PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE TRAINING ACADEMY

Research Summary:
Supporting, Retaining & Recruiting Resource Families

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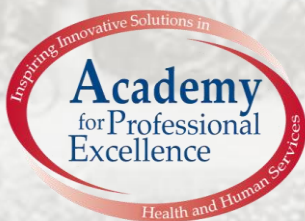*Professor Emeritus—SDSU School of Social Work*

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Research Summary: Supporting, Retaining & Recruiting Resource Families[1]

I. Background

Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) [2]

- In September 2012, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in partnership with the counties launched the CCR effort.
    - CCR is a joint effort among advocates, legislators and DSS to moveaway from long-term group home care towards more permanent home-based settings.
    - The CDSS, along with county partners and stakeholders, developed recommendations to revise the state's current rate setting system, service provision, and programs serving minor and non-minor juvenile court dependents and families in the continuum of Aid to Families with Dependent Children – Foster Care (AFDC-FC) eligible placement settings.
- As a result of the CCR efforts, a detailed Legislative Report: *California's Child Welfare CCR* (available at: http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/pdf/CCR_LegislativeReport.pdf) was developed and provided to the California Legislature in January 2015.
    - A specific recommendation within the report (see Recommendation 5) is to "strengthen foster parent, resource family and relative caregiver retention, recruitment, training requirements and strategies."
        - The recommendation envisions these caregivers to be active partners with public child welfare workers and service providers, and as such must also be provided with the necessary supports to retain them.
        - To support this recommendation, funding has been made available for counties to invest in activities to retain and increase the number of foster parents, relative caregivers and resource families available for placement of court dependent minors and non-minor dependents (NMDs).

CDSS Releases County Guidance on Caregiver Recruitment, Retention & Support[3]

- On October 8, 2015, CDSS released an All-County-Letter (available at: http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-76.pdf) providing instruction to county welfare departments developing plans to recruit, retain and support foster parents, resource families and kin caregivers.

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[1] "Resource families" is an umbrella term that includes adoptive, kinship and foster families. These families provide a critical service within communities that spans a continuum of care from respite providers to short-term foster parents to longer-term foster/adoptive/kin families.

[2] California Department of Social Services. (2015). *California's Child Welfare Continuum of Care Reform*. P. 27-28. Retrieved from http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/pdf/CCR_LegislativeReport.pdf ; All County Letter No. 15-76. Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRRS) Funding Opportunity. Retrieved from http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-76.pdf

[3] All County Letter No. 15-76. Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRRS) Funding Opportunity. Retrieved from http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-76.pdf

- o This letter comes after the 2015-2016 state budget included a $17.7 million allocation to counties to carry out these activities as a part of the CCR implementation.
    - a) $2.7 million is available to both child welfare and county probation departments for foster caregiver retention, recruitment, support and training strategies and goals; and
    - b) $15 million, of which $14.5 million, is available only to child welfare departments for foster caregiver retention, recruitment, support and training strategies and goals. The remaining $500,000 is earmarked for use by CDSS to identify and implement best practices and strategies.
- o The letter lays out the elements of the plan that each county must include in order to access their portion of the funding.
    - ▪ The components include an assessment of the current capacity in home-based care and anticipated need for increased capacity in preparation for CCR implementation laid out in AB 403.
    - ▪ The plan must also define specific county goals with regard to increasing the capacity and use of home-based family care and the types of services that will be provided to foster caregivers.
- o Counties may, and are encouraged to, collaborate regionally in the development and submission of their plans.
    - ▪ The Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support plan is due to CDSS no later than Tuesday, December 1, 2015.
- o CDSS will provide available funding to counties based on approval of a plan submitted by each county, or a region of counties, that requests funding. Criteria for the approval of county plans will be developed by CDSS following consultation with County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA).
- o In addition to including a plan template, the ACL also provides guidance on allowable activities and services that may be financed through these funds.
- o This ACL is for child welfare only, but was provided to county probation officers as background information. A separate ACL and county plan template will be sent out to Chief Probation Officers that will be specific to county probation.

II. Evidenced-Based Practices Around "Support Models" for Resource Families

Programs Rated by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)

The following promising programs rated by the CEBC could be employed in the training and support of resource families/foster parents. They are listed in order of their CEBC Scientific Rating[4] which evaluates each practice based on the available research evidence (*Note*: A lower score indicates a greater level of research support).

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[4] Refer to: http://www.cebc4cw.org/ratings/scientific-rating-scale/

1) *Triple P-Positive Parenting Program® System (System Triple P)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level Rating: 1 (Well-Supported by Research Evidence)
The overall System Triple P program is an internationally acclaimed multi-tiered system of 5 levels of education and support for parents and caregivers of children and adolescents. Triple P is intended for the prevention of social, emotional and behavioral problems in childhood, the prevention of child maltreatment, and the strengthening of parenting and parental/caregiver confidence (including helping parents/caregivers learn strategies that promote social competence and self-regulation in children).

During the course of the program, parents/caregivers are encouraged to keep track of their children's behavior, as well as their own behavior, and to reflect on what is working with their parenting plan and what is not working so well. They then work with their practitioner to fine tune their plan. Triple P practitioners are trained to work with caregivers' strengths and to provide a supportive, non-judgmental environment where a caregiver can continually improve their parenting skills. Triple P is supported by strong and growing evidence, and tailorable to family needs through flexible formats and delivery (e.g., individual, group, self-directed, and online).
For more information: http://www.triplep-america.com/ and
http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/triple-p-positive-parenting-program-system/detailed

2) *The Incredible Years (IY)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level Rating: 1 (Well-Supported by Research Evidence)
The Incredible Years (IY) is a series of three separate, multifaceted, and developmentally based curricula for parents, teachers, and children. This series is designed to promote emotional and social competence; and to prevent, reduce, and treat behavior and emotional problems in young children. The parent, teacher, and child programs can be used separately or in combination. There are treatment versions of the parent and child programs as well as prevention versions for high-risk populations.

IY directly provides services to parents/caregivers and addresses the following: negative affect, negative commands, poor parent bonding, and ineffective limit setting. The Basic Parent Training Program is 14 weeks for prevention populations, and 18 - 20 weeks for treatment. One international study[5] examined the feasibility of delivery and the effectiveness of IY parenting program in supporting foster parents in managing difficult behavior in children in foster care. Foster parents were randomly assigned to the IY intervention or the control group. Measures included the Parenting Scale, Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI), and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Analyses showed a significant reduction in child problem behavior and improvement in foster parents' depression

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[5] Bywater, T., Hutchings, J., Linck, P., Whitaker, C., Daley, D., Yeo, S. T., & Edwards, R. T. (2011). Incredible Years parent training support for foster carers in Wales: A multi-centre feasibility study. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 37*(2), 233–243.

levels for intervention families at follow-up, compared with control. For more information: http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/the-incredible-years/detailed

3) *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level Rating: 1 (Well-Supported by Research Evidence)
Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a dyadic behavioral intervention for children (ages 2 –7 years) and their parents or caregivers that focuses on decreasing externalizing child behavior problems (e.g., defiance, aggression), increasing child social skills and cooperation, and improving the parent-child attachment relationship. It teaches parents traditional play-therapy skills to use as social reinforcers of positive child behavior and traditional behavior management skills to decrease negative child behavior. Parents are taught and then practice these skills with their child in a playroom while coached by a therapist. The coaching provides caregivers with immediate feedback on their use of the new parenting skills, which enables them to apply the skills correctly and master them rapidly. PCIT is time-unlimited; families remain in treatment until parents have demonstrated mastery of the treatment skills and rate their child's behavior as within normal limits on a standardized measure of child behavior. Therefore treatment length varies but averages about 14 weeks, with hour-long weekly sessions. For more information: http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/parent-child-interaction-therapy/detailed

4) *Treatment Foster Care Oregon - Adolescents (TFCO-A)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level Rating: 1 (Well-Supported by Research Evidence)
TFCO-A (previously referred to as Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care-Adolescents) is a model of foster care treatment for children 12-18 years old with severe emotional and behavioral disorders and/or severe delinquency. TFCO-A aims to create opportunities for youths to successfully live in families rather than in group or institutional settings, and to simultaneously prepare their parents (or other long-term placement) to provide them with effective parenting. Four key elements of treatment are:

a) providing youths with a consistent reinforcing environment where he or she is mentored and encouraged to develop academic and positive living skills,
b) providing daily structure with clear expectations and limits, with well-specified consequences delivered in a teaching-oriented manner,
c) providing close supervision of youths' whereabouts, and
d) helping youth to avoid deviant peer associations while providing them with the support and assistance needed to establish pro-social peer relationships.

TFCO also has versions for preschoolers and children. For more information: http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/treatment-foster-care-oregon-adolescents/detailed

5) *Treatment Foster Care Oregon for Preschoolers (TFCO-P)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level Rating: 2 (Supported by Research Evidence)
TFCO-P (previously referred to as Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers) is a foster care treatment model specifically tailored to the needs of 3 to 6-year-old foster children. TFCO-P is effective at promoting secure attachments in foster care and facilitating

successful permanent placements. TFCO-P is delivered through a treatment team approach in which foster parents receive training and ongoing consultation and support. Children receive individual skills training and participate in a therapeutic playgroup, and birth parents (or other permanent placement caregivers) receive family therapy. TFCO-P emphasizes the use of concrete encouragement for pro-social behavior; consistent, non-abusive limit-setting to address disruptive behavior; and close supervision of the child. In addition, the TFCO-P intervention employs a developmental framework in which the challenges of foster preschoolers are viewed from the perspective of delayed maturation. For more information:
http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/treatment-foster-care-oregon-for-preschoolers/detailed

6) *Together Facing the Challenge*
Evidence-Based Practice Level: 2 (Supported by Research Evidence)
Together Facing the Challenge is a training/consultation approach to improving practice in treatment foster care (TFC). The intervention was built from a naturalistic study of "usual care" TFC to determine what practice components were related to improved outcomes for youth. It also incorporates elements from existing evidence-based treatments to fill identified gaps in usual care practice. The resulting model includes training/consultation for both agency staff and TFC parents in classes of 15-20 participants. Together Facing the Challenge is designed as a train-the-trainer approach, so that TFC administrative/supervisory personnel can learn the training and model and train TFC parents as well as provide them support. Training for TFC parents occurs over 6 weeks. Follow-up booster sessions for foster parents occur at 6 and 12 months post-training. For more information:
http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/together-facing-the-challenge/detailed

7) *1-2-3 Magic*
Evidence-Based Practice Level Rating: 2 (Supported by Research Evidence)
1-2-3 Magic is a group format discipline program for parents, grandparents, teachers, and other caretakers working with children approximately 2-12 years of age. The program can be used with average or special needs children. 1-2-3 Magic divides the caretaker responsibilities into three straightforward tasks: controlling negative behavior, encouraging good behavior, and strengthening the child-caretaker relationship. The program seeks to encourage gentle, but firm, discipline without arguing, yelling, or spanking. This simple, yet powerful, approach to disciplining kids is said to have won rave reviews from parents, educators and professionals alike. For more information: http://www.parentmagic.com/ and
http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/1-2-3-magic-effective-discipline-for-children-2-12/detailed

8) *Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported (KEEP)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level: 3 (Promising Research Evidence)
In KEEP foster parents attend support groups to learn intervention techniques/effective tools for dealing with their foster child's externalizing and other behavioral and emotional problems and to support them in the implementation of those tools through. KEEP offers manualized training,

supervision and support for foster parents over a 16-week period. It teaches foster parents about the techniques and benefits of positive reinforcement of their foster children.

This program has been evaluated by a randomized trial and has been found to have a number of positive effects. Children whose caretakers participated in the 16-week KEEP curriculum had lower rates of behavior problems, caretakers used relatively more positive parenting methods and reunification rates were higher and disruption rates lower for children relative to those in the study control condition (Chamberlain et al., 2008). Further, the study showed that the increase in positive parenting methods specifically caused (or drove) the reductions in child behavioral problems. [6] For more information:
http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keeping-foster-and-kin-parents-supported-and-trained/detailed

9) *FosterParentCollege.com® (FPC)*
Evidence-Based Practice Level: 3 (Promising Research Evidence)
FPC is an online training venue for foster, adoptive, and kinship parents. Interactive multimedia courses offered through the site provide resource parents with both pre-service and in-service training on clinical aspects of and parent interventions for their child's behavior problems. Instructional content is based on social learning theory and attachment theory. There are currently 41 self-paced courses for parents on FPC: 10 new pre-service training courses and 31 in-service training courses (15 that address specific child behavioral and emotional problems and 16 on parenting strategies), as well as two Advanced Parenting Workshops that provide in-depth training on specific behavioral and emotional problems.
- o Self-paced courses on specific behavioral and emotional problems include courses on attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder/attention-deficit disorder/oppositional defiant disorder (ADHD/ADD/ODD), anger, anxiety disorders, autism, eating disorders, fire-setting, lying, reactive attachment disorder (RAD), running away, self-harm, sexualized behavior, sleep problems, stealing, and wetting and soiling.
- o Self-paced course topics in the area of parenting strategies include safe parenting, positive parenting, resource parents' marriage relationships, working with schools and birth parents, house safety, child safety and supervision, the foster home investigation process, kinship care, culturally competent parenting, grief and loss in the care system, the impact of fostering on birth children, the role of mandated child abuse reporters, and substance-exposed infants.
- o The Advanced Parenting Workshops are on anger and lying and encourage interaction with other participants via a discussion board, and also include homework assignments.

Most FPC courses can be taken individually via computer or in groups via playing a DVD and displaying it on a television or other large screen. In addition, agencies can adapt any of the self-paced courses for delivery as group workshops with a discussion board, adding their own homework assignments. For more information: http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/foster-parent-college/detailed

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[6] Chamberlain P, Price J, Leve LD, Laurent H, Landsverk JA, Reid JB. (2008). Prevention of behavior problems for children in foster care: Outcomes and mediation effects. *Prevention Science, 9*, 17–27.

10) Neighbor to Family Sibling Foster Care Model
Evidence-Based Practice Level: 3 (Promising Research Evidence)
The Neighbor to Family Sibling Foster Care Model was developed by Gordon Johnson as the Neighbor To Neighbor model while he was President and CEO of The Jane Addams Hull House Association. The unique child-centered, family-focused foster care model is designed to keep sibling groups, including large sibling groups, together in stable foster care placements while working intensively on reunification or permanency plans that keep the siblings together. Neighbor To Neighbor began in 1994 serving targeted communities in Chicago where the majority of children came into foster care.

The program uses a community-based, team-oriented approach, including foster caregivers and birth parents as part of the treatment team. Trained and supported foster caregivers are key to the model's success. Neighbor to Neighbor professionalized this key role by placing these trained foster caregivers on the payroll with salaries and benefits. Foster families, birth families, and children receive comprehensive and intensive services including individualized case management, advocacy, and clinical services on a weekly basis. Mr. Johnson incorporated the Neighbor to Neighbor model in 2000 as the Neighbor to Family Sibling Foster Care Model, retaining Neighbor to Neighbor's essential components and expanding its operating model and geographic presence beyond Illinois. For more information:
http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/neighbor-to-neighbor/detailed

11) PRIDE Model of Practice (Parent Resource for Information, Development, & Education)
Evidence-Based Practice Level: Not able to be rated
PRIDE is a competency-based model for developing and supporting foster and adoptive families. The trainings are all designed to teach knowledge and skills in five essential competency categories for foster parents and adoptive parents:
   a) protecting and nurturing children;
   b) meeting children's developmental needs, and addressing developmental delays;
   c) supporting relationships between children and their families;
   d) connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
   e) working as a member of a professional team.
Although this program is endorsed by the Child Welfare League of America, it is considered an "emerging" practice, i.e. no formal evaluations have been completed. For more information:
http://www.cwla.org/pride-training/ and http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/parent-resources-for-information-development-and-education/detailed

Journal Articles on Support Models for Resource Families

Girard, J. (2011). *Facilitating Attachment: Issue-specific Support Groups for Foster Parents*. n.p.: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Summary: Upon entering into the child welfare system, foster children experience a range of intense emotions, from shame, anger, confusion, to helplessness. Foster parents are then

challenged with coping and managing these children who often suffer from emotional, developmental, and behavioral deficits. *This project's aim is help foster parents and foster children develop a healthy attachment before foster parents feel too incompetent and overwhelmed with the grueling duty of caring for emotionally challenged children. A strong foster parent-foster child relationship provides hope of reducing experiences of physical and emotional damage while in the child welfare system, as well as increase the likelihood that foster children will be able to develop the skills needed for future healthy interpersonal relationships. Through a 6-month issue-specific group using Person-Centered Therapy, foster parents may find the emotional support of peers and the tools to help them manage the stressors of an emotional disturbed foster child in their home.*

Golding, K. (2007). Health notes: Attachment theory as a support for foster carers and adoptive parents. *Adoption & Fostering Journal*, *31*(2), 77-79.

