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ADOPTING CHILDREN

WHO ARE WAITING IN THE FOSTER CARE SYTEM

Welcome

- Who is Our Client?
- First Steps
- Process
- Post-Adoption Services
- Is This Right for You?
- Benefits of Adopting Through CPS
- Questions

Who is Our Client?

CHILDREN AWAITING PERMANENT HOMES

(September 2009)

- Texas: 6,197
- Region 3: 1,077

Who is Our Client?

Children Available by Age with No Family Identified

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 0-2years old | 376 children |
| 3-5 years old | 458 children |
| 6-9 years old | 846 children |
| 10-13 years old | 1,014 children |
| 14-17 years old | 695 children |

Reasons Children Come Into Care

ABUSED

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse

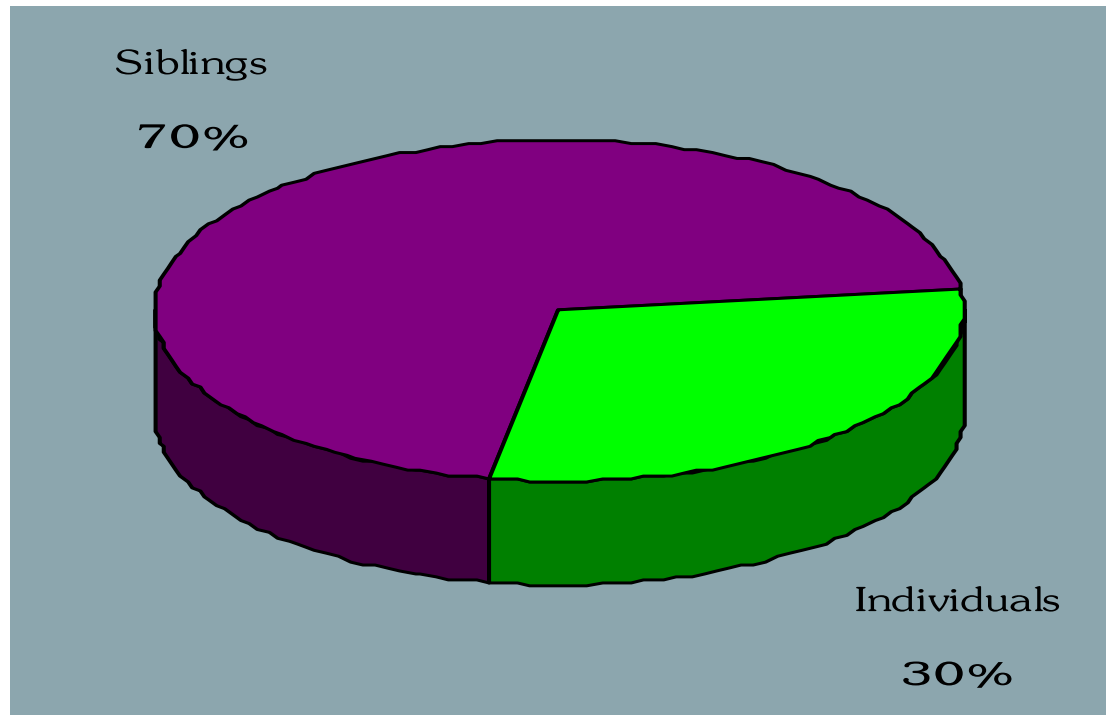
Refusal to accept
parenting
responsibility

