2013 Foster Parent Survey

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

March 2014
Report 11.207

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RDA Research & Data Analysis Division

DSHS

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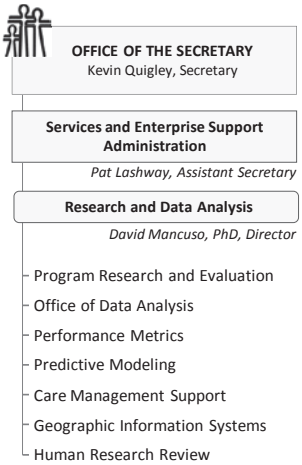

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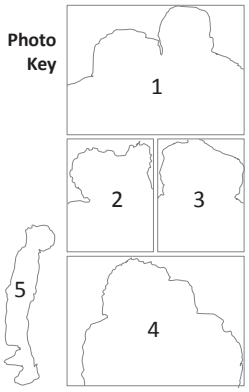

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Title: 2013 Foster Parent Survey: DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Abstract: Between September 2012 and August 2013, DSHS surveyed 1,398 foster parents who had a child in care on the 15th day of August 2012, November 2012, February 2013 or May 2013. These foster parents were asked about their satisfaction with support, training, and information 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, some indicated they want more complete and timely information about their foster children's cases; more resources, such as respite and timely reimbursements; more flexible processes; and more social workers hired. In regard to training, some suggested a need for more convenient training locations and schedules; more training on specific topics; more non-traditional training formats such as online training and foster parent panels; and more choice about which trainings they take.

This report is the second in a series of annual Foster Parent Survey reports.

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2013

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

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Highlights of the Survey

Survey Facts

The 2013 Foster Parent Survey report is the second 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 2013.
- This survey was conducted between September 1, 2012 and August 31, 2013.
- 1,398 foster parents were interviewed by telephone.
- The individuals called were a random sample of all foster parents who had a child in care on the 15th day of August 2012, November 2012, February 2013, or May 2013.
- Translators were available for all languages, and alternative methods were available for deaf and hard-of-hearing respondents.
- The survey's **96% completion rate** is extraordinarily high. 1,398 of the 1,454 eligible foster parents in the sample completed the survey.
- The survey's **98% cooperation rate** is also high. Of the 1,420 eligible foster parents we were able to contact, only 22 refused to take the survey.

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

- 80% (1,109 of the 1,387 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?"
- 66% of comments about overall foster parent support were positive. Of the 441 who commented on this issue, 289 made positive comments.

- ***Most 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

- 85% (1,176 of the 1,384 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Do social workers listen to your input?"
- 66% of the 363 comments about social worker support were positive (239 made positive comments).
- 72% of the 156 comments about social worker courtesy and respect were positive (112 made positive comments).
- 64% of the 252 comments about social workers' ability to listen and understand were positive (160 made positive comments).

- ***Most foster parents felt they got help when they needed it. And, more than half of the comments on access to social workers were positive, whether connections are made in person, by phone, by e-mail, or by text.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 82% (1,135 of the 1,377 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Do you get help when you ask for it?"
- 56% of 555 comments about phone and staff access were positive (313 were positive).
- 62% of the 221 comments about having consistent contact with social workers were positive (138 were positive).

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, and that the overwork results in more staff turnovers which also negatively impact foster families.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 100% of the 149 comments about the need for more social workers were negative (including suggestions for improvement).
- Many of the more negative comments on "access" also pointed out that the social workers had large caseloads and were therefore difficult to reach.

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

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 98% of the 112 comments about general processes were negative or suggestions for improvement (110 negative comments).
- 84% of the 194 comments about specific processes were negative (163 negative comments).
- 88% of the 25 comments about paperwork were negative (22 negative 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 (including suggestions for improvement) or mixed.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 79% (1,091 of the 1,389 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Are you treated like part of the team?"
- 77% (1,055 of the 1,362 who answered) responded positively to the question, "Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?"
- However, 61% of comments about social worker inclusion were negative or mixed/neutral. Of the 208 comments on this issue, 127 were negative or mixed/neutral comments.

- ***Foster parents' responses to questions about getting adequate information about the needs of their children were generally positive. However, the majority of their comments on information were negative or mixed.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 71% (978 of the 1,369 who answered) responded positively to the question "Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental and educational needs?"
- However, 64% of the 721 comments about information were negative or mixed/neutral. (461 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

- 62% of comments about medical/dental/mental health resources were negative. Of the 74 comments on this issue, 46 were negative or suggestions for improvement.
- 66% of comments made about childcare resources were negative. Of the 29 who commented on this issue, 19 comments were negative.
- 73% of comments about respite resources were negative. Of the 71 who commented on this issue, 52 made negative comments. Slow payments for respite were a strong theme.
- 83% of comments about financial resources were negative. Of the 76 who commented on this issue, 63 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

- 89% (1,230 of the 1,384 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?"
- 78% made positive comments about the overall helpfulness of their training. Of the 315 who commented on this issue, 244 made positive comments.
- 82% made positive comments about training provided by specific agencies or programs. Of the 57 who commented on this issue, 47 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

- 86% made positive comments about ways in which training helps them care for their foster children. Of the 322 who commented on this issue, 278 made positive comments.
- 55% made positive comments about ways in which training helps them find resources for their foster children. Of the 80 who commented on this issue, 44 made positive comments.

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

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 93% of comments about training received in support group settings were positive. Of the 28 who commented on this issue, 26 made positive comments.
- 28% of comments about the variety of resources available from lending libraries were positive. Of the 18 who commented on this issue, 5 made positive comments and the rest were pleas to reopen the lending libraries.

- ***Foster parents like non-traditional training formats, particularly on-line resources, and they want more of them.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 59% of comments about on-line training were negative. Of the 200 who commented on this issue, 65 were positive and 117 were negative – but the majority of these negative comments were requests for **more** on-line trainings.
- 41% of comments about other alternative training formats were positive. Of the 46 who commented in this area, 22 were negative or suggestions for improvement – better books and newsletters, more videos, and so on.

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

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 77% of comments about having a voice and sense of community in training were positive. Of the 199 who commented on this issue, 153 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. And – they want access to comprehensive and timely information about availability of training.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 94% of comments about training locations were negative. Of the 143 who commented on this issue, 135 made negative comments (including suggestions for improvement).
- 95% of comments about training schedules were negative. Of the 257 who commented on this issue, 244 made negative comments.
- 95% of comments about childcare during training were negative. Of the 171 who commented on this issue, 163 made negative comments.
- 95% of other comments about access-to-training issues were negative. Of the 21 who commented in this area, 20 made negative comments.
- 80% of comments about the quality and timeliness of training information were negative. Of the 60 who commented on this issue, 48 made negative comments.

MIXED MESSAGES

- ***Foster parents like choice in which trainings to take – and they want more choices.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 56% of comments about the amount of choice foster parents have in which trainings to attend or complete at home were positive. Of the 39 who commented on this issue, 22 made positive comments.

- ***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

- 56% of the 756 comments about specific trainings overall were positive, 23% were mixed/neutral, and 21% were negative. Many mixed/neutral and negative comments were requests for training – or more training - on certain topics, rather than criticisms of existing trainings. Some were requests to shorten some required trainings, or combine them.
- 100% of the 18 comments about Love and Logic training were positive.
- 74% of comments about PRIDE training were positive. Of the 148 who commented on this training, 110 made positive comments.
- 73% of comments about health and safety training (most of which was CPR/first aid training) were positive. Of the 51 who commented on this training, 37 made positive comments.
- 66% of the comments about child behavior trainings were positive. Of the 209 people who commented on this issue, 137 made positive comments.
- 63% of the comments on Parenting Plus were positive. Of the 38 who commented on this class, 24 were positive comments.

Survey Results at a Glance

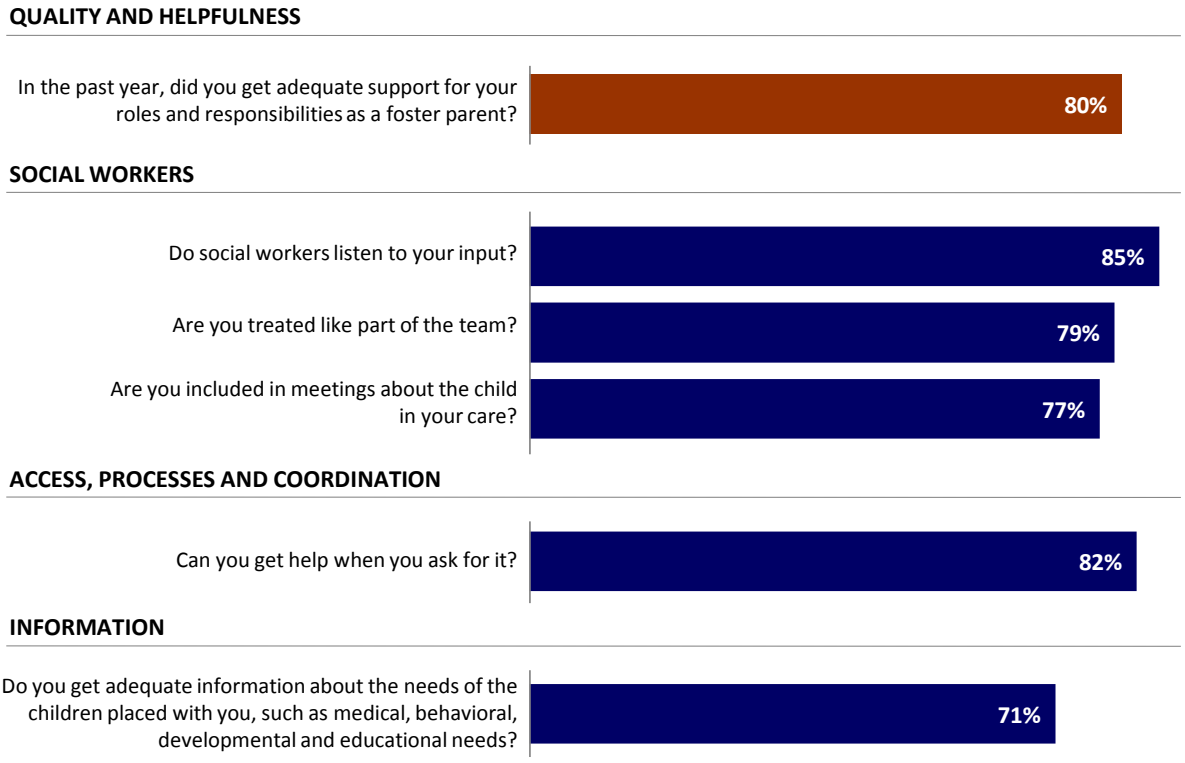
The survey analysis is based on two types of questions – standard (closed-ended) questions and open-ended questions.

There are seven standard questions – two compliance questions related to the Braam Settlement Agreement, and five questions designed to assist in strategic planning for foster parent support. Responses to these seven 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.

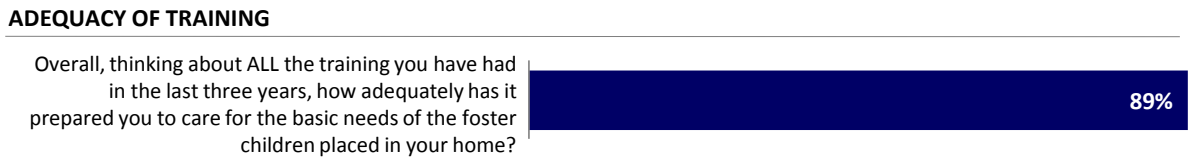
In addition, there are four open-ended questions – two relating to foster parent support, and two relating to foster parent training. Responses to the two foster parent support questions are summarized in the chart on the next page (page 7); responses to the two foster parent training questions are summarized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

2013 Foster Parent Survey satisfaction rates*

Regarding Foster Parent Support . . .

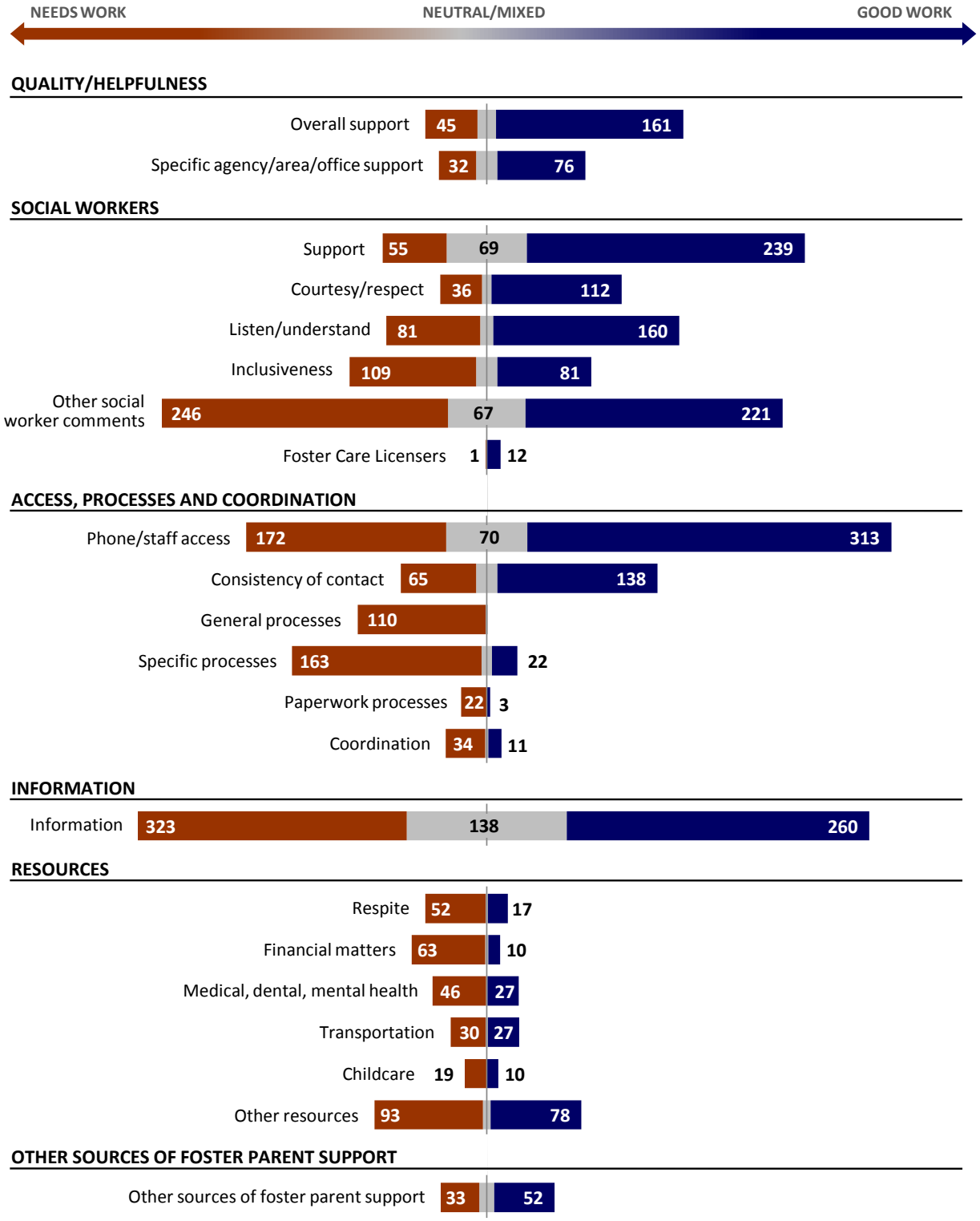


Regarding Foster Parent Training . . .



*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*

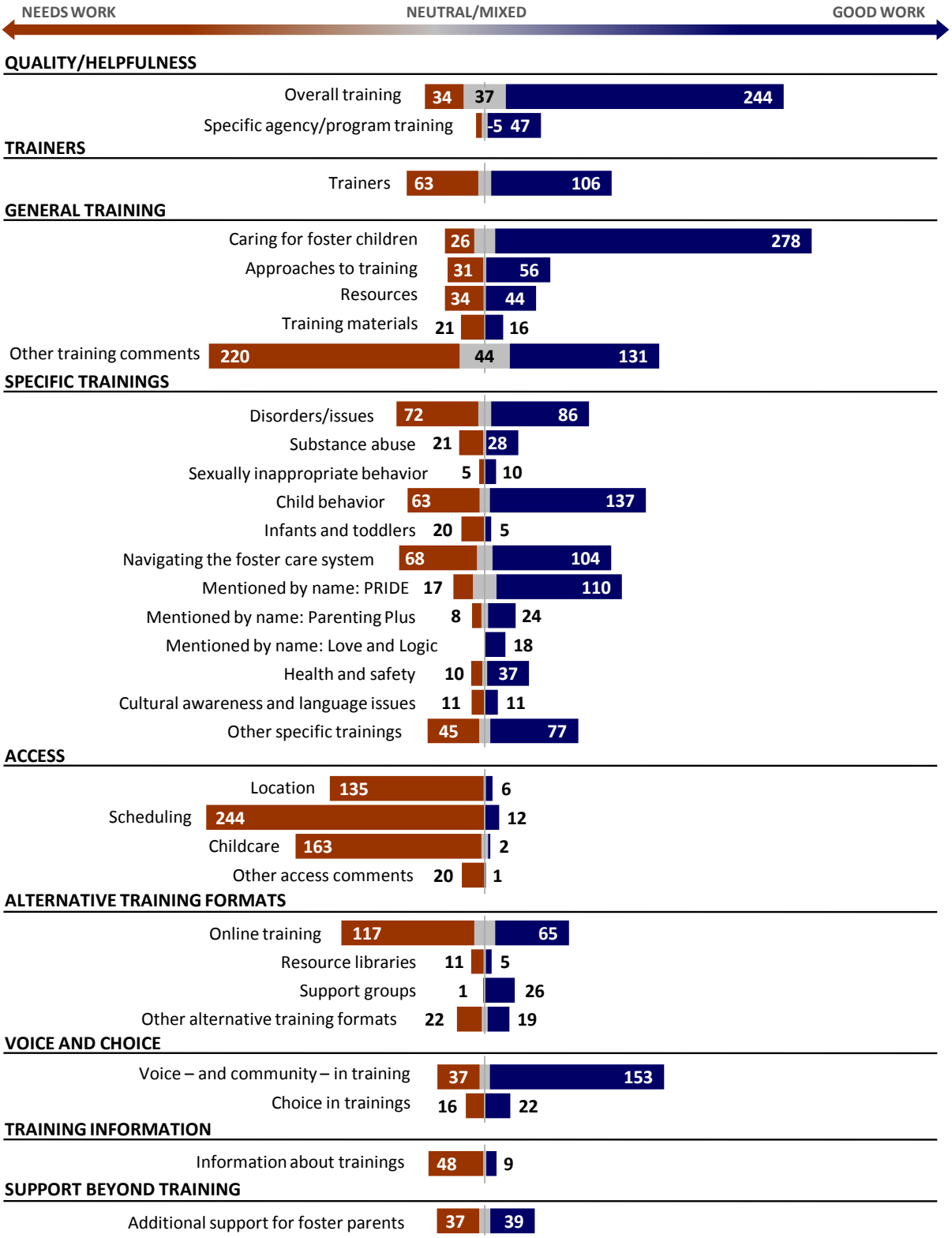


*Narrative comments were made in response to two questions:

- *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

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster Parent Support is the first part of the 2013 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, the commitment of social workers to the needs of the children, and the range of resources they are provided.

However, they also indicated a desire for improvement in some areas. They would like easier access to their assigned social worker, quicker response time to their requests, more 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

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents appreciate support from the Children's Administration and the private agencies who also work with them.

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.

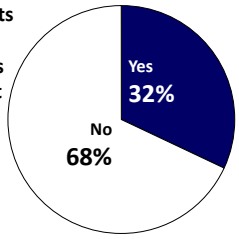
The majority of foster parents expressed gratitude for the support they receive. Even when voicing complaints, survey respondents frequently offered thanks to those who help them do the best for the children in their care.

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 offices or agencies.

About one third of the survey respondents (441) commented on the quality and helpfulness of foster parent support. Of those 441 comments:

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of foster parent support?



- Almost two-thirds (66%) were positive comments.
- Almost one in four (24%) were negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- One of ten (11%) were mixed or neutral comments.

1.1 Quality and Helpfulness

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

The majority of foster parents reported that support is good.

"The Children's Administration and the social worker have gone the extra mile to provide me with what is necessary to care for the child in my home."

"I feel supported by them."

"They were able to take the blame off of us and Children's Administration was willing to be a buffer and was on our side. We appreciated that they were there for us the whole time."

"The social worker really listens to what I say. I have been very happy with DSHS."

"They have been great."

"They are pretty good about supporting us and showing their appreciation when we talk to them."

Some foster parents have mixed experiences with support.

"They provide us with some support. They eventually get to us and are as helpful as possible."

"Our private agency provides us with all the necessary tools to help us be successful at fostering. The state agency provides that at times."

"They do what is required – nothing stands out."

"In the past – they have been more present and helpful in providing care for us and for the wellbeing of the children in our care."

Others are deeply dissatisfied with the support provided.

"I do not feel supported."

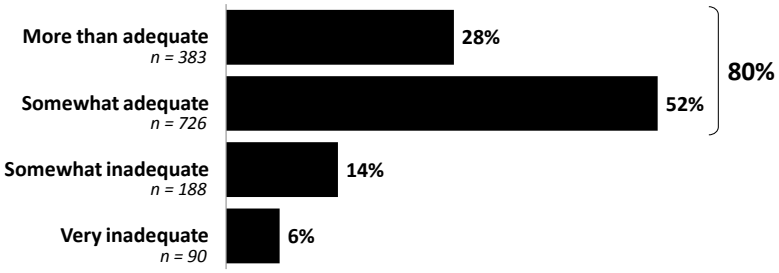
"We get medical information but not information from counseling sessions … a really bad experience."

"These kids are less than six months old and they have already had three DSHS caseworkers … I have only met one caseworker who is now gone."

"We are being treated like an enemy and very disrespectfully. Please improve customer service"

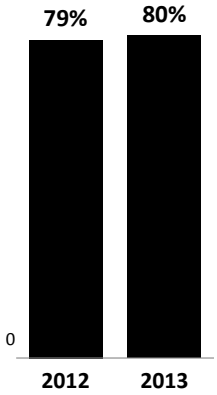
QUESTION | In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?

Eight out of ten foster parents surveyed reported that they received somewhat or more than adequate support in the past year. Two out of ten found support somewhat or very inadequate.



STATE TREND

The percent of foster parents reporting somewhat or more than adequate support did not change significantly from last year.



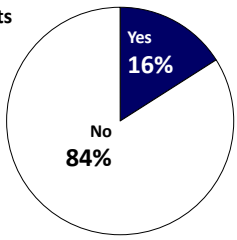
REGIONAL DETAIL

Responses to this question showed little variation by region.

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.

Made comments about overall quality and helpfulness of support?



222 of the foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned general support.

Of the 222 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support, seven out of ten (73%) made positive comments. About two in ten (20%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Less than one in ten (7%) made mixed or neutral comments.

In addition:

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

PHOTO: Eyecandy Images/Getty Images

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

"Things are going well, so I have nothing to add."

"We have had times for them to advocate for medical needs, and provisions needed, they have been there for us."

"They totally trust me in what I do, I have had over 300 foster kids, and they support me in my decisions."

"The DSHS one is great, private agency not so good."

"I can't answer this because they are always there when I need them."

"When we first received our niece and nephew the social workers were wonderful, listening and supportive."

"I get support when I am having difficulty with the child."

"They are always there when needed."

"They ask me if I need anything. They support me in any way that I need."

