DSHS

Foster Parents Speak

2015

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Foster Parent Survey

May 2016 | Report 11.227

Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

RDA Research & Data
Analysis Division

DSHS

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Department of Social and Health Services

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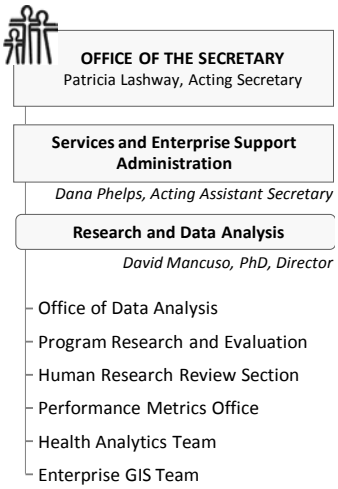

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Title: 2015 Foster Parent Survey: DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Abstract: Between September 2014 and August 2015, DSHS surveyed 1,358 foster parents who had a child in care on the 15th day of August 2014, November 2014, February 2015, or May 2015; or within 5 months before the interview date. 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 continue to express satisfaction with the support and training they receive, and with the social workers assigned to their cases. However, there were statistically significant declines from the previous year in positive responses concerning the overall quality of support, availability of help, and social workers listening to foster parent input. Some indicated that they would like better access to resources, faster and more flexible processes, greater inclusion in matters concerning foster children, and more complete and timely information about their foster children's cases. Some foster parents also suggested a need for more convenient training locations and schedules, more interaction with experienced foster parents in training, more on-line training, and more choice about which trainings they take.

This report is the fourth in a series of annual Foster Parent Survey reports completed by RDA.

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2015

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

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Highlights of the Survey

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The Highlights section is an executive summary of key findings from the 2015 Foster Parent Survey.

During the 2015 State Fiscal Year, the Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) conducted 1,358 telephone interviews with randomly selected foster parents in the state of Washington. The survey consisted of seven standardized questions and four open-ended questions, the responses to which were comprehensively coded and analyzed for this report.

The survey responses described in this report paint a portrait of the complexities, successes, and struggles of Washington's foster care system and the thousands of individuals who interact with it on a daily basis, from the perspective of foster parents. Individuals interacting with the entire system include:

- Children requiring foster care, who often have experienced trauma due to abuse, neglect or separation in their birth families.
- Foster parents trying to meet the complex needs of those children.
- Biological parents who have had difficulty caring for their children.
- Social workers and other professionals who must balance heavy caseloads, find safe placements for youth, and meet the needs of foster and biological parents while satisfying all legal requirements.

The foster parents who contributed to the survey are at the center of this system. Their voices have much to tell us about its areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and the importance of its impact on the lives of foster children.

Foster Parent Support

BRIGHT SPOTS

- ***Most foster parents said they are supported well (e.g. "more than" or "somewhat" adequately) by Children's Administration, specific programs and offices within the Administration, and private agencies contracted by the Administration to serve foster parents.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 75% responded positively to the question "In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?" (1,010 of the 1,352 who answered).
- Of the 441 comments about the general quality of foster parent support, 55% were positive (241 comments).

- ***Most foster parents said they can get help when they ask for it.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 78% responded positively to the question "Can you get help when you ask for it?" (1,030 of the 1,325 who answered).
- Of the 210 comments about having consistent contact with social workers, 62% were positive (131 comments).

- ***Most foster parents said that social workers listened to their input.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 80% responded positively to the question "Do social workers listen to your input?" (1,063 of the 1,325 who answered).
- Of the 260 comments about social workers listening and understanding, 58% were positive (150 comments).

CHALLENGES

- ***Some foster parents want more social workers hired. They state that even excellent social workers are too overworked to pay proper attention to the children and families they serve. There is concern that the overwork results in more staff turnover, which hurts foster families and slows the progress of the children's cases in court.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 153 respondents said that more social workers are needed.
- Although a majority of the comments about access were positive (309 or 54%), many of the 173 negative comments or suggestions for improvement indicated that social workers were difficult to reach or slow to respond.

- ***Some foster parents find processes of the foster care system to be cumbersome and unresponsive to their needs. They are critical of many processes and suggest many improvements.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 205 comments about general processes, 90% were negative or suggestions for improvement (184 comments).
- Of the 211 comments about specific processes, 89% were negative or suggestions for improvement (188 comments).
- Of the 70 comments on coordination, 84% were negative or suggestions for improvement (59 comments).

- ***Foster parents are clear about their need for improved access to resources for their foster children and their families, especially health resources, financial resources, and respite care.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 366 comments about resources, 51% were negative comments or suggestions for improvement (188 comments, including those referenced below).
- Of the 69 comments about financial resources, 74% were negative or suggestions for improvement (51 comments).
- Of the 69 comments about respite resources, 71% were negative or suggestions for improvement (49 comments). Slow payment for respite was a strong theme.
- Of the 76 comments about medical/dental/mental health resources, 54% were negative or suggestions for improvement (41 comments).

MIXED MESSAGES

- ***Most foster parents find the social workers assigned to their cases supportive, courteous and respectful, willing to listen, and understanding of their situations and needs. However, there were small but statistically significant declines from the past year in positive answers to the standard questions about overall support, availability of help, and social workers listening to foster parent input.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Although 75% responded positively to the question "In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?" the decline from the 79% positive response to this question in the prior year was statistically significant.
- Although 78% responded positively to the question "Can you get help if you ask for it?" the decline from the 81% positive response to this question in the prior year was statistically significant.
- Although 80% responded positively to the question "Do social workers listen to your input?" the decline from the 85% positive response to this question in the prior year was statistically significant.

- ***Foster parents' responses to standard questions about their inclusion in meetings and treatment as a team member were mostly positive. However, almost two out of three comments about social workers inclusiveness were negative or suggestions for improvement.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 73% responded positively to the question "Are you treated like part of the team?" (978 of the 1,338 who answered).
- 72% responded positively to the question "Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?" (938 of the 1,306 who answered).
- Of the 223 comments about social worker inclusiveness, 65% were negative or suggestions for improvement (145 comments).

- ***Foster parents' responses to the question about receiving adequate information about the needs of their children were generally positive. However, over half of the comments volunteered about the adequacy of information received were negative or suggestions.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 71% 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?" (934 of the 1,316 who answered).
- However, of the 640 comments concerning information, 53% were negative or suggestions for improvement (341 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

- 85% 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?" (1,129 of the 1,336 who answered).
- Of the 401 comments about the overall helpfulness and quality of their training, 80% were positive (322 comments).
- Of the 127 comments about trainers, 62% were positive (79 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

- Of the 164 comments about the ways in which foster parents' training helps them care for their foster children, 75% were positive (123 comments).
- Of the 78 comments about ways in which training helps foster parents find resources for their foster children, 62% were positive (48 comments).

- ***Foster parents value the information and sense of community they get from interaction with their peers in training, especially when they can meet and learn from experienced foster parents.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 252 comments about having a voice and sense of community in training, 76% were positive (191 comments).
- Most positive comments related to voice and sense of community consisted of statements of appreciation for the presence of experienced foster parents in training activities, and for opportunities to connect with other foster parents in and out of training. Most negative comments were statements of concern that opportunities for interaction were lacking.

CHALLENGES

- ***Foster parents want training locations closer to home to reduce travel time, and class times that accommodate their work schedules. They also need childcare available during training, or assistance with childcare costs when training requires them to be away from home.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 416 comments about access-to-training issues, 90% were negative or suggestions for improvement (374 comments, including those referenced below).
- Of the 129 comments about training locations, 91% were negative or suggestions for improvement (117 comments).
- Of the 222 comments about training schedules, 91% were negative or suggestions for improvement (201 comments).
- Of the 171 comments about childcare during training, 95% were negative or suggestions for improvement (163 comments).
- Of the 62 comments about the quality and timeliness of information about training, 85% were negative (53 comments).

MIXED MESSAGES

- ***Foster parents like non-traditional training formats, particularly on-line resources that offer comprehensive and convenient training options, and support groups that allow them to interact with other foster parents. But there is room for improvement in both cases.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 151 comments about on-line training, 54% were negative or suggestions for improvement (81 comments). The majority of these "negative" comments were requests for **more** on-line trainings, but there were also some complaints about outdated materials.
- Of the 19 comments about training received in support group settings, 85% were positive.

- ***Foster parents gave high marks to many specific trainings, or types of training, they have received. However, many foster parents want trainings on a wider variety of topics, and more on navigating the foster care system, child behavior, drug-exposed infants, and other topics.***

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 827 comments about specific trainings, 58% were positive, 17% were mixed/neutral, and 25% were negative or suggestions for improvement. Many mixed/neutral and negative comments were requests for training or for more training on certain topics, rather than criticisms of existing trainings.
- Of the 217 comments about child behavior trainings, 64% were positive (138 comments).
- Of the 184 comments concerning navigation of the foster care system, 45% were positive (83 comments). Many negative comments were actually suggestions for more training in this area.
- Of the 181 comments on disorders and related issues, 55% were positive (100 comments). Again, many negatives were suggestions for more training in this area.
- Of the 98 comments concerning Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE, 83% were positive (81 comments).
- Of the 50 comments about health and safety training, 76% were positive (38 comments).
- Of the 46 comments on substance abuse training, 59% were positive (27 comments). Again, most of the negative comments suggested more training in this area.

Survey Facts

- This report presents results from the fourth annual Foster Parent Survey report completed by RDA (2015).
- The report summarizes the results of a rolling survey for State Fiscal Year 2015, conducted between September 1, 2014 and August 31, 2015.
- 1,358 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 2014, November 2014, February 2015, or May 2015.
- Interpreters were available for all languages, and alternative methods were available for deaf and hard-of-hearing respondents.
- The survey's **92% completion rate** is extraordinarily high. Of the 1,479 eligible foster parents in the sample, 1,358 completed the survey.
- The survey's **95% cooperation rate** is also high. Of the 1,416 eligible foster parents *contacted*, only 51 refused to take the survey. Another 26 were not available during the study period.
- Participation was voluntary and respondents could decline to answer any question. The number of answers per question varied between 1306 (96%) at lowest, and a maximum of 1,352 (99%).

Survey Results at a Glance

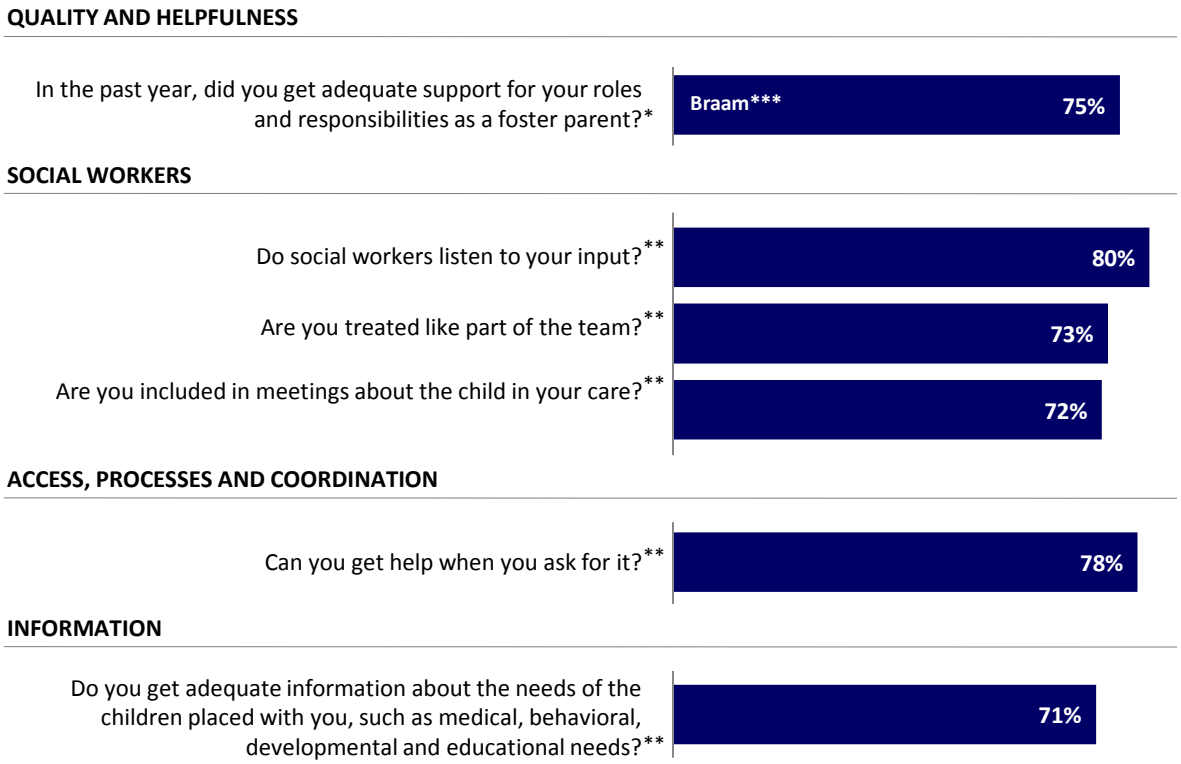
The survey analysis is based on two types of questions – standard (closed-ended) questions and open-ended questions.

There are seven standard questions – two compliance questions related to the Braam Settlement and Exit Agreement ("Quality and Helpfulness" and "Adequacy of Training"), and five questions designed to assist in strategic planning for foster parent support.

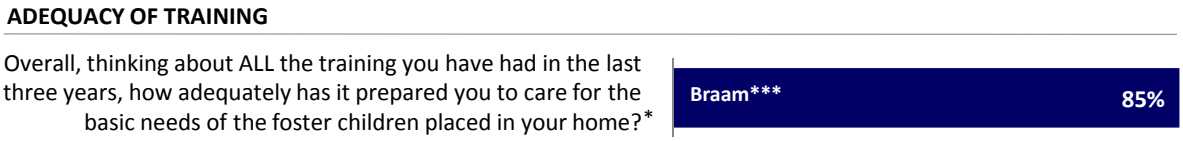
In addition, there are four open-ended questions – two relating to foster parent support, and two relating to foster parent training. Responses to the two foster parent support questions are summarized in the chart on the next page (page 7); responses to the two foster parent training questions are summarized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

2015 Foster Parent Survey satisfaction rates

Regarding Foster Parent Support . . .

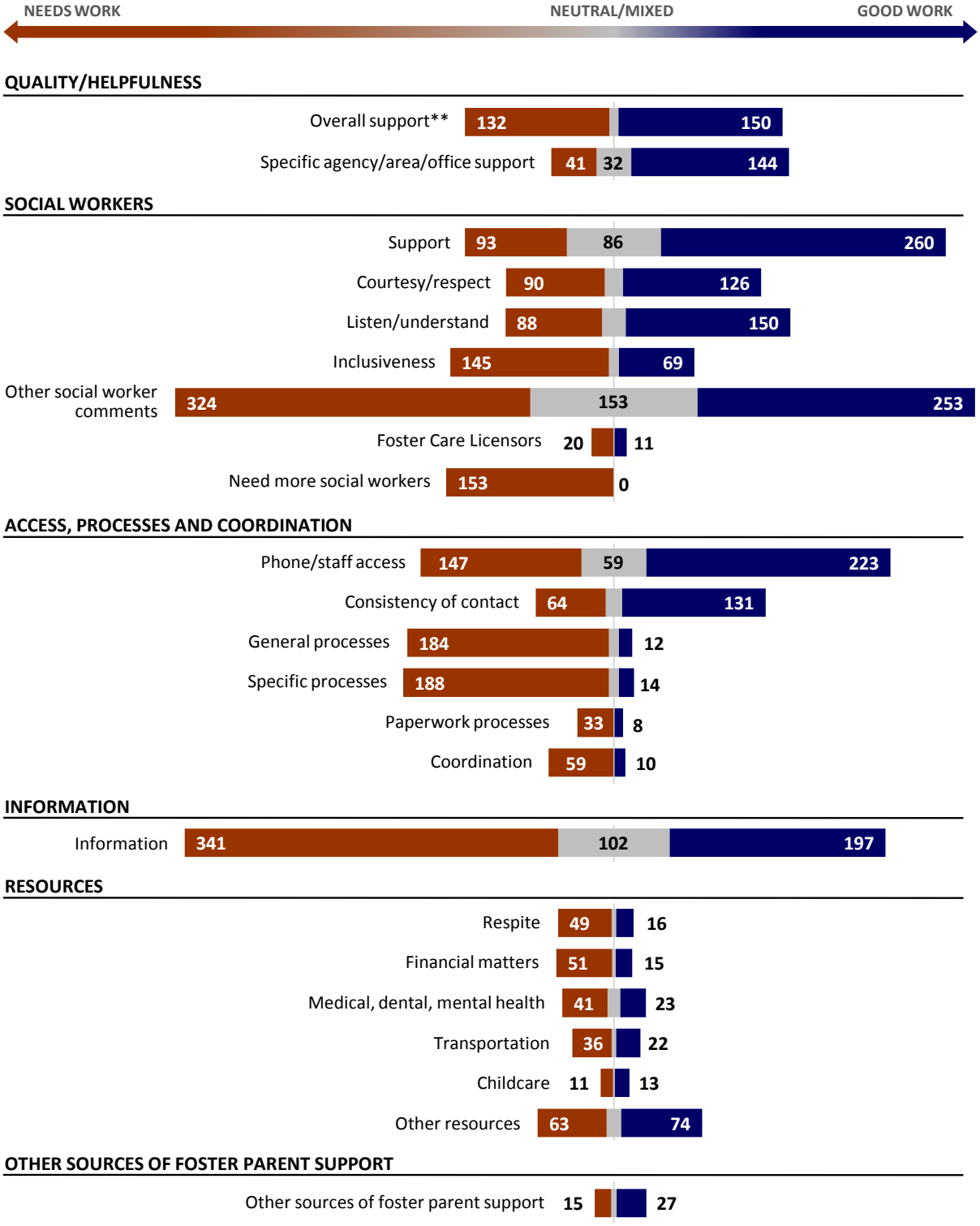


Regarding Foster Parent Training . . .



* Percentage shown is the percent who answered "More than adequate" or "Somewhat adequate."
** Percentage shown is the percent who answered "Always or Almost Always" or "Usually."
*** Questions for "Quality and Helpfulness" and "Adequacy of Training" are related to the Braam Settlement and Exit Agreement.

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



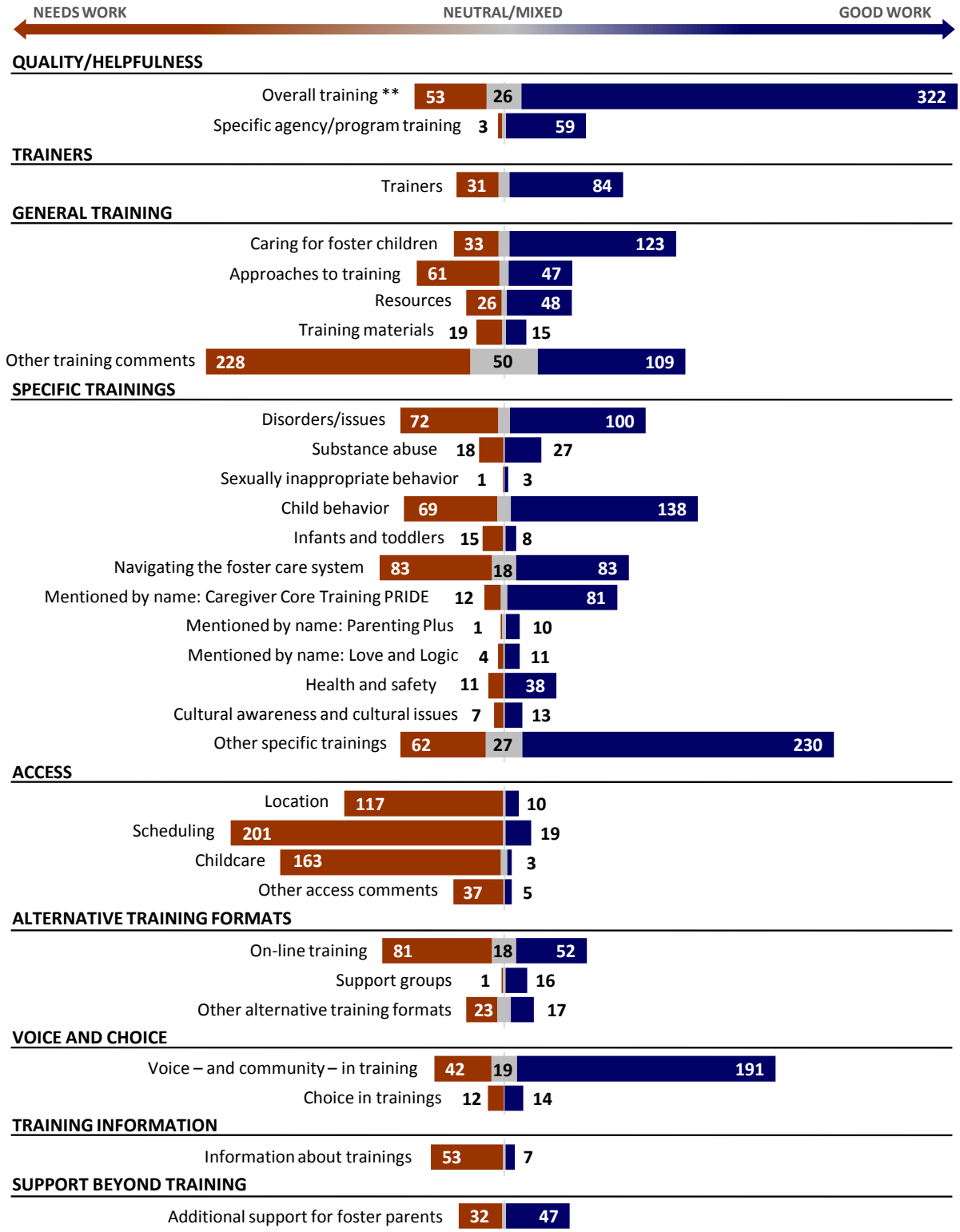
* Narrative comments were made in response to two questions:

- *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 narrative response themes and a response glossary can be found in the Appendix.

**Overall support includes unduplicated general comments about Children's Administration support and "Nothing" answers. See p.13 for more explanation.

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 narrative response themes and a response glossary can be found in the Appendix.

**Overall training includes unduplicated general comments about training and "Nothing" answers. See p.55 for more explanation.

PART 1

Foster Parent Support

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Part 1 of this report (Foster Parent Support) provides a detailed analysis of foster parents' responses to questions about the support they receive when caring for foster children.

The majority of foster parents reported that the level of support they receive is adequate or more than adequate. Many commended the support provided by Children's Administration and private agencies, the skills and efforts of social workers, the commitment of social workers to meet the needs of the children, and the range of resources that are provided.

Many foster parents also noted areas where they would like improved support. They would like more productive relationships with their assigned social workers, less turnover in social workers, more listening, more timely responses to their requests, more information about their foster child's case and available resources, and consistent access to resources. Most of all, they want to be valued members of a team that prioritizes the needs and interests of foster children.

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

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

This section describes the overall quality and helpfulness of the support received by foster parents from Children's Administration and from private agencies contracted by Children's Administration to provide services to foster parents. Subsequent sections present and summarize foster parents' experiences with specific aspects of foster parent support – social workers, access, processes, coordination, information, resources, and additional supports.

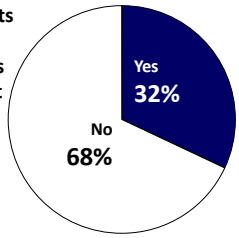
There was a statistically significant decline in ratings of overall support. However, the majority of foster parents indicated satisfaction with the support they receive, and many survey respondents expressed gratitude to those who help them do the best for the children in their care. A substantial minority described challenges or suggestions for improvement.

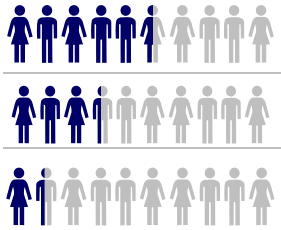
In this section:

- The following page (12) 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 next two pages (13-14) describe foster parents' comments about the quality and helpfulness of support from Children's Administration, and from specific offices or agencies.

About one third of the survey respondents (441 of 1,358, or 32%) commented on the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support. Of their comments:

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of foster parent support?





- More than half (55%) were positive.
- About one in three (31%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.
- Over one of ten (14%) were mixed or neutral.

1.1 Quality and Helpfulness

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The majority of foster parents reported that support is good or adequate.

"They have been awesome, I can't think of any way they could have been better."

"They are almost always there to help."

"They do a good job so I have no comments."

"The agency offers great support. They consult and offer support."

"As a new foster parent, so far everything is good."

"Almost everything they do is good."

"I don't have any complaints. They are doing a pretty good job. They have been spot on."

"Things are working very well, so no suggestions."

"They are very supportive."

"Everybody is doing a good job."

"The DSHS support has been wonderful and you cannot ask for nicer people."

"Things are going ok."

A few foster parents reported mixed or neutral experiences with support.

"As far as DSHS staff go, it depends on which social worker I deal with."

"The private agency offers tons of support. When DSHS does finally respond, they are helpful."

Others are not satisfied with the support provided.

"We're giving up our license due to lack of support."

