

## **Attachment C**

### **Co- Neutral’s Assessment of CYFD’s Efforts to License New Non-Relative Resource Homes January through August 2025**

#### *Summary*

In accordance with *Kevin S. Settlement Agreement* requirements, CYFD committed to recruit and license non-kin foster families that are culturally reflective of the children in CYFD’s custody and to increase therapeutic foster care placements. The Co-Neutral team has gathered information to review and understand CYFD’s process and efforts during the first half of 2025 to meet this commitment. In response to the arbitrator’s first Remedial Order 1 (RO#1), the Co-Neutral’s staff conducted monthly interviews from March through August 2025 with the CYFD recruiters and navigators assigned to the five high-needs counties (“HNC”) to learn about CYFD’s efforts to license and retain non-kin foster homes, as well as to assess common barriers to the implementation and success of these strategies. The findings from those interviews are included within Attachment B.

Throughout 2025, CYFD has struggled to license new foster homes (referred to a community homes) on pace to meet its 2025 target of 265 new non-kin foster homes.<sup>1</sup> As shown in Table 1 below, CYFD newly licensed 61 non-relative foster homes (23% of the 265 annual target) between January and August 2025. This includes 38 new foster homes opened in the five HNCs, highlighted in blue.

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<sup>1</sup> CYFD also committed to the development and implementation of Foster Care Plus (FC+) as a strategy to increase family-based therapeutic placements for children in custody. CYFD is still in the early stages of developing and launching this new effort and data are not available on current progress.

**Table 1: Non-Relative Foster Homes Newly Licensed January to August 2025**

<b>County</b>	<b>Number of New Homes</b>
Bernalillo	22
Chaves/Eddy	5
San Juan	4
Santa Fe	4
Dona Ana	3
San Miguel	3
Grant	2
Lea	2
Otero	2
Quay	2
Sandoval	2
Torrance	2
Valencia	2
Curry	2
Cibola	1
Lincoln	1
Otero	1
Roosevelt	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>61</b>

Source: Data from CYFD’s Monthly Navigation Spreadsheet

The six-months of interviews with HNC recruiters, as detailed in Attachment B, have led the Co-Neutrals to conclude that CYFD has not consistently implemented a coordinated plan or effective strategies to recruit, license, and retain non-relative foster families.

### *Navigation Tracking Worksheet*

The recruitment and licensing data included in this report come from the August 2025 Navigation Tracking Spreadsheet (“navigation spreadsheet”) that CYFD sent to the Co-Neutrals. CYFD’s navigators use the spreadsheet to manage and track the following data: new inquiries received from prospective resource parents; newly licensed community homes; community home applications denied; community home applications withdrawn; community homes closed; and, separate “in progress” tabs for each of the five regions listing non-relative families who submitted applications and are engaged in the licensing process.<sup>2</sup>

All of the data included in this summary refer only to non-relative community homes, however, the navigation spreadsheet also includes information collected for kin families.

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<sup>2</sup> The navigation spreadsheet also contains separate tabs for each region listing recruitment events by month.

The navigation spreadsheet is reported to be continuously updated by navigators who enter information as they gather updates primarily from Licensing and Support Specialists (“LSS”), as well as prospective resource parents. The Co-Neutrals have not independently validated these data and the data may not be complete at any point in time due to data lags and a reliance by CYFD on manual data entry. While the Co-Neutrals have typically relied on well-settled data for their annual November reports required by the *Kevin S. Settlement Agreement*, in an effort to meet the arbitrator’s request for real-time assessments of performance pursuant to the RO#2, the Co-Neutrals are relying on CYFD’s navigation spreadsheet to inform how CYFD is progressing with its efforts to recruit and license new non-relative homes during the year.

CYFD reportedly developed the navigation spreadsheet to consolidate and track information about families from inquiry to licensure, in part, because the two current systems (Binti and FACTS) that CYFD uses to track most of the same information do not interface and contain some distinct information.<sup>3</sup> Using all three of these information systems creates inefficiencies for the recruitment/navigation team as they enter some of the same details into all three systems. Until CYFD transitions to its planned CCWIS system (IMPACT),<sup>4</sup> it appears the navigation spreadsheet will remain a primary source of information that CYFD uses to track and measure its recruitment and licensing progress.

### *Staff and Process to Support Families from Recruitment to Licensing*

Once a prospective family submits a formal inquiry, which is done primarily through the Binti system, one of CYFD’s navigators is assigned to the family to support and encourage completion of the licensing application. The recruiters assigned to the five HNCs also serve as their county’s navigator, with the exception of Bernalillo, which has both a recruiter and navigator assigned. There are four additional navigator positions assigned to the counties outside of the HNCs, with one position allotted to each region.

