



DCYF

Caregiver Survey Report

DCYF 2023 We Are Family Day <https://dcyf.wa.gov>

2024

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Abstract: Between September 2023 and September 2024, DSHS surveyed 1,342 caregivers (884 kinship and 458 foster) who had a child in care within six months of the sampling dates (August and November, 2023; February and May, 2024). These caregivers were asked about their satisfaction with the support and training provided by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and private agencies contracted by DCYF. They were also invited to offer recommendations for change.

Satisfaction remained high in 2024, with a majority of caregivers giving positive responses to all structured questions. Kinship caregivers were more positive than foster caregivers on all items. There were also significant changes since 2023: fewer kinship caregivers said they were treated like part of the team, received adequate information, and found the support from Alliance CaRES helpful; and fewer foster caregivers said they found licensing staff knowledgeable and respectful.

In the written comments, caregivers expressed appreciation for the support from caseworkers; available resources; overall quality and helpfulness of DCYF staff and related agencies; and the helpfulness of the training. Caregiver comments also identify some areas that need work, including more consistent interactions with caseworkers, better service coordination, more information about resources, and additional financial and material support. Many caregivers also commented that they thought DCYF needed additional staff.

Many of the photos in this report were taken by DCYF at We Are Family Day 2023 and are used with permission.

In addition to this main report, a supplemental report that presents detailed survey results, summary of caregiver comments, and a comprehensive discussion of research methodology is available at

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda>. Search for “2024 Caregiver Survey Report.”

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2024 Caregiver Report



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Introduction

Listening to the voices of Washington’s kinship and foster caregivers.

Every year, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) partners with the Research and Data Analysis (RDA) Division of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to gather feedback from kinship and foster caregivers in the State of Washington. This is an opportunity for caregivers to share their perspectives and experiences, offer suggestions for improvement, and help DCYF achieve its mission to protect children and strengthen families so they flourish.

Caregivers who participated in the 2024 survey report positive experiences working with DCYF and partner agencies. Most caregivers feel supported, included, and respected. Though most caregivers gave positive responses to the structured questions, some caregivers expressed concerns. They identified a need for better communication from caseworkers, more coordination across offices and workers, and more adequate resources.

The 2024 Caregiver Survey Report¹ is divided into three sections:

1. **Caregiver Support** highlights where caregivers feel supported by DCYF and partner agencies and where they would like to see improvements. It includes the results from the structured questions, shows trends over time, and shares the voices of caregivers.
2. **Caregiver Training** presents caregiver feedback on the required training. This section also includes the results from the related structured questions, shows trends over time, and shares the voices of caregivers.
3. **Results at a Glance** presents summaries of the survey responses for both the structured and open-ended questions, as well as the demographic characteristics of the survey participants.



DCYF 2023 We Are Family Day <https://dcyf.wa.gov>

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Highlights

About the Survey



Data collected
Sept 2023 to
Sept 2024



Conducted by
phone (51%) and
online (49%)

884
Kinship
Caregivers

458
Foster
Caregivers

81%
Response
Rate

Main Results

Most caregivers are satisfied with support from DCYF. For example,



82% were included in meetings



76% felt listened to



74% can get help when they ask for it



73% were offered resources and support



68% are treated like part of the team



66% feel personally supported by DCYF staff

"Everyone we have worked with has been kind and professional. [They] seem to sincerely care about our needs and well-being as caregivers."

Kinship caregivers are more positive than foster caregivers on all questions. For example,

Do you get adequate information?



Do you feel personally supported?



Did staff offer you resources and support?



Are you treated like part of the team?



2 items significantly lower in 2024 for foster caregivers

*Respect from licensing staff
Licensing staff are knowledgeable*



3 items significantly lower in 2024 for kinship caregivers

*Treated like part of the team
Received adequate information
Helpfulness of support from Alliance CaRES*

Caregiver Support

Overall Support and Helpfulness

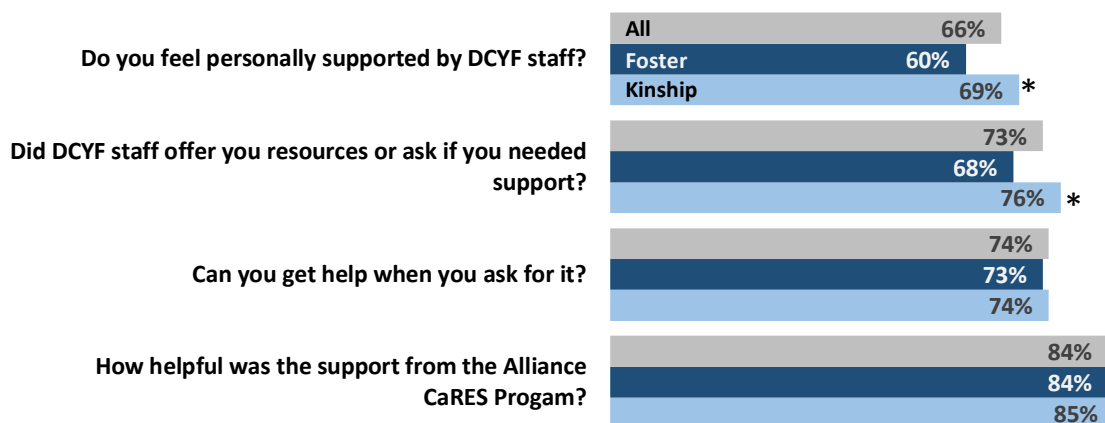
"They supported us so that we could support our grandson."

- Kinship Caregiver

Most caregivers are satisfied with the support and help provided by DCYF. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) feel personally supported by DCYF staff, 73% say staff offer resources or ask if they need support, and 74% are able to get help when they ask for it.¹ In addition, 84% of the caregivers who receive support from the Alliance CaRES Program² reported that it is helpful.

On two of these questions, a significantly higher percentage of kinship caregivers than foster caregivers gave positive responses. Almost 7 of 10 (69%) kinship caregivers reported that they feel personally supported by DCYF staff, compared to 6 of 10 (60%) foster caregivers. Similarly, 76% of kinship caregivers responded that staff offer resources or ask if they need support, compared to 68% of foster caregivers.

Most caregivers are satisfied with the support provided by DCYF and Alliance CaRES.



*Difference between foster and kinship families is significant at $p < .05$.



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¹ Positive responses include caregivers who responded "Always or almost always" or "Usually."