Summary: The attachment relationship is the foundation relationship of a child's life. While later experience will influence and even alter the child's developmental pathway, it is likely that the early relationship will continue to impact on this. For children living in foster care or adoptive homes these early experiences are likely to be difficult, as children experience separation and loss of biological parents, often following an experience of inadequate and sometimes frightening parenting. Often these children grow up with attachment difficulties making it harder for them to settle into their new homes. An understanding of *Attachment Theory can provide foster parents or adoptive parents with a framework for understanding the resulting behavior of the children. It can also provide guidance about ways of parenting the children that fosters increased trust and feelings of security. Within environments of responsive, available care, children can begin to recover from early experience and learn to organize their behavior around their belief in the continued availability and trustworthiness of their foster or adoptive parent.*

Hebert, C., Kulkin, H., & McLean, M. (2013). Grief and foster parents: How do foster parents feel when a foster child leaves their home? *Adoption & Fostering*, *37*(3), 253-267.

Summary: The experience of foster parents when a child they have cared for leaves their home is rarely recognized or discussed. This study sought to learn more about the feelings that foster parents experience in such situations. Evaluation instruments included a quantitative scale and an open-ended question. Results from both these analyses suggest that foster parents do experience significant grief upon the loss of their children and that this emotion takes several forms and affects the recruitment and retention of foster parents. The findings of this study have policy, practice and educational implications.

In terms of practice and education, grief material needs to be included in the training materials for all involved in the care system, including foster parents, child welfare workers and students. Foster parent training models often include some grief education in that caretakers are taught that children who are removed from their biological parents will grieve that loss and are provided with tools to handle the behaviors that accompany the child's

grieving process. However, there is less emphasis on the grief that the foster parents themselves experience when the child leaves their home.

More work needs to be done to develop formal support systems for everyone involved in the foster care system and at all points in the process. Foster parents need additional support after the removal of a child from their home and social workers may need help to realize that they are often sharing the grief of foster parents, especially if they had hopes that the child would remain in the placement. It would help if counseling was available to all parties involved in grief-provoking cases and if informal support systems, such as local foster parent associations, were in place. The support of a fellow foster parent, who understands the special grief a foster parent experiences, is also often immeasurable.

Over-reaching policy changes are also suggested by this study. *Foster parents are often denied the right to have any follow-up with foster children they have cared for and an arrangement that gives them some information about the children's progress would be beneficial.*

Leathers, S., Spielfogel, J., Gleeson, J., & Rolock, N. (2012). Behavior problems, foster home integration, and evidence-based behavioral interventions: What predicts adoption of foster children? *Children and Youth Services Review*,*34*(5), 891-899.

> **Summary:** Several studies have demonstrated that behavioral interventions that increase foster parents' encouragement of positive behavior and use of mild, consistent punishments are effective in reducing foster children's externalizing behavior problems. *Positive outcomes for foster children have been found in two or more studies for the Incredible Years intervention* (Linares et al., 2006 and Nilsen, 2007), *Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported* (KEEP; Chamberlain et al., 2008, Price et al., 2008 and Leathers et al., 2011), *Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers* (MTFC-P; Fisher et al., 2009 and Fisher and Kim, 2007), *and Parent–Child Interaction Therapy* (McNeil et al., 2005, Timmer et al., 2005 and Timmer et al., 2006). *These interventions appear to change child behavior through changes in parenting behavior*, *with factors such as an increase in the ratio of praise to discipline and positive parenting practices found to mediate the effect of the intervention on behavioral outcomes.*

Spielfogel, J., Leathers, S., Christian, E., & McMeel, L. (2011). Parent management training, relationships with agency staff, and child mental health: Urban foster parents' perspectives. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(11), 2366-2374.

> **Summary:** *Many foster parents are ill prepared to meet the behavioral needs of children placed in their homes. Research suggests they lack training in evidence-based behavioral interventions and feel unsupported by child welfare professionals.* Given the complex needs of foster children and increased rates of placement disruption for foster children with behavior problems, implementation of effective interventions is essential. However, little is known about foster parents' receptivity to these types of interventions. In this qualitative study, *authors examine urban foster parents' perceptions of the specific elements of parent*

management training (PMT), an evidence-based treatment for disruptive behaviors that teaches parents to improve desired behaviors and decrease oppositional behaviors by rewarding positive behaviors (positive reinforcement) and responding to negative behaviors with mild, consistent punishments such as timeout or a privilege removal. Authors present data from four focus groups (N = 38).

While the questions focused on parent's perceptions of PMT responses often related to parent interactions with agency staff. *Four strong themes emerged from the data.*

a) *First, foster parents discussed a need for more support and training in how to address children's behaviors, but also had concerns that some PMT discipline techniques would be ineffective based on their past experiences with foster children.*

b) *Second, they described how staff communication skills and allegations of child abuse could affect foster parents' motivation to continue fostering.*

c) *Third, they expressed a need for more detailed information about children's histories and visits with biological families as the lack of information contributed to difficulty in meeting foster children's needs. They suggested that joint training of foster parents and staff in the intervention could improve their ability to work together to support the child's positive behaviors.*

d) *Finally, parents reported little involvement in child mental health services and doubted the effectiveness of the mental health services their foster children received.*

Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) Report: Evidence-Based Practice in Foster Parent Support[7]

- Overall foster parents' primary motivation for fostering is to make a positive difference in children's lives.[8] However, this cannot be successfully accomplished without a variety of supports from agencies, community and family members, and policymakers.

- The social worker role proves pivotal with *foster parents appearing most positive about those social workers who, amongst other things, display an interest in how they manage; are easily contacted and responsive; listen and encourage; and pay heed to the family's needs and circumstances.*[9]

- Table B included in CASCW's *Evidence-Based Practice in Foster Parent Training and Support-Implications for Treatment Foster Care Providers* (2008) provides an overview of

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[7] Piescher, K., Schmidt, M., LaLiberte, T. (2008). *Evidence-Based Practice in Foster Parent Training and Support: Implications for Treatment Foster Care Providers.* University of Minnesota School of Social Work: Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. Retrieved from http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/EBPFPTrainingSupportComplete.pdf . This report was intended to assist Foster Family-Based Treatment Association (FFTA) foster care agencies identify the most effective practices of foster parent training and support.

[8] MacGregor, T. E., Rodger, S., Cummings, A. L., & Leschied, A. W. (2006). The needs of foster parents:A qualitative study of motivation, support, and retention. *Qualitative Social Work, 5*, 351-368.; Rodger, S., Cummings, A., & Leschied, A. W. (2006). Who is caring for our most vulnerable children?: The motivation to foster in child welfare. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*, 1129-1142.

[9] Colton, M., Roberts, S., & Williams, M. (2008). The recruitment and retention of family foster-carers: An international and cross-cultural analysis. *British Journal of Social Work, 38*(5), 865-884.

evidence-based practices in foster parent services and supports. [10] The table presents empirically-based relationships among evidence-based practices in foster parent support services and key child welfare outcomes. *The review of literature indicates that the provision of:*

a) *Benefits (such as health insurance and stipends)*
b) *Opportunities for foster parent collaboration with agency staff and biological families*
c) *Interventions designed to make changing levels of care flow more smoothly*
d) *Respite*
e) *Social Support*
f) *Inventories to assess needs and current sources of support, and*
g) *Models of training which include an ongoing support component*

are all current sources of support for foster parents. Specific models of support have been developed and have been tested in collaboration with foster and biological parents as well as in interventions that are designed to assist youth "step-down" from residential treatment centers to less restrictive levels of care, such as TFC. The results of these models show promise for their utility in a TFC population. However, *there is currently a lack of specific models in the empirical literature developed to address other treatment foster provider support needs, including benefits, collaboration between agencies and treatment foster parents in service planning, delivery of respite services, and the delivery and enhancement of social support services. Effective support services may help TFC agencies recruit and retain experienced, satisfied treatment care providers, and have positive effects on TFC youth outcomes.*

Table B. Outcomes of Evidence-Based Practices in Foster Parent Support

Evidence-Based Practice	Level of EBP	Satisfaction	Resources	Retention	Stress	Skills	Attitudes	Behavior	Moral Development	Mental Health	Delinquency	Education	Service Utilization	Placement Stability	Restrictive Living	Permanency
		Foster Parent					**Foster Child**									
Co-Parenting	3					X		X								
Family-Centered Intensive Case Management (FCICM)	2					X		X								
Fostering Individualized Assistance Program (FIAP)	3							X			X			X		
Health Insurance	-	X	X										X			
Involvement in Service Planning	-	X		X												
Keeping Foster Parents Trained & Supported (KEEP)	3					X		X								X
Managed Care Service Provision	-												X			X
Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)	1	X						X			X					X
Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care-Preschool (MTFC-P)	2				X	X		X								X
Positive Peer Culture (PPC)	2						X	X	X		X					
Re-ED	4							X			X	X			X	
Respite	-	X				X										
Social Support	-	X	X	X			X	X								
Stipends	-			X										X		
Stop-Gap	3							X								
Wraparound	-				X		X	X			X	X			X	

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[10] *Note: This report was produced in 2008 and new evidence-based practices/training models have since emerged from The CEBC as outlined earlier in Section II*. Please refer to the CEBCs EBPs for those that are most up-to-date.

Relationship Between Public Child Welfare Workers, Resource Families and Birth Families: Preventing the Triangulation of the Triangle of Support[11]

- The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning completed a report, *Relationship Between Public Child Welfare Workers, Resource Families and Birth Families: Preventing the Triangulation of the Triangle of Support* (Available at: *http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/triangle_of_support.pdf*) which discusses lessons learned from facilitated dialogues around the country with birth families, resource families, and child welfare workers.
  - o Insights from each of these partners in the care of children in the child welfare system reveal why agencies struggle with the process of building relationships among these three sets of people so important in the life of a child and the responsibility of public child welfare systems to find a way to build these relationships.
  - o A few brief highlights/recommendations from the report to stop the triangulation of this support system include:
    - a) *The triangle of support for children in out-of-home care is one of the most important relationship dynamics that can evolve in the process of ensuring child safety, permanence and well-being. While these interactions are not always easy, and working through the tensions requires skill and patience, the child will in the end benefit from the shared purpose and vision of the team.*
    - b) *Resource families must be recruited and oriented to the fact that a significant portion of their role is to serve as a mentor and role model to the birth family. This means that resource family stereotypes and fears about birth families must be uncovered and challenged during orientation and training.*
    - c) *Agency social workers must view resource families as critical parts of the professional team and share information with them early in the process. Values discussions must occur that get to the heart of biases and stereotypes about resource families. Social workers' practice must be informed by the importance that attachment and ongoing connection have to the emotional health of a child.*
    - d) *Resource families and birth families must meet early in the case, and frequently throughout the time the child is in placement. They must be encouraged to address the tensions and fears that naturally exist. The worker must be able to facilitate the building of the relationship and mediate conflict. Roles and responsibilities for each party need to be made clear—and team members need to hold one another accountable.*
    - e) *Whenever possible, relationships that are built while the child is in care should be supported and maintained after the child returns home or is adopted. The system cannot be the reason for the child experiencing additional loss. Every team member should be a strong advocate for a child's permanent connection to kin, culture and community.*

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[11] National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning. (2005). *Relationship Between Public Child Welfare Workers, Resource Families and Birth Families: Preventing the Triangulation of the Triangle of Support.* Author. Retrieved from
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/triangle_of_support.pdf

Effective Supports and Resources to Retain Foster Parents[12]

- There are a range of measures that enable agencies and key partners to support and retain foster parents:
  - *Effective support starts with a strong understanding of the importance of resource parents and respect for their critical role in creating permanence for children in care.*
  - The first step in assessing a jurisdiction's support system is *identifying who has the responsibility for working with resource parents and in what ways are staff currently responding to the resource parents' needs* (e.g. recertifying homes, troubleshooting when resource parents experience problems, checking in on resource families regularly).
  - *Child welfare agencies should also evaluate foster parent supports in their own agency. Conduct satisfaction surveys with current resource families and exit interviews or surveys with those who leave to find out whether foster parent support is an issue*.[13]
  - Annie E. Casey Foundation (2012) identified a number of leverage points that can be used to provide support to resource families to improve caregiver retention, including:
    a) ***Board rates and flexible funding***
       - Board rates are frequently the first (and sometimes the only) thing that people associate with supporting resource parents. While rates are certainly important, national polls consistently show that resource families prefer specific services that promote more successful placements over board rate increases.
       - To better understand board rates in a particular jurisdiction, it is important to consider two factors: current rates (estimates of the average yearly cost of raising a child based on the child's age, the type of setting, and the region are published in the USDA report *Expenditures on Children by Families[14]*) and the rate of change in payments. In places where board rates have been frozen over time, resource parents may feel underappreciated and resentful.
       - *In addition to board rates, states and jurisdictions may also increase their use of flexible funding to better support resource parents in meeting the actual costs of raising a child in foster care. When available, flexible funds can fill gaps and enhance the quality of life for both children and resource parents by paying for items like a computer, a dress or ticket for a prom and after-school activities (which also provide respite for resource parents). Flexible funds may also cover needs outside of the home, including therapeutic and tutoring expenses, and can pay for house modifications to accommodate a child, such as building a wheelchair ramp or removing moldy carpet.*

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[12] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/

[13] Casey Family Programs. (2002). *The Promise and the Paradox: Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families.* Washington, DC: National Center for Resource Family Support. Retrieved from http://centerforchildwelfare2.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/prprouthome/Recruitment%20and%20Retention%20of%20Resource%20Families%20-%202002.pdf

[14] Available at: http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/ExpendituresonChildrenbyFamilies.htm

b) *Respite care*
- *One of the most frequent requests from resource parents is for respite care to provide relief from day-to-day stress.*
- While most agencies have respite policies in place, resource parents frequently report that it is difficult to access.
- Respite can prevent child abuse or neglect, and reduce placement disruptions. It also promotes retention of foster and kinship homes and the adoption of special needs children.
- *The National Foster Parent Association recommends that all foster parents receive at least two days per month of planned respite care.* While that guideline may be difficult to accommodate, there is a continuum of formal and informal respite care that can provide relief: after-school activities or jobs for teens, summer camp, planned respite with a worker or other resource parent, or crisis respite that may salvage a troubled placement. For more creative respite ideas, see Appendix 24 here: http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-BuildingSuccessfulResourceFamiliesAppendixAll.pdf
- *Agencies should encourage informal respite as an important way for resource parents to establish healthy boundaries and protect themselves from burnout.*
  - Finding adequate numbers of respite caregivers can be challenging since all care providers must pass criminal background checks and be fingerprinted.
  - Agencies should maintain listings of cleared babysitters, especially those with expertise in caring for children with special needs.
  - Resource parents should also be encouraged to arrange their own babysitting swaps. In addition to informal supports, all parents should learn about formal respite care options and who to contact during their pre-service training.
  - All respite programs should be monitored to ensure that they are being used appropriately.
- For more information about developing and running respite programs, see *Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Respite in Your Community*, published by the Collaboration to AdoptUsKids.[15]

c) *Support visits*
- *Support visits promote resource parent retention by surfacing problems before they escalate.* In an agency with resource parent workers, dedicated workers may be responsible for resource family support visits, as well as home safety checks, recertification and help with reunification. In

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[15] Available here: http://www.adoptuskids.org/resourceCenter/publications/respiteManual.aspx

jurisdictions where workers are too busy for regular visits other than recertification, staff could still regularly contact resource parents by phone.

- Some workers consider support visits excessively burdensome to resource parents, who may already struggle with over-taxed schedules. However, *providing each resource parent with an assigned support worker ensures that every parent has a dedicated contact person so when a problem arises, they have someone familiar to call. The contact person should accommodate the resource parent's schedule by meeting at convenient times and locations.* Support visits build a relationship between the support worker and resource parent, and this can significantly reduce disruptions. See Appendix 25 here http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-BuildingSuccessfulResourceFamiliesAppendixAll.pdf for a support visit form, which provides suggested agenda items for a variety of circumstances.

d) *In-service training*

- In-service training is an effective, and often under-utilized, way to support resource parents who are required to receive annual training to maintain certification. *Agencies can design a wide range of training materials that meet the needs of resource parents based on information gathered through periodic surveys conducted during support visits or recertification. As issues emerge among resource families, support workers should maintain a running list of ideas for future training sessions.*
- In-service trainings can leverage a variety of resources, often free of charge. For example:
    - The local fire department could provide training on home fire safety;
    - The local police department might train parents about car seat usage;
    - Local business partners might provide sessions on helping teens find jobs;
    - Local teachers might guide parents through effective strategies for homework help or navigating the IEP process;
    - An agency therapist could work with parents on mental health issues in children, medication compliance and how to manage potential side effects; and
    - Resource parents struggling with birth-parent visits might benefit from a panel session with successful, collaborative birth mothers and resource parents.
- *In addition to presenting helpful content, effective training must also be accessible to resource parents. Providing childcare at trainings is important* and can be offered in a variety of ways, such as enlisting caseworkers to entertain the children during the session, or creating a children's training event at the same time, which targets a particular age or special needs group. *Providing a pleasant setting at different locations throughout the community*

with some snacks helps attract parents. Transportation support through bus passes or gas reimbursement can also boost attendance.

