MCCA) served as the Administrative Service Organization. MCCA is a statewide network of more than 50 agencies that supports members to provide innovative and effective services to children through leadership, advocacy and training.

2. Saint Louis University (SLU) served as the grant’s evaluation partner.

3. Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition (the Coalition) provided Extreme Recruitment® services, 12-20 weeks of intensive recruitment and permanency readiness support. The Coalition is a private nonprofit agency founded in 1989. The Coalition pioneered a teen adoption program, is a Wendy’s Wonderful Kids site, and coordinates the weekly television feature “A Place to Call Home.” More than 2,000 families participate in the agency’s support services, including support groups, workshops, educational supports, advocacy services, and a respite network. The Coalition founded and launched the Extreme Recruitment® program in 2008, and created the program 30 Days to Family™ in 2011.

4. Children’s Home Society (CHS) is the organization identified to provide “Connector Services” for up to one year after the initial 12-20 weeks of intervention to support potential permanency match resources. CHS was founded in 1891 with a mission to improve the quality of life for children in need. Now, the agency offers a full continuum of adoption services and support for families formed through adoption.
5. Adoption Exchange is the grant partner that has led public awareness campaigns to increase the number of individuals interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent.

6. 14 additional partner agencies have served as a collaborative team on the project. In 2005, the state of Missouri initiated a public-private partnership with a number of child welfare agencies to create a more effective system for Missouri’s children in the custody of the state. In the St. Louis region, approximately one-half of the children/youth in the custody of the state for out-of-home placement due to abuse and neglect are provided with foster care case management services by a private child welfare agency. During the period of the grant, the contracts for these agencies were re-issued at least once.

The Community In Which the Project Takes Place

The Diligent Recruitment Grant project provides services in four jurisdictions in and close to St. Louis metropolitan area: St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, and Jefferson County. These four jurisdictions comprise 68% of the population of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (17 counties in Missouri and Illinois). These counties are the four most populous of the nine Missouri counties, and comprise 87% of the population of the Missouri counties.

The four counties vary considerably:
- St. Louis City is urban, with a population that declined 8.3% from 2000 to 2010.
- St. Louis County is suburban with some urban areas; its population declined 1.7%.
- St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States (27% from 2000 to 2010). It is increasingly suburban, and has a large child/youth population.
- Jefferson County has also experienced growth (+10.4%) but remains more rural than the other counties in the project.

Racial composition varies considerably, as does median household income and the percentage of the population below the poverty line.

Table 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR THE PARTICIPATING COUNTIES, FROM THE 2010 CENSUS BUREAU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ST LOUIS CITY</th>
<th>ST LOUIS COUNTY</th>
<th>JEFFERSON COUNTY</th>
<th>ST. CHARLES COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL POPULATION</td>
<td>319,294</td>
<td>998,594</td>
<td>218,733</td>
<td>360,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE IN POPULATION FROM LAST CENSUS</td>
<td>-8.3%</td>
<td>-1.71%</td>
<td>+10.42%</td>
<td>+26.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALES</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALES</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIAN AGE</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDREN/YOUTH 19 AND UNDER</td>
<td>77,930</td>
<td>260,426</td>
<td>60,699</td>
<td>102,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPULATION BY RACE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICAN INDIAN &amp; ALASKA NATIVE</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIAN</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIVE HAWAIIAN, OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER, OTHER RACE</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HISPANIC/LATINO POPULATION | 3.5% | 2.5% | 1.6% | 2.8%
MEDIAN COUNTY INCOME     | $32,767 | $55,290 | $52,841 | $65,281
PERSONS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE | 26.0% | 9.7% | 10.3% | 4.9%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE   | 2.16 individuals | 2.42 individuals | 2.65 individuals | 2.64 individuals
AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE      | 3.08 individuals | 3.02 individuals | 3.06 individuals | 3.11 individuals
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING   | 45.4% | 72.1% | 81.8% | 80.6%

Primary Issues Addressed by the Demonstration Project
In 2008, there were 2,888 children statewide in the custody of the Children’s Division who had been in care for more than 30 months, and 36% of them were in the St. Louis region. Additionally, the St. Louis population was older, more likely to be African American, and to stay in care longer than the statewide average.

In 2013, the number of youth in out-of-home care in the St. Louis region has dramatically decreased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Children in CD custody for 30 months or longer</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>2,888</td>
<td>2,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis region</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in St. Louis region</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographics of children in CD custody for 30 months or longer
- Race, African American                       | 41% MO, 78% STL | 32% MO, 70% STL |
- Race, White                                   | 57% MO, 22% STL | 66% MO, 29% STL |

Additionally, the overall number of children in care has significantly decreased and those in care are increasingly placed with relatives/kin.

Child Welfare Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Welfare Statistics</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children/Youth in Children Division Custody, statewide</td>
<td>14,528</td>
<td>11,875</td>
<td>-18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children/Youth in Out-of-Home Care in the St. Louis Region</td>
<td>3,778</td>
<td>2,302</td>
<td>-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children/Youth in Relative/Kinship Care in St. Louis</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Youth in Relative/Kinship Placement</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population Served

The Missouri Diligent Recruitment Grant served older youth in the St. Louis region in the foster care system. The target population for 150 youth was:
- Ages 10-18;
- Have been in out of home care for 15 months or longer;
- Reside in the St. Louis region and;
• Do not have an identified permanent resource.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM MODEL

The Missouri Diligent Recruitment Grant project was intended to be an experimental design, to provide intervention services to 150 older youth who have been in care for an extended period of time. Intervention services were intended to be provided in two stages, by two different local, private nonprofits:

1. First intervention: Extreme Recruitment® programming - 12-20 weeks of intensive multi-faceted recruitment that results in the identification of a potential permanency resource; provided by Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition
2. Second intervention: Connector Services - supportive services to help the youth and the potential adoptive parent prepare for permanency and stabilize the placement; provided by Children’s Home Society.

Extreme Recruitment® is a program of the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition. The program combines general, child-specific, and targeted recruitment. The program also entails weekly meetings of a team of professionals which focus on recruitment efforts as well as preparing the youth for permanency, facilitated by an Extreme Recruiter. The Recruiter works with an Investigator, who is typically a former police detective. The concept is that comprehensive identification and cultivation of a youth’s biological family, family friends, and other adults likely to have a connection to the child or family – combined with intensive and comprehensive general and targeted recruitment – will lead to two outcomes:

1. Reconnecting the youth with safe and appropriate relatives/kin; and
2. Matching youth with permanent resources for adoption or guardianship.