² The Alliance CaRES question was answered by 259 foster caregivers and 291 kinship caregivers who said that they received support from that program; percentages refer to those who responded "Very helpful" or "Somewhat helpful."

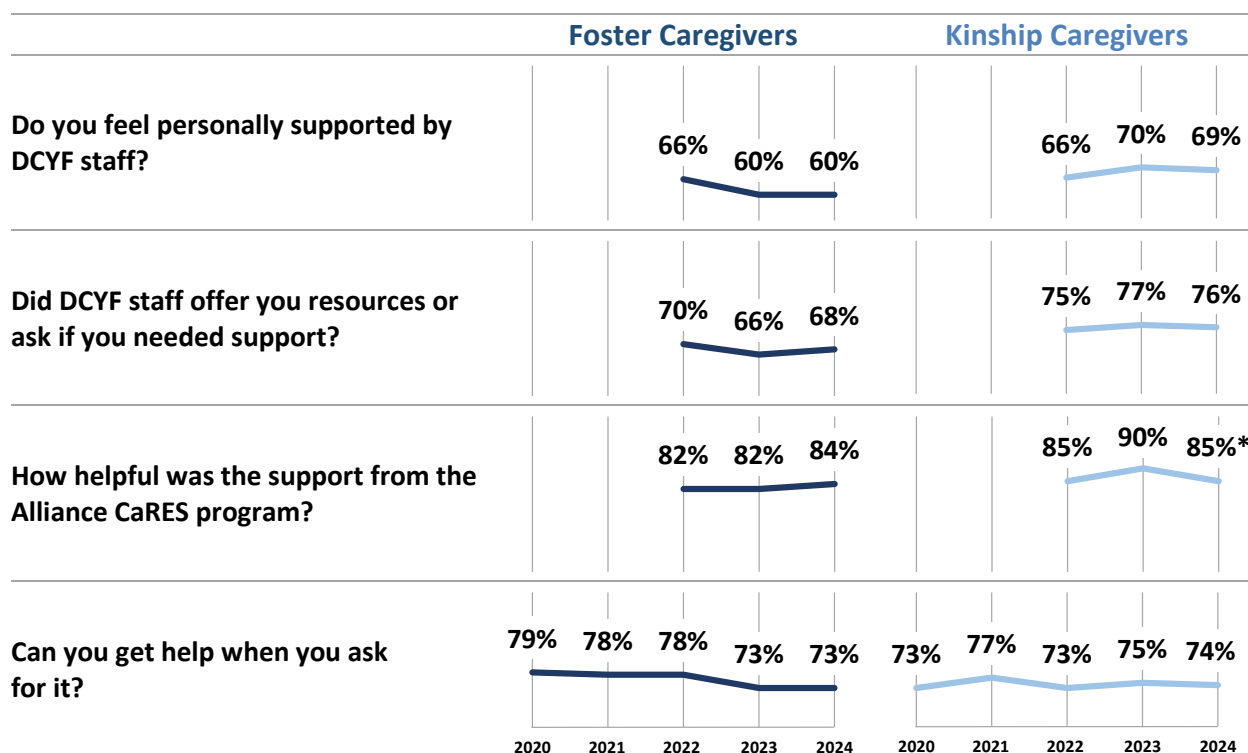
Trends over Time

The first three questions below were first asked in 2022. The proportion of foster caregivers saying that they felt personally supported was stable at 60% for both 2023 and 2024, though this is 6 points lower than in 2022. A slightly higher proportion of foster caregivers said they were offered resources and support in 2024 (68%) than in 2023 (66%), though, again, this is lower than the high of 70% in 2022. In 2024, slightly more foster caregivers said that the support they received from Alliance CaRES was helpful (84%) than in either 2022 or 2023.

Unlike the other support questions, the question “Can you get help when you ask for it?” was included in the survey prior to 2022. The five-year trend shows that in both 2023 and 2024, 73% of foster caregivers said that they could get help when they ask for it, which is 6 points lower than the high of 79% in 2020.

For kinship caregivers, trends on three of the four questions showed minor year-to-year variation. For example, in 2024, 69% of kinship caregivers feel personally supported by DCYF staff, one point lower than the 70% positive in 2023 and 3 points higher than the 66% positive in 2022. The questions about being offered resources and getting help when you need it were stable, with about three-fourths of kinship caregivers giving a positive response in each year.

Kinship caregivers did have one statistically significant change between 2023 and 2024: in 2024, 85% of kinship caregivers said that the support from Alliance CaRES was almost always or usually helpful, down from 90% in 2023. In 2022, the percent positive was also 85%.



*Percentage change between 2023 and 2024 is significant at $p < .05$.

The questions about personal support, being offered resources, and support from Alliance CaRES were introduced in 2022.

Caregivers Speak

Almost two-thirds of caregivers (63%) who commented on support said something about the overall quality and helpfulness of the support they receive from DCYF and other child welfare partners. Most of these comments (57%) were positive, and fewer (19%) were suggestions for improvement. The remaining 24% of comments were mixed.

63% of support comments were about general helpfulness and support (n=776).



▶ **444** (57%) of these comments were positive.



▶ **183** comments (24%) were mixed.



▶ **149** comments (19%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Positive comments from caregivers expressed overall satisfaction with the support they received.

"It feels like they have had our backs. We have so appreciated their desire for the best for the child."

"They always do everything within their ability."

"They always offered support and let us know that we could always reach out to them if we had any questions."

Caregivers were also pleased with the support they received from private agencies and other child welfare organizations.

"Our case manager with our agency is super supportive. We are lucky with our agency."

"We appreciated Treehouse."

"The CASA group really plays a vital role in the child's best interest."

"I had an amazing guardian ad litem. They should assign GALs to every family."

"The best support was my CaRES Alliance mentor with support and information."

Other caregivers had more uneven or negative experiences.

"We had a mostly good experience. However, it depended on the caseworker that was assigned to us."

"I've had really mixed experiences – some have helped a lot, and some have been MIA."

"I would say it is very dependent on the caseworker. Our current caseworker is awesome. I had a different experience with the last one."

"They don't support us. We are on our own."

Although some caregivers have had mixed or less positive experiences, both the statistical results and caregiver comments show that most caregivers are satisfied with the support they receive from DCYF and partner agencies.



