Chapter 3. Learning to Recruit

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| Chapter 3 Learning Objectives |
| The recruiter will learn |
| * that each state has its own requirements for basic training; and |
| multiple strategies for building their skills as a recruiter, including |
| * becoming familiar with the NRG; |
| * reviewing the knowledge and skills needed to identify and recruit migratory children; |
| * meeting with his or her supervisor to ask questions, particularly on child eligibility; |
| * conducting a “self-check” of whether he or she understands MEP child eligibility or passing a state certification exam or knowledge check where required; |
| * finding a knowledgeable mentor; |
| * observing one or more experienced recruiters interview a migratory parent or youth; |
| * determining on what topics he or she needs more training and request it; |
| * identifying other recruiters to share ideas; |
| * arranging to be observed by his or her supervisor; |
| * finding out where to go to ask questions; and |
| * providing feedback on ways the training can be improved. |

Learning about Identification and Recruitment

To successfully find migratory children, the recruiter must have a clear idea of who to look for and the best strategies for finding them. Training both novice and veteran recruiters can be compared to teaching someone to drive a car. Just as a driver education instructor would not put a new student driver behind the wheel of a car on a busy road, those who administer the MEP at a state or local level should not send a new recruiter out to find and interview migratory families or youth without proper instruction and guided practice. Similarly, veteran recruiters, like veteran drivers, may need a defensive driving course once in a while to refresh their knowledge and skills.

The process that a new driver goes through to learn the “rules of the road” is similar to the process that a new recruiter goes through to learn the basic MEP child eligibility requirements. Learning the rules of the road generally involves both classroom instruction and independent study, as does learning basic MEP eligibility definitions. Likewise, the guided practice that a new driver receives with the help of a driver education instructor or parent is similar to what the new recruiter should receive under a knowledgeable and experienced recruitment mentor. Finally, before a new driver may operate a car alone, he or she must pass a driver’s test. Along the same lines, the new recruiter should demonstrate proficiency in recruiting eligible children before being allowed to work independently. Some states require the new recruiter to take a certification examination or survey that measures the recruiter’s ability to make correct eligibility determinations.

Furthermore, state and local personnel should not assume that veteran recruiters do not need continual training and development. As in some states, where drivers may have to take a vision test or a road test to renew their license, veteran recruiters will need to retrain and relearn as laws and regulations change. Beyond new laws and regulatory changes, veteran recruiters should seek out at least one professional development opportunity a year to enhance skills and knowledge.

The recruiter and an immediate supervisor should work together to build and maintain the recruiter’s knowledge and skills. This chapter will discuss the general knowledge and skills of ID&R, the types of training a recruiter might receive, and other strategies to help the recruiter learn, or relearn, the job of ID&R.

Knowledge and Skills of Identification and Recruitment

OME has developed the National ID&R Curriculum that identifies the core knowledge and skills that it believes a recruiter needs to master in order to properly identify and recruit migratory children and make preliminary eligibility determinations.

The National ID&R Curriculum consists of eight modules, each based on one or more chapters of the National ID&R Manual. The content of each module is taught through research-based instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of all learners. Participants will use the four modalities of recruiting (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to process the content being delivered, and the trainer will facilitate the learning process by actively monitoring, questioning, and clarifying, when needed.

Each module consists of 1-3 levels designed to allow the trainer the option of selecting specific topics to train based on the composition of the audience. Level 1 will provide the basic information for the module topic, which makes it ideal for new recruiters and/or MEP staff members to use as a refresher for veteran recruiters. Subsequent levels provide additional topics of study related to the module, which make them ideal for follow-up or in-depth trainings.

The National ID&R Curriculum was created to transform the National ID&R Manual’s set of knowledge and skills into a training experience. The curriculum is based on the following five objectives:

* State and local MEP recruiters understand the background of the MEP, the ID&R process of the MEP, and the duties and responsibilities of a recruiter. As indicated by this first objective, the recruiter will learn about the purpose, basic history, and organization of the MEP. In addition, the recruiter will learn the basic eligibility requirements and the general process for ID&R. Finally, the recruiter will become aware of his or her basic duties and responsibilities.
* State and local MEP personnel implement practices that result in the efficient ID&R of migratory children. To satisfy the second objective, the recruiter will learn how to develop a recruitment network, how to determine where migratory families and youth live and work, and how to locate them. The recruiter will also learn to understand and respect the diversity of migratory children, youth, and their families in order to interact with them effectively. The recruiter will practice how to explain the MEP to migratory families and youth and will learn how to organize and manage his or her caseload. Finally, the recruiter will learn how to take appropriate precautions to ensure personal safety.
* State and local MEP personnel implement practices that result in reliable and valid child eligibility determinations. For this third objective, the recruiter will master the child eligibility requirements under the MEP. The recruiter will also demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to effectively interview a family or youth. The recruiter will learn to make valid and reliable preliminary child eligibility determinations and to implement quality control activities.
* State and local MEP personnel are aware of and adhere to ethical standards of behavior in child eligibility determinations. The recruiter will practice ethical behavior when determining a child’s eligibility.
* State and local MEP personnel implement practices that strengthen coordination and collaboration between migratory families, schools, and the community. The recruiter will demonstrate the ability to facilitate coordination and collaboration between migratory families, schools, and the community. The recruiter will practice meeting planning, facilitation, and team building.

