

Thompson Child & Family Focus in North Carolina










Executive Summary

Thompson Child & Family Focus, a leader in services for children across North Carolina, like many other child welfare agencies, was dependent on antiquated systems for their foster care programming. The lengthy, complicated process to approve prospective foster parents resulted in 60-70% of prospective parents dropping out through the process. As a result, fewer quality homes were available for children who needed them, and social workers were spending more time on paperwork than with children and families.

Will Jones, President and CEO of Thompson, wanted to leverage technology to address the agency's challenges and facilitate the licensing process for parents and staff. In February 2018, Thompson became the first agency on the East Coast to partner with Binti. Thompson's quest for innovative transformation has made the licensing process to become a foster parent more efficient and effective for both parents and social workers. With fully online and mobile functionality, Binti has been a key part of the agency's growth, which has helped drive better outcomes for children and families across the Carolinas.

Binti has helped Thompson to:

-  Grow from 28 to 260 foster homes
-  Reduce time to approval for prospective foster families by over 20%
-  Centralize all documents and files in a online, mobile-friendly platform
-  Streamline workflows and automated processes for families and agency staff
-  Enable families and staff to conduct licensing and re-licensing process remotely
-  Empower social workers to focus more on children and families and less on paperwork
-  Expand presence from 2 to 35 counties

Agency Overview

Thompson Child & Family Focus is the leading provider of clinical & prevention services for children across the Carolinas. The Charlotte, NC-based, nationally accredited nonprofit agency empowers children and families through therapy, education and prevention-based care. Thompson specializes in clinical and behavioral treatment, developmental education, and proactive care. Thompson has 260 homes serving 265 children, with roughly 265 staff members in 5 offices across the state. Thompson has worked with Binti since February 2018, using Binti's Licensing module to more efficiently recruit families, process applications, and handle the family licensing process.

The Voices

Will Jones, President & CEO

Jenn Stout, Statewide Licensing Director & Foster Parent

Gaile Osborne, Foster Parent & President of Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina

Key Challenges

A Complicated, Discouraging Licensing Process

The pressing need for more foster families is caused in part by the complicated and discouraging licensing process. The more complicated and lengthy the process, the more parents drop off. Leadership at Thompson identified that the many different administrative loops and lengthy training would discourage parents from going through the application. Jones notes that antiquated systems are a big turn-off for parents. Prospective foster parents who were once eager to become parents would lose desire and motivation, meaning less quality homes become available for children. Jones relates that from beginning to end of the licensing process, agencies generally lose 60-70% of prospective families. When he joined Thompson, Jones saw this as a key hurdle and believed leveraging modern technology could be an effective way to solve the issue. Thompson sought a solution that could make it quick and easy for prospective parents to apply and become licensed foster families.

Overwhelming amounts of administrative paperwork

Thompson staff struggled with frustrating amounts of paperwork. The sheer volume of administrative tasks was eating up precious agency worker time. Statewide Licensing Director, Jenn Stout, who is a foster parent herself, outlined some of the biggest challenges with relying on paperwork for Licensing staff: According to Jones, there was an inherent problem with the pen

- Digging through files to find certain documents and information
- Delays from back-and-forth communications on filing forms
- Chasing down signatures
- Difficulty in tracking renewal schedules
- Expand presence from 2 to 35 counties

and paper model because it meant social workers were focusing on administrative tasks and less on children and families. This led to workforce turnover in child welfare for many years. Social workers who joined the field to make a difference in the lives of children and families were getting churned out because of the overwhelming amounts of administrative paperwork. Labor-intensive administrative work limited Thompson's ability to effectively scale their foster care program, and resulted in frustrated parents and social workers. Jones believed tapping into modern technology could transform the system and allow Thompson staff to focus more on children and families.

Lack of mobile and remote capabilities

Child welfare systems are failing to meet the needs of increasingly mobile workers and families. 2020 was a tremendously tough year for the world. The pandemic worsened many issues and made it difficult and unsafe for many to do important work. It also highlighted the pressing need to make child welfare systems more mobile in order to empower social workers to work remotely. For Thompson, it was not only the pandemic; the need for remote and mobile work is important for social workers who are often on the move and in the field.

"We are doing everything else with our phones and tablets and computers, why not become a foster parent with that process."



Jenn Stout, Statewide Licensing Director

Stout relates that if she received an urgent message from a colleague asking for a particular document or providing information on a certain family, she had to be in office or carry around her work laptop with her in order to respond.

