

LINC Commission Meeting

June 18, 2012



Top and right photo credit: Jadelynn King, Symington Elementary 5th grader



Photos: Nina Falls, LINC Site Coordinator



LINC Summer Programs will serve students in 6 school districts this year.



Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



Monday, June 18, 2012 | 4 – 6 pm
Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. Approvals
 - a. **May minutes (motion)**
- III. Child welfare
 - a. Jackson County Children's Division
 - i. Tanya Keys, Director
 - b. Drumm Farm Center for Children
 - i. Brad Smith, Executive Director
 - c. Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association
 - i. Lori Ross, Executive Director
- IV. Superintendent's Reports
- V. Other
 - a. Jackson County Sheriff's Department
 - i. Sheriff Mike Sharp
 - b. Approval of New LINC Commissioner
 - c. Palestine neighborhood update
- VI. Adjournment



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – MAY 21, 2012

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Chairman **Landon Rowland** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bert Berkley
Jack Craft
Sharon Cheers
Steve Dunn
Herb Freeman
SuEllen Fried
Rob Givens
Anita Gorman
Bart Hakan
Richard Hibschman

Judy Hunt
Tom Lewin
Rosemary Lowe
Sandy Mayer (for Mike Sanders)
Mary Kay McPhee
Richard Morris
Margie Peltier
David Rock
Bailus Tate

Rowland reported LINC participated in the annual Coalition for Community Schools national forum, held this month in San Francisco. A video featuring coalition director **Marty Blank's** remarks at the forum was shown.

Superintendents' Report

- **Bob Bartman** (Superintendent, Center School District) reported the Missouri General Assembly session ended without passing education legislation. The district will distribute Scholastic books to K-5th graders to promote summer reading and reading with families.
- **John Tramel** (Family Services Director, Independence School District) reported the district is planning to serve 9,000 K-12 students in summer school beginning June 3. Nowlin Middle School students organized an anti-bullying event on May 11 featuring LINC Commissioner **SuEllen Fried**. Pre-K students will be affected by state budget cuts for Early Head Start.
- **John Ruddy** (Assistant Superintendent, Fort Osage School District) reported the school year ended and summer school will begin this week. LINC will provide summer childcare for the district in July. Over 10 weeks this summer the district will carry out \$5 million in bond-funded improvement projects.
- **Marge Williams** (Superintendent, Hickman Mills School District) reported 400 students will graduate from Ruskin High School tonight. Summer school begins June 4.

Discussion followed.

Richard Morris, Bailus Tate, and Sharon Cheers reported on LINC's effort to distribute 10,000 books donated by Rosen Publishing to second- and third-graders in the Kansas City, Hickman Mills, Center and Grandview school districts. **Gayle A. Hobbs** reported the donation was an opportunity to forge relationships with the publisher and area elected officials. A video about the book donation was shown.

LINC Communications Director **Brent Schondelmeyer** reported on the second year of the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children, an initiative of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to determine what happens over the summer to children who are on free and reduced lunch during the regular school year. The experiment has presented LINC with many challenges: contacting highly mobile families, coordinating with multiple partners with different needs and perspectives, and helping those families that were not selected to receive benefits get connected

to food resources. Hobbs reported the initiative is an opportunity for LINC to help families and to shape federal policy around food security.

LINC Communications staff **David Buchmann** gave an overview of LINC's plans to offer summer programs this year in support of school-age children, their families and school districts.

A motion to approve the May 21, 2012, LINC Commission meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

LINC Missouri StarSchools staff **Dennis Gragg** reported on LINC's partnership with the Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS) to develop educational opportunities for youth in the DYS system who are not ready to return to their home school district. The initiative will assign learning coaches to provide these youth with support needed to finish school. Participants will engage in distance learning at community site sponsors who will provide computer access and a good environment in which to study. DYS Regional Director **Juliet Breaux** reported on the history of partnership between LINC and DYS.

Rowland reported the LINC Finance Committee has presented the LINC FY2010-2011 IRS Form 990 to the Commission.

A motion to approve the LINC FY2010-2011 IRS Form 990 as received was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

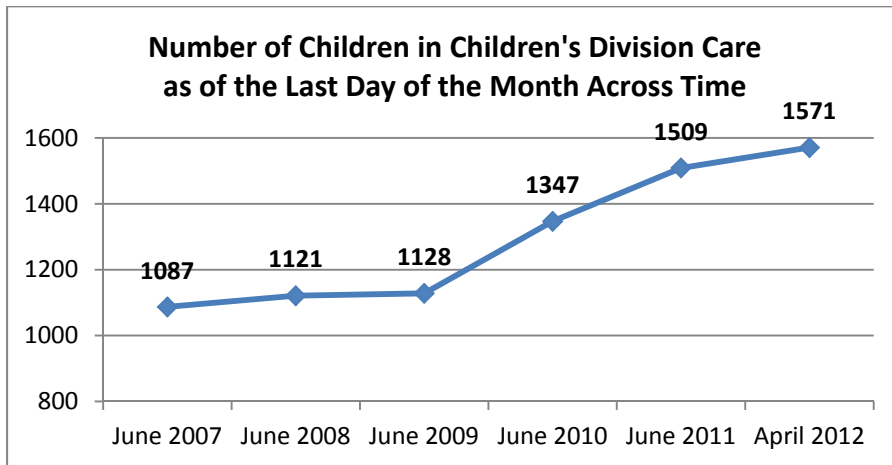


Jackson County Child Welfare Portrait

Data as of April 30, 2012

General Information	Jackson County	Missouri	Nationwide
# of Persons under 18 (2010) ¹	165,842	1,425,364	74,098,929
% of Persons under 18 (2010) ¹	24.6%	23.8%	24%
# of Children in Poverty (2009) ²	38,207	291,359	14,656,962
% of Children in Poverty (2009) ²	23.1%	20.7%	18.2%

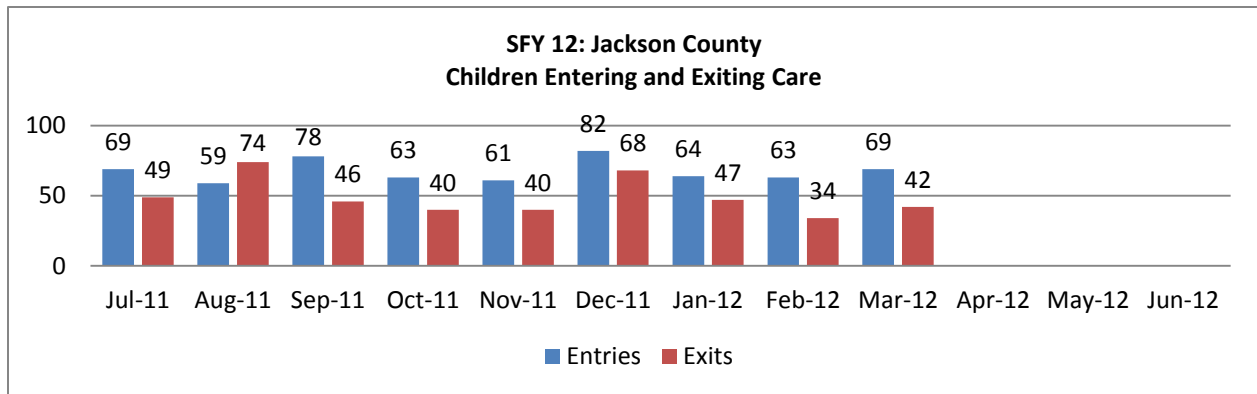
Child Welfare Indicators			
Substantiated Victims Rate Per 1,000 ³	3.64 (SFY10)	3.94 (SFY10)	9.3 (FFY09)
Child Fatality Rate per 1,000 ³	.84 (CY09)	.74 (CY09)	2.34 (FFY09)
Child Removal Rate per 1,000 ³	6.03 (SFY10)	4.16 (SFY10)	3.4 (FFY10)
Average months in out of home placement ³	16.8 (SFY10)	22.1 (SFY10)	21.7 (FFY10)
% of Children placed with relatives/kin ³	28%/35%	31%/38%	26% (FFY10)
% of Children in a family like setting ³	73% (3/31/12)	77% (3/31/12)	83% (FFY10)
% of Children placed in Residential Settings ³	15% (3/31/12)	13% (3/31/12)	9% (FFY10)



The number of children in alternate care in Jackson County on April 30, 2012 (1,571) increased by 14% from the number of children in CD custody on June 30, 2010. During State Fiscal Year 12, the number of children entering care (608) has exceeded the number of children reaching permanency (440), yielding a greater number of children in care.

For children, youth and young adults in alternative care in March 2012:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8% are younger than one year in age • 34% are age 1 to 6 years • 22% are age 7 to 12 years • 27% are youth age 13 to 17 years • 9% are young adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.0 years is their average age • 47% have been in care 0-11 months • 26% have been in care 24 months or more • 22% have a goal of adoption • 12 had their adoptions finalized
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Race	Children under 18 in Jackson County (2010) ¹		Children in Out of Home Placement (Mar 2012) ³	
	# children	%	# children	%
African American/Black	39,636	23.9%	773	50.6%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	829	0.5%	6	0.4%
Asian	2,653	1.6%	6	0.4%
Caucasian	110,948	66.9%	672	44.1%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	332	0.2%	1	0.01%
Multiracial	5,141	3.1%	22	1.4%
Unable to Determine	6,303	3.8%	45	2.9%
Totals	165,842	100%	1525	100%

Accountability and Outcome Highlights:

- Children in Jackson County are safe. For the past 6 years, Jackson County meets or exceeds the federal standard of 94.6% or more for absence of repeat maltreatment. Since 2008, Jackson County has met the federal standard (99.68%) for absence of child abuse and neglect in foster care.
- CD achieves timely initial contact within 24 hours of hotline report with 92% of children.
- 83% of children have stable placements (2 or fewer) in their first 12 months of care.
- 64% of children achieve timely reunification in 12 months (national median is 68.6%)
- 57% of children achieve timely adoption in 24 months (national median is 32.5%)
- 83% of children have a visit each month with their case manager
- 75% of children are placed within Jackson County

¹Population Estimates Program, U.S. Bureau of the Census last updated October 13, 2011.

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/29/29095.html>

²Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2009, U.S. Bureau of the Census last updated December 8, 2010

<http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/data/statecounty/index.html>

³Jackson County and State of Missouri data is from the Children’s Division Annual Reports, Quarterly Child Welfare Outcomes Reports and the Missouri Child Fatality Review Program Annual Report. The National Data is from AFCARS report FFY2010. Data regarding placement information may not equal 100% as independent living, hospitalization, detention and run settings are excluded

<http://dss.mo.gov/re/csar.htm>

<http://dssweb/cs/outcomes/index.htm>

<http://dss.mo.gov/re/pdf/cfrar/cfrar09.pdf>

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report18.htm



Since 2010, Jackson County has experienced a steady increase in the number of children in care. Data trends reflect an increase in the number of children entering foster care for the first time and a longer length of stay for children in care.

The Children’s Division desires to convene the community to review information and explore strategies to strengthen families toward safe prevention of children into care and timely permanency for those families who have children in care and custody of Children’s Division.

Toward that end, a project brief has been developed for review and consideration.

Project Scope:

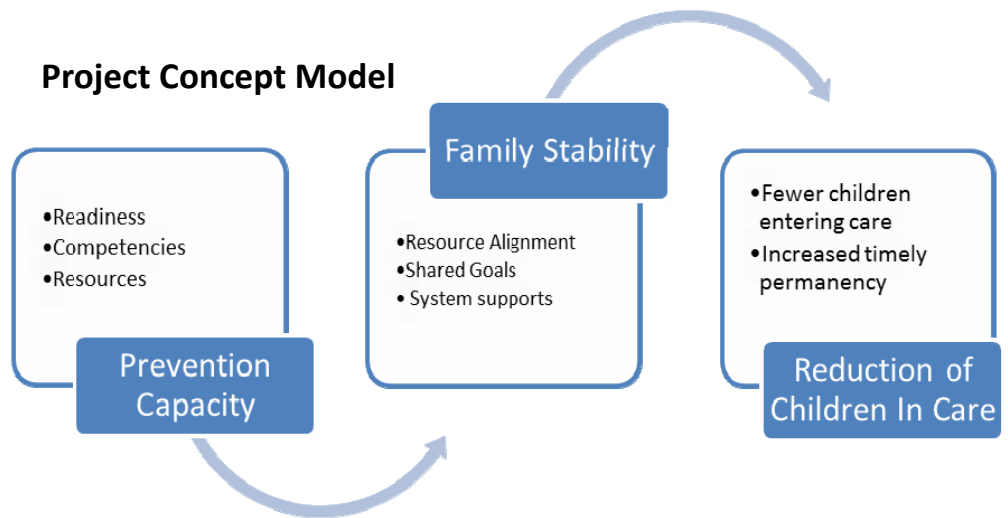
- Engage and convene key community stakeholders and partners in assessment and planning toward implementation of strategies to safely prevent the need for placement of children and youth into care and strengthen practices to assure timely permanency for those children in care.

