

DSHS

Foster Parents Speak



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2016

Foster Parent Survey

June 2017 | Report 11.239



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

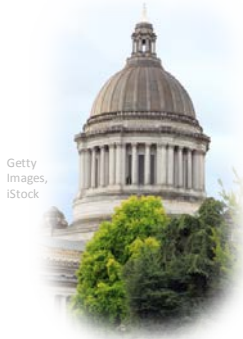
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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Title: 2016 Foster Parent Survey: DSHS Foster Parents Speak

Abstract: Between September 2015 and September 2016, DSHS surveyed 1,350 foster parents who had a child in care on the 17th day of August 2015, November 2015, February 2016, or May 2016; or within 5 months before the interview date. These foster parents were asked about their satisfaction with support, training and information provided by Children's Administration and private agencies contracted by the Administration to provide services to foster parents. They were also asked to offer recommendations for change.

The majority of foster parents continue to express satisfaction with the support and training they receive, and with the social workers assigned to their cases. Compared to 2015, there was a statistically significant increase in positive responses about the overall quality of support, and there were non-significant increases on four other measures. Responses about the adequacy of training continue to be very positive. The greatest increases in positive responses occurred in Region 1. As in previous years, foster parents indicated that they would like greater inclusion in meetings and decisions, faster and more flexible processes, consistent policies, and more complete and timely information about their foster children's cases. Some foster parents also suggested needs for updated training materials, childcare options for training, more convenient training locations and schedules and more interaction with experienced foster parents in training.

This report is the sixth annual Foster Parent Survey report completed by RDA.

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DSHS Foster Parents Speak



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Executive Summary



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The 2016 Foster Parent Survey provides a voice for Washington's foster parents.

During the 2016 State Fiscal Year, the Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) conducted 1,350 telephone interviews with randomly selected foster parents in the state of Washington. The survey consisted of seven standardized questions and four open-ended questions, which were comprehensively coded and analyzed for this report.

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

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

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

Key Findings: Support for Foster Parents

Most foster parents are satisfied with the support they receive. Positive responses about the adequacy of support increased in 2016, reversing the negative trend we observed in 2015.

- ▶ 79% of foster parents said that support was “more than adequate” or “somewhat adequate,” a statistically significant increase of four percentage points from 2015
- ▶ Of the 385 general comments about support, 67% were positive (up from 55% in 2015)

Perceptions of social workers remain mostly positive. Responses to questions about social workers did not change significantly from the 2015 survey.

- ▶ 81% of respondents said that social workers always or usually listen to their input
- ▶ Of the 1,151 who commented about social workers, 43% made mixed or neutral comments, many including statements that some workers are better than others
- ▶ Most comments were positive in the areas of social worker support (59% of 446 comments), courtesy (63% of 188 comments), and listening/understanding (62% of 233 comments)
- ▶ Of the 226 comments about social workers’ inclusiveness, 62% were negative or suggestions for improvement

Responsiveness and communication are important to foster parents. Most respondents said they can get help when they ask for it, but complaints about responsiveness continue to be a concern.

- ▶ 80% of respondents said they can always or usually get help when they ask for it
- ▶ Of the 627 foster parents commenting on access to social workers, 57% were positive
- ▶ 13% of all respondents expressed concerns that insufficient numbers of social workers, high social worker caseloads, and turnover contribute to a variety of problems (177 comments)

Foster parents value consistent and fair processes, and smooth coordination of efforts. Although most foster parents said they feel included in the care team, some foster parents described challenges rooted in processes and coordination.

- ▶ 74% said they are always or usually treated like part of the team; and 72% agreed that they are included in meetings about the child in their care
- ▶ Of the 272 foster parents who commented about processes, 93% offered negative comments or suggestions for improvement

Most foster parents were satisfied with the information they receive about the children in their care, but many expressed concern about the consequences of inadequate information sharing. The number of comments on this topic highlights the importance of information for foster parents.

- ▶ 70% of respondents agreed that they always or usually get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with them
- ▶ There were 740 comments related to information in 2016 (55% of all respondents). Of these, 51% were negative or suggestions for improvement
- ▶ Foster parents are most concerned when they do not receive information about medical needs and behavioral problems at the time of placement, and when they do not receive information about court hearings or developments in a foster child’s biological family



Our social worker now is really good at getting things done and she acts like it's not just a job for her.

—A Foster Parent, 2016



Key Findings: Training for Foster Parents

Most foster parents are satisfied with the training they receive from Children’s Administration and contracted training providers. Positive ratings of training have been at or above 85% since RDA began surveying foster parents in 2012.

- ▶ 87% agreed that the training they had received in the prior year was somewhat adequate or more than adequate in preparing them to care for the needs of foster children
- ▶ Of the 353 comments about the quality and helpfulness of training, 79% were positive

When asked open-ended questions about training, many foster parents offered suggestions for improvement. Some expressed concerns about the availability of information on resources or the quality of training materials; many others suggested topics for specialized training.

- ▶ Of the 680 respondents who made comments about general training issues, 44% made positive comments; 34% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement
- ▶ Of the 810 respondents mentioning specific training topics, 61% made positive comments. The most frequently mentioned topics included child behavior, specific disorders, navigating the foster care system, and Caregiver Core Training. Other training topics mentioned were trauma, special-needs or disabled children, and mental health, especially attachment disorder.
- ▶ Of the 409 comments about access to training, 92% were negative or suggestions for improvement. Most of these comments concerned scheduling, childcare, and location.
- ▶ Foster parents appreciate the flexibility and convenience of online training, but many also noted the value of in-person training

Foster parents continue to emphasize that participation of experienced foster parents and the ability to interact with one another adds value to training. They especially value opportunities to learn from peers in training or support groups, and the sense of community they get from these interactions.

- ▶ Of the 276 respondents who made reference to their sense of community with other foster parents, nearly three quarters (74%) made positive comments
- ▶ Most often these comments addressed inclusion of experienced foster parents as trainers and the value of encouraging interaction between foster parents. Some suggested including former foster children and others who could provide important perspectives.



I appreciate the classes that really prepare you for the reality of foster parenting.

—A Foster Parent, 2016



About the Survey

- ▶ 1,350 foster parents completed the survey (92% response rate)
- ▶ Telephone interviews were completed between August 1, 2015 and August 31, 2016
- ▶ The survey sample included 1,472 foster parents who had a child in care on the 17th day of August 2015, November 2015, February 2016, or May 2016. These foster parents were selected at random, on a quarterly basis
- ▶ Interpreters were available for all languages, and alternative methods were available for respondents who were deaf or hard of hearing

Survey Results at a Glance

The survey included seven structured questions. Two of these were originally selected to inform the Braam Settlement and Exit Agreement (“Quality and Helpfulness” and “Adequacy of Training”). The remaining five questions were designed to support strategic planning for foster parent support. Statistical significance tests were calculated for the change in positive responding since the 2015 survey, and for differences between regions.

The survey also included four open-ended questions—two related to foster parent support and two related to foster parent training. Responses to these questions are summarized in the following pages. The open ended responses were coded by thematic content. The entire survey questionnaire can be found in the Appendix (pages 104-105).

Responses to structured questions

Regarding Foster Parent Support

QUALITY AND HELPFULNESS

In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?*	2016	79%
	2015	75%

SOCIAL WORKERS

Do social workers listen to your input? **	2016	81%
	2015	80%
Are you treated like part of the team? **	2016	74%
	2015	73%
Are you included in meetings about the child in your care? **	2016	72%
	2015	72%

ACCESS, PROCESSES AND COORDINATION

Can you get help when you ask for it? **	2016	80%
	2015	78%

INFORMATION

Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental and educational needs? **	2016	70%
	2015	71%

Regarding Foster Parent Training

ADEQUACY OF TRAINING

Overall, thinking about ALL the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of the foster children placed in your home?*	2016	87%
	2015	85%

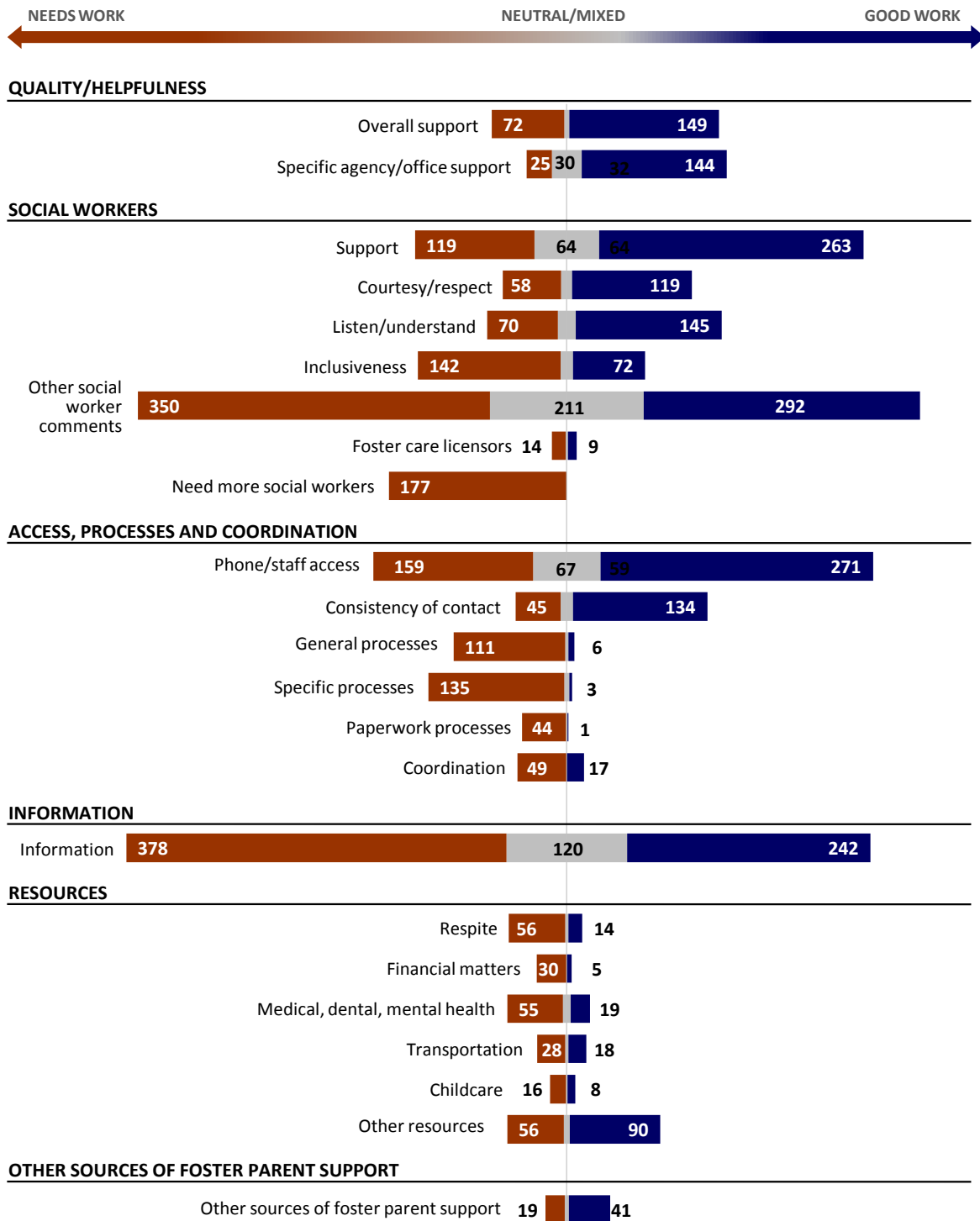
* Percentage shown is the percent who answered “More than adequate” or “Somewhat adequate.”

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

Survey Results at a Glance: Support

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

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



Survey Results at a Glance: Training

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

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



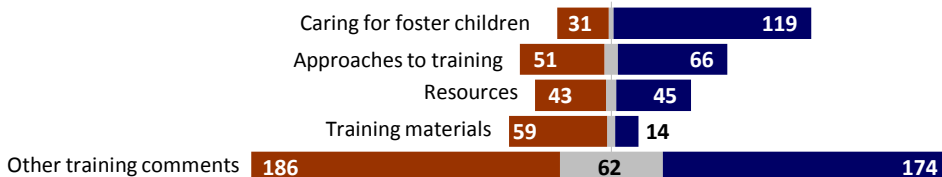
QUALITY/HELPFULNESS



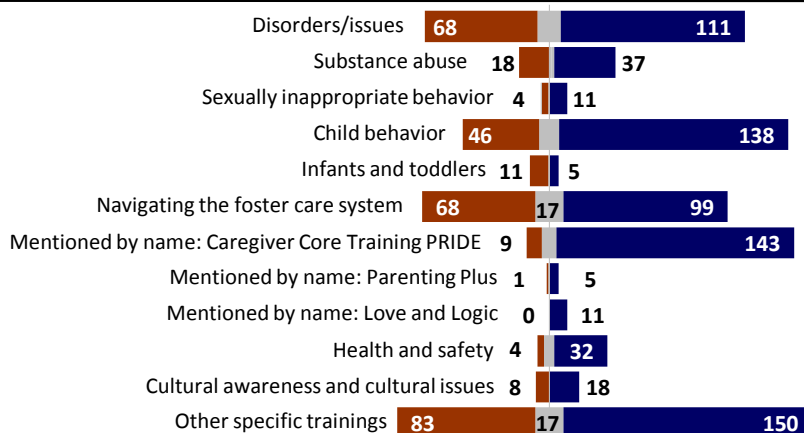
TRAINERS



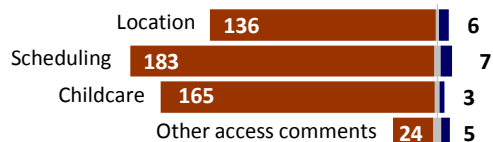
GENERAL TRAINING



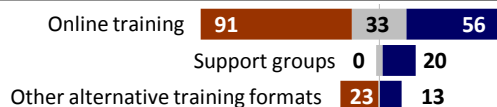
SPECIFIC TRAININGS



ACCESS



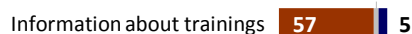
ALTERNATIVE TRAINING FORMATS



VOICE AND CHOICE



TRAINING INFORMATION



SUPPORT BEYOND TRAINING



Foster Parent Support



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Part 1 of this report analyzes foster parents' responses to questions about the support they receive when caring for foster children.

In 2016, as in prior years, foster parents express satisfaction with the quality and helpfulness of the support they receive from Children's Administration. The small declines in satisfaction in prior years started to turn around. Compared to 2015, there was a statistically significant increase in positive responses to the question "*In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?*" This brings the percent of foster parents who report "somewhat" or "more than" adequate support back up to the 2014 level of 79%.

Positive responses to four of the other five standard questions also increased (not statistically significant). Only the question about getting adequate information saw fewer positive responses than in 2015.

This part of the report contains the following sections:

- Section 1: Quality and Helpfulness
- Section 2: Social Workers
- Section 3: Access, Processes and Coordination
- Section 4: Information
- Section 5: Resources
- Section 6: Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

Quality and Helpfulness



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Foster parents expect and appreciate support from Children’s Administration, and from the private and tribal agencies who also work with them.

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

More than two-thirds of foster parents’ comments in the theme “Overall Quality and Helpfulness” about Children’s Administration in general were positive, as were nearly three-quarters of those about the quality and helpfulness of support from specific agencies or offices.

In this section:

- The following page highlights foster parents’ responses to the question: “In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?”
- Pages 11-12 describe foster parents’ comments about the quality and helpfulness of support from Children’s Administration, and from specific offices or agencies

Almost one third of the survey respondents (385 of 1,350, or 29%) commented on the themes in this section. When all subthemes were combined:



1.1 Quality and Helpfulness



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

“They are only a phone call away. The agency is there to help me with paperwork, getting information, moral support.”

“Everything is outstanding. If I call with a problem or an idea about something, they help me resolve it.”

“The social workers and their boss really helped us transition the three girls from the former foster family to us.”

“I don’t know how they could do better. Great experiences all around.”

“Whenever I deal with Children’s Administration, they always try to help me and I really like my private agency.”

“We really like our current social worker. She knows the child well and understands whatever we bring up about the child. She knows resources for the child. She has been extraordinarily helpful.”

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

“Children’s Administration doesn’t do much but the social workers help quite a bit. They answer most of our questions and help out when they can.”

“While my social worker was perfect, the Department was not supportive of foster parents. They are more intimidating.”

“I am very proactive and vocal so most of the time, especially with one of my social workers, I can get my needs met.”

Others are not pleased with the support provided.

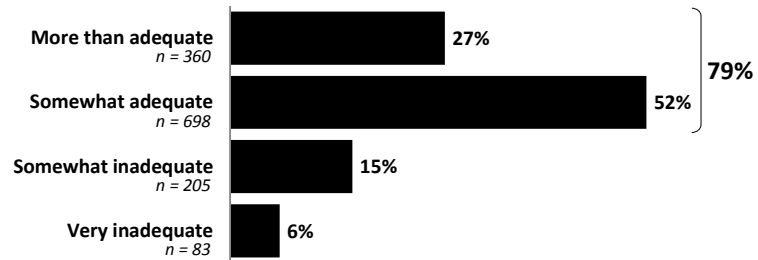
“They seem to be more concerned about themselves and their workload than they are for the foster children’s welfare.”

“Knowing that you could lose a child and still needing to give this child your best is heartbreaking sometimes. At the very least, we should be supported when we do lose the child.”

“I have had a very bad experience so far so I can’t think of anything good right now.”

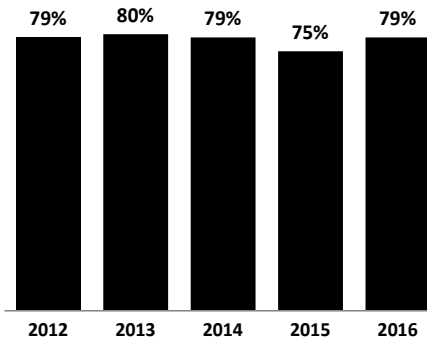
QUESTION | In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?

Of the 1,346 foster parents who answered this question, nearly four out of five (79%) reported that they received somewhat or more than adequate support in the past year. The remaining foster parents (21%) found support somewhat or very inadequate.



TREND

Compared to 2015, in 2016 there was a statistically significant increase in “More than adequate” or “Somewhat adequate” responses to this question, returning to previous levels.



REGIONAL DETAIL

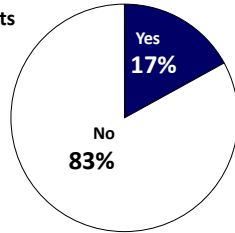
Positive responses were significantly higher in Region 1 (82%), compared to Region 2 (75%).



THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Support

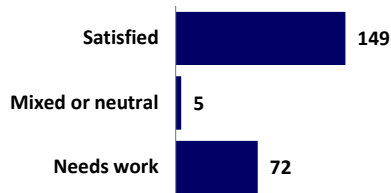
Comments about the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support were included in this category.

Made comments about overall quality and helpfulness of support?



226 of the foster parents surveyed (17%) mentioned general support.

Of the 226 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent support, two thirds (66%) made positive comments. Thirty-two percent made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Only 5 (2%) made mixed or neutral comments.



These general comments include 145 comments made by respondents who answered “Nothing” when asked what is done well and what could be done better.

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

These comments also include 105 foster parents who provided more specific descriptions in praising or criticizing the general quality of support.

- 68 made a specific positive comment about overall support (65% of specific comments)
- 32 criticized overall support in specific terms (30% of specific comments)
- 5 offered specific neutral or mixed comments (5% of specific comments)



We Are Family event 2016 photo courtesy Ben VanHouten, Seattle Mariners

Most foster parents are pleased with support for foster parents.

“They all do an outstanding job; this applies to both DSHS and private agency.”

“I think they are good and are providing what is needed for the children.”

“I brought three foster kids from California. Washington was very helpful and helped me with the adoption. Washington helped me so much I have continued on even after I adopted.”

“We called DSHS when child risk level was assessed; they were very helpful.”

“Children’s Administration is good. I usually get the help and answers I need.”

“Everything is good right now.”

“The private agency is available 24/7 to answer all of our questions. DSHS social workers’ supervisor was available on her cell phone to answer any of our questions.”

“I would say that in our situation, DSHS staff are a very strong advocate for our foster child. She is getting the right care and they are doing a good job.”

“This last year has been great and I really cannot think of anything.”

Others have encountered challenges with Children’s Administration support.

“Assign a proficient social worker and leave him/her with a foster child. We are done with foster children; not because of the workers but because of the state.”

“No support from the state. The social workers have told us to do something in writing and we did it but also got written up for it.”

“DSHS is absent.”

“The state agency is not supportive. Put the interest of the child in the forefront.”

1.1 Quality and Helpfulness



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Foster parents are mostly pleased with the support they get from private agencies, tribes, and specific offices.

“Cowlitz County communicates very effectively and treats me as part of the team, gives me help, etc.”

“The private agency staff respond even after hours and on weekends. The foster parent liaison seems to get support from the state workers.”

“All my social workers are pretty available to me, especially the one from my agency, and I feel like they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.”

“Most of the social workers are good at making me feel like I am part of the team, at least here in Clark County.”

“The tribal social worker always listens and tries to accommodate.”

“My private agency gives me excellent support. They are always available and always return phone calls.”

“We have only worked through the staff at Lummi Tribe. They do monthly home visits which are helpful.”

“I only deal with my private agency. They are always there to help me. They are available 24/7. I can call them in the middle of the night and someone answers the phone.”

Foster parents note that the quality of support varies among Children’s Administration offices, private agencies, and tribal agencies.

“When they check in on us for a health and safety visit, it is nice that they also ask ‘how are you foster parents doing?’ The private agency does that much more than DSHS staff.”

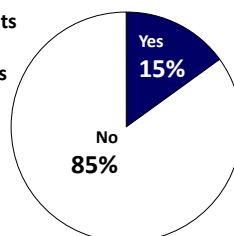
“Our private agency contacts us often and respond quickly to our calls and e-mails. And, they intervene on our behalf if we are having trouble getting answers from our social worker.”

“Private agency: I get no help from them! DSHS: they give me pretty good support.”

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

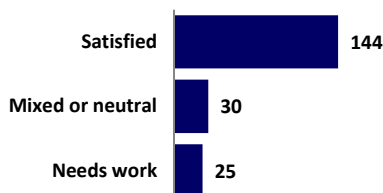
Comments about the quality and helpfulness of support specified as being received from a private agency, or from a named Children’s Administration area or office, were included in this category. Fifteen percent of respondents commented about support from a specific entity.

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



199 of the foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned support from specific agencies, areas or offices.

Of the 199 foster parents who mentioned specific agencies, offices, or tribes, nearly three out of four (72%) made positive comments. Only 13% made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and 15% described mixed or neutral experiences.



Foster parents may interact with many different sources of support in the course of providing care, including Children’s Administration regions or offices, private foster care agencies, Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention contractors (also known as liaisons or RPMs) and Native American tribal organizations. Comments about individual social workers mentioned by name are on page 20 of this report; other organizational sources of support are discussed on page 47.

Most comments reflect the greater level of satisfaction with the adequacy of support found in this year’s survey. However, some foster parent’s responses highlight situations that could benefit from improvements, such as:

- More consistency among the various offices and agencies that interact with foster parents
- More clear expressions of concern and positive regard for foster parents and the efforts they make

Social Workers



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Foster parents want timely, supportive, respectful, and helpful interactions with social workers.

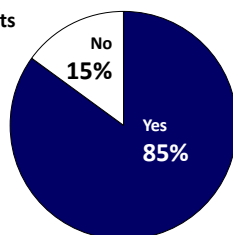
Many respondents made positive comments about general social worker support, listening skills, and the respect and courtesy shown; these included comments made about those employed by Children’s Administration as well as those who work for contracting private agencies. However, foster parents also said it can be a challenge to feel included as part of the team and to get responses quickly enough. They identified social worker turnover and high caseloads as additional causes of problems for children, families, and the progress of cases.

In this section:

- Topics are addressed in this order: social worker support; social worker courtesy and respect; social workers listen/understand; social worker inclusiveness; other comments about social workers; comments that mention specific social workers; foster care licensors; and the need for more social workers
- Three of those pages (16 and 18-19) provide foster parents’ responses to standard questions
- The remaining seven pages address foster parents’ comments on various themes related to social workers

More than four out of five of the foster parents surveyed (1151 out of 1350, or 85%) made comments about social workers. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about social workers?



- ▶ About three out of ten (32%) made positive comments



- ▶ One-quarter made negative comments or suggestions for improvement



- ▶ Forty-three percent made mixed or neutral comments

1.2 Social Workers



We Are Family event 2016 photo courtesy Ben VanHouten, Seattle Mariners

Foster parents appreciate the support received from their social workers.

“My social workers call me, check in, even on their days off. They are always offering to help. I have been very happy with social workers I have had over the past 5 years.”

“They are willing to do whatever is needed to help.”

“I feel completely supported.”

“The DSHS social workers have been phenomenal in working with us.”

“Our social worker now is really good at getting things done and she acts like it's not just a job for her. We appreciate that.”

“We are so happy with the support we get from the State and our social worker.”

“I have an amazing social worker. She is always there for me.”

“I am happy with the support.”

Others say the support received is not meeting their needs.

“The social worker did not do anything to support us.”

“We can't handle very much more. We even cc'd the area administrator to see if they could get our social worker to give us some support.”

“When we ask for support, provide it and not a bunch of excuses.”

“Get organized! Support these children!”

Some observed that support quality varies between individual social workers.

“I am working with two social workers; one is outstanding and the other is a doofus.”