NEGLECTED

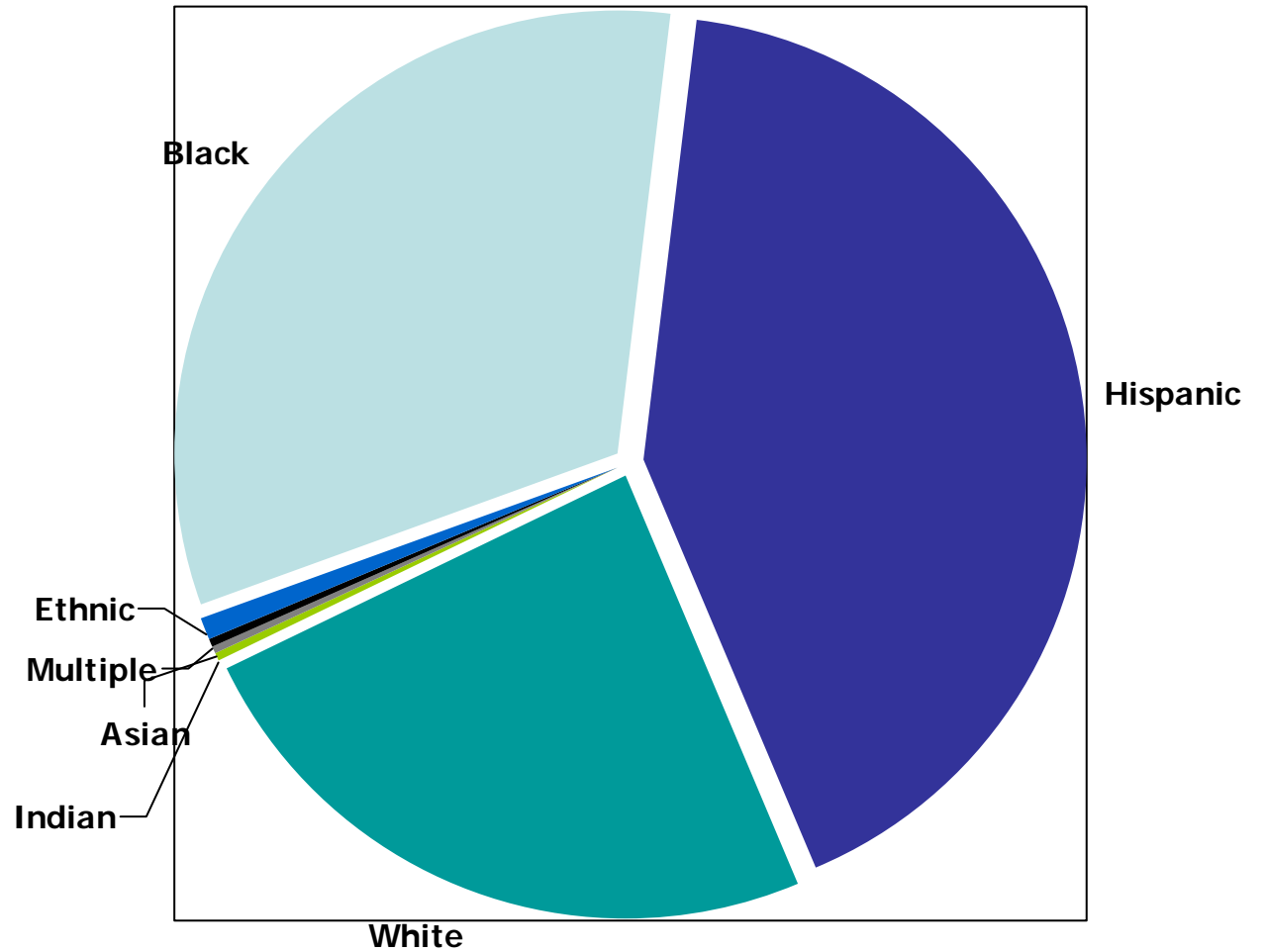
- Neglectful supervision
- Medical Neglect
- Physical neglect

Abandonment

Who is Our Client?



Who is Our Client?



Who is Our Client?

- Factors that Challenge Finding Adoptive Placements
 - Age
 - Race
 - Number of Children in Sibling group
 - Special needs
- What happens if no home is found?

Who is Our Client?

- The CHILD is our Client
- Neglected or Abused
- Parent's rights are terminated
- Have been through losses and trauma
- Not blank slates at any age

First Steps

- Licensing to adopt through CPS or a CPA
 - Home study
 - Home inspections
 - Criminal and CPS checks
- Foster/Adopt vs. Straight Adopt license

You Can Be...

- Single
- Divorced
- Don't have to be Daddy Warbucks (but living within means)
- In the prime of life 😊
- Don't have to have a perfect past
- Any education level (high school, GED, etc.)
- Managed health conditions

After You are Licensed

SEARCH FOR A MATCH

- You and worker search for kids
- Your worker lets us know about your family
- CPS workers look for families

What's Happening on Our End

- Recruitment gathers home studies
- CPS Worker reads home studies
 - One home study is enough
 - Read SPECIFICALLY for the child
- CPS Worker asks family's worker questions
- Supervisor reads top 1-3 home studies

What are Workers Looking for in a Home Study?

- Best interest of child
- Stability
- Resolved fertility/infertility, abuse/neglect issues
- Consistency/Structure
- Experience is a plus (for some kids a requirement)
- Personality/Interests/Activity Level

Process Continued- Selection Staffing

- Selection Staffing
 - Worker
 - Supervisor
 - CASA (Court appointed special advocate)
 - Attorney for child
 - YOUR worker
 - Possibly other family's workers
- We share about the child.
- Workers (separately and privately) share about your family.
- Everyone can ask questions
- One family selected, caseworker notified.

Process Continued- After Selection Staffing

- Worker Tells You About the Child(ren)
- You Think, Pray, Decide
- You Review the Case File
- You Think, Pray, Ask Questions, Decide

Process Continued- If Yes Then...

- Adoption Presentation
 - All parties from selection staffing PLUS YOU!
 - Chance to meet foster parent (possibly)
 - Chance to ask many questions
 - Hear about kids verbally
- Go home, think and pray (at least 24 hours)
- Say Yes or No

Process Continued- If Yes Then...

- Pre-placement visits arranged
- Share family's photos with child and visit calendar
- Visits
 - Usually: 1-2 hours in foster home
 - Lunch or dinner, take child out
 - Half-day visit
 - Full day visit
 - Full day visit and spend the night
 - Return to foster home for goodbye
 - Welcome Home Day!