"There is not much done well."

"DSHS does nothing."

"The whole system is broken."

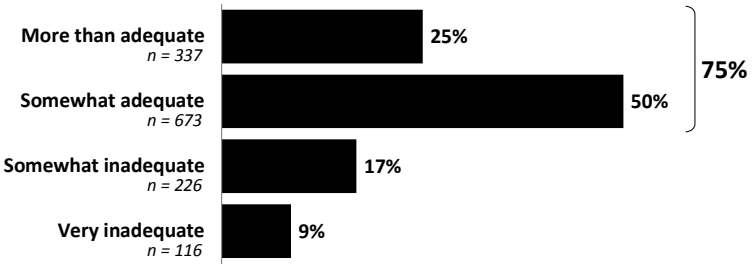
"Whenever I would ask for help they would never help me. Nothing to support me."

"I am not sure who my support is or who is supposed to support me. Who stands up for me in all of this?"

"Not much – do not feel supported."

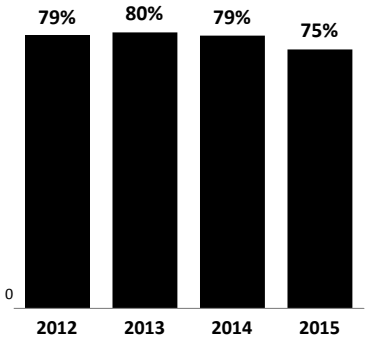
QUESTION | In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?

Of the 1,352 foster parents who answered this question, three quarters (75%) reported that they received somewhat or more than adequate support in the past year. The remaining quarter (26%) found support somewhat or very inadequate.



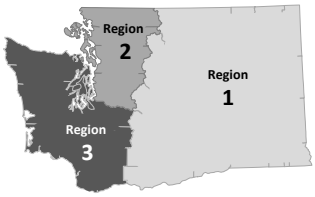
STATE TREND

There was a statistically significant decline of four percentage points from last year.



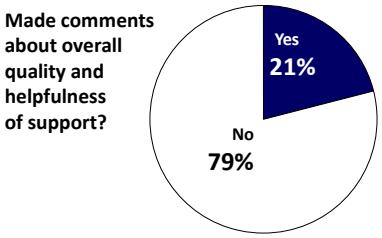
REGIONAL DETAIL

There was no statistically significant variation by region.



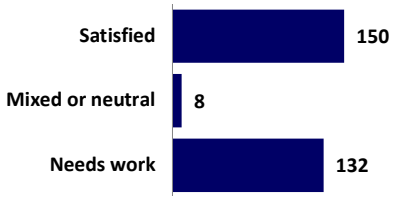
THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Support Received from Children's Administration

Comments about the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support received from Children's Administration (CA) were included in this category.[1]



290 of the foster parents surveyed (21%) mentioned general support.

Of the 290 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support and made comments, more than half (52%) made positive comments. Slightly less than half (46%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Very few (3%) made mixed or neutral comments.



These general comments include 152 comments made by respondents who answered "Nothing" when asked what could improve – or what was good.

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

These comments also include 180 foster parents who provided more specific descriptions in praising or criticizing the general quality of support.

- 106 made a specific positive comment about overall support (59% of specific comments).
- 66 criticized overall support in specific terms (37% of specific comments).
- 8 offered specific neutral or mixed comments (4% of specific comments).

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

"The CPS workers have walked my family through a very difficult situation and helped us get through this."

"DSHS – they include me in meetings, give me reports about action that is happening in a case, they offer resources. Private agency staff supports more in terms of answering questions about the process and providing emotional support for me as a foster parent."

"DSHS staff and private agency staff are good with responses and they always provide what info that I need."

"Private agency and DSHS tell us about hearings, procedures and what's coming to affect the child's welfare."

"Both private agency and DSHS home visits are good."

Others find CA support lacking.

"DSHS – I have had some good social workers, but the one I have now doesn't answer my questions. It made me scramble to stay in compliance."

"We have dealt with a private agency, the Tribal Agency and DSHS and I have not had any positive experiences through the State."

"Because of a very difficult foster child…we were put under investigation. We were exonerated since they were lies. No one at DSHS ever apologized for the hell they put us through. We are very disappointed in that."

"I had a kid leave a couple of months ago who had been with me for ten years. He was a really tough kid who would have likely bounced around, had I not stuck with him. When he left, they came and picked him up and that was that. That was very disappointing. I just wish they would give me a bit of recognition for hanging on for the kid's best interests as long as I did."

[1] As described on the lower part of this page, positive and negative comments were combined with "Nothing" responses according to question context.

Getty Images/Hemera

Some foster parents commented on support they did or did not receive from Children's Administration offices.

"We have had a very positive experience with Children's Services in Spokane and Long Beach."

"The King County offices were very timely with their communication and receptive to our needs."

"The Yakima office has a placement coordinator that is awesome!"

"Our Bellingham case is handled well."

"The Colfax office does well in supporting and communication."

"Everybody at Smokey Point is wonderful to work with."

"King County DCS office in Bellevue needs more case worker involvement."

"We have a case out of Kent and nothing goes well. No support."

"We moved from Clark County 6 months ago. Those workers provided help immediately or if they were away, a supervisor or back up would respond right away. We are currently in Cowlitz County and they are just the opposite, we can't get any response or support."

"We have kids from Thurston County, and they are great. But Mason County, the workers from there are terrible."

"Pierce County Foster Parent program was not supportive."

"Kitsap County was very bad. They were not receptive to our needs."

Respondents also discussed support from the private agencies or Tribes.

"I don't feel very supported by the State. My private agency is doing a great job though."

"Our private agency returns our phone calls. They are supportive. They seem appreciative of what we are doing."

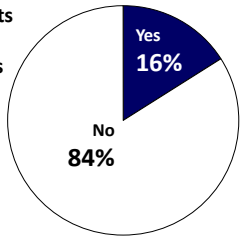
"My worker from Lummi Indian Reservation is awesome."

"If I were not a private agency foster parent and supported solely by DSHS social worker staff, I probably would not be a foster parent!"

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

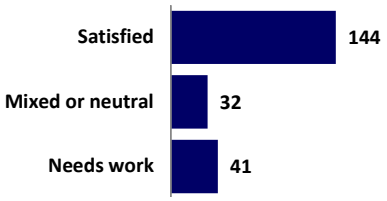
Comments about the quality and helpfulness of support received from particular private agencies, or from a specific Children's Administration area or office, were included in this category. 16% of respondents commented about support from a specific entity.

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



217 of the foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned support from specific agencies, areas or offices.

Of the 217 foster parents who mentioned specific agencies, offices, or Tribes, nearly two out of three (66%) made positive comments. Nearly one in five (19%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 15% described mixed or neutral experiences.



In some cases, comments about specific agencies, areas, or offices may be based on experiences with individual staff members. Comments 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

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want positive, timely, supportive, friendly, respectful, and productive interactions with social workers.

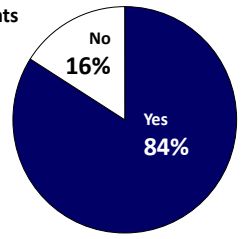
Many foster parents reported they are pleased with the support they receive from social workers – those employed by Children's Admistration and those employed by agencies contracted with Children's Administration. However, challenges were also reported in: making foster parents part of the team, communication, responding effectively when problems arise, and successfully managing heavy caseloads. Foster parents were significantly less likely than in the prior year to say that workers listened to their input. Many foster parents identified social worker turnover and high caseloads as causes of problems for children, families and the progress of cases.

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 licensing; and the need for more social workers.
- Three pages (18 and 20-21) provide foster parents' responses to specific questions.
- The remaining seven pages (16-17, 19, and 22-25) address foster parents' comments on various themes related to social workers.

Over four out of five of the foster parents surveyed (1134 out of 1358, or 84%) made comments about social workers. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about social workers?



- About three out of ten (31%) made positive comments (355).

- About three out of ten (29%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement (324).

- Four out of ten (40%) made mixed or neutral comments (455).

1.2 Social Workers

Getty Images/Creatas

Most foster parents appreciate the social worker support they receive.

"Social worker is always outstanding – both DSHS and private agency."

"Our current social worker is awesome. Most social workers have been good."

"All the social workers we've had up to now have been helpful."

"I am in a tough situation with my foster child and they are behind me 100%."

"They give me moral support when I feel overloaded."

"I have had really awesome social workers."

"I would say most staff are pretty awesome."

"She always gives me support. If I am struggling, she figures out something to help me out."

Some are dissatisfied with their social worker support.

"We are going through something really tough right now and it doesn't seem like they are supporting us now when we need them."

"I don't feel supported."

Others reported that support depends on the individual social worker.

"I think it depends on the social worker. I have received more support from some workers than others."

"It's very hard to rate them, because some are good and some are awful – they shouldn't even be in the job."

"I have four girls and two different social workers. One is great. The other is totally unavailable."

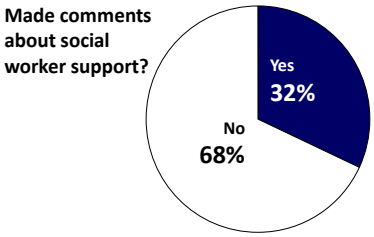
"If you get a social worker who actually gets involved and cares for the kids, the support is good."

"We had four different social workers involved this past year. Only one was inadequate. Others were great!"

"Our new social worker is supporting us, so we now feel well supported."

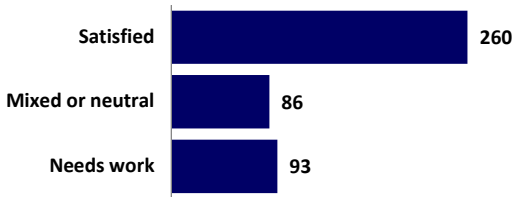
THEME | Social Worker Support

Almost three in ten foster parents commented at least once on the overall quality of social worker support (rather than on specific social worker attributes, such as respect or understanding).



Of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed, 439 (32%) mentioned general social worker support in their comments.

Of the 439 comments on general social worker support, almost six in ten were positive (59%). Two in ten (21%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two in ten (20%) made mixed or neutral comments.



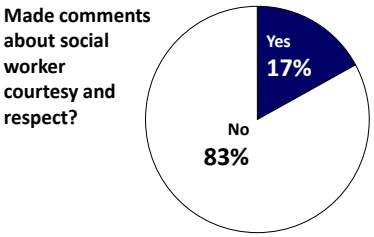
Comments about the quality of social worker support included foster parents' thoughts about:

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

Although most comments praised the support provided by social workers, some indicated the level of support should be higher or that it varied greatly between social workers.

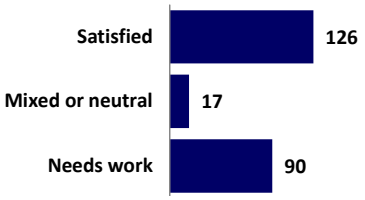
THEME | Social Worker Courtesy and Respect

Comments about courtesy and respect shown to foster parents by social workers were included in this category. 17% of survey respondents made a comment about social worker courtesy and respect.



Almost two in ten (233 or 17%) of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed mentioned social worker courtesy and respect.

Of the 233 foster parents who addressed social worker courtesy and respect, more than half (54%) made positive comments. Almost four in ten (39%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. The remaining 17 (7%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents are *grateful* when social workers:

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

Foster parents are *displeased* when social workers:

- Are rude, inconsiderate, or unprofessional.
- Are judgmental.
- 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.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want social workers to be courteous and friendly.

"The social workers were nice, caring and friendly."

"The social workers were thorough, well organized, and respectful."

"The social workers provide understanding and emotional support when things go badly. They feel our pain and they want to help. They often share in my frustrations and we have a good camaraderie."

"Our current social worker is amazing. She is always ready to answer my questions and is always polite."

"DSHS should not vent their frustration and anger so verbally. The social worker should not be rude to the foster parents or private agency."

"The social workers need to cease being rude to the foster parents and the biological parents. Stop bullying, threatening, being disrespectful."

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

"They care a lot about the kids."

"I think they care about the children and what happens to the children."

"They need better emotional support or sympathy to the foster child."

"A child's mother passed away, but no one from the Department sent him a card or anything. They tell the kids that they care, but nobody shows them."

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

"I feel respected. They understand how hard I am working as a foster parent."

"They treat me with respect and like I know something."

"They need to recognize the foster parents for all the good work they do."

"Not a lot of respect is shown toward foster parents."

"We are trying to help and need to be respected. Sometimes I feel like I am treated as the scum of the earth."

1.2 Social Workers

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents like social workers who are good listeners.

"They listen when I have concerns."

"The workers who support well are good at listening and understand the child's needs and have the child's best interest at heart."

"I feel very listened to by my social worker although she doesn't always have the resources to help our situation."

"She does a good job of listening to what I need."

"They communicate well and listen. I feel supported by them."

"Our current social worker truly listens to us."

"They take my point of view. They listen to my concerns."

"The good ones are very open to listening to me and my concerns."

"I feel like I am heard when I call with a concern. I understand that the local office is very understaffed, but I feel when I do reach my social worker that they treat me with respect and really listen to what I am saying."

"Communication – she is a great communicator and responds pretty quickly given the large caseload she has."

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

"They could listen to me. Make us feel like we matter."

"Listen, treat foster parents with respect."

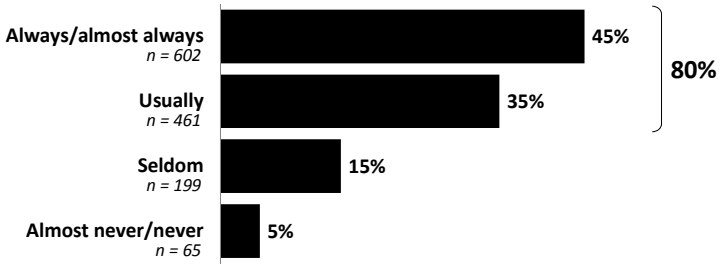
"Listen to what we are saying and be open to suggestion by the foster parents."

"The social workers need to listen to the foster parents. We have the kids 24 hours a day – our input is important."

"All social workers could listen better. They could respect the foster parent by giving us more notice about the foster child going someplace when we already have made plans."

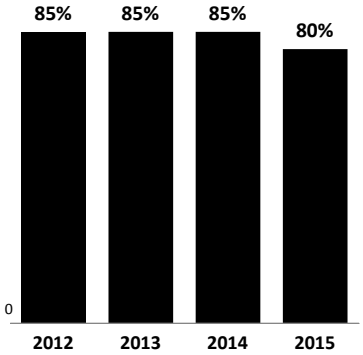
QUESTION | Do social workers listen to your input?

The majority of the 1,327 foster parents who answered this question (80%) said that social workers always, almost always, or usually listened to their input. The remaining 20% said seldom, almost never, or never.



STATE TREND

There was a statistically significant decline of 5 percentage points from last year.

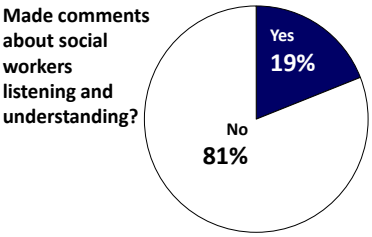


REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 2 was slightly higher (82%) on this question than the other two Regions (80% and 79%), but the difference was not statistically significant.

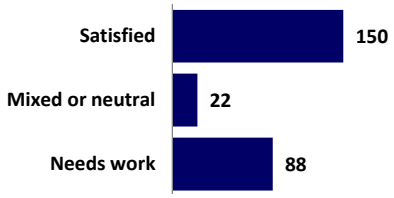
THEME | Social Workers Listen/Understand

Comments about social workers' ability to listen to and understand foster parents were included in this category. 19% of foster parents surveyed made a comment about social workers listening and understanding.



260 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (19%) mentioned social workers listening and understanding.

Of the 260 survey respondents who addressed social workers' ability to listen and understand, almost six in ten (58%) made positive comments. One third (34%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eight percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents said that their social workers:

- Are good listeners.
- Take foster parents' ideas and concerns into account when making decisions about foster children.
- Listen to – and support them – when they discuss the children's needs.
- Understand the needs of foster parents and foster children.

Some suggested that social workers should:

- 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.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want social workers to *listen* to what they have to say.

"They always listen and answer our questions or needs."

"They have kept me involved, listened to my input for most the year."

"They could actually listen to how I am doing and respond accordingly. They are not good listeners."

"They could listen to how I feel, and my ideas on how to deal with the child, or just listen to what is going on. They don't hear me and make me feel like I am the problem."

They also want social workers to understand their circumstances.

"Most of them have let me be honest and rant and rave."

"They could have a better understanding of the emotional roller coaster ride a foster parent goes through with these children."

"We do this because we want to help these kids and we are the ones up in the middle of the nights, and wiping their tears and having their backs. Our job doesn't end at 5 pm and when we need help, we need the workers to be there for us and listen."

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

"They listen to me when I need services for the child and walk me through the process I need to go through."

"Anything that I advocate for a foster child in my care, I can usually get."

"They do listen to my recommendation for things. "

"Listen to what the foster parents say as they have the children 24/7 and know what the children need."

"Pay better attention to input from foster parents regarding the children. Many of us have a lot of experience with kids and we should be heard."

"They need to listen more carefully to foster parents' assessment of the foster child's needs."

1.2 Social Workers

Getty Images/Blend Images

Most foster parents feel valued as a team member.

"Biggest is their team approach – all working to the same end."

"Children's Administration employees have always been there for me. We work well as a team."

"She responds quickly and keeps us in the loop."

"They treat me as a valued member of the team – they make regular visits and phone calls once a month. I have no complaints."

"They treat me as a member of the team; open, never left out, listen, good information."

"All work as a team to help us get what we need."

"That's a strange question. We work as a team and we're always on the same team."

"They are really listening and working with us as a team. I've had two social workers and they were both great."

"They include us as part of the team and they are respectful to us and they put the child's interests first."

Some feel excluded from the caregiving team.

"I know you have a big caseload, but most of the time it is a guessing game as to what is going on with the child and we need information so that we can do our best job for this child. I know some things are private, but tell us what you can."

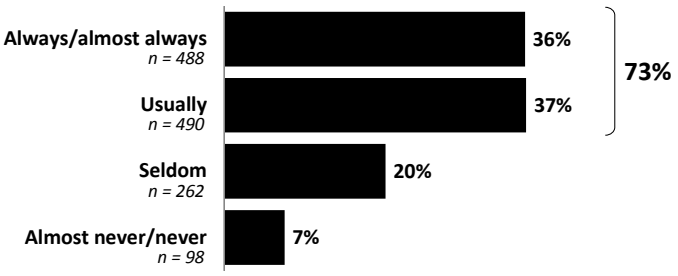
"Include foster parents in more of the decision making."

"They could treat you like an actual part of the team."

"Sometimes I feel like I am just a babysitter. I pick him up at day care and he stays with me, but I never feel like I can talk to my social worker about the outcome of the meetings with his mom. Sometimes I really feel like I would like to, especially when his behavior changes kind of dramatically after one of those meetings."

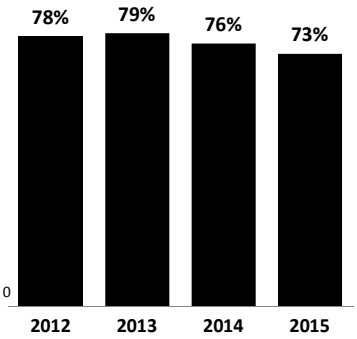
QUESTION | Are you treated like part of the team?

Nearly three quarters of the 1,338 foster parents who answered this question (73%) reported they are usually or always treated like part of the team. Just over one quarter (27%) said seldom or never.



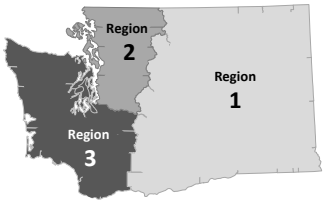
STATE TREND

There was a small decrease in this percentage compared to last year. The change was not statistically significant, but there appears to be an ongoing negative trend after 2013.



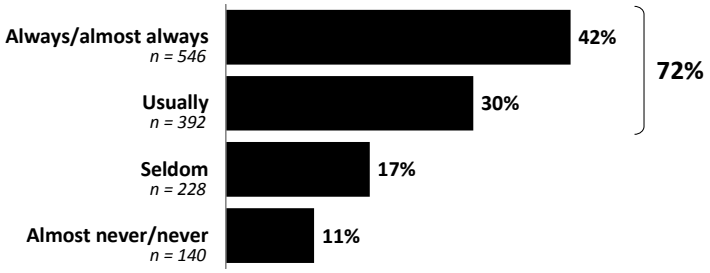
REGIONAL DETAIL

Region 2 (71%) was slightly lower than Regions 2 and 3 (74% each), but the difference was not statistically significant.



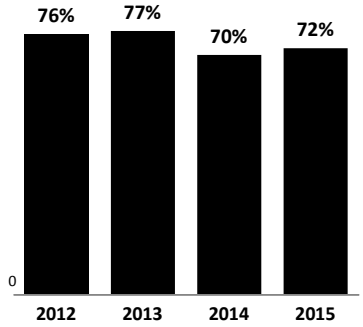
QUESTION | Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?

Seven out of ten of the 1,306 foster parents who answered this question (72%) reported they are usually or always included in meetings about the child in their care. Just under three out of ten (28%) indicated they are seldom or never included.



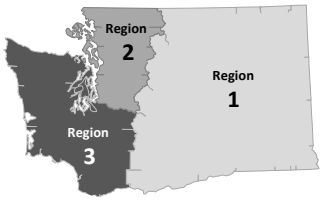
STATE TREND

The increase of two percent from 2014 to 2015 was not statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

Responses in Region 1 were more positive (75%) than in Regions 2 (70%) and 3 (71%), but the difference was not statistically significant.



Getty Images/Wavebreak Media

Most foster parents feel included in meetings about their foster children.

"They included us in the meetings."

"Even as a receiving home, we get invited to the Family Team Decision Making meeting."

"1624 meetings have been great."

"They always try to include us in meetings and that has gotten a lot better recently."

"They listen and if there are changes that need to be made, we have a meeting and we get it done."

"They have included me in meetings but that is it."

"One of my social workers includes me in all of the court meetings and plans. One of the workers kept me informed of the biological parents' status."

"We also work with DSHS social workers and we are always invited to team meetings, they let us know about the court dates, etc."

"When it comes to involvement in cases, we always have the option to participate with DSHS."

Others report they are left out.

"Include the foster parents in meetings concerning the child in care with the future plans."

"Include me in meetings about the child."

"Include the foster parents in the meetings, court dates, the whole process of the child and what is going on with them."

"I think I should be invited to more meetings and kept better informed."

"They could include us in the meetings with the biological parents and not have predetermined decisions made before any meetings."

"Include me in the meetings when it comes to stating the level of care that my kids are at. This is referring to DSHS staff."

"We were never invited to the meetings about the child."

1.2 Social Workers

Getty Images/Pixland

Foster parents appreciate social workers using their input.

"They do listen to my ideas and suggestions. They are open to input."

"They listen to what I have to say and advocate accordingly."

"More receptiveness to our input."

"Listen to our feedback. Provide support when we ask for it. They make us jump through so many hoops before they actually do something."

"Listen to us as a check-in. Sometimes we just need conversation. It is difficult to have that quality of communication when it appears the social worker is rushed."

"Please honor the input of foster parents."

They want to be included in planning for the children in their care.

"They usually listen and usually together we can come up with a solution to handle a situation. I have a great worker from CA right now."

"They did a great job helping us get the medical and mental health services we needed for our kid. Our social worker taught us that we need to advocate for our foster kid because the more we do it, the better our chances are of getting him what we need."

"Communicate better and include me in the major decision processes."

"Social workers need to include foster parents in decisions that are happening with the children in their care."

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

"I would say they do well keeping us in the loop as to what is going on."

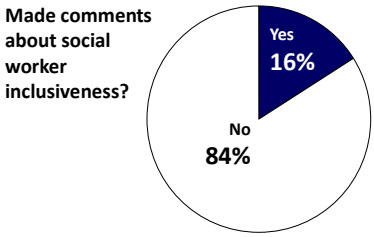
"The social workers need to keep the foster parents informed on decisions and keep them in the loop."

"Give us more accurate information about the case and its progress."

"Respond. Keep us in the loop."

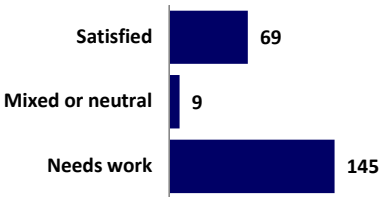
THEME | Social Worker Inclusiveness

Comments about social workers' inclusion – or exclusion – of foster parents in matters concerning their foster children were included in this category. 16% of survey respondents commented on social worker inclusiveness.



223 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned social worker inclusiveness.

Of the 223 survey respondents who addressed social worker inclusiveness, three in ten (31%) made positive comments. Two thirds (65%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Four percent 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 timely updates on their foster children's cases.
- Include them more in decision-making, meetings, and court hearings.