“It depends on the social worker. I have one social worker that is really bad, one good one and one that tells me absolutely nothing.”

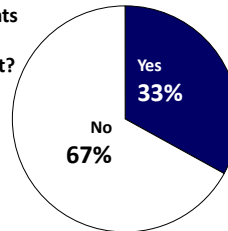
“Some social workers are amazing and others are not.”

“It depends on the social worker what kind of service we get.”

THEME | Social Worker Support

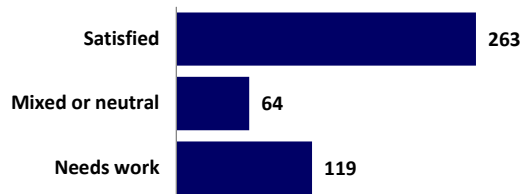
More than one-third of foster parents commented on the *overall* quality of social worker support (rather than specific social worker attributes, which are covered on the following pages).

Made comments about social worker support?



Of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed, 446 (33%) mentioned general social worker support in their comments.

Of the 446 comments on general social worker support, almost six in ten were positive (59%). More than one-quarter (27%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Fourteen percent made mixed or neutral comments.



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

- General level of support received from social workers
- Whether social workers provide good customer service
- How much social workers actually help the family

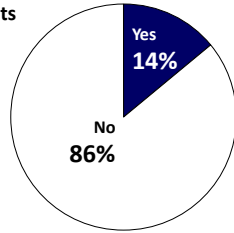
Although most foster parents expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by social workers, some indicated that:

- Support varies a great deal between social workers
- Social worker support affects relationships between foster parents and foster children

THEME | Social Worker Courtesy and Respect

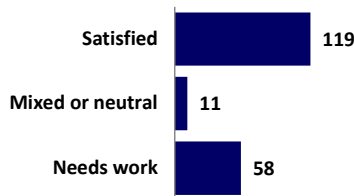
Fourteen percent of survey respondents made a comment about courtesy and respect shown to foster parents by social workers.

Made comments about social worker courtesy and respect?



More than one in ten (188 or 14%) of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed mentioned social worker courtesy and respect.

Of the 188 foster parents who addressed social worker courtesy and respect, nearly two-thirds made positive comments (63%). More than three in ten (31%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. The remaining 11 (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate social workers who:

- Treat them with kindness and courtesy
- Tell them they appreciate the work they do for the children in their care
- Exhibit trust when foster parents say that there is a problem
- Show respect for their time and family needs
- Treat them as equals
- Are actively engaged and personable
- Show that they truly care about foster children and foster families

Foster parents are displeased when social workers:

- Behave in a rude, inconsiderate, or unprofessional manner
- Give no indication that they appreciate the foster parent nor the time spent caring for the foster children
- Seem to devalue and judge them
- Treat them as inferiors or lacking in knowledge
- Don't seem to have a "heart" for foster children and families
- Threaten or retaliate against them



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents commented on different aspects of social workers' courtesy and demeanor.

- "My social worker and her supervisor treat me like a professional. They are very respectful to me."
- "The social worker is pleasant when she comes to the home."
- "The supervisor is rude in their response to me."
- "They are polite and unobtrusive during home visits."
- "Most workers are conscientious, pretty responsive and sensitive, but then there are those that nobody should have to work with."
- "They have a good attitude when they come to my home. They are kind, helpful, and supportive."
- "I feel the social worker treats us with animosity."

They like social workers to show respect for their work as foster parents.

- "This office thanks me and makes me feel valued."
- "I have really good social workers who value me and my opinions."
- "Do not no-show or cancel at the last minute of sit-in visits. This is really disrespectful of me and my family's time."
- "I feel that they respect me and respect my needs as a foster parent and caregiver. They know that I am acting in the best interests of the child."
- "They are grateful for what we do and they tell me so."
- "Treat foster parents like they matter."
- "They provide positive feedback about the importance of the role of a foster family and they thank me for the job I am doing for these children."
- "Our social worker trusts our judgment."
- "Honestly we feel so unappreciated and disrespected and like a temporary babysitter instead of a selfless temporary 'parent' who is stepping up to love and care for this child."

1.2 Social Workers



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Foster parents want their opinions to matter.

"The social workers respect my opinion."

"The social worker we have now really listens and makes sure I'm involved with things needed for the children."

"They actively listen to our concerns and act when appropriate."

"They listen to me which makes me feel like I am making a difference."

"They listen and respect my input."

"They listen to my concerns. They act on my suggestions."

They notice when their social workers have good listening skills.

"They are good at listening and including me in the big things."

"This social worker uses active listening and clarifies communication."

"They are really trained to listen to us and our input as foster parents."

"They are good listeners."

"I feel like I have good insight about how visits might impact the child. They listen, ask questions when we share our concerns so they are clear about what the issue is."

"They listen to my thoughts and opinions and always try to give me as much time as they can spare."

They don't like it when workers do not seem to value their input.

"I voiced my opinion and I felt like my input was not valued."

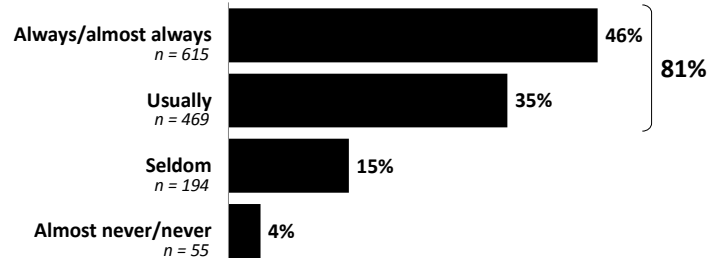
"Listen to our concerns and ask us what our thoughts are before taking action and making decisions for the children."

"Support us by listening and asking us questions about the kids. We have them 24/7 and if you don't trust our skills and opinions, why place them with us."

"Take our input seriously. I felt written off when we shared our opinion and observations."

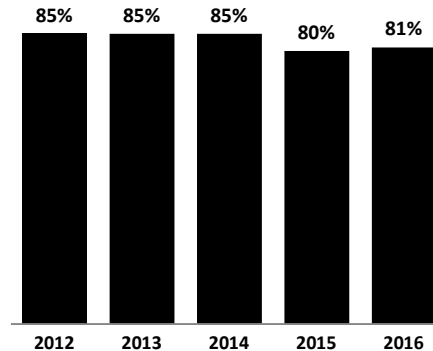
QUESTION | Do social workers listen to your input?

The majority of the 1,333 foster parents who answered this question (81%) said that social workers always, almost always, or usually listened to their input. The remaining 19% said seldom, almost never, or never.



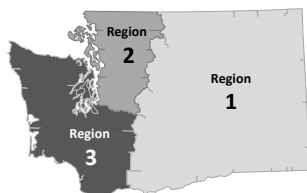
STATE TREND

The increase from last year was not statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

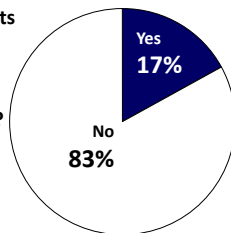
Region 1 was slightly higher (84%) on this question than the other two Regions (79% and 81%), but the differences were not statistically significant.



THEME | Social Workers Listen/Understand

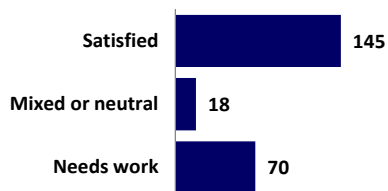
Comments about whether social workers listen to and understand foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about social workers listening and understanding?



233 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (17%) mentioned social workers listening and understanding.

Of the 233 survey respondents who addressed whether social workers listen to and understand them, more than six in ten (62%) made positive comments. About one-third (30%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eight percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents said they expect their social workers to:

- Listen carefully
- Respect foster parents' ideas and concerns
- Take their opinions into account when making decisions about foster children
- Understand the needs of foster parents and the children in their care

Some suggested that social workers should:

- Attend training to improve their listening skills
- Take foster parents seriously when they express concerns
- Ask for and use foster parents' input about needs of the children in their care
- Try harder to understand the circumstances of foster parents and foster children



Getty Images/iStock

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

"I can't seem to get anyone to really listen or help me."

"They are open and welcome input and collaboration. They listen and are generally responsive."

"I feel heard and my input is being considered."

"She really listens to what we need and does her best to make sure we get that."

"Really listen when we try to explain why we think something is in the best interests of the child."

They are glad when social workers understand and appreciate their efforts.

"They give me the impression that they are listening and understanding when I call them."

"They listen and they understand."

"Be more aware that we aren't always available to schedule things. We have lives and the kids do too."

"They took our needs seriously and they did their best to try and accommodate our needs."

"Respect the foster parents in that they have the children 24/7 and know what they need."

"They listen when I do need to talk to them. They take what I say at least at face value."

They want their opinions to matter for the children in their care.

"Really see that I am the person that is with the child on a daily basis and so therefore they should take my comments and opinions seriously."

"When I call they take me seriously."

"They consult us when there are changes and they seem to listen to what we say regarding the kids."

"They have listened to our needs and provided all the services needed for the girls and the family."

1.2 Social Workers



Getty Images/iStock

Most foster parents feel their social worker collaborates with them.

"I have a really good working relationship with my social worker and she always calls me back and we work through problems together."

"They responded to my requests and included me in input about the children's wellbeing."

"They work with us to figure out the best plan for the child."

"We work really well together as a team."

"They work with me as a team and are very supportive."

"The social worker treats us as part of the team and listens to our input."

"They develop a good working relationship with us so we can all help the child."

"They listened when the child needed to be separated from a sibling."

"I have had great experience with most social workers. I feel understood and part of the team."

"They work with me to meet the needs of the children."

"There is a mutual respect between all of us and we work together as a team."

"They include me and make me feel part of the team."

"The social workers include me in everything about the case."

"They allow me to make decisions and they trust me."

They express dissatisfaction when they feel excluded from decisions and planning.

"Always include us in meetings. Stop underhanded dealings without our knowledge."

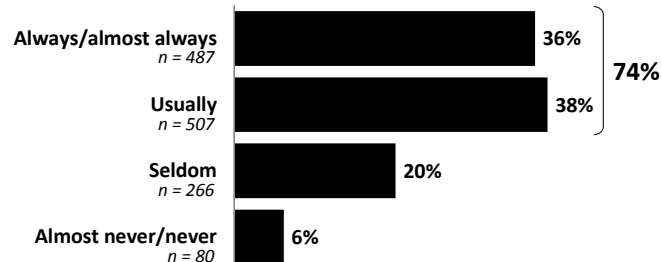
"Consider me as a member of the team and not 'just a foster parent.'"

"The social worker will ask me a question and when I answer, they respond like I didn't even speak. They overlook my input when decisions are being made."

"It would be nice to be included in the decision planning."

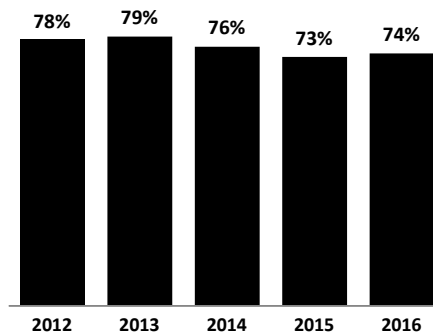
QUESTION | Are you treated like part of the team?

Nearly three-quarters of the 1,340 foster parents who answered this question (74%) reported they are always, almost always, or usually treated like part of the team. Just over one quarter (26%) said seldom or never.



STATE TREND

The small increase in this percentage from last year was not statistically significant.



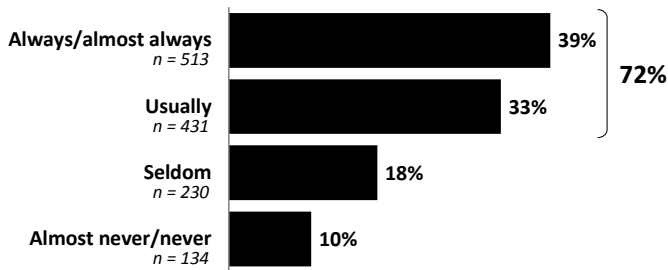
REGIONAL DETAIL

Positive responses were significantly higher in Region 1 (79%), compared to Region 2 (69%).



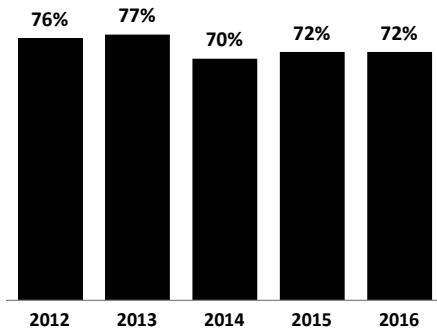
QUESTION | Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?

More than seven out of ten of the 1,308 foster parents who answered this question (72%) reported they are usually or always included in meetings about the child in their care. Just under three out of ten (28%) indicated they are seldom, almost never, or never included.



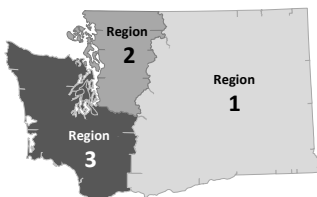
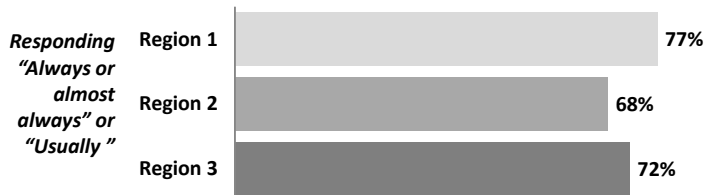
STATE TREND

There was no change from 2015 to 2016.



REGIONAL DETAIL

Positive responses were significantly higher in Region 1 (77%), compared to Region 2 (68%).



Getty Images/Wavebreak Media

Foster parents appreciate being included in meetings about the children in their care.

"They always include me and support my suggestions when it comes to children in my home."

"I appreciate being included in Family Team Decision-Making Meetings (FTDM)."

"They include you in on the important part of the cases and they ask what your needs are."

"I am included in discussions."

"My social worker included me in all the meetings."

"They try and include us regarding the plan for the child and where they see that going and how it might progress."

"We are invited to FTDM."

"The social worker has been very willing to reach out to us and request our input and requests."

"Some were very good at including us and helping us to be able to help the child."

They are concerned that they miss valuable information when excluded from meetings.

"Sometimes I feel like I am out of the loop. A lot of times I don't find out information from DSHS meetings between staffers."

"I feel left out when there are meetings that I find out about later and I felt I should have been included."

"I would like to be more a part of the meetings and the planning for the child."

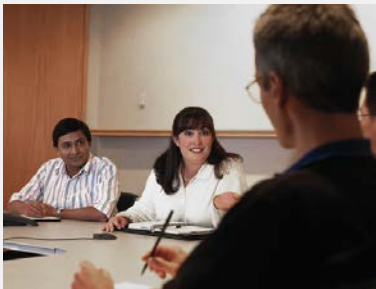
The need for teamwork was often mentioned.

"Include me in conversations about care for child. Please give me a heads up for appointment so I can plan. I want to be a part of the team 100%"

"Include us in team discussions."

"Teamwork with private agency. They help schedule appointments and bus trips for the children."

1.2 Social Workers



Getty Images/Hemera Technologies

Foster parents want to be included in the decision-making process.

“Include foster parents in case development.”

“I think DSHS should include foster parents in decision making because we have the most exposure.”

“Treat us as part of the team and not as an enemy.”

“Include us in decisions that are made for the children.”

“Our social worker did not include us on any of the decisions.”

“Include the foster parents more in the meeting and the decisions as to what is happening with the children.”

They want their opinions to matter.

“If I have one complaint it would be that I don't think that foster parents' opinions are valued.”

“Take us seriously when we share a concern.”

“It seems that we are the bottom of the priority list. Maybe we aren't whining enough!”

“Our opinion does not matter.”

“I think you listen, but I am not sure you hear.”

“Our input should matter more than it seems to.”

They appreciate when social workers collaborate and share information.

“The better social workers contact me and keep me in the loop.”

“They are open to any suggestions that I may have.”

“She keeps me informed about what happens.”

“The social worker always tells us things that are going to happen before they happen.”

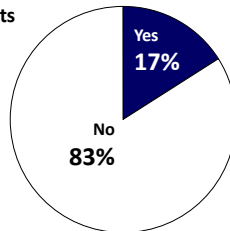
“If I call with any needs, we work together to get it taken care of.”

“They keep us informed about meetings and court dates and medical issues.”

THEME | Social Worker Inclusiveness

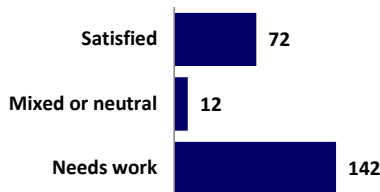
Comments about social workers' inclusion – or exclusion – of foster parents on matters related to their foster children are contained in this category.

Made comments about social worker inclusiveness?



226 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (17%) mentioned willingness of social workers to include them.

Of the 226 survey respondents who addressed social worker inclusiveness, about three in ten (32%) made positive comments. Two thirds (63%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Five percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want their social workers to include them:

- By asking for and using their ideas and opinions
- In meetings and court appointments
- By keeping them informed of updates to their case
- As a trusted member of the team
- When making plans and decisions about children in their care

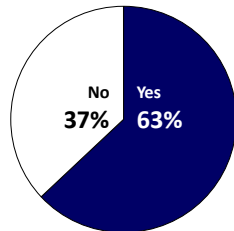
Foster parents expressed strongly that when social workers exclude them:

- They feel devalued, as if their opinions and observations don't matter
- They miss out on important information about the children
- Their ability to provide proper care is hindered
- Unsafe situations in the home may result

THEME | Other Comments About Social Workers

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

Made other comments about social workers?



853 of the foster parents surveyed (63%) made other comments about social workers.

Of the 853 survey respondents who made other comments about social workers, about one third (34%) made positive comments. More than four in ten (41%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One-quarter (25%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents praised social workers for:

- Good customer service and follow-through
- Providing quick responses and solutions
- Solving problems in a professional manner
- High levels of training and knowledge
- Communicating clearly and honestly

Many foster parents thought that social workers should:

- Respond quickly and thoroughly to foster parents’ concerns
- Try harder to be fair and flexible when dealing with foster families
- Improve their communication and customer service skills through more training
- Show more commitment and concern for the children on their caseload
- Demonstrate more knowledge about, and helpfulness in, finding resources for foster families



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents like social workers who respond quickly to solve problems.

“They get back to me in a timely way and I am grateful for that.”

“Our social worker has been awesome, very good at communicating and getting back to us.”

“I have seen lots of support with any problem that I have, I call them and they come to help me fix the problem.”

“Well, they do try and get back to me if I have a problem or a question and they do it in a timely manner.”

They appreciate honest, fair interactions with their case worker.

“The social worker I have is really honest and forthright and I appreciate that so much. He doesn't sugarcoat things and he is always there for me when I need him.”

“Treat children and foster parents more fairly by being available when needed.”

“Honest and straightforward communication is the norm.”

“They are straight and honest with me.”

Foster parents want social workers to be responsive to their needs.

“We have to pester the DSHS staff to get a response or get action to solve a problem.”

“Need to get services in a more timely manner and not wait until an absolute crisis.”

“We ask for little, but when we do ask for something, it would be great if something was done.”

“I have been ignored by my social worker and their supervisor multiple times. And, if I ask for a resource of some sort, it takes forever to get it.”

“I have found that they are not very responsive to my child's needs.”

“Be responsive! If we have an issue come up on the weekend, it is always sad when we are dealing with a human element but DSHS is working on banker's hours!”

1.2 Social Workers



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Most comments naming a specific social worker were positive.

“Teresa Obregon is so good, we just love her.”

“Joanne Horner is amazing and should be nominated for social worker sainthood.”

“Our social workers Barbara Harrington and Mike Wenndorf are amazing!”

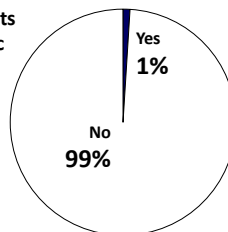
“Heidi Nelson and Stephanie Valentine make a great team.”

“Taylor Kennedy and Laura Carnegie are amazing.”

THEME | Specific Social Workers

Comments about specific social workers were included in this category.

Made comments about a specific social worker?



16 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific social worker in their comments.

Of the 16 foster parents who mentioned a specific social worker, 14 made positive comments.

1.2 Social Workers



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Several foster parents mentioned what they appreciate about their licensor.

“Our licensor has been extremely supportive and amazing.”

“I have to say that our licensor is the best there is. We went to her for everything, and she always helped us or directed us to someone who could help us.”

Many wish their licensor was more helpful to them.

“The licensor could be honest with the foster parents instead of lying to them.”

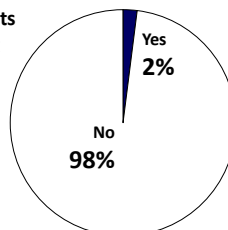
“Every time I get discouraged and feel like giving up, my case worker and licensor coddle me and promise the world. But when I really need them, they are not there for me.”

“The licensors are terrible at listening and helping, and we just can't take it anymore.”

THEME | Foster Care Licensors

Comments about the quality of support foster care licensors provide to foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about licensing support?



25 of the foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned foster care licensing support in their comments.

Of the 25 foster parents who addressed support from their foster care licensor, more than one in three (36%) made positive comments. Two made a mixed or neutral comment. More than half (56%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

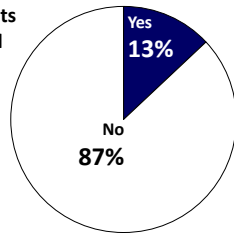
Many of the comments noted that:

- Interactions with licensors can have a big impact on foster parents' perceptions of the program
- Licensors are an important part of the foster care team

THEME | Need More Social Workers

Comments about the need for more social workers were included in this category. All of these comments emphasized the need for more social workers.

Made comments about the need for more social workers?



177 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned the need for more social workers.

Of the 177 survey respondents who addressed the need for more social workers, all of them made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.

Foster parents attributed a variety of issues to needs for more social workers, including:

- Social workers' caseloads are too large
- Social workers cannot give the attention needed to each case because they are spread too thin
- High turnover negatively affects worker competency and case knowledge, and can slow the progress of cases in court
- The ongoing need for more social workers causes job burnout among the remaining social workers



Getty Images/Jupiterimages

Foster parents are frustrated when social workers are spread too thin.

"We know her caseload is large, but I always feel like she is hurrying me or that I am kind of an afterthought."

"They need to lighten the caseloads of the social workers so they can have more interaction with foster parents and children. Not just the safety and health checks, but to actually get involved with the foster child and parents. Our current social worker is so overloaded we hardly hear from him."

"Reduce caseload size or hire more staff so administrative issues get taken care of. Things get dropped."

"Reduce the turnover! I had 4 different social workers in 1 year. I think turnover is from burnout."

They point out that high turnover rates result in communication gaps.

"This child has had five case workers in the last year and every single time there is a new one, they ask the same questions."

"My current placement has been through 8 caseworkers just this past year. And with every new case worker, I have to essentially start all over and tell them the story and bring them up to speed. Because there is so much turnover a lot of what I (or other foster parents) need to be told falls by the wayside."

"There have been four social workers in six months. None of them give the next social worker information. Mandate that a written summary of the case be done so the supervisor knows what is going on. It took a week for me to find out who the social worker was for the recent placement."

Most are understanding of the pressures placed on social workers.

"I feel that when they can't do something or they take a long time to get something done, that it is not intentional and that they are swamped."

"Although they seem overwhelmed at times, they make a concerted effort to be involved."

Access, Processes and Coordination



Getty Images/iStock

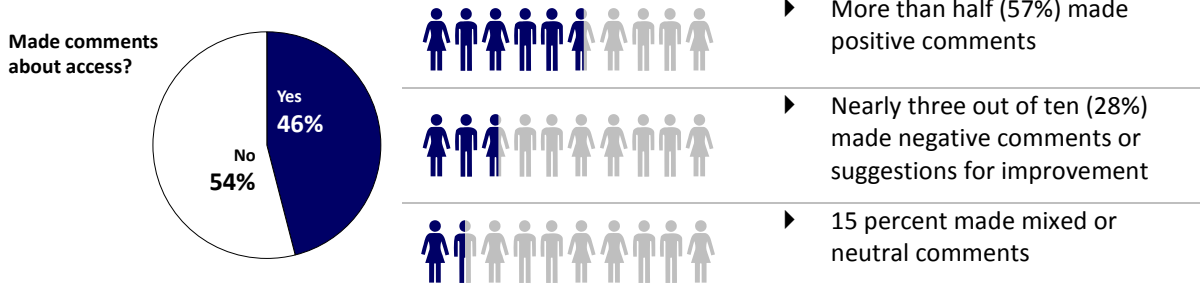
Foster parents need timely, coordinated and effective support and services.

Eighty percent of respondents said they can get help when they ask for it (a two point increase over 2015, but not statistically significant) and 74% said they are treated as “part of the team.” However, foster parents’ comments describe persistent challenges in navigating agency processes and coordination of services.

