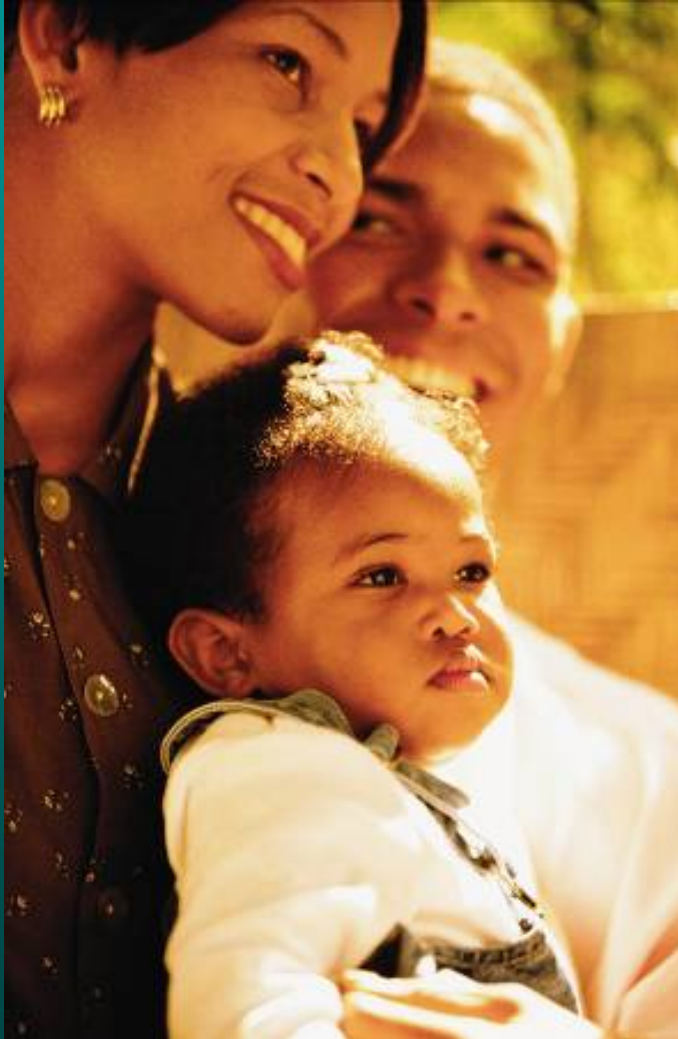


# New Jersey Department of Children and Families



## DCF / DYFS Case Practice Improvement Overview Community Information Meeting

**Kimberly S. Ricketts, Commissioner**  
Department of Children and Families  
**Christine Mozes, Director**  
DCF, Division of Youth and Family Services

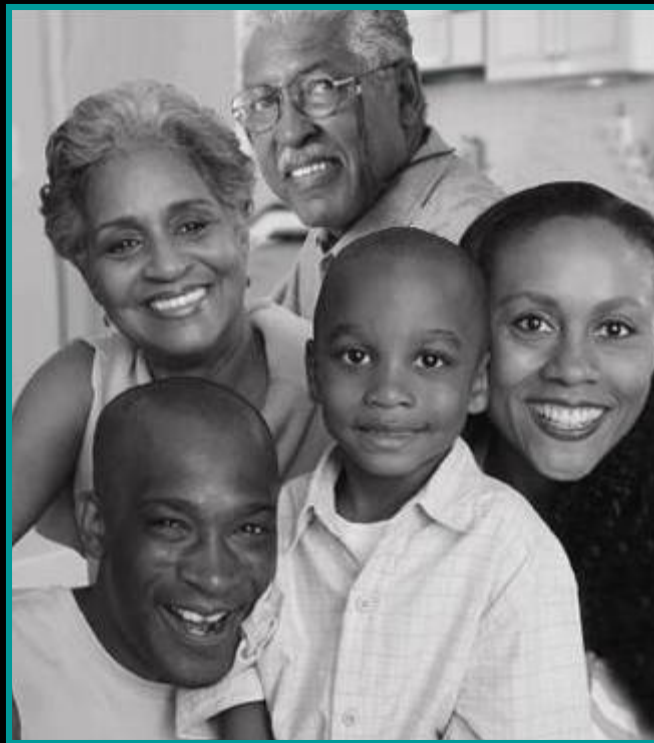


# DCF CASE PRACTICE

**Strengthening case practice,  
engaging families to**

*see a child not  
just as he is...*

**FAMILY**



**FOCUS**

*But as strong as  
his family can  
become.*

# The federal lawsuit recognizes that reform requires a focused and staged process to achieve results:

## **1<sup>st</sup> Focus on the Fundamentals**

Create the conditions that are pre-requisites to...

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Implementing Change in the Culture of Practice**

Move from a case management service delivery model to a strength-based, family centered, child focused model. Then, DYFS can...

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Deliver Results**

With improved outcomes for children and families.



