

*Using the*

## **DILIGENT RECRUITMENT NAVIGATOR**

### to Support Implementation and Ongoing Program Improvement

#### **Purpose of this Publication**

We know that many child welfare systems used the [Diligent Recruitment Navigator](#) to develop their most recent Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Now that states and tribes have all submitted their 2015–2019 CFSP, we are highlighting other ways that the Diligent Recruitment Navigator can continue to be a useful tool for child welfare systems.

#### **Overview of the Diligent Recruitment Navigator**

We developed our Diligent Recruitment Navigator as a customizable tool to assist child welfare systems in developing comprehensive diligent recruitment programs that are designed specifically to meet the needs of each child welfare system. Our Diligent Recruitment Navigator is a tool that helps guide States, Tribes, and Territories through their own process of developing a comprehensive, multi-faceted diligent recruitment program, providing suggested discussion questions and people to include in the process of developing a diligent recruitment program. You can customize the Diligent Recruitment Navigator so that you receive suggestions that are specifically tailored to your child welfare system. You can customize your Diligent Recruitment Navigator based on the following factors:

- Child welfare system structure (state supervised and state administered, state supervised and county administered, tribe, or territory)
- Other considerations affecting diligent recruitment (partially or fully privatized; current or recent Diligent Recruitment grantee; consent decree, settlement agreement, or other arrangements from a lawsuit in place relevant to recruitment and retention; and Title IV-E child welfare waiver in place relevant to recruitment and retention)

By providing customized discussion questions and recommendations about which key stakeholders to include in the planning process, the Diligent Recruitment Navigator offers child welfare systems a framework for a thoughtful, structured planning process while recognizing the unique dynamics of each system. We believe that the flexibility of the Diligent Recruitment Navigator and the customizable content are key strengths of the tool that supports the development of rich, data-driven diligent recruitment programs. We also know that many states and tribes used the Diligent Recruitment Navigator as part of their process for designing and writing their diligent recruitment plan that was required as part of the 2015–2019 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP).



## How Else Can the Diligent Recruitment Navigator Help?

The Diligent Recruitment Navigator is a very flexible tool that can be used in a wide variety of ways. For example, it is helpful as an assessment tool, a framework for tracking progress in implementing your diligent recruitment plan or program design, and a structure for soliciting feedback from stakeholders.

Below are some specific ways that you might find the Diligent Recruitment Navigator helpful in your ongoing implementation of your diligent recruitment plan and program. We also continue to hear of new, creative ways that child welfare systems are using the tool in their work; we encourage you to consider other ways that the Diligent Recruitment Navigator—including any subsets of its content—might provide a valuable starting point for your work.

### *Specific Suggestions for Ways to Use the Diligent Recruitment Navigator*

- **Guiding implementation of diligent recruitment plans or programs**—As your child welfare system addresses all of the areas involved in a comprehensive diligent recruitment program, you may find it helpful to have a framework for monitoring ongoing implementation progress. It is common for child welfare systems to have some parts of their implementation move ahead faster than other parts. For example, you may be able to strengthen your internal use of data more quickly than you are able to give your contracted private agency partners appropriate access to your data systems. You can use the Diligent Recruitment Navigator's discussion questions to check in on how your system's implementation efforts are going and to identify possible gaps in implementation.