"They answer all my questions, they listen to us, everything really."

"They are on top of the child's needs."

"My DSHS team has always open communication and we truly do work as a team."

"They are the best of the best at the office we work with."

Some find support to be lacking.

"So far it has been a really bad experience. We have our nephews and are kept in the dark about them."

"They answer the phone, that's about it … listen but no help or feedback."

"The system is pretty vague. Have to learn things from other foster parents rather from social workers."

"We have been licensed emergency after-hours caregivers for four years … have had so much denial from CA staff as regards to our experiences and problems, we may quit!"

"Support has been against us with 'bullying' techniques."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Some foster parents commented on support received (or not) from Children's Administration offices.

"They offer good classes. Whatcom does a good job. Bellingham office is supportive of foster parents and takes the time to get to know us personally."

"The Wenatchee office is pretty danged good – I like to work with them."

"Tacoma staff does nothing well."

"Kent DSHS social workers are amazing."

"The Yakima office … has met my needs well and gets back to me the next day. The Moses Lake office – I am struggling to get a response or help."

"I felt more included in Tacoma office versus Bremerton office."

"I get pretty good service and a sense of appreciation from all but Pierce and Kitsap counties."

"Pierce and Kitsap counties – their offices do a terrible job, they scrutinize everything, they don't offer services that are needed, and the kids that I get from those areas are more severe."

"King County workers provide supportive counseling and validation."

"They are excellent – Aberdeen DCFS – very skilled, have the children's best interest in mind and are reality-based."

Respondents also discussed support from the private agencies or tribes.

"Private agency usually responds the same day. DSHS takes a couple of days to a week to respond."

"The private agency always comes to meetings with us. They e-mail or call and answer our questions. They provide training every month for us. They keep in touch with us and get information to us quickly."

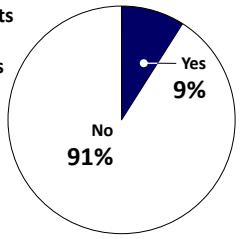
"The private agency social workers meet with us monthly and go over the concerns that we have."

"Private agency – they only show up when it's audit time. They do not support me."

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

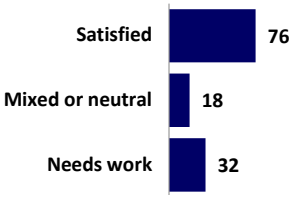
Comments about the quality and helpfulness of support received from particular private agencies, or from a specific Children's Administration area or office, were included in this category. 9% of respondents commented about support from a specific entity.

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of specific agencies, areas, offices?



126 of the foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned support from specific agencies, areas or offices.

Six out of ten (60%) of the 126 foster parents who mentioned specific agencies or offices or tribes made positive comments. One in four (25%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Fourteen percent had mixed or neutral experiences.



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

- Support received from their Children's Administration regions or offices.
- Support received from their private foster care agencies.
- Support provided by American Indian 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

PHOTO: Ingram Publishing/Getty Images

Foster parents want positive, timely, friendly, respectful, 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.

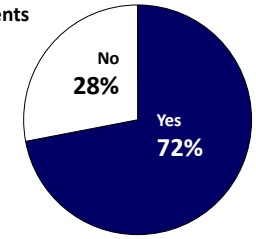
Most foster parents reported they are pleased with the support they receive from social workers. However, complaints were registered in a number of areas, including social workers' failure to make foster parents a real part of the team; to respond effectively when problems arise; or to successfully manage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

Almost three out of four of the foster parents surveyed (1005 out of 1398, or 72%) made comments about social workers. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about social workers?



- About four out of ten (42%) made positive comments (423).

- Almost three in ten (28%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement (277).

- Three in ten (30%) made mixed or neutral comments (305).

1.2 Social Workers

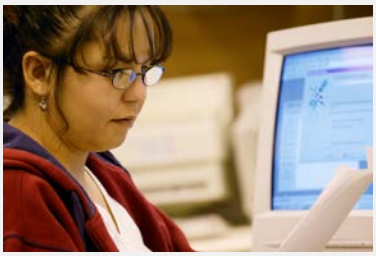


PHOTO: Design Pics/Getty Images

Most foster parents praised the social worker support they receive.

"We have a remarkable social worker. She is quick to respond, comes to her monthly home visits and is attentive acting on our concerns or questions."

"I feel supported. Our DSHS social worker has met with us monthly, with added support when the foster child was having some behavioral issues."

"Our social worker has done an amazing job and we appreciate him."

"The social workers are always there to help us with our problems and the needs of the children in our care."

"Case manager is encouraging of me and what I do."

"This is taxing work mentally and emotionally. They support me very well by checking with me often. I have amazing social workers from DSHS."

"When I ask for help, I get a response and they do what they can to help."

Some indicated that social worker support could be improved.

"Very little social worker support until the situation gets real serious."

"When we express concern or try to talk to the social workers, they could show a little more support. Instead they let us know they are overworked, overbooked and cannot keep up."

"We put our heart and soul into these kids, and there was no support at all."

Others reported that support varies from social worker to social worker or by agency type.

"It depends on the case worker."

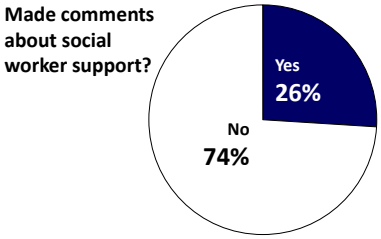
"I have had three case workers in the last year. Of the three, one was very supportive, the others were not."

"I have a great social worker. She listens and follows through. The private agency is not so supportive."

"Private agency workers are more in tune with who I am, what I need and what is needed for the child. State workers seem clueless and are more concerned with money going out."

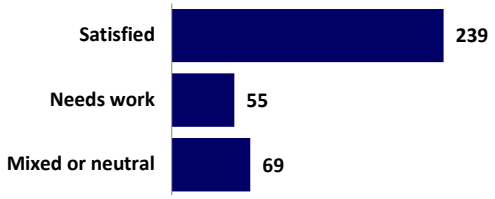
THEME | Social Worker Support

About one in four foster parents commented at least once on the overall quality of social worker support (rather than on specific social worker attributes, such as courtesy or understanding).



Of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed, 363 (26%) mentioned general social worker support in their comments.

Two out of three (66%) comments on general social work support were positive (239 positive out of 363 comments). Fifteen percent (55) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Nineteen percent (69) made mixed or neutral comments.



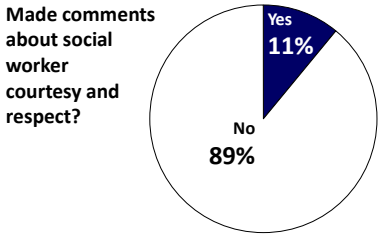
Comments about the quality of social worker support included foster parents' thoughts about:

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

Although most comments applauded the support social workers provide, some indicated the level of support should be higher or that it varied greatly across social workers or types of agencies.

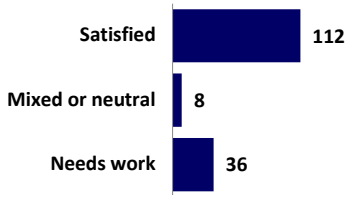
THEME | Social Worker Courtesy and Respect

Comments about courtesy and respect shown to foster parents by social workers were included in this category. 11% of survey respondents made a comment about social worker courtesy and respect.



Over one in ten (156 or 11%) of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed mentioned social worker courtesy and respect in their comments.

Of the 156 survey respondents who addressed social worker courtesy and respect, more than seven in ten (112 or 72%) made positive comments. Over two in ten (36 or 23%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. The remaining 8 (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents **like** social workers who:

- Act professional and courteous.
- Are actively engaged with them.
- Treat them as equals.
- Truly care about foster children and foster families.
- Respect the many contributions foster parents make to the children in their care.

Foster parents **dislike** social workers who:

- Are inconsiderate, unprofessional or rude.
- 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.

PHOTO: Fuse/Getty Images

Foster parents want social workers to be courteous and friendly.

"They are very courteous."

"Sometimes the DSHS workers are rude and unprofessional."

"My current social worker is encouraging, open and human."

"They are polite and professional."

"Listen to me. Don't cut me off as I am talking. Don't raise your voice at me!"

They value social workers who respect and and appreciate their work as foster parents.

"They respect me."

"A prior social worker gave us blatant disrespect last fall."

"The social workers honor my opinion and respect me."

"They tell us how much we are appreciated as foster parents."

"They do not judge. We are new to this and they were very helpful and not condescending."

"I feel judged when I was accused that I was in it for the money, when I reported some problems. Foster parents are never in it for money!"

"They listen and care and want to help the child and foster parents as well."

"One social worker was rude when I told the child that she was lovely and beautiful. She said, 'you don't need to talk that way!' That was hurtful. When my husband called her about it, she said, 'You need to be careful, because you could lose your license'."

"Our social worker has always been positive about the children we have."

"We feel like we are on the bottom rung. Make us feel like a priority!"

They value social workers who care about the children in their homes.

"They really strive for the best for the children."

"They are there for the right reasons."

"Made us feel like they value the kids and it's not just their job."

1.2 Social Workers

PHOTO: Iromaya/Getty Images

Foster parents like social workers who are good listeners.

"If I have a concern about the child, they listen very well to what I have to say about the situation."

"The social workers are always there to listen to me and provided me with the necessary information needed."

"We have really good social workers. They are really good listeners. They are all very consistently supportive."

"I would say caring and understanding of our position and feelings. They give us information that impacts us."

"The social workers listen to what we had to say about the care of the children in our home."

"They listen thoughtfully, respond quickly and help create solutions."

"We have a really good open communication with the social workers during the monthly meetings. They have been honest about the timelines as to where things are going, especially regarding legal matters. They let us know what to expect."

Some feel social workers should improve their listening and communication skills.

"Social workers need to listen to the foster parents and consider their opinions, as they have the children 24/7 in their care and they know what is needed."

"Listening to the whole story when we call or write – that way the response would be a full response."

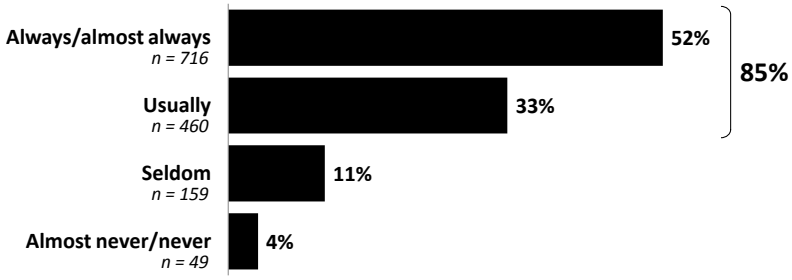
"The social workers need to listen, take action, be honest, and have open communications with foster parents."

"Listen better to what I have to say about the children I have, and maybe help me get things together that I need."

"Listen. The Kelso office is not very supportive of foster parents. They make you feel like if the kid runs it is your fault."

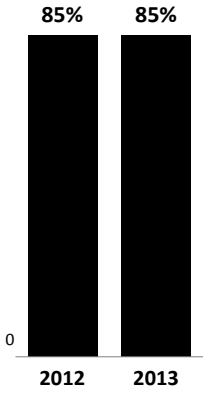
QUESTION | Do social workers listen to your input?

The overwhelming majority of the 1,384 foster parents who answered this question (85%) said that social workers almost always, always or usually listened to their input. The remaining 15 percent said seldom, almost never, or never.



STATE TREND

This percent is unchanged from last year.

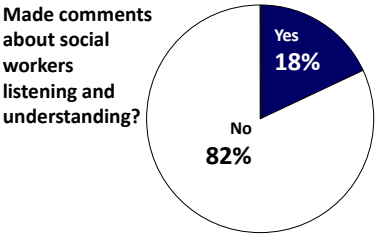


REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 3 was a little higher (88%) on this question than the other two Regions (both 83%).

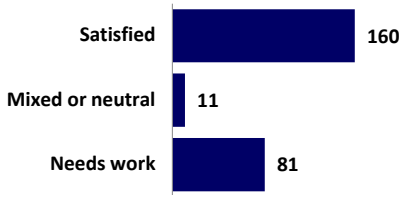
THEME | Social Workers Listen/Understand

Comments about social workers' ability to listen to and understand foster parents were included in this category. 18 percent of foster parents surveyed made a comment about social workers listening and understanding.



252 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (18%) mentioned social workers listening and understanding.

Of the 252 survey respondents who addressed social workers' ability to listen and understand, almost two-thirds (160 or 64%) made positive comments. Nearly one-third (81 or 32%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% 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.
- Listen – and back them up – when they discuss the children's needs.
- 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.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"They usually listen to what we have to say. They pay attention to us as experienced foster parents."

"Listen to what the foster parents have to say since the child is in our care day in and day out. They treat you like your word does not mean anything."

"They are good listeners and pay attention to my input for the foster children in my care."

"The tribal workers are always willing to listen to my ideas and concerns and help with referrals to outside."

"Really listen to what we say about the children's needs – we are with them 24/7."

"They did listen real well when I reached out about the behavior of some children placed with me."

They also want social workers to understand their circumstances.

"Our social worker allows me to be a real person. She listens to me. I can vent when necessary and she listens and does not judge."

"The social workers need to understand that even if you are a foster parent you still have a life."

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

"Very good at listening about the kids medical issues and they back me up."

"They need to listen to us when we say that we have a child that needs to be separated from a sibling. Not listening is the biggest obstacle I have seen."

"They are open to hearing about what is going on with the kids."

"The social workers need to listen to the complaints of the foster parents and act according as to the level of care needed for the child."

"The social worker listens to what we say is happening in the home and school. They take a supportive stand with parenting processes."

1.2 Social Workers

PHOTO: Purestock/Getty Images

Most foster parents feel valued as a team member and included in decision-making.

"The social worker has kept me informed as to the status of the case and what is happening. They listen to me and include me in decisions."

"The DSHS social worker really makes me feel like a part of the team. She is more in touch with me than what I have experienced in the past."

"I have all tribal kids placed by the state, I am tribal licensed. Tribal workers treat me like a part of the team, and they help when I ask and include me in meetings and they appreciate what I am doing."

"Our worker is fabulous, she has kept us abreast of information on the case and keeps us in the loop on changes."

"We are a team, and we want the best for the child, and we work towards that goal, we meet once a month and it is a good experience. She always responds promptly and follows up with questions."

"I almost always can get information that I need about the child. They answer questions and listen to what I have to say about the child."

Some feel excluded from full team membership.

"Just believe that I know what I am talking about, and give us credibility as foster parents. One child I had to get books and document his behavior. Finally they listened, that it was the child, not the seven foster homes."

"Private Agency staff members are very supportive, include me in meetings, and listen to what I have to say. DSHS staff seldom do."

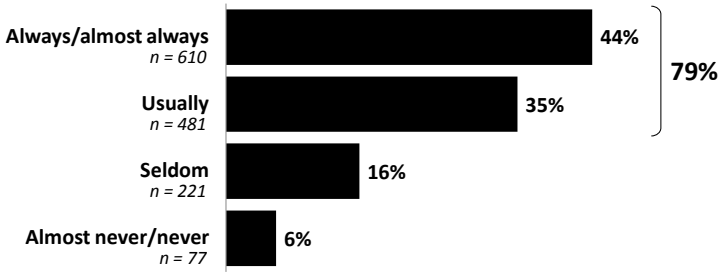
"I think we need to be treated more as part of the team. Often we don't know what is going on with the case."

"Include me more. Keep me informed of the progression of the case from the family side."

"We need to be included more in decisions for the foster child."

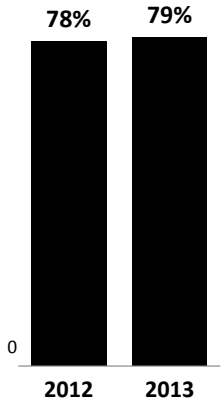
QUESTION | Are you treated like part of the team?

Over three quarters of 1,389 foster parents who answered this question (79%) reported they are usually or always treated like part of the team. Over two out of ten (22%) said seldom or never.



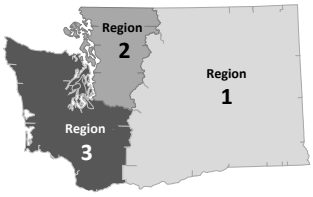
STATE TREND

There is little change in thise percentage from last year.



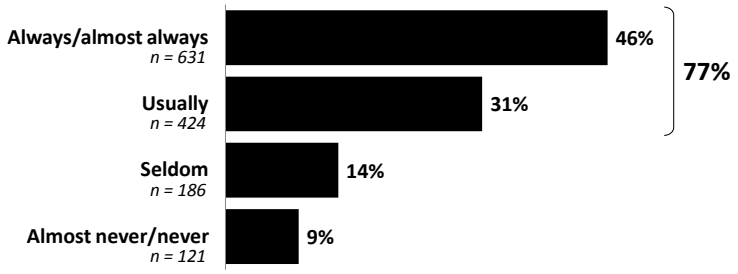
REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 3 was a little more positive than Regions 1 and 2 (81% compared to 77%)



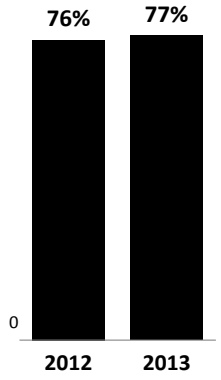
QUESTION | Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?

More than three quarters of the 1,361 foster parents who answered this question (77%) reported they are usually or always included in meetings about the child in their care. Nearly one quarter (23%) indicated they are seldom or never included.



STATE TREND

There was no significant change from last year in these percentages



REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 3 responses were slightly more positive than Region 1 and 2 (79% to 76%)

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"They keep me in the loop, let me know when meetings are, and include me."

"The DSHS social worker includes us in meetings. We have monthly meetings with her. I do have access to her supervisors if needed."

"We have monthly meetings. We all get together what's going right and wrong in the house. If I ever need anything, they are a call away and they answer my calls right away."

"I get included in meetings. They seek my input."

"Private agency gives me great support. We have had great meetings with school and include me as well."

"We have monthly meetings so we get together and talk over things."

"I am always 'allowed' in meetings. I cannot always fit them in due to my work schedule."

"I think that they have done well with including me in decision making and keeping me informed about how the family is doing and that decision making with and for the foster child."

Some report they are left out.

"I would like to be included in meetings about the child. I would like more consistent interaction with staff."

"The social workers need to include the foster parents in the meeting of the children in their home."

"Prior to the most current placement, I was included in meetings and listened to as far as input regarding the child.

"Communication – court dates, information about the progress of the case, what is the permanency plan, what direction are they going with this child? Include me in the meetings about the child. I have the most information about the child."

"The family team building meetings should include me more often."

1.2 Social Workers

PHOTO: VStock/Getty Images

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

"We have meetings about the child, including me being able to call a meeting. If I have an issue, they are very good about being supportive and helping to resolve it."

"The state does not include me in kid's meetings, they don't respond to my requests for help and they don't treat me like I'm a part of the team – maybe because I am a tribal foster parent."

"They legitimately consider my requests – and more times than not they approve them. And, they will usually engage me in a discussion about the foster child's needs."

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

"Keep me in the loop! Adequate information should be given to the foster parent when a kid is placed, specifically when a child has placement history."

"They kept us in the loop during the hearing, which was very appreciated."

"Keep us better informed on what is happening. We are out of the loop as the foster parents."

"The social workers keep me in the loop so I know what's going on. It makes me feel like part of the team and that I have a value."

"They should give information that they know to the foster parents, things would be a little better, and treat you with respect and like you are a part of the team."

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

"The social worker needs to include the foster parent in decisions and listen to what the foster parent has to say as we have the children 24/7!"

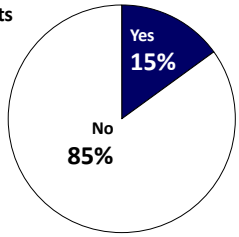
"They are good about listening to my opinion about things, and implementing them into the plan."

"Be more open to foster parent suggestions!"

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. 15% of survey respondents commented on social worker inclusiveness.

Made comments about social worker inclusiveness?



208 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned social worker inclusiveness.

Of the 208 survey respondents who addressed social worker inclusiveness, almost four out of ten (39%) made positive comments. Over half (52%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 9% 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.

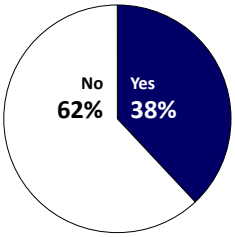
Others appreciate that social workers:

- 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

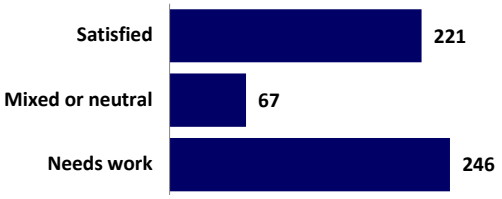
All comments about social workers which did not refer to general support, courtesy, respect, listening, understanding, or inclusiveness were categorized as"other" social worker comments.

Made other comments about social workers?



534 of the foster parents surveyed (38%) made other comments about social workers.

Of the 534 survey respondents who made other comments about social workers, about four out of ten (41%) made positive comments. Slightly more (46%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 13% (67) 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.

PHOTO: Blend Images/Getty Images

Foster parents want social workers to provide good service.

"Give us relevant information. Be more helpful when there is a need for transfer of services. Be more knowledgeable of resources needed for a DD child to become an adult."

"They are quick to answer questions, they are very good listeners, and they do an amazing job gathering evidence, and keeping in contact with biological parents, they do an amazing job."

"We depend on quality of social worker. Set a standard for social workers and enforce the social workers meeting that standard. We have had social workers who are unavailable and unresponsive."

"Make their individual workers have consequences when they do not fulfill their duties/responsibilities."

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

"I appreciate having her direct line and she gets back to me quickly."

"They always listen and offer helpful solutions and advice."

Foster parents like social workers to be effective problem solvers.

"I appreciate experienced social workers. They offer resources which are quite helpful."

"The social worker presents as totally helpless and is only the messenger."

"I feel like my newest caseworker is always on top of the case, and is very thorough."

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

"Our social worker is not fully aware or confused about her responsibilities and is confused about her duties."

Foster parents value social workers who have good communication skills.

"They communicate well. This includes the regular social worker, adoption social worker, and case manager."

"Communicate better."

1.2 Social Workers

PHOTO: Creatas/Getty Images

Four foster parents complimented their social workers by name.

"Marie Oliphant kept me informed and has been on top of things to be helpful."

"Sandy Brown – she is like my ally."

"I can get medical help for my foster son more easily now days. S.M. is very responsive to my needs particularly because I have an autistic teenager."

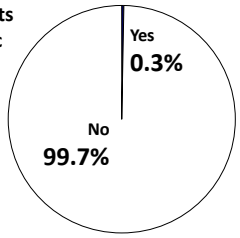
Only one was critical of a particular social worker.

"My worker [name redacted]. wouldn't let me know about meetings until the day they happened, told me about things after the fact and was late in turning in much paperwork."

THEME | Specific Social Workers

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

Made comments about a specific social worker?



Five of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (0.3%) mentioned a specific social worker in their comments.

Of the five survey respondents who commented on a specific social worker, all but one made positive comments.

1.2 Social Workers

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Comments on licenser support were generally positive.

"Licensor has been wonderful, helping me coordinate with the other social workers – though that's not his job."

"My licensing social worker adheres to the schedule to check up with us and answers our questions. She understands the needs of our children and respects me as a professional."

"The licenser is always available and takes care of whatever needs to be done. They get back to me quickly."

"My licenser is a gem – very prompt!"

