

Last fall, Jacob's mother died suddenly of a heart attack leaving her teenage son without family. Several years before his mother's death, Jake's father also died. Jake's mother left no provisions, no will, and no instructions as to the care of Jake or their belongings.

Jake's assigned CPS worker arranged to place him with a local foster family, but was concerned because Jake had a dog named Bo, to whom he was very attached. Since Jake had suffered so much loss in his life, the social workers involved in Jake's case were desperate to figure out who could take the dog home temporarily to avoid taking him to an animal shelter.

While still trying to decide what to do with Bo, the social worker placed Jake in the foster home. The foster mother immediately empathized with Jake's situation and insisted that Bo be placed with her also.

The foster mother requested that Jake stay with her family until a permanent relative placement could be found that would take both Jake and Bo.

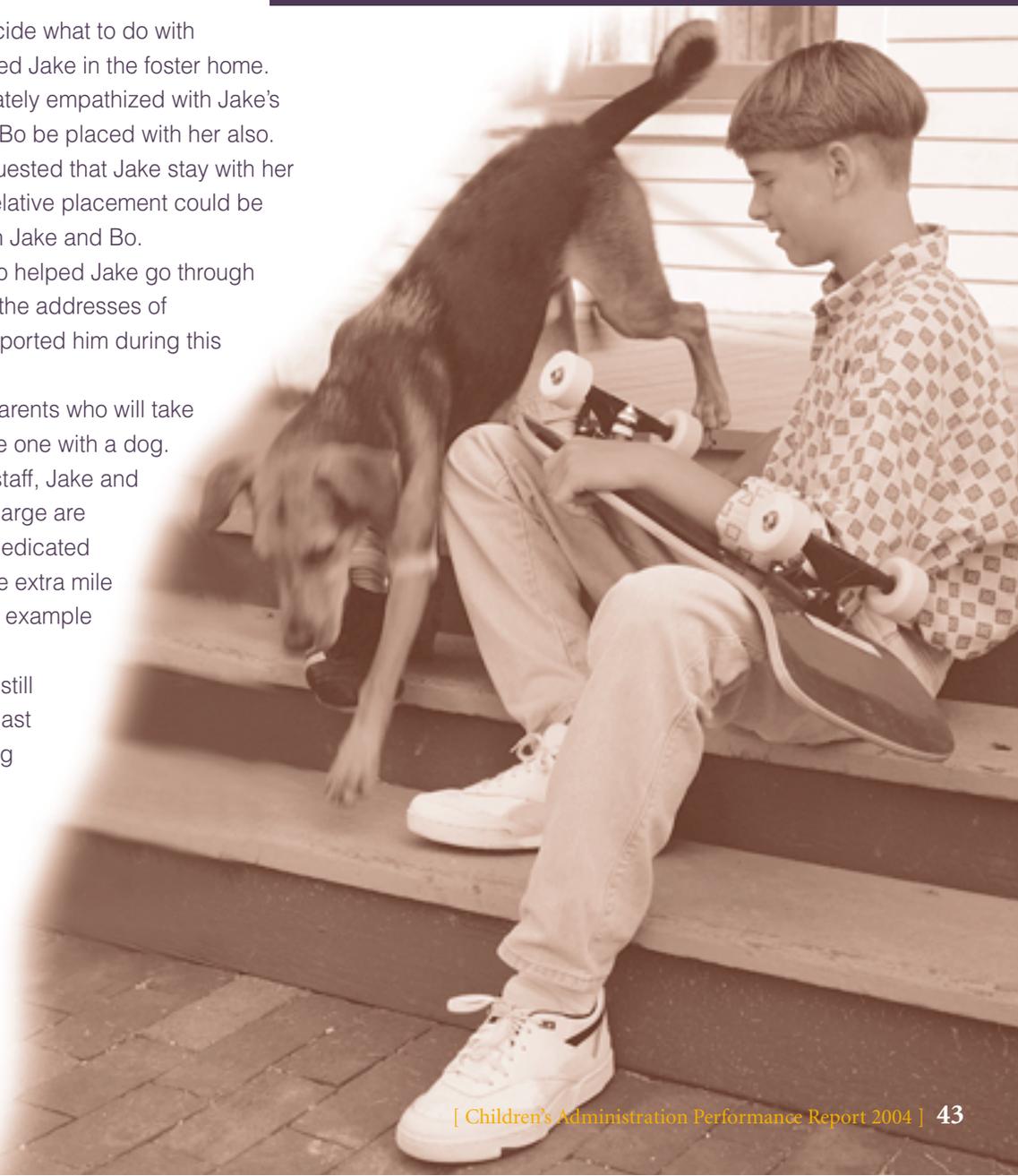
The foster parents also helped Jake go through his mother's things to find the addresses of possible relatives and supported him during this time of great loss.

There are few foster parents who will take a 14-year-old boy, let alone one with a dog. Children's Administration staff, Jake and Bo and the community-at-large are grateful to this and other dedicated foster families for going the extra mile to help children. This is an example of foster care at its finest.