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Caseworkers and Other Staff

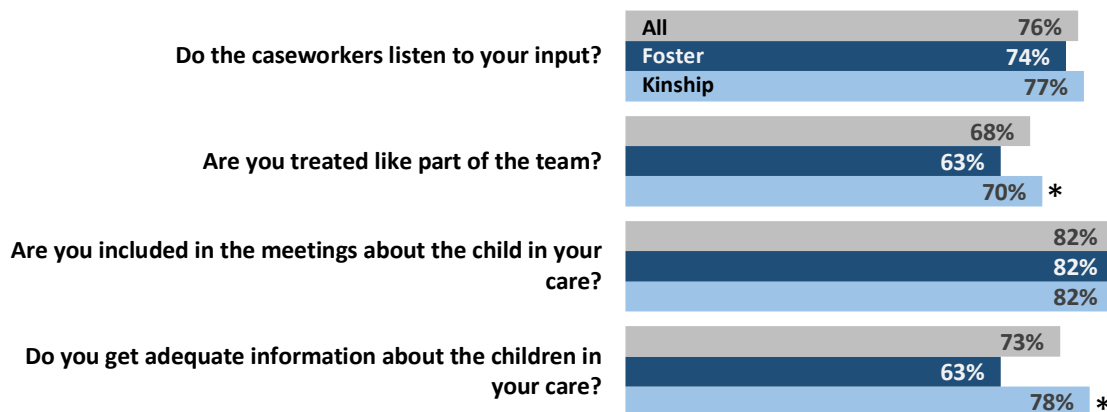
"I have been blessed with three caseworkers that support me and my family well by keeping us up to date, listening to my experiences and taking them seriously, and keeping me in the loop with my boys and what's happening."

- Foster Caregiver

Caregivers feel that caseworkers and other staff listen to and include them. Overall, about three quarters of caregivers (76%) said that caseworkers listen to their input; almost 7 of 10 (68%) feel they are treated like part of the team; over 8 of 10 (82%) reported that they were included in meetings about the children in their care; and over 7 of 10 (73%) get adequate information about the children in their care.

Kinship caregivers were significantly more likely than foster caregivers to say that they are treated like part of the team (70% vs. 63%) and that they get adequate information (78% vs. 63%). They were also more positive in feeling that caseworkers listened to their input, but this three-point difference (77% vs. 74%) was not statistically significant.

Caregivers feel listened to and included.



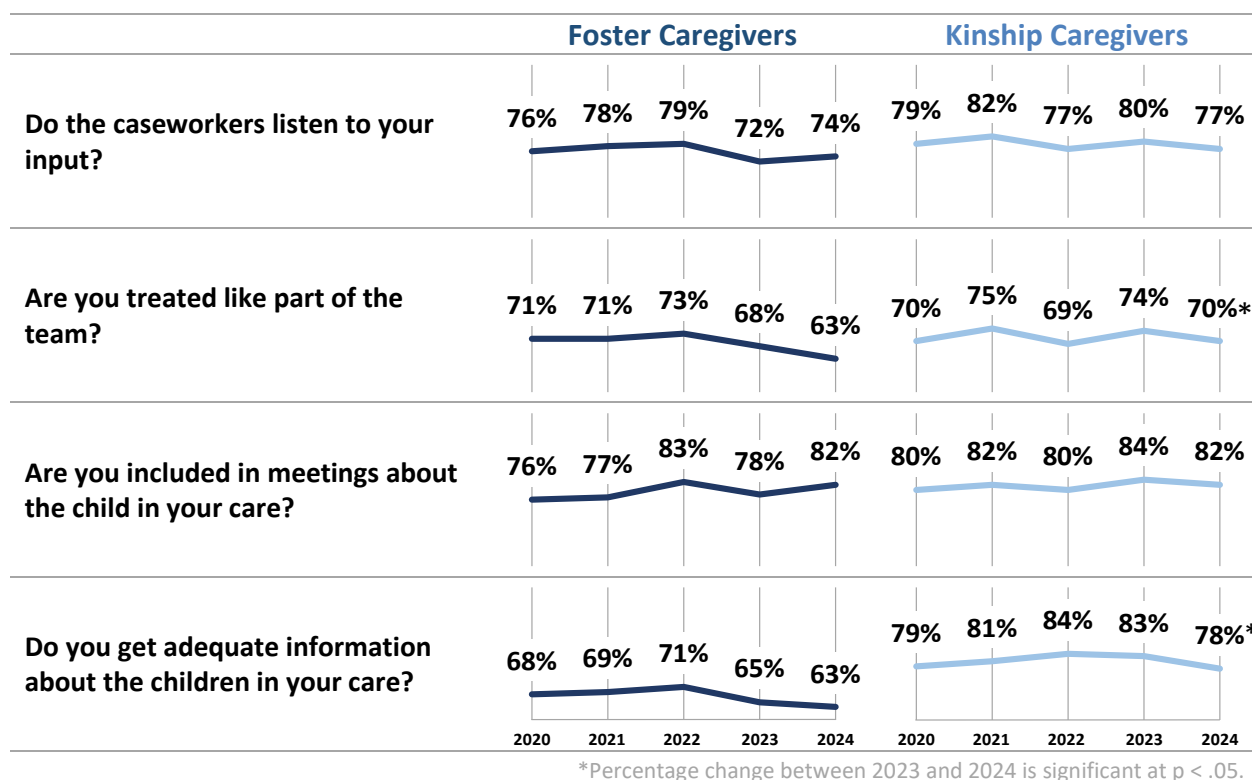
*Difference between foster and kinship families is significant at $p < .05$.

Trends over Time

In the past five years, foster caregivers have become more positive about being included in meetings, and they have become less positive about being treated like part of the team and getting adequate information about the children in their care. Since 2020, the proportion saying that they are included in meetings increased 6 points, from 76% in 2020 to 82% in 2024.

At the same time, there is a clear decline in foster caregivers' responses to feeling like part of team. At 63% positive in 2024, this is 10 points lower than the five-year high of 73% in 2022 and 8 points lower than the 71% positive in 2020. Similarly, the response from foster caregivers about whether they get adequate information was lower in 2024 than at any time in the past five years, with 63% positive in 2024, compared to the high of 71% in 2022. Perceptions of being listened to have also declined from the high of 79% in 2022, but the 74% in 2024 is also 2 points higher than the five-year low of 72% in 2023. Comments suggest that this may be due to some foster caregivers feeling left behind by the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227) and DCYF's kin-first culture.