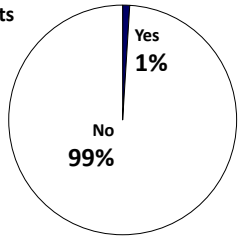
"When the social worker was not available, the licenser was there to give support and share information."

"The foster licenser was great, she answered all our questions and gave us details, she went above and beyond."

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?



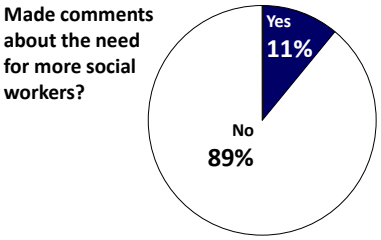
13 of the foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned foster care licenser support.

Of the 13 survey respondents who addressed foster care licensing support, 12 made positive comments. Several of those comments addressed the licensing social worker's assistance to them in dealing with the other parts of the Children's Administration, and "filling in" when the family is having problems with the Administration.

One comment was negative about the most recent licensing experience.

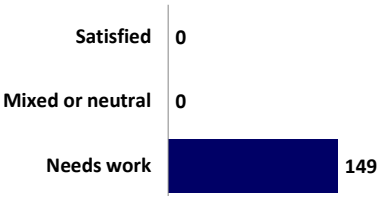
THEME | Need More Social Workers

Comments about the need for more social workers were included in this category. 11% of survey respondents commented on this topic.



149 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned the need for more social workers.

Of the 149 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.

PHOTO: Top Photo Group/Getty Images

Foster parents feel social workers should have smaller caseloads.

"Caseworkers are GROSSLY overworked. Hire more staff. They cannot possibly keep up with the demand."

"The state should not remove a child unless they can provide the proper supervision in foster placement. Close supervision is absolutely necessary and it is not happening."

"Spend more time on each case. Hire more staff! Reduce caseload! The kids are worth more than 5 minutes at the door asking how it is going."

"As a program they are very underfunded and overworked with too large a caseload. Staff are WAY too busy. Interns are not very helpful due to their lack of experience."

"The state needs to have more social workers so they can handle the caseload better OR have more support staff to help social workers so they can focus on the case itself."

"Have more social workers. They are overworked and have too many cases to be responsible for."

"Their caseloads are impossible."

"I know they don't have enough time for their workloads. It's physically impossible to meet their requirements."

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

"Well, they could have smaller caseloads. We get good initial support but as the social worker gets more cases or there was social worker turnover – the support gets much worse."

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

"Too much social worker turnover which impedes communication."

"There is a high turnover rate with the social workers which impacts the case. It is continually starting over."

Access, Processes, and Coordination

PHOTO: Ingram Publishing/Getty Images

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

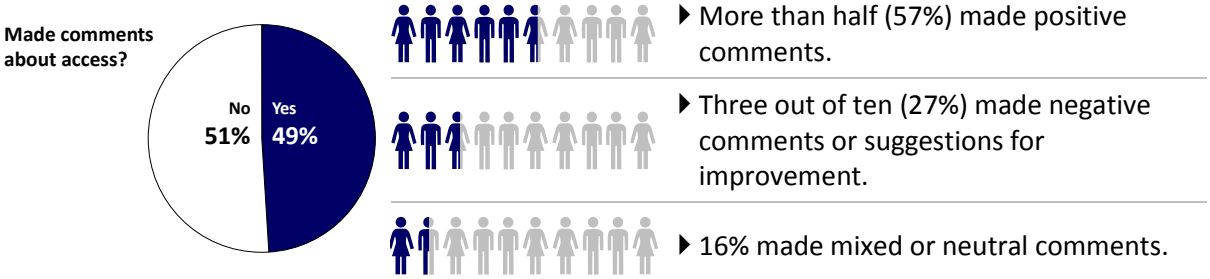
This section focuses on the access foster parents have to the social workers that serve them, and the services that they need. It also documents foster parents' experience of agency processes, and their view of how effectively services are coordinated within and between agencies.

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.

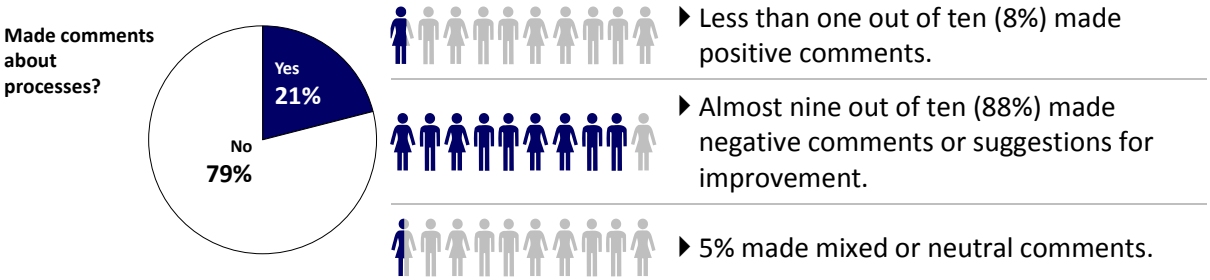
In this section:

- 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.

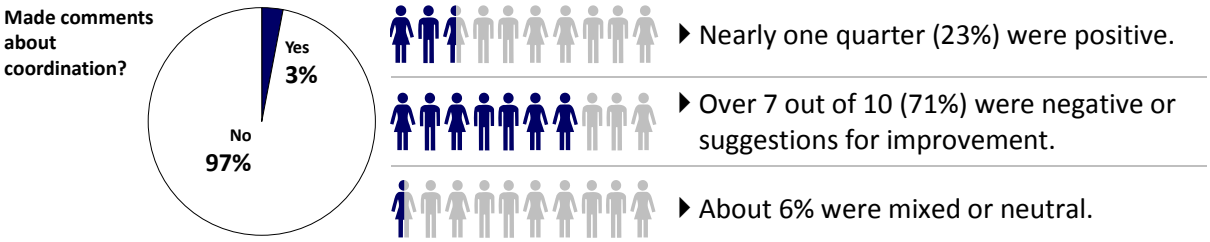
Nearly half of survey respondents (680 out of 1,398, or 49%) made comments about access. Of those who commented on this subject:



Over one in five survey respondents (289 out of 1,398, or 21%) commented on processes. Of those who commented on this subject:

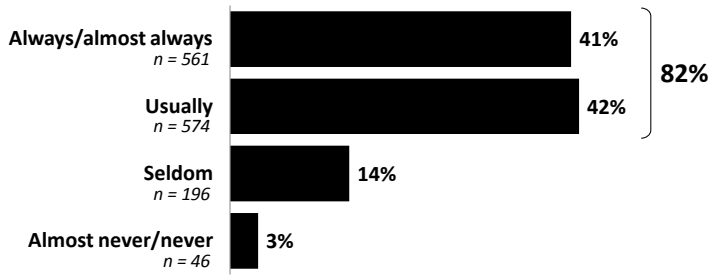


A small number of survey respondents (48 out of 1,398, or 3%) made comments about coordination. Of those comments:



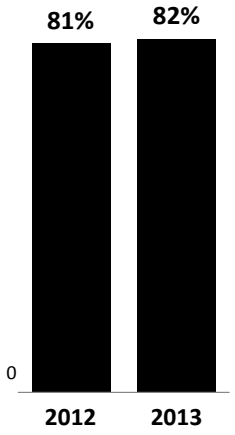
QUESTION | Can you get help when you ask for it?

More than eight out of ten of the 1,377 foster parents who answered this question (82%) reported that they can usually or always get help when they ask for it. Less than one out of five (17%) indicated it is difficult to get the help they need.



STATE TREND

Last year's percent was not much different from this years'.



REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 3 gave the most positive response on this question and Region 2 the least (85% to 80%), with Region 1 in the middle (82%).

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"Prompt on answering questions or e-mails."

"They e-mail and return phone calls."

"They are available, they do answer questions when we ask."

"The social workers are available when I need them!"

"They are organized, and reply within 2 to 3 days of our e-mail or phone call."

"The social worker has been good about returning phone calls immediately and doing what she can to help."

"They usually give us answers when we e-mail, on the same day. Cannot get through on the phone."

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

"Be more available!"

"The same age old bitch that we would like a timely answer to phone calls or e-mails. Sometimes we get no response or an extremely delayed response. The quality of the response is not very good."

"Probably return my calls. There have been several times I have never gotten a return call."

"Return phone calls and e-mails promptly, especially if it is a dire situation."

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

"Depends on the social worker of course – a good social worker keeps in contact with you and returns the phone calls promptly."

"When they finally get a phone call to me – they are very quick with a response and an answer."

"If we have a need and we call the social worker, please get back to us with a number within a sufficient amount of time. Sometimes they don't call back at all."

"They return phone calls and e-mails quickly, which is very important."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"The social workers are very good about answering my e-mails. It is easier to get ahold of them by e-mail and not phone calls."

"If you call them and ask for resources, or e-mail them, they usually get back to me within 24 hours with an answer."

"They are available when needed. Get a phone call back within 24 hours."

"They are always there to answer questions, usually right away or real soon."

"The social workers are always there when we need them. They have provided us with cell number so we can contact them any time."

"They communicate good, they get back with us right away, and they address our concerns or questions we have."

"They return calls, respond to their e-mails very well, and they usually have good answers to our questions."

Others describe less timely and positive telephone and e-mail access.

"Sometimes they return my phone calls and e-mails."

"First, they could call me back when I call them – within at least a week!"

"Respond to phone calls in a timely manner!"

"They answer the phone sometimes. Depending on the worker, some follow through and offer services and answer requests, but not reliably or consistently."

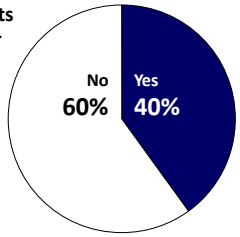
"Some, but not all, social workers respond to my phone calls and e-mails in a timely manner."

"Private agency is awesome. Answered my phone calls, fought for me to get what I needed. DSHS was abominable. No response to phone calls and e-mail. Had to go to a supervisor to get any response from the social worker."

THEME | Phone/Staff Access

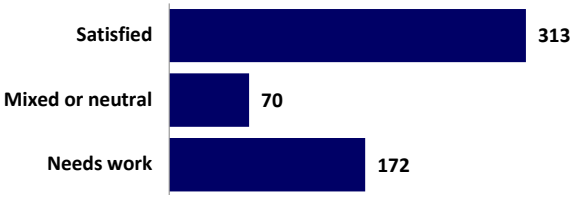
Comments about foster parents' ability to access social workers and other staff – by phone or other methods – were included in this category. Four out of ten foster parents surveyed commented about phone or staff access.

Made comments about phone or staff access?



555 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (40%) mentioned phone or staff access.

Of the 555 survey respondents who addressed phone or staff access, more than half (56%) made positive comments. About three out of ten (31%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 13% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents commended social workers for:

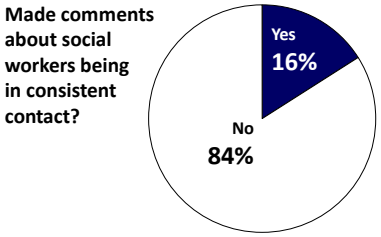
- Being easy to reach when they are needed.
- Returning phone calls quickly.
- Responding reliably to e-mails.

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.

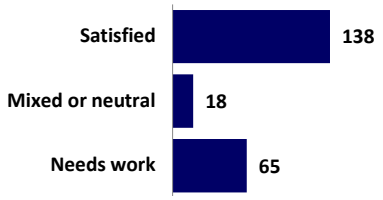
THEME | Consistency of Contact

Comments about the consistency of social workers' contact with foster parents were included in this category. 16% of survey respondents made a comment about the consistency of contact.



221 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned consistency of contact.

Of the 221 survey respondents who addressed consistency of contact, more than six out of ten (62%) commented positively. Nearly three out of ten (29%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Under one in ten (8%) 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 – and listen to the foster parent answers!

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.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"The social workers do their visits in a timely manner."

"They offer lots of support here on the reservation. We have almost daily contact."

"They call and check in and they call the kids at school, and they listen to me and value my opinion."

"The social workers visit monthly. Phone messages are returned in a timely manner."

"They answer phone calls in timely manner, and visit monthly."

"Our social worker has always been good about having the health and safety checks. Those always happen."

"They are very good about coming out and seeing the kids. If we need help with something, they get us information or point us in the right direction or refer us to the proper resources."

Some want social workers to check in more frequently.

"They should be more attentive. The child has been with us for twelve years – the social worker should visit us regularly but does not. They should keep up on how the child is doing in school but they do not."

"DSHS social worker needs to be more responsive. With a volatile situation, more contact than once per month is needed. I asked for help, specifically to get a psychiatric appointment for the child. There was hesitance in responding to me and the child (30 days) and child attempted suicide."

"The DSHS social worker can follow through with the commitments he has given us. We don't hear from him and no follow up."

"The prior social worker never showed up for visits. The supervisor didn't call back and neither did the social worker."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents feel the system is biased toward biological parents.

"I am not a baby snatcher but I am a firm believer in taking the foster children out early and quickly from the bio parents. I am not a huge fan always of relative placements. A lot of these children are placed very close to the situation that we are trying to get them away from. It seems the apple doesn't usually fall very far from the family tree!"

"My problem is with the courts/judges – and the lack of support the social worker gets from their supervisors and the courts around the children versus the biological parents."

"Even when visits with the biological parents are detrimental to the children, the parents are allowed to renegotiate these visits."

"We are concerned that the needs of the children are outweighed by the needs of the parents. We know that that is a legislative issue."

They feel social workers are hindered by bureaucracy.

"The social workers do not seem to be able to call the shots. Anything controversial is handled by someone else in a politically correct way so that the caseloads can be reduced."

"The problem is beyond the workers. The social workers care and try but they cannot change the system and the rules. The kids go from house to house, one we had had been placed 12 times by the time she was three. We finally adopted her."

They feel that processes are inconsistent across staff and offices.

"Social workers should be more consistent. Supervisors should check up, supervise the quality of the work and make sure that the social worker is doing what they are supposed to."

The system moves too slowly.

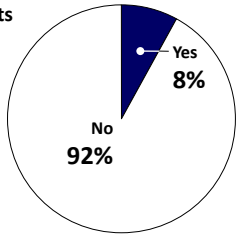
"Offer interventions sooner in difficult situations."

"Follow through on time limits/time frames allowed."

THEME | General Processes

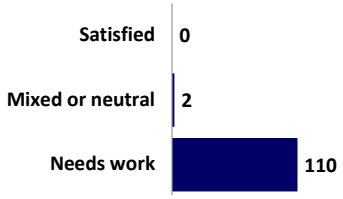
Comments about the general processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 8% of survey respondents made a comment about general processes.

Made comments about general processes?



112 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (8%) mentioned general processes.

Of the 112 survey respondents who addressed general processes. NO comments were positive. The vast majority (98%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 2% made mixed or neutral comments.

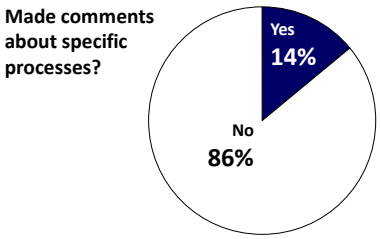


Foster parents are concerned that:

- The foster care system favors biological parents over the needs of the children, and social workers are not able to intervene.
- The bureaucracy focuses too much on budget, caseload reduction and other political issues, and too little on the needs of the foster children.
- Office procedures and staff performance aren't standardized.
- The system moves too slowly, particularly in difficult cases.

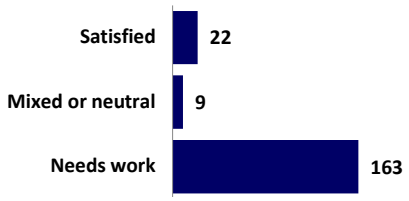
THEME | Specific Processes

Comments about specific processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents made a comment about specific processes.



194 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned specific processes.

Of the 194 survey respondents who addressed specific processes, about one in ten (11%) made positive comments. More than eight out of ten (84%) 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 – poor documentation and information of children's problems.
- Multiple changes in social workers.
- Prompt reimbursements for services, mileage and respite services.
- Learning about court processes, being involved in them, and being sure the older foster children were informed of them.
- Moving from foster care to adoption.
- Delays in licensing, especially for emergency relative placements.
- Getting permission to travel with foster children.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Many different processes presented problems.

"When the child is placed give real information about the child."

"Have a comprehensive system to keep track of relevant information on each child that follows the child – and is provided to the foster parent."

"Contact us when there are changes in social workers – and reduce the numbers of changes!"

"Within the year, we have had four different social workers."

"Pay respite providers on time. I am still waiting payment for respite care provided in February and May 2013."

"Speed up mileage reimbursements to foster parents. Would state employees have 6 to 7 month delays?"

"The visit supervisors, mental health therapists, childcare providers have not been paid and get no response when they call the social worker."

"Respect our right to be heard in court. We spent lots of time on a caregiver report that wasn't submitted."

"The children were being removed from core classes 3 hours per day, 3 days per week for bio logical parent visits. This was not in keeping with the court order. This breach in following the court order caused academic and emotional issues for the kids."

"If the bio parents have attorneys, the foster-to-adopt family should have legal counsel through DSHS."

"As the child becomes old enough to understand what is happening, explain the court processes to them."

"Getting my foster parent license could have been less of a hassle. I am a grandparent of these children, the police asked me to take them – but it took over a year to get this license."

"Streamline the adoption process."

"There is no real avenue for our input on a poor social worker."

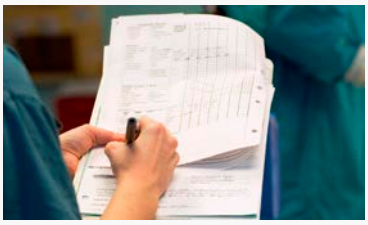


PHOTO: Ingram Publishing/Getty Images

Many foster parents were critical of paperwork processes.

"Our child was free last August, and now the paperwork is still not filed."

"MANAGE THE PAPERWORK in a timely way. It has caused delays and significant stress to the children."

"File documents in a timely way!!! If termination was filed in a timely way the children would not be going home to the family."

"Manage paperwork more efficiently."

"Streamline the paperwork involved in approving different needs of the children."

"I was basically asked to write a report and was highly offended by that. Don't push documenting everything onto foster parents when it comes to high needs kids – that's a social worker's job!"

"They need to speed up the paperwork and payment process for the respite care."

"Kids show up with no documentation and no paperwork."

"During placement oftentimes all the paperwork is not completed. Children come from a very disrupted situation and we don't know enough about what has gone on. This is the early placement papers – they come but are not filled out."

"Having the paperwork in order. Licensing keeps adding paperwork after they led us to believe it is all done. Piecemeal us constantly."

"Get some of the forms online to file instead of always in paper. Papers sometimes get lost, which delays the process."

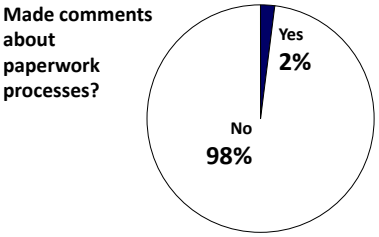
"The paperwork for the foster children needs to be clearer."

"They could DO the paperwork!"

"Some social workers need to work harder on the paperwork. I never get papers for the foster children quickly and their Provider One card needs to get to us sooner so the needed services are available."

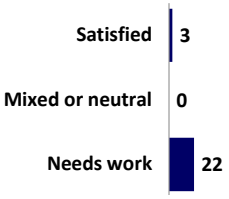
THEME | Paperwork Processes

Comments about paperwork processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 2% of survey respondents made a comment about paperwork processes.



25 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned paperwork processes.

Of the 25 survey respondents who commented about paperwork processes, less than one out of ten (12%) made positive comments. Eight out of ten (88%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.

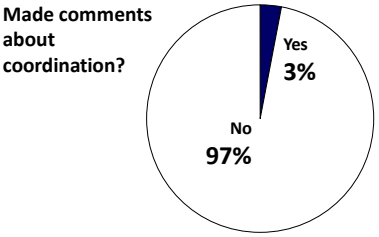


Foster parents are unhappy when:

- 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.
- Foster children are placed with them without medical cards or needed documentation, and therefore services are delayed.

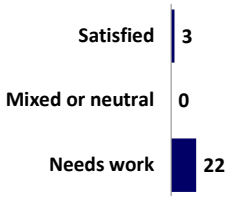
THEME | Coordination

Comments about how well those who support foster parents coordinate their efforts were included in this category. 3% of survey respondents made a comment about coordination.



48 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned coordination.

Of the 48 foster parents who addressed coordination, nearly one quarter (23%) made positive comments. Seven out of ten (71%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% 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.

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.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Some comments focused on coordination within Children's Administration.

"There was significant breakdown between the local social worker and supervisors in another part of the state."

"I feel like no two people in DSHS have the same answer. I also feel that I don't get the same story from the social worker and another story from the supervisor…they should be on the same page and they are not."

"It took us forever to get licensed, as there is a lot of confusion because there is a big difference between the licensing and Children's Administration."

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

"CA social workers know their area, but they do not seem to have the crossover ability to locate other folks to answer questions not included in their own skill set. I am very concerned over lack of coordination between DSHS divisions and agencies. As soon as current foster child leaves my care, I will terminate my license."

"I work with a Private Agency and DSHS Children's Administration – they have been an outstanding team! In the past that hasn't been the case."

"Work together better – private agency and DSHS."

"CA staff need to collaborate with mental health staff when the child needs these services."

"The social workers are right there. They have the courts and CASA backing me up in whatever I need."

"They give me resources (WIC, Tree House) outside of their system."

"Difficult to get authorization for medical services for this fragile child. All DSHS agencies and state agencies should share information about common clients and have the client's best interests in mind."

Information

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents want clear and current information.

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

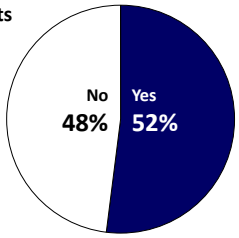
The majority of foster parents suggested that the process of sharing information could be improved. However, there were many who indicated they are satisfied with the information that they receive.

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 half of the foster parents surveyed (721 out of 1,398, or 52%) commented about information. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about information?



- More than one third (36%) made positive comments.

- More than four out of ten (45%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- More than two out of ten (19%) made mixed or neutral comments.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Many foster parents are grateful for the information they receive.

"I appreciate the information they give to me about the child and their individual case. The more information they give the easier it is."

"The social worker always provides me with the information requested."

"They give us info about the child and listen to my input regarding the child's behavior."

"I get better information now days prior to placement. And the social workers answer my questions. They come to the house once a month. When I call they are always helpful."

Some consider the information they receive inadequate.

"It would be helpful to have more information prior to accepting a placement."

"Court dates were not disclosed to me in advance. I would like to be more informed as to what is happening with the case. I would like to be included in meetings about the child."

"It would be helpful if the placers had more information when the children are initially placed."

"In the 9 years I have done this, I don't get a lot of information about the kids. I'm not sure what they do well."

Others have mixed experiences with being given information.

"I had one caseworker that was great. The other caseworker was not so good. They give information needed to adequately care for the child."

"For the level 3 child we get lots more information; less with the level 1."

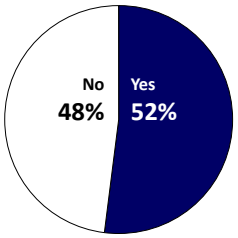
"Our current worker is good. She checks in all the time. She texts me with information if we need updates. If I need anything, she is right there to help. Prior to this, my responses would not have been the same."

"The CPS worker will contact me and give me more information than the foster care social worker. Depends on the social worker if it works well."

