



adoption-share
Bright Hope
annual report 2023

Pictured on front cover: Amy and Christopher pictured with their two children brought together through Adoption-Share's Family-Match Program.

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CEO *Thea Ramirez*

Major General Robert T. Preston was a WWII chaplain for the US Air Force, 31st Infantry, Philippine Division, when he was taken prisoner after the US surrendered at the Battle of Bataan. Surviving a 65-mile Death March, where 10,000 US and Filipino soldiers perished, he served his fellow soldiers for 42 months in Japanese prisons, enduring beatings, starvation, solitary confinement, and punishing Japanese heat boxes. Upon release from one particularly grueling time in a heat box, he emerged to exhort his fellow captives with this charge: “Don’t doubt in the dark, what you believed in the light.” For 3.5 years, Major General Robert T. Preston never abandoned hope that his suffering would end.

Hope is an interesting word. One of only 472 words in the English language that serves as both a noun and a verb, the word hope is both a feeling of expectation and an active longing for something to happen. It is the *already*, but *not yet*. Hope roars to life in a feeling of expectation, but in active waiting, it can grow faint. Proverbs warns that a hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled - is a tree of life.

As we reflect on our journey through 2023, I am reminded of this tricky four letter word, hope, and the tension it produces in ‘the already, but not yet’ nature of our work.

- The *already* ... celebrating the countless lives that have been touched and the families we have united, or helped reunite, through our work in adoptions and helping recruit foster parents. But not yet ... the 30,000 children who are legally freed for adoption and do not yet have a family identified to adopt them.
- The *already* ... scaling our work to new states and jurisdictions, but the not yet reality that there are still more states and jurisdictions to onboard.
- The *already* ... data and research that supports the efficacy of our work but the not yet influence to combat attempts to diminish the incredible transformation we are achieving through our work and mission.

In this tension, we find fertile ground for *Hope* to emerge from our foundation of *what has been* to nurture *what is yet to be*. And this is key: for *Hope* to flourish, it must be anchored in what we know to be true, lest we will “doubt in the dark what we believed in the light.”

For Major General Preston, the presence of God was Truth in the midst of his suffering as well as his certainty that the power of the U. S. Armed Forces would ultimately achieve his liberation. For me, the Truth is, God called me to this work and has sustained it in miraculous ways. The ‘already’ is found in the incredible outcomes we’ve achieved as well as the testimonies of those who we’ve helped. My *hope* is that our ‘not yet’ will soon be realized, that it’s just around the next corner.

I write with confidence because of the exceptional power and skill sets of our growing Adoption-Share team and the incredible generosity and support of our donors!

As we look ahead to 2024, we are filled with Bright Hope, thankful for what has been and expectant for what is yet to come. Thank you for joining us in this work!

Sincerely,



Thea Ramirez
Founder and CEO

www.adoption-share.com

[f](#) [t](#) [e](#) @adoptionshare



Adoption-Share is a 501 (c) 3 tax exempt organization that equips all people working on behalf of children and families with technology, analysis, and insights that prioritize and meet each child's individual needs through foster care and adoption outcomes that are in the child's best interest.

OUR VISION

We believe every child deserves a secure and nurturing environment that fosters growth, happiness, and belonging in a family, regardless of their background or circumstances. Our vision is to be the premier organization for leading changes within the child welfare system that promote well-being for vulnerable children.

Highlight Reel

A Few of Our Achievements in 2023

SOC 2 Type 2 Audit Completion

Commitment to Security, Availability, and Accessibility

SOC 2 compliance is a component of the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA)'s Service Organization Control reporting platform. Adoption-Share completed a SOC 2 Type 2 Audit in 2023. The SOC 2 Audit independently confirms the Family-Match application and infrastructure are established and maintained in a manner that assures security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality, and privacy of customer data. (aicpa.org)



Adoption-Share x Big League Impact Partner for Home Plate Campaign

From Data to Advocacy

Founded in 2013 by St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Adam Wainwright, Big League Impact selected Adoption-Share as its Home Plate Charity for St. Louis! These dollars are helping expand our work to impact more lives in Missouri, where 1400 children are currently waiting for a family to adopt them. Stay tuned!