Kinship caregivers show more year-to-year variation and less stable five-year trends on three of these four questions, though overall they are more positive than foster caregivers. For example, the 70% of kinship caregivers who felt like part of the team in 2024 was similar to percentages in 2020 (70%) and 2022 (69%), but lower than percentages in 2021 (75%) and 2023 (74%). The four-point decline between 2023 and 2024 is statistically significant. There is also a significant decline for kinship caregivers in the proportion saying they almost always or usually get adequate information about the child they are caring for: in 2024, 78% of kinship caregivers gave a positive response, a 5-point decline from 2023.



Caregivers Speak

Almost 9 of 10 caregivers who commented on support mentioned caseworkers and other staff (88%). These comments varied in their sentiment: slightly more than 3 of 10 comments are positive (32%); just over 3 of 10 are suggestions for improvement (31%); and the remainder (37%) expressed both positive and negative sentiment.

88% of support comments were about caseworkers and other staff (n=1,080).



▶ **345** (32%) of these comments were positive.



▶ **400** comments (37%) were mixed.



▶ **335** comments (31%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Caregivers appreciate the kindness, responsiveness, and professionalism of their caseworkers.

"They always talked to me with respect and kindness."

"Everyone we have worked with has been kind and professional. Seem to sincerely care about our needs and well-being as caregivers."

"Our social worker has always listened to our needs."

"They get back to any questions or concerns I have in a very timely manner and never make me feel bad for reaching out."

Caregivers also identified some ways their caseworkers did not live up to expectations, especially with communication, transparency, and follow-through.

"Don't make promises and then not follow through."

"[Provide] honest communication about a child's needs/situation prior to placement."

"Never make assumptions. Some people have learning disabilities and are slower to understand."

"Listen to what is being shared from the foster families, share court dates, and take input from families."

"Our insight and observations are disregarded and minimized."

"Be way more transparent and honest, providing us with all information and explaining the process."

"Getting updates on the cases more than once a month would ease a lot of the frustration. When big decisions are made, they are not communicated to us."

The variety of comments about caseworkers, as well as the even balance of positive and negative comments, suggests that caregivers have mixed experiences working with caseworkers and other staff. Moving towards consistently positive interactions between caregivers and staff would help ensure that caregivers feel supported by caseworkers throughout the experience.

Organizational Processes and Policy

"I got caught off guard by people from different agencies that contacted me. Often one person didn't know what the others were doing. The system doesn't seem organized."

- Kinship Caregiver

Caregivers Speak

Over one-third of caregivers (36%) who commented about support mentioned organizational processes and policy. Most of these comments (89%) were suggestions for improvement.

36% of support comments were about organizational processes and policy (n=442).



▶ **20** (5%) of these comments were positive.



▶ **29** comments (7%) were mixed.



▶ **393** comments (89%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Many of these negative comments described challenges with coordination.

"Have better communication between departments in DCYF and with the courts to speed up processes."

"They have so many people involved that the right hand doesn't know what the left one's doing."

"Because there have been so many different social workers, important information does not seem to be passed on correctly, misplaced, left undone, etc."

"[We need] consistency on the rules. Social workers give different answers on what they can do to support us."

"Find a way to make this more cohesive when different counties are involved."

Also common were comments about caseworker turnover and workload and the impact this has on their ability to provide support.

"Have more staff. There could be more of them. Every single individual was doing their best, but there isn't enough man power."

"The social workers are so busy it just blows my mind."

"The turnover rate in social workers greatly impacts the well-being of the children. Children are unable to build trusting relationships because they have to rebuild trust every time a new social worker is assigned."

"DCYF is understaffed. I appreciate that the DCYF staff is working very hard and has the best intentions. Yet, they are not able to provide the support needed for the child and caregivers as they do not have enough hours in the day."

Some caregivers commented on more specific process issues, such as a lack of timeliness and the need for after-hours support.

“Process paperwork in a timely manner so things are not delayed.”

“It took us 2 ½ years to go through an adoption that was uncontested, and it shouldn’t take that long.”

“It would be nice if they had a better after-hours way to reach someone for emergencies.”

“I can’t reach someone over the weekend, so that would help.”

Finally, many caregivers expressed concerns about laws and policies, including the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227).

“HB 1227 is so troubling to me, and it’s causing issues in our case and in other cases. I wish the state would be able to look at the whole thing and make the best decision for the child, and not be hamstrung by this new law.”

“Very concerned about legislation that went into effect July 2023 that allows parents who are actively using illicit substances to have their children returned home.”

“Caseworkers are bound by court decisions and departmental policies. The state makes every excuse for poor parenting in the name of ‘preserving families.’ However, this view is biased towards a single definition of family - biological parent and child. Family can mean many things to people. It SHOULD mean loving, supportive, mentoring, educating adults with children they have attached and bonded to. Biology isn’t everything.”

“They need to update the Washington state laws as to better support foster parents concerning the care of the foster child. Washington state law needs to put the child’s needs first and not always the bio parents.”

“They [caseworkers] were often limited by really bad laws that don’t help the children and give addicted parents way way way too many chances!”

Caregiver comments about organizational level issues, including coordination, turnover, processes, and policies, speak to the challenges in navigating a complex and under-resourced system that has to balance competing needs and demands. While many caregivers understood the organizational constraints that caseworkers have to navigate, these constraints also had a real impact on their experience as caregivers.



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Resources

"[They] provide resources in a non-judgmental, supportive manner."

- Foster Caregiver

In their comments, over forty percent (42%) of caregivers mentioned resources. Almost half (45%) of these comments are positive, over 3 of 10 (33%) are suggestions for improvement, and about 2 of 10 (22%) are mixed.

Caregivers Speak

42% of support comments were about resources (n=515).



▶ **234** (45%) of these comments were positive.



▶ **111** comments (22%) were mixed.



▶ **170** comments (33%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Most general comments about resources were positive.

"If I ask for something, they are good about connecting me with resources."

"They offer resources or solutions I may not think of or remember."

Caregivers also referred to specific resources in their comments. They expressed gratitude for access to material resources like clothing and supplies for baby care, as well as medical resources.

"There are so many resources for material things for the kids, which is really reassuring to know that there will always be a place to go grab some new clothes or shoes."

"We got our second child at a week old, and we immediately got gift cards and diapers."

"I would say that anytime there's a medical issue. . . , there's always been someone who helps us get referrals and encourages us to get medical help."

"I have the ability to get medical, dental, and mental health care for the kids without problems."

