Finding Families for Children in Care: Perspectives from the US and England

Rudd New Worlds of Adoption and Foster Care Conference
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Adopt US Kids
Together we hold their future
About AdoptUSKids

• AdoptUSKids is a service of the U.S. Children’s Bureau and has been in operation since 2002 by the Adoption Exchange Association

• The mission of AdoptUSKids is two-fold:
  – To raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children and youth in the public child welfare system
  – To assist U.S. states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, assess, inform, develop and support foster and adoptive families and connect them with children and youth
How AdoptUSKids accomplishes its mission

- By providing tools & technical assistance to:
  - The general public
  - State, territory, & tribal child welfare agency staff
  - State, territory, & tribal public information officers
  - Private agencies that partner with & assist public agencies
  - Prospective foster, adoptive, & kin care families
  - Current foster, adoptive, & kin care families

- Each aspect of AUSK & NRCDR has a different “customer” focus from the above list
AdoptUSKids Key Activities
Child welfare services, England

- Responsible government dept – Education
- Services provided by a range of agencies, public, private and 3rd sector (inc social enterprise)
- Statutory duties for child welfare and protection services* fall to children’s services directorates of local authorities (n=152!).
- Almost all LAs operate an adoption service
- Adoption services also provided by voluntary sector
The English Care system

• Major legislation remains the Children Act 1989 (though lots of supplement/amendment leg).
• Entry by voluntary or statutory means
• Stability and permanence key
• Placement options: (most can be kin or non-kin)
  – Residential Care
  – Foster Care
  – Child Arrangement Order
  – Special Guardianship Order
  – Adoption (inc Concurrent and Foster4Adopt).
Supporting Policy & Practice Development in England

• British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF – now CoramBAAF)
  – National Adoption Week
  – Operates National Adoption Registers
  – Produces good practice guidance and produces quarterly journal
  – Online resources, training and dissemination

• Active group representing adopters – Adoption UK

• Also Adoption Leadership Board
  – And other groups

• First4Adoption: national online recruitment resource

• Supporting linking: Link-Maker (Adoption Link)
Adoption relevant legislation: England

- First legal basis – Adoption of Children Act 1926 (previously unregulated)
- Adoption Act 1976 (fully implemented 1988!)
- Children Act 1989 (major piece of legislation)
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 (imp 12/05)
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education and Adoption Act 2016
Timeline of Major Federal Legislation Concerned with Child Protection, Child Welfare, and Adoption

- Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act, P.L. 112-34.
- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, P.L. 111-148.
- Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, P.L. 113-183.
Key adoption & foster care federal legislation in U.S. 1974 - present

1. 1974: Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) & revisions

2. 1978: Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)


4. 1992: Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Adoption & Family Services Act

5. 1992: MEPA/1996 IEP

6. 1997: Adoption & Safe Families Act (ASFA)

7. 1999: Foster Care Independence Act
**Key adoption & foster care federal legislation in U.S. 1974 - present**

8. *2000: Children’s Health Act*

9. (2000: Intercountry Adoption Act)

10. 2003: Adoption Promotion Act

11. 2006: Safe & Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act

12. 2006: Adam Walsh Child Protection & Safety Act

13. 2008: Fostering Connections to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act

14. 2010: Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act

15. 2016: (Currently being proposed: Family First Act)
Key adoption & foster care federal legislation England & US

What impact does legislation have on:

• Adoption policy at the local, county, state/territorial and tribal level?

• Adoption practices?

• Outcomes for children and youth who enter the public child welfare system in the US & England and are unable to return safely and permanently to their families?
What kinds of impact(s) have 30 years of legislation had on adoption policy, practice and outcomes?

- Professional & family “players” & other workforce issues
- Child’s itinerary for the journey to adoption: thinking about & planning it, embarking on it with baggage, arriving, unpacking & dealing with the baggage, staying
- How long does it take to get there?
- Who is adopting whom these days, and why?
- What do and don’t we tell prospective adopters – about the process, about the children? when do we tell them and why?
- Who is and who isn’t getting adopted, and why? Then what?
- Adoption in an electronified world: benefits & challenges
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY</td>
<td>404,878</td>
<td>398,057</td>
<td>397,153</td>
<td>400,989</td>
<td>415,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number entered foster care during FY</td>
<td>256,092</td>
<td>251,958</td>
<td>251,850</td>
<td>255,080</td>
<td>264,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number exited foster care during FY</td>
<td>257,806</td>
<td>247,607</td>
<td>240,987</td>
<td>240,392</td>
<td>238,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY</td>
<td>108,746</td>
<td>106,561</td>
<td>102,058</td>
<td>104,493</td>
<td>107,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number waiting to be adopted whose parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated during FY</td>
<td>65,747</td>
<td>62,852</td>
<td>59,147</td>
<td>59,662</td>
<td>60,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during FY</td>
<td>53,547</td>
<td>50,901</td>
<td>52,046</td>
<td>50,841</td>
<td>50,644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Numbers (England)