States may want to consider developing their own ID&R training programs that are customized to the specific needs and characteristics of their states. For example, the recruiter should know about the local MEP including services offered, dates of operation, hours, and contact information. Here are some other topics that state and local training programs should consider, including

* how the state and local ID&R system is organized, including reporting relationships;
* state and local ID&R policies and procedures, including required paperwork;
* the content of the state and local ID&R plans, when available;
* demographic information regarding the characteristics of local migratory agricultural workers and fishers and their children, as well as their mobility patterns;
* state methods of collecting and maintaining data on migratory children;
* the recruiter’s role in the state’s quality control process and how to assist in developing and implementing the state or local plan for quality control, such as the mandatory federal re-interviewing requirements; and
* the organizations with which the SEA and LEAs expect the recruiter to coordinate and the amount of time the recruiter should allocate to this coordination.

The National ID&R Curriculum provides a structure that can be used to teach the newest recruiter the basic knowledge and skills needed to properly identify and recruit migratory children. It can also provide the most veteran recruiter with an understanding of more advanced recruitment concepts that prepares the recruiter for a stronger leadership role in the MEP. In combination with the National ID&R Curriculum, an individual state ID&R orientation, on-going training, and the National ID&R Manual, recruiters will discover the wide range of knowledge and skills necessary to become an effective MEP recruiter. States should continually work to improve their overall ID&R system and sharpen the knowledge and skills of new and veteran recruiters alike.

New Recruiter Training

The new recruiter generally receives basic training from an ID&R coordinator, a state-approved trainer, a local program coordinator, and/or a highly knowledgeable and skilled recruiter. This training often starts in a classroom or one-on-one setting and is generally followed by independent study and on-the-job training in the field. The on-the-job training often pairs the new recruiter with a highly skilled staff member until the new recruiter is ready to recruit or conduct an interview alone.

Classroom or Individual Training. By the end of the basic training, the recruiter should be able to correctly answer questions such as

* Why are migratory children identified and recruited? See Chapter 1.
* Who is eligible for the MEP? See Chapter 7.
* How do I find eligible children and youth? How do I develop an ID&R action plan?   
  See Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Appendix II.
* How do I conduct an interview? How do I explain the MEP to the family? What local services are available? See Chapter 6.
* How do I determine if a particular child is eligible for the MEP? See Chapter 7.
* What do I do if I encounter a situation that is not covered in the Sample Interview Script? See Chapter 6.
* How do I fill out a COE? See Chapter 8.
* How is my state’s student eligibility data collected, used, and stored? See Chapter 8.
* What ethical standards should I follow? See Chapter 2, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8.
* What should I know about the language and culture of migratory families in my area? See Chapter 1.
* What safety precautions should I take when recruiting? See Chapter 5.
* What state and local laws should I know about? See state ID&R material.

After the classroom or individual training ends, the new recruiter should work with a supervisor to explore what other federal, state, and local training materials and opportunities are available, and use this information to develop a long-term personal training and development plan. SEAs and LOAs generally offer training on the MEP that recruiters are required to attend, and SEAs also hold an annual national ID&R conference that features workshops with updated ID&R information and methods. Even though not all recruiters may be able to attend a national MEP conference, the state and local staff generally obtain and disseminate information from the conference.

Independent Study. In addition to taking the basic classroom training, the recruiter should study key documents on his or her own. In particular, the new recruiter is encouraged to study the materials provided in the initial training, use the National ID&R Curriculum as a way to gauge progress in learning the suggested knowledge and skills, self-check through a review of the learning objectives listed at the beginning of each chapter and the use of the chapter checklists provided in Appendix XIIl, and carefully read and study relevant documents, such as

* the law and regulations (including the instructions to complete the National COE);
* the NRG;
* the National ID&R Manual;
* state ID&R materials (if available);
* the State’s Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and Comprehensive State Plan, also known as the Service Delivery Plan (SDP);
* applicable state and local laws, regulations, and policy guidance;
* relevant state and local ID&R action plans (more information will be provided in Chapter 5); and
* the RESULTS website (<https://results.ed.gov>).