A “reconnection” is defined as any form of contact (i.e., letter, phone call, visit) after there has been no contact with the youth for a minimum of six months. Often times, this reconnection is with a relative. It may also be with a former neighbor, babysitter, step-parent, godparent, etc. For some cases, a reconnection may be with a relative the child has never met. These relationships are still important, as the resource may be able to assist the child in developing a stronger sense of identity by answering questions about their family and history. A core belief of the program is that the number of “non-paid” supports that a youth has, the higher the youth’s well-being.

A “match” has been identified once an individual has committed to adopting or taking guardianship of the youth and the team is in agreement that the identified person is an appropriate resource. Once a match is identified, the Extreme Recruiter works with the team and identified resource to complete a Roadmap to Permanency and Supports Checklist. The Roadmap to Permanency acts as a long term, specific plan to accomplish all necessary tasks for an adoption or guardianship to be finalized. The Supports Checklist is an inventory of major supports an adoptive parent or new guardian would need for a successful placement. The team uses these tools as a plan to complete the finalization of the guardianship or adoption.
At this point in the program model (20 weeks), the services are transferred to Children’s Home Society for “Connector” services to assist the identified resource and youth to prepare for permanency and stabilize the placement. The services were not as prescriptive as those to be provided by the Extreme Recruitment program because the needs of each youth and potential permanency resource differ but were intended to be tailored to each youth and potential permanency resource’s needs. Supportive services that were intended to be provided include outpatient mental health services, psychological testing and evaluation, parent education, support groups, and advocacy services.

**Logic Model**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INPUTS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with case management agencies</td>
<td>Prepare youth for permanency and family connections:</td>
<td>Approximately 15-17 youth served per recruiter each year</td>
<td>90% of youth are reconnected with a safe/appropriate relative/kin</td>
<td>The child welfare system returns to its original purpose of being a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of policies/statutes regarding adoption/guardianship placements</td>
<td>• Child/youth assessment</td>
<td>Identify at least 40 relatives/kin in 97% of cases with equal emphasis on maternal and paternal sides of the family</td>
<td>(reconnection is defined as phone, letter, e-mail, or face-to-face</td>
<td>temporary placement where children receive safe and loving care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation websites</td>
<td>• Address needs in areas of best placement, mental health, physical health, peer relationships, adult relationships, and education</td>
<td>All recruitment methods (general, targeted, child-specific, and diligent recruitment) are conducted for 97% of children</td>
<td>(approximately 10-12 matches a year per recruiter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise in family finding</td>
<td>Conduct all available recruitment methods concurrently:</td>
<td>Weekly Recruitment Meetings for 12-20 weeks</td>
<td>90% of cases meet weekly at least 90% of the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with media partners for general recruitment</td>
<td>• General Recruitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative recruitment ideas</td>
<td>• Targeted Recruitment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Child-Specific Recruitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Diligent Search for Relatives/Kin</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

70% of youth have clinically significant improvements on the CAFAS from baseline to case closure

70% of youth increase their level of connectedness to adults, as measured by the Social Support Survey
**Service Model**

Extreme Recruitment® eliminates a linear model of adoption recruitment; instead implementing all available recruitment methods simultaneously while concurrently preparing the child for permanency.

The service model utilized by Children’s Home Society to provide Connector Services is based on trauma-informed care for children in foster care, adopted or in kinship care. CHS staff have been trained in Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT), a promising practice developed by Dr. Bruce Perry, Senior Fellow of The Child Trauma Academy and adjunct Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the School of Medicine at Northwestern University.

NMT is an approach to working with at-risk children based on the evidence presented by the fields of neuropsychology that negative and traumatic experiences in early life significantly
impact the development of the brain and its ability to regulate emotional and behavioral responses. NMT draws on several core principles of trauma and neurodevelopment to create a comprehensive approach to the child, family and the broader community by integrating emerging principles of developmental neuroscience into clinical practice. The NMT process helps match the nature and timing of specific therapeutic techniques to the developmental stage of the child, and to the brain region and neural networks that are likely mediating the neuropsychiatric problems.

Key Interventions and Activities – Extreme Recruitment

Extreme Recruitment activities take place both inside and outside of weekly meetings of the Extreme Recruitment Team, which includes some or all of the following: the Extreme Recruiter, Extreme Recruitment investigator, the child’s case manager and his/her supervisor, Guardian Ad Litem, Deputy Juvenile Officer, therapist, adoption specialist, and foster parent. Key interventions and activities are described below:

1. Address permanency readiness needs
   When considering the child’s well-being, the professional team explores if the child has any needs to improve his or her mental health, physical health, educational issues, adult relationships, or peer relationships. While most children will not have a need for assistance in every domain, all of these “Preparing for Permanency” considerations are addressed weekly. The goal of reviewing these issues is to ultimately make a child’s transition into an adoptive home as smooth as possible. When the child’s basic needs are already being met, the transition will be easier for both the child and the adoptive parents. The youth being served will interact with the most appropriate team member throughout the intervention to prepare him/her for permanency.

2. Recruitment
   Each form of adoption recruitment is considered weekly. The outer ring of the Extreme Recruitment® model focuses on recruitment activities. At each meeting, the recruiter checks to see if any additional recruitment methods can be utilized in that week.

   Child-specific recruitment involves contacting family friends and previous supports to the child. This may include anyone who has previous knowledge with the child. These individuals will come up in conversations with relatives and commonly include former neighbors, babysitters, family friends, teachers, coaches, etc. The child may also provide ideas about people they were and are currently close with.

   Targeted recruitment requires the recruiter to aim recruitment efforts at a specific subset of the community that is somehow important to the child in need of a home, such as a child’s specific interest or hobby. Recruitment among licensed foster and adoptive homes is also a common form of targeted recruitment.
General recruitment targets the population as a whole. This could include Wednesday’s Child features. The Coalition has a long-term partnership with the St. Louis NBC affiliate to air features on children weekly (“A Place to Call Home”).

Foster Parent recruitment, a type of child-specific recruitment, is also vital. The child’s current and former foster parents may be interested in adopting the child, but have never previously been asked. They may have apprehension because of a lack of knowledge of post-adoption supports. Even if they are not interested in adopting the child, they may know of people within their family or their community who are or have other ways in which they can be supportive to the child while they remain in foster care.

