

ADOPTION EXCHANGE ASSOCIATION

2015

ANNUAL REPORT





MISSION STATEMENT

Because all children need families, the Adoption Exchange Association serves its members by stimulating innovative solutions, eliminating barriers, advocating, educating, and sharing excellent practice. Our central goal is to assist and encourage our members nationwide as they find adoptive families for all children and youth who wait in foster care.

LETTER FROM CEO & PRESIDENT

Thank you for your interest in and support of the Adoption Exchange Association (AEA). We are proud to share our accomplishments for 2015.

One of the most cherished benefits AEA offers its member is our bi-annual conference. The 2015 conference was held in Charleston, SC. It brought more than 120 of our members together from across the country to learn new skills, build new relationships, and forge and fortify partnerships to find families for children in foster care.

At the same time, AEA completed its thirteenth year operating its signature program, AdoptUSKids, with its partners across the country on behalf of the Children's Bureau. In partnership with the Children's Bureau and the Ad Council, The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids continued to prove "You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent" by inspiring families across the country to consider adopting from foster care.

On a sad note, we said goodbye to Rachel Pratt, CEO of the Adoption Exchange Association, who left AEA in September to join the New York Road Runners as their Senior Vice President. Rachel led AEA for 8 ½ years and ushered the organization through a phase of great growth and progress both financially and programmatically. She will be missed, and we wish her well with her future endeavors.

We had a tremendous year. Though this report captures only nine-months of outcomes, as our fiscal year ended on September 30, 2015, we are proud of what we have accomplished. Through the generosity and support of our members and supporters, we also look ahead to continued success in 2016!

Kamilah Bunn
Chief Executive Officer

Ernesto Loperena
President, Board of Directors

AEA MEMBERS

AEA's members from across the United States continued to be actively engaged with the organization in 2015.

Member benefits include:

- Monthly newsletter.
- Member Forums six times per year.
- Access to the member-only portion of the AEA website for an archive of Member Forums, special opportunities, meeting notes, and more.
- Periodic member surveys designed to improve services to all AEA members.
- Standards & Ethics for Member Agencies.
- Organization's link on the AEA website.
- Discounted registration at the AEA Conference.
- Opportunities to author articles or submit information for the AEA newsletter.
- The chance to participate in the planning of the AEA conference.
- And more...

2015 Members

Premier Members

Adoption Advocacy of South Carolina

Adoptions Unlimited, Inc.

Coalition for Children, Youth & Families

Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange

New York Council on Adoptable Children

Northwest Adoption Exchange

Seven Homes

The Adoption Exchange

Three Rivers Adoption Council

Organization

Adopt America Network
Adoption Advocacy of South Carolina
Adoption Rhode Island
Adoptions Together
Bethany Christian Services
Child Saving Institute
Consortium for Children
DCCCA
Eckerd Youth Alternatives
Family Builders by Adoption
Family Connections Adopt
Family Design Resources
Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
Georgia Department of Human Resources
Iowa KidsNet
Kansas Children's Service League
Latino Family Institute
Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan
Maryland Department of Human Resources
Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange
National Adoption Center

North American Council on Adoptable Children
North Carolina Division of Social Services
RaiseAChild
Spence-Chapin Services to Families and Children
You Gotta Believe!

Small Organization

Children Awaiting Parents
Families Like Ours, Inc.
Florida's Adoption Information Center
Virginia One Church, One Child

Individual

Dixie van de Flier Davis
Joe Kroll
John Levesque
Kamilah Bunn
Kirby Lindgren
Marilyn Panichi
Pamela Piero
Peggy Lynch
Sondra Draper
Stephanie Pettaway
Tia Kontenakos
Traci Jones



AEA PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

AEA Conference

Hosted in the lovely and historic city of Charleston, South Carolina, the theme of the 2015 conference was “The Spectrum of Family Engagement: Recruit, Develop & Support.” More than one hundred AEA members, and supporters attended the two-day educational event and learned new skills to incorporate into their work.