Centered from left to right, Jenny Wainwright, Darrell Missey, Director of Children's Services for Missouri Department of Social Services, and Thea Ramirez. Also pictured Marcy Bursac with her family. Marcy is the Founder of The Forgotten Adoption Option Podcast. Keith Brooks (far left), Executive Director of Big League Impact.



Adoption-Share Receives 9th IRB Approval

Commitment to Putting Families and Children First

In a continued effort to maintain integrity, transparency, and accountability as we deploy the Family-Match Application in states across the country, Adoption-Share applied for and received IRB approval for the ninth year in a row! The IRB ensures our pilots are conducted ethically and with the safety and security of the pilot participants in mind.





Adoption-Share Invited to Attend Cornell's Inaugural Child Welfare Symposium

Commitment to Efficacy

Under the leadership of Dr. Vince Slaugh, Cornell hosted a symposium to facilitate conversations between operations academics and child welfare practitioners to spur collaborative efforts toward systemic improvements. During the full day gathering, Dr. Slaugh presented his preliminary analysis on the impact Family-Match has had on increasing the number of adoptions.

Thea Ramirez with Dr. Vince Slaugh at Cornell University



Adoption-Share Executes New Data Sharing Agreement with Georgia's Division of Family and Children's Services

Commitment to Leadership

Following the completion of a successful pilot in 2022 (see page 9) Adoption-Share executed a new data sharing agreement in June of 2023, with Georgia's Division of Family and Children's Services to increase its utilization across the state of Georgia.



Adoption-Share Launches an Informal Coalition to Push Back on Anti-Adoption Narrative in the US

Commitment to Inspiring Change

In response to the growing anti-adoption narrative in the United States, Adoption-Share launched an informal coalition, consisting of individuals impacted by adoption and adoption-related organizations, who are weaving together collective experience, research, and influence to make a significant impact in the adoption space.

Thea Ramirez speaking at one of several fireside chats. This one was hosted at the home of David and Jennifer Nasser. Right, Thea pictured with John Knox, Founder of Adoption is an Option.



Adoption-Share Celebrates Over 500 Adoptions in the State of Florida! State Legislature Funds Our Work in the Sunshine State!

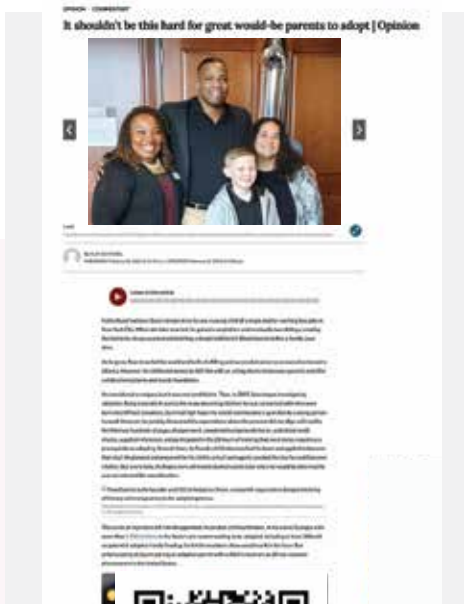
Commitment to Children and Families!

2023 ushered in our intense celebration of achieving this milestone! We are so grateful for our agency partners who continue to work tirelessly to achieve legal permanency through adoption for children waiting to be adopted!

Mentions and Moments

Extra, Extra! Scan the QR codes to read, listen, and watch.

» Georgia Father Shares His Story



Word from our Director of Private Infant Adoption Network

Our network for private infant adoption helps prospective adoptive parents get matched faster

by networking with licensed adoption agencies and adoption attorneys from all over the United States.