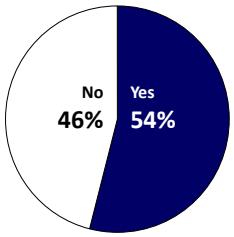
Others appreciate that social workers:

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

THEME | Other Comments about Social Workers

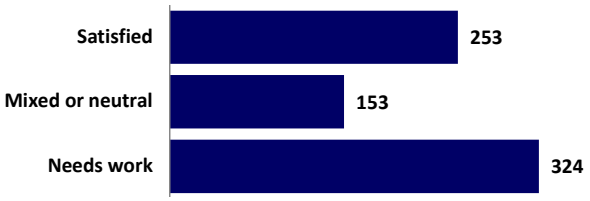
All comments about social workers that did not refer to general support, courtesy, respect, listening, understanding, or inclusiveness were categorized as "other" social worker comments.

Made other comments about social workers?



730 of the foster parents surveyed (54%) made other comments about social workers.

Of the 730 survey respondents who made other comments about social workers, about one third (35%) made positive comments. Nearly half (44%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 21% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents commended social workers for:

- Providing good service, including quick responses and follow-through.
- Solving problems efficiently and effectively.
- Being well-trained and knowledgeable.
- Communicating clearly and honestly.
- Advocating for the children and the foster family.

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 and respond more quickly.

Getty Images/Design Pics

Foster parents like social workers who are effective problem solvers and responsive to their needs.

"They are good about getting the kids counseling and other resources. They seem committed to keeping these kids in a good placement and try their best to get us the help we need."

"They are responsive to my needs."

"Respond more quickly when I have a need. Follow through with things promised."

"If a foster parent says they need help, the social workers need to listen and set up meetings to discuss how things could be worked out to prevent having to move the child."

They also value social workers who provide good service and advocacy.

"Communication is great. Our social worker gives us opportunities to be involved. We have access to everyone involved with the child. We feel our social worker is an advocate for both us and the child. Our social worker has done an outstanding job in communication, support, advocacy. We could not ask for better in the job."

"Some workers do their job really well, and confirm the receipt of e-mails, and when a child is placed with you, some workers give you some of the basic necessities, like diapers, formula, etc. Some are good listeners and actually hear what you are saying."

"We have one amazing social worker and three terrible social workers. The amazing social worker is good at communicating, she talks to us even about little things. We never feel like we ask a stupid question when we are talking with her."

Foster parents want social workers to have good communication skills.

"Good communicator and forthright with us and felt included in the loop."

"Communicate better. Respond to e-mails and calls in a timely manner."

1.2 Social Workers

Getty Images/iStock

Thirteen people provided a full name.

"Please never lose Ashley Riffe!"

"Jennifer Horner – need more like her."

"Tammara Grant is great."

"Sarah Warren is amazing."

"Catherine McEnderfer goes beyond!"

"I appreciate Catherine McEnderfer."

"Dorothy Peterson and Alec Jasaur were amazing social workers."

"Miguel Ortiz has been really great."

"Charles Loeffler was the best!"

"Carla Dragich – she has been absolutely great and wonderful."

"Danille Miller and Sandra Womack."

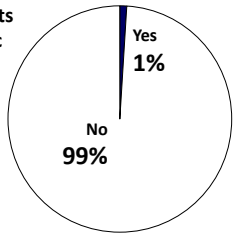
"I have had a lot. Some were good like Karen O'Leary and some were not."

"Kate Paull and Kate Schmidt have been great advocates for our family."

THEME | Specific Social Workers

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

Made comments about a specific social worker?



15 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific social worker in their comments.

All of the foster parents who commented on a specific social worker made positive comments.

1.2 Social Workers

Getty Images/Blend Images

Two out of three comments on licensing were negative.

"Licensor is awesome."

"My licensor was horrible. I stopped fostering because of the licensor."

"Foster care licensing was a nightmare. It took ten months to get our license. The papers were lost. They changed what they wanted."

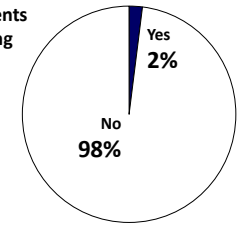
"Licensing could be less adversarial and 'got you.'"

"Licensor was very good and answered all my questions."

THEME | Foster Care Licensing

Comments about the quality of support foster care licensors provide to foster parents were included in this category. Two percent of survey respondents made a comment about foster care licensing support.

Made comments about licensing support?

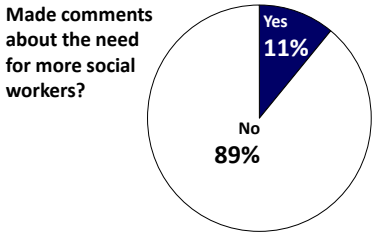


32 of the foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned foster care licensing support.

Of the 32 foster parents who addressed foster care licensing support, one in three (34%) made positive comments. One made a mixed or neutral comment. Almost two in three (63%) comments were negative.

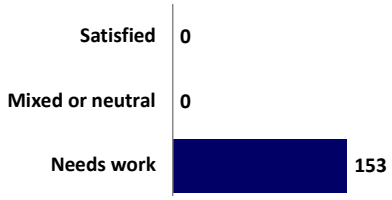
THEME | Need More Social Workers

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



153 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned the need for more social workers.

Of the 153 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 hinder social workers' ability to support foster families.
- High social worker turnover makes it hard to develop positive relationships between social workers and foster families.
- High turnover makes it hard to provide continuity of care for the foster child, and slows the progress of the cases in court.

As noted above, all comments in this category underscored the need for more social workers.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents believe social workers should have smaller caseloads.

"They seem overwhelmed with work. I've been doing this for 18 years and this is the worst I have ever seen it. They are understaffed."

"Give the workers more resources so they have more time to work on each case. They are too stretched for time."

"Reduce caseloads!"

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

"My social worker had a caseload of 50 foster children! I don't know how she can keep up with that and that time commitment trickles down to me since she doesn't have time to contact us when she should with appointments or with court related issues."

"The social workers are way too overworked. This does not lend itself to providing good and timely services to the children."

"Caseloads are too high for the social workers to do a thorough job with each case."

"There is way too much work for too few social workers. They only have time to put out the fires. They have an impossible task with such huge caseloads."

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

"Another delay occurs every time there is a change in social worker. Reduce the turnover of social workers."

"I have two different social workers at the private agency. I had three different ones with the state this year. For another child there were three different social workers. That is a lot of turnover."

"Way too much turnover in social workers. There is always someone new working on the case."

Access, Processes, and Coordination

Getty Images/Purestock

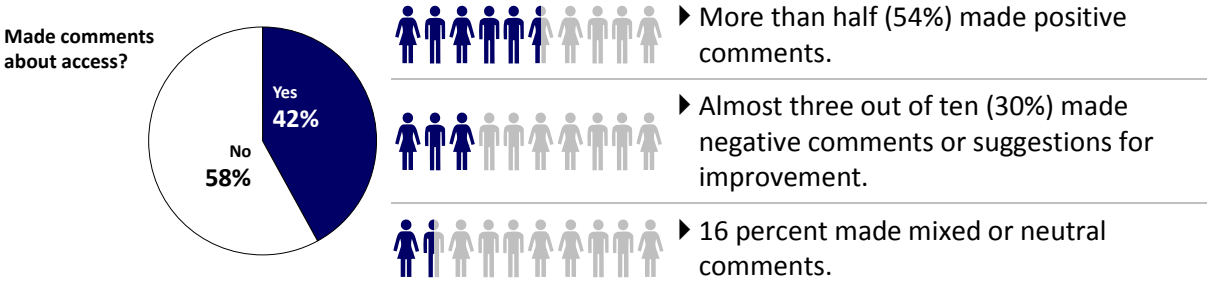
Foster parents need effective access to support and services.

The majority of foster parents say they can get help from their social workers when they need it. However, some report problems with access and there was a statistically significant decline in positive responses to the question "Can you get help when you ask for it?" Many respondents suggested that both agency processes and coordination of services for foster parents are in need of improvement.

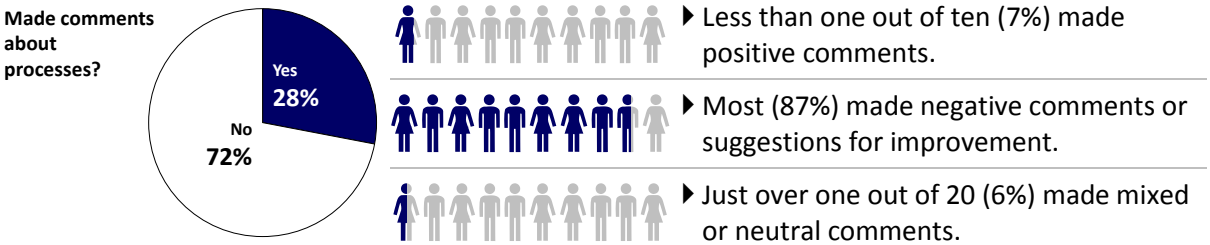
In this section:

- Topics are addressed in the following order: Help when you need it; Phone/staff access; consistent contact; general processes; specific processes; paperwork; and coordination.
- The following page (28) shows a summary of written comments.
- The next page (29) highlights foster parents' responses to the question: ***Can you get help when you ask for it?***
- The next six pages (30-35) describe foster parents' comments on access to support, agency processes, and coordination of services.

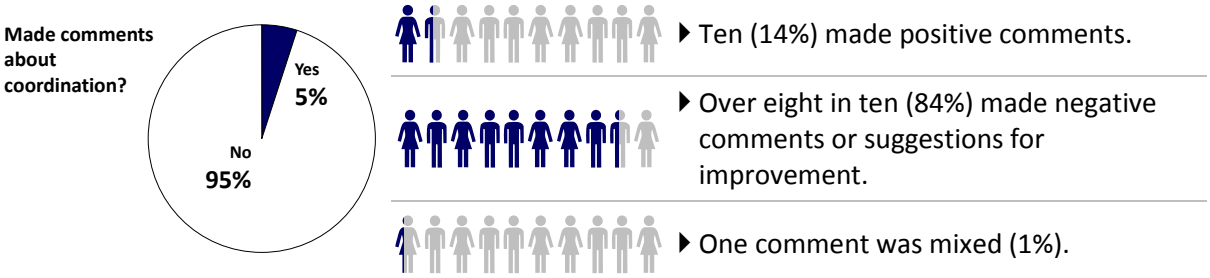
More than four out of ten foster parents surveyed (573 out of 1,358, or 42%) made comments about access. Of those who commented on this subject:



Almost three in ten foster parents (386 out of 1,358, or 28%) commented on processes. Of those who commented on this subject:

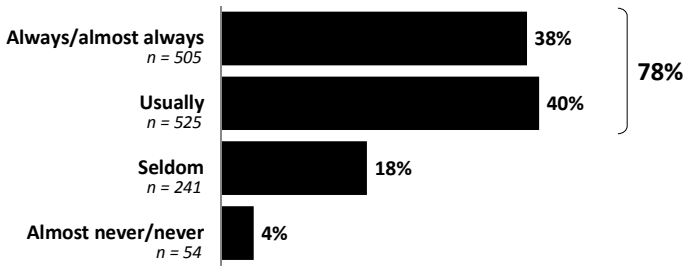


A small number of survey respondents (70 out of 1,358, or 5%) made comments about coordination. Of those who commented on this subject:



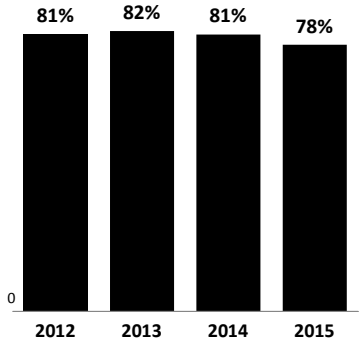
QUESTION | Can you get help when you ask for it?

Nearly eight out of ten of the 1,325 foster parents who answered this question (78%) reported that they can usually or always get help when they ask for it. About one out of five (22%) indicated it is difficult to get the help they need.



STATE TREND

The decrease of three percentage points from 2014 was statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

Responses to this question were most positive in Region 1 (79%) and least positive in Region 3 (77%), but the differences are not statistically significant.

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

"I get replies to my e-mails."

"I am heard. I do not have to wait more than two days to get a reply to e-mail or phone calls. My questions get resolved and I get info that I need."

"They respond to our questions, answer our e-mails and phone calls."

"They respond to my calls and e-mails quickly."

"They answer my questions. Mostly they return phone calls and e-mails."

"They return my e-mails and phone calls within a reasonable amount of time, do their monthly visits, and keep in good contact."

"The social worker for the past seven months is very responsive, returns calls and e-mails within a day."

"All the social workers except for one have been good at returning my calls and e-mails."

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

"My DSHS worker never answers her phone or returns phone calls or e-mails or faxes. Then we have to get ahold of a supervisor who never returns our calls. Then all I hear is, 'That's because it's King County, and they are overwhelmed and have huge caseloads,' and my response is 'Not my problem.'"

"Social worker needs to call us and not just send an e-mail!"

"They are bad about returning phone calls. They will tell you that they will do something and then never do it. Doesn't have answers."

"Getting back to me in a more timely manner. I understand they have a high caseload. Within 24 hours would be helpful. This would keep placements from blowing up."

"Promises to call back before the end of the day don't happen."

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents say good access helps them serve the children better.

"I get support from King County, because I work with a special infant drug exposed population. We are on the same page. They respond to my e-mails and phone calls."

"When I have a problem or questions about the baby, they always help and return calls."

"The social workers respond to my phone calls and provide information and resources when requested."

"Having regular meetings with us and making us feel part of the team. Our voice counts."

"Many social workers don't return phone calls or e-mails. "

"They listen and call me back promptly, they involve me and do well-baby check-ups on a regular basis. If I need anything, they usually try and get it for me as quick as possible."

"One worker is very moody, we have to call several times to get any response."

Others describe mixed responsiveness and variability across social workers.

"Some social workers answer the phone."

"Some social workers and DSHS staff followup quickly with phone calls and some actually have helpful information when I get ahold of them."

"Get back to us on a timely basis regarding our phone calls and messages left. Some social workers get right back to me and some others take days and days to get back to me – specifically the Yakima office."

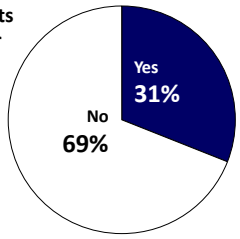
Returning phone calls is important.

"Communicate in person and by phone whenever possible. There is real dialogue when there is a voice. It works better than text or e-mail. Text and e-mail do not offer the genuineness that is needed in effective communication. Understanding breaks down and interpretation is possible which can lead to confusion."

THEME | Phone/Staff Access

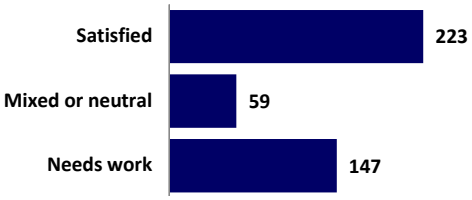
Comments about foster parents' ability to access social workers and other staff – by phone or other methods – were included in this category. Over three out of ten foster parents surveyed commented about phone or staff access.

Made comments about phone or staff access?



429 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (32%) mentioned phone or staff access.

Of the 429 foster parents who addressed phone or staff access, half (52%) made positive comments. About one third (34%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 14% made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents commended social workers for:

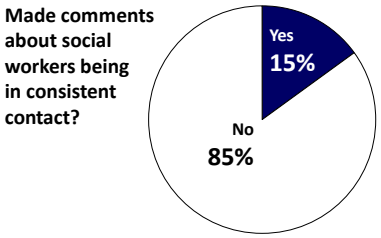
- Being easy to reach when they are needed.
- Returning phone calls and e-mails quickly.
- Listening to their concerns and taking action.

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.
- Designate alternative contacts when they will be unavailable for an extended period of time, and after hours.

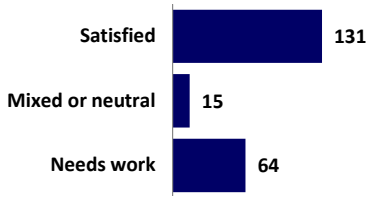
THEME | Consistency of Contact

Comments about the consistency of social workers' contact with foster parents were included in this category. 15% of foster parents surveyed commented about consistency of contact.



210 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned consistency of contact.

Of the 210 foster parents who addressed consistency of contact, more than six out of ten (62%) commented positively. Three out of ten (30%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Seven percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate consistency of contact across different social workers. They also appreciate social workers who:

- Visit their home regularly each month.
- Check-in often by phone or e-mail.
- Ask how things are and what is needed, and listen to what the foster parent has to say.

Foster parents dislike it when social workers:

- Visit rarely, or not at all.
- Visited the child at school, not at home.
- Only react to emergencies or major events.
- Fail to respond when contacted.

Getty Images/Stockbyte

Most comments provided by foster parents described consistent contact with social workers.

"They visit our home weekly."

"They do their home visits regularly which is a help to me so I can discuss my concerns."

"Private agency staff and DSHS staff tell us what the hearings and procedures are and what is coming up affecting the foster child's welfare. They keep us aware of hearings and court dates."

"They keep in consistent contact with me."

"They check-in a lot to see how we are doing."

"They come out once a month for 10-15 minutes for a home visit."

"They have been responsive to e-mails and they do come for the monthly visits."

"Monthly visits are the only time we find out what is going on with the case – so I think this is something my social worker does well."

"The monthly check-in is like clockwork."

"I very much appreciate the month end check-ins."

Some want social workers to check-in more frequently, and some are not getting the contact they expect.

"We have had multiple case workers, and they vary greatly. The last social worker we had we didn't see for six months, meaning we had NO home visits for that time."

"DSHS did not do the in-home visits."

"We've had a child for six months and we never met the social worker from DSHS. DSHS needs to communicate better and more frequently."

"Our social worker only checks in with us once a month."

"Social worker needs to come to our home to visit the child. She visits child at school and counseling sessions."

"They could visit my home once a month as they are required to."

Getty Images/Hemera

A few foster parents reported on positive process experiences.

"This was a relative placement and everyone we dealt with from our social worker to the adoption folks were fabulous. I have to say I was pleasantly surprised because I was bracing for a long, hard time. I had heard of some nightmare scenarios, and none of it happened to us."

Some foster parents feel the system is biased toward biological parents at the expense of the children.

"It feels like the system is set up to protect the rights of the parents more than the rights of the children. More emphasis needs to be placed on the needs of the children."

"The system is a nightmare. It is not set up for success for the kids. Kids deserve permanency and stability. Four years in the system is way too long."

"We feel beat up by kids that keep getting sent back to their parents. The system cares more for the 'deadbeat' parents than the foster folks who want to love and adopt them."

"We need to concentrate more on the kids coming into the system rather than worrying about possible lawsuits from the parents."

"The biological parent did a lot of lying during court session and he was not called out on it. He said he was working when he was not…that type of thing."

Some feel that bureaucracy hinders social workers.

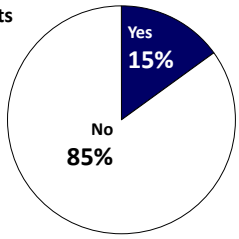
"We have been foster parents for 22 years. There is a real disconnect. Social workers are disempowered. Higher ups undermine social workers. They reverse decisions that have been made between us and social workers. The best interests of the child are not at the center."

"I have seen what the social workers are up against. Some of the Supervisors have been in the game too long and the cynicism was 'we lost, let's go.'"

THEME | General Processes

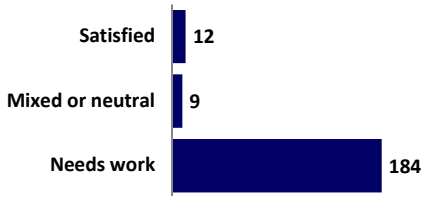
Comments about the general processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 15% of foster parents surveyed commented about general processes.

Made comments about general processes?



205 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned general processes.

Of the 205 survey respondents who addressed general processes, six percent were positive. The majority (90%) made suggestions for improvement or negative comments. Four percent made mixed or neutral comments.

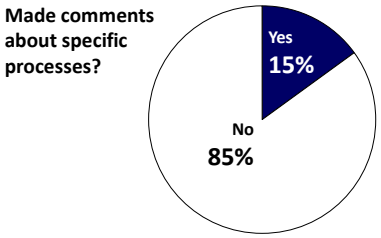


These foster parents are concerned that:

- The foster care system seems to favor biological parents over the needs of the children, and social workers are not able to intervene.
- Foster care system seems to focus too much on blindly following rules and avoiding lawsuits, and too little on the needs of the foster children. Some foster parents are also concerned that it does not support the social workers or the foster families.

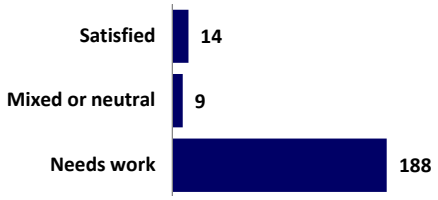
THEME | Specific Processes

Comments about specific processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category. 15% of foster parents surveyed commented on specific processes.



211 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned specific processes.

Of the 211 foster parents who addressed specific processes, 14 individuals (7%) made positive comments. Almost nine out of ten (89%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. About one out of twenty (4%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents had concerns about the following processes:

- Initial placement into foster homes – poor documentation and limited information about children's problems.
- The rating assessment for determining a child's level of need.
- Difficulty getting services approved for children.
- Slow reimbursements for services, mileage, and respite services.
- Learning about court processes, being involved in them, and being sure the older foster children are informed of them.
- Difficulty moving from foster care to adoption.
- Too many things foster children cannot do.
- Poor planning and lack of notice when children go back to their biological families.

Getty Images/iStock

Many different processes presented challenges for foster parents.

"There tends to be dishonesty about the child upfront."

"I don't feel children are being assessed for the right level for the amount of care they need."

"Make information available about the child, if it is available. For example, I had a child in my home for seven months and I just now found out why she is in foster care. She has been in the foster care system for six years."

"Provide more information about what is happening with the child's family so we can anticipate better what might be happening in the future."

"Getting services is like pulling teeth. Once you get a response and get paperwork, it can be quick. Getting to that point is very difficult. You contact the same people over and over again."

"Mileage reimbursement should be an on-line system."

"Allow foster children to be like regular children – not so many stipulations."

"The kids are in foster care too long. Make the adoption process faster. We have had the children for three years. Parents are incarcerated."

"Keep our privacy and keep us safe and do not put us into vulnerable situations with biological parents."

"When removing the child, there was no pre-planning, no communication, no plan. There was no transition period for the child when being returned to his/her family. This resulted in the child being returned to my home two days after being removed."

"I keep getting new social workers and they want to start with the case from the beginning even though I have had the child for over a year."

"Please have the courage to admit when you are wrong and work with us to solve the problem."

"I disagree with the flu shot requirement."

Getty Images/Blend Images

Most foster parents who commented on paperwork processes were critical or offered suggestions for improvement.

"The amount of paperwork and the system to manage that paperwork needs to be looked at, it is inefficient and overwhelming."

"The paperwork can be overwhelming."

"Do some of the paperwork through e-mail rather than through regular mail to speed up the process, such as the placement paperwork, rate assessment paperwork, and payment schedule."

"Make some of the paperwork more electronic, such as an incident report from the playground. Have an app for this type of stuff."

"They could sign the paperwork they are supposed to sign so we can get support for the kids in our care. They need to sign release of information forms so we can get counseling for the kids, which is a court order."

"Our adoption case has been delayed 3 times because paperwork has not been completed by the social worker."

"The social worker is great. He returns e-mails right away. He gets all of the paperwork done on time."

"File paperwork in a timely manner."

"Paperwork side is good – haven't had any problems on the administrative side from the current social workers."

"Make sure paperwork is not lost at DSHS."

"They help me when I need it, like paperwork and letters for doctors."

"My daycare provider has not received pay. The caseworker never turned in the proper paperwork."

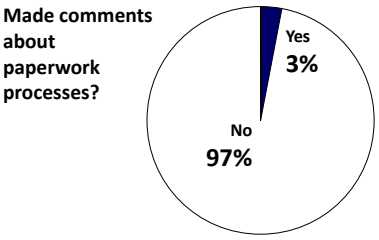
"They help with getting contacts set up and getting paperwork completed."

"Some of the medical issues take a very long time to get the testing he needed, so the paperwork is very lengthy and time consuming."

"Need paperwork released for necessary medical information."

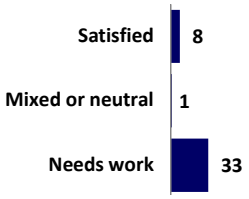
THEME | Paperwork Processes

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



42 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned paperwork processes.

Of the 42 survey respondents who commented about paperwork processes, eight individuals (19%) made positive comments. Nearly eight out of ten (79%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and there was one mixed or neutral comment.

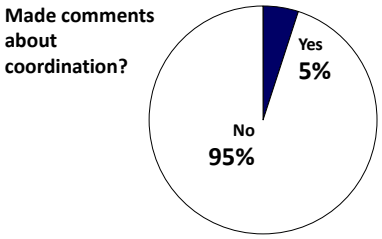


Foster parents are unhappy when:

- The amount of paperwork is excessive.
- Paperwork sent to DSHS is lost.
- Late paperwork delays payments or reimbursements.
- There is no way to file paperwork on-line.
- They cannot get help filling out needed paperwork.
- Late paperwork delays legal processes and increases child's time in limbo.
- Recordkeeping is incomplete or inaccurate.
- Foster children are placed without medical cards or needed documentation, causing delays in needed services.

