

# DCYF

## Foster Parents Speak



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# 2018

## Foster Parent Survey

January 2019 | Report 11.246



WASHINGTON STATE  
Department of  
Children, Youth, and Families

Prepared for Washington State  
Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services  
by Department of Social and Health Services  
Research & Data Analysis Division

This report has been prepared for

WASHINGTON STATE

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#### Order Publication:

11.246

#### Online Library:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda>

## INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

**Title:** Foster Parents Speak: 2018 Foster Parent Survey

**Abstract:** Between September 2017 and September 2018, DSHS surveyed 1,349 foster parents who had a child in care in August 2017, November 2017, February 2018, or May 2018; or within six months before the interview date. These foster parents were asked about their satisfaction with support, training and information provided by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DSHS Children's Administration through June 2018), and private agencies contracted by the Department to provide services to foster parents. They were also asked to offer recommendations for change.

Foster parents reported greater satisfaction with the support they received in 2018. More foster parents said that they get adequate support, can get help when they ask for it, find that social workers will listen to their input, are treated as part of the team, and get adequate information about the needs of children placed with them. Ratings of training opportunities continue to be very high (87% positive responses). Written comments show that there are still some areas where many desire improvement, including information sharing, inclusiveness, reimbursements, and efficient processes. Suggestions for training improvement included factors affecting whether foster parents are able to attend training, such as scheduling, the availability of online options, and child care. Foster parents continue to emphasize that participation of experienced foster parents and the ability to interact with one another add value to training.

This report is the 7<sup>th</sup> and final annual Foster Parent Survey report completed by RDA. Starting with the 2019 survey, kinship care providers are included in the survey and the project is now called the Caregiver Survey.

**Keywords:** Surveys, DCYF, Children's Administration, Foster Parents, Foster Care

**Category:** Child Welfare

**Geography:** Washington State

**Research Time Period:** September 11, 2017 – September 14, 2018

**Publication Date:** January 2019

**Publication Number:** 11.246

**Project Name:** Foster Parent Survey

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**Acknowledgements:** DCYF Foster Parents and Foster Families, Seattle Mariners, Stacy Weaver-Wee, DCYF staff, Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence

# DSHS Foster Parents Speak



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## The 2018 Foster Parent Survey is a voice for Washington’s foster parents.

During the 2018 Federal Fiscal Year, the Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) conducted 1,349 telephone interviews with randomly selected foster parents in the state of Washington. The survey consisted of seven standardized questions and four open-ended questions, 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 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 this survey are a vital and valued part of the system. Their voices tell us about strengths, opportunities for improvement, and the impacts of the system on the lives of foster children.

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***“My private agency has an open door policy so we can call them whenever we need to, including 24-hour on-call service. The DSHS social worker also answers my questions quickly. Everyone has been very helpful.”***

*—A Foster Parent, 2018*

***“DSHS could do better with supporting the foster parents and getting back to us during transition of our foster child. Communication was lacking.”***

*—A Foster Parent, 2018*

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## Key Findings: Support for Foster Parents

Foster parents rated the following aspects of support more highly in 2018 than in 2017.

- *Can you get help when you ask for it?* (84% positive, up from 79% in 2017)
- *Do social workers listen to your input?* (82% positive, up from 78%)
- *Did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities?* (81% positive, up from 78%)
- *Are you treated like part of the team?* (76% positive, up from 73%)
- *Did you get adequate information about the needs of children placed with you?* (73% positive, up from 69%)

These answers, while generally positive, leave room for more improvement. There were 1,318 foster parents who answered these two questions: “What do Children’s Administration and your social workers do well to support you?” and “What could Children’s Administration and your social workers do better to support you?” The answers parents gave indicated what good support means to them.

**Almost three in four (73 percent) of the 454 foster parents who commented on the quality and helpfulness of the support they received were positive.**

*“Our social workers are amazing. They are just always there for us when we need them.”*

- 68% of the 289 parents commenting on overall support were positive (page 13).
- 81% of the 189 parents who discussed help from specific agencies or offices were positive (page 14).
- 63% of the 327 foster parents commenting on social worker support were positive (page 16).

**Good support means including foster parents in meetings, being accessible, and treating them as teammates.**

*“They try to answer all my questions. They answer the phone or call back. We have regular meetings and FDTM meetings when needed. They never miss a monthly visit. They include me in the court hearings.”*

- 68% of the 224 parents who addressed consistent contact were positive (page 28).
- 60% of the 376 foster parents who discussed phone, text and email access were positive (page 27).
- On the other hand, 61% of the 198 foster parents who addressed inclusiveness were negative (page 22).
- 131 of the foster parent comments discussed the need for more social workers (page 24).

**Good support means providing complete information on the child up-front, answers to questions, links to local resources to help solve problems, and updates on the case plans, court dates and case progress.**

*“The social workers give us information and they are quick to answer questions. When we express a concern about the child, they resolve it quickly. They keep us informed about court dates and progress of the case.”*

- 736 foster parents who commented addressed information-sharing. Of those comments, 47% were negative, 19% were mixed or neutral, and 34% were positive (pages 33-36).

**Good support means listening empathetically to foster parents and treating them with courtesy and respect**

*“They are always professional. They are kind and empathetic. They listen to my input. There is mutual respect.”*

*“Some social workers regularly asked if we needed anything or if they could support us. Others didn’t.”*

- 68% of the 200 parents who commented on listening were positive (pages 18-19).
- 63% of the 202 parents who commented on respect and courtesy were positive (page 17).

**Good support means smooth, fair state processes that move the child’s case along and facilitate permanency.**

*“The ‘powers that be’ could put more work into speeding up permanency for kids.”*

- 90% of the 208 foster parent comments on general processes were negative or suggestions for improvement (page 29).
- 91% of the 212 comments on specific processes were negative or suggestions for improvement (page 30).
- 77% of the 70 comments on coordination were negative or suggestions for improvement (page 32).

**Good support means resources are available and foster parents who provide them get reimbursed promptly.**

*“Reimbursements should be quicker. It takes many months to get reimbursed.”*

- 390 parents commented on resources available for foster children and foster parents. 43% were negative or suggestions for improvement. Financial matters (page 42), respite care (page 39) and child care (page 41) received mostly negative comments on both availability and reimbursement.

## **Key Findings: Training for Foster Parents**

**Foster parents have been rating their training positively since the foster parent survey began in 2012.**

- ***Thinking about all the training you have had in the past three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of children placed in your home? (87% positive since 2016)***
- Of the 500 parents who commented on quality and helpfulness of training, 84% were positive (pages 47-50).

These answers still leave room for improvement. There were 1,309 foster parents who answered these two questions: *“What about foster parent training has been helpful?”* and *“How could foster parent training be improved?”* The answers foster parents gave indicated what good training means to them.

**Most foster parents liked the Caregiver Core training.**

*“All of the Core training was good. It was good to learn what makes kids act the way they do and how their behavior can change when they are traumatized.”*

- 79% of the 191 foster parents who discussed the Core Caregiver training were positive (page 66).

**Good training starts with trainers who are skilled, realistic, relevant, and approachable.**

*“The trainers were realistic and knowledgeable, and made learning relevant, but not intimidating.”*

- 67% of the 148 parents who addressed trainers in their comments were positive (page 52).

**Good training helps foster parents learn to navigate the foster care system, and more of that is needed.**

*“There needs to be more training on the paperwork and how the system works.”*

- 49% of the 198 parents who addressed training on navigating the system were positive (page 63).

**Good training includes other foster parents. Local foster parent support groups and annual foster parent conferences were mentioned for both the training they offer and the community-building.**

*“I think that the support group sessions help to build a community of foster parents.”*

*“Meeting with and listening to the experiences of biological parents, former foster kids, and other foster parents was very helpful.”*

- 93% of the 28 foster parents who mentioned their support group trainings were positive (page 77).
- 77% of the 240 parents who discussed building community among foster parents were positive (page 55).

**Good training helps foster parents deal with the behaviors and needs of their foster children. Relevant topics included trauma, behavior training, exposure to alcohol and other drugs, mental health needs, and sexuality.**

*“I liked the training on behavior problems and how to address the behavior problems without escalation.”*

*“The training on trauma and the training on LGBTQ kids were both great.”*

- 60% of the 242 parents who discussed training on disorders and problem behaviors were positive (page 60).
- 64% of the 168 parents who addressed training on child behavior and development were positive (page 62).
- 58% of the 207 parents who addressed other specific training topics were positive (pages 67 and 68).

**Good training includes online options, and they need updating. Video conferencing would be useful.**

*“The online trainings are incredibly outdated. They risk irrelevancy. Updating those would be really helpful.”*

- 56% of the 191 parents discussing online training suggested improvements (page 76).

**Parents have difficulty attending in-person trainings. More local classes would help. Child care at the trainings would help. Weekend and evening classes would help. Accurate information on trainings would help.**

*“Childcare at the trainings would be useful.”*

*“Provide awareness that DSHS offers training and communicate it.”*

- 91% of the 144 parents discussing scheduling of training suggested improvements (page 72).
- 96% of the 138 parents discussing child care during training suggested improvements (page 74).
- 93% of the 123 parents discussing training locations suggested improvements (page 71).
- 82% of the 82 parents discussing information about training suggested improvements (page 70).

## About the Survey

- 1,515 total foster parents were randomly sampled on a quarterly basis, if they had at least one child in care on the 15th day of August 2017, November 2017, February 2018, or May 2018.
- Telephone interviews were completed between September 25, 2017 and September 11, 2018.
- Interpreters were available for all languages requested, and alternative methods were available for respondents who were deaf or hard of hearing.
- 1,349 foster parents completed the survey (89% response rate).

## Survey Results at a Glance

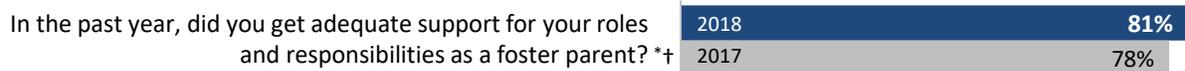
The survey included seven structured questions. Two of these were originally selected to inform the Braam Settlement and Exit Agreement (“Quality and Helpfulness” and “Adequacy of Training”). The remaining five questions were designed to support strategic planning for foster parent support. Statistical significance tests were calculated for the change in positive responding since the 2017 survey, and for differences between regions.

The survey also included four open-ended questions—two related to foster parent support and two related to foster parent training. Responses to these questions are summarized in the following pages. The open-ended responses were coded by thematic content. The entire questionnaire can be found in the Appendix (pages 91-92).

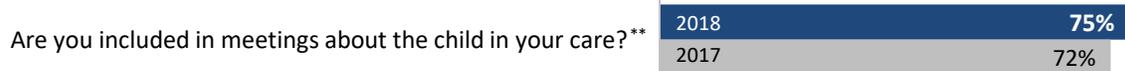
### Responses to Structured Questions

#### Foster Parent Support

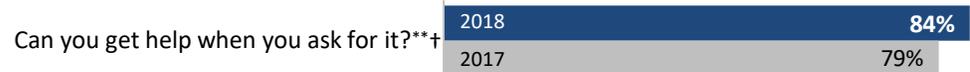
##### QUALITY AND HELPFULNESS



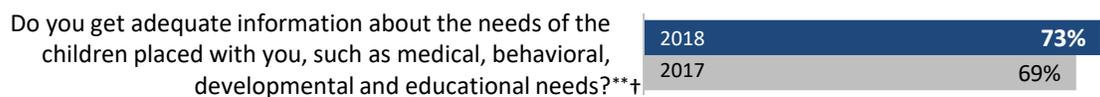
##### SOCIAL WORKERS



##### ACCESS, PROCESSES AND COORDINATION

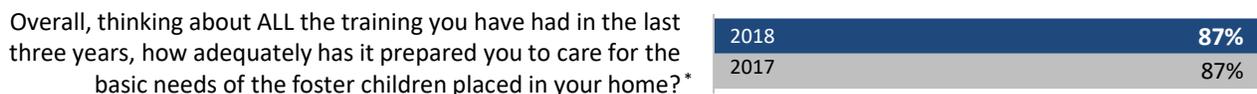


##### INFORMATION



#### Foster Parent Training

##### ADEQUACY OF TRAINING



\*Percentage shown is the proportion who answered “More than adequate” or “Somewhat adequate.”

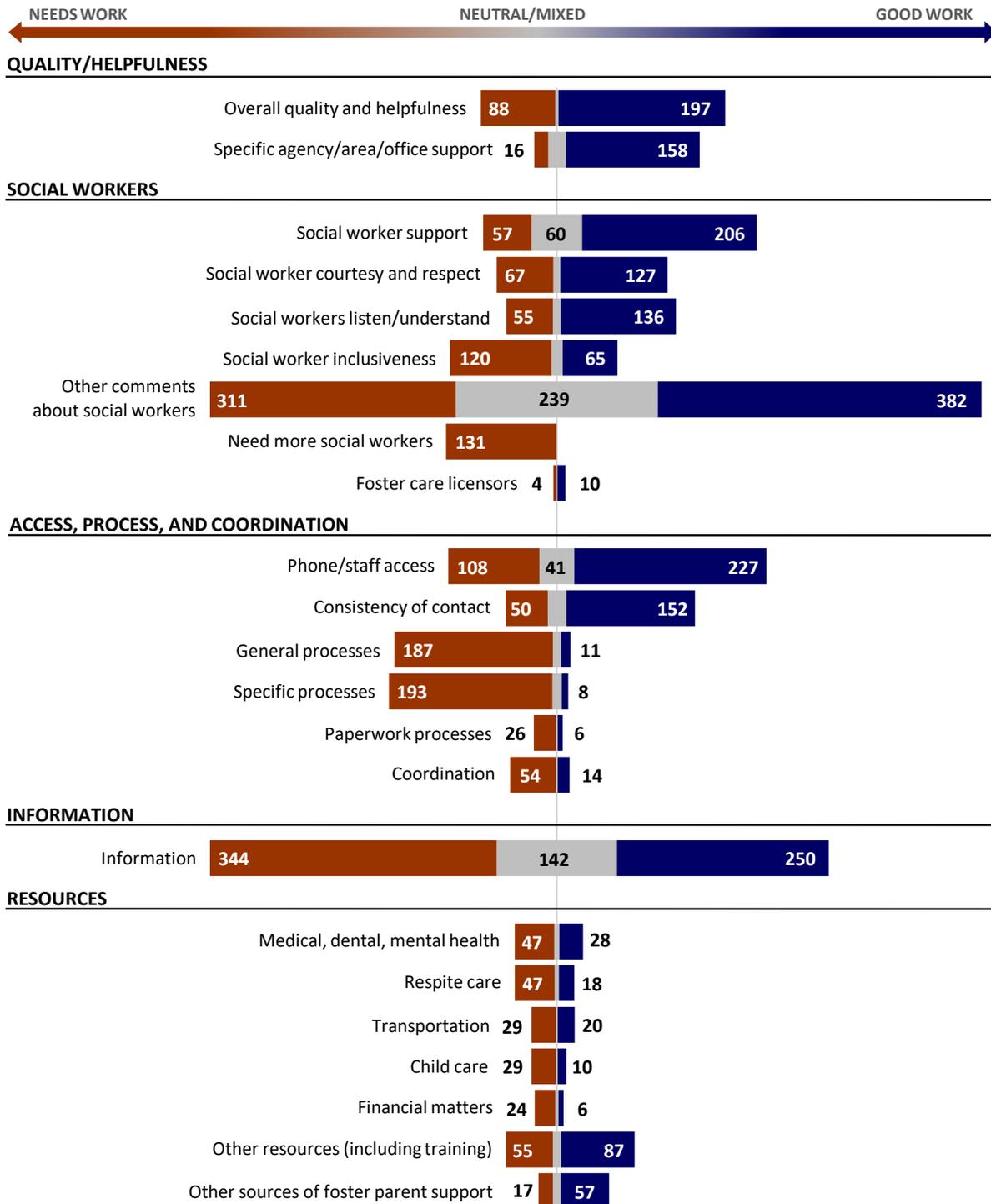
\*\*Percentage shown is the proportion who answered “Always or Almost Always” or “Usually.”

†Statistically significant, p. < .05.

## Responses to open-ended questions about support

### Open-Ended Questions about Support

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



## Responses to Open-Ended Questions about Training

### Open-Ended Questions about Training

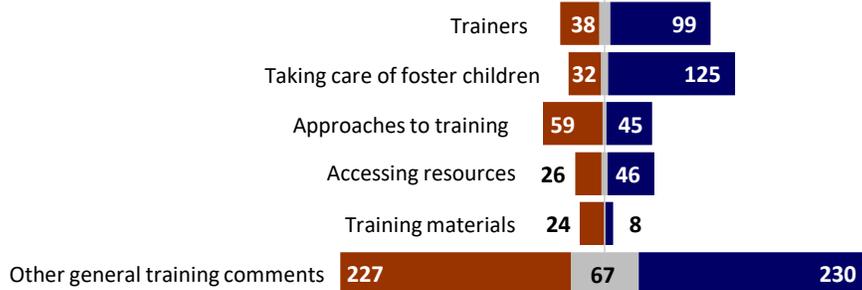
- What about foster parent training has been helpful?
- How could foster parent training be improved?



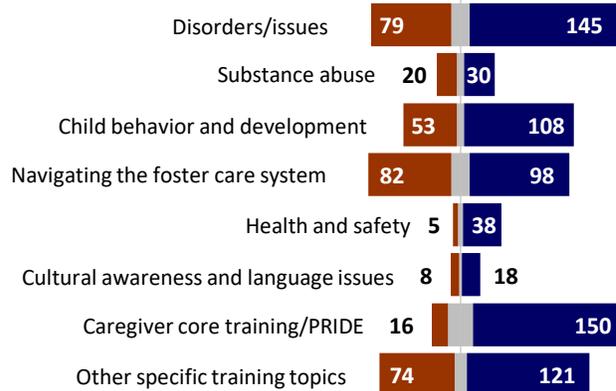
#### TRAINING QUALITY/HELPFULNESS



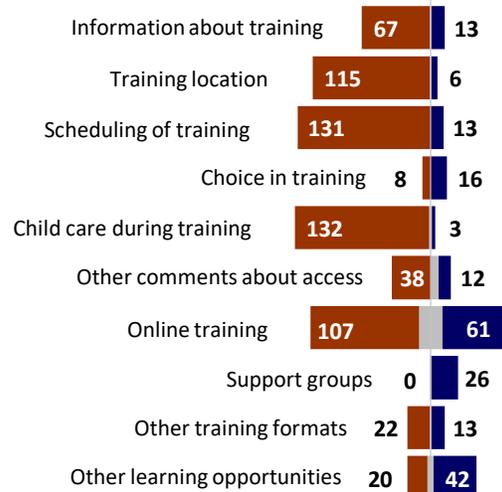
#### TRAINERS, METHODS, AND RESOURCES



#### SPECIFIC TRAINING TOPICS



#### ACCESS AND FORMAT





## Foster Parent Support



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### Part 1 concerns the support foster parents receive in their roles as caregivers.

Foster parents interact with social workers from the state and contracted local agencies, child-support staff such as guardians ad litem (GALs) and court appointed special advocates (CASAs), foster care licensors, and the court system. They work with their foster children’s schools, medical providers and mental health counselors. They keep records, submit reports to the state and the courts, and submit reimbursement requests.

Foster parents rated five aspects of the support they received more highly this year than last year. These were:

- *Can you get help when you ask for it?* (84% positive)
- *Do social workers listen to your input?* (82% positive)
- *Did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities?* (81% positive)
- *Are you treated like part of the team?* (76% positive)
- *Did you get adequate information about the needs of children placed with you?* (73% positive)

These answers, while positive, leave room for more improvement. Foster parents’ comments indicate what good support means to them. It occurs when social workers: Provide complete information on the children’s needs upfront, include foster parents as part of the team, listen respectfully to foster parent input, advocate for the foster children, help resolve issues that come up, make sure foster parents receive regular updates on the cases, can be reached quickly when needed, and submit court paperwork and reimbursement requests on time.

### This part of the report contains the following sections on support:

- Section 1.1: Quality and Helpfulness
- Section 1.2: Social Workers
- Section 1.3: Access, Processes, and Coordination
- Section 1.4: Information
- Section 1.5: Resources



## Quality and Helpfulness



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### Support from the Children’s Administration and contracted private and tribal agencies is very important to foster parents.

General support for foster parents showed a statistically significant improvement since 2017.

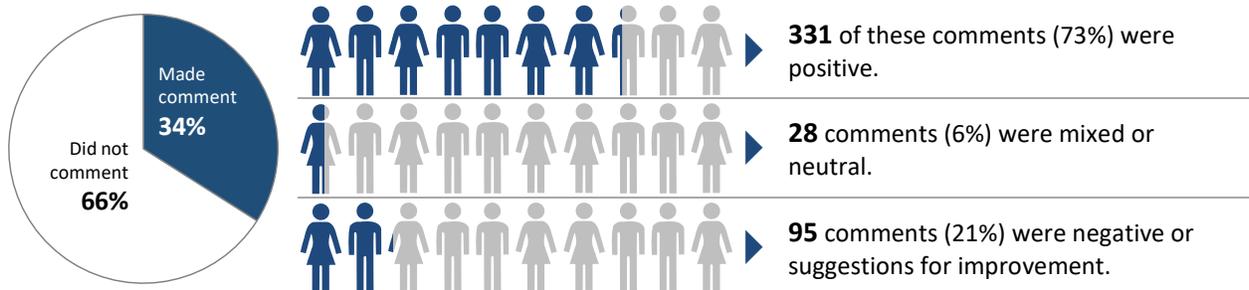
- *In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent? (81% said support was “more than” or “somewhat” adequate 2018, compared to 78% in 2017).*

About one third of the foster parent comments discussed support in general, including support from the private agencies and state offices they worked with. Most comments on support were positive, and some said support had improved recently. Some parents mentioned speed of response and help getting needed resources, such as respite and therapy. Others said the agencies and offices “had their back” in dealing with the emotions involved in foster care. They often praised private agencies for getting them answers from the State and being generally accessible.

A number of comments said support was generally available from some parts of the system, or at some times and not from others. These were coded as “mixed or neutral” comments.

Some of the negative comments discussed lack of contact. A few suggested that parts of the child welfare system seemed to be actively working against the foster parents.

### 454 respondents (34%) commented on quality and helpfulness of support



## 1.1 Quality and Helpfulness



Photo by: Rena Perez

### Most parents say support is very good

"They have done an awesome job."

"For the past 20 years, I've had zero trouble. I get what I ask for, always.

That's why I continue to do it, because of the help I get."

"I feel really supported, so no comments."

"Not a thing, they have been amazing."

"We've been supported pretty well."

"This past year has been good, can't think of anything."

### Some say support has improved recently

"I think they do a wonderful job now."

"They are all doing fine at this time."

"The last year has been really good and has certainly improved."

### Some say support varies

"I have experienced excellent support, like a member of the team, in early foster care. When parental rights are severed and planning moves into permanent placement and adoption is stressed, most energy goes into adoption options, and the support for foster care languishes."

"We moved to a new county, and it seems like we moved to another country.

Where we are now, we get zero support. It needs to be more uniform."

"Private case managers are always there to support us, not necessarily the state. Get more social workers and smaller caseloads for the state."

### A few parents say support is missing

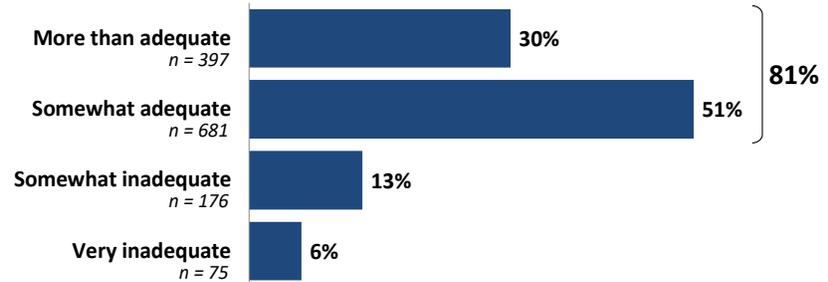
"We stopped asking for help because we weren't getting it from Children's. We need better follow-through."

"I'm so displeased with how we have been treated by DSHS that I am moving my license to a private agency. We thought about dropping our license, but that isn't fair to the kids in my care."

"I was not supported this year. In fact, my social worker tried to sabotage me adopting these kids."

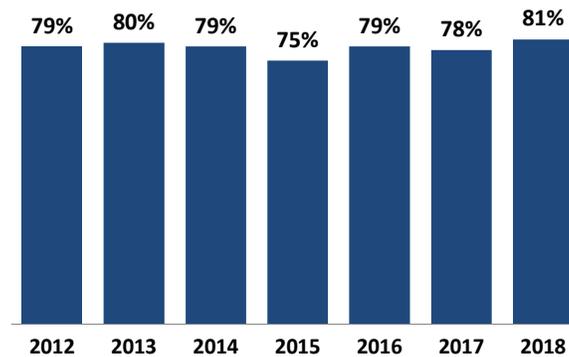
## QUESTION | In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?

Of the 1,329 foster parents who answered this question, more than eight in ten reported that the support they received in the past year was somewhat or more than adequate.



### State Trend

Positive responses (More than adequate/Somewhat adequate) increased by three percentage points from 2017 to 2018, a statistically significant difference.



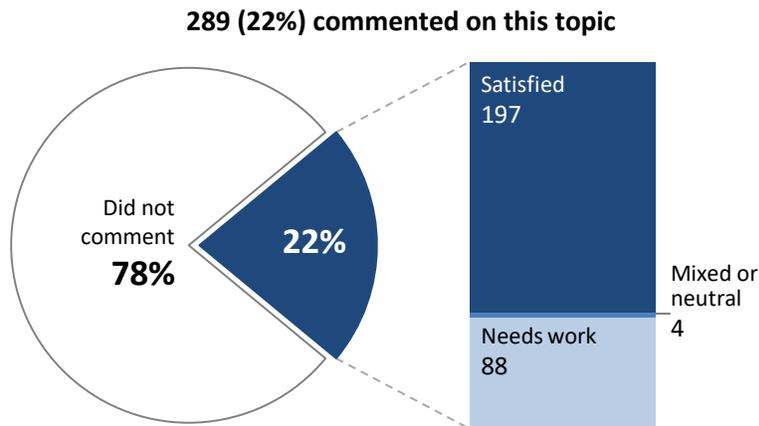
### Regional Detail

Differences among regions were not statistically significant.



**THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Support**

Of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support, twenty-two percent addressed overall quality and helpfulness or answered “Nothing.” Most of these comments (197, or 68%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



**Most comments were general and positive.**

There were 151 foster parents who made detailed comments (other than “nothing”) about the general quality of support they received.

- 105 of these were positive comments. Most simply said they felt well-supported, or that things were going well, or that their needs were being met.
- There were four mixed comments. Three said the private agency supported them but the state did not. One person said support depended on where the child was in the process. That parent felt that support for the foster process languished once parental rights were terminated and adoption was the priority.
- The 42 negative comments on support were more varied. Some simply said they did not think they received much support, while others went into some detail about the difficulties they were experiencing. These comments ranged from being placed under investigation three times to difficulties with placements which cost them money and time. Several said they were not renewing their licenses.

**“Nothing” Responses are also included in the pie chart above.**

Nothing responses were coded as positive or negative depending on the question.

- 134 respondents replied “Nothing” to the question “What could Children’s Administration and your social workers do better to support you?” (“Nothing” coded as a positive response.)
- 49 respondents replied “Nothing” to the question “What do Children’s Administration and your social workers do well to support you?” (“Nothing” coded as a negative response.)



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**Most parents say support is good**

- “Nothing right now, we are very happy.”
- “I have no problems, and it has been a very wonderful experience so far.”
- “We are very new at this, and it’s all been pretty good so far.”
- “No, I feel really well supported.”
- “They just do an all-around good job.”
- “The system was very supportive when we lost a foster child through SIDs. They were very caring for our family in this time of need. We were treated as part of the team during this difficult time.”

“My needs are always met by both the State and my private agency.”

“They give me the help that I need. They support me.”

**Some say private agency support is better**

- “My private agency almost always gives us adequate support. Children’s seldom gives support and what they do is inadequate.”
- “Your private agency supports. The state agency does not always support me.”

**Some say support is generally lacking**

- “DSHS could do better with supporting the foster parents and getting back to us during transition of the foster child.”
- “I know doing this is good work, but next time it comes around, I will NOT be renewing my license. I’m tired of not getting any help, I’m tired of being investigated. I really hope this survey changes something!”
- “For the last year, I can’t say they are doing much of anything to support us. When the child I have leaves that will be the end of it! Things aren’t as they were; they are in a constant ‘panic mode.’ I’ve done this for 16 years, it’s not always been this way.”
- “Nothing. It is horrible.”
- “I don’t feel like I am supported.”
- “My foster child has been with me a long time, and I don’t feel I get a lot of support.”