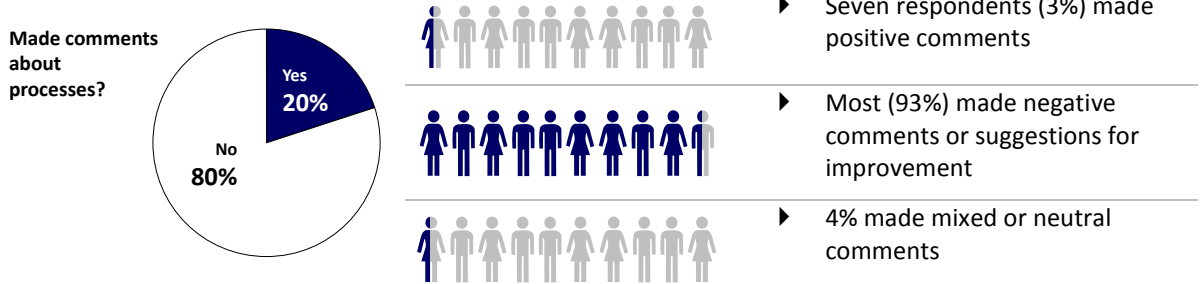
In this section:

- Topics are addressed in the following order: help when you need it; phone/staff access; consistent contact; general processes; specific processes; paperwork; and coordination
- The following page provides charts that summarize responses to open-ended questions
- Page 27 highlights foster parents’ responses to the question: “Can you get help when you ask for it?”
- Pages 28-33 describe foster parents’ comments on access to support, agency processes, and coordination of services

Nearly half of foster parents surveyed (627 out of 1,350, or 46%) made comments about being able to access staff by phone or email. Of those who commented on this subject:



One-fifth of foster parents (272 out of 1,350, or 20%) commented on general or specific processes. Of those who commented on this subject:

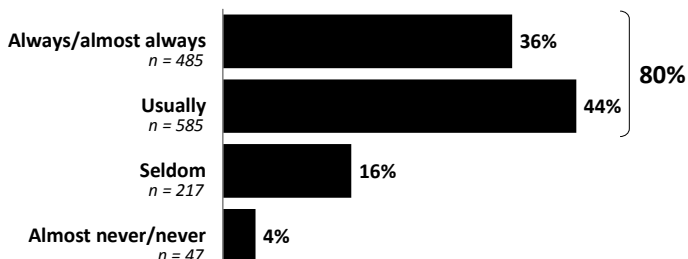


A few survey respondents (66 out of 1,350, or 5%) made comments about coordination. Of those who commented on this subject:



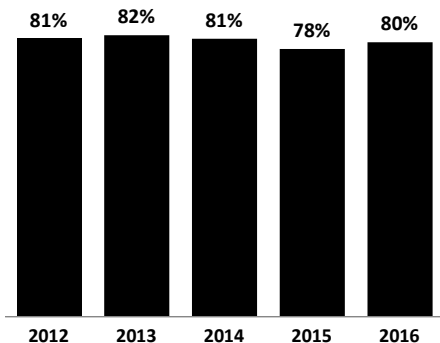
QUESTION | Can you get help when you ask for it?

Eight out of ten of the 1,334 foster parents who answered this question (80%) reported that they can usually or always get help when they ask for it. One out of five (20%) indicated it is difficult to access help they need when they ask for it.



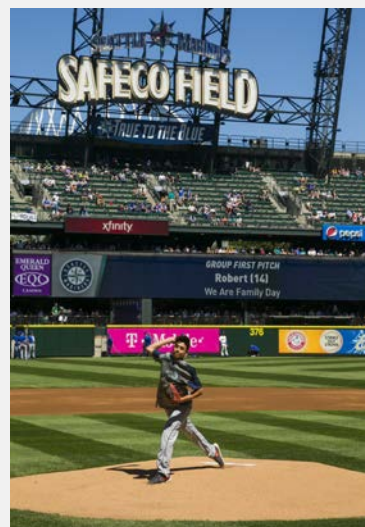
STATE TREND

The increase from 2015 was not statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

Positive responses were significantly higher in Regions 1 and 3 compared to Region 2.



We Are Family event 2016 photo courtesy Ben VanHouten, Seattle Mariners

Well-coordinated and sensitive responses to foster parents' needs are important.

"Whoever is in charge of scheduling various appointments doesn't always contact the foster parent when an appointment has been cancelled. The service providers are not communicating with the social workers, thus the information does not get to the foster parents."

"They are good about being the line between the biological parents and the foster parents."

Prompt responses to foster parents' inquiries are appreciated, even if it is just to say the inquiry was received.

"My current social worker is wonderful. She gets back to me within 24 hours. She anticipates things that might come up and brings these things to my attention. She makes sure I stay within the loop."

"We realize that their caseloads are very big, but just a quick e-mail to say they heard us and will get back to us as soon as they can. No response for a long time or not at all feels like they don't really care about us."

"Please get back to us within a couple of days; it's so hard when nobody responds from the private agency or DSHS."

"Current social worker has been very accessible and responds that she is looking for the answer if she does not have the answer immediately."

1.3 Access, Processes and Coordination



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Many foster parents appreciated being able to get help quickly.

“Anytime I call them they are there to give me direction and support.”

“When I send an e-mail, I like it when the social worker sends me back an e-mail. That way I have a written trail of what is going on.”

“Agency staff are available 24/7. We get prompt call back when we call.”

“My current social worker returns e-mails instantly.”

“I have had the greatest experience with a majority of the social workers. They return calls and e-mails quickly.”

Some said access has improved.

“Communication has improved with social workers and agency. They return phone calls and e-mails.”

“Overall we are able to reach the social worker when necessary, which is an improvement.”

“I think that they now have cell phones and they can communicate with us when out of the office. This is a great improvement.”

Others described problems caused by poor access.

“Get back to us when we e-mail and call and not weeks later. It was 5 weeks and the threat of the therapist dropping the kids before she called them.”

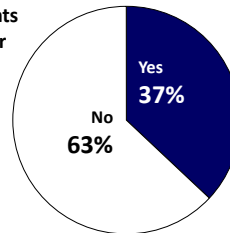
“I am just at my wits’ end. I feel as if I have been labeled as a complaining foster parent because I have to call my social worker’s supervisor, and that is after multiple phone calls and e-mails. This is going to be my last placement.”

“Better support after hours and during an emergency. I had a runaway girl and I tried calling the after-hours phone number. After 25 minutes and no one answered, I called 911.”

THEME | Phone/Staff Access

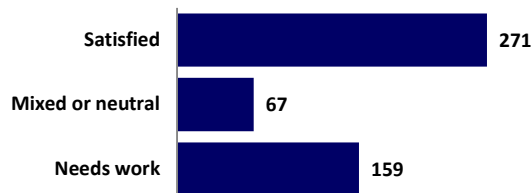
Comments about foster parents’ ability to access social workers and other staff by phone or other methods were included in this category.

Made comments about phone or staff access?



497 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (37%) mentioned ease or difficulty of accessing staff.

Of the 497 foster parents who addressed phone or staff access, more than half (55%) made positive comments. Nearly one-third (32%) made negative comments or suggested improvements. Thirteen percent made mixed or neutral comments.



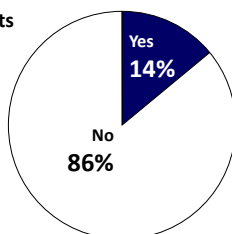
Common themes in this section include:

- Improved access to social workers due to cell phone use (especially texting) has been a positive development
- Sometimes social workers do not seem to have read or understood e-mail inquiries, or answer only parts of the e-mail
- Lack of responsiveness may be caused by large caseloads
- Quick responses to e-mails, texts, and calls is an essential component of overall support
- Responsiveness varies depending on the office or individual contacted

THEME | Consistency of Contact

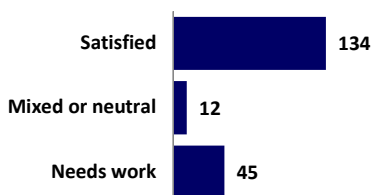
Comments about the consistency of social workers' initiating contact with foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about social workers being in consistent contact?



191 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned consistency of contact.

Of the 191 foster parents who addressed consistency of contact, seven out of ten (70%) commented positively. About one-quarter (24%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Six percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents want DSHS staff and affiliates to initiate regular and reliable contact to help them succeed. They expressed appreciation for:

- Monthly health and safety visits
- Time taken to make the best possible use of the monthly visits
- Being able to count on upcoming visits to discuss new developments and ask advice
- Additional check-ins and assistance when special situations warrant it

Foster parents find it especially difficult when:

- They cannot anticipate and schedule social worker visits well in advance
- The parents' and children's schedules are disrupted by unexpected home visits, or when they receive little or no notice of visits
- They cannot rely on regular contact from DSHS or private agency social workers



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Most comments described regular and helpful contact with social workers.

"The social worker always checked in to be sure we were OK and inquired if we needed added support."

"They check on kids, come to health and safety visits, and try hard to help the children feel like they are important."

"They are very good about visiting monthly."

"They come to my house for visits, talk with children, and visit the children at school."

"I like the monthly visits. My social worker doesn't miss them. She listens to my concerns."

"They have been coming 3 days a week to take the child out on staff time. This child is very difficult and this gives me some respite time."

"My social worker has been in constant communication with me and she is really good at checking in as she has time."

"When she comes for the health and safety checks, she takes the time to sit and talk with us and check the child's room. We really feel that she cares."

Some foster parents need more, or more consistent, contact.

"When I'm having trouble with teenagers and need someone to talk to about issues, it would be nice to know I'd be hearing from the social worker on a regular basis. Sometimes it feels like I'm on my own."

"They need to stick to their own rules. Once a placement is made, the social workers vaporize. Do the once-a-month visit."

"It has been over five months since one of my foster children has had a health and safety visit!"

"The social worker does not keep me up to date about the visiting schedule until the day of the visit."

1.3 Access, Processes and Coordination



Getty Images/Blend Images

Foster parents want the system to put children's needs first.

"The permanency is awful. The court system and Children's Administration couldn't get any slower on making this permanent for these kids. Four years of being in limbo is unbelievable for all involved."

"My complaint is not against Children's Administration or my social workers, it is with the commissioners who make decisions to send children back to abusive homes."

"The system is for the parents' rights and not what is best for the children. They should not pull the children out of school to do visits three hours every week."

Others are worried about whether foster parents' rights are adequately protected.

"Foster parents need to have representation (legal or otherwise) to protect us. Everyone else in the system seems to have it, so why not us?"

Some talked about how larger policy matters may affect social workers.

"Remedy whatever work place pressures that are causing such attrition or turnover in the social worker pool."

"Better check and balances for social workers."

"Put more money in the foster care system to hire qualified social workers and keep their caseloads at a reasonable limit."

"I believe the social workers believe the regulations prevent them from doing the best thing for the foster child but instead protect the biological parents."

"DSHS staff are forced to go through lots of hoops to accomplish many tasks."

A few foster parents acknowledged that processes sometimes work well.

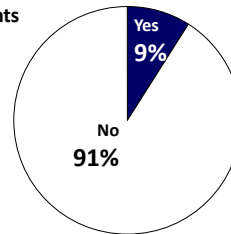
"My wife and I are very aware that the Department has been making every effort to improve the foster parent system. It is very apparent and appreciated."

"I was able to adopt two children through this process."

THEME | General Processes

Comments about the general processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about general processes?



120 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned general processes associated with foster parenting.

Of the 120 survey respondents who addressed general processes, five percent were positive. The majority (93%) made suggestions for improvement or negative comments. Three made mixed or neutral comments.



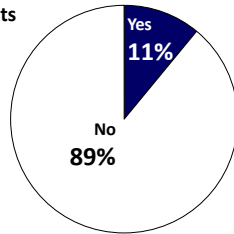
These foster parents are concerned when they feel that:

- Close adherence to policies and processes seems to come at the expense of children's wellbeing
- Reunification policies seem to favor biological parents over the needs of their children, making foster parents unsure of policy priorities
- Inconsistent record-keeping makes transitions more difficult for everyone, and may at times endanger children
- "One-size-fits-all" policies place excessive restrictions on families without improving health and safety
- Policies are not applied consistently from county to county

THEME | Specific Processes

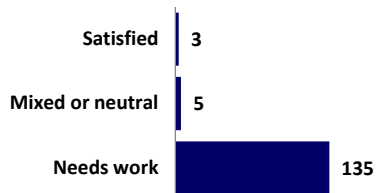
Comments about specific processes followed by the agencies serving foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about specific processes?



143 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned specific processes.

Of the 143 foster parents who addressed specific processes, three individuals (2%) made positive comments. More than nine out of ten (94%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Fewer than one out of twenty (3%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents suggested ideas to improve how specific processes are carried out, including:

- Apply policies uniformly, whether it be from one county to another, or for different affected groups, such as biological parents
- Streamline processes such as licensing to reduce unnecessary delays
- Handle allegations against foster parents with more sensitivity
- Provide more options for responding to children with extreme behavior difficulties
- Educate families about court processes and how they affect foster parents
- Develop procedures that allow foster parents to take appropriate action in an emergency



Getty Images/Purestock

Many specific processes presented challenges for foster parents.

“Place the children from the age group that is requested. I signed up for 5 year olds and below. We got very few of those children.”

“Tell us when social workers change.”

“Their hands are kind of tied when there is an allegation and they all seem to pull away from us as if we had some sort of disease.”

“Whatever they can do to help us foster parents when someone complains about us. I felt like they thought I was guilty before investigating the allegation.”

“The rules say that after three missed visits by the parents, there will be consequences. But from our experience, the bio parents learn that they can miss more and there won't be consequences.”

“Some of the licensing rules are really silly. I have a 15-year-old and I am not allowed to have a pond in my yard.”

“We need a mechanism to document social workers' lack of responsibility for the child in their care. It needs to go above a supervisor's level.”

“Develop a standard transition plan for kids being returned to their bio family. Don't just make a decision and move them the same day.”

“Sometimes things are left out of the court reports that would affect the outcome. The judges must have all pertinent facts and not just the things that are favorable to reunification.”

“There does not seem to be any accountability for licensing timelines from county to county. Ours took more than six months but other counties use only 30 days.”

“There should be a policy that says what we can do as a next step if a social worker does not reply within two hours.”

1.3 Access, Processes and Coordination



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Foster parents emphasized the need for quick and accurate paperwork completion.

“Be accurate in your paperwork. Do not code us as family members when we are not. Need to be honest in the recordkeeping.”

“A child will have to stay in care for one more year because papers were not filed and things did not get done on time.”

Sometimes paperwork is lost, causing delays and frustration.

“Licensing department lost my paperwork. That was unpleasant. I cannot renew my license as I have to devote 20 more hours of paperwork to get re-licensed.”

“Our social worker left for four months and we thought she had turned in our paperwork. When we didn't get paid, we checked with the supervisor who told us they never received anything.”

Some foster parents commented on the burden that paperwork can create.

“The paperwork you have to do to get licensed: it took a year and I now have a binder with 500 pages. I am a university administrator who is used to paperwork and even I found it daunting.”

“We are expected to sign papers without understanding what we are signing. No attorney is looking out for our interests.”

Several respondents offered specific suggestions for improvement.

“Is there a systemic way to expedite record sharing? We have found a way to demand it but most foster parents do not get this kind of service.”

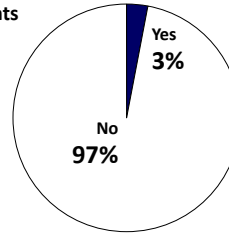
“Automate the licensing and renewal process.”

“Have more instruction on how to complete the paperwork for mileage, etc.”

THEME | Paperwork Processes

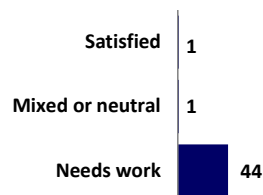
Comments about foster parenting paperwork processes were included in this category. Three percent of survey respondents made a comment about paperwork processes.

Made comments about paperwork processes?



46 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned paperwork processes.

Of the 46 survey respondents who commented about paperwork processes, only one individual (2%) made a positive comment. Nearly all (96%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and there was one mixed or neutral comment.

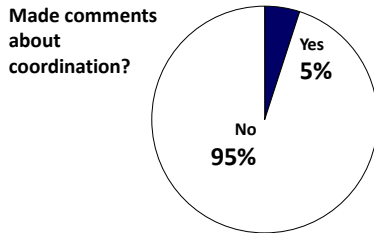


Foster parents highlighted specific aspects of understanding, completing, and keeping track of paperwork that they would like to see improved. These included:

- Excessive paperwork
- Lost forms and packets that lead to significant delays, which can have a negative impact on the foster parents' and/or foster children's lives
- Foster children being placed without medical cards or other documentation, causing delays in needed services
- Unclear or inconsistent instructions about how to complete forms can cause unnecessary delays or duplicated work
- Recordkeeping that is incomplete or inaccurate
- Late paperwork that delays payments or reimbursements
- Important forms and instructions that are not available online, or can't be submitted online

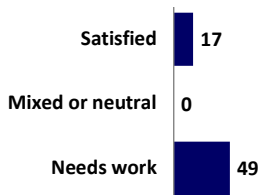
THEME | Coordination

Comments about how well those who support foster parents coordinate their efforts were included in this category.



66 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned coordination.

Of the 66 foster parents who addressed coordination, 17 (26%) made positive comments. More than seven in ten (74%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



When coordination is successful:

- Employees of Children’s Administration, and of private agencies serving foster parents, work well as a team
- Social workers collaborate with others in the community to get foster children the resources they need
- DSHS coordinates well internally among its different sections, making consistent decisions and sharing information about kids and foster families
- Meetings are scheduled to include as many parties as possible so that all are on board with the solutions that are generated

Foster parents are frustrated when:

- Transitions due to social worker turnover are not handled well, such as when information about the child and his or her needs is not passed on
- Policies, processes, and procedures seem to vary greatly among counties
- Social workers don’t reach out to others who can provide resources for foster children
- DSHS and private agencies do not communicate effectively



Getty Images/Purestock

Foster parents expressed a need for more coordination among all parties.

“It takes too long to get information passed to the right people. Everyone on the team needs to be on the same page.”

“More consistent status reports on custody. Different people report different pieces of information regarding permanency.”

“We had a real problem with day care while the caseworker was gone and we almost could not get this kid in because the ball was dropped.”

“I think they should work more with the schools as well as with the foster parents.”

“Increasing communication between offices especially when you are on the county line.”

“The last we heard grandma was not ready to take our child. We wanted to take this little girl on vacation with us, but because of the transition from one social worker to another, some things did not get done, so we had to leave her in respite care. We just got a call that the social worker came to pick up her from respite care and placed her with the grandmother. I am so emotional that I can’t even talk.”

When coordination is done well, it is appreciated.

“The private agency and state staff work as a team. It is an awesome partnership.”

“The school needs to get more on board with the child’s needs and Children’s Administration helped us to set up a meeting to talk about this.”

“The social workers inform me when there are meetings and make sure that the visitation people contact me.”

“DSHS social workers and our private agency staff listen to our concerns and they work together as a team to help get reasonable solutions.”

Information



Getty Images/BananaStock

Foster parents want clear and timely information.

Information is very important to foster parents. When asked directly, seven out of ten foster parents said they usually or always received adequate information needed to care for the children placed with them. However, more than half of those who made comments (51%) suggested that information sharing could be improved.

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

In this section:

- The following page shows answers to the question about adequacy of information
- Pages 37-38 summarize open-ended responses related to information

More than half of the foster parents surveyed (740 out of 1,350, or 55%) commented about information. Of those who commented on the themes in this section:



1.4 Information



Photo courtesy Meri Waterhouse, Children's Administration

Some foster parents said that they receive timely and helpful information.

"Our social worker is good, upfront and honest, eager to get us information we have needed."

"If she doesn't know the answer to my question, she finds an answer. If it takes her a little time, she calls me and lets me know she is still working on the question."

"The social workers are willing to reach out to other people to find an answer for us."

"They make themselves available for questions, respond promptly, and share resources with us when we need them."

"Most of the time I can get an answer fairly quickly. It is helpful when I am notified of meetings and changes that are happening."

"They are pretty honest with the information on the kids to the best of their knowledge. They don't hide information."

"In the past month, I have a new social worker and the adoption social worker had come with tons of information. I have suddenly felt like they want me to succeed as a foster parent."

Others were frustrated when information was unclear, contradictory, or delayed.

"Our social worker knew that the bio mom was pregnant, but I had to hear it from a very agitated and angry teen. A little heads-up would have helped us."

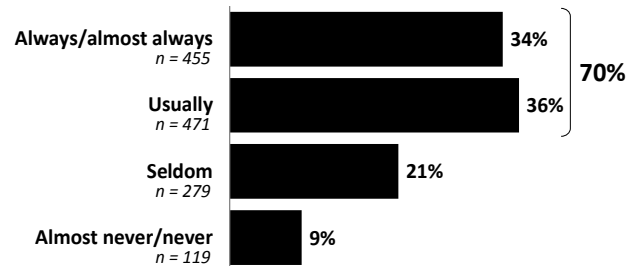
"We have a tough time getting straight answers. We get a lot of misinformation."

"Fill us in more on what happens at court and what direction we are going in reunification with the bio family. Tell me what happens in court."

"When you send us letters, don't assume we know what all the abbreviations and acronyms mean."

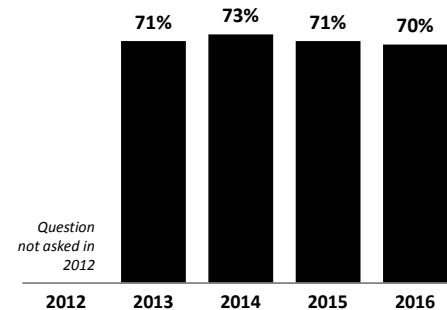
QUESTION | Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental, and educational needs?

Seven in ten (70%) of the 1,324 foster parents who answered this question reported that they can get timely information about children placed with them. Three out of ten (30%) said they seldom or never get that information.



STATEWIDE TREND

The small decrease from 2015 was not statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

There were no statistically significant differences by region.





Getty Images/iStock

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

“I feel relief that I have so many resources at my hand through classes and reading material; and my social worker always tells me to call anytime I have questions.”

“Whenever I have a question they are right there to help me, and if they don't have an answer they get one.”

“Private agency does an outstanding job of interpreting for us as to exactly what is going on.”

Just over half of those commenting described concerns about information.

“I would like clearer understanding of court hearings, timelines for petition, adoption application process. More information on the legal side; defining some terms.”

“All we were told was that there was a charming little boy who had been abandoned. It did not take us long to figure out that there were some real big problems and we really needed help.”

“Send us a notice when the social worker is leaving, so we don't continue to try to get in touch with them. We also need time to prepare the child for the social worker leaving.”

“When the child is first placed in the home, we don't get enough information about the child, especially with behavioral and medical problems. For example, a child with scabies was placed with us and we weren't told for 2-3 days.”

Others have mixed experiences with being given information.

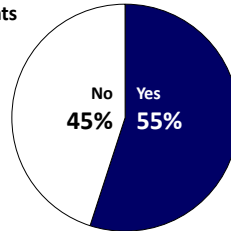
“When we finally do get through to our social worker, she does usually answer our question or try to help us to the best of her ability.”

“They return phone calls, making sure I have all important medical information. It has gotten better in the last year. Previously it was quite frustrating in regard to getting timely information.”

THEME | Information

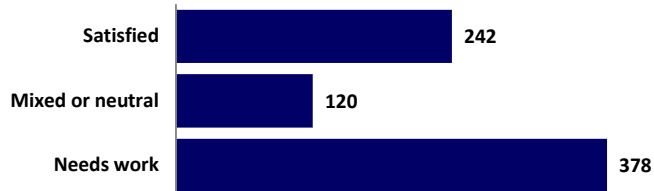
Comments about information provided to foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about information?



740 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (55%) mentioned information.

Of the 740 survey respondents who addressed information, one third (33%) made positive comments. Just over half (51%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Sixteen percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents expressed appreciation for:

- Honesty and transparency in the information they are given about their foster child's background
- Timely and accurate information about upcoming steps in the foster care process, especially court dates
- Getting answers to their questions, even if it takes extra time to find the answer

However, they also noted that:

- The consequences are potentially very serious if they are not given complete and timely details about the child's medical history, changes in the biological parents' situation, or other crucial information
- Although most understand that certain information about a child's background cannot be shared with them, they need to know as much as possible, and for the rules to be applied consistently
- Adequate notification about meetings and visits (or cancellations) makes a big difference and communicates respect for what the foster parents do
- The frequency and quality of information received varies among social workers, agencies, and offices

1.4 Information

THEME | *Information, continued*

Foster parents recognize that some questions are not easily answered, and some information cannot be legally shared, but they appreciate receiving as much information as possible.

Voices

Foster parents appreciate frankness and transparency in the information they receive.

"They are pretty honest and upfront with us and don't try to hide anything. When we have questions, they are very straightforward with us."

"They are honest with what they don't know about the foster child. I ask a lot of questions before I get a foster child. I appreciate transparency."

"Give me information on how to care for the child. In case of sexual abuse, I am not informed but yet I am dealing with the fall out. Some things are not disclosed in court, but to give proper care to the child, I need to know major issues like this. I received two kids who were trafficked for sex and this was not disclosed. The kids were extremely fragile and we did not know why."

"They keep us up to date regarding any contact with the children's parents. They seem pretty up front about the information. They don't always tell us exactly, but they give us a couple of possible scenarios as to what might happen in certain situations."

"Give us as much information about a child up front and don't sugar coat it because you are afraid we won't take the child."

Foster parents value clear and consistent answers to their questions.

"For new foster parents, need to explain more about the documentation the child comes into the home with. We were given different information about what types of documents the social worker could leave with us, especially regarding the medical documents."

"Having access to more information on the case such as the kind of situations the kids have come from so we know better how to deal with behaviors that come up. Social workers are not consistent with this information. Some will give us adequate information of the child's past and others don't."

They also expect social workers and other staff to be proactive in ensuring that they receive crucial information.

