

Featuring Photolisted Children

SELECTING CHILDREN AND PREPARING YOUR AGENCY'S RESPONSE

Many child welfare systems already use photolistings as part of their efforts to recruit families for children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. Social media and other electronic communication tools provide exciting new opportunities to increase awareness of specific children who are photolisted. We have seen dramatically higher rates of children's profiles being viewed when they are featured on our website, social media accounts, and in our monthly email newsletters.

Featuring photolisted children—by actively highlighting their profile online rather than relying on people to find it—may be an effective strategy for your agency. Using this strategy, however, requires taking a thoughtful, strategic approach both to the selection of children to feature and the preparation of your agency to respond effectively to inquiries from prospective parents.

Effectiveness of Featuring Photolisted Children and Sibling Groups

Through our own experience with the national AdoptUSKids photolisting, we have seen the power of featuring photolisted children as a way to dramatically increase the number views a child or sibling group's

online profile receives. Our data, detailed in the chart below, shows the significant results of proactively featuring children's online profiles. By increasing the number of prospective adoptive parents who see a child's profile, you create more opportunities to achieve permanency for children who are waiting to be adopted.

Increased Views of Featured Child Profiles

	Baseline— Week Before Being Featured	Week When a Child or Sibling Group is Featured on Website	If Child or Sibling Group is Also Featured on Facebook	If Child or Sibling Group is Also Featured on Twitter	If Child or Sibling Group is Included in an Email Newsletter
Photolisted Child	24 views	5,105 views	105 additional views	130 additional views	42 additional views
Photolisted Sibling Group	33 views	5,209 views	209 additional views	144 additional views	53 additional views

Data in table was taken from AdoptUSKids' website analytics between 10/31/2011 and 09/22/2012.

Where to Feature Children’s Profiles

Your agency can feature photolisted children in multiple ways, including on your agency’s website, through electronic and hard-copy newsletters, and through social media platforms. Featuring a child or sibling group who is waiting to be adopted through Facebook or Twitter can be a particularly effective way to reach a broader audience; social media allows you to push content out to people who are engaged in a conversation with you, rather than relying on them to visit your website. To see examples of how we feature children, visit our website, Facebook page, and Twitter account geared toward families:

- www.facebook.com/adoptuskids
- <https://twitter.com/adoptuskids>
- <http://adoptuskids.org/>

How to Select Children to Feature

Featuring children’s online profiles can help increase visibility for children who most need it, such as children who have been waiting the longest to be adopted, are in a large sibling group, or whose photolisting profiles haven’t recently received many views.

If your agency is going to feature photolisted children, you can determine your own process and criteria for deciding which children to feature. Criteria you may want to consider include:

- How long a child or sibling group has been photolisted
- How many inquiries a child or sibling group has received, especially recently
- How current a child or sibling group’s photo and narratives are on their profile
- How to represent children from various geographic areas served by your child welfare system
- How to highlight the diversity of children who are waiting to be adopted (e.g., age, race and ethnicity, interests, personalities, skills, etc.)

Preparing Your Agency’s Response System

As with any recruitment activity or strategy, if your agency is going to start using a new approach—such as featuring photolisted children on new sites and social media platforms—you need to be sure to have a response plan in place before you begin. If the approach of featuring photolisted children in new ways is effective in increasing interest in children who are waiting to be adopted, then your agency will likely receive increased inquiries from prospective parents. The way your agency responds to these inquiries will play an important role in sustaining prospective parents’ enthusiasm for the adoption process, which is a key factor in whether or not your agency retains these prospective parents.

The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (formerly the National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents) at AdoptUSKids has tools and expertise on ways for agencies to strengthen your response system and build your capacity to retain parents, including through the use of a customer service framework. A good starting point for your agency is to review our self-assessment tool for agencies, *Is Your Response System Family Friendly?* (PDF – 131 KB)¹. This assessment tool will help you examine how well your agency’s response system meets the needs of families throughout the foster and adoptive parent recruitment process. Once you have completed this assessment tool, your agency can determine which areas, if any, of your response system you think you should strengthen.

The National Resource Center’s tip sheets on customer service may also be helpful for your agency as you prepare and strengthen your capacity to respond to prospective parents.

¹Available to download at: http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/is-your-response-system-family-friendly.pdf

- **Five Things You Can Do to Improve Customer Service – Phone Interaction With Families** (PDF – 186KB)² : Suggests simple steps for improving customer service as you interact with current and prospective foster, adoptive, and kinship families
- **10 Things You Can Do to Improve Customer Service – Prospective Parent Orientation Sessions** (PDF – 201KB)³ : Offers simple ideas for creating a more welcoming and encouraging climate at orientations for prospective parents

The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids can provide free technical assistance to help you strengthen your response system as part of your recruitment and retention efforts. Please contact the National Resource Center at 303-726-0198 or NRCDR@adoptuskids.org if you are interested in exploring ways to increase your agency’s capacity to respond to prospective parents.

²Available to download at: http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/five-things-you-can-do-customer-service-phone-interaction.pdf

³Available to download at: http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/10-things-you-can-do-to-improve-customer-services.pdf

Seek Your Agency’s Guidance Before Implementing These Ideas

The guidelines in this document apply equally to both public child welfare staff and the staff of private agencies that provide services on behalf of the public agency.

Child welfare systems across the country are in varied stages of exploring and using social media. The ideas included in this document are general suggestions for ways to use social media in child welfare work and are intended for agency leaders and managers as they decide if and how social media can support their communication, outreach, and engagement efforts. As with all new approaches, you should consider how these suggestions might work within the context of your jurisdiction and your State’s public child welfare agency’s policies, guidelines, and best practices. The ideas and tips included here should not be used if they conflict with any policies of your State’s public child welfare agency, regardless of whether your relationship with the agency is that of employee-employer or contractual, and should only be implemented with the support of the public agency’s leadership.



More free resources at:
www.adoptuskids.org/nrc-recruitment

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