



## Methodist Foster Care Being Developed by Louisiana Methodist Children's Home

*October 23, 2015 – Ruston, LA* With a goal of developing across Louisiana the type of Therapeutic Foster Care system which Methodist Children's Home of Greater New Orleans maintained in southeast Louisiana prior to Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana Methodist Children's Home is, as one staff member said, "bringing Lazarus forth".

During coming months, Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services will be updating the policies, procedures and forms from the former program and bringing them to life under a new Child Placing License the organization is seeking from the Department of Children and Family Services.

Methodist Foster Care's website is at [www.MethodistFosterCare.org](http://www.MethodistFosterCare.org), a domain the organization has held for years. As the Methodist Foster Care program is developed, information will be published there.

Rick Wheat, President of Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services, reports, "providing therapeutic foster care again has been on our radar and in our strategic plan. Recently, when we learned a significant provider of therapeutic foster care in Louisiana is ending services, we decided now is the time to make this happen. Louisiana's foster children require these services and we believe we have the resources to develop an excellent TFC program."

Wheat continued, "During the remainder of 2015 we will seek a Child Placing license from Louisiana's Department of Children and Family Services, hire a Director for Methodist Foster Care, establish regional offices, hire staff, and begin building a network of Therapeutic Foster Care families. We are preparing a response to the Office of Juvenile Justice's request for proposals to provide TFC services and, when an opportunity presents itself, we will respond to similar requests from Louisiana's Department of Children and Family Services. This is another step of active pursuit of our organization's mission."

A few years ago when Louisiana decided to use Medicaid funds for children in need of care, the staff of Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services achieved what had never been done. The organization transitioned three children's homes into psychiatric residential treatment facilities. This was accomplished without losing focus on our mission, without relinquishing our values and principles, and without losing our culture.

Since then, the organization's three children's homes have focused on perfecting residential treatment services. One of the strategic goals established by the organization's Board of Directors is to continue perfecting residential care.

For the foreseeable future, and short of any social upheaval that would require expansion of residential services to meet the needs of larger numbers of children, the organization will maintain 128 licensed residential beds; 84 in Ruston, 24 in Sulphur and 20 in Mandeville.

The organization is also expanding the community-based, "Methodist Family Services". Family Plus sites have increased from 5 at the beginning of the year to 24 located throughout Louisiana. By year end the organization expects to have established 30 service sites located in partnership with United Methodist congregations throughout Louisiana. This expansion is another of the organization's strategic goals.

The next step in achieving the organization's strategic plan is developing "Methodist Foster Care". Persons interested in Therapeutic Foster Care will learn more at: <http://www.MethodistFosterCare.org>

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