"As long as I am asking questions, things are good. Need to be more forthcoming with information. Sharing the case plan with me would be very helpful."

"They keep me in the loop. The agency case worker is pro-active about giving information. They offer things that I wouldn't necessarily know to ask for."

"Answer questions and give information. We need medical, behavioral, development and educational history and needs. We never hear about court dates. We have had our foster children for about a year but we have never received an ISSP which is supposed to be given to us within three months of placement. They are not equipping us with any information which would help us be successful with the foster children."

"Don't make me have to call the social worker to find out information that I need to have. Sometimes when meetings are cancelled, I am not told until the last minute. I work and this creates problems for me at work."

"If we raise enough fuss, we usually get the answers I need."

"I don't always know when the court hearing is being held until it is over. I like to be able to attend the court hearing."

"Be more informative about the children and the case plan. We find out after the fact too often."

They appreciate knowing about resources and services available to the children in their care.

"They helped us identify medical and counseling options in our area. They are pretty good about following through."

"I wish there was a list of resources that were split up by type and county. It seems when I need something, it takes an inordinate amount of time to contact my social worker or hunt it up on my own."

"They are aware of local resources and help us to connect to them."

They also want clear, consistent, and easily accessible information about rules, processes, and procedures.

"From the beginning it was not made clear to us what the standards are for reunification. There needs to be more clarity as to the progress of the case."

"Offer a road map regarding parental termination so it can be more easily understood."

"They are really good at explaining things that we do not understand, for instance, the court process."

"Better communication of the process, because it is very long and I am often confused about what I should be doing when (e.g. what paperwork and so forth). We want to adopt out foster child and everything you need to do to make that happen can be quite daunting if there isn't good communication."

"They helped me understand what needs to happen before children are reunited or terminated. I understand now why it takes so long sometimes."

Resources



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Foster parents want resources to be quickly and easily available.

This section focuses on resources provided to foster parents for the children in their care, such as respite care or clothing vouchers. Comments related to payments and reimbursements to foster parents from DSHS are also included in this section.

Just over half of foster parents (54%) who commented about resources identified problems. However, many also noted that they are pleased with the resources available to their foster children.

In this section:

- The first five pages of this section are arranged by topic, in the following order: respite care; financial matters; medical, dental, mental health resources; transportation; and childcare.
- Page 45 contains an overview of comments about various other resources.

One-quarter of survey respondents (336 out of 1,350) made comments about resources. Of those who commented on this subject:



1.5 Resources



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Most foster parents who commented on respite care expressed needs for better access, and for help finding this care.

“Provide more opportunities for respite. It is left up to us to find respite care. This is burning out the foster parents. We had kids for a year and could not get respite one time in that year.”

“I need respite care and they need to provide it when I request it. I've only been able to get respite once in the last 2-1/2 years even though I have asked for more. And, make it closer. I can't be driving half way across the state to get respite care.”

“Establish a uniform respite system that is monitored and fully functional.”

“For stay at home moms, I think it would be helpful if part-time daycare or preschool would be available for the foster child. It would be jointly beneficial for both the foster parent and foster child to have a 2- or 3-hour break at times.”

Those who provide respite care want more timely and reliable payment.

“They need to pay for respite on the first request and not on the 7th or 8th request.”

“Payments should be more prompt. We had to wait 2-1/2 months for a respite payment.”

“Receiving respite payment is a hassle. I don't do a lot of it because I have to hunt down the worker to get payment. I will need respite in February myself, and I sympathize with people who do not want to do it because of difficulty getting paid.”

Foster parents who have accessed respite care very much appreciate the service, and receiving help to find it.

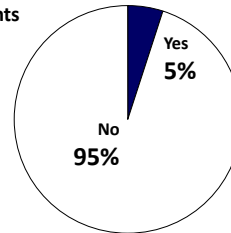
“They respond to my requests for respite and they hear me out when I have difficulties with the child.”

“Whenever we have a pressing concern, we go to our private agency. They have helped us in a number of situations, including finding respite care.”

THEME | Respite Care

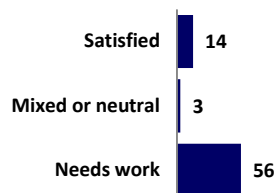
Respite care is temporary, time-limited relief for parenting or caregiving of a child.

Made comments about respite?



73 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned respite care.

Of the 73 survey respondents who mentioned respite service, nearly one in five (19%) made positive comments. Three-quarters (77%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals (4%) made mixed or neutral observations.



Respondents suggested they need:

- More access to respite care
- Assistance with finding respite care
- Timely payment when respite care is provided

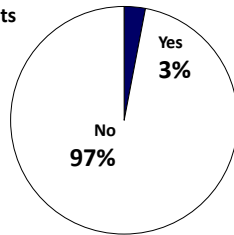
Many stressed that:

- Respite care is essential and greatly appreciated when available
- Ready access to respite care helps prevent foster parent burn-out
- Respite care is especially valuable for families when foster children have intensive needs or especially challenging situations

THEME | Financial Matters

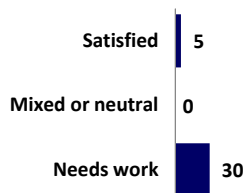
Comments about financial matters (e.g. payments and reimbursements to foster parents from DSHS) were included in this category.

Made comments about financial matters?



35 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned financial matters.

Of the 35 survey respondents addressing financial matters, less than one in seven (14%) made positive comments. Most (86%) who commented on this topic made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Foster parents who commented on financial issues indicated a need for:

- Better communication about differing rate assessment levels
- Accurate rate assessments
- Quicker and more efficient reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses
- Timely processing of paperwork and reporting, so that foster parents and other service providers do not have to absorb late payments into their own budgets



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want clear rates and reimbursements that accurately reflect children’s needs.

“The children that have special needs need to be on a different level of pay and care with the foster parents. There are different levels of care and not all foster parents are aware of this or made aware of it.”

“As a foster parent, your pay goes down as the child gets better. That seems backward to me. I would think that once a child is stabilized in a particular foster home, you would want to encourage those foster parents to continue to care for this child. I know it's not about the money, but that rule just seems backward to me.”

“We have done this for a long time and I don't think we have ever been successful in getting reimbursed for damages to our home caused by foster children. Why not?”

“The payment rate for teenagers is not accurate according to what I have seen. My teen has very high needs but they are not addressing it.”

Foster parents want timely pay and reimbursement.

“Better time frame for payment. We have waited for 6 weeks and got nothing, and one of my daycare providers had to wait for 4 months to get paid.”

“My payment is on time each month.”

“Getting reimbursed at adequate intervals; we have had such a problem with this and it has caused some real issues with our budget.”

“They are good about payment.”

When improvements in payment processes are made, they are noticed and appreciated.

“The significant increase in the monthly stipend was awesome and so appreciated. And lately the mileage reimbursement has gone more smoothly.”

1.5 Resources



Getty Images/Purestock

Foster parents want complete and timely information and resources to meet their foster children's medical needs.

"Send medical card promptly. Have not received a medical card for current child. It has been 6 weeks!"

"Check medications at the moment of placement or transfer! I received non-prescription supplement from previous parents. This was not on the list."

"Our little guy needed meds right away and Rite Aid had no idea what a voucher was. I paid for the meds out of pocket. I was reimbursed, but it was a hassle."

"You know, it's not always helpful when your child is in crisis or having trouble in school, to request a counselor only to be told 'well, look in your phone book and find one that will take your child.'"

They are concerned about being able to access counseling and specialty care when the child needs it.

"I can't believe that so many [medical professionals] still do not take medical coupons. Isn't there something the State can do to sweeten the pot so that these kids who so desperately need help can get it in a more timely way?"

"Some social workers have been very responsive to behavioral issues with the kids. We've been supported in getting counseling and other services [and] in providing medical services such as orthodontia and eye therapy."

"We got a particularly difficult child and our social worker was really good at hooking us up with community support. Also, without Provider One, we would not have been able to take our child to the therapy he so sorely needed."

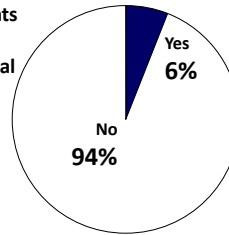
They also have concerns about reimbursement for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

"The uncovered medical expenses for the foster child in my care should be reimbursed and [I should] not have to put up a fight to get them paid for."

THEME | Medical, Dental and Mental Health Resources

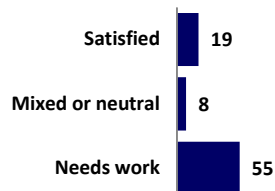
Comments about medical, dental and mental health resources needed by foster children were included in this category.

Made comments about medical, dental or mental health resources?



82 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned medical, dental or mental health resources.

Of the 82 survey respondents addressing medical, dental or mental health resources, nearly one-quarter (23%) made positive comments. Two-thirds (67%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Ten percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate:

- Thorough and up-to-date information about children's medical needs and conditions, with advice about where to get appropriate resources for them
- Access to needed medical, dental, and specialty health care for their foster children
- Appropriate mental health and counseling services
- Assistance in finding care

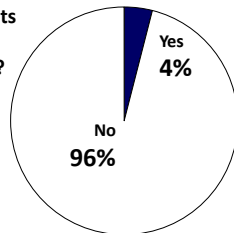
They express discouragement over:

- Struggles to get reimbursement for foster children's medical expenses
- Lack of care providers near their home
- Harm resulting from unmet care needs

THEME | **Transportation**

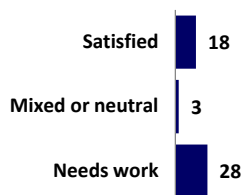
Comments about resources available for transportation of foster children were included in this category.

Made comments about transportation?



49 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned transportation resources.

Of the 49 comments addressing transportation, more than a third (37%) were positive. More than half (57%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Some foster parents mentioned positive ways that transportation services help the children in their care by:

- Making sure that foster children can access important medical and educational services because they have a way to get to them
- Maintaining important family relationships through regular visits
- Conveying a spirit of teamwork in getting children where they need to go
- Allowing foster parents to use their time more effectively

They are frustrated by:

- Incomplete or late information about what transportation services are available
- Difficulties in communicating with transport providers
- Missed pick-ups and unreliable scheduling



Getty Images/iStock

Assistance with transportation received several appreciative comments.

“The social worker would transport a my foster child’s sister to me for visitation instead of making me drive almost two hours for the children to get together.”

“They have been good about providing support and transportation for the foster child for visits or therapy.”

“The social worker is very supportive in coordinating for visits and counseling since I work full time. So, they have a ride when they need it or for scheduled items.”

Some foster parents expressed the need for transportation services to be a part of the care team.

“Transporters are abrupt and do not introduce themselves. The kids are reactive as they are fearful of new faces and people they do not know.”

“Please train transportation people on how to install car seats. All that I have seen have been improperly installed. We have asked multiple times why they have not been trained. It is required of foster parents to know how to install all types of car seats and should be required of people doing transporting.”

Others commented on the importance of communication and reliability in transporting foster children.

“Increase communication between social worker and transportation. There are several transportation agencies and they are not consistent.”

“Pay attention to my transportation requests and schedule changes. I asked for 24-hour notice. Communicate when transporter is not available.”

“We are having a real problem with our transporters this year. There have been no-shows and cancellations and one time a child got dropped off at our house while I was at work; I had to drop what I was doing and go home.”

“It would be so nice if they could respond quickly to our requests for transportation for the children to visit their siblings.”

“Transportation is the main area of concern for me. Need to work more with my schedule.”

1.5 Resources



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents value high-quality childcare, though they acknowledge that it can be difficult to find.

“There is a lot of nanny sharing in our particular community. Even if you get your nanny licensed by the State, the house where the childcare is happening has to be licensed too. The options are so limited for licensed daycare that one of us has to take turns staying home with him. There needs to be better delineated rules regarding childcare and powers that be need to think a little more outside the box.”

“During the last year this social worker has been good. She set up day care for us. It took a while, but she did it.”

“Up the stipend for childcare. If you want to attract and keep good daycare personnel, then you have to pay them for the important job they are doing.”

“Be more proactive in helping provide adequate childcare.”

“One of my friend’s daycare will not take foster children anymore because they have had so much trouble. I don’t want this to happen to my relationship with my daycare. That would be just awful.”

Without childcare for the foster child, some parents are not able to accept placements.

“The biggest problem I have had is having Children’s Administration and my social worker follow through with establishing daycare. I need this to work seamlessly because I am a single working Mom and without daycare I cannot take the foster child. If the daycare doesn’t get what they need and has trouble getting paid, it can really lead to problems.”

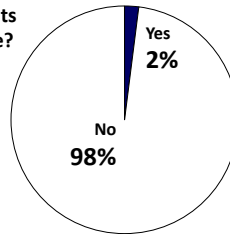
“My social worker could help us by being more responsive in setting up daycare for us. It has been weeks between when we left messages and she still has not gotten back to the daycare provider.”

“I had to turn down a placement because I could not find childcare for them.”

THEME | Childcare

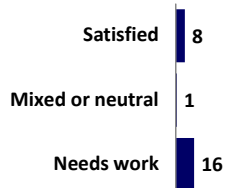
Comments about childcare services for foster children were included in this category.

Made comments about childcare?



25 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned childcare.

Of the 25 survey respondents addressing childcare, one-third (32%) made positive comments. Nearly two-thirds (64%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One individual (4%) made a mixed comment.



Some foster parents are pleased with:

- Commitment and persistence of social workers in obtaining and ensuring that payments are processed on time
- Childcare provided during foster parent training classes and support group activities

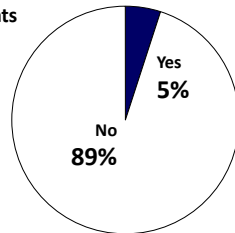
Others expressed frustration with:

- Restrictions on the types of childcare that can be used
- Insufficient childcare resources in their community
- Slow or incorrect payment for providers

THEME | **Other Resources**

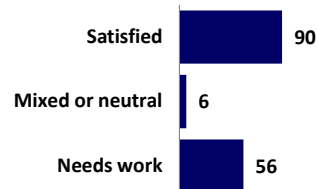
Comments about resources other than those previously described were included in this category.

Made comments about other resources?



152 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned other resources.

Of the 152 survey respondents addressing other resources, about six in ten (59%) made positive comments. More than one-third (37%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Four percent made mixed or neutral comments.



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

- Resources (with no further clarification of the term)
- Additional activities for foster children
- Training for foster parents*
- Clothing
- Other supplies (like bikes and books)

Foster parents made positive comments about:

- Getting timely responses to requests for these resources
- Resources that are provided which are unique to their foster child’s situation

However, some expressed that:

- They often feel unsure of what is available and whether they are responsible for the cost
- They are frustrated by the time it can take to receive essential basic resources, such as clothing

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



Getty Images/JupiterImages

Many of the comments in this category mentioned the need for clothing and clothing vouchers.

“When I first get a placement, I get clothing vouchers right away.”

“It would be great to get some help with food and clothing for my kids. A holiday package that included some certificates or vouchers for clothes, toys, or food once a year would be super.”

“There should be care packages available for children who arrive with nothing. It takes a week or longer to get a clothing voucher for a child who arrives with nothing but the clothes on their back.”

“If we ask for something such as a clothes voucher or counseling, they are very good at supporting us. Also, if the foster child needs football shoes, etc. they get us in touch with Bridge the Gap.”

“We got a baby with literally the clothes on her back and nothing else. If we hadn’t had a few clothes on hand for a baby, we would have had to buy some. A \$300 voucher had already been given to the people who had her before us and we couldn’t get one.”

Some foster parents noted the need for specific resources for certain children or situations.

“Offer online education options for children being moved from home to home. They get too far behind being moved so much.”

“I have a baby who is a fragile feeder and my social workers have been so helpful in getting us what we need.”

“We are paying out of pocket for our foster child to attend preschool two days a week. We are being told that he would really benefit from going full-time. Shouldn’t the State be paying for this?”

“Some of the things that I think foster children should qualify for, they don’t. I have a foster child with special dietary needs and a 14-year-old who eats like a man.”

Other Sources of Foster Parent Support



We Are Family event 2016 photo courtesy Ben VanHouten, Seattle Mariners

Foster parents receive support from a variety of sources.

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

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

The majority of foster parents who commented on support received from various sources in their community expressed satisfaction. However, some do not feel well supported and others find that supports that do exist are not well coordinated. Positive comments about support groups suggest a desire for more contact with their peers.

- The following page provides an overview of foster parents’ comments about the support they receive from staff other than social workers, and from sources outside Children’s Administration and its contracted providers

Five percent of respondents (64 out of 1,350) made comments about help available from other sources of support. Of those who commented on this subject:



1.6 Other Sources of Support



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Many foster parents see support groups as important sources of encouragement and information.

"I learn more about foster benefits for the child from support meetings than from caseworkers."

"We attend support dinners monthly where we meet other foster parents. They provide child care and much support during evening. We got connected to kids' clothing resources."

"Please facilitate formation of more foster parent resource groups so we can talk with other foster parents."

"The tribal agency could gather their foster parents together and set up a support group."

Advocacy groups such as Fostering Together and Mockingbird are greatly valued by some families.

"I appreciate the Fostering Together program and the advocacy."

"Providing the Mockingbird constellation model for support and respite needs."

"Fostering Together has been my support. I need more support than that. I use Facebook also."

Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), Guardians ad Litem (GALs), and other community resources fill an important role.

"Our GAL worker is fantastic. She is very experienced, she knows what is going on and keeps us as informed as much as she is allowed."

"There needs to be more trust in the CASA workers, social workers, court and others that have a voice in the case of the child. Open more communication between the players."

"It is great having a liaison and foster parent advocate we can call."

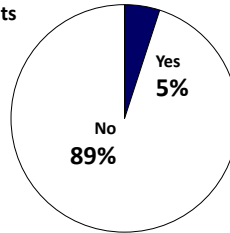
"The CASA worker is very good about helping me."

"I have an amazing family and church. That is where I get support."

THEME | Other Sources of Foster Parent Support

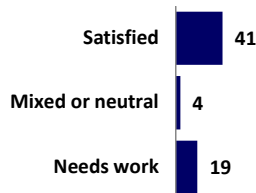
Comments about other sources of foster parent support outside Children's Administration and its contracted providers were included here.

Made comments about other resources?



64 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned other resources.

Of the 64 survey respondents who addressed other sources of foster parent support, nearly two-thirds (64%) made positive comments. Almost one in three (30%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Four individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents' comments included the following:

- Contact with other foster parents through support groups provides not only emotional support, but practical advice such as information about resources
- Support from CASAs (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) or GALs (Guardians ad Litem) is appreciated when present, and may provide important information and support, especially when communication between Children's Administration workers and parents is not at its best
- Foster parents expect effective coordination between social workers, other representatives of the foster care system, and community supports

Foster Parent Training



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Part 2 of this report examines foster parents' responses to questions about training provided by Children's Administration and affiliated agencies.

The Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, a partnership between Children's Administration and the state's leading universities, offers education and training programs to Washington child welfare staff and caregivers. Both Children's Administration and the Alliance use foster parent feedback from this survey and other sources to update training opportunities. Foster parents also receive training through other organizations. The survey responses reflect training received from all sources.

Most respondents are satisfied with training, especially increased access to training through the Internet. Difficulties remain with access to in-person training due to schedules, locations, travel costs, and need for childcare. Also, the interaction that in-person classes facilitate is greatly valued. Some foster parents requested increased options and flexibility in choices.

This part of the report contains the following sections:

- Section 1: Quality and Helpfulness
- Section 2: Trainers
- Section 3: General Training
- Section 4: Specific Training Topics
- Section 5: Access
- Section 6: Alternative Training Formats
- Section 7: Voice and Choice
- Section 8: Training Information
- Section 9: Support Beyond Training

Training Quality and Helpfulness



Getty Images/BananaStock

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

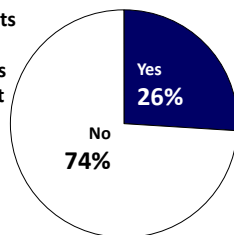
Since 2012, foster parents have given the training they receive consistently positive ratings, and 2016 was no exception, with 87% of respondents responding that the training they received adequately prepared them to care for the foster children in their homes.

Many foster parents see training as essential to their success. In addition to comments praising the quality and helpfulness of existing training, there were suggestions for how to make it better. These included more scheduling, location and format options, as well as expanded topics for experienced foster parents and those with special situations.

In this section:

- The following page highlights foster parents' responses to the question: *"Overall, thinking about all the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?"*
- Pages 53-54 address foster parents' comments about the quality and helpfulness of training as a whole, and from specific agencies or programs
- About one in four foster parents (353 of 1,350 or 26%) commented on the themes in this section. Of these:

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of foster parent training?



▶ About eight out of ten (79%) made positive comments



▶ Fifty respondents (14%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement



▶ 7% made mixed or neutral comments

2.1 Training Quality and Helpfulness



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Both experienced and new foster parents felt that their training helped them to care for foster children.

"I have been doing this for a long time. I think any training is good, and I always learn something new or that I didn't know before or how to handle a situation."

"We already had a pretty good idea what to do, but the classes were good reinforcement and we learned a lot about the legal ramifications of decisions made about foster vs. biological children."

"I found the training very helpful. They help prepare us for certain behaviors the children exhibit, how to deal with different situations. They present information that we can apply to an everyday situation."

"I am a first time foster parent. It was very overwhelming. Lots of good information and it was all helpful. It was an eye-opener."

"I've been a foster parent for a long time and at my level, I believe that the classes are very helpful. I can pick and choose what will be helpful to me."

"It is such a difficult thing to try and train to everything one might need to be a foster parent, So, given that, I think they are doing a pretty good job."

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

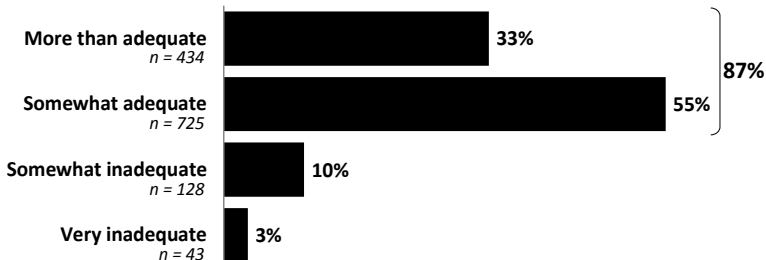
"We do medically fragile children, so most of the training is not helpful. I have gotten most of my training on the job."

"It absolutely does not work and is inadequate! They are not in the trenches. I have kids that have robbed a bank, etc.! The training doesn't do much to address high end foster children's needs."

"The social workers do not back up the training that you receive."

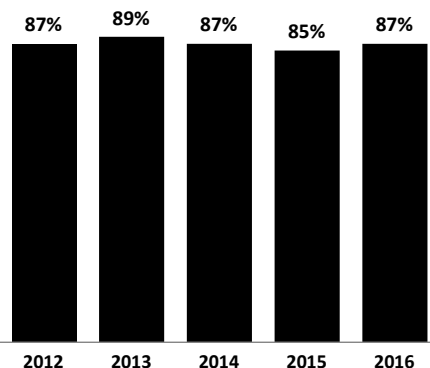
QUESTION | Overall, thinking about all the training you have had in the last three years, how adequately has it prepared you to care for the basic needs of foster children placed in your home?

Nearly nine out of ten of the 1,330 foster parents who answered this question (87%) reported that training was more than or somewhat adequate. 13% found the training somewhat or very inadequate.



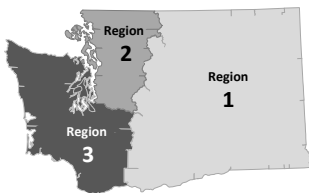
STATE TREND

The increase from 2015 was not statistically significant.



REGIONAL DETAIL

There were no significant differences between the three regions.

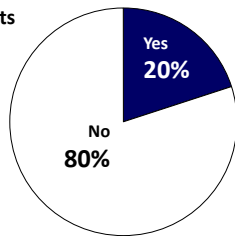


2.1 Training Quality and Helpfulness

THEME | Overall Quality and Helpfulness of Training

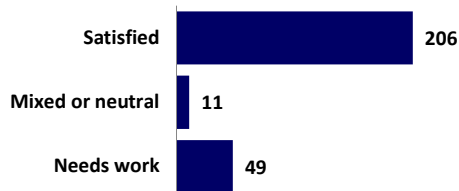
Comments about the overall quality and helpfulness of foster parent training were included in this category. Comments about quality and helpfulness of specific training topics follow.

Made comments about overall quality and helpfulness of training?



266 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (20%) mentioned the overall quality and helpfulness of training.

Of the 266 survey respondents who addressed the overall quality and helpfulness of training, 77% made positive comments. Eighteen percent made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Four percent made mixed or neutral comments.



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

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

This category also includes 201 foster parents who provided a comment praising or criticizing the general quality of training.

- 172 made a positive comment about overall training (86% of specific comments)
- 19 criticized overall training in specific terms (9%)
- 10 offered specific neutral or mixed comments (5%)



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Foster parents appreciate many different aspects of training.

“Just having it available. The interactions and discussions with the other foster parents during the classes have really taught me a lot.”

“My husband and I both have thoroughly enjoyed all our training experiences. Such a great free resource to us mommies and daddies!”

“Nice talking to other foster parents and the training is good in general.”

“The classes taught how to deal with children who have been traumatized by violence. Trainers were very capable. It helped me grow.”

“I love education and I believe that all the training classes have been helpful. I always learn something and that's so important to me.”