Jake and Bo are both still in this foster home and at last report, this boy and his dog are doing quite well.

Supporting Client Outcomes

Goal: Continuously improve the organization's capacity to achieve outcomes for children and families



Supporting Client Outcomes Overview

The Children's Administration strives to ensure that children who must be placed into out-of-home care are provided the most appropriate out-of-home placement that is able to meet the individual needs of each child while we develop and implement the permanent plan.

In an effort to ensure that the licensed homes caring for children are safe and that caregivers are nurturing, supportive and well-equipped to meet the needs of children placed in their care, the administration has worked diligently to improve screening, training and support to foster families.

The administration monitors the licensed resources available to care for children through the following measures:

- Licensed foster homes available to care for children
- Availability of minority foster homes
- Foster care licensing applications which take more than 90 days to complete.

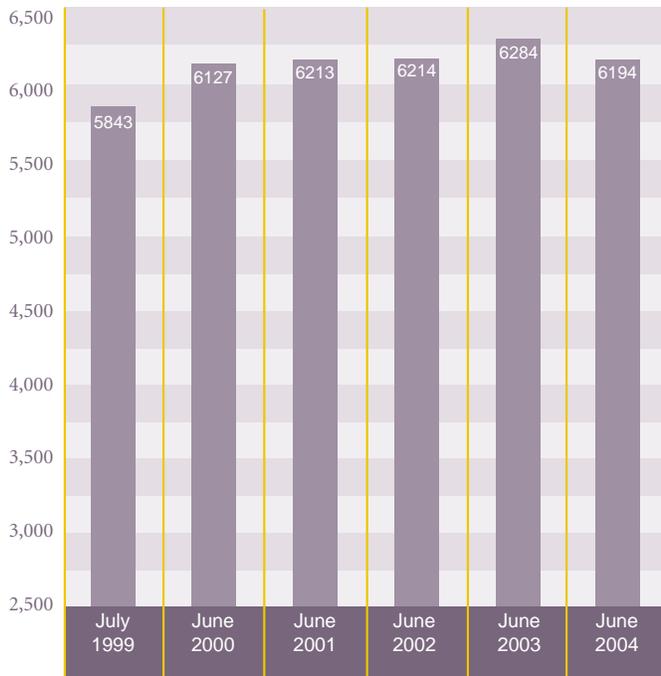
Objective Adequate quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services and adoption
Measured by Licensed foster homes available to care for children

The Children’s Administration makes every effort to ensure that the temporary caregivers providing for children in out-of-home care are capable, competent and caring families who are dedicated to the needs of vulnerable children.

Potential foster parents must attend a minimum of 30 hours of orientation and pre-service training and are required to submit applications which include a broad range of personal information. They must undergo a criminal background check and, if they’ve lived in Washington less than three years, they must have a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint-based background check. Families are assessed through interviewing family members and references. They must demonstrate that their homes can accommodate children and those homes must be thoroughly inspected to ensure that no health or safety concerns are evident.

Efforts to recruit foster families have remained consistent or increased, and the number of families licensed has stayed relatively constant over the last five years. This consistent number of homes is very positive, given the downturn in the economy and the fact that in many families both parents must work outside the home, thereby reducing the potential for many families to consider being foster parents.

Licensed Foster Homes*



*Number of DLR and Private Agency foster homes licensed to provide care.

Progress

- Increased the number of foster parent trainers throughout the state from nine to nineteen
- Increased pre-service training available to potential foster families
- Licensed five homes through the Bellingham Police Department as part of increased recruiting efforts through schools and law enforcement
- Hired eight foster parent recruiters specializing in the recruitment of culturally diverse families
- Received \$75,000 grant through the Robert C. Weidel Trust Fund to increase homes that reflect the ethnic diversity of children in care

Supporting Client Outcomes

Do you know

- 1 Which measures are included in the Supporting Client Outcomes Section?
- 2 What is the minimum number of hours of orientation and pre-service training a potential foster parent must attend prior to licensing?
- 3 What is the target time period in which foster homes are licensed?

(1) Availability of total foster homes, availability of minority foster homes and foster home licensing applications taking longer than 90 days to complete (2) 30 (3) 90 days

Objective Adequate quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services and adoption Measured by Availability of minority foster homes

One of the more difficult experiences for a child who has been removed from their home is the loss of a sense of familiarity, even when the familiar is sometimes painful.

Children develop their sense of self based upon their surroundings, their relationships, their culture and community. For a child who has grown up in a family speaking a common language, eating familiar foods and celebrating culturally-specific holidays and celebrations, foster care may be a world of difference and a challenge requiring a great deal of adjustment.

The administration works to recruit minority foster homes which reflect the population of children that we serve. The administration works with recruiters in specific geographic regions who are knowledgeable about the language, culture and experiences of diverse families in an effort to secure placements for children that more closely match their needs.

In addition, the administration partners with tribes throughout Washington state toward the goal of licensing Native American families. Fifty-one new Native American homes were licensed in 2004.