THEME | Information

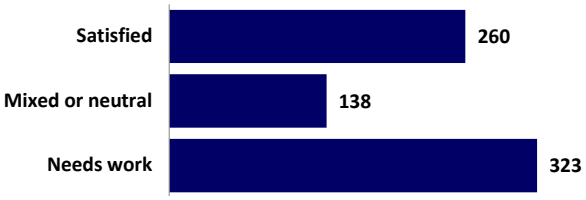
Comments about information were included in this category. 52% of survey respondents made a comment about information.

Made comments about information?



721 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (52%) mentioned information.

Of the 721 survey respondents who addressed information, nearly four out of ten (36%) made positive comments. More than four out of ten (45%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 19% 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.

Other 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 enough information about community services needed by their foster children.
- Don't get enough information about community supports for foster families.

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 appreciate clear and complete answers to their questions.

"The majority of social workers go out of their way to help or answer my questions."

"The social workers advise us on how to handle problems that we have."

"If they don't know the answer, they need to tell me and either research it or tell me how to find the answer."

"They call me back right away – if they don't know the answer they look for it and call me back with the answer."

"They need to communicate quickly and accurately with their answers."

"They give good answers. They facilitate things happening and they are clear with their answers."

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

"I like to know info up front, and our worker has been very good letting us know every step of the way."

"Keep me up-to-date on what is going on with the child; e.g., when there are court hearings and what the results are."

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

"The foster parents need to be more informed of what is happened in the case. What the status is of the bio parents and if they are on track or what is happening."

"They keep me updated on court dates and meetings about the child."

"There needs to be a better way of getting permission on different medical services than waiting on the bio parents to approve it. It affects the foster parents and the child and the treatment process."

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

"Give adequate notice of court hearings so I could have the report to the court updated and turned in."

"They send me the court reports, and always ask for a caregiver statement so I am able to give my input."

"They could be more up front and honest about the outcomes of court proceedings – not just say what they think we want to hear."

"I am totally out of the loop when it comes to court dates and court decisions. We are trying to adopt and we have not been advised about court dates before they happened. I realize the social workers are very busy but we need to know what's going on."

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

"They gave me a lot of info when I receive a new foster child."

"Give me better information about the child up front."

"When our child was placed with us and even since then – we have had no background info provided to us! DSHS needs to give us more info to prepare us with as much info as possible to help the foster child."

"I wasn't really informed about what all was going on with the child before I got him."

"Offer accurate or up-to-date medical information."

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

"They keep me informed. They are always able to give me information about resources the children need."

"They give me ideas about how to deal with a situation and needed help. I appreciate the open communication."

"Very supportive regarding the needs of the child. She listens."

"They could let foster parents know what resources are out there for these kids. i.e., counseling, mental health therapies."

"Follow through with requests for added services that the child needs."

"Provide the foster parents with better resources as to how to get specialty care for the children in the area that they live."

They also want support and information for their own roles as foster parents.

"Help me connect with other foster parents to discuss foster parenting. More information about networking."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Some foster parents are getting good information on their foster children.

"They make sure I get what I need to care for the children. They provide information."

"They are very helpful in helping me care for the children in my home and providing me with what is needed for the children."

"They have always been able to answer our questions or direct us to someone who might. They have done a good job of explaining the steps with each foster care case."

"The social workers are very helpful in providing me with the necessary information needed to care for the children in my home and also the legal system."

"They give me with honest and valuable information about the children placed in my home and they do treat me as part of the team."

Others have had more negative or mixed experiences.

"Give foster parent information about previous placements, difficult behavior, etc. It would help me know if I have the capacity to manage the child. It would help make for a better placement that will last."

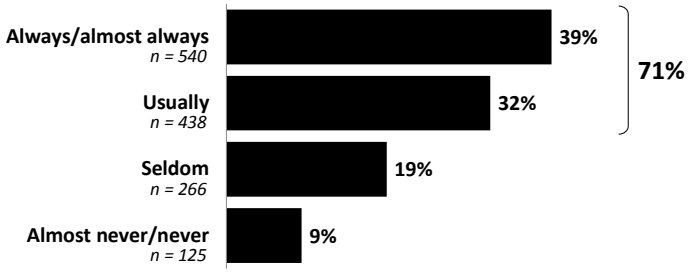
"DSHS social workers need to give correct and complete information about the child, and they need to listen to information about the child's needs from the foster parents."

"Depends on the social worker. One responds to my questions with honest answers and when I ask for help, she will either do it herself or find someone who can help. With the other, I ask for information repeatedly; now I am asking from her supervisor, and I still don't have the information!"

"Differs by office. The Sunnyside office social workers talk to us, tell us what is happening, explain things, answer questions, let us know about resources. The Everett office social workers did none of those things!"

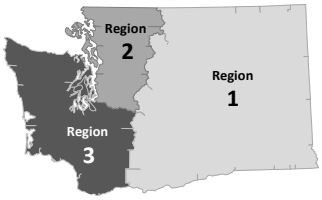
QUESTION | Did you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental and educational needs?

More than seven out of ten of the 1,369 foster parents who answered this question (978 or 71%) reported that they can get information about the needs of the children placed with them when they need it. Almost three out of ten (28%) said they seldom or never get that information.



REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 3 had somewhat higher ratings on this question (75%) than Regions 1 (68%). Region 2 (71%) was just at the average.



Resources

PHOTO: Digital Vision/Getty Images

Foster parents like needed resources to be readily available for their families.

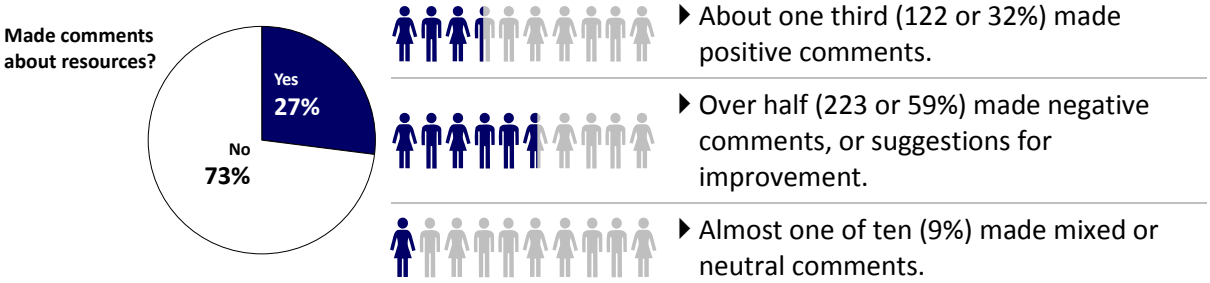
This section focuses on a wide variety of resources provided to foster parents and the children in their care.

The majority of foster parents who commented about resources had problems. However, some also commented that they 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.

Over one quarter of survey respondents (381 out of 1,398, or 27%) made comments about resources. Of those who commented on this subject:



- About one third (122 or 32%) made positive comments.
- Over half (223 or 59%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- Almost one of ten (9%) made mixed or neutral comments.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"I'd like to have more people available to take her for respite, as usually once they provided care they don't come back."

"Payment for respite care is too slow and needs too many follow-up calls. It took three months to get paid for the respite care I provided. Some parents were never paid for respite care."

"Getting responses to my requests for respite care has been a challenge!"

"Not enough respite care available."

"Asked for respite and it took four months to get anything. The new system to have the social worker OK respite before it can be scheduled needs to changed. It takes forever to get a call back if you ever do!"

"I put in for respite for vacation two times in advance, and found out the day before that we could get it and who would be doing it—stressful!"

"Make respite more responsive/ accessible. I contacted the person in charge and **never** got a call back."

"Foster parents still need respite, especially for high needs children, and social workers need to help us get a break. We don't want them taken away, we just need a break and the social worker should help with that."

"Provide respite when requested. We requested it once two months in advance and it did not happen. We do not ask anymore."

Others did not have difficulty getting respite services.

"The training they give us, the respite care they provide."

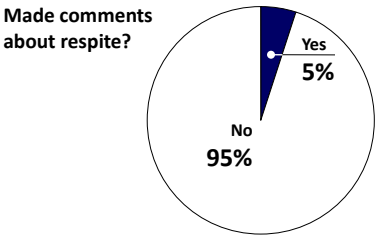
"They are good about making sure our needs as foster parents and individuals are met. They provide respite, make sure we get breaks when needed."

"They get us respite care."

"They offer help with respite care."

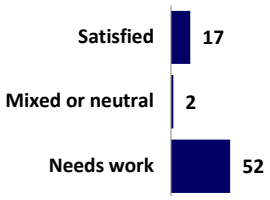
THEME | Respite

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



71 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned respite.

Of the 71 survey respondents addressing respite, nearly one in four (24%) made positive comments. Nearly three in four (73%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 3% made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents suggested they need:

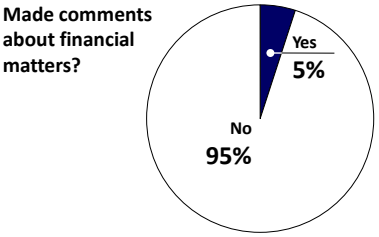
- Better access to respite care.
- More timely response to respite care requests.
- Respite care designed for high-needs foster children.
- High quality respite care.
- Faster payment for respite care.

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.

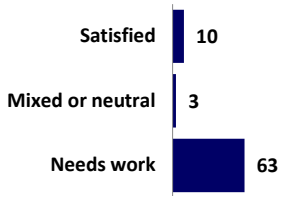
THEME | Financial Matters

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



76 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned financial matters.

Of the 76 survey respondents addressing financial matters, 13% made positive comments. More than eight out of ten (83%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% 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.

PHOTO: Digital Vision/Getty Images

Foster parents want timely and fair reimbursement for their expenses and work.

"I am still waiting for reimbursement for respite care provided during Feb 2013 and May 2013. I was told by other foster families that if you don't receive payment within 90 days it will be very difficult to get it."

"There needs to be payment for the mileage to go to training. The reimbursement of activities and mileage provided for the children takes 3 to 4 months – too long!"

"I had this child for 8 months, and completed all of the training, before I received any compensation."

"I've asked for family and individual counseling for the child with us. Never been addressed. I have turned in receipts for the child but never got reimbursed, even though I was told these were covered items."

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

"Evaluation method of levels is a problem. Documenting that a child placed with you as a level 1 is actually a level 4 is discouraging."

"The payments from DSHS are debilitating for my small agency. Apparently, the Rate Assessor doesn't relay information to SW very well since a new rate is set and then we get a payment that has the old rate on it."

"We need better compensation for level 4 kids – they are so much work!"

"Reimbursements are inadequate, especially when there are special needs and extra help has been paid for by the foster parents."

Foster parents have strong feelings about financial support.

"Give the foster parents a raise. In 16 years I have got one raise in the amount of $25.00."

"It is tougher now than it used to be to afford to be a foster parent. I know we have a budget crisis, but there need to be cuts that do not affect people's lives, especially children's lives."

PHOTO: Design Pics/Getty Images

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

"I would like to get phone numbers and doctors' names so we could schedule medical/dental appointments. It is problematic to have social workers set it up and tell us without sufficient notice about the appointment."

"There need to be resources available for medical/dental for the foster children in the home, so that the foster parents are not responsible for the remainder of the services if there is an additional charge."

"The social workers need to help the foster parents find dental workers and dentists that will take the medical to provide dental for the foster children."

"More specific medical specialists to work with. I call the social worker and they often don't know where I should take the child. We need more support in this area."

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

"We have been waiting for months to get a psychiatric evaluation appointment. The referral process is quite lengthy and awkward. There are issues that need to be addressed happening now!"

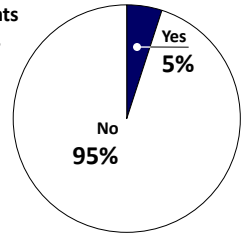
"I had a boy with mental health issues and I tried to tell DSHS about what I was seeing, but they would not move. Finally he flipped out and asked to go to emergency. I took him there and the MH professionals interviewed him and decided we were not safe. Even though I caught the kid masturbating in public, they would not remove him and would not get him an evaluation. I have a house of little girls, this was a very dangerous situation."

"One child had severe ADHD, finally I took him to the doctor and they diagnosed him. I wanted the lowest dosage for the child – but the social worker would not send the request for medication to the court, even with the medical diagnosis."

THEME | Medical, Dental, Mental Health

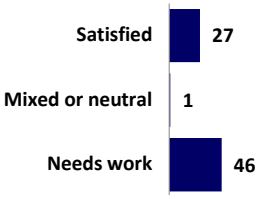
Comments about medical, dental and mental health resources were included in this category. 5% of foster parents surveyed made a comment about one or more of these resources.

Made comments about medical, dental, mental health?



74 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned medical, dental or mental health resources.

Of the 74 survey respondents addressing medical, dental or mental health resources, more than a third (37%) made positive comments. Almost two-thirds (62%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 1% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

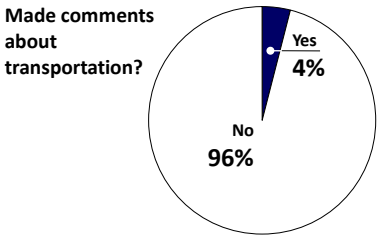
- Access to the medical, dental, and mental health care their foster children need.
- High quality care.
- Assistance in finding the best care.

They are discouraged by:

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

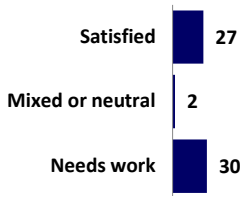
THEME | Transportation

Comments about transportation were included in this category. 4% of survey respondents made a comment about transportation.



59 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned transportation.

Of the 59 survey respondents addressing transportation, nearly half (46%) made positive comments. Half (51%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 3% 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:

- Confusing chain of command for transportation reimbursements.
- Long waits for transportation reimbursements.

PHOTO: MIXA/Getty Images

Some foster parents are pleased with transportation services.

"DSHS does well at transporting the kids."

"They help with transportation if I am not available."

"They give me passes to the ferry."

"Good follow-through on transportation when needed."

"We take medically fragile children and we are treated very well. Medical mileage is paid for. I have been very happy with DSHS overall."

"They transport my foster child to anything she needs to be at since we work full time jobs."

"The social worker helps the kids get transportation and counseling."

"The social workers provide me with transportation for the children to go to their visits."

Foster parents want compensation for transportation costs and they would like it to be more timely!

"I have submitted mileage reimbursement and after a year or more of no action on the requests, we have given up."

"Let me call in my own mileage and payment because sometimes when I send my mileage reimbursements, they don't get processed. I have to call them and then they go check on it."

"The mileage reimbursements are extremely slow – by that I mean it takes months to get paid."

"They need to reimburse the foster parents for their mileage in a more timely manner."

"We were told that our request was approved for travel reimbursement, and then the supervisor's supervisor denied it. We need to understand the chain of command so there are no false expectations and we can follow up. Now the travel reimbursement is denied by the next supervisor up the chain after we were promised it would be paid."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

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

"DSHS has done a nice job of coordinating childcare and getting our foster child set up with mental health care."

"Good follow-through as far as after-school care when needed."

"They were quick to set up daycare for the child because I work."

"They provided childcare when we needed it."

"They organize daycare efficiently."

"My social workers are good at arranging daycare and visits."

"The private agency helps me with transportation or childcare needs."

Some foster parents are displeased with the childcare available, would like daycare for required trainings, or are unhappy with the length of time it takes to get child-care payments processed.

"The lists of resources are limited and I sometimes have to find my own resources. There are inadequate resources for counseling or daycare in the rural area!"

"DSHS has also not paid the daycare bill."

"If immediate family member, sibling, or other relative are available to watch the child, I think they should be permitted to provide childcare."

"The daycare for the children has not been paid for 2 months. The foster child may have to leave here because of lack of daycare due to termination because of DSHS late payments."

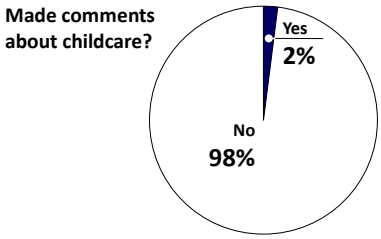
"Provide childcare when they have required training."

"No support for daycare coverage for in-person training."

"Need help with daycare when the child is a difficult child and no one wants to take him/her. It should not take several days to get the daycare approved."

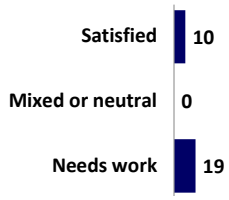
THEME | Childcare

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



29 of the 1,3998 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned childcare.

Of the 29 survey respondents addressing childcare, over one third (35%) made positive comments. Almost two thirds (66%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Some foster parents are pleased with:

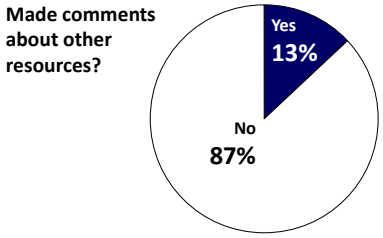
- Availability of childcare.
- Assistance in obtaining and paying for childcare.
- Specialized childcare.

Others suggested that childcare should be:

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

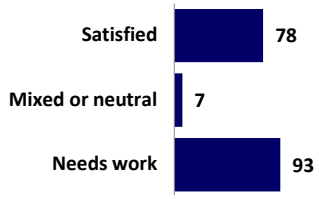
THEME | Other Resources

Comments about other resources were included in this category. 13% of survey respondents made a comment about other resources.



178 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned other resources.

Of the 178 survey respondents addressing other resources, more than four out of ten (44%) made positive comments. Over half (52%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% 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.

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

*The comments about training discussed on this page were made in response to questions about foster care support. Further comments in response to specific questions about training are found in Part 2 of this report.

PHOTO: Ingram Publishing/Getty Images

Some foster parents made general comments about resources.

"The social workers need to have additional resources for the children that have additional needs and let the foster parents know of these resources."

"Provide resources. I adopted 2 children. I will not do this again as I am not getting the support that I expected."

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

"Linking us with some training regarding trauma and outbursts with an emotionally devastated child."

"We don't have most of the required classes in this area. I have to travel a long way south or north to take these classes. Since these are required classes it would be nice if they were more convenient."

"More trainings where both parents can go, it is hard to be on the same page. I think they should offer trainings during the day or during weekends or evenings. They should offer childcare there."

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

"Provide clothing vouchers even if received one at the previous foster home. Need personal care items much quicker."

"Provide clothing voucher. I have had this child for 3 years and never got a clothing voucher."

"I wish there wasn't so much funding restraints, sometimes you could get a clothing voucher if you got a child with no clothing."

"Support the children who are coming into the home better. Often have no clothes or anything else when they come to foster care. They are just dropped off. We have to go out and buy clothing and other necessary items for the children. Last child had no shoes and socks. The clothing closet is not adequate."

Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

PHOTO: Fuse/Getty Images

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.*

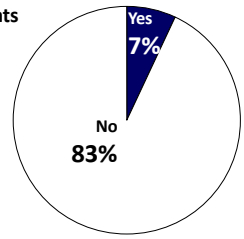
Most foster parents expressed thanks for support they have received from various sources in their community. However, some are clearly displeased with the support they have been given.

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 (98 out of 1,398, or 7%) made comments about other sources of support. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about other sources of foster parent support?



- Over half (53%) made positive comments.
- One third (34%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 13% made mixed or neutral comments.

1.6 Other Sources of Support

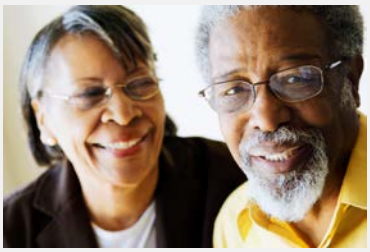


PHOTO: Creatas/Getty Images

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

"Having the foster parent liaison, so I can get information needed."

"If I have trouble contacting social worker, I have had success in contacting the supervisor."

"The Chet screeners did a good job. They are timely."

"The social work supervisor helps me out a lot since I don't know who my social worker is right now."

"We had a complete change of staffing on this child in our care. That was an improvement. The supervisor is always responsive."

"Licenser is a big support and so is the placement coordinator."

"I was licensed in 1997 originally and my overall experience that time was reasonably adequate. This summer when I went through the relicensing, it is a terrible experience."

They also value support received from CASAs and GALs.

"The guardian ad litem is supportive."

"CASA worker helps clarify things, informs me of things going on with the kids, is very supportive."

"The CASA needs to treat the foster parents with respect."

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

"The private agency social workers provide a support group, respond to our questions and come for visits."

"The transfer lady is really good; does well with the kids during transport."

"I enjoy attending the HUB meetings to hear what other foster parents experience, and get more information about foster care."

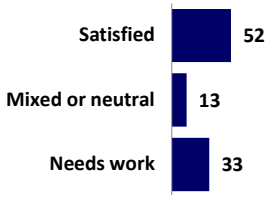
"I got a referral to Tree House – they respond quickly."

"To connect foster parents to each other, facilitate a support group, there is none here in Jefferson County."

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. 7% of survey respondents made a comment about other sources of foster parent support.

Of the 98 survey respondents who addressed other sources of foster parent support, over half (53%) made positive comments. One third (34%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 13% 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

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster Parent Training is the second of two parts of the 2013 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, many foster parents also reported difficulties with training access – with training schedules, locations, lack of reimbursement for travel to training, and lack of childcare. Foster parents also indicated they would like some newer trainings provided more frequently, and more non-traditional training options such as on-line training or training integrated with support groups. They would also like more timely information on trainings that are 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

PHOTO: Blend Images/Getty Images

Most 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.)

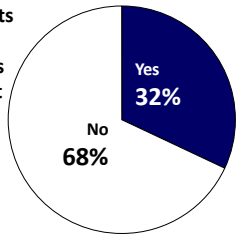
The majority of foster parents indicate they benefit from foster parent training. Even those who feel that current training needs serious work – either generally, or in specific areas – often acknowledge the benefits of trainings they have taken.

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 program

- **Over three in ten survey respondents (445 of 1,398 or 32%) 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?



- Over three quarters (78%) made positive comments.

- Just over one out of ten (11%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- 11% made mixed or neutral comments.

PHOTO: Photodisc/Getty Images

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

"All of the training is done well. It is well thought out and allows for question and answer sessions. Focusing on reunification is important and done well. Clarify that adoption is not an option is also important and done well. They emphasize looking at things through the eyes of the biological parents; developing empathy. This is well done."

"I think the classes that we have taken before getting our first foster child provided lots of info that was very useful after we got our child."

"All the classes I have taken have been very helpful in learning techniques to work with the children."

"Giving the background on what some of the kids have had to endure. Being as prepared as we can is useful."

"The information is very helpful with behavioral issues. I've learned so much!"

"The entire curriculum has been helpful, including the tribal training."

"Most of the trainings have been wonderful."

"I'm very impressed with the training overall."

"Nothing. I think it is good now."

"Nothing. The training has been great."

"All the preparation given to being a foster parent. We were well prepared for our first foster child."

"It is very good. No suggestions for improvement."

Some don't feel the state training has prepared them sufficiently.

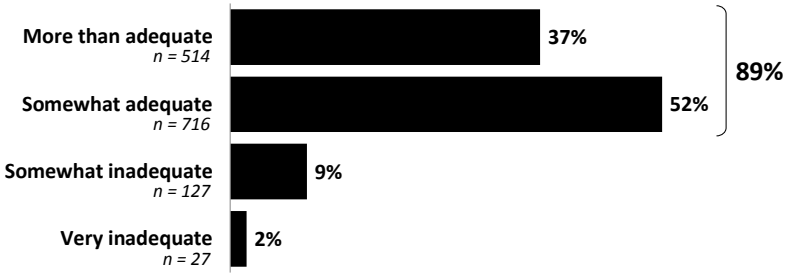
"We have gone beyond what DSHS offers. We have sought out relevant training through other sources."