# What are the fundamentals?

- Hire and train staff & achieve caseload standards
- Expand services & reduce inappropriate placements
- Grow the pool of non-kin resource families
- Strengthen permanency processes & achieve adoption targets
- Improve coordination between DYFS, DCBHS and DPCP
- Sharpen the focus on safety

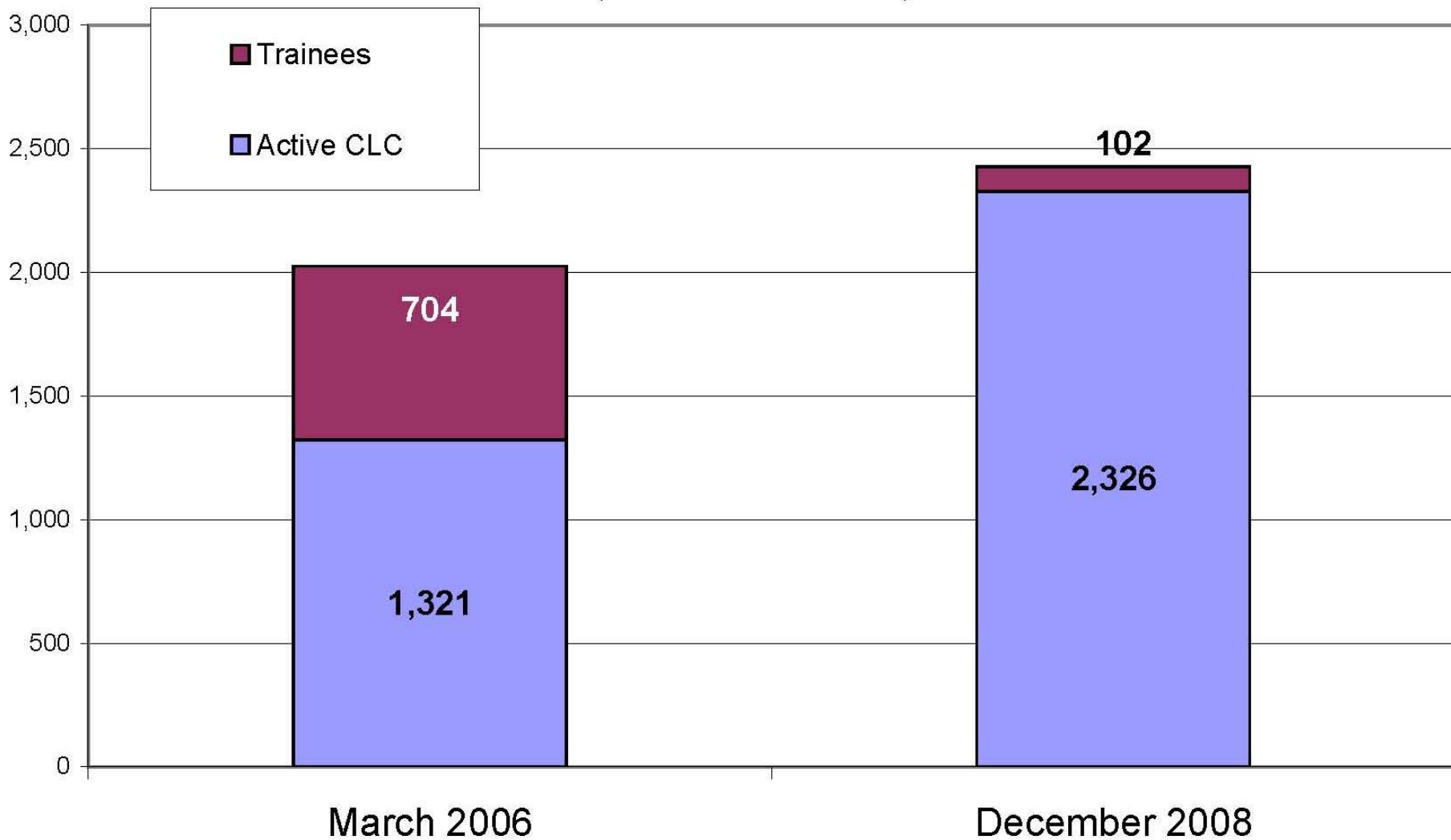


# DYFS Active Caseload Carrying (CLC) Staff & Trainees

Total March 2006 = 2,025

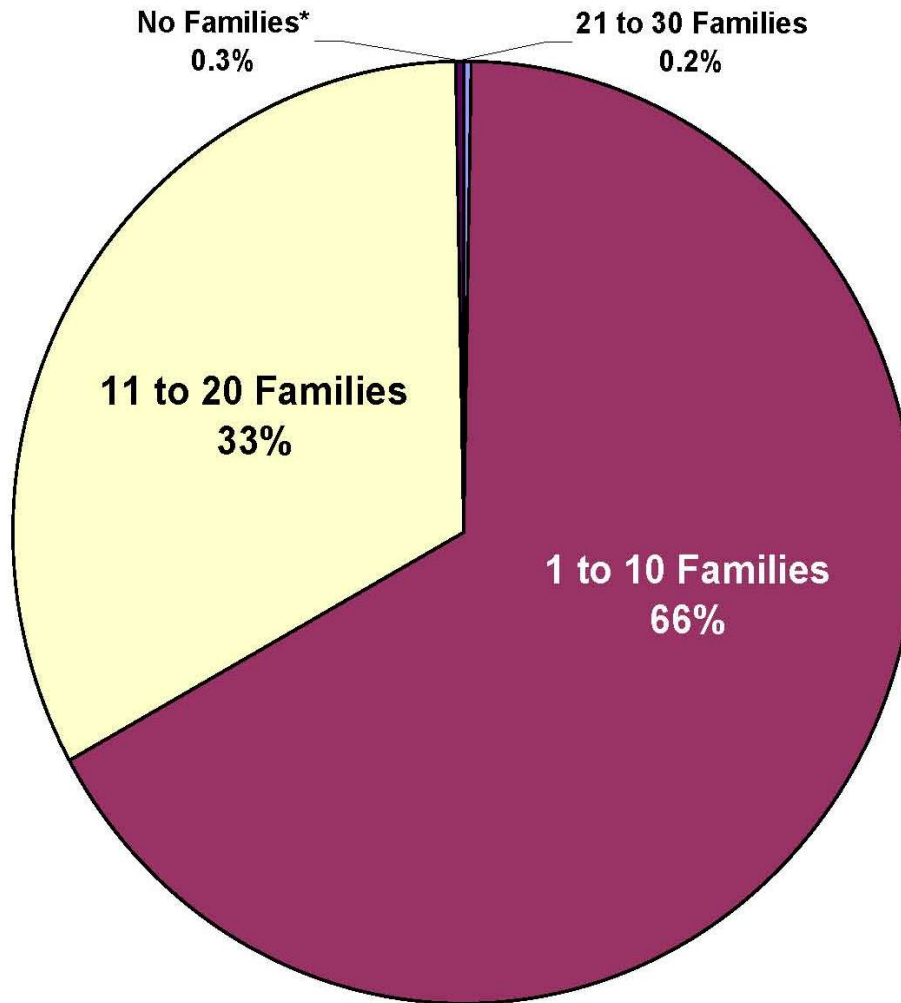
Total December 2008 = 2,428

(excludes staff on leave)