The goal of independent study is for the new recruiter to become familiar with these key documents and resources and to know where to find answers to basic questions about ID&R and child eligibility. It is critical for the recruiter to stay up-to-date on the latest changes in guidance and policy at both the state and federal levels.

If you’re a new recruiter, find a good, experienced recruiter and ask if you can tag along when he or she makes home visits. After a few visits, attempt your first MEP introduction or conduct a parent interview. You’ll learn far more seeing it done and doing it than you will just talking about it or reading an ID&R manual. You might try this even if you are not a new recruiter. The really great recruiter is always trying to learn new things.

Field-Based Training. Many states try to match new recruiters with mentors who are highly knowledgeable and skilled. At first, the new recruiter will shadow the mentor on recruitment visits to observe how to conduct an eligibility interview. The new recruiter should observe how the mentor makes the initial contact, explains the MEP, conducts an interview (paying particular attention to what questions are asked to determine whether the child is eligible for the MEP), and handles questions, problems, or concerns that arise. After each visit, the mentor and new recruiter should debrief and discuss the interview and eligibility determination. The new recruiter may find it helpful to shadow several mentor recruiters to observe the different strengths of each.

After watching several interviews, the new recruiter should begin to conduct a small part of the interview with the mentor’s guidance. Each time the new recruiter conducts a part of an interview, the recruiter should talk with the mentor about how the interview went and ask the mentor for feedback or advice on how to improve for the next interview. This conversation should be away from the family or youth that was interviewed. As the new recruiter’s interviewing skills improve, he or she can take over more of the interview process until comfortable conducting a full interview. By the end of the peer-mentoring portion of the training, the recruiter should be able to properly conduct an interview, determine child eligibility, complete a COE form, and perform other key duties.

Sometimes, especially in small states and very isolated areas, mentoring may not be practical. In this case, the recruiter should try to practice interviewing through a role-playing exercise during the classroom training, perhaps with another new recruiter. Practice is important as it makes the actual interview flow naturally and helps to ensure that the recruiter collects all of the required information to complete the COE and make the preliminary eligibility determination. In situations like this, the recruiter should discuss with his or her supervisor other ways to obtain adequate training and/or mentoring opportunities, including contacting a nearby state able to send an experienced recruiter for a limited time (three to four days).

Some states require the recruiter to pass a certification exam or answer questions to demonstrate the recruiter’s knowledge of child eligibility requirements. The purpose of these tests is to assess whether the new recruiter fully understands program eligibility requirements and can apply them to determine if a child is eligible for the MEP. If the recruiter’s state does not have a certification exam or knowledge check, the recruiter should conduct a self-check to test how thoroughly he or she understands the MEP child eligibility requirements (see Appendix IX). If the recruiter does not pass the certification exam or knowledge check, the recruiter should talk with an immediate supervisor to find out which topics to study and arrange for further training.

On-the-Job Training

Learning how to recruit properly is a process that does not end when the recruiter has finished the training activities. The recruiter will continue to learn as he or she identifies and recruits migratory children. It is important for the recruiter to ask questions about any eligibility situation that is unclear and to seek direction and guidance from supervisors and peers to become highly knowledgeable   
and skilled.

Regular Meetings with the Supervisor. The new recruiter should meet regularly with the immediate supervisor to discuss child eligibility questions and other concerns that arise. Ideally, a supervisor will provide regular feedback during the training process; however, it is equally important for the recruiter to ask for regular feedback on whether he or she is properly applying the child eligibility requirements. This is vital during the first few months on the job to prevent any misunderstandings from becoming ingrained.

Performance Assessments by Supervisors. As part of the system of state quality controls, SEAs or LOAs are required to complete an annual review and evaluation of ID&R practices of individual recruiters [34 CFR § 200.89(d)(2)]. While supervisors may conduct a performance review with seasoned recruiters in an office setting, supervisors generally observe each new recruiter in the field. This allows a supervisor to provide comprehensive feedback on the recruiter’s rapport building, interviewing, decision-making, and documenting skills. The purpose of this observation is for the supervisor to see how the new recruiter approaches interviewing migratory families and making and documenting preliminary eligibility determinations. It is imperative that supervisors schedule observations with new recruiters. The recruiter should also request feedback on completed COEs to make sure they are being done properly.