AEA paid tribute and presented a special award to Dixie van de Flier Davis, Marilyn Panichi, and Colleen Ellingson for all of their contributions to the organization. Chairman of the AEA Board, Ernesto Loperena, presented the award and thanked the awardees for their dedication to the organization and the children and families we serve.



Our signature national Wednesday’s Child award was presented to Lisa Funaro, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, and WB2-TV and Michelle Lyon an Adoption Specialist from Greenville, South Carolina was the recipient of the Lansberry Memorial Award.

The conference included plenary sessions and workshops addressing some of the most critical issues facing our members today including how to utilize adoptive and foster parents to support, educate, and advocate, how to develop a service continuum, and identifying effective support services for adoptive, foster, and kinship families.

AEA Newsletter and On-Line Communications

AEA sends out a monthly e-newsletter that is also available through the AEA website. In addition to member highlights and a message from the CEO, AEA shares relevant topics of interests to its members.

AEA members have exclusive access to the password-protected members’ resources area of the website. This section includes meeting notes, audio recordings of Member Forums, special offers and other content.

Member Site Visits

AEA continued visiting and meeting with its member agencies in 2015. These visits inform AEA about the current climate of adoption across the country, help us to offer relevant member programming, and create stronger bonds and relationships between members and AEA. Meetings held in 2015 included visits to Spence-Chapin, Council on Adoptable Children and You Gotta Believe in New York City.

Member Forums

AEA member-only calls are facilitated discussions on topics of interest to AEA member agencies. Four calls were facilitated from January 1 – September 30, 2015 and included:

- LGBT Adoption & Marriage Equality (February 2015), Ellen Kahn, HRC
- The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994: A Fresh Look and Discussion (April 2015), Richard Gold, Esq.
- Michigan’s Adoption Navigator Program: Utilizing Adoptive and Foster Parents to Support, Educate and Advocate (June 2015), Heidi Raubenolt, Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange
- Adoption Rhode Island (August 2015): National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Localization

Stewards of Change

Several years ago AEA contracted with Stewards of Change (SOC), an organization focusing on interoperability across the fields of health and human services. This arrangement has generated revenue and deepened AEA’s thinking about governance, technology, and the interconnectedness between adoption exchanges and other health and human service providers. Over the years AEA has participated in a variety of activities directly for the organization and with its government and non-profit contracts. During 2015 AEA assisted SOC with a symposium in Baltimore, MD and a new initiative with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Voice for Adoption

AEA serves as a founding Board Member of Voice For Adoption (VFA) whose mission is “Speaking out for our nation’s forgotten children.” AEA’s role on the VFA Board offers additional value for AEA members including access to policy agendas, statements, positions and a platform to advocate on behalf of the needs of the children and families AEA members serve.

Website Partnerships

AEA had agreements with 11 states to host their photolisting sites in 2015. All child cases registered on adoptuskids.org are simultaneously posted to pages that have the look and feel of each state’s website. This AEA service saves states and workers time and money in duplicative data entry.

And states—and children and families—benefit in many ways:

- Allows visitors to the state site to search for children based on the same search criteria used for the public “Meet the Children” search on adoptuskids.org. Search criteria includes: gender, minimum and maximum age, minimum and maximum number of children, and race/racial composition.
- Reduces worker caseload because, when a worker updates case information on adoptuskids.org, the changes automatically apply to the data posted on the state site.
- States receive technical support, eliminating the need for in-house database support and maintenance.
- AEA posts links from adoptuskids.org to the state’s Partner Photolisting in order to encourage traffic between sites.

- Partnership reduces the cost of photolisting by removing technical development costs, the cost of server space, maintenance, monitoring and hosting.
- Partnership reduces staff time required to register child cases: data is input once and then appears simultaneously on both the national and state photolisting.