Diligent search is conducted as part of child-specific recruitment efforts. Diligent search is the search for biological relatives/kin to the child, on both the maternal and paternal sides of the family. The first step in this process is to review the child’s case record for names and information for these people. Once names have been obtained, a Family Finding Checklist provides assistance on how to locate relatives, including:

- Search engine (Examples: Google, Yahoo!, Bing)
- Free online people finders (Examples: whitepages.com, zabasearch.com)
- Paid online people finders (Examples: privateeye.com, archives.com, accurint.com)
- Law enforcement records (Examples: vinelink.com, bop.gov)
- Department of Revenue
- Child Protection Databases
- Social networking sites (Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Twitter)

3. Engaging Relatives and Potential Permanency Resources: Speaking with Relatives/Kin of the Youth

Typically, the first contact with a relative will either be at their front door or over the phone. In both situations, it is possible that the recruiter and/or investigator have not yet confirmed the identity or relationship of the individual. Very limited information is shared initially to maintain the child’s confidentiality.

If relatives are willing, Extreme Recruiters use this time to ask questions about the family tree and record pertinent information. Extreme Recruitment® is explained as a program to research the family to develop supports for the child and ask about their interest in having contact with the youth.

Often times, relatives will be quick to explain why they cannot care for the youth, even prior to the recruiter or investigator discussing placement. Effort is made to develop a rapport with the individual prior to asking questions about placement possibilities. If relatives are interested in having contact, information necessary to conduct the background checks is collected.

4. Engaging Relatives and Potential Permanency Resources: Speaking with Other Permanency Resources
When receiving inquiries from general and target recruitment efforts, recruiters must first confirm the licensing status of the inquirer. If inquirers are not licensed, information beyond what is present in the strengths-based media profile is not shared. The recruiter shares information on licensing and maintains an open door for communication throughout their licensing process. If a licensing worker confirms that the inquirer is currently licensed and in good standing, the long adoption summary is shared with the inquirer so they can determine if they feel the child would be a good match with their family.

**Key Interventions and Activities – Connector Services**
The program model stipulated that, after the Extreme Recruitment® case was closed at 20 weeks, services would be transferred to Children’s Home Society for supportive services. Available services included:

- **Outpatient Mental Health Services**
  All therapy services focus on the needs of the family as a whole, so that there exists a secure relationship between the adoptive parent(s) and the child. Counseling services assist the family in strengthening and facilitating adjustment and attachment, positive parenting skills, behavioral concerns, developmental transitions, sibling interactions, and marital and social supports.

- **Psychological Testing and Evaluation**
  A psychological evaluation by CHS is designed to determine the cognitive, psychological, emotional, social and environment components of a child’s functioning and how those components interact.

- **Parent and Professional Education**
  CHS provides educational seminars regarding such as topics as facilitating attachment, handling difficult behaviors, communicating the child’s needs to others, preventing discord with the family, building self-esteem, parenting teenagers, post-institutional behavior, and understanding the birth family. CHS also hosts opportunities for respite care providers, child welfare workers, family and marriage therapists, school counselors and educators to learn about adoption related issues so that they may be more effective in helping families affected by adoption.

- **Support Groups**
  This component of the program offers on-going support groups for adoptive parents as well as children and teens who have been adopted.

- **Family Support Partner / Advocacy Services**
  Many children who have been traumatized prior to their adoption demonstrate delays in their academic performance or difficulties functioning within social systems. They often
need special services to assist them in correcting delays or learning to function with specific limitations. Accessing these services can be a confusing and intimidating process for parents. CHS offers advocates to assist parents in identifying available services and negotiating with various systems for those services. In addition, staff seeks opportunities to provide training to school personnel, child care providers, and mental health practitioners regarding adoption and supporting adopted children and families.

**Challenges and Modifications to the Program Implementation**
There were several challenges and modifications; major ones are summarized below.

1. Exclusions, ineligible youth, and other factors resulting in low enrollment in the program and study groups that were not truly random
   - A significant barrier to enrolling youth in the program came from the program design itself. Once a youth was randomly assigned, actual enrollment in the program was not guaranteed.
     - An initial email was sent from Children’s Division staff to the youth’s case manager to inform him/her of the youth’s inclusion in the project.
     - The Coalition initiated phone calls or emails with the case manager to schedule a Extreme Recruitment Team meeting. 65% of the youth were deemed to be ineligible at this point.
     - During the initial team meeting, the Coalition presented the program and the team determined whether the youth should participate, a step that was required by the Children’s Division. 54% of the eligible youth were excluded.

In total, 786 youth were selected for the program but a full 58% of them did not participate. For the intervention group in particular, the youth’s child welfare teams self-selected youth who participated and, in result, the control and intervention groups were not truly random.

   - Two additional items also resulted in lower enrollment:
     - The Media Orders from the court allowing general recruitment activities for youth were difficult to obtain (taking more than 60 days at one point)
     - The pool of eligible youth in the custody of the state was depleted, resulting in a “waiting period” during which youth became eligible

In total, only 83 youth received intervention services, instead of the 150 planned.

2. Disruption of services midway through the grant period; low enrollment in the program
   - Conflict occurred that resulted in the cessation of enrollment of new youth in the intervention group for eight months during Year 3. This significantly reduced the number of intervention youth and there was difficulty in ramping the program
back up because of caseload management. Only 83 youth were in the intervention group instead of 150 planned.

3. Privatization of foster care case management; systemic/structural considerations led to underutilization of Connector services; only one-half of intervention model actually occurred
   - The program model called for Connector Services to be provided by Children’s Home Society after the 12-20 week Extreme Recruitment® case closure. However, the state’s contracts with the private foster care case management providers stipulate that they are responsible for all of the support services for the youth. Children’s Division determined, early in the grant period, that the provider agencies could not be required to utilize Connector Services. In most cases, therefore, Connector services were not utilized and so only one-half of the proposed intervention service was actually provided.

4. Fidelity to the Extreme Recruitment model
   During the course of the grant, a number of changes were implemented. Some were significant, such as the requirement, beginning in Year 4, that Extreme Recruitment® services would not be instigated until after a Court Order to allow general recruitment was obtained. Prior to this change, not all cases received the full complement of recruitment activities.

To address some of these challenges, during Year 3 a consultant was engaged to address partner issues, provide leadership and problem solving, and identify successful implementation strategies. Kari McAvoy was eventually engaged as Program Consultant to continue these activities during Years 4 and 5, and program management was restructured accordingly.