- Foster, adoptive and kinship parents need immediate training to meet a child's unique needs. *When a new issue, need or problem arises, the caregiver cannot afford to wait three to six months until training has been scheduled on the needed topic. Consequently, agencies need to offer families additional training resources via the Internet, community resources or one-on-one to ensure that little issues do not become big problems.*

- *The benefit that caregivers experience from networking and developing supportive relationships with other foster, adoptive and kinship parents must also be considered when planning and implementing an in-service training program.*

- In –service training as well as typical training offered at an agency, requires outreach to parents through multiple channels. In addition to sending out general notices and reminders, staff should be aware of upcoming trainings and recommend specific sessions to resource parents who would benefit from them (or who need to keep up with licensing standards).

- *Agencies should ensure that all eligible parent activities are counted toward their training requirement.* For instance, if parents attend therapy with their child, or meet with a therapist for 10 minutes following their child's session, that time can be applied to their training requirement. Another strategy is to provide credit for participating in support groups or attending the Foster/Adoptive Parent Association monthly meeting.

e) *Recertification*

- Recertification provides another opportunity to support resource parents. *Support workers should have a clear understanding of resource family requirements in order to prepare parents for the recertification visit.* If there is a safety hazard in the home or a change in household composition, the worker should be able to help the parent resolve the issue and prevent any lapse in certification or placement disruption. *Workers should be able to schedule recertification far enough in advance to give the family time to correct any problems before the certification expires.*

- *The recertification process is also another opportunity to continue the resource parents' growth and development.* Review the successes and challenges the parents have encountered in the past year. Identify specific training or education that would help fill the gaps in their knowledge and skill. This may be a good time to review the number and types of children the resource parent has cared for and make any necessary adjustments.

- Additionally, *recertification is an opportunity to check in with resource parents regarding the services and support they are receiving from the agency.*

- Some jurisdictions have created a satisfaction survey that is completed by the resource parent during recertification. It should include queries on the quality of communication and information received about children in their home, as well as rating the timeliness and appropriateness of services/supports they have received. Resource parents should also be asked about how well they have been included as part of the team; if they have been invited to court hearings and reviews and been given updates on the progress of the case. This survey can identify areas of support that need to be reformed in areas of the agency outside of the home development department.

- *In many jurisdictions, recertification involves an excessive amount of paperwork. Agencies should consider how to simplify the process to make it a more pleasant experience for both the family and the social worker.*

f) Placement

- *Placing the right child in the right home is a key component and driver of resource family support.* Cooperation between a child's caseworker and support workers who are familiar with local resource parents leads to successful placements. Parents need to receive background information about the child, along with an explanation of what brought the child into care. *Sharing information about the child's needs, possible visitation schedule, etc. assists in preparing the resource parent to care for the child.*

- Training for placement workers should include learning how to constructively discuss potential placements with families and children. *Clearly explaining the reasoning behind a particular match will make resource parents more comfortable with a prospective placement*, particularly one that differs from their expectations.

- Depending on their age, a child may also benefit from understanding the placement rationale. Caseworkers should avoid making promises to a child about permanence or reunification, but school-age children may feel more comfortable going to a home when they have received a clear explanation.

- Jurisdictions have different approaches to placement. Some rely on children's caseworkers to make placement decisions, although they may be unfamiliar with the pool of available families, while others may work primarily with resource families and lack experience with specific children. Without a system for sharing information, the risk of failed placement increases— disrupting children and families as well as caseworkers who must quickly find alternatives. To improve coordination and reduce confusion about roles, one licensing unit established a simple rotation schedule for placement duty: each day one worker became the lead for placements, creating a single point of contact. *Agencies can also improve coordination by developing annotated*

listings of available homes that are maintained on a shared drive that can be easily accessed and updated by staff.

g) Partnerships

- *Community*: *Engaging the broader community is one of the most effective ways to support resource parents.* Sharing success stories with the public about resource families builds awareness of their important work and supports recruitment. Positive messages also make resource parents feel appreciated and recognized. External communications can include advertisements that showcase resource parents, public awards, and press coverage of positive events. Resource parents can also be recognized in church bulletins, in speeches or press conferences by public officials, and in mailings that accompany board reimbursement payments. *Agencies should maintain confidentiality by ensuring that communications about resource parents do not reveal the identity of children in care.*

  - Agencies can explore creative ways to involve the community, such as encouraging merchants to offer discounts or redeemable coupons to resource families, or to offer internships, mentoring and after-school jobs to teens in care. Resource family recruitment campaigns can highlight the number of children in out-of-home care within a particular neighborhood.

  - *Another important message to share with the community is, "Not everyone can be a foster or adoptive parent, but everyone can support them!"* This can encourage people in the community to sponsor kids to camp, donate school supplies, bake birthday cakes, conduct a gift drive for holidays and birthdays, etc. The opportunities for community involvement are countless. Encouraging local families to donate time or services to resource parents is often a first step toward bringing them in later as resource parents, while reinforcing a positive image about the work. When foster care receives only negative attention due to a crisis or an agency's bad reputation, resource parents do not want to be associated with the agency; it becomes harder to recruit and attrition increases. *By reaching out through programs and the press, agencies can improve their relationship with the community while building long-term support for resource families.*

- *Inter-agency*: *Partnering with other agencies can provide additional support for resource families by enhancing their access to services.* Children in care interact frequently with other local departments, including schools, health care, mental health, juvenile justice and others. Agencies can often reduce paperwork and roadblocks by sharing information and streamlining regulations. For example, one jurisdiction required an examination by a

medical professional before a child could be placed in a home. Children and their caseworkers had to wait for hours in an emergency room until the jurisdiction developed a small clinic where registered nurses could perform examinations during business hours, providing a more pleasant, and less costly, experience. For admissions after business hours, the agency worked with the emergency room to expedite the process by allowing children in need of placement to skip to the front of the line.

- Other supports include:
  - o Contracting with providers who facilitate visits with incarcerated parents;
  - o Creating a hotline for police to contact child welfare when they determine that an adult under arrest has dependent children, reducing the need for shelter placements; and
  - o Working with school systems to streamline enrollment for children entering a new school during the middle of the school year.

- *Intra-agency:* Supporting resource parents is the responsibility of the entire agency. Yet, resource families are often treated poorly by public agency staff. This attitude must change and should start at the top of the agency. Managers should always speak highly and respectfully of resource parents so the culture toward them is positive and respectful. In one jurisdiction, multi-disciplinary workgroups created an internal media campaign that promoted a culture in which "support is everyone's business." The workgroup developed a series of slogans that accompanied pictures of children on full-sized, high-quality posters. Every local and regional office received a set of the posters for display.

- *Family:* Every staff member, at every level within the agency, should see resource family support as part of their job. In one agency, a workgroup developed "role cards" that identified how each position in the agency could support resource parents within the context of their role. For example, clerical staff could warmly greet resource parents when they come to the agency. Or the transportation staff can give the foster parent a brief verbal report when returning the child after a visit. Agencies should also include content about resource parent support in staff-wide training to reinforce the message that "support is everyone's job!"

- *Other Resource Families: When resource parents are asked about what they need to feel supported, they often request support from other resource families, including support groups, mentoring from more-experienced families, a buddy system or a hotline staffed by experienced resource parents.* Occasionally a pre-service training group evolves into an informal support group, or families exchange contact information, but agencies rarely make a systematic effort to encourage peer support. *Other resource families can*

> *provide an effective support option for new parents who may be reluctant to call a worker for help.*

- Agencies may be reluctant to facilitate peer family support because of potential liability. However, parents naturally turn to friends and family for advice from other parents who have had similar experiences.
- Agencies should encourage parents to contact caseworkers whenever a problem arises that requires agency intervention. At the same time, agencies can facilitate resource family group meetings or provide a space for them to meet on their own.
- If there are workers who carry a caseload of parents, they can pair new parents with experienced parents, or create a group made up of the families on their caseload.
- Agencies can also track the overall satisfaction level of resource families through an annual survey. See Appendix 26 here for an example: http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-BuildingSuccessfulResourceFamiliesAppendixAll.pdf

h) ***Exit surveys***

- ▪ *Exit surveys are a form of quality assurance that enables agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of resource family support activities. Every parent who is closing their home should be offered a short (one-page) survey with a few open-ended questions to encourage specific comments.* Surveys should ask both positive and negative questions, and should ask for concrete, creative suggestions for improvement. The surveys should remain anonymous unless parents choose to identify themselves, and they should be maintained by an individual worker in a central location so the results can be compared and analyzed together before they are disseminated across the department. For a resource parent exit survey example, see Appendix 27 here: http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-BuildingSuccessfulResourceFamiliesAppendixAll.pdf

o Refer to *Appendix A: Resource Family Best Practices* for examples of promising practices among states as they apply the above elements recommended by Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Concrete Supports[16]

- *Concrete supports for resource families refer to formal support networks that offer key tangible resources in times of need, such as housing, food, financial assistance, and job assistance.*

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[16]Semanchin Jones, A., & LaLiberte, T. (2013). *Brief Literature Review: Impact of Changes to Foster Parent Reimbursement Rates Annotated Bibliography*. University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. Available at http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/LitRevFPReimbRate-Rev.pdf

- Although money cannot be the primary motivator for foster parents *several studies examine the potential impact of increases to foster care payments (i.e. economic incentives) on foster parent recruitment, satisfaction and retention, which indirectly effects child well-being and the ability of child welfare systems to best meet the needs of all youth in care. Lack of adequate financial support may hinder caregivers from continuing to foster if they perceive that compensation does not meet their family's needs. Multiple foster caregivers feel that adequate financial support is necessary for recruiting and maintaining current foster care placements, and is a critical resource in their fostering process.* Research studies indicate that *increasing foster care payments to adequately cover the actual costs of fostering is just one of many factors that may increase foster parent satisfaction and retention*, as well as improve recruitment efforts to increase the overall number of foster homes.

  - Findings from Duncan, B. & Argys (2007) suggest that *a $100 increase in the foster care payment is associated with a 6.9% increase in the number of children with a race/ethnicity match and a 29.5% increase in the number of children with a race/ethnicity mismatch. However, they found for a child older than 12 years, an increase in foster care payments is not associated with an increase in the probability of a race/ethnicity mismatch. Their findings also suggest that increases in foster care payments are associated with approximately 20 percent reduction in the number of placement moves in the full sample and county subsamples, respectively.*[17]

  - Another study indicated that *increasing payments for low income foster parents may actually be linked to improved foster parent-child interaction and quality of play materials available to the child*.

  - Studies on kinship care also indicate that *raising payments is linked to improved permanency outcomes for children*.

III. Best Practices for Developing Retention Programs for Resource Families

- *Foster caregivers who are unable to care for their foster children may result in placement moves for the child, and the greater the number of placement moves increases the probability that a child will be eventually placed into a group home.* Also, for children placed out of county, these youth and caregivers face greater challenges in accessing needed supports and services that impact resource family retention.[18]

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[17] Duncan, B. & Argys, L. (2007). Economic incentives and foster care placement. *Southern Economic Journal 74*(1), 114-142.

[18] All County Letter No. 15-76. Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRRS) Funding Opportunity. 2015 Foster and Relative Caregiver Recruitment, Retention and Support Plan, P. 2. Retrieved from http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-76.pdf

Challenges to Retention[19]

- Once foster parents have been recruited to care for foster children, retaining those parents becomes a concern given the many challenges faced in the current system of care. No discussion on foster parent retention can begin without addressing the common reasons why foster parents leave. Past studies have targeted this concern in exploring what factors influence foster parents' satisfaction and ultimately, what leads them to continue or discontinue fostering. Most recently the Child Welfare League of Canada (2014) completed a thorough scan of such research regarding foster parent retention and decisions to leave (including various research studies completed in the United States) and the following factors were found across research studies to influence foster home closure:
    a) Disillusionment regarding foster parenting duties/child (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; MacGregor et al., 2006);
    b) Concerns in the relationship between the foster child and biological children (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; Rodger et al., 2006; Twigg & Swan, 2007);
    c) Inadequate financial reimbursements for providing care (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; Chamberlain, Moreland & Reid, 1992; Denby & Rindfleisch, 1996; Rodger et al., 2006);
    d) Inappropriate matching of foster child and parents based on needs of child (Baring-Gould, 1983; Blakey et al., 2012);
    e) Poor relationship with child's biological parent (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; Rodger et al., 2006);
    f) Losing a child the caregiver was fond of[20] (Hebert and Kulkin, 2012; Hebert, Kulkin , & McLean, 2013);
    g) Insufficient training/lack of education around providing effective care (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; Cummins & Rindfleisch, 1994; Lee & Holland, 1991; Murray, Tarren-Sweeney & France, 2011);
    h) Lack of interaction/support from other foster parents (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; MacGregor et al., 2006);
    i) Poor relationship with agency workers/perceptions of inadequate support from agency workers (Baring-Gould et al., 1983; Cummins & Rindfleisch, 1994; Downs, 1986; Office of Inspector General, 2002; Rodwell & Biggerstaff, 1993; Rodger et al., 2006);
    j) Cultural incompatibilities with agency conduct (Downs, 1986; Hill, 2006);
    k) Lack of recognition/appreciation for work (MacGregor et al., 2006; USAGO, 1993);
    l) Incompatible goals of foster parents and child welfare agencies (Cummins & Rindfleisch, 1994);

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[19] Leschied, A., Rodger, S., Brown, J., den Dunnen, W., Pickel, L. (2014). *A Review of the Foster Care Retention and Recruitment Literature and its Relevance in the Canadian Child Welfare Context.* Child Welfare League of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ECM-FINAL-REPORT-LONG-Version-Oct-23.pdf

[20] Previous research has suggested that welfare workers are frequently unaware of the nature and pervasiveness of foster parent grief (Hebert and Kulkin, 2012). For a recent study on this topic, including how grief upon the loss of a foster child children can affect the recruitment and retention of foster parents refer to: Hebert, C., Kulkin, H. , & McLean, M. (2013). Grief and foster parents: How do foster parents feel when a foster child leaves their home? *Adoption & Fostering,37*(3), 253-267.

m) Involvement in false allegations of abuse (Office of Inspector General, 2002; Rodger et al., 2006); and

n) Not feeling accepted as a 'team player' in making decisions for the children in their care (Office of Inspector General, 2002).

Promising Practices in Foster Parent Retention

- Retention is as important to agencies as recruitment. Satisfied, experienced foster parents are the foundation of recruitment.
- *Surveys of foster families repeatedly find that the primary reason foster families leave fostering is a lack of agency responsiveness, communication and support.*[21]
  - *Foster parents' satisfaction is related to their perceptions about teamwork, communication, and confidence in relation to both the child welfare agency and its professionals.*
  - *Negative relationships with professional staff from the child welfare agency are linked to considering quitting fostering.*[22]
- The entire child welfare agency must work together to retain a pool of engaged, well-trained and well-supported resource families.
- The results from a survey of thirty state foster care managers on promising practices in foster care recruitment and retention found the best practice principles for retention included:[23]
  1) *Communication is the key: Foster parents must experience a relationship with the agency that is typified by sharing of information and ready access to worker support, within the framework of respect and positive regard.*
  2) *Define roles clearly: Foster parents must be clear and confident about their rights and responsibilities and agency expectations.*
  3) *Provide ongoing training: Foster parents should have access to a supportive network of caseworkers and other more experienced foster parents when challenges and crises occur. They should also have access to planned respite care and quality training events.*
  4) *View as a team: Foster parents should always be regarded as part of the team that is responsible for making decisions about the child and family.*
- To support resource families Casey Family Programs report *Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families: The Promise and the Paradox* suggests that agencies must also ensure: [24]
  a) Staff are trained during their orientation about the importance of creating strong partnerships with resource families.
  b) Staff view resource families as role models and mentors to the birth family and as such, incorporate these roles into the planning when crafting case plans.