## 1.1 Quality and Helpfulness



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### Many parents say support from private and tribal agencies is very good

"I feel in general that I get more support from my private agency. Private agency communicates well and provides support when I need it."

"My private agency never causes me any grief and they are always there for me to the best of their capacity. But I have nothing good to say about the state for this past year."

"My private agency gives me support. If I need respite care, they get me respite. If I need someone to talk to the boys, they get someone to talk to them."

"Our private agency has gotten responses for us when we have difficulty getting answers through the state."

"Private agency is always there no matter what it is if we need something. Private agency is who I work with day in and day out. They were always there, and I didn't work much with DSHS staff."

"Dealing with the five state caseworkers in one year has been 'hit and miss,' but dealing with the Renton School district and Olive Crest has been very good."

"We get support from our private social worker, children's counselor and CASA. Our CA social worker only appears to support the biological mom."

"They are good at having my back and supporting me. This applies to both state staff and private agency staff."

"State social worker has been very responsive. The private agency is not; it's as if the agency doesn't exist."

### Some state offices give great support

"The Smokey Point office is phenomenal. I would take a child from there strictly on their word alone. They give me things I didn't even know I needed."

"King West is the best to work with."

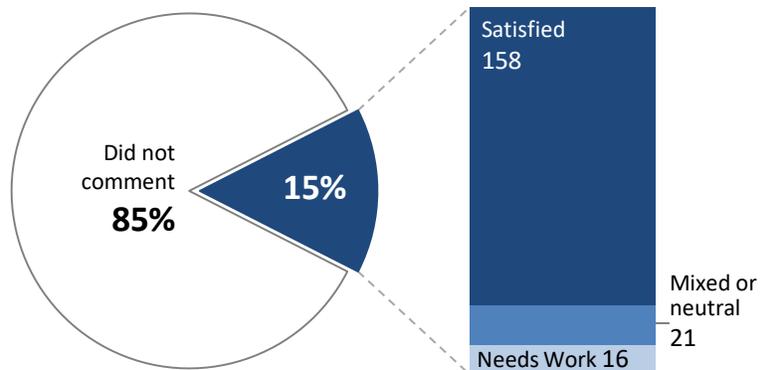
"Spokane is fabulous. They follow through when I need information."

"West Seattle and Yakima social workers were wonderful and understanding."

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

Fifteen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed quality and helpfulness from specific agencies or offices. Most of these comments (158, or 81%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

195 (15%) commented on this topic



### Many foster parents appreciate the quick practical turnaround they usually receive from private agencies.

- Several mentioned the private agencies' ability to provide respite care and therapy for their children.
- Others said they see private agency staff more often.

### Foster parents appreciate feeling that the private agencies they work with "had their back" as foster parents.

### They appreciate cooperation between state and private agencies.

- Some said the state and their private agency work well together.
- Some said that the private agency interceded with them when they had difficulty with the state.
- Several parents suggested that the private agencies had less staff turnover than the state, and could therefore help them more.

### Some experienced foster parents mentioned particular state offices as especially helpful and supportive.

## Social Workers



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### Social workers are very important to the foster care experience.

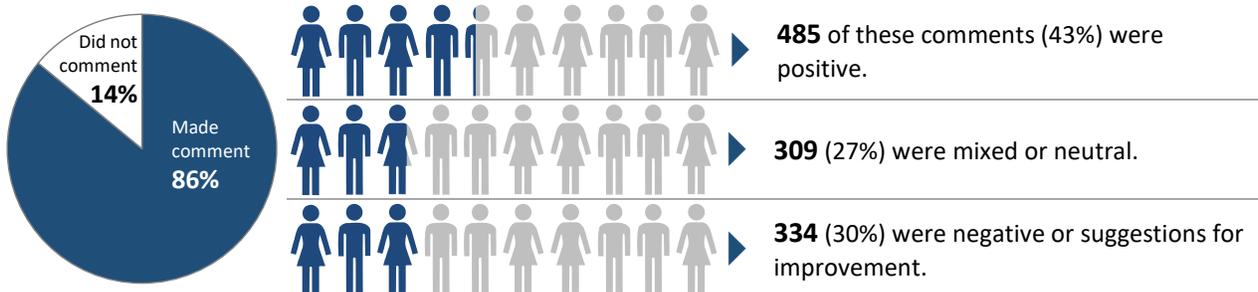
Two aspects of social work practice – listening to foster parent input and treating the foster parents as part of the team – showed statistically significant improvement since 2017.

- *Do social workers listen to your input?* (82% positive in 2018 compared to 78% positive in 2017)
- *Are you treated like a part of the team?* (76% positive in 2018 compared to 73% positive in 2017)

More than eight out of ten of the foster parent comments discussed social workers. Their comments addressed both social workers employed by DSHS and by contracted private or tribal agencies. Over four out of ten comments were positive, almost three in ten were mixed, and three in ten were negative.

Both positive and negative comments often discussed some aspect of the social worker’s relationships with the foster parent and their children, such as support, courtesy, respect, attention, timeliness, inclusion, and competence. Some parents mentioned systemic issues causing problems with social workers, such as frequent turnover and high caseloads. Others said simply that some social workers were wonderful and others problematic.

### 1,128 respondents (86%) commented on social workers



## 1.2 Social Workers



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### Most parents appreciate the support they get from social workers

“Always there for my kiddos. *Always, always, always there.* I have four different social workers and they are amazing. They all work together to come to solutions and the bond that each of them share with my kids is wonderful.”

“They do so much for us and they handle everything with grace, considering that they are overworked and under-appreciated most of the time.”

“I’ve ended up with a good social worker. She is direct, honest, forthright, and doesn’t give false hopes. It’s refreshing!”

“They are easy to get ahold of nowadays with their cell phones. I get pretty good support. They are going above and beyond to help me.”

“They go out of their way to care for the foster child and out of their way to support us – both DSHS and private agency staff.”

“She is fabulous. The kids love her and she loves them, she answers all my questions and she’s very supportive.”

“There are some social workers that make you feel really well supported. They respond to your questions quickly and do their best to meet the child’s needs.”

### Some say it depends on the person

“Depends on the social worker, some are great and others not so much.”

“Every worker is different. Some are more supportive than others.”

“We’ve had really good ones and really bad ones.”

### Some say support is missing

“In the past year, they haven’t done a lot to help us.”

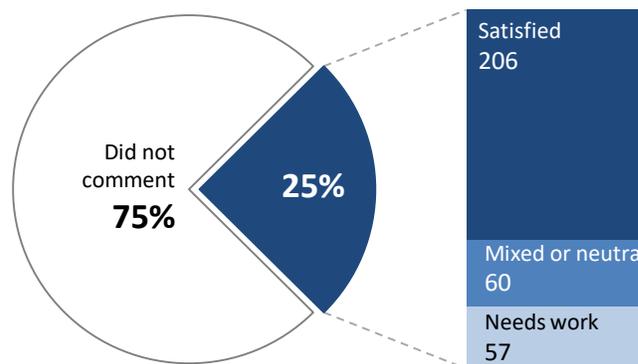
“My experience with this last social worker was so bad I am not taking any more children into foster care.”

“My current social worker does nothing to support us.”

## THEME | Social Worker Support

Twenty-five percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed social worker support. Most of these comments (206, or 63%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

327 (25%) commented on this topic



### Social workers who provide good support are deeply appreciated.

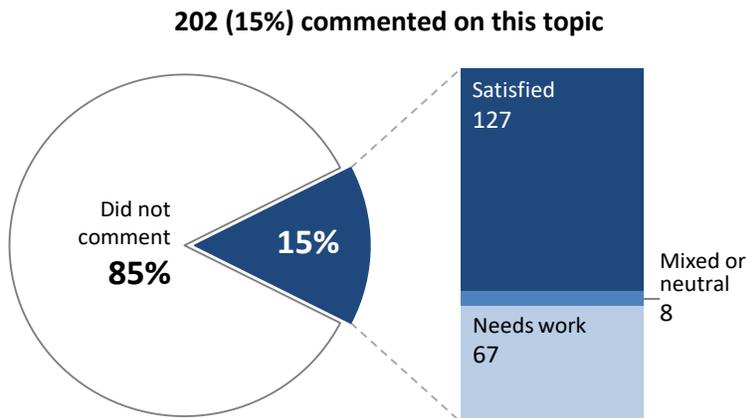
- Some praised social workers who were accessible, provided help quickly, and “backed up” the foster parents.
- Others said the social worker really cared about their foster children.
- Ten positive comments mentioned a particular worker:
  - “Denise Huynh has been incredible. She supports us in all of our needs, fully understands the boys’ needs and is caring.”
  - “Patty in Yakima and Jenny in TriCities were awesome.”
  - “I cannot say enough good things about Megan.”
  - “Heather Hamashima is WONDERFUL.”
  - “Naomi is a good communicator.”
  - “Suzanne P. really goes out of her way.”
  - “Denise Huyhn is a true stand out.”
  - “Our social worker here in Stevens County is awesome.”
  - “Alicia gets back to us immediately.”
  - “Emily Paradis and Elsy Cruz have been excellent.”

### Some parents said support depended on the particular social worker. Others said support was simply missing.

- The mixed comments mostly said the quality of support depends on the particular social worker.
- Those leaving negative comments found the lack of support very discouraging. Some were rethinking their commitment to providing foster care.

**THEME | Social Worker Courtesy and Respect**

Fifteen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed social worker courtesy and respect. Almost two-thirds (127) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



**Social workers who respect the unique expertise and knowledge of foster parents, and their ability to deal with sometimes challenging children, are appreciated.**

- Foster parents appreciate being respected for their care and expertise in dealing with sometimes challenging children.
- Foster parents sometimes describe feeling disrespected as being treated “like a babysitter.”
- Foster parents feel respected when their input is taken seriously.
- Foster parents strongly dislike being patronized.
- Foster parents want to be treated as respected team members.

**Social workers who help foster parents care for themselves are appreciated.**

- Foster parents appreciate being asked about their own well-being.
- Foster parents appreciate having their time constraints acknowledged and respected.



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**Most parents say their social worker respects their work with difficult children**

- “They respect me as part of a team.”
- “Our present social worker is fantastic. She takes our input to meetings and makes us feel valued.”
- “The social worker validates how challenging my foster child is. She is very supportive and gives me ideas to help the child.”
- “All of the social workers have treated us well, they pay us a lot of attention and help us a lot.”
- “He includes me in meetings. He cares about what I share about the kids. He does not dismiss me. He treats me as a part of the team.”
- “My social workers treat me with respect and as though I am an expert at what I do. They try to make our challenging life easier.”
- “She seems to really care about how we are doing as foster parents.”
- “They express appreciation for us playing our role as foster parents. When they call us after hours and we are not able to take the child, they are always respectful and gracious about our refusal.”
- “She was grateful that we were fostering these kids.”

**Sometimes courtesy and respect from social workers is missing**

- “Engage me as a team member, but that doesn't happen!”
- “Treat us with respect, like part of the team. Be respectful of our time.”
- “We've been parents for a lot of kids and we've realized that the department does not respect foster parents as they should.”
- “Treat us as a really valuable part of the team rather than just as a babysitter. Give us some acknowledgement of the difficult behaviors we deal with.”
- “As a whole, social workers need to have more respect for foster parents.”

## 1.2 Social Workers



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### Foster parents want their social workers to listen and respond to their concerns

"They include me, they encourage, and they listen to me."

"I am in constant contact with my social worker as I have a very high needs kiddo. We need to stay on the same page where this child's needs are concerned. When items were needed for this child, everyone worked together to get those items approved timely. They listen, they hear my concerns, and they do what they can to accommodate and meet our needs for this child."

"Gets me whatever I need. They listen to what I need and they listen to what the child needs."

"Our social worker has the best interests of the child in mind. We have a pretty hard case and things have gone well with a good social worker. She listens and tries to get answers for us."

"They listen to me and they give me the service when necessary."

"They listen to us and try to figure out how to help us meet the kid's needs. They are very supportive and inclusive."

"She ensures she fully understands the boys' needs and challenges."

"When I put my foot down on something, the social workers then listen."

### When foster parents do not feel heard and respected, they want to quit

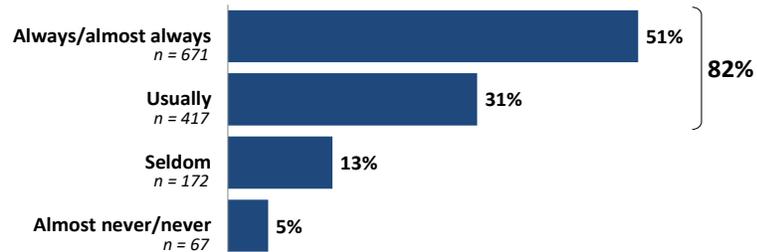
"Do not patronize me. We are with the kids 24/7 and they talk to us like we don't know anything. The social workers listen, but they don't hear what we are saying. Treat us with respect. We are closing our license because it has been too hard without the support we need."

"DSHS does not listen, I have fought more for the foster child than DSHS staff have."

"They are good at listening but poor at following through."

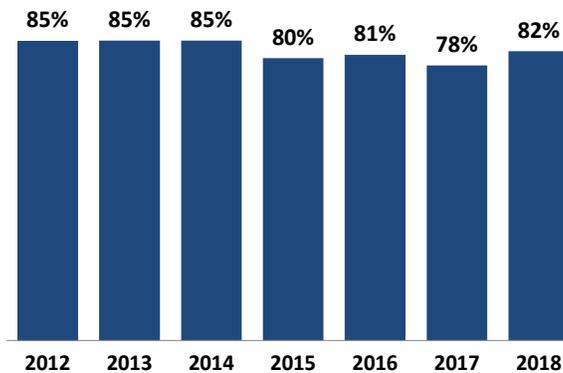
### QUESTION | Do social workers listen to your input?

Of the 1,327 foster parents who answered this question, more than eight out of ten (82%) gave a positive response (Always/almost always or Usually) about whether social workers listen to their input.



### State Trend

Positive responses increased by four percentage points from 2017 to 2018, a statistically significant difference.



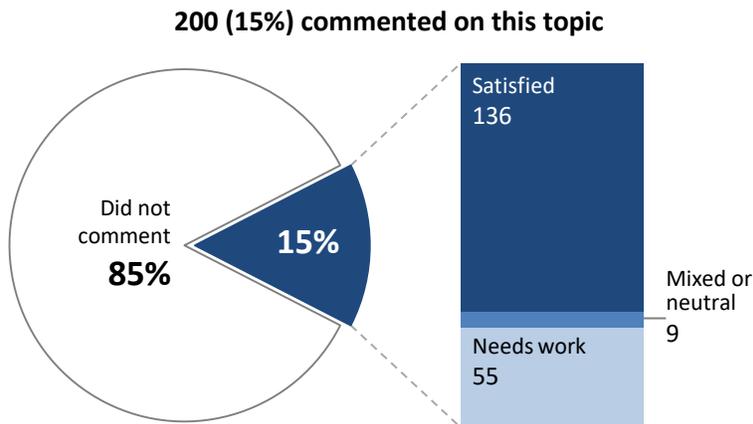
### Regional Detail

Differences among regions were not statistically significant.



**THEME | Social Workers Listen/Understand**

Fifteen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed how well social workers listen and understand. Most of these comments (136, or 68%) expressed satisfaction.



**Foster parents want their social workers to hear, understand, and advocate for the needs and concerns those parents bring up.**

- They want the worker to take time to listen to their concerns.
- They want the social worker to advocate for the child’s needs as the foster parent sees them – or at least take those needs into account.
- They want the social workers to advocate for the needs of the foster parent as well – for respite, for transportation, for help.
- They want to know “why” if advocacy fails.
- They want their 24/7 role with the children to be respected.

**Foster parents don’t want “by the book” treatment. They want their social workers to pay attention to their unique children and their families.**



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**Foster parents want their concerns heard, understood, respected and addressed**

- “Listens attentively to my questions. Answers my questions completely and in a timely fashion.”
- “The social worker hears my voice and voices my concerns in meetings and in court. She respects my opinion.”
- “Taking time to listen to my concerns at home visits.”
- “They listen to me when I give them information about the kids. They accept what I tell them as the truth because no one from the private agency or the state agency knows very much about the kids.”
- “Well, we have been doing this for 19 years and whenever we call they still listen to us and try to help in any way they can.”
- “They listen and almost always try to address the needs and concerns we have for the children.”
- “My good social worker always listens to me. She got me respite when I really needed it. She listens to my input about my special needs child.”
- “They communicate with us regarding the children’s needs and listen to our input.”

**Understanding each unique child and family is key – and it begins with listening**

- “Also, need to train the social workers better to understand what the kids are experiencing.”
- “Listen to foster parents, we are with the children 24/7. Don’t just get things out of a dang book because every kid is different. Also, you seem to go to the kids first and I appreciate that, but you need to have more family meetings. Some of these kids have been in the system for a while, and they are as good at manipulating you as they are us.”
- “Start listening to us when we provide information that affects the children.”
- “Listen when I say ‘no’ and don’t bully.”

## 1.2 Social Workers



Photo by: Nathan Moreland

### Most foster parents say they are always or usually treated like part of the team

"This last time, the worker was in contact with us every day. I felt like I was a part of the team, and she was great at communicating."

"I feel that I am allowed to be a proactive voice regarding my child's needs."

"Overall, in foster parenting, we have had a very good experience as far as support and teamwork in the entire system. We have felt very good about the social workers we have had to deal with."

"I really can't think of anything. The caseworker of these three kids is working hard to get them adopted so we have worked as a team on that."

"When they come for the first visit they provide me with the necessary information needed, so that I feel I am now included in the case."

"She keeps me in the loop and lets me know what direction the case was going in. I always felt that she and I were on the same path with the same goal."

"They always ask me what I need and they include me in everything that they can. They keep me updated to the best of their ability."

### Some respondents did not feel they are considered part of the team

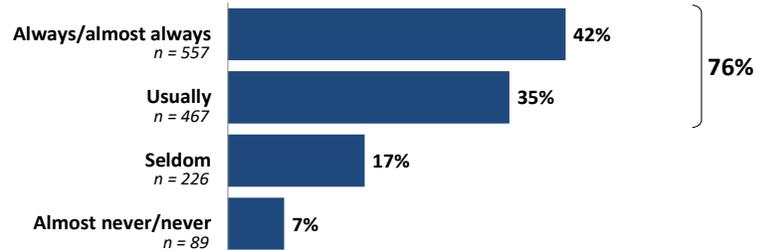
"Try to remember we are a team and foster parents have other people in their lives that they have to consider when planning things."

"Involve me more in the case so that I know more of the back story and the history of the child."

"Keep us posted on the status of the case; don't invite us to meetings and then when you discuss the parents ask us to leave after driving all the way there."

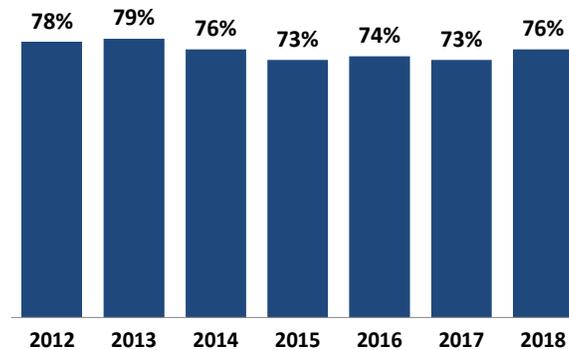
### QUESTION | Are you treated like part of the team?

Of the 1,339 foster parents who answered this question, more than three out of four gave a positive response (Always/almost always or Usually) when asked if they are treated like part of the team.



### State Trend

Positive responses increased from 73% in 2017 to 76% in 2018, a statistically significant difference.



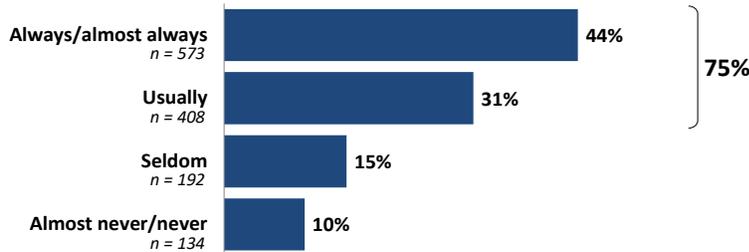
### Regional Detail

Differences among regions were not statistically significant.



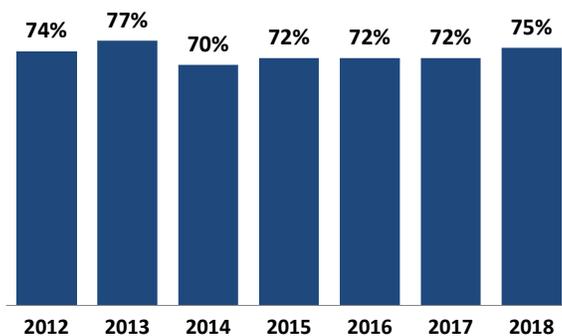
**QUESTION | Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?**

Of the 1,307 foster parents who answered this question, three-quarters gave a positive response (Always/almost always or Usually) when asked if they are included in meetings about the child in their care.



**State Trend**

The increase in positive responses from 2017 to 2018 was not statistically significant.



**Regional Detail**

Differences among regions were not statistically significant.



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**Inclusion in meetings matters**

“I like it when they will schedule a Family Team Decision Making meeting (FTDM) when we ask for or need one.”

“They answer the phone. My worker encourages me to do caregiver reports for the court hearings. They attend school meetings when I ask them.”

“They have set up Family Team Decision Making meetings (FTDM’s) whenever requested.”

“They keep me well informed. We have meetings every two weeks and discuss any issues that arise with the kids.”

“There has been notification of court hearings and shared planning meetings.”

“They are doing much better in keeping me in the loop on court dates. Not many meetings but have been including me. Health and safety visits have been good and well planned.”

**Not being in meetings, or being invited late, is a problem**

“Include us in team meetings and court preparation meetings. Turn in my completed caregiver reports so the Commissioner actually receives them! Give me copies of the department’s court reports.”

“I am included in meetings, but communication needs to be more timely to allow for planning. Often hearings and meetings are postponed at the last minute, or notification is received at last minute. So anything we can do to improve the timeliness of communication would help me.”

“Sometimes it is hard to get info from DSHS regarding current case status or the plan for the foster child. We don’t get to attend planning meetings.”

## 1.2 Social Workers



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### Not being included is damaging

“Don’t look at the foster family as the outsider.”

“Be included in what’s going on with the child. Not being told after hand.”

“Having us more a part of the case. If we’ve had a child over 2 years we could be considered for long term placement. We need to be part of the permanent outcome. More listening to us.”

“The DSHS social worker does not include me in anything about the child. They tell me nothing about the case plan. There is no communication unless she wants something done.”

“Treat foster parents like part of the team and truly listen, don’t be an ‘uh huh’ bobble head.”

“Include me in as a part of the team and keep me updated.”

“Treat foster parents as a valued member of the team. It would help with retention.”

“I have never been invited to a FTDM, not even by phone. I was told I am not wanted and this makes me feel like I am not a member of this child’s team.”

### Inclusion matters to foster parents

“Our current social worker is very responsive. We are part of the team.”

“The social worker and the other staff all come at the same time so we can work as a team for the benefit of the children.”

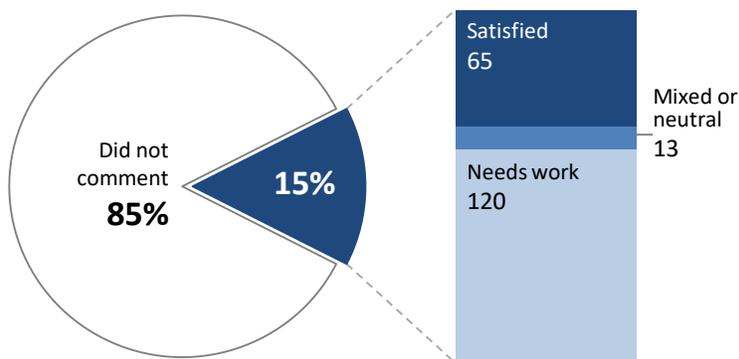
“I have both a caseworker with my private agency and social worker with Children’s Administration. I see and have more contact with my private agency case worker. I just got a new social worker so it’s been a bit of a struggle to feel like I’m being included.”

“I get more support from my agency but all staff are very helpful. I feel like my input is taken seriously, so I feel supported by all.”

## THEME | Social Worker Inclusiveness

Fifteen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed social worker inclusiveness. Six out of ten comments (120 out of 198) were negative or suggested ways that inclusion could be improved.

198 (15%) commented on this topic



**Social worker inclusiveness overlaps many of the other categories in this report. Foster parents commenting about being included or treated as part of a team often also mentioned:**

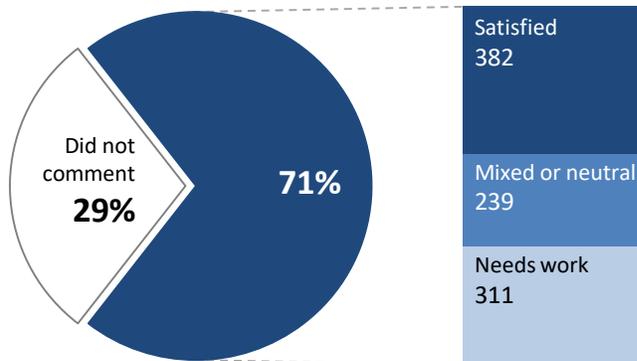
- Knowing what is going on with their child’s case – getting regular feedback and updates.
- Knowing the social worker listens carefully to their opinions.
- Hoping that the social worker is not only listening but also advocating for the child and family.
- Understanding the “why” of state decision-making.
- Receiving timely notifications of meetings about their children.
- Wanting honest consideration of their opinions.
- Being considered in the long-term planning for the children.

For some, being part of a team also means that they can rely on DSHS social workers and other professionals in situations when they need help or advice – so there is a good deal of overlap with “support.”

## THEME | Other Comments about Social Workers

Seventy-one percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed something about social workers that did not fit neatly into the previous themes. About four in ten (382) of these comments expressed satisfaction; 239 were mixed or neutral, and 311 discussed something that needed work.

932 (71%) commented on “other” concerns



**Many of these “other” comments discussed communication, and expressed the need for communication with social workers that is:**

- Proactive and occurring regularly.
- Quick in response foster parent questions and concerns.
- Honest and thorough.
- Consistent across the system, including with the foster family, the courts, private agencies, and GALs.

**Foster parents appreciate social workers who work creatively with each individual child, particularly those with severe issues. They praise social workers who:**

- Quickly arrange for outside therapy when needed.
- Use creativity and collaboration in solving problems.
- Make the child’s best interest the top priority.

**Other areas of foster parent concern included:**

- Lack of support from supervisors and lack of state resources for foster children and parents.
- Difficulties and delays in getting respite care approved.
- Putting the biological parents’ needs ahead of the needs of the child.



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### Communication is critical throughout

“Communication has been pretty good and they keep in contact.”

“They communicate with us.”

“They answer questions timely.”

“In general, communication is a problem. I get poor notice of court dates. They could do better communicating with the court. There have been a number of clerical errors with the court which resulted in a delay in the case.”

“They respond in a timely manner to my texts and emails.”

“The communication between CASA and the social worker needs to be better. It seems they are working independently of one another, and like they don’t have the same information about the case.”

“Getting back to us sooner.”

### Foster parents need child-centered problem solving and resources for tough kids with challenging behaviors

“They did everything they could all the way down to the behavioral issues, from the very beginning.”

“Provide resources for behavioral problems, developmental delays, and support groups.”

“She recommended and arranged functional family therapy, and connected with the youth after severe behavior issues.”

“I have received little to no help with this child. The social worker says things like, ‘My son brought a knife to school too.’ All right in front of the child.”

### They discussed other areas of concern

“Too often the biological parents’ needs are put ahead of the child’s needs.”

“More respite availability.”

“They do their best considering what tools they have. Don’t feel the social workers are at fault as they are not supported by the legislature and their supervisors.”

## 1.2 Social Workers

### DSHS needs smaller social work caseloads

"The social workers seem overwhelmed so they don't get back to us very quickly. Their caseloads are way too high."

"There are not enough staff. This means we don't get enough communication and the kids don't get enough attention from the social workers."

"The social workers have an extremely high caseload. I feel our social worker was spread so thin she was not able to provide the help we needed."

"Private agency are incredibly helpful, responsive and follow up when I ask about something and have forgotten about it. DSHS social workers are great but are overworked so they have a tendency to forget or not respond to emails after the 4th or 5th or 6th time! But, in general they are doing the best they can with the time they have."