"The best training is provided by Children's Hospital as I take 'medically fragile' children."

"I have been a foster parent for years and the training is pretty much the same. 30 hours of training per year is ridiculous."

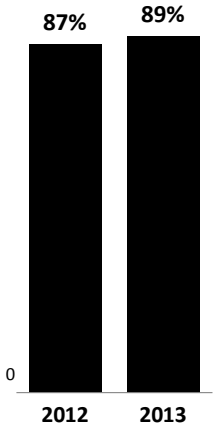
QUESTION | Overall, thinking about ALL the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?

Nearly nine out of ten of the 1,384 foster parents who answered this question (89%) reported that training was more than or somewhat adequate. 11% found the training somewhat or very inadequate.



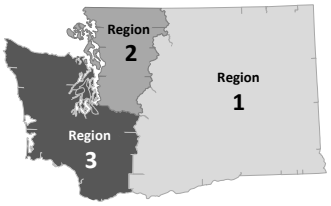
STATE TREND

There was a slight increase from 2012.



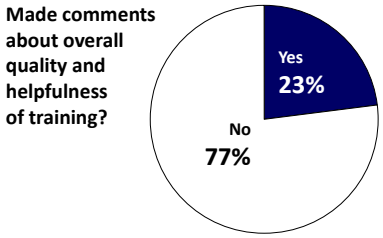
REGIONAL DETAIL

Responses to this question showed little variation by region.



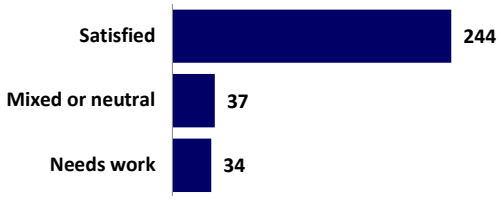
THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Training

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. 23% of survey respondents made a general comment about training.



315 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (23%) mentioned the overall quality and helpfulness of training.

Of the 315 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of training, more than three quarters (78%) made positive comments. 11% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 12% made mixed or neutral comments.



In addition:

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

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Most foster parents find the training they receive very helpful.

"On-going training has been very helpful. The initial training throws so much at you that it was hard to absorb it all."

"The basic foster parent training does a decent job giving one an overview and does not make foster parenting out to be rosier than it is."

"It has been very helpful. It answered so many questions that I had. They gave us a lot of good information."

"The on-line training is awesome."

"It has relevant content, it is delivered professionally."

"There have been lots of things in the training that helps explain the kids' problems and offers some good solutions. My husband and I both like the on-line."

"The training was great. Negative issues first lets people decide whether to continue as a foster parent."

"All has been helpful to me. It explains where the foster children come from and how we can best help them through their lives."

"All of the classes have been helpful, but most helpful is being with other foster parents."

"We get on-going training all the time, I'm happy with what we get."

"I think they're doing great. They gave the answers to all the questions we had and I felt like they were interested in helping us."

Some have negative feelings.

"I don't think the training prepares one for the real world and, in particular, the negative parts of it and also allegations that might be made."

"Do not require age-specific training that is not applicable to the ages of the kids served in a particular home."

"I have done foster parenting for many years, so the training is redundant."

"I've had a lot of this training already because I work at a daycare. It's just redundant and a waste of time."

"None of this was new to me."

PHOTO: Ingram Publishing/Getty Images

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

"Really good instructors in the PRIDE class."

"The Casey Family Program has done a fairly good job. The sexually aggressive training on-line was good."

"The new training that we all have to take is really good. How To Avoid a CPS Referral was helpful. Physically Assaultive and Sexually Aggressive training was good."

"Homes for Hope gets us training we need – very good."

"I would say Foster Hope in Ellensburg provides good training."

"My training has been through Catholic Community Services. They were child-specific, and helpful."

"The PRIDE training through Youth for Christ was amazing!"

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

"Training through the private agency is tailored to what the kids really need."

"I have received training through my private agency and it has been good."

"The private agency training has been great."

"We have good training through our private agency. They offer training every month. Understanding the triggers from the kid's past experiences that result in difficult behavior."

Others reported on training support from a variety of sources.

"I get all my training at Mary Bridge as I have a special medical needs child."

"Best training for my medically fragile kids is from Children's Hospital."

"I get a lot out of the Pierce County support meetings once a month, called Foster Care Resource Network."

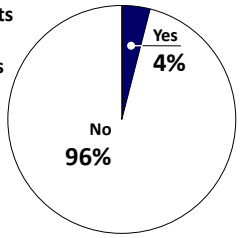
"I took training through my tribe. Parent and child did a sweat lodge together. It was good."

"I get my training through my job."

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. 4% 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?



57 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned the quality and helpfulness of training in a specific agency or program.

Of the 57 survey respondents who addressed the quality and helpfulness of training in specific agencies or programs, over eight out of ten (83%) made positive comments. A few (9%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Another 9% 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, including hospitals, foster care networks, and professional training.

Trainers

PHOTO: Photodisc/Getty Images

Foster parents feel that good trainers enhance the training experience.

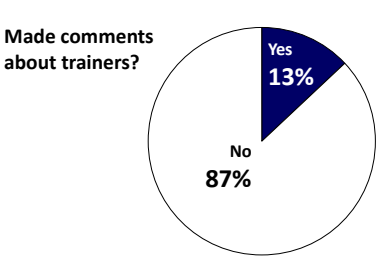
This section focuses on the trainers who lead the various foster parent trainings. Some of these trainers are employees of Children's Administration, some are employees of agencies contracting with Children's Administration, and still others are hired by Children's Administration or private agencies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

Many foster parents reported satisfaction with trainers involved with the trainings they have attended. Others suggested changes, including more real-world experience with foster care, more practical suggestions, more interaction during the classes, more up-to-date materials, and more expertise.

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.

More than one in ten survey respondents (182 out of 1,398, or 13%) made comments about trainers. Of those who commented on this subject:



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

2.2 Trainers

PHOTO: Photodisc/Getty Images

Most foster parents commended trainers.

"The presenters are excellent, and they have you join in and answer questions."

"Some of the speakers and topics are very good."

"The particular trainer for PRIDE training was extremely helpful and available to us."

"Loved the woman who came to talk to us because she talked about reality and gave real examples."

"The teachers were what really made it helpful, as they were experienced in every area, and had a passion for what they do."

"Parenting Plus is really good stuff. The facilitator involves the class in the training."

"Our trainer did a great job applying situational comments and remedies for problems. He also taught you about the 'process' and 'timelines' about the placement process which was very appreciated."

"The most helpful training was on attachment. The trainers are good."

"I think the presenters do a great job in giving valid information and keeping it entertaining at the same time."

"We could ask questions. The instructors were very good."

"I liked the trainers of PRIDE training. They were experienced foster parents and answered my questions."

"The PRIDE training was very helpful. We had a very good trainer. She was honest and gave us good advice."

Some suggested ways trainers could become more effective.

"Have instructors that know how to teach. Not just social workers – but real teachers that know how to use technology. Training needs to be up-to-date – some of the recerts we got were from the 1980s!"

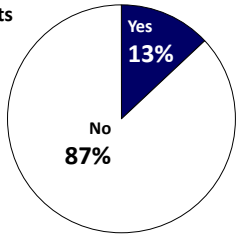
"Need more real situations in the training. Have foster parents help train other foster parents."

"Have guest speakers be actively doing what they are advising or training about."

THEME | Trainers

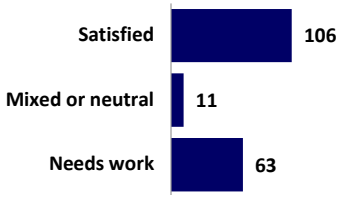
Comments about foster parent trainers were included in this category. 13% of survey respondents made a general comment about trainers.

Made comments about trainers?



180 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned trainers.

Of the 180 survey respondents who addressed trainers, almost six out of ten (59%) made positive comments. Over one in three (35%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents are pleased when trainers:

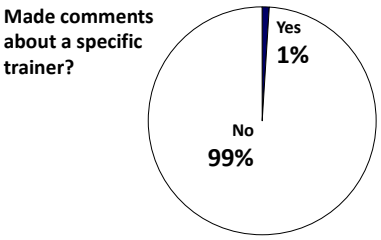
- Know their subject matter well.
- Have real-life experience with foster care.
- Are honest about the ups and downs of foster care.
- Take time to answer questions.
- Involves the class throughout training.
- Have passion for their work.
- Are interesting.

They are frustrated by trainers who:

- Lack practical experience with foster care.
- Don't use up-to-date teaching methods.
- Lack depth of knowledge in their subject area.
- Don't invite others with different expertise to co-train.
- Share outdated information.
- Don't answer questions or offer practical solutions to problems.

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 by name.*



9 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific trainer.

All nine comments mentioning specific trainers or staff involved in training were positive.

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.

PHOTO: AbleStock/Getty Images

All comments about specific trainers were positive.

"The trainer was an attorney who has amassed a group of trainers that are excellent. She runs the training throughout Eastern Washington."

"The most helpful training I have ever had was the Grief class – instructor was Rick Pribbernow."

"I would say that PRIDE training was pretty standard – the instructor was named David and he was very realistic. He has a website called Families Like Ours which I still use."

"Support meetings I went to through Olive Crest in Spokane. An advocate thru DSHS, Drew Powers, conducts the meetings. It's called Families for Kids."

"I liked Love and Logic. Nancy Lee does a good job in training."

"I think Martha Hastings was very helpful. She took her time and told us all about the training. Bill Todd was also very good."

"I like the on-line training option. There are some interesting elective classes. Gary Benton's training is good. I like the engaging and practical."

"I think the discipline training – the trainer was Colleen Kops...it was really good. The training taught us what to expect…the honeymoon period and what happens after that."

"They do a good job of preparing us with the logistics and legalities of the situations. There are miscommunications, but I feel like they help us figure it out. Our liaison, Sheryl Crow, does a good job."

"I think they do a very good job – Bill Todd does a great job!"

*The ten comments listed on this page include one comment which does not include the trainer's name, but provides a fairly detailed description.

General Training

PHOTO: Design Pics/Getty Images

Foster parents appreciate many aspects of foster parent training.

This section focuses on general observations about foster parent training.

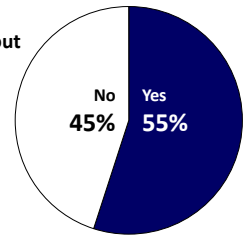
The majority of foster parents made positive comments about training. They commented on the useful information and skills they gained during training, the way that training prepared them to care better for their foster children, and the new perspectives that training gave them. Some made suggestions for improvements in certain aspects of training, such as training requirements, techniques, materials, and resources.

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 (762 out of 1,398, or 55%) 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 (29%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- 19% made mixed or neutral comments.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents like training that:

Helps them understand and deal with their foster children.

"Learning things the child has been through that we have not."

"Understanding what the kids are thinking since they have been through different things than we have. Understanding the mind set of children."

"How to talk to the children, how to encourage them, and care for them."

"Understanding multiple placements and the effect of trauma on the brain and how it affects behavior, and how to nurture the child."

"How to communicate with a child with different diagnoses and behaviors."

"Learning about a hurting child and how to work on attachment."

"Helps with the separation anxiety of the child. Teaches us what we can and cannot do as foster parents."

"The discussion about behavioral issues that foster children sometimes exhibit was pretty honest and helpful – led by experienced foster parents."

Teaches them how to get help and resources for their foster children.

"Learning about the process, steps involved, who to contact and what to expect dealing with the kids. Knowing there is support and resources!"

"Learning what programs are available to help them."

"Training needs to provide more detail about advocating for the child and knowing options and resources in the community for the child."

Helps them with biological parents.

"It helps us understand the bio parents, and manage interactions with them."

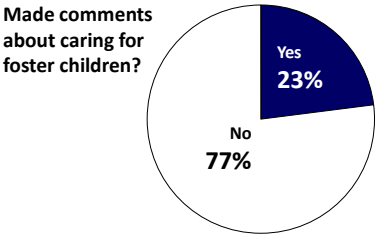
"There needs to be training on what to expect of a child when they return back from a visit with their bio parent and how to deal with the child when their bio parents don't show up."

Helps them care for themselves.

"Knowing about resources for self-care for the foster parent."

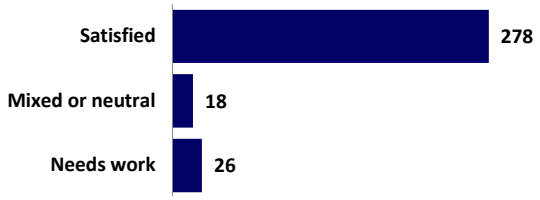
THEME | Caring for Foster Children

Comments about how well training prepared foster parents to care for the children in their home were included in this category. Almost one in four (23%) of survey respondents commented on that aspect of training.



Almost one in four of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (322 or 23%) mentioned the impact of training on their ability to care for foster children.

Of the 322 survey respondents who addressed how adequately training prepared them to care for foster children, more than eight out of ten (86%) made positive comments. 8% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% made mixed or neutral comments.

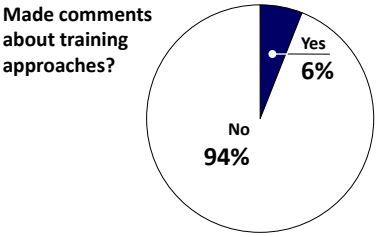


Foster parents want training that:

- Helps them understand, and deal with, the experiences and emotional needs of foster children.
- Helps them advocate for their foster children, and get them access to outside resources.
- Helps them understand and deal with biological parents.
- Helps them learn to care for themselves.

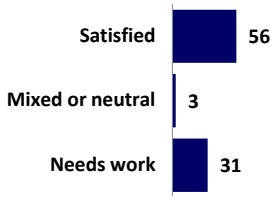
THEME | Approaches to Training

Comments about various approaches to foster parent training were included in this category. 6% of survey respondents commented on approaches to training.



90 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned approaches to training.

Of the 90 survey respondents who addressed approaches to training, over six out of ten (62%) made positive comments. One in three (34%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 3% 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.
- Interaction with other foster parents.
- Online opportunities.

Many made it clear that they want more training to include more of these approaches – and several also mentioned that it would be good to have childcare available at the trainings.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents like training that:

Discusses real-life situations.

"Don't use theoretical situations but real situations."

"The initial PRIDE training could have more real live case studies – really important for new foster parents."

Includes role playing and scenarios.

"More role playing, practicing applying the learning that is being presented. Show examples."

"I liked hearing all the different scenarios that could happen."

"I think we need role play or more interaction. Weekly meetings with my group help me greatly."

"We did some role playing and did a simulation of a STDM (family team meeting) and that was helpful."

Has questions, answers, and feedback.

"A session where we can ask questions and get feedback."

"For first-time foster parents, a question and answer session – an open platform forum for foster parents to share their experiences."

Includes real foster parents.

"Hearing from other foster parents was very helpful; it was the real world."

"The input from the foster parent trainer. Real life examples."

Is interactive.

"I did the newly required training, the 40 hour training, there was a significant interactive and more conversational style to it, and it was very effective to process the information."

"Not so textbook; be more interactive."

Has more online options.

"More offerings on-line. Some hybrid classes that are done on-line and then followed up with classroom would maximize the computer options and reduce time away from family."

Has child-care available.

"Provide daycare during the training."

"Kids friendly venues and locations or on-site childcare."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Many foster parents are pleased with the resources provided in training.

"Giving me a list of resources that I can access, such as books and websites."

"How to dig in and research things and reach out in avenues that I never knew existed. Names and people and places were given to me to research to see if they could help me."

"Referring us to the various support groups in the city where we live so we can seek additional information."

"Definitely has given me directions to different resources outside DSHS to receive help. We have a Native American daughter, and have been helped to keep her close to her tribe."

Some would like more information about available resources.

"The training needs to include a more available list of resources available in your area."

"We need to know where to get resources – babysitter, respite care, other specialty services – for the child placed in our home."

"Maybe giving us a list of where to find resources, such as our mileage forms. It would be nice to know what we can be reimbursed for and how."

"The training needs to provide more information on the community resources available to the foster parents and foster children."

"Resources for kids with special needs."

"It was hard to find the resources referred to in the training. Where is this on the web? More hands-on web guidance would be helpful."

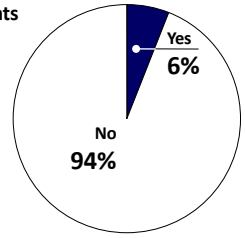
"It would have been good to know earlier that foster kids get free or reduced lunches at school; sports programs offer reduced sports fees, too. Same with bowling, the YMCA, etc. Please let people know about these resources at the beginning."

"Develop a resource list of other classes that are relevant to parenting and offered through other community agencies. Tailor the list to the needs of the child in care."

THEME | Resources

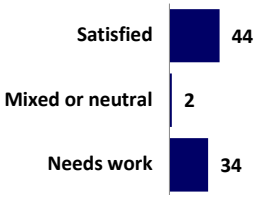
Comments about resource lists being included in this category. 6% of survey respondents commented on resource information.

Made comments about training resources?



80 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned resource information in training.

Of the 80 survey respondents who addressed training resources, more than half (55%) made positive comments. Over four in ten (43%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 3% made mixed or neutral comments.

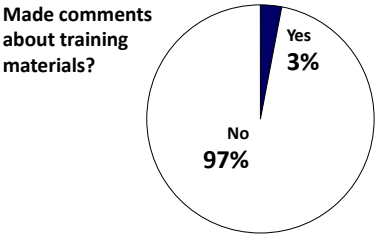


The majority of foster parents are satisfied with the information about resources for foster children and foster families that they receive in training. Some would like more information about:

- Resources available in specific geographical areas.
- Resources for activities or fee reductions available to foster children.
- Resources for help for when foster child issues arise.
- Local resources for foster parents – babysitters, respite care and so forth.
- Online resources for foster care paperwork.
- Resources for children with special needs.

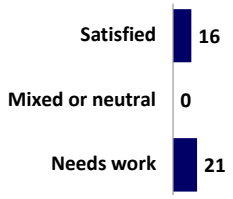
THEME | Training Materials

Comments about training materials were included in this category. 3% of survey respondents commented on training materials.



37 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned training materials.

Of the 37 survey respondents who addressed training materials, over four in ten (43%) made positive comments. The remaining 57% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



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.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Many foster parents complimented the materials used in trainings.

"The PRIDE book given to us on CD has been real helpful."

"I took the Now You Are A Foster Parent – Now What training. It was really good! The manual provided was like a how-to manual."

"The videos 'Parenting with Love and Logic' are excellent."

"The CD-ROM with all the resources they talked about during the training."

"The 'Foster parent plus' is very helpful. The 'Netflix' was very informative."

"I really liked the small group action sharing aspect of the classes. I like the models that they provide in the training such as in Parenting Plus and the tools in the handouts."

"The CD-ROM with all the resources they talked about during the training."

"I do a lot of the video trainings due to having five young children in my care. These are fantastic. Keep updating these trainings!"

"A good refresher. I have the books to refer to."

"The packets they give out at training have been very helpful. Packets give different scenarios and offer solutions to the situations."

Some felt the materials – or the access to materials – could be improved.

"Some videos need to be updated."

"Need more updated information in the case scenarios and the videos were more like scenes out of 'Full House'."

"If they could update some of their video material with new and revised statuses."

"Some of it gets pretty boring. Could they improve delivery of some sort – maybe provide videos? The training manuals are pretty old – I saw some printed in 1989 – they should be updated!"

"The videos are not realistic enough. Need more current material and examples of behavioral issues."

". . . Kind of cheesy."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents want a wide variety of trainings with current content.

"The training is too basic."

"Make more of a variety available."

"More real-world experience, greater emphasis on building support structures, better time availability for working parents."

"Enhance the training because there are so many questions we have that do not get addressed. There are so many expectations of foster parents, so we need to be trained on all this."

They want more focus on special needs foster children.

"Need more specialized groups to discuss common problems, such as mentally challenged children and medically fragile children."

"Not enough time spent on children with serious problems."

They have strong feelings about the amount of training they receive.

"I think they have great topics and great classes. I think they should have more options and present classes more often."

"My husband is doing the Parenting Plus for us right now. The 36 hrs. is a HUGE sacrifice for our entire family. Especially after doing the PRIDE training, which is so lengthy."

"The training is pretty much the same over and over. 30 hours of required training per year is ridiculous!"

"It is helpful that there is so much information, but it was such a broad spectrum of information, so hope fully you can remember it all."

Some would like waivers for professional backgrounds or long-time foster parent experience.

"We are highly trained in medical and psychology – should be waivers."

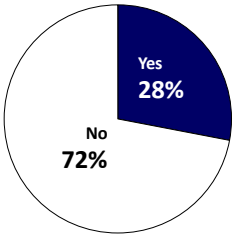
"I have an MA in early childhood development and I used to teach classes in that. The state should require less training in my case!"

"I wish there were training waivers if the foster parent already has knowledge and is educated or in the field professionally."

THEME | Other General Training Comments

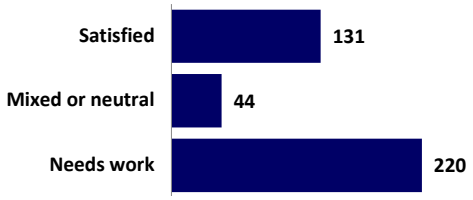
Other general comments about training were included in this category. 28% of survey respondents made other general training comments.

Made other general comments about training?



395 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (28%) made other general comments about training.

Of the 395 survey respondents who made other general comments about training, one in three (33%) were positive comments. More than half (56%) were negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 11% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like:

- Variety in training.
- Up-to-date training.
- Training that provides useful information.
- Training based in real-world experience.
- Training about special needs foster children.
- Training that helps them develop new skills.

They dislike:

- Having too little training available nearby.
- Having too much training required.
- Too much information in a single training session.
- Training that isn't based in reality.
- Training requirements that do not take into account professional backgrounds and long-time foster parent experience.

Specific Trainings

PHOTO: Photodisc/Getty Images

Foster parents have strong opinions about specific trainings.

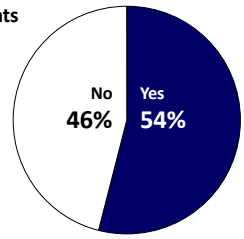
This section focuses on comments about specific types of foster parent trainings. Of those who commented on specific trainings, some were positive towards a favorite training or training type. Others voiced negative or mixed comments about particular trainings, suggested ways to improve a specific training, 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 (756 out of 1,398, or 54%) made comments about specific trainings. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about specific trainings?



- Over half (56%) made positive comments.
- Over one in five (21%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- Almost one in four (23%) made mixed or neutral comments.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Most foster parents find the trainings they receive on specific disorders or issues very useful.

"The CPR and ADHD classes were good."

"The different tools we learn to work with helping the children work out their anger. How to better prepare ourselves for what is coming on with some of the kids."

"The trainings on grief and loss, attachment disorder and anger issues were most helpful."

"The 'What trauma does to the brain' training was very good."

"The training on trauma and how to deal with it was helpful."

"Knowing and understanding the effect of childhood neglect and trauma."

"Attachment disorder training was very useful in understanding foster kids."

"The focused training on our issues of our special needs kids."

"Most useful was training on mental health and how to handle children's behavioral issues."

"Courses like the Safe Babies, & the Special Needs Kids training and also one on Diversity of Kids."

