

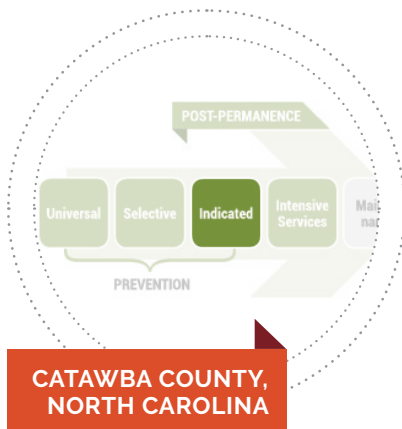
**CATAWBA COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA**

REACH FOR SUCCESS

**INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTED IN CATAWBA COUNTY,
NORTH CAROLINA FOR THE QIC-AG PROJECT**

OVERVIEW OF THE QIC-AG

The Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation (QIC-AG) is a 5-year federally funded project that promotes permanence (when reunification is no longer a goal) and improves supports for adoptive and guardianship families. Working in partnership with eight sites, the QIC-AG is identifying and testing promising practices and evidence-based models of support and services for children and families both pre and post permanence. Effective interventions are expected to achieve long-term stable permanence in adoptive and guardianship homes not only for waiting children but also for children and families after adoption or guardianship has been finalized. To learn more about the work of the QIC-AG, please go to www.qic-ag.org.



The QIC-AG created a Permanency Continuum Framework to help structure work with sites and families pre and post permanence. The Continuum Framework was developed on the premise that children in adoptive or guardianship families fare better when their families are fully prepared and supported to address issues before they arise, and if issues arise, before they escalate into a crisis. The Continuum Framework is comprised of eight intervals; three intervals start prior to finalization (*stage setting, preparation, and focused services*); three intervals continue after finalization and focus on prevention services (*universal, selective, and indicated services*); and the last two intervals focus on the provision of *intensive services and maintenance of permanence*.

Catawba County has designed and is implementing an intervention that falls into the **indicated interval** on the Permanency Continuum Framework. Indicated services focus on early detection of factors linked with an elevated potential for post-permanency discontinuity¹ (instability) of the adoptive or guardianship family.

OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTION DEVELOPED BY CATAWBA COUNTY

Reach for Success was developed by Catawba County with support from the QIC-AG. *Reach for Success* is a structured early-outreach program designed to identify adoptive families who might be at higher risk for post-permanency discontinuity and may benefit from Success Coach² post-adoption services. This two-part intervention begins with a survey mailed to families residing in Catawba County who have (1) adopted through the public child welfare system, (2) are receiving an adoption subsidy, and (3) have not received and are not currently receiving Success Coach services. The *Reach for Success* project will also serve families who have adopted children through a private domestic or intercountry process.

The *Reach for Success* survey can be viewed at <http://qic-ag.org/nc-site>. Parents whose survey responses indicate that their family may benefit from Success Coach services are contacted by a Success Coach. In this initial contact, the Success Coach explains the program and asks the family if they would like to participate.



The QIC-AG team, in conjunction with the Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago (SRL), developed the *Reach for Success* survey instrument and protocol. The survey was designed to help identify and better understand the needs and strengths of adoptive families, and to test whether survey responses could be used to identify families likely to benefit from post-adoption services. The survey consists of validated scales or measures, and the questions cover topics such as the child's educational and extra-curricular experiences, behavioral issues, and sense of belonging and security. The survey also asks about the family's protective factors, the parents' sense of connection or bonding with the child, and the types of services the parents have sought and received for their child or family. In addition, Catawba, with the help of the QIC-AG team, developed an engagement protocol to guide outreach efforts with families contacted through *Reach for Success*.

¹ Post-permanency discontinuity encompasses the following: displacement (child no longer in the physical custody but guardianship/parental rights remain intact); post-adoption placement; dissolution (guardianship or adoption legally terminated for reason other than parent death or incapacitation); and subsidy ended prematurely (subsidy payment ends prior to the child reaching age 18 years; may be related to child's absence from household or caregiver death).

² Success Coach is a post-permanency program that was developed by Catawba County Social Services. Information on the program can be obtained by going to: <http://www.postadoptionssuccesscoach.org>

WHY REACH FOR SUCCESS WAS SELECTED BY CATAWBA COUNTY

In the past, Catawba County Social Services (CCSS) has provided outreach to adoptive families in many ways, including sending mailers to all families whose adoption was finalized in the County, sending partner agencies monthly referral reminders of services available to families, maintaining a Facebook page, holding quarterly post-adoption consortiums and an annual post-adoption conference, and providing presentations on Success Coach services at partner agencies in neighboring counties. In addition, CCSS has provided services to families who contacted the agency requesting post adoption support. Despite these outreach efforts, CCSS recognized that by the time many families called to request services, the families were already in crisis. The CCSS staff felt they were missing the opportunity to proactively serve and intervene early with adoptive families who were either unaware of the support services available or reluctant to initiate contact with CCSS. *Reach for Success* was selected in response to these needs and designed with a primary short-term outcome of increasing engagement in the Success Coach program.