The chart on the following page shows that caregivers were especially positive about medical care, vouchers, clothing, and transportation, whereas they were most critical about stipends, medical care, child and respite care, and clothing.

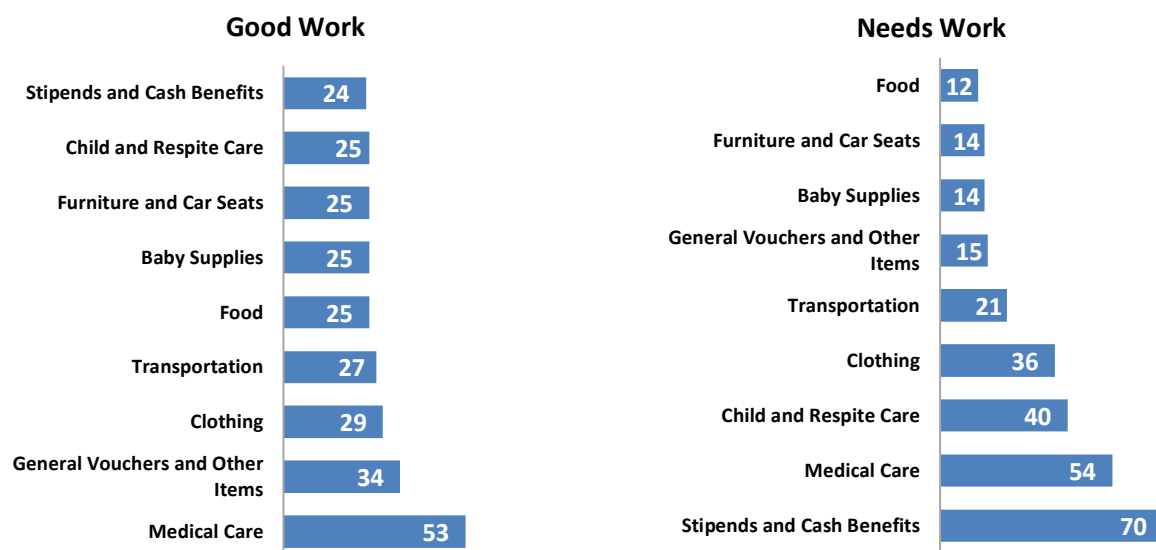
The critical comments often reflected a need for more adequate and effective resources.

"[We need] better resources that ACTUALLY work."

"Monetary support is not adequate. The level system is broken. The scale they use is not working and that interferes with financial support."

"They gave me \$23 dollars a month. That is not enough to feed a child for a month."

Caregivers Appreciate the Resources They Receive and Identify Areas Where They'd Like More Support.



Comments that include both positive and negative feedback are counted in both charts.

Other critical comments were about difficulties accessing resources.

"Bigger network of providers for mental health and child psychologist and psychiatrist to assist with behavior issues for younger children. There is not enough, and the waiting list is too long."

"I have had to get a case aid for my medically fragile child, which is approved for a three-month period, but then I have to reapply every time and it's a fiasco, a fighting matter."

"Had to fight to get food, clothes, diapers. Never got money."

Finally, some caregivers said that they were not given adequate information about the resources available to them.

"Our greatest frustration at this time is that it can feel like a guessing game to access information and resources. We feel that if we do not know what exactly to ask for it is not offered."

"Give me names and numbers of all the resources I might need. You have to drag it out of them for each situation. When we have yearly meetings, I find out about things that I think should be given at the beginning."

"I didn't know about any of the resources that were available to foster parents being as I was only kinship care. I paid for every activity that the kids were in and didn't know anything about Bridge the Gap that paid for sports or martial arts that I paid for myself."

"I had my granddaughter for over a year before I found out that I could get monthly payments. No one told me."

Overall, caregivers were grateful for the resources they received, but many also faced difficulty accessing resources and knowing what resources were available to them.

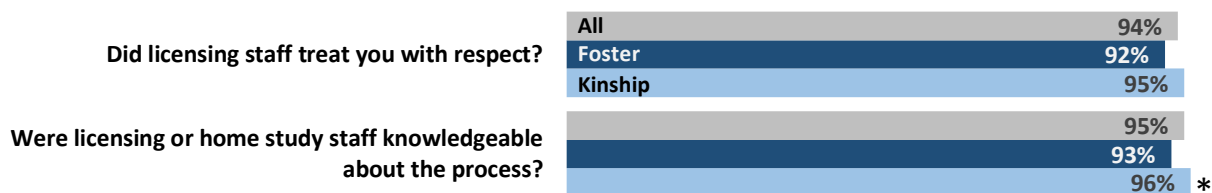
Caregiver Licensing

"Our licenser was thorough, knowledgeable, helpful, and offered lots of great advice."
- Kinship Caregiver

About two-thirds of caregivers (67%) said that they interacted with the Licensing Division in the past year. The vast majority of these caregivers reported that licensing staff treat them with respect (94%) and that licensing or home study staff were knowledgeable (95%). These are the highest percentages among all the survey questions.

Although the proportion of positive responses was high for all caregivers, this year was the first time that kinship caregivers were more positive on these questions than foster caregivers were. Kinship caregivers were 3 points more positive on licensing staff treating them with respect (95% vs. 92%) and 3 points more positive about licenser knowledge (96% vs. 93%). This difference for licenser knowledge is statistically significant.

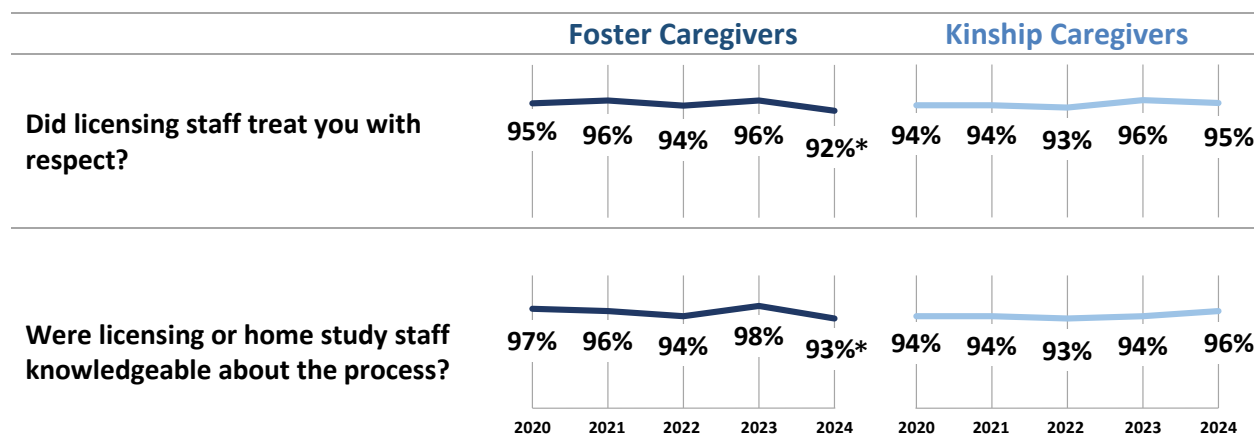
Caregivers are positive about their work with licensing staff.