- **Ongoing stakeholder engagement**—Creating ongoing opportunities for stakeholder involvement is a key strategy for having an effective, comprehensive diligent recruitment program. Some child welfare systems provide extensive ways for stakeholders to be involved when initially developing a diligent recruitment plan but don't have structures for ongoing input and guidance from stakeholders. The Diligent Recruitment Navigator offers helpful suggestions about the categories of stakeholders who should be part of ongoing discussions on various topics (e.g., analysis of your current pool of foster, adoptive, and kinship families; partnerships that can provide support to foster, adoptive, and kinship families; concurrent planning efforts; etc.). By periodically reviewing the Diligent Recruitment Navigator, you can be reminded of stakeholders who you should continue to engage or re-engage. You can also share the Diligent Recruitment Navigator with stakeholders to get their thoughts about who else should be engaged in ongoing discussions; stakeholders often have rich insights into other people or organizations that should be part of the planning and assessment discussions who aren't currently included.
- **Structuring how you review and discuss data**—The Diligent Recruitment Navigator has several discussion questions that can help you establish consistent procedures for ongoing review and interpretation of your data, including data on the children in foster care, the pool of families needed in order to provide permanency and placement stability to children, the effectiveness of your response and family support systems, and many other categories of data. You can also use the data-related discussion questions to consider new ways to look at your child welfare system's data and to engage a broader team in interpreting the data and exploring the implications of what you data reveals. Periodically referring to the data-related discussion questions and the suggested people to include can help you assess whether all of the relevant staff, departments, partner organizations, and community stakeholders are being appropriately included in data sharing and data interpretation. The Diligent Recruitment Navigator may also help you identify and prioritize new data elements that would be helpful for your child welfare system to collect and analyze.
- **Assessing progress in various areas of diligent recruitment**—Because the tool includes rich discussion questions, you can use it for ongoing, periodic self-assessment of your diligent recruitment program to identify strengths, new needs based on updated data, areas for improvement, new stakeholders to include, and emerging best practices that you might want to expand. Taking a more narrowly focused approach, you can use selected discussion questions from the Diligent Recruitment Navigator to examine and assess specific areas of your child welfare systems work, such as: your approach for training staff and stakeholders, your use of a customer service approach, your capacity to explore and support interjurisdictional placements, and your procedures for the ongoing use of data to guide your work. You may also find it helpful to use the Diligent Recruitment Navigator to assess your child welfare system's progress in implementing your diligent recruitment plan, in preparation for writing your updates for your Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) due each June.
- **Building partners' understanding of comprehensive diligent recruitment and how they can contribute to its success**—Your child welfare system's partners—including contracted providers and private agencies, community groups, foster and adoptive parent support groups, and others—can play a crucial role in your efforts to develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted diligent recruitment program. By sharing the Diligent Recruitment Navigator with your partners

and discussing all of the elements of diligent recruitment that are included in the tool, you can help ensure that all of your partners have a deep understanding of what comprehensive diligent recruitment involves. These discussions can also help you and your partners develop a shared understanding of what diligent recruitment really looks like in practice and what it takes to develop and sustain a diligent recruitment program.

## Ideas from the Field

### *How a State Used the Diligent Recruitment Navigator*

One state used the Diligent Recruitment Navigator as a guide to facilitate discussions with staff and key stakeholders around the state at regional meetings, aligning the elements of the Diligent Recruitment Navigator with the individual required elements for the diligent recruitment plan as part of the state's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). State agency staff used the Diligent Recruitment Navigator to prepare for individual meetings for each region in the state; the discussion questions provided by the Diligent Recruitment Navigator provided staff with a consistent framework for each regional discussion without having a rigid structure for getting input from staff and stakeholders.

From the state: "We used the Diligent Recruitment Navigator to guide our conversations with staff, foster and adoptive parents, and key stakeholders in preparation for the CFSP. The Navigator was a step-by-step tool that helped us clarify key elements for each component."

### *How a Tribe Used the Diligent Recruitment Navigator*

One tribe is using the Diligent Recruitment Navigator to enhance the process of developing their recruitment plan. While they are still gathering data, the Diligent Recruitment Navigator gave them a starting point and helped them pinpoint the types of recruitment strategies that best fit the needs of the children in custody. They have identified the need to increase the number of certified foster homes and also adoptive homes for older children, and are addressing this need by targeting their tribal communities and gathering data to ensure that they are recruiting in the geographical areas from which their children are removed. They believe they will experience fewer placement disruptions and faster reunifications if they are able to keep children in their communities of origin.



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[nrcdr.org](http://nrcdr.org)

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