“It has been helpful a lot, I took foster to adopt, and foster training after two years of having my niece and 2 nephews in my home, and I wish I would have taken the classes earlier as they were very helpful.”

Some respondents expressed the need for more relevant, up-to-date, and consistent training.

“Nothing prepares a foster parent for being a foster parent. None of the stuff we learned in training has related to our current situation. They gave us some handouts regarding foster child behaviors that I have referred back to; that was helpful.”

“The training is outdated and not good at all. The training I had last year is the same training that I took 26 years ago and it has not changed. The social workers do not back up the training that you receive.”

“The training I have received from DSHS seemed like a big waste of time. The trainings need to be more relevant to what we are dealing with. There is too much textbook theory but we need real life situational training and practical tools provided for us to use.”

2.1 Training Quality and Helpfulness



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

"I got all my training through Youth for Christ. They provided real life experiences for us to learn from. They even went over the rules of DSHS completely. It was excellent training."

"We attended the Empower to Connect conference. It was spot on as to what most foster children need emotionally and behaviorally."

"Recruit foster parents to attend the Children's Justice Conference. It was very educational. The panel is outstanding and includes biological parents."

"Mockingbird training is the best. It has really stepped up since it first started."

"Foster Care College is an online program that is very interesting."

Some spoke of the ability of other programs to address special training needs and situations.

"I get a lot of training through my job. I like the class on child abuse offered by the college."

"The best training I've had is a refresher course I took recently at Overlake Christian Church that had more information on special needs children than I have ever had."

"We get training once per month through the private agency. They offer a variety of trainings including 'ethnic hair' and working with Native American children. Very cool."

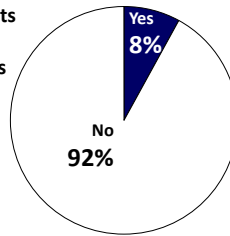
"Mary Bridge [Children's Hospital] diabetic nursing educator and nurses provided awesome and amazing training. They call me right back and answer questions and give me middle of the night contact numbers."

"I am a retired special education teacher so I have strong background. I am a certified equine mental health facilitator and therapeutic riding instructor. The classes I take with the equine organization counts towards my foster parent certification."

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

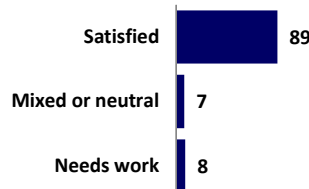
Comments about the quality and helpfulness of training, including training provided by specific DSHS/Children's Administration offices or locations were included in this category.

Made comments about quality and helpfulness of training in specific agencies or programs?



104 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (8%) mentioned the quality and helpfulness of training in a specific agency or program.

Of the 104 survey respondents who addressed the quality and helpfulness of training provided by specific agencies or programs, more than eight out of ten (86%) made positive comments. Eight respondents (8%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Seven (7%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Many comments described features that foster parents found to be helpful. Foster parents:

- Recommended specific conferences, trainers, or courses that would be helpful for other foster parents
- Praised training resources that filled a gap for a special need or situation
- Noted that specialized professional or academic education fills some foster parents' training needs better than what is typically offered

Trainers



Getty Images/iStock

Trainers provide an essential foundation for foster parents.

The majority of foster parents who commented on trainers are satisfied. They value trainers who share personal experiences and create an interactive environment. Some made suggestions for improvement, such as providing realistic examples and collaborating with experts.

In this section:

- The following page contains general comments about trainers
- Page 57 shows comments about specific trainers

More than one in ten respondents (165 out of 1,350, or 12%) made comments about trainers (including comments about specific trainers). Of those who commented on trainers:



2.2 Trainers



Getty Images/iStock

Many foster parents praised their trainers.

“Our trainer was easy to understand and easy to follow. He gave relatable situations.”

“I would say that the instructor was approachable and real. He was entertaining yet professional.”

“The instructors are very knowledgeable and have a really good background to be giving the training. They seemed to really care about foster children.”

“The instructor shared their personal experiences. Helped us relate to possible different scenarios.”

“The speaker has a lot to do with it and keeps us engaged. They can be open and allow us to ask questions.”

“Instructors and their life experiences were very helpful. They gave us some great personal tips.”

“I really enjoy it when outside presenters come in or other foster parents make a verbal presentation.”

Some described areas where they felt trainers could improve.

“When we go to DSHS training, it seems like a venting session for the trainers. So, they don't get much actual training or providing solutions to us.”

“If they had actual specialists giving some of the trainings, it would be so awesome.”

“I avoid certain classes that have very opinionated instructors. I don't want their opinion, but I want the subject matter; more facts, less opinion.”

“They could bring in more experts that have much more knowledge in what we are studying. Just don't read out of a book. Have experts present the information.”

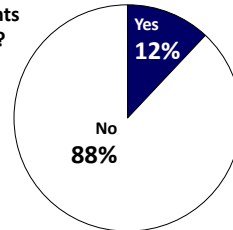
“Need more trainers with different points of view.”

“More hands on knowledge with the trainers in being a foster parent. It is easy to tell the foster parents the rules but they have never been a foster parent.”

THEME | Trainers

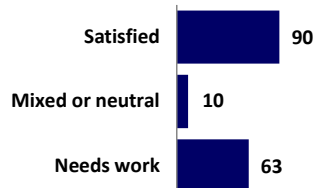
Comments about the effectiveness of trainers were included in this category.

Made comments about trainers?



163 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned trainers.

Of the 163 survey respondents who addressed trainers, more than half (55%) made positive comments. Nearly four out of ten (39%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Ten people (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate trainers who:

- Create an interactive training environment
- Present relevant information
- Answer any questions and address concerns
- Are experts in their fields
- Are engaging speakers
- Give honest information
- Share multiple points of view

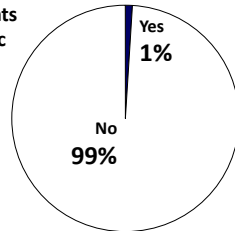
They are unsatisfied when trainers:

- Provide examples or instructions that seem inconsistent with their foster parenting experiences
- Present the information in an uninteresting way
- Lack personal life experience with the subject matter
- Have little experience working with professionals in the field
- Lack skill in answering questions or giving advice on specific issues

THEME | **Specific Trainers**

Comments about specific trainers were included in this category.

Made comments about a specific trainer?



Eleven of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned a specific trainer.

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

Foster parents compliment trainers who:

- Make trainings interesting
- Give relevant information
- Are honest about the reality of foster parenting



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Foster parents expressed appreciation for specific trainers who were memorable and made a positive impact.

“I went to the mini-conference with FPAWS and I really enjoyed one of the trainers. I think his name was Gary Benton. He was very helpful.”

“I love our new trainer Leon, he makes trainings interesting and relevant.”

“My Caregiver Core Training class taught by Patty Rona was great.”

“Colleen Wilcox is an excellent instructor.”

“They had a seasoned Foster Parent by the name of Talia; she co-led the training with the social worker. It was so helpful to hear what they both had to say. The social worker said all the stuff that she ‘had’ to say and then Talia would say her piece about how it usually works in the real world. Our cohort still keeps in contact via Facebook and Talia is there to answer questions and share experiences.”

“Classes have been really helpful and trainer Penny from Chehalis is great.”

“I have been attending the Refresh Conference in Redmond. The sessions about attachment and their speaker Deborah Gray.”

“The training taught us what we were getting ourselves into. Obviously they cannot cover every scenario, but they did not sugar coat it and Art (the trainer from Tacoma) was really great.”

“No suggestions as long as Nancy Lee does the training.”

“The overall training prepared me well. It’s been awhile, but I especially remember a great trainer named Sheri Rego.”

“Make Karyn Purvis more a part of training. Her Empower to Connect is religiously based and that might be off-putting to some. But for us, her methods have worked so well with our adopted daughter and our foster child.”

General Training



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Foster parents appreciate and want to improve foster parent training.

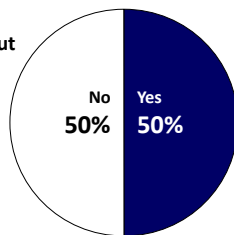
Foster parents benefit the most from attending trainings that address specific, realistic, current topics through a variety of interactive approaches. They are most interested in gaining in-depth knowledge of how to best help their foster child and the resources available to help everyone succeed.

In this section:

- The following page presents foster parents' perceptions of training focused on understanding foster children
- Page 61 discusses comments about various approaches to training
- Page 62 reviews comments about training on accessing resources
- Page 63 presents comments about training materials
- Page 64 presents other general training comments

One-half of survey respondents (680 out of 1,350, or 50%) made general comments about training. Of those who commented on the themes in this section:

Made general comments about training?



- ▶ More than four out of ten (44%) made positive comments



- ▶ About one-third (34%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement



- ▶ Two out of ten (22%) made mixed or neutral comments

2.3 General Training



Getty Images/Creatas

Foster parents appreciate training that helps them understand the foster child's perspective.

"It's helped me deal with the different attitudes of the children and it's helped me understand what the children have gone through."

"They helped us see all the aspects of a child and that helped us with our first placement. We were prepared to meet the child on their terms."

"It was good to hear that what would work for a normal situation would not work with the kiddos I have."

"Sometimes we just feel we are doing it all wrong, and training helped us to realize that we were doing the right things. It just was not working for these kids."

"Learning to understand the 'typical' foster child's experience. Understanding the child is in an environment where they have very little control and how they deal with that. Learning some strategies to deal with this. How to bring an element of caring into the structure of foster parenting. Learning how to be supportive to the foster child."

"Learning about how much a foster child lost and what they are experiencing in coming to a new home."

Some felt there was a disconnect between training and real-life.

"They tell us what the foster child is feeling but don't tell us how to help the foster child function on a daily basis in the home."

"Be more realistic about what kind of kids you will be seeing. They come from horrible circumstances and there will be difficult issues to deal with. You can't anticipate what you will encounter but do not candy-coat things."

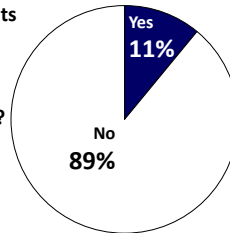
"It's nice to learn about all the rules, but more training on the day to day things foster parents go through would be so much more helpful."

"I would like to learn more about how to actually care for the child."

THEME | Taking Care of Foster Children

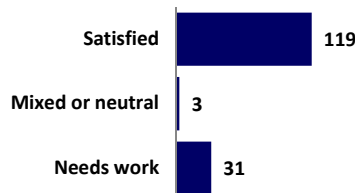
Comments about how well training prepared foster parents to understand and provide care for foster children were included in this category.

Made comments about training on understanding foster children?



153 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned the impact of training on their ability to care for foster children.

Of the 153 survey respondents who addressed how adequately training prepared them to care for foster children, nearly eight out of ten (78%) made positive comments. Twenty percent made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals made mixed or neutral comments (2%).



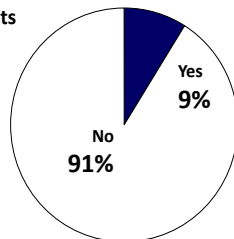
Foster parents value training that includes information about how to care for the foster child and how to:

- Improve their ability to manage each child's current challenges in real-life settings
- Better understand the children's emotional needs
- Gain insight into the children's family background and the emotional impact their experiences may have had
- Learn about experiences that children may have had with the foster care system

THEME | Approaches to Training

Trainers use many different methods to make training effective, such as small group sharing, written exercises, and online modules. Comments about these approaches to training were included in this category.

Made comments about training approaches?



125 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (9%) mentioned approaches to training.

Of the 125 survey respondents who addressed approaches to training, more than half (53%) made positive comments. About four out of ten (41%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eight individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents say that they learn the most from training that includes:

- Small group discussions
- Role-playing and hands-on activities
- Real-life examples or case studies
- Examples of practical application of training topics
- A mix of perspectives and advice from individuals with experience, especially experienced foster parents



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Foster parents enjoy actively participating in trainings.

“I think the best trainings had small groups and a lot of time to have personal interaction with fellow caregivers. A lot of stuff is text book stuff but people talk about how it really happens and how we dealt with it.”

“Real time examples are helpful. I like small group discussions about situations. Different perspectives are then shared with the group as a whole.”

“The Therapeutic Crisis Intervention trainings and the special role playing to handle kids in crisis was helpful.”

“The case studies and examples were the most helpful.”

“I like the training where real-life situations are included. That type of training helps prepare foster parents for actual life situations that come up with foster youth.”

They want more opportunities to gain hands-on knowledge.

“Have more hands-on training, maybe working in the placement office and meeting more with the foster children before foster parents have them in your home. Also, maybe working with foster parents before taking placements of children instead of sitting in a classroom doing the Core training for a certain number of hours. Hands-on is something you can't get out of a book.”

“It could be improved to be more relevant and realistic to the day-to-day job of being a foster parent. Give us real-life situations.”

“Provide more problem solving tools. Let's get beyond theory.”

“I would like more role-play to help grasp the skills.”

“Training should be more practical, hands-on, with opportunity to practice.”

2.3 General Training



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Foster parents pointed out the benefits of learning about resources to help their foster children.

“They gave us resources that we could use to develop a plan.”

“Learning about all the resources available to us if we need them is reassuring to us.”

“They give you so many resources and they let you know they are there for you if things go sideways.”

“I got a sense of typical behaviors and was offered tools and resources to deal with this.”

“They covered the legalities and helped us understand the process and resource structure, and how to get to those resources was helpful.”

“Information about what services were available from the department and what kind of support they have.”

“Learning more about resources that are outside of DSHS (like Treehouse).”

They want to learn about and have convenient access to well-organized information about resources.

“It would be great if there was a resource book that lists doctors, dentists, counselors, social media groups, special Facebook groups, etc., assigned by regions and agencies.”

“Spend more time on resources and practical everyday stuff, how to find out what’s approved medical or dental, and rules and regulations.”

“There needs to be a handout or web resource of where to go for more information. You feel like you are on your own once you get your license unless you are the kind of person that researches things on your own.”

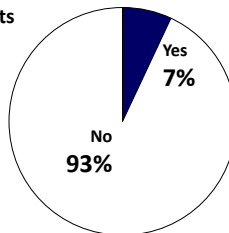
“Inform people of where and how to find information and put it in a single consistent place. Avoid referring people to 10 different websites.”

“Give us the rules so we know what we can expect and ask for. A matrix on what to do and where to go when things don’t work as they should.”

THEME | Accessing Resources

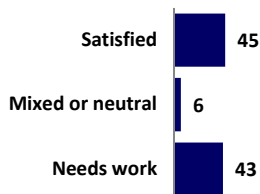
This section summarizes comments on information about resources that is provided at foster parent training.

Made comments about training on accessing resources?



94 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (7%) mentioned resource information at trainings.

Of the 94 survey respondents who addressed training on accessing resources, nearly half (48%) made positive comments. Almost as many (46%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and six individuals (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



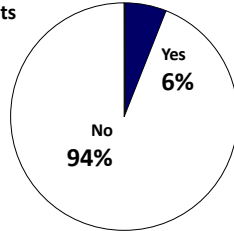
Foster parents appreciate knowing about resources that can improve the lives of the children in their care. They expressed the need for information that is:

- Relevant to their specific situation
- Available in their local community
- Easy to locate online or given to them during training
- Kept up-to-date

THEME | Training Materials

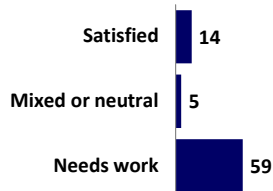
Comments about materials used in foster parent training were included in this category.

Made comments about training materials?



78 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned training materials.

Of the 78 survey respondents who addressed training materials, nearly two out of ten (18%) made positive comments. About three out of four (76%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. The remaining five (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents' comments about training materials often focused on:

- Videos, handouts, and scenarios that address current issues and depict today's foster family
- Handouts that they are able to take home or access later online
- Materials that portray realistic scenarios
- Training packages that include high-quality video or audio presentations along with complementary printed material



Getty Images/iStock

Some foster parents made positive comments about the training materials.

"We got a lot of information. It was difficult to process on the spot, but we have handouts to take home and review the material."

"The training that provided me with a notebook to keep all the papers in order was helpful."

"Lots of good information to take home and read later."

"The videos were helpful."

"Literature and handouts were great."

Many asked for the materials to be updated for quality and relevance.

"I like some of the online classes but the presentation format could be improved so we don't feel we are watching a 60's training module."

"The online offerings should be updated and include a broader scope of subjects and include different points of view from different trainers."

"Updated online training is really needed! Some of those online training courses look like they were made in the early 1980's! I still learn things, but it's actually distracting to view some of the training because the styles and quality of the video is old."

"Quality of video needs improvement, more realistic."

"Update the trainings to include the new problems that we are dealing with in today's world."

"They need to update some of their information: updated videos, updated curriculum, more time-appropriate info."

They also suggested other ways to improve training materials.

"Have a print-out that goes along with the videos so that we can take notes."

"Need more videos that are more specific in their topics, such as fetal alcohol syndrome, special needs children, etc."

"Giving the trainers more resources to keep the classes interesting; new material, etc., so we don't fall asleep."

2.3 General Training



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents appreciate variety and thoroughness.

"It's a good foundation. Getting to know the basic basics, so to speak."

"I have a Masters in Counseling and I still found classes that taught me things. It really did do a good job to prepare you."

"I think the variety is really good. They try to touch a little bit on everything."

"I have found all the classes I have attended to be very thorough."

"The training I have had was very realistic and very honest."

"It gave us a good foundation and an awareness of where to ask additional questions and to seek out more information."

Some saw ways that depth or breadth could be expanded.

"Need to do targeted refreshers once a child is placed in your home."

"Most of it was common sense stuff."

"Need more in-depth about process and emotional roller coaster that may occur. The difficult stuff seems glossed over."

"Need more options of classes being offered. More quality information in the class."

"The trainings are too cookie-cutter. Not enough consideration for individual differences in children. The kids don't just have one problem. They come with a variety of problems, but we are not taught how to deal with complex issues. This burns out foster parents."

Experienced foster parents expressed their unique training needs.

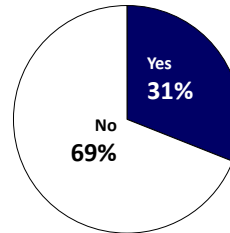
"You should be able to use your experience and years of being a foster parent in place of the training that you have already done."

"More variety of subjects. I see the same classes over and over again and it would be nice to see a wider variety. So many classes are all butterflies and roses and I appreciate the ones that really prepare you for the reality of foster parenting."

THEME | Other General Training Comments

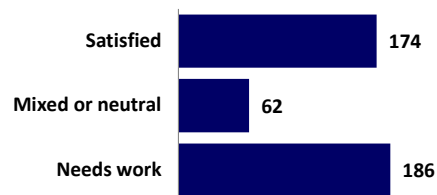
Comments about training issues not already covered in prior sections were included here.

Made other general comments about training?



422 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (31%) made other general comments about training.

Of the 422 survey respondents who made other general comments about training, four out of ten (41%) were positive comments. A slightly higher percent (44%) were negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Fifteen percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents want training to:

- Cover a range of topics, from basic parenting information to situation-specific refreshers
- Allow for adjusted training requirements according to their experience/education/profession
- Offer realistic examples, with best- and worst-case scenarios
- Include a wide range of topics
- Give them new information they can use right away

Some also commented on:

- How overwhelming and eye-opening initial training can be
- The experience of not being able to take all the information in before they have a placement, but then needing brief refreshers once they've had a foster child.
- The need for training in languages other than English.
- The consistency in the information given by training classes, and consistency between training and practice

Specific Training Topics



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Foster parents commented on a variety of specific training topics.

Foster parents participate in a wide array of classes that cover both general and more focused topics. Although many expressed appreciation for the training they have received, a large proportion of the comments were requests for more targeted courses that address their specific circumstances. Others were interested in delving deeper into specific subjects or finding ways to match training opportunities with the needs of their current foster children.

In this section:

- This chapter reviews foster parents' comments on ten specific training themes, in the following order: specific disorders and issues; substance abuse; children with sexual behavior concerns; child behavior; infants and toddlers; navigating the foster care system; health and safety; cultural awareness and cultural issues; training topics mentioned by name; and other specific training topics.

Sixty percent of survey respondents (810 out of 1,350) made comments about specific training topics. Of those who commented on the themes in this section:



2.4 Specific Training Topics



Getty Images/Wavebreak Media

Foster parents feel more equipped to handle specific disorders or issues after receiving training.

"I think learning about different ways to deal with children that come from neglect. How to work with kids in a more positive way. They talked about what works and what doesn't, and that was helpful."

"It helps us understand the needs of the kids, especially the ones with special needs. It has helped us learn how to communicate with them on their level."

"Learning about trauma and how that can potentially impact a child's behavior. Learning how to react and how not to react and how to handle a child who has gone from caregiver to caregiver."

"Any of the training that I have had on Asperger's, autism and other behavioral problems has been great."

"Impact of trauma on child's brain was very well done and very helpful."

"I have special needs kids and I can get information when I need help with behavioral issues."

They want to continue learning but see some areas that could be improved.

"I feel there is a big void in training about dealing with children of trauma. I know they cannot train to every situation that you might encounter, I just feel there needs to be more about behavior problems and how to deal with them."

"Stay abreast with the times. There should be more classes on autism and Asperger's and other current brain disorders."

"More classes on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and what it looks like. Kids that have gone through abuse and neglect often have PTSD and we need to know how to spot it and how to deal with it."

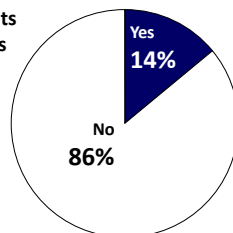
"They emphasize what we can't do, but do not provide any real-world skills to deal with traumatized kids."

"Need more directed training for ADHD."

THEME | Specific Disorders and Issues

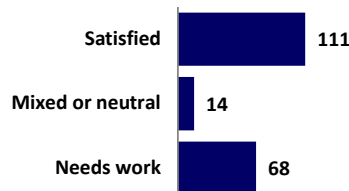
Comments regarding training directed at understanding specific disorders or issues that foster children commonly experience were included in this section.

Made comments about disorders or issues?



193 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned training on specific disorders or issues.

Of the 193 survey respondents who addressed training on specific disorders or issues, more than half (58%) made positive comments. About a third (35%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and seven percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Many of the comments in this category contained praise for training that helped them understand foster children's attachment issues and experiences with grief, loss and trauma. There were also requests for more training along these lines. Other conditions and issues foster parents would like to see addressed in training include:

- Mental health disorders, such as depression, bipolar disorder, and self-harm
- How to manage children who express anger explosively or violently
- Autism and ADHD

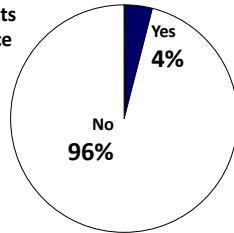
Foster parents want training to:

- Provide specific examples that apply to their current situation
- Include up-to-date information and topics, especially for training that addresses behavioral and learning difficulties
- Help them develop tools to manage and understand behaviors they encounter
- Provide suggestions for additional resources or classes

THEME | Substance Abuse

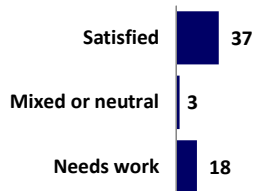
Comments that specifically referred to training about substance abuse were included in this section.

Made comments about substance abuse?



58 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (4%) mentioned substance abuse training.

Of the 58 survey respondents who addressed substance abuse training, more than six out of ten (64%) made positive comments. Three out of ten (31%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three comments were mixed.



Foster parents are interested in learning more about:

- How brain development and cognition are affected by substance use and abuse
- How to care for infants who have been exposed to drugs
- The impact that specific drugs can have on the developing child
- Behavioral challenges specific to Fetal Alcohol Effects, and how to address them
- Short-term and long-term challenges that may arise when a child has been exposed to harmful drugs
- Spotting signs of substance abuse in their foster children



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Foster parents want to learn about how substance abuse affects children from before birth through adolescence.

“Any training on how drugs affect the child developmentally has been useful. I really like the practice notes on specific interventions; what worked vs. what did not work.”

“The classes on how drugs affect children and how to spot signs of abuse.”

“Different insights into how drugs and alcohol affect the children cognitively.”

“I have liked learning about the fetal alcohol syndrome. Just learning about the different things a foster child could have and how to deal with their different behaviors.”

“I like when there are more psychological professionals there talking about development, fetal alcohol effects, etc.”

“I have FAS children and the information was helpful in dealing with stressors.”

“Knowing what kinds of developmental issues to watch for, getting an idea about the typical timeline and process.”

Some expressed interest in long-term effects, such as brain development and behavior.

“More information about how specific drugs affect the brains and development of children.”

“Not enough training that focuses on babies, particularly drug impacted. I learned by trial and error how to feed them.”

“More training on drug exposed babies and children. The long term consequences of drugs in child development.”

“Need more training on behavior issues, especially the drug exposed children.”

“More training on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and drug addicted babies is needed for me to do parenting adequately with them.”

2.4 Specific Training Topics



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Positive feedback was very general, referring to the content on the whole.

“The training on sexual aggressive youth was very informational.”

“All the trainings on sexual abuse were extremely helpful.”

“Training on sexual assault issues is good.”

“The training on sexually aggressive youth was good. It was an eye opener.”

“We learned a lot in the classes on sexual abuse.”

“The sexually aggressive youth training was quite good.”

“The training on sexual behavior was good. There needs to be more of this training.”

“The training on sexual reactive children was great.”

“We did a class about foster children that were sexually abused and we thought it was exceptional.”