IV. COLLABORATION

Missouri Diligent Recruitment Grant project was a partnership that included the private/public child welfare agencies and community organizations in the St. Louis region. Specific organizations are as follows:

The **Missouri Children’s Division, Missouri Department of Social Services**: The Missouri Department of Social Services/Missouri Children’s Division was the grantee and provided hands-on oversight for the grant. The Children’s Division is the lead state agency for Missouri child welfare and is responsible for adoption, foster care, child abuse and neglect hotline, family center services and intensive In-Home services statewide. The Diligent Recruitment Grant Project Director is an employee of the Children’s Division and based in Jefferson City, the state capitol.

**Missouri Coalition of Children’s Agencies**: The Children’s Division contracted with MCCA as the Administrative Agent for the Diligent Recruitment Grant (ASO). Grant responsibilities included
hiring and supervising the grant Project Manager and the Project Consultant, providing accounting and budget services, general administrative services, and website management.

MCCA is a not-for-profit organization that has advocated for Missouri’s at-risk, abused and neglected children and the people who care for them since 1976. MCCA leads a coalition of over 50 partner organizations around the state who are committed to improving outcomes for children/youth in the system. The MCCA office is located in the state capitol of Jefferson City.

**Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition:** The Coalition is a not-for-profit community agency established in 1989 in St. Louis. The Coalition’s mission is to create permanency for children in out of home care by recruiting and retaining foster/adoptive families. The Coalition is the St. Louis region’s largest recruiter of foster/adoptive homes due to partnerships with the local media, including television, radio and 13 local newspapers. The Coalition also has an Adoption Resource Center, which is a base for support groups, training, advocacy, newsletters, resale shops, crisis intervention services and the Little Wishes program.

The Coalition developed the model for the initial 12-20 weeks of Extreme Recruitment® services early in 2008 and began delivering services with funding from foundations and local resources. As the Extreme Recruitment® model evolved, Private Investigators who had formerly been employed as police detectives were added to intensify family finding efforts.

When federal grant funding announcements occurred in 2008, the Coalition joined a group of local partners to apply for funding for the Extreme Recruitment® model. There was considerable local interest in the grant, as family finding was becoming significant and the use of private investigators was new and creative.

Initially, the grant provided funding for two Extreme Recruiters, one Private Investigator and a part-time supervisor. The match from foundations and local resources also provided two additional Extreme Recruiters and one additional investigator. Later in the grant, foundation funding cut back on one of the Extreme Recruiters. The Coalition continued to provide the initial 12-20 weeks of service to youth until the end of the five year grant period.

**Children’s Home Society (CHS):** CHS has been providing children with a permanent safe and loving home since 1891. For over 100 years, CHS has formed thousands of families through adoptions. In the 1980’s, CHS began providing short and long term care for children with significant development disabilities. CHS developed its Education and Counseling Services program in 2000 and now provides a full spectrum of services for children in need of a permanent home.

The CHS role in the grant focused on supporting potential families as they navigated the process to obtain permanency. An array of services was available from CHS to the families and youth, including counseling, intensive training, mental health counseling and parent education. CHS worked with families who were interested in parenting a child/youth for up to year after initial placement.
Adoption Exchange: The Adoption Exchange of St. Louis, Missouri focused on recruiting foster and adoptive parents for the older youth in the St. Louis region. The Adoption Exchange created general recruitment campaigns that included radio, television and newspaper ads targeted for older youth. A video was created that focuses on the recruitment for foster care and adoptive resources for teens.

Saint Louis University/Missouri Institute of Mental Health: MIMH was contracted for the Diligent Recruitment Grant evaluation for Years 1 and 2 of the grant. When Principal Investigator Debra H. Zand, Ph.D. left MIMH, the grant went with her to Saint Louis University. Saint Louis University continued the evaluation services until the end of the grant.

Public/Private Child Welfare Agencies in the St. Louis region: There are three coalitions of child welfare agencies in the St. Louis region, made up of 14 private child welfare agencies. There are also four public child welfare agencies. These public/private organizations case manage children in the custody of the state of Missouri in a partially privatized system.

The team of professionals that work with each youth were important participants in the program. During the Extreme Recruitment® phase, weekly meetings were held that included the youth’s case manager, Guardian Ad Litem, Deputy Juvenile officer, adoption specialist, therapist, and foster parent.

Partner Relationships
The key partners identified above were generally familiar with one another, as the St. Louis region is geographically small, and the child welfare organizations interact with one another in a variety of ways.

A number of changes took place over the course of the grant:
- Kari McAvoy, Project Consultant, was added in Year 4. She provided overall program management, leadership, and resolution of implementation issues. The Program Manager, Sally Howard, continued on a part-time basis and was responsible for budgets, contracts, and preparing federal reports.
- The evaluation organization changed from Missouri Institute of Mental Health to Saint Louis University when Debra H. Zand, Ph.D., moved to Saint Louis University.
- The website management contract was moved from MIMH to Trackside Marketing.

Partners Without Formal Agreements
The public/private partners who deliver child welfare services in the St. Louis region have formal agreements and contracts with the Missouri Children’s Division and are responsible for service delivery to youth in state custody. Staff participation from these organizations was critical during the Extreme Recruitment® phase of the project, as services included a weekly Extreme Recruitment® Team meeting.

Advisory Groups/Steering Committees
The Project Consultant provided regular updates to the MCCA board and to a regional group of CEO’s and managers of public/private child welfare partners in St. Louis that served as the advisory council for the Diligent Recruitment Grant.

V. Sustainability

Continuation of Extreme Recruitment® Program
The Extreme Recruitment® program will continue to be provided for youth in the St. Louis area by Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition, and it has expanded to Kansas City. As the experimental design with control groups ended at the conclusion of the grant, the program has returned to a referral system. Since accepting referrals, there has been a wait list to participate in the program. Funding has been secured to cover the salaries of four Extreme Recruiters, two Investigators, two Extreme Recruitment Supervisors, and program evaluation in St. Louis and Kansas City. The Coalition will continue collecting data on youth served through Extreme Recruitment®, although there will no longer be a control comparison group.

$450,000 per year is needed to sustain key program elements of Extreme Recruitment® in St. Louis and Kansas City. This cost was determined based on the actual cost of salaries, benefits, supplies, mileage, and overhead for the Extreme Recruitment® program. Funding was secured through a combination of State, United Way, and grant funding.

There will be several changes to the program:

1. Child must be legally free for adoption – eligibility has been changed; an exception may be made if all of the following criteria are met:
   a. Reunification is no longer the case plan;
   b. The court grants written permission to the Extreme Recruitment® team to utilize the child’s picture and strengths-based profile for recruitment through print media, online resources, and on television;
   c. The child’s professional team agrees that Extreme Recruitment® is in the child’s best interest.