As a mom to 8 children, 5 through adoption, I have a unique perspective in my expanding role as Director of Adoption-Share's private infant adoption network and Family Coordinator for Family-Match in Georgia, which has proven to be an invaluable resource to offer and share with hopeful adoptive parents. I have been on both sides of the fence. I have experienced the tiresome wait and exuberant joy. I have experienced the Proverb on a personal level- that hope deferred makes the heart sick but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Adoption-Share offers an online platform to help hopeful adoptive parents make connections faster and in keeping

with our values, I made it my personal mission to personally connect with every family and adoption professional on our platform. As our platform continues to grow and we continue to celebrate the beautiful families forged through adoption, I look forward to being a catalyst for more longings fulfilled!



Kristina Mongillo,

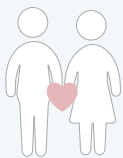
Private Infant Adoption
Network Director | Adoption-Share



Our platform has helped shorten the wait time for hopeful adoptive parents, given licensed adoption agencies and attorneys more families to consider, and empowered families to have more control, transparency, and decision making ability.

Accomplishments

Our network of adoption professionals help women making an adoption plan, consider families on our platform as prospective adoptive parents, through a licensed child placement agency or adoption attorney.



131

Families Registered

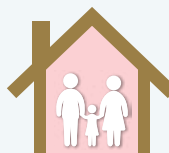


250

child placement agencies, family support organizations, and adoption attorneys from around the USA



Connected **71** women who were confronted with unexpected pregnancies and wanting to learn more about adoption



73

Adoption situations posted this year

Bringing Efficiency

Having personally benefited from Family-Match (we adopted a sibling set of three in 2021), I now have the extraordinary honor of working to support agencies in Florida, grow in their knowledge, and use the tool. Each day, I get to see the positive results generated by the efforts of so many caseworkers working across the state of Florida to find forever homes for waiting children. I recall the recent adoption of a child with autism, whose worker used Family-Match to find a loving home. It's incredible to think how much this child has grown and flourished in the loving home of a forever family.

In 2023, our team collectively celebrated the monumental achievement of 500+ adoptions on Family-Match, a testament to the dedication and hard work of child welfare professionals across the state. 2023 also brought growth of important partnerships with the Florida Department of Health and Florida Department of Children and Families, helping to expand the pool of potential foster and adoptive families, while strengthening relationships with Community Based Care Providers.

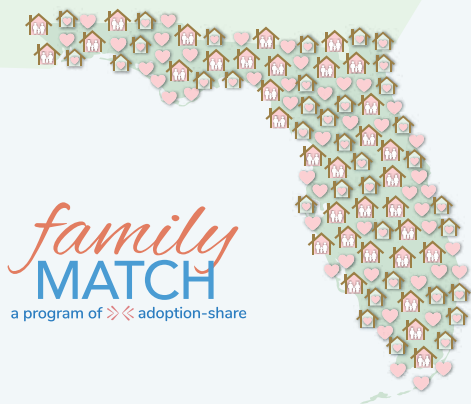
As we look towards 2024, it's clear that there's no better time to fully integrate Family-Match into each agency's recruitment and matching processes for foster care and adoption. We're excited to continue our mission of supporting child welfare professionals across the state to find the best placements for the children they serve and to welcome new partners into our community.

In 2023, we continued to be heartened by our results:

- ✓ Family-Match increased its finalized adoptions from 2022 to 2023 by 31% (from 86 in 2022 to 113 in 2023)
- ✓ Received support from the Florida Legislature to continue Family-Match across the state, converting philanthropic funding to state funding.
- ✓ Onboarded 753 new prospective adoptive families.



Michelle Giordano
Family-Match Director, Florida



In Just 5 Years...