Foster parents are interested in realistic information that relates to their specific circumstance.

“Need training about sexual abuse prior to receiving any of these kids into care. Need training on what is normal sexualized behavior. No one is talking about these kids who have been sexually abused and what is normal and what is not.”

“Don't sugar-coat things because when we find out the realities of certain things (sexual abuse, trauma etc.) it's like a sucker punch to the gut.”

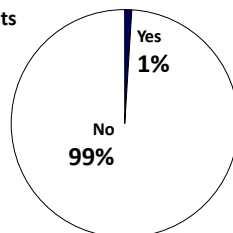
“We have a boy who is a sexually aggressive youth; we completed an on-line course so we could accept him. We need more training regarding this youth but there hasn't been any available.”

“I had training on how to talk with a child about their sexuality. I have not had that come up yet, but I feel much more prepared now as to what to look for and how to open a conversation with the child.”

THEME | Children with Sexual Behavior Concerns

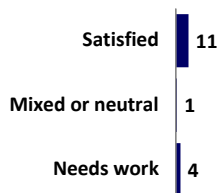
Comments from respondents who mentioned training about sexually inappropriate behavior and children who have experienced sexual abuse were included here.

Made comments about sexually inappropriate behavior?



16 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned training about sexually inappropriate behavior.

Of the 16 survey respondents who addressed a specific training about sexually inappropriate behavior, 11 made positive comments. One was a suggestion for an improved method of delivering the training.



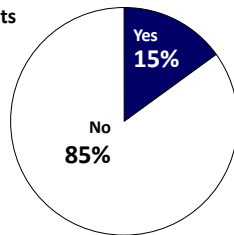
Foster parents want training to provide them with a better understanding of:

- The concerns and development of children who have experienced sexual abuse
- Characteristics of sexually aggressive youth
- How to distinguish between typical sexualized behavior among children and youth, and behaviors that may indicate the need for counseling or other intervention
- What types of scenarios may occur, and how they should be handled most effectively

THEME | Child Behavior and Development

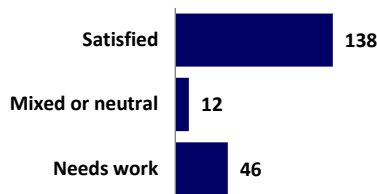
Comments from respondents who mentioned training about child behavior and development were included here.

Made comments about child behavior?



196 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (15%) mentioned training on child behavior.

Of the 196 survey respondents who addressed training on child behavior, seven out of ten (70%) made positive comments. Nearly a quarter (23%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement, and 12 (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Many foster parents made positive comments about training that:

- Covers specific developmental, emotional, and behavioral stages that they may encounter with different age groups
- Helps them develop positive and constructive approaches to behavioral challenges and providing discipline to bring about positive change
- Gives them tools and resources they can apply in the home

Comments that suggested improvements often expressed the desire for more:

- Training that addresses the needs and experiences of older children, especially teens
- Information about how to work with school systems
- Specific, real-world scenarios and exercises that help foster parents develop effective skills that they can use in the home
- Information about how to handle extreme behavioral situations safely



Getty Images/Photodisc

Many foster parents say they appreciate practical scenarios and new perspectives provided by these classes.

“Good techniques to use in positive discipline and learning about the unique challenges these kids have.”

“I appreciate the training about the child’s emotional development.”

“All the information they have about different age groups and how they respond mentally and physically.”

“Discipline practices and considering the needs of the traumatized child when you do need to discipline them. My own baby is throwing a tantrum on the kitchen floor right now and I might need to use some of those discipline tips to handle this little guy.”

“It has taught me how to bring a child down when they are over-excited and it has also taught me how to deal with difficult behavior.”

“It’s nice that it’s not all just general stuff and I like that they have specific, targeted topics, especially those that are related to teens.”

“It helps you understand about the differences in kids and why they do what they do. It also helps you understand how to deal with bad behavior in a more positive way.”

Some wanted more examples, relevant topics, and tools for specific circumstances.

“You need more realistic examples of children’s issues. The examples used were not applicable.”

“I feel like the classes are so broad that they should be much more specific. More age-specific classes would be great.”

“I think that they should do a better job regarding discipline of foster children. What can we do and what can we not do?”

“More classes on how to handle attitude and defiance problems.”

“Provide more of the day-to-day stuff we deal with such as behaviors, psychological stuff. We need more usable tools.”

2.4 Specific Training Topics



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Foster parents expressed appreciation for training that specifically addresses infant and toddler care.

“Anything that was about babies was very helpful.”

“I loved the training. Lots of great suggestions about how to manage the demanding behaviors of 2-year-olds.”

“The infant care training was informative.”

“When the training talks about the ages of the children in our home and are medically fragile, it is helpful.”

Several suggestions for improvement highlighted the need for training on infant and toddler care.

“Better training and more often for people taking infants.”

“There was not enough focus on basic parenting. We are fostering to adopt twins. And when we first got them they were two months old. A little training about feeding, burping, colic, bath time and so forth would really have helped us.”

“The trainings do not adequately address medically fragile children.”

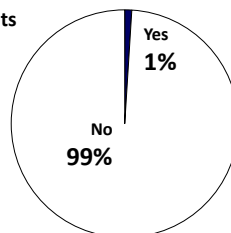
“Emphasis on infant mental health. Include training on brain development and trauma.”

“I had the initial training and it was focused on older kids and I had a baby. It would be good to add a little more about younger children in the initial training.”

THEME | Infants and Toddlers

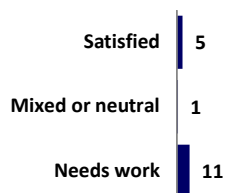
This section summarizes comments that addressed training about infants and toddlers.

Made comments about infants and toddlers?



17 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned infant and toddler training.

Of the 17 survey respondents who addressed infant and toddler training, almost one in three (29%) made positive comments. More than six out of ten (65%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



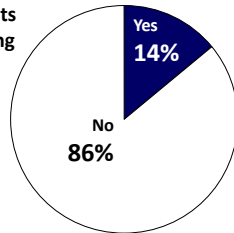
Most of the foster parents who commented on infant- and toddler-specific training made suggestions for improvement, such as:

- Include more information about how to care for very young children who have difficult conditions, such as being medically fragile or those who have been exposed to drugs or alcohol
- Make sure that the age covered by training matches the ages of the children cared for by the foster parents in the class
- Include at least some in-depth information on infants and toddlers in the initial training
- Provide practical ways to effectively handle toddler behavior

THEME | Navigating the Foster Care System

This section includes comments from respondents who mentioned training about navigating the foster care system.

Made comments about navigating the foster care system?



184 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned training on navigating the foster care system.

Of the 184 survey respondents who addressed training on navigating the foster care system, more than half (54%) made positive comments. Nearly four out of ten (37%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Nine percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents expressed interest in training that:

- Takes them through paperwork requirements
- Explains legal processes that foster parents and the children they care for may encounter
- Covers relevant sections of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and policy updates
- Explains the roles of the department and of foster parents, and how they work together for the best interests of children and families
- Provides contact information that they can use when they encounter specific problems
- Clarifies timeframes and timelines for placement, licensing, and other processes



Getty Images/Stockbyte

Many foster parents found practical value in learning about the foster care system.

“We did training before licensing which was clarifying about how the licensing process works. I felt empowered. Learning the acronyms!”

“It helped me with expectations, especially about the department and social worker, i.e. what roles they play.”

“I like learning about all the rules and regulations. They are very honest in the training and let us know about real things that could happen.”

“I liked learning about the paperwork side of foster care.”

“It has prepared me for all the logistics of being a foster parent, things like filling out paperwork and navigating through the system.”

“It keeps you current regarding WACs and rules.”

“It helped me understand the system, timelines, expectations and reunification.”

They want more opportunities to gain knowledge about specific aspects of the foster care system.

“More information as to how it works with the parents and the responsibilities of the foster parents with all the appointments that happen.”

“Better explanation of the court system. I had no idea at the beginning what it all meant.”

“More training on how the system works and who the key players are. What is the role of a foster parent?”

“More classes about everyday practical things like: How to fill out paperwork, how much will I be paid and when, how best to navigate the system, what benefits are available to my foster child.”

“Talk more about the process during the placement. Such as preparing for court hearings, preparing for family meetings, how to prepare me for my role in these things.”

2.4 Specific Training Topics



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Most of the positive feedback about health and safety training was general appreciation for the courses.

“The CPR training was very interesting.”

“Information about health and dental was great.”

“The first-aid training was the most helpful.”

“The car seat training was very good.”

“We got tons of information, skills, even CPR that we now have in our tool box.”

“The CPR classes and the online training from the UW.”

“The training related to safety issues and resources available to children that are having issues.”

“It is always helpful to get CPR.”

“Free first-aid and CPR training.”

Some want more content online or wanted training to include more detail on a certain topic.

“More online training and include CPR and first-aid training.”

“More training in the medical arena.”

“Recently there was a requirement for an in-person update. It almost caused us quitting foster parenting. I've been licensed for many years. We could not do the training online anymore. We had to hire someone to come to our house to administer CPR training to both of us.”

“Alert us to changes in the law and of CPR training, etc.”

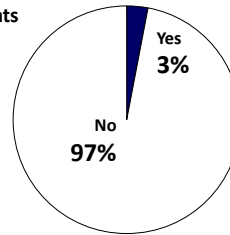
“More training on behaviors like eating disorders or hair pulling, things like that. It is all well and good to hear about adoption support and car seats, but more on behaviors would be much better for us.”

“Offer more training in behavioral, medical, health, etc. Explain why child is on the medication that they are on. More information about conditions for which they are being treated.”

THEME | Health and Safety

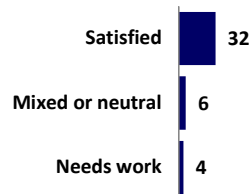
Comments that addressed health and safety training were included here.

Made comments about health and safety?



42 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned health and safety training.

Of the 42 survey respondents who addressed health and safety training, more than three out of four (76%) made positive comments. One of ten (10%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Six people made a mixed or neutral comment.



Foster parents appreciate training that gives them:

- CPR and first-aid training
- Updates and CPR recertification classes
- Safety information and resources

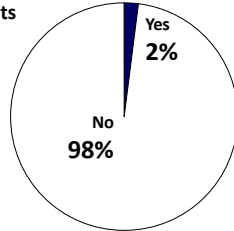
Some would like to see:

- Expanded medical- and health-related options, including those that cover behavioral health issues
- Online options for CPR to make recertification more convenient

THEME | Cultural Awareness and Cultural Issues

Responses that addressed cultural awareness training, cultural practice issues, and language were included in this category.

Made comments about cultural issues?



26 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned cultural issues.

Of the 26 survey respondents who addressed training on cultural awareness and issues, nearly seven out of ten (69%) made positive comments. Eight individuals (31%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Most comments about training in cultural awareness were positive, and highlighted the benefits of:

- Understanding that children in their care may have experiences and values that are very different from the foster family
- Learning how to use this understanding to improve their fostering skills

Some foster parents expressed the desire to gain more knowledge about:

- Various cultures' practices and history, and how they affect family dynamics
- Practical aspects of how to care for their foster child's physical and emotional needs, while being culturally sensitive and appropriate
- The process of integrating a foster child of another cultural background into their family life
- Aspects of children's identity that go beyond ethnicity



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Most foster parent comments about cultural awareness training expressed appreciation for the opportunity to broaden their understanding and awareness.

"It opened my mind to other factors like being cultural sensitive."

"The cultural awareness and keeping children involved with their history was helpful."

"It was helpful to go through the process of merging cultures and how to be a good team member."

"The diversity training was very helpful. Learning about cultural differences was helpful."

"The Native American training was very eye opening."

"Getting really good at LGBT training, and they tried to touch on how to handle children of different faiths."

"Behavioral management techniques, how cultural issues should be taken into consideration."

"It was nice to learn about the diversity of the children placed in care."

They requested more specific information about caring for children from different cultures.

"Training us on how to deal with interracial children and siblings whether it is biological or new family siblings."

"I'd like more to do with basic care of children with other ethnicities."

"Need much more emphasis on issues around parenting/caring for a child of a different race."

"You know, I was wishing that there was a class on how to fix hair. I have a little African American girl and I try my darndest, but I am afraid it doesn't look very good. Is there a video out there that could help me know what products to buy and what kind of hairdos they like?"



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Caregiver Core Training (formerly PRIDE) is widely enjoyed for its unique insight and comprehensive approach.

“Caregiver Core Training was good. They covered things that we would never have known to ask.”

“The Caregiver Core Training provided us with a big picture of what we were to expect being foster parents.”

“We appreciated that in the core training, they told us all the bad stuff that could happen so that we would not panic if we encounter any of it.”

“Caregiver Core Training was helpful in that they stated goals about unification and how to work with biological parents.”

“The Caregiver Core Training prepared us to ask good questions when getting a call for a child.”

“The Caregiver Core was good at giving a picture of where the children are coming from and how they are feeling. My empathy even increased more.”

“The initial training was a great foundation to build from. That is the Caregiver Core Training sessions.”

A few foster parents suggested ways they'd like to see Caregiver Core Training changed.

“Caregiver Core Training should be offered after we have foster children in our care.”

“The Caregiver Core Training classes really don't prepare the new foster parents at all to be a foster parent. Classes really need to be more realistic! I understand that Children's is wanting and needing to get more foster parent homes for the children that need them, but the training is just too sugar coated.”

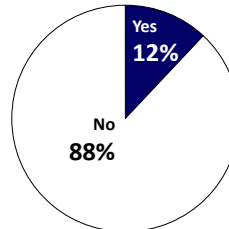
“The Caregiver Core Training was too long and not very helpful.”

“I think a refresher of the Core Training is really needed right after you get your kids. So much time passes from the time you start the process until you get your kids that you forget a lot (and believe me there is a lot) of what you were taught.”

THEME | Caregiver Core Training

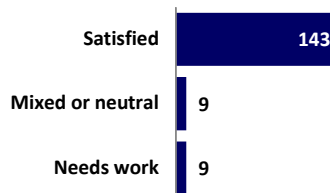
The comments on this page are from survey respondents who specifically mentioned Caregiver Core Training (formerly called PRIDE).

Mentioned CCT/PRIDE by name?



161 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (12%) mentioned Caregiver Core Training.

Of the 161 survey respondents who addressed Caregiver Core Training (formerly called PRIDE training), nine out of ten (89%) made positive comments. Nine (6%) respondents made negative comments or suggested improvements. An equal number (6%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents appreciate many aspects of Caregiver Core Training, including:

- Real-life examples from foster parents and biological parents
- Opportunities for hands-on instruction
- Comprehensive information about foster parenting
- Preparation prior to and continuing education or a refresher course upon placement
- Insight on the emotional as well as physical needs of foster children

Some offered suggestions for how this class could be improved:

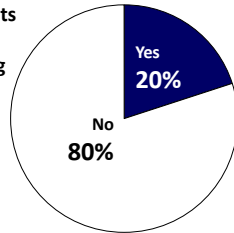
- Provide Caregiver Core Training or a refresher after they have foster children in the home and know what issues they are facing
- Make the content more realistic

2.4 Specific Training Topics

THEME | Other Specific Training Topics

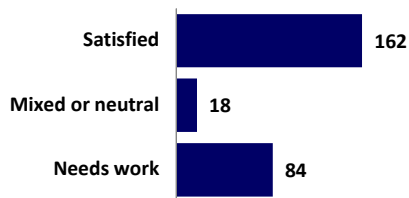
This category includes comments about training topics and approaches that do not fit into any of the previous categories.

Made comments about other specific training topics?



264 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (20%) mentioned other specific training topics.

Of the 264 survey respondents who addressed other specific training topics, about six in ten (61%) made positive comments. One in three (32%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement/additional topics. Less than one in ten (7%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents seek out training that includes:

- Detailed explanations that build a solid foundation for fostering
- Responses to specific behaviors and challenges that they are experiencing in their foster home
- Topics relating to foster parent well-being
- Updates to courses that address current issues
- Options to learn from real-life settings, whether by observation or practice
- Clarity on the goals of fostering and their role in a foster child's life, including information on interacting with biological parents

More comments regarding suggested training topics are on the following page.



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Foster parents appreciated the content of their first training experience.

"The initial training was good. I liked the education on encouraging the families to re-unite. Seeing what the families are dealing with."

"The initial training gives you a foundation for the basics, and then whatever you can seek out in additional training is good."

"We have had some great training that addressed how to accept each child and that one size does not fit all. Each child is a unique individual and all the training better prepared us to deal with this."

"The classes you have to take before you become certified were helpful. They did tell us what to expect and I learned some techniques for disciplining in a positive way."

Some want more training on specific circumstances.

"Foster parents should have a little more field experience. I would have benefited by volunteering at SafePlace or a Children's Day Treatment center. Just to observe the children and how staff handle certain behaviors. Is this even possible?"

"If the main objective is return home, then some program to help foster parents and birth parents to build communication and trust."

"More training on issues we are not aware of. More telling people what is possible to happen with foster kids who have far different issues than normal."

"Have training on family relationship rather than just the foster children."

"Learning to look at the side of the parents and learning to be compassionate and understanding their life situations."

"Keep up with the times; these kids hit me with things that I have no idea what they are talking about. Maybe a class on kid-speak or how to handle a kid who has an electronic device at the end of their arm every waking hour."

THEME | **Other Specific Training Topics, *continued***

Foster parents obtain training from a wide variety of sources and classes that were beneficial. Some also suggested additional training topics that would be helpful.

Voices

Some foster parents named other specific training topics that they found useful.

"The training that included Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) was excellent."

"The training on 'So you have first placement now what?' was good."

"They were all helpful in one way or another. The two-day weekend class I took this past summer was really good. We both enjoyed the classes on self-care and sleeping patterns. There was even a little seminar about how to comb and fix children's hair."

"The Ask Don't Tell training was good."

"The training that really stands out for us is the one called The Incredible Years."

"The Parenting Plus training was very good."

"A recent training talked about bullying which was very helpful."

"The Nurtured Heart training was good."

"Right Response class was helpful. It helped us prepare for more aggressive children. It offered a fresh perspective and information about how we can protect ourselves."

"The Emotional Loss training was super."

"I have been doing the Trust Based Parenting training through my church which I have found very helpful."

"We loved the Refresh Conference. We were able to take some amazing workshops, for instance: How to Tell Your Child Their Story: Cultural Sensitivity and a workshop where foster and adoptive parents shared their personal stories and experiences."

"Love and Logic is great. It gave us more tools for our tool box. PCIT training was good and we are going to be adopting. Attachment through Play was well done. I appreciated it and hope it continues to be a resource for foster parents."

Others described training topics they would like to have available or have taken elsewhere and found to be valuable.

"There should be a classes titled: 'How do you discipline a child when all the positive discipline techniques you've learned are not working?'"

"I think there should be more training about the process of the foster child starting school."

"Have more training around biological parent visits. Training on where to get resources for children with special needs. Training on how the process is different when you take a child from a different county."

"They need to have training on emotional intelligence development."

"There was not any training at all on how to protect ourselves on harassment/false accusations from biological family members. They need to change that."

"Explain therapeutic hold better. What is appropriate and what are the legal ramifications of the same?"

"I would say they need to dive in a lot deeper in how to deal with specific issues. Such as abuse issues, but I haven't found any classes that would address what I am dealing with. DSHS should provide more in-depth training at the initial time and provide more resources that we can utilize."

"Offer more on non-communicative children and offer training on resources available in the community."

"Integrate more information on different evidence-based practices and let us know where to go to access this information."

"Need more training about how to deal with the biological parents. In smaller communities, we run into the parents in town."

"More in-depth training on attachment, bonding, de-escalation."

"I had to fly to Texas to get classes on doing therapeutic care for children. I would like it if there were more classes like this in our state."

"More training on how to interact with the foster child's school. How to navigate the IEP and special education process."

"A class on how to talk to kids about adoption."

"Discuss documentation of medication and the importance of keeping accurate records and following orders."

"How to report incidents when kids get hurt. How to fill out forms. How to communicate with the biological parents during visitation."

"How do we deal with foster children that have seen lots of violent video games, etc.? Provide training on how to handle this."

"More classes on-line about bullying."

"I saw a telecast called 'Children From Hard Places' by Dr. Karyn Purvis that talked about brain chemistry, sensory processing and trauma. It was fabulous."

Access



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For foster parents, access to training is often challenging.

Most foster parents who commented on access to training described problems or suggestions for improvement. For many foster parents, attending training can require a substantial investment of time and financial resources when they must take time off work, travel long distances, and make childcare arrangements.

In this section:

- The following page addresses comments about the location of training
- Page 79 reviews comments about the scheduling of training
- Page 80 reviews comments about childcare during training
- Page 81 provides other comments about access to training

Nearly one-third of survey respondents (409 out of 1,350, or 30%) made comments about access to training. Of those who commented on this subject:





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State-wide, foster parents want training closer to where they live.

“Have the training closer to us. Have it in Bellingham.”

“In my area, it would be nice if there were more classes. They don't offer any classes very often which then makes it necessary for me to travel two or three hours to classes.”

“I wish they offered more training closer to where I live. Spokane and Seattle are too far to drive.”

“Offer training in more locations closer to home. I am giving up my license because I cannot get to trainings.”

Traveling long distances to attend training is especially burdensome when childcare needs to be arranged.

“We have to travel about an hour to attend training. We need childcare while we are attending training.”

“Offer the classes more often and in the more remote areas. Also, there is no childcare in classes and that makes it difficult to attend!”

It is also difficult for foster parents to travel to attend training when it conflicts with employment obligations.

“Location and times need to be accessible for working parents.”

“More training in my area would be nice. I don't feel like driving an hour to and from Bremerton after I get home from work.”

“I am in central Washington State and the training is usually 60 to 80 miles one way from my location, which is too far to travel since I work Monday through Friday during the days.”

Online training should not replace efforts to provide local, in-person training in rural areas.

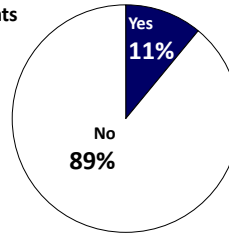
“Continue to offer training in outlying locations. Some of the most desirable classes you cannot take online.”

“A lot of foster parents here do the training online but I prefer face-to-face training. The state sends lots of stuff by e-mail but we don't have it in our home.”

THEME | Training Location

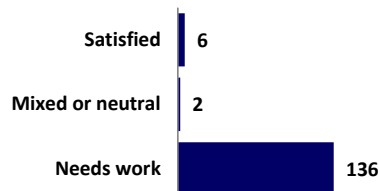
Comments about the location of foster parent training were included in this category.

Made comments about training locations?



144 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (11%) mentioned of training location.

Of the 144 survey respondents who addressed locations of training, six (4%) made positive comments. More than nine out of ten (94%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Two (1%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Foster parents throughout Washington want training to be offered closer to where they live, so that:

- More time can be spent on training rather than travel
- Juggling additional obligations, such as child care and work hours, will be easier

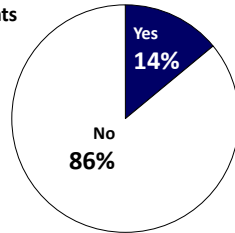
Traveling long distances for training creates a variety of burdens for foster parents:

- Traveling great distances for training can require foster parents to find childcare for the children in their homes (See page 78 for more about childcare and training)
- Long-distance travel adds to the time foster parents must take off from work, which can mean conflicts with employers or loss of income
- Although foster parents appreciate online training options, some still desire local, in-person training (even if online training is available)

THEME | Scheduling of Training

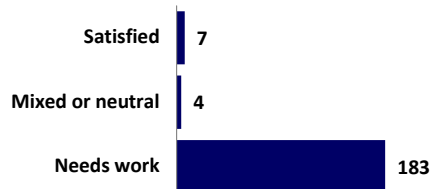
Comments about when foster parent training is scheduled were included in this category.

Made comments about the scheduling of training?



194 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (14%) mentioned scheduling of training.

Of the 194 survey respondents who addressed scheduling of training, very few (4%) made positive comments. Nine in ten (94%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



Foster parents want a variety of training topics offered more often throughout the year and at more times during the day:

- Some foster parents pointed out that offering training on more days or more varied hours would help them better fulfill their required training hours. This would also help them attend more specialized training.
- Children's school schedules and foster parents' work schedules can make training that is only offered during traditional working hours difficult to attend
- Many foster parents specifically requested more training in the evening and on weekends

Foster parents expressed concern about certain scheduling issues. These include:

- Single training sessions that take many hours to complete
- Training that is cancelled at the last minute
- Training that is missed because of poor communication



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Foster parents want training to be more compatible with their work schedules.

"It was difficult to go to training four nights a week for three weeks. When you work full-time and then go to training it is hard."

"Make the trainings a little more schedule-friendly. The timing of the classes doesn't always mesh with working parents."

"We cannot afford for my husband to take whole days off to attend the all-day classes on a weekday."

"I work nine-to-five, Monday through Friday, and cannot make a lot of the classes that are offered."

Evenings and weekends were frequently requested for training times.

"Training on weekends and evenings and not during the day when we are working."

"Training during work hours does not work for me. We need it on weekends and evenings with day care provided."

"Having the training in the evenings."

"Offer more trainings on the weekend. When trainings occur during the day, I cannot attend as I am working."

Foster parents want the way they are informed about training schedules to be improved, especially concerning cancelled or rescheduled training.

"Please, please let foster parents know when a class has been moved or cancelled. We realize this is a huge agency, but we have to go through so much just to go to one class and it is a huge deal when we don't get this kind of information and we take the time to travel there and find out it has been cancelled."

