

Wendy's Wonderful Kids

The *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* program, administered by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA), aims to increase adoptions from foster care, focusing primarily on children for whom it has been traditionally difficult to find families: older children, groups of siblings, and children with physical or emotional challenges. The philosophy of *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* (WWK) is that “Unadoptable is Unacceptable.” Children are eligible to be served by the program if they are in the public foster care system, have been freed for adoption, have a permanency plan of adoption, or a plan to be freed for adoption (this may be a concurrent plan). Children may also be in Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA).

For More Information

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www.davethomasfoundation.org/what-we-do/wendys-wonderful-kids/
or in New York State, the OCFS regional offices.

WWK adoption specialists (or recruiters) employ effective, aggressive, and accountable child-focused recruitment activities. They directly engage youth to explore their attitudes towards adoption and seek their input on prospective adoptive resources. Recruiters conduct an exhaustive search for people with whom the child has had a bond or positive relationship. The WWK model contains eight major components (illustrated on the following page).

As of 2018, nearly 400 WWK recruiters have worked throughout the U.S. and Canada. In New York State, a collaboration between DTFA and the New York Office of Children and Family Services brought additional WWK recruiters to New York, expanding the number from less than ten recruiters to over 60 recruiters throughout the state. Forty three (43) of the WWK recruiters are located in New York City, and over 20 recruiters serve multiple upstate counties.

See WWK New York Overview for more information.
(<http://www.recruit4fostercare.org/img/WendysWonderfulKidsNewYorkOverview2018.pdf>)

Resources needed for implementation

DTFA is scaling up the WWK program nationally, with implementation in multiple states, and plans to bring the model to scale in all fifty states and Canada by 2028. Participating states are expected to make a financial investment in the program. DTFA provides training and other technical assistance to jurisdictions implementing the model. In some places, WWK recruiters are employees of public agencies, while in others they are employees of private agencies that oversee services including foster care. Jurisdictions interested in implementing WWK may reach out to DTFA for more information.

Evidence base

A rigorous, five-year evaluation by Child Trends found that when served by WWK, older children and those with emotional challenges were three times more likely to be adopted. Overall, children served by the program were nearly two times (1.7 times) more likely to be adopted. For the executive summary, see <https://www.davethomasfoundation.org/our-programs/wendys-wonderful-kids/>. WWK has been reviewed by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) and is listed in the CEBC registry.