 1015+ Children Matched	 680+ Children Placed	 513+ Adoptions
 100% Participation by all 19 community-based care circuits statewide	 3,479+ Families have created profiles	 700 Maintained on average an open and active pool of children

Of the 513+ adoptions facilitated by our Family-Match Program in Florida

 100% Are considered special needs	 9 years Average of children adopted	 42% Have a disability
 46% Spent time in congregate care homes or residential treatment facilities.	 60% Are part of sibling groups	 52% Occurred outside the child placing agency's area

Family Corner

We were honored to be a part of so many matches and finalizations this year. It's gratifying to see families form and grow through adoption, especially when our tool has helped bridge the gap between waiting children and families waiting to adopt. We celebrate these new beginnings as we expand how we can support families at every step of the way.

In 2023, we continued our Family Meetings on Facebook Live, covering topics like:

- ✓ Sibling Relationships
- ✓ Signs of Depression
- ✓ Family Communication
- ✓ Inviting Biological Children Into the Adoption Journey
- ✓ Tips for Surviving Summer
- ✓ Trauma Informed Parenting
- ✓ Effective Discipline: Utilizing Natural and Logical Consequences
- ✓ Trauma and the Impact on Development
- ✓ Navigating Birth Family Relationships in Foster Care
- ✓ Sleep and Its Impact on the Brain



Additionally, 2023 was the year we launched our “It Takes a Village” calls for families who have finalized adoptions. These virtual meetings allowed families to make connections with each other, provided support, and built community. These opportunities help families feel seen. We make sure our calls provide space for families to share their experiences and offer resources families can access to help them navigate challenges they may be facing.



Libby Sobkowiak,
Family Coordinator, Florida

Did You Know?

Adoption-Share sends out post placement care packages to families who have been matched on Family-Match and have made it to placement!

These boxes are filled with items to equip and encourage families as they journey towards finalizing their adoption. In 2023 over 85 post placement boxes were mailed to families.



Pictured: Post Placement Care Packages on their way to being shipped out to families!

Faster Families Highway for Recruitment

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and Adoption-Share have entered our 2nd year of a successful partnership aimed at helping local departments across the Commonwealth increase its pool of prospective foster families to improve outcomes for children in foster care.

Localities across the Commonwealth have embraced Adoption-Share’s recruitment tool, “Faster Families Highway for Recruitment” provided by VDSS, to assist them with identifying the most compatible and capable families best fit to serve local children in care. Research shows children placed in local homes within their own community spend less time in care and have a higher likelihood of achieving reunification than those placed in foster homes outside of their communities.



Anna Tyson,
Family-Match Virginia Director

I got two families just like that. I am going to reach out to more. I am a believer. It is that easy to see the families and reach out to the ones I think are a good fit.

Rebecca, Foster Care/Resource Home Recruiter, Tazewell DSS

Highlights



- ✔ All 120 localities in the Commonwealth in addition to state and local VDSS leadership, continued to have access to the Faster Families Highway.
- ✔ 116 OnRamps have been established to connect families directly to the Highway. The Highway serves as a connection point where local departments can view and recruit prospective families who will go on to become trained and approved.
- ✔ American Indian Tribes recognized by the state of Virginia have been invited to join the Highway and create their own OnRamps.
- ✔ Since July 1, 2023, family registration has increased by 45%.
- ✔ 2,415 families in total have accessed the OnRamp to the Faster Families Highway since launching in mid-April of 2022.

Of the 2,415 families that accessed a Highway OnRamp



1,086+

family inquiries presented as qualified leads to recruitment workers. 72% of these families are open to fostering children and supporting the work of reunification!



499+

Families presented as qualified leads on Family-Match to recruitment workers were recruited by a local DSS office.



941+

of prospective families are open to caring for children over 12 years old.



1,376+

are open to more than one child.