Under CYFD’s current protocol, navigators do not give families access to the licensing application in Binti until they have completed an orientation session. The five HNC recruiters each typically offer one orientation session virtually each month, giving interested families at least five opportunities to complete the orientation every month.

Once a prospective family submits a completed application, they are assigned to an LSS worker, who then assumes the primary responsibility to guide and support the family to become licensed. The LSS supervisors decide whether the assigned LSS worker or contracted staff of All Faiths, a local nonprofit organization, will complete a family’s home

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<sup>3</sup> Binti is a software system that gives families access to submit an inquiry or application and to upload or enter all the information required to become licensed. FACTS is CYFD’s current State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

<sup>4</sup> Former CYFD Secretary Casados reported during her June 2025 Finance Committee hearing that CYFD planned to begin using the new IMPACT system in February 2026, with testing of the system beginning in December 2025.

study.<sup>5</sup> The assigned LSS worker continues to work with the family throughout the full licensing process, whether the family's LSS worker completes the home study or All Faiths' staff does. The assigned navigator is also responsible for continuing to track their assigned families' progress toward licensure and updating this progress in the navigation worksheet. The navigators may also assist the families and their assigned LSS workers as needed through the licensing process.

Due to information gaps, the Co-Neutrals are unable to assess from the navigation spreadsheet why certain families do not move beyond inquiry or how many families completed the orientation but not an application. In June 2025, the Co-Neutrals requested that CYFD provide a report from Binti that includes follow-up navigation details. CYFD did not provide this report and as of September 2025, the Co-Neutrals reiterated the request.

### **Current Status of Families in the Pipeline from Inquiry to Licensure**

From January through August 2025, the navigation spreadsheet shows that 724 families submitted an inquiry about serving as a non-relative resource family. Among these 724 inquiries, 149 families (21%) completed an application and were in the following status at the end of August 2025:

- 106 were listed as in progress toward licensing;
- 25 withdrew their application;
- 14 were licensed;
- 3 were denied; and
- 1 was licensed but then closed

A total of 111 families were identified as in-progress at the end of August 2025 (106 of these families submitted their initial inquiries during 2025 and the other five submitted their inquiries prior to the beginning of this calendar year). Of the 111 families in progress, 66 are in the HNCs, highlighted in blue in the table below.

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<sup>5</sup> As further discussed below, CYFD contracts All Faiths to complete home studies for some non-relative families seeking to be licensed. CYFD's LLS workers also complete home studies for non-relative families.

**Table 2: Number of Non-Relative Families in Progress to Licensure at the End of August 2025**

<b>County</b>	<b>Count</b>
Bernalillo	43
Sandoval/Valencia	14
Chaves/Eddy	12
Dona Ana	7
Lea	7
Curry	6
Otero	5
Los Alamos	4
San Juan	3
Mckinley	2
Roosevelt	2
Santa Fe	1
Cibola	1
Lincoln	1
Rio Arriba	1
Taos	1
Torrance	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>111</b>

Source: Data from CYFD’s Monthly Navigation Spreadsheet

CYFD’s established target is to complete a family’s full licensing within 120 days of their completing the application. Eighty-three of the 111 families were within 120 days<sup>6</sup> of the date they submitted their applications; 15 were between 120 and 150 days from their application date; seven were between 150 and 180 days; and five were between 191 and 250 days post-application as of August 31, 2025.<sup>7</sup>

## ***STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT AND DEVELOP NEW LEADS***

### **Digital Marketing to Recruit New Non-Kin Foster Families**

In 2025, CYFD contracted with JJS & Associates to lead a \$150,000 digital marketing and media campaign to recruit new families. Between January and April 2025, the marketing campaign reportedly yielded 300 new leads. Table 3 below shows the source of inquiries by month.

<sup>6</sup> September 10, 2025 was used as the current date to compare to the application date.

<sup>7</sup> For one family in progress, the application date is not listed in the navigation spreadsheet so the number of days post-application is unknown.