This slowed down crucial work and reduced the time it took to license families and resolve issues. Parents as well, like Gaile Osborne and her husband, who have fostered nearly 30 children, wanted the ability to attend training and work through the licensing process on their own time. It was a challenge having to plan around training and a hassle going back and forth between offices to pick up and drop off forms. Thompson saw an increasing need to bring mobility to staff and families.

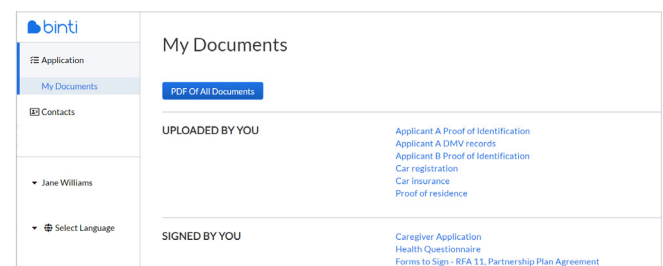
The Solution

In February 2018 Thompson became the first child welfare agency in North Carolina to start using Binti. They had been searching for an innovative solution that would help them grow their foster care program. Since using Binti, Thompson has expanded its foster care from 28 children in 2 counties to 245 across 35 counties. Some key ways Binti has helped Thompson address its challenges include:

Streamlining Licensing for Foster Families

Many agencies struggle with recruiting and retention particularly because of the frustrating amount of time and work required of prospective foster parents. By partnering with Binti, Thompson was able to modernize the application process - making it online, mobile-friendly and easy. As Stout mentions, parents feel a great sense of relief that they can do it all on the computer. Parents looking to apply often are hesitant to begin the complex process. Now, with the convenience of simply clicking a link to begin, their initial apprehension is greatly reduced. Thompson has had many parents note that the application process was much easier than they anticipated, and many parents, like Osborne, “shop around” specifically looking for agencies with easy, online applications and training. Binti enables Thompson parents to move smoothly through the application online and allows them to upload, electronically sign, and track their forms and documents all in one portal. Streamlining the foster parent application process means more parents are willing to apply and fewer drop off. This has been a key factor in the quality growth of Thompson’s foster care programming.

Challenges	Solutions
Complicated & Discouraging Licensing Process	Streamlined tools for parents to apply and become licensed Parents no longer have to fill form after form with information; their application to become a foster parent is now in one centralized, streamlined portal.
Overwhelming Amounts of Paperwork	Efficient, online tracking of applications Agency staff can track families’ progress as well as capture and sign documents on a user-friendly portal, designed specifically for the workflows of child welfare agencies.
Lack of Remote and Mobile Capabilities	Completely online, mobile-friendly tools Parents and staff can login from any device, anywhere and get their work done.



Parents have a centralized view of all of their documents.

Providing Clear, Efficient Tracking of Applications

Keeping track of the many different forms and documents was an administrative struggle for staff: if staff or a parent wanted to refer to a certain form they would have to dig through many files to find what they needed. This put a significant strain on the application process. With Binti, staff efficiently can monitor and track where parents are in the application process and provide reminders and guidance along the way. User-friendly dashboards make it easy for all users to track progress, and different steps are paced and parceled out to encourage success.

Stout praises the tracking capabilities of Binti:

We can watch [the applicants'] progress without having to make 800 phone calls to track people down. We are going to one website and literally just clicking on the family's name and we have exactly where they are in the process. It makes tracking so much easier than where we were 2 years ago. We went from 6-8 months of taking time of training and licensing families, [and now] we are down to 3.5 months start to finish, which is so dramatic of a difference.

Stout also highlights how Binti has helped with re-licensure:

Being able to have something that is not an excel spreadsheet that you have to go and dig and see if you have a new relicensure - something that sends you an email that says, 'Hey, this is how many relicensures your going to have this month [and] this is what's overdue. This keeps Thompson completely up-to-date. It makes my job easier.

Efficient tracking makes transparency and communication easier on both sides of the application, and Thompson has seen this result in happier families and staff. Each year since using Binti, as Jones notes, Thompson has seen an increase in parent satisfaction.