"Have more staff. Social workers need to call back. Have better communication with visit supervisors. Need better communication all around, plus with organizations that are also involved."

"Have a smaller caseload so they can give more attention to their cases."

"I think they are stretched so thin that things get lost in the shuffle and things are handled in the last minute."

"The social workers have too many cases and this trickles down to the child."

### Social worker turnover is too frequent

"We keep getting new social workers and the handoff is not good."

"I have had a foster child for only one month with 5 different social workers."

"There is a big turnover of social workers. The first social worker I think I had for two months and then the second social worker I had for three months."

### Licensors matter

"Our licensor has been amazing to work with. She is very responsive and takes the time to educate me when I do not understand something."

"Our licensor is fantastic and responds quickly to our questions and emails."

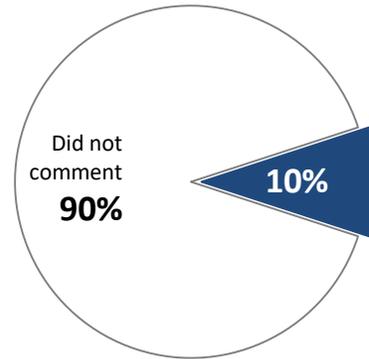
"Private agency licensor is absolutely amazing. I tend to go to her first since she is extremely responsive."

"The licensor should not ask if someone (me!) is trying to get a license to get benefits for herself. This question was asked in front of the children."

## THEME | Need More Social Workers

Ten percent (131) of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed the need for more social workers.

131 (10%) commented on this topic



### Foster parent comments in this theme often mentioned:

- High caseloads lead to poor response times and poor communication.
- High caseloads lead to not enough attention to cases, and foster child and family needs not being met.
- High caseloads also lead to social worker burnout and high turnover.
- High turnover causes difficulties in paying attention to the case and can delay the progress of each child's case.

## THEME | Foster Care Licensors

A small number (14, or one percent) of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed foster care licensors. Ten of the fourteen comments (71%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

## Access, Process, and Coordination



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### Foster parents need good access to staff, and timely approvals and payments.

Access to help showed a statistically significant improvement since 2017.

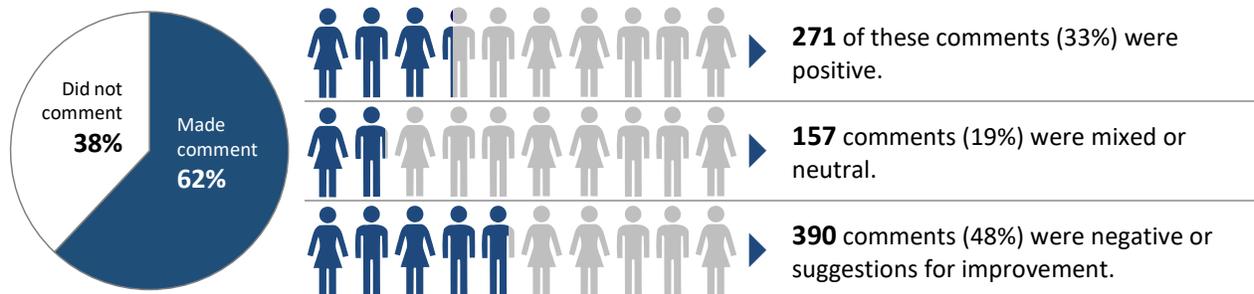
- *Can you get help when you ask for it?* (84% positive in 2018 compared to 79% positive in 2017)
- Region 1 parents were significantly more likely to give positive answers than Region 3 parents (88% to 80%)

Many (818) foster parent comments discussed access, processes, or coordination of care. Almost half of these comments were negative, about one third were positive, and nearly two out of ten were mixed or neutral.

Access to social workers generated mostly positive comments. A few parents added that access had improved over past years. A few said access depends on the worker, or that it was simply bad. Coordination between private agencies and DSHS staff was also praised in most comments, as was the consistency of monthly health and safety visits. Some parents wished for more frequent visits.

The more negative comments addressed needed process improvements. These included: better “up front” and case progress information; better management of out-of-county cases and the information transfer when social workers change; better coordination and processing of medical approvals; clearer and more timely reimbursements; more help with transportation, respite and child care; and filing court paperwork on time.

### 818 foster parents (62%) commented on access, process, and coordination



## 1.3 Access, Process, and Coordination



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### Many comments described good help

"My social workers have been very responsive any time I call, text, or email. She is always quick to respond. If she is going to be out of town, she lets me know. If she can't get back to me right away, she lets me know this."

"I think the availability of our social worker was good about responding to emails and texts. Also, keeping us informed on where we were in regard to the child's plan."

"Since DSHS staff got cell phones they are so much easier to get ahold of. They may not always answer their phones, but they get back to us much quicker. Having had some kids from outside of my area lately, I appreciate the Bremerton office more."

"The social worker has her cell phone number so she can contact our foster child and us directly. This makes social worker contact very good and the foster child can call the social worker directly."

"They quickly respond via emails giving correct advice."

"They make themselves available, they respond to my emails and provide us with necessary information requested."

### Other foster parents aren't getting the help they need easily

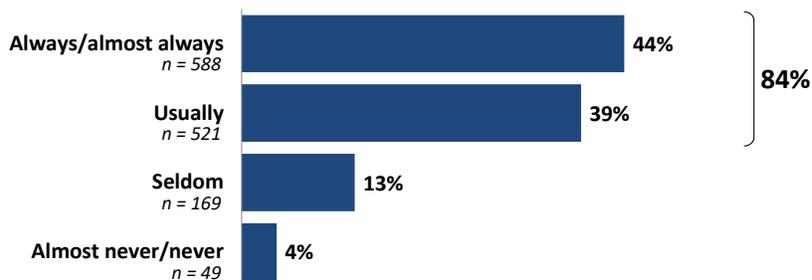
"There are a number of times where it takes several emails and/or phone calls to simply get an answer. I have used other sections in Children's Administration to get answers because my social worker won't return a call, text, or email."

"I have a very big problem with them checking their phone messages. I have left them urgent messages and they do not get back to me for a long time."

"Give me the help I need when I ask for it and listen to what I have to say and do something about. They don't respond to emails timely so that leaves me in the dark."

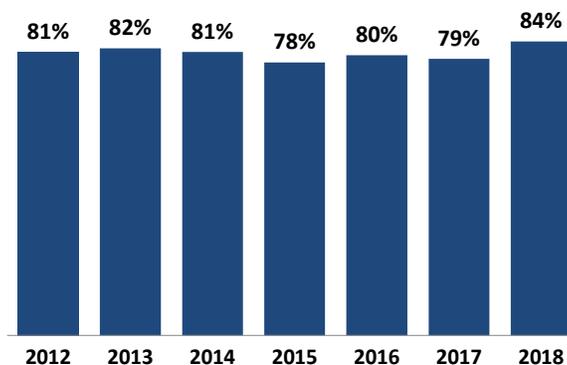
## QUESTION | Can you get help when you ask for it?

More than four out of five of the 1,327 foster parents who answered this question (84%) gave a positive response (Always/almost always or Usually) about whether they can get help when they ask for it.



### State Trend

Positive responses increased by four percentage points from 2017 to 2018, a statistically significant difference.



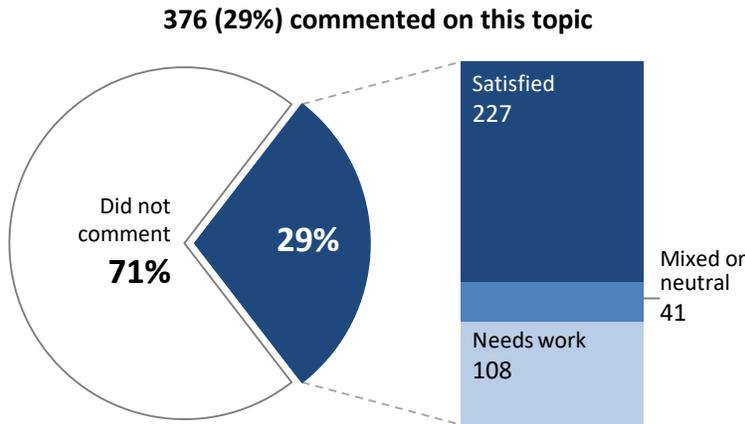
### Regional Detail

Respondents were more likely to provide positive responses in Region 1 than those in Region 3, a statistically significant difference.



**THEME | Phone/Staff Access**

Twenty-nine percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed phone, email, text, or staff access. Most comments (227, or 60%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



**Many foster parents commented on phone, text, and email access to their workers.**

- Most foster parent comments were positive, saying the social worker got back to them quickly.
- Some experienced foster parents commented that the fact that workers now have their own cell phones has improved access.
- Most mixed or neutral comments said access varied by social worker – some were easy to reach and others were nearly impossible to reach.
- Less than a third of the foster parents who commented said accessibility was poor. Some simply said the worker did not respond to them. Others said they had to make multiple attempts to get help.
- A few foster parents suggested that some form of improved weekend and evening access to texts or phone calls would be helpful, since that is when the children are home and issues come up. There were also a few spontaneous comments that their social worker returned calls on evenings and weekends.



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**Most comments on access were positive**

“They answer my calls, emails or texts.”  
 “Social worker is very prompt as to getting back to me on the phone and emails.”  
 “They always call me back when I have questions or email them. They are easy to get in touch with.”  
 “DSHS worker is really good to responding to emails and voicemail within 24 hours. A very positive change from years past.”

“The social workers I have now are responsive to my email and phone calls - that's the biggest help.”

“I like it when social workers respond quickly (within 24 hours) to phone calls, texts, and emails.”

“The majority of the time, if I have a concern or question, and I email or call, they get back to me fairly quickly.”

“Both of my workers gave me their cell numbers. They are always available by either email or phone calls and are very good about getting back to me.”

**Some said access depends on the worker**

“The social worker for my other foster child does not reply to my phone calls and emails for days and sometimes weeks.”

“Often, workers get back to me through email or phone calls in a timely manner, but sometimes I have a worker that doesn't.”

“I would really like to know what I can expect as a response time from social worker. One calls me right back and the other might not get back to me for 10 days. What should my expectations be?”

**Other access comments were negative**

“Social worker doesn't do home studies, doesn't return calls, and doesn't respond to emails.”

“We feel like we have to push and make multiple calls to get help or a response.”

**Evening and weekend access would help**

“It would be great for DSHS to have a text on-call on evenings and weekends.”

## 1.3 Access, Process, and Coordination



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### The monthly health and safety visits are helpful and consistent

"Our social worker comes out once a month and I appreciate that she asks us what we need."

"The monthly health and child safety visits are very consistent."

"They come and visit every 30 days."

"My private agency staff come to the house at least once a month."

"They check in with us monthly."

"Our agency checks in with us regularly to see how things are going."

"They do monthly health and safeties and are available by phone or email when I have a question."

### Some feel once a month is not enough

"They need to check more to see how the situation is with the child more than once a month."

"We would like to meet with our social worker more than just once a month."

### Some private agencies visit more frequently

"My current social worker makes weekly contact, which is helpful."

"Social workers come every month to do the visit, and the private agency checks in weekly."

"Private agency comes and does home visits every two weeks."

"My private agency comes out regularly. As for the state social worker, she's never come to our home."

### Some parents had few or no visits

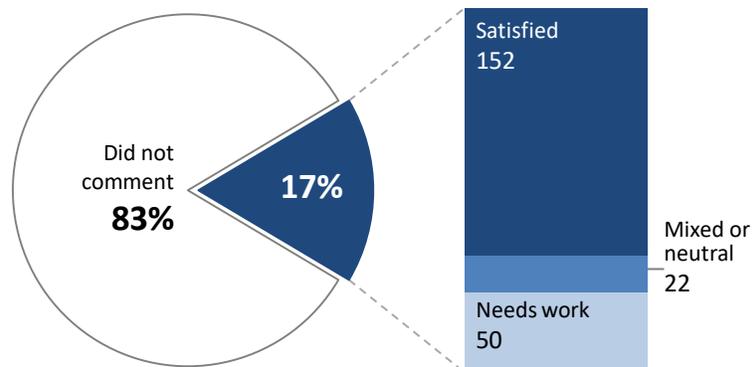
"We have kids from different counties. The social worker has come to visit the children only once. Courtesy social worker is different each visit and doesn't know anything about the kids."

"We would like it if our current case manager for the state could check in with us in person or on the phone."

## THEME | Consistency of Contact

Seventeen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed the consistency of contact, often mentioning the monthly health and safety visits. Most comments (152, or 68%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

224 (17%) commented on this topic



### Most comments on the health and safety visits were positive.

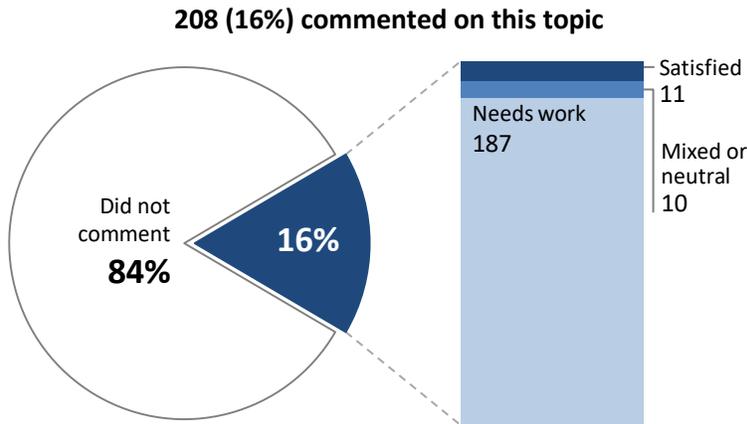
- Most comments praised the consistent monthly visits as a good opportunity for check-in and consultation.
- Some parents felt that visits once a month were not enough.
- Some private agencies apparently visit some cases more frequently than once a month, and the foster parents liked that. Every two weeks and weekly were both mentioned.

### A few parents commented that they did not have regular visits from their child's social worker.

- Some parents said they had never or rarely seen their child's state social worker.
- A number of these had out-of-county children and did receive monthly visits from courtesy workers. However, sometimes the courtesy visits were not seen as helpful, because the worker didn't know the child, the family, or the case progress.

**THEME | General Processes**

Sixteen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed general processes. The majority of these comments (187, or 90%) were negative or made suggestions for change.



**Almost all the general process comments suggested something needing improvement.**

- Some foster parents felt the “system” was geared to the needs of the biological families rather than the needs of the child. They felt that this dragged the cases out and endangered the children’s wellbeing.
- Some foster parents asked for better information on case progress, on children’s medical needs, and on the children’s interactions with their biological parents. These information issues are also discussed in later chapters.
- Some foster parents felt they needed to fight for the help they received, and battle “the system.”
- Some foster parents felt that the paperwork and processes to get help for the foster families (respite and transportation came up as frequent examples) were far too burdensome.



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**Focus should be on child, not the parents**

“The system is supposed to be about the children, so I think it should be about the child’s progress not the biological parents. They seem to have more rights than the kids.”

“Stop dragging the kids along and giving the parents every chance no matter how many times they fail.”

“The biggest complaint I have is the biological parents have so many rights and the kids don’t.”

“The kids need their own attorneys. They need someone to speak for them in court other than the CASA workers.”

“A child should not have to go through ‘Mommy and Me’ rehab every 8 months. The state needs at some point to say, ‘enough is enough’ when it comes to the biological parents’ behavior.”

**Better information on cases is needed**

“The system is the reason we have a shortage of foster parents because the foster parent isn’t kept in the loop. Keep us posted/updated.”

“One child had fetal alcohol issues, and we didn’t know that.”

“Better inform the foster family of hearings, meetings, and case status. Keep things moving along by getting paperwork done and being prepared for hearings.”

**Fighting for help is frustrating**

“Nothing is easy. If you really need help you have to know how to fight for it. In the last year, two of our five social workers respond to emails and calls, but the other three don’t. One doesn’t even answer emails.”

“I rely on our support group on Facebook, other foster mothers, or trainers, so that’s where I get most of my support. They tell me how to battle the system.”

“They could help with transportation needs such as with visitation and therapy. Need respite care. There is none available.”

## 1.3 Access, Process, and Coordination



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### Reimbursement process should be improved

"Many of the reputable day care providers will not take DSHS children; there are too many payment problems."

"The way DSHS does payments, because I have no idea what we're getting paid for. Is it mileage, reimbursements, or care? There needs to be an itemized invoice of reimbursements and also a contact number in the payment office."

### Parents need help finding and paying for respite care

"One of our biggest challenges is finding child care just to have a date with our spouses. Getting respite is super hard."

"My ability to attend trainings, meetings and court dates is dependent on whether I can get adequate child care."

"We haven't been paid for the last two summers we did respite care."

### Clothing vouchers are needed sooner

"They could do better about getting clothing vouchers for infants who grow so fast. More than once a year."

"A lot of these kids come to our homes with nothing and it would be nice to get the vouchers up front, so we could get the items they're in need of right away."

### Parents talked about other processes

"The secured email system is a good communication tool."

"Adequate information about kids, especially medical issues. Had to find out about my kiddo's severe food and chemical allergies on my own when she got sick. That information should have come with the child from day one."

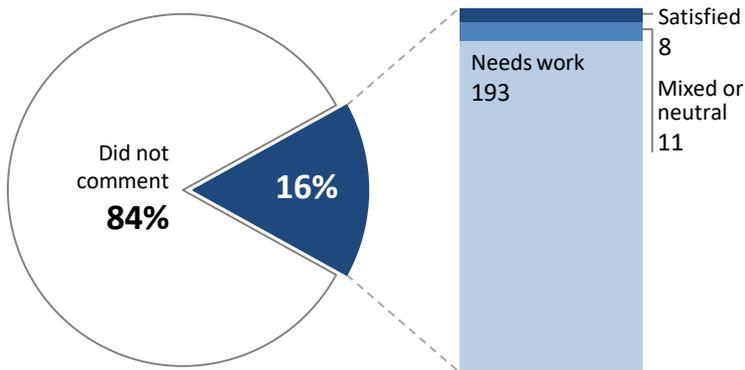
"The Facebook foster support page is very helpful. A great resource to have."

"The Administration really heard me when I voiced concerns about one of the workers."

## THEME | Specific Processes

Sixteen percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed one or more specific processes. Most of these comments (193, or 91%) were negative or suggested changes.

212 (16%) commented on this topic



Some parents suggested specific processes that could be improved. Those mentioned in more than one comment included:

- Problems with reimbursements. Delays in payment and lack of clarity were both mentioned.
- Difficulties in finding respite child care or child care so the parent can attend meetings – and difficulties getting paid for doing respite care.
- Clothing vouchers should be issued more quickly or frequently.

One experienced foster parent mentioned a number of specific processes that they felt needed improvement.

*"Have systems in place for the youth that come into care and can't go to school or daycare right away. DSHS should not expect the families to lose their jobs or take days off to meet this need and especially without additional compensation.*

*Reimburse for stolen or damaged items.*

*Require follow up from the department directly to the foster parent regarding any back pay. Too many delays with pay or non-payment issues have slipped between the cracks.*

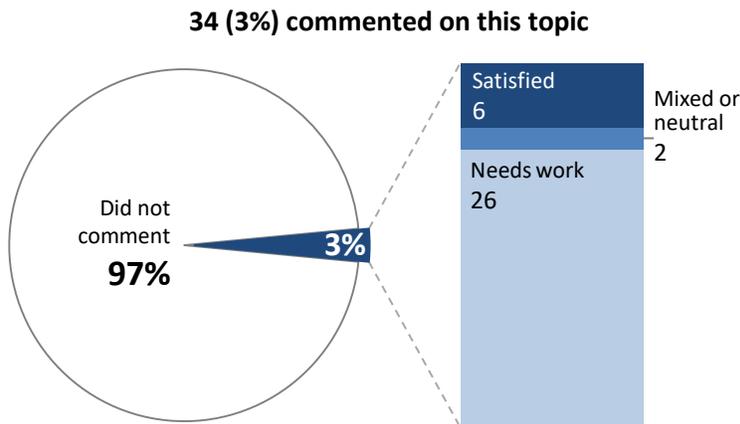
*Make it mandatory that select staff and/or "after hours" teams respond in a timely fashion or have a protocol, outside of calling the authorities, when a child needs to be removed from a foster home.*

*Properly compensate foster parents who deal with children who have extensive behavioral issues. More foster parents would be apt to stick around versus not take the children or quit fostering altogether.*

*Check children for lice, infectious diseases, and bed bugs before placement occurs. This would save a lot of headache and possibly save DSHS thousands of dollars, especially with bed bug situations."*

**THEME | Paperwork Processes**

Three percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed paperwork processes. Most of these comments (26, or 76%) were negative or suggested changes.



**Of the small number of comments on paperwork, most were critical.**

- Several parents said their social workers did not file needed court paperwork on time, and that slowed down the children’s cases.
- Others said that their social workers did not file paperwork approving their reimbursements, and that slowed payments.
- Some discussed problems with too many paperwork steps involved in getting approval for medical procedures.
- Some appreciated getting needed paperwork from social workers or commented on good teamwork in getting papers filed.
- Others complained the paperwork was just too much! One parent said: *“The amount of paperwork is ridiculous. If these weren't my grandchildren I would have dropped out. Even though they are my grandchildren I often think about dropping out because of the paperwork, and the barriers and roadblocks in getting things done.”*



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**Delayed paperwork slows court cases**

“We completed paperwork for court, and it didn't get filed. So when we got to court the judge continued the case until the paperwork got to him. Need to get paperwork to where it needs to go.”

“In our child's case they've dropped the ball on the parental rights. The rights should've been severed over a year ago, but the paperwork wasn't filed and then it wasn't sent to the correct place.”

“Speed things up on the adoption process. Get paperwork filed promptly.”

**Delayed paperwork slows health care**

“Need quicker approvals on the medical procedures that need immediate care. I have a child with a brain cyst that needs removal. It is taking way too long to get approval through the courts, when this surgery is vital. It's already been 3 weeks and it could be more than 2 weeks more before approval.”

“There is stuff that needs to be authorized quickly, especially the medical stuff and the social workers need to follow-up on the paperwork they've submitted.”

**Delayed paperwork slows payments**

“We were denied payment for three Level 3 kids who are in our care for over ten months because our worker was one day late turning in our move paperwork. Then we had to reinstate our entire license.”

“My social worker files paperwork wrongly, so we end up paying for things DSHS is supposed to pay for. We have bills pending since January that have not been paid.”

**Teamwork helps paperwork go smoothly**

“Doing the paperwork internally so we work as a team. I document and do my work on this side which improves the results.”

“The 14 year old we have wanted to go to camp. They got us all the paperwork and info we needed before we went before the judge to get permission to go.”

## 1.3 Access, Process, and Coordination



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### Private agency, DSHS and foster parents mostly coordinate well

“Private agency can intervene to DCFS when I feel so emotional about what is happening to the child and I cannot be professional. They meet with DCFS and bring the information back to me.”

“Private agency is good at mediating between DSHS and us to get what the child needs.”

“Collaboration and teamwork. They make it easy for us as far as scheduling meetings together. I am talking about private agency staff, DSHS staff and social workers all meeting together.”

### Coordination falters when child is placed out-of-county

“They could better support the 'out of county' placements by having the 'courtesy worker' have more responsibility in making decisions regarding the child.”

“The social worker in the other county never gets back to me. The worker in my county has no information.”

### Coordination during social worker turnover needs improvement

“Improve the communication between the social worker during transitions from one to another so I am not the one having to bring them up to speed.”

“One of the things they could use are tools to keep them organized, especially in transitioning cases so nothing is lost.”

### Social workers need to be consistent

“I think they all need to get on the same page. We brought up concerns to case worker and he completely brushed it off. Another case worker was completely floored by the inaction.”

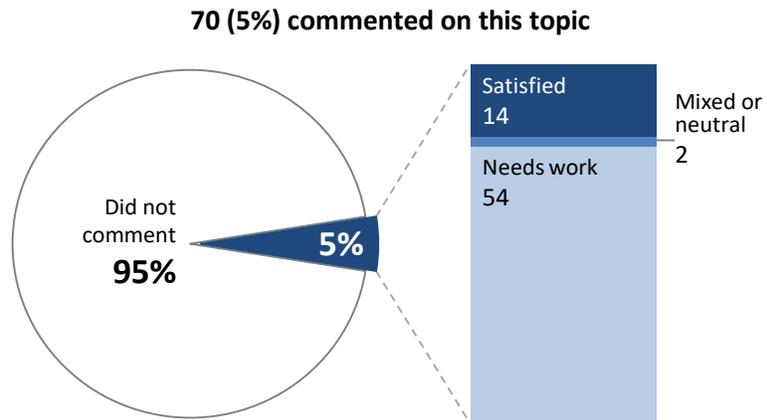
“Some social workers tell me one thing and then something else to my agency.”

### Medical coordination is a problem

“Make it easier to coordinate things between the State and Apple Health.”

## THEME | Coordination

Five percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed coordination. Most of these comments (54, or 77%) were negative or suggestions for change.



### Successful coordination involves communication, meetings, and information consistency, including:

- Good communication between private agencies, DSHS staff, and foster parents.
- Meetings scheduled together between private agency staff, social workers, and foster families.
- Consistency in information and messaging across DSHS.

### Foster parents are frustrated when coordination is lacking.

- Action items and paperwork are dropped when social workers turn over.
- During turnover, the foster parent needs to update the new social workers.
- Decision-making in out-of-county cases is difficult.
- Needed medical care is postponed because of coordination problems between DSHS and Apple Health.
- One parent commented:
 

*“Eliminate the requirement to have Olive Crest visit monthly and be so involved. They don’t have decision-making authority and are an inconvenience.”*

## Information



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### Foster parents need complete and timely information on their foster children.

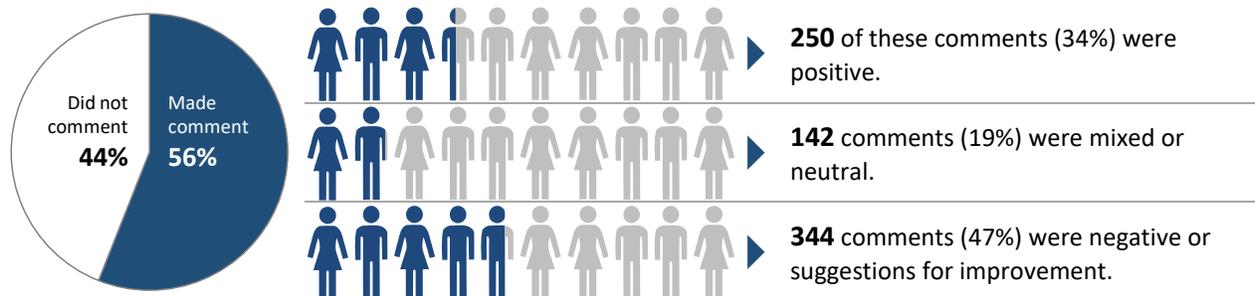
Information sharing showed a statistically significant improvement since 2017.

- *Did you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral developmental, and educational needs?* (73% usually, almost always, or always in 2018, compared to 69% in 2017)
- Region 1 had a 78% positive rate. The difference from Regions 2 (70%) and 3 (71%) was statistically significant.

Over half of the foster parent comments addressed information sharing. More comments were negative than positive, and almost 20% were mixed or neutral.

Concerns addressed in the comments began with the need for complete information about the child’s health and behavioral issues on or before placement. Ongoing information needs that were addressed included: quick answers to emerging questions, knowledge of local resources to support the children, regular updates on case plans and progress, and notice of court dates and meetings in time to attend them. These issues were all the focus of positive, mixed, and negative comments, so information sharing is clearly both important and variable.

### More than half of the foster parent comments (736) addressed information sharing.



## 1.4 Information



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### Foster parents need up-front information about the child's medical needs

"I like it when the foster child comes with their medical information when they first arrive at my home."

"They give me medical information about the children being placed."

"We got really good medical information on this child which helps us care for her."

"We need better and more adequate information about the kids in our care. More accurate medical info."

"I only take medically fragile babies, so I have to know everything, so I get a lot more information than other parents. They, for the most part, know to answer my questions most of the time."

"They provide excellent communication about the children and their needs up front, and are responsive to ongoing updates and notifications."

"Be more honest and up-front when it comes to medical issues."

"It's really difficult to advocate for the child medically when I don't have a good background on the child. I take medically complex infants, so I need all the medical information which would help me."

### Foster parents need and value quick answers to their questions

"The social worker is very good about responding to questions and concerns that I have."

"They are usually helpful when I have questions or need information."

