

Recruitment Connection



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**A MARE
NEWSLETTER
FOR ADOPTION
PROFESSIONALS**

Quarter 3, 2025

SUPPORTING FOSTER TEENS THROUGH PERMANENCY PLANNING:

Meeting Reluctance with Relationship and Clarity

By: Adriana Cazzell



Emily

MARE videos are posted on YouTube for recruitment.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A GREAT PLANNING MEETING

Permanency planning meetings are a key part of helping foster youth move toward lasting connections. But for teens with a goal of adoption, especially those who are reluctant, these meetings can feel overwhelming, confusing, or even dismissive of their lived experiences. How professionals approach these conversations makes all the difference. MARE Adoption Permanency Specialists frequently work with reluctant youth and have a wealth of tips to share.

When talking to youth about adoption, using plain language, checking for understanding, and avoiding jargon are foundational to building trust. "The biggest thing I try to talk about is having a conversation on their level," says Jennifer Brooks, MARE Adoption Permanency Specialist. "Also make sure they understand clearly what each thing is that we are asking them to consent to." Brooks recommends using visual tools or videos to help explain recruitment, such as examples of videos of their peers, tangible examples of MARE print materials, or following the video MARE created that discusses recruitment options.



The Heart Gallery is another form of recruitment for teens.



Check out the consent form video here, which explains all of the types of recruitment MARE has to offer.

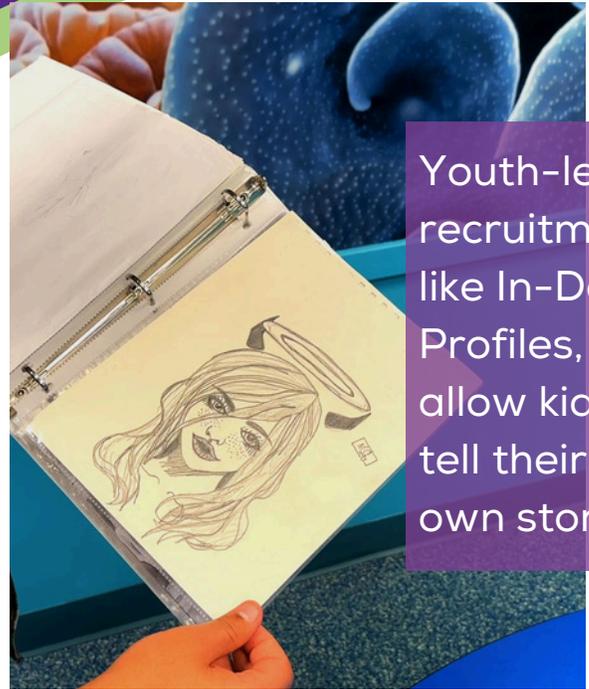
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Another common barrier? A youth's initial "no." According to Brooks, "Recruitment is an ongoing conversation." That initial reluctance may reflect fear, grief, or just a lack of understanding. Repeated, respectful conversations—paired with authentic relationship-building—help create space for a shift over time.

MARE Adoption Permanency Specialist Jacqueline Berka agrees. "Acknowledge that it's difficult or even 'weird,'" she says. Teens deserve honesty about the complexity of adoption.



Youth-led recruitment, like In-Depth Profiles, allow kids to tell their own story.

"Let them know that just because they are open to recruitment doesn't mean they are going to move with a family right away or that they won't have a say in the remaining steps of the process." Berka also emphasizes collaboration with mental health providers, when appropriate. "Communicate with the youth's mental health provider to see if they are working on adoption topics in therapy."

She also suggests framing the conversation in terms of the youth's future. "Ask questions about their hopes for the future and how they feel a family might support them toward those goals," Berka advises, while being careful not to promise specific outcomes or timelines.

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Liz

Liz, who prefers her nickname over the more formal "Elizabeth," has a heart full of compassion and a mind buzzing with creativity. Liz's heart is firmly grounded in empathy.

Enhanced Narratives put more information out there for families.

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Even this newsletter is a recruitment tool. Teens may not even know it!

Understanding a teen's natural support system can also open doors. Asking targeted questions like, "Who made you dinner? Where did you go after school? Who were your favorite teachers?" can help uncover meaningful relationships. This can help the team build a family tree or support network and find individuals that could be approached about potential placement/adoption," Berka explains. These conversations can also strengthen rapport and show the youth that their voice and history matter.

Keep in mind that it may take time to get to place where meaningful discussions about adoption and recruitment can happen. "If adoption topics are not going well, focus on building a relationship with the youth and provide support for them in other ways," Berka says. "Visits don't have to be limited to the quarterly visits that are required by policy."

Ultimately, adoption is a deeply emotional topic—often introduced shortly after termination of parental rights. Youth need space, patience, and professionals who will meet them where they are. As Brooks reminds us: "Don't take the first no." Keep showing up, keep listening, and keep the conversation going.