2. Full implementation of program design – Extreme Recruitment® follows a circular model that incorporates preparing the youth for permanency and conducting all methods of adoption recruitment (general, targeted, and child-specific) at the same time. This is a divergence from what was previously done, where teams would find a permanent resource and then prepare the youth for permanency, or wait until the youth was “ready” to start looking for a permanent family. The model does not allow for the team to wait and discover if one method works prior to attempting another method. In the early Diligent Recruitment Grant cases, teams approved of exploring family members for support, but did not always allow other recruitment activities to be explored. Over the past few years, the Extreme Recruitment® partners have worked to ensure the Extreme Recruitment® model is being implemented as designed. At the initial team approval meetings, teams must now
agree to the full model, which includes recruitment of a permanent resource through general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment.

3. The Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) has generated barriers due to the lengthy process and teams not always understanding the requirements – to overcome this, Extreme Recruiters received training from Missouri’s ICPC unit at the State level so they were aware of procedures and policies and could help team members navigate the process.

4. The Coalition will utilize its crisis intervention services to include the type of supportive services envisioned during the federal grant planning. Because Coalition staff have developed close relationships with the potential permanency resource and the foster care case management staff, the continuation of services to include these important supports while the family prepares for adoption or guardianship will occur. The Extreme Recruiter will participate in monthly team meetings until finalization in order to help the team identify barriers to permanency and execute a plan to overcome those barriers.

The Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition also created a $3.9 million business plan to expand 30 Days to Family™ to two sites in Missouri and two sites in Illinois and conduct a third party evaluation of the program over five years.

**Changes in Child Welfare Services in Missouri**

There is a growing movement to integrate Extreme Recruitment® principles, and family finding programs, into child welfare services throughout the state of Missouri. In 2011, the Coalition created a new program, 30 Days to Family™, which takes the philosophy of Extreme Recruitment® and applies it to the first 30 days of a child entering foster care. This program has now expanded to a team of four staff. 30 Days to Family™ has had success with placing 70% of children served with relatives or kin by case closure (typically 30 business days). This program aims to help case managers comply with the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 by reaching out to and informing all adult relatives of their option to care for their relative who entered foster care. The program currently serves children in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. Two Missouri Children’s Division circuits have been trained to implement the Extreme Recruitment® or 30 Days to Family™ models.

Additionally, Missouri state legislation passed in 2013 (SB 47) to broaden the definition of kin for guardianship subsidy in the State of Missouri. Individuals taking guardianship of a child through foster care in Missouri who are distant relatives, half relatives, and close family friends are now eligible to receive guardianship subsidy. This new law will help many foster youth achieve permanency with kin.

Governor Jeremiah Nixon established the Task Force on Recruitment, Licensure and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Homes, which provided recommendations to improve Missouri’s child welfare system. Two of the Task Force’s recommendations relate directly to the progress initiated by Extreme Recruitment®:
• Increase focus on use of relatives and kin by intensifying early efforts to identify relative placement options and exploring models of diligent search.
• Explore for possible statewide replication the use of innovative approaches such as team decision making, diligent recruitment, and expanded privatization of resourcing functions.

**Replication**

Interest to replicate Extreme Recruitment® and 30 Days to Family™ in other parts of the United States and Canada has also been generated. Replication is occurring at the following sites:

• Coordinators² (Richmond, VA)
• United Methodist Family Services (Norfolk, VA)
• Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association (Kansas City, MO)
• St. Francis Community Services (Hutchinson, KS)
• Chatham-Kent Children’s Services (Chatham-Kent, ON, Canada)
• TFI Family Services, Inc. (Topeka, KS)

**Training**

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition has provided training on Extreme Recruitment® or 30 Days to Family™ at the following sites and conferences:

• Harmony Adoptions (Nashville, TN)
• One Church One Child (Richmond, VA)
• Casey Family Services (White River Junction, VT)
• Casey Family Programs (Seattle, WA)
• Casey Family Services (New Haven, CT)
• St. Francis Community Services (Hutchinson, KS)
• Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association/Cornerstones of Care (Kansas City, MO)
• Casey Family Services (White River Junction, VT)
• Children’s Aid Society (Ottawa, Ontario)
• AdoptUSKids Regional Roundtable (Kansas City, MO)
• TFI Family Services (Topeka, KS)
• Chatham-Kent Children’s Services (Chatham-Kent, ON)
• Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (Toronto, ON)
• The Children’s Aid Society of the District of Nipissing and Parry Sound (North Bay, ON)
• Missouri Children’s Division’s 37th Circuit
• North American Council on Adoptable Children Conference (Toronto, ON)
• Foster Family-Based Treatment Association Conference (Nashville, TN)
• One Child, Many Hands Conference (Philadelphia, PA)
• Adoption Exchange Association Conference (Boulder, CO)

**Plan for Sustaining Programs**
As the federal grant funding has ended, new funding streams and new procedures are in place, as follows:
1. New funding resources have been developed with state funds, grant funds and United Way funds.
2. An appropriations bill was passed to fund Extreme Recruitment® in St. Louis and Kansas City.
3. Senate Bill 47 was passed.
4. Practice alert sent out to all case managers clarifying that kin is a relationship with the child or the child’s family.
5. Intake procedures of the Extreme Recruitment® program were changed to a referral system and to require that youth served must be legally free for adoption.

VI: EVALUATION
Evaluation Methodology

Research Questions
Several research questions guided the outcome evaluation including:

1. How did intervention services impact the likelihood of achieving permanency?
2. How did intervention services impact child well-being?
3. How did intervention services impact social support?

Research Design
The study employed an experimental, repeated measures design to determine if the intervention increased permanency, social support, and child well-being. An experimental design was selected for the evaluation because it has been recognized in the program evaluation literature as best suited for assessing intervention effectiveness (GAO, November, 2009). As noted below, however, a quasi-experimental design was carried out because the randomization of youth into treatment and control groups was problematic and did not result in the creation of two equivalent groups.