AdoptUSKids is operated as a partnership between the Children’s Bureau, AEA (grant coordination, campaign fulfillment, National Adoption and Foster Care Information Exchange System), Northwest Resource Associates (Digital Media including website and social media), The Adoption Exchange (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment), North American Council on Adoptable Children (family support), and the University of Texas at Austin (evaluation). The project had three Federally-approved goals in 2015:

- Operate a high-quality, multi-faceted, national AdoptUSKids project that is responsive to the needs of States and tribes for assistance recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive parents for children in public foster care;
- Continue to be a strong partner with the Children’s Bureau in the development and implementation of the AdoptUSKids cooperative agreement;
- Work collaboratively within the Children’s Bureau’s T/TA Network to provide a seamless array of user-friendly, accessible resources and services to States, tribes, and grantees to promote continuous improvement in the delivery of child welfare services by building and supporting their capacity to achieve sustainable, systemic change that results in greater safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and families.

2015 was a wonderfully successful year as indicated by the data as well as the fulfillment of key objectives. A small sampling of the span of AdoptUSKids activities and successes includes the following:

Implementation of the READiS model, Chat Feature, and the Family Intake Tracking Tool (FITT)

After 6 months of literature review, exploration and development in 2013, the AdoptUSKids Foster Care and Adoption Resource Specialist (FCARS) Team began 2014 with the initial installation stage of a new model of engagement with families who contact AdoptUSKids to inquire about becoming foster or adoptive parents to children and youth in U.S. foster care. After a comprehensive review and reassessment of the model’s process and tools, and mid-course adaptations, the full implementation of READiS (recruitment, engagement, assessment, development, inform and support) took place during the first half of 2015.

The READiS model is far more comprehensive than previous methods, requiring the FCARS to support and develop the inquirers understanding of the experiences and needs of the children and youth who have encountered trauma and require out of home placements in foster and adoptive families, the qualities and supports that foster and adoptive families need to develop, and the step by step process to foster or adopt.

As anticipated, some families who would have been referred to their states or tribes before the READiS model was fully implemented, are choosing to not move forward after assessing themselves as not reflecting the needed characteristics of successful adoptive and foster families. This saves valuable time, energy and resources for the families, as well as the state and tribal staff.

In 2014, a chat feature was added to the FCARS existing methods of communication with families and professionals. The chat feature affords families and professionals an additional way to have their questions about foster care and adoption answered. Families' use of the chat feature came quickly and continued to grow in 2015. Preliminary analyses indicate that the AdoptUSKids Chat feature is being utilized by the public in ways that further the mission of AdoptUSKids and users represent virtually every state.

In late 2014, AdoptUSKids launched the Family Intake Tracking Tool (FITT). Primarily used by the FCARS to record family information, including how far along in the READiS model each family has progressed and to refer families to appropriate agencies and services in their home states, the FITT replaces the precursor RRT database and is much more robust.

A May 2015 pilot report that was conducted by the AdoptUSKids evaluation team states that among families who took part in the survey, those contacting AdoptUSKids were generally satisfied with the information and services provided. And for most content areas, families who spoke with an FCARS rated their self-understanding of topics higher than families who completed a "request for information" from the AdoptUSKids website.

Over time, as intake information on more families is entered into the FITT, the AdoptUSKids Evaluation Team, and states themselves, could be better able to identify the points in the process where families are most likely to discontinue the process to foster and adopt.

Inquiries about Adoption and Foster Care: 17,275, or an average of 1,919 per month. The total number includes:

- Families from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. military and ex-pat families and foreign nationals from more than three dozen countries. Inquiries were received by telephone, email, chat, and requests for information submitted on the AdoptUSKids website.
- Of these inquiries, an average of 141 calls, emails, and requests for information submitted on the AdoptUSKids website were from Spanish-speaking families each month
- AdoptUSKids provided phone and email support to a total of 524 prospective adoptive or foster families who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT), including 137 new LGBT families during this reporting period. Of all of the families served, 50 percent are in the stage of gathering information about foster care or adoption from foster care, 40 percent are in the process of becoming licensed for foster care or adopting from foster care, and 10 percent have adopted or have foster or pre-adoptive placements.