Potential project tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Identify desired impact to community
 - Identify measureable benchmarks or outcomes
 - Identify success indicators
- Gather and review data trends for various child welfare characteristics and milestones including neighborhood mapping (zip code);
- Examine gaps and strengths in community and system capacity related to secondary and tertiary prevention programs;
- Examine gaps and strengths in community readiness to prevent children entering care ;
- Develop a plan to amplify support to families and systems;
- Develop a communication plan for internal and external partners;
- Identify focus points or populations of focus;
- Develop plans and tasks
- Explore strategies for improvement

Project Resources:

- Casey Family Programs has an agreement with DSS to assist with review of trends in foster care populations and may have resources to assist with data or coordination
- Jackson County Children’s Division can provide data and coordination



Data trends for Jackson County (Circuit 16)

compiled and reported by Casey Family Programs 2011

Jackson County has seen a steep rise in the number of children in custody. Driving this rise is a sharp increase in entries into care, while exits from care have remained flat.

In order to understand the increase in entries, we reviewed Child Abuse/Neglect reports (CA/N Reports), the age of children entering care, the conditions of removal, and whether these are children entering care for the first time, or re-entries after a previous foster care episode.

Entries into Care

The total number of CA/N reports has been increasing, while the number of substantiated reports has declined. ***This suggests a greater proportion of children may be entering care without a finding of maltreatment.***

The children entering care in Jackson County are primarily first-time entries. The proportion of all entries returning from a previous episode in custody has remained stable.

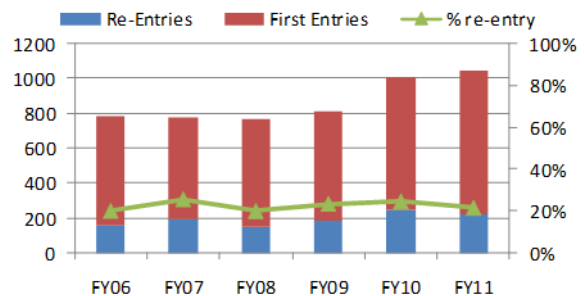
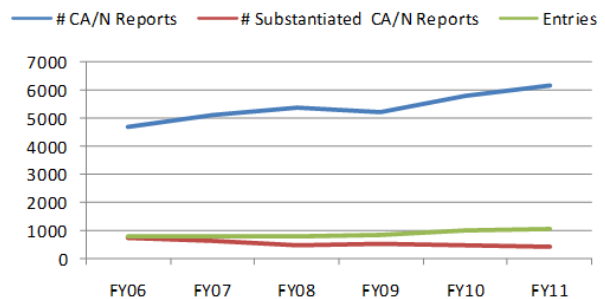
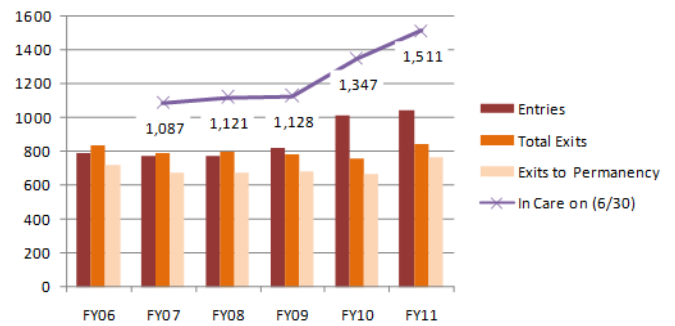
Between FY09 and FY10, the increase in entries occurred primarily among infants and children ages 1 to 5. Some additional increase was seen in FY11 among older children.

While entries have increased overall, the proportions of particular conditions associated with home removal have not changed substantially (more than one condition of removal may be selected).

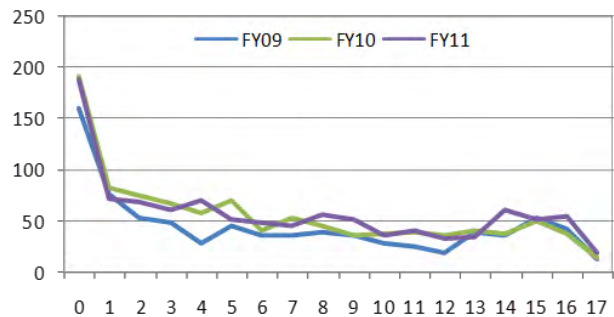
The exceptions in Jackson County are caretaker illness and inadequate housing. Entries associated with caretaker illness have increased from just 6% of all entries in FY06 to 11% in FY11 (and 14% in FY10).

Entries associated with inadequate housing are now a smaller proportion of all entries. (11% in FY11 down from 22% in FY06.)

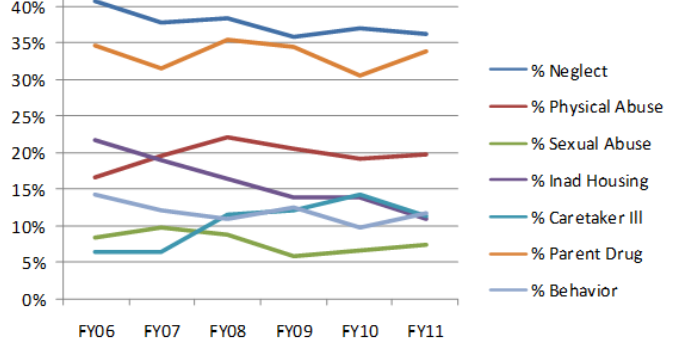
Further analysis of these conditions is recommended.



Jackson (Circuit 16) Entries by Age



Jackson County: Removal Conditions



Exits from Care

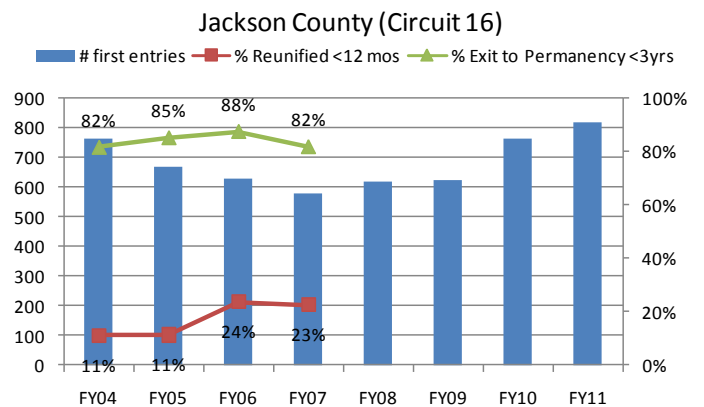
Permanency is often measured by analyzing “exit cohorts” or groups of children who exit custody during the year. There are many problems with this type of analysis. First, this measure overlooks those children who remain in care. Measuring length of stay under this method, for example, may underestimate true length of stay as the exit cohorts are much more likely to include children who reunify quickly. Conversely, efforts to achieve reunification for children who have already been in care a long time (a positive practice) will reflect negatively on exit cohort measures of length of stay. Finally, simply counting the number of exits (such as exits to adoption) does not control for overall changes in the number of children in care. (As the number in care goes down, the number exiting will eventually decline as well.)

The appropriate method for discussing trends in the likelihood and timeliness of achieving permanency is longitudinal analysis of entry cohorts. Simply stated, this is selecting a group of children who entered care during the year, and following them over time to see whether they achieve permanency, and how long it takes for this to occur. The drawback to this type of analysis is that it takes time for these children to exit care. Many will stay in care for more than three years, resulting in data that appears “old”.

Entry cohort data for Jackson County are presented at right.

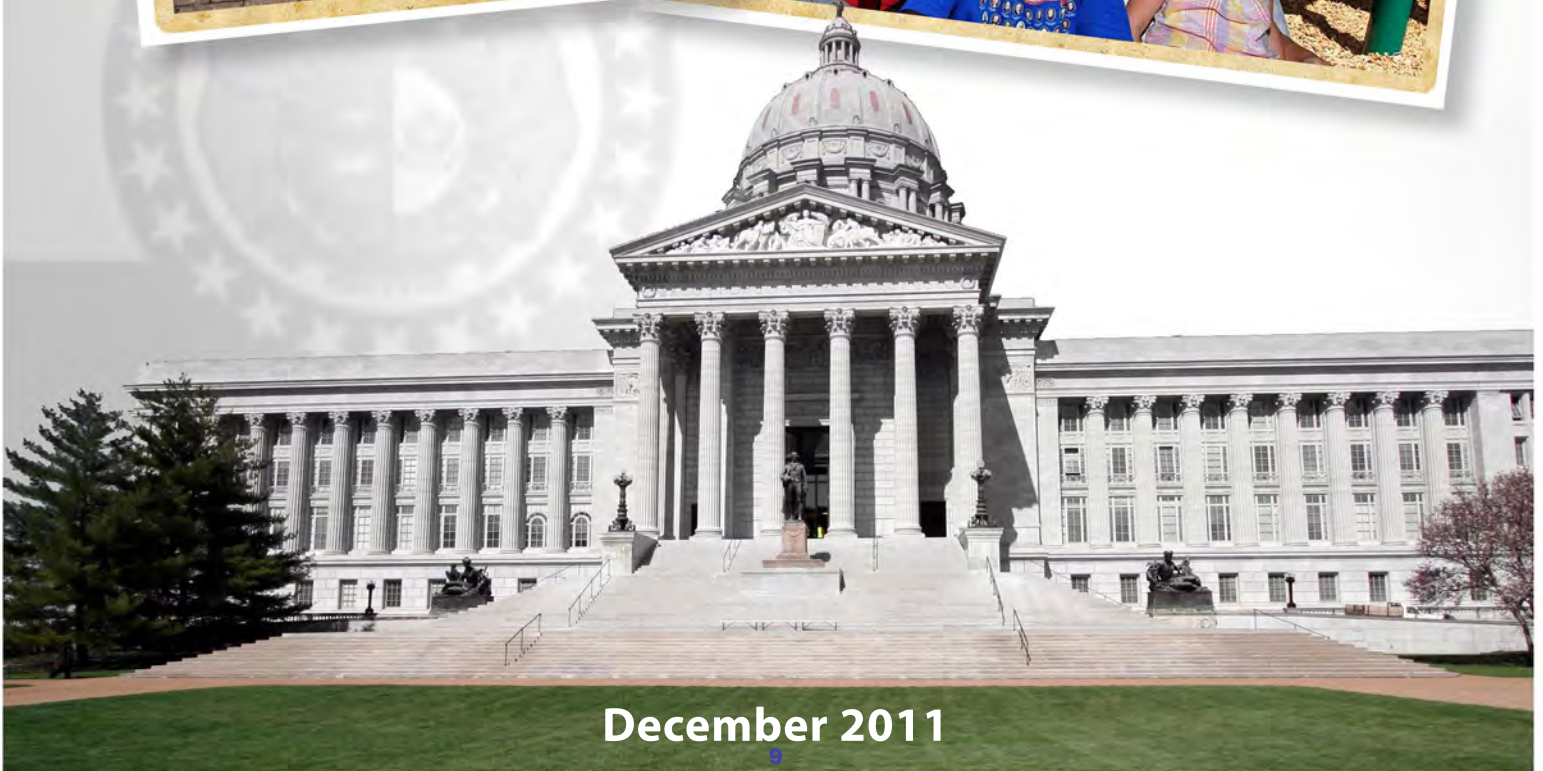
What this analysis tells us is that among the 579 children who entered care for the first time in FY07, less than one quarter (23%) were reunified with their caretakers within a year. This is an improvement from previous years in which only 11% of new entries were reunified within 12 months.

82% of the children entering care for the first time in FY07 achieved legal permanency within three years (including reunification, adoption, guardianship, or custody with a relative.) This outcome had been improving for several years before declining slightly.



Task Force on Recruitment, Licensing, and Retention of Foster Care and Adoptive Homes

Foster Care and Adoption
in Missouri



December 2011

Executive Summary

A number of strategies have been identified for improving how Missouri recruits, licenses and retains our network of foster and adoptive homes. Core themes that emerged during the development of these strategies include expansion of supports for foster and adoptive homes, training and professional development enhancements, targeted recruitment approaches, improvements in the licensure process, unique ways to support a growing number of relative and kin resource homes, reinforcing inclusion of the resource parent as part of the child's professional team, practice innovations, compensation methods, and financing strategies.

The specific recommendations outlined in the report are intended to be a starting point for improving the system related to our foster and adoptive homes. System enhancements will ultimately have a positive impact on the well-being of children who come into the state's care. Included in the report are a number of beginning steps which the Children's Division could initiate without added resources or statutory changes. The task force included these to demonstrate opportunities for early wins in transforming the system as we know it today.

Pursuing these low-cost or no-cost options would serve as a catalyst and foundation for more significant changes which could be researched, tested, and implemented over the next 1-5 years. With the growing number of children being served in kin placements and the desire to serve children in the home county, it is clear our current methods need to be refreshed (see Appendix, Fig. 9-10). This, coupled with the high needs of children entering care, suggests the time is right for altering our practice approach to garner needed system improvements. From the moment we have our first encounter with the biological family, it is imperative involved professionals work in partnership to best support the needs of the child(ren) and their family. Gaining mutual respect and understanding of our respective roles and contributions is a critical starting point.

Following is a list of the broad recommendations of the Task Force on Recruitment, Licensure and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Homes. These recommendations, along with near-term and long-term proposals, will be presented in further detail later in the report.