Enabling Remote and Mobile Work

Remote work has become more important than ever in order to keep staff, parents, and children safe. Thompson's early

adoption of Binti's online Licensing module meant that they were equipped with the tools they needed when the pandemic hit. Many agencies struggled immensely with stay-at-home orders, and social workers were unable to conduct home visits, or physically go into an office to submit forms. Binti's online, mobile-friendly functionalities allowed Thompson staff to continue their crucial work to support children and families. While many other agencies have been unable to license homes during the pandemic, Thompson was able to sustain its growth throughout 2020 through its use of Binti. Binti enables staff to view the status of a family, make updates, and send out notifications at the click of a button from any device.

"I can see what is in our pipeline, any place, at any time. One click and I can get information."



Jenn Stout, Statewide Licensing Director

Parents as well have the ability to work on their application via mobile devices. They no longer have to submit documents in person, and can do it by the tap of a phone. The efficiencies of online, mobile functionality for both staff and parents has translated to a quicker licensing process for Thompson.

Favorite Features

Electronic signatures

Workers and applicants can sign their forms via e-signature, allowing for the completion of documents entirely online without having to print anything. This saves a significant amount of time and gets rid of the frustration of staff having to chase down signatures, and parents having to go into an office to sign and submit forms.

Family portal

Applicants can access their foster parent application portal from any computer, tablet or mobile device using their secure username and password, and all users save their progress as they go, easily picking up where they left off. With everything in one place, parents going through Thompson are surprised at how easy the portal has made their lives.

Robust Reporting

Access to real-time data through robust on-demand reports and dashboards gives Thompson leaders a granular look into the foster parent pipeline and helps drive operational efficiency and decision-making. With Binti’s insightful reports, Thompson staff can easily identify patterns over time and make organizational decisions, such as hiring staff, based on the data. For Jones, it has given his organization a better idea of Thompson’s successes and challenges in recruiting and retaining foster parents, and has helped leadership set organizational goals for growth.

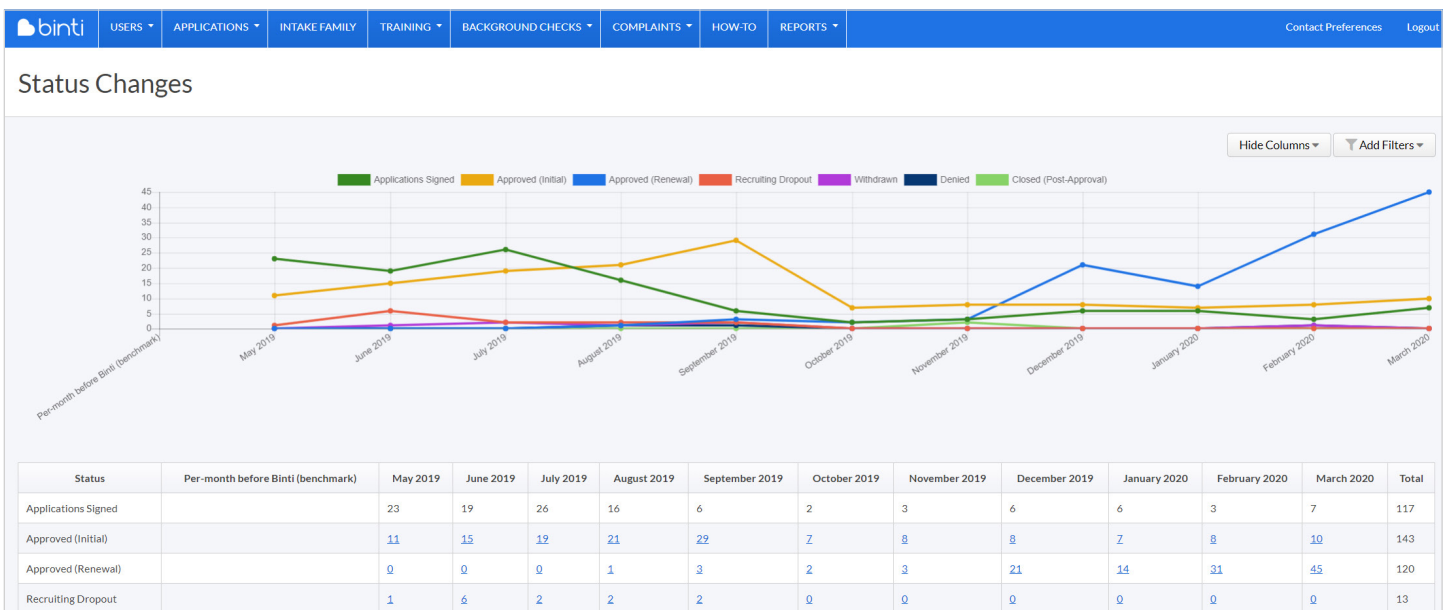
Swift Support and Account Management

If Thompson users have any issues, they are able to get quick live support. Additionally, Thompson has requested features in their monthly check-ins with their dedicated account manager, and have seen new features and updates churned out in a matter of days. Thompson leadership sees incredible value in having Binti staff readily available to address questions and quickly resolve issues.

