

Guidelines for Developing & Approving Recruitment Plans for Children Waiting for Adoptive Families

Writing a child's public profile:

A public profile is an important part of a child's recruitment plan. The guidelines below will help you to write an effective one.

A well-written profile:

- ➔ Captures the child's unique personality and interests
- ➔ Helps prospective adoptive families make an emotional connection to the child
- ➔ Paints a picture of what the child wants and needs in a family
- ➔ Informs families about the next steps

An approved public profile could be:

- ➔ Listed on the DCF website—with or without a photo (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/adopt/waiting>)
 - ➔ Photolisted on the AdoptUSKids website (<http://www.adoptuskids.org/>)
 - ➔ Published in newspapers, magazines and newsletters
 - ➔ Featured on TV and radio programs
 - ➔ Posted on social media sites
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Privacy concerns:

Some workers and members of the public may be concerned that listing children on websites, social media sites, in newspapers and other places exploits them and unduly invades their privacy. While these concerns are understandable, it's important for people to understand that these children NEED families and child-specific profiles help us find them. They work!

- ➔ Federal law requires states to do child specific recruitment for the waiting children in their care (42 U.S.C. 675).
- ➔ The Children's Bureau endorses photolisting as an important recruitment tool, and it provides funds for photolisting services such as AdoptUSKids.

AS WE RECRUIT FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT WE MAINTAIN THEIR SAFETY, DIGNITY AND PRIVACY.

General guidelines:

- Public profiles should be positive, descriptive and strengths-based. We want to draw prospective parents in, rather than narrow the field of potential parents.
- You may use a child's real first name as long as the child is legally freed for adoption, there are no safety issues and you are using a photo. If a photo is not used, you may still use the child's real first name as long as it's not easily identifiable.
- Use the child's own words whenever possible. This will help bring the child to life in a way that a profile written only by a worker cannot. It also involves them in the process.
- Remember that public profiles can be viewed by anyone who visits a photolisting website or picks up a printed flyer. Think about how the children might feel seeing private details about their lives somewhere for all to see.

DO:

- ⇒ Check your facts. Make sure the information in the profile is accurate.
- ⇒ Proofread before you publish (e.g., spelling, punctuation and grammar).
- ⇒ Use plain language. Choose words that are clear and simple. Keep sentences short. Use bullets to break up longer sentences when you can.
- ⇒ Ask yourself whether there's anything in the profile that could hurt or embarrass the child.
- ⇒ Revise the profile at least once a year and remove it from all sites once a home is found.

DON'T:

- ⇒ Divulge any medical/mental health diagnoses, medications the child is taking or therapy the child is getting.
- ⇒ Include any information that could hurt or embarrass the child.
- ⇒ Give the child's full name, location or physical description.
- ⇒ Provide details about the abuse experienced or any failed placements.
- ⇒ Restrict the type of family you're looking for, unless there's a good reason to do so.

THE INFORMATION SHARING CONTINUUM

Information sharing should happen on a continuum. You should share:

- Positive, descriptive information with the general public.
- A bit more information with families who express an interest in the child.
- More specific details (e.g., diagnoses, challenges, needed supports) with families who provide a copy of their adoption homestudy or VT foster care license.
- More specific information with families who are seriously being considered as a placement option for the child.

Writing a child's public profile:

- ➔ Get input from the child/youth and from the people who know them best, including the foster parents, respite providers and Family Services worker.
 - ➔ Include this statement at the bottom of each profile: *All waiting children have experienced some degree of abuse, neglect and loss. This profile is meant as an introduction. To get a fuller understanding of the child, please follow up with the worker that's listed.*
 - ➔ Look at these examples of well-written public narratives: <https://adoptuskids.org/for-professionals/writing-childrens-narratives/good-examples>
 - ➔ Read updated guidance on writing compelling public narratives: https://www.adoptuskids.org/assets/files/AUSK/Publications/AUSK_CreatingEffectiveNarratives_Booklet_final-web-508.pdf
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Include the following types of information:

ABOUT THE CHILD:

- Positive personality traits, strengths
- Hobbies, sports, activities, interests
- Favorite things
- Accomplishments, milestones, successes
- What they like about school, things that make them proud
- What matters to them, dreams for the future
- Ways they're connected to community (e.g., church, ROTC, Scouts)
- Cultural connections or languages they speak
- Important connections such as siblings or grandparents
- Positive quotes—from the child or people who know them
- What they want in a family, what they want families to know about them
- How a family might make a difference in their life, things they might do together

ABOUT THE FAMILY WE ARE SEEKING:

- Don't be restrictive unless there is good reason
- Focus instead on the skills, experience and attitudes we'd like them to have

ABOUT WHO TO CONTACT:

- Include the worker's name, employer, phone number and email address, or an email alias which will reach the worker

Using photos:

- ➔ Whenever appropriate, use an up-to-date, appealing photograph and/or video of the child.
- ➔ It is NOT appropriate to use photos when:
 - There are any safety concerns
 - The child is not aware of recruitment efforts
 - The child asked that images not be used

The use of children's images in print ads, on television and on social media sites should be decided on a case-by-case basis, and decision making should include the young person and their team.