Recommendations

- Expand support for resource families, including real time feedback, support groups, peer-to-peer support networks, use of seasoned foster parents as mentors, respite services, and increased availability of child care.
- Enhance training and professional development by establishing competency based curriculum for pre-service and in-service to include de-escalation techniques, trauma informed approaches, sibling connections, coaching, and placement decision requirements.

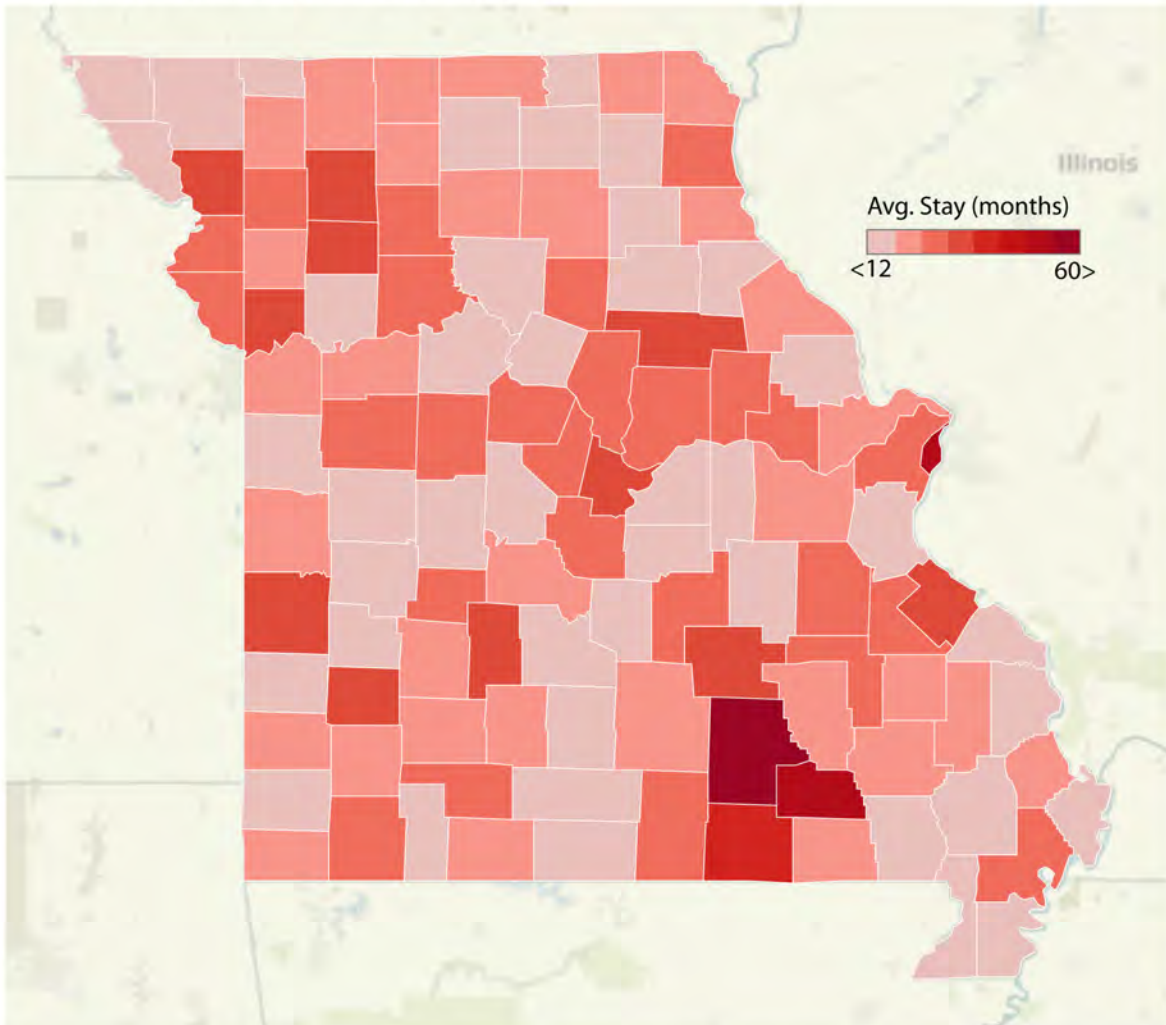
- Increase focus on use of relatives and kin by intensifying early efforts to identify relative placement options and exploring models of diligent search.
- Deploy a broader range of recruitment strategies by using foster parents as recruiters, engaging in targeted recruitment for special populations, and modifying pre-placement screening activities for potential resource homes.
- Support the importance of the foster/adoptive parent as a member of the professional team by eliminating barriers to information sharing consistent with state and federal law, cross-training, and use of structured feedback mechanisms.
- Evaluate compensation for foster/adoptive parents including reimbursement for mentoring supports, subsidy reimbursement rates, timely payment of respite services, rate differences paid by contracted agencies, and behavioral rates.
- Streamline licensure requirements by creating a single license for potential resource families, eliminate delays in training schedules, and ensure consistency of definitions and process between circuits.
- Explore for possible statewide replication the use of innovative approaches such as team decision making, diligent recruitment, and expanded privatization of resourcing functions.
- Review system financing by realigning existing dollars, exploring Medicaid reimbursement options for therapeutic care, evaluating sub-recipient options through IV-E, incentivizing resource homes for desired outcomes, and appropriating resources to the Recruitment and Retention Fund.
- Continue the Task Force to advise the Children's Division, conduct additional research, steer system changes, recommend mid-course adjustments and evaluate results.

Appendix

For county names, see Missouri state map inside front cover.

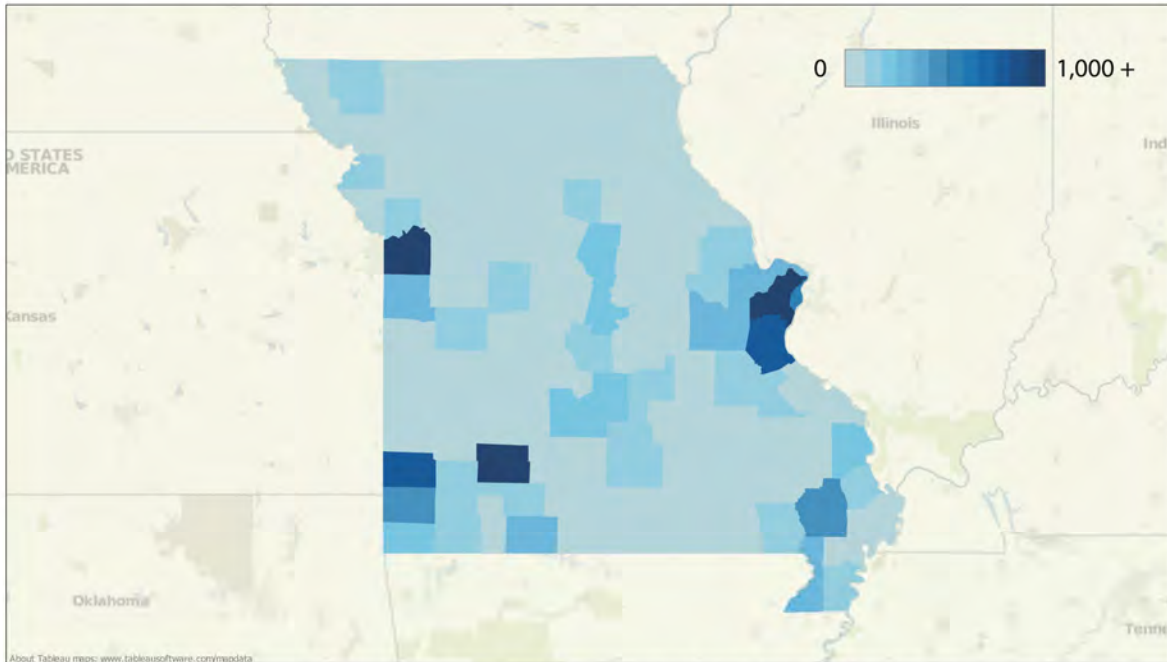
Figure 1

Foster Care Average Stay in Months



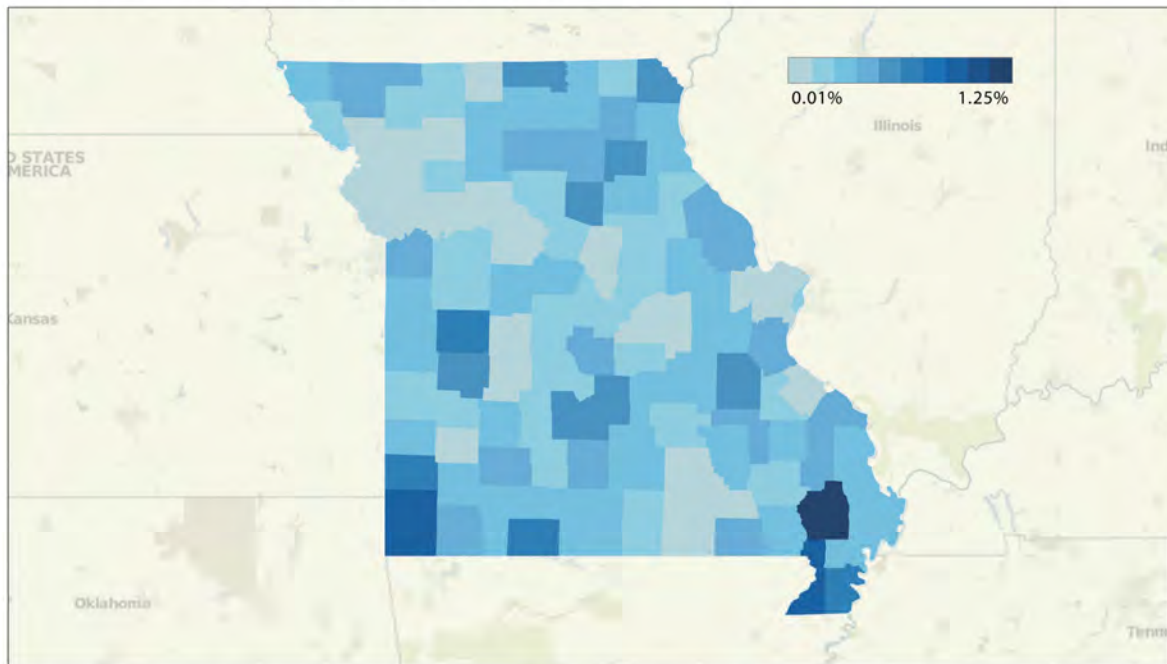
Source: Children's Division, Missouri Department of Social Services. As of 9/30/2011. Darkest areas indicate 60 or more months of care.

Figure 2
Total Foster Care Entries



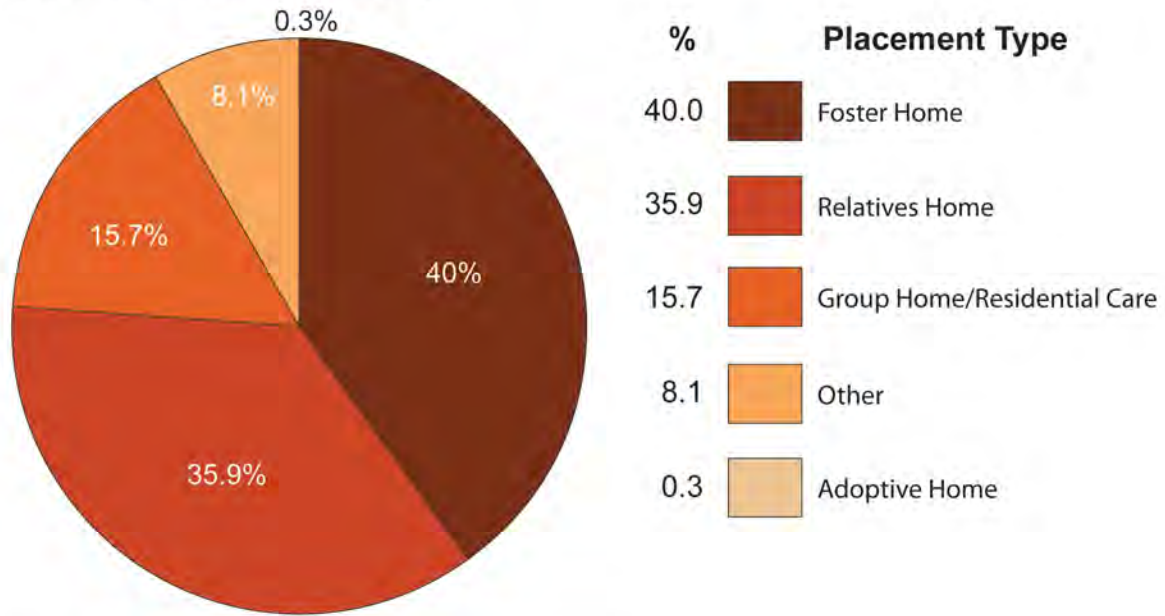
Source: Children's Division, Missouri Department of Social Services. Map based on data for total Foster Care entries from Jan. 2009 - Aug. 2011. Darkest color indicated 1,000+ entries.