“Binti has been a part of the recipe to help grow our foster care program, and not just grow it, but grow it in a quality way.”



Will Jones, President & CEO

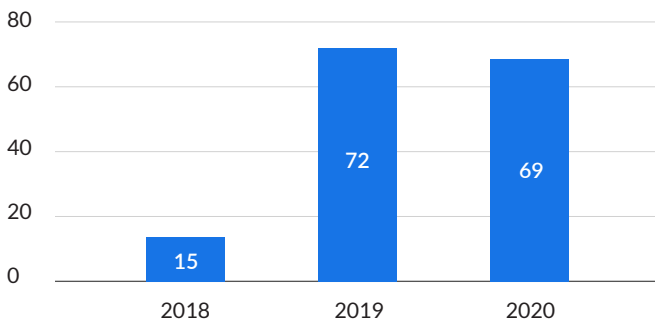


Robust reporting functionalities, such as an interactive Status Changes report, help Thompson leaders make planned, informed decisions.

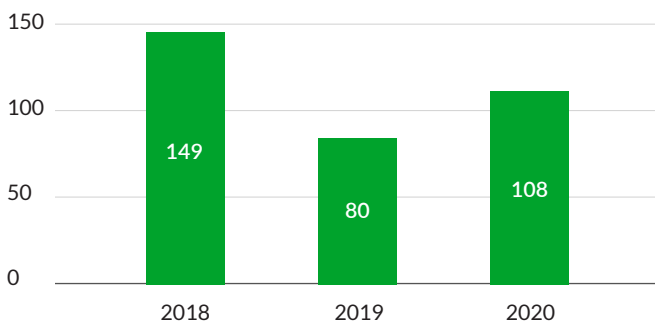
The Outcomes

Since Binti’s launch with Thompson in February 2018 until December 2020, the agency has grown from 28 to 260 foster homes, making a meaningful impact in the shortage of foster homes and ensuring that more children have safe and loving homes. Binti was a major part of Thompson’s ‘recipe’ for quality growth, along with impactful philanthropic investments. From the first year of using Binti (2018) to the second year (2019), Thompson was able to approve 380% more families (15 to 72 homes) in 46% fewer days (149 to 80 days). Despite the obstacles of the pandemic, Thompson was able to sustain continued growth and licensed 69 new homes in 2020.

Foster Homes Approved by Year (2018–20)



Days to Approval by Year (2018–20)



About Binti

Binti is a mission-driven company founded to serve child welfare. We believe every child deserves the care and support of a loving family. Our CEO, Felicia Curcuro, saw the challenges of the foster and adoption process after her sister struggled with the process of adopting two children, and knew that technology could empower agencies to close the gap between the lack of foster/adoptive parents and the demand for safe and loving homes. She built a team of both child welfare professionals and leading Silicon Valley engineers to create a Software as a Service (SaaS) solution for both families and agencies to simplify and facilitate the licensing and placement processes.

Find out more at www.binti.com or reach out to us at partnerships@binti.com.

Foster Family Spotlight

Gaile Osborne and her husband have been foster parents in the State of North Carolina for over 13 years. After having cared for nearly 30 children, they decided to adopt, and took a break from foster care. After several years, Gaile wanted to get back into foster care, but her husband felt very discouraged by the extensive licensing process. Additionally, with children who had experienced trauma with strangers before, the Osbornes did not want to have to attend extensive in-person training sessions. With these challenges in mind, Gaile looked at different options across the state. Thompson’s streamlined licensing process caught her attention. The Osbornes made their choice to go through Thompson based on the fact that Thompson, with Binti, had an easy, online application process.

As the Board President of the Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina, Gaile tells us that many foster parents often express worries about the lengthy licensing/relicensing process. She highly recommends Binti because, in her words:

“It is just so time consuming for someone who is getting ready to offer a service to the most vulnerable population, and such a waste of time. Anything to make it easier for foster parents, I’m all in.”



Gaile Osborne, Foster Parent