Website visitors

- Average of 500,000 daily unique visitors each month
- View 4 million AUSK web pages per month
- Stay on the site an average of 4 minutes
- More than 56% of visitors each month are new to the site

Registered agencies

- New in 2015: 37 (average of 4/month)
- Total from 2002 – September 30, 2015: 1,389

Registered families

- New in 2015: 1,518, an average of 169/month
- Total from 2002 – September 30, 2015: 37,690

Children Registered

- New in 2015: 2,915, an average of 324/month
- Total from 2002 – September 30, 2015: 49,523
- Actively registered on September 30: 5,291
 - 38% female; 62% male
 - 41% Caucasian; 37% Black or African American; 15% of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (of any race)
 - 11% age 0-8; 25% age 9-12; 64% age 13 and older
 - 22% (1,155) of all actively registered children are part of 469 photolisted sibling groups, including 47 sibling groups of 4 or more

Children Placed

- New in 2015: 1,180, an average of 131/month
- Total from 2002 – September 30, 2015: 24,874
- 42% female; 58% male
- 40% Caucasian; 35% Black or African American; 15% of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (of any race)
- 32% age 0-8; 34% age 9-12; 34% age 13 and older (1% missing age due to placement date errors)
- 44% (10,995) of all placed children were in 4,354 photolisted sibling groups, including 508 sibling groups of 4 or more



Social Media

AdoptUSKids and Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative (ARCRI) continue to explore emerging social media strategies and assure a responsive system is in place to support these efforts. Social media results for the first nine months of calendar year 2015 are highlighted below:

	1/1/15	9/30/15	# increase	%
Facebook	97,898	166,524	68,626	70.10%
Twitter (AUSK)	16,766	19,632	2,866	17.09%
Twitter (NRCDR)	1,146	1,442	296	25.83%
YouTube	1,555	1,894	339	21.80%
Total	117,365	189,492	72,127	61.46%

National Adoption Month

In collaboration with the Children's Bureau and Child Welfare Information Gateway, the AdoptUSKids team planned and developed content for the 2015 National Adoption Month website to support adoption awareness and recruitment efforts, focusing on the importance of seeking to provide permanent adoptive families for 15 to 18 year old youth who are in foster care.

National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (NRCDR)

The NRCDR provided technical assistance through substantial on-site activities and off-site activities, to 26 jurisdictions (14 states and 12 tribes). The topics included diligent recruitment, development, and support of resource families; recruitment, development, and support of Native American resource families, customer service standards, market segmentation, and recruitment, development, and support of resource families for older youth. The NRCDR also provided general technical assistance via teleconference, webinars, and in-person presentations to 91 jurisdictions (49 states, 39 tribes, Washington, D.C., American Samoa, and Guam).

- The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (NRCDR) successfully implemented a state and tribal peer to peer group, focusing on elements of diligent recruitment. Each of these groups had their initial kick off calls which were well attended. These groups met quarterly to discuss topics chosen by the group. In addition the NRCDR offers a list-serv for states and tribal peer to peer group members. Listserv members can pose questions to their colleagues pertaining to recruiting, developing, and supporting resource families to meet the needs of children and youth in care.
- The NRCDR hosted several webinars which were very well attended, showing the continued need for information on how to recruit, develop and support families at all levels of the field. The webinars are being attended by line workers, supervisors and administrators across units.
- Intermediate outcome data was collected from participants six weeks after participating in technical assistance provided by the NRCDR. Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they had applied information presented in the technical assistance activity to their work, and approximately 80% of respondents indicated that they had follow-up conversations with other colleagues regarding the work conducted during the technical assistance activity.