Figure 3
Total Foster Care Entries Per Capita



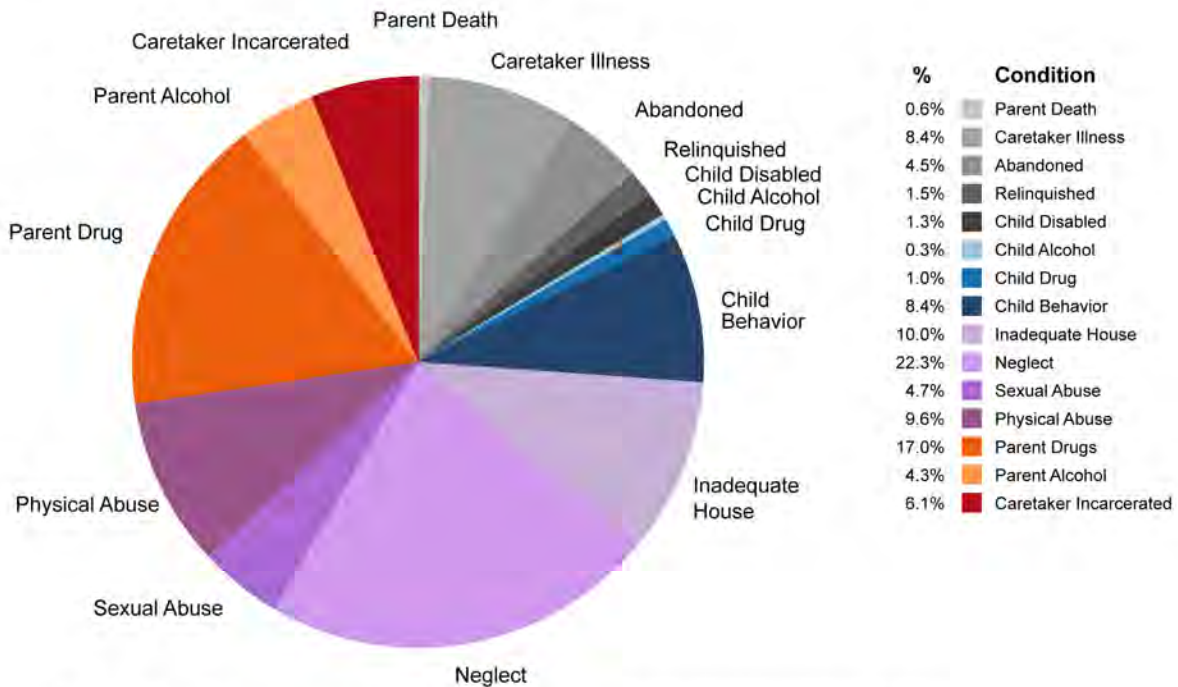
Source: Children's Division, Missouri Department of Social Services. Map based on data for total foster care entries from Jan. 2009 - Aug. 2011. Color indicates entries per capita % based on 2010 U.S. Census. Darkest colors indicate highest rates of entries per capita.

Figure 4
Foster Care Placement by Type



Source: Children's Division, Missouri Department of Social Services. As of 9/30/2011

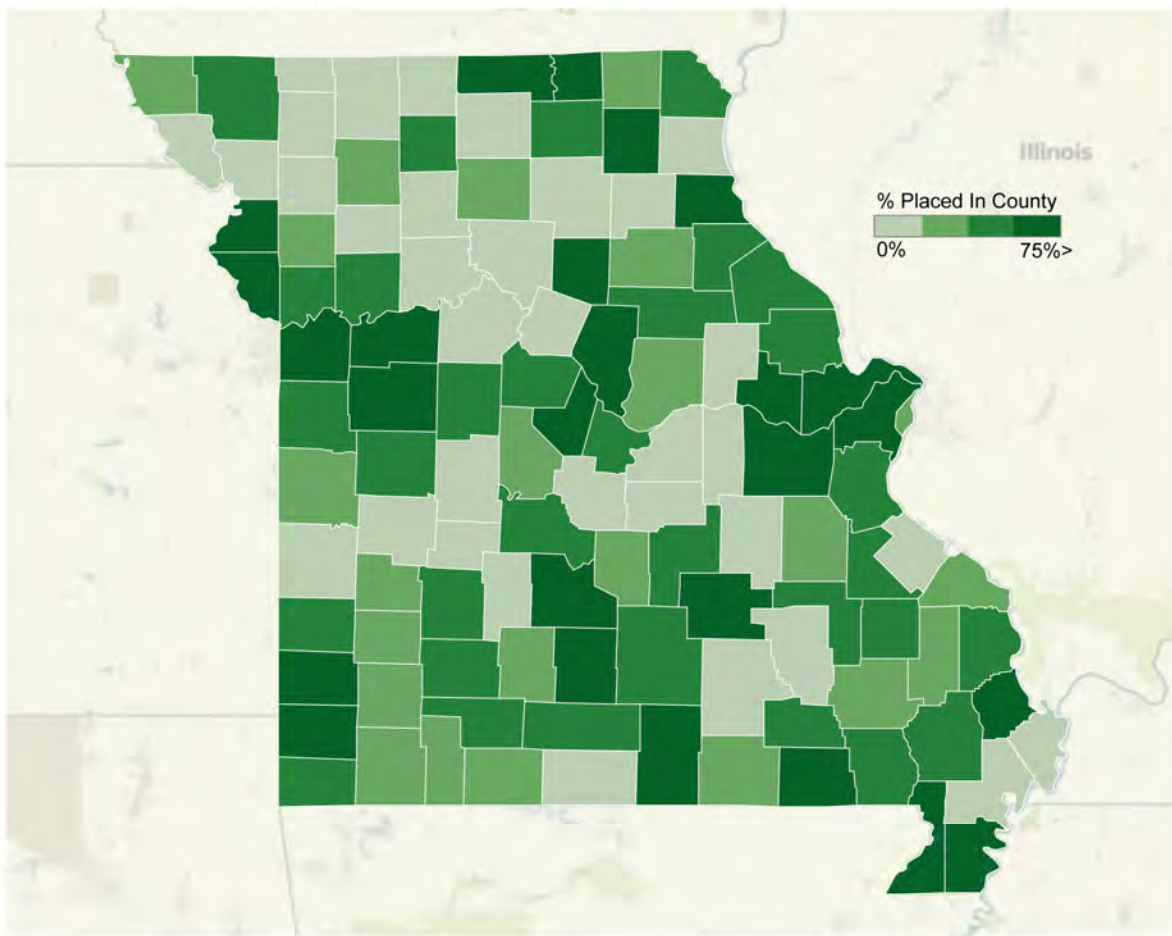
Figure 5
Conditions for Foster Care Entries



Source: Children's Division, Missouri Department of Social Services. Conditions for entry into Missouri State Foster Care. Each child may have multiple conditions for entry. State totals indicate total conditions and not individual children. Data as of 8/31/11

Figure 9

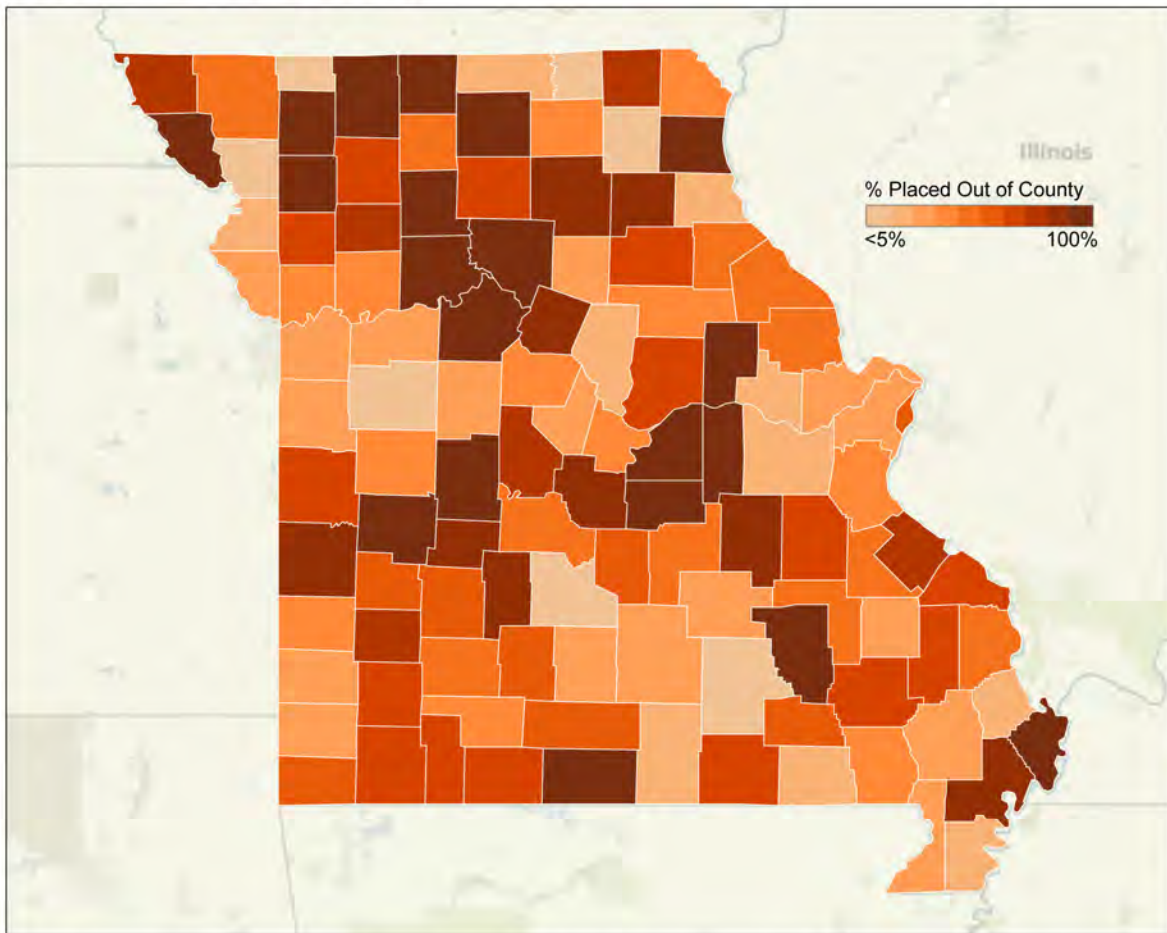
Placements In County



Source: Children's Division, Missouri Dept. of Social Services. Maps shows foster care placements that remain in the county of the case origin. Darkest colors indicate 75% or more of cases placed in county. Data as of 8/3/11.

Figure 10

Placements Out of County



Source: Children's Division, Missouri Dept. of Social Services. Maps shows foster care placements that leave the county of the case origin. Darkest colors indicate 100% of cases placed out of county. Data as of 8/3/11.

Drumm Farm unveils refurbished Swinney Hall

By Kelly Evenson - kelly.evenson@examiner.net

[The Examiner](#)

Independence, MO — When renovations started on Swinney Hall, there were some colorful residents in the 130-year-old building.

“When we started this process, we had a population of about 20 raccoons, three large bee hives and three huge hedgehogs,” said Bert Schwaller, general contractor of the Swinney Hall restoration project. “We had to find homes for all of the residents before we could do anything.”



Now the facility, built in 1881 and later purchased by Major Andrew Drumm, is home to the Drumm Farm Center for Children’s administrative offices, counseling services and the COMPASS program, a new program designed for young men aging out of the foster care system. Community members celebrated the completed

restoration project during a grand opening Thursday.

“This is the centerpiece of Drumm Farm and showcases what we are trying to do for our children, which is providing them the highest quality service possible,” said David Rock, president of the Drumm Farm Board of Directors. “In 1881, I am sure this was a very elaborate building. But over the years, the brick work and wood was deteriorating to the point where we got very close to having to tear it down. This is a community that values history, and that thought frightened many of the board members.”

From 1929 to 1975, Swinney Hall served as a residence hall for boys. The boys would go to public school in the morning, and then take vocational classes on the estate. It was briefly converted to administrative offices before it was completely shut down in the early 1980s.

Schwaller said the first year of renovations was spent stabilizing the outside of the structure and making much needed repairs. Two of the three porches had been removed for safety reasons, and many of the windows were broken out. The roof was also replaced, which provided additional time to save the interior of the building.

When the work moved to the inside, Schwaller said it was basically “a shell.” Years of leaking water had taken its toll, causing the ceiling to fall in and damaging many of the floors beyond repair. Plaster and paint were peeling off the walls, and the third floor was in such bad shape, it had been closed off.

“We wanted to do an accurate re-creation as to how the original building would have been,” he said. “But we then added modern electrical and an updated floor plan to meet Drumm Farm’s needs.”

Considered the “crown jewel” of the project is the third floor, which has been converted into a large communal living space, small kitchen and four bedrooms. This program will provide on-campus housing, instruction, staff supervision and a network of support to help young men transition successfully into adulthood.

Brad Smith, director of Drumm Farm, said those who participate in the program must be in a career-orientated activity such as college or technical school, pay a small amount of rent each month and work on campus. Interviews are in process for the program’s first group of residents.

“We want to prepare them for true independent living,” he said. “But there will also a network of support that they would not find elsewhere.”

Rock said the third floor is his favorite feature of the new building.

“This gives them a home until they are ready to go out on their own. I think it is definitely the most meaningful place we have here on campus,” he said. “This is more than restoring a historic building, but it is about improving children’s lives.”





