



Adoption Conversion and Infant Adoption Spotlight

Our Program Spotlight series continues by highlighting how our **Adoption Conversion and Infant Adoption** continue to provide services in this **Q & A** with the program's Director, **Mary Kay Collins**.

Q: How has the current shelter in place mandate affected how we deliver our adoption services? Do caseworkers still see clients face-to-face?

A: The adoption staff has made some adaptations to continue to provide adoption services and to ensure as best as possible that the challenges of this pandemic **do not slow down permanency** for the children waiting for their forever families. We are doing home visits and adoption

using virtual technology such as Zoom. We are mindful of the importance of keeping the number of staff engaging with families in their home to a minimum so will only do face to face visits when it is absolutely necessary.

Q: Tell us some of your biggest wins for your program during this crisis. What are you most proud of?

A: There are two things we are most proud of as a program. The first is **our team!** Each one of our CYFS adoption staff has had to **step out** of their comfort zone and learn new ways to assist our children and families. This necessitates a high level of commitment and dedication to be able to put energy into the everyday work along with finding solutions to coping with challenges specific to the impact of COVID. Our staff has a can do attitude. They pull together to **support each other** from a distance and to find ways individually and as a team to support our families.

The second thing we are most proud of is our agency. Using the framework this agency was founded upon, the adoption staff has been able to work with community partners to **find solutions** to permanency for children. Whether it means zooming with attorneys or learning how to get electronic signatures on required documents, the staff has been creative and innovative in finding solutions, one challenge at a time.

Q: What have been your biggest obstacles?

A: The biggest challenge has been the **delay in the court proceedings** that move the **permanency** process along. We know what time means to a child and we understand, especially now how important being in a forever family is to a child. Having to wait on the courts to open or find other ways to function has been stressful. Thankfully many of our courts are now **finding ways** using social distancing and video conferencing to start opening up. This is still new and may require a **different set of tools and skills** to function. However, we are ready for this challenge as it is the way forward for the children and families we serve.

Q: If someone reading this wanted to help our Adoption programs right now during the pandemic, what would you say is your greatest need?

A: When it comes to working remotely, our staff has been blessed to have an IT department that has been able to assist us with our needs. This has been huge in helping staff adjust to accommodating the stay at home order. It would be nice to provide our staff with some sort of a **Quaran-team Survival** care package to help them feel connected to each other and the agency. Just a little something to brighten their day. Specifically a t shirt or a mug, something tangible to remember the work they did during this time.

It would also be nice to be able to provide those families who will finalize their adoption during this time with a special memento to remember becoming a forever family in a time of great challenges. Something like a porch photo opportunity or t-shirts to help celebrate their **gotcha day** in 2020.