



The Homecoming Project is a Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) project to increase the number of adoptions of adolescents who are under state guardianship in Minnesota. DHS contracts with the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN) to provide these services. This demonstration project, funded by a federal Adoption Opportunities and Activities Grant provides an opportunity to expand efforts to recruit permanent families for teenagers.

The Homecoming Project is unique in its unwavering commitment to youth participation in the recruitment process.

Why?

Teenagers 13-17 years old are 22% of the waiting children in Minnesota, yet in 2002 they made up only 7% of adoptions of Minnesota waiting children.

Wilder Research is evaluating the effectiveness of the project.

A comprehensive report will be published at the end, sharing innovative ideas and best practice with teens in adoption.

Project Goals

- To increase the rate and frequency of adoptions for teenagers under state guardianship;
- To strengthen participating youths' connectedness to caring

Positive Results

As of July 2008, 47 Minnesota Waiting Teens have joined permanent families with assistance from The Homecoming Project.

The Homecoming Project provides intensive recruitment assistance at no cost to counties or families.

For more information see www.mnadopt.org or contact Michelle Chalmer; at 612.746.5121

Serving youth who:

- are under state guardianship
- are 13-17 years of age
- have a permanency plan of adoption
- have no identified adoptive family
- had a termination of parental rights ordered more than one year ago

Using research-based principles of positive youth development

By using strategies that are age and developmentally appropriate, the project will fully engage adolescents in identifying and achieving their own individualized permanency outcomes.

Not only are adolescents able to participate in cultivating their own recruitment plans, developmentally they must participate, in order to mature into healthy adults.

Anecdotal evidence from similar programs nationally suggests that teens who have been a partner in the recruitment process will be more prepared to join adoptive families.

Supporting families

Prospective adoptive parents will require initial and ongoing support to successfully parent The Homecoming Project youth.

Direct staff contact with each prospective parent

- **Assess prospective parent's capacity and interest**
- **Provide appropriate resources and referrals regarding the adoption process**
- **Facilitate conversations/contact between youth and prospective parent**
- **Support youth and prospective parent throughout the process, assuring successful matches**
- **Discuss other ways a person can be supportive to youth in an ongoing way, if not as an adoptive parent**

Support and resources available to prospective adoptive families through referrals

- **Pre- and post-adoption support through MN ASAP services**
- **Pre-adoption support through Minnesota Recruitment Project services**
- **Adoption home study, adoption placement services and post-adoption services at no charge through county of residence or Public/Private Adoption Initiative contracted agencies**



Documentary featuring The Homecoming Project Wins Annie E. Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism

The show, *Wanted: Parents*, followed Homecoming Project youth, Chris and Amanda, who are looking for a family before they age out of the foster care system. Jen Braun, Recruitment Specialist with The Homecoming Project, was central in connecting the producers with information and people, and is featured in the documentary.

"*Wanted: Parents*" merited the Annie E. Casey Medal for "masterfully reported, compelling stories that cut through compassion fatigue on socially significant topics; demonstrated enterprise and thorough research; and showed evidence of impact."

The documentary was produced by Catherine Winter and Ellen Guettler of American RadioWorks, and broadcast nationally on National Public Radio stations.

Download the show at <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/fostercare/>

Creating lifetime connections with significant adults

The Homecoming Project recruitment specialists are tuned into the intense emotional issues that exist for young people in need of permanent families.

The youth and recruitment specialist will meet as often as necessary to generate ideas for prospective adoptive families as well as recruitment techniques unique to the interests of the youth.

Through comprehensive conversation and information sharing, recruitment specialists will support youth in making well-informed decisions about adoption and developing a network of ongoing support.