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[21] Rodger, S., Cununings, A., & Leschied, A. (2006). Who is caring for our most vulnerable children? the motivation to foster in child welfare. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(10), 1129-1142.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Lutz, L. (2002). *Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families: The Promise and the Paradox.* Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Retrieved from
http://centerforchildwelfare2.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/prprouthome/Recruitment%20and%20Retention%20of%20Resource%20Families%20-%202002.pdf

[24] Ibid.

- ▪ Staff practice this partnership by inviting families to all team meetings and asking resource families to provide feedback on the well-being of children in their care.
  - c) Staff are trained to respond to resource families' requests for help in a timely manner and to be available for crisis situations.
- *The process of the actual placement of the child is also linked to retention, and the following are tips that agencies may try in supporting resource families through this stage*[25]*:*
  - a) *Gathering as much information as possible from birth parents about children's personality, likes/dislikes, habits, etc. and provision of a brief description of these to foster parents*
  - b) *Providing all official information to foster parents including medical and academic information, social service requirements, clothing vouchers, etc.*
  - c) *Providing foster parents with resources to help them and foster children with the adjustment, such as psycho-educational materials, journals to document feelings in, etc.*
  - d) *Having the case manager schedule a visit within the first week to the home to address needs, assist with transition, etc.*
  - e) *Planning a visit with birth parents or extended family as appropriate and as soon as possible specifically documenting time, place, etc.*
  - f) *Asking foster parents what is the best and most reasonable way to communicate with them; provide them with agency contact numbers*
  - g) *Relaying updated information about child to foster parents as soon as it is available*
  - h) *Creating agency policies around maximum length of time to return phone calls*
  - i) *Creating a regular meeting foster parent mentor/support group that new foster parents may join to feel connected and supported with others parents; and*
  - j) *Keeping foster parents updated about new training opportunities as they are available*
- The most frequently endorsed reasons for fostering reflect foster parents' altruistic and internal motivations to foster. [26] The Child Welfare League of Canada (2014) summarized in their *Review of the Foster Care Retention and Recruitment Literature* that *the following promotes continuation for foster parents in their role*[27]*:*
  - a) *feelings of satisfaction that the type of children placed with them are within their expertise*
  - b) *personal feelings of competence to handle the type(s) of children placed in their home*
  - c) *seeing positive changes in the children who were placed with them*
  - d) *having knowledge and skills learned in foster care training reinforced by agency workers*
  - e) *experiencing foster care training based on 'real' training need, and*

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[25] Leschied, A., Rodger, S., Brown, J., den Dunnen, W., Pickel, L. (2014). *A Review of the Foster Care Retention and Recruitment Literature and its Relevance in the Canadian Child Welfare Context.* Child Welfare League of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ECM-FINAL-REPORT-LONG-Version-Oct-23.pdf

[26] Rodger, S., Cununings, A., & Leschied, A. (2006). Who is caring for our most vulnerable children? the motivation to foster in child welfare. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(10), 1129-1142.

[27] Leschied, A., Rodger, S., Brown, J., den Dunnen, W., Pickel, L. (2014). *A Review of the Foster Care Retention and Recruitment Literature and its Relevance in the Canadian Child Welfare Context.* Child Welfare League of Canada. Available at http://www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ECM-FINAL-REPORT-LONG-Version-Oct-23.pdf

> f) *being helped through orientation/pre-service training to anticipate difficulties that are later experienced as a foster family.*

Using Home Visits to Improve Retention[28]

- *Home visits with families provide a good opportunity to address issues that the family is going through before they reach a crisis situation. Below are some questions that can help get the conversation started about the changes the family may be experiencing. Foster parents often note that having a listening ear is the best solution to the situation.*

  1) How do you see yourself? How has that changed since the child entered the family?
  2) What does your support system look like? How have your social activities changed?
  3) How have you been impacted by the responses from family and community regarding the issues you face with the child? How have these responses made you feel?
  4) How are you managing strong feelings? How do you see your spouse managing strong feelings? Has that changed since the child has entered you family?
  5) Do you feel competent as a parent? If not, when did it change for you?
  6) If you have other permanent children in the household, how would you describe changes you've seen in them? Positive? Neutral? Negative?
  7) Do you feel safe? Do your children feel safe?
  8) Do you react to triggers connected to the child's trauma experiences?
  9) Do you feel you have control over your life?
  10) Do you believe you can influence the behavior of your traumatized child?
  11) Have you noticed any changes within yourself as a result of the stress under which you live? (numbing, hypersensitivity, or increased sleeplessness)
  12) Do you use outside resources to help in decision-making? (self-protection and setting boundaries)

Dealing with Common Expectations[29]

- *Even the best pre-service training may fail to prepare families for the challenges they will face as foster parents, because foster parents often believe that their experience with foster care will be different. It is important for foster care workers to be aware of the common expectations parents have and to address them with families through open dialogue so the gap between what the family expects and reality does not overwhelm new families leading them to make the decision to close their home.*

  What are some common expectations?
  a) Our love will be enough.
  b) We will feel love for and connection with this child quickly.

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[28] Adapted from Schooler, J. (2009). *Why are foster parents leaving?* Retrieved from: www.fosteringfamiliestoday.com and additional sources. Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CO1040. Retrieved from http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/DR-Grantees/year-one/promising-practices-in-foster-parent-retention-leaflet.pdf
[29] Ibid.

    c) This child will step into our family and easily function with our rules, goals and ambitions.

    d) Our biological children will embrace this new child as a sibling.

    e) Our child will fit well into our extended family and be welcomed by them.

    f) Our friends and acquaintances will validate our role as parents and support us through this fostering process.

    g) We will never feel regrets or ambivalence in adopting this child with a traumatic past.

Three Things New Foster Parents Wish Their Agencies Knew[30]

- *Being aware of the challenges facing new foster parents can help foster care workers begin to have conversations that will help new parents navigate the changes in their family.*
    1) "As a new foster parent, I may have unrealistic expectations. I may be broadsided by shattered assumptions."
    2) "Although I have had the training, I do not have life experience in living with traumatized children. I will have emotions and thoughts that catch me unaware."
    3) "My family will go through a transformation, that fostering isn't a job, but a lifestyle change for the entire family. Our family may be changing and no one supports us and guides us through those changes — ones we may not like."

Including Current Foster Parents in Recruiting and Retaining Resource Families[31]

- *Satisfied foster parents are the best tool for recruitment and retention.*
    o In a survey by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one state reported that more than 50% of its successful foster parent recruits are referred by other foster parents, compared to a 10% recruitment rate for general recruiting (USDHHS, 2002).
    o Another study of 650 foster parents found that only 21% had found out about fostering through media sources, while 58.5% did so because of the connections they had with other foster parents or children in foster care (Rodger, et al. 2006).
- Working in collaboration with foster parents to increase recruitment should improve retention as well. *Numerous studies have found that retention is significantly affected by how valued foster parents feel and how much they are treated like partners by their agencies* (Rhodes et al. 2001; Rodger et al. 2006; NRCSNA 2003*). Creatively involving foster parents in an agency's efforts to find and keep other foster parents can build a collaborative, mutually respectful relationship. Support by other foster parents also plays a crucial role in foster parents' decision to continue fostering* (Seaberg & Harrigan 1999). Foster parents can aid recruitment and retention in many ways (DHHS 2002; NRCSNA 2003), including the following:
    1) Sharing experiences and allowing newly-licensed families to meet children in care before their first placement
    2) Helping prospective resource families complete applications

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[30] Ibid.

[31] NC DSS Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership. (July 2008). Core Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Resource Families. *Training Matter, 9*(3). Retrieved from http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org/tm_v9n3/TMv9n3.pdf

3) Providing parts of pre-service and ongoing trainings
4) Following-up with new contacts with an in-person visit or phone call
5) Providing support groups
6) Organizing recognition/appreciation efforts and events
7) Providing individualized mentoring for new foster parents

Impacts of Foster Parent Training on Retention[32]

- Overall, the review of research on foster parent training suggests that a variety of pre-service and in-service foster training programs exist. These include general pre-service trainings, foster parent trainings in parenting, and specialized foster parent training programs, such as those for foster parents of infants with substance abuse effects, nutritional training for young children and infants, etc. Most of the trainings show promise in a traditional foster care population, while others have been developed for, and tested in, populations of children and youth that resemble those traditionally served in treatment foster care settings.
  - The review of research suggests that training programs are most able to create positive changes in parenting knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, behaviors, skills, and to a lesser extent child behaviors. *Training of foster parents is also linked to foster parent satisfaction, increased licensing rates, foster parent retention, placement stability, and permanency*

- *Effective elements of foster parent training programs include: increasing positive parent-child interactions (in non-disciplinary situations) and emotional communication skills; teaching parents to use time out; and teaching disciplinary consistency.[33]*

- *California's Child Welfare Continuum of Care Reform* report emphasized that all resource families need the knowledge, skills and abilities that are trauma-informed and attachment-based to best support the children placed with them. Training given to resource families should include a basic curriculum that supports their role in parenting vulnerable children and youth. Consistent with existing requirements, the training for resource families need to be both initial and ongoing in order to continually provide information on current new practices and/or changes within foster care.[34]

- *Foster parent training programs that:*
  1) *incorporate many partners (teachers, foster parents, social workers, etc.) with clearly defined roles, and*
  2) *are comprehensive in nature and incorporate education on attachment, and training in behavior management methods*

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[32] Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW). (2008). *Evidence-Based Practice in Foster Parent Training and Support-Implications for Treatment Foster Care Providers [Appendices]*. Retrieved from http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/EBPFPTrainingSupportComplete.pdf

[33] Kaminski, J., Valle, L. A., Filene, J. H., & Boyle, C. L. (2008). A meta-analytic review of components associated with parent training program effectiveness. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 36*, 567-589.

[34] California Department of Social Services. (2015). *California's Child Welfare Continuum of Care Reform*. P. 27. Retrieved from http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/pdf/CCR_LegislativeReport.pdf

appear to be the most promising in producing long-term change and may be the best for addressing the complex training needs of treatment foster parents. In addition to ensuring the content of the trainings are applicable to caregiver needs it is very important to ensure trainings for resource families are also accessible in terms of times and locations.[35] Much like for the traditional foster care population, the use of effective training programs in TFC may lead to increased treatment foster parent satisfaction, licensing rates, retention, and placement stability and permanency for TFC youth.

- As described in Section II, *FosterParentCollege.com® (FPC)[36] is another resource to strengthen agency efforts to support and retain foster parents by providing quick and easy access to expert help on specific parenting and behavioral challenges through online training.*

Kinship-Specific Training[37]

- *There are some important differences between traditional foster parents and kinship caregivers that may impact their training experiences.*
    - Traditional foster parents have made a conscious decision to provide care to vulnerable children, many of whom have suffered physical and/or emotional abuse. They generally have made preparations to be foster parents, have become familiar with the child welfare agency and its requirements as they made the decision to take on this role, and are eager for information about how they can be most effective as foster parents. They also understand and accept that training is one of the major requirements to become a foster parent and begin caring for a child.
    - *Kinship caregivers may feel they already know the child well and that they don't need to be "trained" to continue providing care. Some kin see the requirement for foster parent training as an intrusion, even though they may have little preparation in terms of learning about the child welfare system, their new role as kinship caregivers, or how to access support.*
- The *Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) Standards of Excellence for Kinship Care Services (1999)*[38] outlines specific issues that should be addressed in training for kinship caregivers in order to better support their retention as caregivers. They include:
    - Recognizing issues specific to the stresses and dynamics of full-time parenting for the second time;
    - Being an active participant in permanency planning;
    - Attending to the relationships among kinship siblings and other children in the household;
    - Resolving family conflict, including mediation approaches;
    - Understanding and managing the effects of chemical dependency, parental incarceration, and HIV/AIDS;

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[35] Sullivan, D., Collins-Camargo, C. & Murphy, A. (2014). Identifying Barriers to Permanency: The Recruitment, Selection, and Training of Resource Parents. *Child & Youth Services, 35*(4), 365-389
[36] For more information on FPC: http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/foster-parent-college/detailed
[37] ChildFocus. (2008). *Training Kin to be Foster Parents: Best Practices from the Field.* Author. Retrieved from: http://centerforchildwelfare2.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/Implementation/TrainingKinToBeFP.pdf
[38] For more information CWLA *Standards of Excellence for Kinship Care Services* : http://66.227.70.18/programs/standards/cwsstandardskinship.htm

- o Addressing children's specific medical, educational, emotional and sexuality needs;
- o Accessing and addressing financial and resource issues;
- o Addressing cultural, ethnic, and religious orientations as appropriate; and
- o Working as a member of a team, including participating in case reviews, court involvement, counseling sessions, medical services, school meetings, and agency team meetings, as appropriate.

Impacts of Child Behaviors on Foster Parent Supports and Retention

Cooley, M., Farineau, H., & Mullis, A. (2015). Child behaviors as a moderator: Examining the relationship between foster parent supports, satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *45*, 46-56.

Summary:

- Foster parents need access to supports and resources in order to be satisfied with their caregiving role and continue providing foster care services. However, they often experience multiple demands in their role as a substitute caregiver that could lead to stress.
- Child behaviors especially may be a significant factor when considering sources of strain and may be a potential risk factor for negative outcomes such as dissatisfaction with fostering or the decision to discontinue providing foster care.
- The *purpose of this study was to examine whether child disruptive behaviors moderated or influenced the nature or strength of the relationship between foster parent supports and satisfaction as a caregiver as well as intent to continue fostering*. The sample size consisted of 155 licensed foster caregivers from across the United States.
    - o This study had a few limitations. This study is cross-sectional, meaning that the results should only be interpreted relationally. If these experiences were analyzed longitudinally other associations between the variables may appear. Additionally, the sample size is fairly small and consisted of a non-random, snowball sample of participants from varying geographical locations across the United States. Another limitation regarding participants is that most foster parents in this study were fairly high income and non-minority, which may not be reflective of a large number of caregivers, particularly those involved in kinship care.
- *Various resources are needed to adequately support foster parents, preserve their satisfaction, and keep them fostering, such as resilience, social connections, support in times of need, and the opportunity to form a positive attachment to their foster child*.
- However, child behaviors may also be a significant factor when considering foster parents' satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. *Previous research has indicated that child behaviors may be one of the most significant factors that impact caregivers' decision to continue fostering* (Oosterman, Schuengel, Slot, Bullens, & Doreleijers, 2007).
    - o In a qualitative study of foster parents, Zuniga (2012) found that foster parents are often times unsure of how to deal with children's various behavioral difficulties. While foster parents may have positive relationships with professional staff, the difficulties with managing child behaviors are troublesome. Given this, it is critical to

understand how significant these behaviors are in relation to the function and well-being of foster caregivers.

- o Understanding the interconnection of supports, child behaviors, and foster parent satisfaction with and intent to continue fostering is important for ensuring quality substitute caregivers for youth in the child welfare system. More specifically, *it is critically important to understand how child behaviors may in fact moderate the benefits of foster parents resources and supports on their satisfaction with fostering and desire to continue providing services.*

- *Researchers have suggested that foster parents may need to possess personal values or character attributes to persevere and remain resilient throughout the challenges of fostering* (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). *Some researchers have suggested that resilience is more of a personal attribute than a skill that can be taught* (Whiting & Huber, 2007), *but as such, it is still a very important resource for foster parents.* Sinclair and Wilson (2003) found that the personal attribute of resilience of the foster parent might also be an important attribute in providing quality caregiving.

- *Another important resource for foster parents is the relationships they have with others.* The retention of foster caregivers can be challenging as caregivers often report inadequate support or strain from various support systems.

  - o When caregivers do not get their needs met through formal supports (e.g., licensing agencies) they may create stronger connections with informal supports, such as family and friends, which could have many beneficial effects. *Support may be especially beneficial to foster caregivers, as they have reported feeling isolated from their non-foster counterparts due to the services they provide. Benefits of informal support or social connections may include more satisfaction in their role as a foster parent, less strain, and improved psychosocial well-being, which have been attributed to caregiver longevity or commitment to fostering.*

  - o *Another supportive relationship for foster parents may be the relationship with their foster children.* Researchers have found that the ability to nurture a positive relationship with one's foster child may contribute to family well-being (Strengthening Families, 2012). Difficulty developing a strong attachment with one's foster child can strain foster parents, who also benefit from and need positive relationships with youth in their care. *The attachment with one's caregiver can be mutually beneficial to both caregivers and youths, as the strength of the relationship between foster caregivers and youth could be predictive of the success of that particular placement, such as less behavioral disruptions and longer stays by foster youth* (Leathers, 2006).