What you shouldn't include:

- ➔ Identifying information (e.g., last name, date of birth, name of school)
- ➔ Details about the child's birth family (e.g., mental health or substance abuse challenges)
- ➔ Details about current and past placements
- ➔ Information about the abuse the child experienced/reason they came into care
- ➔ Any behavioral challenges (e.g., lying, aggression, sexually acting out)
- ➔ Intellectual ability or educational challenges, including all references to special education status, IEPs and grades
- ➔ Statements about the fact that a child or youth is a member of a protected class (i.e., based on sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or medical status, race, culture, or religion) unless the person is a teen (13-19) and ALL three of the following are true. THE TEEN:
 1. Wants the listing to include this information
 2. Has had thoughtful conversations with affirming adults about the potential positive and negative consequences AND
 3. Helped craft the narrative and approves of how the information is presented
 4. In the event that a youth opts to include information about their sensitive identity, it is recommended to provide only general information (ie "youth identifies as a person of color and cultural identity is important to them," or "youth is a member of the LGBTQ community and is hoping for a family that will support them in this identity")
- ➔ Things that limit potential families, including that you are seeking a two-parent family or a family of a certain race or religion or other fixed characteristics, unless the youth is specifically requesting these characteristics in a family
- ➔ Links or references to a child's personal YouTube channel, web page or social media accounts
- ➔ Negative information about the child
- ➔ Any information the child asked to have excluded from the narrative

Protocol for approving recruitment plans & profiles:

The Project Family Worker:

1. Completes *Appendix A: Child/Youth Specific Recruitment Plan Release* or *Appendix B: Over 18 Recruitment Plan Release*.
2. Writes a draft public profile following the guidelines in this document.
3. Has the child/youth review the draft profile and recruitment plan to make sure they are comfortable with it — if appropriate.
4. Has the child's Family Services worker review the draft profile and approve the child's recruitment plan.
5. Sends the draft profile, recruitment plan and any photo/video to Lund's Director of Adoption (karisat@lundvt.org) for review and editing.
6. Advises the FSD System of Care Administrative Services Coordinator (Jennifer.Aines@vermont.gov) when to remove a profile from the DCF website.

If the plan includes photolisting a child on the AdoptUSKids website:

7. Adds the child's info and approved public profile.
8. Emails the child's photo to photos@adoptuskids.org asking that the child be added to the website. The email should include the child's name and site case number.
9. Changes the status of the child on the website as it changes.

Lund's Director of Adoption:

10. Sends the child's edited profile, recruitment plan and any photo/video to:
 - a. The FSD System of Care Unit Director (Barbara.Joyal@vermont.gov) for approval

FSD System of Care Unit Director:

11. Reviews the edited profile, recruitment plan and any photo and video to ensure that all permissions have been granted and that the profile follows the above guidelines
12. Emails the approved profile, along with any photo/video, to the FSD System of Care Administrative Services Coordinator (Jennifer.Aines@vermont.gov) to be uploaded onto the FSD public web site.
13. Notifies Project Family staff once the profile has been posted.

FSD's System of Care Administrative Services Coordinator:

14. Posts the approved profile and any photo/video on the DCF website
15. Advises Lund's Director of Adoption by email once the profile has been posted.

Protocol for other recruitment activities:

Activities not included in the child's recruitment plan:

If Project Family is considering posting a child-specific profile/ad in a newspaper or magazine, on a social media site, on television or on some other medium not covered by the recruitment plan, Lund's Director of Adoption will consult with FSD's System of Care Unit Director who will consult with DCF's Marketing & Outreach Officer to determine how to edit the profile for the medium.

Heart Gallery Exhibition

If the recruitment plan authorizes the inclusion of the child's photo & profile pull tab in Heart Gallery exhibitions, the following considerations will be made on a case by case basis:

- ⇒ Whether the geographic location of the exhibition could pose a risk to a child's safety or well-being.
- ⇒ If media coverage is expected, specific youth and/or teams will be informed of the youth's inclusion in an exhibition, its location and duration.
- ⇒ The youth will be given the opportunity to opt out of inclusion in a particular exhibition where the above considerations may exist.
- ⇒ If a child or child's team (when appropriate) doesn't consent to the photo being displayed in a certain location, it will not be displayed. If there is disagreement between a youth and/or team, the decision lies with the Department.