Process Continued- Placement

- Have therapy in place for family
- Have therapy in place for child
- IF CPA is involved:
 - You will see them within 2 weeks and at least once a month
 - CPS worker will see you once a quarter
- If CPS adoption:
 - FAD and CPS worker see you each month
- In home 6 months for consummation

Phases of Adjustment

- Getting Acquainted
- The Honeymoon
- Ambivalence
- Reciprocal
Interaction
- Bond Solidification

Process-Consummation

- National Adoption Day
- Obtain a lawyer
- Workers do Paperwork
- Show up with your camera!!!!

Post-Adoption Services

- Adoption Assistance
 - Over age of 2 and minority race
 - Over age of 6 and non-minority
 - Member of sibling group (adopted together)
 - Handicapping condition
- Amount determined by estimated costs of adding child to your family.
 - Tutoring
 - Therapy
 - Childcare
 - Special Services
- Medicaid
- Tuition Waiver (determined by legislature)
- One time expenses (court fees, etc).
- Enhanced adoption assistance in rare cases

Post-Adoption Services

- Lutheran Social Services
 - Respite care
 - In-home daycare
 - Support groups
 - Tutoring
 - Counseling
 - Camps
 - Etc.

Is This Right For Your Family?

- Our kids are not “blank slates”
- Parenting methods may differ from your biological children
- What works for one child, does not work for all.
- They may need time to trust
- They may not be grateful for years to come
- Could be going through grief and loss
- Will almost always see how far they can push you before you also give up on them
- Could face discrimination
- May have cultural differences from children (even of same race)

Benefits of adopting through CPS

- True picture of redemption.
- Taking care of the widowed and orphaned.
- You play the role of a healer
- You help stop the cycle of abuse/neglect
- One day the kids will thank you (maybe not today)
- Many times, birth parents are thankful too.
- Alternative to expensive private or international adoption.

Questions?

Resources

- Adoptchildren.org (TARE)
- Adoptameicanetwork.org
- 3rdgreeparenting.com
- adoptUSkids.com
- **The Connected Child** by Karyn Purvis, David Cross and Wendy Sunshine
- **Nurturing Adoptions** by Deborah Gray
- **National American Council on Adoptable Children** (nacac.org)

Successful Adoptive Families

1. Tolerance for Ambivalent Feelings

Successful resource families keep going when "the warm, mushy feelings are gone." They do not judge themselves too harshly for experiencing negative feelings toward the child and/or the child's birth family. They understand that they may feel angry without acting on that anger. They have empathy for both the child and the birth family.

2. Firm and Controlling Qualities

They are comfortable giving direction and providing structure for their children. As the adults in the family, they take the lead in the relationship in a strong and caring way. They try to anticipate behaviors, interrupt negative behaviors early, and provide praise and physical affection. They are not deterred by a child's protest or withdraw.

3. Flexible Expectations

When involved with children, they have realistic, flexible expectations of themselves and their children. They do not work to remake the child, but strive to help the child achieve success by acknowledging and appreciating small steps toward goals. They demonstrate flexibility in their expectations about the outcome of the placement.

4. Tolerance for Rejection

They are able to withstand testing behaviors by their foster/adoptive children, including hurtful, angry, rejecting behaviors. They do not take it personally if the child is rejecting, because they recognize the rejection as the child's fear of closeness. They realize that the child's tie to the birth family, former foster families, and others is not a rejection of their new parents.

5. Ability to Delay Parental Gratification

They are aware that the relationship with their foster/adopted children may not be reciprocal. They can give nurturance without receiving much in return. They can postpone their own rewards and not equate the child's behavior with their failure as a parent.

6. Sense of Humor

They are able to use humor to cope with the stress that can result from foster or adoptive parenting. They can laugh and vent feelings, finding humor in daily exchanges with their children and/or birth parents.

7. Ability to Meet Personal Needs

They know how to take care of themselves. They refuse to be martyrs and recognize that taking personal time as a couple and as individuals is necessary. They take breaks from the child, using respite care and other resources to do this.

8. Ability to Use Resources

They seek and accept help. They learn how to identify and access help and support. They may do this on a formal or informal basis, seeking assistance ranging from self-help

support groups to professionally facilitated therapy. They let others into their family system to get the additional support they need.

9. Flexible Family Roles

They share the responsibility of parenting and nurturing. They look to the total family system to find answers for problems. Parents are able to detect signs of "burnout" in their partner, and share the care-giving role for the children. Such flexibility greatly increases the likelihood of success.

10. Spirituality

Resource families process a spiritual or religious belief that supports altruism and providing care for others. They have acquired a sense of meaning and basic satisfaction with where they are in life.

These 10 characteristics develop over time. Successful resource families are those willing to grow and change in order to maintain their commitment to their child. They are also families who feel good about asking for help and use it appropriately.

Judith K. McKenzie and John L. McKenzie, *Answering the Call- Practitioner's Guide*. AdoptUSKids. (Adapted from the videotape, Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families, @ Spaulding for Children, 1989, and adapted from the ideas first put forth by Katz, Linda, "Parental Stress and Factors for Success in Older Child Adoption." *Child Welfare*, LXV, 6, November-December 1986, pp. 569-578