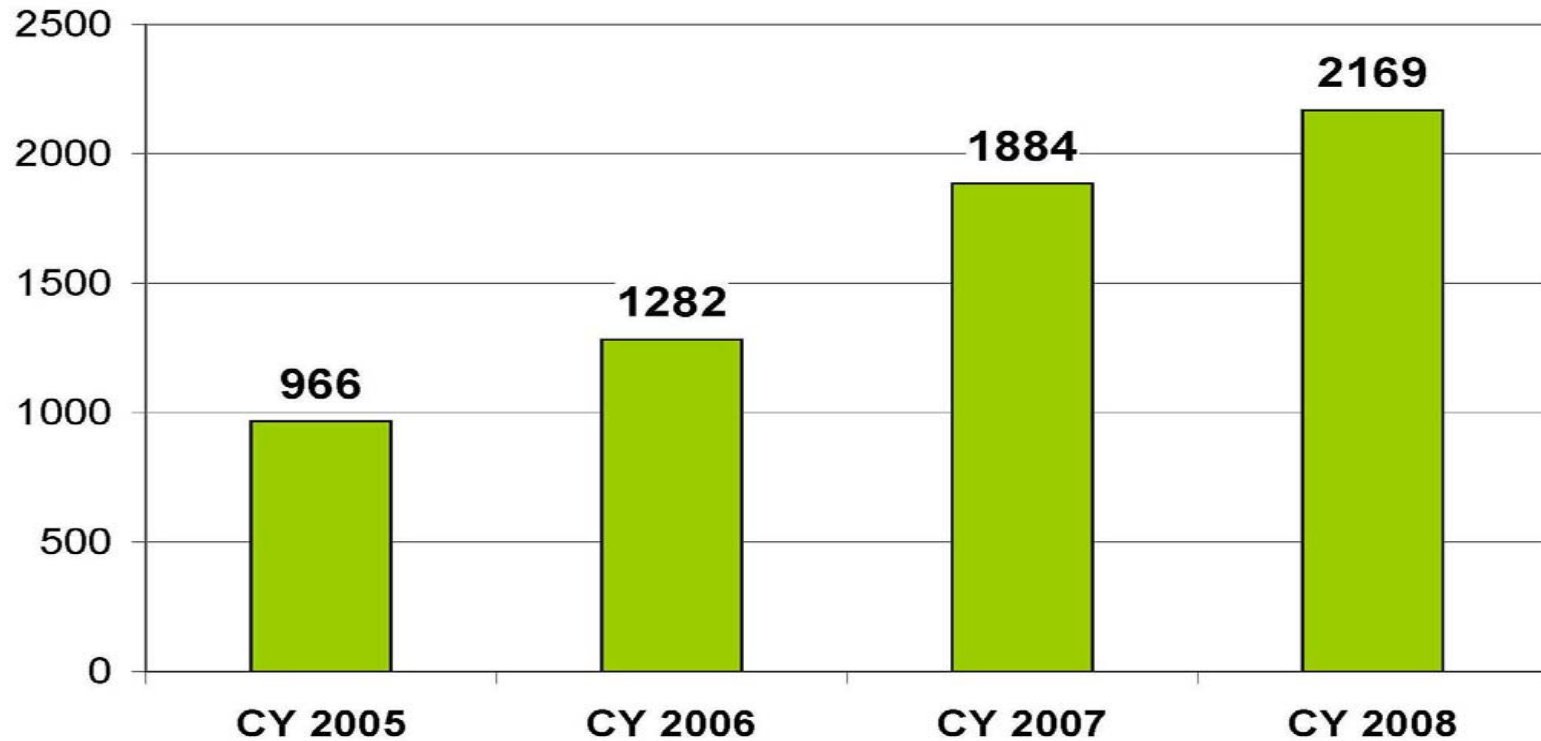
# Average DYFS Caseloads Statewide

As of December 31, 2008