"Best were the trainings on ADHD, FAS, FAE, physically aggressive youth, and sexually aggressive youth."

"Good information about sensory-affected kids. Also drug-addicted children, the younger kids."

Some see a need for more training on particular disorders or issues.

"Need more training on autism."

"More on neurological versus normal brain behavioral function."

"Training does not prepare one for the emotions, the bonding, the torture when you have to give the baby back."

"More training on behavior issues and documentation."

"Courses on how to deal with really, really stubborn children."

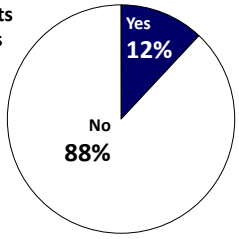
"More on reactive detachment disorder – common in these kids."

"More on trauma, and sexual abuse on teenagers."

THEME | Disorders/Issues

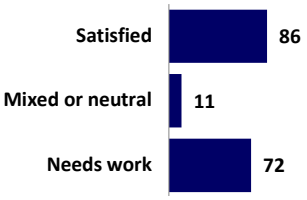
Comments about training on specific disorders or issues were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents commented on disorders/issues training.

Made comments about disorders or issues?



169 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned training on disorders or issues.

Of the 169 survey respondents who addressed trainings on specific disorders or issues, over half (51%) made positive comments. Over four out of ten (43%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 7% made mixed or neutral comments.



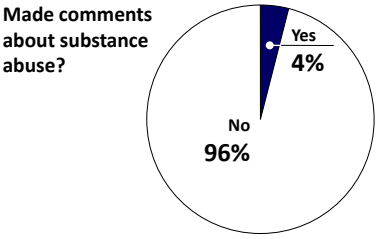
Many foster parents reported the value of trainings on specific disorders or issues, including:

- Abuse and neglect issues.
- ADHD and ADD.
- Attachment disorders.
- Autism.
- Sensory disorders.
- Behavior disorders.
- Grief, loss, and separation issues.
- Medical fragility issues.
- Special needs kids.
- Sexually aggressive youth.
- 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.

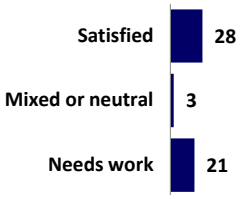
THEME | Substance Abuse

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.



52 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned substance abuse training.

Of the 52 survey respondents who addressed substance abuse training, more than half (54%) made positive comments. Four out of ten (40%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 6% 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.

- Fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect classes were singled out particularly as being useful.

Some suggested they would benefit from more training on:

- More in depth on drug-affected infants and children.
- Methamphetamine addiction and its impacts.
- Heroin addiction.
- Teenagers and alcohol/drug issues.
- Emerging street drugs.

PHOTO: Fuse/Getty Images

Most foster parents think substance abuse training they got was useful.

"Fetal alcohol syndrome was very helpful and informative!"

"We take care of drug babies, so that specialized training was great."

"Alcohol syndrome and how it affects a person and their behaviors."

"Drug-addicted children – younger kids."

"There was a training on drug affected infants that was very good."

"The fetal alcohol training was the best."

"The drug training was great."

"They taught me a lot of things I didn't know – have patience, alcohol abuse with behavior problems, how to deal with foster child anger."

Some indicated they would like more – or more accessible – substance abuse training.

"More training on specific issues regarding 'meth' kids."

"More training regarding foster child drug use and drug issues."

"More in depth training (more specific and detailed) about addicted babies. I just read an article in the Tacoma Tribune that was very informative and wished I could have read it before we got our baby."

"We have a heroin child and they don't know how to care for a heroin child. They offer us all they can, there just is not enough research on this."

"More trainings on the youth coming into care having drug and alcohol issues. We need lots of information and assistance with them."

"More training taking a developmental and age-specific approach to alcohol and drug issues. Drug babies are different than teenagers with drug problems. The fetal alcohol syndrome baby grows up differently than the teenager who goes on drugs later in life. We need training on these different aspects of drug abuse."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Most foster parents appreciate training on sexually inappropriate behavior.

"All of the training has been helpful, especially with children who have more problems than others, such as behavioral and sexual problems."

"The sexual abuse training was very helpful as I was not familiar with this. The training helped me understand that what I was doing was okay."

"The class for handling sexual abuse was helpful."

"The sexually aggressive youth training on-line was good."

"The trainings called SAY and BAY was very helpful."

"The trainings on sexually aggressive youth. Brainstorming in class on what works best in these situations."

"Most helpful was teaching me how to deal with sexualized kids because I've never dealt with them before."

Some offered suggestions about training in this area.

"Require specific training for children who have special needs, such as sexually aggressive youth. Tier it by education. Only allow those who have education in an area take the kind of youth with a specific problem."

"I think it is very important for foster parents to be made more aware of possible sexual traps. Foster children coming in who have been sexually abused can come onto my children or other foster children in my care. Foster parents are afraid to speak up because they/we can get into big trouble. This situation should be addressed by the state. I don't want my own children or other foster children sexually abused."

"I would like more live discussion on sexual misbehavior. We were given hand-outs from the Internet."

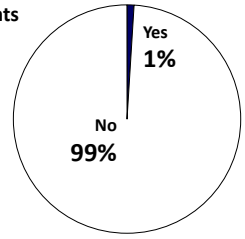
"More information about how to help SAY [Sexually Aggressive Youth] kids."

"Need more focus on practical aspects of parenting children with needs outside the realm of a typical child, such as physical or sexual abuse and how this is displayed behaviorally."

THEME | Sexually Inappropriate Behavior

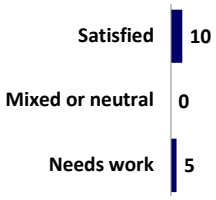
Comments about sexually inappropriate behavior training were included in this category. 1% of survey respondents commented on a specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

Made comments about sexually inappropriate behavior?



15 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

Of the 15 survey respondents who addressed a specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior, two out three (67%) made positive comments. Nearly one in three (33%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Foster parents feel it is important to receive training about:

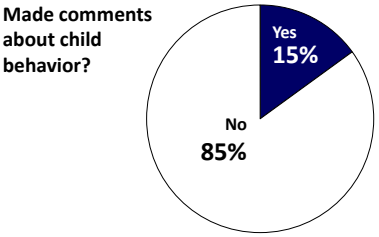
- Sexually active youth.
- Sexually aggressive youth.
- Signs of sexually inappropriate behavior.
- How to deal with sexual misconduct.
- Sexualized behavior.
- Sexual and physical abuse of children.
- How to protect children from sexual abuse.

Some would like:

- More training about sexually inappropriate behavior.
- More training about sexually abused children.
- Easier access to training on these and similar subjects.

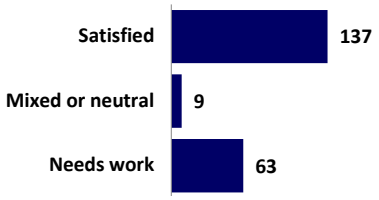
THEME | Child Behavior

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.) 15% of survey respondents commented on training on child behavior.



209 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned training on child behavior.

Of the 209 survey respondents who addressed training on child behavior, more than two in three (66%) made positive comments. Three in ten (30%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate training on:

- Child development.
- Behavior management.
- Dealing effectively with traumatized children.
- Discipline techniques.
- De-escalation techniques.
- Bullying.

Some 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 to help them deal with really difficult behaviors.

PHOTO: Design Pics/Getty Images

Foster parents found much to like about training on child behavior.

"Most helpful – how to handle different behaviors and how to act rather than react to child's behavior."

"Training on de-escalation of the child who is out of control was helpful."

"The segments on behavioral challenges."

"Parenting styles training and dealing with behavioral issues are good."

"Positive discipline training is great."

"Topics on cultural needs, the wide variety of disciplining options that are acceptable, and those that are not. And offering a wide variety of those disciplinary actions for children of trauma."

"The behavior and anger management training was excellent."

"The new information on behaviors."

"Prepares the foster parent to deal with behaviors, especially of teens."

"Training about lying was helpful."

"Training offered a wide variety of disciplinary actions for children of trauma."

"The training on corrective actions/discipline was very helpful."

Some foster parents suggested ways to improve child behavior training.

"Offer more training on managing difficult behavior."

"More training on teenagers!"

"More age-specific behavior training."

"Our kid has more issues that fall out of our knowledge base and we could use a lot more help in the emotional, psychological and behavioral areas."

"More details on discipline. The trainers hold back about what to do with behaviors because of liability issues. We need guidelines – a variety of techniques. It is difficult to learn from someone who is concerned about legal ramifications of their words. Example: using a sticker chart does not work with someone who is out of control."

"More child development training."

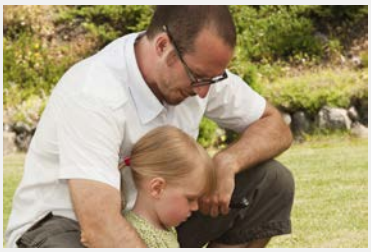


PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Some foster parents commended the infant and toddler training they have received.

"Courses like the Safe Babies were good."

"The first required course learning new things about infants."

"One training about how to calm babies was great! I learned communication techniques and calming techniques."

"Training on medically fragile infants is very good."

Many criticized, or offered ideas about, infant and toddler training.

"We take babies, most training is geared toward older kids."

"Better resources and better infant training."

"Provide training for infant, toddler, and teenager separately."

"Maybe working a little more training information with birth to three years of age."

"More information on how to deal with emotional acting out for toddlers 9 months to two years."

"Infant sign language training would be good."

"More age-specific training. We are licensed for 0-8 and I would like more training that pertains to that age group."

"More training and more options and classes. We just do infants, maybe more training on infant care."

"Need training on drug-affected babies. There needs to be more training on behavior problems in babies and toddlers. Two year olds can be very violent."

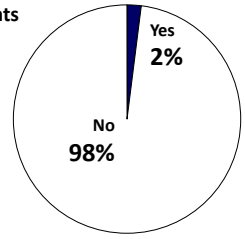
"Most of the training is for older kids and I usually take infants, more training on how to take care of infant issues."

"This is our first placement and we have no children of our own. More on basic child/ infant care. Not just about the abuse and neglect issues."

THEME | Infants and Toddlers

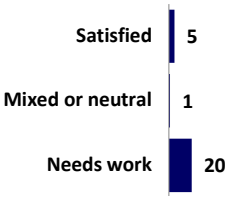
Comments about training on infants and toddlers were included in this category. 2% of survey respondents commented on infant and toddler training.

Made comments about infants and toddlers?



26 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned infant and toddler training.

Of the 26 survey respondents who addressed infant and toddler training, two out of ten (19%) made positive comments. Almost eight in ten (77%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents are pleased with training on:

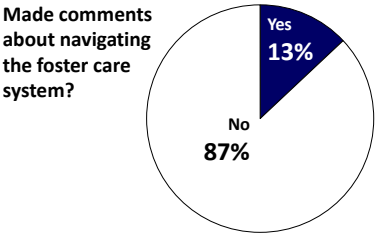
- Medically fragile infants.
- Calming babies.
- Infant and toddler behavior and development.

Many would like to see:

- More training on caring for 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.

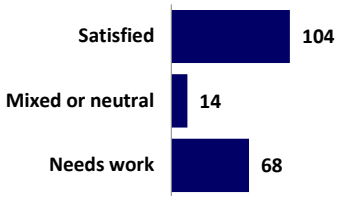
THEME | Navigating the Foster Care System

Comments about training on navigating the foster care system were included in this category. 13% of survey respondents commented on navigating the foster care system training.



186 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned training on navigating the foster care system.

Of the 186 survey respondents who addressed training on navigating the foster care system, more than half (56%) made positive comments. Almost four in ten (37%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 8% 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.

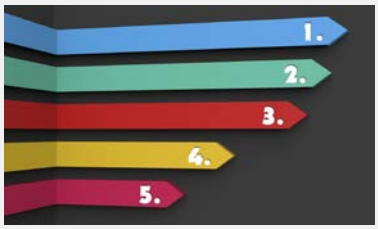


PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents want to understand how the foster care system works.

"I liked an explanation about the overall DSHS foster care process. That was helpful."

"I think getting a good overview of the system and the particulars of foster care and rules/regulations."

"Just the information about how the system works, and documentation."

"The rules and regulations information was helpful and the CPR training was helpful."

"The training that provided us with the laws and regulation of the system was very good."

"Rules and regulations update was useful."

"The practical information about the different roles of social worker, guardian ad litem, foster parent, bio-parent, CASA worker, etc."

They also want advice on how to work within that system.

"Navigating the maze of rules that surround FP and placements."

"Preparing us for how the system works. How to be a voice for the child, who to contact, etc."

"The training provided information on how to deal with the system and what the dependency process was and how to deal with the different players."

Foster parents want clear and current information on foster care guidelines.

"Knowing where to find the policies. They gave us a giant book on a CD. DSHS has a good website with FP information."

"Instead of the monthly newsletter – provide us with any new rule changes. Update the rules regularly as the changes occur instead of never!"

They want help with required paperwork and record-keeping.

"They provided no info on how to complete paperwork."

"What forms to fill out, how to get reimbursed was also very helpful."

"Understanding the process of paperwork."

PHOTO: Blend Images/Getty Images

Most foster parents applauded PRIDE training, but a few were unimpressed.

"PRIDE classes were very good. Putting ourselves in the kids shoes and getting familiar with what they are experiencing."

"The PRIDE training was very helpful in informing me of what to expect of the children placed in my home."

"The PRIDE classes were very good. Getting some insight in how to deal with neglect. It exposed us to a world we are not used to thinking about."

"PRIDE classes."

"The PRIDE training was great."

"The PRIDE training was very real in what they provided us with. They did not sugarcoat it."

"Shorten PRIDE training."

"The initial PRIDE training could have more real live case studies. I think it should include a support group of current foster parents."

"PRIDE was informative – sometimes dry."

"PRIDE training – I felt like the trainers were not very realistic about what would happen after the placement. They provided through rose-colored glasses…we want it told like it is."

Most liked Parenting Plus training but others did not.

"Parenting Plus training is great!"

"The Parenting Plus class is redundant of the Pride training. It is a lot of hours of training that is unnecessary."

"Parenting Plus was very helpful."

"The Parenting Plus course seemed like a recycling of PRIDE class and Foster Parenting Skills class. It was not worth our time to attend."

"Parenting Plus is a ridiculous class."

Most were quite enthusiastic about Love and Logic training.

"I like the Love and Logic training – I continue to use that even with my own children. It was awesome."

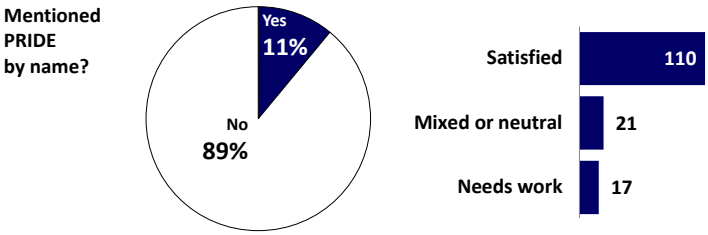
"Love and Logic seminars are excellent."

"Love and Logic is the very best training we've had."

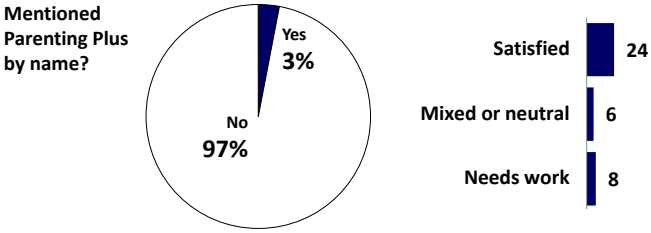
THEME | Trainings Mentioned by Name

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.

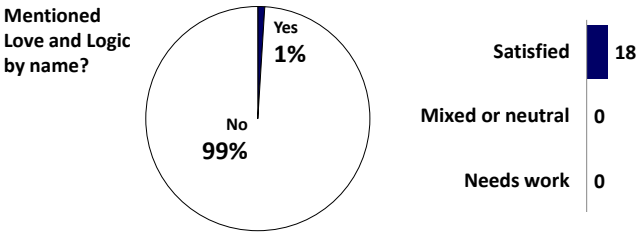
PRIDE. Of the 148 survey respondents who addressed PRIDE training, 74% made positive comments. 12% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 14% made mixed or neutral comments.



PARENTING PLUS. Of the 38 survey respondents who addressed Parenting Plus training, 63% made positive comments. 21% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 16% made mixed or neutral comments.

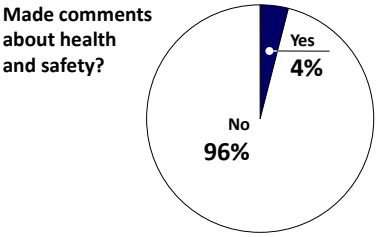


LOVE AND LOGIC. All of the 18 survey respondents who addressed Love and Logic training (100%) made positive comments.



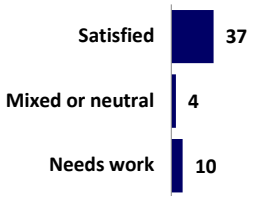
THEME | Health and Safety

Comments about health and safety training were included in this category. 4% of survey respondents commented on health and safety training.



51 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned health and safety training.

Of the 51 survey respondents who addressed health and safety training, seven out of ten (73%) made positive comments. Just under two out of ten (20%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 8% 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.

A number of potential health and safety classes that foster parents would like to see were mentioned, including some involving system navigation for children with challenging health care issues.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Most foster parents are satisfied with CPR and first aid training.

"The training on first aid, and CPR was very helpful."

"The first aid CPR was helpful."

"The first aid and videos on-line."

"The first aid training was good."

"The 'right response' training and CPR, blood-borne pathogens, etc."

"Having been required to take the CPR training."

"I guess review on basic care of a child, CPR and safety of a child."

Some are dissatisfied with the current approach to CPR and first aid training.

"I feel like the first aid training wasn't very in-depth. It seemed a little rushed and was not done in the most professional manner."

Other comments involved other health and safety ideas that foster parents liked or would have liked.

"I also liked the training on poison control. It was VERY informative!"

"We need more medical classes for the foster parents – like feeding tubes, oxygen, how to get medical supplies within the system."

"We did not get our questions answered. Cover everyday things. Instruct foster parents to look over the child for bruises and cuts at placement. Forms were not covered in the initial training. Offer"A day in the life" information. Cover medical forms, prescription forms, what medical providers are available to the child, lice, hair cuts, allergies, how to get authorization for things, how to register a child for daycare, etc."

"It is quite a common problem that these kids have been deprived of food. Eating disorders related to food deprivation should be addressed; what to look for and how to handle them."

"If there was some sort of trainings addressing specific medical conditions such as juvenile diabetes, etc. and then foster parent could be connected with resources on those conditions."

PHOTO: Digital Vision/Getty Images

Some foster parents praised the cultural awareness training they receive.

"Topics on cultural needs."

"Giving you a picture for different needs for different races of children was helpful."

"The overall training on how to deal with kids was great. We used to live by the"old rule." They showed us a way to take care of things today in a new way in light of cultural changes based on generational issues."

"I wanted to take the ethnic hair care, but wasn't able to arrange. That is a great offering."

"I think we had Transracial Training (multiracial kids) and I thought it was pretty interesting and enlightening."

"All the African American training and culture training."

"Training for American Indian children was the best training I have had."

"Diversity of kids."

"Different cultures and how to respond was helpful."

Others took issue with the cultural awareness training offered.

"Better training on African American hair care."

"Maybe have some training on tribal foster children."

"I don't think there is enough training about Native American children! A full day of that training would be fantastic."

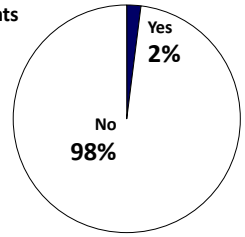
"I think a race issue that needs to be emphasized is how to work with different races of children in your home."

"Need to improve the cultural relevancy training. Hygiene issues vary between different cultures and this needs to be included in the training, especially around hair. Afro American and Native American children view hair issues very differently than the white culture. This is never addressed."

THEME | Cultural Awareness and Racial Issues

Comments about cultural awareness training, and cultural and cultural practice 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?



23 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned cultural or racial issues.

Of the 23 survey respondents who addressed cultural awareness issues and training, 48% made positive comments. 48% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One foster parent made a mixed or neutral comment.

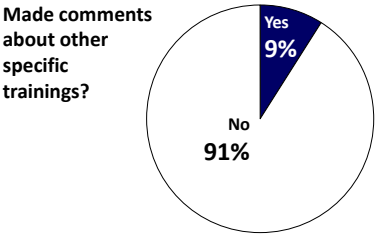
Foster parents like:

- Expanding their awareness of different cultures.
- Culturally-sensitive training.
- Training specific to their foster child's culture.
- Discussions on diversity that are connected to the care of the children in their home.

They are particularly interested in having some education and ideas around hair-care, which can be important cultural identity issues for foster children.

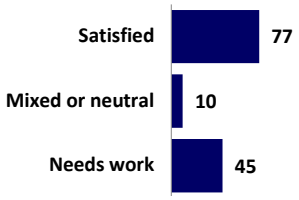
THEME | Other Specific Trainings

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. 9% of survey respondents commented on other specific trainings.



132 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned other specific trainings.

Of the 132 survey respondents who addressed other specific trainings, almost six out of ten (58%) made positive comments. One in three (34%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 8% made mixed or neutral comments.



Many comments about"other specific trainings" fall into one of three groups:

- Comments about foster parents' initial training.
- Comments about"Now What" training taken during their first year as a foster parent.
- Comments about the value of participating in training and support groups with other foster parents.

In addition, 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.

PHOTO: BananaStock/Getty Images

Some foster parents commented on their first training experience.

"I am a new foster parent, so I have only been through the first big training. That was very helpful in learning about the different ways to think about situations and put things in perspective. How the child is feeling, their loss, etc."

"The first 30 hours was a great training."

"I have only had the pre-requisite training because I just started foster parenting. They did a good job setting examples on problems that may arise, it helped me understand some of the behavioral issues and the reasons behind them."

"When we went through the first 36 hours, we felt the training was valuable whether we took a placement or not – a good learning experience."

"I think the initial training was very helpful in giving an overview of what you may be facing."

"We have only been foster parents for 4 months, so we have only had the initial training. It was helpful in preparing us about how the child feels."

Several commented on the "Now What?" training taken in their first year.

"'I Have My First Placement, Now What?' is really good. This is especially helpful with new foster parents."

"I would say that the training we found most helpful was the one that you take within the first year of the child's placement. It is called 'You Have Your First Placement, Now What?'"

"The training on 'I am a licensed foster parent, now what?' was good."

Others commented on the value of trainings with other foster parents.

"I think the biggest thing is the monthly HUB support group meetings. The chance to feel like part of the foster parent community and know more about our situation as it might relate to theirs. It is more helpful than any other training."

THEME | Other Specific Trainings, *continued*

Foster parents commented on a wide variety of trainings or training types. In some cases, they named 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.

"The training on purple crying was great. The training on equipment needed for the children was wonderful."

"The 'How to adjust the child into a changing environment.'"

"I have taken a program called Scope and I think it's the best program they ever had! It is a really good training program."

"I think the long training called some sort of Scope was very good. It went over everything and encompasses a lot of different behaviors, how to deal with infancy to teenage years."

"The class taught by Grief and Law specialist from the Tri-Cities – she was amazing. Being able to do training on-line has been a plus."

"Last summer's training that was required for relicensing that I attended was very good."

"A 30-hour class was very helpful (can't remember the name)."