"I want more timely notification of when the training is scheduled."

"They need to get the word out as to when the trainings are and where they are available."

2.5 Access



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents' most common complaint about training is the lack of childcare.

"Lack of childcare is the biggest problem with training."

"Childcare. I have gathered groups in my church to watch a particular Netflix video and we get someone to watch our children while it is going on. I understand the liability of providing childcare, but there just has to be something the State can come up with so that we can go to more trainings since they are mandatory."

Foster parents often find it difficult to attend training when no childcare is offered.

"A lot of the in-house training at DSHS offices don't have childcare. With my little guys, it is hard to find day care for one day in the middle of the week for eight hours of training."

"Include childcare or please help me figure out how I can go to training with these two little ones."

"Offer childcare during the training and not just for the foster children."

"Offer childcare. I haven't taken one class in past year-and-a-half as I do not have childcare."

"I would love to go to more trainings, but without childcare, it is almost impossible to get to them."

When childcare is provided, it should be equipped to care for the diverse needs of foster children.

"Childcare, childcare, childcare. Please, please, please. If we have kids that are medically fragile, it makes it very difficult to get a sitter for them."

"Provide childcare at the training. Need special needs type of childcare."

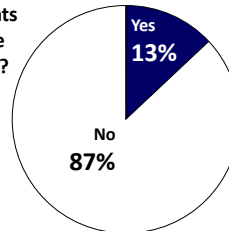
"The biggest issue is lack of childcare since I had foster children with special needs."

"Provide childcare. We can't leave the kids with just anybody. It is especially difficult with medically fragile children to leave them with sitters."

THEME | Childcare During Training

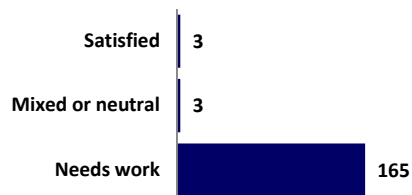
Comments about childcare during foster parent training were included in this category.

Made comments about childcare during training?



171 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned childcare during training.

Of the 171 survey respondents who addressed childcare during training, nearly all (96%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals (2%) made positive comments, and three (2%) made mixed or neutral comments.



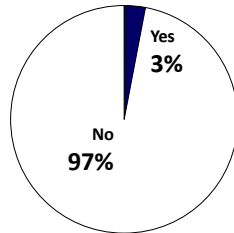
Nearly every foster parent who commented on childcare during training expressed the need for more. They also suggested that:

- Childcare should be appropriate for foster children with special needs
- Childcare should be available for all children under the care of the foster parent while attending training, not just the foster children
- If childcare was more readily available at training, foster parents would be more able and willing to attend both required and voluntary training

THEME | Other Comments About Access

Other comments about access to foster parent training were included in this category.

Made other comments about access?



34 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (3%) made other comments about access.

Of the 34 survey respondents who made other comments about access, most (71%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Five (15%) made positive comments. Five respondents (15%) made a mixed or neutral comment.



The most common suggestions for improving access include requests for:

- Someone to contact by phone or e-mail to schedule or inquire about upcoming training
- Assistance with access to training if their situation is unique or especially difficult
- Training environments designed for learning (e.g. comfortable, easy to take notes)
- Assistance organizing training in less populated areas



Getty Images/Huntstock

Foster parents made a wide variety of comments, both general and specific, about improving access to training.

“I want to be able to reach the people scheduling the training by phone and talk to a person. I have called multiple times this week and cannot talk to anyone. I want to sign up for Keep The Beat CPR training! I don't have a computer and want to speak to representatives on the phone to get this scheduled!”

“For us it was difficult to get to classes because of the children. It would be nice to have more flexible groups like this Mockingbird group we belong to. They have really nice little classes on everyday things like first aid, proper car seats and how to deal with them and stuff like that. They are at flexible times and they aren't too long.”

“Help foster parents like us get a break to go to training. We do online training but there is nothing like the interaction with the trainers and other foster parents. It's invaluable!”

“Well, if the training is through DSHS, I don't get any e-mails about any classes that are offered. So, we seek out our own training.”

“I have never attended any state trainings because they haven't seemed to hit our needs or they were not convenient.”

“Meetings need to have tables and not just chairs. Unable to take notes just sitting in a chair.”

“Make training easier and more accessible.”

“We have to gather names of five others and then ask for the agency to offer a specific training in my area. They will not come to train unless there are five to eight people. We have to do a lot of the work to get a class to happen.”

“I think there need to be better options and availability of trainings that are not location based. Have more options of available and practical training locations.”

Alternative Training Formats



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents like having alternative training formats available to them.

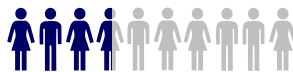
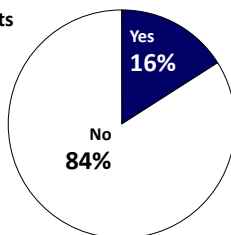
Foster parents who commented on alternative training formats often made suggestions for improvement, such as providing more online training. Comments about training received through support groups were almost uniformly positive. Other format suggestions included expansion of video training, teleconferencing, suggestions for written materials, reinstatement of the Lending Library, and more conferences with experts, specialists, and experienced foster parents.

In this section:

- The following page addresses comments about online training
- Page 85 provides comments about training received in foster parent support groups.
- Page 86 reviews other comments about alternative training formats

About one out of seven survey respondents (222 out of 1,350, or 16%) made comments about alternative training formats. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about alternative training formats?



- ▶ Almost four in ten (37%) made positive comments



- ▶ Almost half (45%) of the comments were negative or suggested improvements



- ▶ 19% made mixed or neutral comments

2.6 Alternative Training Formats



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents desire more online training, especially in video format.

“Continuing training online or video options would be convenient.”

“More online training.”

“Videotape popular classes and make them available online.”

“More online training so that we can do it when you have the time to do it.”

“I like the online classes. The Netflix classes have been great.”

Foster parents desire online content that is detailed, specific, and kept up-to-date.

“The online stuff is very outdated. So, please post some new, more relevant videos online.”

“More online training needs to be available about different situations that a teenager may have.”

“Update the videos online.”

“More current things available online and more choices.”

Foster parents who have difficulty attending location-based training appreciate the flexibility online training offers.

“When you have a medically needy baby, it is very difficult to find someone who can take care of them so that you can attend training. So I guess I would like more webinars and videos so that I could do training at home as I can.”

“It would be nice if they expanded the credits for online trainings. I know we have to go to a number of in-person ones, but make the ratio of online vs. in-person a little more flexible.”

Some foster parents believe online training is not appropriate for all situations.

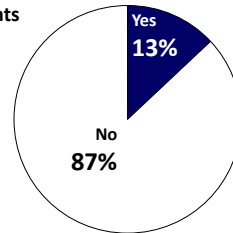
“Interaction with other foster parents is very valuable. Online classes OK but the interaction is really important.”

“I hate the online training. It is difficult to stay engaged while online especially with foster children running around.”

THEME | Online Training

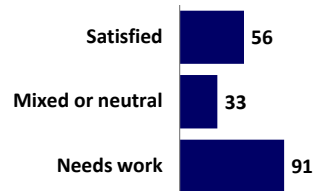
Comments about online training were included in this category.

Made comments about online training?



180 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (13%) mentioned online training.

Of the 180 respondents who commented about online training, more than one in three (31%) made positive comments. Just over half (51%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Eighteen percent made mixed or neutral comments.



Although some foster parents noted that online training is not appropriate for all topics and situations, many recognize and appreciate the flexibility of being able to complete training online. They also said that:

- Easy access to content online allows foster parents the flexibility of starting and stopping the course at their convenience
- Online training eliminates potentially long commutes and costs associated with in-person training
- Online training does not provide the same level of interaction as in-person training, leaving foster parents with less opportunity to ask questions and build community

Foster parents offered suggestions for improvement, such as:

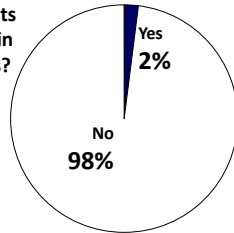
- Provide better communication about online training: when it is, who is providing it, and how to access it
- Make online training as thorough as in-person training, and keep it up-to-date and relevant to foster parents' needs

Requests for more online training were coded as suggestions for improvement (i.e. as negative comments). Support for online training is likely higher than the percentage of negative comments might suggest.

THEME | Support Groups

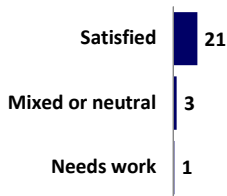
Comments about training that takes place in support groups were included in this category.

Made comments about training in support groups?



24 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (2%) mentioned training in support groups.¹

Of the 25 survey respondents who addressed training in support groups, more than eight out of ten (84%) made positive comments. Three made mixed or neutral comments, and one made a comment that was coded as negative (a request for more support group-based training opportunities).



Comments about training received in support groups was almost entirely positive. Some specific aspects that foster parents commented on were:

- Support groups provide a flexible, supportive environment for foster parents to ask questions about their unique situations
- Foster parents seek out and value experienced foster parents in these groups for both advice and emotional support
- Support groups, especially those organized by other foster parents in their communities, can provide training and guest speakers who address concerns relevant to the group



Getty Images/DigitalVision

Foster parents appreciate the discussions and camaraderie found in foster parent support groups.

“I like the training at the bi-weekly foster parent meeting.”

“I get a lot of my information from the Fostering Together meetings. Sometimes social workers come and give a little speech on what they expect. I like those little talks so we get to know the social worker better and they know us better.”

“I like the classes that are interactive with other foster parents where we can share ideas. The training that is provided within the scope of our foster parent support groups is some of the best information that I get.”

“The conferences are helpful, and the monthly support group meetings are very helpful. They give you the extra information by attending those. For example, you can get free pull-ups for children over three years old who wet the bed; you can get free horse-riding lessons for foster kids; you can take them to the aquarium for free, etc.”

“The training with other foster parents in a support group is good. They provide dinner and childcare.”

“We get helpful information from our support group, they have people from different areas come and speak. We have a really, really, really good support group in our area.”

“I like the training from my Refresh group. Their training is regular and focused on what we are working on. I have learned a lot from these classes and other foster parents.”

“I used to organize training for foster parents in my area. I had police officers come and train us on drug issues. It was quite informative about what children can be exposed to.”

“I like the training with the monthly support groups.”

¹ Training in support groups is not provided by the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence.

2.6 Alternative Training Formats



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Foster parents requested a variety of alternative training formats, with an emphasis on written material and videos.

"We used to be able to read a book and get credit for that. Now, the state won't give credit for that anymore and the reason is that the state doesn't belong to the Washington State Lending Library."

"Have video with a PowerPoint."

"More interactive podcasts would be great."

"I like the training that I receive from other foster parents on Facebook."

"They should have more live video conferencing."

"I miss the Lending Library. I am a big book person."

"The private agency had a conference where lots of experts were there and it was of great assistance to us."

"Have books available to give the foster parent to help them through their first placement. Kind of like a how-to book for beginning foster parents."

"I like video training. It is convenient!"

"I would like more written materials available to us that would count toward continuing education. Going to class can be difficult and online training is difficult with kids and service providers interrupting all the time."

"I think they need to film more of the in-person trainings and make them available online so that foster parents can still get the classes when they can't get to them in person."

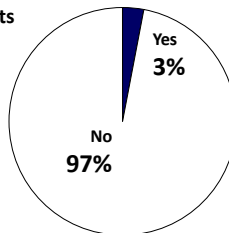
"It would be good to have all specific training classes available east of the mountains. Some are just available in Seattle. Maybe have these classes available via teleconference."

"Maybe offer an online library that you could search when you have a question about issues pertaining to foster parenting."

THEME | Other Alternative Training Formats

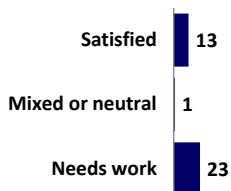
Comments about training formats not mentioned elsewhere were included in this category.

Made comments about other alternative training formats?



37 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (3%) mentioned other alternative training formats.

Of the 37 survey respondents who addressed other alternative training formats, more than one in three (35%) made positive comments. More than six out of ten (62%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. One respondent (3%) made a mixed or neutral comment.



These foster parents suggested:

- Additional books and other printed training materials
- Reinstatement of the Lending Library
- Training that they can complete at home, at their own pace, using formats other than online
- More conferences with subject specialists, experts, and experienced foster parents
- Video-conferencing and tele-conferencing that allows for "live" participation from home, especially for required training
- Credit for research they do on their own

Voice and Choice



Getty Images/Hemera

Foster parents want a foster parent voice in their training, and they want choices.

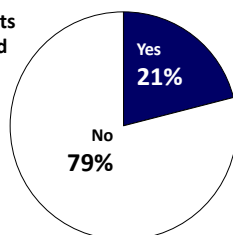
Foster parents value interacting with other experienced foster parents during training. Foster parents also want a say in which trainings are available to them, and the ability to choose training that is most applicable to their situation.

In this section:

- The following page addresses comments about foster parent participation and building a sense of community through training
- Page 89 is an overview of foster parents' comments about choosing which training to participate in

Two in ten survey respondents (288 out of 1,350, or 21%) commented about voice and choice in training. Of those who commented on this subject:

Made comments about voice and choice in training?



- ▶ Almost three out of four (73%) made positive comments



- ▶ More than one in five (22%) made negative comments, or suggestions for improvement



- ▶ 5% made mixed or neutral comments

2.7 Voice and Choice



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Foster parents value listening to other foster parents' stories for examples of how to handle difficult situations.

"Honestly, the best thing about training is being able to visit with other foster parents and learn what they have done. I do think it refreshes things in your mind and gives you a new direction in how to address issues."

"I like learning what to do in special situations, especially those classes taught or co-taught by foster parents who have real life experience. I have used some of the techniques and advice I have learned in these classes."

"I've been doing this for 30 years. Other foster parents are the greatest teachers."

"Bring in former foster parents to tell their stories and then have a 20 minute Q & A afterward."

"New foster parents should be put with long-term foster parents so you have someone to turn to when you have a question and can get advice as to what to do."

"The most helpful thing is being in a room with other foster parents. They have great wisdom to share."

"I loved the real life examples that were provided by foster parents. I appreciated knowing tips and tricks that licensors and social workers would do to get us to take a child."

Foster parents commented that communication among the foster parent community builds camaraderie and provides opportunities for support.

"The training helps to create community support groups for foster parents, and I have found that to be very helpful."

"The most helpful thing is the camaraderie and support with the other foster parents."

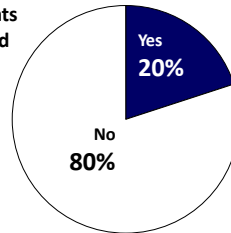
"The other foster parents have been my best resource by far. Some of them even help me with paperwork."

"I think the camaraderie between foster parents at the training and sharing information is the most helpful."

THEME | Voice and Community in Training

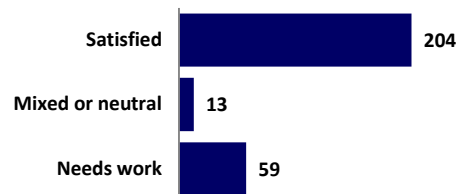
Comments about foster parent participation in training and their sense of community were included in this category.

Made comments about voice and community in training?



276 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (20%) mentioned voice and community in training.

Of the 276 survey respondents who addressed voice and community in training, nearly three in four (74%) made positive comments. About two in ten (21%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Five percent made mixed or neutral comments.



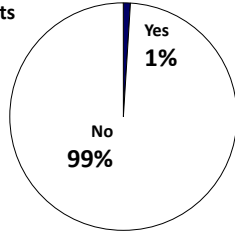
Foster parents asked for training that promotes discussion and interaction with other foster parents, especially experienced foster parents teaching or mentoring newer foster parents. They pointed out several possibilities:

- Encouraging support and camaraderie among the foster care community in a variety of ways
- Having experienced foster parents run training provides more realistic and practical advice for difficult fostering situations
- Organizing an official mentoring program to match willing and experienced foster parents with new foster parents might be a way to achieve these benefits
- Experienced foster parents can help new foster parents make sense of the sometimes difficult processes or paperwork without relying on their social worker

THEME | Choice in Training

Comments about foster parents' choices in which training to participate were included in this category.

Made comments about choice in which training to take?



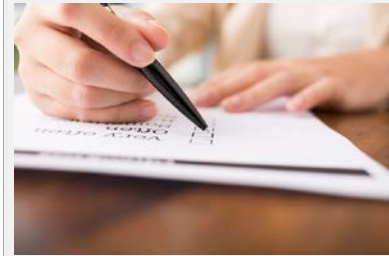
16 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (1%) mentioned choice in training.

Of the 16 survey respondents who addressed choice in training, nearly two-thirds (63%) made positive comments. The other third (37%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement.



These foster parents value:

- Being able to choose the training that they attend
- Having more input about the variety of training that is available
- Collaboration between foster parents and training organizers to decide what topics should be pursued



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents expressed appreciation for being able to choose the training that they attend.

“The training I chose to take helped me because I got to choose things that were helpful to me, such as the Connected Child.”

“It is nice that you can pick and choose the training you want according to your needs.”

“Our private agency has done some very specific training on medical needs. They allow us to provide input on what we would like to see in training.”

“Fetal Alcohol Syndrome information was very useful. The private agency responds when I ask for something specific.”

Some foster parents want more input on the topics of training that are offered.

“Find what the needs are of the foster parents and offer more training as to the requests.”

“Set up a foster parent group session once in a while to ask us foster parents what kind of training we think we need.”

“They need to ask the foster parents what their needs are for classes.”

“I think if they actually sat down with foster parents and talked to them about their needs and formed classes based on what they need. For me it is much more about what the state needs to cover so they don't get sued instead of giving us what we truly need on a daily basis.”

Training Information



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Foster parents want accurate and timely information about upcoming training.

Some foster parents commented on the information they receive about training and the information provided to them to help track their training requirements. These comments generally requested improvements such as ensuring that information about upcoming offerings gets to foster parents well in advance.

In this section:

- The following page addresses foster parents' comments about training information

One in twenty survey respondents (65 out of 1,350, or 5%) made comments about training information. Of those who commented on this subject:



2.8 Training Information



Getty Images/iStock

Foster parents want improved communication about when training is scheduled, and in a variety of formats.

“Let me know when classes are being scheduled. I never receive any information about when classes are scheduled.”

“Communicate better about what is available and when and where it is.”

“The foster parents need to have notice of how to get additional training.”

“Getting the mailings about the classes has been really helpful to us.”

“Send out e-mails as to when training is available or maybe a Facebook page that tells when training is available.”

“There needs to be a better way to get to the online training instead of just by an e-mail. There needs to be a website that is available to the foster parents.”

“Get the word out much earlier when classes are available in our area. I get e-mails about training in surrounding counties a month early, but when I get information regarding my area many of the classes just occurred and, of course, I cannot then attend them.”

Foster parents want more timely and complete information about training and training requirements.

“I want a reminder of how much training I have done, what more training I need to do, and how close I am to the deadline.”

“They could make training opportunities easier to find. I ended up going onto Facebook and reached out to other foster parents to find out about training opportunities. I checked the DSHS website to find out how many hours of training I needed and it simply said I needed training. I again went through Facebook to other foster parents to get the information.”

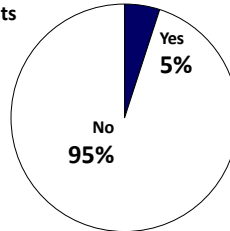
“There should be a consolidated list of training: where, when, and what time.”

“Where can I find a tally of how many training hours I have and how many continuing education credits I have?”

THEME | Information About Training

Comments about the information about training that is provided to foster parents were included in this category.

Made comments about information related to trainings?



65 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (5%) mentioned information about training.

Of the 65 survey respondents who addressed information about training, only five (8%) made positive comments. Almost nine in ten (88%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Three individuals (5%) made mixed or neutral comments.



Some respondents expressed frustration about how information on the content, location, and schedule of training is communicated. They would like:

- More timely and accurate communication about scheduled training
- A way to be alerted when topics they are specifically interested in are offered
- Training information communicated by a variety of methods, so that each foster parent could have information provided in the most convenient way for them
- An easily accessible and comprehensive online list of training by location
- A method to conveniently check on their training requirements progress online

Support Beyond Training



Photo courtesy Sue Kormondy, Children's Administration

Foster parents described other kinds of support that help them give foster children the best possible care.

Foster parents provided various suggestions for other resources or approaches that could help them accomplish their training goals. These included opportunities for peer-to-peer training and for question-and-answer sessions, either in-person or online.

In this section:

- The following page addresses foster parents' comments about support beyond training

Six percent of survey respondents (77 out of 1,350, or 6%) made "other" comments about support beyond the formal training provided by DSHS. Of those who commented on this subject:



2.9 Support Beyond Training



Getty Images/Design Pics

Foster parents want information on additional resources for both them and their foster children.

“More education on resources that are available. Free or low cost clothes, bicycle helmets. Offer as much support with this information as possible so the kids feel 'normal.' All foster parents do not have unlimited resources.”

“With our new foster parents, they get their first placement and quit. There needs to be a huge support system for these new parents, so they don't feel overwhelmed. We need to figure out how to keep these new foster parents with proper preparation and support. Information sources for local resources would be nice to get (like Arc and Pediasure and bed pads for free).”

They also want the ability to ask questions of and get answers from knowledgeable sources.

“If they could just have more Q & A sessions where foster parents could go and ask questions. Especially first time foster parents, which would be awesome. I found out from my support group that many of us have the same kinds of questions and none of us had the answers.”

“We need a database where you can either call or text with questions. We know social workers are busy, but there have to be questions that come up all the time regarding money, resources, rules, etc. You could have staff research it and get right back to the parents thus taking a lot of stuff off the busy social worker's plate.”

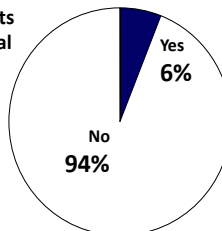
“I wish sometimes that I could send my social worker a question and when she comes for her monthly visit, she could give us a five or ten minute primer about it or tell me where to go to find the answer.”

“For me, the support group for Foster-to-Adopt parents has been the best. They have ongoing question and answer sessions. They bring in experts to speak and they are there even after you adopt a child. It has been better than any training I have ever taken.”

THEME | Additional Support for Foster Parents

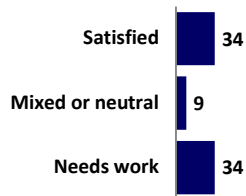
Comments that did not fit in other training categories are summarized here.

Made comments about additional support for foster parents?



77 of the 1,350 foster parents surveyed (6%) mentioned additional support.

Of the 77 survey respondents addressing additional support beyond training for foster parents, almost half (44%) made positive comments. An equal number (44%) made negative comments or suggestions for improvement. Nine individuals (12%) made mixed or neutral comments.



These foster parents like or suggested:

- Peer-to-peer opportunities with other foster parents for support
- Formal question and answer opportunities with experts in the foster care field
- Easier access to information about resources, like winter clothes and recreation for foster youth
- Additional training support for foster parents with relicensing, paperwork, and other foster care activities that do not directly involve parenting foster children



Getty Images/Photodisc



2016 Appendix



Getty Images/iStock

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Foster Parent Support 2016 – Response Glossary

Question 1: What do Children’s Administration and your social workers do well to support you?

Question 2: What could Children’s Administration and your social workers do better to support you?

Response Category	Description
QUALITY/ HELPFULNESS	
QS – Overall Support	CA has supported/not supported me and my family; good/bad service overall; grateful for help, appreciative (or not); like/don’t like CA/everything. They help/don’t help. They do/don’t provide good services.
QP – Specific Agency/Office Support	Named specific CA program/location/office that was supportive/not supportive; mentioned support/non-support of “private agency” (named or not).
QN – Nothing	“Nothing,” “Can’t think of anything,” etc. (Negative, if about what has been supportive; Positive, if about what needs to be done better.)
SOCIAL WORKERS	
SS – Social Worker Support	Social workers have supported/not supported me and my family; good/bad service overall; grateful for their help, appreciative (or not); like/don’t like social workers and the work they do. Social workers help/don’t help. Social workers do/don’t provide good services.
SC – Social Worker Courtesy/Respect	Compliments/complaints regarding social worker courtesy, respect, helpful attitude (<i>tries</i> to help), sensitivity, kindness, friendliness, niceness, caring (about both foster children and parents), compassion.
SL – Social Workers Listen/Understand	Social worker does/doesn’t listen; is – or isn’t – attentive; does/doesn’t understand what foster parents say, and what they (and the children) need.
SI – Social Workers Inclusiveness	Social worker gets input from foster parents; lets them help make decisions and plans; collaborates with them; invites them to participate in meetings (or fails to do these things). Use this code along with IN if a comment addresses a need for inclusion <u>and</u> information.
SO – Other Social Worker Comments	Like/don’t like social workers’ follow-through; commitment; professionalism; responsiveness; customer service; timeliness; showing up for scheduled appointments; fairness; flexibility; problem-solving; looking for resources. Specific supportive or non-supportive actions not covered in other codes. Social workers are/are not knowledgeable, honest, well-trained; good at communicating (if they don’t specify IN or SL).
SF – Foster Care Licensor Support	Compliments/complaints about foster parents’ experience with foster care licensors. (Comments specific to the licensing <i>process</i> are coded PS.)
SW – Specific Social Worker	Named specific social worker.
SN – Need More Social Workers	More social workers are needed to serve foster parents; workload too heavy; social workers too busy; caseloads too high/need smaller caseloads; turnover a problem.
ACCESS	
AP – Phone/Staff Access	Able/unable to reach social workers by phone/voicemail/e-mail/website. Social workers do/don’t return calls and messages (or if they do/don’t <u>return</u> calls and messages in a timely manner); social workers are available/unavailable; it’s easy/hard to reach social workers.
AR – Consistency of Contact	Social workers are/aren’t <u>initiating</u> regular or sufficient contact via home visits, phone calls, etc., or if contact is limited (i.e. “regular” doesn’t mean consistently poor).