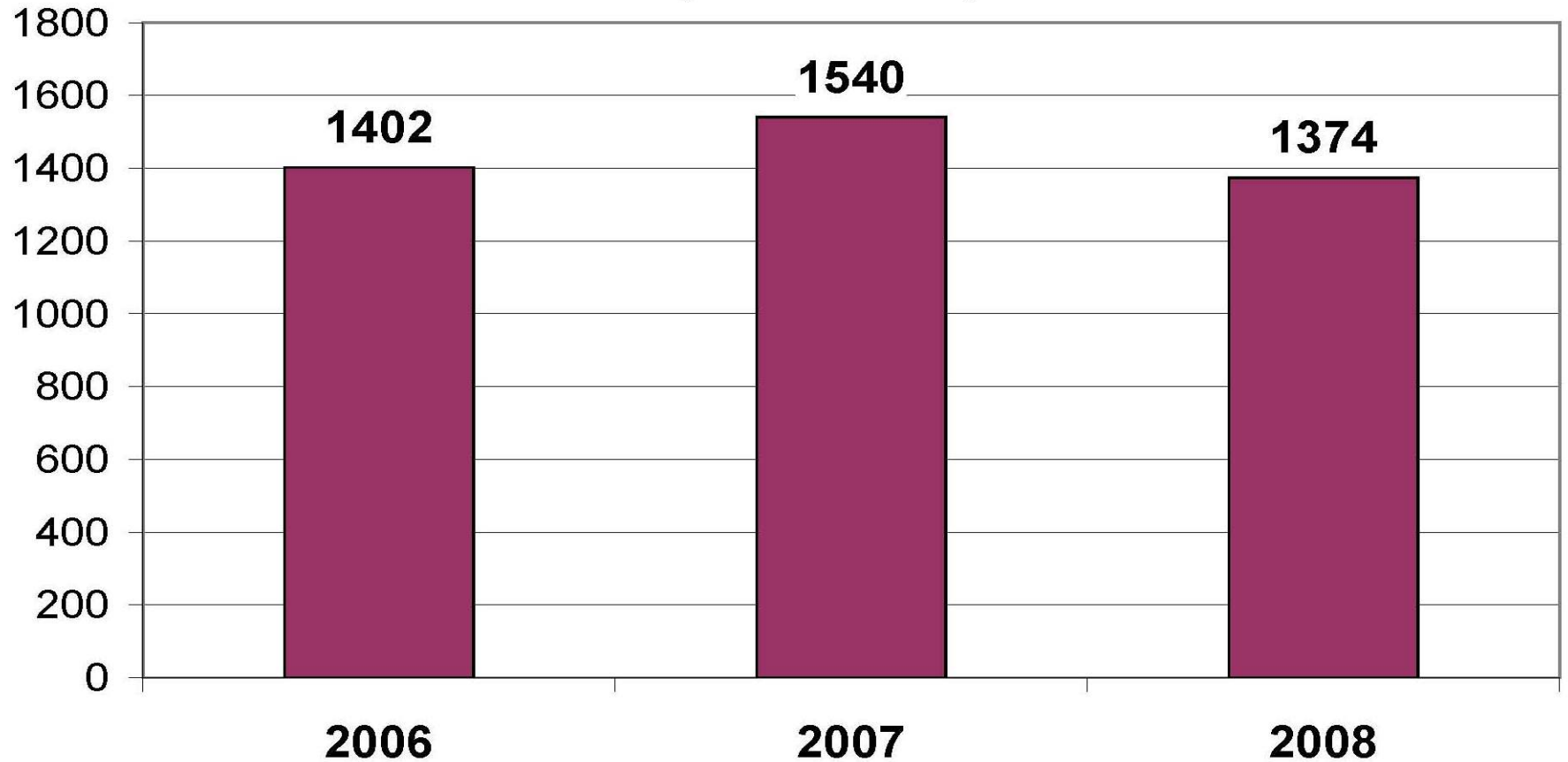
# Recruiting New Foster and Adoptive Families