He likes sports, chess, and video games but what he'd really like is to be adopted.

Be the change

There are almost 200 youth in Michigan waiting for a forever home.

Visit www.mare.org or call us at 800-589-6273 to learn how you can make a difference.

Adopt · Foster · Volunteer · Donate

MICHIGAN ADOPTION RESOURCE EXCHANGE
www.mare.org

Social Media posts can help boost recruitment for teens.

Do you have specific questions on recruitment issues? Reach out to the MARE Adoption Permanency Specialist team by contacting MARE Social Work Supervisor, Maggie White at margaret_white@judsoncenter.org.

HEY *there*

2025 HEART GALLERY PREMIERE

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2025 Heart Gallery Premiere is coming soon! Saturday, September 13th, from 11AM - 2PM at Emagine Theater in Royal Oak. Foster youth and potential families are welcome and invited to attend this *free* event! It will be a fun day with lunch, the unveiling of the Heart Gallery display and a special screening of the Heart Gallery film. We hope you can join us.

If you have any questions, contact Jessie Thompson at Jessica_Thompson@judsoncenter.org. Be on the lookout for more details!



DID YOU KNOW?

Sibling splits need MCI approval before a foster youth can be posted on the MARE website. Please make sure you submit the proper paperwork and receive an MCI approval on a sibling split request. Once the approval is submitted to MARE, in addition to the rest of the photolisting paperwork, MARE can move forward with the photolisting process.

HARMONY'S *IDP*

Harmony just completed an In-Depth Profile and you should check it out! Harmony enjoys playing basketball and chose to share some of her skills with potential families. Her passion and dedication for the game are testaments to why she would make a great addition to any family.

Harmony's In-Depth Profile and many more are live on indepthprofiles.mare.org now! In-Depth Profiles are a personalized way for MARE youth to share their story in their own way with potential families. If you think your MARE youth would be interested in working with us on an In-Depth Profile, contact Jennifer Brooks at jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org.



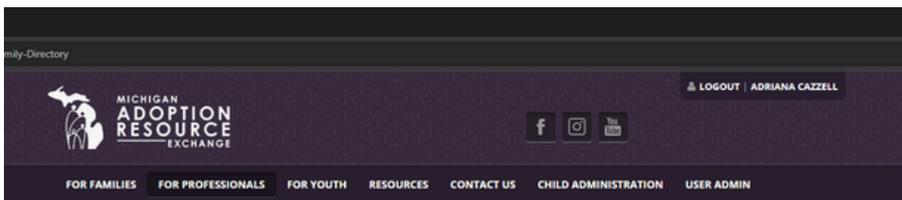
Rhonda Pomeroy,
Adoption Specialist
Child & Family Services of
Northwestern Michigan

MARE STAFF *Shoutout*

MARE Staff Jennifer Brooks would like to shout out Rhonda Pomeroy, from Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan. Rhonda worked with Jen on a difficult case with lots of roadblocks and Jen was “blown away by her dedication and how on top of everything she was.” Thank you Rhonda for everything you do for Michigan foster youth!

Family Directory

Do you have a MARE youth on your caseload? Be sure to search the MARE Family Directory for potential matches.



Family Directory

Home Page > For Professionals > Family Directory

Family Registry

ADVANCED SEARCH

Worker Dashboard

Inquiry Outcome Report

Worker Forms

Family Directory

What is a MARE Meet & Greet?

Has Adoption Experience Has Foster Experience 2 Parents
Your Search returned 61 records.



Andrea and John

John and Andrea are a married couple and adoptive parents to two daughters through their successful MARE adoptions. They are looking to expand their family again! They started their adoption journey in 2015 after becoming approved to adopt and began their search. They are continuing to build their f...

F08648
Has Adoption Experience
Has Foster Experience
Has Foster Experience
2 Parents



Aaron and Darlene

We are Aaron and Darlene. We've been married since 2003, and fostering children since 2011. It was soon after that we decided to start looking for a child we could provide a forever home for. We live in Lansing MI in a home with two cats and a big salt water fish tank. We call our home the Brian Pat...

F08754
Has Foster Experience
Has Foster Experience
2 Parents



Aleechia and Zackary

Zack and Aleechia are a married couple with a blended family who met on the first day of preschool in 1998 and have been inseparable ever since... depending on which one you ask. Zack would call it love at first sight while Aleechia would say "calling someone stupid and making them cry doesn't make th...

F08944
Has Adoption Experience
Has Foster Experience
Has Foster Experience
2 Parents

For a complete list of events and resources, visit www.mare.org

Mailing Address

3840 Packard Rd. Suite 170
Ann Arbor, MI

Toll Free
800-589-6273

Fax
734-528-1695

Email Address

mare@judsoncenter.org

MARE Events



MEET & GREET
PORTAGE

July 19th

TEEN SPOTLIGHT

July 23rd

MEET & GREET
OXFORD

Date TBD

For more information, contact jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2070.



Michigan,
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