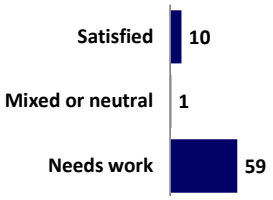
THEME | Coordination

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



70 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned coordination.

Of the 70 foster parents who addressed coordination, only ten (14%) made positive comments. Over eight out of ten (84%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One person made a mixed comment.



When coordination is successful:

- 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.
- DSHS coordinates well internally among its different sections – making consistent decisions, sharing information about kids and foster families.
- Connections between courtesy social workers and others are smooth.

Foster parents are frustrated when:

- Social workers change without transfer of information.
- Social workers don't reach out to others who can provide resources for foster children.
- Employees within an agency aren't "on the same page."
- DSHS and private agencies do not communicate effectively.
- Processes are not standard from office to office.

Getty Images/Digital Vision

Some comments focused on coordination within Children's Administration.

"Coordination between social workers and case workers could be better."

"Better communication between sections – placement desk, CPS, social worker and licensing. Take foster parent out of the middle."

"They definitely need to communicate between and amongst themselves so that they can then get me the correct information in a timely basis."

"CPS could do a better job, and I wish all the social workers, counselors and other staff could be on the same page."

"Better coordination needed between the east and west and consistency in service and response."

"I have a reputation for being a 'tough love' parent and this should not be a surprise to each new social worker. Someone should be educating them."

"A better handoff by DSHS when switching social workers on a case."

"The courtesy social worker and the placing social worker could communicate better."

"Now an adoption social worker, who ends up asking the same questions. The continuity is lost and makes it difficult."

"The lack of consistency/standardization around the State with social workers is mind boggling."

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

"DSHS and private agency should have more and better open communication between them."

"Social workers need to maintain contact with the schools. DSHS needs to keep private agency informed of legal proceedings and court dates."

"Need to make the tribal social workers work more in conjunction with the State."

Information

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Foster parents want clear and current information.

Information is very important to foster parents. On the survey, seven out of ten foster parents said they usually or always received adequate information on the child's needs of the children placed with them. However, more than half (53%) of foster parents who commented on information suggested that information sharing could be improved.

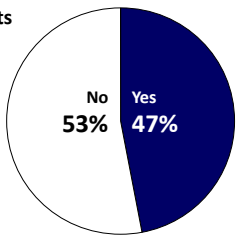
Many noted that the quality and timeliness of information varies across individual social workers, indicating that this is an area in which improvements are possible.

In this section:

- The following page (38) shows answers to the question about adequacy of information.
- The next page (39) summarizes the written comments about information.
- The last page (40) provides additional comments about information.

Almost half of the foster parents surveyed (640 out of 1,358, or 47%) commented about information. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about information?



- Almost one third (31%) made positive comments.
- Over half (53%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 16% made mixed or neutral comments.

Getty Images/iStock

Some foster parents said they were told what their foster children needed.

"Newport office was really good about explaining foster children before they arrived."

"The social workers help me to understand why the behavior of the children is like it is."

"They don't lie to me about the situation about the child, about medical or anything."

"At time of placement I feel I have enough information to get started with."

"The social workers assigned to the children from CA do a wonderful job as far as communication of needs of the children, forthcoming with information on history, behaviors as known to them."

"They give me as much background information on the history of the family as they can."

"We got full backgrounds on the foster children."

"They provide me with good information about the foster child."

Others were frustrated when information about the needs of children was seen as inadequate.

"Better collection of medical and psychological information about the kids would be helpful."

"Be upfront about the medical needs of the children. Do not lie about the problems of the children."

"DSHS should try to provide the support for the children that they need rather than try to minimize their needs."

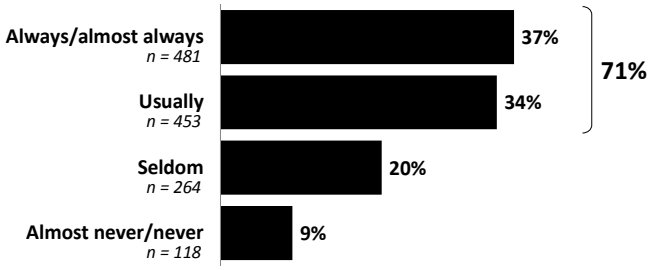
"Give me more information about the child and any special needs they may have. Reports from other foster homes would be helpful."

"We could have more in depth information provided to us regarding the past behavioral requirements."

"It is very difficult to take the kids to counseling when we don't know much about their history."

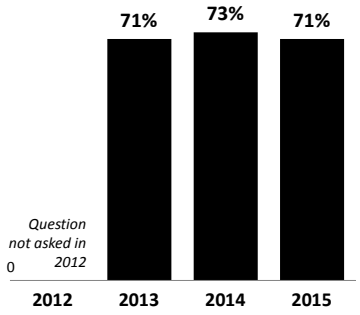
QUESTION | Did you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental, and educational needs?

More than seven out of ten of the 1,316 foster parents who answered this question (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 (29%) said they seldom or never get that information.



STATEWIDE TREND

The small decrease from 2014 was not statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

There were no statistically significant differences by region.

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Some foster parents are very satisfied with the information they receive.

"They respond in a timely manner with either information over e-mail or a phone call."

"They come by for monthly visits. We get a report about what is going on with the family. The check-in is helpful."

"We get e-mails when we need to know information."

"I like that they keep me informed."

"New resources are forwarded to us regularly. I ask a lot of questions and I get good answers."

"She lets me know when there are any meetings and she calls me to let me know about training I might be interested in. I appreciate that."

More than half of those commenting described concerns about information.

"The foster parents need to be better informed as to when the visits are and how the visits have gone."

"Provide information when they say they will do something."

"It would be nice if they would let the foster parent know if the foster child has a guardian ad litem or not. The state needs to ensure that foster children have their legal rights taken care of especially when an attorney resigns and DSHS does not seek another attorney for that foster child."

"Be more truthful with foster parents."

"We will not be renewing our license after we adopt the children currently placed with us. We have had to go to the CASAs for answers."

"DSHS staff could do a better job of notifying foster parents of upcoming meetings and court dates."

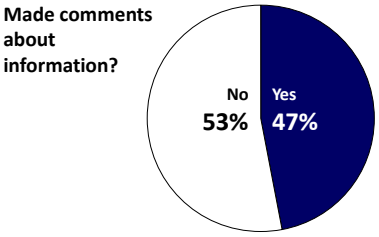
Others have mixed experiences with being given information.

"The social workers do well when I reach out and ask questions, but I have to ask. Not much is volunteered."

"They are somewhat open but I feel like they keep things from me."

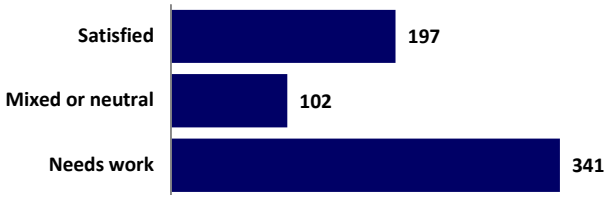
THEME | Information

Comments about information were included in this category. 47% of survey respondents made a comment about information.



640 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (47%) mentioned information.

Of the 640 survey respondents who addressed information, almost one third (31%) made positive comments. Over half (53%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 16% 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.
- Good information on foster children's backgrounds.
- Good information about services.
- Information on how the child's visits with parents have gone.

Some foster parents reported that the frequency and quality of information received varies between social workers, agencies, and offices.

A greater number of foster parents reported that they:

- Don't get "straight answers" to their questions.
- Lack current information about their foster children's cases.
- Are not 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 their role in the foster care system.

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

THEME | Information, *continued*

Foster parents want timely, accurate, and useful answers to their questions concerning the children in their care. They want adequate notice about court hearings and meetings; comprehensive background information about their foster children; resource availability, and their role in the foster care system.

Voices . . . .

Foster parents value clear and complete answers to their questions.

"More information and clear definitions of the plan. Providing or creating clearer definitions of timeframes for the children."

"Information is always changing or coming in a little bit at a time rather than being more complete up front."

"Make sure that they completely answer all the questions. Many times the response covers some issues but not all of them."

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

"I would like pertinent information on a more timely basis, such as what is going on with the case."

"Follow up on requested information rather than having to ask for it multiple times and not getting answers for months."

"Better informed by the social worker and be informed in a timely matter as to what issues are coming."

"Give heads up for things that are on the horizon. I would like to plan ahead as much as possible."

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

"They are good about keeping us up to date about where the case is at."

"I would like more information about the outcome of court appearances, or at least what they are authorized to share with me."

"Give us a better outline of cases and a 'big picture' outline for a case."

"Communicate. Keep us better informed about the case."

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

"Give me my court reports. Keep me informed of meetings and court dates. I have to pester the social workers about these things."

"Give us enough lead in time to get to the meetings. More of us would attend more meetings if we had enough lead time to make arrangements for the kiddos."

"Please let me know about the family team decision making meetings, timely. It doesn't make you feel very good when your social worker says 'well, they tell me I need to invite you to this meeting, do you want to go?' And this was the day before the meeting."

"Let us know when meetings are, rather than having us track down when a meeting is being held."

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

"Our child has neuro-developmental issues. The description of this child prior to placement was inadequate. None of her needs had been diagnosed or addressed in her previous foster placement. It would have been helpful since this child had great special needs and this info was not available prior to placement."

"I was new at this and I did not know how to handle undiagnosed issues. Please provide info at the beginning if it is available."

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

"Services received in other foster homes should follow the child so we do not have to reinvent the wheel and there is some continuity for the child. They should be consistent especially like personal care services; should be no gap."

"Have a list of mental health facilities that are available for children when seeking counseling for them."

"They never offer information, you have to request, and most times you have to research yourself for services, or opportunities that are offered for children, they are rarely ever offered by the workers."

"They have provided information about resources for the age of my foster child and what is available."

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

"Social workers could make my job as a foster parent easier if they had an easy system to look up information I have already given them. Sometimes I am asked for the same daycare information or doctor appointment dates repeatedly."

"My social worker visited me when I was new and sat for a long time with me explaining the ins-and-outs of being a new foster parent. That was greatly appreciated."

"Keep me better informed about all the services that are available. I never knew I was eligible for mileage reimbursement until my new case manager from my private agency recently told me. I have been a foster parent for several years."

Resources

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Foster parents want needed resources to be quickly and easily available.

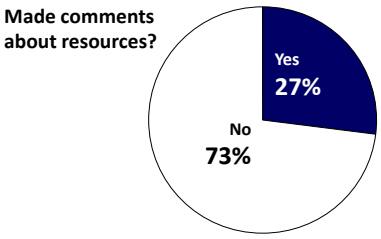
This section focuses on the wide variety of resources provided to foster parents and the children in their care.

Just over half of foster parents who commented about resources identified problems. However, many also commented that they are pleased with the resources they currently receive.

In this section:

- The first five pages are arranged by topic, in the following order: respite (42); financial matters (43); medical, dental, mental health (44); transportation (45); and childcare (46). The sixth page (47) contains an overview of comments about various other resources.

Over one quarter of survey respondents (366 out of 1,358 or 27%) made comments about resources. Of those who commented on this subject:



- About one third (32%) made positive comments.

- Just over half (51%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- 16% made mixed or neutral comments.

Getty Images/Blend Images

Many foster parents want improved access to respite care, and more timely payments.

"Try to help find respite. Three times this year I have asked for respite and they have told me no one will do it. I have been a foster parent for eleven years and only used respite maybe three times."

"Process respite care payment in a timely manner."

"We have been foster parents for a long time, we take high need teen girls, and we have issues when we ask for respite and we do not ask very often."

"It is impossible to get respite."

"It takes forever to get respite care."

"Respite payment system needs to be fixed. Payments are delayed for months."

"I have had a hard time getting paid for respite care. There seems to be a lack of clear procedures for respite care and getting reimbursed for respite care costs."

"Respite – caregivers absolutely must have respite."

"Find respite care for foster parents. There is not enough of it. They need to find and develop respite providers for the exhausted foster parents."

Others did not have difficulty getting respite services.

"They always set up respite for me."

"They offer me respite and are very supportive."

"Allowing respite care can be done by friends and family now for short periods."

"I have one good worker. She gives me respite when we need it."

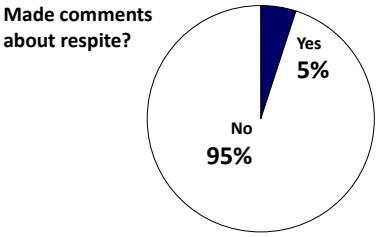
"My private agency worker will help find respite when needed."

"They are very helpful if we need respite care."

"I have good medical support and good respite support."

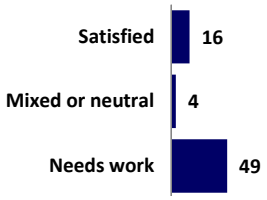
THEME | Respite

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



69 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned respite.

Of the 69 survey respondents addressing respite, almost one in four (23%) made positive comments. Seven out of ten (71%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Four individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Respondents suggested they need:

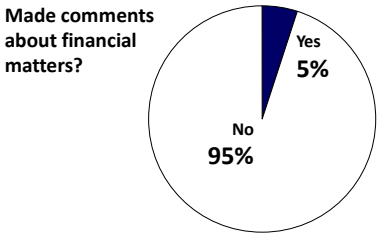
- Easier access to respite care.
- Faster response to requests for respite care.
- Timely payment for respite care.

Some foster parents are satisfied with:

- Improvement in respite care service.
- Social workers' support for respite care requests.
- Ready access to respite care.

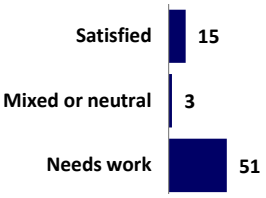
THEME | Financial Matters

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



69 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned financial matters.

Of the 69 survey respondents addressing financial matters, over one in five (22%) made positive comments. Nearly three in four (74%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three indivuduals (4%) made mixed or neutral comments.

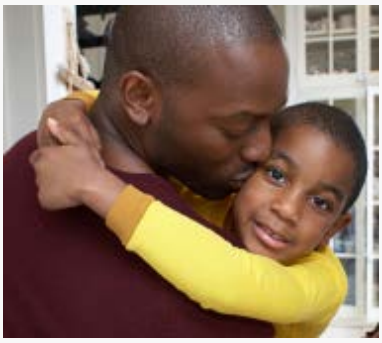


The majority of foster parents commenting on financial issues indicated a need for:

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

Some commended the:

- Timeliness of reimbursements.
- Reliability of foster care payments.



Getty Images/Digital Vision

Foster parents want fair, timely reimbursement.

"Be timely when processing reimbursements for expenses."

"Foster child needed braces badly and we spent $5,000 of our own retirement and have not received any reimbursement from DSHS. They said it wasn't necessary since it was strictly cosmetic."

"Need more support for kinship providers. TANF payment is insufficient to cover the needs of these children when they have nothing when placed."

"Need to reimburse us for mileage as they have not processed that."

"Timely reimbursement for mileage and exceptional costs."

"Never say when I am going to be paid or I never know what the amount should be or what is actually authorized. Tribe never pays on time. The state pays the Tribe and then they are inconsistent about paying me."

They want timely rate assessments that accurately reflect children's needs

"The rate assessment system needs to be looked at. It does not take into account the special needs of the children placed with us."

"The reimbursement for the special needs kids is not adequate. It has become much more difficult to get the special rates for special needs kids."

"In order to get adequate support for special needs children, you have to do the paperwork several times and jump through too many hoops."

Some foster parents are satisfied with their financial support.

"Transportation reimbursement is paid timely. I get my monthly stipend on time."

"They make sure my payment goes through."

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want accessible, high-quality medical and dental care for their foster children.

"I had to fight for every service and medical need that my child required."

"When requesting medical equipment, we have found that requests are usually denied twice before getting approved. It would be helpful if this process was made easier and quicker. Make the process for obtaining medical equipment less cumbersome. This is especially important as a child outgrows their equipment."

"For kids with sensitive medical needs there needs to be more support for the foster family's access to services."

"If you are not a complete bulldog and fight the state, your foster children will not get what they need."

They want mental health services.

"My private agency advocates with DSHS to get services and help us find resources for counseling and therapy."

"I have to take the small kids to psychologists, doctors, etc. and take it out of my own pocket."

"For kids with mental health issues, there needs to be more help available."

"Address our concerns for quicker behavioral and therapeutic needs."

"We kept asking for some added testing re: ADHD, FAE/FAS and autism spectrum, but kept getting refused. Then we were doing the pre-adoption and the social worker was shocked that no testing had been done."

Foster parents want information about the medical needs of children, and about available resources.

"Inform us about what resources are available to meet the kids' needs."

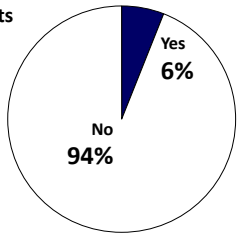
"I was told a child would need an IV bag. In reality I had to do daily injections into catheter, two physical therapy sessions a day, meds twice a day, hourly respiratory treatments."

"Be more forthcoming with information related to known behaviors."

THEME | Medical, Dental, Mental Health

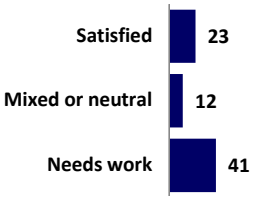
Comments about medical, dental, and mental health resources were included in this category. Six percent of foster parents surveyed made a comment about one or more health-related resources.

Made comments about medical, dental, mental health?



76 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned medical, dental or mental health resources.

Of the 76 survey respondents addressing medical, dental or mental health resources, three out of ten (30%) made positive comments. Over half (54%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 16% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

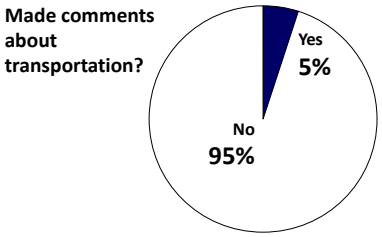
- Access to needed medical, dental, and mental health care for their foster children.
- Information about children's medical needs.
- Assistance in finding the best care.

They are discouraged by:

- Bureaucratic roadblocks to getting services.
- The need to "fight the state" for services.
- Lack of care providers near their home.
- Denial of needed care for foster children.
- Harm resulting from unmet care needs.

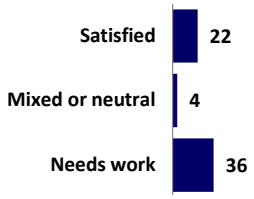
THEME | Transportation

Comments about transportation were included in this category. Five percent of survey respondents made a comment about transportation.



62 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned transportation.

Of the 62 comments addressing transportation, more than a third (35%) were positive. More than half (58%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Four individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like:

- Access to needed transportation.
- Safe transporters.
- Fair compensation for mileage.
- Timely reimbursement.

They are frustrated by:

- Confusing processes for transportation reimbursements.
- Long (3-4 months) waits for transportation reimbursements.
- Burdensome transportation needs.
- Lost transportation paperwork.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want compensation for transportation costs and would like timely payment.

"Our request for mileage reimbursements has gotten lost (two of them). The last one I did was four months ago and I am still waiting. What's up?"

"We've only been with them a month and half. They haven't done anything for me. In fact, they lost our mileage sheet and we have to redo it. I'm not very happy."

"Mileage and respite needs to be paid on time, not three months later."

"In my experience, most of the workers handle our mileage reimbursements appropriately."

"Do better with processing mileage reimbursement. It takes 12-14 weeks to get reimbursed."

Some foster parents want better assistance with transportation.

"Get more help with transporting kids to appointments. We have six kids at a time and it is difficult to manage all the appointments for the children. Sports and activities are not an option when we only have two adults available to drive them after school."

"More access to drivers so that I can make appointments."

Some foster parents are pleased with transportation services.

"If I have a conflict, especially when it comes to transportation as I live in a remote area, they are very helpful in making sure the kids have transportation."

"My private agency is very good with transportation. They hire safe, clean people, so I feel good about putting the kids in their car."

"They help with transportation when I need it."

"They found transportation to get us to the dentist when my car was on the fritz, and the counselor came to the house and picked up my wife and the kids and took them to Treehouse."

Getty Images/iStock

Some foster parents were pleased with the childcare assistance they have received.

"They did set up childcare when I was working."

"Some of them have helped me set up daycare because we both work."

"They pay for daycare."

"They have offered childcare for me so I can continue to keep my job."

"They are helpful with childcare."

"The foster parent support groups are very helpful. They provide dinner and let the children come. They provide childcare."

"DSHS has done well with services such as daycare."

"Our current social worker is great about processing clothing vouchers and daycare payments."

Some foster parents are displeased with the limited availability of childcare, and with the adequacy and timeliness of payments.

"With complicated kids, it is extremely hard to get the support we need for the child, especially medically fragile children. We have to pay out-of-pocket childcare since they haven't done rate assessments."

"They do not offer daycare for 'non-working' parents. I volunteer at my children's school. The social workers have to follow the rules. I'm arguing my case for daycare."

"It is a pain to get the social worker to set up confirmed payment for daycare."

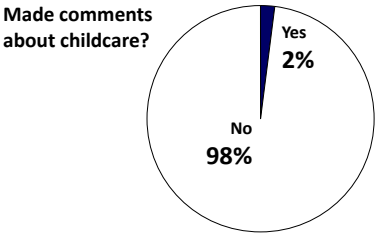
"Have more of a resource to help find daycare."

"Getting someone to babysit is a hassle as there are so many restrictions on who can babysit a foster child."

"When it comes to childcare, I have to petition to get it. I should not have to do that for the foster kids."

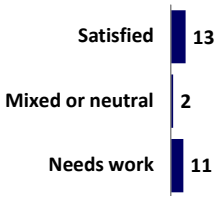
THEME | Childcare

Comments about childcare were included in this category. Two percent of survey respondents made a comment about childcare.



26 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned childcare.

Of the 26 survey respondents addressing childcare, half (50%) made positive comments. Four out of ten (42%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two individuals (8%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents are pleased with:

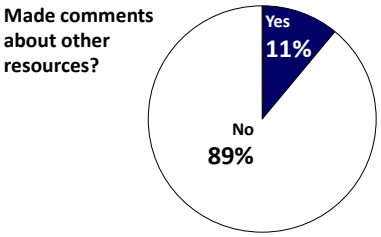
- Assistance of social workers in obtaining and paying for childcare, especially for working foster parents.
- Improvements in the payment process.
- Childcare provided during foster parent training classes and support group activities.

Others suggested that childcare should be:

- Easier to access.
- Provided in a timelier manner.
- Expanded to encompass more types of care.
- Improved for special needs, medically fragile children.
- Fully reimbursed.

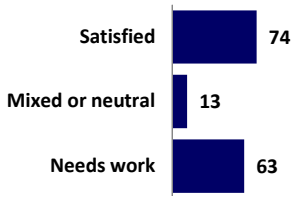
THEME | Other Resources

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



150 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned other resources.

Of the 150 survey respondents addressing other resources, almost half (49%) made positive comments. Over four out of ten (42%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Nine percent made mixed or neutral comments.



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

- Resources (with no further clarification of the term).
- Additional activities for foster kids.
- Training for foster parents.*
- Clothing.
- Food support if the family is low-income.
- Other supplies (like bikes).

Some foster parents are pleased to have the resources named above. Others are frustrated by limited availability of those resources, particularly with respect to food support, clothing vouchers and extra support for children with special needs. Families are also frustrated by different treatment for different children – which can vary by social worker.

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

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Some foster parents made a variety of comments about resources provided by social workers.

"They usually work with me to get outside support when I need it for the children. For example, the teenagers need school tutoring or counselors at school, supplies, clothes, etc."

"I let them know what is going on with the kids and they help me out. For example, the foster children wanted to do karate. It cost $90 per month. I didn't have money so I called the social worker and she found funding for three months for my foster children."

"My husband and I both work and we are right on the borderline for getting any extra food help for the family. Some months we just cannot make it, and I can't seem to get the ICW workers to understand we can't get to a food bank during the day because we work full-time and it's not every month we need help."

"Private agency provides me with gift cards and a bike for the foster children when they first came into my care."

"They help find extra programs for exercise, dance classes, counseling, medical, and bereavement classes."

"Help me get clothes for the children while they are in my home."

Others commented on training for foster parents provided by the social workers.

"The private agency has provided additional parenting education classes and even coming up to my house and offering me private classes."

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

"Good at getting me clothing vouchers for kids who come with no clothes."

"The agency staff are very supportive, offering clothing and tickets to events."

"Slow in giving vouchers for clothing and supplies. We have two foster children, each served by a different social worker. We can see differences in what is supplied to each child!"

Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

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Foster parents receive support from a variety of sources.

