

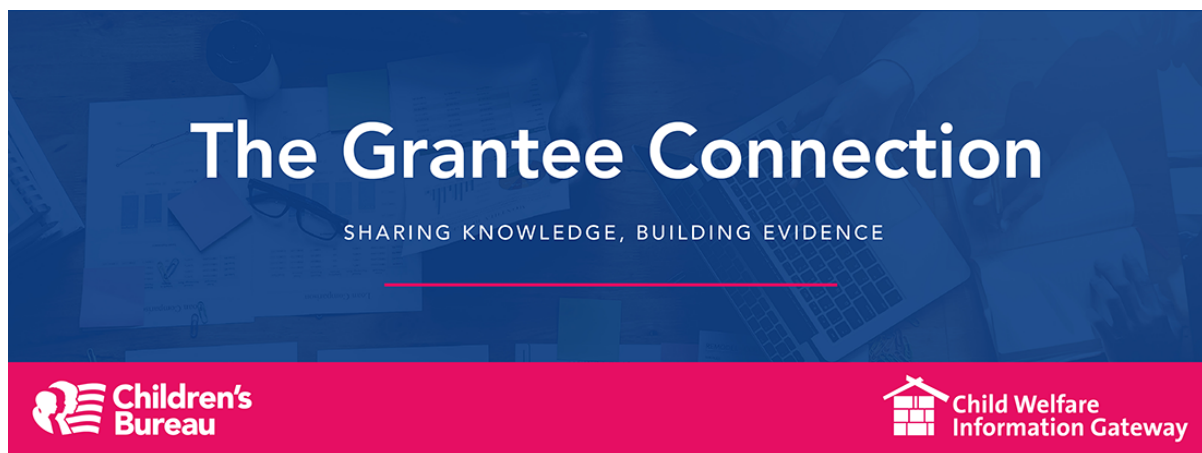
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## The Grantee Connection // March 2023

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**March 2023 | Issue 15**

*The Grantee Connection is a quarterly digest featuring new and noteworthy products, information, and lessons learned from select Children's Bureau discretionary grants to inform research, capacity building, and program improvement efforts.*

## Featured Grantees

### Facilitating Support Groups With Foster and Adoptive Families

**Project Description:** [AdoptUSKids](#), funded through a 5-year cooperative agreement in 2022, is a national project working to ensure that children and teens in foster care get safe, loving, permanent families. As part of its mission, AdoptUSKids assists U.S. states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop, and support foster and adoptive families. Professionals can request [free tailored support](#) from consultants and access relevant [resources](#), including webinar recordings, discussion guides, and tools.

**Project Highlight:** Parent support groups are a valuable way to support families in adoption, foster care, and kinship care. To be most effective, support group leaders must have the knowledge and skills to address group dynamics and keep the group positive, focused, and



informed. AdoptUSKids has developed a variety of [resources](#) to support parent group leaders in this work, including discussion guides for caregivers on pertinent topics. The discussion guides below are two recent additions to the suite of parent group tools:

- [Navigating First Family Relationships](#): The term “first family” is a broad term that can include birth family and any important person whom a child considers family. This discussion guide is designed to help support group leaders hold a discussion about first family relationships, including important discussion themes and how to respond to challenges.
- [Supporting a Positive Racial Identity for Black, Indigenous, and Other Children of Color in Transracial Placements](#): This guide is designed to help facilitate discussions with white parents about supporting a positive racial identity for children of color in transracial placements. It discusses the legacy of systemic racism in America, White privilege, and racial identity work in action. At the end of the guide, you’ll find a list of books and other resources parents may find helpful.

**Learn More:** Find all parent group resources, including the free ["Parent Group Leadership Curriculum"](#), and other helpful tools on the [AdoptUSKids’ website](#).

Photo from [Supporting a Positive Racial Identity for Black, Indigenous, and Other Children of Color in Transracial Placements](#)

## Supporting Supervisors in Onboarding and Managing a Hybrid Workforce

**Project Description:** [The Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development](#) (QIC-WD), a 5-year cooperative agreement funded in 2016, was developed to implement and evaluate strategies to strengthen the child welfare workforce. In partnership with eight public child welfare jurisdictions, QIC-WD is studying interventions related to [job redesign](#), [telework](#), [technology](#), [onboarding](#), [supportive supervision](#), [hiring](#), [organizational culture and climate](#), and job-related [secondary traumatic stress](#). The website has information about [project sites](#), [workforce analytic tools](#), and [tips](#) from the expertise and experience of the QIC-WD team.

**Project Highlight:** The past several years has created new opportunities and challenges for the child welfare workforce. The QIC-WD recently held two recorded webinars to offer updated and evidence-informed strategies to support supervisors as they onboard new staff, as well as manage a hybrid workforce:

- [“Supporting New Workers: Evidence-Informed Strategies for Those in Supervisory Roles”](#) provides a general framework for what research says about best practices in onboarding, examples from its work with various jurisdictions to support supervisors



who work with new workers, and evidence-informed strategies to make new workers feel like they are part of something bigger.