"The training on Parent-Child Interaction Therapy was very helpful."

"Trust-Based Relational Interventions was very helpful."

"The initial PRIDE class was very comprehensive and got us to thinking about what actually we wanted to do as foster parents. The Now What class was very helpful too. We appreciated participating in the foster parent support group!"

"The ideas regarding discipline are great. And I learned activities to do with the kids."

"The initial training of the 'FLO' training was good in letting you know what to expect."

"The Parentscope was really good. Right Response was excellent."

"The training on the parenting tips was very helpful and the drug training was great."

"The 'keep' training was good and helpful."

"We got to do the 'Circle of Security' at MLK center in Spokane, I know everyone cannot take this training, but it was excellent training and think it was very beneficial to us and I think everyone would benefit from taking this class."

"All should attend the Connected Child training – it is really good!"

"I took college classes for special needs children. The class for handling sexual abuse and the 28-hour required training were helpful."

"The specific training on 'attachment', the 'first placement' training was helpful in knowing what to expect with the process. I. e., court system, visitation, amd so on."

Others described trainings they would like to have available or changes they would like to see.

"Need to add more training on family visits and special behavioral needs. So much information on the front end, it would be helpful to have a review after children have been placed."

"The training needs to provide you with a step-by-step as to the process of when a child is in your home and what to do. Also the PRIDE training and the"you have had your first one now what" training needs to be combined into one training."

"I think a lot of the training that they do – they do by the book. If they had a little hands-on experience, I think it would really help. Have outside agencies (such as Gang Officers) come in and tell us what to look for and show us the colors, signs, names, etc. I also had the Drug Task Force come in and bring the drug paraphernalia so we would know what to look for, etc."

"Domestic violence is rampant and I don't think there are any classes on that issue. Listen to FP and you will learn what classes need to be added to the curriculum."

"The part that needs improvement is the 'foster-to-adopt' training. I don't think the training is realistic, as they don't know they may never get a placement, as it is very rare in our area – and they should be told that and to go to a private agency."

"Need more standardized classes when re-certified. This would include a review of the older classes and some new classes. Need refreshers periodically, such as law enforcement. Classes on new dos and don'ts as to what can be done and not done with foster children. Too often learn about these changes word of mouth. Example: taking of pictures."

"One training we have to take it every year, Right Response Training, it lasts all day, and it is recertification training, it is exactly the same every year we have to sit there 8 hours."

"Training was focused on a generic foster child rather than a relative. There are a lot of things that are different for relative caregivers and we would appreciate some training for this type of care.

Access

PHOTO: AbleStock.com/Getty Images

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 (458 out of 1,398, or 33%) made comments about access to training. Of those who commented on this subject:

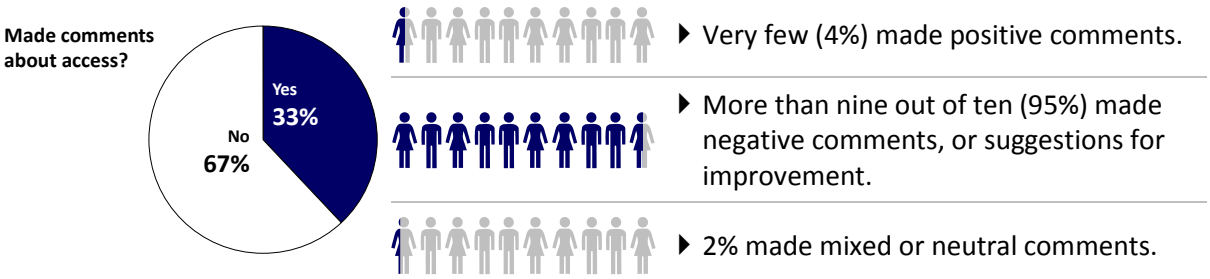


PHOTO: Wavebreak Media/Getty Images

Many foster parents want training to be closer to their home. This was important in both rural and urban settings!

"Provide it closer to home! We have to travel over an hour each way."

"More locations are needed. Traveling 2 plus hours to get to training is hard on the foster parents."

"The training needs to be offered closer to the foster parents so they don't have to travel one to two hours to get to the training."

"Training should be more available in everybody's area so we don't have to drive to Timbuktu."

"Due to our location, training is over an hour away which makes it very difficult to attend."

"Bring training to our town. Have to go out of town for all training."

Long travel times are problems in both cities and smaller places.

"More training available for foster parents in the Forks area."

"We are in South King County and there are no trainings here."

"They now require 'Parenting Plus,' a 32-hour program, they have only offered it in Tacoma 3 times. Otherwise they expect us to drive to Kent, Bremerton or West Seattle."

"I would like see more training in my local area (Mason County)."

"We live in a small area, trainings are scheduled, then cancelled. The next closest trainings are two hours away."

"We had to travel a long time to attend training on the other side of Seattle."

"The last training was in West Seattle, and I had to travel from Carnation, 1 hr. and 1/2 each way. Have trainings closer, say in Redmond."

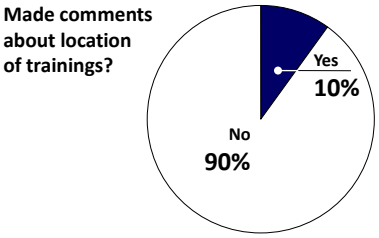
"It would be nice to have more training in the Olympic Peninsula area!"

"More Bellingham locations."

"It would be great to have more local training, we have to travel from Ellensburg to Wenatchee or Yakima, and the weather is not always good."

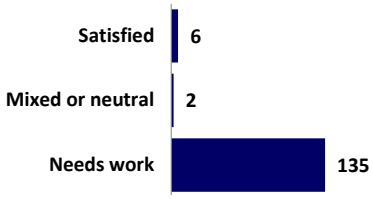
THEME | Location of Trainings

Comments about the location of foster parent trainings were included in this category. 10% of survey respondents commented on location of trainings.



143 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (10%) mentioned location of trainings.

Of the 143 survey respondents who addressed location of trainings, 4% made positive comments. Over nine out of ten (94%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 1% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want training to be:

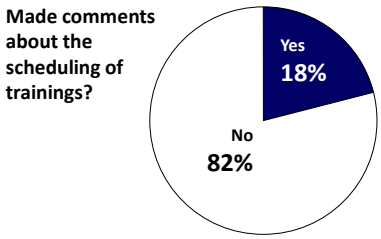
- Close to home.
- Available in multiple locations.

They dislike:

- Having a small number of training locations available.
- Traveling a great distance to training.
- Having to go to training, when training could come to them.

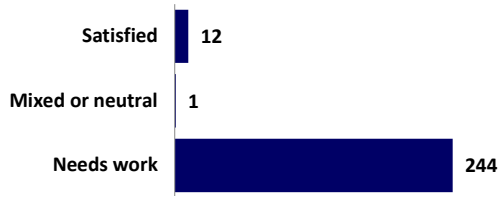
THEME | Scheduling of Trainings

Comments about the scheduling of foster parent trainings were included in this category. Almost two in ten (18%) of those surveyed commented on scheduling of trainings.



257 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (18%) mentioned scheduling of trainings.

Of the 257 survey respondents who addressed scheduling of trainings, very few (5%) made positive comments. Over nine out of ten (95%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Foster parents appreciate:

- Evening and weekend trainings.
- Day-time trainings.
- Frequently-offered trainings.
- The ability to take training at various times.
- Brief, relevant trainings.

Some foster parents are frustrated by:

- Lack of trainings on evenings or weekends.
- Infrequently-scheduled trainings.
- Trainings that go on too long.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Employed foster parents want trainings on evenings or weekends.

"A Saturday training would be helpful for working foster parents."

"More evening and weekend class offerings."

"More availability on the weekends for classes."

"The follow-up training needs to be on-line and available in the evening so that the foster parent doesn't need childcare."

"More local classes and varied times – I work during the day and most of the classes seem to be 10 AM to 4 PM."

Others want more classes during the school day rather than spread over several evenings.

"Need to offer during the day while the kids are in school. Need childcare during the evening training."

"Offer other time slots or weekends. Maybe offer trainings like Love/Logic in one training during a whole day, as I could not make 2 of the 4 segment trainings due to spouse's work schedule and child-care needs."

"Offer more full-day classes. I work full time with small children and night classes are difficult. I can more easily take a day off work to get the training finished."

"Night time training is not good for the parents or the kids."

They want trainings offered more frequently at a variety of times.

"The schedule that they offer is not possible, you would have to get off work early 2 weeks in a row, get childcare for 2 weeks. They should release that training to private agencies so they can give more options and different times and schedules."

Foster parents expressed their thoughts about the length of trainings.

"I think there is an excessive amount of training and it is very difficult to attend."

"Not having too long of classes, I just finished a long class, it was 4 hours a night for 9 weeks, too long."

PHOTO: Stockbyte/Getty Images

Foster parents made it very clear they need childcare during training.

"Have daycare during the training."

"Better times available for the training for working parents and daycare provide during the training."

"Need childcare during the training."

"Offering the trainings with childcare if only offered during the days."

"Provide childcare so we can attend training. It is hard to find daycare for foster children, especially the special needs children."

"I would like to attend more classes, but due to the medical fragile children we take, cannot get away for class."

"Childcare would help us get to training since we have special needs children."

"Daycare provided during training!"

"Providing on-line, or providing childcare so we could attend training, or on site childcare at training."

"They are requiring Parenting Plus now without childcare and I think we will lose lots of foster parents with this requirement. Think about providing training with respite provided or partnering more with support groups where childcare is provided."

"There needs to be childcare provided during the training and the 36 hours of training required is too much."

"I can't attend in-person training because there is no way to get daycare at the training office. It's a big production to get daycare approval."

"Providing daycare support in the office would allow me and my husband to attend. I got conflicting information from social workers as to how to get family members (my mom) approved for short term (1-2 hours) care for training attendance."

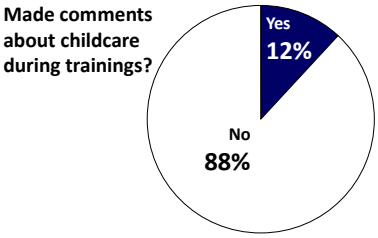
There were two positive comments on childcare.

"Private agency assists with childcare so I can attend training."

"I went to a convention and there was a big variety of training – it was great. Childcare was provided so we could attend the trainings."

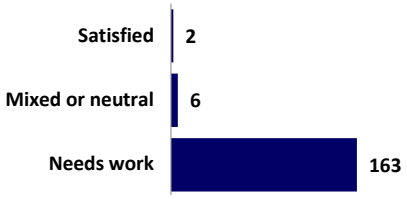
THEME | Childcare During Trainings

Comments about childcare during foster parent trainings were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents commented on childcare during trainings.



171 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned childcare during trainings.

Of the 171 survey respondents who addressed childcare during trainings, nearly all (95%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 1% made positive comments. 4% made mixed or neutral comments.

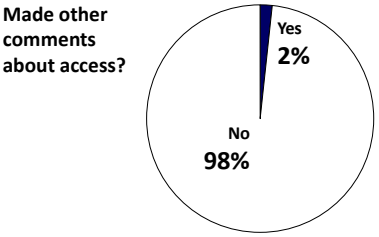


The vast majority of foster parents reported that they want childcare to be available during trainings. They indicated they would be much more likely to attend a wider range of trainings if such care was available. They suggested they would like:

- 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.

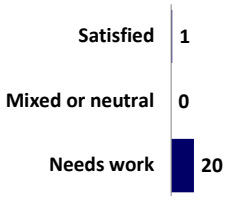
THEME | Other Comments About Access

Other comments about access to foster parent trainings are included in this category. 2% of survey respondents made other comments about access.



21 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (2%) made other comments about access.

Of the 21 survey respondents who made other comments about access, few (5%) were positive. Over nine out of ten (95%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Foster parents want:

- Ease in getting to mandatory and elective trainings.
- Trainings in their primary language.
- Help with training-connected transportation costs.
- Training available when they need it.

PHOTO: Digital Vision/Getty Images

Distance and schedule both present access problems.

"I haven't been to any training other than my initial training. It just isn't offered at times that are good for me. Makes it hard for me to do training. I wish I could do more. I wish they offered more time choices."

"The training needs to be available and closer to the foster parents."

Access is not only about geography and schedules.

"When they show the movies, if it is not in 'closed caption' I don't understand it as I am hard of hearing."

Training in Spanish would be useful.

"Something I would like is that there are lots of Spanish foster parents and the training is always in English. They do provide an interpreter but the interpreter isn't the same as a Spanish instructor. If you offered more Spanish instructors, there likely would be more Spanish foster parents entering the system."

"It would be good to have Spanish speaking training, instead of using interpreters."

"More training in Spanish as that is my first language."

Off-site training can substitute for in-person training.

"More availability of the training. It can be difficult to get to training. Have more on-line training and more videos available to use at home. Have this off site training count toward our required training."

"The in-person training is most beneficial versus computer training. Although it is inconvenient, and sometimes impossible to attend."

For some foster parents, travel costs are an issue.

"I had to travel quite a distance to attend a class and pay for overnight travel. There was no reimbursement for my travel expenses."

Alternative Training Formats

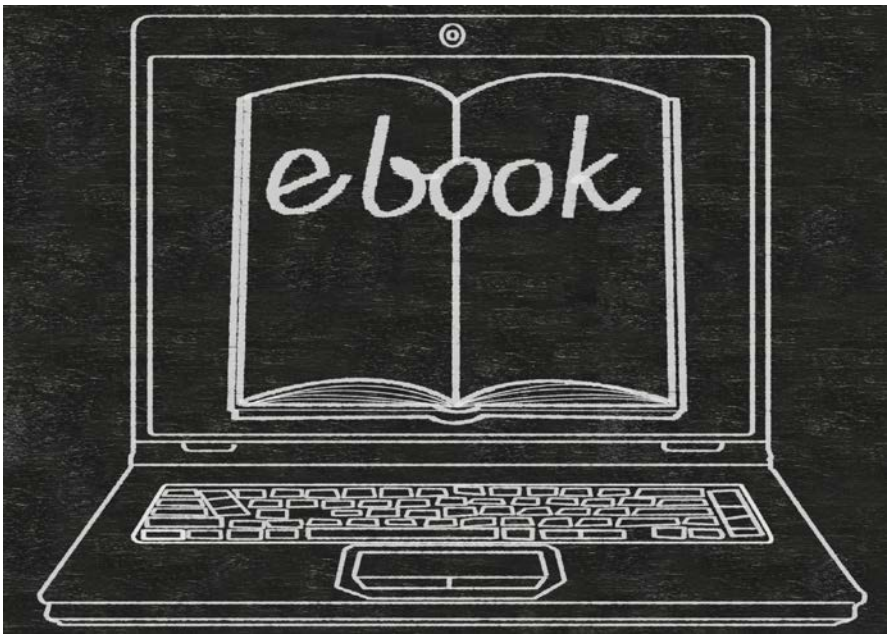


PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents like having alternative training formats available to them.

This section focuses on alternative foster parent training formats.

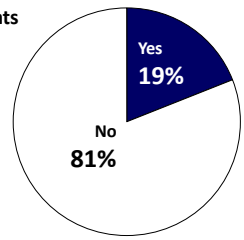
Many foster parents made positive comments in this area, applauding the useful aspects of different alternative training formats. Some pointed out the drawbacks of those same formats, while others suggested there should be more or different alternative training formats available.

In this section:

- The first page addresses comments about on-line 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 (269 out of 1,398, or 19%) made comments about alternative training formats. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about alternative training formats?



- Almost four out of ten (38%) made positive comments.
- 50% made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 12% made mixed or neutral comments.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents appreciate the quality and convenience of on-line training – and want more of it!

"The internet training is good, and costs much less."

"I take classes on-line as my children are special needs children."

"I would like more on-line training or anything I can access from home such as DVDs or webinars."

"The ADHD training was very good in the on-line courses."

"It's great you can do some on-line."

"On-line training options are great as I usually cannot travel to training."

"The classes should be made available on-line or at least more available to working parents."

"Do videos of the really good instructors and have available on-line."

"We have to drive 45 miles one way. This adds up in time, cost, childcare, etc. The class that is required every other year – put this on-line."

"The availability of classes has been an issue. We have to travel to Clarkston or Spokane. That is a pain. It would be nice if videos were available for the mandatory training classes."

"I live way out in the boonies and can't get on-line."

"I wish most of the classes were available on-line, or on videos so anybody can access the same training across the state."

Some want on-line resources updated

"I would like to see the on-line resource such as books or video be updated. Much of it is stale and needs to be updated."

Others miss in-person training.

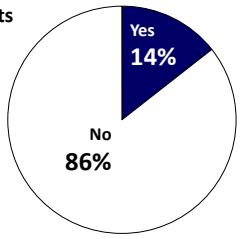
"We have done video tapes but think the in-person trainings are much better. The video tapes are pretty dry and long/drawn out. With a video tape, you cannot ask a question or have interaction."

"What one misses with on-line training is the interaction with other foster parents."

THEME | On-line Training

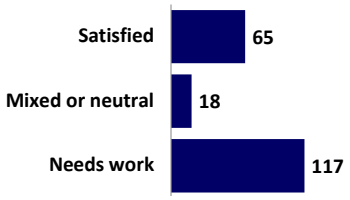
Comments about on-line training were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents commented on on-line training.

Made comments about online training?



200 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned on-line training.

Almost all the 200 survey respondents who addressed on-line training liked its quality and convienience. One in three (33%) made generally positive comments. Almost six in ten respondents (59%) wanted more on-line training options – which was the work needed! 9% made mixed or neutral comments.



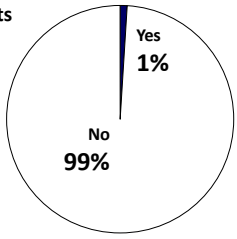
Most parents want on-line training that is:

- High quality.
- Easy to access.
- Constantly expanding to meet their needs.

Some foster parents have no interest in taking on-line training.

THEME | Resource Libraries

Made comments about resource libraries?



18 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned resource libraries.

Of the 18 survey respondents who addressed resource libraries, almost three in ten (28%) made positive comments. Six out of ten (61%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement – though many of these basically wanted more library resources or wanted the library re-opened. 11% 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.
- Contain material that will count towards their required training.

They would like to see libraries, the resources they hold, and the services they provide to foster parents, expand in the future.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Most foster parents had positive things to say about resource libraries and want them made more available.

"We live a long way away so the library is awesome!"

"They need to reopen the lending library for the foster parents."

"Put the lending library back. This was very, very important."

"The fact that I get information sent to me monthly by mail, and that counts toward my training time. I fill out a form when I complete the reading material, also same type training through library resources and videos."

"I enjoy doing the reading from assorted topics from the library."

"Have the leaning library available again."

"The lending library continuing education program has been excellent – keep adding those videos and audios to the library!!!!"

"The audio training through the library has been very helpful."

"I have six kids, and it is almost impossible to attend training. I don't have a great internet connection. The library used to be a viable option to us, but it isn't anymore."

Some foster parents have complaints or concerns about library materials.

"Add more trauma therapy directed at emotional issues audio and video courses in the lending library."

"Provide more audio training and books available in the library."

"They could give us much better reference material. The books need to be much shorter. Make the reference materials more user-friendly."

Others want library videos and audios to count towards required training.

"A video that I could take home for the mandatory training. I work 12 hour shifts then have days off and can't always fit my schedule to the 36 hour mandatory training."

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents praised the training provided in support groups.

"The support meetings with other foster parents and speakers are great!"

"The training when we have meetings with foster parents every month. It is very helpful, and we ask questions."

"I would say the support groups composed of other foster parents with the childcare and dinners."

"The monthly training dinner meeting (Fostering Hope) has been very helpful."

"I go to the monthly foster support groups and I get useful training at those meetings."

"I've gone to a lot of the Friday night ones, getting support from the other foster parents."

"Foster parent support group is fabulous for ongoing learning and collaborative approach to the foster children in our area. More than one home is sometimes needed."

"The classes they offer and the support groups because they bring in people to talk about different topics."

"I also attend Fostering Hope monthly group that is a supplement to the required training."

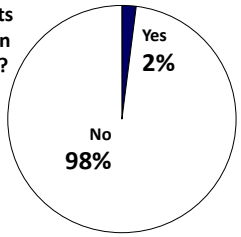
"Foster Together meetings on behavioral issues were very helpful."

"I appreciate the monthly meetings where they have guest speakers. I liked hearing from Sibling House who talked about first time foster parent experiences. "

"Funding for the support group was cut. I think DSHS could support a group of foster parents who want to meet regularly. Refresher training could be infused into a support group for foster parents. It was effective and could be effective again. We set up respite care for one another and offered experienced voices. There were concerns about confidentiality. Foster parents have no privacy right according to Walla Walla County. Could this be dealt with?

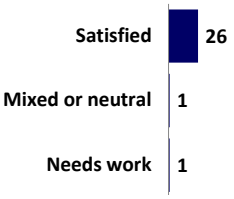
THEME | Support Groups

Made comments about training in support groups?



28 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned training in support groups.

Of the 28 survey respondents who addressed training in support groups, nine out of ten (93%) made positive comments. One comment was a suggestion for improvement, and one was mixed. In addition to these comments, a number of people who commented in the next section on"support other than training" also mentioned support groups.



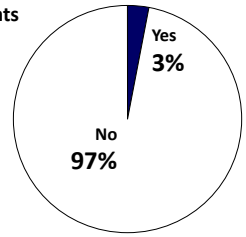
Foster parents are grateful for:

- The convenience of training in support group settings.
- The quality of the support group training.
- The ability to talk with other foster parents and learn from experts who speak.

They would like to see support groups continued where funding has been reduced or eliminated.

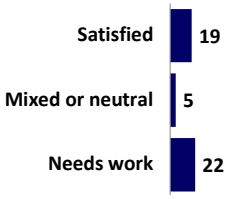
THEME | Other Alternative Training Formats

Made comments about other alternative training formats?



46 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned other alternative training formats.

Of the 46 survey respondents who addressed other alternative training formats, 41% made positive comments. 48% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 11% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents like:

- Foster care conferences with a variety of training options – and childcare.
- 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 consultations.

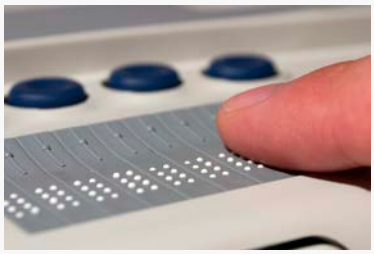


PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster Parent Training Conferences.

"The foster parent conference is the most helpful; we try to attend every year."

"I like the once-a-year training, statewide conference. You can pick a few subjects and take the training the same day."

"The training that the state provided every fall all day Saturday is excellent."

"FPAWS conference was very useful. We were there for 3 days and it was time well spent."

"It would be the ongoing caregiver conferences that they have."

"We went to a conference last year, it was very helpful and supportive and talked about building relationships to help out when needed. And information about how to connect with the kids who are a little higher need kid, it was very helpful."

"The training at the Great Wolf Lodge was excellent. I learned a lot listening to other foster parents. We could pick the classes we wanted to attend."

Information by Mail

"The monthly printouts that we get now – since May 2012 – it is good information about foster care in general."

Video conferencing.

"Video conferencing is available to us which is more helpful for us living in rural area."

Training they would like to see implemented.

"I see foster parents in my private practice, and they appreciate that I am a foster parent and that I really understand what they are going through – they don't feel judged. More adequate trainers and more accessible to these parents and more in-depth training and more personal on-going training."

"It would be helpful if DSHS had behavior specialists on staff who could go to the home and interact with the child."