    - ▪ One study found that foster parents who rated higher levels of commitment to their foster child experienced more delight as a result of the relationship with their child (Bernard & Dozier, 2011). *Therefore, opportunities to foster a positive relationship between caregivers and foster youth can potentially increase foster parents' desire to continue fostering based on positive experiences.*

- *The results of this study by Cooley, et al. (2015) found child behaviors indeed served as a significant moderator between some types of supports and satisfaction.*
    - *Because the perception of child behaviors moderates the relationship between some of foster caregiver's supports and their satisfaction, these supports could be built upon in a training situation or even in a therapeutic environment. Trainers could highlight the benefits of developing these supports or identifying resources during trainings for foster parents. Focused training that is intended to help foster parents develop personal resources or supports (e.g., resilience or social support) may be able to help caregivers feel higher satisfaction as a caregiver.*
    - *Family therapy could be a helpful tool for social workers and therapists to use by working with foster caregivers to build upon their resources and also address concerns related to managing child behaviors.* Because some foster caregivers report high levels of supports but also report high levels of disruptive child behaviors or a lack of satisfaction, *parenting interventions or therapy could potentially help them address their perceptions of their situation or environment and help them find new ways of viewing their situation.*
        - Utilizing family therapy, whether in-home or in an office-based setting, as an intervention may also be effective, as researchers have identified a range of positive outcomes for caregivers and children who have gone to therapy together[39]. Family therapy, from a systemic perspective, could be a potentially effective intervention for foster families as well by including and recognizing the contribution and process of each member of the foster family.
        - Lastly, understanding necessary resources and supports of foster parents could be effective for helping social workers and therapists working with foster families, as it may give them not only more tools but a more holistic intervention for working with clients.
- *Given that child behaviors were indicated to be a significant moderator in this study, it shows that clinicians and other child welfare professionals need to focus on child behaviors when working with foster parents. While providing supports to foster parents is important, one cannot ignore the need to intervene with children who are displaying difficult behaviors.*
    - It is important that services are provided to reduce difficult child behaviors and not simply try to provide support to foster parents as a means of increasing their satisfaction with fostering.
    - The results from this study also highlight that *ignoring the need of intervening with the children, either through individual or family treatment would be to neglect an essential aspect of the fostering experience, the management of difficult child behaviors.*

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[39] Henggeler, S. W., & Sheidow, A. J. (2012). Empirically supported family-based treatments for conduct disorder and delinquency in adolescents. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*(1), 30-58.; Turner, W., & Macdonald, G. (2011). Treatment foster care for improving outcomes in children and young people: A systematic review. *Research on Social Work Practice, 21,* 501- 527.

- o *Such intervention could potentially aid in maintaining more stable foster care placements, promote a more positive experience for foster parents, and even more importantly provide a positive experience for children in foster care.*
- Lastly this research study also provides implications for determining the most appropriate measures for examining whether child behaviors moderate the relationship between foster caregiver supports and satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.
  - o First, *it may be more practical to help foster parents develop more or stronger support systems than it would be to help them change their views on their child's behaviors.*
  - o Second, *it may be helpful to use a scale that measures internalizing and externalizing behaviors to determine whether there are specific types of child behaviors that influence foster caregivers most.*
  - o Foster parents are an important source of feedback through which foster parent training or intervention could be improved.

Additional Resources

- *Please refer to Section II- Effective Supports and Resources to Retain Foster Parents of this Summary of the Research for additional promising practices/recommendation that help promote the retention of resource families.*
- North Carolina DSS, Child Welfare Service's *Treat them Like Gold, A Best Practice Guide to Partnering with Resource Families* (2009):
  http://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/publications/docs/Partnering_with_Resource_Families.pdf
- The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning has developed a large collection of resources on retention that can be accessed at:
  http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/recruitment-and-retention.html
- The National Center for Child Welfare Excellence (NCCWE) at the Silberman School of Social Work resources on *Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families* that can be accessed at:
  http://www.nccwe.org/BPR/hot-topics/RecruitmentAndRetentionOfResourceFamilies.html
- *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies (2012)* can be accessed at:
  http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/
  (The goal of this Annie E. Casey guide is to leverage their experience working with a range of city and state human service departments to promote child welfare reform by sharing information and encouraging the use of best practices in working with resource families.
  (http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid=%7b224EC50B-F809-4135-9C0E-803E87CD49B8%7d).
- A study by Howell-Moroney (2013) found amidst a crisis shortage of foster homes in the child welfare system *faith-based collaborations aimed at recruiting foster parents from churches have recently emerged. These collaborations may offer a unique opportunity to recruit committed and altruistic parents as caregivers, providing much needed capacity to an overloaded child welfare system.* This paper uses original survey data from participants in two large-scale programs: Project 1.27 in Colorado and the CALL in Arkansas. The empirical results demonstrate that both

programs are very successful at building awareness about the need for foster/adoptive parents and the biblical mandate for serving as caregivers. Further, a large percentage of respondents shifted their attitudes from not seriously considering fostering or adopting before program exposure to serious consideration of fostering or adopting after exposure. The paper concludes with a discussion of these findings and their implications for child welfare policy.[40]

IV. Promising Practices Around Recruitment Including for "Harder to Place" Children (e.g. sibling groups, older youth, and children with higher behavioral, mental, and/or medical needs)?

Main Types of Resource Family Recruitment: General, Targeted and Child-Specific[41]

1) *General recruitment consists of basic, undifferentiated outreach to the public, conveying the message that homes are needed for children in foster care or awaiting adoption. The goal is to disperse the message widely and to generate as many phone calls as possible from people who want to help—regardless of qualification or the type of children they wish to foster or adopt.*
   - Common examples of general recruitment tools are: television/radio public service announcements, billboards, booths at community events, advertisement in newspapers and social media.

2) *Targeted recruitment routes the recruitment message directly to the people who are most likely to follow through to become foster or adoptive parents for specific types of children. It focuses on families in targeted communities where homes are needed as well as finding families with specific backgrounds that match the backgrounds and needs of children awaiting homes.* Targeted recruitment reflects a clear understanding of a community's needs based on the profiles of children awaiting homes.
   - Common examples of targeted recruitment are: placing human interest stories in neighborhood publications, engaging teens as recruiters, holding "fosterware parties," partnering with a faith organization in a specific neighborhood and customizing recruitment materials to reflect targeted groups of children.
   - *For planning purposes, agencies should focus the majority (about 60 percent) of their recruitment budget on targeted recruitment. While this approach may attract fewer inquiries from prospective parents than a general recruitment campaign, the rate of completion should be significantly higher and the prospective families will be applying to foster and adopt your highest-need children.* In general, between 5 and 10 percent of interested callers complete the certification process and become resource parents, although yields should increase with greater focus on targeted recruitment.
   - *Targeted recruitment uses community research and data to make educated choices about who to approach based on actual local needs.* For instance, if a majority of children

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[40] Howell-Moroney, M. (2013). On the effectiveness of faith-based partnerships in recruitment of foster and adoptive parents. *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy, 19*(2), 168.

[41] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/

entering out-of-home care are between six and nine years old, then recruiters would want to target parents of grade-school children or community partners that serve that population. *However, a closer look might reveal that the children most in need of homes are actually age 15 or older, because local grade-school children often find placements with relatives. In that situation, recruiters might look for prospective parents among high school parents, teachers, volunteers, coaches and after-school programs for teens. Targeted recruiting can also be based on children from ethnic or racial groups where there may be strong demand and short supply of resource families. Engage cultural organizations, using racially specific media, or approach minority-owned businesses and churches to help spread the word to the audience most likely to respond to the need.*

- *One successful targeted recruiting tactic is to provide prospective parents with detailed, local information as a recruiting tool.* It is more powerful to approach a prospective parent with specific data rather than with the message that thousands of children across the state need homes.
    - o Specific stories can motivate people to share information with friends and recruit on behalf of the agency, even if they are not interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent. Examples include: Four children in your elementary school are in need of a home; Twelve children in your neighborhood are removed from their homes every year and will have to move to a new neighborhood, away from their school and friend; There are 17 tribal children in care who have to live in non-tribal households.

3) *Child-specific recruitment develops an individual recruitment plan for a specific child or sibling group in need of a temporary or permanent family*. For example, the child's parental rights may have been terminated and no family has been identified or a youth may be stepping down from a group home who needs specialized care. *Child-specific recruitment is often done as a partnership between the child's caseworker and the recruiter. The process usually begins with a conversation with the child to determine who the key people are in the child's life that could be explored as family options. In addition, a thorough review of the child's case record often uncovers important relationships and connections.* Customized materials such as flyers or brochures are developed to highlight the child's personality, likes/dislikes, activities and needs.

- For a *Recruitment Plan Guidance Chart* developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012), which also summarizes the above three recruitment types, please refer to Appendix B of this report.

Best Practice Principles: General Recruitment

- Thirty state foster care managers responded to a survey on promising practices in foster care recruitment and retention.[42] The best practice principles that emerged for general recruitment are summarized below.

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[42] Lutz, L. (2002). *Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families; The Promise and the Paradox.* Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Retrieved from
http://centerforchildwelfare2.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/prprouthome/Recruitment%20and%20Retention%20of%20Resource%20Families%20-%202002.pdf

- o *Respond to inquiries quickly and with adequate information*: Agencies should respond to foster parents' inquiries in a timely manner, providing information that fully explains the initial application and training process.
- o *Provide competency-based pre-service training:* Foster parents should receive competency-based pre-service training, which clearly defines the requirements and challenges of foster care.
- o *Create powerful impact messages:* Agencies should convey a message of the impact foster parents have on the children and their families (exercising caution with "rescuing" messages).
- o *Target recruitment efforts:* Targeted recruitment has proven to be the most effective in attracting the right kinds of families for the particular kinds of children and teens an agency has in its care.
- o *Recognize that recruitment is a community activity:* The Casey study notes: "The foundation of successful recruitment is building strong relationships with visible, influential community members. Successful recruitment is not something that can occur in a bubble. The most successful efforts were those where the community took ownership for meeting the needs of children in care. Community stakeholders must be engaged in the goal setting and recruitment process."

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) emphasizes that the recruitment of non-related caregivers alone will not be sufficient to meet the ongoing foster care capacity needs of California's counties, and that *greater effort must be made to finding, retaining and supporting relative caregivers.*[43]
  - o It is also clear that relative finding alone is insufficient—that relatives must also be supported and services must be available in the home.
  - o *Another advantage to support more increased attention/efforts to relative caregiver recruitment is research has shown that that foster youth placed with kin experience fewer placements (which reduces social worker workload and improves child well-being) have more frequent and consistent contact with siblings and birth parents (which can aid in reunification efforts and improves child well-being), have fewer negative emotions about being placed into foster care than youth placed with non-relatives, are less likely to run away and are more likely to graduate.*[44]

Lessons Learned from Recruiting Resource Families for Washington State's Children in Care

- A 2009 Washington State report[45] reviewed research and strategy literature related to foster parent recruitment trends. In summary, their foster parent recruitment literature review found that:

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[43] All County Letter No. 15-76. Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRRS) Funding Opportunity. 2015 Foster and Relative Caregiver Recruitment, Retention and Support Plan, P. 2. Retrieved from http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-76.pdf

[44] Ibid.

[45] Marcenko, M. Brennan, K., & Lyons, S. (2009, May). *Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention: Developing Resource Families for Washington State's Children in Care.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington School of

1) "word-of-mouth" from satisfied caregivers is believed to be the most effective recruitment tool;
2) negative public perceptions, burdensome application processes, and poor agency responsiveness contribute to recruitment challenges;
3) targeted recruitment is more effective than general media approaches;
4) foster parents are motivated by altruism and/or a desire to adopt;
5) many foster parent applicants do not complete the process; and
6) a small percent of foster parents provide the majority of care.

The Case for a Strategic Recruitment Plan[46]

- In many agencies, recruitment is often approached in a haphazard way with staff doing the same activities and events from previous years. Unfortunately, this has yielded the same result–an inadequate supply of resource parents. *An annual plan for recruitment can eliminate the use of overused and ineffective strategies when written with specific goals and outcomes delineated from the beginning. All activities must move the agency toward its identified goals and outcomes.*
- Recruitment plans should:
  1) *Have specific goals and outcomes identifying the types of children targeted and the numbers of specific families that are being targeted.* (Example: Targeted homes for African-American boys, ages 12-15. Goal in 12 months: 20 newly certified homes);
  2) *Use data to determine what recruitment goals should be established;*
  3) *Be written in great detail with dates, time/location, materials needed, estimated budget, contact persons and responsible agency personnel;*
  4) *Have activities that build on one another, month after month, to keep the message going out to the community;*
  5) *Be community based, creating solid partnerships with local resources;*
  6) *Be culturally sensitive with appropriate messaging and images that accurately reflect the children in need of homes; and*
  7) *Eliminate or limit the use of booths and tables, which are general recruitment in nature.*

Additional General Recruitment Resources

- *National Resource Center–AdoptUsKids:* www.adoptuskids.org/nrc-recruitment
  - *Answering the Call: Getting More Parents for Children from Your Recruitment Efforts, Practitioner's Guide*
    http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/practitionersGuide.pdf
  - *Answering the Call: Finding Common Ground: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies Working with Communities of Faith*
    http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/faithbook.pdf
  - *Strategies for Recruiting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families:*

Social Work, Partners for Our Children. Retrieved from
http://partnersforourchildren.org/sites/default/files/2009._foster_parent_recruitment_and_retention.pdf
[46] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved at http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/

http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/strategies-for-recruiting-LGBT-foster-adoptive-kinship-families.pdf

- *National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids*
  - *Data Driven Recruitment: Key Data Elements on Foster and Adoptive Care* (Suggests priorities for key data elements on prospective and current families that will help inform agency/staff efforts to recruit and maintain a pool of families and help agencies/staff assess the effectiveness of recruitment efforts): http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/data-driven-recruitment-110514.pdf
  - *Diligent Recruitment Navigator Tool:* http://www.nrcdr.org/diligent-recruitment/dr-navigator
  - *Tips, Tools, and Trends: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) & Market Segmentation* (Provides a brief overview of how child welfare systems can use Geographic Information Systems and market segmentation approaches to visualize data and to support targeted, data-informed outreach and recruitment efforts): http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/TTT_GIS_MarketSegmentation.pdf
  - *Using Social Media in Recruitment* (These resources can help agencies decide if it is ready to use social media as a tool for recruiting and retaining families, and which networks one might consider using): http://www.nrcdr.org/placement-stability-and-permanency/tools-and-resources/using-social-media-in-recruitment
  - *Placement Stability and Permanency Tools and Resources:* http://www.nrcdr.org/placement-stability-and-permanency/tools-and-resources
- *Creating Foster Care Capacity for Abused and Neglected Children:* http://library.cppp.org/files/4/capacitypiece311.pdf
- *Recruiting Techniques-Ideas for recruiting in rural areas (from The Rural Adoption Recruiter):* http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/Rural_Adoption_Recruiter.pdf
- *Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center-Best Practice Articles Regarding Recruitment and Retention:* http://wifostercareandadoption.org/ToolsforWorkers/BestPracticeArticles.aspx

Impacts of Inappropriate Recruitment of Resource Families[47]

- Across the country, child welfare systems suffer from a lack of suitable resource families due to inappropriate recruiting and inadequate support. This deficit has a broad impact on vulnerable children and families, including:
  1) *Overly restrictive placements. Placements (particularly for teens) are often based on availability rather than level of need and this often results in inappropriate use of non-family care such as shelters, group homes and institutions.*
  2) *Poor matches between children and resource families. The matching process should consider the child's needs and community of origin to preserve family, friends, local schools and churches. In looking for an appropriate placement, it is important to*

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[47] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/

consider a child's unique and special needs and identify a family who is best able to meet all the child's needs. A good match means that a child is more likely to fit into a family and neither the child nor the family will have to experience the trauma of disruption. Staff must also recognize that a child's first placement could become his permanent placement, should reunification not be an option.