**Table 3: Source of Inquiries by Month January through August 2025**

Type of Source Inquiry	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Total
CYFD Website	28	14	15	16	12	18	16	15	<b>134</b>
Other Foster or Adoptive Parents	8	13	11	14	10	13	13	16	<b>98</b>
Unknown	21	12	7	8	6	11	14	6	<b>85</b>
Heard from friend/family/other	4	9	6	4	6	5	12	9	<b>55</b>
Interested/Calling	2	9	10	9	3	1	7	7	<b>48</b>
AdoptUSKids	8	5	6	6	5	4	1	4	<b>39</b>
Internet Search	4	7	4	5	4	1	11	3	<b>39</b>
Social Media	3	7	5	5	1	4	12	1	<b>38</b>
Child Specific	4	9	3	7	1		4	5	<b>33</b>
CYFD Employee	9	4	3	1	3	1	4	6	<b>31</b>
Event	2	1	4	3		1	10	4	<b>25</b>
Fostered/Adopted Previously	2	5	1	1	1	3	4	2	<b>19</b>
Printed Material	4	2		3	2	3	3	2	<b>19</b>
Event Inquiry on the Spot								18	<b>18</b>
TV		1	2			3		3	<b>9</b>
Daycare	1		1	1			3	1	<b>7</b>
Heart Gallery	1			1	1	2	1	1	<b>7</b>
Wants to adopt		1	3	1	1				<b>6</b>
Was in Foster Care		1		2		1	2		<b>6</b>
Radio	1	2							<b>3</b>
Unknown								3	<b>3</b>
News re Cara Babies								2	<b>2</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>724</b>

Source: Data from CYFD’s Monthly Navigation Spreadsheet

CYFD reported in a May 15, 2025 letter that targeted digital marketing would be its leading recruitment strategy moving forward. CYFD has not recently confirmed whether this remains the leading strategy.

### **Recruitment and Retention through Events**

HNC recruiters reported in interviews with the Co-Neutral staff that CYFD has repeatedly shifted focus throughout the year, with increasing and then decreasing focus on recruitment events. CYFD reported in a May 15, 2025 letter that “[c]osts associated with event prep (collateral, logistics, travel, promotion, staffing) far outweighed the measurable outcomes.”<sup>8</sup> In the same letter, CYFD also reported that it would “begin rollout of new event and family engagement strategy in July 2025, that would “restrict recruitment event participation to six HNC;” and prioritize events for “deeper engagement with leads who have completed

<sup>8</sup> CYFD May 15, 2025 letter to the Co-Neutrals.

applications and supporting the success of current families.” As of the writing of this report, CYFD’s current strategy is not clear to the Co-Neutrals.

### **Targeted Recruitment through Events**

CYFD reported in monthly recruitment updates sent to the Co-Neutrals that between February and July 2025, CYFD recruiters and staff participated in 10 events targeting the Native American community and two events focused on recruiting LGBTQ families. CYFD did not report any new families recruited through these events.

### **Orientation Sessions**

Some recruiters will offer a one-on-one orientation to accommodate a family’s schedule when needed, but generally families must participate in one of the five sessions that the HNC recruiters offer virtually each month. The recruiters described poor quality of and technical challenges with the pre-recorded segment of the orientation. The rationale provided for requiring participation in the orientation session is to ensure that a family understands the application process and CYFD’s expectations of foster parents. It is important for families to understand all of this; at the same time, there is an open question whether requiring the orientation before the application process begins creates a barrier to families moving forward. As part of its planned assessment, CYFD should review whether the orientation session, either the requirement or its content, has been a deterrent to families advancing to the application stage.

### **ReadiNM Pre-service Foster Parent Training**

Challenges with scheduling prospective foster families for the ReadiNM pre-service training has been a recurring concern, including the ad hoc scheduling of the trainings with LSS workers, many of whom are not professional trainers. The Co-Neutrals’ staff were informed during their initial interviews with the HNC recruiters that training materials are at times not readily available for families before their training begins. Further, the Co-Neutrals learned that the training unit does not have a budget for ReadiNM training materials and must submit a new purchasing request for every 100 sets of the training materials that families need before starting their trainings. This is another example of the halting, unfocused approach to non-relative family licensure that too often typifies CYFD’s efforts.

In response to the arbitrator’s request for recommendations under RO#1, the Co-Neutrals recommended that CYFD establish a dedicated new home certification unit which would include a team focused solely on training resource parents and relieve LSS staff of this training responsibility. CYFD reported in its June 27, 2025 reply to the arbitrator that it was actively developing a dedicated team responsible for training foster parents for licensure, using five new regional foster parent training positions. RO#2 documented that the “State will develop a team responsible for training Resource/Foster parents for licensure.”

In their September 2, 2025 letter requesting data and information to assess the State’s compliance with RO#2, the Co-Neutrals requested that by September 24, 2025, CYFD share information on the “structure, organizational chart, position descriptions, and timeline for

development of the team responsible for training resource parents for licensure, including if these positions are newly established or pulled from other units/divisions.”

### **Home Studies – Completed by LSS or All Faiths**

CYFD entered into a SFY2025 contract for All Faiths to complete 80 percent of the home studies required statewide for non-relative families undergoing the licensing process. LSS workers are assigned to complete all kinship home studies and some non-relative home studies. CYFD reported that it expanded the home study contract with All Faiths before the end of July 30, 2025, providing resources for All Faiths to complete 20 non-relative home studies each month. However, CYFD reported that it did not have enough homes to refer to All Faiths to take full advantage of this contracted capacity. The Co-Neutrals requested on July 8, 2025, that CYFD share any new or renewed contracts with All Faiths to support the licensing of new non-relative foster homes during the current 2026 state fiscal year.

### **SFY2026 Contracts to Support New Foster Home Recruitment, Licensing and Retention**

The Co-Neutrals requested on July 8, 2025, that CYFD share any new or renewed contracts for SFY2026 with any contractor to support the recruitment, licensing or retention of foster homes. As of September 22, 2025, the Co-Neutrals have not received confirmation or copies of any such contracts. Prior to her retirement, CYFD Secretary Casados reported her intention to establish new contracts that would transfer to private agencies most of the work required to license new foster homes. With Secretary Casados’ retirement and the lack of response to the Co-Neutrals’ request for SFY2026 contracts in this area, it is uncertain what model CYFD will embrace for its recruitment and licensing responsibilities moving forward.

CYFD was working with some of its contractors at the end of SFY2025 to develop a refocused plan for foster home recruitment and retention. Given the Co-Neutrals assessment that CYFD has not implemented a consistent and focused plan for recruitment during the first half of 2025 (see the six-month summary of interviews with the HNC recruiters in Attachment B), the Co-Neutrals encourage CYFD to continue its efforts to develop a statewide, comprehensive plan for foster home recruitment and retention.

### ***FOSTER CARE PLUS***

CYFD began to highlight over one year ago that it planned to develop a new Foster Care Plus (FC+) program as a primary strategy to expand family-based placements. CYFD described FC+ as an effort to support and supplement an increase in family-based therapeutic placements beyond the traditional model of privately licensed and managed Therapeutic Foster Care placements. The state identified that it would build the program based on the model developed and implemented in Oklahoma. In general, CYFD has lagged in developing its FC+ program. Since June 2025, the Co-Neutrals have requested any information or



documentation showing that CYFD has built out this program but have not received any such documentation as of this report.

Progress that CYFD reports having made includes completing train-the-trainer sessions under a contract with Pressley Ridge (a therapeutic parenting curriculum for foster parents) and establishing six FC+ staff positions, specifically a FC+ lead and one FC+ coordinator for each region. As of September 22, 2025, CYFD had the FC+ lead and three coordinators in place and was recruiting candidates for the other two coordinator positions. Critically important, CYFD has stalled the decision to provide a supplemental payment to foster parents in the program. A supplemental foster care rate is an important component of the Oklahoma model of the FC+ program.

The Co-Neutrals have had direct, firsthand knowledge of Oklahoma's program and observed how that program substantially increased family-based therapeutic placements, support and healing for children in custody who require a higher-level of therapeutic parenting and services. After years of reporting a steady decline in their capacity and number of TFC homes and contractors, Oklahoma's development of its version of a FC+ program – through building therapeutic supports and parenting skills in traditional non-relative and kinship foster homes - yielded substantial increases in therapeutic foster placements and better – documented and verified – outcomes for children in state custody. The Co-Neutrals strongly encourage CYFD and HCA to refocus and prioritize the state's commitment to develop and implement its FC+ program, with the Oklahoma model as a guide.

### ***RESOURCE FAMILY RETENTION***

To improve non-relative family retention, CYFD must establish a case practice that prioritizes supporting resource parents with timely, transparent, and respectful communication and the services they need to best care of children placed in their homes. Fundamentally, CYFD must also reduce CYFD caseloads and improve workforce stability to advance this case practice among permanency and LSS caseworkers. It remains true that the lack of permanency workers statewide – in some offices, there are none – and the overwhelming and geographically diffuse caseloads borne by some current permanency workers, undermines effective communication with children and families. And the poor quality of those interactions is a major contributor to resource family burn-out, dissatisfaction, and attrition. It will not be possible to address the state's substantial shortage of non-relative resource families until CYFD builds an adequate workforce.