The Opportunity

Family-Match was launched as a three region pilot in 2022 in partnership with Georgia's Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). During the 12 month pilot, DFCS workers across 30 counties within Regions 1, 8, and 13 were trained and onboarded onto Family-Match. Family-Match provided a tool whereby workers could identify and evaluate families for children who were legally freed for adoption and did not have a family identified to adopt them. These children were older, in large sibling sets, and with significant needs. During our 12 month pilot we:

>>> Faster Time to Permanency

X2

Matched children demonstrated an average time to match of 2.3 months (a savings in time in one case of more than 4.5 years)



The Allen Family, adopted a sibling set of three during Adoption-Share's Family-Match Pilot!

>>> Increase in Adoption Matching

30%

of children onboarded onto Family-Match across the three piloted regions with open and active cases were matched. This was a 13% increase in adoption matches in less than 12 months with only three regions participating.

>>> Increase in Adoption



Celebrated 4 finalized adoptions with 8 additional placements slated for finalization post pilot!

Increased the prospective adoptive pool by 275+ Georgia families



60%

of the families have no preference on race



72%

of the families have no preference on gender



42%

of the families are open to siblings



50%

of the families are hoping to adopt older youth

Faster Families A Front End Recruitment Tool of Our Family-Match Program

Adoption-Share's Family-Match Program was launched to more efficiently and appropriately match hard to place children with licensed, approved and waiting families.

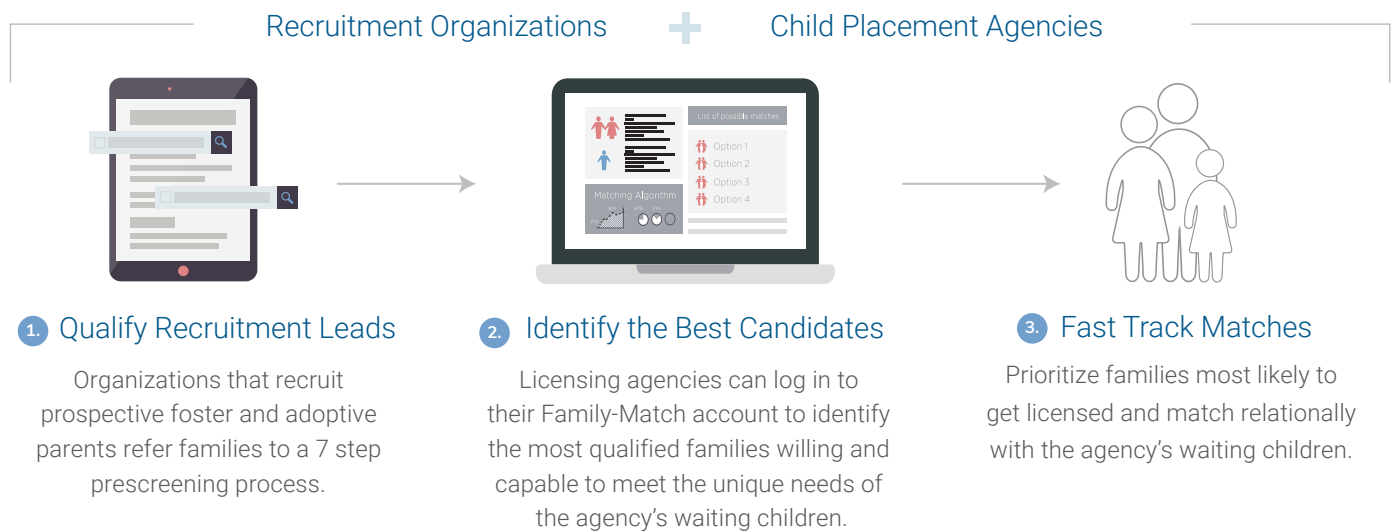
Now, Family-Match has been expanded to help child placement agencies identify the most qualified candidates from the moment they inquire about becoming a foster or adoptive parent. Instead of processing all families on a first-come, first-serve basis, workers can prioritize licensing for families who have passed a readiness assessment, disclosed prior criminal history, stated their capacity and interest, completed a 60 minute overview on trauma informed parenting and completed their Family-Match Compatibility Assessments.

