2012 Foster Parent Survey

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

February 2013
Report 11.188

Washington State
Department of Social & Health Services

PPA Planning, Performance & Accountability

DSHS

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Department of Social and Health Services

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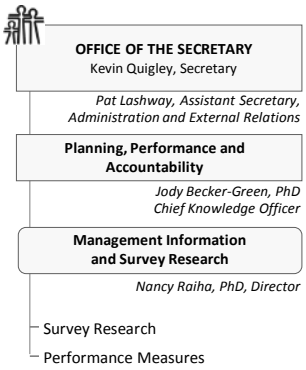

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Title: 2012 Foster Parent Survey: DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Abstract: Between April 2012 and August 2012, DSHS surveyed 1,371 foster parents who had a child in care on February 13, 2012 or May 15, 2012. These foster parents were asked about their satisfaction with support and training provided by Children's Administration and private agencies contracted by the Administration to provide services to foster parents. They were also asked to offer recommendations for change.

The majority of foster parents expressed satisfaction with the support and training they receive, and with the social workers assigned to their cases. In regard to support, they indicated they want more complete and timely information about their foster children's cases; more efficient and flexible bureaucratic processes; more resources, such as respite and reimbursements; and more social workers hired. In regard to training, they suggested a need for improved access to training; more training on specific topics; more non-traditional training formats; and more choice about which trainings they take.

This report is the first in a series of annual Foster Parent Survey reports. In the future, each report will summarize foster parents' responses to a "rolling survey" (four quarterly surveys – August, November, February, and May) in a given fiscal year.

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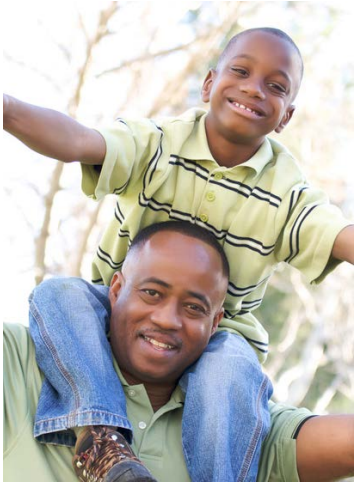
2012

DSHS Foster Parents Speak



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Highlights of the Survey

Survey Facts

The 2012 Foster Parent Survey report is the first annual report on foster parents' responses to questions about the support and training they receive.

- The report summarizes the results of a rolling survey for State Fiscal Year 2012.
- This survey was conducted between April 19, 2012 and August 31, 2012.
- 1,371 foster parents were interviewed by telephone.
- The individuals called were a random sample of all foster parents who had a child in care on February 13, 2012 or May 15, 2012.
- Translators were available for all languages, and alternative methods were available for deaf and hard-of-hearing respondents.
- The survey's **95% completion rate** is extraordinarily high. 1,371 of the 1,442 eligible foster parents in the sample completed the survey.
- The survey's **98% cooperation rate** is also high. Of the 1,398 foster parents we were able to contact, only 27 refused to take the survey.
- The survey was conducted in the second half of the fiscal year due to the initial contract start date. In future years, the survey will be conducted quarterly – interviewing a random sample of foster parents who had a child in care in August, November, February, and May.

Foster Parent Support

BRIGHT SPOTS

- ***Most foster parents appreciate the support they are given. Overall, they feel well-supported by Children's Administration; specific programs and offices within the Administration; and private agencies contracted by the Administration to serve foster parents.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 79% (1,073 of the 1,356 who answered) responded positively to the question, "In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?"
- 53% of comments about overall foster parent support were positive. Of the 460 who commented on this issue, 243 made positive comments.

- ***Many foster parents find the social workers assigned to their cases supportive, courteous, respectful, willing to listen, and understanding of their situations and needs.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 58% of comments about social worker support were positive. Of the 603 who commented on this issue, 350 made positive comments.
- 61% of comments about social worker courtesy and respect were positive. Of the 198 who commented on this issue, 121 made positive comments.
- 85% (1,146 of the 1,349 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Do social workers listen to your input?"
- 71 of comments about social workers' ability to listen and understand were positive. Of the 271 who commented on this issue, 191 made positive comments.

- ***Many foster parents are satisfied with their access to social workers, whether connections are made in person, by phone, by e-mail, or by text.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 53% of comments about phone and staff access were positive. Of the 523 who commented on this issue, 276 made positive comments.
- 61% of comments about having consistent contact with social workers were positive. Of the 201 who commented on this issue, 122 made positive comments.

CHALLENGES

- ***Some foster parents want more social workers hired. They feel that even excellent social workers are too overworked to pay proper attention to the children and families they serve.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 100% of comments about the need for more social workers were negative. Of the 124 who commented on this issue, all made negative comments.

- ***Some foster parents find the foster care bureaucracy cumbersome and unresponsive. They are critical of general, specific, and paperwork processes.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 95% of comments about general processes were negative. Of the 166 who commented on this issue, 157 made negative comments.
- 77% of comments about specific processes were negative. Of the 164 who commented on this issue, 127 made negative comments.
- 80% of comments about paperwork processes were negative. Of the 50 who commented on this issue, 40 made negative comments.

- ***Foster parents want more complete – and more timely – information from social worker and other agency personnel.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 63% of comments about information were negative or mixed/neutral comments. Of the 584 who commented on this issue, 367 made negative or mixed/neutral comments.

MIXED MESSAGES

- ***Foster parents' responses to questions about their inclusion in meetings and other matters concerning their foster children were largely positive. However, the majority of their comments about whether social workers include foster parents were negative or mixed.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 78% (1,062 of the 1,359 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Are you treated like part of the team?"
- 76% (1,012 of the 1,336 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?"
- 56% of comments about inclusion were negative or mixed/neutral. Of the 262 who commented on the issue, 146 made negative or mixed/neutral comments.

- ***Foster parents are grateful for the resources they receive. However, they are clear about their need for more resources, especially financial resources and respite care.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 52% of comments about childcare resources were positive. Of the 27 who commented on this issue, 14 made positive comments.
- 51% of comments about medical/dental/mental health resources were positive. Of the 57 who commented on this issue, 29 made positive comments.
- 84% of comments about financial resources were negative. Of the 67 who commented on this issue, 56 made negative comments.
- 64% of comments about respite resources were negative. Of the 75 who commented on this issue, 48 made negative comments.

Foster Parent Training

BRIGHT SPOTS

- ***The majority of foster parents are pleased with the training they receive from Children's Administration, private agencies, or specific programs.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 87% (1,182 of the 1,354 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Overall, thinking about all the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of the foster children placed in your home?"
- 74% made positive comments about training overall. Of the 517 who commented on this issue, 381 made positive comments.
- 76% made positive comments about training provided by Children's Administration. Of the 400 who commented on this issue, 302 made positive comments.
- 69% made positive comments about training provided by specific agencies or programs. Of the 91 who commented on this issue, 63 made positive comments.

- ***Foster parents are grateful for the many ways training helps them care for their foster children, and find resources that benefit those children.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 83% made positive comments about ways in which training helps them care for their foster children. Of the 253 who commented on this issue, 209 made positive comments.
- 63% made positive comments about ways in which training helps them find resources for their foster children. Of the 82 who commented on this issue, 52 made positive comments.

- ***Foster parents like training offered in support group settings and training resources available through lending libraries.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 67% of comments about training received in support group settings were positive. Of the 61 who commented on this issue, 41 made positive comments.
- 57% of comments about the variety of resources available from lending libraries were positive. Of the 44 who commented on this issue, 25 made positive comments.

- ***Foster parents report having a strong voice, and a strong sense of community, in training.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 63% of comments about having a voice and sense of community in training were positive. Of the 193 who commented on this issue, 121 made positive comments.

CHALLENGES

- ***Foster parents want more convenient training locations and training schedules. They also want childcare available during training, and resolution to other access-to-training issues.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 89% of comments about training locations were negative. Of the 137 who commented on this issue, 122 made negative comments.
- 87% of comments about training schedules were negative. Of the 287 who commented on this issue, 249 made negative comments.
- 98% of comments about childcare during training were negative. Of the 163 who commented on this issue, 159 made negative comments.
- 57% of other comments about access-to-training issues were negative. Of the 28 who commented in this area, 16 made negative comments.

- ***Foster parents want more non-traditional training formats.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 57% of comments about online training were negative or mixed/neutral. Of the 197 who commented on this issue, 113 made negative or mixed/neutral comments. The majority of these comments were requests for more online trainings.
- 55% of comments about other alternative training formats were negative or mixed/neutral. Of the 31 who commented in this area, 17 made negative or mixed/neutral comments. These comments included recommendations for more books and other printed materials, newsletters, and help lines.

- ***Foster parents want more choice in which trainings to take.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 61% of comments about the amount of choice foster parents have in which trainings to attend or complete at home were negative. Of the 49 who commented on this issue, 30 made negative comments.

- ***Foster parents want comprehensive and timely information about trainings.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 70% of comments about the quality and timeliness of training information were negative. Of the 81 who commented on this issue, 57 made negative comments.

MIXED MESSAGES

- ***Foster parents gave high marks to many specific trainings, or types of training, they have received. However, many foster parents want trainings that are currently unavailable, or want trainings currently being offered to be more accessible.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 50% of comments about specific trainings overall were positive, 25% were mixed/neutral, and 25% were negative. Of the 699 who commented on this issue, 349 made positive comments, 176 made mixed/neutral comments, and 174 made negative comments. Most mixed/neutral and negative comments were requests for training – or more training - on certain topics, rather than criticisms of existing trainings.
- 86% of comments about Love and Logic training were positive. Of the 22 who commented on this training, 19 made positive comments.
- 78% of comments about PRIDE training were positive. Of the 116 who commented on this training, 90 made positive comments.
- 70% of comments about health and safety training (most of which was CPR/first aid training) were positive. Of the 33 who commented on this training, 23 made positive comments.

Survey Results at a Glance

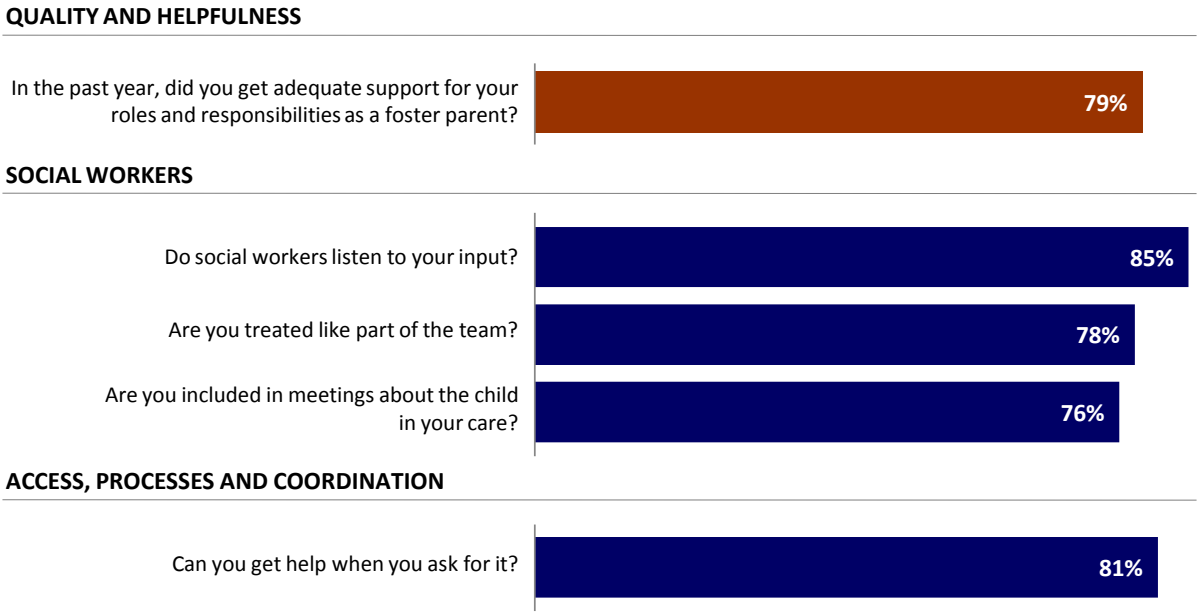
The survey analysis is based on two types of questions – standard (closed-ended) questions and open-ended questions.

There are six standard questions – two compliance questions related to the Braam Settlement Agreement, and four questions designed to assist in strategic planning for foster parent support. Responses to these six questions are summarized in the chart below. In the chart, ***brown*** bars are used for the two compliance questions and ***dark blue*** bars are used for the four strategic planning questions.

In addition, there are four open-ended questions – two relating to foster parent support, and two relating to foster parent training. Responses to the two foster parent support questions are summarized in the chart on the next page (page 7); responses to the two foster parent training questions are summarized on page 8.

2012 Foster Parent Survey satisfaction rates*

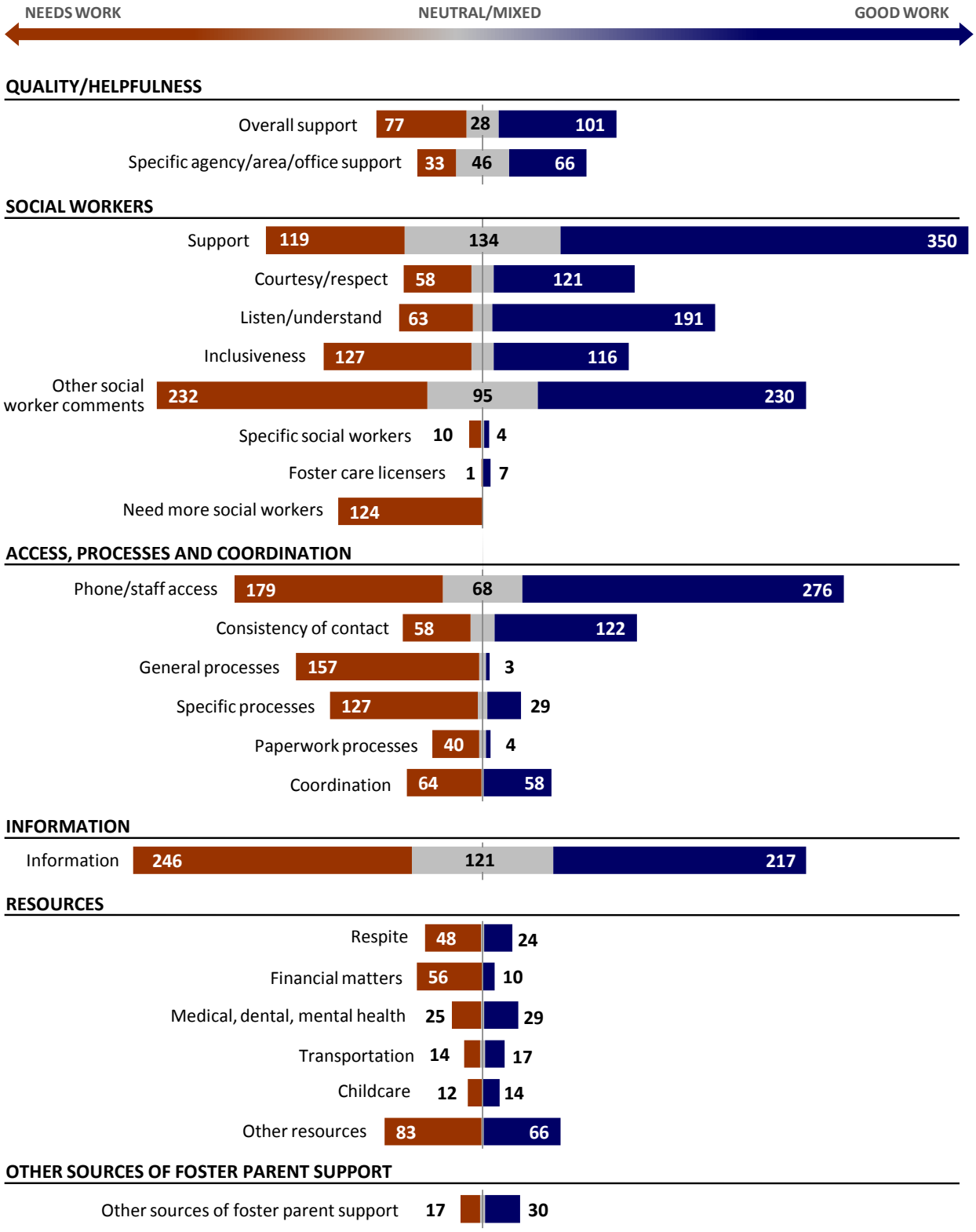
Regarding Foster Parent Support . . .



Regarding Foster Parent Training . . .

*On questions with ***brown*** bars, percentage shown is the percent who answered "More than adequate" or "Somewhat adequate." On the questions with ***dark blue*** bars, percentage shown is the percent who answered "Always or Almost Always" or "Usually."

Respondents who made positive, negative, or neutral/mixed comments about Foster Parent Support*

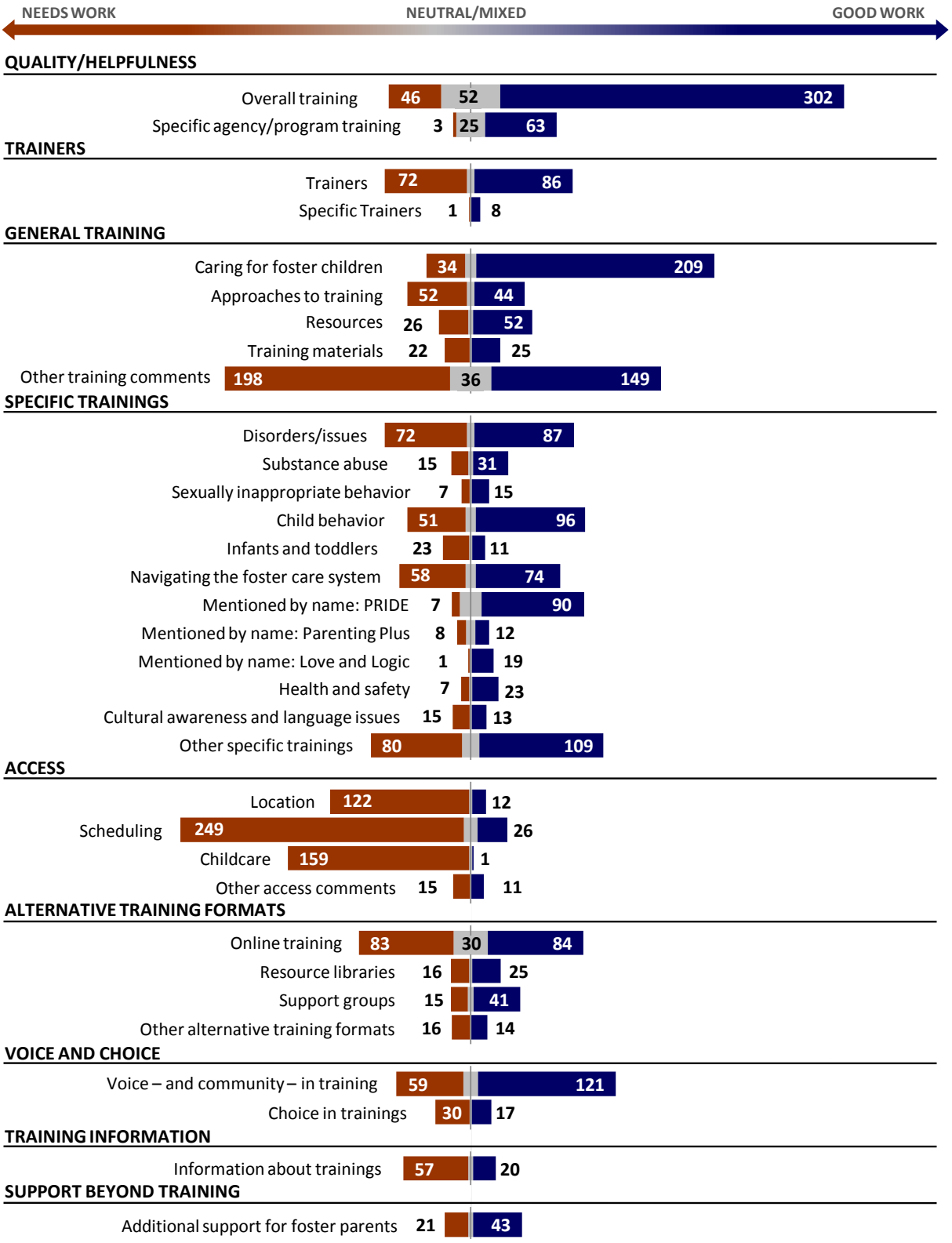


*Narrative comments were made in response to two questions:

- *What do Children's Administration and your social workers do well to support you?*
- *What could Children's Administration do better to support you?*

A more detailed table showing themes from the narrative responses and a response glossary can be found in the Appendix.

Respondents who made positive, negative, or neutral/mixed comments about Foster Parent Training*



*Narrative comments were made in response to two questions:

- *What about foster parent training has been helpful?*
- *How could foster parent training be improved?*

A more detailed table showing themes from the narrative responses and a response glossary can be found in the Appendix.

PART 1

Foster Parent Support

Foster Parent Support is the first of two parts of the 2012 Foster Parent Survey Report. It provides an overview of foster parents' responses to questions about the support they receive when caring for foster children.

The majority of foster parents reported they are satisfied with the support they receive. They commended the support provided by Children's Administration and private agencies, the skills and efforts of social workers, and the range of resources they are provided. However, they also indicated a desire for improvement in some areas, including easier access to assigned social workers; complete and current information about their foster child's case; and an increase in specific resources such as respite, medical care, and financial payments.

This part of the report contains the following sections:

- Section 1: Quality and Helpfulness
- Section 2: Social Workers
- Section 3: Access, Processes and Coordination
- Section 4: Information
- Section 5: Resources
- Section 6: Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

Quality and Helpfulness

Foster parents appreciate the support provided by Children's Administration.

This section focuses on the overall quality and helpfulness of the support foster parents are given by Children's Administration, and by private agencies contracted by Children's Administration to provide services to foster parents.

Subsequent sections address more specific aspects of foster parent support – social workers, access, processes, coordination, information, resources, and additional supports.

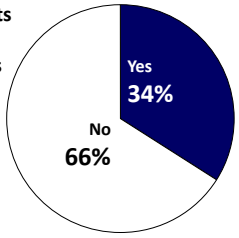
The majority of foster parents expressed gratitude for the support they receive. Even when voicing complaints, survey respondents frequently offered thanks to those who help them do the best for the children in their care.

In this section:

- The first page highlights foster parents' responses to the question: ***In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?***
- The following two pages address foster parents' comments about the quality and helpfulness of support from Children's Administration as a whole, and from specific agencies, areas or offices.

About one third of the survey respondents (460 of 1,371, or 34%) made comments about the quality and helpfulness of foster parent support. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of foster parent support?



- Over half (53%) made positive comments.

- Three out of ten (30%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- Nearly two out of ten (18%) made mixed or neutral comments.

The majority of foster parents are quite satisfied with the support they receive.

"I think they do a very good job, and I am happy."

"The agency supports the needs of the children that are placed in my home."

"At this point, we couldn't ask for more."

"I feel fully supported."

"I don't think there was anything that they could have done better to support me."

"Everything is great."

Some have mixed feelings about foster parent support.

"When we have something traumatic with the child, I feel support. Beyond that, I do not feel much at all."

"If you are not vocal, you don't get any support. I felt support, but I asked for it…I've seen others struggle with this because they aren't as vocal as me."

"They listen to our problems but they can't always fix them."

"DSHS places the child and, while they are concerned about the child's safety, there is no support for a child's emotional or therapeutic needs."

Others are clearly dissatisfied with the support provided.

"I don't feel supported as a foster parent. 'It's all about the child' - not true - it's all about the social worker and deadlines."

"They don't respond when you ask for support."

"In order to get anything done, we seem to have to do it ourselves."

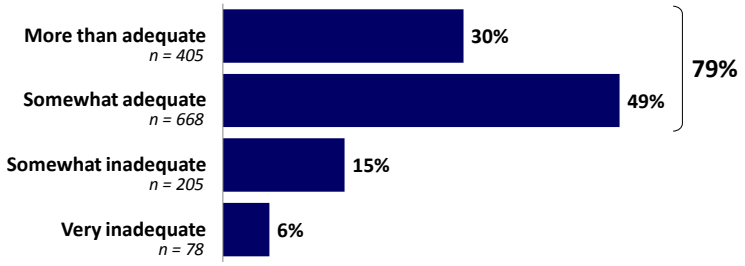
"All I get is undermined and investigated…we're giving up our license."

"They support the [bio] parents more than they support the foster parents."

"DSHS as an organization is not very supportive to foster parents."

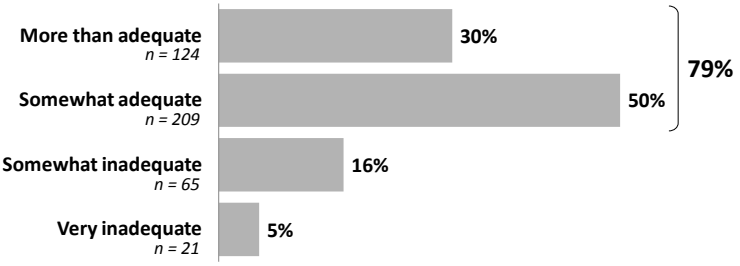
QUESTION | In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?

Nearly eight out of ten foster parents surveyed (79%) reported that they received adequate support in the past year. About one out of five people (21%) found the support inadequate.

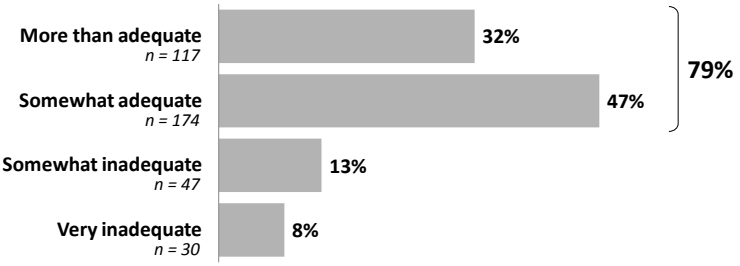


Responses to this question showed little variation by region.

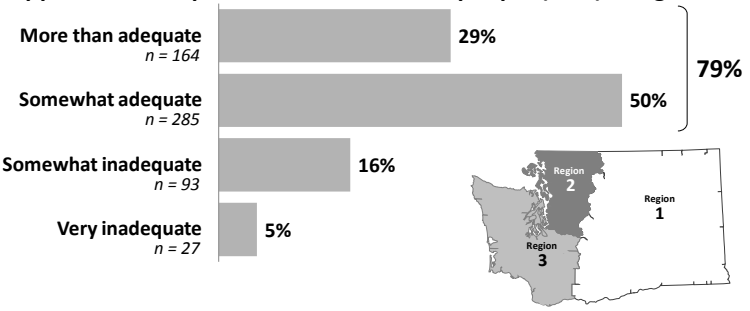
In REGION 1 nearly eight out of ten respondents (79%) indicated support was adequate. About one in five people (21%) disagreed.



In REGION 2 nearly eight out of ten respondents (79%) indicated support was adequate. About one in five people (21%) disagreed.



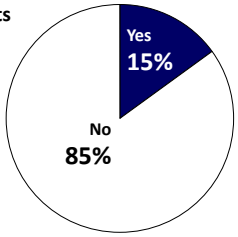
In REGION 3 nearly eight out of ten respondents [79%) indicated support was adequate. About one in five people (21%) disagreed.



THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Support

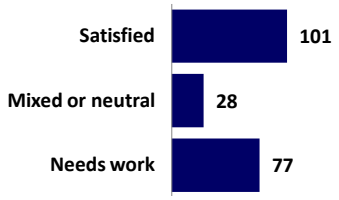
Comments about the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support (rather than the quality/helpfulness of specific agencies, areas, or offices) were included in this category. 15% of survey respondents made a general comment about support.

Made comments about overall quality and helpfulness of support?



206 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned general support.

Of the 206 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support, nearly half (49%) made positive comments. 37% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 14% made mixed or neutral comments.



In addition:

- **121 survey respondents replied "Nothing" to the question, "What could Children's Administration and your social workers do better to support you?" (a positive response).**
- **54 respondents replied "Nothing" to the question, "What do Children's Administration and your social workers do well to support you?" (a negative response).**

Many foster parents are pleased with the quality of foster parent support.

"They make every effort to provide everything we need to do the best possible job for the foster children."

"I think they do a great job."

"They are always there when I need them. They have gone overboard to do the extras."

"They help me when I need the help."

"I would say I've been impressed with all the services that are available, and the genuine concern for the kids."

"They have been really good, and they have your back."

"No matter what I need, they are always there for me."

"So far they have been really good. We have gone through a placement and now are working on an adoption."

"They give us support every time we call them – we have not had problems with them yet."

Some find support to be lacking.

"I can't think of anything they have done well."

"They need to provide more assistance when you first start out being a foster parent."

"There is not much they do to support me."

"I have been foster parenting for 16 years, and this past year support has gone down so bad I am thinking of closing my license."

"Just be more available when crisis happens."

"We have been very discouraged by the poor handling of our foster son's case."

"Take more of an interest in foster care people."

"When things go badly, they are quick to blame the foster parents."

Some foster parents commented on support received from sections of Children's Administration.

"I work with the Everett Office, and they are awesome."

"Because of the geographical spread, we have had problems with King County establishing services for kids."

"Social workers in the Omak Office are very supportive. They communicate and include me in decision making."

"The Bellingham Office could communicate better and try to listen to what I have to say and include me in the team. They haven't been supportive at all."

Others made comments about the private agencies that support them.

"Service Alternatives is there for us whenever we need them. They do well, and work through any issue."

"Regarding CCS workers – we have not had a good experience with these workers – they have not been helpful or clear in their information."

"I work with a private agency (Community and Family Services) and they are my support lifeline."

"As soon as the girls were placed in my home – the private agency then walked away and I haven't seen them for a long, long time."

Some comments were directed to the support provided by tribes.

"I go through Quinault Indian Nation to get foster children…they always call me to see if I need anything or have any concerns."

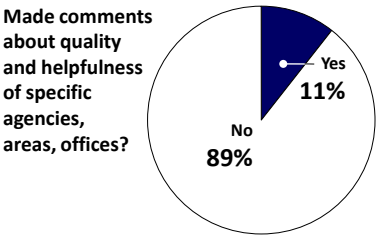
"I have had a tribal child since August. They have never come out and done any safety check."

"I work through the tribal program… excellent access to social workers."

"Colville Tribe does not provide support. Poor communication… hostility and distrust at every turn."

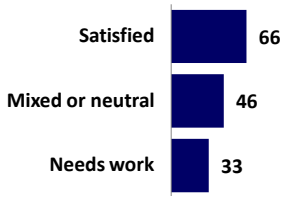
THEME | Quality and Helpfulness of Support from Specific Agencies, Areas or Offices

Comments about the quality and helpfulness of support received from particular private agencies, or from a specific Children's Administration area or office, were included in this category. 11% of survey respondents commented about support from a specific entity.



145 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned support from specific agencies, areas or offices.

Of the 145 survey respondents who addressed the quality and helpfulness of support from specific agencies, areas or offices, 46% made positive comments. Half as many (23%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Nearly one third (32%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Comments about specific agencies, areas or offices included foster parents' observations about:

- Support received from specific Children's Administration regions or offices.
- Support received from particular private foster care agencies.
- Support provided by various Native American tribal organizations.

While the majority of the comments were positive in nature, some foster parents pointed out deficiencies in the support they received.

Social Workers

Foster parents want positive and productive interactions with social workers.

This section focuses on the support foster parents receive from the social workers assigned to their case. Some of these social workers are employed by Children's Administration, and others are employed by agencies contracting with Children's Administration to provide services to foster parents. (When commenting on social worker support, some survey respondents referred to staff – particularly private agency staff - as "case workers" rather than "social workers.")

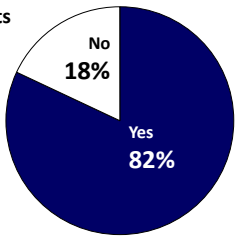
Most foster parents reported they are pleased with the support they receive from social workers. However, complaints were registered in a number of areas, including social workers' failure to make foster parents a real part of the team; to respond effectively when problems arise; or to successfully manage their heavy caseloads.

In this section:

- Topics are addressed in this order: social worker support; social worker courtesy and respect; social workers listen/understand; social worker inclusiveness; other comments about social workers; specific social workers; foster care licensers; and the need for more social workers.
- Three pages (18, 20 and 21) provide foster parents' responses to specific questions
- Seven pages (16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, and 25) address foster parents' comments on various themes.

The vast majority of survey respondents (1,127 out of 1,371, or 82%) made comments about social workers. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about social workers?



- About four out of ten (41%) made positive comments.

- Nearly one quarter (24%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- Just over one third (35%) made mixed or neutral comments.

1.2 Social Workers

Most foster parents praised the support they receive from social workers.

"We have an awesome social worker. He cares about the kids and focuses on the child's needs."

"The social workers are really good with us and our situation."

"[I] feel support…Both private agency and DSHS social workers do well."

"The social workers are great, and I can't think of anything they could do better."

"We have a great social worker, and she's always on top of things."

"My social worker always looks out for me, as well as the foster child."

Some indicated that social worker support could be improved.

"The foster parents need to have more support from the social workers, instead of always the biological parents getting all of the support."

"They don't respond when you ask for support."

"Current social worker has not been helpful. It has been a nightmare getting anything done."

"They didn't do anything to support. They treated me as though they were doing me a favor."

"They don't do very much at all to help us. Once they get the child in the placement, they're out of the picture."

Others reported that support varies from social worker to social worker.

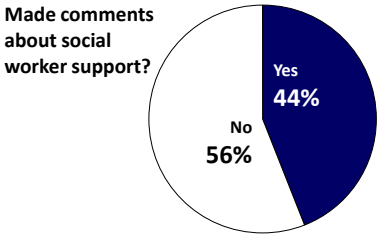
"It depends on which social worker… one's wonderful, the other doesn't call back unless something's on fire."

"I have workers that bend over backwards for you, and others that blow you off."

"I can't put all social workers in one box. Some do a good job, and some you get nothing from."

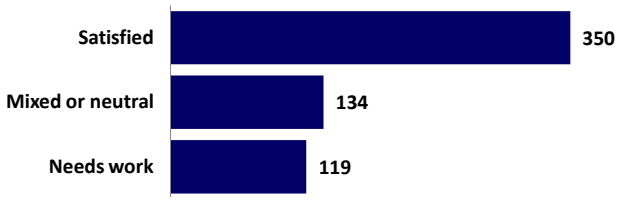
THEME | Social Worker Support

Comments about the overall quality of social worker support (rather than specific social worker attributes, such as courtesy or understanding) were included in this category. 44% of survey respondents made a general comment about social worker support.



603 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (44%) mentioned social worker support.

Of the 603 survey respondents who addressed social work support, nearly six out of ten (58%) made positive comments. Two out of ten (20%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 22% made mixed or neutral comments.



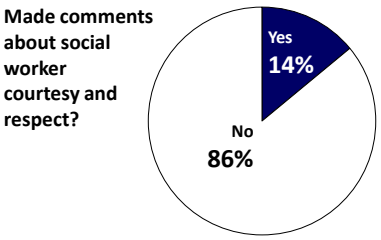
Comments about the quality of social worker support included foster parents' thoughts about:

- Individual social workers.
- Social workers in general.
- Children's Administration social workers.
- Private agency social workers.

Although most comments applauded the support social workers provide, some indicated the level of support should be higher.

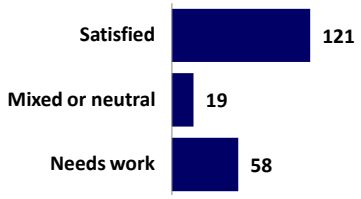
THEME | Social Worker Courtesy and Respect

Comments about courtesy and respect shown to foster parents by social workers were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents made a comment about social worker courtesy and respect.



198 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned social worker courtesy and respect.

Of the 198 survey respondents who addressed social worker courtesy and respect, more than six out of ten (61%) made positive comments. Nearly three out of ten (29%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One out of ten (10%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like social workers who:

- Treat them with common courtesy.
- Are actively engaged with them.
- Regard them as equals.
- Truly care about foster children and foster families.
- Are respectful of the many contributions foster parents make to the children in their care.

Foster parents dislike social workers who:

- Are inconsiderate or uncaring.
- Are distant or distracted.
- Treat them as inferiors.
- Don't have a "heart" for foster children and families.
- Fail to recognize the time and effort that foster parents spend caring for their foster children.

Foster parents want social workers to be courteous and friendly.

"They're always polite and courteous."

"They are nice people who are easy to talk to."

"Common decency would be nice."

"The social worker is very friendly, and has developed a good relationship with the kids as well as with me."

"The social workers don't need to be so politically correct – be more human."

"They have been nice people to work with."

They also want social workers' respect.

"They are always respectful if they have questions about the children, not bossy or pushy."

"Respect me, and the things I give up to be a foster parent."

"[The social worker] respects me as a foster parent."

"It seems like the social workers believe we are their employees."

"My social worker treats me with respect…and treats the children with respect."

"Try not to run rough shod over us."

Foster parents value social workers who care for them and the children in their homes.

"I feel like my social worker always looks out for me as well as the foster child, and that she really cares."

"Social worker should be more empathetic."

"They seem to really care about the kids."

"The social workers need to care more about what they are doing, and consider the foster parents."

"They could be more concerned with the children."

"[The social worker] appears to care very much about the child, us, and our home."

1.2 Social Workers

Foster parents like social workers who are good listeners.

"The social workers listen to what we have to say and what our needs are."

"Our experience has been that the social worker listens to us, and when we have a specific concern it is addressed. Listening is valuable."

"They have always listened to me, as well as the child in my care."

"They pay attention when I tell them we have needs as a family."

"The social workers are very good at listening to me."

"They listen to me, calm me down, and let me vent when I need it."

"They really listen, and take time to hear what I am talking about."

Some feel social workers should improve their listening skills.

"The social workers don't want to hear when I have a problem with the kids – apparently they have their own problems."

"They need to be willing to listen, and available to listen."

"Listen! When I call in about an issue, it's not because I want the kids moved – I want help…DSHS many times moves the child instead of dealing with the problem."

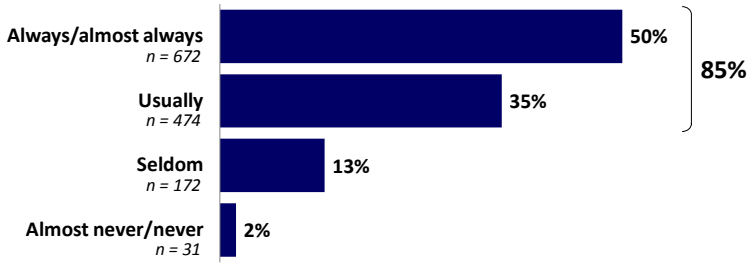
"The DSHS social worker doesn't seem to listen to anything we say."

"Listen to the foster parents when they are concerned about the child's well-being in the home."

"[Social workers] just don't listen! They protect their jobs instead of protecting the child's best interests."

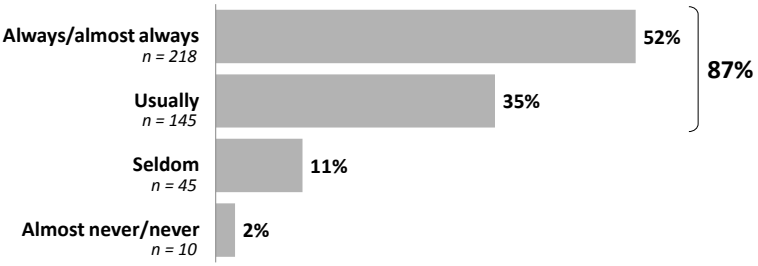
QUESTION | Do social workers listen to your input?

The vast majority of foster parents surveyed (85%) reported that social workers listen to their input. 15% feel their input is not heard.

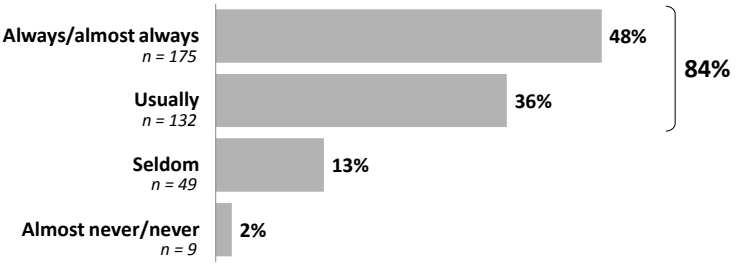


Slight differences between regions were not statistically significant.

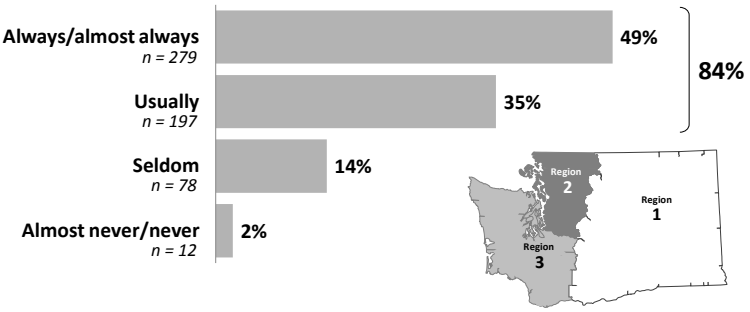
In REGION 1 nearly nine out of ten respondents (87%) indicated that social workers listen to their input. 13% disagreed.



In REGION 2 more than eight out of ten respondents (84%) indicated that social workers listen to their input. 16% disagreed.

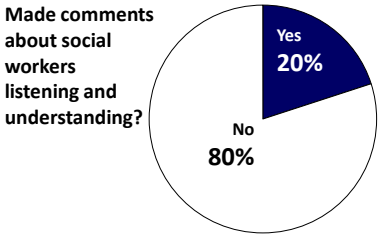


In REGION 3 more than eight out of ten respondents (84%) indicated that social workers listen to their input. 16% disagreed.



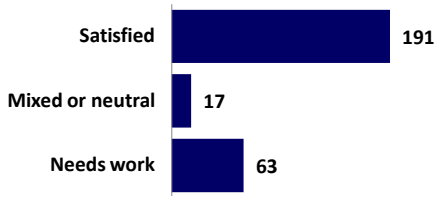
THEME | Social Workers Listen/Understand

Comments about social workers' ability to listen to and understand foster parents were included in this category. 20% of survey respondents made a comment about social workers listening and understanding.



271 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (20%) mentioned social workers listening and understanding.

Of the 271 survey respondents who addressed social workers' ability to listen and understand, more than seven out of ten (71%) made positive comments. Nearly one quarter (23%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% made mixed or neutral comments.

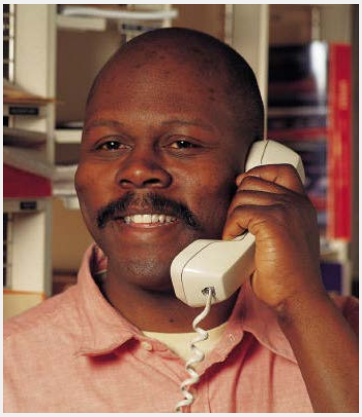


Many foster parents mentioned that social workers:

- Are good listeners.
- Take foster parents' ideas and concerns into account when making decisions about foster children.
- Understand the needs of foster parents and foster children.

Some suggested that social workers:

- Work on their listening skills .
- Solicit and *use* foster parents' input about children in their care.
- Try harder to understand foster parents' and foster children's circumstances.



Foster parents want social workers to *really hear* the information they share.

"They really listen, and take time to hear what I am talking about."

"Listen to foster parents more, since they are taking care of the child."

"The social workers do a great job listening to me."

"I think they could listen to foster parents more…A lot of times they want to dictate to us."

"Listening!! Even when they don't agree I feel listened to."

They also want social workers to understand their circumstances.

"This year, I've had social workers who understand the needs of my family."

"The social workers need to listen to the foster parents more closely, and understand what they're requesting."

"[The social worker] has a clear understanding of the issues that I have."

Most of all, foster parents want a strong voice in matters regarding the children in their care.

"The social worker does well – she listens to me and takes what I have to say seriously and works with me."

"When we suggest something about the child, we feel brushed off...Social workers listen to the children rather than us [foster parents]."

"[My social worker] listens to me and I feel validated and she implements stuff if she feels it is good. She trusts the fact that I am with the children and I know them."

"Give a darn about what the foster parent has to say."

"When there is a question of needs of a child in my care – they always defer to my advice."

Most foster parents feel valued as a team member.

"I am made to feel part of the team. I think that our input and our child's input is valued and integrated into the plan."

"They treat me as a team member."

"They take my opinions for the best interest of the child, and we all work together as a team."

"I am included in the decision-making for the foster child."

"They make you be a part of the 'all together' team."

"[Social worker] listens well to relationship issues, our needs, and creates a team effort."

"They always include us."

"They keep in touch so we can function as a team in taking care of the foster child."

Some feel excluded from full team membership.

"They don't think I am part of the team, and leave me out of all kinds of things."

"Include me as a member of the team."

"I think it would be nice if we were more of a team…We are expected to do their beckon…They want to run your life."

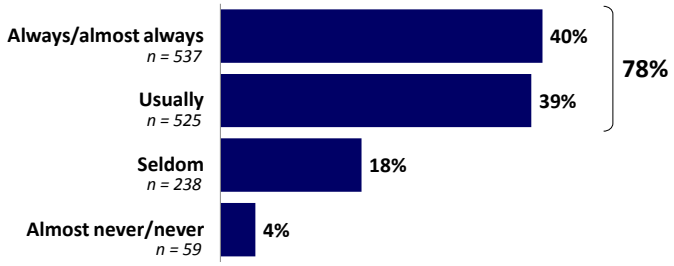
"True treatment of foster parents as viable team members."

"I don't feel like I am part of the team at all. Team says 'co-worker,' but I am treated as a subordinate."

"Include us more in the decision-making process or as part of the team …foster parents know the children better than the social workers."

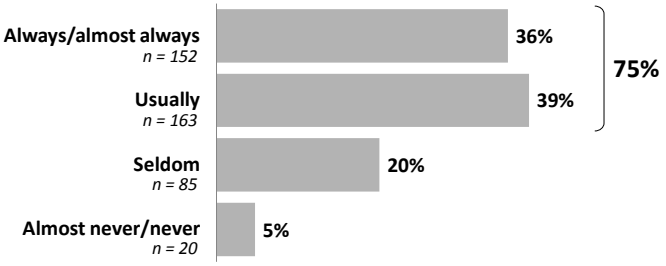
QUESTION | Are you treated like part of the team?

Over three quarters of foster parents surveyed (78%) reported they are treated like part of the team. Just over two out of ten (22%) feel excluded to some degree.

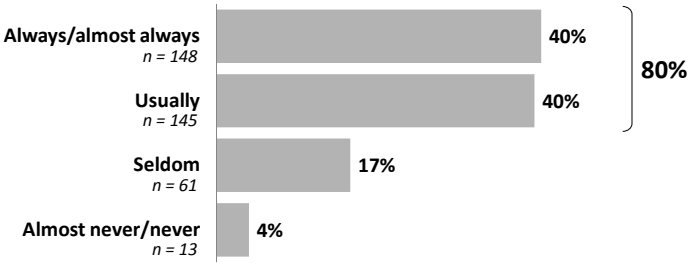


Differences between regions were not statistically significant.

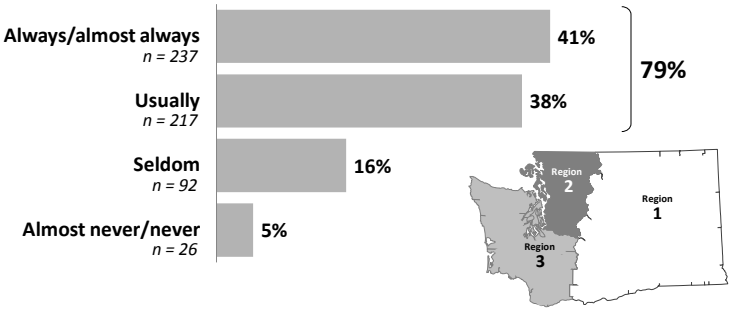
In REGION 1 three quarters of respondents (75%) indicated they are treated like part of the team. One quarter (25%) disagreed.



In REGION 2 eight out of ten respondents (80%) indicated they are treated like part of the team. Two out of ten (20%) disagreed.

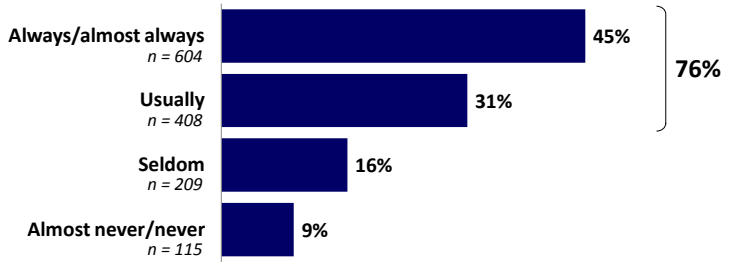


In REGION 3 nearly eight out of ten respondents (79%) indicated they are treated like part of the team. Just over two out of ten (21%) disagreed.



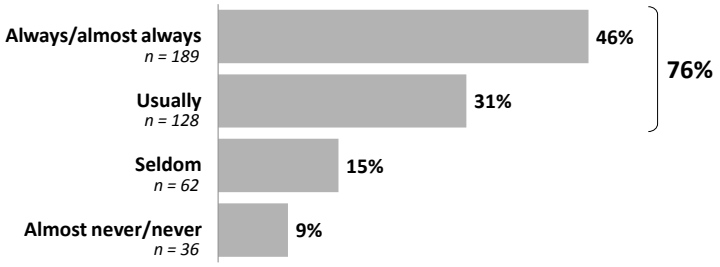
QUESTION | Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?

More than three quarters of foster parents surveyed (76%) reported they are included in meetings about the child in their care. Nearly one quarter (24%) indicated they are not included in such meetings.

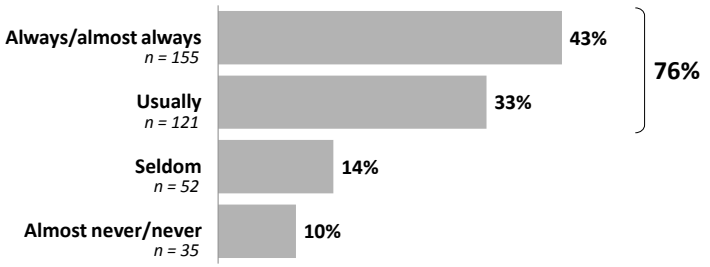


Responses to this question showed little variation by region.

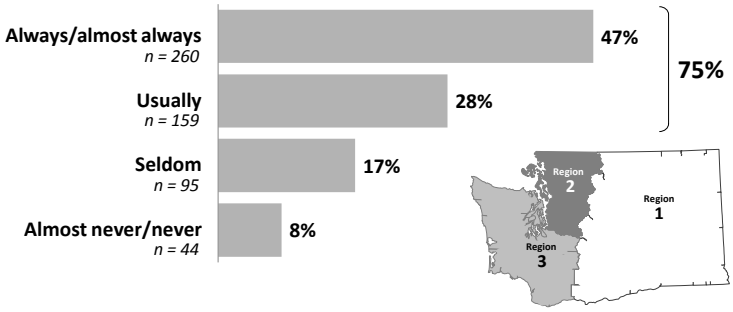
In REGION 1 more than three quarters of respondents (76%) indicated they are included in meetings about the child in their care. Nearly one quarter (24%) feel excluded to some degree.

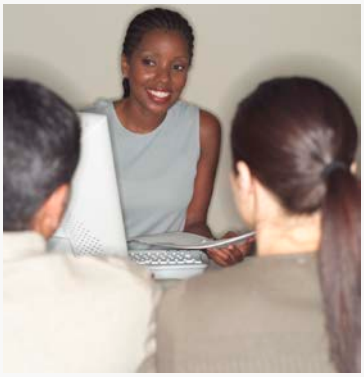


In REGION 2 more than three quarters of respondents [76%] indicated they are included in meetings about the child in their care. Nearly one quarter (24%) feel excluded to some degree.



In REGION 3 three quarters of respondents [75%] indicated they are l included in meetings about the child in their care. One quarter [25%] feel excluded to some degree.





The majority of foster parents feel included in meetings about their foster children.

"They are inviting about the family meeting or meetings with the court."

"We are always collaborating. We meet about every two weeks."

"Always included in all meetings. I'm respected at these meetings."

"We feel like part of the team with family meetings. They value our input."

"I appreciate invitations to meetings."

"Our current social worker includes us in the FTDM meetings and includes us as part of the team and we feel valued."

"I am included in meetings about the child."

"The social workers contact me when there is a meeting, they let me know when court dates are, they keep me in the loop."

Some report they are left out of such meetings.

"I am not usually informed about meetings in a timely way so I can participate."

"Include foster parents in meetings."

"We are rarely included in meetings. They usually make most of the decisions without asking us, and then inform us of the decisions."

"The social workers need to include the parents in decisions and meetings."

"Not always informed about meetings. I find out after the fact."

"Need to include the foster parents in the meetings and the decision-making."

"Invite foster parents to the meetings."

"I would like to be more involved in most situations with the child, school, and social worker. I usually find out about the meeting after the fact."

1.2 Social Workers

Foster parents want social workers to ask for – and consider – their input.

"They listen to what I have to say, and they actually ask my opinion, too."

"I don't feel like they value my opinion when I give it."

"They are very receptive to my feedback and treatment recommendations."

"We care for these kids, but nobody wants your input."

"They always try to take into consideration our thoughts on an issue. They are always interested in listening to our input."

They also want social workers to supply regular updates on children's cases.

"They keep me in the loop and informed."

"They could let me know what's going on, and give me some advance warning on things that are changed."

"They keep me updated on the progress of the child's case, and let me know what I can be involved in."

"I would like more information about when and where things will be happening with the child."

They appreciate being included in planning for the children in their care.

"[My social worker] laid everything on the table and I was part of everything as she was making decisions."

"[Social workers] make their own decisions and then have us jump on board – as if that is going to benefit us."

"They try to include me in what's going on with the children, and make a valiant attempt to do so."

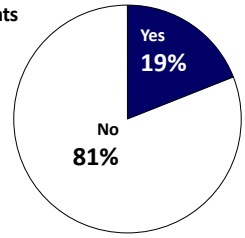
"I asked for more involvement in the process of planning for child's care, but it did not happen."

"They have included me in the planning of the actions [for] the children."

THEME | Social Worker Inclusiveness

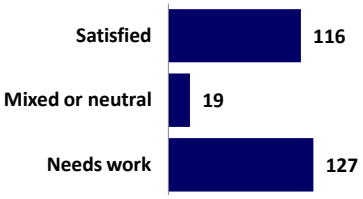
Comments about social workers' tendency to include – or exclude – foster parents in matters concerning their foster children were included in this category. 19% of survey respondents made a comment about social worker inclusiveness.

Made comments about social worker inclusiveness?