*Difference between foster and kinship families is significant at $p < .05$.

Trends over Time

Since 2020, the questions asking about licensing staff have consistently been the highest scoring items on the survey. Though this is still the case, foster caregivers did become less positive in 2024, with the lowest scores in the past five years on both questions. Kinship caregivers did not have a similar decline.



*Percentage change between 2022 and 2023 is significant at $p < .05$.

Caregivers Speak

Caregiver comments about licensors and licensing reflect the positive responses in the structured questions.

"Our licensor did the best job and was so patient with me."

"The licensor gave me a lot of resources."

"Our licensor was great. She understood our ambivalence about getting licensed again after many years and encouraged us through the process."

"Licensors were good about providing us with the necessary information required and support."

"My licensor was very knowledgeable and helped me navigate hard issues."

"The licensors are amazing, and I feel well supported in regards to our licensing."

A few caregivers expressed concerns about licensing, usually related to negative interactions with a specific licensor or a lack of timeliness in the process.

"My previous licensor was amazing. Checked in with us, problem-solved with us, and treated us like he was there to help us better understand things if we had questions and treated us like an asset. Current licensor from day one seems to make up her own rules, talks down to me, puts words in my mouth, and overall I get knots in my stomach every time I need to reach out to her."

"As far as licensing, we were told we would be licensed in 90 days. We didn't get licensed for 10 months!"

"Well, it has been 10 months since placement, and I am still not licensed. . . . There is no reason I cannot be licensed other than it is taking the worker forever to complete the process."

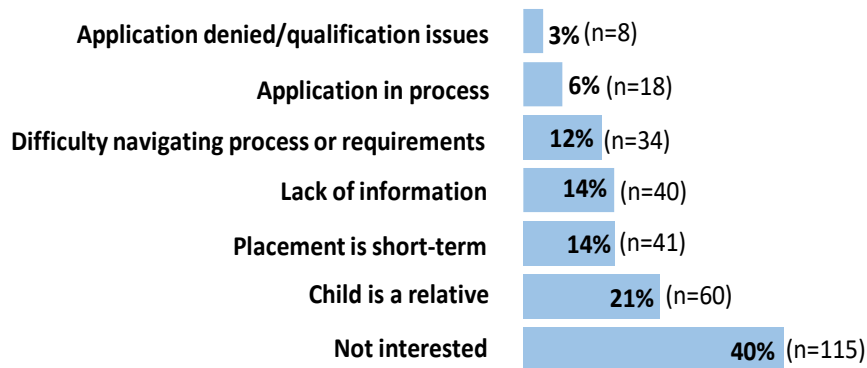
"Be quicker. Getting licensed was long."

"Get the paperwork straightened out and approve a kinship license so that we can care for the child."



Gettyimages.com/Jacob Wackerhausen

Kinship caregivers cite several reasons for not being licensed.



Note: Caregivers could cite more than one reason for not being licensed.

Even as DCYF has instituted policies and procedures to make licenses more accessible to kinship caregivers, only half of the kinship caregivers who completed the survey indicated that they had a license. When asked why, the most common reason was a general disinterest, often because they are only interested in taking care of a family member.

"The children were placed with us on an emergent basis. It was not in our plans to become caregivers or foster parents."

"I don't want to be licensed because I only want to care for my family."

"The only reason I didn't want a license is because I can't take care of other kids. The only reason I had her was she's my great granddaughter."

"I just don't want to. I don't want to be in that system."

"Just want to care for the child we have now."

"Only had my grandkids for a short time and no desire to get licensed. Kinship license was never mentioned."

As suggested by that last comment, a few caregivers also said that they were not familiar with kinship licenses.

"I was never offered the opportunity."

"I didn't know a thing about it."

Finally, some caregivers said that they had difficulty navigating the process.

"Confused by all the paperwork."

"Licensing [Division] made it very difficult to become licensed."

"They said it would take too long."

What is clear from many of these comments is that some kinship caregivers do not think that licensing is relevant to their situation. As DCYF continues to put processes into place to license more kinship caregivers, the number of kinship caregivers expressing interest in and pursuing licensing may continue to grow.

Summary of Key Findings about Support

Support

- On all support questions, a higher proportion of kinship caregivers than foster caregivers gave positive responses.
- Kinship caregivers were most positive on the questions about being included in meetings (82% positive); getting adequate information about the children in their care (78% positive); and feeling that caseworkers listen (77% positive).
- Foster caregivers were most positive on the questions about being included in meetings (82% positive); feeling like caseworkers listen (74%); and getting help when they ask for it (73% positive).
- 46% of caregivers (n=591) report that they get support from Alliance CaRES, and both kinship (85%) and foster (84%) caregivers find that support very or somewhat helpful.
- In the open-ended questions about support, caregivers are especially satisfied with support they receive from DCYF and partner organizations; staff access and consistency of contact; and available resources. Caregiver comments also identify some areas that need work, including timeliness, service coordination, and access to financial resources. Many caregivers also commented on the need for additional DCYF staff.

Licensing

- About two-thirds (67%) of caregivers report contact with the Licensing Division in the past 12 months (73% of foster caregivers and 64% of kinship caregivers). Almost all of these caregivers found the staff respectful (94%) and knowledgeable (95%).
- Kinship caregivers were significantly more likely than foster caregivers to find the licensing staff knowledgeable (96% vs. 93%), a change from 2023 when kinship caregivers scored significantly lower than foster caregivers on this question. The gap narrowed because kinship caregivers became slightly more positive in their view of licenser knowledge (from 94% to 96% positive) and foster caregivers became significantly less positive (from 98% to 93% positive). This may reflect licensors' growing experience with the kinship licensing process.
- Most kinship caregivers who are not licensed report that this is because they are caring for a relative and are not interested in pursuing a license.