Voice and Choice

PHOTO: moodboard/Getty Images

Foster parents want a foster parent voice in their training – and they want choices.

This section focuses on the involvement and voice of foster parents in their trainings, and the choice they have about which trainings to take.

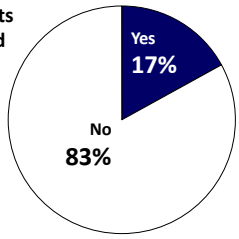
Most foster parents report they have a real voice, and a sense of community, during trainings. Fewer report they are given the opportunity to select the trainings that would benefit them the most.

In this section:

- The first page addresses foster parents' comments about having a foster parent 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 (234 out of 1,398, 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?



- Three out of four (74%) made positive comments.
- One in five (21%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 5% made mixed or neutral comments.

2.7 Voice and Choice

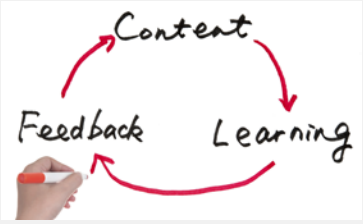


PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents value:

Hearing other foster parent voices as part of their training.

"The training itself is far outweighed by the experienced foster parents who are involved with it. The relating of their experiences as foster parents is very helpful."

"The training that involved former foster parents was the most helpful."

"Most helpful has been meetings or online classes where I hear what other foster parents have to say. They have been there, done that and they are remarkable, are a great support, are very realistic, and I really like to hear what they have to say."

Training interactions, group work and collaborative problem solving.

"Working together when we are in a group, and learning new ideas for problem solving."

"Connecting with other foster parents and collaborating with them. Finding common systems in dealing with difficult behaviors."

"I also like the collaboration with experienced foster parents."

"I valued the personal interaction in the training. Learning how to apply the lessons is quite helpful."

Informal networking with other foster parents.

"Honestly for us is the networking and being able to meet other foster parents and talk with them. The training info has been basic – the networking has been the big benefit."

"There is a level of emotional support from the other foster parents and the instructors that is helpful to me."

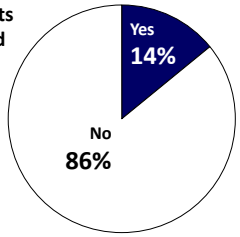
"The main thing was that existing foster parents helped new foster parents – extremely helpful!!!! It was amazing! The emotional and practical support is/was fantastic."

"Getting together with other foster parents who are experiencing the same difficulties."

THEME | Voice—and Community—in Training

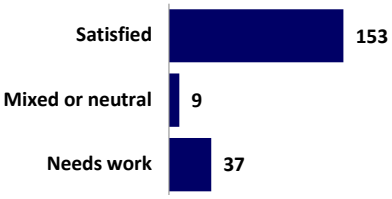
Comments about foster parents having a voice, and a sense of community, in training were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents commented on voice and community in training.

Made comments about voice and community in training?



199 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned voice and community in training.

Of the 199 survey respondents who addressed voice and community in training, more than three in four (77%) made positive comments. Just under two in ten (19%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 5% made mixed or neutral comments.



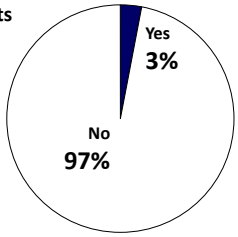
Most foster parents appreciate being able to:

- Have other foster parents involved in their trainings.
- Interact, work in groups, and solve problems collaboratively during trainings.
- Develop informal networking connections with other foster parents they meet in training.

THEME | Choice in Trainings

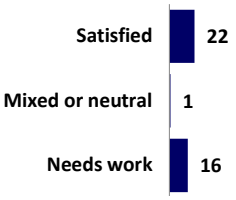
Comments about foster parents having a choice in which trainings to attend, or complete at home, were included in this category. 3% of survey respondents commented on choice in trainings.

Made comments about choice in which trainings to take?



39 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned choice in trainings.

Of the 39 survey respondents who addressed choice in trainings, over half (56%) made positive comments. Four out of ten (41%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 3% 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, based on the needs of the children they are caring for in their home.

PHOTO: iStock/Getty Images

Foster parents like being able to choose their training topics.

"We could pick the classes we wanted to attend."

"I like the variety that is available."

"Wide variety offered so we can choose what is relevant to us. We got issues addressed (example, bullying) quickly as we have been able to find what we needed in a timely way."

"I like the different type of classes that we can choose based on the type of children that are placed with us."

"The variety of topics is great. I can go look at the list of offerings and choose what would apply to me. Required classes are high quality."

"Having the variety of trainings available specific to the needs of the child is good! We can focus on the needs we have at that time."

"I usually select educational training. Being allowed to choose training."

"More conferences, where you can pick and choose the topics which are better suited to you and your child, and if both parents attend, they can get choose different topics and get more information in a day."

"I do a lot of training on line and it's helpful to be able to pick the training that fits the needs of our child."

"We get to choose the classes that I think will best apply to me. That choice is really important. The content of the classes is helpful like behavioral management."

"There is a broad scope of trainings you can chose trainings from as related to your kid."

Some would like more foster parent involvement in training subjects.

"Ask foster parents what they need – base the training on those needs."

"There needs to be more of an effort to find out from foster parents what type of training is needed."

"I would take a survey of foster parents and ask what their specific needs are and then base the training on the actual needs identified."

Training Information

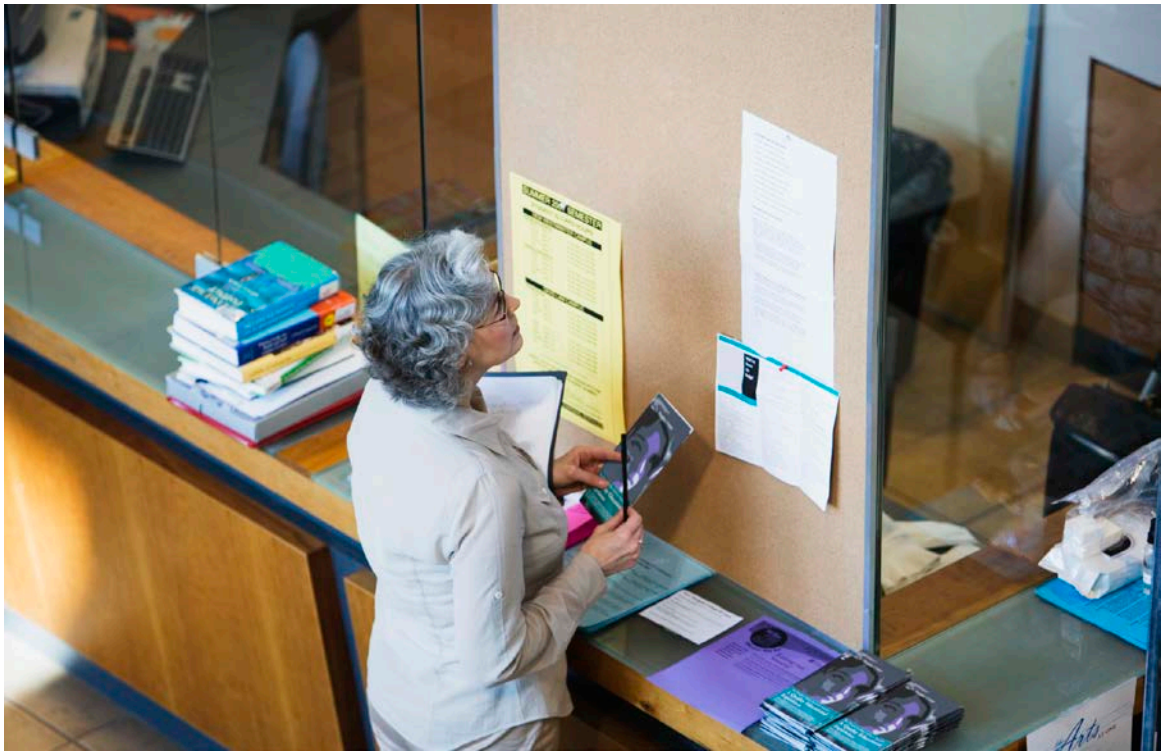


PHOTO: Fuse/Getty Images

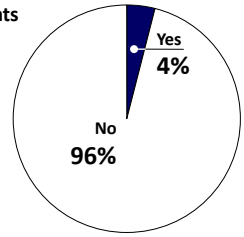
Foster parents want accurate and timely information about upcoming trainings.

Some foster parents made positive comments about the training information they receive. However, the majority of comments 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 twenty survey respondents (60 out of 1,398, or 4%) made comments about training information. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about training information?



- One sixth (15%) made positive comments.
- Eight out of ten (80%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 5% made mixed or neutral comments.

2.8 Training Information

PHOTO: Fuse/Getty Images

Some foster parents are very satisfied with the information they receive about trainings.

"Notified of lots of training available. Have been able to go to ones dealing with drug-affected children."

"Support group that meets the first of the month has a variety of topics. The leader of that group is excellent in bringing relevant topics to the table. She also sends reminders e-mails with a regulation reviewed. This is quite useful way of reminding us on what is supposed to be happening."

"They send out e-mails about new classes coming up."

"I get e-mails about upcoming training and how to get into the class."

"Online info on trainings is good."

Others were not.

"Need better information on what is available during the off hours and weekends."

"Provide the training schedule, so the foster parents do not have to go searching for it."

"I am unaware of when services are being offered. Cancellations are not publicized sufficiently. I would like to be more included in training opportunities and support group announcements."

"I would really like to hear more about online training. I'd like notices about what is available, so I don't have to leave home to do training."

"I used to get e-mails monthly telling me when support groups are. Those have stopped since OC took over support. I am not receiving emails any longer and don't know what is happening."

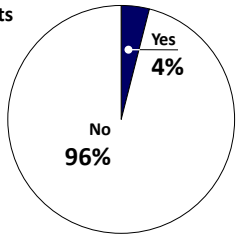
"More timely and thorough announcements of training. We need weekend and evening classes as we both work. We are 30 miles from town and need to plan ahead."

"I don't get the training fliers often; they usually arrive after the training."

"It would be very helpful to have a reminder post card a few days before the class or a reminder phone call."

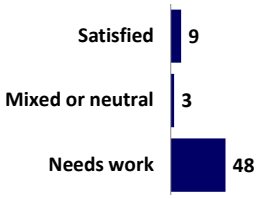
THEME | Information About Trainings

Made comments about information related to trainings?



60 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned information about trainings.

Of the 60 survey respondents who addressed information about trainings, under one in six (15%) made positive comments. Eight out of ten (80%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 5% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some 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.

Others are not getting adequate information.

- Sometimes they are not informed of upcoming trainings in a timely manner – or at all.
- Sometimes they are given short notice of trainings, leaving no time to make arrangements to attend.

Support Beyond Training

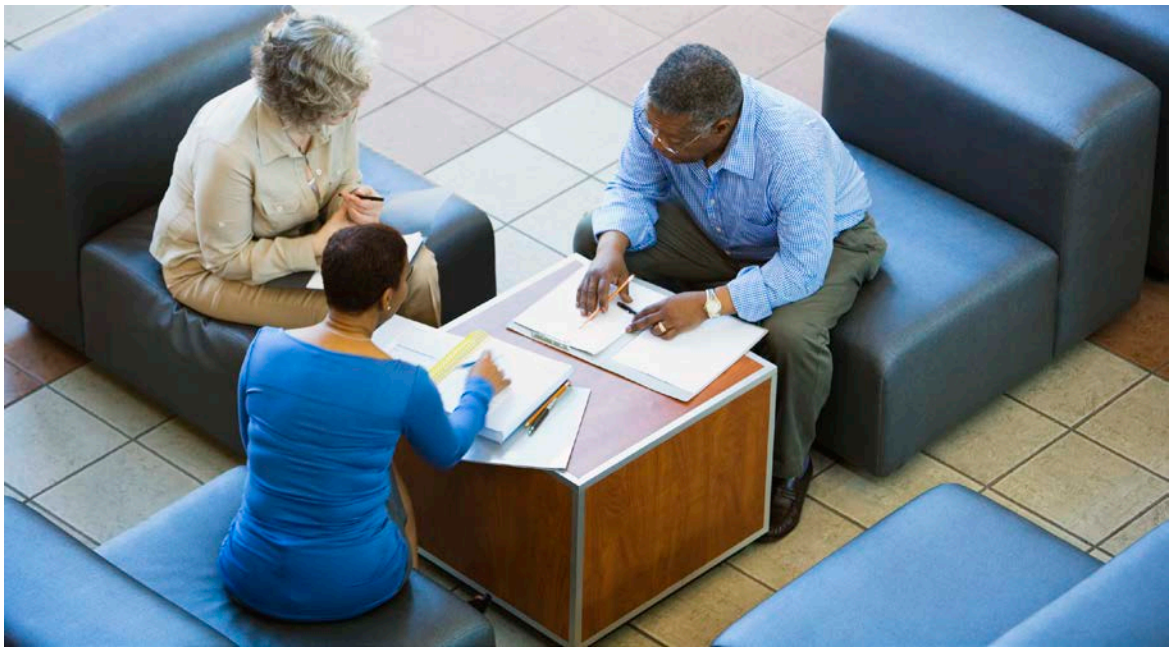


PHOTO: Fuse/Getty Images

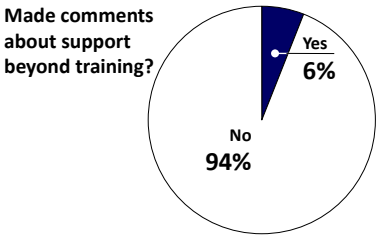
Foster parents are grateful for other support that helps them give foster children the best possible care.

This section focuses on comments about support outside of established foster care training – such as foster parent support groups, mentoring, and special needs discussion groups – that is valued by foster parents.

A number 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 (86 out of 1,398, or 6%) made comments about support beyond training. Of those who commented on this subject:



- Over four out of ten (45%) made positive comments.
- Another four out of ten (43%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 12% made mixed or neutral comments.

2.9 Support Beyond Training

PHOTO: Creatas/Getty Images

Foster parents appreciated:

Regular foster parent support groups.

"Fostering Together meetings once a month are very helpful."

"The support of our local foster parent network and DSHS staff."

"The support groups through the private agency are really great."

"More group meetings where we can just discuss current problems with other foster parents. Would be good to have a moderator for this."

Formal mentoring programs.

"Some sort of a mentoring program might be a good idea so a new foster parent would have someone to contact or reach out to for advice. Sometimes I don't know what to ask since I have never done much of this before. A mentor would be of great help with hands-on and direct contact!"

"We have struggled with specific issues with some children and would like a mentoring program to learn how to deal with these issues that are not covered in training."

"I would love to see a better mentoring program."

Specialized groups or outside information for the special needs of their foster children.

"I would like to see foster parents being more informed with the medication piece. The foster children arrive at our home with all sorts of medication and we don't know what it's all for."

"I think we need classes on autism. We need to live and move with the times."

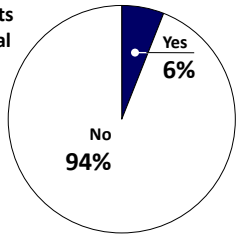
"Information on dealing with children with mental illness was very helpful. We took it on our own (through WAMI) as most of the kids we take have special needs in this area."

"I took a class on my own for special needs and I learned a lot on how to cope with special needs child."

"I watch PBS and do classes on-line."

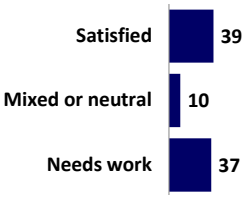
THEME | Additional Support for Foster Parents

Made comments about additional support for foster parents?



86 of the 1,398 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned additional support.

Of the 86 survey respondents addressing additional support for foster parents, more than four out of ten (45%) made positive comments. A similar proportion (43%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 12% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents value:

- Moderated support groups with other foster parents.
- Formalized peer-to-peer mentoring.
- Specialized support groups or outside classes for special needs children.

2013 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**

Foster Parent Training – Narrative Comments Report **106**

Survey Script and Survey Questions **107**

Foster Parent Support (2013) – 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 (2013) – 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 (2013) – Narrative Comments Report

1,398 Respondents									
		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES[1]		#[2]	% of All[3]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]
Quality/Support		441	31.5%	289	65.5%	105	23.8%	47	10.7%
CA Support	QS	222	15.9%	161	72.5%	45	20.3%	16	7.2%
Specific Program or Agency Support	QP	126	9.0%	76	60.3%	32	25.4%	18	14.3%
Nothing	QN	196	14.0%	143	73.0%	52	26.5%	1	0.5%
Social Workers		1,005	71.9%	423	42.1%	277	27.6%	305	30.3%
Social Worker Support	SS	363	26.0%	239	65.8%	55	15.2%	69	19.0%
Social Worker Courtesy	SC	156	11.2%	112	71.8%	36	23.1%	8	5.1%
Social Workers Listen/Understand	SL	252	18.0%	160	63.5%	81	32.1%	11	4.4%
Social Workers are Inclusive	SI	208	14.9%	81	38.9%	109	52.4%	18	8.7%
Other Social Worker Comments	SO	534	38.2%	221	41.4%	246	46.1%	67	12.5%
Foster Care Licenser Support	SF	13	0.9%	12	92.3%	1	7.7%	0	0.0%
Specific Social Worker	SW	4	0.3%						
Need Social Worker	SN	149	10.7%			149	100.0%		
Access		680	48.6%	389	57.2%	183	26.9%	108	15.9%
Phone/Staff Access	AP	555	39.7%	313	56.4%	172	31.0%	70	12.6%
Consistent Contact	AR	221	15.8%	138	62.4%	65	29.4%	18	8.1%
Information		721	51.6%	260	36.1%	323	44.8%	138	19.1%
Information from Social Workers	IN	721	51.6%	260	36.1%	323	44.8%	138	19.1%
Coordination		48	3.4%	11	22.9%	34	70.8%	3	6.3%
Coordination	CO	48	3.4%	11	22.9%	34	70.8%	3	6.3%
Process		289	20.7%	22	7.6%	254	87.9%	13	4.5%
Process, General	PR	112	8.0%	0	0.0%	110	98.2%	2	1.8%
Process, Specific	PS	194	13.9%	22	11.3%	163	84.0%	9	4.6%
Paperwork	PP	25	1.8%	3	12.0%	22	88.0%	0	0.0%
Resources		381	27.3%	122	32.0%	223	58.5%	36	9.4%
Transportation	RT	59	4.2%	27	45.8%	30	50.8%	2	3.4%
Medical, Dental, Mental Health	RM	74	5.3%	27	36.5%	46	62.2%	1	1.4%
Childcare	RC	29	2.1%	10	34.5%	19	65.5%	0	0.0%
Respite	RR	71	5.1%	17	23.9%	52	73.2%	2	2.8%
Financial	RF	76	5.4%	10	13.2%	63	82.9%	3	3.9%
Other Resources (includes training)	RO	178	12.7%	78	43.8%	93	52.2%	7	3.9%
Other		230	16.5%	50	21.7%	37	16.1%	143	62.2%
Other Support	OS	98	7.0%	52	53.1%	33	33.7%	13	13.3%
Not about support	O	62	4.4%	3	4.8%	7	11.3%	52	83.9%
Don't know	DK	79	5.7%					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 "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 (2013) – Narrative Comments Report

1,338 Respondents									
		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES[1]		#[2]	% of All[3]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]
Quality/Help		445	31.8%	348	78.2%	48	10.8%	49	11.0%
Helpfulness of training	TH	315	22.5%	244	77.5%	34	10.8%	37	11.7%
Specific Program or Agency	TP	57	4.1%	47	82.5%	5	8.8%	5	8.8%
Nothing	TN	136	9.7%	116	85.3%	19	14.0%	1	0.7%
Trainers		182	13.0%	100	54.9%	63	34.6%	19	10.4%
Trainers	TR	180	12.9%	106	58.9%	63	35.0%	11	6.1%
Specific Trainer	TT	9	0.6%						
Specific Trainings		756	54.1%	420	55.6%	160	21.2%	176	23.3%
Substance Abuse	TS-S	52	3.7%	28	53.8%	21	40.4%	3	5.8%
Sex Offenders	TS-Y	15	1.1%	10	66.7%	5	33.3%	0	0.0%
Infants and Toddlers	TS-I	26	1.9%	5	19.2%	20	76.9%	1	3.8%
Child Behavior	TS-B	209	14.9%	137	65.6%	63	30.1%	9	4.3%
Health and Safety	TS-H	51	3.6%	37	72.5%	10	19.6%	4	7.8%
Disorders/Issues	TS-D	169	12.1%	86	50.9%	72	42.6%	11	6.5%
Navigating Foster Care System	TS-F	186	13.3%	104	55.9%	68	36.6%	14	7.5%
Cultures/Cultural Issues	TS-C	23	1.6%	11	47.8%	11	47.8%	1	4.3%
Love and Logic	TS-L	18	1.3%	18	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
PRIDE	TS-P	148	10.6%	110	74.3%	17	11.5%	21	14.2%
Parenting Plus	TS-A	38	2.7%	24	63.2%	8	21.1%	6	15.8%
Other Trainings	TS-O	132	9.4%	77	58.3%	45	34.1%	10	7.6%
General Training		762	54.5%	398	52.2%	219	28.7%	145	19.0%
Caring for foster children	TG-C	322	23.0%	278	86.3%	26	8.1%	18	5.6%
Approaches to Training	TG-A	90	6.4%	56	62.2%	31	34.4%	3	3.3%
Resources	TG-R	80	5.7%	44	55.0%	34	42.5%	2	2.5%
Training Materials	TG-M	37	2.6%	16	43.2%	21	56.8%	0	0.0%
Other Training Comments	TG-O	395	28.3%	131	33.2%	220	55.7%	44	11.1%
Accessibility		458	32.8%	17	3.7%	433	94.5%	8	1.7%
Location	TA-L	143	10.2%	6	4.2%	135	94.4%	2	1.4%
Scheduling	TA-S	257	18.4%	12	4.7%	244	94.9%	1	0.4%
Childcare	TA-C	171	12.2%	2	1.2%	163	95.3%	6	3.5%
Other Accessibility Comments	TA-O	21	1.5%	1	4.8%	20	95.2%	0	0.0%
Training - Voice and Choice		234	16.7%	172	73.5%	50	21.4%	12	5.1%
Voice (and sense of community)	TV	199	14.2%	153	76.9%	37	18.6%	9	4.5%
Choice	TC	39	2.8%	22	56.4%	16	41.0%	1	2.6%
Training Information		60	4.3%	9	15.0%	48	80.0%	3	5.0%
Information related to trainings	TI	60	4.3%	9	15.0%	48	80.0%	3	5.0%
Training Formats		269	19.2%	103	38.3%	135	50.2%	31	11.5%
Online Training	TF-N	200	14.3%	65	32.5%	117	58.5%	18	9.0%
Library	TF-L	18	1.3%	5	27.8%	11	61.1%	2	11.1%
Support Group	TF-S	28	2.0%	26	92.9%	1	3.6%	1	3.6%
Other Formats	TF-O	46	3.3%	19	41.3%	22	47.8%	5	10.9%
Other		241	17.2%	39	16.2%	79	32.8%	123	51.0%
Other Support - Training & Groups	TOS	86	6.2%	39	45.3%	37	43.0%	10	11.6%
Response not about training	TO	83	5.9%	3	3.6%	53	63.9%	27	32.5%
Don't know	TDK	87	6.3%					87	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.

2013 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-2E:

   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?
   E. Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental and educational needs?

Response Options for Questions 2A-2E:

- ☐ *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?

2013 Foster Parent Survey

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

RDA Research & Data
Analysis Division