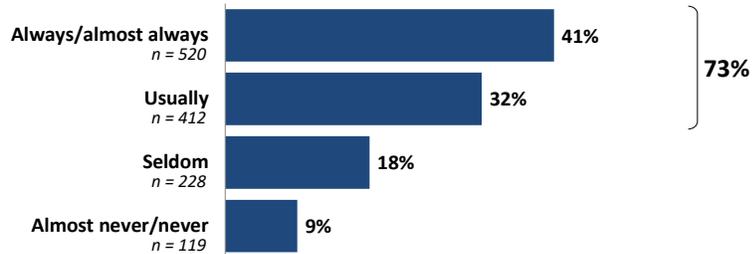
"They are really good about answering questions, getting services, and pointing me in the right direction for health care services."

"Those social workers that support us well provide responses to our questions with meaningful answers within a day or so."

"The social workers need to be there when we have needs or questions. We should not have to wait a couple of weeks for a response."

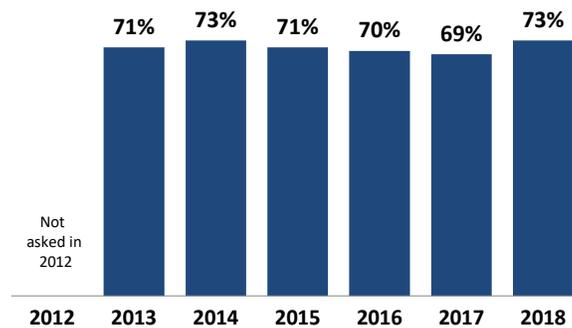
### QUESTION | Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental, and educational needs?

Of the 1,279 foster parents who answered this question, almost three-quarters reported that they get adequate information always, almost always, or usually.



### State Trend

Positive responses increased by four percentage points from 2017 to 2018, a statistically significant difference.



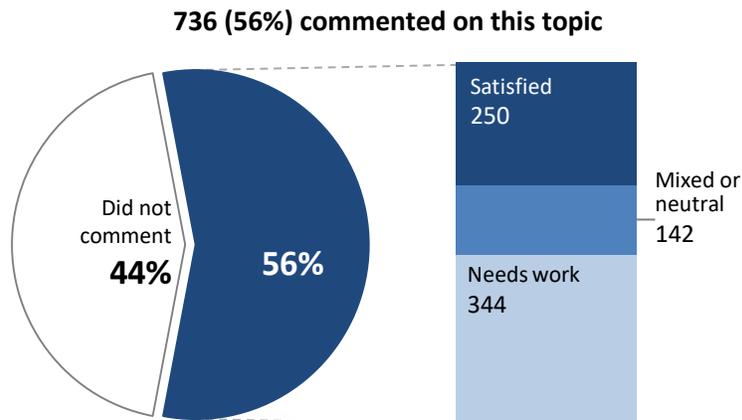
### Regional Detail

Respondents were more likely to provide positive responses in Region 1 than those in Regions 2 and 3. Both differences were statistically significant.



**THEME | Information**

Fifty-six percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support addressed the information that parents received about their foster child before or during the foster care process. Most comments suggested needed improvements, or were mixed or neutral.



**Many comments in this theme focused on the need for good medical and behavioral information about the child upon placement, or as soon afterwards as possible.**

- This helps the foster parent care for the child.
- It also helps the foster parent prepare their homes, families, and schedules.
- Not having that information creates distrust between the foster parents and the social workers or “the agency,” especially because the foster parents tend to think the information was not provided because DSHS wanted to get the child placed.

**Foster parents also commented on the need for ongoing information throughout the time the child is in their care. Topics included:**

- Dates and times of court hearings and other meetings.
- Updates on the case progress, especially when they may have serious consequences for the foster family and the children in their care.
- Local resources available for foster children and families.
- Quick answers to questions asked of social workers by foster parents.



Photo By: Camp to Belong, Washington

**Foster parents need up-front information on the child's history and behavioral issues**

“When kids are placed with us, we need more information about the child so we can be better foster parents. We are given very little information about their history. Sometimes the social worker doesn't have much information at the time of placement.”

“Be more honest up front about a child's challenges instead of trying to sugar coat or make excuses for no information.”

“Don't say there are no issues and then months later everything falls apart and the kid's behavior is horrible, then the social worker says, ‘Oh yes, that's his previous behavior issue.’ Give us the information up front with each child.”

“Be a little bit more open about information regarding the child when the child comes into care. Make the foster parent more aware of situations such as background and what this child's needs are so we can better serve them now rather than later.”

“Give me more information on intake. That would be fantastic.”

“Be honest with us about the level of care needed for our foster child. When we received the placements, we were told there might be some minor problems and self-neglect. But, we are getting holes in the wall and I found out later that the foster child had been bumped a number of times. These are level 2 and 3 kids.”

“We have been lucky that we have people that have given us the history and the struggles that these children have gone through. It helped us understand the children better.”

“The social workers need to offer more information about the kids placed in the home so that the foster parents understand how to deal with problems.”

“They were very good at providing us enough information up front so that we felt more prepared when we got our first child.”

## 1.4 Information

### THEME | Information

Besides better information on the child's health and behavioral issues up front and answers to ongoing questions, foster parents need and appreciate information on: local resources to support both the foster children and the parents, regular updates on the case plans and progress, and notice of court dates and meetings in time to attend them.

#### Voices

##### **Foster parents need information about local resources for their foster children and themselves.**

"Talk about resources and let me know what's available."

"More online information about available resources and FAQ's."

"She helps us get in touch with resources that help with difficult situations."

"Need assistance in connecting with resources. Put out a list of resources for the county."

"General information. I rarely got emails from my social worker about trainings. "

"They give different names and phone numbers of resources that are available in our area, including names of doctors and dentists who take Medicaid."

"Have a social worker who is more informed about resources that are available. We have to find out on our own what our child could use."

"I like it when they suggest help with behaviors and where we can go to get services."

"They always bring flyers for events, or they call to see if I need anything."

"More communication about the training available."

"Share more resources. Give some guidance, and knowledge of what is available for the children."

"More info about behaviors and how to deal with them."

"I wish that, during the first few months of a child's placement, there was a number that you could call to speak with (for instance) a nutritionist or an occupational therapist to ask general questions. I find myself calling my social worker who then has to do some research and most times just calls me back and tells me to go to a pediatrician. This is the time when we would really love to know how we can help this child in any way we can. Maybe they just need a diet change or their sleep pattern changed. You could call it 'dial an expert.' We want to welcome this new child into our home without dragging them to a doctor because they are peeing in a corner or don't sleep all night."

##### **Foster parents need to be kept informed of the changes in the child's status and plans, especially when a child is leaving their care.**

"My social workers have been great. They keep me apprised of the status of the kids. They inform me of changes in the plan."

"Provide more regular (unprompted) updates on the case."

"She calls us with updates about the case."

"Let me know the case plan because I feel in the dark about that."

"Isn't there some way you can give us periodic updates on the process without violating anyone's rights? We want to know how it is going."

"Full disclosure on the case; no bit and pieces. Give us more details and let us know what the plan is."

"They are really good about telling us as to what is happening in the case and what the plan is."

"We feel like afterthoughts once the decision is made to return the child to their parents. We just had a terrible experience with a child that we had for almost two years. We got very little lead-in time that the child was leaving us and we were to meet the CASA worker with the child to hand him over. When we got there we discovered that the bio parent was there as well and the mother reached into our car and took the child out of his car seat and all the while child was reaching back for me saying "Momma, Momma" and crying his little eyes out. I was crying, my daughter was crying, and it was just heartbreaking. Why can't there be a more humane way to do these transitions?"

##### **Foster parents need timely information about court dates and meetings they are supposed to attend, so they can plan their time.**

"Let me know when the court dates are. If the date or time changes, please notify me. My current worker doesn't let me know."

"Keep us posted with meetings and not at last minute."

"Need to keep us updated and informed about hearings and other meetings that we can attend and not at the last minute."

"Keep us posted about key dates such as court hearings and family team decision-making meetings in advance."

"Keep me informed about meetings and court dates. I shouldn't have to ask! The old social worker worked with me on scheduling and that isn't happening now. I've had this child for over two years. Court dates get set and then cancelled and I'm informed at the last minute."

## Resources



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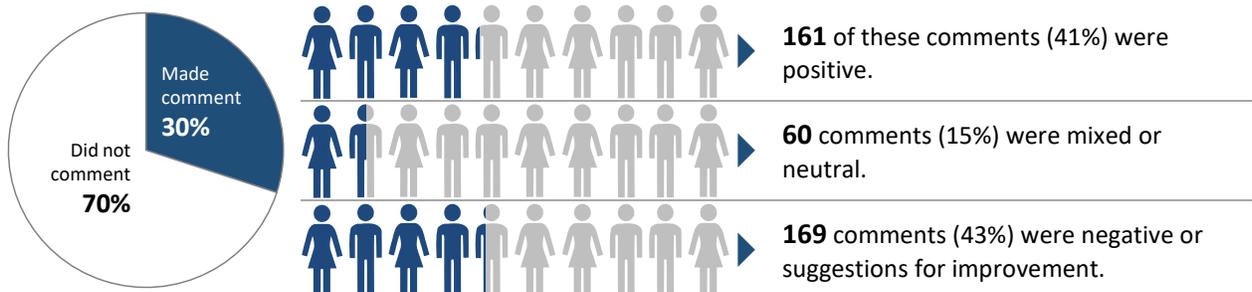
### Foster parents want the resources needed by them and their foster children to be readily available. And they want reimbursement to be swift and predictable.

About three in ten foster parents commented on resources such as medical and mental health services, respite care, transportation, child care, financial matters, and other resources.

For each resource type, some parents reported it going well and others badly. The neutral or mixed comments generally pointed out that whether it went well or not depended on the social workers.

Financial matters, respite care and child care received the greatest proportion of negative comments, both in relation to availability and reimbursement.

#### 390 (30%) respondents commented on resources available for foster families



## 1.5 Resources



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### Foster parents need help getting medical and mental health care for their children

"Our social worker helped us get a prescription our foster child needed."

"They get us set up with mental health."

"Because we take medically fragile kids, we really need medical supplies in a timely manner. It has been a real struggle this past year."

"They helped us get medical approval."

"The biggest issue is the medical. Need medical authorization more quickly."

"Private agency helped with a foster child with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Supported her and us, too."

"Getting us the insurance cards and medical needs of the kids taken care of."

"Information about our foster child's medical needs was not accurate, as they were taken four years ago when child first came into the system. So we've had to get her seen for updates."

"More resources available to get these kids the help they need (Occupational, Physical, and Speech, or Applied Behavior Analysis) quickly, instead of sitting on a waiting list for months."

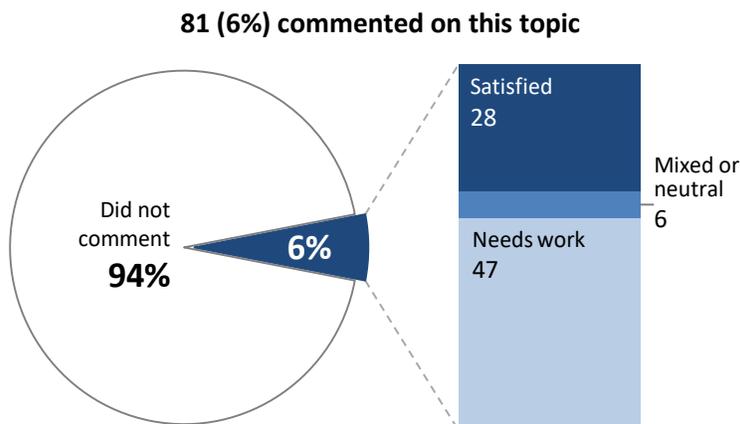
"Need other facilities to do assessments as I've been waiting for 8 months for an assessment at Mary Bridge."

"When a foster parent states they're having trouble with attachment, or fears the child's behavioral issues result from attachment issues, take that seriously. If that case is heading towards permanency, then attachment services, classes, and circle of security all need to be done before permanency planning."

"They could take the child's medical needs seriously. It's not just me, it is medical experts saying the same thing. There is no way this child's parents can care for her medical needs. You can't just pick and choose who to listen to when a child's survival and well-being are at stake."

## THEME | Medical, Dental, and Mental Health Resources

Six percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed medical, dental, and mental health resources for the children in their care. Most of these comments (47, or 58%) were negative or suggested improvements.



### Foster parents appreciate help caring for the medical and behavioral needs of their children.

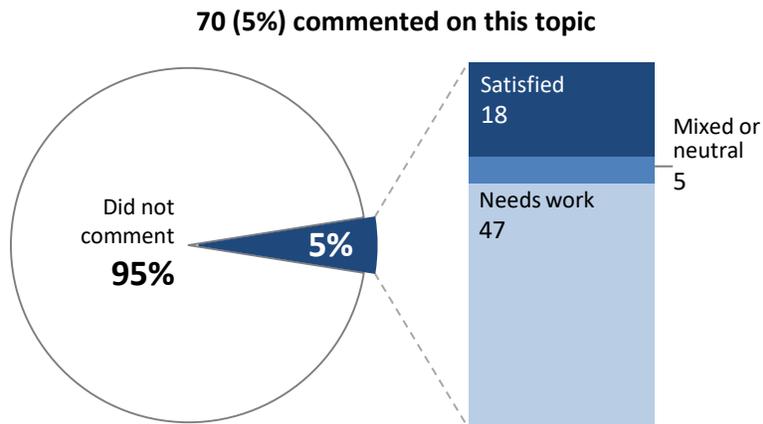
- Social workers who assist them with referrals to doctors, specialists, and mental health services who take Medicaid clients.
- Social workers who speed the process of medical approvals.
- Special care taken with children who are medically fragile or have special needs.
- Thorough and up-to-date information on the child's health care needs.

### Foster parents are discouraged when:

- Information about the child's medical history is not known or communicated.
- The social worker does not seem to understand the complex needs of the foster children.
- The social worker does not pay attention to foster parent and provider concerns about the ability of the biological families to care for fragile children.
- There are long wait times for medical approvals, assessments, evaluations, and needed therapies.

## THEME | Respite Care

Five percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed respite care. Most of these comments (47, or 67%) were negative or suggested improvements.



### Most foster parents who mentioned respite say they are not receiving help in accessing it. They say:

- There is not enough available respite care.
- There is little or no respite for high needs children.
- Their social workers do not respond quickly to the need for respite care, so they have difficulty planning, even for surgeries or planned vacations requested months in advance.

### Foster parents who provide respite care say the respite payments are often delayed for months or years.

- Some say the social worker does not submit the respite hours.
- Others say the problem is with the payment office.
- Some commented that the payment delays contribute to the shortage of respite providers.

### Foster parents who are getting respite find it very valuable.

- Most parents who said respite was available when needed got it from their private agencies.
- Access to respite improves their fostering experience, especially when they care for children with serious problems.



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### Many parents do not have reliable respite

- “Have better access to respite.”
- “Make respite care easier. It is too hard to find people to do this.”
- “Respite care is lacking.”
- “Provide regular/ongoing respite for high needs children. Give us a break once or twice a month to regroup.”
- “They promised us up to 20 hours of respite time to run our errands, but lately we only get 2 hours in a week.”
- “Have respite more readily available for special needs kids.”
- “More respite availability. The protocol is not well defined, asking for respite is not easy, and even with that they leave it up in the air so we never know how to plan.”
- “I had surgery planned for 3:00 A.M. and we notified our social worker months before. They finally found her a place only eight hours before my surgery.”

### Some foster parents have reliable respite

- “They listen to my need for respite and provide it.”
- “They provide respite care where they can.”
- “When we need respite, we get it.”
- “Our private agency staff always makes sure we have respite when we need it.”

### Payment for respite is often delayed

- “Respite pay is awful, and the timeliness of the pay is so far from when the respite is completed. That is why people do not want to do respite!”
- “I did respite care for 8 days in July and they still haven’t paid us.”
- “We haven’t been paid for the last two summers we did respite care.”
- “Did respite care in September and didn’t get paid. They need to pay more quickly.”
- “Respite care payment should not take one year to process. There seems to be too many layers for the payment to process.”

## 1.5 Resources



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### Some foster parents get transportation assistance

"The social worker is very helpful in transportation if needed."

"DSHS transporter that we had was the most amazing transporter that I have ever come in contact with. Her reports were great and she kept me really informed. I felt that my foster children were very safe with her!"

"They set up transportation for our foster daughter to and from her prior school. This has given her continuity and is not something we would have been able to provide for her due to the distance involved."

"When I can't take a child somewhere, they find someone who can provide transportation."

"My private agency staff are always there for me. They help with the transportation of the child."

### Other foster parents wish they did

"Work harder to provide transport for visits for foster children and family. Bring in more transporters. Put out the word to organizations of this need, so these visits can happen timely."

"They need to provide more transportation for the foster children in order to visit."

"I need more assistance with transportation to visits and school. I have a child who is not in school because they have no transport there."

"You cannot call me at 9:20 at night and say there is a visit happening the next day at 11:00 a.m. and nothing has been arranged for travel – this is just not happening. I need a 24 hour notice!"

### Mileage payments are problematic

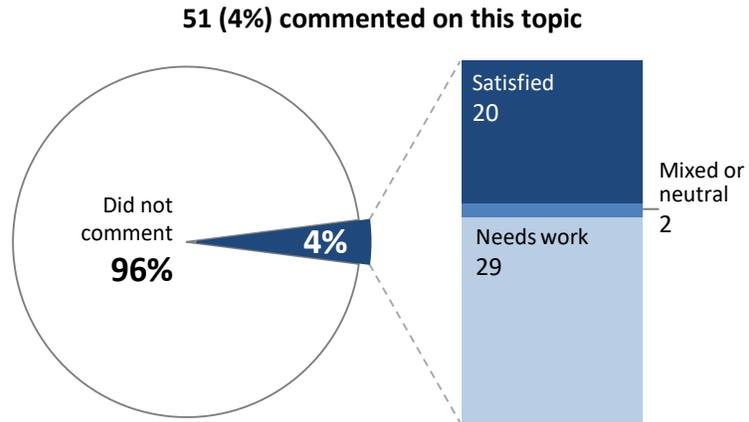
"When the mileage reimbursement isn't paid in full, there is no explanation."

"I've been waiting three months to get a mileage payment and I keep calling."

"Mileage needs to be reimbursed timely."

## THEME | Transportation

Four percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed transportation resources. Most of these comments (29, or 57%) were negative or suggested improvements.



### Foster parents mentioned ways that transportation helped their children. For example, it helped them:

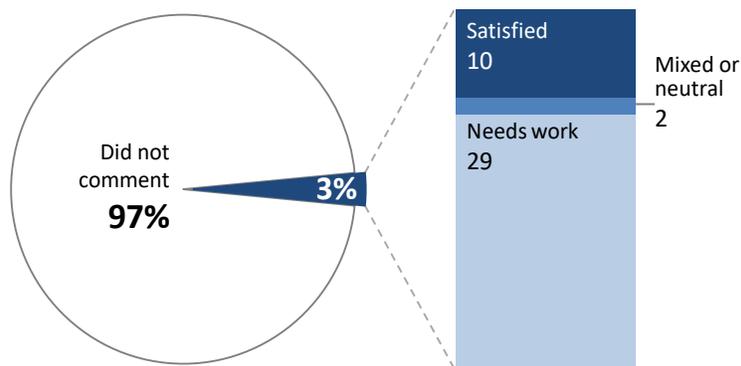
- Get to school.
- Maintain family visits and connections.
- Receive needed therapies.

### A number of parents said reimbursement for transportation and mileage often lagged and required repeated phone calls or emails.

- Several parents said mileage was too difficult to file.
- Others said it took months to receive reimbursement.

**THEME | Child Care**

Three percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed child care resources. Most of these comments (29, or 71%) were negative or suggested ways that child care assistance could be improved.

**41 (3%) commented on this topic**

**A few comments showed that parents appreciated help in finding and paying for child care for their foster children.**

**But most comments suggested needed improvements, such as:**

- More help in finding day care.
- More help finding day care for kids with special needs and behavioral issues.
- Giving some day care to parents who are not working.
- More flexibility for parents who work evenings or weekends.
- Fixing reimbursement issues.



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**Parents appreciate help with day care**

“The social worker helps us with day care.”

“It really depends on the worker. Some are great at getting things set up, like day care and travel. Others leave you in desperate situations because they couldn't be bothered.”

“They do well in paying for day care.”

**Finding day care can be a big problem**

“Make day care easier to get for foster children. Getting DSHS day care is extremely difficult to find.”

“Locating day care is problematic. It is challenging to get foster kids into day care with the issues they have. Give us a list of day cares that have had training for these behaviors or day cares that are willing to take the kids with significant problems.”

“In general, the hardest thing to find is child care for working foster parents, especially for kids who are not in school.”

“A retired person who is single has doctor's appointments. I need child care too. I'm asking for maybe twice a month.”

**Payment for day care can be a problem**

“Payment problems are difficult to fix. Day care payments have been messed up several times. The payment problem is an ongoing problem and we have to go to the supervisor each time to get it resolved. Many of the reputable day care providers will not take DSHS children because there are too many problems with payments.”

“Child care for the weekends, need more information about this. Most of the time I have to pay for this out of my own pocket and I am now working weekends.”

“We have a real crisis with licensed day care. We have spent thousands of dollars of our own money getting child care because we have to work. Bellingham office has gone to bat for us, but the State refuses to pay us back. This is the worst year we have had in the 13 years we have been fostering kids.”

## 1.5 Resources



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### Some parents say payment is smooth

"A couple of times they have helped to get us more payment when the child had more difficult behaviors."

"The financial support is good."

"No problem with payment."

"They usually pay me on time, but that is really the least of my worries."

### More parents say payment is rough

"Difficulty getting reimbursed for kids in care. Had a child in September 2017; didn't get reimbursed until March 2018."

"Sometimes the rates paid are inadequate for the age of the child."

"We haven't been getting the financial support that we were told that we would get, and as a result we are feeling financial strain from suddenly having an extra person in our home."

"The foster care payment in Washington State is low compared to other states where the cost of living is lower."

"We have our full time kids and things run pretty smoothly financially for them. But we also take respite kids for weekends, weeks and sometimes months and getting paid for those is always a hassle because 99% of the time the social worker does not enter the time into the system and we have to call and call just to get paid."

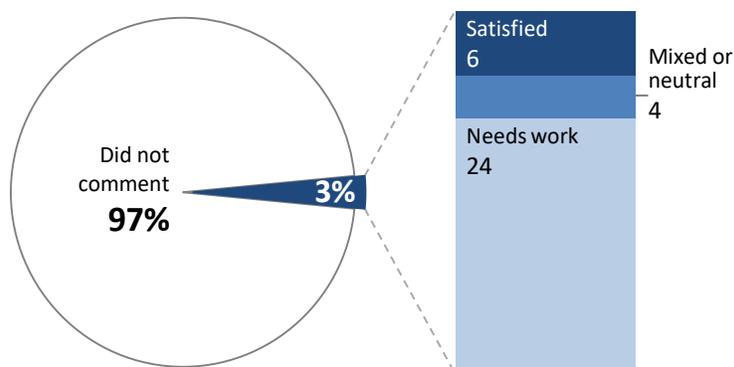
"When special circumstances have been approved, it takes months and months to get reimbursed. Emergency placements don't get reimbursed quickly. It took six months to get the extra money for care for a special needs child placed on an emergency basis. We have an autistic child who was approved for an item in advance, then refused reimbursement after we purchased it."

"My only comment is Children's needs to make payments in a timely way."

## THEME | Financial Matters

Three percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support mentioned the financial issues about getting paid for taking care of their foster child. Most of these comments (24, or 71%) were negative or suggested improvements.

### 34 (3%) commented on this topic



### Foster parents discussed some payment problems.

- Changes in circumstances that lead to changed rates take a long time to process.
- Sometimes it takes too long for children to be recorded as being cared for by a particular foster parent.

### Foster parents appreciate it when:

- They receive reimbursements promptly.
- Reimbursement is available for extra activities and services that individual children need.
- The amount they receive for providing services seems fair.

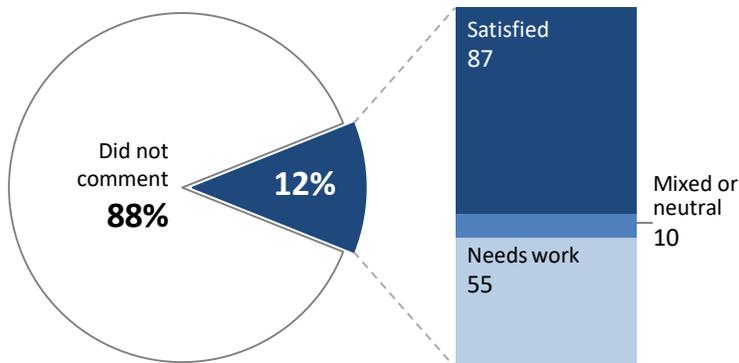
### Reimbursement issues that arise in the context of particular services are discussed in those sections and not counted above. For example:

- Respite.
- Mileage.
- Damages caused by the foster child.
- Paperwork processes (general delays in responses).
- Specific processes (child care and respite).
- Child care.

**THEME | Other Resources**

Twelve percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed other resources that help them care for their foster children. Most of these comments (87, or 57%) were positive; a few were mixed, and about one in three were negative or suggested improvements.

**152 (12%) commented on this topic**



**Foster parents mentioned resources not covered in the previous themes, including:**

- Clothing vouchers (some had difficulty getting them).
- Special programs.
- Services such as day camps.
- Help for their biological children.

**Experiences receiving other resources vary. Foster parents mentioned:**

- Inconsistencies in how much social workers and foster parents know about what resources are available.
- Better resources available to foster parents than to kinship caregivers.



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**Getting extra resources can be hard**

“Give us in-home services when needed for the child.”

“We need more help for biological kids in the home, they often feel more of the brunt of behaviors.”

“We struggled for years paying for things ourselves before we got smart and got our license and started getting financial help from the State. The case workers should mention this to relatives that take family members in.”

“Getting paid for extra activities takes forever. We have to call many times to get the voucher processed.”

“There are never enough resources for the child. Clothing vouchers would be very helpful.”

“It would be helpful if the State would have more resources, especially for cultural events (Native American).”

“When a child is placed with no clothes to speak of, we need an immediate clothing voucher to buy the kid some clothes.”

**Other times the help comes easily**

“I got my clothing voucher right away.”

“They help me get clothes for the children.”

“Well, they were great to get us a clothing voucher in the beginning.”

“The social workers give me resources when needed.”

“They help me get services for the child.”

“They provide beds for the two little ones.”

“They have access to resources that are not given to me as a foster parent.”

“Whenever we had behavioral concerns they made sure the resources were made available to our family.”

“Our private agency offers us a lot of indirect help, freebies, and events.”

“If I needed financial support with like sports equipment or sports camp, most of the time I get reimbursed.”

## 1.5 Resources



Photo By: Lori Matchett

### Parents cited specific groups providing great support

"I appreciate the initial information I receive from Home Finders because if not for that, I wouldn't know ANYTHING about what my kids have gone through."

"Our guardian ad litem is where I feel very listened to and supported."

"My agency does a lot for me. They offer classes and workshops. They have core groups which is very helpful."

"The CASA worker is fabulous."

"The support by Fostering Together is the most informative and supportive. They let us know what training opportunities there are and support groups."

"I usually get more help from the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence team."

"We had an amazing 'CHET' screener who was phenomenal."

"Casey Foundation and Treehouse help a lot with additional events and funds."

"Treehouse is helping me with school staff to help the kids in school."

"Children's could do themselves a big favor if they would support the pilot training that Priscilla Bell-Lowe is doing in Kent. She is a 'Placement Support' worker between the foster parents and the social worker. We can call her with a lot of those little problems that we could normally have to call the social worker about and she gets right on it."

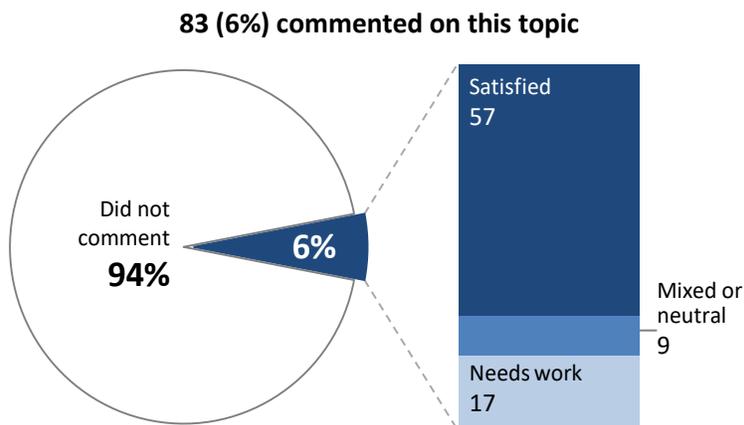
### A few services generate problems

"Whoever is supporting the Our Kids App (that I have on my iPhone) needs to keep it updated. It gives you the history of all your placements and other pertinent information and we would not have to bother the busy social worker if this was kept up-to-date."