The Need

Agencies report less than 20% of families who reach out for information on fostering or adopting from foster care will become licensed.

The Solution

Family-Match 2.0 is bridging the divide between recruitment and agency on-boarding for improved, accelerated matching.



Here is how it works

Family-Match 2.0 helps a licensing agency's on-boarding process from being overwhelmed by families who are not ready to continue the process.



Investing in Research and Continued Learning

In partnership with state and local agencies, Adoption-Share’s Family-Match Program is establishing a unique data set in child welfare that zeroes in on the quality of child and family pairings. Through the identification and long-term tracking of the attributes initially derived in the scientific literature that influence stability in child and family placements, Family-Match is able to assist workers in identifying and evaluating families for children who will have the greatest likelihood of longterm success.

The outcomes of the pairings generated through Family-Match inform the continuous improvement to the computational models we use to recommend child and family pairings that will have the greatest likelihood of success.

This iterative process reinforces our data driven decision making tool to support workers as they evaluate and engage families who may be a fit for a child in need of a home. All decisions regarding matches, placements, and adoptions are made by child welfare professionals. Family-Match is not an AI-powered tool.

Meet the D.A.R.T Crew | Data Analysis + Research Team



**Dr. Gian Gonzaga,
Senior Consultant of
Research and Data Analytics**

Dr. Gonzaga brings expertise in relationship, emotional, and health psychology to Adoption-Share’s Family-Match Program. He currently serves as Senior Consultant of Research and Data Analytics at Adoption-Share, where he co-authored the Family-Match Compatibility Assessment, child welfare professionals are utilizing for matching prospective families and children. The relational fit score generated from Family-Match Compatibility Assessments inform workers which child and family pairings will have the greatest likelihood of success.

Dr. Gonzaga’s previous experience includes working as the Director of Data Science at Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, serving as a senior director of research and development at eHarmony Labs, and working with world-renowned marriage researcher Dr. Thomas Bradbury at the University of California, Los Angeles. There he researched the factors that led to marital success as part of an 11-year study of married couples. He also worked with Dr. Shelley Taylor, a leading expert in how social relationships buffer individuals against stress.

He has taught, presented and published extensively on topics relating to relationships, love and health, and has received numerous honors and awards for his work, including the prestigious National Science foundation minority Predoctoral Fellowship and Psi Chi National Undergraduate Research Competition.

Dr. Gonzaga holds a doctorate in Personality-Social Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.



**Heather Setrakian,
Senior Consultant of
Research and Data Analytics**

Heather Setrakian holds an M.A. in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy from Pepperdine University. In her work for Adoption-Share, Heather co-authored the Family-Match compatibility assessments for families and children to be better matched. She continues to follow child and family pairings once they move into placement to assess the quality of the match, applying insights from continued evaluation into actionable recommendations to improve the Family-Match Application.

Prior to her work with Adoption-Share, Heather developed and managed multiple large scale research projects including co-founding the eHarmony longitudinal study of marriage, conducting numerous studies on user behavior and outcomes, and studies that profiled user personality and lead to improvements in the eHarmony matching system. She has deep experience with all aspects of the research process: design, data collection, analysis. She has spoken both nationally and internationally on marriage and relationship development. Her research has been presented at numerous professional conferences and has been featured in magazines, newspapers, and TV segments across the globe.



Dr. Vince Slaugh,
Research Associate

Dr. Vince Slaugh is an assistant professor at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration (SHA). He received his PhD in operations management from the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University and joined the SHA faculty in July 2016, after spending one year as a visiting faculty member in supply chain management at Penn State University's Smeal College of Business. Slaugh holds a BS and MS in industrial engineering and a BA in history from Penn State University.