Changes between 2023 and 2024

- On five questions, significantly fewer caregivers provided positive responses in 2024 compared to 2023 ($p < .05$).
- For foster caregivers, a significantly lower percentage in 2024 felt that licensing staff treated them with respect (96% in 2023 vs. 92% in 2024) and that licensing staff were knowledgeable about the process (98% in 2023 vs. 93% in 2024).
- For kinship caregivers, a significantly lower percentage in 2024 felt that they are treated like part of the team (74% in 2023 vs. 70% in 2024); get adequate information about the children in their care (83% in 2023 vs. 78% in 2024); and find the support from Alliance CaRES helpful (90% in 2023 vs. 85% in 2024).

Overall, the results demonstrate that most caregivers continue to be pleased with the support provided by DCYF and partner agencies. They recognize some of the ongoing challenges related to staffing, financial resources, and bureaucratic processes, yet they also appreciate the many ways that caseworkers and other DCYF staff support them in their caregiver role.

Caregiver Training

"It keeps my knowledge fresh and gives me tools in my tool belt to help support the children in my care."

- Foster Caregiver

Most foster caregivers (95%) report that they have participated in training related to their caregiving at least once in the past 3 years. As expected, fewer kinship caregivers (46%) report participating in training, as it is not required for all kinship caregivers. This, however, is 11 points higher than the 35% of kinship caregivers who participated in training in 2023.

Among caregivers who did participate in training, over 8 in 10 are satisfied with their experience. Eighty-seven percent of foster caregivers and 90% of kinship caregivers who participated indicated that the training was more than adequate or somewhat adequate.

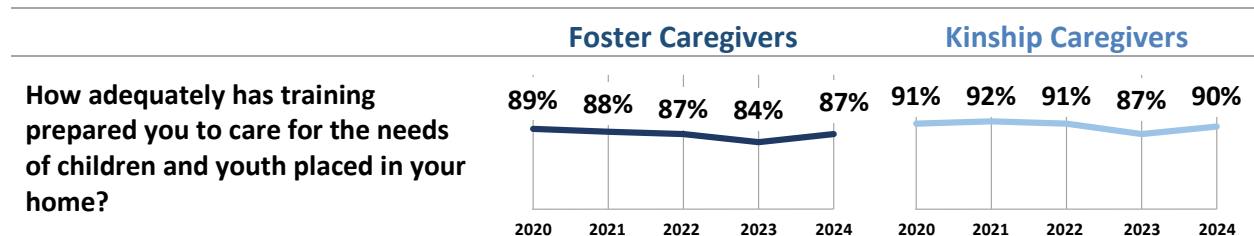
Caregivers are satisfied with training.

How adequately has training prepared you to care for the needs of children and youth placed in your home?

All	88%
Foster	87%
Kinship	90%

Trends over Time

Though caregiver satisfaction with training declined between 2020 and 2023, there was an uptick in 2024 for both foster and kinship caregivers. In 2023, 84% of foster caregivers found the training adequate, and this rose to 87% in 2024. Similarly, for kinship caregivers, the proportion who finds the training adequate increased from 87% in 2023 to 90% in 2024.



DCYF 2023 We Are Family Day <https://dcyf.wa.gov>

Training Quality and Helpfulness

"The training explained a lot of things I did not know before becoming a foster parent."

- Foster Caregiver

One quarter of caregivers (25%) who commented on training mentioned overall quality and helpfulness. Over 8 of 10 of these comments (81%) were positive.

25% of training comments were about training quality and helpfulness (n=187).



152 (81%) of these comments were positive.



9 comments (5%) were mixed.



26 comments (14%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Most caregivers found training helpful.

"All the information was helpful because I was new to being a foster care provider."

"Understanding these kids that have different situations. It's true you have to live it to totally understand it, but the knowledge was there, so it helped."

"It gave me the tools I needed to help these kids."

The 14% of caregivers who had suggestions for improvement in this area described the training as too general and not applicable to real world caregiving.

"The training we got was very generic."

"There is not any type of training that can prepare you. The current trainings are misleading."

"It's a hassle and almost always is some picture-perfect hypothetical situation which is wildly easier and different than when the problem is right there happening in real time, throwing curve balls that no one considered in training."



GettyImages.com/Yana Tatevosian

Training Access

"I was very impressed with the training. It was easy to navigate and helpful. Even as an educator of 15 years, it was still worth my time."

- Kinship Caregiver

About 3 of 10 caregivers (31%) who commented on training mentioned access. This included comments about schedule and location, registering for trainings, and training requirements. Most of the comments about access (61%) were suggestions for improvement.

31% of training comments were about training access (n=231).



52 (23%) of these comments were positive.



37 comments (16%) were mixed.



142 comments (61%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Caregivers commented that they'd like to see more flexibility in the training schedule and more offerings on the weekends. They'd also like to see more in-person trainings in their local area.

"The Alliance is wonderful, and the classes are great, but I work fulltime and the classes are almost always daytime."

"More flexible online courses that can be done on our own time. With multiple children and jobs, it is hard to make it to trainings in the day or at bedtime."

"More in-person training available on weekends and evenings."

"Having trainings with variable times to choose from would give me the chance to take those classes."

"It's too hard to access a class in this small community."

"Better and more convenient locations."

Caregivers would also like the training website to be easier to navigate.

"I get an email every month about the classes being given by Alliance but the website is not user friendly and needs improvement."

"Get the website easier to use for us people who aren't computer savvy."

Caregivers also commented on the training structure and requirements.

"The length of the trainings are prohibitive for me. If some of the longer trainings could be broken into shorter pieces, I would be able to complete more."

"I think the overall load is overwhelming. It's a lot of classes. It felt like 24 hours of busy work."

Caregivers who made positive comments related to training access were pleased with the training being "readily available" and "easy to navigate and helpful."

Training Format

"I love that the department has diversified training options. In-person, online, and support groups are excellent."

- Foster Caregiver

About 3 of 10 caregivers (31%) who commented on training mentioned training format, which includes training methods and comments about trainers. Forty percent of these comments were positive, 45% were suggestions for improvement, and 15% were mixed.

31% of training comments were about training format (n=229).



92 (40%) of these comments were positive.



35 comments (15%) were mixed.



102 comments (45%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Caregiver comments about trainers were mostly positive.

"Providers of the classes are knowledgeable and very supportive."