262 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (19%) mentioned social worker inclusiveness.

Of the 262 survey respondents who addressed social worker inclusiveness, more than four out of ten (44%) made positive comments. Nearly half (49%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents feel social workers should:

- Ask for – and act on – their ideas and opinions.
- Provide more complete and consistent updates on their foster children's cases.
- Include them more in decision-making, meetings, and court hearings.

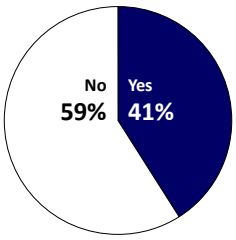
Others appreciate that social workers:

- Value their opinions and observations about the children in their care.
- Keep them "in the loop" about developments in children's cases.
- Make them a legitimate part of the team.

THEME | Other Comments about Social Workers

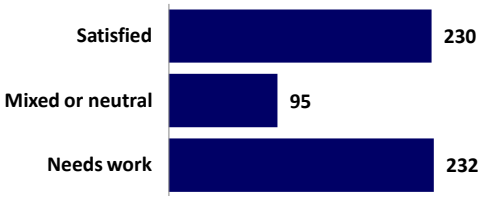
All comments about social workers which did not refer to general support, courtesy, respect, listening, understanding, or inclusiveness were categorized as "other" social worker comments.

Made other comments about social workers?



557 of 1,371 foster parents surveyed (41%) made other comments about social workers.

Of the 557 survey respondents who made other comments about social workers, about four out of ten (41%) made positive comments. Slightly more (42%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 17% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents commended social workers for:

- Providing good service, including quick response and follow-through.
- Solving problems efficiently and effectively.
- Being knowledgeable and well-trained.
- Communicating clearly and honestly.

Others suggested that social workers should:

- Be more responsive to foster parents' concerns.
- Try harder to create good solutions for foster children and foster families.
- Be better trained, and more "on top of" their jobs.
- Improve their communication skills.

Foster parents want social workers to provide good service.

"They've gone above and beyond for me."

"Social worker expects me to do her reports for her…doesn't seem able to follow the case."

"They work their schedule around my schedule."

They also want social workers to be responsive to their needs.

"When I ask for things, they provide it immediately."

"It takes them a long time to get something done, if they even bother."

"They responded in 20 minutes to a crisis. I really appreciated that."

Foster parents like social workers to be effective problem solvers.

"More follow through on how to handle a kid or situation. Give us some resources or suggestions."

"When I have a problem, they work with me to get the problem solved."

"It feels like the social worker wants the parents to solve all the problems."

They also like them to be well trained, and knowledgeable about their work.

"I have had situations where I am much better versed in state policy and practice than social worker was!!!"

"Most of them are on top of what's going on with the child."

"They need to know their jobs inside out."

Foster parents value social workers who have good communication skills.

"The social worker has been very good at communicating with me."

"There seems to be no importance placed on communicating with us."

"We have open communication with the social workers."

"Communicate honestly."

1.2 Social Workers

Most foster parents complimented the social workers they mentioned by name.

"Mary Stratton is an awesome social worker."

"Judy Thorton is amazing, and works very hard for the birth family as well as the foster family."

"Tribe refused to allow adoption even though foster father is 8th tribal. Steve Chervinskis of Omak office intervened for us."

"I have the best social worker – Alice Campis…always good attitude and always helpful. She is fantastic."

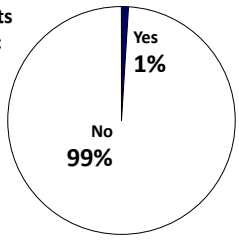
Only one was critical of a particular social worker.

"Social worker [name deleted] is absolutely terrible!"

THEME | Specific Social Workers

Comments about specific social workers were included in this category. 1% of survey respondents made a comment about one or more specific social workers.

Made comments about a specific social worker?



8 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific social worker.

Of the 8 survey respondents who commented on a specific social worker, all but one made positive comments. Two of the positive comments contained compliments about two different social workers.

1.2 Social Workers

Some foster parents spoke positively about licenser support.

"My foster parent licenser is right there looking out for my best interest."

"Licenser is behind me 100%. He oversees that I follow rules, or helps me get the support I need."

Most feel licenser support needs improvement.

"The foster licensers could be a little more on top of things. No communication with them even when trying to renew the license."

"I had one licenser that out-and-out lied to my face."

"Licenser through private agency loses paperwork, does not get back to me in a timely way."

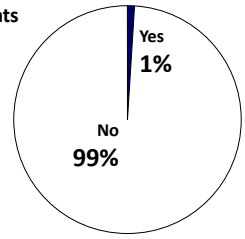
"The DSHS licenser has been very unpleasant to work with. Our foster daughter is very fearful of the licenser."

"Licenser changed often – too much turnover to build a relationship."

THEME | Foster Care Licensers

Comments about the quality of support foster care licensers provide to foster parents were included in this category. 1% of survey respondents made a comment about foster care licenser support.

Made comments about licenser support?

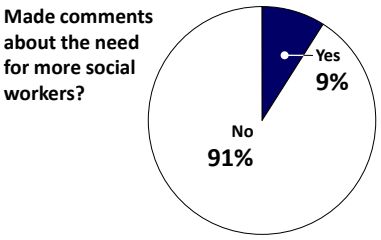


17 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned foster care licenser support.

Of the 17 survey respondents who addressed foster care licenser support, four made positive comments. Ten made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three made mixed or neutral comments.

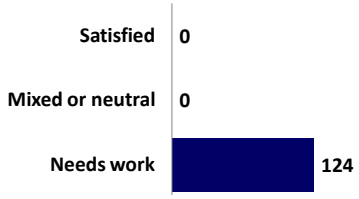
THEME | Need More Social Workers

Comments about the need for more social workers were included in this category. 9% of survey respondents made a comment on this topic.



124 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned the need for more social workers.

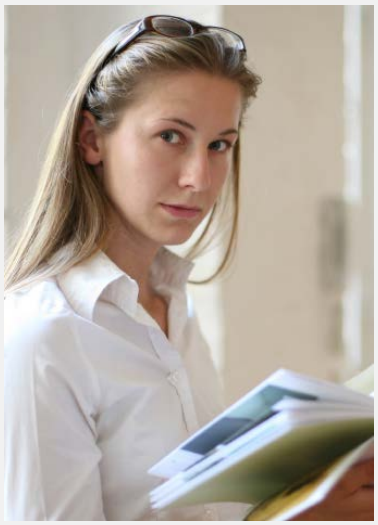
Of the 124 survey respondents who addressed the need for more social workers, all made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



In the comments about the need for more social workers, foster parents made three key points:

- Social workers' caseloads are too large.
- Heavy workloads hamper social workers' ability to support foster families.
- High social worker turnover makes it hard for positive relationships to develop between social workers and foster families.

As noted above, all comments in this category underscored the need for more social workers; none suggested the current level of social worker staffing is adequate.



Foster parents feel social workers should have smaller caseloads.

"They need more staff – each social worker has too many children!"

"The caseworkers have too many cases and are unable to give adequate time to the children and foster parents."

"I wish the social workers had smaller caseloads. Not enough to go around."

"Hire more staff. Support the social workers more so they can do a good job."

"It appears their caseloads are just exhausting!"

They believe social workers' ability to support foster families is limited by their heavy workloads.

"They are so overworked – they just don't have time to get all the information out in a timely manner."

"Their availability is impacted by the workload."

"[Social workers] seem to be struggling, not enough time to do the job well."

"Social workers are overworked, burnt out, and the kids suffer."

They also believe social workers' high turnover rate has a negative effect on foster parent support.

"They need to prevent high turnover with social workers. Changing a social worker every two months is very tough on the foster parent."

"My number one thing would be social worker turnover…The kids feel like they don't care enough to stick around."

"[Don't] have high turnover. I have had 3 social workers in the last 3 months. It feels like starting over each time."

Access, Processes and Coordination

Foster parents value easy access to the support and services they need.

This section focuses on the access foster parents have to the social workers that serve them, and the services that they need. It also documents foster parents' experience of agency processes, and their view of how effectively services are coordinated within and between agencies.

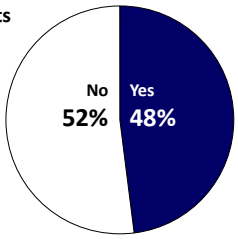
The majority of foster parents are satisfied with their access to social workers. However, many reported that both agency processes and coordination of services for foster parents are in need of improvement.

In this section:

- Topics are addressed in this order: phone/staff access; consistent contact; general processes; specific processes; paperwork; and coordination.
- The first page highlights foster parents' responses to the question: ***Can you get help when you need it?***
- The next six pages address foster parents' comments on various themes.

Nearly half of survey respondents (654 out of 1,371, or 48%) made comments about access. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about access?

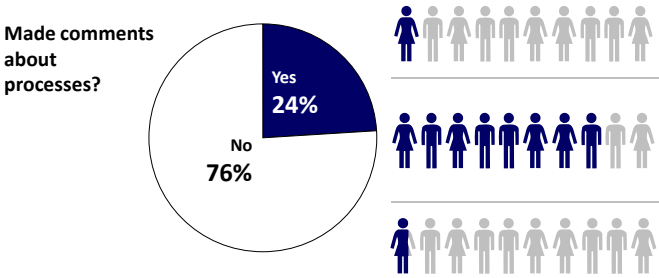


- More than half (54%) made positive comments.

- Three out of ten (30%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.

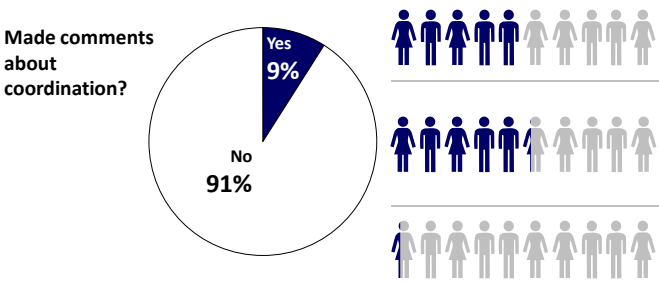
- 16% made mixed or neutral comments.

One quarter of survey respondents (335 out of 1,371, or 24%) made comments about processes. Of those who commented on this subject:



- Less than one out of ten (9%) made positive comments.
- More than eight out of ten (84%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.
- 8% made mixed or neutral comments.

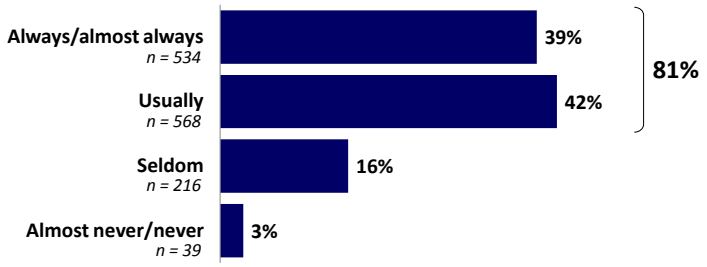
Nearly one out of ten survey respondents (124 out of 1,371, or 9%) made comments about coordination. Of those who commented on this subject:



- Nearly one half (47%) made positive comments.
- Just over one half (52%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.
- 2% made mixed or neutral comments.

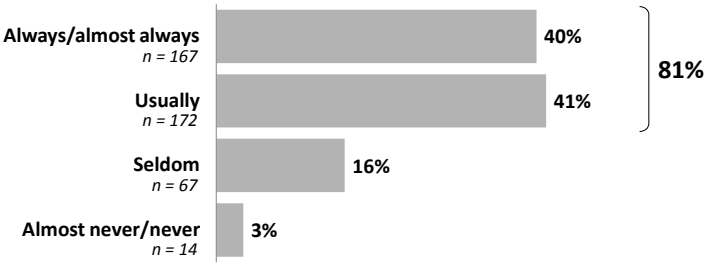
QUESTION | Can you get help when you ask for it?

More than eight out of ten of foster parents surveyed (81%) reported that they can get help when they ask for it. Less than one out of five (19%) indicated it is difficult to get the help they need.

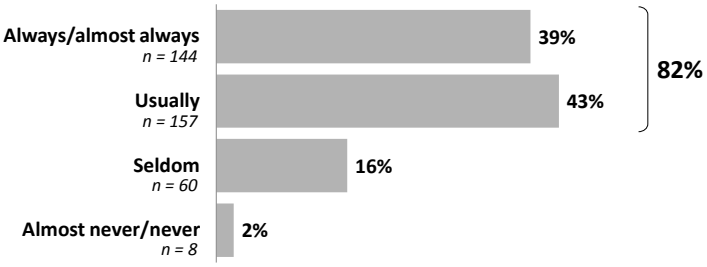


Responses to this question showed little variation by region.

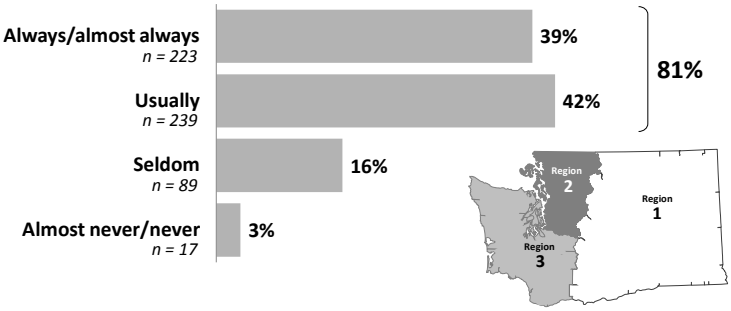
In REGION 1 more than eight out of ten respondents (81%) indicated that they can get help when they ask for it. Less than one out of five (19%) feel it is hard to get the help they need.



In REGION 2 more than eight out of ten respondents (82%) indicated that they can get help when they ask for it. Less than one out of five (18%) feel it is hard to get the help they need.



In REGION 3 more than eight out of ten respondents (81%) indicated that they can get help when they ask for it. Less than one out of five (19%) feel it is hard to get the help they need.



Foster parents like quick responses to their phone calls and e-mails.

"They respond quickly with e-mails or phone calls if I have questions."

"They always return my calls the same day."

"They answer my e-mails in a timely manner."

"State worker is on top of things. She returns calls and leaves information [about] when she will be available."

"They are always available by phone, and return e-mails immediately."

They find slow responses – or *no* responses – very frustrating.

"When I want them to call me, sometimes it takes two or three weeks for them to get back to me."

"I get frustrated when a social worker doesn't return my calls…I try to be patient, but sometimes I have an immediate need, and this is difficult!"

"Return my calls. I just needed a one word response…Return e-mails. Had to ask in person about what I needed a week later."

To foster parents, easy access to social workers is very important.

"The social workers are available whenever I need them, and I get a timely response from them."

"Be more available. It's hard to get in touch with some of them – maybe they are overbooked, or possibly have too many cases."

"Our social worker is always available. Gets back to us as quickly as possible."

"Be more readily available. Have someone as backup if they are not."

"They are pretty much always available. When I hit a snag and need help with my kids, I've always been able to get that help."

Many foster parents are pleased with the response to their phone calls and e-mails.

"When I call the social workers, they either answer the phone or call back within 24 hours. Service is very good."

"They try hard to get back to me on phone calls and e-mails."

"The private agency responds quickly by returning phone calls and e-mails in a timely way."

"Get good response to phone calls and e-mails."

"The social worker is extremely reliable in terms of responding to my phone calls and e-mails."

"They are just always there when we need them, and get back to me right away."

"The social worker I have is very good at communication and answers my phone calls and e-mails within one day. She is good!"

Others feel they deserve more timely responses.

"Number 1, they could return phone calls. Mine are almost never returned."

"Return phone calls promptly. Same thing applies to e-mails."

"We have to e-mail them since it it hard to reach them by phone. They are buried by e-mails and the responses are kinda slow."

"Our social worker was difficult to reach…Did not get back in touch with us when we had a question."

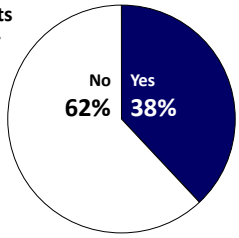
"Be more available, don't use voice mail…it is full."

"When they say they're going to call back – they need to call back."

THEME | Phone/Staff Access

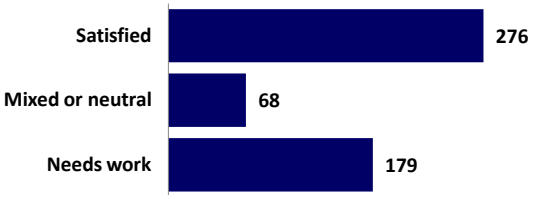
Comments about foster parents' ability to access social workers and other staff - by phone or other methods - were included in this category. 38% of survey respondents made a comment about phone or staff access.

Made comments about phone or staff access?



523 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (38%) mentioned phone or staff access.

Of the 523 survey respondents who addressed phone or staff access, more than half (53%) made positive comments. Just over one third (34%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 13% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents commended social workers for:

- Being easy to reach when they are needed.
- Returning phone calls quickly.
- Responding reliably to e-mails.

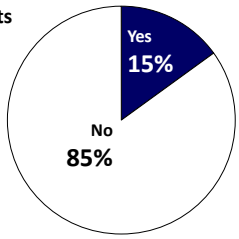
Others suggested social workers should:

- Be more available to answer questions and act on requests.
- Return phone calls and e-mails within a reasonable time frame.
- Follow through with promises to contact foster parents.

THEME | Consistency of Contact

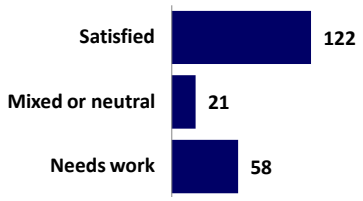
Comments about the consistency of social workers' contact with foster parents were included in this category. 15% of survey respondents made a comment about the consistency of contact.

Made comments about social workers being in consistent contact?



201 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned consistency of contact.

Of the 201 survey respondents who addressed consistency of contact, more than six out of ten (61%) made positive comments. Nearly three out of ten (29%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One out of ten (10%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate social workers who:

- Visit their home frequently.
- Check in often by phone or e-mail.
- Attend important meetings.
- Ask how things are, and what is needed.

They dislike it when social workers:

- Visit rarely, or not at all.
- Know little about their foster children, or their family.
- Only react to emergencies or major events.
- Fail to respond when contacted.

Most foster parents reported they have consistent contact with social workers.

"Current caseworker is fabulous. She checks in and asks what we need."

"They come to the house regularly."

"They attend our meetings with Children's Home Society…we meet about every two weeks so the social worker knows how the child is doing."

"I get a call every day from a staff member with the private agency."

"They visit fairly frequently so we can answer questions and find out things that might be important."

"They are good at checking to see how we are doing and what we need."

"The social workers stay in contact with the foster parents."

"They keep very close track, and are good when I contact them to help me."

"We see our social worker regularly."

"One of the social workers comes out faithfully every month. Good job."

Some want social workers to check in more frequently.

"The support is not good now – it is not consistent, and I don't get responses to my inquiries, etc."

"Have a child for a month, with no contact with state social worker."

"The social workers are spread too thin…Unless I have a problem I don't hear from them."

"Very inconsistent meetings with social workers. A significant event had to occur. No planned meeting times."

"Stay in touch with the children. Visit them. Check in with them – see what their needs are."

"We've had a new social worker since November. I've seen her only twice."

"Contact with social workers is a problem...monthly visits are not consistent."

Foster parents are frustrated by some aspects of the foster care bureaucracy.

"They are driven at times more by budget, or legal liability, than what would be best to parent the child."

"Become less rigid in the enforcement of some rules. Need more flexibility in certain circumstances."

"[Social workers] need to have less red tape on their hands…free them up to make the children a priority."

"The bureaucracy makes it very difficult to be supportive to foster parents because there is so much political that goes into play."

They feel the system moves too slowly.

"If processes could be sped up that would be nice."

"Sometimes it takes a very long time to get reimbursed for things – it took nine months to be reimbursed for a day camp."

"Foster parents are held accountable for requirements from the state in a timely way, but are not accorded the same respect and timely processing."

They also feel the system is biased toward biological parents.

"I think DSHS puts a higher premium on the rights of the parent than it does on the rights of the child!"

"Equal support for the foster parents and the bio parents."

"They are always giving the parents another chance, and another chance."

"Make it more about the kids…keep the kids' best interest in mind."

Foster parents believe procedures and staff performance are inconsistent.

"Different offices and different social workers operate differently. There is no continuity."

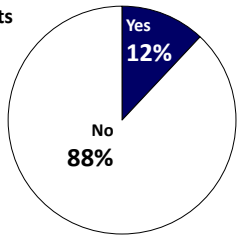
"They could be more consistent in the way they handle cases."

"If all the social workers would perform uniformly, it would really help."

THEME | General Processes

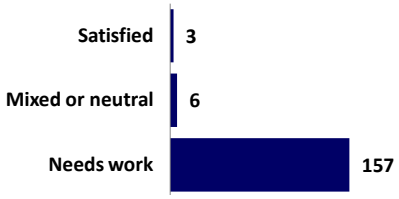
Comments about general processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents made a comment about general processes.

Made comments about general processes?



166 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned general processes.

Of the 166 survey respondents who addressed general processes, only a few (2%) made positive comments. The vast majority (95%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.

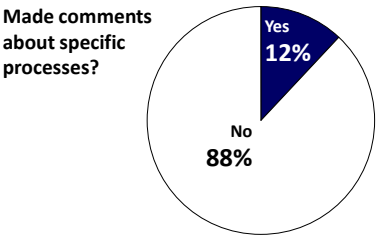


Foster parents are concerned that:

- The foster care bureaucracy is too rigid.
- The bureaucracy focuses too much on budget, liability and other political issues, and too little on foster children.
- The system moves too slowly.
- The system favors biological parents over foster parents.
- Office procedures and staff performance aren't standardized.

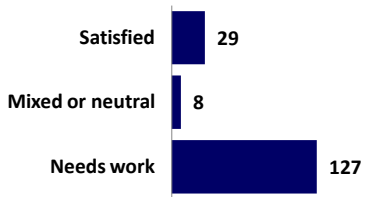
THEME | Specific Processes

Comments about specific processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents made a comment about specific processes.



164 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned specific processes.

Of the 164 survey respondents who addressed specific processes, nearly two out of ten (18%) made positive comments. More than three quarters (77%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One out of twenty (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents had complaints about the following processes:

- Initial placement into foster homes.
- Removal of children from foster homes.
- Visitation.
- Adoption.
- Licensing.
- Rate assessment.
- Getting permission to travel with foster children.

A few shared positive experiences with the same processes.

A small number of foster parents praised specific processes.

"They are good in the initial placement, as far as giving information and making sure we have what is needed."

"They have fast-tracked the adoption process."

"My current social worker has been very helpful in authorizing travel out of state for me and my kid."

"They do pretty good matching the right child to our home."

Most indicated that certain processes are in need of change.

"When the children are first placed, the child needs more support."

"Personally, I think there are some issues with visitation centers."

"Shorten the process of foster-to-adopt. Shorten the termination period for the parents."

"I have hard-to-handle kids, and I asked for one to be removed, and it took six months, and that was very stressful."

"The foster parent licensing is a big joke. I did all the paperwork, and it took about two months to do the home study."

"It took three months to get travel [with foster child] approved."

"One thing that is frustrating to me – when foster children are rated, they rate them lower than they really are."

"The only time I hear from the licensing department is when there is a problem. This is not rewarding."

"We ended up adopting both foster kids – the process was really slow."

"Do not take a child out of the home without the chance to say goodbye."

Many foster parents were critical of paperwork processes.

"They are not very good at their paperwork."

"They could turn their paperwork in so that I get paid on time."

"I have noticed how much duplicate paperwork there is…things get lost and we have to resubmit papers."

"Process applications for respite care workers faster."

"We're not getting the court reports we're supposed to get regarding our cases."

"Step up the paperwork process for terminating bio-parent rights."

"They need to have better records and information about the children they are placing in your home."

"I have had one child for two months and I have yet to receive any paperwork on him from DSHS."

"The social workers need to not misplace important paperwork from foster parents."

"More complete paperwork with background information [on each child] at the beginning of placement."

A few had positive things to say about paperwork.

"They support us in providing all the paperwork needs for the foster children in our care."

"The paperwork came through fine and timely."

"They are actually good about getting paperwork filled out for the courts."

"They do well with bookwork, like the daycare reimbursement and the medical coverage issue got taken care of really fast."

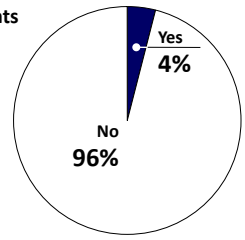
"They provide us with the necessary paperwork."

"They try to process my paperwork in a timely manner."

THEME | Paperwork Processes

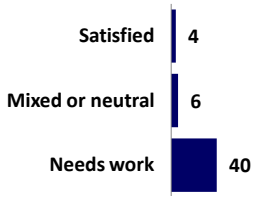
Comments about paperwork processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 4% of survey respondents made a comment about paperwork processes.

Made comments about paperwork processes?



50 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned paperwork processes.

Of the 50 survey respondents who commented about paperwork processes, less than one out of ten (8%) made positive comments. Eight out of ten (80%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 12% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents are unhappy when:

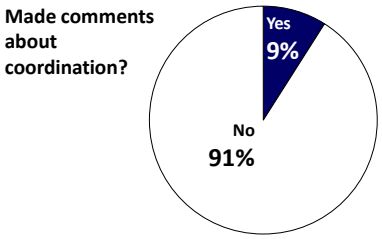
- Recordkeeping is incomplete or inaccurate.
- Paperwork processes take too long.
- Late paperwork delays payments or reimbursements.
- Paperwork is lost.
- There is too much duplication of paperwork.

They are pleased when:

- They receive the paperwork they need concerning their foster children's cases.
- Paperwork is completed, and recorded, properly.
- Paperwork is done in a timely manner.
- Paperwork *they submit* is processed quickly.

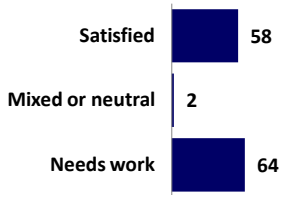
THEME | Coordination

Comments about how well those who support foster parents coordinate their efforts were included in this category. 9% of survey respondents made a comment about coordination.



124 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned coordination.

Of the 124 survey respondents who addressed coordination, nearly half (47%) made positive comments. More than half (52%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 2% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents are grateful when:

- Employees of Children's Administration, or of a private agency serving them, work well as a team.
- Social workers collaborate with others in the community to get foster children the resources they need.
- Social workers facilitate interaction between foster parents and bio-families or adoptive families.

It frustrates them when:

- Employees within an agency aren't "on the same page."
- Social workers don't reach out to others who can provide resources for foster children.
- Social workers don't work to create connections between foster families and bio-families and adoptive families.

Some foster parents wrote about coordination among Children's Administration employees.

"The social workers talk among themselves to get help for the child."

"We are constantly getting different answers from different people – that shouldn't be happening."

"They worked well as a team."

"The segments of Children's Administration do not talk to one another and don't follow [up] on issues."

Others focused on coordination between Children's Administration and other agencies.

"My DSHS social worker collaborated well with the private agency."

"The tribal worker and the DSHS worker do not talk - I am forced to be the intermediary."

"Better communication between the social workers and service people, like the Salvation Army."

"They have connected us with therapists, and an orthodontist who takes state payments."

Foster parents want help coordinating with biological and adoptive families.

"[Social workers] take child to visits with brother, which is very important to the child, and helpful to us."

"[We were] not offered a single visit with the adoptive family receiving the child to give them photo albums, wish them well, etc. Rough transition emotionally for all involved."

