

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org).



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# Good service means great outcomes for kids in care

STORY BY **LAURA RUTKOWSKI, MARE SUPERVISOR**

Diligent recruitment programs from across the country emphasize the impact of good customer service on recruitment.

Every interaction with prospective adoptive parents can affect the future of your waiting youth, whether it's engaging with visitors while working an information table at the Kinship Festival, returning the call of a prospective family who inquired after seeing a youth's MLive story or contacting a relative named in a previous foster care report.

To help workers hone their customer service skills when interacting with families, the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment offers the following tips:

- **Have a positive attitude.** Being warm and welcoming makes families want to learn more. The approval process involves a lot of effort on their part, so being positive and friendly helps them feel it's worth the work.



- **Avoid using jargon and acronyms.** Child welfare has its own version of alphabet soup from ICPC and MCI to DOC rate or FTM. When talking to families, use familiar, descriptive language and full names and titles when talking about the adoption process.

- **Follow up in a timely manner.** Best practice is to respond to families within 24 hours. Even if you do not have a large amount of time to spend, call to schedule an appointment with them. Also, if you don't have answers to all of their questions at that moment, let them know you are working to get the information they need.

Since people are at the heart of the work that you do, the way you treat those you encounter through the adoption process truly matters.

*For more tips and information about making the most of your role in recruitment efforts, visit [www.nrcdr.org](http://www.nrcdr.org).*





## *Exceptional Recruitment Award*

*The MARE team respects and admires Michigan's adoption specialists for the amazing work they do for waiting youth, so with each issue of the Professional Provider Newsletter, we feature an adoption specialist nominated by a MARE staff member for an Exceptional Recruitment Award.*

*Now let's meet the new Exceptional Recruitment Award winner ...*

# *How about a round of applause for a wonderful worker?*

## **Hannah Gac shows care for families needing support**

Hannah Gac has great communication with the team and family including ways to provide support.

Oftentimes, when families reach out to the MARE Match Support Program, assistance from the worker is critical in providing

resources and support that are best for that particular family.

Hannah always communicates well when needed, which not only helps workers but also families. She has gone above and beyond for a family currently in the program to ensure they receive

needed services and resources.

"I know that this family would not be receiving support or assistance if it wasn't for Hannah," says Match Support Specialist Jessica DuVall. "Her empathy and caring towards the families she works with really shows!"



**These photos show the attention to detail that helps enhance a MARE photolisting. In the left photo, Myasia is dressed to her best, and there’s a good background. The lighting shows her face, and she has a slight smile. In the right photo, the photographer got some nice foliage in the background. Deavonte also is dressed appropriately, and he is posed and smiling.**

# *Taking quality photos for a MARE photolisting*

STORY BY **HANNAH DUNNE, MARE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**

We know that not all workers are part-time photographers, so we thought we could make a quick “how-to” guide to help workers get the most out of their photos for MARE.

There are a few key things to pay attention to when taking a photo for MARE:

How’s the lighting? Is it too dark? Is it too light?

Is the child dressed appropriately? Can I get him or her to smile?

Is there a nice area at the residential or foster home that I can use to take the child’s photo?

## **Lighting**

Lighting can be tricky at times, especially when you’re using a cell phone. If it’s really bright out, try to find a nice shaded area so the

child doesn’t have to squint. This will also keep parts of the image from being overexposed (too bright to show details). As always, natural light is the best for pictures, but if you’re inside try to find a well-lit spot and snap your photo there.

Also watch out for shadows on the child’s face! If possible, have your back to the source of the light. If the child has his or her back to the light source, there’s a good possibility that the child’s face will appear as a shadow.

## **Child’s appearance**

Since this picture will be one of the only images families might see, we want to make sure the child looks his or her best. Think of what the child might wear for a school

photo and have him or her refrain from wearing revealing clothing. In addition, beware of any identifying information on the child’s shirt such as the name or logo of a school.

## **Location**

It may be hard to find a decent area and backdrop for the photo, but if you can get outside, try it! Any sort of foliage will make the photo stand out and look great. Also, try to avoid having the child stand in front of cinder block walls. If they have to, see if there’s some artwork on the wall or something to make it stand out.

Finally, if you have any questions or concerns, contact Hannah Dunne, Mark Fisk or Laura Rutkowski at 800-589-6273.

# What's the deal with those due dates on mare.org?

STORY BY **JEREMIAH BALAZOVICH, MARE DATA ANALYST**

We get it. Your job isn't just hectic sometimes; it's hectic most of the time.

A court appointment on Monday, a meeting with a youth on Tuesday, a stack of paperwork to photolist a youth on Wednesday, a meeting with one of your families on Thursday. And Friday ... what was on Friday?

So you log onto your dashboard on the MARE website to see if anything needs to be completed. The first thing you see is a list of due dates, and at the top of that list are the recruitment items you just uploaded a couple days ago. They're past due! "I know I just did this on Wednesday," you tell yourself, yet it's clear. Your dashboard says they're late.



These due dates can be confusing because they have been tied to other approvals on the website instead of the individual document that you just uploaded. A call to the MARE office could clear things up, but wouldn't it be better if the due dates were more accurate? Well, now they are.

We've been working with our web development company, and we're excited to report that these dates are now correct. Not only will the due dates be correct when new

recruitment items are uploaded to mare.org, but all of the due dates from previous photolistings have been fixed as well.

Now when you log into your dashboard on the MARE website to see if anything is due, you will be able to rely on the due dates. When you tell yourself, "I know I just did this on Wednesday," the website will respond, "You're right! You did!"

OK, not really. The MARE website can't talk to you ... yet.

## *Relax, learn and enjoy*



**The Adoption Worker Conference** will take place Aug. 21 from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Aug. 22 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with registration beginning 30 minutes prior each day at the Shanty Creek Resort, 5780 Shanty Creek Road, Bellaire, MI 49615.

**Registration** is available at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017adoptionconference](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017adoptionconference).

**Photo by Bob Tosterud shows the Intermediate River near Bellaire.**