FOSTER & ADOPTIVE CARE COALITION FOR EVERY CHILD... A PLACE TO CALL HOME

EXTREME RECRUITMENT

Issue Addressed

In the St. Louis area, nearly 500 children are waiting for an adoptive family. These are legal orphans who, on average, are 16 years old. Not surprisingly, most “age out” of the system at 18 or 21 years old.

The *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth* reports that of individuals ages 22-24 who aged out of foster care:

- 24.3% experienced homelessness since exiting foster care
- 24.4% had no high school diploma or GED
- 2.5% completed a 4 year degree
- 48% were employed during the study
- 65% of females found themselves pregnant since leaving care
- 64% of males had been arrested since age 18

Extreme Recruitment program brings hope to these youth. In little more than the first year of Extreme Recruitment, 60 youth were served. Of these 60, 42 (70%) were matched with a safe, appropriate adoptive family.

This program is so powerful that we are convinced that it will change the child welfare system in St. Louis. Locally, the entire child welfare system—the Children’s Division, private agencies, and the courts—are excited about Extreme Recruitment’s results.

Currently, Extreme Recruitment is involved in a partnership under a federal grant to evaluate Extreme Recruitment’s effectiveness. The evaluation utilizes a control group and random assignment. The evaluation period will end in the Fall of 2013, and we hope to share the outcomes shortly thereafter.

Program Overview

Silly as it may sound, Extreme Recruitment was inspired by the television show Extreme Home Makeover. This program is an exciting race against time to build a house in just a week by coordinating hundreds of professionals and volunteers. Likewise, Extreme Recruitment is a race to find an adoptive home for a child in a fraction of the time it would normally take (12-20 weeks vs. 12-24 months).

We work exclusively with the hardest-to-place children: ages 10-18, sibling groups, African-American children, and youth with emotional, developmental, or behavioral concerns. Extreme Recruitment is successful for ANY child in foster care because it:

1. requires weekly, intensive meetings between the child’s professional team members for 12-20 weeks
2. demands concentrated support from child welfare supervisors
3. focuses on preparing the youth for adoption, including their mental health and educational needs

Extreme Recruitment is operated by the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition and is made possible by grant number 90C010391 from the Children’s Bureau. These contents are solely the responsibility of the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children’s Bureau, ACYF, ACF, or HHS.



1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Suite 210
St. Louis, Missouri 63144

t 800.FOSTER.3
o 314.367.8373

w www.foster-adopt.org
f 314.241.0715



The added ingredient that makes Extreme Recruitment so effective is our private investigator. Originally, we tried to do the investigation work ourselves, but our contact rate with relatives was a dismal 23%. Within two weeks of hiring an investigator, the contact rate skyrocketed to 80%.

Our investigator finds relatives through internet tools, court databases, and good old-fashioned gumshoe detective work. Many times, he will find a grandmother or an aunt who will say, "Thank God you are here. I have been waiting years for you to find me." Other times, he must use persuasion and tenacity to convince relatives to meet with him.

Program Achievements

Extreme Recruitment's goal is to:

- Match 90% of youth with a network of safe, appropriate adults
- Match 70% of youth with an adoptive family

Here are a few kids who have benefited from Extreme Recruitment:

- **Sherry** came into foster care 11 years ago. Despite the challenges of being in the system, Sherry held her own at school and was a favorite employee at a local grocery store. Our **Extreme Recruitment** program located Sherry's older sister and now they are living together. Sherry's grades have skyrocketed and she is even making plans for college. Sherry's deep longing for family has been fulfilled.
- **Keith** came into foster care at age five. Now 15 years old, he has lived a difficult life. In February, our **Extreme Recruitment** investigator found Keith's grandfather. His grandfather, who is former military, is an exact replica of Keith in both looks and manner. He is already 100% committed to Keith, and they talk on the phone every day. In less than two months, Keith's entire demeanor has changed, "Before I thought I had no family to visit. Now I have my grandpa."
- **Serena**. Coalition staff traveled to Minneapolis to locate family, and it worked! They found Sharon, aunt of 14-year-old Serena. Aunt Sharon lost connection with Serena ten years ago, after her niece entered the St. Louis foster care system. Greeting our **Extreme Recruitment** team with a big hug and tears of joy, Aunt Sharon exclaimed "I have been so worried about her!" The visit was great, and Aunt Sharon's strength, wisdom, and commitment were obvious. Describing herself as the "glue of the family," Aunt Sharon will do all that she can to bring Serena home.

To Learn More About Extreme Recruitment

Contact: Gayle Flavin, Director of Training and Implementation, Extreme Recruitment

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

1750 S. Brentwood, Suite 210

Saint Louis, Missouri 63144

o 800.FOSTER.3 (314.367.8373)

c 314.363.7043

e gayleflavin@foster-adopt.org

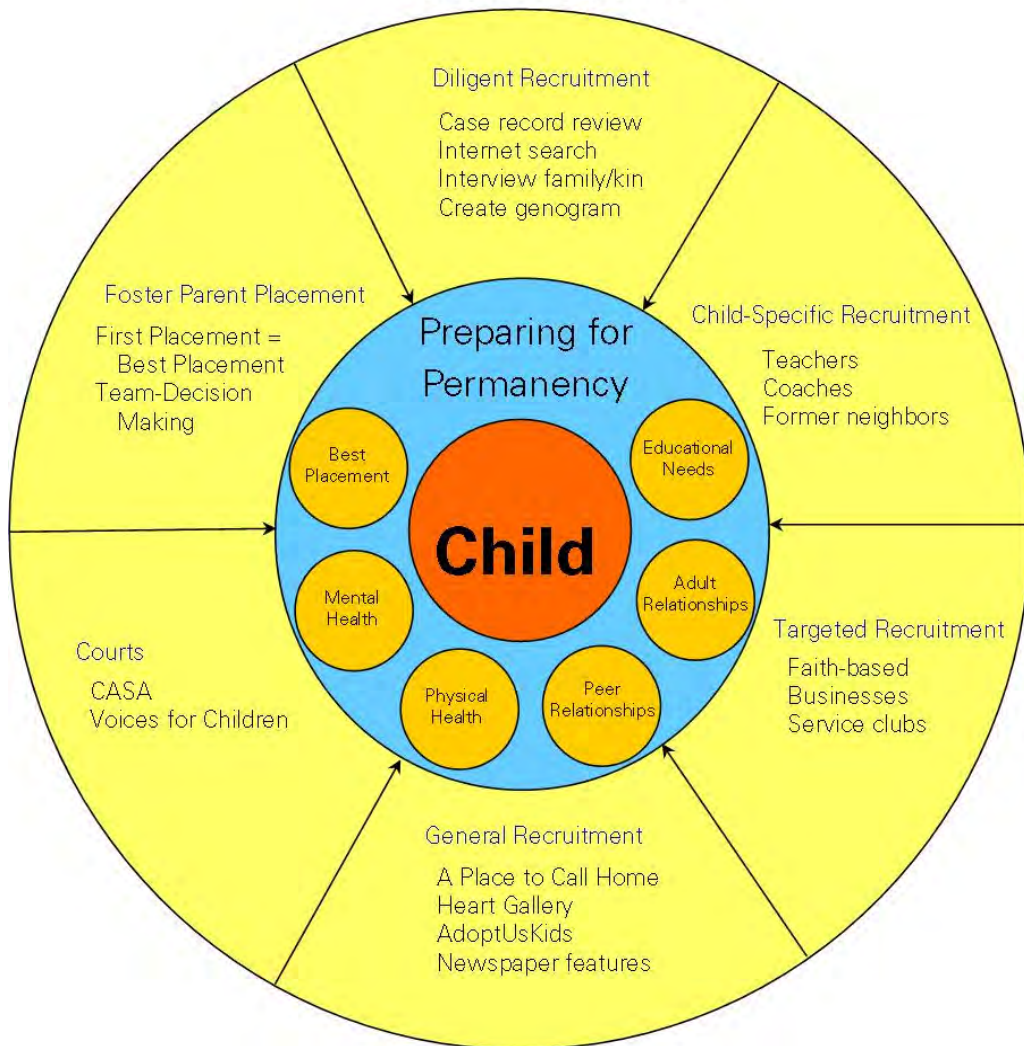
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FOSTER & ADOPTIVE CARE COALITION
 FOR EVERY CHILD... A PLACE TO CALL HOME

EXTREME Recruitment™



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1750 S. Brentwood Blvd., Suite 210
 St. Louis, Missouri 63144

† 800.FOSTER.3
 ○ 314.367.8373

W www.foster-adopt.org
 F 314.241.0715



TIME

Monday, Jan. 10, 2011

Foster Care: Extreme Edition

By Curtis Sittenfeld / St. Louis

In many ways, Claire was a typical 14-year-old. Her favorite store was Forever 21, her favorite food was macaroni and cheese, and her favorite TV show was *Bad Girls Club*. As a ninth-grader living in St. Louis, she was a member of her school dance team, and she was (of course) on Facebook. A pretty and stylish girl, Claire was a strong student whose long-term goal was to become a lawyer.

In other ways, however, Claire's life was decidedly not typical, and the odds were seriously stacked against her. At age 6, she entered foster care after evidence of abuse and neglect surfaced in her home. She then lived in six different settings, including foster homes and group residences; her current home was a facility. Although she navigated those challenges with remarkable grace, her prospects were, statistically speaking, bleak. She would "age out" of the foster-care system when she turned 18, at which point she would have to fight to keep her head above water. There are nearly half a million American children in foster care; one 2007 survey found that of the young adults who age out, about half don't complete high school, about a third are arrested, and almost as many struggle with homelessness. Only 38% of those working at age 18 are employed a year after leaving foster care, and among the women, roughly half are pregnant within 12 to 18 months. ([See more about the epidemic of teen pregnancy in foster care.](#))

But in November 2009, Claire got a lucky break: her case was randomly selected to be part of an innovative program known as Extreme Recruitment. Pioneered by a 23-person St. Louis — based agency called the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, Extreme Recruitment seeks out the foster children who are the hardest to find homes for — kids older than 10, kids with special needs, sibling groups and African Americans — and not only matches them with permanent adoptive families but also does so in a fraction of the time such matches usually take. Success depends on close coordination of a professional team — one that includes detectives who track down enough potential adoptive relatives to fill a small dance hall. Although half of all foster kids wait in custody for one to five years, Extreme Recruitment aims for a match in 12 to 20 weeks; instead of finding "forever families" for 40% of the children they work with, as the agency did before 2008, Extreme Recruitment finds families for 70%.

"We think it's the best thing since sliced bread," the coalition's executive director, Melanie Scheetz, says of Extreme Recruitment. "But until we can prove it as an evidence-based practice, it's just that nice little program that people are doing out in St. Louis." In 2008 the coalition partnered with the state of Missouri on a five-year federal grant to compare Extreme Recruitment's family-matching methods with foster-care business as usual — an evaluation Scheetz welcomes. As interest in the program rises and the coalition hosts visitors from around the country eager to observe and replicate its methods, Extreme Recruitment might remain just a nice little program out in St. Louis, or it might pave the way to revolutionize the foster-care system in America. ([See the story of one family who adopted a teenager.](#))

The Need for Speed

Extreme recruitment came about while its creator was waiting for *Desperate Housewives* to come on TV. That is the "very embarrassing but very true" story, as Scheetz describes it, of how she decided to dramatically shift the way her agency approached finding homes for children. She was sitting in front of the television in her family's living room on a Sunday night in March 2008, impatiently watching the last few minutes of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. "How can they build a house that fast?" she remembers wondering. "If they can do that — and they do it not because they use any new technologies or processes; they just coordinate their massive team of professionals and volunteers in a highly effective way — the question is why can't we do that too in finding homes for kids?"

Of the 424,000 American children currently in foster care, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, close to a quarter will remain in care for more than three years. At the coalition prior to Extreme Recruitment, a social worker typically checked in with a child's caseworker once a month, and the various other players — the educational advocate, the therapist, the court-appointed special advocate — were rarely in the same room.

[See a brief history of the American family.](#)

But under the Extreme Recruitment model, team members are in constant contact, with weekly 30-minute meetings propelled by checklists of action items. Among the team members are the coalition's not-so-secret weapons: two full-time private investigators employed by the agency who track down dozens of members of a child's biological family. The old assumption was that if a child's parents couldn't care for her, everyone else in

the family would have a similarly negative influence — that the apple didn't fall far from the tree. The new conventional wisdom is that having contact with family is critical to a child's identity, and if you haven't found any family members who can be a positive influence, then you haven't looked hard enough. "There are," Scheetz says, "lots of apples."

In 2008, George W. Bush signed family finding into federal law as part of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. While different states have implemented the law at different speeds, within Extreme Recruitment, the significance of family finding can't be overestimated. "We're talking about these kids being reconnected to support systems, family, their roots," says Sheila Suderwalla, a coalition social worker. "For our kids, when they enter foster care, their primary label, their primary identity, is a foster child." But a foster child reconnected to his family becomes Aunt Rita's nephew or Johnny's cousin. "He is someone who's cared about," Suderwalla says. ([See TIME's cover story on the crisis of foster care.](#))

On a practical level, Scheetz says, relatives are likelier than strangers to be unfazed by a kid's special needs. Say a 10-year-old foster child has been diagnosed as bipolar. It's possible that bipolar disorder runs in the family and that the great-grandmother considering adopting the child is already familiar with the condition because her niece has it too. "The family knows how to deal with it," says Scheetz.