"Our social worker values team collaboration...We have a comprehensive plan with bio-parent…a whole village around 'our little guy.'"

Information

Foster parents want clear and current information.

This section focuses on the information foster parents receive from social workers and other agency personnel.

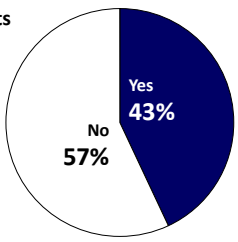
The majority of foster parents suggested that the process of sharing information could be improved. However, there were many who indicated they are satisfied with the information that they receive.

In this section:

- The first page provides an overview of foster parents' comments about the information they receive, including key comments.
- The second page contains additional comments about information, broken down into more specific subject areas.

More than four out of ten survey respondents (584 out of 1,371, or 43%) made comments about information. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about information?



- More than one third (37%) made positive comments.
- More than four out of ten (42%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- More than two out of ten (21%) made mixed or neutral comments.

Many foster parents are grateful for the information they receive.

"I am always informed on case progress, upcoming changes, and upcoming court dates."

"They notify us about visit changes and upcoming events like clothing drives."

"They give us information about classes and about renewing license. They give us information about children's issues and activities."

"If I have any questions, the worker is there to help me with them."

"I hear everything about what's going on."

Some consider the information they receive inadequate.

"They could communicate where the case is heading, or if there is a hearing, or if there is a family team meeting."

"Keep me better informed."

"They could let me know what's going on, give me some advance warning on things that are changed."

"Social worker gives me very little information."

"Never told about hearings. Not consistently informed about when the meetings were to occur."

Others have mixed feelings about the information they are given.

"One of my workers is very good about communicating with me and giving me information about the children, but the other one is terrible."

"The social workers provide us with the input needed, sometimes."

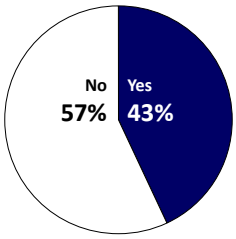
"Communication about meetings would help me participate more. This varies from worker to worker."

"Some [workers] do a good job…some you get nothing from. It's sometimes hard to get answers from them."

THEME | Information

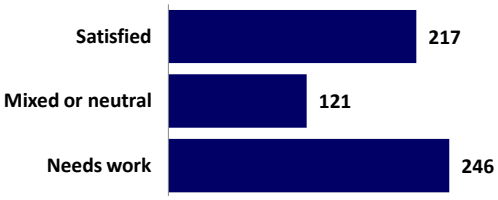
Comments about information were included in this category. 43% of survey respondents made a comment about information.

Made comments about information?



584 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (43%) mentioned information.

Of the 584 survey respondents who addressed information, nearly four out of ten (37%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (42%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 21% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents noted they are given:

- Quick, and complete, answers to their questions.
- Regular updates on their foster children's cases.
- Timely notice of court hearings and meetings.
- Information on foster children's backgrounds.
- Information about services for foster children and foster families.
- Insights into the foster care system.

Many foster parents reported that they:

- Don't get "straight answers" to their questions.
- Lack current information about their foster children's cases.
- Aren't notified of court hearings and meetings in advance.
- Are told little about their foster children's history.
- Don't get information about community supports for foster families.
- Aren't advised how the foster care system operates.

Many comments contained very specific compliments, complaints, or suggestions for improvement. Some of these comments can be found in the column to the left. Additional comments, organized by category, can be found on the next page.

THEME | Information, *continued*

Foster parents want good answers to their questions, and confidence they are receiving key – and timely – information concerning the children in their care. They also want adequate notice about court hearings and meetings; comprehensive background information about their foster children; and awareness of services currently available to those children. Finally, they want to know about the foster care system, and how they fit into that system.

Voices . . . .

Foster parents want clear and complete answers to their questions.

"I don't feel like I get straight answers from the DSHS social worker."

"They try to answer my questions in the best way possible."

"When I've gone in person, they can't find the person or supervisor to answer my questions."

"They are very good about answering our questions."

They also want important information to be shared in a timely fashion.

"They are very prompt about getting information to me – like a birth certificate or something."

"Not generally informed about court dates – I have to go after that information."

"They get us answers quickly about the status of the case or resources."

"Keep the foster parent notified of any changes in the case in a timely manner."

Foster parents are particularly interested in receiving regular updates on their foster children's cases.

"They could give us more updates without me attempting to pull teeth."

"They keep me up-to-date about what is going on with the case."

"They need to update the foster parents as to what is happening in the case more than once a month."

"My current social worker is very diligent about telling what the status of the case is."

"Let me know what the big picture is, and what the long-term possibilities are, for the child."

They want to be informed about meetings and court hearings *before* they occur.

"They try to keep us aware of all the court dates."

"Keep me updated about court hearings, so I can attend those hearings."

"I get all the information…if there are any meetings."

"I am not advised of various meetings and court dates by the social worker."

"Notify of meetings and court dates in advance."

They want detailed information about their foster children's background.

"Provide more background information on the children that I get."

"They provide information about the background of the child, and they facilitate information from prior foster homes."

"Give us full and complete access to the child's file that is pertinent. We need to know everything."

"They are very open about…child's history."

They also want to know of resources and services available to the children in their care.

"They have provided lots of information about services that are available."

"I need to know about the resources that are available to me."

"They keep us informed of programs and resources for kids."

"It would be nice to know what classes or things the children can do during the summer."

Foster parents are eager to understand the foster care system, and their role in that system.

"Explain details of different situations and processes as we go through them."

"They did a good job of explaining the process…and how to navigate the system."

"Be clear about what the expectations are from the state."

"When I have questions, they always do their best to answer them – particularly about the process."

Resources

Foster parents like needed resources to be readily available.

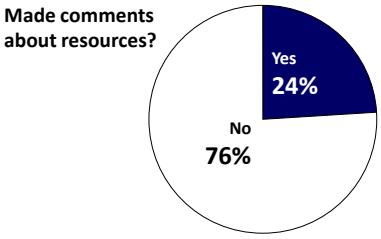
This section focuses on a wide variety of resources provided to foster parents and the children in their care.

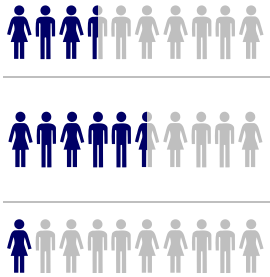
The majority of foster parents are dissatisfied with their access to resources. However, many are happy with – and grateful for – the resources they currently receive.

In this section:

- The first five pages are arranged by topic, in the following order: respite; financial matters; medical, dental, mental health; transportation; and childcare.
- The sixth page contains an overview of comments about various other resources.

Nearly one quarter of survey respondents (329 out of 1,371, or 24%) made comments about resources. Of those who commented on this subject:





- More than one third (35%) made positive comments.
- Over half (55%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- One out of ten (10%) made mixed or neutral comments.

Most foster parents want improved respite care, and easier access to that care.

"The biggest issue we have is trying to get respite care."

"They should provide better respite, and ways of getting respite."

"Medically fragile babies…there aren't a lot of places that will do respite."

"Give the foster parents more respite. It's been six months since I had any."

"Not enough people do respite care in this region. I have to request three months in advance for some time off."

"I don't even ask for respite anymore, as I've been told to find my own."

"They have cut the hired help that was given to us to help with our kid – the kid needs it severely."

"I would like to see [children with] high medical/behavioral needs have extra respite care available."

"We have no respite. I live in a rural area."

"Foster parents have a hard time getting respite! It would be very helpful for Children's Administration to find people who can give foster parents a break for vacations and emergencies."

Some are very grateful for the respite services they receive.

"If I need respite, they are there for me."

"They have a program where they take our children for 3 hours a day…this is very helpful to us."

"[They] provide options for respite."

"They are very willing to provide respite care for us."

"I have a challenging foster daughter. I appreciate the respite care that is available."

"Whenever I call and need respite, they try to do it."

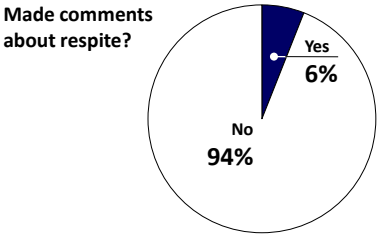
"They take the kids, so we can get a little bit of a break."

"[They are] helpful in getting respite care, which is needed."

"We get respite when we need it."

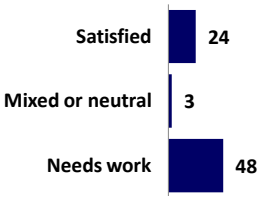
THEME | Respite

Comments about respite care were included in this category. 6% of survey respondents made a comment about respite.



75 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned respite.

Of the 75 survey respondents addressing respite, nearly one third (32%) made positive comments. More than six out of ten (64%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents suggested they need:

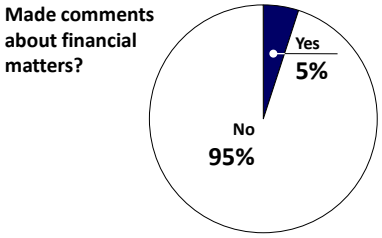
- Better access to respite care.
- More timely respite care.
- Respite care designed for high-needs foster children.
- High quality respite care.

Some foster parents are satisfied with:

- Social workers' willingness to provide respite care.
- Ready access to respite care.
- Respite care that suits their particular needs.

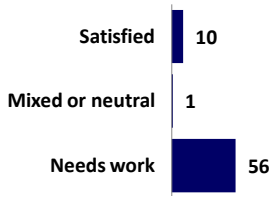
THEME | Financial Matters

Comments about financial matters were included in this category. 5% of survey respondents made a comment about financial matters.



67 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned financial matters.

Of the 67 survey respondents addressing financial matters, 15% made positive comments. More than eight out of ten (84%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 2% made mixed or neutral comments.



The majority of foster parents indicated a need for:

- Quicker and more efficient reimbursement for "out of pocket" expenses.
- Higher reimbursement rates.
- Accurate rate assessments.
- Increased foster care payments.

Some commended the:

- Timeliness of reimbursements.
- Reliability of foster care payments.
- Increase of payments, due to increased need.

Foster parents want timely and fair reimbursement for foster care expenses.

"The foster care reimbursement part is such a hassle. I think they make it that way so people won't even bother to try and get reimbursement."

"They process reimbursement paper quickly."

"I bought clothes on sale for my kids. It's been 8 months and I've not got reimbursement."

"[The social worker] helped us obtain reimbursement for out-of-pocket."

"We should get better reimbursement for gas, and household damages caused by kids."

They also want rate assessments that are timely, and accurately reflect foster children's circumstances.

"DSHS is holding down payments to foster parents by classifying foster children at Level 1 when they should be a Level 2, 3 or 4."

"I am not getting [rate assessments] in a timely manner at all."

"Level was reduced too quickly. Child began acting out, and rate is now too low. Rating system should be revised."

Foster parents have strong feelings about financial support.

"You have a child for a whole month before you get paid. That is ridiculous."

"My payments are on time, which is very helpful, of course!"

"The basic payment rate is terrible. Daycare pays up to $900 per month…foster parents only get $423 per month for 24/7 total care."

"They could turn in their paperwork so I get paid on time."

"They are cutting back with the foster care stipend. It's very hard to get clothes and vouchers and things that the children need. It's a huge hassle."

"When I needed help due to difficult kids…they increased the stipend."

"Give me more money!"

Foster parents want good - and accessible - medical and dental care for their foster children.

"On medical issues, my caseworker always provides me ways to go forward."

"Only one health care provider accepts DSHS payment in my area. Must go to another city for dental care for child."

"They're not providing medical care for this child who has a progressive medical disease…working through the bureaucracy for medical care while dealing with a very ill child is tough."

"They helped us figure out how to get medical and dental care."

"Medically, my foster child has a lot of needs, and the social worker has been very easy to work with as far as his insurance is concerned."

"I wanted to take one of my foster kids to the dentist, but I couldn't because they still haven't worked out the paperwork to get that appointment."

"They give good attention to referrals for medical care."

They also want access to the mental health services their families need.

"They get our children into counseling when they need it."

"They have provided counseling services for the children and the family."

"I have requested mental health services for the child. Many delays and no results."

"Offer more mental health services for the children, and do it more quickly."

"They provide an amazing amount of therapists for the children."

"Help when the 'bottom fell out.' Got child to a counselor."

"We wanted to do some mental evaluation…we had to get medical approval and jump through a bunch of hoops…It made it very difficult to get special medical services."

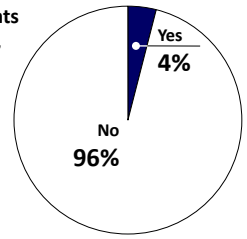
"Have better quality of therapeutic care for these kids that have suffered from traumatic experiences."

"Social workers are very good about providing counseling."

THEME | Medical, Dental, Mental Health

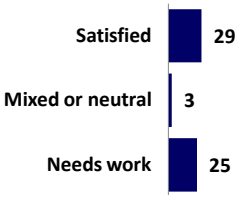
Comments about medical, dental and mental health resources were included in this category. 4% of survey respondents made a comment about one or more of these resources.

Made comments about medical, dental, mental health?



57 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned medical, dental or mental health resources.

Of the 57 survey respondents addressing medical, dental or mental health resources, more than half (51%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (44%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 5% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

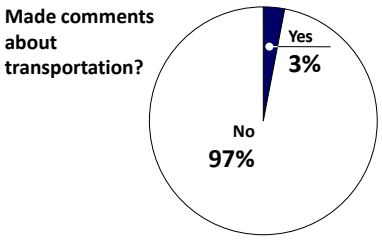
- Access to the medical, dental, and mental health care their foster children need.
- High quality care.
- Assistance in finding the best care.

They are discouraged by:

- Lack of care providers near their home.
- Bureaucratic roadblocks to getting services.
- Foster children being denied the care they need.

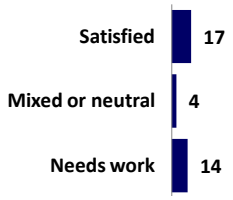
THEME | Transportation

Comments about transportation were included in this category. 3% of survey respondents made a comment about transportation.



35 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned transportation.

Of the 35 survey respondents addressing transportation, nearly half (49%) made positive comments. Four out of ten (40%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 11% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like:

- Easy access to needed transportation.
- Social workers who assist with transportation.
- Timely transportation services.
- Fair compensation for mileage.

They are frustrated by:

- Lack of transportation options.
- Lengthy waits for transportation services.
- Low mileage rates, or no reimbursement for miles traveled.

Some foster parents are pleased with transportation services.

"They are very helpful in getting the foster children to an appointment if necessary."

"The last social worker took the kids to the dentist. That was helpful."

"We have a transporting agency that is contracted by DSHS to take kids to their [bio] parent visits."

"The social workers provide transportation to counseling and medical appointments for the children in our home."

"They arrange transportation for the children."

"When I have a child to be transferred to an appointment, they always find someone to do it."

Some feel transportation services can be improved.

"They could provide transportation for 'out of county' trips…I live in Stevenson, and it is 95 miles round trip to go to Vancouver."

"There are not enough transportation people."

"I would love to see transportation handled faster."

"When we get a child who needs transportation to counseling or something…we do not get help."

"For people in outlying areas, make bus passes available."

"More consideration for transportation requests – my calls are not returned."

Foster parents want compensation for transportation costs.

"I appreciate being compensated for mileage."

"Better mileage reimbursement, as I have to run the kids to school, appointments, counseling, etc."

"I get reimbursed for mileage for therapy trips."

"Reimbursement for gas mileage, in a timely manner."

"We get mileage reimbursement."

"Raise the mileage reimbursement rate."

Many foster parents appreciate the childcare that is available to them.

"Always takes care of our daycare issues – I love our social worker of the last year."

"They pay for day care, which is really nice."

"[Social worker] did well in finding additional resources and day care. The day care is really important because we both work."

"They arranged daycare payments for children."

"There have been significant improvements in making my daycare get paid."

"[Social worker] enrolled the child in special needs daycare as I requested."

"I appreciate daycare once per week."

"The social worker was very helpful in offering us additional childcare for a child we needed a break from."

Some want more childcare, or are displeased with the childcare available.

"Make childcare more available."

"Issue paying for daycare…DSHS reimburses at a lower rate, which was a disadvantage."

"Daycare took 3 weeks to get."

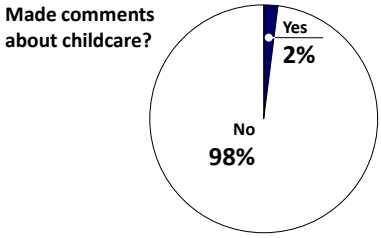
"My foster son goes to afterschool daycare, and they don't pay for that…It would be nice to be more flexible with the daycare options."

"It would be nice to be able to pick your own childcare provider."

"I have three foster kids and my own child…it would be really helpful to have daycare system to help when one of the kids has a doctor appointment, so I could drop the others off occasionally."

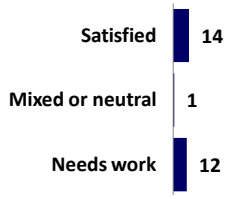
THEME | Childcare

Comments about childcare were included in this category. 2% of survey respondents made a comment about childcare.



27 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned childcare.

Of the 27 survey respondents addressing childcare, more than half (52%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (44%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents are pleased with:

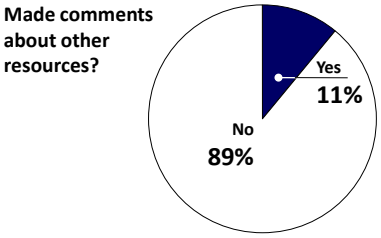
- Availability of childcare.
- Assistance in obtaining and paying for childcare.
- Specialized childcare.

Others suggested that childcare should be:

- More readily available.
- Provided more quickly.
- Expanded to encompass more types of care.
- Chosen by foster parents.

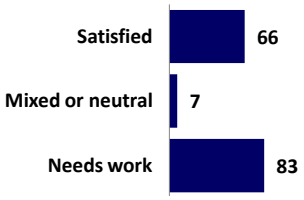
THEME | Other Resources

Comments about other resources were included in this category. 11% of survey respondents made a comment about other resources.



156 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned other resources.

Of the 156 survey respondents addressing other resources, more than four out of ten (43%) made positive comments. Over half (53%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 5% made mixed or neutral comments.



Comments placed in the "Other Resources" category include those that mention:

- Resources (with no further clarification of the term).
- Training for foster parents.
- Training for foster children.
- Clothing.
- Other supplies.
- Recreational activities for foster children and foster families.

Some foster parents are pleased to have resources named above. Others are frustrated by their inability to access those resources.

Some foster parents made general comments about resources.

"There need to be more funds for additional resources for the foster children."

"They have always provided what the kids need when I ask for something. They even offered stuff I haven't asked for – that is very helpful."

"They often don't have the resources to fulfill a need."

"When I need a voucher or the child is lacking something, they are very responsive and provide what's needed."

Others commented on training for foster parents, or foster children.

"There are lots of good training classes out there for us."

"They could offer a wider variety of training options."

"More skills training for the children."

"They find me the training that I need."

"I would definitely like more resources for teenagers…i.e., independent living skills."

Some foster parents addressed the need for clothing and other supplies.

"Wish they would bring back clothing vouchers for the kids."

"If I ask for clothing for the kids, the social worker is very helpful."

"They need to help us get cribs, beds, etc. – it was very difficult!"

"I asked for a few items for the baby, and [the social worker] got them right away – I appreciated that."

Others focused on activities for foster children and foster families.

"They followed through with camp for the kid!"

"Provide financial support for school sports and activities."

"They have outings for the foster child."

"More activities for a foster family to do."

"Have more activities for the kids."

"I appreciate the little things, like free Washington State campgrounds."

Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

Foster parents are thankful for support from a variety of sources.

This section focuses on support provided to foster parents and foster children by two groups:

- Staff *other than social workers* employed by Children's Administration or its contracted providers.
- Individuals and organizations *other than Children's Administration and its contracted providers.*

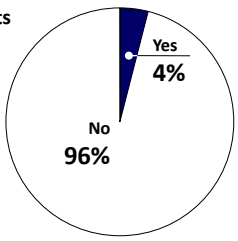
Most foster parents expressed thanks for support they have received from various sources in their community. However, some are clearly displeased with the support they have been given.

In this section:

- There is a single page overview of foster parents' comments about the support they receive from staff other than social workers, and from sources outside Children's Administration and its contracted providers.

Less than one in ten survey respondents (51 out of 1,371, or 4%) made comments about other sources of support. Though small in number, these comments are important to consider, as they shed light on key sources of community support for foster families. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about other sources of foster parent support?



- Nearly six out of ten (59%) made positive comments.
- One third (33%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 8% made mixed or neutral comments.

1.6 Other Sources of Support

Foster parents want to be supported by staff at all levels in foster care agencies.

"The social worker support staff…they are not helpful at all."

"The supervisor helps with concerns I have with the children in my care."

"The case aides are a great relief. They assist with troubled kids."

"Other team members help out when the social worker is not available."

"No help from the front office staff."

"The Area Administrator could be more available to answer questions."

They also value support received from CASAs and GALs.

"CASA worker was a huge resource on many levels. They know the system and know how to help you get what you need."

"The guardian ad litem was very helpful."

"Have a guardian ad litem available more."

"Encourage use of the CASA system. Their role of advocacy is vital."

They depend on their connections with other foster parents.

"Strong foster parent support group helps me."

"We should have more area support groups."

"Getting together on family night – it is good to be around other people who are foster parents."

"I learn from other foster parents."

In addition, foster parents benefit from the assistance of a variety of organizations in their communities.

"The 'Mockingbird' group is a good support, because we can get respite whenever we need it."

"Treehouse has offered music lessons, driver's ed. Good resource."

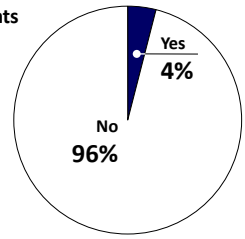
"We had a terminally ill child and everyone was very supportive, including the doctors and Hospice."

"Sibling House has been very helpful in providing clothing and funding for extracurricular activities."

THEME | Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

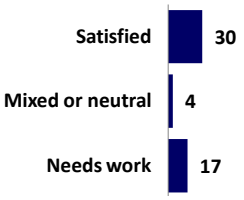
Comments about other sources of foster parent support were included in this category. "Other sources" were defined as Children's Administration or private foster care agency staff (other than social workers), and other individuals or organizations in the community. 4% of survey respondents made a comment about other sources of foster parent support.

Made comments about other sources of foster parent support?



51 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned other sources of foster parent support.

Of the 51 survey respondents who addressed other sources of foster parent support, nearly six out of ten (59%) made positive comments. One third (33%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 8% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents' comments covered the following topics:

- Support from Children's Administration or private agency staff (not social workers).
- Support from CASAs (court-appointed special advocates) or GALs (guardians ad litem).
- Support from other foster parents.
- Support from other community organizations.

Most foster parents applauded the amount and quality of support they receive from the sources named above. Some indicated they would like to receive *more* or *better* support than they are currently receiving.

PART 2

Foster Parent Training

Foster Parent Training is the second of two parts of the 2012 Foster Parent Survey Report. It provides an overview of foster parents' responses to questions about the foster parent training provided by Children's Administration and affiliated agencies.

The majority of foster parents reported they are satisfied with the training they receive. They praised the training provided by Children's Administration and private agencies; the skill of the trainers; and many of the trainings currently offered. However, they also indicated they would like to have easier access to training; certain trainings provided (or provided more often); more non-traditional training options such as online training or training integrated with support groups; and more timely information about trainings available.

This part of the report contains the following sections:

- Section 1: Quality and Helpfulness
- Section 2: Trainers
- Section 3: General Training
- Section 4: Specific Trainings
- Section 5: Access
- Section 6: Alternative Training Formats
- Section 7: Voice and Choice
- Section 8: Training Information
- Section 9: Support Beyond Training

Quality and Helpfulness

Foster parents give high marks to the training they receive.

This section focuses on the overall quality and helpfulness of the training foster parents are given by Children's Administration, and by private agencies contracted by Children's Administration. (Subsequent sections address more specific aspects of foster parent training – trainers, general training, specific trainings, access, alternative training formats, voice and choice, training information, and support beyond training.)

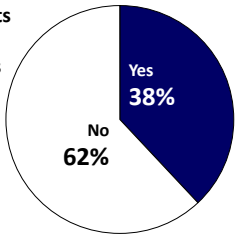
The majority of foster parents indicate they benefit from foster parent training. Even those who feel that current training needs serious work - either generally, or in specific areas – often acknowledge the benefits of trainings they have taken.

In this section:

- The first page highlights foster parents' responses to the question: ***Overall, thinking about ALL the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?***
- The following two pages address foster parents' comments about the quality and helpfulness of training as a whole, and from specific agencies or programs.

Close to four out of ten survey respondents (517 of 1,371 or 38%) made comments about the quality and helpfulness of foster parent training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of foster parent training?



- Nearly three quarters (74%) made positive comments

- Just over one out of ten (12%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement

- 14% made mixed or neutral comments

The majority of foster parents feel positively about the training they receive.

"State training is awesome."

"The trainings are full of substance, and lots of helpful information. They are in-depth."

"Training is good, and it is applicable."

"Considering I was never a parent before this – all the foster parent training was very helpful to me."

"The training has covered many facets and is very good."

"All of [the training] has been helpful, and it helps get needs for the children met."

"Foster parent training laid the basis for understanding foster parenting."

"[Training] has been really great. They teach you how to care for the children."

"The training has provided me with the necessary tools to be a foster parent."

Some don't feel training has prepared them sufficiently.

"Foster care training is not good at all."

"The training just doesn't apply to what we're doing or encountering."

"Not much of the training has prepared me for what I needed."

"I have learned much more from the other foster parents than I did from the training."

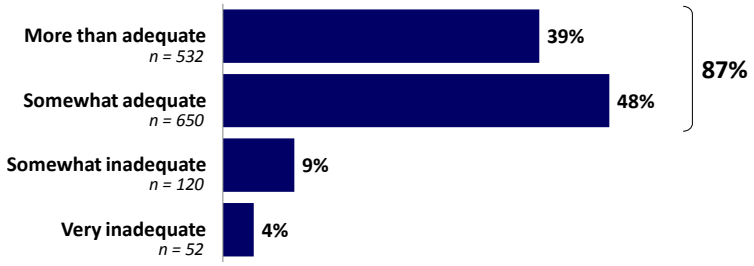
"Nothing that is offered by DSHS applies to the child in my home now."

"The trainings give you a lot of information about dealing with situations…when we actually deal with situations the way they say, you can get in trouble…They tell you in training there is a fine line and each case is different. But how are we supposed to know where that line is?"

"I haven't really found any of the training helpful in real life situations."

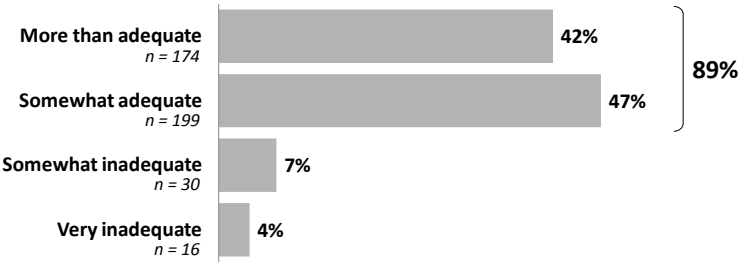
QUESTION | Overall, thinking about ALL the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?

Nearly nine out of ten foster parents surveyed (87%) reported that training adequately prepares them to care for the foster children in their home. 13% found the training inadequate.