• At 31 March 2015, 69,540 children looked after in England
• =60 per 10,000 children under 18.
• Gradual increase in last 5 yrs from 65,510

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of CIC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looked after children w PO</td>
<td>7320</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked after children placed for adoption</td>
<td>3320 (+270 concurrent or FfA)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Recently numbers of children recommended for adoption falling.
Adoption from foster care in the U.S.: The Players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1973</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Child (usually very young)</td>
<td>• Older child or youth with consent right; children of color; traumatized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caseworker (generalist)</td>
<td>• Press; staff ed; staff turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Judge</td>
<td>• Back to generalist CW; WWW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Friend of the Court”</td>
<td>• Law enforcement (!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Law enforcement (?)</td>
<td>• Judge + attorneys, CASA, licensers, trainers, ICPC, ICAMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom’s grandma &amp; auntie</td>
<td>• Tribes, all relatives, faith communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foster-only parents</td>
<td>• Foster parent adopters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adoptive couples</td>
<td>• Recruited couples, singles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AdoptUSKids
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## Child’s itinerary for the journey to adoption: First Leg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1973 | - Pendulum in parents’ favor; safety second  
- Find mom’s mom or aunt but apple doesn’t fall far from the tree  
- “Indians”: race, right?  
- First available bed; institutions & group care  
- To FP: don’t get attached; don’t even think adoption! |
| 2016 | - Prevention; safety is paramount  
- Reunification primary plan  
- ICWA  
- Urgency: 15/22  
- Concurrent planning (?)  
- M&P relatives first (& alone?)  
- Attachment to fp, sibs, life  
- Recruitment (DR, child specific, targeted, general) |
Child’s itinerary for the journey to adoption: Second Leg

1973
- Pendulum in parents’ favor
- Apple doesn’t fall far from the tree – ever!
- Prospective adopters: nice people, want kids
- Un-adoptability is an immutable trait
- To FP: don’t even think adoption even if there’s no alternative for child
- Baggage? What baggage?

2016
- ICWA & dad (1 more time!)
- Trauma: what you see may not be what you get!
- No family is an island
- Youth: unpacking the “no”
- Family: separated but connected
- Testing limits
- It’s not final ‘til we all agree
- Unpacking lasts forever
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type of Adoptive Parents</th>
<th>Methods of Adoption</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Childless married straight couples; closed adoption</td>
<td>Fostering as backdoor to adoption discouraged</td>
<td>Apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, Criminals, Strangers, Same race, Same jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Unmarried &amp; married couples, singles, lesbian, gay, straight, empty nesters; open adoption</td>
<td>Foster parents; conversion families; recruited families</td>
<td>Maternal &amp; paternal relatives, Tribal; traditional adoption, Case file mining; fictive kin, Fewer criminals, Transracial, Interjurisdictional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do and don’t we tell prospective adopters – about the process, about the children? When do we tell them and why?

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<tr>
<th>1973</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effects of substances on fetus unknown</td>
<td>Pathologized &amp; labeled trauma-related behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term effects of child trauma unknown</td>
<td>Over-medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love heals all so ongoing support not so important</td>
<td>Full disclosure but when?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay to split sibs</td>
<td>Continuum of recruit-engage-develop-support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean house=good home</td>
<td>AUSK READiS model from first inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dad</td>
<td>Photolisting narrative standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who is getting adopted from U.S. foster care? AFCARS v AdoptUSKids 2014: by gender

- Male:
  - AFCARS: 51%
  - AdoptUSKids: 60%

- Female:
  - AFCARS: 49%
  - AdoptUSKids: 40%
Who gets adopted from foster care?
AFCARS v AdoptUSKids 2014: by age

Age in Years
AFCARS
AdoptUSKids

0  2%
1  1%  1%  <1%
2  11%  3%  <1%
3  10%  4%  <1%
4  8%  5%  <1%
5  7%  6%  <1%
6  5%  5%  <1%
7  7%  4%  <1%
8  8%  4%  <1%
9  7%  3%  <1%
10  10%  3%  <1%
11  10%  2%  <1%
12  10%  2%  <1%
13  10%  2%  <1%
14  9%  2%  <1%
15  6%  2%  <1%
16  5%  1%  <1%
17  5%  1%  <1%
18  2%  1%  <1%
19  1%  1%  <1%
20  1%  1%  <1%
21  1%  1%  <1%
22  0%

Children in care by age group: US and England

Children adopted from care by age group: US and England

- England: Children in care by age group % (n=69,540) 2014-15
- US Children in care by age group % (n=415,129) 2014
- Children adopted from care by age group % (n=5,330) 2014-15
- US Children adopted from care by age group % (n=50,634) 2014

Children in care by Ethnic Group US and England

Children adopted from care by ethnic group: US and England

Other ethnic group includes Native American, Alaskan,

Children adopted from care by age group (% (n=50,634) 2014

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Manchester Metropolitan University
Who gets adopted from foster care?
AFCARS v AdoptUSKids 2014: by disability

- Yes: AFCARS 33%, AdoptUSKids 56%
- No: AFCARS 54%, AdoptUSKids 44%
- Not Yet Determined / Missing: NA

13%
Who isn’t getting adopted, and why?