Participants & Study Enrollment
The project received referrals for youth participants from the Missouri Children’s Division. Youth were randomly assigned to receive Extreme Recruitment® and Connector Services (the treatment group) or “services as usual” (the control group). The criteria for referral and inclusion into the project were the following:

- Between the ages of 10 and 18
- Under state guardianship for at least 15 months
- Not currently in the process of adoption/guardianship/reunification
- County jurisdiction was one of the following: St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson County
- Ability to verbally communicate

To enroll a youth in the study, the following activities occurred:

An initial email was sent from Children’s Division staff to the youth’s case manager to inform him/her of the youth’s assignment to either the intervention or control group. Then:

- **Control Group**
  - Phone calls from the evaluation team were initiated to the case manager, foster parents (where applicable), and youth. Eligibility was established; non-eligible youth were excluded (129 youth (45%) were ineligible, see graph).
  - During a face-to-face meeting, the youth was enrolled and baseline evaluation data was collected.

- **Intervention Group**
  - FACC took several steps to enroll participants in the intervention program.
  - FACC notified the evaluation team that an individual was enrolled in the program.
  - Phone calls from the evaluation team were initiated to the case manager, foster parents (where applicable), and youth. Eligibility was established; non-eligible youth were excluded (three were ineligible, see graph).
  - During a face-to-face meeting, the youth was enrolled and baseline evaluation data was collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Referred</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Ineligible</td>
<td>325 (65%)</td>
<td>129 (45%)</td>
<td>454 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Eligible, but services were declined by team at initial mtg</td>
<td>93 (54%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Eligible, but refused or had passive refusal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Youth Enrolled</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td><strong>122</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Youth found ineligible for evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Youth refused to participate in evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, a significant barrier to enrolling youth in the program came from the program design itself. Very significant staff time and resources was spent on youth who appeared eligible in the Children’s Division data but, when verified with the case manager, was not. 786 youth were “pulled” for the program, but a full 58% of them were deemed ineligible. Another 93 youth,
who were eligible for the intervention service, were not enrolled because the teams rejected participation.

The total number of youth enrolled in the evaluation study, therefore, was 78 in the intervention group and 120 in the control group.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The original research protocol was approved by the University of Missouri-Columbia Institutional Review Board in 2008. The project fully transferred from the University of Missouri-Columbia to Saint Louis University, School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics (SLU) in October, 2011. Institutional Review Board approval was secured from Saint Louis University Institutional Review Board in September, 2011, and was renewed every year subsequently.

Face-to-face interviews were carried out with youth. Occasionally, follow-up interviews took place via telephone when not possible to meet in person. Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) data was collected from caregivers and case managers (in addition to the youth).

State administrative data was provided for all children enrolled in the evaluation. Demographic data included date of birth, gender, race, permanency goal, and whether parental rights had been terminated. Placement data included the start and end dates of every placement since Baseline, as well as information about the type of placement (foster home, group home, etc.), reason for placement change, whether the placement was pre-adoptive, as well as dates of discharge from the foster care system, if applicable.

Data Collection Instruments

1. Social Support Survey
   The Social Support Survey was developed by the grant partners during Year 1. Using the Delphi Technique, an iterative process for obtaining consensus, the group generated a list of qualities that youth (who are at least 10 years old and who have been receiving at least 15 months of child welfare services) find important in a relationship with a significant other (i.e., peer, kin, case manager, teacher). The group identified the following qualities: trust, committed to youth’s success, unconditional love, dependability, and listens to the youth. Youth rank order up to five people who are important to them. Subsequently, they rate each person on the five qualities generated by the Delphi on a four point Likert-type scale (1, Very True to 4, Not at all True).

2. Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)
The CAFAS measures child and adolescent functional levels in eight areas: school/work, home, community, behavior towards others, moods/emotions, self-harmful behavior, substance usage, and thinking. After interviewing the child and/or others who know the child well, a trained rater selects from a list of behavioral descriptions the items that best match the child. CAFAS items are grouped into four levels: (0) no impairment, (10) mild impairment, (20) moderate impairment, and (30) severe impairment. Higher total scores have been associated with problems with social relationships, involvement in juvenile justice, and school related problems. Additionally, total CAFAS scores have been shown to predict total cost of services, restrictiveness of care, utilization of services, contact with law enforcement, school attendance, and recidivism. Once relevant information is gathered, the CAFAS takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Data Collection Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Points</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Social Support Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children &amp; Adolescent Functional Assessment Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-months Post-Baseline</td>
<td>Social Support Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children &amp; Adolescent Functional Assessment Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-months Post-Baseline</td>
<td>Social Support Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children &amp; Adolescent Functional Assessment Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Closure (09/30/2013)</td>
<td>Administrative data provided by the Children’s Division</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes to Data Collection Procedure
- CAFAS data was collected at five months starting at the beginning of Year 4. Previously, CAFAS data was only collected at Baseline and 12-months.
- Starting in Year 4, follow-up interviews were allowed to take place over the telephone.

Data Analysis
Descriptive statistics, including percentages, rates, frequency distributions and means, were used to describe the two groups. Inferential statistics were used to test the statistical significance of any differences within and/or between groups as established in the research questions. Inferential statistics included paired t-tests, chi-square analyses, and 2 x 2 ANOVAs.

Evaluation Results
A full set evaluation results is contained in the Appendix.

Permanency, Stability, and Continuity

1. Overall Permanency

Permanency outcomes were compared for youth receiving intervention services to youth receiving standard services at 12-months and at study closure. Permanency included adoption, guardianship, and pre-adoptive placements.
A greater proportion of Intervention youth achieved permanency than did Control youth at both 12-months and at study closure. There was a significant difference between groups at 12-months but not at study closure.

2. Permanency Type

Of the subset of youth that had achieved permanency, youth in the Control group nearly all achieved permanency in the form of guardianship, while all youth in the Intervention group achieved permanency in the form of adoption and pre-adoptive placements.

At 12-months, only one Intervention youth had been adopted. At study closure, however, there was an increase in the number of adoptions, and a decrease in the number of pre-adoptive placements.

3. Placement Moves

Table: Average Number of Placement Moves Between Baseline and 12-Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On average, during the study period, Intervention youth moved 3 times, and Control youth moved 2 times. In both groups, the most frequent number of moves (mode) was 0. The number of moves for the Intervention group ranged from 0-12 and for the Control group the number of moves ranged from 0-20. The difference in moves between groups is significant (p=.02) with the Intervention group having a greater average number of moves.

The Intervention group had a significantly greater average number of moves than the Control group. An area for further analysis would be to measure the trend in movements toward or away from permanency.