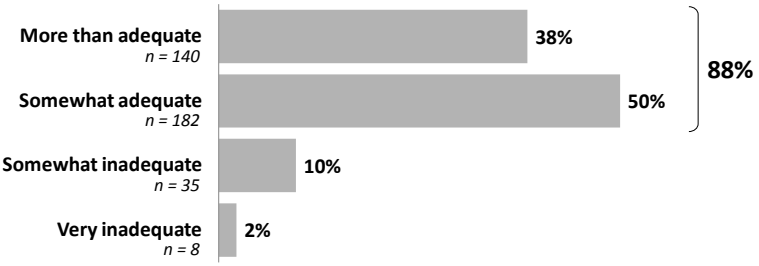


Difference between regions were not statistically significant.

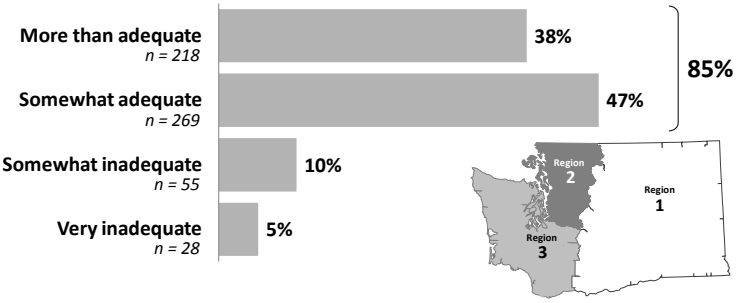
In REGION 1 nearly nine out of ten repondents (89%) indicated training was adequate. 11% of respondents disagreed.



In REGION 2 nearly nine out of ten respondents (88%) indicated training was adequate. 12% of respondents disagreed.

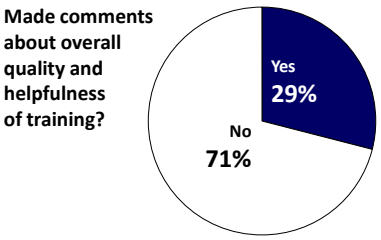


In REGION 3 more than eight out of ten respondents (85%) indicated training was adequate. 15% of respondents disagreed.



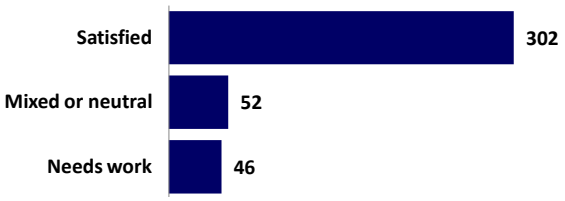
THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Training

Comments about the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent training (rather than the quality and helpfulness of specific trainings) were included in this category. 29% of survey respondents made a general comment about training.



400 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (29%) mentioned the overall quality and helpfulness of training.

Of the 400 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of training, more than three quarters (76%) made positive comments. 12% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 13% made mixed or neutral comments.



In addition:

- **81 survey respondents replied "Nothing" to the question, "How could foster parent training be improved?" (a positive response).**
- **21 respondents replied "Nothing" to the question, "What about foster parent training has been helpful?" (a negative response).**

Most foster parents find the training they receive very helpful.

"Training program was a great eye opener to another world."

"It was all helpful. I got a lot out of it."

"The training that I have received has been excellent and very informative."

"My husband and I have been very impressed with the training."

"The training offered is fabulous."

"Every training I have taken has given me an 'aha' moment."

"The training was very good – I wish I'd received it with my own children."

"It is all wonderful. I can't get enough."

Some have mixed feelings about training.

"The training was very good, but some of it was redundant."

"The classes are good information, but I don't get a ton out of it."

"Some of the training is really helpful – some is ridiculous. It's the same training for everyone regardless of the types of kids they take into their homes."

"If there's new stuff, that's great. If not, the classes take time away from my babies."

"There were some areas that we didn't get the training that we should have."

Others have little good to say about their training experience.

"It is ridiculous to have to put so many hours into training. It's a waste of state dollars."

"The training I've received has been very little help."

"We already know about fostering. We are familiar with different aspects, and don't need the training."

"The classes are repetitious and boring to listen to."

"I hate training. I do it because I have to – it's useless."

Many foster parents commented on the quality of training from specific agencies or programs.

"We do all of our training through Tacoma Youth for Christ, and it has been awesome."

"We are part of the PICs program, and [their] training was very good!"

"Catholic Community Services just started their training, and their training seems not very good."

"The trainings from AMARA (foster-to-adopt agency) were the most helpful."

"There are a lot of good trainers with the Children's Alliance in Seattle."

"Training through Families Like Ours was amazing."

Some spoke of the helpfulness of private agency training, without naming the agency.

"The training that I have received from the private agency is wonderful."

"Private agency offers quality training."

"Get a lot of training through a private agency, and it is becoming old."

"The only training that we received was from the private agency, and it was great."

"The private agency provides exceptional training."

"I wish there were more trainings through the private agency."

Others reported on training support from a variety of sources.

"I attend local foster support meetings, where there is training."

"We attend classes in Tacoma and in Port Orchard when they are offered."

"I use my professional training, which counts toward my training requirements."

"I got training for how to deal with medically fragile infants from the hospital."

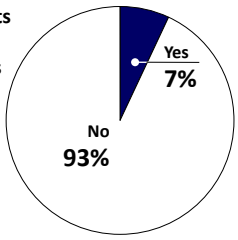
"I receive my training through my employer."

"I am attending college for special education. Some of those classes count for continuing education."

THEME | Quality and Helpfulness of Training in Specific Agencies or Programs

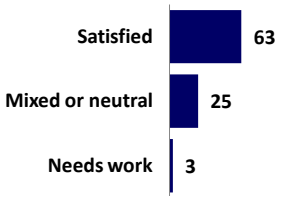
Comments about the quality and helpfulness of training provided by specific agencies or programs were included in this category. Other comments included in this category were those that mentioned an unnamed "private agency," a specific Children's Administration office, college classes, or classes in the community. 7% of survey respondents made a comment about training in a specific agency or program.

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of training in specific agencies or programs?



91 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (7%) mentioned the quality and helpfulness of training in a specific agency or program.

Of the 91 survey respondents who addressed the quality and helpfulness of training in specific agencies or programs, nearly seven out of ten (69%) made positive comments. Very few (3%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 28% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents' comments fell into the following groups:

- Comments on the quality/helpfulness of training from specific *named* agencies or programs.
- Comments on the quality/helpfulness of *unnamed* private agencies.
- Comments on other sources of training support.

Trainers

Foster parents feel that good trainers enhance the training experience.

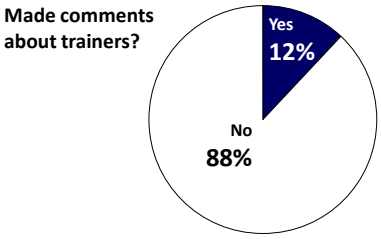
This section focuses on the trainers who lead the various foster parent trainings. Some of these trainers are employees of Children's Administration, some are employees of agencies contracting with Children's Administration, and still others are hired by Children's Administration or private agencies to present specific trainings.

Many foster parents reported satisfaction with trainers involved with the trainings they have attended. Others suggested changes such as having trainers with more professional credentials, having experienced foster parents and social workers involved in the training, and replacing "old" trainers with new ones.

In this section:

- The first page provides an overview of general comments about the performance of trainers.
- The second page addresses comments about specific trainers that foster parents liked or disliked.

Slightly more than one out of ten survey respondents (167 out of 1,371, or 12%) made comments about trainers. Of those who commented on this subject:



- Nearly one half (48%) made positive comments.
- More than four out of ten (42%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- One out of ten (10%) made mixed or neutral comments.

Most foster parents commended trainers.

"In all the classes I have taken, the trainers have been phenomenal – absolutely wonderful!"

"The instructors know their stuff."

"The [trainers] don't sugarcoat anything, which is good!"

"One of the best [trainings] was when the social workers and foster parents trained together. Foster parent as co-trainer is really the best model."

"The presenters have been exceptional, and I've been able to learn a lot."

"[Classes] are taught by very qualified people."

"The instructors are very good at answering questions, and if they don't know the answer they'll find out."

"Trainers are engaging and experienced."

"The main trainer here are really, really good."

Some suggested ways trainers could become more effective.

"The training needs to connect you with past foster parents, so you will hear live stories and not just what's in the book."

"Have an expert (doctor, etc.) provide the trainings."

"It would be beneficial to have social workers come to the 30-hour training to talk about what information they need/don't need from you."

"Higher level training is needed – more nationally recognized seminars."

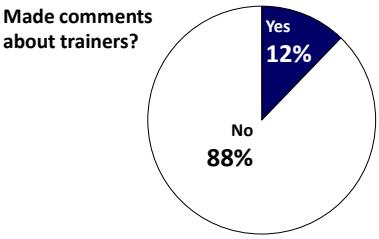
"New trainers – a lot of them have been doing it for 15-20 years – new trainers bring new perspectives."

"Have instructors be more up-to-date on the problems of today's children."

"Have the social worker and the foster parents do the training."

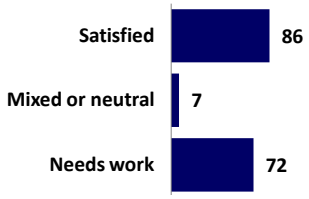
THEME | Trainers

Comments about foster parent trainers were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents made a general comment about trainers.



165 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned trainers.

Of the 165 survey respondents who addressed trainers, more than half (52%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (44%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents are pleased when trainers:

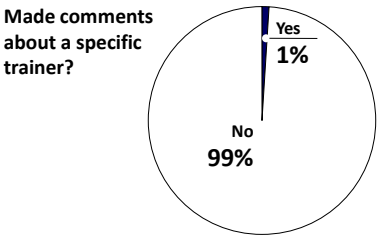
- Know their subject matter well.
- Are honest about the ups and downs of foster care.
- Take time to answer questions.
- Engage with trainees throughout training.

They are frustrated by trainers who:

- Lack practical experience with foster care.
- Lack depth of knowledge in their subject area.
- Don't invite others with different expertise to co-train.
- Share outdated information.
- Have been training too long.

THEME | Specific Trainers

Comments about specific foster parent trainers were included in this category. 1% of survey respondents made a comment about a specific trainer.



10 the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific trainer.

Of the 10 survey respondents who commented on a specific trainer, 8 made positive comments, 1 made a negative comment/suggestion for improvement, and 1 made a mixed/neutral comment.

Those who commented praised particular trainers for:

- Excellent training skills.
- Knowledge of the "ins and outs" of foster care.
- Expertise in specific areas.
- Willingness to draw experienced foster parents into training.

The one foster parent who made a negative comment felt that the trainer was culturally insensitive.

Most comments about specific trainers were positive.

"Randy Hankins in Walla Walla is an excellent trainer for special needs."

"Challenging Destructive Adolescent Behaviors was very helpful. Conrad Bagley, Parenting Project, was the trainer."

"There is a class that Michelle Cutliff is doing now about the first placement that is a really good class."

"I had a trainer, Bill, out of Clallam County…he brought other foster parents who talked with us and gave us their phone numbers to contact…it was nice to have a foster parent resource available."

"Nancy Lee was great."

"Every foster parent should go to one camp put on by Nancy Thomas. Every foster parent needs to go to one of her camps! Because 95% percent of these [foster] kids are likely to have Reactive Attachment Disorder because they move all the time."

"The person who did the training, Sherry Rego, was excellent. This was the standard training that was required."

One comment is best described as neutral.

"I would like to see our trainer and her team up there presenting true cases. Tell us like it is, and how we can manage our foster parent lives. It is extremely difficult."

Only one comment contained a negative reference to a particular trainer.

"Sometimes the trainer should focus more on what is happening with the children, not on what is happening in general with the Mexican people (i.e., [trainer name redacted] spoke to us and said that since I have been here 20 years, why haven't I learned to speak English, and that has nothing to do with the foster parent training class, or at least it shouldn't)."

General Training

Foster parents appreciate many aspects of foster parent training.

This section focuses on general observations about foster parent training.

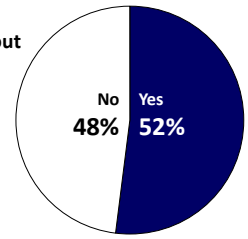
Most foster parents made favorable comments about training. They reported their satisfaction with the useful information and skills they gained during training, and the new perspectives that training gave them. Some leveled criticisms about certain aspects of training, such as training techniques and training materials.

In this section:

- The first page addresses comments about how well training prepares foster parents to deal with the children in their care.
- The second page is an overview of comments about approaches to training.
- The third page focuses on comments about training resources.
- The fourth page reviews comments on training materials.
- The fifth page looks at other general training comments.

More than half of survey respondents (716 out of 1,371, or 52%) made general comments about training. Of those who commented on this subject:

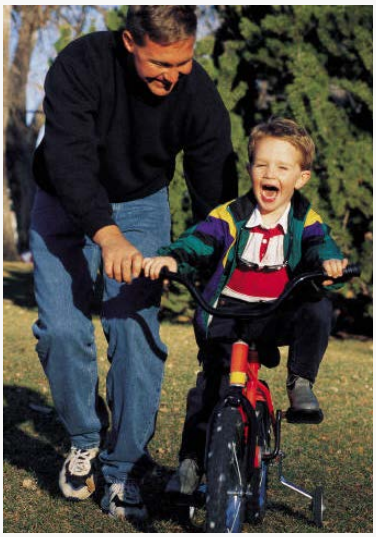
Made general comments about training?



- More than half (52%) made positive comments

- Nearly one third (31%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement

- 17% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want training that helps them understand and deal with the foster children in their care.

"Helps to know what to expect when children are removed from their parents and their home."

"Just knowing the different types of issues that kids can come in with, and how to handle them."

"The training is seriously lacking in teaching foster parents how to deal with the daily issues."

"Prepared us for the [foster care] journey so that we were not completely shocked."

"I wish they would warn us more of the ups and downs, and how difficult it is to be a foster parent."

They also want training on how to deal with biological parents.

"[I like] talking about… how to deal with bio-families."

"[I like] team building, and support in dealing with biological parents."

"The training needs to [help] foster parents understand what bio-parents are going through."

"It has helped me not be angry with the birth parents, and to be more understanding of their situation."

Some foster parents want to better understand the experience of their biological children in foster families.

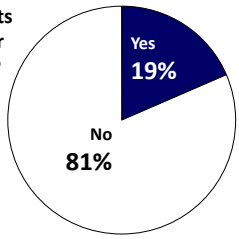
"I wish I had learned what the effects of being a foster parent would be on my biological children. I don't think training prepares you enough for that."

"[Should be more] training on how to integrate foster children with our own children, and how to parent this mixture."

THEME | Caring for Foster Children

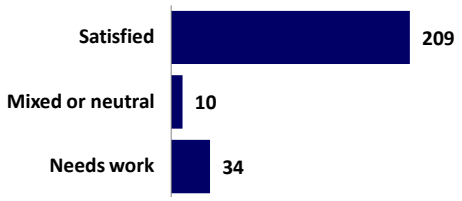
Comments about how well training prepared foster parents to care for the children in their home were included in this category. 19% of survey respondents commented on caring for foster children.

Made comments about caring for foster children?



253 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (19%) mentioned caring for foster children.

Of the 253 survey respondents who addressed how adequately training prepared them to care for foster children, more than eight out of ten (83%) made positive comments. 13% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.

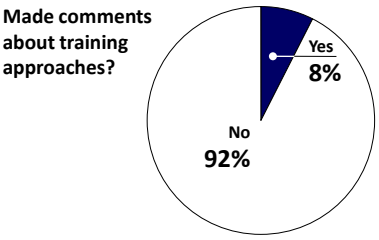


Comments about caring for foster children fall into three primary areas:

- How well training helps foster parents understand, and deal with, foster children.
- How well training helps foster parents understand, and deal with, biological parents.
- How well training helps foster parents understand the effect of fostering on their biological children.

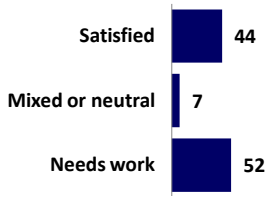
THEME | Approaches to Training

Comments about various approaches to foster parent training were included in this category. 8% of survey respondents commented on approaches to training.



103 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (8%) mentioned approaches to training.

Of the 103 survey respondents who addressed approaches to training, more than four out of ten (43%) made positive comments. Just over half (51%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



Comments about approaches to training made it clear that foster parents favor:

- "Hands on" training.
- Role plays and scenarios.
- Real life examples.
- Small group trainings.

Many made it clear that they want more training to include these approaches.

Foster parents like "hands on" training experiences.

"More 'hands on' training would be good. I learn by doing and practicing."

"I like the interactive nature of the training."

"It should be more interactive. You can sit and have a passive experience, but it's not as helpful as doing activities."

They particularly like role playing and scenarios.

"Role playing is helpful."

"[I liked] talking about different scenarios with different children and different backgrounds."

"I like the group activities with scenarios, role play, and discussions with other foster parents."

They want training to include "real life" examples.

"More real life situations, instead of generic examples."

"Real life stories from trainers and foster parents are greatly helpful."

"I'd like to hear from experienced foster parents how they deal with real life situations. Theory is great, but practical is powerful."

They prefer training in small group settings.

"The training in small groups is very helpful."

"Have smaller groups – it's hard to see material [trainers] are trying to share."

"Smaller groups would make interacting easier."

Foster parents had a wide variety of additional suggestions for training.

"Be more detailed on things – they barely skim the surface of issues."

"Offer more group panel discussions with experienced foster parents."

"Involve the children in the training."

Most foster parents are pleased with the resources that are provided in training.

"Given the right tools and resources during training. Thank you!"

"The training has been helpful in directing me toward resources that are available for individual issues."

"They give you a good idea of which services are available."

"Learning about accessing social support and therapy for the kids has been helpful."

"We were given lots of good resources."

"[I like] having a list of numbers for foster care liaisons, so we can [reach] someone to help us with questions."

"We got information on resources that are available to foster children."

"[Training] makes us aware of resources in the community."

"They always give good ways to find more support at the end of training."

Some would like more information about available resources.

"More listing of real resources available in the county."

"They should cover more things like available sports, camps, and clothing for the kids."

"They gave us a lot of resource phone numbers, but the numbers weren't that helpful."

"There needs to be training on resources [for] foster children."

"Go into more depth about resources available to foster parents."

"More resources and contacts to get help if you have a problem. The social worker can't solve everything."

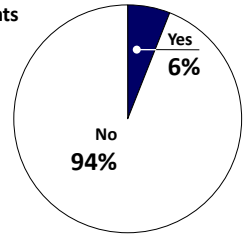
"Offer more resources for more difficult children."

"Newcomers need to know about support services, tutoring, sending kids to camp, Sibling House, support for Native American kids - RESOURCES!!"

THEME | Resources

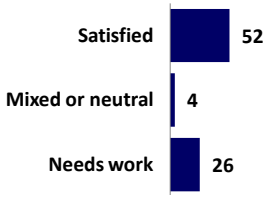
Comments about training resources were included in this category. 6% of survey respondents commented on training resources.

Made comments about training resources?



82 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned training resources.

Of the 82 survey respondents who addressed training resources, more than six out of ten (63%) made positive comments. Nearly one third (32%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 5% made mixed or neutral comments.

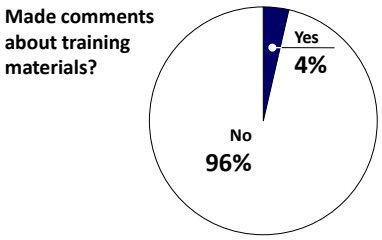


The majority of foster parents are satisfied with the information about resources for foster children and foster families that they receive in training. Some would like more information about:

- Resources available in specific geographical areas.
- Resources for specific items, such as clothing.
- Resources for activities available to foster children.
- Resources for help when issues arise.
- Resources for children with special needs.

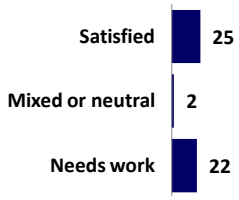
THEME | Training Materials

Comments about training materials were included in this category. 4% of survey respondents commented on training materials.



49 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned training materials.

Of the 49 survey respondents who addressed training materials, more than half (51%) made positive comments. 45% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Comments about training materials fell into three groups:

- Quality of videos.
- Quality of written materials.
- Access to training materials.

Although many foster parents had positive things to say about training materials, some found the materials outdated, unrealistic, inaccurate, or too simplistic.

Many foster parents complimented the materials used in trainings.

"All the materials I get on any subject are very, very helpful to have. The materials apply well to foster care and everyday life."

"I know the videos are dated, but they still give a powerful message."

"We got a PRIDE CD disc if we needed to go back and review."

"We got written material for follow-up."

"The literature they hand out is very good."

"The written and video materials about child psychology and brain development are really good."

"The articles were helpful."

"Have watched a lot of helpful videos."

"I like the written materials, so I can take it and keep it for reference purposes. It's a good sporadic refresher."

"[I found the] video and resource material helpful."

Some felt the materials - or the access to materials - could be improved.

"Videos need updating. Too much humor, outdated, too scripted, gets lost in frivolous."

"What they put on paper is not realistic."

"Access to training materials if we cannot attend the training."

"The videos need to show more difficult cases, as we care for difficult cases."

"The material is usually a no-brainer."

"We didn't have helpful guides. They didn't match [the training] so they weren't very helpful."

"Foster care has changed dramatically, but the material is the same."

"Update the videos."

"Maybe more realistic videos, as theirs were kind of cheesy."

Foster parents want a wide variety of trainings with current content.

"Good job offering a wide variety of continuing education subjects."

"Variety, for those of us who are experienced, would be good."

"The updates of new procedures are very helpful."

"The training can be repetitious. There are no new trainings."

"I gobble up the classes…there is a wide variety for children's needs."

"[Training] needs to stay 'fresh,' current and up-to-date."

They have strong feelings about the amount of training they receive.

"Training is helpful, but there is too much of it."

"More training would be welcomed."

"I like the amount of [training]."

"They lowered the amount of training that a foster parent needs if they have a license for awhile. I pat DSHS on the back for that - it recognizes our experience."

They also feel strongly about a wide range of other training matters.

"The training has opened my eyes to what to do as a foster parent."

"The majority of training – they don't take into account what type of foster parent you are. It's like one shoe fits all."

"It makes you more excited about what you are doing."

"The foster training is theoretical, whereas in my home the activity is real, and usually different."

"It has given me a lot of skills that I didn't have before."

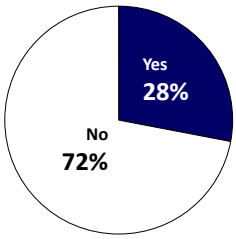
"A lot of the training doesn't relate to our child or our situation."

"A lot of information received in a short period of time – hard to remember it all."

THEME | Other General Training Comments

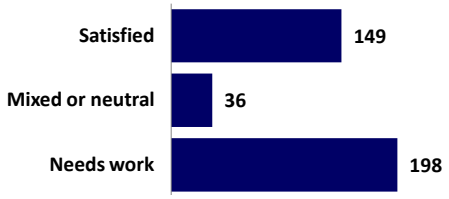
Other general comments about training were included in this category. 28% of survey respondents made other general training comments.

Made other general comments about training?



383 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (28%) made other general comments about training.

Of the 383 survey respondents who made other general comments about training, nearly one out of four (39%) made positive comments. More than half (52%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 9% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like:

- Variety in training.
- Up-to-date training.
- Training that provides useful information.
- Training that helps them develop new skills.
- Training that gives them new awareness and enthusiasm.

They dislike:

- Having too little training available.
- Having too much training required.
- Too much information in a single training session.
- Repetitious training.
- Out-of-date training.
- Training that is too general.
- Training that isn't based in reality.

Specific Trainings

Foster parents have strong opinions about specific trainings.

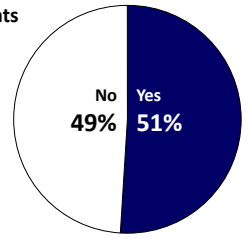
This section focuses on specific foster parent trainings, or specific types of training. Foster parents commented on a wide variety of trainings. In some instances, they shared positive reactions to a favorite training or training type. In others, they reviewed a particular training negatively; suggested ways to improve a specific training; or asked for training – or more training – in a specific area.

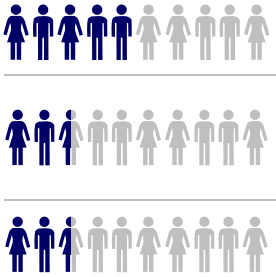
In this section:

- Eleven pages review foster parents' comments on ten specific training themes. The themes are arranged in the following order: Disorders/issues; substance abuse; sexually inappropriate behavior; child behavior; infants and toddlers; navigating the foster care system; trainings mentioned by name (PRIDE, Parenting Plus, and Love and Logic); health and safety; cultural and language issues; and other specific trainings.

More than half of survey respondents (699 out of 1,371, or 51%) made general comments about training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about specific trainings?





- Half (50%) made positive comments.
- One quarter (25%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- One quarter (25%) made mixed or neutral comments.

Most foster parents find the trainings they receive on specific disorders or issues very useful.

"Preparing me for the grief process that the kids are going through, that was a lifesaver."

"Training on children with special needs has been very helpful."

"The training on Sensory Issues and Autism was very interesting. I learned lots."

"Bi-polar training was awesome."

"Attachment Disorder, Behavior Disorders were the most helpful [trainings]."

"ADHD class and mental health issue training was helpful."

"It has been helpful to get education about neglect issues and abuse issues."

"The grief and loss training, especially as it relates to what the child is going through in losing their family through entering foster care."

"The 'Training on Trauma' training stands out in my mind."

Some see a need for more training on particular disorders or issues.

"I have special needs children, and I would like more training for their issues."

"More training on the behavioral issues you may encounter with children who have experienced abuse and neglect."

"We need more training on Oppositional Defiant Disorder."

"Basic knowledge on how to deal with a child who has PTSD."

"I would like to see more training available for developmentally disabled or medically fragile kids."

"We need a lot more on how to deal with these kids with complex trauma."

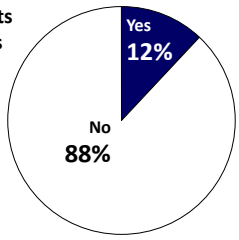
"More training offered on attachment issues and trust issues."

"Autistic kids – specific training in this area would be very helpful."

THEME | Disorders/Issues

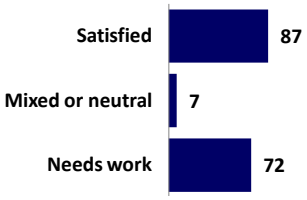
Comments about training on specific disorders or issues were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents commented on disorders/issues training.

Made comments about disorders or issues?



166 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (12% mentioned training on disorders or issues.

Of the 166 survey respondents who addressed trainings on specific disorders or issues, over half (52%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (43%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



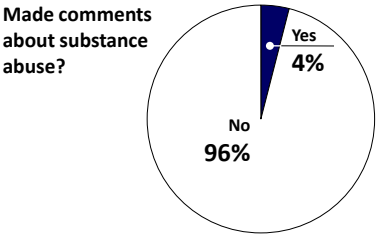
Many foster parents reported the value of trainings on specific disorders or issues, including:

- Abuse and neglect issues.
- ADHD and ADD.
- Attachment disorder.
- Autism and sensory issues.
- Behavior disorders.
- Bipolar disorder.
- Developmental disabilities.
- Grief, loss, and separation issues.
- Oppositional defiant disorder.
- Medically fragility issues.
- Special needs.
- Trauma, and post traumatic stress disorder.
- Other mental health disorders.

Some feel there is a need for additional training in one or more of these areas.