**Newly Licensed Resource Family Homes  
(Kin and Non-Kin)  
2005-2008**



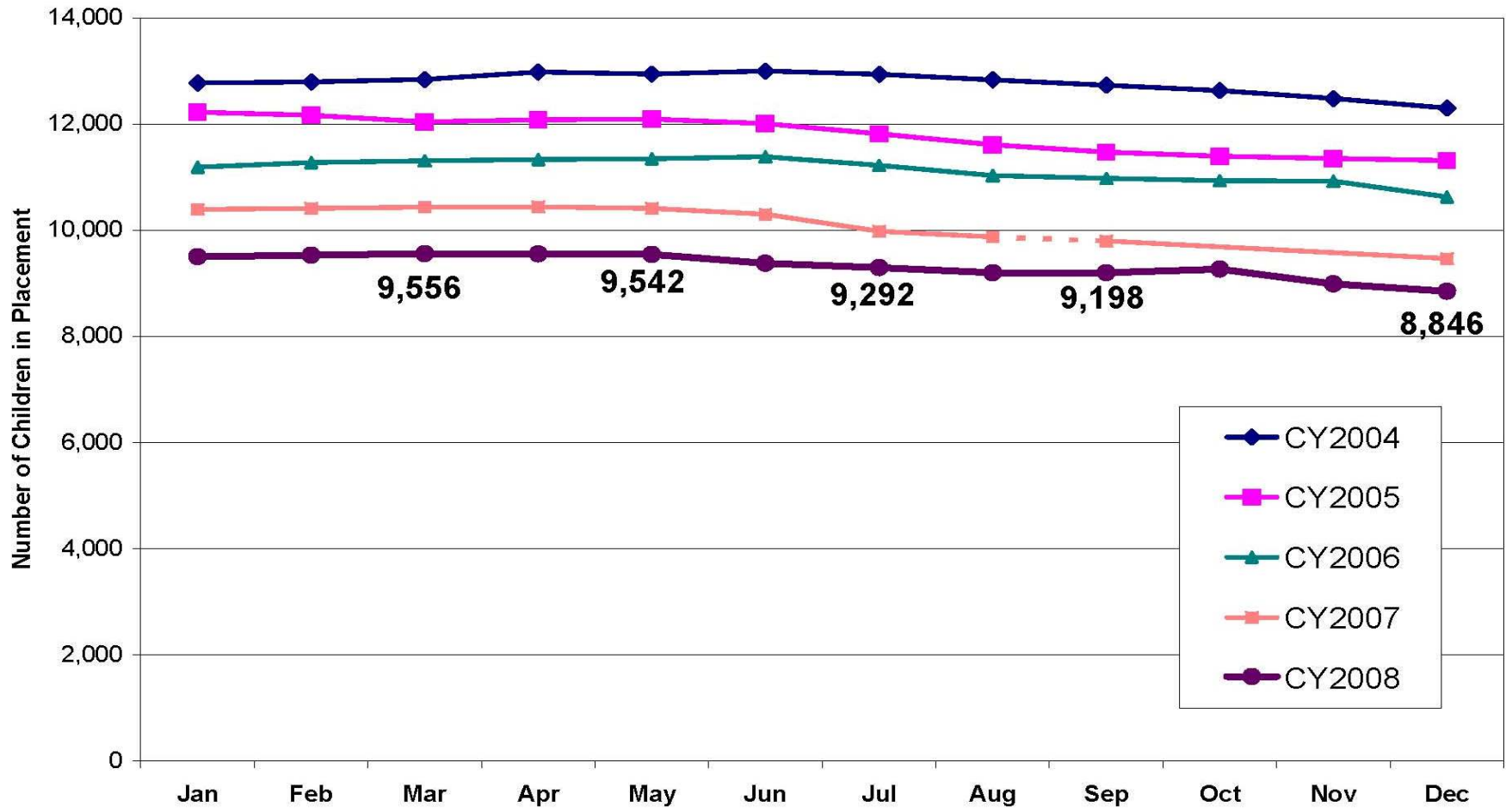
# NJ Department of Children and Families

## Finalized Adoptions (2003-2008)



# NJ Department of Children and Families

## Children in DYFS Placement



# DCF Case Practice: Focusing on Families

DCF/DYFS Case Practice model aims to see a family's whole life picture; including it's natural supports (such as community organizations, family members, neighbors) and any issues effecting the family's success (such as unemployment, substance abuse, housing, education, domestic violence, physical and mental health, etc.).



# DCF Case Practice: Focusing on Families



- Families must be our most powerful ally to ensure safety, improve well-being and achieve permanency for children.
- Our case practice focuses us on engaging families in a robust and constructive way.
- With this practice, we focus on children while strengthening their family and formal and natural supports to help make good decisions effecting their safety and well-being.