- [“Supporting Virtual Supervision as Part of a Hybrid Workforce”](#) focuses on strategies to support supervisors by offering evidence-informed tips and tools for effective supervision.

**Learn More:** Want to get your workforce questions answered and hear directly from experts? Register today for the last two webinars

in the [QIC-WD National Webinar Series!](#) Topics include [measuring diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) (May 9, 2023, at 12 p.m. ET) and [attracting and hiring workers](#) (June 6, 2023, at 1 p.m. ET).

Graphic from [“Supporting New Workers: Evidence-Informed Strategies for Those in Supervisory Roles”](#)

## Authentically Engaging Children and Youth in Court Proceedings

**Project Description:** Informed by the lived experiences and professional expertise of youth formerly in foster care, the [Quality Improvement Center for Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency \(QIC-EY\)](#) is a 5-year cooperative agreement, funded in 2021, that aims to bring about systemic culture shifts resulting in intentional policy and practice changes directly related to the child welfare system’s engagement and empowerment of and partnership with children and youth.

To accomplish its goals, the QIC-EY is partnering with [eight pilot sites](#). Between October 2022 and September 2026, these sites will receive support and resources from the QIC-EY to make changes in how they authentically engage children and youth. The information gained through evaluation of the work being done in the pilot sites will help to transform how children and youth are engaged authentically in child welfare systems throughout the nation.



**Project Highlight:** Children and youth are the experts on their own lives and should be meaningfully engaged by everyone involved in their case, including court professionals. The [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges](#) has helped the QIC-EY identify [four ways](#) that

all judges, court professionals, and related agencies involved with juvenile, family, and domestic violence cases can ensure that children and youth feel empowered and have a voice and a choice about their futures. These engagement strategies can be tailored to each child’s age and development level to ensure they can properly communicate their needs and be involved in decision-making:

1. Use court hearings as opportunities to build relationships with children and youth.

2. Create a child-and-youth-friendly court environment.
3. Create opportunities to engage children and youth between court hearings.
4. Partner with people who have lived expertise to create a court process and an environment that promote success.

**Wondering how you can use [this report](#)?** Knowing busy professionals don't always have the opportunity to identify tools that could help them upgrade their work with children and youth, each section contains meaningful insights and practical actions that professionals working in courts can take to engage and empower children and youth at the most critical milestones of their lives. Teams may also find it helpful to divide report sections among team members for review, followed by a report back and discussion with the group.

Photo from [Four Ways That Courts Can Actively Engage Children and Youth Involved in Child Welfare Proceedings](#)

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## Engaging Resource and Birth Families Across Communities

**Project Description:** In 2019, the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) Social Services Administration (SSA) was awarded the 4-year [Center for Excellence in Foster Family Development \(CfE\)](#) grant in partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work Institute for Innovation and Implementation. The focus of the grant is engagement, development, and support of resource families to promote reunification of children with their families of origin and minimize unnecessary congregate care placements by providing resource parents with enhanced support services. The CfE is being implemented in five local Departments of Social Services (DSSs) in Maryland—Baltimore County, Carroll County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County.



**Project Highlight:** Over the past 3 years, the CfE jurisdictions have engaged in extensive community outreach to recruit and retain resource families and build partnerships with families of origin in their communities. Some examples of this work include the following:

- **Baltimore County DSS** held various activities to raise awareness about CfE and to support resource parents, families of origin, and youth participating in the program, including a resource parent appreciation event at the Baltimore Zoo and a back-to-school event for parents and youth.
- **Carroll County DSS** held a virtual CfE kickoff event that included a panel consisting of a youth formerly in foster care, a birth parent, and the resource parent who cared for that birth parent's child to highlight the partnership between the two caregivers working to reunify the family. A [Facebook page](#) was also created so members of the community could stay informed.

- **Frederick County DSS** hosted a Family-to-Family community event at a farm that included birth parents, their children, and the resource parents providing care. By the end of the event, resource parents and birth parents were exchanging phone numbers and planning future events. There is also a [Facebook page](#) for Frederick County's foster care program.
- **Montgomery County DSS** conducted a series of outreach events to promote the CfE and becoming a foster parent, including hosting a child welfare partnership meeting; providing an information table at the county's Foster Family Picnic and the PRIDE in the Plaza community event; and partnering with DHS at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair.
- **Prince George's County DSS** held a ribbon cutting/unveiling for its dedicated in-office CfE family room, which was developed as a space where families can come together to foster connections and educate staff and community partners. Intentionally designed and furnished to facilitate positive interactions, the CfE family room provides opportunities for engagement and reconnection of youth with their family of origin to support reunification efforts.

**Learn More:** Find information about the CfE and its engagement materials, evidence-based models, and additional resources on the [CfE website](#).