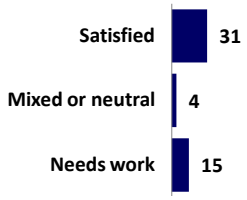
THEME | Substance Abuse

Comments about substance abuse training were included in this category. Most comments referred to trainings about children exposed to alcohol or drugs before birth. 4% of survey respondents commented on substance abuse training.



50 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned substance abuse training.

Of the 50 survey respondents who addressed substance abuse training, more than six out of ten (62%) made positive comments. Three out of ten (30%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 8% made mixed or neutral comments.



The majority of foster parents indicated they find the classes about drugs and alcohol, and the effects those substances have on foster children, important and useful. Some suggested they would benefit from more training on:

- Fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect.
- Alcohol and attachment problems.
- Drug-affected infants and children.
- Methamphetamine addiction.
- Heroin addiction.
- Emerging street drugs.

Most foster parents think substance abuse training is very informative.

"I have boys with high needs – FAS [fetal alcohol syndrome]. All the training I have received has answered a lot of my questions, which has enabled me to do more for them."

"The information about drug-affected infants…has been helpful."

"The education on FAS kids and middle-aged kids was useful. What to expect around seizures and withdrawal was critical."

"'What Do I Do with my Drug-Affected Child Now?' was a good class."

"Classes about drug exposure were very helpful, as the children currently placed had exposure."

"Alcohol Syndrome was very helpful, so I had an idea what I was getting into."

"I like the meth classes, as it helps me understand what the child's parent is going through."

"The training on fetal alcohol syndrome and brain development helped in understanding."

Some indicated they would like more – or more accessible – substance abuse training.

"Need more training dealing with children that have a drug and alcohol background in the age group of 5-14."

"Offer heroin addiction training."

"Some of the trainings I would like to take – Fetal Alcohol Effect, etc. – are only in the larger cities or the regional office city."

"More training on alcohol and attachment problems."

"Have training that includes more understanding of a child from a meth home."

"Would like more classes…on drug-affected [babies]."

"Training on the new drugs that are being used by [biological] parents and affecting the children and their behavior."

"I would like to see training about addiction and how it affects the child and foster family/bio-parents."

Most foster parents appreciate training on sexually inappropriate behavior.

"The training that we have had on sexually aggressive youth has been very helpful."

"How to deal with sexual misconduct was helpful."

"Sexual behavior [training] was great. It showed me what to look for and how to spot it."

"The training about sexual and physical abuse of children… very helpful."

"[I liked the] training on sexually active and aggressive children."

"The training on Sexually Aggressive Youth was helpful in how to manage that behavior."

"[I liked] how to protect your kids from sexual abuse."

"I liked the [trainings] on 'defiant' children and 'sexually aggressive' children."

"Sexual behavior and disorders training has been helpful."

"The training on sexual behavior was great."

Some registered complaints or offered suggestions about training in this area.

"We've been trying to take Sexually Aggressive Youth training for several months, but we live at least 1 ½ hours away from where the training is being held."

"I would like more training in the areas like SAY (sexually aggressive youth)."

"Probably more classes that talk about sexualized behaviors. We had a boy that had problems in that area and we didn't know how to deal with it. It would have been nice to know what to watch for."

"[I would like] specialized training on sexually abused children and how to deal with their needs."

"Sexually Deviant Behavior – I didn't learn anything new."

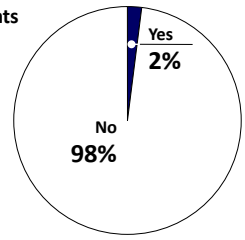
"Need to deal with issues around technology, sexy behavior in younger children, strangers approaching kids."

"Add speakers on special topics. Sexually aggressive kids, for example."

THEME | Sexually Inappropriate Behavior

Comments about sexually inappropriate behavior training were included in this category. 2% of survey respondents commented on a specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

Made comments about sexually inappropriate behavior?



24 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

Of the 24 survey respondents who addressed a specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior, more than six out of ten (63%) made positive comments. Nearly three out of ten (29%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Less than one out of ten (8%) made mixed or neutral comments.

Foster parents feel it is important to receive training about:

- Sexually active youth.
- Sexually aggressive youth.
- Signs of sexually inappropriate behavior.
- How to deal with sexual misconduct.
- Sexual and physical abuse of children.
- How to protect children from sexual abuse.

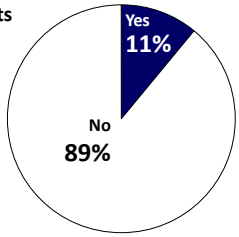
Some would like:

- More training about sexually inappropriate behavior.
- More training about sexually abused children.
- Easier access to training on these, and similar, subjects.

THEME | Child Behavior

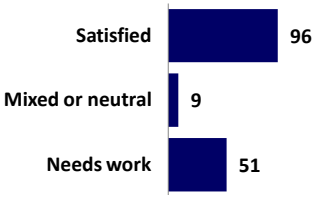
Comments about training on child behavior were included in this category. (Comments specific to training on infants and toddlers are in a separate category, addressed on the next page.) 11% of survey respondents commented on training on child behavior.

Made comments about child behavior?



156 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned training on child behavior.

Of the 156 survey respondents who addressed training on child behavior, more than six out of ten (62%) made positive comments. One third (33%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate training on:

- Child development.
- Behavior management.
- Discipline techniques.
- De-escalation techniques.
- Bullying.

They would like:

- More training for specific age groups.
- More training focused on the teenage years.
- More training on child development.
- More training on behavior management.

Foster parents found much to like about training on child behavior.

"Nuts and bolts of child development is good."

"[I like] managing behaviors like boundaries, biting, and hitting."

"[I like] techniques on how to discipline appropriately."

"[I learned] how to deal with angry outbursts, exercises in dealing with 'bad behaviors.'"

"[I like] the bullying training… the redirection training (how to redirect their attention)."

"Behavioral management and de-escalation techniques have been helpful."

"The stuff on stages of development, as it applies to abuse or loss, has been helpful."

"[Help] defining the mental age of the child."

"The irrational behaviors are tough to deal with, and the training really helped us."

Some foster parents suggested ways to improve child behavior training.

"They need to have training for each group (newborns, toddlers, school-age children, teens)."

"More basic training in how to manage behavior."

"Need more [training] for the teenagers. How to deal with the drama. Runaway issues, legalities would be helpful."

"The training needs to have more education on child development. What happens at what age, and what do we do as a foster parent."

"More about how to set rules for the children about the household."

"We could use more training for teens approaching 18 years – they all seem to freak out."

"I'd like more on basic child development."

"How to deal with the defiant child, who doesn't respond, no matter how well they are treated. How to comfort them, make being cared for normal."

Some foster parents commended the infant and toddler training they have received.

"Infant training was good."

"It has been helpful to get the education about behavioral issues that a lot of our toddlers have."

"Birth-to-three courses have been very helpful."

"I was impressed with 'Communication with Infants and Toddlers' through Swedish. I learned so much."

"Infant development was very helpful."

"The training for ages 1-5 is adequate, and makes me able to meet the needs of the kids."

"General education on parenting infants/toddlers was useful."

"I usually take medically fragile babies, and that training was very helpful."

"Born learning (0-5 development) – very impactful."

Many criticized, or offered ideas about, infant and toddler training.

"Psychology of a toddler…I'd like help with that."

"Birth-through-3 years training was insufficient – hard to find classes about behavioral issues, stress, separation anxiety, ADHD, bed wetting, anger, temper tantrums."

"There needs to be more training on infant care."

"They should do early development training, sensory training, behavior management, failure to thrive."

"More classes for little kids (6 and under)."

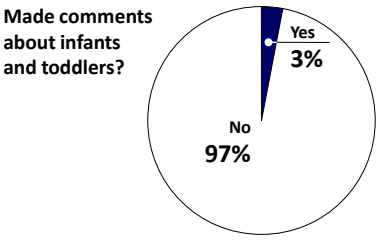
"There is no training for medically fragile infants…how to give injections, do suction, other technical procedures. Employ a nurse consultant to help foster parents deal with these issues."

"Need special training for those caring for infants."

"We need to hear more about the latest research on early childhood and infant care."

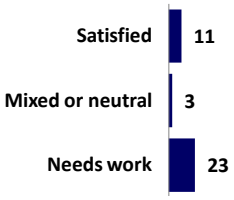
THEME | Infants and Toddlers

Comments about training on infants and toddlers were included in this category. 3% of survey respondents commented on infant and toddler training.



37 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned infant and toddler training.

Of the 37 survey respondents who addressed infant and toddler training, three out of ten (30%) made positive comments. More than six out of ten (62%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 8% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents are pleased with training on:

- Medically fragile infants.
- Infant and toddler development.
- Infant and toddler behavior.
- Communicating with infants and toddlers.
- How infants and toddlers learn.

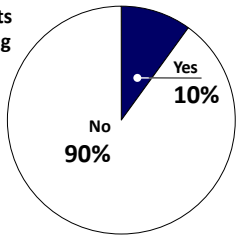
Many would like to see:

- More training on caring for infants.
- Practical instruction on caring for medically fragile infants.
- More training on infant and toddler development.
- Specific trainings on infant and toddler disorders.
- More training on infant and toddler behavior, and behavior management.

THEME | Navigating the Foster Care System

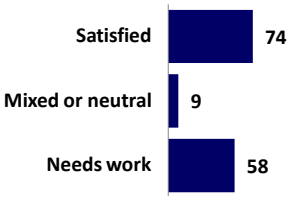
Comments about training on navigating the foster care system were included in this category. 10% of survey respondents commented on navigating the foster care system training.

Made comments about navigating the foster care system?



141 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (10%) mentioned training on navigating the foster care system.

Of the 141 survey respondents who addressed training on navigating the foster care system, more than half (53%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (41%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like training that helps them to:

- Understand the foster care system.
- Work effectively within the foster care system.
- Understand foster care guidelines, and know when guidelines change.
- Do required paperwork, and keep required records.

In their view, a lack of comprehensive training in these areas leaves them at a distinct disadvantage.

Foster parents want to understand how the foster care system works.

"The training gave me a good overview of the system, and what to expect."

"[Help] foster parents understand what the process looks like, end to end. More clarity on exactly who the different players are within DSHS."

"The training was most helpful in explaining the system, and what the child's and foster parents' roles are."

"More time on how the system works. I don't understand all the acronyms."

They also want advice on how to work within that system.

"I think we need a class on 'How to Navigate the System.' When to dig your heels in, and when not to."

"They do a good job of preparing you to work with the system."

"Tell the foster parents how the system works, and who to talk to about what when things come up."

Foster parents want clear and current information on foster care guidelines.

"The biggest thing is keeping us informed on the rules and regulations (WACs)."

"More training on WACs, what they are about, what can and can't happen."

"The updates of new procedures are very helpful."

"They should have a class on legal rights and responsibilities, for both foster parents and the State."

They also want assistance with required paperwork and record-keeping.

"The most helpful was the training on how to complete forms, and what [forms] the system requires."

"Paperwork pertaining to a child coming into care…could have spent more time on the mechanics of this, what I need to do first, second, etc."

"[I like] the classes that talk about how to keep records, files, how to organize and prepare for things."

Most foster parents applauded PRIDE training, but a few were unimpressed.

"I did PRIDE training. It was spectacular, a high quality program."

"The PRIDE classes were helpful. It gave me insight into the issues the children might have."

"PRIDE training was too basic and general."

"The PRIDE class in particular was good, and gave us a broad overview."

"The PRIDE training provided me with the negatives and positives of being a foster parent."

"[PRIDE] training is very long and hard to sit through…shorten it up."

"PRIDE training was really, really helpful and comprehensive."

They gave Parenting Plus training mixed reviews.

"Parenting Plus classes were awesome. The piece about discipline can never be enough for foster/bio parents."

"I don't like this Parenting Plus class they have us take…the classes are repetitious, and boring to listen to someone skim over the very basics."

"Parenting Plus was helpful. It reinforces your own parenting, gives you new tools, and connects you with other foster parents."

"Parenting Plus – it is two hours every Friday for 12 weeks – this is a 3-hour round trip, which is too long!"

"Parenting Plus is a great class, and every parent gets to take it now."

Most were quite enthusiastic about Love and Logic training.

"Love and Logic is wonderful."

"Love and Logic – a very helpful class."

"Have Love and Logic be a mandatory class for foster parents."

"Love and Logic – 90 percent of the time it doesn't help with foster kids."

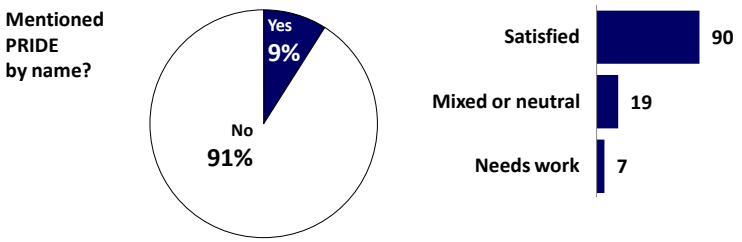
"Love and Logic was excellent."

"Love and Logic is fantastic – they need to offer it more often."

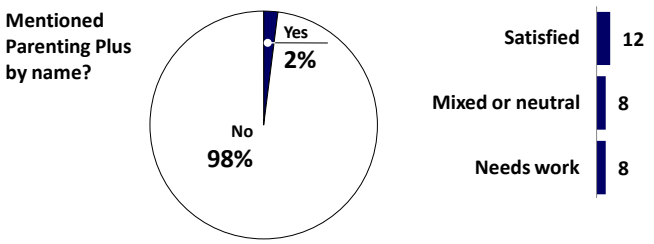
THEME | Trainings Mentioned by Name

Comments about trainings frequently mentioned by name were included in this category. Three trainings were often commented upon, and therefore included in this category: PRIDE, Parenting Plus, and Love and Logic.

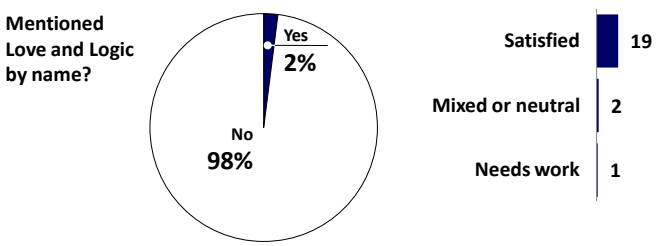
PRIDE. Of the 116 survey respondents who addressed PRIDE training, 78% made positive comments. 6% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 16% made mixed or neutral comments.



PARENTING PLUS. Of the 28 survey respondents who addressed Parenting Plus training, 43% made positive comments. 29% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. The same percentage (29%) made mixed or neutral comments.

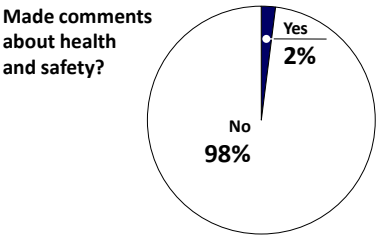


LOVE AND LOGIC. Of the 22 survey respondents who addressed Love and Logic training, 86% made positive comments. 5% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 9% made mixed or neutral comments.



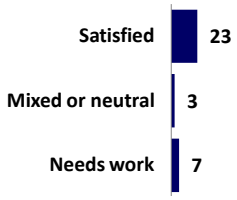
THEME | Health and Safety

Comments about health and safety training were included in this category. 2% of survey respondents commented on health and safety training.



33 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned health and safety training.

Of the 33 survey respondents who addressed health and safety training, seven out of ten (70%) made positive comments. Just over two out of ten (21%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 9% made mixed or neutral comments.



The vast majority of foster parents made comments about CPR and first aid training. They appreciate:

- Free CPR/first aid training.
- CPR/first aid training on an annual basis.
- Reminders about CPR/first aid certification.

Foster parents would like:

- CPR/first aid refresher classes between yearly trainings.
- CPR/first aid sessions available on more days and times.
- CPR/first aid training combined with other trainings.
- Non-mandatory CPR/first aid training.

Two foster parents made specific comments about the value of car seat training.

Most foster parents are satisfied with CPR and first aid training.

"The free CPR and first aid training is helpful."

"Ongoing first aid, CPR, support. I had no clue that my certification was to expire. I appreciate the reminder."

"The first aid training is helpful."

"It is good to make everyone renew their CPR and first aid."

"First aid and CPR is important and necessary."

"I liked the first aid, and really appreciated that."

"The training on CPR and first aid is great."

"I go to Foster Support meetings. We get first aid, CPR."

"The CPR first aid is helpful."

"The first aid training every year. Helps me keep on top of it."

"The CPR training has always been a plus, and helpful to have."

Some are dissatisfied with the current approach to CPR and first aid training.

"I feel like CPR and first aid could be more frequent. I'd like to take refreshers more often."

"Not make so many classes mandatory. The CPR is ridiculous."

"More CPR classes that are needed to keep your foster parent license."

"Combine CPR training with PRIDE training, and have it done in one day."

"Make it easier for me to attend First Aid and CPR – make it available at more times and different days."

Two foster parents mentioned car seat training.

"Detailed training, like the car seats, was interesting. I didn't know [about] that."

"It would be good to have car seat training. Make sure foster parents use car seats correctly!"

Some foster parents praised the cultural awareness training they receive.

"[I like] training on cultural differences, and understanding a different perspective."

"African-American hair and skin care was very helpful!"

"[I like] the support groups and training about cultural awareness."

"The Native [American] training and involvement has been very helpful."

"The training is culturally sensitive! I am very pleased with that feature."

"The two that have been exceptional are PRIDE training and the multicultural fostering and adoption training."

Others took issue with the cultural awareness training offered.

"We need more training on Native American culture. I would like to better understand their culture. I need to teach [foster children] who they are and where they come from."

"Cultural sensitivity – we need more of it. Some of the presenters don't really know the cultures they are talking about."

"Some [training] was really outdated. They told us African-American kids might eat different foods. One video we saw had people talking that blacks liked collard greens. It felt very wrong and weird to me."

"We got a bit offended that the training was somewhat generic. We feel that issues of race should be addressed."

Some foster parents commented on language issues.

"Have more classes in Spanish."

"They could provide more interpreters, as sometimes they don't have anyone available."

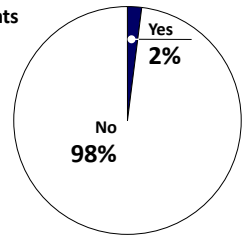
"Talk more Spanish, so that Spanish-speaking foster parents can understand the training."

"I had to make a request for interpreters, as I am deaf. Sometimes they didn't show up."

THEME | Cultural Awareness and Language Issues

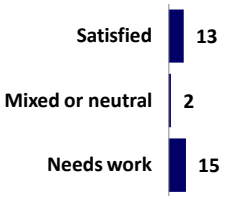
Comments about cultural awareness training, and cultural and language issues related to training, were included in this category. 2% of survey respondents commented on cultural or language issues.

Made comments about cultural and language issues?



30 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned cultural or language issues.

Of the 30 survey respondents who addressed cultural awareness training, or cultural or language issues related to training, 43% made positive comments. 50% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like:

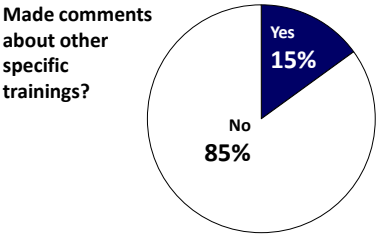
- Expanding their awareness of different cultures.
- Culturally-sensitive training.
- Training specific to their foster child's culture.

They are displeased by:

- Outdated training.
- Culturally-insensitive training.
- Lack of training on particular cultures.
- Difficulty accessing needed interpreters.
- Trainings offered only in English.

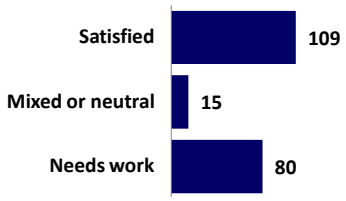
THEME | Other Specific Trainings

This "Other Specific Trainings" category includes comments about trainings and training types that do not fit into any of the previous categories in the Specific Trainings section. 15% of survey respondents commented on other specific trainings.



204 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned other specific trainings.

Of the 204 survey respondents who addressed other specific trainings, more than half (53%) made positive comments. Nearly four out of ten (39%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



Many comments about "other specific trainings" fall into one of four groups:

- Comments about foster parents' initial training.
- Comments about learning to deal with biological parents.
- Comments about workshops and conferences.
- Comments about the value of specific-topic trainings.

In addition to the four groups of comments outlined above, there were many comments which included the name of a *specific training* or a *specific type of training*. Some of these comments can be found on the next page.

Some foster parents commented on their first foster parenting training experience.

"I liked the initial training we did. It was extremely thorough and covered all the potential negatives and was really upfront about it and helped us make decisions."

"The initial class could be less confusing. It was a lot of information all at once, and I didn't feel very well informed after the class."

"The initial training to become a foster parent was helpful, but I wish it had been more in-depth."

Others spoke about training to help them interact with biological parents.

"We did take one class on how to interact with birth parents, keeping communication open with them, etc."

"More training on how to deal with bio-parents when they are bashing you."

"[I liked] team building and support in dealing with biological parents."

"We have to co-parent, so some training on how to co-parent with the biological parent."

Still others commented on conferences and workshops.

"Having a state-wide conference was helpful, so I could get the majority of my training in a short period of time."

"Semi-annual workshops are fabulous, really community-building."

"The conference trainings have been the most helpful."

Foster parents noted the value of having specific-topic trainings.

"The trainings offered lately have been very specific – it's an improvement."

"Specific topic trainings are good."

"Instead of focusing on just the number of hours, it's important to get specific training for your child's needs."

THEME | Other Specific Trainings, *continued*

Foster parents commented on a wide variety of trainings or training types. In some cases, they named n a training that they found to be beneficial. In other cases, they specified a training they would like to have available to them. Some of their comments are listed below.

Voices . . . .

Some foster parents named specific trainings they found useful.

"Training about adoption was very helpful."

"Self-reflection Activities was good for me as a person."

"I have found the training I have taken on dealing with the schools to be very helpful."

"[I liked] the training to deal with the whole licensing process."

"We had someone come and talk about adoption services – that was helpful."

"The most helpful was the documentation process."

"Enjoyed the session on foster [siblings] who are in different homes and keeping them together."

"WAC training was very good."

"I took a class about licensing requirements – very helpful."

"The training that involved the children's different rights was very helpful."

"The trainings on…educational issues have been helpful."

"Support group on foster-to-adopt was great."

"Mentoring training was helpful when it was offered."

"The training that focuses on 'effective communication' was very helpful."

"The foster training that the foster mom and dad could go to regarding how their own children accept the foster children in their care was very good."

Others described trainings they would like to have available.

"Class is needed for relative placement."

"I would like training on self-esteem for kids, so they can have better feelings about their biological family."

"I need to know what the law is, and how to handle bad situations when they come around."

"More training for foster parents on how to get their needs met."

"How to manage medication administration."

"Training about gangs is needed! We don't know what to look for or how to handle it."

"Offer more support for families having to give up children."

"More education on the medication that they give kids."

"Caregiver training for the foster parents that need it."

"They should offer advanced training for experienced foster parents."

"Classes on how to improve the brain with brain exercises."

"Teach the foster parents how to advocate for the youth – what it means to advocate, and how to do it correctly."

"We need more training on the pre-adoption cases."

"Specific training for working with hospitals such as Mary Bridge [Children's Hospital]."

"Might include 'Helping Children Through Divorce' as an additional training."

"Texting, and how to deal with/monitor electronic communication. I'd like training that could address this."

"Process trainings on how to have a voice as a foster parent advocate for the children."

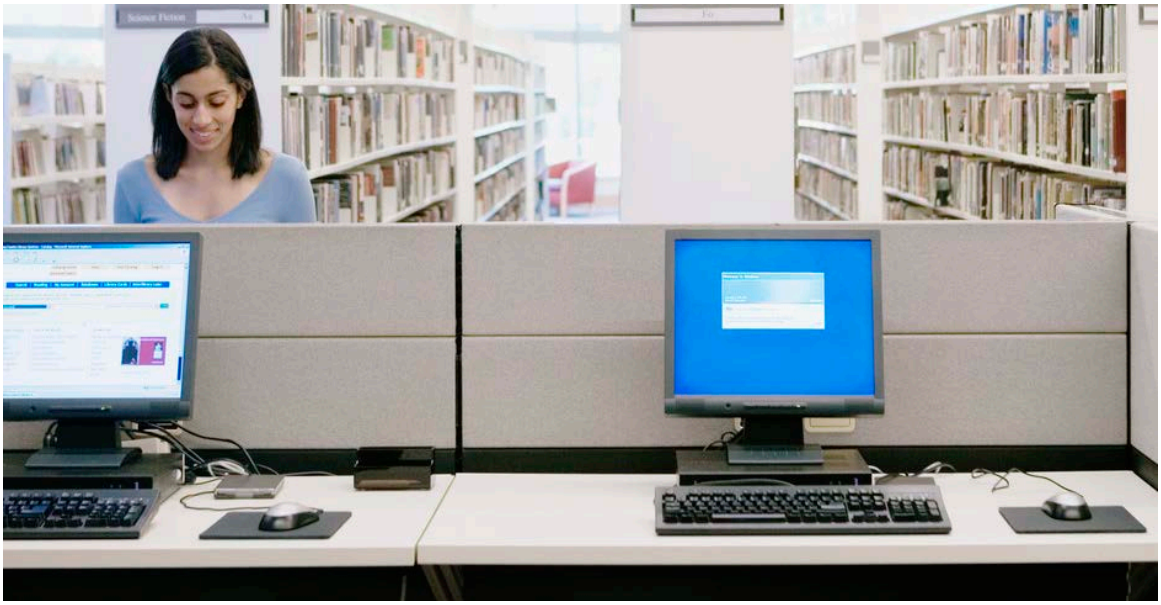
"Educate the foster parents more about the technology."

"More education on the medication that they give kids."

"TBRI [Trust-based Relational Intervention] should be mandatory, as it about relationship with child."

"Could use a class on how the foster parents and their children can separate from the foster children when they leave."

Access



For foster parents, easy access to training is an important consideration.

This section focuses on the ease of access to foster parent trainings.

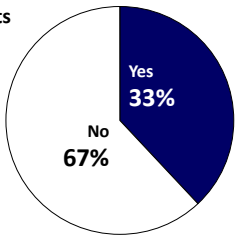
A small number of foster parents expressed satisfaction with their access to training. Many more commented on the difficulties they had in accessing the training they wanted to – or were required to – attend.

In this section:

- The first page addresses comments about the location of trainings.
- The second page reviews comments about the scheduling of trainings.
- The third page looks at comments about childcare during training.
- The fourth page deals with other comments about access to training.

One third of survey respondents (446 out of 1,371, or 33%) made comments about access to training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about access?



- Less than one out of ten (7%) made positive comments.
- Nearly nine out of ten (87%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 7% made mixed or neutral comments.

A few foster parents are pleased with the location of trainings.

"Location of the training is good."

"Classes are offered in a location close to our home."

"They are working on satellite sites – I like the idea that they are trying that."

"[I like] having classes in different locations. I'm in the middle of the region, so this really helps."

"Lots of locations and times in my area to choose from."

Many foster parents want training to be closer to their home.

"Traveling an hour or two to training is too long."

"We don't have training options in Oak Harbor. You have to go to Smokey Point or Bremerton. I have two special needs kids - it's almost impossible."

"Please offer [training] in smaller cities closer to my home."

"It would be nice if classes were offered closer to my home – I have to drive at least 100 miles to most classes."

"More training offered in local offices closer to foster parent homes."

"The classes could be closer geographically – some of my classes are 45 to 90 miles away."

"My trainings all have to be online - no training offered in my area."