### Child Well-Being

#### 1. CAFAS Scores

By 5-months, Intervention youth improved significantly more than Control youth on all domains. By 12-months, the Intervention group’s improvements were maintained in the Total Score and five of the domains (School, Home, Behavior, Mood, and Self-Harm), but worsened significantly on the Community score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>5-months</th>
<th>12-months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=78)</td>
<td>(n=120)</td>
<td>(n=38)</td>
<td>(n=95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Score</strong></td>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>61.8 (50.9)</td>
<td>25.8 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>0-190</td>
<td>0-140</td>
<td>0-130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>11.5 (12.3)</td>
<td>7.8 (10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(std)</td>
<td>(std)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substances</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>0-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (std)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure. Series of Line Graphs Showing CAFAS Subscale Scores Over Time

- **Total Score**
  - Intervention: 61.8, 39.5, 47
  - Control: 25.8, 20.5, 26.1

- **School**
  - Intervention: 11.5, 7.9, 8.5
  - Control: 7.8, 5.3, 4.6

- **Home**
  - Intervention: 13
  - Control: 3.7, 3.3, 4.6

- **Self-Harm**
  - Intervention: 4.7, 2.1, 2.5
  - Control: 1, 0.9

- **Mood**
  - Intervention: 10.9, 7.1, 9.6
  - Control: 4.3, 3.3, 4.1

- **Community**
  - Intervention: 4.2, 1.8, 1.2
  - Control: 2, 0.8, 1.2

- **Behavior**
  - Intervention: 10.1, 7.6, 7.8
  - Control: 4.1, 4.3, 4.5

- **Substance Use**
  - Intervention: 3.5
  - Control: 1.4

- **Thinking**
  - Intervention: 4, 3.2, 3.8
  - Control: 1.4, 1.4
2. Social Support Survey
   
a. Biological vs. Paid Social Supports
   
   Intervention youth increasingly chose biological supports and decreasingly chose paid supports over time. These trends were not observed for youth in the Control group.

   Figure: Percentage of Youth Who Chose More Biological Over Paid Supports

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Intervention Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-months</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-months</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

b. Perceived Support

   Youth rank ordered up to five people who are important to them. Subsequently, they rated each person on the five qualities (“I trust ___.”, “___ is committed to my success.”, “___ loves me no matter what.”, “___ is always there for me.”, “___ listens to me.” ) on a four point Likert-type scale (4, Very True to 1, Not at all True). All of the scores are summed. If all five supports were rated, the scores ranged from 20 (lowest perceived support (all 1’s) to 100 (highest perceived support (all 4’s)). The tool and a scoring guide are attached as an appendix to this evaluation report.

   Changes in perceived social support are not significant over time. Although the control group has higher ratings of perceived social support, these findings are not statistically significant. Consequently, it appears that group membership does not have an impact on perceived social support.

   Figure: Average Perceived Social Support by Group
3. Permanent Match Outcomes
   
a. Percentage of Intervention youth who identified match as social support

   After the first Intervention (the Extreme Recruitment® program), there is a peak in
   the number of individuals identified as the potential permanency resource (the
   “match”) who were identified by the youth as one of their social supports. This
   reflects improvements in relationships between youth and their matches, as a result
   of the first Intervention. Furthermore, more youth were in constant contact with
   their match individual after the first Intervention.

   By 12-months, there was a sharp decrease in youth-identification of their match as a
   social support.

   Figure: Percentage of Intervention youth who Identified Match as Social Support

b. Percentage of matched Intervention youth who identified match as social support
   according to type of match outcome

   *Any 1 of the 5 social supports identified on the Social Support Survey
Among youth who were never placed with their permanent match, 31% identified their match as a support at 5-months, and 10% identified their match as a support at 12-months.

Likewise, in matched placements that disrupted, 70% of youth identified their match as a support at 5-months, and 1/3 identified their permanent match as a support at 12-months.

In matched placements that did not disrupt, there were 0 youth who named their match as a social support.

Figure: Percentage of Youth who Identified Match as Social Support According to Type of Match Outcome (N=40)

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c. **Functional Impairment of Youth Based on Match Outcome**

Of youth with disrupted matched placements, nearly 50% were functionally impaired at baseline.

Of youth with maintained matched placements, only 22% were functionally impaired at baseline (and 0% at 5- and 12-months).

Figure: Percentage of Youth who were Functionally Impaired* on CAFAS by Match Outcome (N=78)
Evaluation Discussion

Challenges that impacted the evaluation implementation included:

**Non-random groups:** Enrollment and program design factors noted above led to a set of subjects that were not truly random.

**Differences in functional impairment at Baseline:** The absence of equivalent groups led to the Intervention group being significantly more impaired at Baseline than the Control group. Therefore, it is important to consider that groups were not equal in functional impairment level at baseline.

**Differences in sample size between groups:** The number of control youth was substantially higher than the number of intervention youth. Differences in sample size are problematic because larger size affects variance. There may be reasons for unequal samples due to the possibility of confounding variables.

**Attrition:** Loss to follow-up was a definite challenge to the evaluation. While in foster care, youth are a very mobile group with frequent placement changes. Youth run away from placements, particularly older youth who are approaching emancipation from the system. Once emancipated, youth are an even more mobile group (Pergamit, 2012). Frequently, youth in both groups were staying with friends or at homeless shelters at follow-up and lacked contact information.

There was a difference in attrition rates between groups, particularly at the 12-month mark. Intervention youth refused follow-up interviews more often. An area for further analysis would be to determine why this occurred, and to also look at differences in attrition by demographic characteristics.
Timing difficulties: The disruption of new enrollments for three quarters in the middle of the grant (Year 3) led to inconsistent work flow. Large numbers of youth were enrolled during Years 4 and 5, which made it more difficult for evaluation staff to maintain the data collection schedule. Although enrollment stopped at the end of Year 4 for the Control group, Intervention youth continued to be referred until Year 5 (May, 2013). These youth were not able to complete the 12-month follow-up due to study closure before the end of 12-months. Some of these youth were lost to follow-up at the 5-month mark and therefore only have Baseline data.

It is clear that the Intervention group realized numerous positive outcomes. However, due to the numerous challenges explained above, the necessary rigor to deem Extreme Recruitment an evidence-based practice was not obtained.

Finally, it is possible that a measurement tool created by the grant team could be of value to future evaluators. The Principal Investigator of the project plans to pursue publication and further validation of the Social Support Survey.

References


VII: CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the implementation, structural, and organizational challenges encountered during the grant period, the intervention group realized several positive outcomes, including increased permanency and well-being. While the small sample size and non-randomness of the study groups mean that we cannot infer replicable impact, the Extreme Recruitment® program warrants further study.