- The NRCDR began distribution of the electronic version of *Support Matters*, through several editions of E-Notes and by posting on both the AdoptUSKids and NRCDR websites. Targeted, personalized emails with a link to the guide were sent to state adoption and foster care managers, key tribal leaders, regional HHS managers, and key parent groups, support organizations, and adoption exchanges. The “support matters” section of nr cdr.org was viewed 794 times during the last six months and the PDF was downloaded 630 times. A print version of the guide was mailed to state adoption and foster care managers, key tribal leaders, regional HHS managers, and Adoption Exchange Association members. In both the email and mail distribution, the NRCDR promoted the opportunity for technical assistance about how to improve support services for foster, adoptive, and kinship care families.
- *Support Matters* was promoted to hundreds of child welfare professionals through a NRCDR webinar and five conference presentations (Adoption Exchange Association, National Indian Child Welfare Association, Adoption Support and Preservation, National Foster Parent Association, and North American Council on Adoptable Children).

Media Interviews

During 2015 AdoptUSKids effectively managed our responsiveness to media inquiries and increased our collaboration and support to state child welfare public information officers. We responded to and participated in more than 25 media interview requests.

Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative (ARCRI)

The Adoption Recruitment and Response Initiative (ARCRI) has six goals: 1) Achieve a measureable change in public perceptions about adopting children from the foster care system; 2) Increase the number of potential adoptive families inquiring about adoption; 3) Increase the number of children, especially older children, adopted from foster care; 4) Strengthen the AdoptUSKids response system that supports States in managing the increased volume of inquiries due to the new media materials and national public service advertising campaign; 5) Increase the measureable penetration into the local markets of each State of the multi-media campaign; and 6) Realize a measureable increase in the utilization of emerging social media strategies in States.

2015 highlights of ARCRI activities and accomplishments are included below.

AdoptUSKids Speakers Bureau



As of September 2015, the speakers bureau had a total of 93 spokespeople from 39 States, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. This includes a new pool of 4 young people who were adopted out of foster care just prior to their 18 birthdays. All new spokespersons participate in a webinar training prior to being added to the AdoptUSKids speakers bureau. Individuals participating in the media training continue to report that the training exceeds their expectations and that they learned a great deal that will help them respond to media requests and share their adoption stories.

National Adoption Recruitment Campaign Strategy in Preparation for Launch November 2015

During the first nine months of CY 2015, the Ad Council with the assistance of kbs+ developed a campaign strategy and multimedia products consistent with the previous body of work and featured the familiar tagline, “You Don’t Have to be Perfect to be a Perfect Parent.” This strategy also reflected the Children’s Bureau focus on finding families for older youth, aged 15 to 18, who are in foster care. AdoptUSKids actively participated with the development and production of the campaign.

The AdoptUSKids Fulfillment Team identified, engaged, developed and prepared a special pool of spokespersons, including both parents who have adopted 15-18 year old youth from foster care and young adults who had been adopted as older teens, to share their stories with the media. In September, AdoptUSKids brought those with the most compelling stories into Washington DC for on-camera training in collaboration with the Ad Council and Homefront Communications, further preparing them as spokespersons for 2015 National Adoption Month events.

During the nine-month period from January through September 2015, the PSA campaign received \$37,333,211 in donated media support.

The majority (76%) of child welfare professionals responding to questions about the ad campaign in the AdoptUSKids and NRCDR Website User Surveys indicated that they had seen or heard the “You Don’t Have to be Perfect to be a Perfect Parent” ads. Of those, 74% reported seeing them on TV, and 57% reported hearing them on the radio.

Campaign Localization Grants

Of special note during 2015 are our efforts around the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative Localization Grants. The localization grants are intended to increase the measurable penetration of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign into the local markets of each state. A host of activities were completed in 2015 in support of the ARCRI Localization Grants.

General activities for all cluster one grantees (Northwest Adoption Exchange/ Washington; The Adoption Exchange/New Mexico; Adoptions Unlimited/Illinois; and Adoption Rhode Island) throughout 2015 included extensive media outreach, development of spokesholders to recruit new foster and adoptive families, and media interviews. The current localization grantees established and shared best practices for localization and have demonstrated positive results in a short amount of time. Their activities included: identifying and securing unique opportunities for donated media support, establishing excellent media contacts and relationships, and leading the way with the use of a speakers bureaus that feature experts, youth, and families. With funds from the Boxtrolls auction, the Cluster I grantees are able to continue their activities for an additional year (FY 2016).