Her claims are borne out by a recent Cornell University study showing that of people who take an adoption-preparation course, only 4% of those who do not have a prior connection to a child will ultimately go through with adoption, but a whopping 53% of people with a connection will. As foster-care consultant Kevin Campbell, who is credited with inventing the practice of family finding, puts it, "Before giving kids to strangers, we should be making sure they don't have family members who can take care of them. Children and young people need to be afforded the dignity of knowing their family story — where they come from, the strengths and challenges in the family. For me, it's a human-rights issue." ([See more about the heartbreak of adoption.](#))

Rather than following the steps to permanent placement sequentially — for example, identifying a family for a child and then making sure the child is mentally and physically ready to live with that family — Extreme Recruitment pursues all the preparations for adoption simultaneously. It also pursues multiple adoptive families at once instead of waiting for one not to work out before moving on. "What happens if we find more than one preadoptive family?" Scheetz asks. "Great!"

Where once social workers would locate just a handful of relatives per child, these days the social workers and private investigators working in tandem find a minimum of 40 per child, though the number is usually closer to 60. The Internet, especially public databases like [publicrecordsnow.com](#) and [virtualgumshoe.com](#) has made the job easier, though there's no replacement for old-fashioned pavement pounding. In one extraordinary week, coalition social worker Ian Forber-Pratt and private investigator Russell Smith identified a staggering 113 family members of a child; then Forber-Pratt attended a wake where he found 15 more. For putting faces with the names on a family tree, it turns out, nothing beats a funeral. ([See pictures of a diverse group of American teens.](#))

Finding the Gems

For each child's case, the goal is to find the two individuals who, Scheetz swears, exist in every family: the informant, who knows who lives where, who has been married or divorced or imprisoned and what everyone's phone numbers are; and the family gem, to use Scheetz's term, the cousin or uncle or grandparent who is both emotionally and logistically prepared to open his or her home to a young relative. The sign that he's found the family gem, says Carlos Lopez, one of the coalition's investigators, is when the person opens the door, hears why he's there and immediately says, "I'm so glad you've found me. What do I need to do?"

[See TIME's cover story on the crisis of foster care.](#)

Regularly, Lopez and Suderwalla, who work together often, must apologize to family members who feel they have been failed by the foster-care system and quite possibly believe that the child ended up in foster care against their will. In one instance, a great-aunt berated Lopez and Suderwalla for three hours before she was willing to divulge any family information. "She had to grieve," Suderwalla says.

Despite the challenges, Suderwalla and Lopez both say they love their jobs. A former juvenile detective, Lopez was accustomed to encountering kids, often the same ones over and over, when they were in trouble and being unable to truly address the underlying problems in their lives. Now, he says, he can make a difference. ([See photos of the crisis nursery providing relief in Minneapolis.](#))

It was by knocking on doors that Lopez found Stephanie, 31, whose ex-husband is Claire's cousin. When Claire's file came to the coalition, it contained the names of six relatives. Claire's Extreme Recruitment team managed to find over 80 more, one of whom was Stephanie. (Claire is still a ward of the state, and Claire and Stephanie are not their real names, though they are pseudonyms the two picked for themselves.)

A police officer who was recently promoted to detective and a divorced mother of three, Stephanie hadn't seen Claire for close to a decade but

remembered her well. "She used to come around, and she was the cutest little girl," Stephanie says. "She always had these long beautiful ponytails."

When Lopez appeared out of the blue and told Stephanie the coalition was gathering information about Claire's family, Stephanie immediately wanted to know more. After a series of conversations with a coalition social worker and extensive prayer — "I'm a woman of the faith," Stephanie says — she decided she wanted to become Claire's adoptive mother. "She's family," Stephanie says. "And I feel like I have the resources. Why not?" ([See more about child abuse investigations that don't help kids.](#))

In early August, shortly after her 15th birthday, Claire moved into Stephanie's rental town house, sharing a room with Stephanie's 8-year-old daughter. The plan is that after the required six-month period, Stephanie will legally adopt Claire. Though Claire is related by blood to Stephanie's children, Claire and Stephanie are not biologically related. But they both say this makes no difference. Stephanie maintains a friendly relationship with her ex-husband and several of her former in-laws and is eager for Claire to see them frequently. And one of these days, Claire will get to meet Stephanie's brother, who works in New York City as a lawyer — the profession Claire hopes to pursue.

Although they reconnected less than a year ago, it's hard to pinpoint the differences between Stephanie and Claire and other mother-daughter duos. Stephanie brags about Claire's 3.875 grade-point average, chides her for something she posted on Facebook (which neither of them, despite much pleading, would divulge to a reporter) and shares Claire's fondness for reading the Bible. Claire was quiet as a little girl, Stephanie recalls, but "she's very outspoken now. I love that, though, 'cause she's just like me." ([See "Should Race Be a Factor in Adoptions?"](#))

Not all Extreme Recruitment cases unfold as smoothly as Claire's: 50% of the planned first matches don't pan out, leading the team to look for a second, third or fourth match. "It's not magic," Scheetz says. "You've got to keep trying." In some cases, the team simply can't find any appropriate family members willing to consider adoption, though a nonfamily adoption isn't deemed a failure. Ideally, the child still develops relationships with family members without living with them and receives the family's blessing for a nonkinship adoption, thereby surmounting the uneasiness about disloyalty that can cause teens in particular to claim they don't want to be adopted.

Even in Claire's case, there are many unknowns. But the evidence so far suggests that Stephanie is exactly the sort of family gem whose existence Extreme Recruitment is built on and who gives credence to Scheetz's belief that many more such gems are out there waiting to be discovered by those willing to search. The program is being watched closely — and in some cases copied — by family-service professionals across the country. Using investigators is "a stroke of genius," says Rana O'Connor, who works for the Maine division of Casey Family Services, which serves 4,000 children in seven states annually. "Detectives have access to information or skills that social workers don't necessarily have." O'Connor plans to hire three full-time private investigators this year and mirror the intense focus and compressed timetable that Extreme Recruitment has developed. All of which means that this big program from a small agency could not only change the way foster care works in America but could also do so very quickly — and if it does, well, won't that be fitting?

Sittenfeld is the author of the novels Prep and American Wife (Random House)

[See TIME's Top 10 of Everything of 2010.](#)

[See TIME's best pictures of 2010.](#)

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January 31, 2010

A Determined Quest to Bring Adoptive Ties to Foster Teenagers

By [ERIK ECKHOLM](#)

ST. LOUIS — After a day of knocking on doors chasing fleeting leads, Carlos Lopez and his partner finally heard welcome words: Yes, a resident confirmed, the man they were seeking lived in this house and would be home that evening.

Mr. Lopez, a former police detective, now does gumshoe work for what he calls a more fulfilling cause: tracking down long-lost relatives of teenagers languishing in [foster care](#), in desperate need of family ties and in danger of becoming rootless adults. That recent day, he was hoping to find the father of a boy who had lived in 16 different foster homes since 1995. The boy did not remember his mother, who had long since disappeared.

Finding an adoptive parent for older children with years in foster care is known in child welfare circles as the toughest challenge. Typically, their biological parents abused or neglected them and had parental rights terminated. Relatives may not know where the children are, or even that they exist. And the supply of saints in the general public, willing to adopt teenagers shaken by years of trauma and loss, is limited.

The intensive searches in St. Louis reflect a growing national shift toward relatives as caretakers, a quest that has often been limited by a seeming scarcity of known suitable kin. But scores of foster and adoption agencies around the country have found that assertive efforts relying on the Internet, the telephone, advertisements and, in some cases like this one, door-to-door questioning by full-time investigators, can turn up dozens of relatives for almost any child. Many of them turn out to be willing to help nieces, nephews and grandchildren they had never seen.

“The lost relatives are a largely untapped resource for adoption,” said Melanie Scheetz, director of the nonprofit [Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition](#) here, which employs Mr. Lopez. “The system has overlooked all these amazing, strong people who are out there and willing to help.”

The potential of such searches was first established about a decade ago by Kevin Campbell, a former head of a charity in Washington State. In his initial work, mainly using computer databases, Mr. Campbell located 40 to 150 relatives each for most children in his program, reaching as far as grandparents’ siblings.

“Some relatives recoil when contacted,” he said; the surprise calls can rekindle ugly family histories. “But many want to help and are willing to consider adoption.”

Many foster children are intensely curious about their biological families, said Mr. Campbell, who is now a

consultant and trains agencies in a six-stage strategy of counseling and searches known as [Family Finding](#). But the children also must be prepared to learn unpleasant facts.

“People have a right to know the truth about their families,” he said. “We work with youths to get answers, knowing that some of the answers may not be hopeful.”

Efforts to help foster teenagers, including those in St. Louis, have been widely supported by grants from [Wendy’s Wonderful Kids](#), created by the founder of the fast food chain.

In the St. Louis area, at any given time some 400 foster children ages 10 and older whose parents’ rights were terminated are eligible for adoption. With a \$2 million federal grant and private aid, the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition has begun unusually intense 12- to 20-week searches for family connections and potential adopters, which it calls Extreme Recruitment. Of 56 cases last year, 90 percent were connected with a relative and 70 percent were matched with adoptive parents, most but not all of them relatives, Ms. Scheetz said.

The pull of blood ties affected Robert Jackson, a 53-year-old meat packer across the Mississippi River in Fairview, Ill. He had not known that his troubled younger brother had fathered two children in St. Louis who soon ended up in foster care, with the parents’ rights terminated by a court. By chance, about two years ago he saw an advertisement in a local newspaper for potential adoptive parents that featured a picture of Charles, now 13, and Charlotte, now 12.

Mr. Jackson did a double take: the boy bore an uncanny resemblance to his brother, the girl resembled a sister, and Charles and Charlotte were family names. After confirming his suspicion, Mr. Jackson recalled, “I thought, ‘We’ve got to bring them back into the family.’”

He and his wife, Maxine, went to see the children and started the adoption process. Of that first meeting with his uncle, Charles said, “I thought he really looked like me.”

After his adoption, recalled Liz Johnson, a social worker and “recruiter” with the coalition here, Charles said to her: “I’m a real boy now. I’m not a boy in foster care anymore.”

While the outlook for these two seems bright, their case shows the potential complexity of such transitions. The children had the same foster mother for many years and were deeply attached to her, as she was to them, but she would not commit to adoption.

The children chose to move in with their newfound relatives, but suffered emotional turmoil and problems at their new school, which was far more demanding academically than the one they left in St. Louis. They still see a therapist weekly. Causing new heartache, Maxine died of cancer in December, six months after the children moved in.

To speed the process of recruiting parents and preparing children for adoptions, the St. Louis coalition employs Mr. Lopez and one other investigator full time alongside its social workers and starts transitional therapy for children before a parent is located, rather than waiting, as is common.

Many older children in foster care, after years of disappointments and rejections, initially say they do not want to be adopted. While children cannot be forced to accept adoptive parents, counselors help make them

aware of the advantages of permanent legal ties to caring adults.

Teenagers in foster care often learn how to be alone, said Latasha Holt, a 26-year-old cashier and former foster child who is studying to become a parole officer. Ms. Holt described her isolation in high school, when she lived in a group home and was too ashamed to let others know.

“I had friends until the school day ended at 2:15,” she said. “Graduation was extremely emotional for me because I didn’t have anybody there.”

Ms. Holt had to feed her younger siblings when she was only 7 because their mother disappeared for days at a time. The children all ended up in foster care.

Recently, Ms. Holt became the foster parent of her 18-year-old sister, Sharda. A legal adoption is in the works, and in the meantime she made sure that Sharda had a better graduation experience, throwing her a luau-themed surprise party.

The man found recently by Mr. Lopez and his partner, Sheila Suderwalla, a social worker, proved willing to cooperate. That man knew that a girlfriend from his teenage years had borne a boy, but he said he understood he was not the father. However, he agreed to a paternity test and he and his wife said that while they awaited the results, they could at least tell the inquiring boy about his mother.

“They may give us leads to other relatives,” Ms. Suderwalla said. “If nothing else, this will help give the boy a sense of his identity.”

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Suburban districts fight paying for Kansas City Public Schools transfers

Date: Friday, June 8, 2012, 5:00am CDT

[Paul Koeppe](#) - Reporter- *Kansas City Business Journal*

Suburban school districts that may have to accept thousands of students from the unaccredited Kansas City Public Schools have begun tallying the potential cost to taxpayers.

The five districts that filed suit to try to head off the transfers — Blue Springs, Independence, Lee’s Summit, North Kansas City and Raytown — said they would have to spend a combined \$9.5 million in capital costs to expand facilities, plus an additional \$14.9 million annually for students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and for disabled and limited-English students.

“The state can mandate what it wants to as long as it pays for it,” said [Duane Martin](#) of Columbia-based Guin Martin Mundorf LLC, who represents the suburban districts. “You’re asking the taxpayers of one district to shoulder a burden that is properly the burden of taxpayers of another district.”

The districts’ lawsuit presses the case that passing along costs from one district to another is unconstitutional and that even if KCPS pays tuition and transportation for any transfers, the additional costs still would impose an unlawful burden.

Their lawsuit is rolling toward trial later this month, despite an attempt by KCPS to put on the brakes.