"Fostering Together is a big help but I feel my privacy is being infringed upon."

## THEME | Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

Six percent of the 1,318 foster parents who commented on support discussed sources of foster parent support other than social workers. Most of these comments (57, or 69%) expressed satisfaction.



### Other professionals provide important support for the foster care process:

- Court-appointed guardians ad litem and special advocates like CASA workers who help represent the child's interest in court cases.
- The private agencies.
- Not-for-profit community-based organizations.

### Parents commenting about other types of support expressed:

- The need for updating online support resources.
- Desire for grief support for foster parents when children leave their home.

## Foster Parent Training



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### **Part 2 concerns the training foster parents receive in their role as caregivers.**

The Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, a partnership between Children’s Administration and the state’s leading universities, offers education and training programs to Washington child welfare staff and caregivers. Both the Children’s Administration and the Alliance use foster parent feedback from this survey and other sources to update training opportunities. Foster parents also receive training through other organizations, including but not limited to local support groups, Foster Parents of Washington State (FPAWS), Fostering Together, and the Overlake Refresh Conference. The survey responses reflect training received from all sources.

Most foster parents were satisfied with many aspects of their training, especially with the Caregiver Core class and the increased access to online training.

In-person training was valued for the interaction it facilitates. For some parents, difficulties with access to in-person classes persist, due to employment schedules, class hours, remote locations, travel costs and the need for child care. Some parents suggested webinars or telephone attendance as additions to in-person classes.

Some parents commented that the content for online courses, videos and in-person classes needs to be strengthened and updated, particularly around youth with trauma, special needs, and severe behavioral issues. They suggested that more training is needed in the areas of sexual behavior, gender identities, working with schools, bullying, and local resources.

Foster parents deeply appreciate the training, networking, and community-building opportunities provided by local support groups. They also appreciate the flexibility to find their own trainings and receive credit for them.

### **This part of the report contains the following sections:**

- Section 2.1: Training Quality and Helpfulness
- Section 2.2: Trainers, Methods, and Resources
- Section 2.3: Specific Training Topics
- Section 2.4: Access and Format



## Training Quality and Helpfulness



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### Most foster parents give high marks to the training they receive.

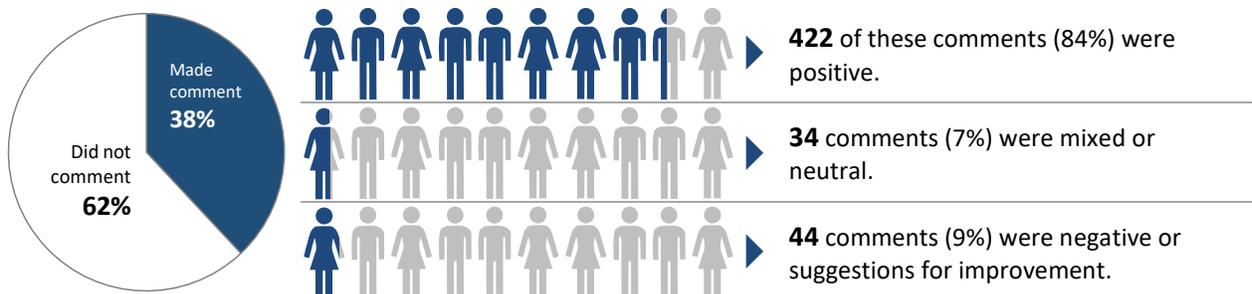
Since 2012, foster parents have said their training helps to prepare them for fostering, and 2018 was no exception.

- Overall, thinking about all the training you have had in the past three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home? (87% said more than or somewhat adequate in both 2018 and 2017.)

Many foster parents commented on the high overall quality of their training. Most said it was helpful, and some said it had already improved or couldn't be better. Specific programs mentioned as helpful included the Overlake Refresh conference, Caregiver Core classes, Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS) conferences, Fostering Together, and Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) classes.

Some parent comments mentioned topics they had found particularly useful, including trauma-informed care, Native American and tribal issues, medically fragile children, and attachment disorder. They commented on the importance of interaction with other foster parents. They appreciated the flexibility to train online and from outside DSHS, so they could learn about particular issues their children were experiencing.

### 500 respondents (38%) commented on the general quality and helpfulness of foster parent training



## 2.1 Training Quality and Helpfulness



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### Most parents found the training helpful

"It is all helpful really. I like to be able to take refreshers because there is so much to learn and retain."

"Everything was great. Learning about the state of mind of foster children, what it takes to be a foster parent, and how to navigate the state system and paperwork. It was all helpful to me."

"I think for my husband the training on different aspects of fostering has been helpful. My full time job has prepared me for our foster parenting and I also think the variety of training offered is good."

"All the classes are really good."

"I only went to one training, but it was very helpful to me. They gave me examples of what a child goes through to end up in foster care and tips to make everything go more smoothly."

"They covered a lot of ground. It should be required for all parents and not just foster parents. I really learned so much and enjoyed most of the classes."

### A few commented that training had recently improved

"They already improved. Very helpful."

"It's improved immensely over the years. All the training has been helpful, from the CORE to psychology classes which helped us to understand the kids we care for."

### A few said training varied in helpfulness

"I've received some training that has been extremely helpful and some that isn't at all. Training that speaks to what I'm dealing with as far as behavioral issues and understanding trauma is the best."

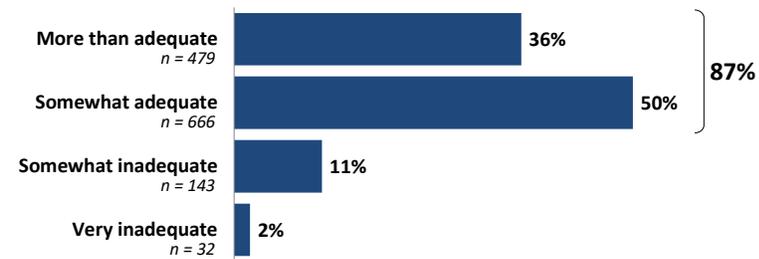
"Some training have felt like a waste of our time. Usually the content or the teachers just read off a script. The short trainings need to be revamped."

### Others did not find the training helpful or found access to training difficult

"The quality of the training could be better. Have child care available at the training."

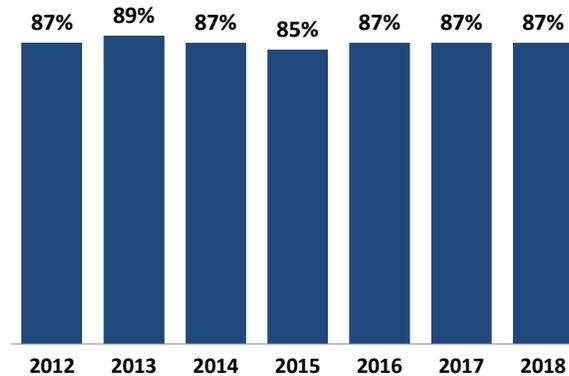
### QUESTION | Overall, thinking about all the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?

Of the 1,320 foster parents who answered this question, most reported that their training adequately prepared them to care for their foster children.



### State Trend

There was no change in positive responses from 2017 to 2018.



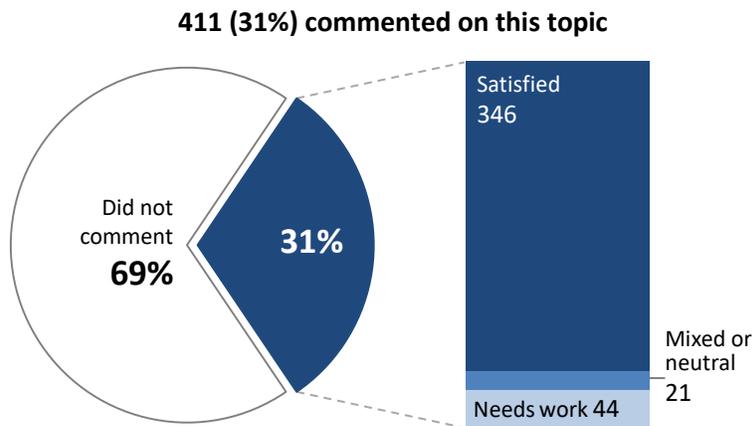
### Regional Detail

Differences among regions were not statistically significant.



### THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Training

Thirty-one percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed the overall quality and helpfulness of the training they received, or answered “Nothing” when asked how training could be improved or what had been most helpful. Most of these comments (346, or 84%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



#### Detailed Responses

Comments praising or criticizing the general quality of training were provided by 222 foster parents.

- 174 praised the overall training (78%). Many commented on the quality of the classes. A few commented that meeting with other foster parents was particularly helpful.
- 25 criticized the overall training (11%).
- 23 offered neutral or mixed comments (10%).

#### “Nothing” Responses

The comments in this theme also include those made by 239 respondents who answered “Nothing” when asked how foster parent training is helpful or could be improved.

- 218 survey respondents replied “Nothing” to the question “How could foster parent training be improved?” (“Nothing” coded as a positive response).
- 21 respondents replied “Nothing” to the question “What about foster parent training has been helpful?” (“Nothing” coded as a negative response).



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#### Most parents say the training was helpful

“I have no suggestions at this time. I have found the training to be very helpful.”

“The training was very helpful. We got the help we felt like we needed.”

“I think every class I have taken in regards to training has been so incredibly helpful and very useful.”

“In general, the training was helpful. Can't think of anything specific.”

“All of the training has been helpful. The trainings by topic are spot on. They always give me more information than I am looking for.”

“I think it's all really, really good.”

“They did a great job.”

“The content of the trainings are wonderful.”

“It's good; I don't think it needs improving.”

#### Other foster parents are trainers too

“Sometimes the people in the group provide more insight than the formal training. We learn from each other.”

“I learn more from other foster parents than any training.”

“All of it. It was nice to meet other foster parents.”

“I get more training from other foster parents than I do from the classes.”

#### A few parents did not like the training

“The training was very basic. I didn't get a lot out of it.”

“It's helped administratively, but nothing other than that. There was nothing there that would help us become better foster parents. The training didn't help, and I found it a waste of time, to be honest.”

“I have found a majority of sessions either too general or they just read through the textbook. That is not helpful. The trainings are not frequent enough in my area. I don't think child care is offered much of the time.”

## 2.1 Training Quality and Helpfulness



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### Refresh, FPAWS, Fostering Together, TBRI and Core trainings were praised.

"We do the Refresh conference every year and it's excellent."

"The Refresh Conference at Overlake Church in Redmond was wonderful. Great time to network and do various workshops. A good experience."

"We go to the Refresh conference and that is great. Having people there with a lot of experience is nice, you get to ask them questions."

"FPAWS is a phenomenal program and they need to put more emphasis on it."

"I think the FPAWS training is the best."

"Encourage foster parents to go to the Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS) conference."

"Keep up the Fostering Together program. They keep us informed on all aspects of ensuring a well-balanced foster child upbringing and life balance."

"The Core training was good."

"The Core training regarding Washington laws/rules was insightful."

"TBRI classes like *Empower to Connect*."

### Some parents mentioned specific topics that helped them

"The Native American issues was a great training. Really useful information regarding the cultural issues."

"Deeper training through Amara on race and siblings has been helpful."

"I had a class through Headstart called *Circle of Security* that helped me deal with kids coming from trauma."

"The Children's Justice Conference helped with my medically fragile kids."

"The WISE program trained us."

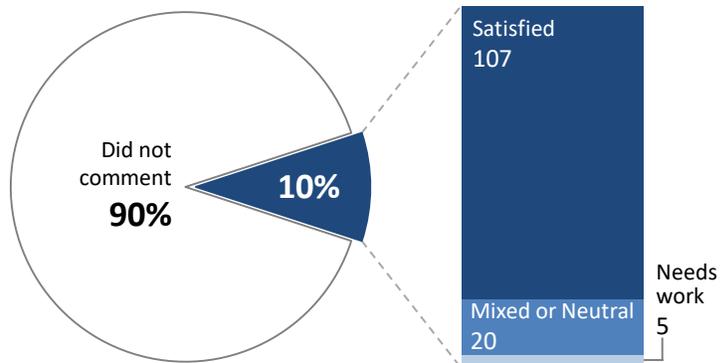
"The Fostering to Adopt Conference was extremely helpful. We plan our whole year around it."

"The training I received from medical providers has been helpful."

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

Ten percent of the 1,309 foster parent comments on training mentioned specific training agencies or programs. Most of these comments (107, or 81%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

132 (10%) commented on this topic



### Specific programs that several foster parents liked included:

- Refresh, a private, religiously-focused conference for fostering and adoptive families.
- The Caregiver Core training (discussed further on page 66).
- The Foster Parents Association of Washington (FPAWS) Conference.
- Fostering Together.
- Trust-Based Relational Intervention classes (TBRI).

### A few mentioned specific training topics and opportunities they had found useful and would like to see more generally available, including:

- Native American issues.
- The Fostering to Adopt Conference.
- Training through Amara on race and siblings.
- Reactive Attachment Disorder training.
- Children's Justice Conference.
- WISE training.
- Training on fetal alcohol syndrome and other drug-affected infants and kids.
- More on traumatic brain injury and trauma-informed caregiving.
- "Circle of Security" on trauma.
- "The Incredible Years."

### Foster parents appreciate credit for outside and online training.

## Trainers, Methods, and Resources



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### Trainers, methods, and resources are the keys to useful foster care training.

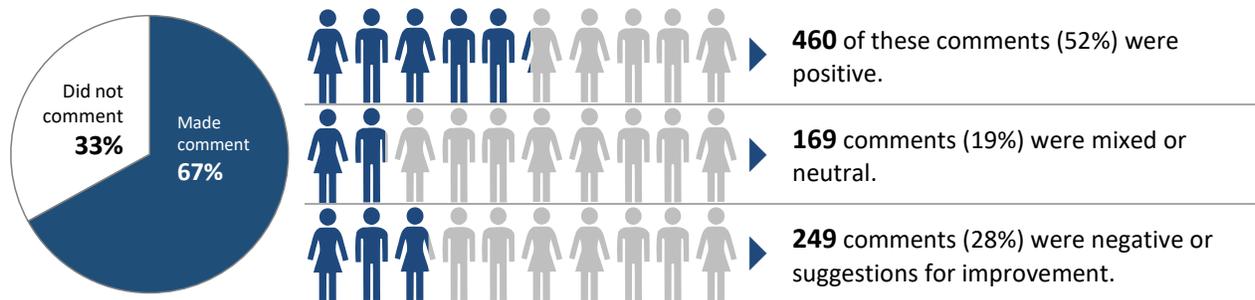
Foster parents value trainers who are skilled, realistic, relevant, and approachable. They appreciate the inclusion of experienced foster parents, and they value the panels of biological parents and foster children.

Foster parents said the most useful training helps them understand their foster children, and deal with their behaviors and emotions. Understanding the impact of trauma on their foster children was most important. They also appreciate training that helps them deal with the realities and emotions of being a foster parent.

Foster parents appreciate role play around different scenarios in their training. They appreciate panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions. Lectures are seen as less useful. They appreciate building community with other foster parents and community organizations during training. They appreciate learning about community resources to help their foster children.

Foster parents appreciate receiving organized print materials and links to online resources as part of training. Several commented that there is a lot to learn about fostering, and it is helpful to have a place to store information so they can access it later.

### 879 respondents (67%) commented on trainers, training methods, or training resources



## 2.2 Trainers, Methods, and Resources



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### Direct, knowledgeable, realistic, positive, and straightforward trainers were good

“The trainer in the Caregiver Core class in Pierce County was phenomenal, and she was very straightforward.”

“The instructor was good at answering questions. Her presence and knowledge were awesome.”

“The reality of it that the instructor taught us. No sugar coating it!”

“A psychologist came to talk to us which was helpful. They taught us how to handle all types of situations.”

“Trainers were realistic and made learning relevant, but not intimidating.”

“The initial class instructors were very good and they were approachable.”

“The trainers that spoke had great information. They were very open about giving their contact info and saying that we could reach out to them if we had any questions or anything.”

“The trainers were excellent. They knew what they were talking about. They were insightful. We got good sound advice and information.”

“The trainer I had (and she is still training) was condescending, disruptive and told weird personal stories.”

“One instructor acted like we don't know anything. She treated us like we needed things explained in a 5th grade way.”

### Including foster kids, biological parents, and experienced foster parents helps

“Having biological parents speaking about their experience helped me.”

“Meeting up with and listening to the experiences of biological parents, former foster kids, and other foster parents.”

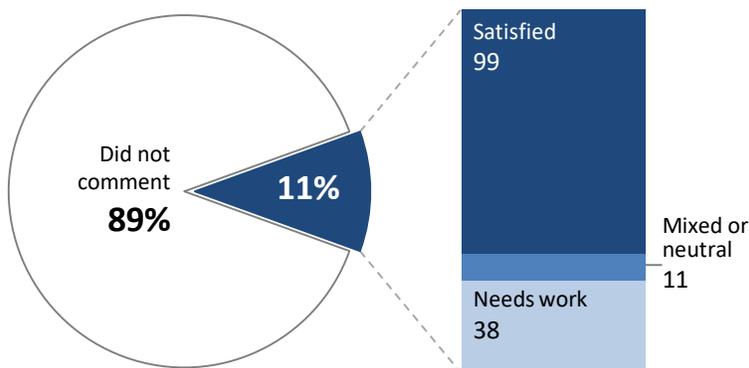
“Hearing the experiences of a longtime foster parent was very good.”

“The training with the panel of actual foster kids in it. It was nice to hear things from the kid's point of view.”

## THEME | Trainers

Eleven percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed the trainers. Most of these comments (99, or 67%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

148 (11%) commented on this topic



### Foster parents appreciate knowledgeable, realistic, approachable trainers. They appreciate:

- Relevant, skilled, and realistic trainers.
- Approachable and insightful trainers.
- Hearing from foster kids, biological parents, and experienced foster parents – which really helps ground the training.

### Specific trainers were praised.

“Ryan Krueger is a really great teacher, he really pushes the parents to do good. He really prepares you on almost what it's like.”

“The ‘tell it like it is’ style of Patty Orona and Ryan Krueger.”

“I had Julia Gello and her stories were extremely helpful.”

“The class called Drug Impacted Child Development taught by a woman named Luanne (in Tacoma) was really good.”

“There was a trainer named Gracia Hahn that was a great asset. I felt I could have called her up after class and she'd help me.”

“Joan Sager made the Caregiver Core class interesting, pertinent and easy to understand.”

“Ryan Krueger is a phenomenal trainer.”

“My trainer, Patty out of Yakima, was really good at giving tips on how to react with certain issues.”

“Pat Mullen's training worked really well for the children who were in my home at the time.”

“Penny Michel as the primary trainer is outstanding.”

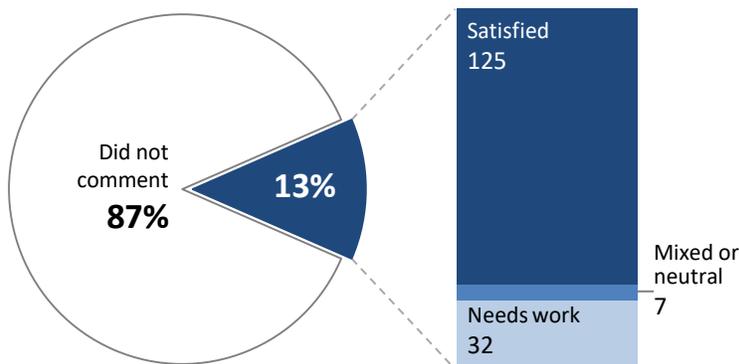
“In our 40 hour training, we had a trainer named Arthur. He usually trains the trainers. He was extremely engaging and knowledgeable.”

“Renee Siers from Alliance was excellent.”

## THEME | Training Helps in Caring for Foster Children

Thirteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed how the training helped them take care of their foster children. Most comments (125, or 76%) were positive and expressed satisfaction.

164 (13%) commented on this topic



**Foster parents appreciated training that helped them understand their foster children. They liked training that:**

- Helped them understand the trauma of neglect and abuse.
- Helped them deal with difficult behaviors from their foster children.
- Helped them understand the impacts of alcohol and other drugs and mental illness on their foster children.

**Foster parents appreciated training that helped them understand the emotions, realities, and difficulties of foster parenting. They liked training about:**

- Learning about the initial ‘honeymoon period’ and what comes after.
- Learning how to advocate for their foster children.
- Learning to care for themselves in fostering.
- One parent said sadly:

*“I don’t feel it has been that helpful in actually taking the kids in. None of it prepares you for the first placement or the first day of any new placement. None of it prepares you for when the kids have breakdowns because they miss their bio parents or what to say in certain situations. None of it prepares you for when a kid thinks they are going home and they find out their parents don’t want to try hard enough to get them back. And none of the training prepares you for when you want so badly to help a child and nothing you can do is going to help them.”*

**Foster parents would appreciate training on how to better integrate their biological children and their foster children.**

*“Have a special class on how to blend foster children with our biological children. There needs to be more training for foster parents when they are just starting out when they have their own children. We need to be taught how to blend the kids.”*



Photo by: Dala Rice

### Training helps deal with the child’s trauma

“Learning about neglect and abuse and how to deal with the effects on the children.”

“Giving tools to best care for children coming from hard places.”

“It helps us understand the child’s needs for different level of care and the trauma they have suffered.”

“My favorite training was about children who come from a very difficult background and trauma.”

### Training helps deal with child’s behavior

“Getting ideas on dealing with difficult children.”

“I liked training on how to cope with some of the more aggressive kids.”

“Training on problems some foster children have because of drugs or alcohol.”

“The training on attachment and how issues around holidays and special events affects foster children was really helpful.”

“The disciplinary training was good, as well as the special needs a foster child has.”

“The most helpful was the class about fetal alcohol syndrome babies.”

### Training helps deal with the realities

“Explain the ‘honeymoon’ period right after placement and how things can change after this period ends. Learning about our role to advocate for the child and their needs.”

“It gave us some specifics for trauma, grief when the child leaves, and what to expect when the child comes into our home.”

“Talk more about self-care. How to be in tune with knowing a break is needed.”

### Training should help us blend our foster and biological children

“I have said this from day one; I wish that foster parent training included bio children and how my children can interact with them and how all of them can get along and become a family unit.”

## 2.2 Trainers, Methods, and Resources



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### Role-play with different situations is good

“The role play and the various scenarios we worked through were very helpful in preparing us to work with children from different backgrounds.”

“The training that has situational examples and ways to handle it.”

“Story sharing and real life situations are what I seem to remember months later. Work through scenarios and have participants share what they would do.”

### Hearing from other foster parents is best

“I like group meetings where you can talk to other foster parents, share stories, and talk about real life situations and solutions.”

“Hearing real foster parent stories about what happens. Hearing the brutal truth about how hard this is.”

“Most helpful are the stories and discussions rather than content of training. Other foster parents.”

### Watching or mentoring other foster parents might be good too

“I personally would like to see a mentor program vs. more classroom training. Train me on the issues at hand.”

“Have a mandatory system for shadowing a foster family for a week. One day shadowing is not enough to really get a feeling for things. But after a few days people start to relax and you get a more accurate picture of what becoming a foster parent will be like.”

### Lectures are not valued as much

“The questions and answers they do afterwards were helpful.”

“The most helpful was going to family court and sitting there and observing it.”

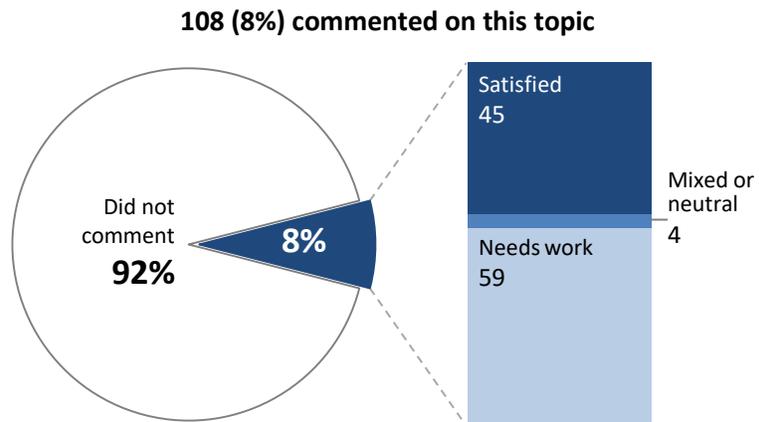
“More interaction, less lecture.”

“Have an actual demonstration on how to do African-American hair, the real thing, not a video.”

“Have more hands-on training such as doing respite care for a while.”

## THEME | Approaches to Training

Eight percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed how the training is approached. Most comments suggested improvements (59, or 55%), while forty-two percent (45) expressed satisfaction.



### Experienced foster parents say the training has improved!

*“It has improved immensely in the last eight years, so not much to add.”*

### Foster parents value training that is:

- Interactive.
- Realistic.
- Includes role-playing with different real-life scenarios.
- Models diversity and cultural sensitivity.
- Includes story-sharing from experienced foster parents.
- Includes time for questions and answers.

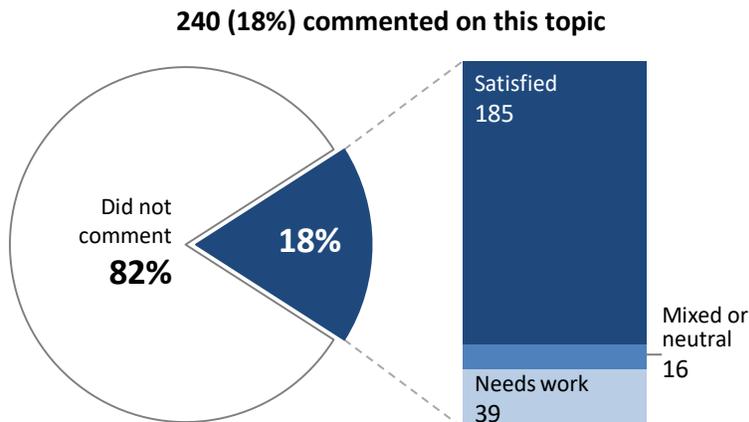
### Suggestions for training improvement included:

- Shadowing or mentoring with other foster parents.
- Volunteer work with community organizations dealing with hard-to-serve youth as an option to current BRS training classes. The parent suggesting this said:

*“The training for BRS (Behavioral Rehabilitation Services) foster parents is a joke. The training classes online and in person are old, and it is very hard to meet training hours without re-doing training classes. The training is geared to foster care, not BRS youth. We could use hands-on internships at JRA, DSHS, Group Care Centers. Updated training that touches on topics such as medication management, cognitive disorders, de-escalation techniques, SAY, PAY, legal advocacy. Provide us with volunteer/intern options with the Court system, Children’s Administration, and so forth. Providing training hours for volunteers helps foster/build working relationships for the foster parents and the services that are available for the youth. It’s a win-win for everyone involved.”*

**THEME | Building Community in Training**

Eighteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training included discussions of community-building. Most of these comments (185, or 77%) were positive. Those that were negative mostly wanted more community-building as part of their training.

**Foster parents appreciate community with other foster parents because:**

- It helps them generate ideas for handling new situations.
- It helps them learn about community resources for their kids.
- It helps them learn how to deal with the social workers, schools, agencies, and the courts.
- It allows them to discuss their feelings with people who understand the situation from the inside.
- It provides peer support.
- It lets them know they are not alone. One parent said:  
*"It allowed us to connect with other foster parents and compare our journeys."*



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**Networking, ideas, and resource knowledge come from the foster parent community**

"The most helpful is the support group we go to monthly, and the other foster parents we network with in the community."

"The connections we made at the training were so helpful. Having these resources to call when we have questions."

"A lot of the more technical stuff, such as how the system works and what to expect in the legal realm. It was good to hear from more experienced foster parents."

"Two things stand out about training: it builds networking and resources for you. Next, it helps you better prepare for difficult situations and better understand the procedures and policies of the state."

"I learned more from other foster parents than any training I received."

"Letting us know what resources are available. Networking with other foster parents is especially helpful."

"I really like the support groups. This gives us a chance to meet other people in our area and we learn from one another."

"Coming together with other foster parents and getting together with professionals and peers. Comparing notes."

"Getting to know other foster parents from training and having them available for resources."

"Having a community of foster parents that I can reach out to and connect with."

"Some of the support group sessions have been helpful because I get to hear from others parents how they navigate challenges with social workers and the Department."

**It helps to know that you are not alone**

"Peer support."

"Learning that we are not alone in this."