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

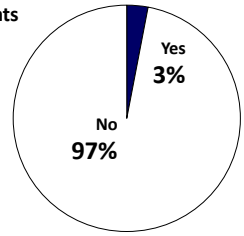
- Staff *other than social workers* employed by Children's Administration or its contracted providers.
- Individuals and organizations *other than Children's Administration and its contracted providers.*

Many foster parents expressed satisfaction with support they have received from various sources in their community. However, some do not feel well supported and others believe the supports that do exist are not well coordinated. Many foster parents desire more contact with their peers.

- The following page (50) provides an 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 twenty respondents (47 out of 1,358, or 3%) 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 (57%) made positive comments.

- One in three (32%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- 11% made mixed or neutral comments.

1.6 Other Sources of Support

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Foster parents value their contact with other foster parents, in classes or support groups.

"They are able to send me in the right direction, such as getting together with other foster parents."

"The support groups are good."

"Provided us lots of resources and support groups and lots of literature."

"More support of the local and regional foster community."

"When we went to the first trainings, it was good to see that other newbies were asking the same questions we were and that made us feel like we were not alone."

Foster parents often get support from other team members, if they are not getting it from the social workers.

"I end up getting the information I need from counselors, guardians, etc. Social worker does not respond back unless it becomes an emergency."

"My social worker is not helpful. The licensor has been great as well as her supervisor. My rate adjustment worker has been great and helpful."

"I have found more support in the community than DSHS has provided."

Most foster parents value the Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) and Guardians ad Litems (GALs).

"I don't get much support from the social worker. I get help from the CASA."

"We have a very strong relationship with our CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocate."

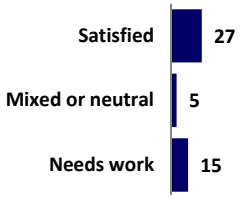
"The guardian ad litem is a meticulous professional and very helpful at times and there is not wasted bureaucratic administration!"

"The guardian ad litem was not very helpful, he did not seem consistent, and I was not impressed with him."

THEME | Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

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

Of the 47 survey respondents who addressed other sources of foster parent support, over half (57%) made positive comments. Almost one in three (32%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Five individuals (11%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents' comments covered the following topics:

- Many foster parents value contact with other foster parents.
- Support from CASAs (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) or GALs (Guardians ad Litem) is appreciated when present, and missed when it is lacking.
- Foster parents expect effective coordination between social workers, other representatives of the foster care system, and community supports. For example, foster parents may appreciate information received through a GAL while wondering why they did not get it through their social worker.

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PART 2

Foster Parent Training

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Part 2 of this report (Foster Parent Training) examines 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. They particularly praised access to experienced foster parents during their trainings.

However, a substantial number of foster parents reported difficulties with training access – with training schedules, locations, travel costs, and childcare. They want more non-traditional options such as on-line training or training integrated with support groups. They want more contact with experienced foster parents, and timely information on training opportunities.

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

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Most foster parents give high marks about the training they receive.

This section is about 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.

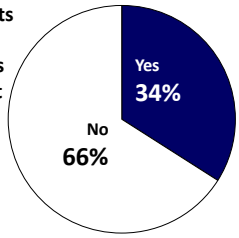
The majority of foster parents indicate that the training they receive is adequate or better. Even those who feel that current training needs work often acknowledge the benefits of trainings they have taken.

In this section:

- The following page (54) 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 next two pages (55-56) address foster parents' comments about the quality and helpfulness of training as a whole, and from specific agencies or programs.

- **One in three foster parents (460 of 1,358 or 34%) made comments about the quality and helpfulness of foster parent training across all sources. Of these:**

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of foster parent training?



- About eight out of ten (81%) made positive comments.

- About one in ten (12%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- Seven percent made mixed or neutral comments.

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The majority of foster parents felt that their training prepared them well to care for foster children.

"The training was kind of a good preparation for what we might expect as foster parents."

"It gave me a perspective on what situation the kids were coming from and the magnitude of the change in their life."

"It gave us a big insight on what to expect and to decide on whether or not we could handle it."

"It prepared us for behaviors we might see. How to support the kids who are placed in our care. We were prepared for the letdowns of having the child leave our care."

"It helped prepare us mentally for the direction we need to go when we encounter problems and need support."

"The training on how to deal with questions about biological parents and why they are gone and why they are staying with me now. This training was so helpful to us."

"It's a good overview of what to expect."

"It prepared me for what to expect and prepped me for worst case scenario."

"I have been foster parenting for 30 years. It is all helpful and gives you different ideas on how to handle problems you may encounter."

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

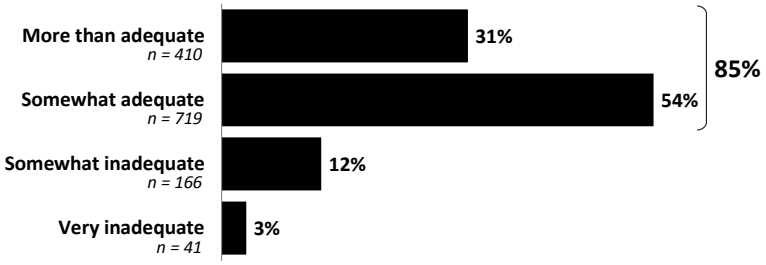
"Need to be real about what foster parenting is all about. Emphasize that these children have been messed with and have special needs. It is not all a piece of cake."

"A bit more training on how to psychologically support the children."

"The training needs to include more real life situations and what to expect when you become a foster parent."

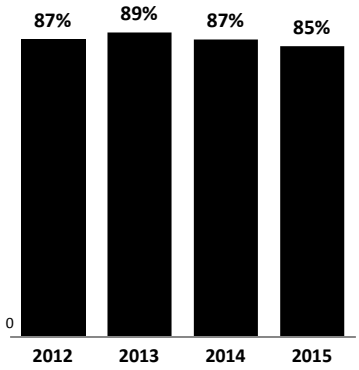
QUESTION | Overall, thinking about ALL the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?

Over eight out of ten of the 1,336 foster parents who answered this question (85%) reported that training was more than or somewhat adequate. 15% found the training somewhat or very inadequate.



STATE TREND

The decrease from 2014 was not statistically significant.



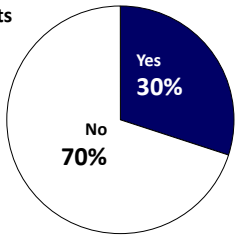
REGIONAL DETAIL

There were significantly fewer positive ratings for training in Region 1 (81%), compared to Region 3 (87%).

THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Training

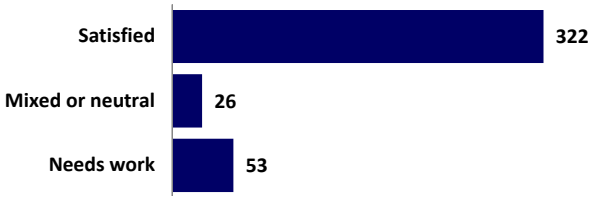
Comments about the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent training (rather than the quality and helpfulness of specific trainings) were included in this category. 30% of survey respondents made a general comment about training.[1]

Made comments about overall quality and helpfulness of training?



401 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (30%) mentioned the overall quality and helpfulness of training.

Of the 401 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of training, eight in ten (80%) made positive comments. 13% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Six percent made mixed or neutral comments.



These general comments include those that were made when respondents did not name any specific areas where training could improve – or areas where training is good.

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

This category also includes 270 foster parents who provided a comment praising or criticizing the general quality of training.

- 221 made a positive comment about overall training (82% of specific comments).
- 30 criticized overall training in specific terms (11%).
- 19 offered specific neutral or mixed comments (7%).

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Most foster parents find the training they receive to be very helpful.

"Much of it is very helpful. Good overview."

"Everything was good."

"The training itself was awesome."

"Enjoyed the classes – both my husband and I could attend so the time frames met our needs. Lots of people and lots of good information."

"I found all the classes interesting and helpful. My foster children are my grandchildren, so I knew a lot about them to begin with. But, the classes on special needs have really helped me."

"I had such a positive experience, I cannot think of anything bad. Well, it might have been nice if they had served lunch!"

"The couple of weekends we spent in training here was super."

"I found all of the classes interesting and helpful."

"Some of the children will act out and the training helped me a lot."

A few have mixed or negative feelings.

"I really don't know, sitting in a classroom, I feel like it is pointless, honestly. But I have read up on trauma, etc. on my own."

"Most of it was stuff I already knew."

"It was so inadequate I have no comments."

"Not much. I have advanced degrees in education, so the training has not been useful. I have received better knowledge through my education."

"There has been no training that really prepares us to be foster parents, such as how take down a 9-year old when spitting at me, kicking dirt at me, throwing rocks at me, etc. What to do when a kid shoplifts at my grocery store and gets caught."

[1] As described on the lower part of this page, positive and negative comments were combined with "Nothing" responses according to question context.

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

"We went to the Children's Justice Conference and it was really good. We had attorneys and the big wigs all in one spot."

"We attended the REFRESH conference and it was excellent. There is no way they could have improved it."

"I went to Pierce College to take the four year training. I enjoyed going and the information they provided was wonderful."

"PRIDE training was very helpful. The specific programs are very helpful."

"I really loved the new Alliance out of the UW and they do excellent training."

"The CPR/first aid was good."

"The best training I have received was at Great Wolf Lodge provided by FPAWS but I had to pay for the training myself."

"The class on sex trafficking and drugs was quite an eye opener and very informational."

"I take teens, so any training for how to deal with that population is very helpful."

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

"My private agency trains me in working with autistic children."

"The training I had in caring for infants addicted to drugs was excellent."

"The private agency staff provide us with up to date psychological training on how children's brains are different from adults. They give us awareness of current scientific advances."

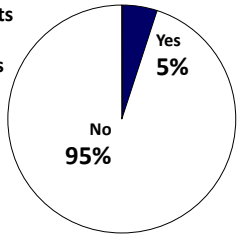
"Private agency – I feel I have gotten the best training through them."

"We did all our training through our private agency. It helped us to understand the needs of the children in foster care that we were not aware of before."

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. Five percent 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?



67 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned the quality and helpfulness of training in a specific agency or program.

Of the 67 survey respondents who addressed the quality and helpfulness of training in specific agencies or programs, more than eight out of ten (88%) made positive comments. Five respondents (7%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three (4%) 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 (sometimes including detail on the training content).
- Comments on other sources of training support, including hospitals, foster care networks, and professional training.

Trainers

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Foster parents feel that good trainers enhance the training experience.

Foster parents' experiences with trainers involve multiple agencies. 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.

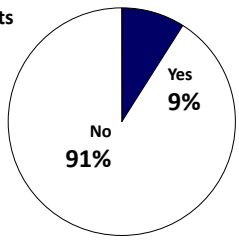
Most foster parents who commented reported satisfaction with the trainers they have worked with. A smaller number suggested that trainers would be most effective if they have direct experience with foster care, focus on practical suggestions, offer more interaction during the classes, and present more up-to-date materials.

In this section:

- The following page (58) provides an overview of general comments about the performance of trainers.
- The next page (59) shows comments about specific trainers.

Fewer than one in ten survey respondents (127 out of 1,358, or 9%) made comments about trainers (including comments about specific trainers). Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about trainers?



- Over six in ten (62%) made positive comments.
- Almost one in four (24%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- 13% made mixed or neutral comments.

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Most foster parents commended their trainers.

"The most helpful was personal experience stories shared by other foster parents and instructors."

"They did a good job. Good teaching. Good discussions and activities. Well taught. Information was great."

"They have good trainers."

"I really liked the teachers and I found all the training helpful."

"The trainers were really honest about their experiences and situation."

"The trainers have been great and are very informative about behaviors."

"Instructors are usually 'veterans' and give good life examples."

"Trainers were marvelous! Extremely helpful even on personal questions about our current placement."

"Some trainers are very well educated and teach in a very helpful way."

Some suggested ways trainers could become more effective.

"When they put down the book and told it from the heart and their own experiences, it really connected."

"Life is hard so I appreciate trainers that can use humor to break up tension of an overwhelming subject. If I can laugh a little bit in training, it makes me feel like we are all in this together and we can get through even the tough stuff."

"Some teachers seemed inexperienced. They were less effective."

"Don't have a trainer that has never been a foster parent or who doesn't have any kids of their own."

"They need to be more excited about it, not so dry and boring."

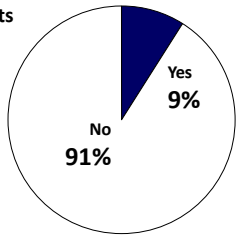
"They need more trainers with real life experiences with older kids."

"I would like to see a panel of social workers, biological parents, kids who went through the system and foster parents in the same room. They could tell us how to deal with the system and how to make our voices heard."

THEME | Trainers

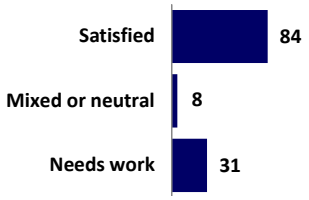
General comments about foster parent trainers were included in this category (not including comments about specific trainers). Nine percent of survey respondents made a comment about trainers in general.

Made comments about trainers?



123 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned trainers.

Of the 123 survey respondents who addressed trainers, over two thirds (68%) made positive comments. One in four (25%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eight people (7%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like it when trainers:

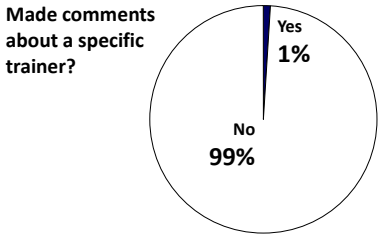
- Know their subject matter well.
- Have real-life experience with foster care.
- Are honest about the ups and downs of foster care.
- Take time to answer questions.
- Involve the class throughout training.
- Have passion for their work.
- Make the class interesting.

They are frustrated by trainers who:

- Lack practical experience with foster care.
- Don't invite others with expertise to co-train.
- Lack knowledge of their subject area.
- Share outdated information and materials.
- Don't answer questions or offer practical solutions to problems.
- Do not speak from the heart; are dry and boring.

THEME | Specific Trainers

Nine people made comments about specific foster parent trainers, mentioning them by name.



9 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific trainer.

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

Those who commented praised particular trainers for:

- Sharing realistic, honest experiences.
- Having first-hand knowledge themselves of what it takes to be a foster parent.
- Providing information on specialized topics.

Getty Images/Monkey Business

People tend to mention specific trainers by name when they consider them to be outstanding in some way.

"Arthur Fernandez was an excellent trainer."

"The trainer was Kathryn Goetz. She was very good and she was very honest with people."

"I have most appreciated the simulcast of Dr. Karyn Purvis."

"We went through the Alliance with Penny Michel and Linda Bales and they gave us the 'straight dope' about what we were getting into. They are really great trainers and I appreciated their honesty."

"Outside training (Debra Ray) about adoption and trauma is excellent."

"Gary Benton's class was phenomenal."

"I enjoyed the 'trauma' training with Carol Thomas."

"I think Deltha Hudson has offered us a lot of training and it is very good!"

"Having real current or past foster parents tell their stories and be a resource, and subject matter experts like Julie are invaluable."

General Training

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Foster parents appreciate – and want to improve – foster parent training.

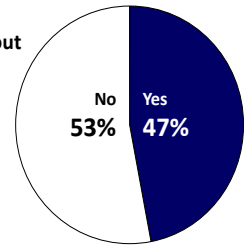
Four out of ten foster parents who made general comments about training made positive comments on the useful information and skills they gained during training, the way that training prepared them to care better for their foster children, and the new perspectives that training gave them. Four out of ten made negative comments or suggestions for improvements in certain aspects of training, such as practicality, training requirements, techniques, materials, and resources. Two out of ten made mixed or neutral comments.

In this section:

- The following page (62) addresses comments about how well training prepares foster parents to deal with the children in their care.
- The third page (63) is an overview of comments about approaches to training.
- The fourth page (64) focuses on comments about training resources.
- The fifth page (65) reviews comments on training materials.
- The sixth page (66) looks at other general training comments.

Almost half the survey respondents (638 out of 1,358, or 47%) made general comments about training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made general comments about training?



- Four out of ten (41%) made positive comments
- Almost four out of ten (39%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- Two out of ten (20%) made mixed or neutral comments.

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Foster parents like training that helps them understand and deal with their foster children.

"Got a good understanding of where the foster children come from and why they display the behaviors they do. Like abandonment, fear, anger, and how to deal with all of that."

"I learned about how kids think, and why my nieces were worried about when they would eat next, even after they had eaten a meal."

"Learned how to calm down my voice when talking to the kids and learned how to take time out and think about things before responding to the little squabbles the kids always get into."

"Some of the undiagnosed issues that could be affecting the child."

"How to integrate the kids into our family."

"How to defuse situations. How to support the kids on where they are coming from."

"Different ideas as far as discipline and their different attitudes when coming into my home."

"Cultural heritage things for the kids."

They appreciate learning how to get resources to help foster children.

"The resources for drug exposed kids, and different resources available."

"A realistic picture on what to expect and the resources available."

"It's helpful to learn how to document."

"Tell them to seek diagnosis and treatment earlier on in the placement in the home rather than later."

Some said they needed more training on how to care for foster children.

"Need more help with behavioral needs like reactive attachment disorder, and anger and violence."

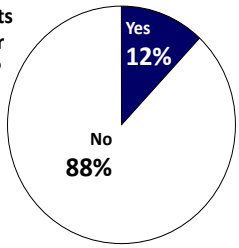
"How to talk to kids about hard things."

"Training about the empathy and grief they feel for the biological parents and the extended family."

THEME | Caring for Foster Children

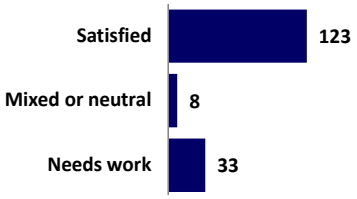
Comments about how well training prepared foster parents to care for the children in their home were included in this category. 12% of survey respondents commented on this aspect of training.

Made comments about caring for foster children?



164 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned the impact of training on their ability to care for foster children.

Of the 164 survey respondents who addressed how adequately training prepared them to care for foster children, three out of four (75%) made positive comments. 20% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eight individuals made mixed or neutral comments (5%).

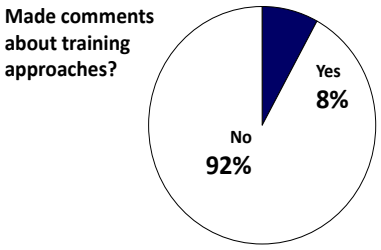


Foster parents want training that:

- Helps them understand, and deal with, the experiences and emotional needs of foster children – including the effects of trauma, grief and violence.
- Teaches them useful behavioral and defusing strategies for adapting to each new child.
- Teaches them how the entire family adjusts to a new child.
- Helps them advocate for their foster children, and get them access to outside resources and support.
- Realistically covers current issues facing foster children.
- Helps them understand the foster care system.

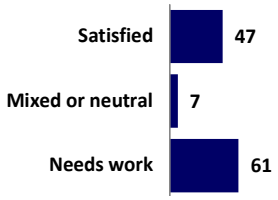
THEME | Approaches to Training

Comments about various approaches to foster parent training were included in this category. Nine percent of survey respondents made a comment about approaches to training.



115 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (8%) mentioned approaches to training.

Of the 115 survey respondents who addressed approaches to training, over four out of ten (41%) made positive comments. Slightly more than half (53%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Seven individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



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

- "Hands on" and interactive training.
- Role-playing various real-life situations.
- Small group and one-on-one trainings.
- Question-and-answer sessions with experienced foster parents.
- Hearing from former foster children.
- Hearing from parents who have lost custody of their children.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents appreciate training that is interactive.

"When you talk one on one and role model in different situations."

"The group trainings (breakout sessions) because we get more interaction and personal stories from the different foster parents."

"More role playing to practice dealing with different confrontations with foster children, especially regarding defiant, anti-authority behavior in teens."

They want training that is realistic, concrete and relevant.

"Do break out sessions by age groups. It is very different to care for a baby vs. a teenager and the general trainings are not helpful for these differences."

"A recent training with a child psychologist was the most helpful training we have had. They had concrete, specific examples of what we can do in certain situations."

"Some training for de-escalation, redirecting, and restraint."

"There needs to be less theory and more practical application. I need to know exactly what to do, for example, when a foster child is swearing at me."

They like hearing from people other than trainers.

"They have veteran foster parents do a helpful question and answer session."

"Hearing from a former foster child was excellent."

"People who had been foster kids and parents who lost their kids to the system were the most helpful. This was so much better than what the trainers had to say."

"A panel of biological parents told us what it was like having their children placed in foster care and what they had to do to get them back home. It cemented in my mind that what we were about to do was hard, but very needed."

Getty Images/DigitalVision

Many foster parents are pleased with information given at trainings about available resources.

"You get a binder that is helpful with resources."

"The Facebook page is a nice place for resources."

"They give the basics, and tell about resources to access when needed."

"They give you a lot of resources for a child (e.g. ADHD)."

"How to navigate the system and what resources are available."

"Learning about all of the resources for foster parents and where to go to get them."

"Resource numbers were helpful and helpful getting us started and navigate through the system."

"I learned about what resources are available in my area."

"It was a lot of work researching the resources but extremely helpful once we got the placements. I felt well prepared by that exercise."

Some feel like they need more knowledge about resources.

"Need to know more about the resources available in my area."

"Create a list of all the resources in our region and distribute to all the foster parents at training."

"It would be helpful during training to be provided 'go to' phone numbers of someone we could contact."

"More awareness of the on-demand resources."

"Tell us what support services are available."

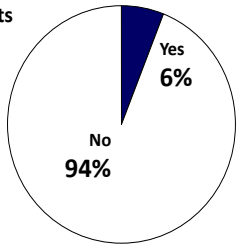
"Master list of resources available with names and phone numbers."

"This is our first placement, and she is a baby and it is foster-to-adopt. I think it would be great if we had a resource telling us about our requirements and when they need to be done."

THEME | Resources

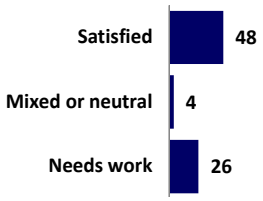
Comments about resource lists being available at trainings are included in this category. Six percent of survey respondents commented on resource information available at trainings.

Made comments about training resources?



78 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned resource information at trainings.

Of the 78 survey respondents who addressed training resources, over six in ten (62%) made positive comments. One in three (33%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and four individuals (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.

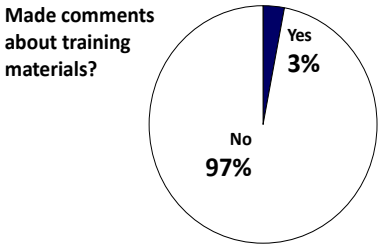


The majority of comments expressed satisfaction with the information about resources for foster children and foster families that they receive in training. Some would like more information about:

- Resources available in specific geographical areas.
- Resources for help for when foster child issues arise.
- Local resources for foster parents – babysitters, respite care, community connections, and more.
- On-line resources for foster care support.
- Resources for children with special needs.
- Grief counseling for the departure of foster children.

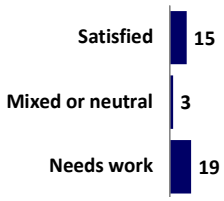
THEME | Training Materials

Comments about training materials were included in this category. Three percent of survey respondents commented on materials used in trainings.



37 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned training materials.

Of the 37 survey respondents who addressed training materials, four out of ten (41%) made positive comments. Half (51%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. The remaining 3 made (8%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Comments about training materials fell into three groups:

- Quality of videos.
- Quality of written materials.
- Access to training materials.

Although some foster parents had positive things to say about training materials, a few more said that the materials are outdated, poor quality, or not realistic.

Getty Images/Wavebreak Media

Some foster parents liked the materials used in trainings.

"The examples of behaviors we might encounter. The videos were good."

"I really like the video classes they offer, as I can watch them over and over and get something new every time."

"The resources and literature I got have really been helpful."

"The videos have been great. The subject matter has been very relevant and helpful."

"Movies and readings recommended were good."

"The last few trainings, we learned about teenagers. The material is fresh and not boring."

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

"Update the videos. Put new information about drug exposed, ADHD, sexually aggressive children. There is new information available. Please update."

"Need to update the online materials."

"We need new fresh material. We get the same videos over and over."

"There needs to be a mandatory training about the first 30 days of care when kids come into placement. Maybe a checklist of what is required during the first 30 days, what the items are and why they are important."

"Films are very outdated. Need more current films with current issues."

"More videos on how to deal with behavioral issues."

"Provide more reference material, you take the class and it's so much to absorb. More reference material to look up later would be so helpful."

"Keep training material up to date. Too much of what I have attended has been totally out of date. We need best practices for children."

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents appreciate when trainings are helpful and realistic.

"Training helps you realize exactly what you are getting yourself into as a new foster parent."

"The training expressed the emotional needs of foster kids in a realistic way. They didn't sugar coat it, they gave us the truth on that."

"Trainers usually tell you like it is; they don't sugarcoat it."

"The candid information that is there and the real stories of foster parents."

"They have good specialized training on line."

"Variety of classes is outstanding. I can usually find a class on-line that will answer my questions or help me learn about something new."

There were many suggestions for ways training could be improved.

"Consistency, and better information regarding procedures/requirements."

"Offer more trainings, specifically systems (how to navigate) and mental health training regarding children."