The number of minority homes has remained fairly constant over the last few years, which is positive, given the downturn in the economy and many families with both parents working outside the home.

Minority Homes Available *



*Number of DLR and Private Agency minority foster homes licensed to provide care.

Objective Adequate quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services and adoption

Measured by Foster care licensing applications which take more than 90 days to complete

In order to better serve children who must be placed into out-of-home care, the Children's Administration works continuously to identify, engage and license families who are best qualified to meet the needs of children, and to complete the foster home licensing process expeditiously in an effort to ensure that homes are available for the children who need them.

At times, these licensed caregivers are family members or friends of specific children who need temporary placement. Some families are seeking to adopt a legally-free child in DCFS custody and seek foster home licensure as part of the foster-to-adopt process. Still, other families are well-aware that certain children need only temporary care and they are interested in serving as a bridge between where a child lived prior to coming into care and that child's permanent destination.

The administration seeks to make the licensure process attainable for those serious about becoming foster parents. It must also be thorough enough to make certain families are appropriately screened and adequately trained and prepared for the task of serving as temporary caregivers to children with often complex needs.

The Children's Administration strives to complete licensure on new foster families within 90 days of the licensing application. Often, there are circumstances beyond the control of the administration which can slow the process such as background checks and, for newer residents of Washington, fingerprinting.



Foster Home Licensing Applications which Take More than 90 Days*



* The percent of foster care licensing applications that take longer than 90 days for a full license to be issued.

A World of Thanks

Chances are, if someone is unhappy with an intervention by the Children's Administration or some decision made in good faith turns out not to be in the best interest of a child, the details will be splashed across the front page of the local news and broadcasts will echo from television speakers over and over. The reality is that any time a child is hurt or worse; any time a permanency plan fails or a child is harmed in a foster home, all of us at the Children's Administration are profoundly affected. We take these things to heart; we cry over the pain of children, and we feel a personal sense of responsibility when some intervention fails to provide safety or stability in a child's life. It becomes easy, even for us, to lose sight of those things we have done right. The vast majority of Children's Administration personnel, community stakeholders, foster parents and other child advocates are caring and ethical human beings, a fact often lost in news articles and television sound bites. In Fiscal Year 2004, the administration received countless cards, letters, and stories expressing the positive impact this administration and caring staff are making on the lives of children and families. Here are just a few of the stories that never made the editorial pages. They represent a world of thanks!

. . . At thirteen, I moved in with the Miller family. . . They were a very loving and caring family. The first thing Catherine, my foster mother, did was took me clothes shopping. I never saw a person spend that much money in one place. I also loved that everyone ate meals together at the dinner table. All the kids including my foster mother would cook and clean together. We went to church every Sunday, and every summer I went to church camp. . . Eventually, I formed a strong bond with the Millers. When I was about fifteen they became my legal guardians. I had a mother, one that actually loved and cared for me. Catherine always had my best interest at heart . . .

— Excerpted from a college essay written by 29-year-old former foster child, Dani

"Dear Jim, You have done so much for my sister & I that I had to send you a Valentines card! I thank you very much because even though it's your job, I feel like the luckiest foster child in the U. S. So, I've written you this name poem:

Just when I needed you, you were there!
I ask, and ask, and you always answer back!
My best friend older than 16!

*Sincerely, Carson
P.S. Happy Valentines Day!"*

— Valentine's Card to a social worker
from 11-year-old Carson



*Dear DCFS Staff and Foster Parents,
The past 14 years I have shared laughter and tears with you. I have had the pleasure of working with many workers and have appreciated all the help and support you have given me as I cared for the many children who came to my home. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with all of you. You are like a family to me and I will miss all of you As you all continue to care for the children, may you know that you have touched my life in a special way. I will cherish all the memories. God bless and love the children.*

Sincerely, Carrie

— Excerpted from a letter written by a foster parent leaving Washington state

I'm in foster care and as all foster children have I have a caseworker but, I've been blessed with not only two caseworkers but, two friends and "moms" that support me no matter what. A caseworker is someone who keeps all your paper work for when you get put in the system till you get out and they also keep track of where you're living. Some caseworkers even get into your life like Janet and Debbie do and become pretty much part of your family. Debbie and Janet don't just do my paper work they take me out to eat like on my birthday, they take me to get clothes and school supplies, and most important they're there for me emotionally.

— Excerpted from a high-school English composition written by 16-year-old foster child, Jenna

*I wanted to thank you.
For everything.
For helping me stand when I almost fell.
For picking me up when I did.
For believing in me.
For giving me a chance and not letting me fail.
For holding onto me when I wasn't able to walk alone.
For pushing me into believing in myself.
I never woulda made it had it not been for you.
You helped mold me into what I'm becoming to be.
You gave me the tough love I needed to stay strong.
I love you like the mother I never had.*

— Poem to her child's social worker,
written by Amanda, a former foster child
and parent of a child previously in foster care