## 2.2 Trainers, Methods, and Resources

### Foster parents liked training on local resources for their children

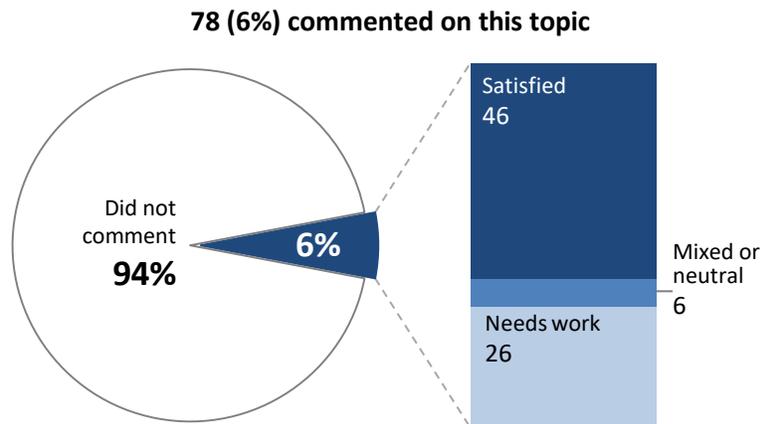
- "Getting to know basically the supports that are available."
- "Learning about the resources available."
- "Learning about the additional resources and where to find them, who to talk to."
- "Just all the different resources there are for foster children."
- "For one, it gave me info about how I can better serve the foster child and look for resources so I can advocate for them."
- "The training that provided information on the resources available."
- "Learning about the support services that are available for us."
- "Learning about resources and programs for children."
- "Letting us know about the type of resources I have as a foster parent and what resources are available for the children."
- "Education concerning other resources and services available. Recent suicide prevention training was timely and helpful."
- "What I found most helpful was the information about places we can go for support as a foster parent."
- "All the resources available and learning how to use them."
- "The resource list was especially helpful."

### Some parents wanted more or better resource information

- "There should be a class that is all about resources. Like, what can the child qualify for? How do we work the health system for the child?"
- "It would be nice to have references for resources available in the area."
- "Add details that give some positive spins on what is available to children as they age through the system. For example, we did not know that kids who are still in foster care at age 12 can have their college tuition paid for if they choose to go to college after high school."
- "I would have liked a list of the different resources for our kids. I had no idea there are so many. It would've been nice if they had gone over some of those."
- "Keep resource information up to date."
- "I did my training in Kent, and I feel it was not good because they didn't offer resources in my area, only King County."

## THEME | Accessing Resources

Six percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed the importance of learning about community resources for their kids. Most of these comments (46, or 59%) expressed satisfaction.

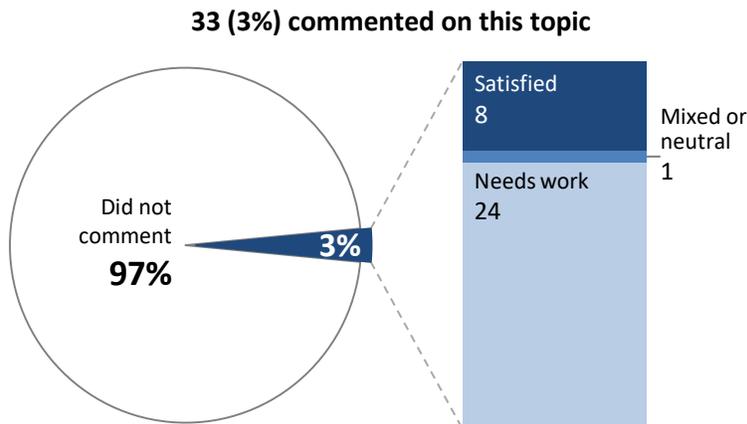


### Foster parents appreciate knowing about resources and services for their foster children.

- Lists of resources were appreciated.
- Lists of programs were appreciated.
- Knowing how to use those resources was appreciated.
- Parents who did not receive resource lists in training suggested them.

**THEME | Training Materials**

Three percent (33) of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed the materials used in training. Most of these comments (24, or 73%) suggested improvements.



**Many foster parents said the online training and videos need updating. One parent said:**

*“There were some online classes that we took (for example, ‘physically assaultive and sexually aggressive youth’) that were fairly good, but really outdated. It was like I was sitting through my sex-health class in the 80’s. It needs to be updated to the way society and kids/teens are nowadays.”*

**Other specific suggestions about materials included:**

- An indexed handbook for the initial training.
- Update the BRS training materials or remove the requirement for 30 hours a year.
- A checklist for the first placement class.
- A booklet on caring for drug-affected children.
- Links to materials that are part of the online trainings.



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**Training videos and online classes need updating**

“More relevant training online. A lot of the training online is really, really old and out of date.”

“More up-to-date training videos.”

“A lot of the videos are out of date so need more current videos.”

“The training online needs to be updated, some of the videos are not relevant anymore.”

“A lot of the training videos are old.”

“The videos are a bit outdated, the hairdos are distracting.”

“A lot of the online offerings are from the 1970s and early 1980s.”

“Videos need updating.”

**Other material suggestions included:**

“I would like to have a handbook (like an index) of everything I learned in the initial training. A quick reference of topics and FAQs.”

“We are a BRS Medically Fragile Home and we are obligated to take 30 hours of training each year. The training has not changed in 5 years and it has become pretty monotonous now. Please update it or excuse us from the next one. They could update the training videos for the 30 hours of training we are obligated to do each year.”

“The class called ‘You Have Your First Placement - Now What?’ could provide a checklist that chronicles the sequence of things that a new foster parent might encounter. We would have found that most helpful.”

“Have a booklet that explains caring for a drug affected child or infant.”

“Some of the forms in the ‘You’ve fostered for one year, now what?’ could be updated. Up-to-date emails, phone numbers and contact information.”

“Make the materials for the online training available. Give us a link to the materials.”

## 2.2 Trainers, Methods, and Resources



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### More training on trauma and tough kids

“Need training on how to support the kids emotional needs better.”

“Focus on emotional behaviors and the trauma the child has experienced. Have refresher classes for foster parents. PTSD and attachment disorders need more coverage. PCIT is training every foster parent should attend. It is a type of therapy that is helpful in caring for kids who have experienced trauma.”

“We need more training for the really, really hard kids. We get the basic training, but sometimes that isn't enough for the tough kids.”

“After you have the initial training, there needs to be more specialized training that you can get for the problems that you encounter with the children that are placed in your home. We would have liked more in-depth training about children with sexualized behaviors.”

### More training at night, weekends, and online

“Need more online training. Improve the hours to be more convenient for working foster parents. Need evening classes. Use training obtained through our jobs and have it count.”

“Having similar trainings in the evenings, not just during the day.”

“The repetition of the same trainings being offered in the same areas. We are limited due to geography but I need some different trainings.”

“Help foster parents living in rural areas to get training. I work all week and I just can't make the trainings in Tacoma. The online trainings are the same ones that have always been there. Why can't we join in the live classes remotely?”

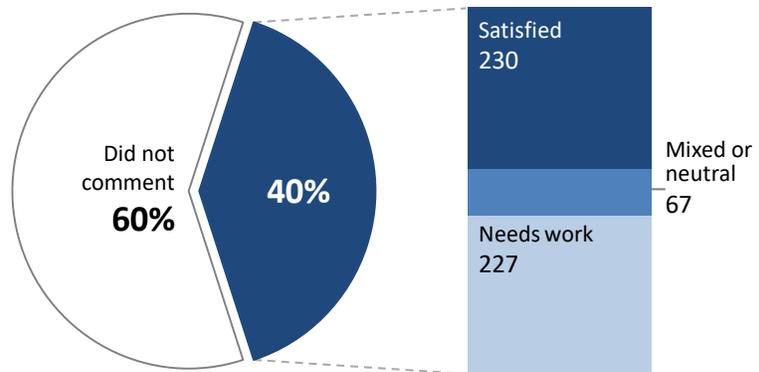
### Require training for family caregivers too

“Children's may want to give relative care givers some training before placing kids! I was a year and a half into placement before I had any training.”

## THEME | Other General Training Comments

Forty percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed some training issue that did not fit precisely into the prior themes. Forty-three percent (227) were negative or suggested improvements. Forty-four percent (230) expressed satisfaction, and 67 (13%) were mixed or neutral response.

524 (40%) commented on this topic



### Several comments suggested specialized training needs, including:

- Trauma care should be required up front.
- PTSD and attachment disorders.
- PCIT training.
- Training for really hard kids: sexually aggressive, sexual acting out, very aggressive.

### Parents wanted more kinds of training at night and on weekends and more variety in remote area classes.

- It can be hard for people living in remote areas to access specialized training.
- There were difficulties in arranging for child care, especially when the parents care for several children.
- Attending the live classes remotely might help.

### Kinship caregivers need training too, several parents said. However, since they often enter caregiving when there is a crisis, it can be hard for them to attend.

## Specific Training Topics



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### Training that is realistic, practical, and broadens understanding matters to foster parents.

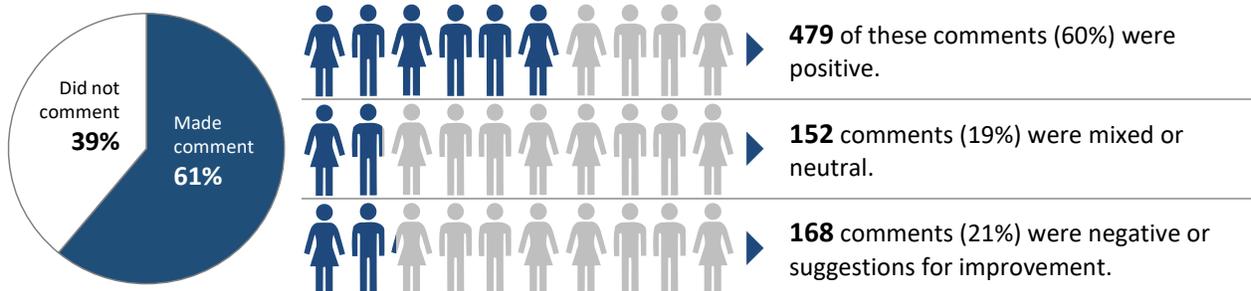
Many foster parents praised the Caregiver Core Training. They said it helped prepare them for fostering and helped them understand and navigate the system. Parents appreciated the inclusion of experienced foster parents and panels with foster youth and biological parent in Core classes. Some also praised the class on first placements.

Foster parents who experienced classes based on Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) praised them highly. Parents valued all classes dealing with trauma and its effects on the child’s brain, emotions and behavior.

Parents mentioned additional training topics they would like, or praised trainings they have experienced. Topics discussed by several parents included: high needs youth, difficult behavior, sexualized behavior, gender identity, medical needs and medical advocacy, particular behavioral health diagnoses, drug and alcohol issues, self-harm and suicide prevention, multi-cultural issues beyond skin and hair care, running away, health and safety, and school issues. A number of parents requested training in dealing with biological parents, and a few in blending their foster and biological children.

The last two pages include a list of “other” trainings parents recommended.

### 799 respondents (61%) made a comment about specific training topics



## 2.3 Specific Training Topics



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### Trauma training is critical

"Make sure the trauma training is required right up front."

"Trauma training is the most important."

"Early childhood trauma (ACES) was very well done."

"More on how to discipline/care for children with trauma backgrounds."

"Dealing with trauma in children and abandonment and finding ways to care for their hearts."

### More training on sexual aggression, sexuality, and gender

"More training on sexually aggressive behavior."

"Liked the training about dealing with sexually abused kids."

"Provide more training on LGBTQ and transgender issues."

### More training on managing children with particular behavioral health diagnoses

"Specific diagnoses (ADD, ODD) and managing them at home."

"Content on eating disorders helped."

"Reactive Attachment Disorder."

"Autism training was very helpful."

### More on self-harm and suicide

"Everyone needs training on potential suicides."

"There needs to be training on self-harming and kids that are suicidal. And, it needs to be in a role playing format."

### More training on high-needs children

"Need more training about the high needs children and how to handle the really difficult behaviors."

### More on the medical needs of children

"More training for people who take medically fragile children."

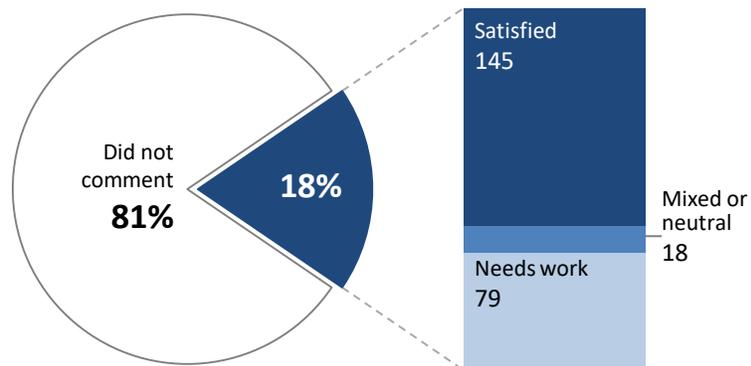
"We need trainings on Down's Syndrome, autism, and physical disabilities."

"A training on medications."

## THEME | Disorders and Issues

Eighteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed specific disorders and issues. Most of these comments (145, or 60%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

242 (18%) commented on this topic



### Foster parents want, need, and appreciate training on:

- Trauma, its effects on the brain and emotions, and how to care for children who experienced it (at least 104 comments discussed this).
- Understanding and caring for children who have been sexually abused – including training on aggression (18 mentioned this), sexual expression, and LGBTQ issues.
- Understanding and caring for children with specific mental health diagnoses, including Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Autism, Eating Disorders, Attention Deficit Disorder, and Borderline Personality.
- Dealing with self-harm, depression, and suicide prevention.
- High needs children with difficult behaviors and how to handle them. Several commented that this material was not as well-taught as the more general training on foster parenting.
- Training on the medical needs of children.

### Other comments addressed more specialized training needs:

"Training on sensory disorders."

"Trainings on bullying in the schools and safety of the kids."

"Nothing that I have had in training has prepared me for taking care of a child who was sleep disabled, and had such problems with temper."

"More tangible information on behaviors such as food hoarding, property destruction, and things that go along with the mental health issues."

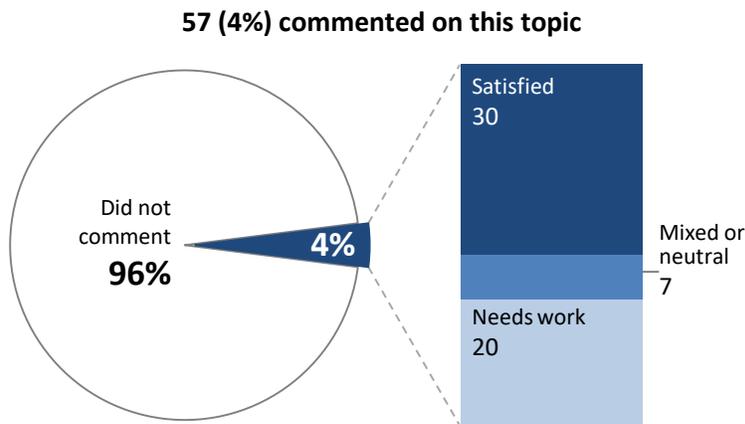
"How to work with defiant toddlers."

"We need training on sexual health."

"Offer real life-type trainings online, with current situations: trafficking, internet, sex, drugs, weapons, violent children."

**THEME | Substance Abuse**

Four percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed training about substance abuse and its ramifications for foster children. Most of these comments (30, or 53%) were positive or expressed satisfaction, while thirty-five percent (20) thought improvements were needed.



**Foster parents who received training on prenatal exposure to alcohol and drugs found those classes useful.**

- Many parents expressed satisfaction with this training.
- Others wanted more training on this topic. One parent commented: *“More training on behavioral health and what drugs/alcohol really do to our babies should be offered upfront for new foster parents, and brain development classes should be a MUST know. It takes a couple of times hearing how the brain works and is impacted to fully understand it.”*

**A few parents expressed a desire for more training on how to recognize and address drug use in their foster youth.**



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**Parents value training on alcohol and other drug exposure in babies**

- “I do value the ones about drug exposed babies.”
- “I liked the trainings on drug addicted children, especially cocaine.”
- “I did like the class that was about drug abuse and infants.”
- “The 6-hour training about drug-affected babies was very, very good. And, as we got a drug-affected baby as our first placement, we had the tools and resources to help this baby. We were so blown away about how nuanced and culturally informed the initial training was.”
- “I have really liked the videos that are shown about specific things like fetal alcohol syndrome or drug exposure in the uterus.”
- “The training on brain development of babies with alcohol and drug addiction.”
- “What we learned about fetal alcohol syndrome and drug exposure of the children.”
- “More true-life scenarios, such as a fetal alcohol baby and how to deal with this.”
- “Training about babies with trauma issues and coming from addiction.”
- “We need more information on drug-exposed children.”
- “It would help to have more training on addicted children.”
- “Need more training on drug-exposed kids, especially those exposed prior to birth.”
- “There needs to be a heavy emphasis on drug exposure and its long term effects.”
- “We need to know about the newer drugs and their effect on the foster child.”

**A few parents wanted training in dealing with drug and alcohol use by the foster children**

- “More drug and alcohol training.”
- “Offer more specialized classes for how to deal with issues such as harming themselves, acting out, and drug use.”

## 2.3 Specific Training Topics



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### Child behavior training is useful

"Some of the basic trainings regarding behavior have been wonderful."

"Behavioral training and understanding some of the 'whys behind a behavior' and suggestions on what to do about it."

"Especially learning how to handle the children and how to help them with their behavioral issues and how to approach them in the proper way."

"I think the behavioral trainings have been the most useful in preparing me to handle the behaviors we are facing and how to parent and guide appropriately as far as discipline and guidance."

"I really liked the training on behavior problems and how to address those problems without escalating them."

"Positive discipline and Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)."

### Child development training is useful

"The one about brain development was really good."

"Need more training on brain development and the child's behavior."

"The continuing education about specific age groups and specific problems."

"We really liked the classes on brain development in children. The classes on nature vs. nurture were very interesting; we have learned a lot."

### Age-specific training is useful and needed

"Separate age groups in the training. Most of the training is for pre-teens and teens. Need more information on babies and toddlers."

"Need to offer more relevant training for the ages we care for. They need to update the online training."

"More age specific training would be helpful."

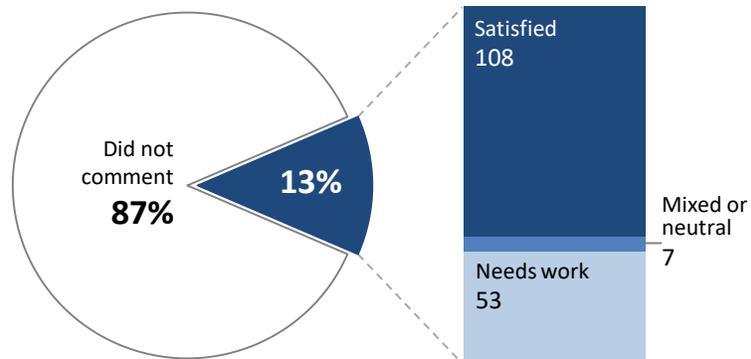
"I learned a lot about kids aged 10 to 17, but I've only had babies birth to five."

"I liked the age-group specific trainings."

## THEME | Child Behavior and Development

Thirteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed training on behavior and development of foster children, including comments specifically about training addressing infants and toddlers. Most of these comments (108, or 64%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

168 (13%) commented on this topic



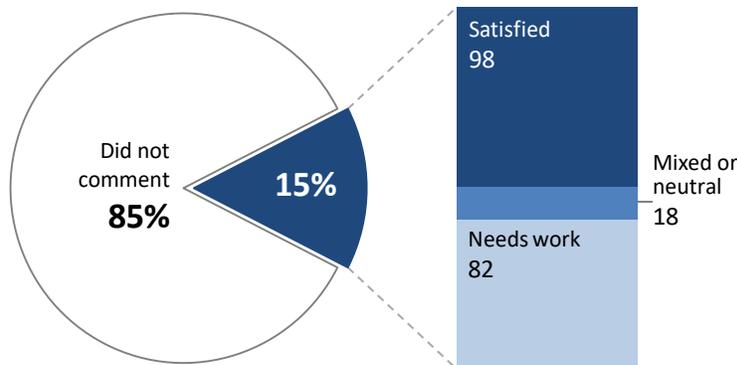
### Foster parents value and use training that helps them deal with their children's behavior. They appreciate:

- Training in understanding problem behaviors and how to deal with them without escalation.
- Training that connects behavior to the developing brain of the children.
- Training that looks at specific age groups and the issues that arise at each age.
- The "nature versus nurture" aspect of a particular course was praised in several comments.
- Several parents also praised training that made clear the connections between trauma and brain development.
- Age-specific training is useful and needed both online and in the classes.

**THEME | Navigating the Foster Care System**

Fifteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed the training on the rules and processes of navigating the foster care system. About half of these comments (98, or 49%) were positive or expressed satisfaction. Forty-one percent (82) of the comments were negative or suggestions for improvements.

198 (15%) commented on this topic



**Foster parents appreciate training on the rules and processes of foster care. It helps them understand and navigate various parts of the system.**

- The Washington state system of foster care.
- The Washington state focus on reunification.
- The court processes for the foster children.
- The different professionals involved, and their roles and responsibilities.
- The terminology.
- The rules, and why the rules and guidelines are what they are.
- The required paperwork and documentation foster parents need to provide.
- Learning where to go for what sorts of needs.

**One parent suggested:**

*“There is a lot of pressure to navigate the system and the system is very complex. I would like to see an online portal that foster parents could go to and train themselves. Like some place that you could enter a topic and all things on that topic would pop up. Or one that is divided into topics. Also, where foster parents could ask questions so they do not have to burden their social worker.”*



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**Training helps parents understand our state’s system**

“Training explained how the process works in regards to placement and all the steps necessary that a foster child go through.”

“General overall understanding of Children’s Administration and their role as well as mine as a foster mom.”

“Knowing the situation from the social worker’s side and the court’s side.”

“The explanations from our training about the process: terminology, different professionals involved, and legal terms.”

“Good to be told up front that the focus in our state is on birth parent rights and reunification, even to the detriment of the children in care. That helps explain the actions, decisions, and reactions of those working at DSHS and in the court system.”

**Learning and understanding the rules**

“Learning all the rules and the different paths for the different types of issues.”

“The guidelines and rules for the children and why they were put into place.”

“Understanding the system, role of foster parent, legal dos and don’ts.”

“Learning the rules of foster parenting.”

“We need more training on the rights of both foster parents and foster children.”

**Training on court processes is needed**

“Good training on the court system; learning how cases move through the system.”

“I would like a training solely on the legal lingo that happens in a court room.”

**Learning to navigate and do our part**

“Teaching us the paperwork and legal side and boring part of our responsibilities.”

“It helped understand the system: where to go for what I need, and who to ask.”

“How to manage all the paperwork required. The documentation I need to keep. How to fill out the court reports.”

“More in-depth training for newbies about how the Apple Health system works. How to find the answers to health queries.”

## 2.3 Specific Training Topics



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### CPR and First Aid classes are useful

"The first aid and CPR that I needed to know."

"The CPR for infants."

"More available CPR and first aid classes in my area."

"I do NOT think we need a CPR retraining every 2 years. It's excessive! Or, if we do have to do the retraining that often, have it separate and more condensed than the initial training."

"The ongoing CPR classes because we don't use it a lot. We learn new stuff every time we do the class, and it makes us feel more competent if we would have to use it."

"Taking the CPR class recently, I thought the material was really good and had all of the updated CPR techniques."

"All the training on ER, Safety, and CPR will help. We are trying to get guardianship of our niece and nephew and do appreciate all the safety stuff."

"The first aid, CPR, and safety training was very helpful."

"They need to improve the CPR first aid classes."

"The first aid/CPR training is always a good refresher, although it's too long."

"Did the CPR training together and Instructor was great (Keep the Beat, DSHS affiliated group)."

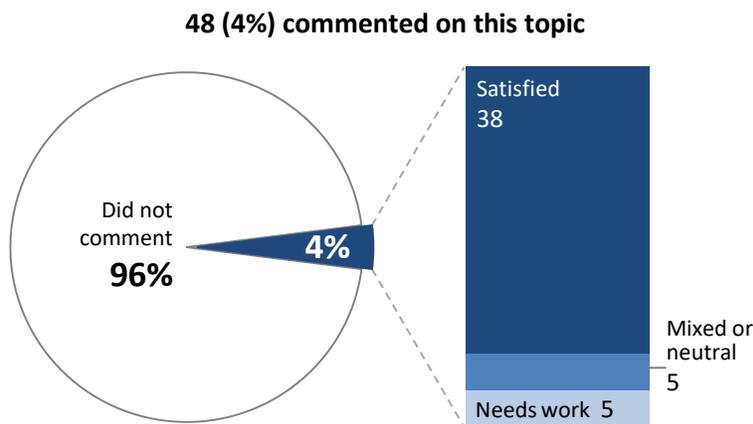
### Training on the health issues that occur because of fetal drug exposure would be useful

"What to look for in drug abuse kids or when birth mother who was using drugs so we can look for foster children in withdrawal."

"Training on drug exposed infants."

## THEME | Health and Safety

Four percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed health and safety trainings. Most of these comments (38, or 79%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



### Foster parents generally liked the CPR and first aid training

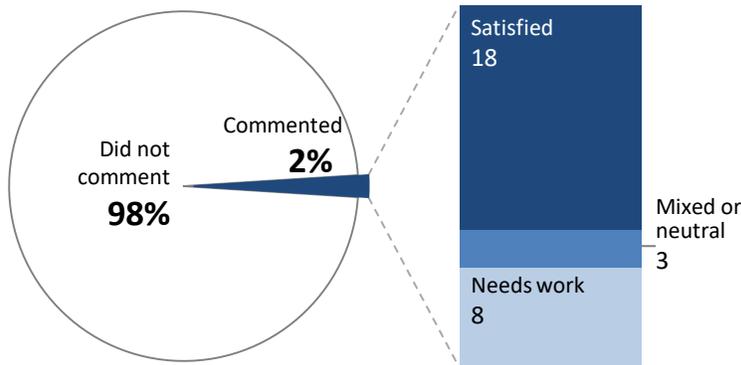
- Most found it useful and several commented on the usefulness of the refresher trainings.
- A few parents said the CPR and first aid retraining classes were not necessary or should be shortened.

### A few parents mentioned that in this context it was or would be useful to know the signs of infant withdrawal from drugs.

**THEME | Cultural Awareness and Cultural Issues**

Two percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed training on cultural awareness and cultural issues. Most of the comments (18, or 62%) were positive and expressed satisfaction.

**29 (2%) commented on this topic**



**Cultural awareness training was good, most parents said.**

- Many parents mentioned finding the sections on hair and skin care useful.
- Others mentioned help in respecting different religious backgrounds and holiday traditions.

**Some felt the multi-cultural training should go deeper than skin and hair care. It should:**

- Teach more active support of other cultures and religions.
- Help white foster parents learn to support the ethnic identities of their minority foster children.



Photo by: Camp to Belong, Washington

**Most comments said the training on cultural issues was good**

- “Learning about the tribal laws and what to expect in this area was helpful.”
- “Learning about cultural and ethnic differences.”
- “Both Native American caregivers and the African American foster parents support group have been created and fill the huge need that those special foster parents have for their ethnic foster children.”
- “The training on the tribal system was good.”
- “I learned to respect the different backgrounds of the children, such as learning about their traditions around holidays.”
- “Helpful to learn about the needs of the non-white child.”
- “Training on cultural differences was very helpful.”
- “Learning to look at things in a different light. There are so many different backgrounds of the kids coming into foster care. Learning about diversity.”
- “Ethnic hair and skin care training was very good.”

**Some parents felt this training could be improved**

- “There needs to be more multi-cultural training, not just the skin care and hair care for African Americans.”
- “They could do a whole lot better in training foster parents in how to be culturally appropriate and relevant. A lot of foster parents are white, but lots of foster children are minority folks. I see that white foster parents struggle to engage their foster children in cultural activities without being cultural vultures themselves.”
- “Build in area-specific cultural training, such as basic parenting we might not encounter until we have a child placed in our home, especially a child of another race or religion. Provide ways to teach us how to be supportive to other cultures and religions.”

## 2.3 Specific Training Topics



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### Most parents liked the Caregiver Core Training

“Caregiver Core Training was a good overall intro to the system.”

“Our Core class was very honest and real.”

“The Caregiver Core training was really good. They did a really good job at trying to explain the job that I was getting myself into.”

“The Core was fantastic at preparing us for the situations we could encounter. Our classes were small, so we were able to get questions answered in a comfortable environment.”

“So far the Caregiver Core Training has been the best.”

“Caregiver Core training was much better than years ago.”

### Parents liked hearing from foster children, biological parents, and most of all, experienced foster parents

“The DSHS Caregiver Core Training. I really appreciated having an experienced state foster parent there, to provide more and sometimes opposing data.”

“I think the Core was helpful and having a foster parent come in and a bio mom come in and talk to us.”

### Some wanted improvements in Core Training

“Caregiver Core Training did not adequately prepare us for a level 4 child. I feel like we were a bit naïve and we were not prepared.”

“The initial training we get is not enough and doesn’t prepare for high level kids.”

“I would have liked it if the Core training didn’t focus mostly on babies and younger children. There should be more information on older kids as well.”

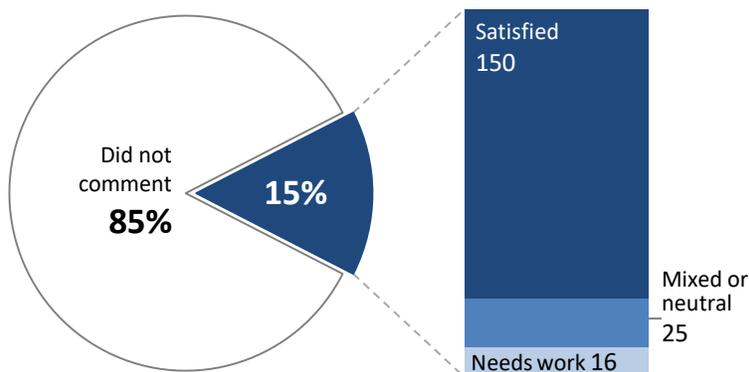
“The Core training did not address the problems that are faced when dealing with drug and mental health issues.”

“The Core class we took was useless.”

## THEME | Caregiver Core Training

Fifteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training mentioned the Caregiver Core training. The vast majority of these comments (150, or 79%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.

191 (15%) commented on this topic



**Foster parents liked the introduction into the system provided in the Core classes.**

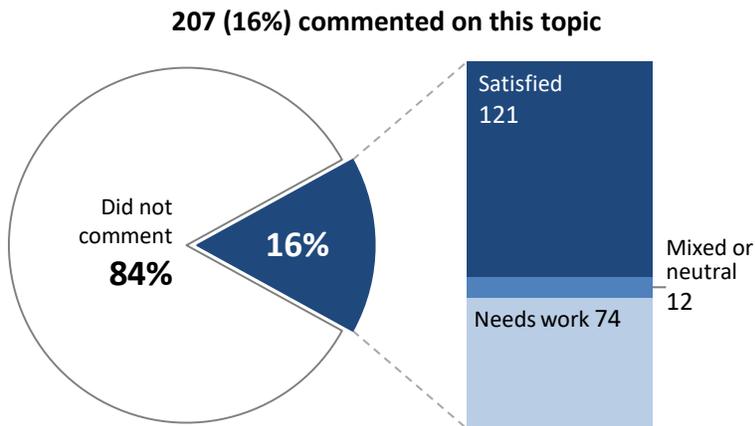
**Foster parents liked the inclusion of experienced foster parents, foster children, and biological parents in the Core classes. One parent summed it up:**

*“Our Core Caregiver trainers were phenomenal. I felt I had the information I needed; they were seasoned foster parents. The content and handouts were high quality, and trainer very thorough, great dialogue was truly helpful. They did a great job facilitating the dialogue. The panel of parents was very powerful talking about all kinds of situational stuff. The stories were helpful and learned how to navigate through certain situations.”*

**Foster parents who wanted changes in the Core classes talked about wanting better preparation for high-needs children, drugs and mental health issues, or older children.**

**THEME | Other Specific Training Topics**

Sixteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training mentioned other topics not covered previously. Most of the comments (121, or 58%) were positive.



**A number of comments discussed a need for training in dealing with the biological parents. One thoughtful parent said:**

*“Well, I feel that a lot of the new foster parents lack any empathy for the bio parents. Someone should do a documentary (and make it mandatory) that follows a few families from the time the kids go into foster care until reunification. You never think that anything like this could happen in your family and when it does, it's devastating. Ask yourself how you would feel if you found yourself with three tiny kids, no money, and very few prospects. It happens more than you think.”*

**Other parents suggested added training topics, including educational plans, nutrition, runaways, dealing with schools, mental health first aid, and advocating for medical needs.**

**One parent suggested bringing some material from the Caregiver Core class online, to allow for more specialized in-person training.**

*“I think much of the Core curriculum in the required initial training could be done online. That could make it more possible for some more specialized training to be delivered in person. I didn't think much of the Core training was a good use of my scarce time. The topics are important but I don't think all of them need to be presented in person. Sometimes I see random posting on social media about online training opportunities. I do not know how such training can be located; tell us where to find it and how to find available training opportunities. Let's have lots of online learning and how to find all training opportunities. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, I appreciate it.”*

**Some parents suggested outside courses they had found beneficial. These are listed on the next page.**



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**Training on dealing with biological parents is needed**

- “Need more in the initial training about boundaries with the biological parents.”
- “There could be more emphasis on creating relationships with the biological family.”
- “How to work with birth parents.”
- “We need a class telling us how to handle allegations from the biological parents.”
- “Education about the biological parents and how important it is for them to be in their children's life.”
- “Becoming aware of biological parent's behavior. Communicating with the parent in relative care situations.”

**Some suggested other training needs**

- “These kids are malnourished, so need a class on how to integrate foods for these kids. Training on nutrition. 62% of foster kids are obese, so this is a huge issue.”
- “A training on how to do 504 and IEP plans, and how to advocate for our kids.”
- “Dealing with attempts to run away.”
- “How do we work with the schools when they are calling about the child's behavior, especially when the child is seriously acting out or is violent?”
- “Add mental health first aid or some sort of brief mental health course.”
- “Need better training on visitation, advocating for a child's medical needs, advocating in the school system, how we can work together better. How to work together as a team including the bio parents and the social worker.”

**Parents liked the first placement class**

- “I really liked the class called ‘So you have your first placement – now what?’”
- “The class on first placement was excellent and did cushion us for the blow.”

**Parents liked TBRI classes**

- “TBRI that was fantastic.”
- “Trust based relational intervention was extremely helpful. I have looking for more training like this. It is called TRBI.”

## 2.3 Specific Training Topics

### THEME | Other Specific Training Topics, *continued*

Foster parents obtained training from a wide variety of sources and classes that they said were beneficial. Some of those comments not included in previous pages are shown below.

#### Voices

- "'Triple P' is a great training given by our therapist/counselor has been very helpful. In Australia it's a mandatory training."
- "One training my husband and I found offered was 'Incredible Years.' It is not offered by Children's, but I was given credit when I took class."
- "I took a crisis intervention class which was very helpful."
- "Look at TBRI training! Trust Based Relationship Intervention! It is amazing!"
- "'Compelled to Care' at Evergreen. They serve us dinner, provide day care, provide a speaker, and sometimes give a certificate for training."
- "Then there's FEST who have monthly meetings and trainings at the Children's Hands On Museum once a month, and they watch our kids too."
- "I like the training that my private agency did such as 'Right Response' and another on trauma. Those were really helpful to me."
- "The training for 'Birds and the Bees' was very helpful, as was 'Transracial Adoption.' 'Self-care for parents' was also good training. These last three were provided through the private agency."
- "The class on runaways was an eye opener. I used to think that only teenagers ran away and I learned that kids as little as seven will run away."
- "Culturally responsive parenting was awesome."
- "The training on Adverse Childhood Experiences was very helpful."
- "'Circle of Security' training really stimulated my interest."
- "I had a class through Headstart called 'Circle of Security' which was beneficial to me in dealing with kids coming from trauma situations."
- "I really liked the class on human trafficking."
- "One training they offered was 'The Teenage Brain' and it was excellent training."
- "We have really enjoyed and learned a lot from the Connected Child program."
- "Learning how to de-escalate situations."
- "The training on 504s and IEPs was really good. Also, I took a parenting class on Healthy Connections."

## Access and Format



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### Foster parents need local classes, good online options, and peer support.

Most of the 594 foster parents who commented on access and format of trainings suggested improvements.

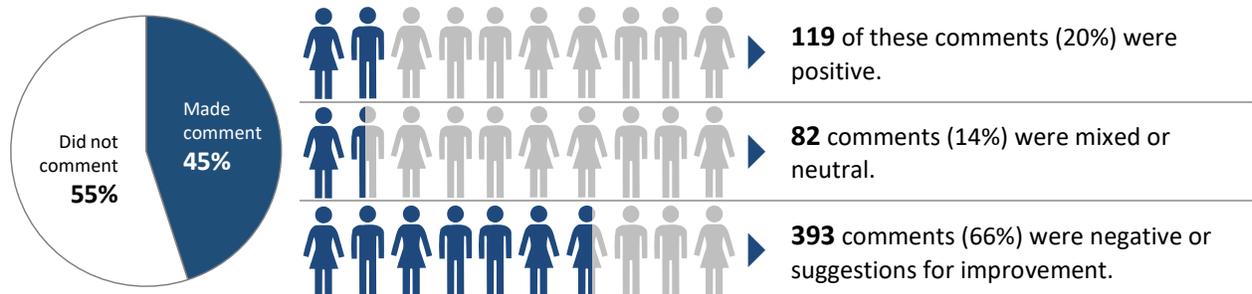
Parents commented that finding comprehensive information on available local trainings was difficult. Some said that websites on training were out-of-date or difficult to use. Some without computers requested written lists.

In-person training could be improved by being closer to home (many mentioned one-way travel of two hours) and having child care available onsite. Webinars were suggested as options for in-person trainings. More weekend and evening training hours for in-person classes were preferred by working parents. Others suggested school hours.

Online training was deeply appreciated for its ease of use and flexibility. However, many parents commented that the videos and other online training classes needed updating and that the topics needed expansion. Parents also appreciated the flexibility to find and choose their own training topics and classes once the basic foster care classes were covered. They appreciated using videos, books, and CDs as well as online classes.

Foster parents greatly valued their local support groups, which combine group interaction with peers, child care, refreshments, regular hours, and parent-suggested training content. Some parents valued the online support groups as well.

### 594 respondents (45%) commented on access to, and format of, training



## 2.4 Access and Format



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### Most comments said information on available training is not good

"No one has told us what's next after Core. I talked to another foster parent to find out when I should do the next training or how long I have."

"I don't get notified at all, about any trainings."

"No one ever told me how many hours I need or when the trainings are held."

"I'd take more through Children's if I knew what there was and when."

"Get the information out there on what classes are coming up."

"Nobody tells us about the training that is available online; maybe because the social workers don't know where it is."

"They offer extended classes, but I don't know how to get in touch for that."

"DSHS sent out a list of videos. I can't find them on Netflix, Amazon or anyplace."

"We would like a routine email with a list of upcoming trainings."

"We need better notice of local classes."

"Send out notices as to when the training is available. Send out flyers."

### Some parents do get lists and updates

"Our agency alerts us on other trainings regarding behavioral issues."

"I have appreciated getting the Alliance area-specific training lists."

"My agency sends me training options and different areas where it is offered."

"I know there is good training out there. I get good updates on offerings."

### Training website and Facebook are useful

"I've checked out the website and it appears to have a good range of topics."

"Make finding local training easy online."

"Fostering Washington website helped."

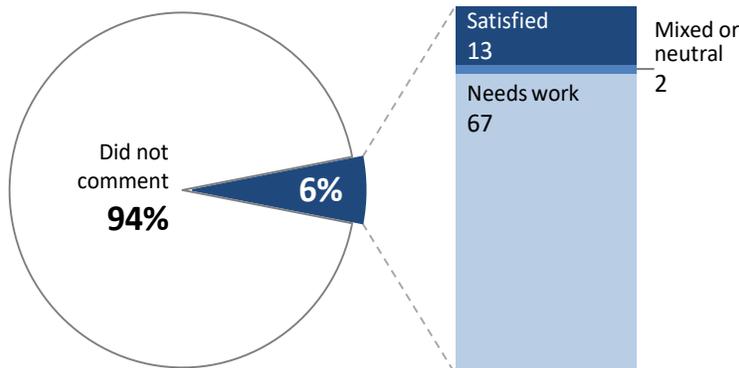
"I do have the website that tells me what training is available."

"I like how I have received some training invites through our Facebook page."

## THEME | Information About Training

Six percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed information about training opportunities. Most of these comments (67, or 82%) suggested ways that information could be improved.

82 (6%) commented on this topic



### Most comments on access to information on training said finding out what was needed and available locally was difficult.

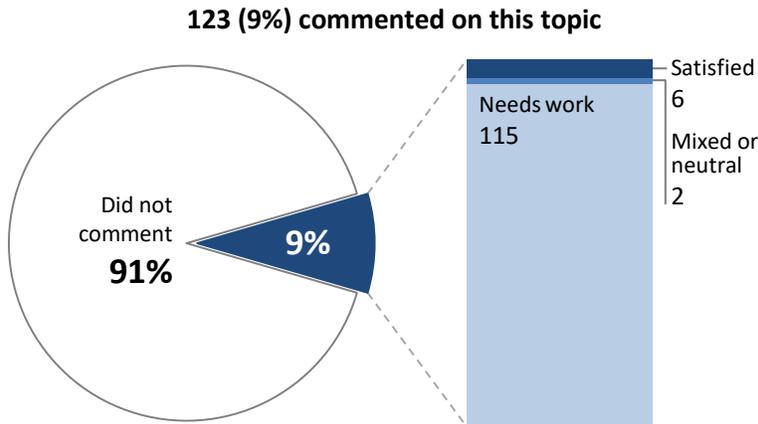
- Some parents said they were informed by their private agency about training.
- Several parents commented that they didn't know what to take after the Caregiver Core class.
- Some said they got their information online.
- However, online information is not helpful to those who do not use computers. One parent commented:
 

*"I need to know on paper where these classes are and when they are because I'm not online. I think they should mail classes and schedules because I don't have that access and would not do any online classes."*
- Other parents said they saw training information on "the website." One parent commented on the need to keep website trainings updated:
 

*"The lists of trainings on the Alliance website is not always updated. Sometimes there is a list of 40 trainings, but only 8 to 10 of them are available because the rest have not been funded or taken off the list (is what I was told). I have been waiting for some time to get a class on autism."*

**THEME | Training Locations**

Nine percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed training locations. Most of these comments (115, or 93%) suggested ways that training locations could be improved.



**Foster parents greatly appreciated more local training when it was available, especially for long classes.**

- A number said they traveled two hours one-way to a class, and that was too much.
- The online training helps but it needs updating and the topics need to be broader.
- Several parents suggested that video or telephone-conferencing for in-person classes would help. One parent said:
 

*“There should be a way to Skype into a class and be able to ask questions right along with the others in the class. Right now only one of us can go to a class and the other one has to stay home and take care of the kids.”*
- Several parents said that online information about available training locations is not helpful to those who do not use computers much.



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**Across the state, local trainings matter**

“We are now having trainings once a month in our isolated area. This really helps.”

“The variety and availability has improved greatly in our area (Pierce County).”

“The training I had to get licensed (Core) was readily available near my home.”

“I am in Coulee Dam and there is very little training in my area. The last one I went to was at Wolf Lodge on the west side. So, more classes in my area would be nice.”

“More training in Bremerton.”

“Offer more classes on the islands.”

“I live in Arlington and most training is in Kent. Make sure King County parents get Snohomish County training information.”

“‘Eliminating Risks and Allegations’ is a class I want to take, but it is two hours away.”

“Make it more available in our region. We have to drive two hours for most training.”

“More locations. It seems all the trainings are way down south or way up north.”

“Travelling to our CORE class took us four hours over a pass in a snowstorm.”

“More classes offered at Richland office or at another Lower Valley location.”

“Training in Clark County; there is none currently.”

“More training in Aberdeen.”

“More classes within 50 miles of Granger.”

“Classes closer to Colville than Spokane.”

**Online and video conference options help**

“I had to do all my training online because there is no in-person training where I live.”

“We wish more training could be provided online or in such a manner to be accessible for parents living in remote areas.”

“I’d like to get all my hours in-home, since I have a child I need to be with 24-7. Continue updating the online classes.”

“I’d like more video conferencing available so we can access classes from home.”

## 2.4 Access and Format



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### Evening and weekend training helps

"I like that some of the trainings are in the evenings and on the weekends."

"If there were more classes and more times available for each class. I think they need to tailor times to fit working parents' schedules better."

"Have the training in the evening and more online training available."

"Have them a little earlier in the evening."

"More weekend trainings or late in the evenings."

"Have the classes in the evening to assist the foster parents working full-time."

"More classes on evenings or weekends."

"Also need to have training in evening and weekends."

"Don't assume that it's easy to take a day off to go to training. We don't have the luxury of taking a day anytime we want to get off work. If there were more Saturday classes, we could attend more trainings."

"Training in the evening. Many working foster parents cannot get off."

"Provide more training on weekends."

### A few prefer school hours

"Please schedule around school hours."

### Group or lengthen classes to cut down on travel time

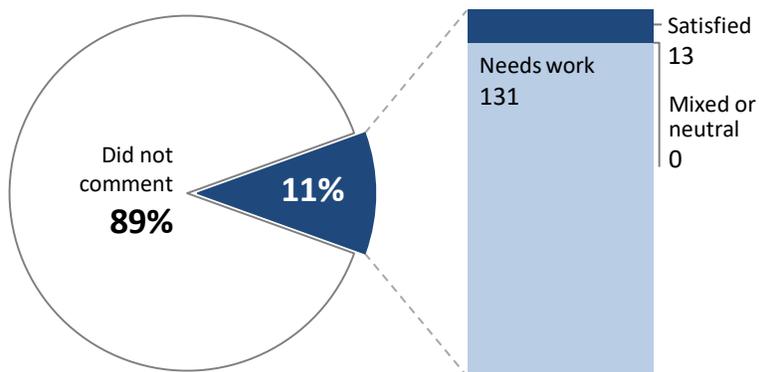
"I really appreciated the day where I could go to four classes in a row."

"Travel time and scheduling time off work is a huge issue. Weekends and holiday training would be good. Compacting the training into fewer but longer classes to prevent having to travel for an hour and a half training that continues for five sessions. Make it longer and shorten the number of days."

## THEME | Scheduling of Training

Eleven percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training discussed how training is scheduled. Most of these comments (131, or 91%) were negative or suggested improvements.

144 (11%) commented on this topic

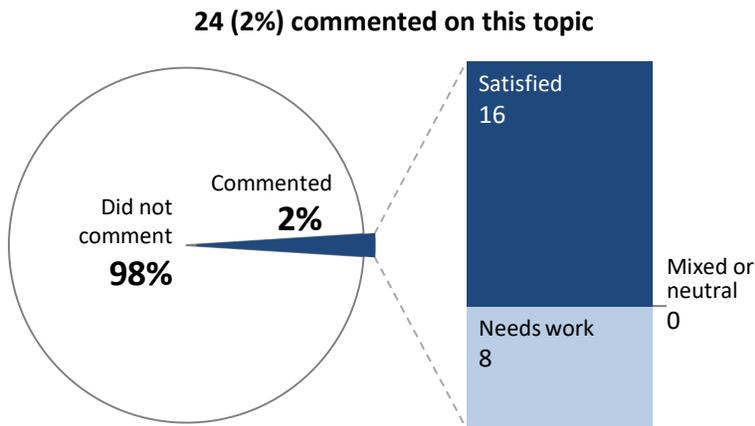


### Foster parents offered ideas about scheduling:

- Many foster parents would appreciate weekend and evening training, particularly if the parents are employed.
- Some parents requested training during school hours.
- Some parents appreciated having several short classes the same day, to minimize travel time.
- Some parents suggested compacting classes into fewer but longer classes to minimize travel time.

**THEME | Choice in Training**

Two percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed training choices. Most of these comments (16, or 67%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



**Most foster parents greatly appreciated the variety of options and flexibility once the basic classes had been taken.**

- Several appreciated being able to find their own training and get credit for it.
- Others appreciated the online courses.

**One experienced foster parent felt there was not enough variety available.**

*“After fostering kids for nine years, I can't even sit through any of the same old classes again. You need more diversity and more locations. I will find a wonderful class to take on a subject that is relevant, and it ends up being a two day class a long way away.”*

**A few parents asked to be involved in setting up local networks and planning new classes.**



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**Foster parents appreciate the choices available**

- “I like the more focused classes. The classes in the beginning covered a lot of stuff, and now I can just take classes on topics that interest me.”
  - “I pick topics of interest to me, so I usually get something out of it.”
  - “Now that I am licensed, I pick and choose training that I feel would be beneficial to me and my foster kids.”
  - “I had to seek out my own specific training, and I was able to find trainings that were helpful to me.”
  - “I think most helpful is the variety of topics so I can assemble my own training and fill in my deficits.”
  - “The online training has been very helpful because I could find the training that was specific to my needs and my foster child's needs.”
  - “Having trainings geared toward specific topics is helpful to get information relevant to the child in our care.”
  - “The wide variety lets you pick and choose what you think will be relevant and where you need extra help.”
- Some foster parents would like to build their own training groups and networks**
- “More opportunities to build our own groups. Give us a list of trainers that would be willing to attend and facilitate a training.”
- Some foster parents would like to be asked about classes they want to take**
- “Ask the foster parents for suggestions on what classes they would like to have presented.”
  - “Listen to the foster parents. Foster parents deal with many issues and they need help, or learn about options on how to handle difficult situations. They know what training they want/need to be able to help the kids in their care.”

## 2.4 Access and Format



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### Child care during training is very important to foster parents

“Try to make training when kids are in school or provide babysitting at night, because I'm a working single mom.”

“Oh gosh, I have no complaints other than child care help. I've talked to other foster parents and they want to go to trainings but once they realize there's no child care they can't go.”

“Well, providing child care at the trainings. So, on top of being a foster parent you may have a problem child so to get the training you need to bring your child with you.”

“I have kids coming and going, and training is an hour away, and then no babysitting. I can't even get my CPR First Aid class done because of no respite.”

“The big thing is going to training when you can't find a sitter. We live out in the country so there aren't sitters around, have to drive into town. If the trainings could have day care provided then we could get the training we need.”

“It is difficult for me to go to in-person training without provided child care.”

“Support groups offer day care but trainings don't, so day care helps.”

“Cannot attend classes that do not provide day care. I am a single/retired lady with three foster kids.”

“Day care during training.”

“One word, day care.”

“Day care available to take care of kids that have special needs.”

“Child care is hard to find in order to attend training.”

“I think they should offer training during the week so we can get day care or offer day care during the training sessions.”

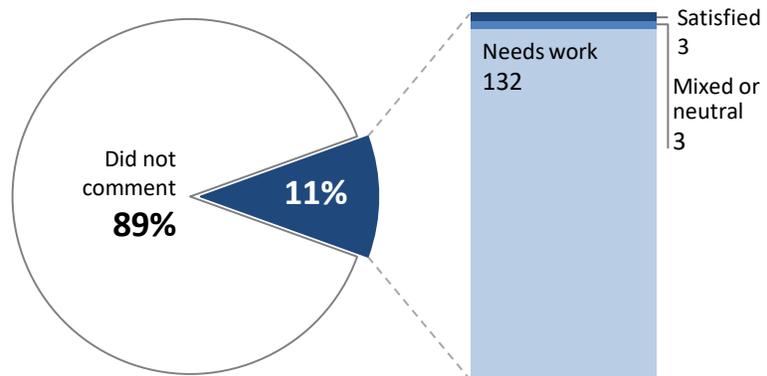
“I think providing child care and offering more online training. This is frustrating; all foster parents ask for child care and nothing is being done about it.”

“Child care during training.”

## THEME | Child Care During Training

Eleven percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed child care during training. Most of these comments (132, or 96%) were negative or suggested improvements.

138 (11%) commented on this topic

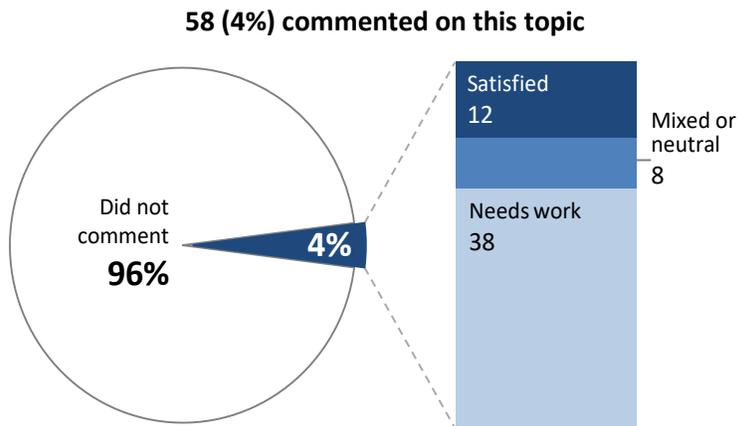


### Again this year, foster parents pointed out that attending training can be difficult without child care. This is especially true when:

- Foster families have many children in their household, including biological and foster children.
- The children in their care are very young, are teenagers who cannot be left alone, or have special needs or behavioral issues. One parent said: *“We really need onsite provided child care for trainings. For those of us fostering babies and toddlers it is not realistic to leave babies, especially new placements, for training.”*
- The foster parent is single, or both parents would like to attend the same training.

## THEME | Other Comments About Access

Four percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed other training access issues. Most of these comments (38, or 66%) suggested improvements.



### Comments here included several different topics:

- Several said that it is difficult to use the Alliance website (or just “the website”) for training.
- Several parents commented on the need to find outside courses that work for the complex problems of foster children.
- Some parents would like the state to cover travel expenses to distant trainings.
- Some parents said they did not know which classes to take. One parent commented:
 

*“Our eldest foster child is ADHD and possibly autistic. We’ve had her for two years and this is still not known/diagnosed. This makes it hard to know WHICH training to take.”*
- Some parents said they wish the state would cover a portion of the costs for outside trainings.
- One parent commented on use of churches for trainings.
 

*“We have to do all our training online because the only training offered here are in churches. We are Jewish and we cannot go to their churches. Please schedule trainings in a neutral environment. How about the library? How about city hall? Or, community service buildings like ARC or Goodwill.”*



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### Current Alliance website is a problem for some parents

“The Alliance website for training is horrible. It is difficult to use this website.”

“Make the website more accessible. The format is lacking.”

“The whole website/interacting with training is a mess. The fact that we just got email alerts is indicative of that.”

“The computer system that you use to get into it sucked!”

### State training doesn’t always address the more complex issues

“The training does not address children with behavior issues very well. I have to seek out classes that address behavioral issues.”

“I haven’t done any state-sponsored training in years. I seek out and pay for my own training.”

“We’ve gone out of our way to take more classes. Classes dealing with Reactive Attachment Disorder have been so helpful as our child is dealing with that issue. Excellent training.”

“We looked for our own training. Overlake Refresh Conference is good. ‘Empower to Connect’ which is a Trust Based Relational Intervention was good.”

### Some parents would like reimbursement for travel expenses to distant trainings

“Not having to travel and if we do, pay for travel, i.e. vouchers to hotels and mileage.”

“They are always out-of-county. Reimbursement on travel.”

### And coverage of a portion of training costs

“We pay for the trainings out of pocket and I think there should be a portion of that cost covered by the state.”

## 2.4 Access and Format



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### Online training is useful

“Good to have online activity for busy families.”

“We have gotten a lot of links for videos that have definitely been helpful.”

“Online Alliance classes on child trauma and positive discipline were great.”

“The online training and lending library is good option.”

“It is online and I can choose the trainings that are most beneficial to us.”

“Online training has been most helpful.”

“I have enjoyed the online classes.”

“All the offerings online have been amazing of late.”

### Online classes need updating

“We need more online variety and updated trainings.”

“More online and more up to date classes. The ones online are outdated.”

“Set up a YouTube channel with videos on helping the children.”

### Online training needs more variety

“Have more different types of online classes. I just completed my online renewal and there were not a lot of classes to choose from.”

“We have to complete many hours without enough quality content.”

### Video-conferencing would also help

“If there could be more online or video conferencing available, so we can access on computer instead of waiting for regional training sites.”

“I think more virtual classroom style training would be nice, instead of having to travel to different classes.”

### Some parents dislike online training

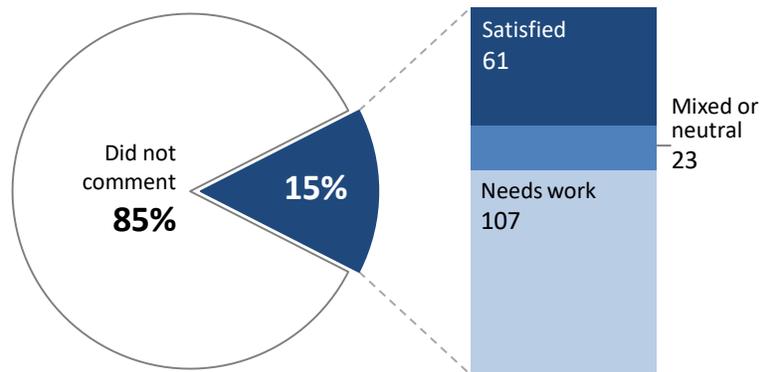
“The online trainings are pointless, that is not training and I learned absolutely nothing from those.”

“I don’t want online training.”

## THEME | Online Training

Fifteen percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed online training. Most of these comments (107, or 56%) suggested improvements, while thirty-two percent (61) expressed satisfaction.

191 (15%) commented on this topic



### Foster parents appreciate the online training.

- It helps them get training when they cannot attend in-person classes.
- It allows them to choose from a variety of topics they want to explore.
- Several commented that the online options have improved.

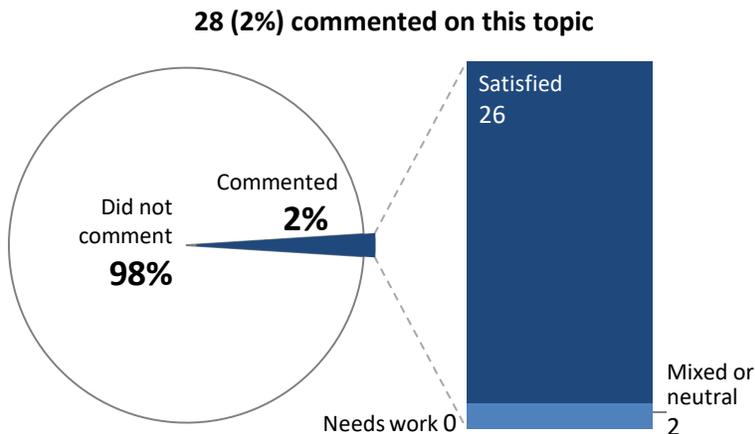
### Many foster parents had many suggestions for improvement in the online trainings.

- Video-conferencing would be a helpful alternative as well.
- Have more online classes.
- More variety in topics is needed.
- The online content needs updating.
- One parent suggested:

*“It would be very helpful if the online trainings could be downloaded and watched offline. I could watch these videos while waiting at appointments.”*

**THEME | Support Groups**

Two percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed support groups. Most of these comments (26, or 93%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



**Foster parents appreciate their support groups for many reasons:**

- They often offer child care.
- They are local.
- They allow foster parents to network and learn from each other.
- They are ongoing.
- The trainings are generally short and beneficial.
- Often the parents help to plan the future training topics.



Photo by: Ben VanHouten. "We Are Family" day.

**Support groups fill many needs**

"There's this monthly foster support group in my county. You can be with other foster families and there is day care so the kids can come too. We get dinner and then an hour or more training that counts towards needed credits. They also provide a 'date night' where you can drop off the kids for three hours so you can have a date with your husband."

"I do Fostering Together every Friday of the month, so that's been helpful."

"I have appreciated the trainings with the foster support groups."

"I take my trainings through Fostering Together and the Constellation (we meet once a month). They are extremely helpful, and I enjoy the networking with the other foster parents."

"We go to support groups and that training is great. We get to network and learn from other foster parents. Networking is very valuable."

"I've had excellent training through the Alliance, and my support group offers terrific and valuable trainings."

"Support group trainings and FPAWS have been very positive for us."

"We have support groups that offer good trainings."

"We're involved in a lot of support groups so get our training there."

"We have a great foster parent support group in our area. After the meeting our leader/trainer asks what topics we might want to cover the following month. All the different topics have been so interesting."

"Hearts and Hands once a month with other foster parents."

"Training we have received through therapy and support groups have been the best trainings."

"A lot of our training is through the foster support groups. These are smaller groups and I like that a lot better."

## 2.4 Access and Format



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### Videos and CDs

"I just got done with a video series; this year I didn't go in person."

"DSHS staff have helped me find videos or CDs about what I needed to see. It has been a great experience so far."

"I took a course called 'Love is Not Enough' at home via CD, I think it would be good to have other such courses offered on CDs."

### Reading books

"If there was more reading material that I could be tested on that would give me my training hours."

"Our social worker also recommended a great book by Bruce Perry, and that put us in a direction for continued reading that we could do on our own."

"Are there ways to read a book and then write a paper about it; could we get credit for it?"

### Video classes and webinars

"It would be a good idea to video an actual class and then have that video available for foster parents to view at their leisure."

"I held a webinar in my home to show a prerecorded video done by Nancy Thomas. It was about rewiring the brain and all found it very helpful."

"It would nice if classes could be a webinar and allow foster parents to log in and watch the class and even be able to interact."

### One-on-one training

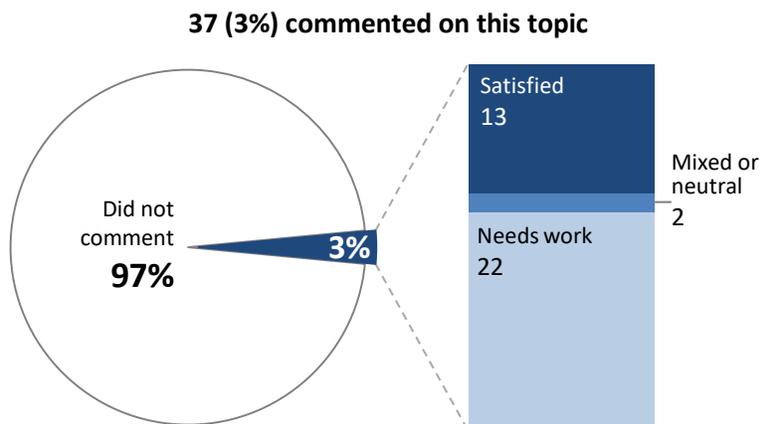
"Having trainers that could come into our homes would be fantastic. Home training would be great."

"More options for personal consults, one-on-one advice, webinars, etc."

"Realistically the training would be best if there was a person on staff to go in and provide in-home training and in-home support."

## THEME | Other Alternative Training Formats

Three percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed other alternative training formats. Most of these comments (22, or 59%) were negative or suggested improvements.

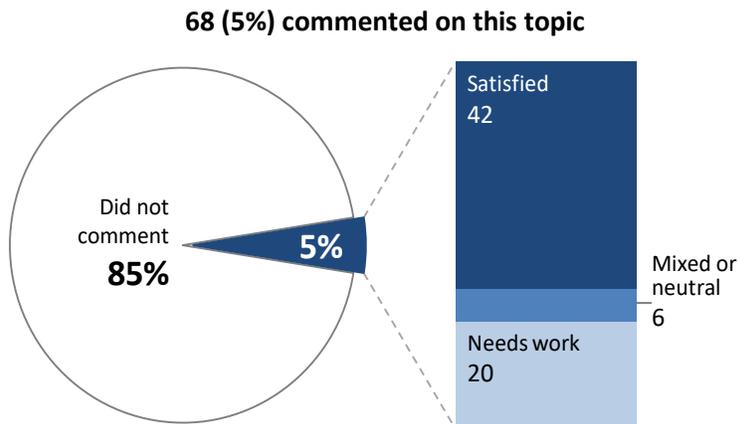


### Foster parents suggested the following options for training

- Videos and CDs can be used for exploring particular topics in more depth.
- Reading books – and perhaps being tested on their content.
- Video actual classes and make recordings available.
- Webinars so people can log in to classes from home.
- One-on-one training in the home.

## THEME | Other Learning Opportunities

Five percent of the 1,309 foster parents who commented on training addressed other opportunities for learning. Most of these comments (42, or 62%) were positive or expressed satisfaction.



**Foster parents love their support groups and many of these comments were about the learning embedded in them.**

**In addition to the regular monthly support groups, parents mentioned:**

- Facebook or other online support groups.
- Specialized support groups, such as peer groups of parents taking high-needs foster children or class cohorts.

**Other learning opportunities included:**

- Mentoring between beginning and more experienced foster parents.
- Mental health counseling.
- Getting an organized notebook from the Caregiver Core class.
- Conferences with a variety of topics. Parents mentioned both the FPAWS conference and the Refresh conference at Overlake.



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### Support groups are good places to learn

“I enjoy going to the support group meetings. I've learned a lot of stuff through my support group.”

“Meeting once a month and interacting with other parents.”

### Mentoring can help

“The thing that's most helpful is the mentor. Ours has been a parent for 15 years and she has been wonderful.”

“A mentor system would be really helpful. Just to kind of help new parents feel comfortable, as it can be very overwhelming.”

“Maybe the newer parents need mentoring by more seasoned foster parents.”

“We get matched with a peer mentor, but when you're in the thick of it during a new journey having one more person to be accountable with is tough. It's nice to know they're there, but it's not like you know them and feel good calling when you know they're busy with their kids.”

### Mental health counseling helps

“The thing that has helped us the most is our meetings with the Mental Health counselors.”

### Facebook or other online support groups

“Some of us have formed a Facebook page to share ideas and support each other.”

“The Facebook pages and message boards are really helpful.”

“I like the Facebook support groups too. You can ask questions and they respond.”

### Other ideas included:

“I wish we had left Core training with a more organized file folder we could quickly open up and reference what we want.”

“I would like to see peer groups of parents that take in level 3 and 4 kids so we could talk and support each other.”

“It would be good to keep in touch with a class cohort to see how everyone progresses and support each other.”





# 2018 Appendix



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## Foster Parent Support 2018 – Response Glossary

**Question 1:** What do Children’s Administration<sup>1</sup> 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
<b>QUALITY/ HELPFULNESS</b>	
<b>QS</b> – 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.
<b>QP</b> – Specific Agency/Office Support	Named specific CA program/location/office that was supportive/not supportive; mentioned support/non-support of “private agency” (named or not).
<b>QN</b> – Nothing	“Nothing,” “Can’t think of anything,” etc. (Negative, if about what has been supportive; Positive, if about what needs to be done better.)
<b>SOCIAL WORKERS</b>	
<b>SS</b> – 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.
<b>SC</b> – Social Worker Courtesy/Respect	Compliments/complaints regarding social worker courtesy, respect, helpful attitude ( <i>tries</i> to help), sensitivity, kindness, friendliness, niceness, caring (about both foster children and parents), compassion.
<b>SL</b> – 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.
<b>SI</b> – Social Workers Inclusiveness	Social worker gets input from foster parents; lets them help make decisions and plans; collaborates with them; invites them to participate in meetings (or fails to do these things). Use this code along with IN if a comment addresses a need for inclusion <u>and</u> information.
<b>SO</b> – 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).
<b>SF</b> – Foster Care Licensor Support	Compliments/complaints about foster parents’ experience with foster care licensors. (Comments specific to the licensing <i>process</i> are coded PS.)
<b>SW</b> – Specific Social Worker	Named specific social worker.
<b>SN</b> – 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.
<b>ACCESS , PROCESS, AND COORDINATION</b>	
<b>AP</b> – Phone/Staff Access	Able/unable to reach social workers by phone/voicemail/email/website/text. Social workers do/don’t return calls and messages (or if they do/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.
<b>AR</b> – Consistency of Contact	Social workers are/aren’t <u>initiating</u> regular or sufficient contact via home visits, phone calls, etc., or if contact is limited (i.e. “regular” doesn’t mean consistently poor).

<sup>1</sup> Starting on July 1, 2018, the DSHS Children’s Administration became part of the Department of Children, Youth and Families. The survey questions were not changed for the final quarter of respondents called after this date because the final quarterly survey sample was selected from respondents who had children in care in May 2018, and because many foster parents were not yet aware of the organizational change. All agency references were changed in the Caregiver Survey, which began in October 2018.

Response Category	Description
<b>PR</b> – 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.
<b>PS</b> – 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.
<b>PP</b> – Paperwork Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants paperwork processes (general or specific). Paperwork lost.
<b>CO</b> – 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.
<b>INFORMATION</b>	
<b>IN</b> – Information	Get/don’t get useful information from social workers about foster child; foster system; available resources; meeting times/court dates; training. 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.
<b>RESOURCES</b>	
<b>RR</b> – Respite	Likes or dislikes/wants respite services. Doesn’t get paid for respite.
<b>RF</b> – Financial Matters	Likes or dislikes/wants financial payments (ongoing or one time) to foster parents.
<b>RM</b> – Medical, Dental, Mental Health	Likes or dislikes/wants medical/dental/mental health services (includes speech and occupational therapy), medical supplies. Likes/grateful for medical care in general. Includes insurance/provider availability, process of authorization, getting paid for medical services, medication.
<b>RT</b> – Transportation	Likes or dislikes/wants transportation services (includes mileage reimbursement). Difficulty getting payment for transportation.
<b>RC</b> – Child Care	Likes or dislikes/wants child care services.
<b>RO</b> – Other Resources	Likes or dislikes/wants other resources (or just says “resources,” not specified).
<b>OTHER</b>	
<b>OS</b> – 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.”
<b>O</b> – Not about Support	Other miscellaneous comments that don’t fit elsewhere. Comments about good/bad support that occurred in the past (any time before current situation); comments about future support. Comments about <u>training</u> should be moved and coded as such.
<b>DK</b> – 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 2018 – Response Glossary

**Question 1:** What about foster parent training has been helpful?

**Question 2:** How could foster parent training be improved?

Response Category	Description
<b>QUALITY/HELPFULNESS</b>	
<b>TH – Overall Training</b>	Training is helpful/not helpful; training was good (great)/not good (great); did/didn't like training (without further clarification).
<b>TP – Specific Agency/Program Training</b>	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.
<b>TN – Nothing</b>	"Nothing," "Can't think of anything," "No suggestions" etc. (Negative, if about what has been helpful; positive, if about what needs improving.)
<b>TRAINERS, METHODS, AND RESOURCES</b>	
<b>TR – Trainers</b>	Trainers are good/bad; specific trainer qualities; want more/less of specific categories of trainers (including foster parents/foster children/biological parents as trainers – use both TR and TV); includes comments about guest speakers/presenters at training.
<b>TT – Specific Trainer</b>	Named specific trainer. Also always coded as TR.
<b>TG-C – Caring for Foster Children</b>	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.
<b>TG-A – Approaches to Training</b>	Approaches used in training. Includes small groups; roundtable discussions; brainstorming; using case scenarios, real life examples.
<b>TV – Building Community</b>	Foster parent involvement in training (including foster parents/foster children/biological parents as trainers – use both TR and TV); interactions between foster parents and trainers, or among foster parents during training; interactions between new and experienced foster parents; sense of community/support in training; networking.
<b>TG-R – Accessing Resources</b>	Information about resources (what/where they are); contact information.
<b>TG-M – Training Materials</b>	Quality/usefulness of materials used in training (including need to update written materials, videos, etc.); specific topics to add/delete in training materials.
<b>TG-O – Other Training Comments</b>	Other comments about training. Includes more/less training; variety in training; repetitious training; updated training; training pace too fast/too slow; tell it like it is; limit socializing during training; 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 biological children in training. "Every child is different."
<b>SPECIFIC TRAINING TOPICS</b>	
<b>TS-D – Disorders/Issues</b>	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. "Medically fragile" if infants/toddlers not specified.
<b>TS-S – Substance Abuse</b>	Training focused on substance abuse issues. Includes fetal alcohol syndrome, drug-exposed infants, and effects of bio-parents' drug use on children.
<b>TS-Y – Sexually Inappropriate Behavior</b>	Training focused on sexual abuse, youthful sex offenders, sexually aggressive or inappropriate behavior.

Response Category	Description
TS-B – Child Behavior & Development	Training focused on child behavior/child development; age-specific populations and issues (toddlers, school-age, teens); includes behavior management and discipline except that which falls in TS-D.
TS-I – Infants and Toddlers	Training on infants and toddlers. Includes infant care, medically fragile infant/toddler care. Not for fetal alcohol syndrome or infants exposed to drugs (TS-S). “Medically fragile” with no mention of infants or toddlers is TS-D.
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	Like/don’t like CCT/PRIDE training (PRIDE is now Caregiver Core Training). Any mention of “Core” training should use this code.
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 training.
TS-O – Other Specific Training Topics	Other training. Includes dealing with biological parents; advocating for youth; children’s rights; grief/loss/stress experienced by foster care <i>providers</i> ; other specific training liked or disliked/wanted. Mentions taking specific classes/training/workshops, without identifying them. Mentions “first placement training” or “initial training” but NOT “Core Training” (TS-P).
TS-L – Love and Logic Training	Love and Logic Training
<b>ACCESS AND FORMAT</b>	
TI – Information about Training	Like/want information about upcoming training; mailings; training calendars. Don’t like/don’t want such information in the form it is currently provided. This includes comments about wanting social workers to make foster parents aware of training. Comments about training certificates.
TA-L – Location	Location of training. Includes having training in more places; having training closer to foster parents’ homes; making it easier to get to training.
TA-S – Scheduling	Scheduling of training. Includes scheduling more training sessions; having training on more – or different – days; training in the evenings, on weekends; duration of training; ongoing training.
TC – Choice in Training	Foster parents do/don’t choose which training to attend, what is addressed in training. Only use if respondent specifically likes/wants more choice in which training to take.
TA-C – Child Care During Training	Child care available during training.
TA-O – Other Access Comments	Other likes/dislikes, or wants/don’t wants, regarding access to training (e.g. “We had to seek training ourselves” without indication of reason/other reason than above). Includes comments about transportation to training.
<b>ALTERNATIVE TRAINING FORMATS</b>	
TF-N – Online Training	Like/dislike, wants more/less online training options, including online videos.
TF-S – Support Groups	Like/dislike training offered during support groups.
TF-O – Other 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.

Response Category	Description
<b>TOS</b> – Other Learning Opportunities	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 biological or foster families); general comments about training in the community.
<b>OTHER</b>	
<b>TO</b> – Response <i>not</i> about Training	Other miscellaneous comments that don't fit elsewhere. <i>"Experience as a foster parent is the best teacher."</i> Comments about <i>support</i> should be moved and coded as such.
<b>TDK</b> – Don't Know	Don't know, not sure, can't answer, haven't attended training.

**Notes:**

- "No comment," "No response," "Don't want to answer," and N/A are not coded.
- Most of these codes can be coded in three different ways: positive (P), needs work (N), or neutral/mixed (E). For example, comments that fall under Social Worker Courtesy (SC) 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 or mixed 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 Information about Training (TI) can be coded TI-P (positive comments about training information), TI-N (negative comments or suggestions for change about training information) or TI-E (neutral comments about training information), for example, "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, including Nothing (QN or TN), Specific Social Worker (SW), Need More Social Workers (SN), and Don't Know (DK or TDK), 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. Likewise, 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 2018 – Narrative Comments Summary Data

1,349 Respondents (1,318 made comments)

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES <sup>1</sup>		Total		Satisfied		Mixed or Neutral		Needs Work	
		# <sup>2</sup>	% of All <sup>3</sup>	# <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>4</sup>	# <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>4</sup>	# <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>4</sup>
<b>Quality/Support</b>		<b>454</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>72.9%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>20.9%</b>
Overall Support	QS	151	11.5%	105	69.5%	4	2.6%	42	27.8%
Nothing	QN	183	13.9%	134	73.2%			49	26.8%
Specific Agency/Area/Office Support	QP	195	14.8%	158	81.0%	21	10.8%	16	8.2%
<b>Social Workers</b>		<b>1,128</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>43.0%</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>27.4%</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>29.6%</b>
Social Worker Support	SS	323	24.5%	206	63.8%	60	18.6%	57	17.6%
Specific Social Worker	SW	8	0.6%						
Social Worker Courtesy and Respect	SC	202	15.3%	127	62.9%	8	4.0%	67	33.2%
Social Workers Listen/Understand	SL	200	15.2%	136	68.0%	9	4.5%	55	27.5%
Social Workers Inclusiveness	SI	198	15.0%	65	32.8%	13	6.6%	120	60.6%
Other Comments About Social Workers	SO	932	70.7%	382	41.0%	239	25.6%	311	33.4%
Need More Social Workers	SN	131	9.9%					131	100.0%
Foster Care Licensors	SF	14	1.1%	10	71.4%	0	0.0%	4	28.6%
<b>Access, Process, and Coordination</b>		<b>818</b>	<b>62.1%</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>47.7%</b>
Phone/Staff Access	AP	376	28.5%	227	60.4%	41	10.9%	108	28.7%
Consistency of Contact	AR	224	17.0%	152	67.9%	22	9.8%	50	22.3%
General Processes	PR	208	15.8%	11	5.3%	10	4.8%	187	89.9%
Specific Processes	PS	212	16.1%	8	3.8%	11	5.2%	193	91.0%
Paperwork Processes	PP	34	2.6%	6	17.6%	2	5.9%	26	76.5%
Coordination	CO	70	5.3%	14	20.0%	2	2.9%	54	77.1%
<b>Information</b>	<b>IN</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>55.8%</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>34.0%</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>46.7%</b>
<b>Resources</b>		<b>390</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>43.3%</b>
Medical, Dental, Mental Health	RM	81	6.1%	28	34.6%	6	7.4%	47	58.0%
Respite Care	RR	70	5.3%	18	25.7%	5	7.1%	47	67.1%
Transportation	RT	51	3.9%	20	39.2%	2	3.9%	29	56.9%
Child Care	RC	41	3.1%	10	24.4%	2	4.9%	29	70.7%
Financial Matters	RF	34	2.6%	6	17.6%	4	11.8%	24	70.6%
Other Resources (includes training)	RO	152	11.5%	87	57.2%	10	6.6%	55	36.2%
Other Sources of Support	OS	83	6.3%	57	68.7%	9	10.8%	17	20.5%
<b>Other</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20.0%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>64.0%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16.0%</b>
Not about support	O	82	6.2%	25	30.5%	37	45.1%	20	24.4%
Don't know	DK	45	3.4%			45	100.0%		

<sup>1</sup> 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 "Child Care" and "Respite Care" is counted only once in the "Resources" row. A person who has a "Satisfied" comment in the "Child Care" row and "Needs Work" in the "Respite Care" row would be counted as a "Mixed" response in the "Resources" row.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of comments in this theme that were categorized as "Satisfied," "Needs Work," or "Mixed or Neutral," respectively.

## Foster Parent Training 2018 – Narrative Comments Summary Data

1,349 Respondents (1,309 made comments)

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES <sup>1</sup>	Total		Satisfied		Mixed or Neutral		Needs Work		
	# <sup>2</sup>	% of All <sup>3</sup>	# <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>4</sup>	# <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>4</sup>	# <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>4</sup>	
<b>Training Quality and Helpfulness</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>84.4%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	
Helpfulness of training	TH	222	17.0%	174	78.4%	23	10.4%	25	11.3%
Nothing	TN	239	18.3%	218	91.2%			21	8.8%
Specific Program or Agency	TP	132	10.1%	107	81.1%	20	15.2%	5	3.8%
<b>Trainers, Methods, and Resources</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>52.3%</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>28.3%</b>	
Trainers	TR	148	11.3%	99	66.9%	11	7.4%	38	25.7%
Specific Trainer	TT	12	0.9%						
Taking Care of Foster Children	TG-C	164	12.5%	125	76.2%	7	4.3%	32	19.5%
Approaches to Training	TG-A	108	8.3%	45	41.7%	4	3.7%	59	54.6%
Building Community	TV	240	18.3%	185	77.1%	16	6.7%	39	16.3%
Accessing Resources	TG-R	78	6.0%	46	59.0%	6	7.7%	26	33.3%
Training Materials	TG-M	33	2.5%	8	24.2%	1	3.0%	24	72.7%
Other General Training Comments	TG-O	524	40.0%	230	43.9%	67	12.8%	227	43.3%
<b>Specific Training Topics</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>61.0%</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>59.9%</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>19.0%</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>21.0%</b>	
Disorders/Issues	TS-D	229	17.5%	141	61.6%	15	6.6%	73	31.9%
Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	TS-Y	18	1.4%	6	33.3%	1	5.6%	11	61.1%
Substance Abuse	TS-S	57	4.4%	30	52.6%	7	12.3%	20	35.1%
Child Behavior and Development	TS-B	160	12.2%	104	65.0%	7	4.4%	49	30.6%
Infants and Toddlers	TS-I	10	0.8%	4	40.0%	0	0%	6	60.0%
Navigating Foster Care System	TS-F	198	15.1%	98	49.5%	18	9.1%	82	41.4%
Health and Safety	TS-H	48	3.7%	38	79.2%	5	10.4%	5	10.4%
Cultural Awareness/Issues	TS-C	29	2.2%	18	62.1%	3	10.3%	8	27.6%
Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE	TS-P	191	14.6%	150	78.5%	25	13.1%	16	8.4%
Other Specific Trainings	TS-O	205	15.7%	119	58.0%	12	5.9%	74	36.1%
Love and Logic	TS-L	3	0.2%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Access and Format</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>20.0%</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	
Information About Training	TI	82	6.3%	13	15.9%	2	2.4%	67	81.7%
Training Location	TA-L	123	9.4%	6	4.9%	2	1.6%	115	93.5%
Scheduling of Training	TA-S	144	11.0%	13	9.0%	0	0.0%	131	91.0%
Choice in Training	TC	24	1.8%	16	66.7%	0	0.0%	8	33.3%
Child Care During Training	TA-C	138	10.5%	3	2.2%	3	2.2%	132	95.7%
Other Comments About Access	TA-O	58	4.4%	12	20.7%	8	13.8%	38	65.5%
Online Training	TF-N	191	14.6%	61	31.9%	23	12.0%	107	56.0%
Support Groups	TF-S	28	2.1%	26	92.9%	2	7.1%	0	0.0%
Other Training Formats	TF-O	37	2.8%	13	35.1%	2	5.4%	22	59.5%
Other Learning Opportunities	TOS	68	5.2%	42	61.8%	6	8.8%	20	29.4%
<b>Other</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>30.2%</b>	
Response not about training	TO	107	8.2%	6	5.6%	53	49.5%	48	44.9%
Don't know	TDK	60	4.6%			60	100.0%		

<sup>1</sup>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 "Child Care During Training" and "Training Location" is counted only once in the "Access and Format" row. A person who has a "Satisfied" comment in the "Child Care During Training" row and "Needs Work" in the "Training Location" row would be counted as a "Mixed" response in the "Access and Format" row.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of comments in this theme that were categorized as "Satisfied," "Needs Work," or "Mixed or Neutral," respectively.

# 2018 Foster Parent Survey: Survey Script and Survey Questions

1

## INTRODUCTION

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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

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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

<sup>1</sup> Starting on July 1, 2018, the DSHS Children's Administration became part of the Department of Children, Youth and Families. The survey questions were not changed for the final quarter of respondents called after this date because the final quarterly survey sample was selected from respondents who had children in care in May 2018, and because many foster parents were not yet aware of the organizational change. All agency references were changed in the Caregiver Survey, which began in October 2018.

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 [and your private agency staff]. For each of the statements below, tell us how often the statement was true in the past year.

- A. Are you treated like part of the team?**
- B. Can you get help when you ask for it?**
- C. Do the social workers listen to your input?**
- D. Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?**
- 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**

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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
- Otherwise 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?**

## 2018 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 2017, November 2017, February 2018, May 2018, or within the five months preceding the interview date. In each of these quarters, 360-384 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 2017 survey year were not eligible to participate and were removed from the sample. We completed interviews with 1,349 foster parents. Based on the 1,515 eligible foster homes selected to complete the survey, the *response rate* was 89%. Based on the 1,430 homes where we were able to speak with a foster parent, the *cooperation rate* was 95%. As of 6/30/2018, there were 5,055 foster homes in the state of Washington.

The 95% sampling error for the survey sample is  $\pm 2.3$  percentage points, for a 50% proportion.

### Mode of data collection

In order to maximize the opportunities for each sampled foster home to participate, the survey was also available online or as a printed copy sent by mail. In total, we completed 1,249 interviews by telephone (87%), 113 online (8%), and 67 were returned by mail (5%).

### Statistical Significance Testing: Comparisons by Survey Year and Regional Differences

For the seven standardized questions, statistical significance tests were calculated to assess differences in the percent of positive responses (More than/Somewhat Adequate or Always/Usually) among regions, and between the 2016 and 2017 survey years. The criterion for statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

Differences between 2017 and 2018 were assessed using a 2-sample test for equality of proportions without continuity correction. Differences among the three regions were first evaluated with the chi-square test of independence; questions with a  $p$  value less than 0.05 were then evaluated with a 2-sample chi-square test.

### Rounding

Results described in the narrative report are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to the effects of rounding, some percentages reported as whole numbers may not add to 100%.





2018 Foster Parent Survey  
**DCYF Foster Parents Speak**



Prepared for Washington State  
Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services  
by Department of Social and Health Services  
Research & Data Analysis Division  
**January 2019**