Reconnection and Permanency Goals
At the conclusion of Extreme Recruitment® services, goals to reconnect 90% of youth with a network of supportive adults and attain 70% permanency were not met. Actual results were 75% reconnection and 21% permanency of those placed with a match.

Figure: Intervention Outcome and Status Information at Program Conclusion
Relevant notes about the status of Intervention participants at program closure include:

- Of the 77 intervention youth who completed the program, only 41 (53%) individuals agreed to be a potential permanency resource for the youth. This is lower than had been anticipated.
- Connector Services were not uniformly provided to the 41 match resources.
- 17 of the matched youth were never placed with their match resource.
- Of the 24 matched youth who were placed with their match resource, 10 (42%) placements disrupted within the first 12 months and another four (17%) placements disrupted by study closure.

A number of reasons can be surmised about why the target numbers of 90% reconnection and 70% permanency were not attained:

- The full model was not implemented:
  - Not all youth were legally free for adoption. This frequently resulted in ambivalence on the part of some professional teams working with the youth toward the Extreme Recruitment® services.
  - Until Year 4, it was not required that Court Orders to allow general recruitment be in place at the beginning of Extreme Recruitment® services. This could have resulted in additional matches being made.
  - Connector Services were not routinely provided. The “transfer” of the case after 20 weeks of Extreme Recruitment® services to Children’s Home Society was not smooth. CHS staff did not attend the weekly team meetings throughout the 20 weeks of Extreme Recruitment® services, and it would have been cost-
prohibitive for the agency to have participated fully during that program phase. Additionally, the private partners were not mandated to and did not choose to utilize Connector Services. The net result is that, after the end of involvement of the Extreme Recruiter and Private Investigator, the level of support provided to the potential permanency resource reverted to traditional levels.

- Youth in the Intervention group were more functionally impaired (as indicated by CAFAS scores) at baseline than the Control group.

**Conclusions from the Evaluation Data**

1. **Overall Permanency**
   - Youth in the Intervention group had significantly better permanency results at 12-months than youth in the Control group, but not at study closure.

   The length of time from identification of a potential permanency resource to adoption (or guardianship), is lengthy and can be assumed to be longer for those youth who are functionally impaired (as indicated by CAFAS scores). It is not possible to determine whether those who were in pre-adoptive placements at study closure will go on to be adopted or if those placements will disrupt.

   Conclusion: Youth in the Intervention group achieved permanency or pre-permanency at a point-in-time, but after 12-months, the impact reduced. A later evaluation finding notes that placement disruptions occur when the youth is functionally impaired (as per CAFAS scores), while placement continuation (and, by extension, potential future permanency) occurs when the youth is not functionally impaired. The failure of the grant to provide Connector Services as originally intended could possibly have mitigated this, as Connector Services were intended to provide individualized support to prevent placement disruption, prepare the youth and family for placement, and, ultimately positively impact permanency.

2. **Placement Moves**
   - The Intervention group had a significantly greater average number of moves than the Control group. However, the nature of the intervention was to move in order to establish placement with a permanent match. An increased number of moves is not necessarily negative if they are moves toward permanency. An area for further analysis would be to measure the trend in movements toward or away from permanency.

   Conclusion: Placement moves are a negative outcome; however, placement moves are a part of the program design and so the impact of this finding on the permanency and well-being of youth is unknown.

3. **Child Well-Being: CAFAS Scores**
   - By 5-months, Intervention youth improved significantly more than Control youth on all domains. By 12-months, the Intervention group improved only on the CAFAS Total,
School, Home, Behavior, Mood, and Self-Harm domains, and worsened significantly on the Community score.

This suggests that Intervention group membership has a positive impact on youth functioning in the first five months. At 12-months, improvement continues overall and in five of the categories.

The Social Support Survey was a tool created by the Diligent Recruitment team to measure who the youth feels is most supportive of him/her and how strong the youth perceives that support to be. A core belief of the program is that the number of “non-paid” supports that a youth has, the higher the youth’s well-being.

Intervention youth increasingly chose biological supports and decreasingly chose paid supports over time. These trends were not observed for youth in the Control group. However, there was no difference in the level of perceived support.

At 5-months, at the conclusion of the Extreme Recruitment® services, there is a peak in the number of matches identified as a social supports. This reflects improvements in relationships between youth and their matches, as a result of the first Intervention. However, at 12-months, there was a sharp decrease in youth-identification of their match as a social support.

Among youth who were never placed with their permanent match, 31% identified their match as a support at 5-months, and 10% identified their match as a support at 12-months. Likewise, in matched placements that disrupted, 70% of youth identified their match as a support at 5-months, and 1/3 identified their permanent match as a support at 12-months.

Conclusion 1: The Extreme Recruitment® program has a beneficial impact on relatives becoming recognized as social supports over time. This is also reflected by the decreased percentage of paid supports over time. It is possible that youth in the Intervention group are more connected to relatives than are youth in the Control group, possibly as a result of being reconnected.

Conclusion 2: The level of perceived support does not differ between the intervention and control groups.

Conclusion 3: Relationships that appear to be growing after 20 weeks are not standing the test of time. This could be due to insufficient Connector Services between 5 and 12-months.

Conclusion 4: Youth are recognizing their match as a support (so there is benefit to being matched with a permanency resource), even if not placed with that individual or if
the placement disrupts. Even when placement with a matched resource did not occur, the match still had a significant role in the life of the youth.

5. Functional Impairment of Youth Based on Match Outcome
Of youth with disrupted matched placements, nearly 50% were functionally impaired at baseline. Of youth with maintained matched placements, only 22% were functionally impaired at baseline (and 0% at 5- and 12-months).

Conclusion: It is possible that functional impairment presented challenges that made it difficult to maintain placements. Youth who were not functionally impaired at baseline were more likely to maintain placements, possibly due to the lack of challenges.

VIII: Recommendations

It’s recommended that further attention be paid to the value of reconnections, how they impact a child’s well-being, even if placement and permanency are not options.

The existence of ongoing services and support after placement is often cited by families as a critical factor in determining their ability to continue parenting special needs children. These services must be at the highest level of professional ability as often families do not access help until they are at a critical stage of crisis and the ability to safely maintain the child in the home is in question. In addition, those providing services to these families must have advanced knowledge of child development, of the manifestations of abuse and neglect histories in behavior, of attachment issues and disorders, and in relationship building – all within the context of foster care and adoption systems.

Continued research is needed regarding the impact of abuse, neglect, and other complex traumas on a child’s emotional, cognitive, and personality development as well as effective methods for treatment in order to understand the vast array of complexities these children present.