Response Category	Description
PROCESSES	
PR – General Processes	Compliments or complaints about the system—efficiency, bureaucracy, continuity, consistency, errors, rules, time it takes to get services (overall). System should care more about children and less about biological parent rights. “Better funding” only if context indicates it’s for systems rather than foster parents.
PS – Specific Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants a specific process/way of doing things, time it takes to get specific services. Includes the time it takes to terminate rights and adopt.
PP – Paperwork Processes	Likes or dislikes/wants paperwork processes (general or specific). Paperwork lost.
COORDINATION	
CO – Coordination	Coordination of services for foster parents, inside or outside of Children’s Administration (includes coordination between foster parents and biological families); communication to accomplish effective coordination. Includes social workers should communicate better with each other and other agencies. “One hand doesn’t know what the other is doing.” Inconsistencies between social workers or offices.
INFORMATION	
IN – Information	Get/don’t get useful information from social workers about foster child; foster system; available resources; meeting times/court dates; training. Social workers do/don’t answer questions; give clear explanations; give consistent responses, provide feedback/advice; provide referrals/grateful for referrals. Get/don’t get useful information online. Likes or dislikes/wants access to interpreters, bilingual staff, native English speakers on staff.
RESOURCES	
RR – Respite	Likes or dislikes/wants respite services. Doesn’t get paid for respite.
RF – Financial Matters	Likes or dislikes/wants financial payments (ongoing or one time) to foster parents.
RM – Medical, Dental, Mental Health	Likes or dislikes/wants medical/dental/mental health services (includes speech and occupational therapy), medical supplies. Likes/grateful for medical care in general.
RT – Transportation	Likes or dislikes/wants transportation services (includes mileage reimbursement). Difficulty getting payment for transportation.
RC – Childcare	Likes or dislikes/wants childcare services.
RO – Other Resources	Likes or dislikes/wants other resources (or just says “resources,” not specified).
OTHER	
OS – Other Sources of Foster Parent Support	Comments about support for foster parents from sources other than social workers inside CA (foster care liaisons, foster care recruiters, support staff) and outside CA (CASA/GAL, extended family, support groups, other community groups). Include events to say “thank you.”
O – <i>Not</i> about Support	Other miscellaneous comments that don’t fit elsewhere. Comments about good/bad support that occurred in the past; comments about future support. Comments about <u>training</u> should be moved and coded as such.
DK – Don’t Know	Don’t know. Have no answer. Unsure. Too new to foster parenting to answer. No contact with CA/DSHS; no need for support.

Foster Parent Training 2016 – Response Glossary

Question 1: What about foster parent training has been helpful?

Question 2: How could foster parent training be improved?

Response Category	Description
QUALITY/HELPFULNESS	
TH – Overall Training	Training is helpful/not helpful; training was good (great)/not good (great); did/didn't like training (without further clarification).
TP – Specific Agency/Program Training	Named specific program/location/office that provides training; names private agency; mentions "private agency" training (no name given); mentions continuing education, college classes, or classes in the community.
TN – Nothing	"Nothing," "Can't think of anything," "No suggestions" etc. (Negative, if about what has been helpful; positive, if about what needs improving.)
TRAINERS	
TR – Trainers	Trainers are good/bad; specific trainer qualities; want more/less of specific categories of trainers (including foster parents/foster children/biological parents as trainers—use both TR and TV); includes comments about guest speakers/presenters at training.
TT – Specific Trainer	Named specific trainer. Also always coded as TT.
GENERAL TRAINING	
Comments on aspects of training foster parents like/want or don't like/don't want	
TG-C – Caring for Foster Children	Dealing with/caring for foster children. Includes communicating with children; identifying/meeting their needs; making them part of foster family; understanding situations in foster children's bio-homes; what to expect from foster children in foster homes.
TG-A – Approaches to Training	Approaches used in training. Includes small groups; roundtable discussions; brainstorming; using case scenarios, real life examples.
TG-R – Resources	Information about resources (what/where they are); contact information.
TG-M – Training Materials	Quality/usefulness of materials used in training (including need to update written materials, videos, etc.); specific topics to add/delete.
TG-O – Other Training Comments	Other comments about training. Includes more/less training; variety in training; repetitious training; updated training; training pace too fast/too slow; tell it like it is; limit socializing during training; general parenting information; information for FP who haven't parented; refresher courses for long-term FP. Complaints about training requirements. Training that addresses general issues of children in my care (only if a general observation, not a request for a specific type of training). Requests for training in languages other than English. Comments about wanting to include foster parent's biological children in training. "Every child is different."
SPECIFIC TRAINING TOPICS	
Comments on specific training/training types foster parents like/want or don't like/don't want	
TS-D – Disorders/Issues	Training focused on particular disorders/disabilities/issues. Includes training on trauma (grief and loss); abuse/neglect; attachment disorder; anorexia, bulimia, hoarding; anger issues; ADD/ADHD; autism; special needs; medications for disorders/issues. Includes behavior problems outside normal developmental issues. "Medically fragile" if infants/toddlers not specified.

Response Category	Description
TS-S – Substance Abuse	Training focused on substance-abuse issues. Includes fetal alcohol syndrome, drug-exposed infants, and effects of bio-parents’ drug use on children.
TS-Y – Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	Training focused on youthful sex offenders, sexually aggressive or inappropriate behavior.
TS-B – Child Behavior	Training focused on child behavior/child development; age-specific populations and issues (toddlers, school-age, teens); includes behavior management except that which falls in TS-D.
TS-I – Infants and Toddlers	Training on infants and toddlers. Includes infant care, medically fragile <u>infant/toddler</u> care. NOT for fetal alcohol syndrome or infants exposed to drugs (TS-S). “Medically fragile” with no mention of infants or toddlers is TS-D.
TS-F – Navigating the Foster Care System	Training on how to navigate the foster care system. Includes how to interact with social workers; paperwork issues; rules and regulations; court procedures; other processes/procedures; what to expect from the system.
TS-P – Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE	Like/don’t like CCT/PRIDE training (PRIDE is now Caregiver Core Training). Any mention of “Core” training should use this code.
TS-H – Health and Safety	Training focused on health and safety. Includes protecting children from abuse; first aid/CPR; immunizations; car seat training.
TS-C – Cultural Awareness and Language Issues	Training focused on cultures and cultural issues. (Includes Native American culture and issues; how tribes interact with DSHS; tribal courts.) Cultural sensitivity of training.
TS-O – Other Specific Training Topics	Other training. Includes dealing with biological parents; advocating for youth; children’s rights; grief/loss/stress experienced by foster care <i>providers</i> ; other specific training liked or disliked/wanted. Mentions taking specific classes/training/workshops, without identifying them. Mentions “first placement training” or “initial training” but NOT “Core Training” (TS-P).
ACCESS	Comments about what made it easier/harder for foster parents to attend training
TA-L – Location	Location of training. Includes having training in more places; having training closer to foster parents’ homes; making it easier to get to training.
TA-S – Scheduling	Scheduling of training. Includes scheduling more training sessions; having training on more–or different–days; training in the evenings, on weekends; duration of training; ongoing training.
TA-C – Childcare	Childcare available during training.
TA-O – Other Access Comments	Other likes/dislikes, or wants/don’t wants, regarding access to training (e.g. “We had to seek training ourselves.” without indication of reason/other reason than above). Includes comments about transportation to training.
ALTERNATIVE TRAINING FORMATS	Comments about training formats (other than standard classroom training)
TF-N – Online Training	Like/dislike online training, including online videos.
TF-S – Support Groups	Like/dislike training offered during support groups.
TF-O – Other Alternative Training Formats	Like/dislike other alternative training formats (newsletters, individual training, etc.); comments about resource libraries or training DVDs; like/want wider variety of formats.

Response Category	Description
VOICE AND CHOICE	Comments that indicate foster parents felt/didn't feel included, involved, empowered by training
TV – Voice – and Community – in Training	Foster parent involvement in training (including foster parents/foster children/biological parents as trainers—use both TR and TV); interactions between foster parents and trainers, or among foster parents during training; interactions between new and experienced foster parents; sense of community/support in training; networking.
TC – Choice in Training	Foster parents do/don't choose which training to attend, what is addressed in training. Only use if R specifically likes / wants more choice in which training to take, or if R requests specific subjects to be addressed.
TRAINING INFORMATION	
TI – Information about Training	Like/want information about upcoming training; mailings; training calendars. Don't like/don't want such information in the form it is currently provided. This includes comments about wanting social workers to make foster parents aware of training. Comments about training certificates.
OTHER	
TOS –Support Beyond Training	Includes support groups for foster parents/mothers; family preservation services; early childhood education support groups; ongoing advocates or mentors for foster parents/families; crisis intervention when trauma occurs (in biological or foster families); general comments about training in the community.
TO – Response <i>not</i> about Training	Other miscellaneous comments that don't fit elsewhere. <i>“Experience as a foster parent is the best teacher.”</i> Comments about <i>support</i> should be moved and coded as such.
TDK – Don't Know	Don't know, not sure, can't answer, haven't attended training.

NOTES:

- “No comment,” “No response,” “Don't want to answer,” and N/A are not coded.
- Most of these codes can be coded in three different ways: positive (P), needs work (N), or neutral (E). For example, comments that fall under Social Worker Courtesy (SC) can be coded SC-P (positive comments about social worker courtesy), SC-N (negative comments or suggestions for change about social worker courtesy) or SC-E (neutral comments about social worker courtesy, like “Social workers are friendly sometimes” or “Some social workers are respectful to foster parents, and some aren't”). Comments that fall under Information about Training (TI) can be coded TI-P (positive comments about training information), TI-N (negative comments or suggestions for change about training information) or TI_E (neutral comments about training information), for example, “The online information about training is great, but the mailings are really hit and miss, and not all foster parents have computer access.”
- A few codes, including Nothing (QN), Specific Social Worker(SW), Need More Social Workers) SN and Don't Know (DK), can only be coded in one way. For example, comments that fall under DK can only be coded DK; this code is not further divided into DK-P, DK-N and DK-E. Comments that fall under TDK can only be coded TDK; this code is not further divided into TDK-P, TDK-N and TDK-E.

Foster Parent Support 2016 – Narrative Comments Summary Data

1,350 Respondents (1,346 made comments)

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES ¹		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
		# ²	% of All ³	# ²	% ⁴	# ²	% ⁴	# ²	% ⁴
Quality/Support		385	28.5%	259	67.3%	80	20.8%	46	11.9%
CA Support	QS	105	7.8%	68	64.8%	32	30.5%	5	4.8%
Specific Agency/Office Support	QP	199	14.7%	144	72.4%	25	12.6%	30	15.1%
Nothing	QN	145	10.7%	104	71.7%	41	28.3%	0	0.0%
Social Workers		1,151	85.3%	372	32.3%	289	25.1%	490	42.6%
Social Worker Support	SS	446	33.0%	263	59.0%	119	26.7%	64	14.3%
Social Worker Courtesy	SC	188	13.9%	119	63.3%	58	30.9%	11	5.9%
Social Workers Listen/Understand	SL	233	17.3%	145	62.2%	70	30.0%	18	7.7%
Social Workers are Inclusive	SI	226	16.7%	72	31.9%	142	62.8%	12	5.3%
Other Social Worker Comments	SO	853	63.2%	292	34.2%	350	41.0%	211	24.7%
Foster Care Licenser Support	SF	25	1.9%	9	36.0%	14	56.0%	2	8.0%
Specific Social Worker	SW	16	1.2%						
Need More Social Workers	SN	177	13.1%			177	100.0%		
Access		627	46.4%	359	57.3%	175	27.9%	93	14.8%
Phone/Staff Access	AP	497	36.8%	271	54.5%	159	32.0%	67	13.5%
Consistency of Contact	AR	191	14.1%	134	70.2%	45	23.6%	12	6.3%
Process		272	20.1%	7	2.6%	253	93.0%	12	4.4%
General Processes	PR	120	8.9%	6	5.0%	111	92.5%	3	2.5%
Specific Processes	PS	143	10.6%	3	2.1%	135	94.4%	5	3.5%
Paperwork Processes	PP	46	3.4%	1	2.2%	44	95.7%	1	2.2%
Coordination		66	4.9%	17	25.8%	49	74.2%	0	0.0%
Coordination	CO	66	4.9%	17	25.8%	49	74.2%	0	0.0%
Information		740	54.8%	242	32.7%	378	51.1%	120	16.2%
Information	IN	740	54.8%	242	32.7%	378	51.1%	120	16.2%
Resources		336	24.9%	118	35.1%	181	53.9%	37	11.0%
Transportation	RT	49	3.6%	18	36.7%	28	57.1%	3	6.1%
Medical, Dental, Mental Health	RM	82	6.1%	19	23.2%	55	67.1%	8	9.8%
Childcare	RC	25	1.9%	8	32.0%	16	64.0%	1	4.0%
Respite	RR	73	5.4%	14	19.2%	56	76.7%	3	4.1%
Financial Matters	RF	35	2.6%	5	14.3%	30	85.7%	0	0.0%
Other Resources (includes training)	RO	152	11.3%	90	59.2%	56	36.8%	6	3.9%
Other		164	12.1%	42	25.6%	28	17.1%	94	57.3%
Other Sources of Foster Parent Support	OS	64	4.7%	41	64.1%	19	29.7%	4	6.3%
Not about support	O	54	4.0%	5	9.3%	9	16.7%	40	74.1%
Don't know	DK	51	3.8%					51	100.0%

¹ Major themes (in blue rows) are rollups of the subthemes listed below. They are unduplicated - not the total of the numbers below. I.e., a person who made "Satisfied" comments in both "Childcare" and "Respite" is counted only once in the "Resources" row. A person who has a "Satisfied" comment in the "Childcare" row and "Needs Work" in the "Respite" row would be counted as a "Mixed" comment in the "Resources" row.

² All # columns show how many persons made any mention of this theme. Multiple comments on the same theme by a single person are only counted once in that theme row. A person with both "Satisfied" and "Needs Work" comments on the same theme is counted in the "Mixed" column.

³ Respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

⁴ Percentage of comments in this theme that were "Satisfied," "Needs Work," or "Mixed or Neutral," respectively.

Foster Parent Training 2016 – Narrative Comments Summary Data

1,350 Respondents (1,346 made comments)

MAJOR THEMES AND SUBTHEMES ¹		Total		Satisfied		Needs Work		Mixed or Neutral	
		# ²	% of All ³	# ²	% ⁴	# ²	% ⁴	# ²	% ⁴
Quality/Help		353	26.1%	279	79.0%	50	14.2%	24	6.8%
Helpfulness of training	TH	201	14.9%	172	85.6%	19	9.5%	10	5.0%
Specific Program or Agency	TP	104	7.7%	89	85.6%	8	7.7%	7	6.7%
Nothing	TN	90	6.7%	57	63.3%	33	36.7%	0	0.0%
Trainers		165	12.2%	90	54.5%	63	38.2%	12	7.3%
Trainers	TR	163	12.1%	90	55.2%	63	38.7%	10	6.1%
Specific Trainer	TT	11	0.8%						
General Training		680	50.4%	299	44.0%	229	33.7%	152	22.4%
Caring for foster children	TG-C	153	11.3%	119	77.8%	31	20.3%	3	2.0%
Approaches to Training	TG-A	125	9.3%	66	52.8%	51	40.8%	8	6.4%
Resources	TG-R	94	7.0%	45	47.9%	43	45.7%	6	6.4%
Training Materials	TG-M	78	5.8%	14	17.9%	59	75.6%	5	6.4%
Other Training Comments	TG-O	422	31.3%	174	41.2%	186	44.1%	62	14.7%
Specific Training		810	60.0%	496	61.2%	121	14.9%	193	23.8%
Substance Abuse	TS-S	58	4.3%	37	63.8%	18	31.0%	3	5.2%
Sexually Inappropriate Behavior	TS-Y	16	1.2%	11	68.8%	4	25.0%	1	6.3%
Infants and Toddlers	TS-I	17	1.3%	5	29.4%	11	64.7%	1	5.9%
Child Behavior	TS-B	196	14.5%	138	70.4%	46	23.5%	12	6.1%
Health and Safety	TS-H	42	3.1%	32	76.2%	4	9.5%	6	14.3%
Disorders/Issues	TS-D	193	14.3%	111	57.5%	68	35.2%	14	7.3%
Navigating Foster Care System	TS-F	184	13.6%	99	53.8%	68	37.0%	17	9.2%
Cultural Awareness/Issues	TS-C	26	1.9%	18	69.2%	8	30.8%	0	0.0%
Caregiver Core Training/PRIDE	TS-P	161	11.9%	143	88.8%	9	5.6%	9	5.6%
Other Specific Training	TS-O	264	19.6%	162	61.4%	84	31.8%	18	6.8%
Access		409	30.3%	13	3.2%	377	92.2%	19	4.6%
Location	TA-L	144	10.7%	6	4.2%	136	94.4%	2	1.4%
Scheduling	TA-S	194	14.4%	7	3.6%	183	94.3%	4	2.1%
Childcare	TA-C	171	12.7%	3	1.8%	165	96.5%	3	1.8%
Other Accessibility Comments	TA-O	34	2.5%	5	14.7%	24	70.6%	5	14.7%
Alternative Training Formats		222	16.4%	81	36.5%	100	45.0%	41	18.5%
Online Training	TF-N	180	13.3%	56	31.1%	91	50.6%	33	18.3%
Support Group	TF-S	24	1.8%	20	83.3%	0	0.0%	4	16.7%
Other Formats	TF-O	37	2.7%	13	35.1%	23	62.2%	1	2.7%
Voice and Choice		288	21.3%	211	73.3%	62	21.5%	15	5.2%
Voice and Community in Training	TV	276	20.4%	204	73.9%	59	21.4%	13	4.7%
Choice in Training	TC	16	1.2%	10	62.5%	6	37.5%	0	0.0%
Training Information		65	4.8%	5	7.7%	57	87.7%	3	4.6%
Information about training	TI	65	4.8%	5	7.7%	57	87.7%	3	4.6%
Other		255	18.9%	42	16.5%	85	33.3%	128	50.2%
Support beyond Training	TOS	77	5.7%	34	44.2%	34	44.2%	9	11.7%
Response not about Training	TO	119	8.8%	19	16.0%	65	54.6%	35	29.4%
Don't know	TDK	81	5.9%					81	100.0%

¹ Major themes (in blue rows) are rollups of the subthemes listed below. They are unduplicated - not the total of the numbers below. For example, a person who made "Satisfied" comments in both "Location" and "Scheduling" is counted only once in the "Accessibility" row. A person who has a "Satisfied" comment in the "Location" row and "Needs Work" in the "Scheduling" row would be counted as a "Mixed" comment in the "Accessibility" row.

² All # columns show how many persons made any mention of this theme. Multiple comments on the same theme by a single person are only counted once in that theme row. A person with both "Satisfied" and "Needs Work" comments on the same theme is counted in the "Mixed" column.

³ Respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

⁴ Percentage of comments in this theme that were "Satisfied," "Needs Work," or "Mixed or Neutral," respectively.

2016 Foster Parent Survey: Survey Script and Survey Questions

INTRODUCTION

I have been asked by the Department of Social and Health Services to talk with foster parents about how well DSHS supports and trains them. You should have received a letter explaining this survey:

- The results of this survey will help DSHS measure how well they support and train foster parents. It will help DSHS make improvements if they are needed.
- You have been randomly chosen from all licensed foster parents.
- Your survey answers will in no way affect your status as a foster parent.
- Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. We promise that no one from the foster care system will know how you individually answered the survey questions.
- Your name is never used; the researchers combine all the survey answers into one report.
- Your participation is completely voluntary, but is very important to us. We want to make sure the sample represents all foster parents.
- Please feel free to ask questions at any time. If I come to any question that you prefer not to answer, just let me know and I will skip over it. Please be honest. We want to know how you really feel.

Did you have a foster child in your care on [TARGET DATE]?

- Yes
- No

If No: Have you had a foster child in your care in the past 5 months?

- Yes
- No [Ineligible]

SUPPORT QUESTIONS

1. Question about Overall Support

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

Response Options for Question 1:

- More than adequate*
- Somewhat adequate*
- Somewhat inadequate*
- Very inadequate*
- Not applicable*

2. Questions to Facilitate Strategic Planning for Support

Preface to Questions 2A-2E:

Please answer the following questions about your experience with Children's Administration staff. For each of the statements below, tell us how often the statement was true in the past year.

- A. Are you treated like part of the team?**
- B. Can you get help when you ask for it?**
- C. Do the social workers listen to your input?**
- D. Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?**
- E. Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, developmental and educational needs?**

Response Options for Questions 2A-2E:

- Always or Almost Always
- Usually
- Seldom
- Almost Never or Never
- Not Applicable

3. Open-ended Questions to Facilitate Strategic Planning for Support

- A. What do Children's Administration and your social workers do well to support you?**
- B. What could Children's Administration and your social workers do better to support you?**

TRAINING QUESTIONS

4. Overall Training

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

Response Options for Question 4:

- More than adequate
- Somewhat adequate
- Somewhat inadequate
- Very inadequate
- Otherwise not applicable
- I haven't had training

5. Open-ended Questions to Facilitate Strategic Planning for Training

- C. What about foster parent training has been helpful?**
- D. How could foster parent training be improved?**

2016 Foster Parent Survey: Technical Notes

Population and Sampling

The survey sample is representative of all foster homes with a child in care on the 15th day of August 2015, November 2015, February 2016, or May 2016, or within the 5 months preceding the interview date. In each of these quarters, 361-375 homes were selected at random from a list of all foster homes to meet the goal of 333 completed interviews per quarter. Foster parents who had already participated in the 2015 survey year were not eligible to participate and were removed from the sample. In total, 1,471 eligible foster homes were selected to complete the survey. Of these, 1,350 completed the interview (92%). As of 6/30/2016, there were 4,945 foster homes in the state of Washington.

The 95% sampling error for the survey sample is ± 2.3 percentage points for a 50% proportion.

Statistical Significance testing: Regional differences and comparisons by survey year

For the seven standardized questions, statistical significance tests were calculated to assess differences in the percent of positive responses across regions, and between the 2015 and 2016 survey years. The criterion for statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Differences across regions

Differences across the three regions were evaluated with the chi-square test of independence, and four questions were found to be statistically significant. Contrasts by region were evaluated with the 2-sample binomial test of proportions.

Responses to the question “In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?” varied significantly by region; $\chi^2(2, 1346) = 6.62, p < .05$. Respondents in Region 1 were more likely to select “more than adequate” or “somewhat adequate” (82%) than those in Region 2 (75%); $z = 2.57, p < .05$.

Responses to the question “Are you treated like part of the team?” varied significantly by region; $\chi^2(2, 1340) = 10.37, p < .01$. Respondents in Region 1 were more likely to select “more than adequate” or “somewhat adequate” (79%) than those in Region 2 (69%); $z = 3.22, p < .01$.

Responses to the question “Can you get help when you ask for it?” varied significantly by region; $\chi^2(2, 1334) = 6.43, p < .05$. Respondents in Regions 1 and 3 were more likely to select “more than adequate” or “somewhat adequate” (82% for each) than those in Region 2 (76%); $z = 2.19, p < .05$ for each comparison.

Responses to the question “Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?” varied significantly by region; $\chi^2(2, 1308) = 8.72, p < .05$. Respondents in Region 1 were more likely to select “more than adequate” or “somewhat adequate” (77%) than those in Region 2 (68%); $z = 2.95, p < .01$.

Differences between 2015 and 2016 survey years

Differences between the 2015 and 2016 survey years were evaluated with the 2-sample binomial test of proportions. Positive responses to the statement “In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster parent?” (“Always or Almost Always” or “Usually”) increased from 75% in 2015 to 79% in 2016 ($z = 2.47, p < .05$).

Rounding

Results described in the narrative report are rounded to the nearest whole number. In the Appendix, percentages for coding categories are rounded to one decimal place. In several cases, correct rounding results in an apparent discrepancy. For example, a percentage of 55.47 would round to 55.5% when rounded to one decimal point, which would be rounded to 56% in the absence of any other information. However, the underlying figure is correctly rounded to 55% (verifiable by hand calculation).

Inter-rater reliability

As a check on coding procedures, two open-ended responses for a set of 25 responses were coded by four staff members associated with the coding and review process (50 responses total). The questions coded were “What do Children’s Administration and your social workers do well to support you?” and “What could Children’s Administration and your social workers do better to support you?” Krippendorff’s Alpha¹ was calculated for the five most commonly occurring codes and averaged. Across the five codes, average reliability was moderately high ($\alpha = .79$), and sufficient for the purposes of this report.

Intercoder reliability for common codes (25 responses each; average $\alpha = .79$)

Code	Description	N	α
SO_N	Other social worker comments (negative)	17	.66
IN_N	Information (negative)	16	.92
SO_P	Other social worker comments (positive)	15	.70
AP_P	Phone/staff access (positive)	10	.88
IN_P	Information (positive)	10	.77

¹ Hayes, A.F. & Krippendorff, K. (2007). Answering the call for a standard reliability measure for coding data. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 1 (1), 77 – 89.

2016 Foster Parent Survey
DSHS Foster Parents Speak



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