"There needs to be a broader range of topics, such as autism, mental health issues, and adolescent behaviors."

"Offer information on trauma and developmental stages."

"Wish there was a way to test out of it. Assess your knowledge and skills and then give you credit for some of the behavioral modules."

"Be more realistic about the situations encountered in foster parenting. Clarify the role of the court in the decisions. Make it more clear how the overall system really works and who has the ultimate responsibility."

"Reduce repetitious elements of training. Offer targeted training."

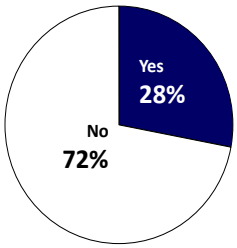
"Stop recycling the same old stuff year after year."

"The 'First Placement, Now What?' should be repeated. If you are not getting a lot of placements, you might need a refresher."

THEME | Other General Training Comments

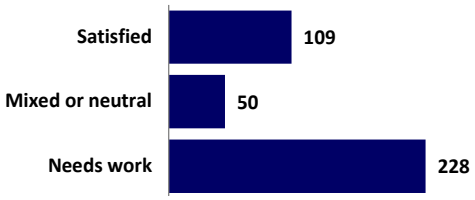
Other general comments about training were included in this category. 28% of survey respondents made comments about other general training issues not already covered in prior sections.

Made other general comments about training?



387 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (28%) made other general comments about training.

Of the 387 survey respondents who made other general comments about training, almost three in ten (28%) were positive comments. Almost six out of ten (59%) were negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 13% made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents are happy when training offers them:

- A wide variety of classes, including the on-line classes.
- Training that helps them understand their roles and the foster care system.
- Training that provides useful information for situations they encounter as foster parents.
- Training that helps them develop new skills.
- Training that is realistic.

They dislike it when:

- Training requirements are redundant or burdensome.
- Training requirements do not take into account professional backgrounds and long-time foster parent experience.
- Varied classes are not available.
- Specialized classes are not available.

Specific Trainings

Getty Images/Wavebreak Media

Foster parents commented on a variety of training types.

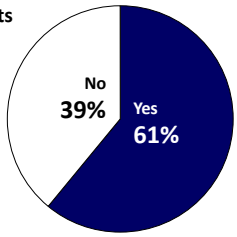
Of those who commented on specific trainings, most made positive comments and many of these were positive towards a favorite training or training type. Some voiced negative or mixed comments about particular trainings, suggested ways to improve a specific training, or asked for training in a specific area.

In this section:

- This chapter reviews foster parents' comments on ten specific training themes, in the following order (68 – 78): Disorders/Issues; Substance Abuse; Sexually Inappropriate Behavior; Child Behavior; Infants and Toddlers; Navigating the Foster Care System; Trainings Mentioned by Name *(Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE, Parenting Plus, and Love and Logic)*; Health and Safety; Cultural Awareness and Cultural Issues; and Other Specific Trainings.

More than half of survey respondents (828 out of 1,358, or 61%) made comments about specific trainings. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about specific trainings?



- Almost six in ten (58%) made positive comments.
- Less than two in ten (17%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- About one in four (25%) made mixed or neutral comments.

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Many foster parents said that the trainings they receive on specific disorders or issues are helpful.

"They have gotten more into issues with the kids (fetal alcohol, reactive attachment disorder kids, etc.)."

"The behavioral training regarding children with behavior issues."

"The training on grief and loss was helpful. A child development class was helpful."

"The brain development and how to deal with and what to expect of a foster child that has experienced trauma."

"Kids with disabilities such as ADHD and ADD; it was helpful to learn why they do what they do."

"I liked the classes about aggressive behaviors and teenagers that are oppositional."

"The training about trauma and how it affects children."

"The class on grief and loss was amazing."

"All the specialized classes (i.e. ADHD, attachment disorder, autism spectrum). I would take these over and over if I could. I read and re-read the material."

"We went to one training recently and it was on attachment and trauma. It was excellent!"

Some foster parents asked for additional training on specific issues.

"More training on attachment disorder."

"More training on sexual abuse."

"More training on children who are gay or transgender."

"How to deal with aggressive children."

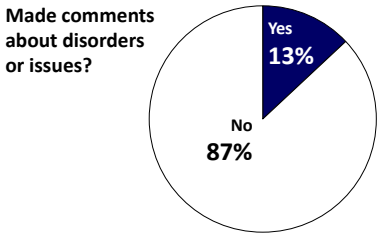
"More on how to communicate with kids who are truly shut down or who do not want to communicate."

"Specific disorders like fetal alcohol and bipolar disorder."

"Lying and stealing by the foster child and how to deal with the problem."

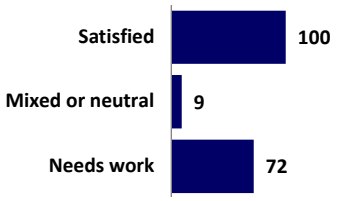
THEME | Disorders/Issues

Comments about training on specific disorders or issues were included in this category. 13% of survey respondents commented on trainings directed at disorders or issues.



181 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned training on disorders or issues.

Of the 181 survey respondents who addressed trainings on specific disorders or issues, over half (55%) made positive comments. Almost four in ten (40%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and five percent made mixed or neutral comments.

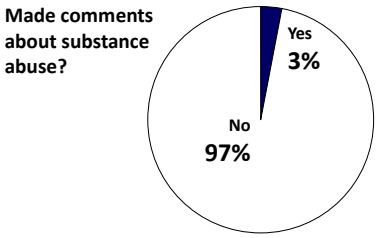


Many comments in this section are requests for additional trainings on specific disorders or issues. The following specific training topics were asked for by respondents (*most often requested at top/least requested at bottom*):

- Problematic behaviors.
- Children with special needs.
- Mental health disorders in general.
- Infants exposed to alcohol or drugs.
- Attachment disorders.
- Trauma, and post traumatic stress disorder.
- Autism spectrum disorders.
- Medical fragility issues.
- ADHD and ADD, bipolar, and sleep disorders.
- Anger management.
- Abuse and neglect issues, including sexual abuse.
- General medical issues.

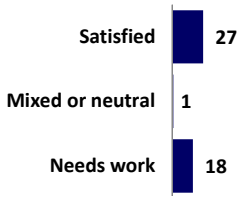
THEME | Substance Abuse

Comments about substance abuse training were included in this category. Many comments focused on children exposed to alcohol and drugs before birth; others on drug and alcohol problems in teenagers. Three percent of survey respondents commented on substance abuse training.



46 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned substance abuse training.

Of the 46 survey respondents who addressed substance abuse training, almost six out of ten (59%) made positive comments. Almost four out of ten (39%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One comment was mixed.



The majority of foster parents, who commented on substance abuse, indicated they find these specific classes important and useful:

- Fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects.
- Infants affected by drugs.
- Infants exposed to methamphetamine.
- Information on dealing with drug and alcohol abuse in teenagers.
- Resources for kids with substance abuse problems.

Some felt that they were not getting the training they need to be able to help the substance-affected children in their care. They want training that:

- Offers more depth on drug-affected infants and children.
- Teaches how to care for children going through substance withdrawal.
- Helps them in dealing with the behaviors of drug exposed and addicted youth.
- Identifies addiction and informs how to get treatment.

Getty Images/iStock

Most foster parents said the substance abuse training they got was useful.

"I think most foster parents should take classes on drug-addicted babies because it seems that many of the foster children coming through have been in that sort of situation."

"The training I had in caring for infants who were addicted to drugs was excellent."

"Learning about how to deal with teen issues: drug abuse and alcohol abuse."

"They had a class on identifying drug babies and this was really helpful."

"How to respond to situations when the child has fetal alcohol syndrome."

"The meth use training – the problem and what it does to the kids."

"Reading up on the Department meth and fetal alcohol studies has really been helpful. We take those babies and the more we learn the better."

Some indicated they would like more or deeper substance abuse training.

"I have to go outside to get the type of training I need for the babies I care for, especially the drug babies and other medically fragile babies. Even on-line training would be helpful."

"More teenage classes and drug use classes and how to spot the behaviors of drug use."

"Need more on the effects of drug exposed children. Need more scientific information. Most of the information is about alcohol effects on children."

"Need more training on meth babies; how do we cope, how do we get help for the child, etc."

"We need more training that is focused on drug affected foster children that we have in our home. The training I have received in the past three years works on normal foster children but not on drug affected foster children."

"Provide more training on children that have been abused and their behavior with drugs."

Getty Images/iStock

Three out of four comments were favorable.

"The sexually aggressive youth (SAY) training and the drug classes for teenagers were helpful."

"The training for SAY and SRY, the sexually aggressive and the sexually reactive kids."

"The range of classes, SAY, aggressive youth, etc., and the content is excellent."

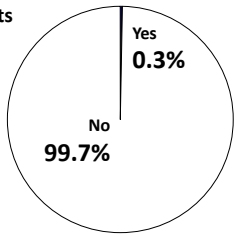
One person asked for a different format for this topic.

"I think it would be a great service if the department could provide someone to come into the home (if I gathered three or four families together, along with the aides) and train us in what to do with Sexually Aggressive and Sexually Active kids. It would be so much more welcomed and useful in a small group in a home setting."

THEME | Sexually Inappropriate Behavior

Comments about sexually inappropriate behavior training were included in this category. Less than one percent of survey respondents commented on specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

Made comments about sexually inappropriate behavior?



4 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (0.3%) mentioned training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

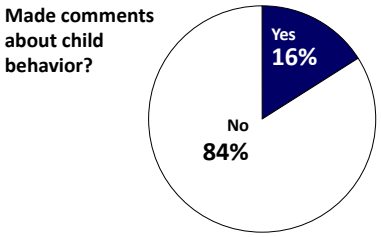
Of the four survey respondents who addressed a specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior, three made positive comments. One was a suggestion for an improved method of delivering the training.

In this and previous surveys foster parents have said it is important to receive training on:

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

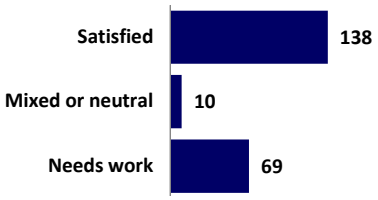
THEME | Child Behavior

Comments about training on child behavior were included in this category. 16% of survey respondents made comments about training dealing with child behavior.



217 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned training on child behavior.

Of the 217 survey respondents who addressed training on child behavior, almost two out of three (64%) made positive comments. Less than one in three (32%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and ten (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.

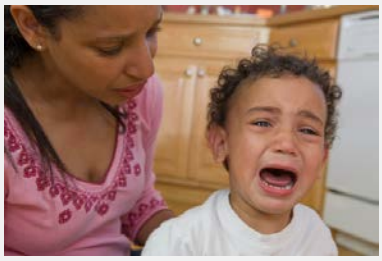


Foster parents appreciate training that covers:

- Child development.
- Behavior management.
- Dealing effectively with traumatized children and children with attachment issues.
- Discipline techniques.
- Realistic de-escalation techniques.
- Where to go for help or more information.

Some would like:

- Training separated by specific age groups.
- Examples given that are realistic and honest.
- Training on behavior management that helps them deal with difficult behaviors.



Getty Images/Huntstock

Foster parents often called the child behavior training "great" and "excellent".

"The discipline skills and development have been helpful, and even have been helpful with my own youngest child."

"The training about the different types of behavior issues with kids is very good."

"They have gotten into more detailed information on the underlying diagnosis of what causes the behavior and helps you better understand how their brain works."

"The suggestions for dealing with all the different situations and behaviors."

"Different viewpoints on how to handle certain kinds of problems with behavior. It is always good to hear how other parents handle things and to find out that you're not as bad at it as you thought you were."

"Anything that is practical and gives practical steps to follow when dealing with specific behaviors."

Some foster parents suggested ways to improve behavior training.

"They teach very little about teenagers. They don't touch on middle of the road situations with teens, they always give worst case scenarios and I have not had any of those."

"More training on dealing with the different behaviors especially those that occur after the child has been in the home awhile."

"Concentrate on helping with behavioral issues after a visit. Consider the emotional and developmental needs of the kids, not the convenience of the biological parent. Also, how to manage the various acting-out behaviors after visits."

"More regular training provided by the state on the subjects of attachment disorders, behavioral disorders, de-escalation procedures."

Getty Images/iStock

Eight foster parents liked the infant and toddler training they received.

"The training on keeping babies safe. We only take babies and, even though I am 70 years old, I really needed a refresher about the babies."

"The part about babies crying, and how to take care of that situation."

"The training about caring for small children, especially with attachment issues."

"The tips they have on what to do when you get a newborn and all the information on the Indian Welfare Act was great."

"ACES training, the training to care for drug impacted infants, pediatric infant care training was great, but I had all this training through our private foster care folks."

Other foster parents offered ideas to improve infant and toddler training.

"Had difficulty finding newborn care classes and had to go outside the system to find one."

"We have an infant, so a lot of the training didn't apply to us at this time."

"More age specific. It was mostly about teenagers and I have babies."

"We first got an infant as a foster child, and they should add a class for infant care, as we have never had an infant before."

"More training for parents that do infant care and the care for kids age three and under."

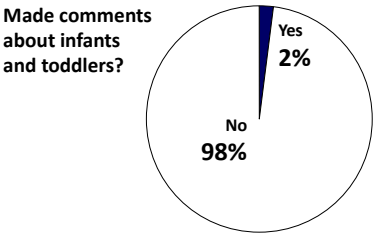
"Experiences regarding getting a baby in the home. Stories regarding real situations, applicable to the age of the children, the whole spectrum."

"We have a medically fragile baby and there is no training offered for that."

"Gear training to kids under two years (in our case). Maybe by age groups."

THEME | Infants and Toddlers

Comments about training on infants and toddlers were included in this category. Two percent of survey respondents commented on infant and toddler training.



25 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned infant and toddler training.

Of the 25 survey respondents who addressed infant and toddler training, almost one in three (32%) made positive comments. Six out of ten (60%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two (8%) made mixed or neutral comments.

Eight foster parents commended the training they received around:

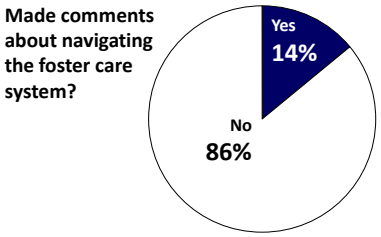
- Medically fragile infants.
- Caring for newborns.
- Age-specific behavior and development.
- Children with attachment disorders.

This list reflects what the fifteen foster parents requested be included to improve training *(most often requested at top/least requested at bottom)*:

- Age-appropriate lessons and material for infants and young children.
- More training on caring specifically for newborns.
- Trainings on dealing with special needs and/or medically fragile children.

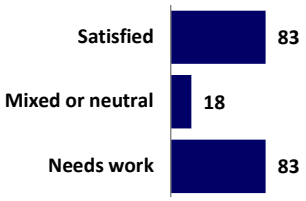
THEME | Navigating the Foster Care System

Comments about learning to navigate the foster care system were included in this category. 14% of survey respondents commented on training about navigating the foster care system.



184 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned training on navigating the foster care system.

Of the 184 survey respondents who addressed training on navigating the foster care system, nearly half (45%) made positive comments. The same number (45%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Ten percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents like training that helps them to:

- Comprehend the whole foster care system and how it works.
- Understand the legal process and court system.
- Keep track of updated policies and procedures.
- Get a clear, realistic idea of foster parent rights, rules, and responsibilities – with regard to their foster children, and also to the biological families of those children.
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of social workers, and how to deal with any difficulties with them.
- Complete required paperwork and keep necessary records.
- Know what resources are available to them and the children they care for.
- Identify who they can contact to get more information.

Almost all of the foster parents who made negative comments said they would like more comprehensive training in the topics described above.

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Foster parents want to understand the roles, rules and responsibilities for everyone in the system.

"It is most helpful to understand everyone's roles."

"They could train foster families to work better with the court process; time frame, what is needed, etc."

"Just understanding what to expect (i.e. what to document and report if something happened to the child)."

"Need in black and white what kids and foster parents can do. Changes from one social worker to another."

"It explains what they expect of us. We know their rules."

"Knowing the rules and the regulations of what is expected of foster parents."

"Knowing my rights as a foster parent."

"What is the social worker's role and responsibility in this?"

"Understanding what social workers have on their plates, how many cases do they have, what do they do in a day or a week, how could foster parents work more efficiently with them and get what we need from them?"

"Good information on the 'stairs to climb' if we have problems with the social worker."

"How to work with and communicate with biological parents, particularly those under the influence or disturbed."

"How to deal with the birth parents, as far as what is and is not okay. Training about our roles and responsibilities."

Foster parents want to understand how the entire system works.

"Information about the steps in the process and what to expect as a child came into our home."

"Understanding how the placement process works and how the different departments work together."

"More in-depth training on how everything works and fits together, how to get to the resources we need, how the court system works."

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Most who mentioned the Caregiver Core Training (formerly PRIDE) liked it. Some wanted to add topics.

"The PRIDE training which explained what the foster children are going through was the most helpful."

"PRIDE was outstanding; roles, explain how difficult some of the children could be and how to work in the system. Also ways to handle the stress of the job."

"I am an early childhood education teacher and already had a lot of the training. But I still enjoyed many of the DCFS classes, like the PRIDE class."

"The emotion coaching training is just as important as the PRIDE training and it too should be required at the beginning of foster parent training."

"More needs to be added to the PRIDE training about respite care."

"Add training to PRIDE for when the child enters the school system, especially for kids with special needs."

Most liked Parenting Plus.

"Parenting Plus was helpful. I found out what my rights as a foster parent are. I learned about the policies of the Department."

"The Parenting Plus class is very good, good refresher and new stuff too."

"Parenting Plus was very valuable."

"All of it was great, the Parenting Plus was most helpful, and PRIDE was 2nd most helpful."

"Parenting Plus was too vague and general. I needed more specifics. More detailed explanation about the WACs."

All who mentioned Love and Logic liked it. Some wanted it more available.

"The Love and Logic training stands out."

"Love and Logic, I think every parent should have this training, it's amazing."

"Love and Logic has been one of the biggest helps for us."

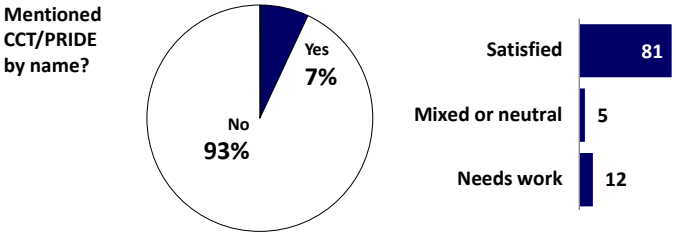
"Can we please get Love and Logic back?"

THEME | Trainings Mentioned by Name

Comments about trainings that foster parents mentioned by name were included in this category. Three trainings were often commented upon, and therefore included in this category: Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE, Parenting Plus, and Love and Logic.

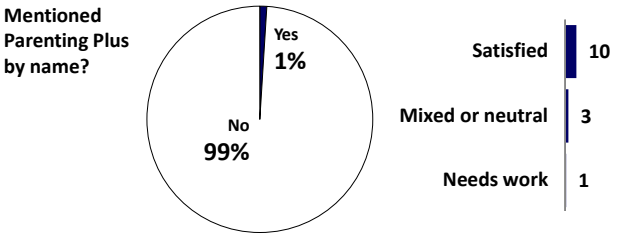
CAREGIVER CORE TRAINING

Of the 98 survey respondents who addressed Caregiver Core Training (formerly called PRIDE training), 83% made positive comments. 12% made negative comments or suggested improvements. Five (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.



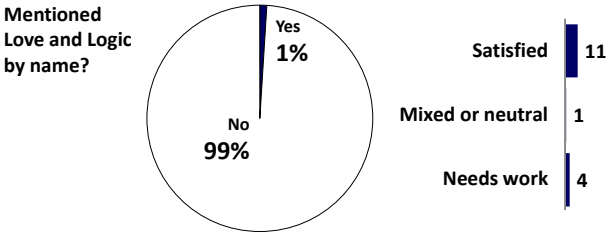
PARENTING PLUS

Of the 14 survey respondents who addressed Parenting Plus training, ten made positive comments. One person made a negative comment. Three made mixed or neutral comments.



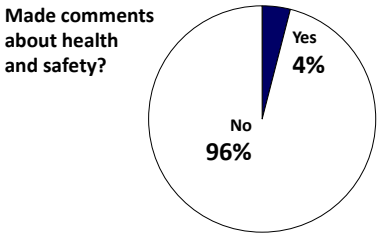
LOVE AND LOGIC

Of the 16 survey respondents who addressed Love and Logic training, 11 made positive comments. Four people made negative comments or suggested it be more available. One made a mixed comment.



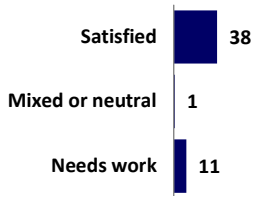
THEME | Health and Safety

Comments about health and safety training were included in this category. Four percent of survey respondents commented on health and safety training.



50 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned health and safety training.

Of the 50 survey respondents who addressed health and safety training, over three in four (76%) made positive comments. Over two out of ten (22%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One person made a mixed or neutral comment.



The majority of comments were about CPR and first aid training. These foster parents appreciate:

- Free CPR/first aid training that gets them certified.
- CPR/first aid training every two years.
- The practical nature of these classes.

Foster parents also mentioned other potential health and safety classes that they would like to see offered:

- More training on medically needy foster children.
- Training on medication foster children may be taking.
- More training on the incoming medical and health issues of foster children.
- Car seat safety training.

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Most foster parents are satisfied with CPR and first aid training.

"First Aid and CPR were very helpful."

"CPR was the only helpful training."

"Since these are our grandchildren, we feel we have already had all the training we need, but the first aid and CPR training was really good."

"The CPR class and first aid training is a plus."

"CPR review is good. I like it that they go over it every couple of years."

Some suggested changes for CPR and first aid training.

"One CPR class and one night of first aid is insufficient to teach anyone how to adequately take care of a child in an emergency. I would raise the level of training for first aid and I would require a refresher course every year."

"Not requiring CPR every two years; make it voluntary."

"First aid with a good instructor."

"Even more on-line (e.g. CPR and first aid.)"

Some foster parents suggested other specific health and safety training ideas.

"Also, foster children with reflux issues; we need a feeding specialist to come see us and show us how to do it."

"Give specific training on how to properly install a car seat."

"It would be nice to have an overall unit at DSHS that deals with foster children with special needs, medical issues, etc. There should be training for DSHS staff and foster parents in this area."

"I suggested many, many times that we should get classes covering the medical needs of the foster child."

"There is no medical training at all and there should be. A lot of foster children come in with medications."

"We need training on medically fragile children and drug affected children."

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Most foster parents who commented praised the cultural awareness training

"Native American training opportunities were made available to me. I needed Tribal info so this is a great resource."

"The few classes on Native American kids were helpful since I foster them."

"I liked the fact that there was training to teach us about how different cultures should be treated."

"Addressing racial issues was good. Many of the other participants seemed like this was new information!"

"The transracial adoption classes were good."

"Finding out about the different cultures of the kids I get."

"Learning how to care for foster children across cultures."

There were requests that other cultural awareness training be offered.

"Better training about the Indian Child Welfare Act and teaching more about Native American culture and how things are different in Tribal court."

"Train foster parents to be better prepared for possible outcomes, especially when you have a native child placed with you. We had one child for 4 years, just to have the Tribe finally decide to place her elsewhere."

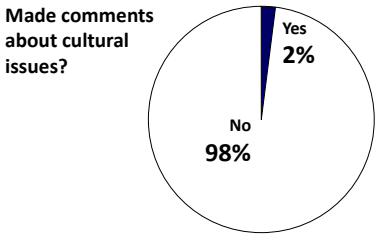
"More cultural sensitivity awareness. There's a lot available on the Internet, but not enough through the State. We need more than ONE African-American hair video. If we are taking black children, there are more issues a bi-racial home needs to cover."

"Here in the region where I live, we need more training in Spanish. I live in the Yakima Valley."

"How can a Christian home best serve an atheist child? How to respect cultural requirements like food, Sabbath, etc. How to address these cultural differences without rejecting both points of view? Real meaningful conversations about these issues."

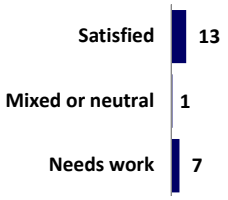
THEME | Cultural Awareness and Cultural Issues

Comments about cultural awareness training, cultural practice issues related to training, and language were included in this category. Two percent of survey respondents commented on cultural issues.



21 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned cultural issues.

Of the 21 survey respondents who addressed cultural awareness issues and training, over six in ten made positive comments. One in three (33%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One made a mixed or neutral comment.



These foster parents like:

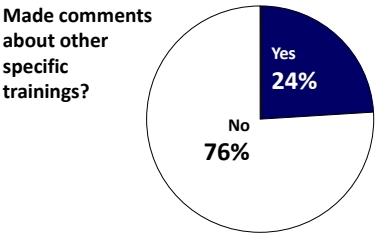
- Expanding their awareness of different cultures.
- Training specific to their foster child's culture.
- Discussions on diversity that are connected to the care of the children in their home.
- Understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act and how it affects the court cases for the children they care for.