Photo from the [Frederick County, Maryland DSS Foster Care Facebook page](#)

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## Rethinking Child Welfare Recruitment

**Project Description:** The [National Child Welfare Workforce Institute \(NCWWI\)](#) is a 5-year cooperative agreement, awarded in 2016, to build the capacity of child welfare professionals and improve the organizations that recruit, train, supervise, manage, and retain them.



**Project Highlight:** Recruiting talented people to work within public and tribal child welfare programs has always been a challenge and is now a *crisis*. Attracting employees to child welfare requires new approaches and strategies in the context of an ongoing pandemic and rapid societal change. NCWWI recently published

[Rethinking Child Welfare Recruitment](#), a brief that discusses the current workforce crisis and provides recommendations on ways child welfare programs can enhance their recruitment efforts. Some examples follow:

- **Consider innovative strategies such as:**
  - Streamlining the hiring process
  - Revising job descriptions to make them clear and compelling
  - Reaching out to strategic populations (such as those with lived experience)

- **Engage in strategies to build a pathway for a future workforce through:**
  - Partnerships with community colleges, universities, and agencies
  - Internships and field placements with paid stipends for people who commit to work at the child welfare program after graduation
  - Employing paraprofessionals and specialized support staff
  
- **Prioritize professional and leadership development by:**
  - Having a defined career ladder
  - Providing supervision for licensure
  - Providing peer support, coaching, and mentoring
  - Offering training and leadership opportunities

Read the [full brief](#) to learn more innovative ways child welfare programs can enhance their recruitment efforts.

**Learn More:** View NCWWI's [reference list](#) for a compilation of papers, reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant resources addressing recruitment, screening, and selection.

Graphic from [Rethinking Child Welfare Recruitment](#)

## **Grantee Blog:**

### **Advancing Equity in Indiana**

Since [funding](#) began in 2019, the goal of the [Strengthening Indiana Families \(SIF\)](#) project has been to support strong and caring communities where families have equitable access to the resources they need to be connected and safe. SIF is 1 of 13 projects across the country funded through the Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families (Community Collaborations) grant to design, implement, and evaluate primary prevention strategies that improve the safety, stability, and well-being of all families through a continuum of community-based services and supports.

Advancing race equity has been a foundation of many Community Collaborations grants. SIF included equity as one of its cornerstone values and guiding principles early on. The project's vision statement and oversight of the steering committee—made up of a variety of partners, including community members and those with lived experience—have also affirmed these values. In 2021, Community Collaborations projects were able to receive supplemental funding to enhance their race equity efforts. With this funding, SIF was able to build upon and continue this work to advance equity throughout Indiana. Some highlights of this work are presented below.

#### **Targeted Outreach:**

- Launched a “Kids Don’t Come With Instructions. We Are Here to Help.” public awareness campaign in English and Spanish, which used inclusive language and representation of community members, to normalize the need for parenting supports and parenting skills training at various developmental stages
- Partnered with the [Migrant Education Program](#), [Indiana Minority Health Coalition](#), and refugee service providers to inform migrant and refugee community members of available programs and services
- Ran Google ads in English and Spanish to promote the family resource centers and project website, which led to an increase in visitors to the website and access of Spanish materials



### Family Resources Centers:

- Located them in places where families already go (e.g., churches, recreation centers)
- Thoughtfully designed them to be welcoming and inviting to the entire community
- Translated center materials, including intake forms, calendars, flyers, digital ads, macro campaign, and the website, into multiple languages
- Staffed them with members of the community along with operational support from SIF partners
- Trained staff and community partners on trauma-informed and culturally responsive services; implicit bias; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and motivational interviewing
- Launched a parent advisory group with wide racial, age, and system-involved representation
- Developed family fun events to ensure that all families felt a sense of belonging and honored heritage months and holidays
- Held inclusive programs and services, such as biracial hair training and technical skills programs for migrant and immigrant families



Visit the [SIF project website](#) to learn more about their outreach campaigns, [Family Resources Centers](#), and other [program and services](#).

## Resources From

# Child Welfare Information Gateway



## Ethical Practice and Client Rights

Visit the [webpage](#).



## “Writing With a Sharpie: How to Make Your Pilot Project a Permanent Program”

Watch the [webinar](#).



## “Authentically and Respectfully Engaging Lived Experience in Storytelling”

Listen to the [podcast](#).

## Grantee News & Updates

- The Children’s Bureau recently published new fiscal year 2023 discretionary grant [forecasts and Notice of Funding Opportunities](#). *Tip: Filter search results by Administration for Children and Families - ACYF/CB [HHS-ACF-CB] to only see Children's Bureau opportunities.*
- Looking for more information on applying for Children’s Bureau grants? Visit the [How to Apply for a Grant](#) web section to learn about the complete process—from finding notices of funding opportunities to writing and submitting a strong application.
- Interested in supporting the Children’s Bureau discretionary grant process? Apply today to be a [grant reviewer](#)!

**Are you a Children's Bureau grant recipient? [SUBMIT YOUR UPDATES AND RESOURCES!](#)**



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