"One way training could be improved is if it were offered in more locations. In areas where children are actually placed – not everyone lives in Kent."

Some suggested the location of trainings should be more flexible.

"The locations for training should be moved around in each region so we don't have to travel so far!"

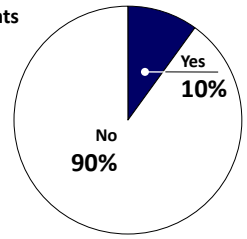
"Vary the locations of trainings – Everett-Lynnwood for example."

"Couldn't the trainers offer the classes in different locations to reduce the travel for foster parents?"

THEME | Location of Trainings

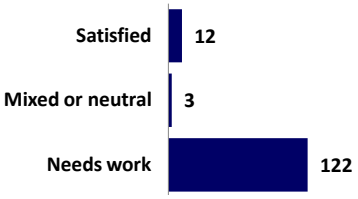
Comments about the location of foster parent trainings were included in this category. 10% of survey respondents commented on location of trainings.

Made comments about location of trainings?



137 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (10%) mentioned location of trainings.

Of the 137 survey respondents who addressed location of trainings, 9% made positive comments. Nearly nine out of ten (89%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 2% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want training to be:

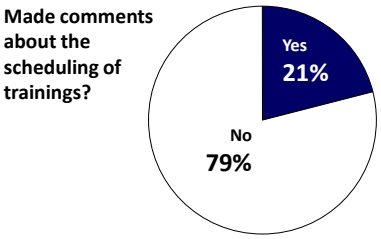
- Close to home.
- Available in multiple locations.
- Moved from location to location.

They dislike:

- Having a small number of training locations available.
- Traveling a great distance to training.
- Being limited to doing only online training.
- Having to go to training, when training could come to them.

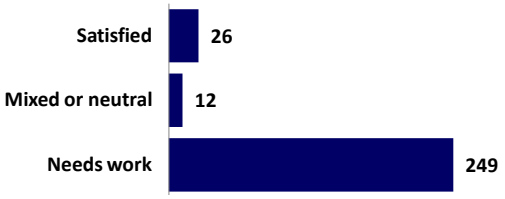
THEME | Scheduling of Trainings

Comments about the scheduling of foster parent trainings were included in this category. 21% of survey respondents commented on scheduling of trainings.



287 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (21%) mentioned scheduling of trainings.

Of the 287 survey respondents who addressed scheduling of trainings, less than one out of ten (9%) made positive comments. Nearly nine out of ten (87%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

- Evening and weekend trainings.
- Frequently-offered trainings.
- The ability to take training at various times.

Some foster parents are frustrated by:

- Lack of trainings on evenings or weekends.
- Infrequently-scheduled trainings.
- Trainings that are too short, or too long.
- Trainings not offered when they're most needed.

Foster parents want trainings to be scheduled for evenings or weekends.

"Make sure the training is offered on evenings or weekends."

"Trainings offered evenings, weekends – this is great, as I work full-time."

"More Saturday and evening classes for those of us who work."

"Courses are offered evenings and weekends, which is helpful."

"Weekend or evening offerings would be more fitting for me, as I work."

They also want trainings offered frequently, and at a variety of times.

"The training needs to be more often."

"The frequency of training offered has been very helpful."

"Training is always in the evening. I would prefer something during the day."

"The scheduling is open enough that I can take something in the hours I can take it."

"Training…at times that are convenient."

Foster parents expressed their thoughts about the length of trainings.

"Shorter courses. It's hard to fit them into my schedule in the middle of a work day."

"The length of time [duration] of classes is good."

"Condensed classes could be longer, so we have time to discuss the information we are learning."

"I'd like to get courses done all at once."

They also commented on the timing of trainings.

"They need to do more training right after placement; it's usually before placement."

"I definitely like that they have continuing mandatory trainings."

"You should take the training before you take the child into the home."

"They need to offer [classes] more often – we need refreshers."

Foster parents made it very clear they need childcare during training.

"I have not gone through a lot of training because of lack of respite/childcare, because I am single and they will not allow children at the training."

"Difficulty finding child care so I could attend all the trainings that interested me. Please provide child care."

"I can't take the mandatory training, and I'm not going to renew, as my husband can't get time off to babysit while I train. I have five children of my own, and I don't have anyone who can watch my children and my foster children."

"I am not good at taking the classes due to no day care offered during class time."

"Access to child care for special needs foster children would be helpful. I would have attended more training if she was close by, so I could intervene if needed."

"When you have difficult kids placed in your home, it's hard to find people who can care for the kids. You can't just get one of the neighborhood kids to watch them while we go to class. Children's Administration needs to either provide child care at training or give us a list of people who can take care of these difficult kids while we attend a class –we'd be happy to pay for that."

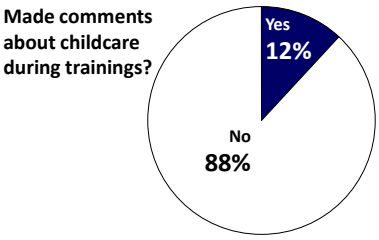
"If DSHS could provide child care for the foster parents, it would be much easier to attend the training. I can't leave them by themselves."

Only one foster parent made a positive statement about childcare available during training.

"KEEP training was offered in Yakima. They offered childcare!"

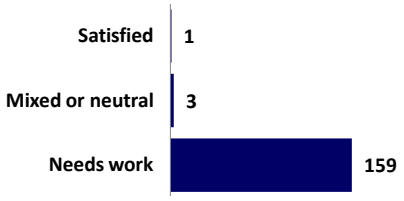
THEME | Childcare During Trainings

Comments about childcare during foster parent trainings were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents commented on childcare during trainings.



163 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned childcare during trainings.

Of the 163 survey respondents who addressed childcare during trainings, nearly all (98%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 1% made positive comments. 2% made mixed or neutral comments.

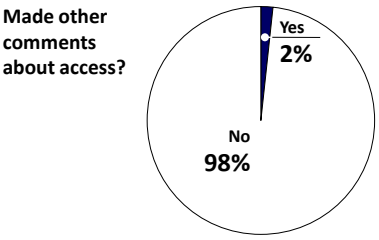


The vast majority of foster parents reported that they want childcare to be available during trainings. They indicated they would be much more likely to attend a wider range of trainings if such care was available. They suggested they would like:

- Childcare available at training sites.
- Childcare provided in their homes during trainings.
- Childcare for special needs foster children.
- Current lists of childcare providers available to them.

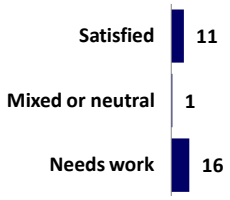
THEME | Other Comments About Access

Other comments about access to foster parent trainings are included in this category. 2% of survey respondents made other comments about access.



28 of the 1,317 foster parents surveyed (2%) made other comments about access.

Of the 28 survey respondents who made other comments about access, nearly four out of ten (39%) made positive comments. Nearly six out of ten (57%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want:

- Ease in getting to mandatory and elective trainings.
- Help with training-connected transportation costs.
- Training available when they need it.

Some foster parents are satisfied with their access to foster parent trainings.

"Access to foster parent training is good."

"If we needed more training, it was available."

"[Training] is easily accessible."

"I have been able to get to the classes necessary to help me with the care of the children in my home."

"Training is very accessible."

"We could find classes that could help us address the issues we were having."

Others want better access to trainings.

"Make training more accessible to us, and give us more notice."

"The availability of training – make it more accessible to people."

"Make [training] more accessible."

"Sometimes it takes a couple of months to get training. It could be expedited a lot!"

"The training should be made more available."

"Make [more] of training accessible."

"Access is important."

For some foster parents, travel costs are an issue.

"The foster parents that have to travel a great amount of miles to get to the training should be reimbursed for the mileage."

"I have to pay for my travel costs."

"It would be nice if they could reimburse for mileage costs!"

"I think [training] attendance would improve if transportation and child care were considered."

"Offer mileage reimbursement."

Alternative Training Formats

Foster parents like having alternative training formats available to them.

This section focuses on alternative foster parent training formats.

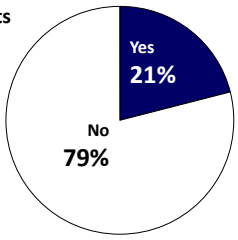
Many foster parents made positive comments in this area, applauding the useful aspects of different alternative training formats. Some pointed out the drawbacks of those same formats, while others suggested there should be more or different alternative training formats available.

In this section:

- The first page addresses comments about online training.
- The second page deals with comments about resource libraries.
- The third page looks at comments about training in foster parent support groups.
- The fourth page reviews other comments about alternative training formats.

About one out of five survey respondents (291 out of 1,371, or 21%) made comments about alternative training formats. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about alternative training formats?



- Nearly half (48%) made positive comments
- 37% made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement
- 15% made mixed or neutral comments.

Some foster parents appreciate the quality and convenience of online training.

"We like the online training material. It is awesome!"

"I really like online courses because I don't have to go anywhere. I can do them on my own time, and I don't have to look for a babysitter."

"Good offering of online courses. Our area is rural, so online is helpful."

"I really like online training options."

Others would like online training - or *more* online training - available.

"Should be able to attend training online. I have three Level 4 kids – I can't leave home to attend training."

"More online specialized training, with issues we encounter with children."

"More mandated training that can be taken online, so we don't have to get sitters, etc."

"The online videos have been great. It'd be helpful to have more of them."

Some foster parents are not fans of online training.

"I don't take classes online because I like interaction with other students in the classroom."

"I am not geared for computer usage, and a lot is offered only on the computer."

"Would prefer in-person training instead of online."

Even proponents of online training see room for improvement.

"New [online] trainings difficult to access. Perhaps 'operator error,' but I do get frustrated and give up. No help desk that I know of."

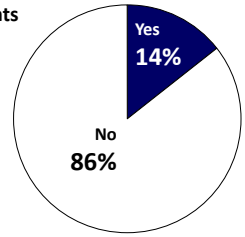
"Some of the videos online need to be updated."

"The handouts for state training say that some videos are on Netflix, but they are not."

THEME | Online Training

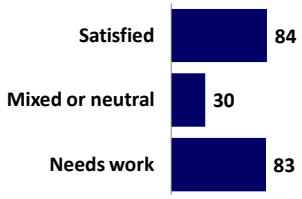
Comments about online training were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents commented on online training.

Made comments about online training?



197 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned online training.

Of the 197 survey respondents who addressed online training, more than four out of ten (43%) made positive comments. A similar percentage of respondents (42%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 15% made mixed or neutral comments.



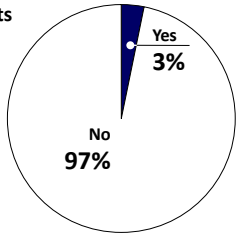
Most parents want online training that is:

- Convenient.
- High quality.
- Easy to access.
- Constantly expanding to meet their needs.

Some foster parents have no interest in taking online training.

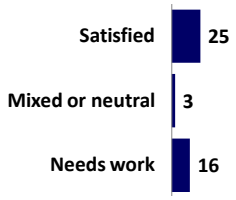
THEME | Resource Libraries

Made comments about resource libraries?



44 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned resource libraries.

Of the 44 survey respondents who addressed resource libraries, nearly six out of ten (57%) made positive comments. More than one third (36%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate resource libraries that:

- Have quality training materials to lend.
- Have information about foster children's specific needs.
- Make it easy and convenient to borrow materials.

They would like to see libraries, the resources they hold, and the services they provide to foster parents, expand in the future.

Most foster parents had positive things to say about resource libraries.

"There are some really great resources available, like the Washington State Lending Library…you can search out information in regard to your child's specific needs."

"The lending library is fabulous."

"It is convenient – I can check [training materials] out of the lending library, and they mail the material to me."

"The lending library is a really good support system."

"The lending library has been most helpful for two reasons – the quality of needs-specific information and the ease of accessibility."

"I like the online library. It has been very good for us."

They particularly like having training DVDs available for their use.

"I like being able to order the DVDs and work at my own pace."

"I check DVDs out of the office if I want to go over something."

"It is great to have DVDs in the library to watch. We need more of this type of training."

"DVD library is very useful."

"Training is available on DVD and I can get it in my own home and not have to find babysitters. It is quality information."

"I like the DVD program."

Some foster parents have complaints or concerns about library materials, or the libraries themselves.

"More DVDs that one could order."

"I have to listen to the tapes 4 or 5 times to figure out what the questions are."

"[I would like] Love and Logic DVDs available to check out."

"They have just canceled the contract for the lending library – they need to renew it."

Foster parents praised training provided in support groups.

"[I like] the local support meetings, getting together for training and fellowship."

"We have foster parent monthly meetings and we have a speaker come to our meetings – I like those."

"Fostering Together provides training during support groups, and that is very helpful."

"The monthly meetings are very helpful. I am grateful for that assistance and training."

"I go to a support group. It has timely topics, great connections – this is very supportive."

"I help organize the monthly meeting of foster parents to bring RFTI and Treehouse to the community. Good content when I have attended."

"Our foster parent program puts on training…that is very helpful."

"FACES group gets together every month for 2 to 2 ½ hours and have different speakers, or videos on different children's behaviors."

"Foster parent support group is very good…has good speakers."

While there were no criticisms of training provided in support groups, some foster parents see a need for more support groups, and more foster parents active in such groups.

"Make more support groups available."

"We need to have support groups that meet every month in each area."

"Offer group meetings where issues can be discussed."

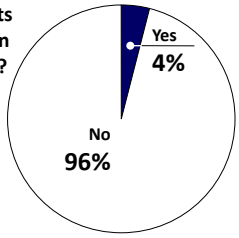
"Ongoing support groups would be helpful."

"We need to have support groups for the foster parents."

"Make sure foster families are connected to support groups in their area."

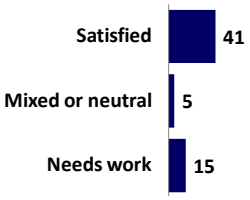
THEME | Support Groups

Made comments about training in support groups?



61 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned training in support groups.

Of the 61 survey respondents who addressed training in support groups, nearly seven out of ten (67%) made positive comments. One quarter (25%) made suggestions for improvement. 8% made mixed or neutral comments.



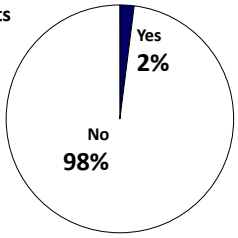
Foster parents are grateful for:

- The convenience of training in support group settings.
- The quality of the support group training.
- Learning in an environment that fosters new connections and relationships.

Some would like to see more support groups, attended by more foster parents, meeting on a more regular basis.

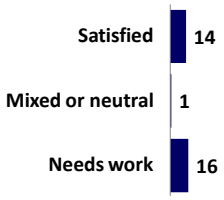
THEME | Other Alternative Training Formats

Made comments about other alternative training formats?



31 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned other alternative training formats.

Of the 31 survey respondents who addressed other alternative training formats, 45% made positive comments. More than half (52%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 3% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents like:

- Training received - and submitted - by mail.
- Training that can be completed at home, at their own pace.
- Newsletters that provide important updates.

Others would like access to:

- Books and other printed training materials.
- Regular newsletters containing current foster care information.
- Individual telephone consultations.

Some foster parents commented on other alternative training formats they find useful.

"I appreciate by-mail training sessions."

"The newsletter is helpful in keeping me informed as to what is happening."

"The correspondence training option where I read and reply by mail."

"The training that my husband and I taught ourselves on behavior was great."

"The training through the mail. I pay for it out of my pocket, but it is better than commuting to Vancouver as I have two small children and children in school, and I don't have Internet."

More suggested training formats they would like to see implemented.

"I wish we could actually check the books out with all the rules and information to read – it's hard to read online."

"A 1-800 number would be good to get immediate real-time support."

"You have to figure things out on your own, like updates on travel forms, or rule changes. A calendar or newsletter would be helpful to let foster parents know of changes as they happen."

"Have books to study on my own time. Don't always have time to watch the DVDs."

"Help people get used to online training, or do a 'work around' offering printed materials or audio recordings."

"Improve training by sending out newsletters."

"There needs to be more ideas in a book. I am always scrounging for concepts and ideas…Creative Ideas for Disciplining should be the title of the book."

Voice and Choice

Foster parents want to choose their trainings, and have a voice in those trainings.

This section focuses on the voice foster parents have when participating in trainings, and the choice they have about which trainings to take.

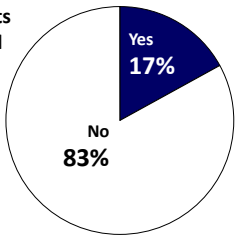
Most foster parents report they have a real voice, and a sense of community, during trainings. Fewer report they are given the opportunity to select the trainings that would benefit them the most.

In this section:

- The first page addresses foster parents' comments about having a voice, and a sense of community, while participating in trainings.
- The second page is an overview of foster parents' comments about choosing trainings to attend, or to complete at home.

Less than two out of ten survey respondents (233 out of 1,371, or 17%) made comments about voice and choice in training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about voice and choice in training?



- More than half (56%) made positive comments.
- About one third (34%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 10% made mixed or neutral comments.

Many foster parents like having a strong voice in their training.

"The classes that are required have great discussions. The experienced foster parents contribute significantly. I like the interactivity."

"[I like] being able to take these classes with other foster parents and having open dialogue."

"I speak up in training and 'bring the real deal' to the training. I promote discussion in the group, which is sometimes more helpful than the lecture."

"It is helpful because you share ideas with other foster parents on how to deal with kids with different behavior issues."

Some would like their voice in training to be stronger.

"Allow foster parents to be more involved, instead of telling us what to do without giving us a thorough reason why."

"More input from foster parents."

"More interaction, allowing foster parents to support one another."

"Listen more to our concerns."

"Full input [from] foster parents – we need a bigger voice!"

Foster parents value the connections and relationships that trainings provide.

"The helpful part of the training is connecting with other foster parents."

"[I like] socialization with other foster parents."

"Training was great because of the networking opportunity."

"[I like] the exchange with other foster parents, sharing ideas."

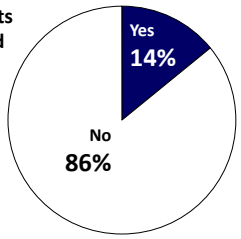
"[I like] the camaraderie of the other foster parents."

"The spirit of community of the group gives the feeling of 'not being in this alone.'"

THEME | Voice—and Community—in Training

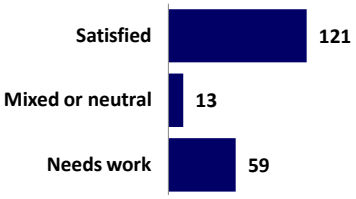
Comments about foster parents having a voice, and a sense of community, in training were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents commented on voice and community in training.

Made comments about voice and community in training?



193 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned voice and community in training.

Of the 193 survey respondents who addressed voice and community in training, more than six out of ten (63%) made positive comments. Just over three out of ten (31%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



Most foster appreciate being able to:

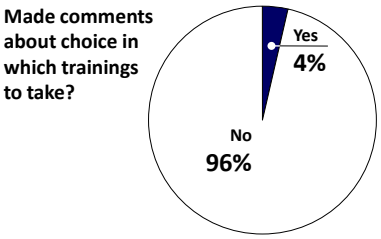
- Ask questions during training.
- Share their experiences, insights and ideas during training.
- Learn from other training participants.
- Develop connections with other foster parents they meet in training.

During training, some foster parents would like to see:

- More foster parent input.
- More attention paid to foster parents' concerns.
- More encouragement of foster parent interaction.

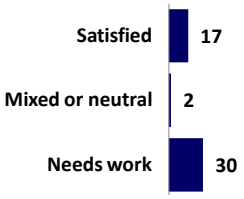
THEME | Choice in Trainings

Comments about foster parents having a choice in which trainings to attend, or complete at home, were included in this category. 4% of survey respondents commented on choice in trainings.



49 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned choice in trainings.

Of the 49 survey respondents who addressed choice in trainings, more than one third (35%) made positive comments. More than six out of ten (61%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

- Having many different trainings, and types of training, to choose from.
- The freedom to select which trainings they want to take.
- Training providers who allow foster parents to assist in choosing the focus of specific trainings.

They would like:

- More say in which trainings to take.
- The ability to select trainings that meet their family's needs.
- More flexibility in training requirements for working parents, and long-term foster parents.

Some foster parents are pleased with the ability to choose their trainings.

"They give us a lot of latitude – many avenues to educate ourselves."

"I picked out things that I need. I have used the Washington Lending Library to get my training. Continuing education offered online and through the library is very helpful."

"It is good to pick and choose what training we want to attend."

"The private agency that offered the training asked the foster parents what was important to them, and they went outside the standard presentation and focused on specific youth-related issues."

"We chose specific classes suited to the children in our care."

"Having the training online and available for us to choose what training we want is great."

Most would like to have more choice in their trainings.

"Foster parents should be able to choose courses relevant to their own situation, rather than having mandated courses."

"For those of us working, more flexibility on attending [training] would help."

"Ask the foster parents what kind of training they would need."

"The new Parenting Plus training - there should be an option for some foster parents to waive it, like taking a test in lieu of going to the classes."

"Training focused on the age group for which I am licensed."

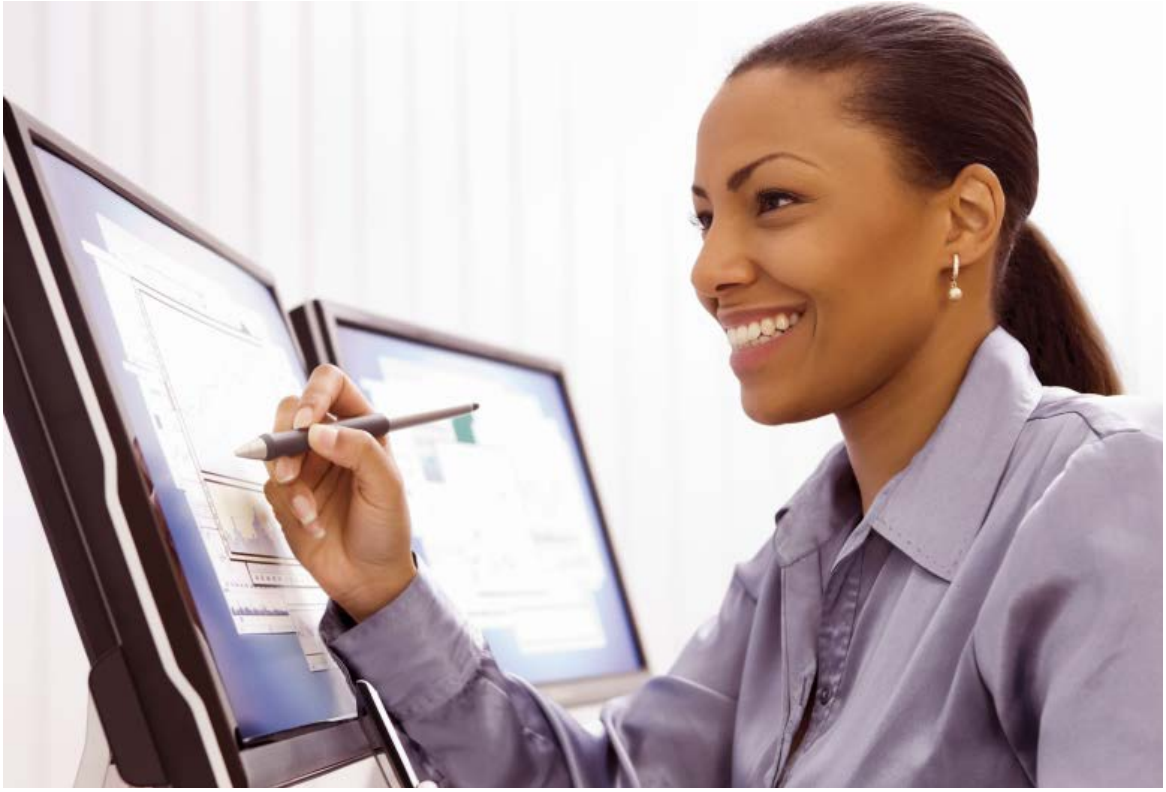
"They need to be more flexible on what training we take."

"If you are taking care of a teenager, you should be able to go to training specific for teens, not newborns."

"[I would like] training specifically on infants and toddlers."

"If you have been a foster parent for decades, maybe…an option whether or not to take the training."

Training Information



Foster parents want accurate and timely information about upcoming trainings.

This section focuses on the quality of the information about trainings provided to foster parents.

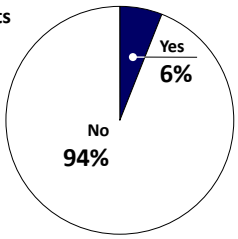
Some foster parents made positive comments about the training information they receive. However, the majority indicated improvements should be made in this area.

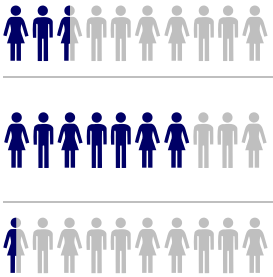
In this section:

- The following page addresses foster parents' comments about training information.

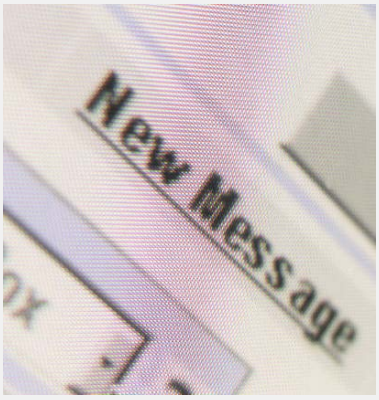
Less than one out of ten survey respondents (81 out of 1,371, or 6%) made comments about training information. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about training information?





- One quarter (25%) made positive comments.
- Seven out of ten (70%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 5% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents are satisfied with the information they receive about trainings.

"I get frequent e-mails about upcoming training, which is helpful."

"[I like] the calendar listing all that is coming up in training."

"It is nice that they call and tell us 'This is a training you need to have.'"

"Just got a pamphlet in the mail, and I am planning to attend. I like being notified in advance, so I can arrange child care."

"The advertising of 'out of area' conferences is great."

"They send me a packet of information every couple of months about offered classes – that is helpful."

"I get lots of advertising about upcoming classes."

Many indicated they do not get notice of trainings.

"Never get information on trainings from Children's Administration."

"Let the foster parents know what training is available."

"Send out e-mails on every training."

"Have a list of training that is available, with details of when and where."

"I get little or no information about training."

Others criticized the timeliness of the training notices they receive.

"We need to be notified of when the training is, and not just two days before it happens."

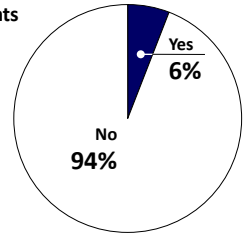
"The flyers arrive 2-3 weeks in advance of the class. We need [more] time to plan for time off work."

"Some classes…you don't find out they are being cancelled until the day before. I'd like more notice."

"We get a flyer that says we need to take training…but when I e-mail to get into training it is too late. Notify us more in advance."

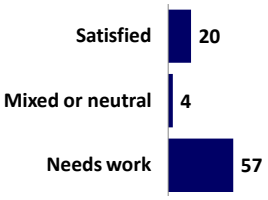
THEME | Information About Trainings

Made comments about information related to trainings?



81 of the 1,371 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned information about trainings.

Of the 81 survey respondents who addressed information about trainings, one quarter (25%) made positive comments. Seven out of ten (70%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 5% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents made positive remarks about:

- Timely notification of trainings.
- Training information received by e-mail.
- Training information received by regular mail.
- Training information received by telephone.