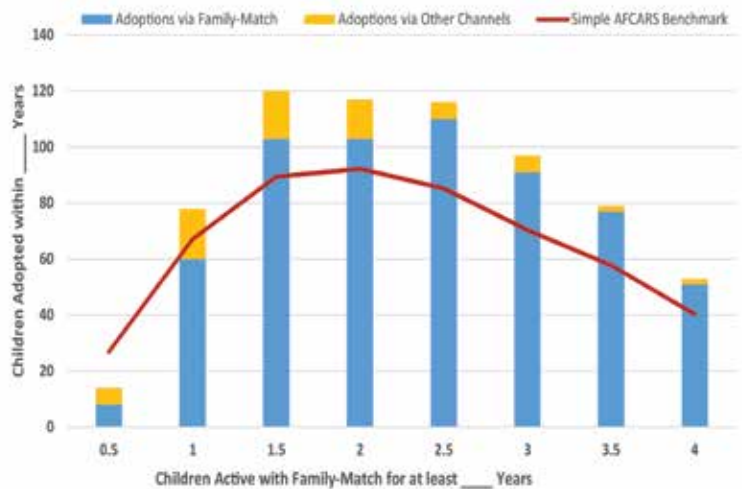
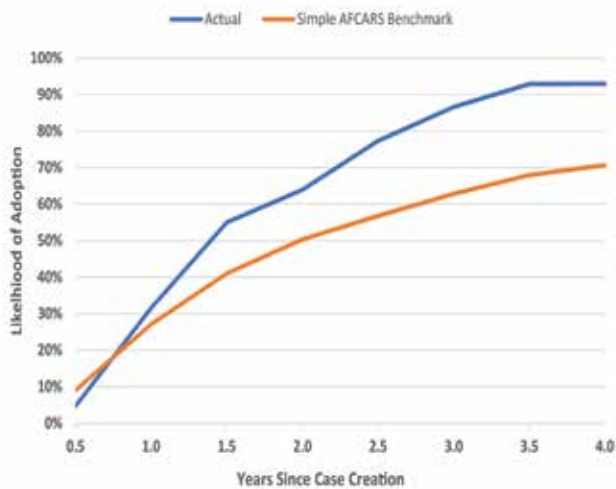
In his research, Slaugh focuses on the optimal design of service systems, especially workforce management for labor-intensive, care-oriented operations. Methodologically, he uses stochastic models to both develop high-level managerial insights and inform tactical choices. Industry collaborations in three rich application domains drive his research: nursing home staffing, hotel housekeeping operations, and child welfare systems. Each of these three industries touch on central service design questions for hundreds of thousands of workers or caregivers in the United States and even more hotel guests, nursing home residents, and children in foster care. His work appears in *Manufacturing and Service Operations Management*, *Production and Operations Management*, and *Interfaces*.

Moving the Needle on

Eradicating “Hardest to Place” as a qualifier for the longest waiting children in the foster care system.

At Adoption-Share we have long believed that the origination of the term “hardest to place”, speaks more to the archaic and uninventive processes and solutions currently deployed to help move the needle for this population of children than to the actual “adoptability” of waiting children. In fact, in the United States, there are more families that are waiting to adopt than children waiting to be adopted.

The graphs below represent analysis from a simple AFCARS benchmark, based on Florida AFCARS data from 2011-2022 with legally free and clear children. Using simple rules about case goals and adoption outcomes, Dr. Slaugh calculated likelihood of adoption based on age, race, gender, special needs, and other information (first graph). While ongoing work in 2024 will refine this benchmark methodology, in comparing the AFCARS data with the work of an agency that has embedded the use of Family-Match in its adoption matching process, Dr. Slaugh shows a marked increase in adoptions when Family-Match is utilized for children deemed “hardest to place” (second graph).



FAMILY-MATCH

Meet our Partners



Trauma Free World: Trauma Free World is a community dedicated to helping people around the world heal from childhood trauma. Headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, Trauma Free World offers training all around the world, as well as online for anyone with an internet connection or mobile phone. Trauma Free World partners with leading trauma researchers to adapt cutting edge trauma research into training that is accessible to all, regardless of literacy level, and applicable across cultures. Thanks to their support- Adoption-Share is able to provide access to Trauma Free World's 75 minute Overview of Trauma Informed Care to every prospective foster and adoptive parent who makes their way through our new recruitment portal at no cost. To date over 168 prospective foster and adoptive families have been trained!