# DCF Case Practice: Focusing on Families

- Most families have the capacity to make positive change with the support of individualized plans for supports and services.
- Engagement is the foundation to build trust and mutually beneficial relationships among children, youth, family members and DCF/DYFS staff.



- We must listen to, assess and address the needs of children, youth and families in a respectful and responsive manner that builds upon their strengths.



# Importance of Family Engagement

- Engagement involves understanding the culture of a family and helping the family identify all potential supports.
- Engagement does NOT mean we will lose objectivity about safety risks to children.
- Engagement means that, whenever safe and appropriate, youth and parents will be included in decision-making about what they need to find solutions to family issues and concerns about child safety.



# Working with Family Teams

## Building a family team has multiple benefits:

- Teams are useful for gathering important information about the strengths and needs of families that contribute to the family's current life situation.



- Teams can assist the family throughout the involvement with DCF/DYFS and help staff facilitate a successful service plan.
- When it is time for the family to end its involvement with DYFS, the team can help support the family's transition.



# Who is Part of a Family Team?

A family team is

made up of everyone important in the life of the child, including interested family members, foster/adoptive parents, neighbors, friends, clergy, as well as representatives from the child's formal support system, such as school staff, therapists, service providers, CASA, the court service and legal systems.



Parents, children and youth (when age appropriate) and team members do become active participants in making decisions about what services and supports are needed, how and who should deliver the services and how to identify success.



# How will we implement Our Case Practice?

The implementation of this case practice must be dynamic and continuous with constant attention to evaluating our progress along the way.

To successfully implement this model throughout DCF, ownership of the reform must live at all levels of the organization.



# How will we implement Our Case Practice?

## SIX PRONG APPROACH

- Investing in strong leadership on all levels of DCF.
- Pursuing an ambitious training plan that began in 2008 and will continue into 2011.
- Building models of case practice through complete immersion in training and coaching for all Local Offices.
- Developing services necessary to support a family-centered child welfare practice in a transparent budget process.
- Bridging the gap between the Divisions of Youth and Family Services and Child Behavioral Health Services and Prevention and Community Partnerships.
- Continued focus on the fundamentals of child safety, well-being and permanency.



# The Road Ahead



Achieving this model of practice with every child and family will take time, but it is the standard through which practice and future commitments will be assessed and measured.

**DCF commits to an ongoing process of reevaluation of our progress against this model.**



# The Road Ahead



We are excited to embark on this important phase of reform. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the children and families we serve, supported by the wider community of stakeholders and providers.

While this work will be demanding, there is nothing more important than the work of learning to better serve New Jersey's vulnerable children and families – and we welcome that challenge.



# Engaging Outcomes



**Engaging skills demonstrate the ability to...**

Develop trusting relationships with families by demonstrating genuineness, empathy, respect and competence by utilizing key skills and techniques to develop these core competencies.

Develop an effective working agreement. Effectiveness means that the family and worker agree on the family's problem, and underlying need that must be addressed to resolve the problem, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

(continued)



# Engaging Outcomes



**Engaging skills demonstrate the ability to...**

Identify the family's functional strengths and underlying needs.

Use a solution focused approach.

Identify, engage and prepare family members and their identified supports to work together.



# Core Conditions - Genuineness

- Make sure your nonverbal behavior, voice tone and verbal responses match and are congruent
- Communicating trustworthiness and acceptance
- Being able to express yourself naturally without artificial behaviors
- Being open and receptive



# Core Conditions - Empathy

- Recognizing the person's experience, feelings and nonverbal communication
- Communicating with words your understanding of the person's experience

*Communicating with empathy  
results in more openness in people!*



# Core Conditions - Respect

- Communicating warmth
- Showing commitment
- Recognizing and using a person's strengths
- Being open-minded