They are particularly interested in more education and ideas around:

- Cultural issues for Native American foster children.
- Help with children speaking foreign languages.
- Help dealing with children who have different religious backgrounds and beliefs than their foster family (including atheist beliefs).
- More and deeper training in cultural issues.
- Working with Tribal courts.

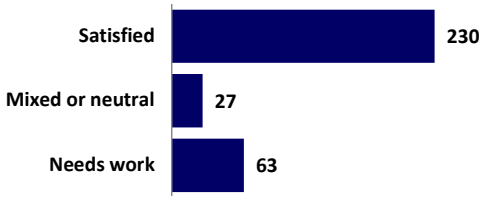
THEME | Other Specific Trainings

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. 24% of survey respondents commented on other specific trainings.



323 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (24%) mentioned other specific trainings.

Of the 320 survey respondents who addressed other specific trainings, more than seven out of ten (72%) made positive comments. Two in ten (20%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Less than one in ten (8%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Many comments about "other specific trainings" fall into one of these three areas:

- Comments about foster parents' initial training.
- Comments about needs for training on the stress of being a foster parent – more on self-care, supports, self-advocacy and availability of counseling.
- 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.

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Many foster parents commented on their first training experience.

"The only thing that has been helpful was the initial training which was very broad and gave us an intro into the foster care world."

"It was an eye opening experience. Showing us the reality of what these kids have gone through and what to expect in dealing with the families."

"The initial training we received was helpful to explain some of the emotional challenges that the foster children coming into care face."

"Initial training was amazing. They did a good job and the experienced foster parent panel was very helpful."

Some said they would like more about foster parent stress and support.

"They should have more information about the importance of getting support for yourself and emphasizing connecting with other people, especially with other foster parents."

"More on caring for the caregiver. How to speak up for oneself. Stress reduction programs for foster parents."

"I wish they had counseling for the foster parents that have to deal with all this stuff. We feel broken and abused by social workers, biological parent problems, the court, etc., and we need someone to talk to sometimes."

"There is nothing that can prepare one to deal with the utter exhaustion you will experience with foster children that are traumatized."

"I would like a whole series on the best way to advocate for yourself, taught by current and former foster parents."

Others commented on the value of input from other foster parents.

"My favorite was the panel with experienced foster parents."

"I get my best information and training from other foster parents."

"I found it helpful to be together with other people who are doing foster parenting and hearing real life stories."

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 or topic they would like to have available to them. Some of their comments are listed below.

Voices . . . .

Some foster parents named other specific trainings they found useful.

"Families Like Ours was the most helpful class."

"Fostering Together is very good, as they provide childcare, and I get the information on what trainings are upcoming."

"The four month training; really really good, and it was held locally so made it easier to attend."

"Things To Look For In Your Kids; this subject matter was helpful."

"The non-violent crisis intervention training."

"I love the Fostering Hope program in Spokane, it's the best. We meet once a month and share food and stories and the foster kids get to meet each other and play together; it's so great."

"Positive Discipline class was really great. I wish this class was required for all parents. I also really liked the Allegations class."

"The 24 hours of training done by a foster parent was great. Even though we whined about it when we were going through it, we now see how really helpful it has been."

"The Right Response training was really good, very thorough giving specifics on what to do in certain situations."

"Positive Parenting was very good. Why Children Lie was also very good. The Suicide Intervention module was very good."

"The class on Sex Trafficking and Drugs was quite an eye opener and very informational."

"I really liked the Foster Parent Conferences, which don't happen very often any longer."

"The grief counseling was very helpful! They were able to explain how to deal with loss, and I felt that was very important."

"The best training that I have taken, So You Have Your First Placement: Now What?, was very helpful."

"Supporting Foster Kids in the School was a great training (not DSHS) I recently attended. Trauma and New Brain Research I have found is very useful. Kids with PTSD (DSHS training) was really good."

Others described trainings they would like to have available or changes they would like to see.

"I really did not like So You Have Your First Placement: Now What? The person just read out of the book."

"Have the training So You Have Your First Placement: Now What? BEFORE any children are placed."

"I am a 'relative placement.' They did not cover much about this in the training. 40% of the class I was in was relatives. More guidance and support for the role of relative as foster parent."

"I have been a foster parent for 28 years, and I think more training on the mental health of these kids would be most helpful."

"They do not provide enough training on how to help the caseworkers; what is legally appropriate? We get a lot of 'oh, don't do that' when we tell them what we are doing when it comes to interacting with the biological parents, but some clear guidelines and training would be helpful."

"The grieving period needs to be addressed whether the child goes home or to another placement. The foster parent's emotions during that grieving process are not acknowledged by some social workers and the judges. You are treated like a sweat shop (i.e. just go get a new foster child and don't grieve)."

"First, preparing foster parents to understand and cope with foster children leaving our homes which you become attached to. That's the main issue for me. The private agency demands total cut-off when the child leaves. DSHS actually encourages some contact with foster children after they have left our home. The child can call our home and talk to us if they would like."

"Training on having the foster child leave the home, which is a very difficult thing for people, would be helpful. Maybe have grief counseling available to all involved. It is difficult for both foster parents and foster children."

"Create timeline for continuing education. Explain how often the child should see medical professional. Who do I see for IFP (IEP for other family in pre-school)? Offer classes after 5 PM and on weekends for working parents. Offer Here Is What to Expect at Adoption (a one page hand out) would help greatly."

"There is nothing that can completely prepare you for the first placement. It can be overwhelming when you get that placement. Please reinforce in training that no matter how prepared you feel, you will feel overwhelmed and lost at first."

Access

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For foster parents, access to training is often challenging.

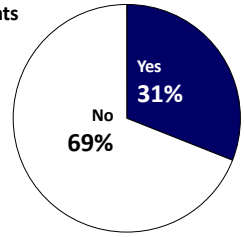
Most foster parents who commented on access to training described problems or suggestions for improvement. In order to access training, many foster parents must lose work time, travel long distances, and make childcare arrangements – all of which require substantial investment of time and financial resources. A small number of foster parents expressed satisfaction with their access to training.

In this section:

- The following page (80) addresses comments about the location of trainings.
- The third page (81) reviews comments about the scheduling of trainings.
- The fourth page (82) looks at comments about childcare during training.
- The fifth page (83) shows other comments about access to training.

Nearly one third of survey respondents (416 out of 1,358, or 31%) made comments about access to training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about access?



- Very few (5%) made positive comments.

- Nine out of ten (90%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.

- 21 (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.

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Many foster parents want training to be near home, especially in rural areas.

"Lots, lots, lots more in the rural areas, actually any training in rural areas."

"More training in the rural areas, especially Tribal."

"Provide training to rural, outlying areas, regardless of how many people show up to the training. Those attending need help, whether one or twenty."

"Offer them closer so it is easier to make it on a weekday."

"Have more locally based training. It's difficult to get to them from Sumner."

"The next one is in Tri-Cities and we live elsewhere. It would be nice if they had one in Yakima one year."

"More offered in our area, not just in Yakima or Tri-Cities."

"Need more training in Lewis county."

"More training in the Kettle Falls area."

"It is too far to drive to Spokane."

"Classes in Grant County. We go to classes in Moses Lake or Wenatchee."

"Offer trainings here in Goldendale."

"Have some training in White Salmon."

"I am in Seattle; most of the trainings are in Kent or Mt. Vernon/Bellingham."

"Have more classes in Bellingham area."

"I have to drive an hour away to get a class that was from 5 PM to 9 PM."

"It's difficult for people like me that live in small towns to get to the training."

"Locations are good."

"Training is local and accessible. "

Long travel times can create a financial burden for foster parents.

"Bring training to the smaller cities so that we don't have to take a day off work so we can travel."

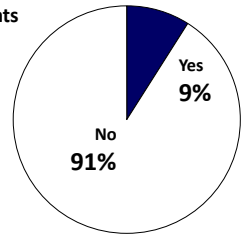
"I had to travel so far and be gone for several nights."

"It is hard for both of us to be gone for so long to attend out-of-town trainings."

THEME | Location of Trainings

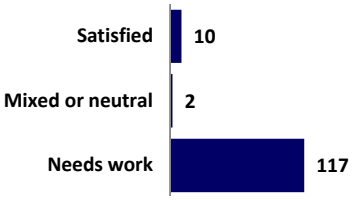
Comments about the location of foster parent trainings were included in this category. Ten percent of survey respondents commented on location of trainings.

Made comments about location of trainings?



129 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned location of trainings.

Of the 129 survey respondents who addressed location of trainings, ten (8%) made positive comments. Nine out of ten (91%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two (2%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want training to be:

- Close to home.
- Available in multiple locations.

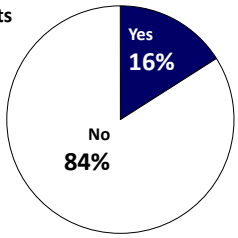
They dislike:

- Traveling a great distance to training.
- Shouldering the personal cost of travel and childcare for trainings that take multiple days and are a long distance from their home.

THEME | Scheduling of Trainings

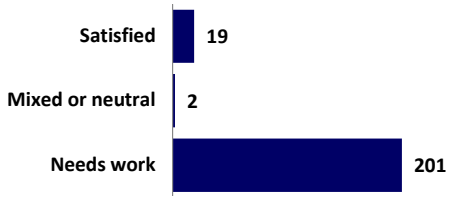
Comments about the scheduling of foster parent trainings were included in this category. 16% of those surveyed commented on scheduling of trainings.

Made comments about the scheduling of trainings?



222 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (16%) mentioned scheduling of trainings.

Of the 222 survey respondents who addressed scheduling of trainings, very few (9%) made positive comments. Nine out of ten (91%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two (1%) individuals made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

- Training that is available during evenings and weekends.
- Training that is available frequently.
- Some want longer classes spread out over a period of weeks.
- Others want classes offered all at one time or on weekends.

Some foster parents are frustrated by:

- Lack of trainings on evenings or weekends.
- Infrequently-scheduled trainings.
- Trainings being cancelled with little or no communication.

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Employed foster parents want trainings on evenings and weekends.

"Offer more weekend and evening training for working foster parents."

"As much as we would like to attend some classes together, life happens. Are there classes on the weekends?"

"Do trainings during the day and at night for the working parents."

"Give more options for the hours of training. Most of our training is on Saturday. I usually work on Saturday."

"Weekend trainings are non-existent."

"Was a Saturday; that was very helpful."

"Lots of weekend classes."

"It would be nice to have training on Friday or Saturday nights. All our trainings happen on weekdays."

They want trainings offered more frequently at a variety of times.

"Offer the same training at different times of the day or different days of the week so that more people can attend."

"More class times so we can choose."

"Daytime when kids are in school."

"A two hour evening class since it is easier to find a babysitter for that."

"All the trainings have been held at the children's bedtime – hold trainings at an earlier time or on the weekend."

"A six week class that you could attend one night a week rather 20 hours in a row. We have seven kiddos and without childcare, it is really tough for us to go to trainings that are that long or all weekend long, OY!"

"Classes at different times help."

They want better communication concerning training cancellations.

"Sometimes it is hard to get into the classes, and finally when you get in they are cancelled."

"We went to a scheduled out-of-town class and when we got there no one was there. And, this after we had received e-mail confirmation that it was being held."

Getty Images/Stockbyte

Foster parents made it very clear they need childcare during training.

"Should offer and provide paid daycare even if it is on-site at the training event."

"It is very difficult for me to make the weekday classes when daycare is not provided."

"Provide childcare so we can both attend training."

"I would love to have training on a weekend with childcare provided. I am a single-parent who works full-time."

"Daycare needs to be provided so that I could actually attend training classes."

"Biggest hurdle, no childcare."

"I have six kids and I can't exactly hire the girl next door."

"Provide daycare during training. It is too hard to find appropriate childcare, especially for the kids with difficult behavior."

"Better childcare. We cannot leave our kids with anyone, as they are kids with special needs. I'd like to take the 'drug affected kids' training, but I cannot due to lack of childcare options."

"Offer childcare. Very difficult to find adequate care providers when you have a large family and need to travel."

"The weekend training offerings are difficult as we do not have access to appropriate childcare. Offer supervision/daycare during the training. The kids are level 3/4 and cannot be left with just any babysitter."

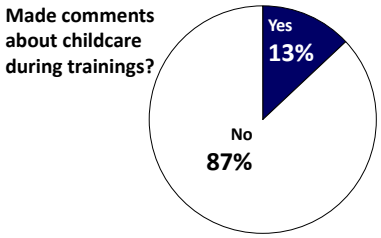
"Training needs to have childcare provided, it is impossible to attend when you care for kids day and night."

"I cannot attend state sponsored foster parent training because DSHS won't provide childcare. I would like to attend the sessions but simply cannot without help with childcare."

"When I have to pay a babysitter $10 an hour and training takes eight hours (six hours of training, an hour lunch and 30 minutes there and back) I am out $80. Honestly, I cannot afford that."

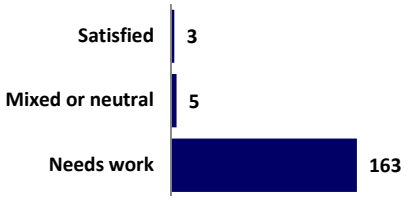
THEME | Childcare During Trainings

Comments about childcare during foster parent trainings were included in this category. 13% of survey respondents commented on childcare during trainings.



171 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned childcare during trainings.

Of the 171 survey respondents who addressed childcare during trainings, nearly all (95%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals (2%) made positive comments. Five (3%) made mixed or neutral comments.

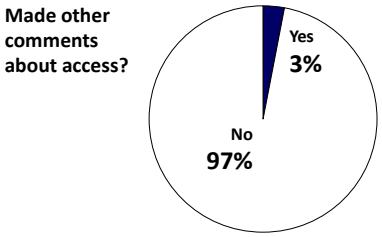


The majority of commenting foster parents reported that they want childcare to be available during trainings. They indicated they would be much more likely to attend a wider range of trainings if such care was available. They suggested they would like:

- Childcare available at training sites.
- Childcare provided in their homes during trainings.
- Childcare for special needs foster children.
- Financial compensation for childcare during mandatory trainings.

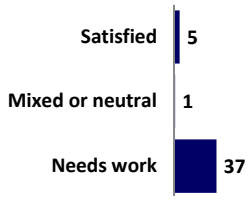
THEME | Other Comments About Access

Other comments about access to foster parent trainings are included in this category. Three percent of survey respondents made other comments about access.



43 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (3%) made other comments about access.

Of the 43 survey respondents who made other comments about access, most (86%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Five (12%) made positive comments. One respondent (2%) made a mixed or neutral comment.



Foster parents want:

- Training available when they need it.
- Training available in their language.
- Assistance with access to training if their situation is unique or especially difficult.
- The ability to receive credit for relevant trainings they find for themselves, once they have completed the basic training required.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents offered a variety of additional comments about access to training.

"The classes are free and as a pre-school teacher I have enjoyed them and learned so much."

"Include more deaf people. Must understand deaf people need to have the same access to information."

"To help me, have more classes in Spanish. Not enough time even if there is an interpreter to get all the information since the trainer goes fast with the explanations."

"I learned a lot from a training that was for state workers only and I got to attend because there hasn't been any other training available."

"I am resisting going through the training again. I needed 36 hours of training and when I checked there wasn't one thing about what I needed or where to get it."

"They rarely pay mileage reimbursement for training. If you want foster parents to attend, it would really help to reimburse for travel costs. I have to travel long distances."

"The classes are definitely helpful. We've enjoyed the conferences provided. We would prefer they condense these conferences instead of drawing them out for multiple classes. We are too busy to keep coming in."

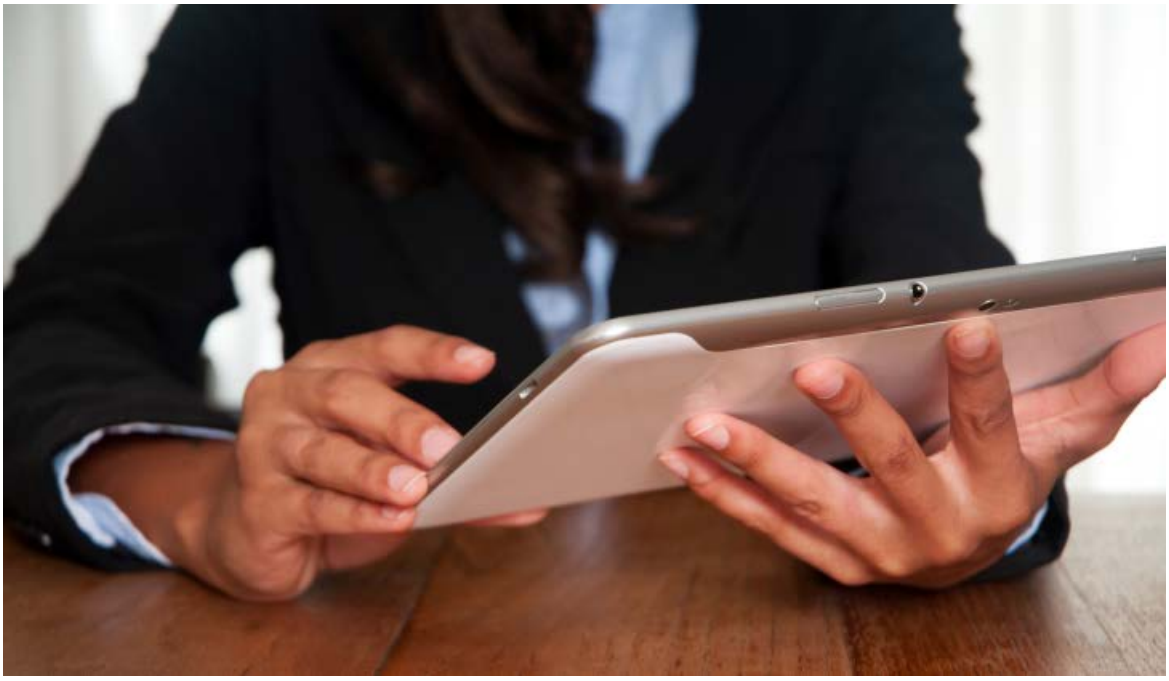
"I have to take vacation time from work to attend the trainings. It took me almost one year to attend a training that was required."

"Stop bullying us into training that is impossible to get to or provide childcare so that we can go."

"Make more on-line training accessible because I don't know how to find it."

"They can't do anything about this, but I just wish I had more time for training."

Alternative Training Formats



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents like having alternative training formats available to them.

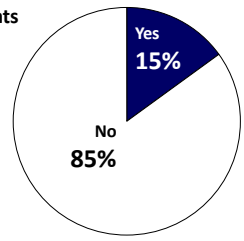
The majority of foster parents who commented on alternative training formats described suggestions for improvement – often in the form of requests for more on-line training. Comments about training received through support groups were almost uniformly positive. Other format suggestions included videoconferencing or Skype training, suggestions for other types of written materials, and the ability to get "credit" for self-directed training.

In this section:

- The following page (86) addresses comments about on-line training.
- The third page (87) looks at comments about training in foster parent support groups.
- The fourth page (88) reviews other comments about alternative training formats.

About one out of seven survey respondents (208 out of 1,358, or 15%) made comments about alternative training formats. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about alternative training formats?



- Almost four in ten (39%) made positive comments.
- Almost half (46%) of the comments were negative or suggestions for improvement.
- 16% made mixed or neutral comments.

Getty Images/iStock

Many – but not all – foster parents like on-line training, and want more of it.

"Vastly increase the on-line trainings."

"More internet training options, possibly with video and questions after the video."

"Post syllabus on-line or send in mail so we can benefit from classes we cannot attend in person."

"More refresher courses on-line. I really appreciate them."

"I am not computer literate. I would appreciate computer training so I can take advantage of the on-line stuff."

"I don't really like the on-line training; would like to see more classroom training offered."

Some want on-line resources updated.

"Offer more variety in the classes on-line. Need to update some of them."

"Teach us in the basic training about the on-line training and how to access it."

"Make the on-line training more known."

"Update the on-line classes."

Many view on-line training as solving the access problems of on-site training.

"On-line is somewhat adequate given I cannot attend live trainings due to childcare situation."

"I wish there had been a webinar on high maintenance infants that I could have participated in. When you have this kind of baby, it is really hard to get to the classes. Interactive webinars would be an excellent way for some of us to get to join in the training."

"On-line training is helpful for working parents."

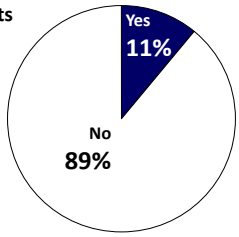
"Make all the training also available on-line. It is usually impossible for me to get to the in person classes."

"On-line training would be really helpful. I'm in a rural area and it's difficult to drive to where the training is."

THEME | On-line Training

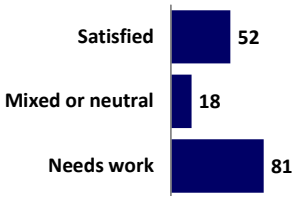
Comments about on-line training were included in this category. 11% of survey respondents commented about on-line training.

Made comments about online training?



151 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned on-line training.

Of the 151 respondents who commented about on-line training, more than one in three (34%) made positive comments. Just over half (54%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. 12% made mixed or neutral comments.



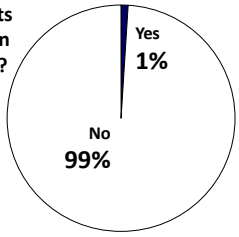
Most foster parents who commented want on-line training that is:

- Comprehensive.
- Up to date.
- Easy to access.

Foster parents that support on-line training value its convenience and reduced cost relative to in-person training. Requests for more on-line training were coded as suggestions for improvement (i.e. as negative comments). Support for on-line training is likely higher than the percentage of negative comments might suggest.

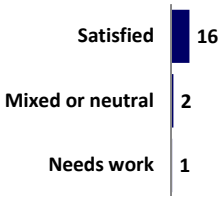
THEME | Support Groups

Made comments about training in support groups?



19 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned training in support groups.[1]

Of the 19 survey respondents who addressed training in support groups, 16 made positive comments. Two made mixed or neutral comments. One suggested that training would be improved with more support groups; this was coded as "Needs Work".



Foster parents commenting about support groups are grateful for:

- The positive environment support groups promote.
- The ability to talk with other foster parents and learn from experts who speak.
- The quality of the training and speakers offered within the support group format.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents praised the training provided in support groups.

"I attend a support group through the agency and they provide guest speakers who are very helpful. On-line training and resources are useful."

"I've been receiving training through our foster group that does training every month. They keep us up-to-date on things that are changing. We learn different strategies on how to help the kids."

"The support groups that are in the training are always there to answer my questions when needed."

"We found the support groups have been very helpful. These are helpful because they help us talk to other foster parents who are experiencing the same things."

"I get training through a support group and through another coalition of foster parents so I have plenty of opportunity for training which is better than the DSHS training."

"Some of the ongoing trainings through the foster support groups have been very helpful."

"Had PRIDE training prior to placement and got local support through foster parent group. PRIDE training was stellar. The foster parent groups were very good also."

"We are in a foster parent support group, and that is the most helpful out of all the trainings, just to have them help you without being judged and give their experience."

"I really like the support groups and the training they offer there."

"The support groups' training have been the most helpful."

"Training would be better if they offered more support groups."

"There is some training going to be put on by a support group this spring. I plan on attending."

[1] Training in support groups is not provided by the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence.

2.6 Alternative Training Formats

Getty Images/iStock

Most comments concerned training formats that foster parents liked or thought would be helpful.

"The website for the University of Washington was really helpful."

"Newsletters about training are great. One of the foster parent trainers was able to give us tips on the absolute do's and don'ts and I still refer to my notes."

"I like the monthly information that comes out giving us dos and don'ts."

"I think the biggest part is the flexibility since there are seminars, on-line, videos, etc. Lots of options!"

"The best training has been to read books regarding the very difficult and complicated behaviors of my DD foster son."

"I would like to see all training sessions videotaped so that if we could not attend we could view the video tape!"

"Offer more on-line training or books."

"Create a newsletter, regular calendar of events, trainings, resources or other info for foster parents. If newsletter is not possible, then an e-mail."

"I know the classes are necessary but I wish there was some way to get credit for research you do on your own. I have read books our therapist suggested to help the boys. Couldn't I just do a report or something and get credit for this extra work that I am doing?"

"Needs to be more stuff on-line or video conference calls or skyping for large training. It is hard for me to get to the trainings and I like to see how the other parents respond to things and what kind of input they have on some subjects. Especially for topics like dealing with a teenager who lies or hoards food. More contact with other foster parents with the same issues."

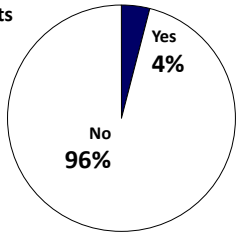
"Set it up so we can call in and listen to the training rather than go in person."

"Bring back the Lending Library."

"Once a month, I used to get stories to read and questions to answer. This would count as 1 hour of training. But since Todd is not in charge anymore, I no longer get them."