RECRUITMENT: OUTREACH TO FAMILIES

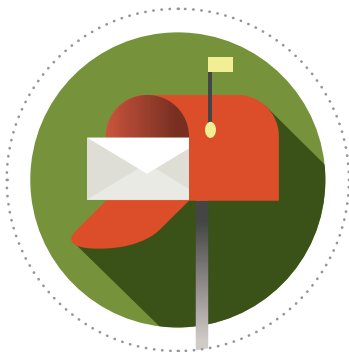
RECRUITMENT OVERVIEW

The *Reach for Success* survey is sent to cohorts (groups) of adoptive families, with approximately 50 families in each cohort. Careful consideration was given to which organization should administer the survey, with discussion centering on an outside research firm versus CCSS. Ultimately, the Catawba County site team decided the survey should be sent by CCSS, with survey responses sent directly to the Survey Research Laboratory to ensure respondents' confidentiality. The site team felt that a letter directly from the CCSS would be better received by families than a letter from an organization that was unknown to the families. Once completed surveys are received by the Survey Research Laboratory (SRL), SRL sends de-identified survey results to the QIC-AG evaluation team for analysis.

During the initial implementation of *Reach for Success*, the outreach protocol included the following steps:

OUTREACH PROTOCOL STEPS

1. Mail a questionnaire packet, including cover letter, overview of the study, survey instrument, and reply envelope.
2. One week after the initial mailing, mail a postcard reminder to families who have not returned the survey.
3. Two weeks after the reminder postcard was sent, mail a duplicate questionnaire packet (with the materials described in Step 1) to families who have not returned a completed survey.
4. Send a \$25 gift card to families who completed the survey.



The second outreach component involves contacting families whose survey responses indicate they might benefit from the Success Coach support services. These families receive a phone call from a Success Coach. The protocol for the Success Coach engagement component includes (1) making initial contact via a phone call, (2) mailing an initial contact letter to families the Success Coach was unable to reach by phone, and (3) scheduling a time for the Success Coach to visit the family. During the first visit, the Success Coach introduces the program, describes the support services, shares program goals and expectations, and—if the parents are interested in participating in the program—obtains the parents signatures on and date on the service agreement.



REFINEMENTS TO RECRUITMENT

- » **Outreach protocol.** Lower than anticipated response rates to the survey among the first cohorts precipitated changes to the outreach protocol. These changes included adding a follow-up reminder phone call to determine why the parents had not completed the survey and to encourage parents to complete and return the survey. This phone call is made by the *Reach for Success* staff, and scheduled one week after the reminder post card is mailed. Moreover, the phone call may include the family's adoption worker, based on the idea that a call from a familiar person might increase families' buy-in to the program. To ensure consistency across the phone contacts, the calls are guided by a structured script. To accommodate this change in the protocol, the second questionnaire packet is mailed two weeks after the reminder call.
- » **Incentives.** To help increase response rates, the incentive process was changed from a single incentive provided after the survey was completed to a multiple incentive process. Under the new process, a \$5 gift card is included in the first and second questionnaire packets mailed to families, in addition to the \$25 gift card families receive upon completion of the survey.
- » **Engagement.** Originally, the Success Coach contacted only those families whose survey responses suggested they may be at higher risk for post-permanency discontinuity and who may benefit from support services. However, based on responses from the first two cohorts that completed the survey, the site team decided that in addition to contacting families whose response suggested they may be in need of additional services, CCSS staff would also reach out to respondents whose responses did not suggest a high need for services. Through these efforts, CCSS is learning about the characteristics of families who may benefit from additional post-adoption services and supports.

RETENTION: KEEPING FAMILIES CONNECTED TO THE PROCESS

Retention is not an issue in Catawba because *Reach for Success* is a proactive outreach program.

LINKS

To learn more about Catawba County's Post-Adoption Success Coach please visit <http://www.postadoptionssuccesscoach.org/>

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Funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CO1122. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funders, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This document is in the public domain. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the QIC-AG.

The QIC-AG is funded through a five-year cooperative agreement between the Children's Bureau, Spaulding for Children, and its partners the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.