Then what?

1973

- Adoption=healthy newborn white baby
- Children of color, esp African American
- Attached to fp who won’t adopt (permanent fc)
- “Handicapped,” “mentally retarded” & mentally ill” kids in institutions
- Siblings together
- Interjurisdictional

2016

- Adoption=healthy newborn white baby, right?
- National Adoption Recruitment Campaign
- Older youth
- Kids of color, esp older African American males
- Siblings together
- Multiple special needs
- Interjurisdictional
- Option: support to 21, Medicaid to 24
- Guardianship option

Adopt US Kids
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Adoption in an electronified world: benefits & challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Can speed things up, e.g. NEICE</td>
<td>• Inquiring families may benefit from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skype pre-placement visits, family connections</td>
<td>• Privacy of sensitive child information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expansion of family resources for child</td>
<td>• Predators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Virtual matching events</td>
<td>• Indirect disclosure of birth parent info via child info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One button family inquiry on child</td>
<td>• Openness whether sanctioned or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can’t un-ring a bell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AdoptUSKids is operated by the Adoption Exchange Association and is made possible by grant number 90CQ0003 from the Children's Bureau. The contents of this presentation are solely the responsibility of the Adoption Exchange Association and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau, ACYF, ACF, or HHS. The Children's Bureau funds AdoptUSKids as part of a network of National Resource Centers established by the Children’s Bureau.
National Adoption Recruitment Campaign

• What it is:
  – Multi-media campaign to raise public awareness
  – Each year focuses on recruiting families for different segment of waiting population
  – Support by social media campaign & speakers bureau
  – Campaign localization

• Who it serves:
  – General public; jurisdictions
  – Localization

• Results since 2002: $50 million/year donated media
National Foster Care & Adoption Resource Exchange System (NAFCIES)

• **What it is:**
  – Exchange of exchanges; phone, email, web, chat
  – READiS (Recruit, Engage, Assess, Develop, inform, Support)
  – Family Tracking Database

• **Who it serves:** families, jurisdictions

• **Results since 2002:** 25K+ families/year
Families Contacting AdoptUSKids in January 2016 for Information about the Process of Fostering or Adopting from Foster Care

Legend:
- 81+
- 61 - 80
- 41 - 60
- 21 - 40
- 1 - 20
- 0

Together we hold their future
AdoptUSKids & NRCDR websites

• What it is:
  – The go-to resource for families (ausk.org) & professionals (ausk.org & nrcdr.org)
  – State-specific information on fostering & adopting from foster care
  – Multiple two-way links with Gateway

• Who it serves:
  – Prospective & approved families; CW professionals; media

• Results since 2002:
  – Adoptuskids.org: nearly 20 million daily unique visitors in CY
National Adoption Photolisting Website
www.adoptuskids.org

• What it is:
  – Congressionally-mandated tool to increase pool of families available to children & youth waiting adoption “in and across state lines”
  – Used by all states & territories
  – Matching tool; Find a Family enhancements

• Who it serves:
  – Homestudy-approved families seeking to adopt & their workers
  – Children’s workers looking for adoptive families

• Results since 2002:
  – Children: 51K registered/26K placed; 38K families; 1600 agencies
National Adoption Photolisting Website

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• Results since 2002:
  – Children: 51K reg/; 26K placed; 38K families; 1600 agencies

Legend:
- 1,001+
- 751 - 1,000
- 501 - 750
- 251 - 500
- 1 - 250
- 0
AdoptUSKids Social Media

• What it is:
  – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, others
  – Facebook & Twitter events
  – Monthly e-communications

• Who it serves:
  – Families & professionals

• Results since 2002:
  – Over 180,000 Facebook followers; weekly reach of 150,000
  – Twitter: 4,000 new followers in CY 2015; Event reach 1M
Research & Evaluation

• What it is:
  – Congressionally-commissioned Barriers & Success Factors study with supplemental studies
  – Rigorous independent look at reach & effectiveness of all AUSK & NRCDR services
  – Used for continuous quality improvement in own and states’ services & outcomes

• Who it serves:
  – Primarily internal & for funder
National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids

• What it is:
  – Provides capacity building technical assistance to states, territories & tribes re recruitment, engagement, development & support of foster, adoptive & kinship care families, including:
    • Capacity building services: diligent recruitment development, customer service, market segmentation, diligent recruitment navigator, data materials, family support
    • Tribal program development
    • Product development
    • Webinars
    • Peer to peer opportunities

• Who it serves:
  – Organizational & programmatic leadership