AdoptUSKids coordinated and hosted a strategic planning/peer-to-peer support meeting in Washington DC in September 2015. All Cluster I grantees and Cluster II grantees (Kansas Children’s Service League, Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange and YouGottaBelieve) were in attendance along with their state agency partners. The planning meeting served as an opportunity to discuss and share workplan activities for both clusters.

Campaign Localization Option for All Jurisdictions

The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (NRCDR) partnered with the associate director and marketing and communications director to create a peer-to-peer series focused on localizing the ad campaign and using speakers bureaus to maximize the benefits of the national adoption recruitment campaign. Each of the meetings had over 25 attendees. As of September 2015, more than 30 public and private agencies have requested campaign localization materials.

SUPPORTERS & FINANCES

AEA is grateful to its supporters who share our desire to achieve our mission. Please consider joining them and helping make AEA's work possible. You can make a tax-deductible gift on-line with a credit card or send your check to the Adoption Exchange Association, 605 Global Way, Suite 100, Linthicum Heights, MD 21090 (410-636-7030).

2015 Supporters

Government

The Children's Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services

Foundations, Corporations, and Non-Profit Sponsors

Boxtroll/Nike Auction

Patti Stanger Auction

Weber Messick

Individuals

Joe Haynes	Darlene Allen	John Levesque	Marilyn Panichi
Sondra Draper	Richard Armstrong	Robert Rooks	Jennifer Corwell

Many generous individuals through the Combined Federal Campaign including:

William E. Hatchett	Angela Matson	Ray Khamsai Daeng	Karen R. Hatwell
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Johnny Nguyen	Niklaus Pegler	David S. Shaklee	Andrea K. Kaman
Kelvin Manning	Susan Sternad-Basel	David Atherton	Frances Burden

2015 Financial Information

Consolidated Statement of Activities

For fiscal year ending September 30, stub or short period due to change in fiscal year (January 1 – September 30, 2015).

Revenue	Amount 2015	%
Federal Cooperative Agreement	\$4,193,923	91.32%
In-Kind Services	\$241	0.01%
Direct and Indirect Contributions	\$294,344	6.41%
AEA Conference & Program Fees	\$92,426	2.01%
Dues from AEA Members	\$9,329	0.20%
Other	\$2,303	0.05%
Total	\$4,592,566	100%

Expenses	Amount 2015	%
AdoptUSKids & ARCRI Program Services	\$4,025,745	87.48%
AEA Member Services	\$168,178	3.65%
Management & General	\$408,166	8.87%
Total	\$4,602,089	100%

	Amount 2015
Change in Net Assets	(\$9,523)
Net Assets, beginning of year	\$454,308
Net Assets, end of year	\$444,785

Consolidated Statements of Financial Position

As of September 30

Assets	Amount 2015
Cash and cash equivalents	\$566,773
Grants receivable	\$714,871
Program fees and other receivables	\$55,824
Prepaid expenses and deposits	\$21,190
Furniture and equipment, net	\$0
Total Assets	\$1,358,658

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities	Amount 2015
Accounts payable	\$837,535
Deferred revenue	\$19,500
Accrued compensation absences	\$56,838
Total Liabilities	\$913,873

Net Assets	Amount 2015
Unrestricted	\$436,940
Temporarily restricted	\$7,845
Total net assets	\$444,785
Total liabilities and net assets	\$1,358,658

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ernesto Loperena, President

New York Council on Adoptable
Children, NY

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Michigan Adoption Resource
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The Adoption Exchange, CO

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Adopt America Network, OH

David Wing-Kovarik

Families Like Ours, WA

**As of September 30, 2015*

www.adoptea.org

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