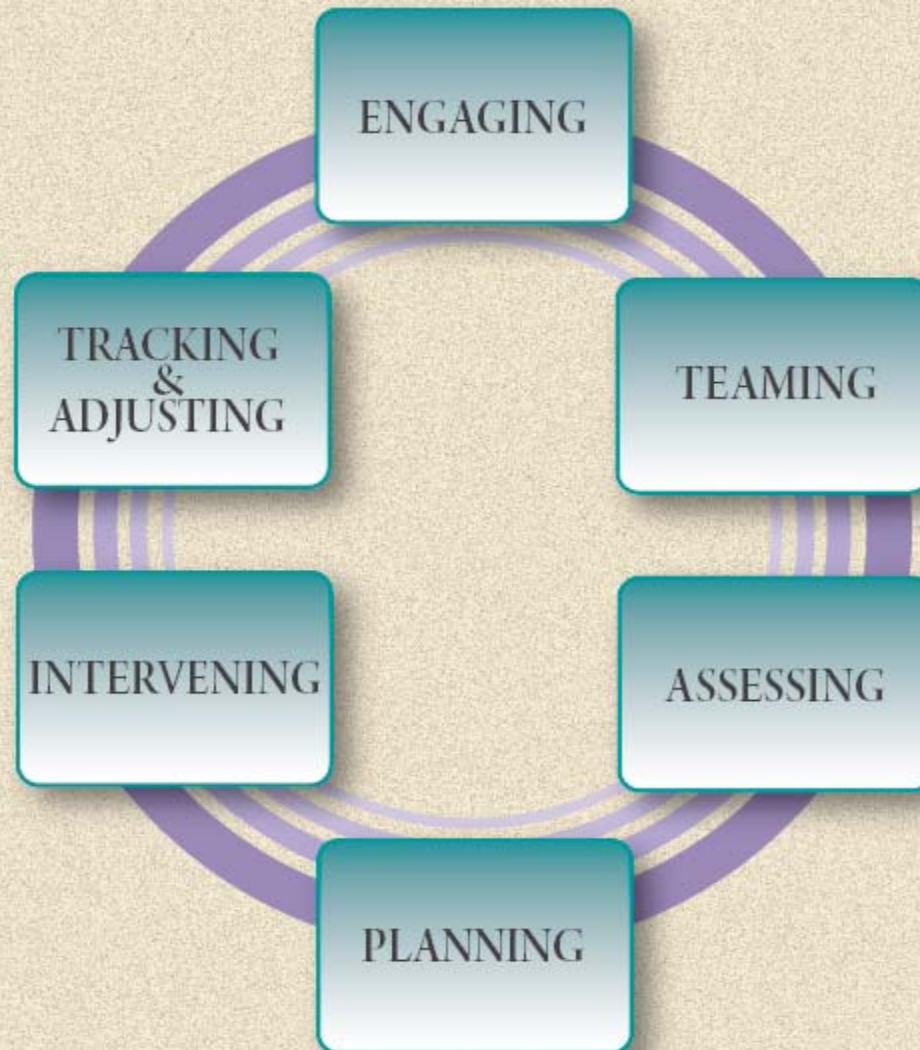


# Core Conditions - Competence

- Listening
- Commitment
- Making progress toward goal
- Follow through
- Being open-minded
- Being knowledgeable
- Providing and welcoming feedback



# PRACTICE WHEEL



## ELICITING SOLUTIONS WHEN TRACKING AND ADJUSTING PLANS WITH PARENTS

- 1) Build on a shared vision.** Start with the places of strong agreement and resonance between yourself and the family. Be able to point to times when the family demonstrated strengths related to this area of the work they have been doing. Help the family see that tracking and adaptation is a shared process to insure that the family goals for the children are met.
- 2) Identify what has gone according to the plan.** Again, even if it means going non-sequentially through the plan, identify what has worked and gone well. Help the parent and/or caregivers operate from a sense of efficacy and success which can give them strength and openness to look at where the plan has gone awry.

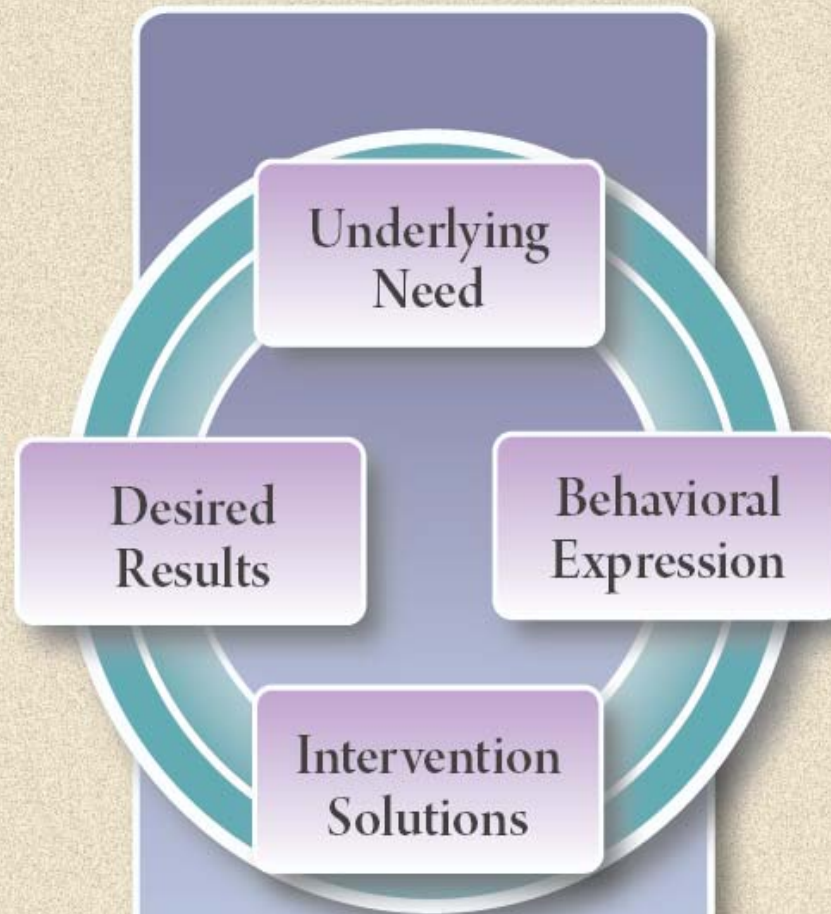
## ELICITING SOLUTIONS WHEN TRACKING AND ADJUSTING PLANS WITH PARENTS

- 3) **Be honest about the areas that are tough.** Acknowledge the barriers to successfully overcoming such issues as substance abuse, trauma recovery, mental illness, cognitive and developmental challenges. Help the family normalize relapse and failings as part of the process and as understandable.
  