3) *Frequent and unnecessary disruptions.* With proper matching and support of families, systems can greatly reduce disruptions—to everyone's benefit. *When a child continues to move from placement to placement, their level of care is likely to become more restrictive, making permanency more difficult to achieve.*

4) *Overcrowded homes. Over-burdened resource families increase the risk of abuse or neglect allegations and licensing rule violations, which ultimately lead to the closing of homes. Overcrowding also leads to burn-out and increased attrition—when overloaded, great resource parents become mediocre resource parents and may eventually leave the system.*

5) *Negative word-of-mouth. Recruitment becomes more difficult when there are negative perceptions of the system in the community. Without adequate resource family support and development, an agency's reputation will suffer and current resource families will discourage friends or family from stepping forward as potential resource families.*

Top Recruitment Strategies Shared by Child Welfare Staff and Resource Parents[48]

- Following a literature review on the recruitment, selection, and training of resource parents as well as conducting surveys and facilitating focus groups with staff and resource parents in the public child welfare agency and private child care facilities, Sullivan, Collins-Camargo & Murphy (2014) found *the same top strategies to reduce the barriers related to recruitment and selection were identified by both the child welfare workers and resource parents (though only in slightly different order)*, with the exception of the resource parents identifying the use of statewide information sessions and training calendars to improve timeliness and accessibility to training. Those perceptions shared by resource parents and staff included:

  a) *designating specific recruitment staff with sufficient time and tools to promote the kind of recruitment and selection activities staff and resource parents believe is necessary (and currently missing),*

  b) *improving knowledge of effective strategies for recruitment (recognizing the ineffectiveness of general recruitment and noting effective targeted and child-specific recruitment activities may require a higher level of skill among staff),*

  c) *helping families expand their preconceived criteria of what type of child they are willing to accept, and*

  d) *the use of data for better decision-making on a regional basis.*

[48] Sullivan, D., Collins-Camargo, C. & Murphy, A. (2014). Identifying Barriers to Permanency: The Recruitment, Selection, and Training of Resource Parents. *Child & Youth Services, 35*(4), 365-389

Targeted Recruitment Techniques for Older Youth/Teens[49]

1) *Develop current resource parents:*
   a) Have licensed families provide respite or mentoring for teens in care so they can develop relationships with them
   b) Have teens and their resource parents speak to MAPP/GPS classes and participate in activities and events for resource families
   c) Provide or refer families to training that prepare them for parenting teens, such as managing common teen behaviors and adolescent development

2) *Target community groups that have experience with teens*, including:
   a) High School groups: PTAs, athletic events, teachers associations, etc.
   b) Community groups: Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, church youth groups, teen community service organizations
   c) Professionals: group home staff, mental health associations, etc.
   d) Senior groups: civic and church organizations that have high numbers of emptynesters or retirees

3) *Ask teens*:
   a) Have ongoing discussions with teens individually and in groups about permanency: a goal of long-term support, stability, and a "home base" for every youth
   b) Ask teens to talk and write about related questions, such as: Who do you consider family? What does family look like? What would you look for in a family? What would you bring to a family? How can you combine birth and adoptive family connections in your life? What do other teens in foster care need from foster families?
   c) In New Hampshire teens are actively involved in permanency planning. They attend six-month administrative reviews, document their past (as in a life book), and identify potential connections. Then, contracted agency workers take over the specialized work of contacting these resources.
   d) In Texas, older teens participate in regular Circle of Support meetings where they drive the agenda. During such meetings, youth have identified long lost relatives and others who have stepped up to adopt, be guardians, or provide support. Audrey Jackson, adoption program specialist at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) notes, "Youth are very helpful in identifying people who may be a resource to them—not just a relative, but a former foster parent, a coach. Their views are very, very key."

4) In reference to adoption recruitment two notable large-scale national recruitment campaigns that have focused on strategies for successfully increasing the adoptions of older children from a general pool of Americans rather than simply turning to relatives and foster families

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[49] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Available at http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/ ; Boo, M. (2010). *Successful Older Child Adoption: Lessons from the Field.* North American Council on Adoptable Children. Retrieved from http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk/OlderChAdoptions.html

are the *Freddie Mac Foundation's Wednesday's Child Program* and the *Department of Health and Human Services AdoptUSKids program*.[50]

- o Additionally a 2012 report by AdoptUSKids, *Increasing Your Agency's Capacity to Respond to Prospective Parents and Prepare Older Youth for Adoption: Going Beyond Recruitment for 14 to 16 Year Olds* is can help support agencies in recruiting adoptive parents for teens in foster care and provides useful tools to inform their work and can be shared with prospective adoptive parents who are considering adopting older youth: http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/going-beyond-recruitment-for-14-to-16-year-olds.pdf

Targeted Recruitment Techniques for Sibling Groups[51]

- *The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse estimated that 65-85% of U.S. foster children come from siblings groups, and studies of siblings in the child welfare system suggest that 60% to 73% of U.S. foster children have siblings who also enter foster care.* It is estimated that only 25% of these children are placed with all their siblings.[52]
- Studies show that larger sibling groups are more likely than smaller groups to be placed separately, not only because fewer foster homes are willing to accept large groups of children, but also because large sibling groups are less likely to enter foster care at the same time.[53]
- The *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* is the first Federal law to address the importance of keeping siblings together. This law requires States to make reasonable efforts to maintain sibling connections in order to receive Federal funding.[54]

[50] Burrell Cowan, A. (2004). New strategies to promote the adoption of older children out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 26*(11), 1007-1020.

[51] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/ ; AdoptUSKids. (2008). *Practice Principles for the Recruitment and Retention Of Kinship, Foster, And Adoptive Families For Siblings.* Retrieved from http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/practice-principles-and-seven-step-process-for-sibling-recruitment.pdf ; AdoptUSKids. (n.d.). *Engaging, Developing, & Supporting Prospective Families for Sibling Groups.* Retrieved from http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/engaging-developing-supporting-prospective-families-for-sibling-groups.pdf

[52] Hegar, R. L. (2005). Sibling placement in foster care and adoption: An overview of international research. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*, p. 718.

[53] Washington, K. (2007). Research review: Sibling placement in foster care: A review of the evidence. *Child and Family Social Work, 12*, p. 431.

[54] *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*, Pub. L. No. 110-351, 122 Stat. 3949

Importance of Keeping Siblings[55] Together[56]

- Siblings can be comforters, caretakers, role models, spurs to achievement, faithful allies, and best friends. No matter how close they are, most brothers and sisters share years of experiences that form a bond, a common foundation they do not have with anyone else.

- When children experience parental losses, neglect and abuse, they depend on one another to survive. *In the absence of reliable parental care, children typically turn to siblings for support, leading to strong sibling bonds.*

- Brothers and sisters separated from each other in foster care experience trauma, anger, and an extreme sense of loss. *Research suggests that separating siblings may make it difficult for them to begin a healing process, make attachments, and develop a healthy self-image. Indeed, because of the reciprocal affection they share, separated siblings often feel they have lost a part of themselves.* Siblings can help each other process the past, remember experiences, and move into the future together.

- *Practice wisdom and research support the premise that children experience better permanency outcomes when placed with their siblings. These outcomes include greater placement stability, fewer emotional and behavioral difficulties, fewer placements and fewer days in placement.*
    - Preschoolers placed with siblings had a higher rate of psychological problems prior to placement, but despite this history, showed significantly fewer emotional and behavioral problems in placement than those separated from their siblings.[57]

- Placing siblings together not only reduces the children's losses and preserves kinship ties, it can also reduce stressed agencies' adoption costs.

- *For these and other reasons, child welfare policy directs child welfare agencies to place siblings together whenever possible, unless contrary to the child's developmental, treatment, or safety needs.[58] To do this successfully, agencies must recruit and prepare resource families willing to take sibling groups.*

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[55] Note: In defining the term "sibling," agencies may use a broad definition to embrace the traditions, faith affiliations, and unique family structures of various cultures and extended families. Therefore, "sibling" can include those who share a birth parent or legal parent, step-parent and/or others who have lived together in a family and identify themselves as siblings.

[56] Cohn, M. & Ariyakulkan, L. (2012). *Information Packet-Sibling Placement: The Importance of the Sibling Relationship for Children in Foster Care*. National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections. Retrieved from
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/information_packets/Sibling_Placement.pdf

[57] Tarren-Sweeney, M. & Hazell, P. (2005). The mental health and socialization of siblings in care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*, p. 839.

[58] *Note:* While in some instances, the placement of siblings together occurs at the time the children enter foster care in other cases, children are born after their siblings are already in care. The newborn infant may or may not enter care and if he does, he may be placed in a home separately from his sibling(s). This infant might begin life without developing a relationship with his siblings, who could be years older. If placed in a loving and nurturing home, the infant will begin to develop a secure attachment relationship with his caregivers. If child welfare workers and judges decide to follow the Fostering Connections to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act without considering the individual infant's needs, an infant could be disrupted from his/her primary attachment figure (research cites the most important need of an infant or young maltreated child in foster care is to establish a healthy attachment relationship with a primary caregiver) in order to be placed with siblings and a caregiver he does not know. Thus some research (e.g. Miron, Sujan, & Middleton 2013) recommends foster care workers also view cases through the lens of infant attachment and infant mental health, considering attachment relationships to infant's foster parents and

- When siblings cannot be placed together, enabling them to maintain contact when they are separated helps preserve their connections with one another and to their family and culture.

Tips for Child Welfare Agencies in Recruiting Resource Families for Sibling Groups[59]
- *Effective recruitment of families for siblings is driven and supported by an attitude of abundance regarding the availability of families to keep siblings together. This includes having a belief that kinship, foster and adoptive families are willing to step forward to assist the agency in keeping siblings together.*
    - In 2014, of the 3,800 families that were actively registered on AdoptUSKids, 84% were open to adopting more than one child.[60]
- No one wakes up one morning, calls an agency, and says "Do you have a sibling group of four children that includes three boys, ages 8–14?" *The only way to successfully recruit families for specific children is specific recruitment.*
    a) Siblings need a recruitment plan. List who is doing what and when. Ensure the plan's timely execution.
    b) A great picture of the sibling group together is a powerful tool. When separate pictures of each child are shown, it gives parents a feeling they can pick and choose whichever child they want (usually the youngest).
    c) Sibling groups almost always get the most calls when presented in the media. Feature sibling groups often in newspapers, television features, agency newsletters, posters, or wherever your agency recruits.
    d) *In general, Latinos are accustomed to large families, so they may be very accepting of sibling groups. It is not unusual for a Latino couple to want to adopt two or three siblings.*[61]
    e) *Pre-service training groups are a great place to recruit homes for siblings—all the parents are there because they want to care for children.* Ask the trainer if you can have five minutes to present a sibling group. Pass out flyers or show a video clip of the children together.

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the consequences of a potential attachment disruption in addition to assessing the quality of sibling relationships and weighing the benefits of placement with their siblings in foster care.

[59] AdoptUSKids. (2008). *Practice Principles for the Recruitment and Retention Of Kinship, Foster, And Adoptive Families For Siblings.* Retrieved from http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/practice-principles-and-seven-step-process-for-sibling-recruitment.pdf; Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). Sibling issues in foster care and adoption. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.; Silverstein, D. N., & Smith, S. L. (2009). Practice strategies to preserve sibling relationships. In D. N. Silverstein and S. L. Smith (Eds.), *Siblings in adoption and foster care*, (pp. 123-137). Westport, CT: Praeger. ; Kupecky, R. (2001). Sibling-Friendly Agencies and Practices Keep Children Together. *Recruiting News*, St. Paul, MN: North American Council on Adoptable Children.

[60] AdoptUSKids. (2014). *Keep Siblings Together: Finding qualified homes for siblings might be easier than you think.* Retrieved from http://www.adoptuskids.org/for-professionals/sibling-infographic?utm_source=nrcdrTarRec&utm_medium=Infographic&utm_campaign=SiblingInfographic

[61] AdoptUSKids. (2008*). Answering the Call: Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura: (Our Family, Our Culture): Promoting & Supporting Latino Families in Adoption and Foster Care.* Retrieved from http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/NuestraFamilia_NuestraCultura.pdf

f) Don't eliminate singles or childless couples. They don't disrupt any more than married or repeat parents.

g) Make sure recruiters know about available subsidies. Many parents feel they can't adopt a group because of costs and are reassured to learn of financial assistance.

h) When an event such as a recruitment picnic is planned, buy each sibling in the group the same shirt so that prospective parents can spot them all in the crowd. Make sure they eat at the same table or play together.

i) Measure success in terms of events, not time. Agencies separate children because "we haven't found a family in five months." But have they tried every recruitment idea once, then again? If so and still no response, then reassess the recruitment plan.

j) *Some sibling groups cannot be placed together.* Prior to recruitment, sibling groups' attachments to each other and their primary caretakers as well as their safety when in the same home should be assessed. But with lifebook work[62] and careful pre-placement preparation, many more sibling groups can be together than are presently.

- *Agency practices can affect whether or not siblings are placed together. The following are strategies/techniques designed to address the needs of sibling groups and help agencies frame their recruitment and retention practices related to placing siblings together and helping child welfare agencies ensure they are sibling-friendly*:

    a) For the child welfare agency to be successful in keeping siblings together, all participants in the child welfare system need to be educated and supported in maintaining siblings together and facilitating contacts and visits through legislation, policy, practice and resources.

        o *Train all staff in the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be effective in finding and supporting kinship, foster and adoptive families to parent siblings as well as the importance of preserving sibling connections and the impact of sibling loss on children.*

        o *Educate foster and adoptive parents, attorneys, judges and others involved in child welfare (e.g., therapists, residential staff and mental health providers) about the importance of sibling connections. A clear understanding of sibling connections could eliminate problems that result from separation and lack of visitation in foster care. Everyone must be onboard*, whether from a sense of child-centered practice, or simply from the fact that placing four children in one home is cheaper than recruiting, educating, and providing post-placement services to four families.

        o Licensing and/or approval standards should encourage placement of siblings together and be applied flexibly to qualify families to care for siblings together, except when safety precludes placements.

    b) If a child welfare agency's office *displays posters of waiting children, ensure some of these posters are of sibling groups (same with any posters displayed in the community)*.

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[62] For more information: https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/postplacement/lifebooks/

o   Newsletter articles and social media platforms should also mention the need for homes for siblings.
o   When recruiters go out ensure they post pictures of sibling groups on their display/ informational handouts.

c)   *Recruit families specifically to care for sibling groups through community outreach, the media, special events, faith-based organizations, photolistings, and websites.*

d)   *Accurate data and accountability systems need to be in place to track the location and status of siblings in care and continuously evaluate services provided for them.*

e)   *Conduct a thorough social work assessment of the sibling group as a whole, as well as of each individual child, and include children in discussions.*

f)   Assign all siblings to the same caseworker, no matter when they enter care.

g)   If siblings must be separated in an emergency placement, provide for a review within the first week to plan for reunification.

h)   *At regular case reviews, discuss sibling issues* and include children or youth in these discussions.

i)   *Proactively pursue placing siblings together with kinship placements first and/or fictive kin, including paternal kinship families because they are generally more open to taking a sibling group and because such placements offer the further advantage of preserving family connections.*

j)   *Designate certain foster home resources for large sibling groups and offer incentives to hold them open for these placements.*

k)   Diligently recruit and prepare a sufficient number of quality homes for siblings coming into care, who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in care.

l)   The agency should use best practices and consider non-traditional families and innovative ways to recruit and retain families to keep siblings together. These practices may include:
o   Making available to staff accurate data regarding children in care and current foster and adoptive families to assist in planning and targeting recruitment for siblings
o   Engaging community-based organizations, including faith-based communities, to help recruit and support families to foster and adopt siblings.
o   *Involving existing foster, adoptive and kinship families who care for siblings in finding and supporting new resource families for siblings.*
o   Have contracts with private agencies to offer a specialized foster care program designed specifically for large sibling groups (e.g. Neighbor to Family Sibling Foster Care Model in Florida and the Jewish Child Care Association Sibling Boarding Home program in New York).

m)   *Ensure that staff who are responding to inquiries from prospective parents are talking about sibling groups in a positive way, mention siblings as an option and are skilled and knowledgeable about the needs of children and youth in sibling groups who are waiting to be fostered or adopted. Provide these staff with clear information, talking points, and answers to common questions from prospective parents.*

- This information may cover the effects of trauma on children in foster care; the importance of preserving sibling connections; the impact of sibling loss on children; the skills and qualities that families find most helpful in parenting sibling groups adopted from foster care; and the support structures and services available to families who adopt sibling groups.
- They can also remind prospective parents that few people adopt one child – families usually come back for more and by taking two or three at once, families eliminate extra paperwork.

n) *During pre-service training for foster parents ensure there is a section on siblings containing specific information on the importance of sibling relationships and the impact of sibling separation* and you can fold it into sections about loss, birth families, or attachment.

o) *Develop a pool of spokesfamilies from approved foster or adoptive families who have parented sibling groups from the foster care system and can share their real life experiences with prospective families* to help to them understand what might be experienced with sibling groups.

p) *Help families assess their own individual and family strengths and concerns and how those strengths and concerns will affect their ability to meet the needs of a sibling group.* This will help them to be better prepared, have realistic expectations, and know when and how to seek assistance with parenting siblings placed in their home. Work with families to identify specific strategies for developing their strengths and skills based on each family's self-assessment.

q) *Provide sufficient resources for foster families who take in large sibling groups and may need additional household items and services.*
   - *Special funding and resources should be available for concrete items and/or services, such as beds, transportation, arranging sufficient space to help families qualify to care for sibling groups.*
   - Give families a list of community resources that can provide helpful support (e.g., camps, family support groups, resources for getting larger vehicles, etc.). Families who have adopted sibling groups can be a valuable source of suggestions for this resource list, based on their own experience identifying their needs and accessing support.

r) *Provide ongoing training and learning opportunities to families on helpful topics identified by other families who have parented sibling groups.* Mentoring, orientation, and ongoing training will be strengthened to highlight the importance of keeping siblings together.

s) *Other support services should be provided to help resource families keep siblings together (e.g., respite care, supportive counseling, community-based support and other incentives).*

t) *If siblings are not placed together, the agency should make all reasonable efforts to provide for frequent visitation and ongoing contact among the siblings.* When siblings

are separated in placement, if possible efforts should be made to place children in homes that are in close proximity to one another.

- o *Families who are parenting different members of a sibling group should be supported and encouraged to use natural means to bring siblings together* (e.g. going to temple or church together, going to sporting events, holiday events, family gatherings and reunions).
- o Ensure that information about siblings is included in each child's Lifebook. Conduct yearly interviews with foster or adoptive parents of separated siblings to assess:
    - i. If visits between and among the siblings are continuing, how often, for how long, and of what quality.
    - ii. If visits have discontinued, for what reason(s) and what would it take to reestablish connections.

u) For a summary of sibling group considerations at every step of the recruitment and retention process for resource families please refer to *Appendix C: Sibling Group Considerations at Every Step.*

Example of Current Programs to Maintain Sibling Connections[63]

a) *Camp To Belong* is an international non-profit organization dedicated to reuniting siblings placed in separate foster homes and other out-of-home care for events of fun, emotional empowerment, and sibling connections. Founded in Las Vegas in the summer of 1995 by Lynn Price, Camp To Belong Summer Camp was created to offer siblings in foster care and other out of home care the opportunity to create lifetime memories. www.camptobelong.org

b) *Camp Connect San Diego* is a partnership program between the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency and Promises2Kids, a non-profit organization offering a wide variety of resources and programs focused on fighting child abuse and neglect. Camp Connect brings together siblings separated in foster care, giving them the opportunity to reconnect and strengthen family ties. http://promises2kids.org/camp-connect

c) *Neighbor to Family* is a foster placement program for sibling groups, in addition to serving children with special needs and older foster children who are preparing to transition to independent living. The program uses a family-centered approach to provide abused and neglected children and their parents quality foster care services. (Offices in Florida, Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia) http://www.neighbortofamily.org/
    http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/neighbor-to-neighbor/detailed

d) *Project Visitation* was developed in 2001 to strengthen the bonds of siblings separated in foster care by coordinating visits that give siblings a chance to connect to one another.

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[63] Cohn, M. & Ariyakulkan, L. (2012). *Information Packet-Sibling Placement: The Importance of the Sibling Relationship for Children in Foster Care*. National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections. Retrieved from
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/information_packets/Sibling_Placement.pdf

Project Visitation, created by the State of Hawaii First Circuit Family Court and the Department of Human Services, is supported by volunteers who bring siblings together for monthly visits and regular family events.
http://familyprogramshawaii.org/programs/project-visitation/

Additional Resources on Sibling Groups

- *National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections (NRCPFC)*
  - *Sibling Practice Curriculum*
    (The overall training objectives of this curriculum are: to enhance understanding of issues concerning siblings in out-of-home care; to expand knowledge and skills in making appropriate placement decisions for sibling groups; to enhance knowledge and skills in the recruitment and retention of resource families willing and able to parent sibling groups; to enhance ability to present appropriate information to the court to support sibling groups; and to increase knowledge of policy and legislation affecting sibling placements in participants' jurisdictions):
    http://www.nrcpfc.org/is/training_curricula.html#spc
  - *Fostering Connections-Siblings webpage*:
    http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering_connections/siblings.html
  - *Siblings Hot Topics webpage*:
    http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/siblings.html
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption.* Washington D.C. Children's Bureau/ACYF:
  http://www.neighbortofamily.org/files/1113/8720/5733/siblingissues.pdf
- *AdoptUSKids*
  - *Practice Principles for the Recruitment and Retention of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Families for Siblings*
    (seeks to assist agencies in creating a clear plan in the recruitment and retention of families for sibling groups. This resource addresses the importance of keeping sibling together, provides ten basic principles to frame an agency's recruitment and retention practices relating to siblings, and uses a seven-step chart to demonstrate considerations at every step from targeted recruitment through placement)
    http://www.adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/practice-principles-and-seven-step-process-for-sibling-recruitment.pdf#snl
  - *10 Realities of Sibling Adoption/Resource List*
    (Highlights 10 key realities about the importance of keeping siblings connected and the benefits of placing siblings together to support children's well-being):
    http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/10-realities-of-sibling-adoption.pdf
  - *Engaging, Developing, & Supporting Prospective Families for Sibling Groups*
    (Highlights the importance of providing good support to families interested in adopting sibling groups beginning at their first contact with your agency and provides specific tips for ways to engage and develop families to help them build their capacity to adopt sibling

groups): http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/engaging-developing-supporting-prospective-families-for-sibling-groups.pdf

- o *Ten Myths and Realities of Sibling Adoptions*
  (Dispels common misconceptions about siblings being adopted):
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/ten-myths-and-realities-of-sibling-adoptions.pdf

Targeted Recruitment Techniques for Children of Color

- The Casey Family Foundation's Breakthrough Series Collaborative (2005)[64] generated numerous interventions in this area. Agencies in other states have successfully undertaken recruitment campaigns among communities of color with similar interventions (e.g. Utah Foster Care Foundation; Contra Costa, CA, "Kids Like Maria" campaign). Key recommendations include:

  1) *Translating materials into Spanish or other languages of minority communities, including recruitment brochures, applications, flyers for schools, posters in community spaces, etc.*
  2) *Certifying foster families of color as co-trainers of MAPP/GPS*
  3) *Conducting joint recruitment efforts by families of colors at fairs and other community events*
  4) *Making joint contacts (agency staff and foster parents of color) with prospective foster families*
  5) *Having existing foster families of color contact prospective families who have dropped out or slowed in their momentum towards licensing*
  6) *Conducting informational meetings in other languages and/or with other foster parents of color*
  7) *Creating a recruitment video for families of color*
  8) *Implementing a dedicated line for foster family inquiries with a recording in multiple languages*
  9) *Building relationships and focusing recruitment efforts in faith, ethnic, and civic organizations in communities of color to help spread the word to the audience most likely to respond to the need.*

African American Family Recruitment[65]

- Include members of the African American community in your recruitment efforts.
- Take time to assess or re-assess the agency's cultural competence.
  - o All staff should honestly examine personal biases and stereotypes about African American families. Agencies should also consider how current policies and practices are likely to alienate or welcome members of the black community. Another option is to

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[64] Casey Family Foundation (2005). *Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families, Promising Practices and Lessons Learned.* Seattle, WA: Author.

[65] Riggs, D. (2005). *Finding African American Families for Foster Children: Tips for Workers & Agencies.* North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). Retrieved from http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk/findingfamilies.html

> bring in a neutral facilitator to help conduct a fair assessment of an agency's cultural competence

- Take time to build trusting relationships in the black community.
- Emphasize and tailor community education efforts for the intended audience.
- Enlist support from African American churches.
- Reach out to the types of people whom your agency has successfully recruited before, but don't ignore untapped resources.

Latino Family Recruitment

- *Latino foster and adoptive parents and bicultural child welfare specialists offered the following insights about the benefits of recruiting Latino foster and adoptive parents:* [66]

  a) Latinos have a long history of helping raise children in need of temporary or permanent families through informal foster care and adoption.

    - Hispanic populations have a far greater likelihood of considering adoption (54%) than African Americans (45%) or Whites (36%).[67]

  b) Latinos often exhibit a great willingness to help other families, based on a strong value of community.

  c) The Latino culture places great emphasis on the importance of family.

  d) The Latino concept of family goes beyond blood relatives, encompassing friends, neighbors, and compadres (honored friends and godparents involved in mentoring and raising the child). This mindset of inclusiveness bodes well for foster and adopted children to be truly claimed and incorporated into the family.

  e) Latino families who are of modest educational and economic accomplishments may be more accepting of children who face academic challenges.

  f) In general, Latinos are accustomed to large families, so they may be very accepting of sibling groups. It is not unusual for a Latino couple to want to adopt two or three siblings.

  g) Many Latinos have strong family and community rites and traditions that can help children develop attachments and positive identities.

  h) Latino families who still parent in the traditional way put emphasis on teaching their children the importance of respect of what is right and proper and tend to hold their children accountable for these values.

  i) In general, Latino families offer life-long connections, assistance, and support through the family value of inter-dependence.

  j) Those Latinos who place a high value on interdependence may exert less pressure on older youth to leave home.

  k) Children raised in Latino families may be given the opportunity to become bilingual.

- *Strategies to Support Recruitment of Latino Resource Families*[68]

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[66] AdoptUSKids. (n.d.*). Benefits for Children of Recruiting Latino Foster and Adoptive Families.* Retrieved from: http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/latino-tipsheet-packet.pdf

[67] Geen, R. (2003). Who will adopt the foster care children left behind? *The Urban Institute, Caring for Children. Brief No. 2.*

a) Overwhelmingly, the Latino foster and adoptive parents interviewed for the *Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura* publication by AdoptUSKids (2008) confirmed the primary importance of speaking Spanish. After all, language expresses more than what people think; it also conveys how people feel.

- While a number of families who inquire via phone line about becoming foster or adoptive parents have basic English skills they may be more comfortable conversing in Spanish. [69]

- *Jurisdictions are often challenged to find ample Spanish-speaking staff to respond in a timely fashion to individuals and families who only speak Spanish and express interest in taking the next steps towards becoming foster or adoptive parents*. Sometimes families may feel pressured to bring a neighbor or relative – or even a very young son or daughter – to translate, and this may compromise their confidentiality or result in their lack of participation in the process. [70]

- A Latino family specialist explains why *offering adoption or foster care classes in Spanish is more beneficial than providing an interpreter*:
  "*The training is a process where parents are introduced to new material. They need time to understand the material, to process it, and to be able to extrapolate information relevant to their situation. They also need time to ask questions and get clarification. This is often difficult when one is in the minority and may not want to hinder the flow of the conversation. Parents also raise concerns about being unable to contribute to the conversation due to language barriers.*"[71]

  i. Ideally offer all written work and preparation classes, as well as any additional requirements such as a First Aid class, in both languages.

- Understand that in some heavily populated Latino communities, the need to learn English may not be as crucial because the majority of community members speak Spanish and the community is fully self-sufficient. Look at this as a strength-based model.[72]

b) A cardinal rule to follow: *Go slowly! Respect a different orientation, one which may be more "now" focused than future focused.* Do not assume a lack of motivation if the family members do not arrive on time to an appointment or if they do not get their paperwork in "on time."

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[68] AdoptUSKids. (2008*). Answering the Call: Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura: (Our Family, Our Culture): Promoting & Supporting Latino Families in Adoption and Foster Care.* Retrieved from
http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/NuestraFamilia_NuestraCultura.pdf
[69] Ibid*.* p. 12.
[70] Ibid. p.15.

[71] Capello, D.C., (2006). Recruiting Hispanic foster parents: Issues of culture, language, and social policy. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services. 87*(4), 529-535.
[72] AdoptUSKids. (2008*). Answering the Call: Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura: (Our Family, Our Culture): Promoting & Supporting Latino Families in Adoption and Foster Care.* P. 13. Retrieved from
http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/NuestraFamilia_NuestraCultura.pdf

    c) S*chedule appointments within a thirty minute timeframe.* ("Is it okay that I meet with you between 9:00am and 9:30am?")

    d) *Break the required paperwork into packets so families do not feel overwhelmed all at one time.*

    e) A formulaic approach to adoption and foster care recruitment, education, preparation, and certification or home study process, especially one with rigid timetables, can work if the family is actively engaged in the process and enough "lead time" is included in the timetable. Advocate with your agency or supervisor for their commitment to an increased amount of time for interactions while at the same time clarifying with the family that time benchmarks are important to meet.

    f) *Several successful Latino family recruitment programs employ a regular telephone check-in to maintain the family's interest and to help mitigate the stress of "waiting" for child placement.* One recruiter classified her role as "the go-between." She might explain to families why their assigned worker has been unable to call them at the expected time. She may offer activities for families to undertake while they wait, such as visiting a local Spanish- speaking parent support group. She will regularly send them brief adoption articles in Spanish.

- *Additional Tips From Foster and Adoptive Parents and Specialists*
  - a) Evaluate each family and family member individually. Do not automatically equate a lack of English dominance with a lack of ability to communicate with schools or counselors or an inability to advocate for a child's needs. Families often will already have a relative or family friend to help them navigate the English-speaking world.
  - b) Be ready to fully explain details about the adoptive and foster parent process for Spanish-speaking families to ensure they receive as much written information and an equal number of hours of adoption or foster care preparation as English-speakers receive.
  - c) Develop a list of Spanish-speaking families who have adopted and fostered through your agency who can speak about their experiences during the orientation and training.
  - d) Maintain a list of professionals who can train in Spanish on varied adoption, foster care, and parenting topics.
  - e) Be creative! Consider alternative methods of transmitting information including audio tapes, DVDs, CDs, PowerPoint presentations, podcasts, and videos. Diligent efforts should be made in this regard and should reflect an understanding of adult learning and effective training techniques.

Additional Resources

- *Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute: Finding Families for African American Children*
  http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/index.php
- *W. E. Kellogg Foundation: Families for Kids of Color: A Special Report on Challenges and Opportunities*
  www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2001/12/Families-For-Kids-Of-Color-A-Special-Report-On-Challenges-And-Opportunities.aspx

- *Child Welfare Information Gateway: Permanency for Children from Minority Groups:* https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/specific/minority/
- *Georgia Division of Family and Children's Services (DHR): Culturally Competent Practice with Latino Families* http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/sites/dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/files/imported/DHR-DFCS/DHR_DFCS-Edu/Files/Latino%20Module%201%20participant%20guide%204-25-07.pdf
- *National Resource Center – AdoptUsKids*
  -Working with African American Adoptive, Foster and Kinship Families: http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/Working-With-African-American-Families.pdf
  -Answering the Call: Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura: (Our Family, Our Culture): Promoting & Supporting Latino Families in Adoption and Foster Care: http://www.adoptuskids.org/images/resourceCenter/NuestraFamilia_NuestraCultura.pdf
  *-Latino Tipsheet Packet (*including: *Benefits for Children of Recruiting Latino Foster and Adoptive Families; Who are the Latinos?; The Importance of Language in Serving Latino Families*: http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/latino-tipsheet-packet.pdf
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services, PDP Distance Learning Project report *Recruiting and Retaining African American and Hispanic American Foster and Adoptive Families* (2010): http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/ohrd/materials/190292.pdf

Targeted Recruitment Techniques for Children with Severe Emotional, Behavioral or Medical Challenges

- Children that are placed in foster care may endure many disruptions or difficulties that could lead to an increased risk of emotional and behavioral problems. Not only are these stressors for foster caregivers, but these stressors may also be severe enough to cause a placement disruption.
  - *Placement disruption due to child behaviors is one of the most common reasons for children to be removed from their foster home*[73] *and the severity of the behaviors of children entering the child welfare system is increasing.*[74]
  - *Careful screening of potential foster families (including helping them be realistic about their capabilities) can guarantee that the child is placed with the best possible family for that child's special needs.*
- Characteristics of the most successful placement agencies for hard-to place children identified in a national study were commitment to placement of hard-to-place children at all levels within the agency (including workers, supervisors, and managers/directors).
  - Agencies providing workers with assistance in recruitment and placement training were more successful in placing hard-to-place children.
  - Furthermore specialization in recruitment within larger agencies is an important contributor to success, *including full-time media/marketing persons to organize and carry out recruitment campaigns.*

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[73] Oosterman, M., Schuengel, C., Slot, N. W., Bullens, R. A. R., & Doreleijers, T. A. H. (2007). Disruptions in foster care: A review and meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*, 53-76.
[74] Price, J., Chamberlain, P., Landsverk, J., Reid, J., Leve, L., & Laurant, H. (2008). Effects of a foster parent training intervention on placement changes of children in foster care. *Child Maltreatment, 13,* 64−75.

- o Negative attitudes and insufficient knowledge can create agency policies, practices, structures, and climate that impede rather than facilitate the rapid placement of hard-to-place children.
- o In addition to attitudinal barriers knowledge barriers exist within agencies. *Many child welfare professionals do not know enough about specific disabilities, services needed, and the availability of these services to enable families to parent children with different types of disabilities.*
- o *Best practices to increase the number of hard-to-place children placed include formal interagency coordinating mechanisms, agency actions to sensitize and strengthen staff, and use of local community groups as unique supports in recruitment efforts.*

- *Integrating knowledge supportive of quality parenting can further the development of resource families skilled in working with probation youth and youth with behavioral health needs necessary to support the transition of youth from residential settings into home-based family care.*[75]

- A study by Cooley (2015)[76] found that tangible resources might be protective against challenges related to fostering when foster parents report more disruptive child behaviors. Examining this from a systemic or ecological perspective, it is possible that having access to important tangible resources may help caregivers deal with stress experienced with other parts of their system.
  - o *One possible explanation for this may be that foster parents with more tangible resources may have the ability to pay for help or therapeutic services in dealing with the disruptive child behaviors, which could decrease their perceptions of challenges related to fostering.*
  - o *Thus prospective resource families may be more open to looking at the possibilities of fostering harder-to-place children if they know more supports were in place for them* (e.g. how they will manage financially, especially if they might have to give up work because of caring for a severely disabled, or emotionally or behaviorally challenged child?).

- According to research by Geen (2003) *African Americans and Hispanics are more willing than Whites to consider adopting children with characteristics such as medical, emotional or behavioral problems.*[77]

- *Older children who suffer from attachment disorders may do better in a home with a single parent and few siblings* because that enables them to receive devoted attention and reinforcement of their foster or adoptive parent's commitment to them. Research has shown that *mothers with*

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[75] California Department of Social Services. (2015). California's Child Welfare Continuum of Care Reform. P. 28. Retrieved from http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/pdf/CCR_LegislativeReport.pdf
[76] Cooley, M., Farineau, H., & Mullis, A. (2015). Child behaviors as a moderator: Examining the relationship between foster parent supports, satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 45*, 46-56.
[77] Geen, R. (2003a). *Who will adopt the foster care children left behind? The Urban Institute, Caring for Children. Brief No. 2.*

college degrees adopt children with emotional problems at a higher rate than do mothers with less education.[78]

- Consider reaching out to individuals who have experience teaching special education programs or working in a profession that interacts with children with special needs to assess for interest in fostering children with special needs.
- *For medically needy children, child welfare agencies/staff may want to contact support groups and associations related to the specific condition or disease.*[79]

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[78] Berry, M., & Barth, R. (1990). A study of disrupted adoptive placements of adolescents. *Child Welfare, 69*(3), 209-225.; Burrell Cowan, A. (2004). New strategies to promote the adoption of older children out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 26*(11), 1007-1020.

[79] All County Letter No. 15-76. Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRRS) Funding Opportunity. Retrieved from http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-76.pdf

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Resource Family Best Practices[80]

Category	Best Practice Location and Description	Tracking Method and Measured Outcomes
Example	**New York City:** fingerprinting is all done by clerical staff – which saves time for Home Development workers and is free for prospective parents; also avoids sending prospective parents to police station for fingerprinting	No tracking method in place but anecdotal reports of more fingerprinting compliance.
Intake phone call	**Louisiana:** revamped 1st phone call to be user-friendly and customer directed. Only ask for name and address.	Use tracking tool
	Guilford/Wake NC) and Cleveland: All intake calls are recorded in a data base and tracked from that call through to licensure. All three data bases allow for reporting on each cell of the intake page, so that for instance they can find out how many calls from folks calling due to a church presentation got licensed.	Maintain tracking tool and produce monthly reports. Use computer based tracking system.
	Cleveland: Sends out *small booklet*, well organized with essential information	
	New York: Centralized "Wishline" accepts inquiries and refers families to private foster care agencies; staff can follow up to assist families with barriers encountered. Community coalitions are now being engaged to support families in the inquiry/licensing/assessment process.	Tracking system in place for use by all foster care agencies to track families in the process from inquiry to licensing. Monthly reports provided to each agency and to each local coalition. Relatively new system, anecdotal info that families are less likely to become "lost".
Orientation session	**Denver:** Orientations held more often in the community and in Spanish. Partnerships with community collaboratives.	Use tracking system. Increase of homes in targeted neighborhoods.
	Louisiana: Revised orientation talking points. Orientation done by dedicated recruiters.	Maintain and track attendees. Certified 750 new homes in one year!
	Anchorage: Have totally revamped their orientation process to make it more participant focused and friendly.	Staff report that they enjoy it more and so do the participants!
	New York: Several orientations each week in varied locations throughout the city, some in Spanish.	Attendance now tracked in inquiry to licensing data system.
Pre-service training	**Phoenix:** 100% privatized foster care system using same MAPP standardized curriculum. Have integrated F2F values and practices into curriculum. Foster care agencies just beginning to work together to share training opportunities.	
	Denver: Revised pre-service curriculum and added a separate track for relative caregivers. Use youth as speakers in training. Now offering training on Saturdays.	Evaluations of training very positive!

[80] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/

Category	Best Practice Location and Description	Tracking Method and Measured Outcomes
	Cleveland: Conduct trainings in community, with foster parent co-trainers and use youth and birth parents in training as speakers. Complete electronic fingerprinting at training for participant convenience.	
	Louisiana: Reduced pre-service training hours to make it more user-friendly to participants. Have separate special training for relatives, conveniently scheduled.	
	Cleveland & Wake Co, NC: One on one interviews during pre-service training to answer any personal questions about requirements. Hold sessions in community and invite local community partner to present about community services available to children and families.	
	Sacramento, CA: Includes Parent Leaders in PRIDE training.	
Homestudy	**Denver:** Have a homestudy unit where all home studies are completed. Use private contractors for overflow.	Use tracking data system. Have increased the number of homestudy completions in the past year.
	Louisiana: Streamlined the homestudy process and simplified paperwork. Revised reference form and added an adult child reference.	750 new families licensed in past 12 months!
Other parts of certification process	**Louisiana:** Extended recertification to 3 years for foster families in good standing.	
	New York: City is providing assistance to the private provider agencies in the form of additional pre-service sessions, access to automated fingerprint systems, locations to obtain medical exams.	Tracked in data system.
Support visits	**Denver:** Specialized support unit makes monthly visits to foster families. Conducts geo-based support groups in 4 communities.	
	Macomb, Co. Michigan: Assigns all prospective foster parents moving through the licensure process to a foster parent mentor.	Have a very high inquiry to licensure rate.
	Louisiana: Have begun making visits to new foster parents getting their first placement within days of placement.	Verbal reports state that parents and staff find these helpful.
	Cleveland: Has a foster home resource management unit that sole purpose is to support foster parents. Make regular visits to foster homes, attends local support groups, plans appreciation events. Visits foster family within 4 days of placement.	
	New York: Has reinvested savings from reductions in congregate care to fund foster parent supports by private providers.	
Flexible Funding	**Guilford CO, NC:** Has a nice fund they can funnel all community resources into so that staff can access for foster parents for any variety of needs.	

Category	Best Practice Location and Description	Tracking Method and Measured Outcomes
Appreciation Events	**Sacramento County, CA:** An appreciation dinner honoring foster parents and a family oriented summer picnic are held annually to thank foster parents for their contribution to children.	
Successful placement process	**Cleveland:** Social worker is interviewed by placement staff to gather information about child prior to selecting family. Info is shared with family and used to determine level of care.	Children's placements are tracked. Most children have a single placement while in care.
	Guilford, Co. NC: Implemented a clinical review team process for all children being considered for a non-family setting.	(This process is new but they have already prevented at least one residential placement)
General recruitment	**Arizona:** The state assumes responsibility for all general recruitment. Messages are consistent statewide and a centralized 800 number is used.	
	New York: Recruitment/retention targets established and monitored for all private provider agencies.	Monthly reports to all agencies; newly developed retention reports.
Targeted recruitment	**Phoenix:** Foster care is privatized. Recent RFP required private providers to do targeted recruitment only and are given geo info, types of children and racial/ethnic groups to recruit homes. Recruitment plans must be approved by the district recruitment liaison.	Private providers must track and share info with state.
	Denver: Denver County has 7 community collaboratives who partner with the county to do targeted recruitment in their geo area. Staff recruiters are assigned to specific geo areas to work with community collaborative.	
	Anchorage: Have targeted the Alaska Native community and partnered with tribal organization.	Have had a net increase of over 50 native homes.
Child specific recruitment	**Phoenix:** District I has contracts with 5 private providers to partner on targeted recruitment with their dedicated staff units. Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter is working well with the District.	Setting up tracking mechanism. But anecdotally have made some great placements.
	Louisiana: Staff recruiters partner with child's social worker to do child specific recruitment.	Each of the 9 Regional recruiters tracks their children on monthly reports. Have had limited success.
	Denver: Have 2 staff child specific recruiters for all units. Work to develop plans with child's social workers.	Track children on database. Had a record number of adoptions in 2007.
	Anchorage: Have formed a child specific recruitment task force with community partners. Have held their first Heart Gallery and are planning their second!	
	New York: Wednesday's Child television feature is also available online; weekly waiting child electronic newsletter; Heart Gallery	

Category	Best Practice Location and Description	Tracking Method and Measured Outcomes
Recruitment is EVERYBODY'S Business (All staff supporting Resource Families)	**Louisville, KY:** Meet and Greet! The recruitment, licensing, training and placement unit has a meet and great for all new staff in the agency 2x's per year. It is a mandatory meeting, the purpose of which is to orient all staff as to what the unit does and how to support the work including and most importantly supporting foster parents. The meeting is co-hosted by the Regional Administrator and the F2F Coordinator **Louisiana:** Have conducted a statewide campaign to train and motivate staff to support resource families. Created job role cards with specific suggestions to support foster parents. Designed and produced posters for all offices to remind staff to support foster parents. **Phoenix:** Developed a workgroup to plan a program to encourage staff to support resource families.	They keep records to insure every that is supposed to attend does attend
Icebreakers	**Los Angeles County, CA:** Created a document clearly identifying participant roles in Icebreaker meetings. **Placer County, CA:** Icebreaker Brochure – the brochure includes information about why the meeting is important, the benefits to all involved and the participants roles and responsibilities. **Santa Clara County, CA:** Icebreaker Brochure – the brochure outlines the meetings purpose, focus and includes information about what will be discussed. **New York:** Icebreaker Meeting newly required as part of the city's reform initiative which will eventually involve all private providers. Training and technical assistance provided to private agencies.	

Appendix B: Recruitment Plan Guidance Chart[81]

Recruitment Strategy *(Definition)*	Goals of Strategy	Potential Activities	Potential Partners
General Recruitment *General recruitment is intended to reach as many people as possible.*	• Raise public awareness of the need for foster and adoptive parents • Build a positive image of fostering and adopting in the community • Bring in new families interested in fostering or adopting	• Actively pursuing press coverage by reaching out to radio, television, newspaper and magazines with story ideas, articles and information • Creating and placing advertisements in various media including yellow pages, radio, television, and newspapers, billboards and free publications • Distributing information at community events including fairs parties and in public spaces • Speaking at clubs, organizations and community groups to provide general information	• Local media of all kinds • Local businesses, organizations and community partners who can donate services, goods or advertising space or allow the agency to reach their employees • Local Foster Parent Association
Targeted Recruitment *Targeted Recruitment seeks to find homes for specific populations of children that are especially high-need (e.g. teenage boys or mother-child placements).*	• Bringing in new families for the specific populations of children most in need of homes • Raising community awareness about the need for homes for specific populations of children	• Same activities as above, though they should be focused on finding families for specific, high-need child populations • Forming recruiting partnerships with those who can help the targeted population (e.g. foster parents who currently care for a child from high-need population and can speak about their experiences) For example: • Advertising in a nursing magazine or at a hospital using advertisements specifying the need for foster families for medically fragile children • Attending an autism awareness event with information about autistic children in need of homes • Speaking at the opening of a new youth recreation center if the targeted population is teenage boys	Same as above PLUS • Resource parents who are already working with children from the targeted population (their networks of friends, coworkers and acquaintances) • Formal and informal community organizations who will partner with us (schools, churches, hospitals, service providers, clubs, social groups, fraternities, sororities, clubs, gathering places including barbershops, restaurants, etc.)

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[81] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Building Successful Resource Families: A Guide for Public Agencies.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/resources/building-successful-resource-families/

Recruitment Strategy (Definition)	Goals of Strategy	Potential Activities	Potential Partners
Child-Specific Recruitment *Child Specific Recruitment seeks to find adoptive families for specific children (or siblings) whose parental rights have*	• Find a permanent home for every child in need • Matching children with families who will best support their needs (locally or nationally)	• Creating a dynamic, strengths-based profile of the child to be shared publicly through AdoptUSKids, MARE and brochures • Recruit and partner with key identified people based on the child's personality and interests (e.g. if the child loves animals, connect with veterinarians, zoo workers, volunteers at the animal shelters, dog groomers, breeders and others who will spread the word) • Recruit and partner with key identified people based on the child's needs (i.e. if the child is deaf, talk to and connect locally and nationally with interpreters, staff at schools for the deaf, support groups, and deaf organizations	Same as above PLUS • Any connections already in the child's life (e.g. networks of friends, coworkers and acquaintances even if they cannot themselves become a permanent home for the child) • National organizations with any relationship to the child's needs or interests

Appendix C: Sibling Group Considerations at Every Step

Practice Principles for the

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF KINSHIP, FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Sibling Group Considerations at Every Step

Do all families have equal access and staff responsiveness at all steps in the process without regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic status, language, age, sensory impairment, disability or other factors such as literacy?

Targeted Recruitment

T.1 To what extent is keeping sibling groups together a priority for your agency and staff?

T.2 Does your data tell you the number and characteristics of the families you need to recruit for sibling groups?

T.3 How can you be successful in searching for relatives to keep siblings together?

T.4 How are community based resources engaged in recruiting families for siblings?

T.5 How do you recruit across jurisdictions to keep siblings together?

T.6 What policies, strategies, and incentives are and/or need to be in place to support recruiting and retaining families for siblings?

First Contact

1.1 How do you insure consistency and quality of the intake process?

1.2 How do you insure that all of your staff are aware of and sensitive to the need for foster and adoptive families for siblings? How is this trained throughout the agency?

1.3 How do you involve families who already have siblings to support new and inquiring families?

1.4 What do you do to create a welcoming atmosphere for families?

Initial Orientation

2.1 How do you promote the need for families for siblings during orientation?

2.2 How do you include experienced families of siblings to encourage support and interest?

2.3 What materials are provided at orientation regarding sibling placements?

2.4 What else could you do at orientation to promote the need for families for siblings?

Pre-Service Training

3.1 How do you train prospective families about the importance of sibling relationships; the myths; the challenges; the rewards of parenting siblings?

3.2 How do you include the need for continuous birth parent involvement?

3.3 How do you emphasize the agency's philosophy and beliefs about keeping siblings together?

Application Process

4.1 How do you encourage and handle applications from relatives/kin of siblings?

4.2 What supports are available to help relatives qualify?

4.3 What else do you do to help encourage and qualify non-kin foster and/or adoptive families to provide care for siblings?

4.4 What do you do to assure that all families have equal access to the application process?

Mutual Assessment /Home Study

5.1 How are staff trained to do effective home studies and prepare families to care for and support siblings?

5.2 How are staff trained to do effective home studies with relatives/kin?

5.3 How do you explore a family's interests, myths and fears about fostering and/or adopting siblings?

5.4 How do you help a family prepare to foster and/or adopt a sibling group?

Licensing and Approval

6.1 How are staff trained to know about and utilize the agency's policies, such as exception policies, for placing sibs together?

6.2 Can your procedures be simplified and time-bound to assure timely approval of exceptions?

6.3 How are staff supported in completing their work in a timely way?

6.4 Is there a way to expedite licensing and/or approval for relatives and/or others qualified for sibling placements?

Placement

7.1 Does the agency have clear and consistent policies, procedures and accountability for keeping siblings together in placement?

7.2 How are siblings kept together when they come into care sequentially?

7.3 How do you assure that siblings are reunited in care?

7.4 How do you assure that when a child has to move that sibling reunification is seriously re-considered?

7.5 How do you insure that siblings who could not be placed together are connected in meaningful ways?

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR
DILIGENT RECRUITMENT
at AdoptUSKids

More free resources at:

www.nrcdr.org

Children's Bureau