Lifesong for Orphans: Lifesong for Orphans is bringing joy and purpose to orphaned and vulnerable children through indigenous orphan care around the world and foster care initiatives in communities across the United States. Lifesong facilitates no-cost church and private adoption funds nationwide and provides adoption grants and loans to adoptive families. Thanks to their support and partnership Adoption-Share is pushing back against anti-adoption rhetoric and expanding our footprint helping children and families come together through adoption.

Program Supporters

Organizations that share our vision of ensuring every child is rooted in family.



2023 Leadership We're together for one reason—to work towards a future in which every child is rooted in family.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Dr Gian Gonzaga
- Steven Mucchetti
- Shelby Patrice
- Jason Dandridge
- Carlos Garcia
- Parker Lavin
- Thea Ramirez

OUR TEAM



Thea Ramirez,
Founder and CEO



Lorin Sholander,
Chief Operating Officer



Amy Simpson,
Vice President of Programs



Kristine Persaud,
Agency Coordinator



Stephen Moxon,
Lead Developer



Kristina Mongillo,
Family Coordinator, Georgia



Dr. Gian Gonzaga,
Senior Consultant of
Research and Data Analytics



Heather Setrakian,
Senior Consultant of
Research and Data Analytics



Eufayba Turnage,
Executive Assistant



Libby Sobkowiak,
Florida Family Coordinator



Anna Tyson,
Family-Match Director Virginia



Jennifer Edson
Family Coordinator Virginia



Michelle Giordano
Family-Match Director, Florida



Elizabeth Flieg
Quality Assurance



Dr. Vince Slaugh,
Research Associate

Sources of Financial Support <<

Our heartfelt thanks to all who have invested in this work! We simply can not do the hard work of system transformation and family creation without your support.

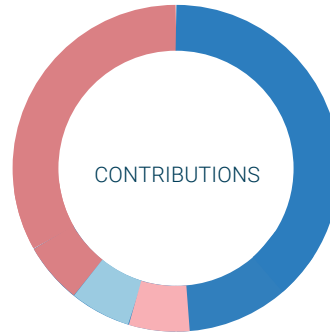
Fiscal Year 2023 (Jan. 1, 2023 – Dec. 31, 2023)

Adoption-Share operating funds come from four sources: Individual contributions, contributions from grant-making organizations, service revenue and other income (e.g. federal credits and interest income). Total Adoption-Share contributions in 2023 were approximately \$1,148,000.

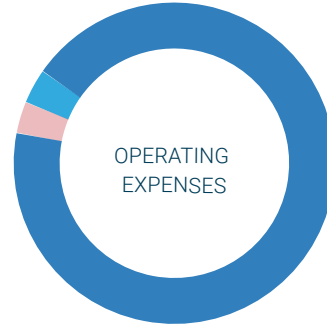
Adoption-Share's total operating expenses in 2023 were approximately \$1,125,000.

***Unofficial unaudited statement for FY2023.*

Does not include in-kind services or donations, estimated to be approximately \$220,000 for FY2023. For audited statement visit adoption-share.com in June of 2024.



- << 9% Grants
- << 30% Individual Contributions
- << 51% Services
- << 10% Other



- << 89% Program Services Expenses
- << 6% Management and General Expenses
- << 5% Fundraising Expenses

>> Did you know? <<

According to the National Adoption Council, each adoption represents a savings of \$15,480 for each year a child remains in his or her adoption placement until they reach 18 years of age. For the 500+ children on Family-Match that have been adopted over the past 4.5 years with the average age at adoption being 10—a conservative estimate would be a cumulative savings over 7 years of **\$75 million dollars**.



adoption-share

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