- 4) **Create and recreate a shared commitment to live up to the children's needs, even when it means re-visioning the original plan.** Acknowledging that while normal, some relapses and vulnerabilities may exact too high a price from children which can help parents have a deeper commitment to change and a more thorough back-up plan.

## ELICITING SOLUTIONS WHEN TRACKING AND ADJUSTING PLANS WITH PARENTS

- 5) Remind the family that they can create and call upon their “team,” even if you don’t use formal teaming as practice.** Many of our families spiral downwards because they are afraid to ask for help. Once you know that something is not working, part of the job is to help the parent fix it; the other part is to help the parent find other supports.

## CYCLE OF NEED



# WINDOWS INTO CHILD/FAMILY LIFE: OUTCOME INDICATORS

## SAFETY

Children are, first and foremost, free from child abuse and neglect.

Examples:

- In Home
- In Placement
- Post-Reunification

## STABILITY

Children deserve predictable and continuous connections with people, places and things that contribute to their development and identify.

Examples:

- School
- Friendships
- Community
- Caring team of adults to look out for them.  
(caseworkers, caregivers, relatives, teachers, coaches, church).

# WINDOWS INTO CHILD/FAMILY LIFE: OUTCOME INDICATORS

## WELL-BEING

Children's health and functioning is supported through assurance of formal and informal supports to provide them with optimal growth and developmental opportunities.

Examples:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Educational
- Vocational

## PERMANENCY

Children need to know where they will grow up and to have lifelong connections to provide a sense of belonging.

Examples:

- A forever family
- A sense that although there may be more than one permanency option on the table, the adults are working together to provide for the child.

# What is a Family Team Meeting?

**A** Family Team Meeting is a gathering of people who together make up a family's team. Relatives, friends and others from the community who might offer support to your family are invited. Aunts and uncles, pastors, teachers, or counselors are examples of some of the individuals who might be included. Depending on their age, children may also attend.

At the meeting, you will talk about and create a plan that will provide safety and permanency for you and your children. The team will work together to identify how each member will help your family to reach its goals.

*Your family  
will be treated with  
dignity and respect.*

## List Your Family Team

---

---

---

---

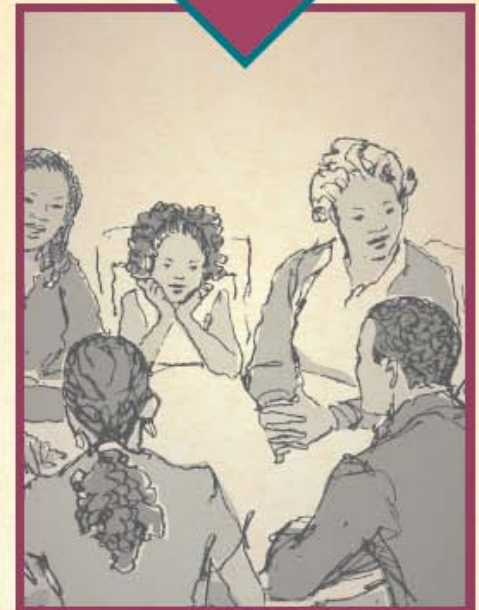
---

---

---

---

DYFS Local Office



Department of Children and Families  
Division of Youth and Family Services

## What Happens During the Family Team Meeting?

### *Introduction*

Introductions will be made and the team will help decide on the meeting's purpose or goal.

### *Strengths*

The team will be able to talk about the family's strengths, both individually and as a family.

### *Needs*

There will be a discussion of the family's needs. The family will help create a list of ideas on how to meet their needs.

### *Plan*

The family team will help decide who will complete the necessary tasks to reach the family's goals. A timeframe will be set for each task.

### *Follow-Up*

All team members will receive a summary of the meeting. As a family progresses, family members, DYFS staff or other members of the team may request a meeting to make new plans.

## Why Should I Have a Family Team Meeting?

- ◆ You are the expert on your family. You will have an active role in all parts of the meeting – what's discussed and what plan is created for you. You will decide who is part of your family team.
- ◆ Every family needs a support structure. With help from your team, you can make informed choices and good decisions about how to keep your children safe. Bringing people together who care about your family can help make changes easier.
- ◆ Your children are more likely to achieve positive results when your family team is involved in decision-making.