Regular meetings and performance assessments also present an opportunity for the new recruiter to suggest ways of improving local ID&R efforts and to identify any training and development activities that would increase productivity. Suggestions from a new recruiter can be particularly useful to the supervisor because a new recruiter will view the system with fresh eyes and may be able to identify productivity solutions that are invisible to those who are comfortable with the process.

Recruiter Support System. The new recruiter should develop a network of other recruiters locally, regionally, or even nationally with whom to share tips and discuss problems. Recruiting can be stressful work; it is important to create a safe learning environment in which the recruiter feels free to share experiences and to learn from successes and failures. The recruiter may find it useful to work with mentors, peers, and the recruitment network to develop an individual ID&R action plan or to adapt an existing plan (more information on ID&R plans is provided in Chapter 5). The recruiter is encouraged to try promising new ID&R strategies and to share the results (both good and bad) with peers.

The recruiter may find it helpful to go on recruitment visits with outreach workers from other programs or agencies. For example, a recruiter may wish to join outreach staff from the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, to learn how they approach migratory families and to learn more about the services they provide (more information on other agencies and organizations that provide services to farmworkers and their families is found in Appendix II).

Advanced Training and Ongoing Professional Development

The law that authorizes the MEP is updated generally every six to eight years. When the law is updated, ED will issue updated MEP regulations and guidance. Periodically, there are changes to other federal and state laws that affect migratory families as well, such as immigration or privacy laws. To properly identify and recruit migratory children, the recruiter must keep up with changes in the law, regulations, and guidance that affect the eligibility of migratory children (more information on other laws that may affect migratory families is found in Appendix I). The recruiter should also periodically visit the MEP web page at the U.S. Department of Education (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/mep/index.html>) and the RESULTS website (<https://results.ed.gov>) for updates and resources. Keep in mind that the recruiter should initially attend his or her state MEP’s training and review state informational resources for MEP program changes and updates before going to the federal level.

To stay current, the recruiter should participate in advanced child eligibility training and ongoing professional development to continually update and improve needed knowledge and skills. The recruiter should make a point of attending local, regional, statewide, and national trainings when possible. Regardless of years of experience, recruiters and supervisors who do not participate in ongoing eligibility training are more likely to make mistakes when making child eligibility determinations than those who are trained regularly. In particular, experienced recruiters may be tempted to apply policies that were learned as new recruiters out of habit, even though those policies may be out-of-date. Timely training and regular meetings can help experienced recruiters overcome these old habits. Some questions a recruiter may want to answer after going through advanced eligibility training include

* Have any changes been made to the child eligibility requirements for the MEP? If so, what are they?
* How do I determine child eligibility in difficult cases?
* How can I strengthen my recruitment network?
* How can I improve my interviewing skills?
* What common mistakes have recruiters made in determining child eligibility and/or filling out COEs and how can I avoid making those mistakes?
* What ethical dilemmas could I encounter and how do I handle them?
* How are these and other recent changes reflected in my district, region, or state?

The recruiter, with the supervisor’s approval, may also want to explore professional development opportunities in other relevant areas, such as education reform, the language and culture of local migratory families, transient populations, negotiation skills, dealing with difficult people, public speaking, immigration issues, agricultural issues, time management, stress management, and safety and emergency training. The recruiter can check the listings at local universities, colleges, community centers, and other organizations for relevant course offerings and training.

In addition to training offered by the state, OME hosts an annual conference in which the latest information on MEP-specific issues, including eligibility and recruitment topics, is presented. It is important to note that not all states have the same policies and practices; therefore, it is crucial that conference participants check with their state or local administrators before implementing policies or practices presented at the OME Conference. Information on the conference can be obtained from the RESULTS website (<https://results.ed.gov>). In addition, there are regional, state, and national conferences, trainings, workshops, and meetings that include sessions and information on ID&R.

Conclusion

There are a number of ways in which the recruiter can learn the job of ID&R: participating in a new recruiter training program, studying the NRG and other key resources, working with a mentor, meeting regularly with a supervisor, and developing a support system. Having knowledgeable and well-trained recruiters is an ongoing responsibility of both the individual recruiter and the MEP administrator. Regardless of what training opportunities are available, it is the recruiter’s job to work with the supervisor to learn the MEP child eligibility requirements and to ask the supervisor for help when questions arise on whether a child qualifies for the MEP. Remember, regardless of the size of the migratory student population, and whether the recruiter’s position is full-time or part-time, all states hold recruiters to the same standard: to conduct timely and proper identification and recruitment of eligible migratory children.

The first step in the process of determining if children are eligible for the MEP, however, is to locate them. Chapter 4 provides specific information on how to find migratory children.