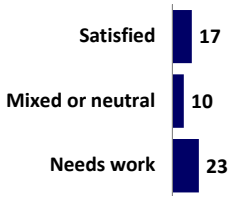
THEME | Other Alternative Training Formats

Made comments about other alternative training formats?



50 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned other alternative training formats.

Of the 50 survey respondents who addressed other alternative training formats, more than one out of three (34%) made positive comments. Nearly half (46%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Ten respondents (20%) made mixed or neutral comments.



These foster parents suggested:

- Books and other printed training materials – and credit for reading and reporting on them.
- Reinstatement of the Lending Library.
- Training that can be completed at home, at their own pace.
- Video tapes of conferences for review.
- Skype participation or video-conferencing that allows for participation from home – especially for required trainings.
- Credit for research they do on their own and report on.
- A newsletter of training opportunities – or an on-line newsletter.

Voice and Choice

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want a foster parent voice in their training – and they want choices.

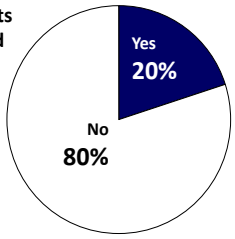
Many respondents value the participation of experienced foster parents during training, as well as the opportunity to interact with other foster parents. Some reported that they appreciate the choices they have in their training options, or a desire for more choices.

In this section:

- The following page (90) addresses foster parents' comments about having a foster parent voice, and a sense of community, while participating in trainings.
- The next page (91) is an overview of foster parents' comments about choosing trainings to attend, or to complete at home.

Two in ten survey respondents (274 out of 1,358, or 20%) commented about voice and choice in training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about voice and choice in training?



- Almost three out of four (73%) made positive comments.
- Less than one in five (19%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- Eight percent made mixed or neutral comments.

2.7 Voice and Choice

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents value:

Hearing other foster parent voices as part of their training.

"You get a chance to talk to other foster parents and talk about what they are going through and vent; good support to talk to other foster parents."

"The trainers that have had hands on foster parent experience gave great feedback on what to expect as a foster parent."

"The lady who is a foster parent who had a bunch of kids; she told stories and used humor and gave some really good examples of what to do in certain situations like lying and bad behavior."

"Hearing experienced foster parent stories and how they have handled things."

Formal and informal networking with other foster parents.

"Networking and meeting with other foster parents and their families and their experiences."

"Lets you know that everybody shares the same kinds of problems and you are not alone."

"Connecting with other foster parents to form a support group."

"Networking and resource sharing with other foster parents."

"Creating a support network with the other parents we trained with was the best thing."

The ability to receive direct, honest perspectives on foster parenting.

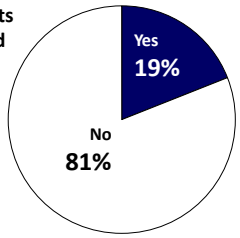
"It helps to be honest to the prospective foster parents. I took the training years ago and now teach it so we try and be honest about what the job is. Having foster parents help teach the class."

"A lot of our trainers had been foster parents, so they had better experience and could explain better what to expect other than what was in the book. Their real life experience was more realistic."

THEME | Voice—and Community—in Training

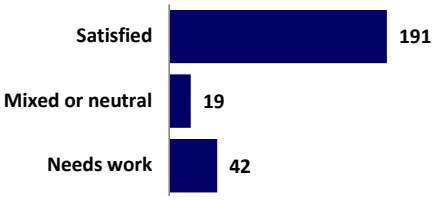
Comments about foster parents participating in training and their sense of community were included in this category. 19% of survey respondents commented on voice and community in training.

Made comments about voice and community in training?



252 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (19%) mentioned voice and community in training.

Of the 252 survey respondents who addressed voice and community in training, more than three in four (76%) made positive comments. Fewer than two in ten (17%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eight percent made mixed or neutral comments.



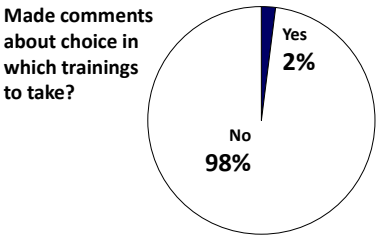
Foster parents appreciate being able to:

- Learn from experienced foster parents in their trainings.
- Develop networking connections with other foster parents they meet in training.
- Share their experiences, and reflect upon the experiences of others.

Nearly all comments related to voice and sense of community were statements of appreciation for the participation of experienced foster parents in training. Foster parents appreciated opportunities to connect with other foster parents in and out of training. Most negative comments were statements of concern that opportunities for interaction were lacking.

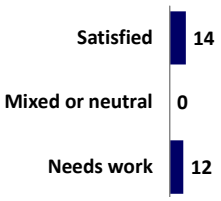
THEME | Choice in Trainings

Comments about foster parents having a choice in which trainings to attend, or complete at home, were included in this category. Two percent of survey respondents commented on choice in trainings.



26 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned choice in trainings.

Of the 26 survey respondents who addressed choice in trainings, more than half (54%) made positive comments. Just under half (46%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



These 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.

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents like being able to choose their training topics.

"You can usually find a class you're interested in when you need one."

"I can choose what I want to take and it is not mandatory. So, I choose according to what we are going through and what children I currently have in my home."

"Having different options for specific issues such as drug affected babies, self-care classes, etc."

"Going to the Children's Justice Conference each year and being able to pick and choose the classes I need is very helpful."

"We should be able to pick topics/trainings that would be helpful for the child in our care."

"I had a child that was very difficult, and I asked for training on fetal alcohol to deal with this child. I was not supported with this training and had to return the child."

"The variety of topics that are offered, so you can take trainings that apply to your child and their specific needs."

"There are lots of training options. I have two children with different sets of needs. I can take the right trainings for my specific placements."

Foster parents want the classes they request to be implemented.

"Allow us to take classes that we see that would help benefit the child. The state should allow those hours to count for mandated training even if the state doesn't provide the class."

"When asking foster parents for their input, they never consider what we tell them we want. Maybe two or three years later we get that topic."

"Have the trainers go to the foster parents and find out what they need for training."

"It's been five years and I'm still waiting for the bipolar class to come around again."

Training Information

Getty Images/Hemera

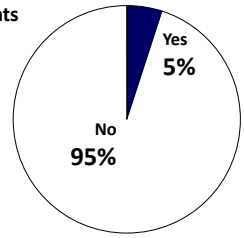
Foster parents want accurate and timely information about upcoming trainings.

Some foster parents made positive comments about the training information they receive. However, the majority of comments indicated improvements could be made in this area.

In this section: the following page (94) addresses foster parents' comments about training information.

One out of twenty survey respondents (62 out of 1,358, or 5%) made comments about training information. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about training information?



- Only one in ten (11%) made positive comments.
- Almost nine in ten (86%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement.
- Two percent made mixed or neutral comments.

2.8 Training Information

Getty Images/Photodisc

Some foster parents wanted better mail notifications.

"I never get any information on this or other classes in the mail."

"I don't have a computer. I wish they would send me information about classes, when they are and where to go and how to register by mail."

"The notices for training don't come in the mail any longer. Now, we have to go look it up online to see what is offered and when."

"It would be good to receive written correspondence on current policies and procedures for foster parents. I do not use e-mail as a primary form of correspondence."

"Most of my problems concerning training have been addressed. Now we have alerts for trainings in my area sent to me, and variety. No complaints!"

Some wanted better information from their computers and websites.

"Make the Alliance website easier to use. Make an option by location to cut down on searching for training nearby."

"Have more information on what is available for online or video training."

"I have asked about on-line training, but no one ever got back to me."

Some wanted better publicity or more training info from their social worker.

"Some sort of reminder or outline or schedule of trainings available."

"I didn't even know about the training until the 4th social worker. I sure would like to have known about it earlier."

"It would be beneficial if social workers were familiar with the training."

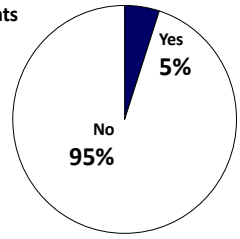
"Announce training offered in advance."

"Need guidance on what outside trainings are acceptable."

"I've been doing relative placement and have never been offered any training. I didn't even know there WAS training."

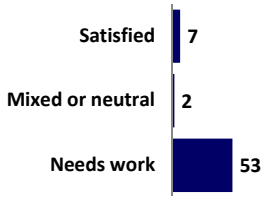
THEME | Information About Trainings

Made comments about information related to trainings?



62 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned information about trainings.

Of the 62 survey respondents who addressed information about trainings, only seven (11%) made positive comments. Almost nine in ten (85%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two individuals (3%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents who commented on this issue said they have difficulty finding out about training opportunities – either through the mail or on-line.

- Some foster parents say that they are no longer receiving notices of training opportunities in the mail.
- Others wished for better information on available trainings from websites.
- Others wished for better publicized trainings, or more information on training from their social workers.
- A few wanted clearer rules about what non-DSHS trainings were acceptable.

Support Beyond Training

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents described other kinds of support that help them give foster children the best possible care.

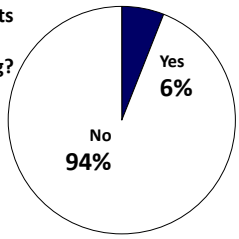
When asked about training, a number of foster parents made positive comments about existing support that is important to them. Some made suggestions about types of support that would be helpful to them, and to others responsible for the care of foster children – such as foster parent support groups, mentoring, and special needs discussion groups.

In this section:

- The following page (96) addresses foster parents' comments about support beyond foster care training.

Just over one in five survey respondents (82 out of 1,358, or 6%) made "other" comments about support beyond the formal training provided by DSHS. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about support beyond training?



- Nearly six in ten (57%) made positive comments.
- Nearly four in ten (39%) made negative comments, or improvement suggestions.
- Three individuals (4%) made mixed or neutral comments.

2.9 Support Beyond Training

Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents appreciate:

Regular support groups and online connections with other foster parents.

"When the foster parents get together once a month that is the best training available."

"Support groups are really helpful."

"We need foster parents support groups, physical meetings, in our area."

"Knowing that there is support like the foster parent support groups, and a Fostering Together liaison."

"We need support group meetings in our area."

"They have monthly foster parent support group meetings, which is one way you can meet other foster parents in your area, and if they don't have them, they need to encourage new foster parents to start support meetings in their area because you learn so much at those."

"I found the support groups to be much more helpful than the actual training."

A hotline for support on demand.

"A 24-hour hotline would be so great. More support once the children are placed because you really don't know the questions to ask until it is 11 o'clock and a child is still screaming and banging their head against the wall."

Formal mentoring programs.

"Assign mentors to new foster parents."

"A mentoring program with more experienced foster parents."

"New foster parents need an experienced foster parent as mentor."

"A foster parent mentor; would be great to assign them to a new foster parent to help them get on their feet."

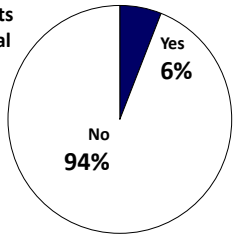
Support groups on-line.

"Being included in social media with foster parents to see what issues others are dealing with."

"A Facebook page where foster parents can share information with each other would be a great idea. If there is one already, send me the link."

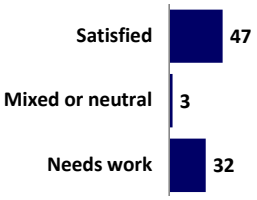
THEME | Additional Support for Foster Parents

Made comments about additional support for foster parents?



82 of the 1,358 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned additional support.

Of the 82 survey respondents addressing additional support for foster parents, almost six in ten (57%) made positive comments. Four out of ten (39%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals (4%) made mixed or neutral comments.



These foster parents like or suggest:

- Support groups with other foster parents.
- Formalized peer-to-peer mentoring.
- On-line contact with other foster parents.
- Access to a 24-hour hotline.

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2015 Appendix

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Response Glossaries, Supporting Tables and Survey Questions

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Foster Parent Support (2015) – 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 (about both foster children and parents), 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; showing up for scheduled appointments; fairness; flexibility; problem-solving; looking for resources. Specific supportive or non-supportive actions not covered in other codes. Social workers are/are not knowledgeable, honest, well-trained; good at communicating (if they don't specify IN or SL).
SF – Foster Care Licensor Support	Compliments/complaints about foster parents' experience with foster care licensors. (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; social workers 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 (or if they don't <u>return</u> calls and messages in a timely manner); social workers are available/unavailable; it's easy/hard to reach social workers
AR – Consistency of Contact	Social workers are/aren't initiating regular or sufficient contact via home visits, phone calls, etc. <u>Responding</u> to foster parents is AP or SO.

PROCESSES	
PR – General Processes	Compliments or complaints about the system – efficiency, bureaucracy, continuity, consistency, errors, rules, time it takes to get services (overall). System should care more about children and less about biological parent rights. "Better funding" only if context indicates it's for systems rather than foster parents.
PS – Specific Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants a specific process/way of doing things, time it takes to get specific services. Includes the time it takes to terminate rights and adopt.
PP – Paperwork Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants paperwork processes (general or specific). Paperwork lost.
COORDINATION	
CO – Coordination	Coordination of services for foster parents, inside or outside of Children's Administration (includes coordination between foster parents and biological families); communication to accomplish effective coordination. Includes social workers should communicate better with each other and other agencies. "One hand doesn't know what the other is doing." Inconsistencies between social workers or offices.
INFORMATION	
IN – Information	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/grateful for 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. Doesn't get paid for respite.
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). Difficulty getting payment for transportation.
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). Include events to say "thank you."
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.

Foster Parent Training (2015) – 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; identifying/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/where they are); contact information.
TG-M – Training Materials	Quality/usefulness of materials used in trainings (including need to update) – 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. Complaints about training requirements. Training that addresses general issues of children in my care (only if a general observation, not a request for a specific type of training). Requests for training in languages other than English. Comments about wanting to include foster parent's bio children in training. "Every child is different."
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. Includes behavior problems outside normal developmental issues.

TS-S – Substance Abuse	Training focused on substance-abuse issues. Includes fetal alcohol syndrome, drug-exposed infants, and effects of bio-parents' drug use on children.
TS-Y – Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	Training focused on youthful sex offenders, sexually aggressive or inappropriate behavior.
TS-B – Child Behavior	Training focused on child behavior/child development; age-specific populations and issues (toddlers, school-age, teens); includes behavior management except that which falls in TS-D.
TS-I – Infants and Toddlers	Training on infants and toddlers. Includes infant care, medically fragile baby care. NOT for fetal alcohol syndrome or infants exposed to drugs (TS-S).
TS-F – Navigating the Foster Care System	Training on how to navigate the foster care system. Includes how to interact with social workers; paperwork issues; rules and regulations; court procedures; other processes/procedures; what to expect from the system.
TS- P –Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE	Like/don't like CCT/PRIDE training (PRIDE is now Caregiver Core Training). Any mention of "Core" training should use this code.
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" but NOT "Core training" (TS-P).
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 (ex. "We had to seek training ourselves" without indication of the reason). 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-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.); comments about resource libraries or training DVDs; 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 – use both TR and TV); 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. Only use if R specifically likes / wants more choice in which trainings to take, or if R requests specific subjects to be addressed.
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. This includes comments about wanting SW to make FP aware of training. 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," "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), Needs work (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 or suggestions for change 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"). Comments that fall under TI – Information about Trainings – can be coded TI-P (positive comments about training information), TI-N (negative comments or suggestions for change 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 – 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. 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 (2015) – Narrative Comments Report

1,358 Respondents (1,350 made comments)

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES[1]		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
		#[2]	% of All[3]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]
Quality/Support		441	32.4%	241	54.6%	138	31.3%	62	14.1%
Children's Administration Support	QS	180	13.2%	106	58.9%	66	36.7%	8	4.4%
Specific Agency/Area/Office Support	QP	217	16.0%	144	66.4%	41	18.9%	32	14.7%
Nothing	QN	152	11.2%	78	51.3%	74	48.7%	0	0.0%
Social Workers		1,134	83.4%	355	31.3%	324	28.6%	455	40.1%
Social Worker Support	SS	439	32.3%	260	59.2%	93	21.2%	86	19.6%
Social Worker Courtesy	SC	233	17.1%	126	54.1%	90	38.6%	17	7.3%
Social Workers Listen/Understand	SL	260	19.1%	150	57.7%	88	33.8%	22	8.5%
Social Workers are Inclusive	SI	223	16.4%	69	30.9%	145	65.0%	9	4.0%
Other Social Worker Comments	SO	730	53.7%	253	34.7%	324	44.4%	153	21.0%
Foster Care Licensing Support	SF	32	2.4%	11	34.4%	20	62.5%	1	3.1%
Specific Social Worker	SW	15	1.1%						
Need More Social Workers	SN	153	11.3%			153	100.0%		
Access		573	42.1%	309	53.9%	173	30.2%	91	15.9%
Phone/Staff Access	AP	429	31.5%	223	52.0%	147	34.3%	59	13.8%
Consistency of Contact	AR	210	15.4%	131	62.4%	64	30.5%	15	7.1%
Process		386	28.4%	28	7.3%	334	86.5%	24	6.2%
General Processes	PR	205	15.1%	12	5.9%	184	89.8%	9	4.4%
Specific Processes	PS	211	15.5%	14	6.6%	188	89.1%	9	4.3%
Paperwork Processes	PP	42	3.1%	8	19.0%	33	78.6%	1	2.4%
Coordination		70	5.1%	10	14.3%	59	84.3%	1	1.4%
Coordination	CO	70	5.1%	10	14.3%	59	84.3%	1	1.4%
Information		640	47.1%	197	30.8%	341	53.3%	102	15.9%
Information	IN	640	47.1%	197	30.8%	341	53.3%	102	15.9%
Resources		366	26.9%	118	32.2%	188	51.4%	60	16.4%
Transportation	RT	62	4.6%	22	35.5%	36	58.1%	4	6.5%
Medical, Dental, Mental Health	RM	76	5.6%	23	30.3%	41	53.9%	12	15.8%
Childcare	RC	26	1.9%	13	50.0%	11	42.3%	2	7.7%
Respite	RR	69	5.1%	16	23.2%	49	71.0%	4	5.8%
Financial Matters	RF	69	5.1%	15	21.7%	51	73.9%	3	4.3%
Other Resources (includes training)	RO	150	11.0%	74	49.3%	63	42.0%	13	8.7%
Other		154	11.3%	38	24.7%	43	27.9%	73	47.4%
Other Sources of Support	OS	47	3.5%	27	57.4%	15	31.9%	5	10.6%
Not About Support	O	83	6.1%	12	14.5%	32	38.6%	39	47.0%
Don't know	DK	29	2.1%					29	100.0%

[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 (2015) – Narrative Comments Report

1,358 Respondents (1,350 made comments)

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES[1]		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
		#[2]	% of All[3]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]	#[2]	%[4]
Quality/Help		460	33.9%	373	81.1%	54	11.7%	33	7.2%
Helpfulness of Training	TH	270	19.9%	221	81.9%	30	11.1%	19	7.0%
Specific Program or Agency	TP	67	4.9%	59	88.1%	5	7.5%	3	4.5%
Nothing	TN	194	14.3%	164	84.5%	25	12.9%	5	2.6%
Trainers		127	9.4%	79	62.2%	31	24.4%	17	13.4%
Trainers	TR	123	9.1%	84	68.3%	31	25.2%	8	6.5%
Specific Trainer	TT	9	0.7%						
General Training		638	47.0%	259	40.6%	250	39.2%	129	20.2%
Caring for foster children	TG-C	164	12.1%	123	75.0%	33	20.1%	8	4.9%
Approaches to Training	TG-A	115	8.5%	47	40.9%	61	53.0%	7	6.1%
Resources	TG-R	78	5.7%	48	61.5%	26	33.3%	4	5.1%
Training Materials	TG-M	37	2.7%	15	40.5%	19	51.4%	3	8.1%
Other Training Comments	TG-O	387	28.5%	109	28.2%	228	58.9%	50	12.9%
Specific Trainings		828	61.0%	482	58.2%	140	16.9%	206	24.9%
Substance Abuse	TS-S	46	3.4%	27	58.7%	18	39.1%	1	2.2%
Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	TS-Y	4	0.3%	3	75.0%	1	25.0%	0	0.0%
Infants and Toddlers	TS-I	25	1.8%	8	32.0%	15	60.0%	2	8.0%
Child Behavior	TS-B	217	16.0%	138	63.6%	69	31.8%	10	4.6%
Health and Safety	TS-H	50	3.7%	38	76.0%	11	22.0%	1	2.0%
Disorders/Issues	TS-D	181	13.3%	100	55.2%	72	39.8%	9	5.0%
Navigating Foster Care System	TS-F	184	13.5%	83	45.1%	83	45.1%	18	9.8%
Cultural Awareness/Issues	TS-C	21	1.5%	13	61.9%	7	33.3%	1	4.8%
Love and Logic	TS-L	16	1.2%	11	68.8%	4	25.0%	1	6.3%
Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE	TS-P	98	7.2%	81	82.7%	12	12.2%	5	5.1%
Parenting Plus	TS-A	14	1.0%	10	71.4%	1	7.1%	3	21.4%
Other Specific Trainings	TS-O	320	23.6%	230	71.9%	63	19.7%	27	8.4%
Access		416	30.6%	21	5.0%	374	89.9%	21	5.0%
Location	TA-L	129	9.5%	10	7.8%	117	90.7%	2	1.6%
Scheduling	TA-S	222	16.3%	19	8.6%	201	90.5%	2	0.9%
Childcare	TA-C	171	12.6%	3	1.8%	163	95.3%	5	2.9%
Other Accessibility Comments	TA-O	43	3.2%	5	11.6%	37	86.0%	1	2.3%
Alternative Training Formats		208	15.3%	80	38.5%	95	45.7%	33	15.9%
On-line Training	TF-N	151	11.1%	52	34.4%	81	53.6%	18	11.9%
Support Group	TF-S	19	1.4%	16	84.2%	1	5.3%	2	10.5%
Other Formats	TF-O	50	3.7%	17	34.0%	23	46.0%	10	20.0%
Voice and Choice		274	20.2%	201	73.4%	52	19.0%	21	7.7%
Voice - and Community - in Training	TV	252	18.6%	191	75.8%	42	16.7%	19	7.5%
Choice in Trainings	TC	26	1.9%	14	53.8%	12	46.2%	0	0.0%
Training Information		62	4.6%	7	11.3%	53	85.5%	2	3.2%
Information about trainings	TI	62	4.6%	7	11.3%	53	85.5%	2	3.2%
Other		277	20.4%	58	20.9%	94	33.9%	125	45.1%
Support Beyond Training	TOS	82	6.0%	47	57.3%	32	39.0%	3	3.7%
Response Not about Training	TO	123	9.1%	17	13.8%	71	57.7%	35	28.5%
Don't Know	TDK							89	100.0%

[1] Major themes (in blue rows) are rollups of the subthemes listed below. They are unduplicated - not the total of the numbers below. For example, 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.

2015 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

If No: Have you had a foster child in your care in the past 5 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [Ineligible]

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?

2015 Foster Parent Survey: Technical Notes

Population and Sampling

The survey sample is representative of all foster homes with a child in care on the 15th day of August 2014, November 2014, February 2015, or May 2015, or within the 5 months preceding the interview date. In each of these quarters, 360-383 homes were selected at random from a list of all foster homes to meet the goal of 333 completed interviews per quarter. Foster parents who had already participated in the 2015 survey year were not eligible to participate and were removed from the sample. In total, 1,479 eligible foster homes were selected to complete the survey. Of these, 1,358 completed the interview (92%). As of 6/30/2015, there were 4,945 foster homes in the state of Washington.

The 95% sampling error for the survey sample is ±2.5 percentage points for a 50% proportion.

Statistical Significance testing and comparisons by survey year

For the seven standardized questions, statistical significance tests were calculated to assess differences in the percent of positive responses across regions, and between the 2014 and 2015 survey years. The criterion for statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Differences across the three regions were evaluated with the chi-square test of independence, and none was found to be statistically significant. A significant difference ($p < .05$) was found for the question "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?" ($X^2_2 = 6.63$, $p < .05$) For this item, contrasts by region were evaluated with the 2-sample binomial test of proportions. Respondents in Region 1 were less likely to select "more than adequate" or "somewhat adequate" (81%) than those in Region 3 (87%); $z = 2.49$, $p < .05$.

Differences between the 2014 and 2015 survey years were evaluated with the 2-sample binomial test of proportions. For the statement "Do social workers listen to your input?" there was a significant decline in the percent selecting "Always or Almost Always" or "Usually". This percentage declined from 85% in 2014 to 80% in 2014 ($z = 3.03$, $p < .01$). Significant declines ($p < .05$) were also observed for the questions "Can you get help when you ask for it?" (from 81% to 78%; $z = 2.36$, $p < .05$); and "In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?" (from 79% to 75%; $z = 2.34$, $p < .05$).

Rounding

Results described in the narrative report are rounded to the nearest whole number. In the Appendix, percentages for coding categories are rounded to one decimal place. In several cases, correct rounding results in an apparent discrepancy. For example, a percentage of 55.47 would round to 55.5% when rounded to one decimal point, which would be rounded to 56% in the absence of any other information. However, the underlying figure is correctly rounded to 55% (verifiable by hand calculation).

2015 Foster Parent Survey

DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives