Chapter 10. Planning ID&R Deployment and Supporting Recruiters

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| Chapter 10 Learning Objectives |
| The administrator will learn |
| how to best deploy recruiters on a statewide basis; |
| how to support recruiters; |
| how to develop programs for mentoring, peer coaching, team building, and peer networking; |
| how to evaluate and improve training strategies; |
| how and when to assess recruiter performance; and |
| under what circumstances it is necessary to terminate an employee. |

Planning Recruitment and Deploying Recruiters

In some ways, the administrator’s role in planning recruitment activities and deploying recruiters mirrors the role of the local recruiter. Chapters 4 and 5 of this manual discuss the recruiter’s role in conducting research, building a recruitment network, and developing an individual ID&R action plan. The administrator, who does much of the same work at a state, regional, or local level, can refer to these chapters for more information.

Planning. In order to develop an effective ID&R plan, the administrator needs to understand the agricultural and migration patterns in the state or local service area. Chapter 4 of this manual provides the essential questions that the administrator needs to answer through careful research. For example, the state should assemble a statewide information database on common crops and qualifying activities, dates of growing and harvesting seasons (which may coincide with peak arrival and departure times for migratory workers), locations of major employers, etc. Not only is this information useful to recruiters, it is also essential to know when and where to deploy the state’s recruitment workforce. Some ID&R systems are able to plan “from the top down” and produce useful information to disseminate to local sites across the state. Other states compile information developed by their local project sites. In these cases, the administrator should carefully review the quality and consistency of the information provided before distributing it to others.

In planning ID&R efforts, the administrator also has a unique opportunity to build relationships that can help the MEP statewide. Building a state network and promoting the program at the regional and state level with major employers, schools, community and commercial organizations, and government agencies can expand the reach of the MEP. Administrators should also consider developing statewide and regional promotions that will support local recruitment efforts, like developing a state MEP brochure or developing radio spots on the MEP. Promotional ideas are provided in Chapter 4. The administrator’s next step is to decide, with input from recruiters, when, where, and how to focus the state’s ID&R efforts.

Deployment. The administrator is responsible for the statewide deployment of ID&R staff and should develop a strategy or action plan for deployment. Chapter 5 gives specific guidance on how to develop a state, local, and individual ID&R action plan. Here are some questions an administrator should consider in deploying recruiters:

* Where are the largest concentrations of migratory children and youth in the state?
* What does the state currently do to find migratory children and youth? How does the state know that these activities are working?
* Does the SEA employ a statewide recruitment coordinator?
* Who generally has the primary responsibility for field-based ID&R activities at the local or regional level? How many local or regional recruiters are employed across the state? How many are employed year-round versus summer-only? Do most recruiters spend all of their time recruiting or do they recruit part-time in conjunction with other MEP responsibilities? What other types of job responsibilities do project recruiters usually have?
* Does the SEA have an ID&R manual? How is it updated and improved?
* What are the primary methods used by local MEP recruiters to identify and recruit migratory students? How much effort is made to identify and recruit previously unidentified migratory students?
* Are there areas of the state that do not have MEP projects? Does the state survey these non-project areas periodically? How are these surveys done?
* With what agencies and data sources does the SEA coordinate to determine where migratory families reside? What activities are coordinated? Do other organizations conduct recruitment activities for the state?
* What are the most common qualifying activities? What are the best times of the year to recruit? From where and to where do most migratory families move?
* Do the local MEPs collaborate well with agricultural and fishing employers? What is the overall relationship like with agricultural and fishing employers across the state? Do they work to enhance these relationships?
* Is the number of identified migratory students increasing or decreasing? Where
and why?

An ID&R action plan that addresses questions like these will help to guide the state’s ID&R efforts. It will also assist the individual recruiter in planning his or her individual recruitment efforts. Finding all eligible migratory children and youth is the state’s responsibility; therefore, recruitment staff should first be deployed in agricultural areas where migratory workers are located, or near housing where the families and youth may reside. Since the MEP has limited resources, it is necessary to prioritize where to deploy recruiters.

Supporting Recruiters

Mentoring and Peer Coaching. Recruiters can learn a lot from fellow recruiters. Whenever possible, an administrator should provide a knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced mentor for each new recruiter. The administrator should be aware that being a good mentor can be challenging and time-consuming and takes careful planning. In particular, the administrator should consider

* how to select and train competent mentors;
* what incentives to offer, for example, reduced workload, additional compensation, or public recognition;
* how to match mentor recruiters with new recruiters;
* how frequently mentors and new recruiters should meet;
* how long (i.e., duration) the mentoring relationship should last;
* what mentoring guidelines, responsibilities, expectations, roles, suggested activities, tips, and/or agreements are needed; and
* how the mentoring program should be evaluated and improved over time.

Ultimately, the administrator may wish to develop a certification program for mentors so only those recruiters who have demonstrated a high level of knowledge of child eligibility requirements and have good interpersonal skills are eligible to be certified as mentors.

When recruiting mentors, some of the benefits of the mentoring relationship that the administrator might want to point out include

* having the personal fulfillment that comes from helping a peer become successful;
* helping the MEP to better attract and keep good recruiters;
* helping the mentor remain well-versed on eligibility requirements and current issues in ID&R;
* expanding the mentor’s network by meeting members of the new recruiter’s network; and
* seeing the mentor’s experience and knowledge continue after the mentor retires or leaves the job.

A primary component of the mentor’s responsibility should be to take the new recruiter on recruitment visits to provide multiple opportunities for the new recruiter to observe how to properly conduct an eligibility interview. This provides the new recruiter with an opportunity to see how the mentor makes the initial contact with a migratory family or youth, explains the MEP program to parents and other family members, conducts an interview, and handles problems or questions that arise during interviews. Whenever possible, have the new recruiter observe more than one experienced recruiter and try to emulate the strengths of each. After observing several interviews, the new recruiter should be encouraged to conduct part of the interview with the mentor’s help and support. As the new recruiter’s interviewing skills improve, the new recruiter should be encouraged to take over more of the interview to become comfortable interviewing a family or youth.

Here are some tips that administrators may want to provide to mentors:

* Be available.New recruiters may be reluctant to ask questions if they think they are interrupting the mentor or using too much of the mentor’s time. The mentor should have an open door policy.
* Be clear. New recruiters may not know what questions to ask or may be confused by common acronyms and terminology. The mentor should clearly describe the responsibilities of the position, using words that the new recruiter will understand.
* Encourage cultural sensitivity. The mentor should teach the new recruiter how to work with all of the ethnical and cultural groups found within the local migratory community.
* Point out pitfalls. The mentor should alert the new recruiter to problems that may occur when recruiting and give ideas and strategies for avoiding or resolving these problems.
* Encourage trying new skills. When the mentor thinks the new recruiter is ready, the mentor should encourage the new recruiter to try out new skills.
* Be constructive. The mentor should provide the new recruiter with constructive and supportive feedback. Criticism should be tempered with legitimate praise. The mentor should also welcome suggestions from the new recruiter on how to do things better and faster.
* Encourage self-sufficiency. Eventually, the new recruiter will have to begin conducting interviews on his or her own. The mentor should help build the new recruiter’s confidence and decision-making skills.
* Model good time management. The mentor should model efficient strategies for finding and recruiting families.
* Provide introductions. The mentor should introduce the new recruiter to members of the mentor’s recruitment network, and also be open to meeting members of the new recruiter’s network.
* Encourage ethical behavior. The mentor should talk with the new recruiter about professional ethics and demonstrate ethical behavior.

The new recruiter may want to work with more than one mentor, and mentors may want to work with more than one new recruiter. A new recruiter should be encouraged to find several mentors, each with a different skill or knowledge that the recruiter wants to learn, instead of expecting a single mentor to have expertise in every topic.

Having an experienced recruiter accompany the new recruiter can help the new recruiter gain confidence and get early feedback on his or her interviewing skills. Mentors and peer coaches should be encouraged to take on a range of roles with the new recruiter, including teacher, networker, sounding board, confidence builder, role model, rapport builder, listener, questioner, source of inspiration, explorer of options, etc.

Teams and Peer Networks. The recruitment administrator should use team-building strategies to help the recruiter feel like part of the MEP family. The recruiter is a member of two basic “teams.” The first is the recruitment team, which includes the state ID&R Coordinator, other administrators directly involved in recruitment, peer recruiters with whom the recruiter was trained, experienced recruiters, and data entry specialists. The second is the staff of the local MEP, which may include a local administrator, instructional and other direct service staff, and support personnel. This group may be school-based or may work independently from the local district.

Recruiting can quickly become an isolating job without a pre-established support team. Recruiters often find it essential to meet regularly with peer recruiters to share tips, discuss problems, and network. It is important to establish a “safe” learning environment where the recruiter feels free to share and to learn from both successes and failures. The recruiter may find it useful to work with a team when developing or updating an individual ID&R plan. The recruiter should be encouraged to try new and promising ID&R strategies and to share the results (both good and bad) with peers. In this way, the whole ID&R team will continually learn and improve.

Here are some basic team building strategies that the administrator can use:

* Establish common group goals. It should be relatively easy for the recruitment team to identify common goals in the areas of finding, identifying, and enrolling migratory children. The common experiences of looking for migratory families, working through the rules and regulations governing ID&R, driving in rural areas, completing paperwork, etc., can unite the group.
* Use teamwork to attain these goals. A good team can help the recruiter find migratory children and youth. For example, the local MEP team can provide leads on families who might have eligible children and can build the credibility of the MEP by providing quality services to those enrolled in the program. The recruitment team can provide advance notification when migratory families move to another recruiter’s area.
* Recognize that team members can be their own best problem-solvers. Bringing in “experts” to solve recruitment problems is often not the best solution. A strong team of people with common goals can often be more effective than an outside expert.
* Instill strong leadership. The administrator should remember that team building starts with strong leadership, so it is important that the team leader receive the training, coaching, and on-going support needed to drive the effort. The administrator can draw from a number of team-building resources in the areas of leadership, diagnosis of individual team member strengths and weaknesses, team-building activities, and ongoing team improvement. The administrator should consider arranging team-building training to learn how to increase the effectiveness of recruiters.
* Provide recognition. The administrator can help to motivate recruiters through positive reinforcement, such as public recognition and awards based on performance (e.g., having a low number of defective COEs, making numerous personal contacts with potentially eligible children or with members of the recruiter’s network). The administrator should emphasize the quality of child eligibility determinations over the quantity of such determinations. The administrator should avoid using recruitment quotas as an incentive (i.e., the number of migratory children recruited each month). Such pressure could lead to making inaccurate eligibility determinations.

Evaluation and Improvement. An important part of any training program is evaluating the quality of the program and continuously making improvements. The most important evaluation of a recruiter training program is the extent to which the recruiter is making correct preliminary eligibility determinations. This is determined by the state’s quality control system (see Chapter 11).
Other methods of evaluation include measuring whether

* training activities have led to more efficient ways of finding migratory families;
* training was implemented as planned;
* training goals were met;
* recruiters were satisfied with the training; and
* the training program is improving over time.

Just as the recruiter is encouraged to participate in professional development activities, the administrator should also take advantage of professional development opportunities such as OME meetings and conferences held annually and other national trainings and conferences. It is also important to hold ongoing state and regional meetings to coordinate efforts and communication across the network.

The administrator is also responsible for evaluating the performance of individual recruiters. Some of the things that an administrator should consider when evaluating a recruiter is whether he or she

* makes correct eligibility decisions;
* documents child eligibility adequately, accurately, and clearly;
* manages time wisely;
* represents the program effectively;
* relates well to others;
* has good interviewing (i.e., questioning) skills;
* demonstrates personal integrity;
* exhibits cultural sensitivity; and
* meets both team and personal goals.

Meet with Recruiters Regularly and Assess Performance. MEP regulations require SEAs to supervise and annually review and evaluate the ID&R practices of individual recruiters. They can accomplish this by carrying out the task themselves or delegating the responsibility to the regional or local level.

A supervisor who meets regularly with recruiters will be in a good position to review and evaluate recruiter performance. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss any child eligibility questions the recruiter might have and to find ways to increase the quality and efficiency of the
ID&R system. In addition, these meetings provide an opportunity to reinforce what the supervisor sees as the recruiter’s primary job duties and responsibilities, so recruiters do not spend too much time on activities that the supervisor sees as being less productive than others. The supervisor should make a point of meeting with the new recruiter to answer questions, show interest in the recruiter’s work, and to provide support and guidance during those important early weeks on the job. For recruiters who work in isolated areas, these meetings could be done through weekly or bi-weekly telephone calls and as questions arise.

It is also important to observe recruiters and provide feedback and guidance on their interviewing and other skills. If the recruiter is not meeting the supervisor’s expectations, the supervisor should develop a coaching and improvement plan.

Layoffs or Terminations. The administrator may be required to lay off recruiters because of reductions in funding or changes in the migratory population, or to terminate a recruiter because of performance. In all cases, the administrator should follow the policies and procedures established by the state program or local project.

Conclusion

Developing and executing a solid ID&R plan, while providing regular supervision and team-building, can be a difficult task for the ID&R administrator. Problems with recruitment put the MEP at risk. Providing recruiters with the resources and support they need and deserve provides reassurance that the children identified and served are truly eligible and in need of services. Chapter 11 provides information to administrators about quality control and ID&R monitoring.