They dislike it when:

- They are not informed of upcoming trainings.
- They are not provided a current list of trainings, and information about each training offered.
- They are given short notice of trainings, leaving no time to make arrangements to attend.
- They learn about training cancellations at the last minute.

Support Beyond Training

Foster parents are grateful for other support that helps them give foster children the best possible care.

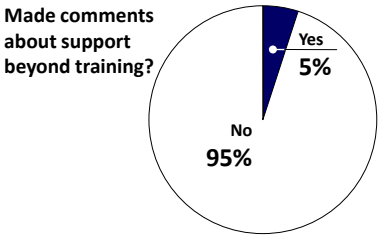
This section focuses on comments about support outside of established foster care training – such as mentoring, counseling, and access to help lines – that is valued by foster parents.

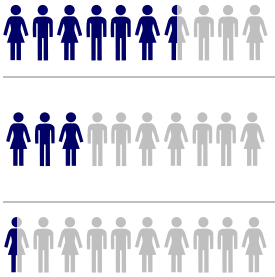
The majority of foster parents made positive comments about existing support that is important to them. Some made suggestions about types of support that would be helpful to them, and to others responsible for the care of foster children.

In this section:

- The following page addresses foster parents' comments about support beyond foster care training.

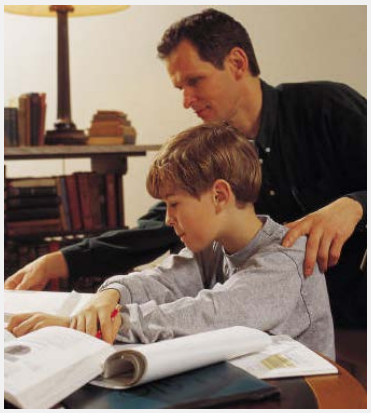
One out of twenty survey respondents (68 out of 1,371, or 5%) made comments about support beyond training. Of those who commented on this subject:





- More than six out of ten (63%) made positive comments
- About three out of ten (31%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement
- 6% made mixed or neutral comments.

2.9 Support Beyond Training



Foster parents want formalized mentoring for those new to fostering.

"I appreciate having a foster care mentor… She meets with me once or twice a week to provide any help I need, walks me through the steps."

"Partner new foster parents with experienced foster parents."

"Having liaisons was very helpful. They were volunteer experienced foster parents who offered advice on navigating the system."

They want access to professional counseling services.

"Got a lot of help from private counselors and a psychologist."

"State should offer counseling from the beginning for foster or adoptive families."

"Having an opportunity to work with a behavior specialist is really helpful."

They also want the ability to consult about foster care issues *as they arise.*

"Have a 24-hour line for strategies and resources to help with specific issues with kids."

"Someone that I could call as a situation arises for assistance and advice."

"A 24-hour line for help and ideas on how to deal with a problem."

Foster parents are grateful for a wide variety of available supports.

"One of the things that has been helpful is the guardian ad litem service."

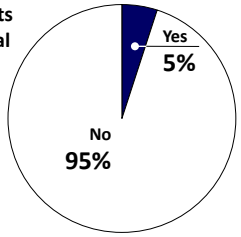
"I attend an early childhood education support group in the community."

"The lady that helps organize and provide daycare gave me much help and insight."

"Training was helpful, and being able to work with a Family Preservation Specialist at the same time was helpful."

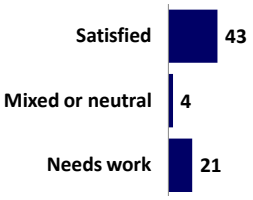
THEME | Additional Support for Foster Parents

Made comments about additional support for foster parents?



68 of the 1,317 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned additional support.

Of the 68 survey respondents addressing additional support for foster parents, more than six out of ten (63%) made positive comments. About three out of ten (31%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents value:

- Formalized peer-to-peer mentoring.
- Professional counseling services.
- Ready access to consultation on foster care issues.
- Other useful supports.

In many cases, they would like to increase the level of meaningful supports.

2012 Appendix

Response Glossaries, Supporting Tables and Survey Questions

Foster Parent Support – Response Glossary **100**

Foster Parent Training – Response Glossary **102**

Foster Parent Support – Narrative Comments Report **105**

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Survey Script and Survey Questions **107**

Foster Parent Support (2012) – Response Glossary

Question 1: What do Children's Administration and your social workers do well to support you?
Question 2: What could Children's Administration and your social workers do better to support you?

Response Category	Description
QUALITY/ HELPFULNESS	
QS – Overall Support	CA has supported/not supported me and my family; good/bad service overall; grateful for help, appreciative (or not); like/don't like CA/everything. They help/don't help. They do/don't provide good services.
QP – Specific Agency/Area/Office Support	Named specific CA program/location/office that was supportive/not supportive; mentioned support/non-support of "private agency" (named or not).
QN – Nothing	"Nothing," "Can't think of anything," etc. (Negative, if about what has been supportive; Positive, if about what needs to be done better.)
SOCIAL WORKERS	
SS – Social Worker Support	Social workers have supported/not supported me and my family; good/bad service overall; grateful for their help, appreciative (or not); like/don't like social workers and the work they do. Social workers help/don't help. Social workers do/don't provide good services.
SC – Social Worker Courtesy/Respect	Compliments/complaints regarding social worker courtesy, respect, helpful attitude (*tries* to help), sensitivity, kindness, friendliness, niceness, caring, compassion.
SL – Social Workers Listen/Understand	Social worker does/doesn't listen; is – or isn't – attentive; does/doesn't understand what foster parents say, and what they (and the children) need.
SI – Social Workers Inclusiveness	Social worker gets input from foster parents; lets them help make decisions and plans; collaborates with them; keeps them "in the loop"; invites them to participate in meetings (or fails to do these things).
SO – Other Social Worker Comments	Like/don't like social workers' follow-through; commitment; professionalism; responsiveness; customer service; timeliness; fairness; flexibility; problem-solving. Social workers are/are not knowledgeable, honest, well-trained; good at communicating (if they don't specify IN or SL).
SF – Foster Care Licenser Support	Compliments/complaints about foster parents' experience with foster care licensers. (Comments specific to the licensing *process* are coded PS.)
SW – Specific Social Worker	Named specific social worker.
SN – Need More Social Workers	More social workers are needed to serve foster parents; workload too heavy; SWs too busy; caseloads too high/need smaller caseloads; turnover a problem.
ACCESS	
AP – Phone/Staff Access	Able/unable to reach social workers by phone/voicemail/e-mail/website. Social workers do/don't return calls and messages; social workers are available/unavailable; it's easy/hard to reach social workers
AR – Consistency of Contact	Social workers are/aren't in regular contact via home visits, phone calls, etc.
PROCESSES	
PR – General Processes	Compliments or complaints about the system – efficiency, bureaucracy, continuity, consistency, errors, rules, time it takes to get services (overall).
PS – Specific Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants a specific process/way of doing things, time it takes to get specific services.
PP – Paperwork Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants paperwork processes (general or specific).

COORDINATION	
CO – Coordination	Coordination of services for foster parents, inside or outside of Children's Administration (includes coordination between foster parents and bio-families); communication to accomplish effective coordination.
INFORMATION	
IN – Information from Social Workers	Get/don't get useful information from social workers about foster child; foster system; available resources; meeting times/court dates; trainings. Social workers do/don't answer questions; give clear explanations; give consistent responses, provide feedback/advice; provide referrals. Get/don't get useful information online. Likes or dislikes/wants access to interpreters, bilingual staff, native English speakers on staff.
RESOURCES	
RR – Respite	Likes or dislikes/wants respite services.
RF – Financial Matters	Likes or dislikes/wants financial payments (ongoing, or one time) to foster parents.
RM – Medical, Dental, Mental Health	Likes or dislikes/wants medical/dental/mental health services (includes speech and occupational therapy), medical supplies.
RT – Transportation	Likes or dislikes/wants transportation services (includes mileage reimbursement).
RC – Childcare	Likes or dislikes/wants childcare services.
RO – Other Resources	Likes or dislikes/wants other resources (or just says "resources," not specified).
OTHER	
OS – Other Sources of Foster Parent Support	Comments about support for foster parents from sources other than social workers inside CA (foster care liaisons, foster care recruiters, support staff) and outside CA (CASA/GAL, extended family, support groups, other community groups).
O – *Not* about Support	Other miscellaneous comments that don't fit elsewhere. Comments about good/bad support that occurred in the past; comments about future support.
DK – Don't Know	Don't know. Have no answer. Unsure. Too new to foster parenting to answer. No contact with CA/DSHS; no need for support.

NOTES:

- "No comment," "No response," "Don't want to answer," and N/A are **not** coded.
- The majority of codes in the glossary above can be coded in three different ways: positive (P), negative (N), or neutral (E). For example, comments that fall under SC – Social Worker Courtesy – can be coded SC-P (positive comments about social worker courtesy), SC-N (negative comments about social worker courtesy) or SC-E (neutral comments about social worker courtesy, like *Social workers are friendly sometimes* or *Some social workers are respectful to foster parents, and some aren't*).
- A few codes – QN (Nothing), SW (Specific Social Worker), SN (Need Social Workers) and DK (Don't Know) – can only be coded in one way. For example, comments that fall under DK can only be coded DK; this code is not further divided into DK-P, DK-N and DK-E.

Foster Parent Training (2012) – Response Glossary

Question 1: What about foster parent training has been helpful?
Question 2: How could foster parent training be improved?

Response Category	Description
QUALITY/HELPFULNESS	
TH – Overall Training	Training is helpful/not helpful; training was good (great)/not good (great); did/didn't like training (without further clarification).
TP – Specific Agency/Program Training	Named specific program/location/office that provides training; names private agency; mentions "private agency" training (no name given); mentions continuing education, college classes, or classes in the community.
TN – Nothing	"Nothing," "Can't think of anything," "No suggestions" etc. (Negative, if about what has been helpful; Positive, if about what needs improving.)
TRAINERS	
TR – Trainers	Trainers are good/bad; specific trainer qualities; want more/less of specific categories of trainers (male trainers, experienced foster parents, etc.); includes comments about guest speakers/presenters at trainings.
TT – Specific Trainer	Named specific trainer.
GENERAL TRAINING	**Comments on aspects of training foster parents like/want or don't like/don't want**
TG-C – Caring for Foster Children	Dealing with/caring for foster children. Includes communicating with children; knowing/meeting their needs; making them part of foster family; understanding situations in foster children's bio-homes; what to expect from foster children in foster homes.
TG-A – Approaches to Training	Approaches used in trainings. Includes small groups; roundtable discussions; brainstorming; using case scenarios, real life examples.
TG-R – Resources	Information about resources (what they are, where they are); contact information.
TG-M – Training Materials	Quality/usefulness of materials used in trainings – written materials, videos, etc., specific topics to add/delete.
TG-O – Other Training Comments	Other comments about trainings. Includes more/less training; variety in trainings; repetitious training; updated training; training pace too fast/too slow; tell it like it is; limit socializing during trainings; general parenting information; information for FP who haven't parented; refresher courses for long-term FP.
SPECIFIC TRAININGS	**Comments on specific trainings/training types foster parents like/want or don't like/don't want**
TS-D – Disorders/Issues	Training focused on particular disorders/disabilities/issues. Includes training on trauma (grief and loss); abuse/neglect; attachment disorder; anorexia, bulimia, hoarding; anger issues; ADD/ADHD; autism; special needs; medications for disorders/issues.
TS-S – Substance Abuse	Training focused on substance-related issues. Includes fetal alcohol syndrome; effects of bio-parents' drug use on children.
TS-Y – Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	Training focused on youthful sex offenders, sexually aggressive behavior.

TS-B – Child Behavior	Training focused on child behavior/child development; age-specific populations and issues (toddlers, school-age, teens); includes behavior management.
TS-I – Infants and Toddlers	Training focused on infants and toddlers. Includes infant care, medically fragile baby care.
TS-F – Navigating the Foster Care System	Training focused on how to navigate the foster care system. Includes how to interact with social workers; paperwork issues; rules and regulations; court procedures; other processes and procedures; what to expect from the system.
TS- P – PRIDE	Like/don't like PRIDE training.
TS-A – Parenting Plus	Like/don't like Parenting Plus training.
TS- L – Love and Logic	Like/don't like Love and Logic training.
TS-H – Health and Safety	Training focused on health and safety. Includes protecting children from abuse; first aid/CPR; immunizations; car seat training.
TS-C –Cultural Awareness and Language Issues	Training focused on cultures and cultural issues. (Includes Native American culture and issues; how tribes interact with DSHS; tribal courts.) Cultural sensitivity of trainings.
TS-O – Other Specific Trainings	Other trainings. Includes dealing with bio-parents; advocating for youth; children's rights; grief/loss/stress experienced by foster care *providers*; other specific trainings liked or disliked/wanted. Mentions taking specific classes/trainings/workshops, without identifying them. Mentions "first placement training" or "initial training."
ACCESS	**Comments about what made it easier/harder for foster parents to attend trainings**
TA-L – Location	Location of trainings. Includes having training in more places; having training closer to foster parents' homes; making it easier to get to trainings.
TA-S – Scheduling	Scheduling of trainings. Includes scheduling more training sessions; having training on more – or different – days; training in the evenings, on weekends; duration of training; ongoing training.
TA-C – Childcare	Childcare available during trainings.
TA-O – Other Access Comments	Other likes/dislikes, or wants/don't wants, regarding access to trainings. Includes comments about transportation to trainings.
ALTERNATIVE TRAINING FORMATS	**Comments about training formats (other than standard classroom training)**
TF-N – Online Training	Like/dislike online training, including online videos.
TF-L – Resource Libraries	Like/don't like library for foster parents (sometimes called "resource library" or "lending library"); like/don't like training DVDs or other materials from library.
TF-S – Support Groups	Like/dislike training offered during support groups.
TF-O – Other Alternative Training Formats	Like/dislike other alternative training formats (newsletters, individual training, etc.); like/want wider variety of formats.
VOICE AND CHOICE	**Comments that indicate foster parents felt/didn't feel included, involved, empowered by trainings**
TV – Voice – and Community – in Training	Foster parent involvement in training (including foster parents as trainers); interactions between foster parents and trainers, or among foster parents during trainings; interactions between new and experienced foster parents; sense of community/support in trainings; networking.

TC – Choice in Trainings	Foster parents do/don't choose which trainings to attend, what is addressed in trainings.
TRAINING INFORMATION	
TI – Information about Trainings	Like/want information about upcoming trainings; mailings; training calendars. Don't like/don't want such information in the form it is currently provided. Comments about training certificates.
OTHER	
TOS –Support Beyond Training	Includes support groups for foster parents/mothers; family preservation services; early childhood education support groups; ongoing advocates or mentors for foster parents/families; crisis intervention when trauma occurs (in bio-families or foster families); general comments about training in the community.
TO – Response *not* about Training	Other miscellaneous comments that don't fit elsewhere. "*Experience as a foster parent is the best teacher."*
TDK – Don't Know	Don't know, not sure, can't answer, haven't attended trainings.

NOTES:

- "No comment," "Don't want to answer," and N/A are not coded.
- The majority of codes in the glossary above can be coded in three different ways: positive (P), negative (N), or neutral (E). For example, comments that fall under TI – Information about Trainings – can be coded TI-P (positive comments about training information), TI-N (negative comments about training information) or SC-E (neutral comments about training information, like The online information about training is great, but the mailings are really hit and miss, and not all foster parents have computer access.
- A few codes – TN (Nothing) TT (Specific Trainer) and TDK (Don't Know) – can only be coded in one way. For example, comments that fall under TDK can only be coded TDK; this code is not further divided into TDK-P, TDK-N and TDK-E.

Foster Parent Support (2012) – Narrative Comments Report

1,371 Respondents

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES[1]		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
		#[2]	% of All[3]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]
Quality/Helpfulness		**460**	**33.6%**	**243**	**52.8%**	**136**	**29.6%**	**81**	**17.6%**
Overall Support	QS	206	15.0%	101	49.0%	77	37.4%	28	13.6%
Specific Agency/Area/Office Support	QP	145	10.6%	66	45.5%	33	22.8%	46	31.7%
Nothing	QN	175	12.8%	121	69.1%	54	30.9%	0	0.0%
Social Workers		**1,127**	**82.2%**	**463**	**41.1%**	**270**	**24.0%**	**394**	**35.0%**
Social Worker Support	SS	603	44.0%	350	58.0%	119	19.7%	134	22.2%
Social Worker Courtesy/Respect	SC	198	14.4%	121	61.1%	58	29.3%	19	9.6%
Social Workers Listen/Understand	SL	271	19.8%	191	70.5%	63	23.2%	17	6.3%
Social Worker Inclusiveness	SI	262	19.1%	116	44.3%	127	48.5%	19	7.3%
Other Social Worker Comments	SO	557	40.6%	230	41.3%	232	41.7%	95	17.1%
Specific Social Workers	SW	8	0.6%						
Foster Care Licensers	SF	17	1.2%	4	23.5%	10	58.8%	3	17.6%
Need More Social Workers	SN	124	9.0%			124	100.0%		
Access		**654**	**47.7%**	**352**	**53.8%**	**197**	**30.1%**	**105**	**16.1%**
Phone/Staff Access	AP	523	38.1%	276	52.8%	179	34.2%	68	13.0%
Consistency of Contact	AR	201	14.7%	122	60.7%	58	28.9%	21	10.4%
Processes		**335**	**24.4%**	**29**	**8.7%**	**280**	**83.6%**	**26**	**7.8%**
General Processes	PR	166	12.1%	3	1.8%	157	94.6%	6	3.6%
Specific Processes	PS	164	12.0%	29	17.7%	127	77.4%	8	4.9%
Paperwork Processes	PP	50	3.6%	4	8.0%	40	80.0%	6	12.0%
Coordination		**124**	**9.0%**	**58**	**46.8%**	**64**	**51.6%**	**2**	**1.6%**
Coordination	CO	124	9.0%	58	46.8%	64	51.6%	2	1.6%
Information		**584**	**42.6%**	**217**	**37.2%**	**246**	**42.1%**	**121**	**20.7%**
Information	IN	584	42.6%	217	37.2%	246	42.1%	121	20.7%
Resources		**329**	**24.0%**	**115**	**35.0%**	**180**	**54.7%**	**34**	**10.3%**
Respite	RR	75	5.5%	24	32.0%	48	64.0%	3	4.0%
Financial Matters	RF	67	4.9%	10	14.9%	56	83.6%	1	1.5%
Medical, Dental, Mental Health	RM	57	4.2%	29	50.9%	25	43.9%	3	5.3%
Transportation	RT	35	2.6%	17	48.6%	14	40.0%	4	11.4%
Childcare	RC	27	2.0%	14	51.9%	12	44.4%	1	3.7%
Other Resources	RO	156	11.4%	66	42.3%	83	53.2%	7	4.5%
Other		**185**	**13.5%**	**24**	**13.0%**	**20**	**10.8%**	**141**	**76.2%**
Other Sources of Foster Parent Support	OS	51	3.7%	30	58.8%	17	33.3%	4	7.8%
Not About Support	O	96	7.0%	1	1.0%	4	4.2%	91	94.8%
Don't Know	DK	47	3.4%					47	100.0%

NOTES:

[1] Major themes (in blue rows) are rollups of the subthemes listed below. They are unduplicated - not the total of the numbers below; i.e., a person who made "Satisfied" comments in both "Childcare" and "Respite" is counted only once in the "Resources" row. A person who has a "Satisfied" comment in the "Childcare" row and "Needs Work" in the "Respite" row would be counted as a "Mixed" comment in the "Resources" row.

[2] All # columns show how many persons made any mention of this theme. Multiple comments on the same theme by a single person are only counted once in that theme row. A person with both "Satisfied" and "Needs Work" comments on the same theme is counted in the "Mixed" column.

[3] Respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

[4] Percentage of comments in this theme that were "Satisfied," "Needs Work," or "Mixed or Neutral," respectively.

Foster Parent Training (2012) – Narrative Comments Report

1,371 Respondents

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES[1]		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
		#[2]	% of All[3]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]
Quality/Helpfulness		**517**	**37.7%**	**381**	**73.7%**	**62**	**12.0%**	**74**	**14.3%**
Overall Training	TH	400	29.2%	302	75.5%	46	11.5%	52	13.0%
Specific Agency/Program Training	TP	91	6.6%	63	69.2%	3	3.3%	25	27.5%
Nothing	TN	103	7.5%	81	78.6%	21	20.4%	1	1.0%
Trainers		**167**	**12.2%**	**80**	**47.9%**	**70**	**41.9%**	**17**	**10.2%**
Trainers	TR	165	12.0%	86	52.1%	72	43.6%	7	4.2%
Specific Trainers	TT	10	0.7%						
General Training		**716**	**52.2%**	**374**	**52.2%**	**224**	**31.3%**	**118**	**16.5%**
Caring for Foster Children	TG-C	253	18.5%	209	82.6%	34	13.4%	10	4.0%
Approaches to Training	TG-A	103	7.5%	44	42.7%	52	50.5%	7	6.8%
Resources	TG-R	82	6.0%	52	63.4%	26	31.7%	4	4.9%
Training Materials	TG-M	49	3.6%	25	51.0%	22	44.9%	2	4.1%
Other Training Comments	TG-O	383	27.9%	149	38.9%	198	51.7%	36	9.4%
Specific Trainings		**699**	**51.0%**	**349**	**49.9%**	**174**	**24.9%**	**176**	**25.2%**
Disorders/Issues	TS-D	166	12.1%	87	52.4%	72	43.4%	7	4.2%
Substance Abuse	TS-S	50	3.6%	31	62.0%	15	30.0%	4	8.0%
Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	TS-Y	24	1.8%	15	62.5%	7	29.2%	2	8.3%
Child Behavior	TS-B	156	11.4%	96	61.5%	51	32.7%	9	5.8%
Infants and Toddlers	TS-I	37	2.7%	11	29.7%	23	62.2%	3	8.1%
Navigating Foster Care System	TS-F	141	10.3%	74	52.5%	58	41.1%	9	6.4%
Mentioned by Name: PRIDE	TS-P	116	8.5%	90	77.6%	7	6.0%	19	16.4%
Mentioned by Name: Parenting Plus	TS-A	28	2.0%	12	42.9%	8	28.6%	8	28.6%
Mentioned by Name: Love and Logic	TS-L	22	1.6%	19	86.4%	1	4.5%	2	9.1%
Health and Safety	TS-H	33	2.4%	23	69.7%	7	21.2%	3	9.1%
Cultural/Awareness and Language Issues	TS-C	30	2.2%	13	43.3%	15	50.0%	2	6.7%
Other Specific Trainings	TS-O	204	14.9%	109	53.4%	80	39.2%	15	7.4%
Access		**446**	**32.5%**	**30**	**6.7%**	**386**	**86.5%**	**30**	**6.7%**
Location	TA-L	137	10.0%	12	8.8%	122	89.1%	3	2.2%
Scheduling	TA-S	287	20.9%	26	9.1%	249	86.8%	12	4.2%
Childcare	TA-C	163	11.9%	1	0.6%	159	97.5%	3	1.8%
Other Access Comments	TA-O	28	2.0%	11	39.3%	16	57.1%	1	3.6%
Alternative Training Formats		**291**	**21.2%**	**139**	**47.8%**	**108**	**37.1%**	**44**	**15.1%**
Online Training	TF-N	197	14.4%	84	42.6%	83	42.1%	30	15.2%
Resource Libraries	TF-L	44	3.2%	25	56.8%	16	36.4%	3	6.8%
Support Groups	TF-S	61	4.4%	41	67.2%	15	24.6%	5	8.2%
Other Alternative Training Formats	TF-O	31	2.3%	14	45.2%	16	51.6%	1	3.2%
Voice and Choice		**233**	**17.0%**	**130**	**55.8%**	**80**	**34.3%**	**23**	**9.9%**
Voice – and Community – in Training	TV	193	14.1%	121	62.7%	59	30.6%	13	6.7%
Choice in Trainings	TC	49	3.6%	17	34.7%	30	61.2%	2	4.1%
Training Information		**81**	**5.9%**	**20**	**24.7%**	**57**	**70.4%**	**4**	**4.9%**
Information About Trainings	TI	81	5.9%	20	24.7%	57	70.4%	4	4.9%
Other		**236**	**17.2%**	**34**	**14.4%**	**19**	**8.1%**	**183**	**77.5%**
Support Beyond Training	TOS	68	5.0%	43	63.2%	21	30.9%	4	5.9%
Response Not About Training	TO	108	7.9%	1	0.9%	1	0.9%	106	98.1%
Don't Know	TDK	79	5.8%					79	100.0%

NOTES:

[1] Major themes (in blue rows) are rollups of the subthemes listed below. They are unduplicated - not the total of the numbers below; i.e., a person who made "Satisfied" comments in both "Location" and "Scheduling" is counted only once in the "Accessibility" row. A person who has a "Satisfied" comment in the "Location" row and "Needs Work" in the "Scheduling" row would be counted as a "Mixed" comment in the "Accessibility" row.

[2] All # columns show how many persons made any mention of this theme. Multiple comments on the same theme by a single person are only counted once in that theme row. A person with both "Satisfied" and "Needs Work" comments on the same theme is counted in the "Mixed" column.

[3] Respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

[4] Percentage of comments in this theme that were "Satisfied," "Needs Work," or "Mixed or Neutral," respectively.

2012 Foster Parent Survey: Survey Script and Survey Questions

INTRODUCTION

I have been asked by the Department of Social and Health Services to talk with foster parents about how well DSHS supports and trains them. You should have received a letter explaining this survey:

- The results of this survey will help DSHS measure how well they support and train foster parents. It will help DSHS make improvements if they are needed.
- You have been randomly chosen from all licensed foster parents.
- Your survey answers will in no way affect your status as a foster parent.
- Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. We promise that no one from the foster care system will know how you individually answered the survey questions.
- Your name is never used; the researchers combine all the survey answers into one report.
- Your participation is completely voluntary, but is very important to us. We want to make sure the sample represents all foster parents.
- Please feel free to ask questions at any time. If I come to any question that you prefer not to answer, just let me know and I will skip over it. Please be honest. We want to know how you really feel.

Did you have a foster child in your care on [TARGET DATE]?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (explain)

SUPPORT QUESTIONS

1. Question about Overall Support

   In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?

   Response Options for Question 1:

   - ☐ *More than adequate*
   - ☐ *Somewhat adequate*
   - ☐ *Somewhat inadequate*
   - ☐ *Very inadequate*
   - ☐ *Not applicable*

2. Questions to Facilitate Strategic Planning for Support

   Preface to Questions 2A-2D:

   Please answer the following questions about your experience with Children's Administration staff. For each of the statements below, tell us how often the statement was true in the past year.

   A. Do social workers listen to your input?
   B. Are you treated like part of the team?
   C. Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?
   D. Can you get help when you ask for it?

Response Options for Questions 2A-2D:

- ☐ *Always or Almost Always*
- ☐ *Usually*
- ☐ *Seldom*
- ☐ *Almost Never or Never*
- ☐ *Not Applicable*

3. Open-ended Questions to Facilitate Strategic Planning for Support

   A. What do Children's Administration and your social workers do well to support you?

   B. What could Children's Administration and your social workers do better to support you?

TRAINING QUESTIONS

4. Overall Training

   Overall, thinking about ALL the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the needs of foster children placed in your home?

   Response Options for Question 4:

- ☐ More than adequate
- ☐ Somewhat adequate
- ☐ Somewhat inadequate
- ☐ Very inadequate
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ I haven't had training

5. Open-ended Questions to Facilitate Strategic Planning for Training

   C. What about foster parent training has been helpful?

   D. How could foster parent training be improved?

2012 Foster Parent Survey

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

PPA Planning, Performance
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