The Kansas City district asked for a stay in the case, given a May 1 decision in St. Louis County Circuit Court blocking the transfer of students from the St. Louis public school district to suburban districts — and the likelihood that the Missouri Supreme Court will review that ruling. Jackson County Circuit Judge [Brent Powell](#) denied the motion on June 1, keeping the case on track for a June 25 trial unless he grants summary judgment motions at a June 13 pretrial hearing.

The two cases are similar, but the St. Louis suit was brought by parents seeking to move their children out of an unaccredited district, whereas the Jackson County suit came from the surrounding districts — and taxpayers in them — looking to pre-emptively block transfers.

The May 1 ruling held that the St. Louis transfers would violate Missouri’s Hancock Amendment, which forbids unfunded mandates. It said neither the sending nor the receiving district could afford the transfers.

The Kansas City-area suburban districts are relying on a report issued May 3 by Stilwell-based Patron Insight Inc. It projected that 7,759 students living within the KCPS boundaries would transfer to those districts alone.

Students could move to any district in any Missouri county touching the KCPS borders. There are 32,173 children ages 5 to 18 living within KCPS limits, according to the report. About half attend public schools; the other half attend private, parochial or charter schools.

In a phone survey conducted in March and April, Patron Insight asked heads of households within the KCPS limits about their perceptions of the quality of other districts. Respondents placed Blue Springs and Lee's Summit in the top tier and North Kansas City, Independence and Raytown in a second tier.

The Center School District has intervened in the lawsuit, supporting the other districts' contention that KCPS should have to pay the tuition and transportation costs of any transfers. [Joe Hatley](#) of Spencer Fane Britt & Browne LLP represents Center.

In a statement, Missouri Education Commissioner [Chris Nicastro](#) said she is disappointed that the General Assembly did not take action during this year's session to let the state intervene immediately in the Kansas City district.

"In the case of (KCPS), the State Board (of Education) does not have the authority to implement immediate changes in governance," Nicastro said. "However, we will continue to advocate for the children in Kansas City and work with the community to find solutions."

TRANSFER STUDENTS

Where students living within KCPS boundaries would choose to transfer:

Lee's Summit: 2,291 students

North Kansas City: 2,035

Blue Springs: 1,690

Independence: 1,002

Raytown: 741

Five-district total: 7,759

Capital costs of absorbing transfer students:

Blue Springs: \$3,901,730

Lee's Summit: \$2,164,328

North Kansas City: \$1,809,979

Raytown: \$1,163,109

Independence: \$465,615

Total: \$9.5 million

Annual costs of free and reduced lunch, disabled and limited-English students:

Lee's Summit: \$4,404,302

North Kansas City: \$3,911,270

Blue Springs: \$3,248,180

Independence: \$1,925,844

Raytown: \$1,424,202

Total: \$14.9 million

Source: Patron Insight Inc. phone survey

Sunday, Jun 10, 2012

Early childhood care slots wiped out by Missouri budget fights

Cut to state child care services goes into effect next month, putting families in tough positions.

By JOE ROBERTSON
The Kansas City Star

Poor working families of some 120 infants and toddlers in the Kansas City area are about to find out they're losing their state-funded child care.

One of the last-moment deals in the Missouri legislature's budget battle begins to hurt this week.

People in area agencies that distribute the state's Early Head Start funds essentially will be deciding in the next few days who will keep their spots in the free programs and who won't beginning July 1.

"Talk about being Solomon," said Jim Caccamo, the director of early learning at the Mid-America Regional Council. "Which kids do you pick out? (The providers) will have criteria, but, still, how'd you like to be the one to tell that family?"

Statewide, state funding for Early Head Start programs was cut nearly in half, from \$5.67 million to \$2.65 million. In the Kansas City area, the funding will fall from \$1.8 million to \$865,000, Caccamo said.

Missouri's Department of Social Services on Thursday distributed new contracts for providers under the reduced funding that cut services from the Family Conservancy and the Independence School District.

The Family Conservancy's Early Head Start programs losing funds include Operation Breakthrough and the early childhood program at St. Mark Union Church in Kansas City, plus several home-based providers.

They will be losing 119 of 222 "slots," pushing many low-income families into difficult situations, said Dean Olson, vice president for programming at the Family Conservancy.

"Politics is all over this," Olson said. "I know they (legislators) have difficult decisions to make, but there are going to be a lot of unintended consequences."

Early childhood programming, though underfunded, had escaped the carousel of state cuts in recent years. But Jeremy LaFaver, a lobbyist for early childhood interests, said they couldn't escape lawmakers' last-week machinations in 2012.

Governor Jay Nixon and the House of Representatives had offered a budget that avoided many of the cuts. It relied on an amnesty program for delinquent taxpayers that would have generated an estimated \$70 million in revenue, said Rep. Ryan Silvey, a Kansas City, North, Republican. But the Senate rejected the tax amnesty plan and submitted a budget with sharper cuts.

Silvey chaired a joint conference committee that hammered out a compromise budget between the House and Senate on the Wednesday before the session ended May 18. He favored the tax amnesty plan. Without it, he said, the committee was forced into hard decisions, including the cuts to Early Head Start.

"It was a matter of trying to find priorities for both of us," he said. "It was important to me we did the best that we could."

The cuts come as efforts throughout the nation, including Kansas City's Turn the Page KC early reading program, emphasize the importance of helping children. In particular, they focus on efforts to prepare disadvantaged children to start their school years ready to learn.

"This is the most formative years for these kids," said Sister Berta Sailer, a co-founder of Operation Breakthrough. "This allows women who have been on welfare to get a job and have their kids taken care of. There is a huge need for this."

Olson fears that a poor family that abruptly has to figure out how to pay for child care will look to unregulated providers.

Missouri law allows anyone to provide care in their home, without being licensed, for up to four children — in addition to any children related to the provider.

"A major concern with parents who lose care is where are they going to go?" Olson said. "In unregulated care there are no inspections, no training."

The Star's Matt Campbell contributed to this report. To reach Joe Robertson, call 816-234-4789 or send email to jrobertson@kcstar.com.

Saturday, Jun 9, 2012

New principal at African-centered school searches for acceptance

By JOE ROBERTSON
The Kansas City Star

Joseph Williams III hoped it was much easier to be reviled when he was a hypothetical.

Someone was going to be the principal of Kansas City Public Schools' African-Centered College Preparatory Academy.

And that someone clearly would face a tall order trying to win the support of the many parents who are uncertain or outright hostile about the

school district's decision to take control of the ethnic-focused K-12 program from its founders.

Well, here he is, a 44-year-old Kansas City-born principal returning from the Deep South, where education became his "calling" after he took a substitute teaching job some 20 years ago that was supposed to simply help him pay for law school.

This is a real person, he imagined the first reaction from parents. Joseph Williams is real. And he has the same values as I do.

More than 100 parents have registered their interest in putting their children in the new school

and close to half of them want to take on parent leader roles on the school's council of elders.

But hundreds more who had children on the campus a year ago are standing back. Many have been joining in angry protests, the latest disrupting what was supposed to be a cookies-and-punch meet-and-greet at the Southeast Community Center on Thursday.

Williams said he sympathizes with the unhappy parents.



A "meet and greet" to allow parents to get acquainted with Joseph Williams III, the new principal of Kansas City's African-centered education campus, quickly turned into a hostile question and answer session on Thursday.

“I have no problem with parents who are vigorous advocates for their kids,” said Williams, a husband and father of a 2-year-old son. “I promise I’m an advocate for my child. I have no problem that they might be withholding judgment until the principal gets here.

“I’m here now.”

Williams and Superintendent Steve Green talked about the task ahead when they walked the spacious campus Wednesday at the former Southeast High School.

“We talked about the tremendous expectations put on him and the important transition of this school,” Green said. “We talked about the vision of what we want to see going into the classrooms, what we’re going to build on. ...We talked about opening day and what we want it to look like and feel like.”

A month ago, on those same school grounds, the leaders who were running Afrikan Centered Education Taskforce Inc., had rallied its more than 900 children onto the lawn during the school day. They brought out community supporters to resist the district’s decision to end the contract and take over operations.

The speakers included an 11-year-old girl urging the crowd in an echo of Malcolm X to stop the district’s takeover “by any means necessary.”

Later in May, when the district planned a public meeting with the consultants it hired to help continue an African-centered program, crowds of parents disrupted the event, many bearing placards that included pictures of the superintendent with “LIAR” stamped over his face. Some of the signs were held up by their children.

Thursday, some of the former school’s supporters came ready with hard questions for the new principal.

They confirmed Williams, who is black, did not have prior experience in African-centered education. They wanted to know about the high school leadership position Williams held that was not listed on the district’s promotional material introducing Williams — a position at an alternative school that Williams said he resigned from because the school was converting to a private institution.

If it wasn’t already apparent, the opponents of the district’s takeover assured after the meeting that Williams now stands at the forefront of an unrelenting battle.

“We’re fighting,” Spark Bookhart said. “We won’t be ignored. We’ll make our voice heard.”

Williams and members of his team eventually retreated into another room at the community center to try to have the intended conversation with interested parents.

LaShaun Lars, who has two children she’s considering enrolling in the school, followed along. She said she wants her children to learn about their culture in a safe environment, and she likes the dual college credit programming that the district plans to continue at the campus.

But the noise at the meetings had been unnerving.

“Every meeting it’s the same thing with all the screaming,” Lars said. “And you’re not hearing what you want to hear.”

The school will be Williams' to run. Green is not wavering in his decision to end the contract and take over the school. He says there have been too many disputes over finances, data management and other issues, including the taskforce's failed attempt to sue the district for breach of contract.

The change is ending the quarter-century involvement of Audrey Bullard. She established the African-centered education movement's first foothold in the district as principal of J.S. Chick Elementary School in the early 1990s and was the leader of the full K-12 campus that opened in 2007.

Williams hasn't worked in African-centered education, but he will be working with a consulting team hired by the district that includes Molefi Kete Asante, a professor of African American studies at Temple University.

This school may pose the stiffest challenge yet for Williams, who came out of high school convinced he was heading for law school.

The former Kansas Citian was finishing his undergraduate education at Liberty University and had acceptance letters from several law schools when a friend told him about a chance to substitute teach in Shreveport, La. Distance learning would allow him to finish his degree while he worked at the school, giving him a more steady income on his way to law school.

"I was tired of the hand-to-mouth existence trying to finish that degree," he said.

At first he was going to defer law school. Then he took a high school job in Baton Rouge, working as a special education teacher while completing an alternative certification program for people who change careers into education.

"My mother told me I should follow my heart," he said. "This was my calling."

He would earn a master's degree in school leadership from Nova Southeastern University in Florida and move into administration in the mid-2000s.

For the last three years he has been the principal of a K-12 school in Quitman County outside Atlanta, Ga.

Now comes his return to Kansas City — a move that will not be easy as he tries to spark his new school's so-far sluggish enrollment.

"I need to get out there and meet the people," he said. "I'm hoping they give us a chance."

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - June 13, 2012
 CONTACT: [Jennifer Sykes](#) PHONE: 816-241-7006

HCF Dedicates \$2.6 Million to Programs and Initiatives that Strive to Improve Access to Healthy Eating and Active Living

KANSAS CITY, MO – The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City (HCF) has awarded 22 Healthy Lifestyles grants totaling \$2.6 million. These grants support community partnerships that aim to increase opportunities for physical activity and improve access to affordable, healthy foods for children and families.

"Our vision is Healthy People in Healthy Communities. In order to achieve that vision, people need healthy environments that are structured in ways that help them access healthy foods and easily incorporate physical activity into their daily routine. HCF is proud to support these agencies and partnerships in their efforts to create healthy environments in the metropolitan area," said Steve Roling, HCF President/CEO.

In December 2011, HCF released its Healthy Lifestyles Requests for Proposals (RFP). The Foundation received a total of 76 proposals totaling approximately \$10.4 million in requests. The following grants were awarded during the June Board of Directors meeting:

Agency	Amount Awarded	Project Description
City of Kansas City, MO	\$50,000	To provide staff support and necessary project materials to achieve policy changes at the city and school district level and run our Safer Routes program in the Hickman Mills and Center school districts; these efforts will facilitate Kansas City, Mo. becoming a more active and healthy city.
Communities Creating Opportunity Organization	\$105,000	To improve food access and reduce pervasive violence by developing the leadership of grassroots volunteers and clergy, empowering neighborhoods to organize for solutions, and advocating for systemic change.
Curators of the University of Missouri	\$228,000	To support the development of a farmer cooperative that will make fresh produce more accessible for institutional buyers in Cass, Jackson and Lafayette County.
Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County -- EITAS (EITAS)	\$93,461	To change policies and practices that improve nutrition and increase physical activity participation among people with developmental disabilities in Jackson County.
El Centro, Inc.	\$35,000	To provide for the training of a new cohort of Promotores and the addition of Youth Promotores teams for disseminating healthy lifestyle information into the Latino community.
Emmanuel Child Development Center	\$74,500	To provide long-term vision, targeted strategies and identify areas for collaboration, in addition to HLS policy recommendations.
First Call Alcohol Drug Prevention and Recovery	\$153,763	To support continued technical assistance and capacity building for the communities, health departments and public policy advocates in Jackson, Cass and Lafayette counties engaged in the Kansas City Youth Mercantile Alliance (KCYMA) project, a community-based intervention addressing the problem of tobacco sales to youth.

Agency	Amount Awarded	Project Description
Gordon Parks Elementary School	\$33,662	To provide staffing for increased physical education time for students and to increase student nutrition through improved school food offerings and the provision of vitamins and water bottles for all students.
Hartwig Legacy Foundation d/b/a KC Healthy Kids	\$275,000	To provide staff and program support to enable the Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition to increase access to fresh, healthy, affordable food in underserved communities in Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas, and to increase institutional purchasing of healthy, local food at institutions and government sites in the Kansas City metropolitan area.
Harvesters - The Community Food Network	\$200,000	To support Harvesters nutrition education and healthy eating programs and our SNAP outreach, as well as our efforts to improve people's health by focusing on advocacy and education.
Kansas City Community Gardens, Inc.	\$147,830	To continue providing technical assistance and garden supplies to schools throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area through the Schoolyard Gardens program, to expand the program in order to serve more schools, to work with supporters to facilitate a community-led process in which participating schools can create a citywide vision for school gardening, and to support schools in their efforts to implement this vision through research, advocacy, and efforts to influence policy, in partnership with KC Healthy Kids.
Mattie Rhodes Center	\$130,715	To provide staff support, supplies, marketing, childcare, and other program expenses for the Gente Sana (Healthy People) program which creates access to healthier food systems for the underserved in the Latino community.
Missouri Bicycle Foundation	\$25,000	To provide staff to create comprehensive policy change and encourage active transportation to school in Kansas City.
Niles Home for Children	\$77,770	To increase access to healthy foods for Niles Home youth and neighborhood families in surrounding urban core neighborhoods and specifically recruiting residents of a nearby family public housing development.
reStart, Inc.	\$97,564	To support Healthy Choices, an agency-wide nutrition and wellness program designed to 1) provide nutrition and fitness education and access for homeless children, youth and families, 2) expand community networks and resources for healthy living, 3) empower homeless clients as self-advocates, and 4) create a replicable model of a nutrition and wellness program that will effectively equip underserved low-income populations to adopt healthy behaviors regarding diet, exercise and tobacco use.
Rosedale Development Association Inc	\$66,025	To enable RHKI to provide staff support, program funds, planning and research to create long-term sustainable community and systems change for healthier Rosedale youth and families.
The Children's Mercy Hospital	\$95,000	To provide staff support and program equipment to implement a coordinated system of care for children with obesity.
Menorah Legacy Foundation Cultivate Kansas City City Market KC Green Market Good Natured Market at HLC	\$220,500	To improve accessibility and affordability for healthy food throughout metropolitan Kansas City for low-income residents through the Kansas City Beans&Greens Program.

Agency	Amount Awarded	Project Description
The Society Of St. Andrew Inc	\$175,000	To provide 3 million pounds of nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks and feeding agencies in Missouri and Kansas, thereby providing access to the most healthy food for the 66,000 people who seek emergency food assistance each month in the Kansas City metropolitan area.
Tri-County Mental Health Services, Inc.	\$120,000	To provide staff and program support for community/school-based tobacco prevention, needed to prevent underage tobacco use while reducing tobacco use by current smokers.
Unified School District 257	\$71,210	To allow the program, through collaboration with vital community partners, to utilize the Spectrum of Prevention to support lasting change in the community and school district through a continuum of integrated and interrelated efforts.
University of Missouri Extension Council of Jackson County	\$125,000	To provide staff support, volunteer and partner training, and supplies for a comprehensive nutrition and gardening program for elementary students to combat childhood obesity.

HCF Applicant Defined Grants are awarded outside of the Foundation's annual Requests for Proposals. The ADGs are reviewed monthly and allow organizations to define their own immediate grant needs in relation to the HCF mission. Organizations are allowed to apply for an ADG once per year and are capped at \$75,000. In 2012, HCF will award a total of \$4.1 million in applicant defined grants.

"We are proud to award these Applicant Defined Grants to support organizations in our service area who are working diligently to help eliminate barriers to quality health for the uninsured and underserved," said Steve Roling, HCF President/CEO. For more information on applying for HCF Applicant Defined Grants, visit the Foundation's website at hcfgkc.org.

Is Local Food Affordable for Ordinary Folks? A Comparison of Farmers Markets and Supermarkets in Nineteen Communities in the Southeast

Anthony Flaccavento, SCALE, Inc

November 1st, 2011

Introduction

The “local foods movement” has been growing rapidly for the past decade or more, reaching communities in nearly every part of the United States. As consumers have become more health conscious and a variety of federal programs have recently begun to support this trend, people from all walks of life have begun to shift their food expenditures to farmers markets, CSAs, local grocers and other types of “farm-to-consumer” direct purchases.

Farmers markets have been at the forefront of this growth in local foods, increasing in number from 1,750 in the mid-nineties to more than 7100 in 2011 (USDA Agriculture Marketing Service). While the best known farmers markets are in larger cities like New York, Washington, DC and Seattle, there are in fact hundreds of markets in the southeastern US, Appalachia and other areas comprised predominantly of small to medium sized towns and rural areas.

As the local foods movement has grown, some have begun to criticize it as “elitist”, with expensive foods largely unaffordable for working people, seniors on fixed incomes and the poor. Farmers markets in particular have increasingly been cited for this criticism.

Growing out of both the success of farmers markets and this growing criticism related to their affordability, SCALE, Inc undertook a survey and analysis of farmers markets in six states in Appalachia and the Southeast during the months of September and October, 2011.

Summary of Findings

This study looked at 24 farmers markets in 19 communities in six states: Virginia, Tennessee, West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina and South Carolina. Communities ranged from under 10,000 in population to over 250,000. Key findings of this study included:

1. Overall, *farmers markets in the Southeast and Appalachia are highly competitive with mainstream supermarkets* in their pricing on a range of commonly consumed foods, including produce, meats and eggs.

2. In 74 % of communities examined, *produce was less expensive at farmers markets* compared with supermarkets, on average by 22%.
3. In 88% of communities, organic produce – when available - *was less expensive at farmers markets compared with supermarkets*, on average by 16%.
4. *Meats and eggs as a group were more expensive at farmers markets in every market* where they were available. This difference was small – 10% - when comparing grass-finished/free range meats in both types of markets, but much larger – 47% - when comparing grass-finished meats at farmers markets with conventionally raised meats at supermarkets.
5. **Overall cost:** Simply comparing the least expensive item available in either market (for example, a free range chicken with a conventionally raised chicken), *farmers markets were more expensive than supermarkets 52% of the time; the same or less expensive 48% of the time*. When comparing “apples to apples”, that is to say, when the lowest priced comparable item was used for comparison, ***farmers markets were the same or less expensive than supermarkets in 74% of all cases, by an average of 12% lower cost.***

Methodology

Data was gathered at 24 farmers markets in 19 different communities, looking at product pricing on a range of fresh produce, eggs and meats. Pricing on the same (or most closely comparable) items was then gathered from 2 major supermarkets in that same community, during the same week.

The intent of this analysis was to examine the relative affordability of farmers markets for “ordinary” people, that is to say low, moderate and lower middle income consumers. Thus, the items selected for cost comparison were weighted towards more common or everyday foods, including produce items like tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, apples, zucchini, butternut squash, potatoes, etc. For meats, information was gathered on ground beef, chicken, eggs, and in some cases, breakfast sausage and beef roasts. A full list of the items selected is contained in the appendix. Those doing the data gathering were given some flexibility as to specific items, selecting from a larger list of commonly eaten foods, depending upon what was available at specific markets.

For each item, pricing was collected from every vendor who carried the item. The median price on that item was then determined for each market. Where available, pricing on organic items was tracked separately and the same process used to determine the median price for each one of these.

Supermarkets chosen for the cost comparison were for the most part mainstream, including two national chains, Kroger and Food Lion, two regional chains, Ingles and Food City, and to help compare organic prices, two specialty chains, Whole Foods and Earth Fare. One IGA was also used in the study. The vast majority of the supermarket data comes from the first four, mainstream supermarkets. For each pair of supermarkets, prices were used from the less expensive of the two, thus biasing the pricing comparison somewhat in favor of the supermarkets (based on the assumption that cost-conscious consumers would generally choose the lower cost supermarket to the degree possible). This was also true for pricing on organic items.

Once data was collected from the farmers markets and nearby supermarkets, a comparison was made of the total cost of all items at the separate markets.

One of the challenges in this study was “comparability” or the risk of comparing “apples and oranges”. This was a problem much more so with meat items than produce, as nearly all of the farmers market meats were “grass-finished”, “free range” (in the case of eggs and chickens), or “pasture raised” (in the case of pork). In several communities, the supermarkets did not carry some or all of these types of meats and eggs, so comparison could only be made between the grass based meats at the farmers market – which are nearly always more expensive in any market – and the conventionally raised meats in the supermarket. Where both types of meats were available at supermarkets, an extra level of comparison was drawn.

Another challenge was simple finding enough products from which to choose at each market. This was a reflection in some cases of later arrival on the market day, when some vendors had already sold out of several items. In other cases, the data was not gathered until early October, when overall product availability is generally lower at markets in the region. This is also why fall crops – sweet potatoes, butternut squash, potatoes, kale, etc – were also included on the list.

Limits of the Study

This study points to a strong and relatively consistent trend among farmers markets in Appalachia and the Southeast: They are generally price competitive with supermarkets in overall pricing, and usually less expensive when it comes to produce and organic produce. However, more towns and cities should be surveyed in the region, preferably during the “peak season” of July – August to test the findings of this analysis.

Additionally, this study does not attempt to draw conclusions about the relative affordability of farmers markets in other regions of the country, let alone nationally. Some parts of the country may echo these findings, while others may come to very different conclusions.

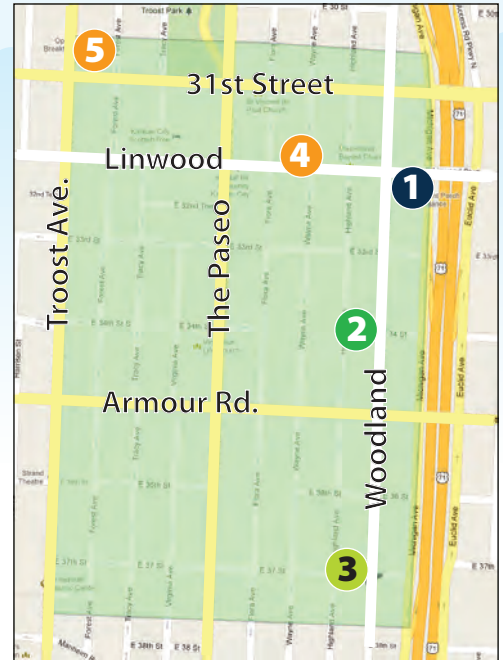
Additional findings and observations

1. In this sample, farmers markets in larger cities (100,000 or more in this region) were more expensive overall than supermarkets in 2 out of 4 cases, lower in 1 of 4, and virtually the same in 1 of 4 (Using the measurement of overall cost of comparable products). Even in the two cases where these markets were higher, it was by relatively small margins of 12% (Lexington, KY) and 5% (Charleston, SC).
2. Among medium sized towns of 40,000 – 99,999, overall pricing at farmers markets were virtually the same as supermarkets in 2 of 5 cases (Greenville/Spartanburg, SC and Chapel Hill, NC), slightly higher in 2 of 5 cases (Charleston, W VA by 5% and Charlottesville, VA by 3%) and slightly lower in 1 of 5 cases (Asheville, NC by 5%).
3. The relatively high cost of free-range chickens at every farmers market that offered them significantly increased the cost of meats at farmers markets relative to supermarkets. Free range chickens are very popular at many markets in the southeast and Appalachia and most producers sell out consistently, usually quickly. Thus the price is clearly considered reasonable, or at least worth the extra cost, by a substantial number of consumers. Nevertheless, in this analysis the cost of a chicken – generally \$4/lb, multiplied by a 4 pound bird, or \$16 – was by far the single biggest contributor to higher costs for farmers market meats (By comparison, most conventional chickens at supermarkets were from \$1.29 - \$1.49 per pound, for a total cost of \$5 - \$6 per chicken; most supermarkets in the study did not offer free range, whole chickens). Ground beef, by contrast, was generally quite close in price, as were free range eggs and, when available, beef roasts and breakfast sausage. Had chickens not been included, the cost competitiveness of farmers markets would have been greater still.

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3400 Woodland Ave
Wed.-Sat., 12-5pm
Produce, meat, dairy
Double EBT offered
- 3 Ivanhoe Farmers' Market**
with Grown in Ivanhoe & Health Care
Foundation of GKC
3700 Woodland Ave
Fridays, 5-7pm
- 4 Beans N Greens**
Robert Mohart Center
3200 Wayne
2nd & 4th Fri., 9am-12
Produce/Meat Mobile Market
Double EBT offered
- 5 Beans N Greens**
Operation Breakthrough
3039 Troost
2nd & 4th Wed., 3-6pm

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M	T	W	Th	F	S
	Front Porch Alliance, 10am-12pm			B&G - Mohart Ctr. 9am-12pm (2 nd & 4 th Fri.)	
		B&G - Operation Breakthrough 3-6pm (2 nd & 4 th Wed.)	Harvest Learning Center, 12-5pm		
				Grown in Ivanhoe 5-7pm	



816.410.8401