"[I like] the knowledge and experience that the trainers have."

Comments about training methods were more mixed. Caregivers appreciated trainings that were interactive and relevant. They also appreciated trainings that included the perspectives of those with lived experience in the child welfare system.

"I loved the videos we watched in our classes, especially from the point of view from adults who had been in the foster system."

"More real life examples and stories."

"I like the ones where you can ask questions and get feedback during the class."

"[I like] the classes where we could all talk to each other. The PowerPoint classes are dreary."

"We need a ton more support groups for foster parents to connect with one another, to bounce ideas off each other and just build community."

Caregivers are split in their preference for online vs. in-person trainings. Many appreciate the flexibility that online training provides, and others miss the connections that are made more easily in-person.

"More online programs. Being a caregiver is time consuming. Having online programs instead of in-person programs lightens the burden of time commitments so we do not have to travel back and forth to trainings."

"We need to get back to in-person [training]. We have friends that we met with our very first training and their help is so valuable with our experience as caregivers. Virtual is not as effective."

Above all, caregivers appreciated having a variety of training options available so that they can choose the format that best meets their needs.

Training Content

"[The training] taught me to be patient and understanding."

- Kinship Caregiver

Over 3 of 4 caregivers (77%) who commented on training mentioned content and topics. Most of these comments (61%) were positive, 27% were mixed, and 12% were suggestions for improvement.

77% of training comments were about training content and topics (n=563).



▶ **341** (61%) of these comments were positive.



▶ **154** comments (27%) were mixed.



▶ **68** comments (12%) were negative or suggestions for improvement.

Many caregivers commented that their training was useful for preparing them to care for the children placed with them, especially the focus on trauma-informed care.

"Understanding the needs of the child to be sure they are cared for in the best possible way with love and support in every aspect."

"Introduced me to new parenting concepts and new perspectives."

"I think the classes help us in dealing with trauma; it taught me to think about where the kids are coming from and not jump to judgment on why they are acting as they do."

"Learning about trauma and the effect it has on the children's brains has helped me entirely reshape the way I think and parent."

Others would have liked the training content to be more personalized to their situation.

"If possible, ensuring the training is geared towards the individual caregiver versus a standard training with courses/information the caregiver doesn't need."

"Give the caregivers more knowledge on their particular personal circumstance."

"Add classes to take care of kids with autism or other special needs."

"Make required training relevant/specific to the age/gender/issues of the particular kids in your care rather than just broadly requiring trainings that may not have any relevance to your current situation."

In addition to these general comments about training content, caregivers also commented on specific training topics. Most of these comments were positive. For example, caregivers appreciated age-specific content (e.g., for infants or teens) and information on providing culturally inclusive and gender inclusive care.

Summary of Key Findings about Training

Most caregivers are satisfied with the training they receive for their caregiving role.

- 95% of foster caregivers and 46% of kinship caregivers report receiving training in the past three years. This proportion for kinship caregivers is 11 points higher than in 2023, which reflects positively on DCYF's commitment to providing training for kinship caregivers.
- Of those caregivers who received training, 87% of foster caregivers and 90% of kinship caregivers found the training more than adequate or somewhat adequate.
- Open-ended comments about training were mostly positive, with caregivers reporting satisfaction with its overall quality and helpfulness and its value for helping them care for children. They find the trainers effective and appreciate having flexible training options, including self-paced online trainings. They also appreciate content focused on trauma-informed care, child development, and health and safety.
- Areas related to training that caregivers would like to see improved include easier access to information about training requirements and schedules; having child care available during training; use of more interactive and community-building training methods; and having training available at more convenient times.



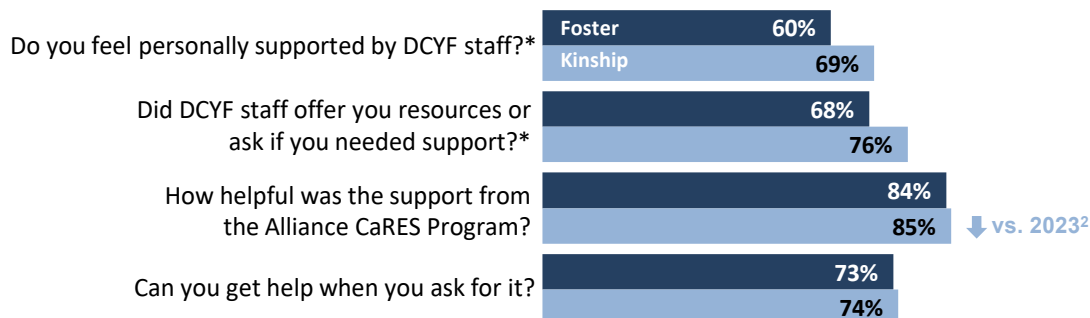
DCYF 2023 We Are Family Day <https://dcyf.wa.gov>

Results at a Glance

Responses to Structured Questions

Foster and Kinship Caregivers, 2024 Percent Positive¹ and Statistical Significance

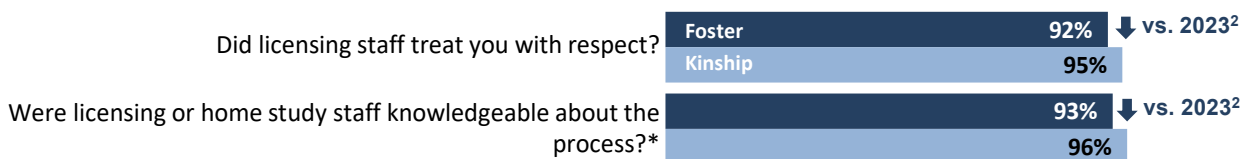
SUPPORT AND HELPFULNESS



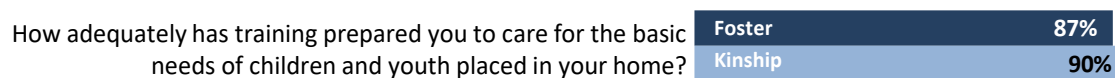
CASEWORKERS AND OTHER STAFF



CAREGIVER LICENSING



ADEQUACY OF TRAINING



¹For the adequacy of training question, percentage shown is the proportion who answered "More than adequate" or "Somewhat adequate." For the helpfulness of Alliance CaRES, percentage shown is the proportion who answered "Very helpful" or "Somewhat helpful." For all other core questions, percentage shown is the proportion who answered "Always or Almost Always" or "Usually."

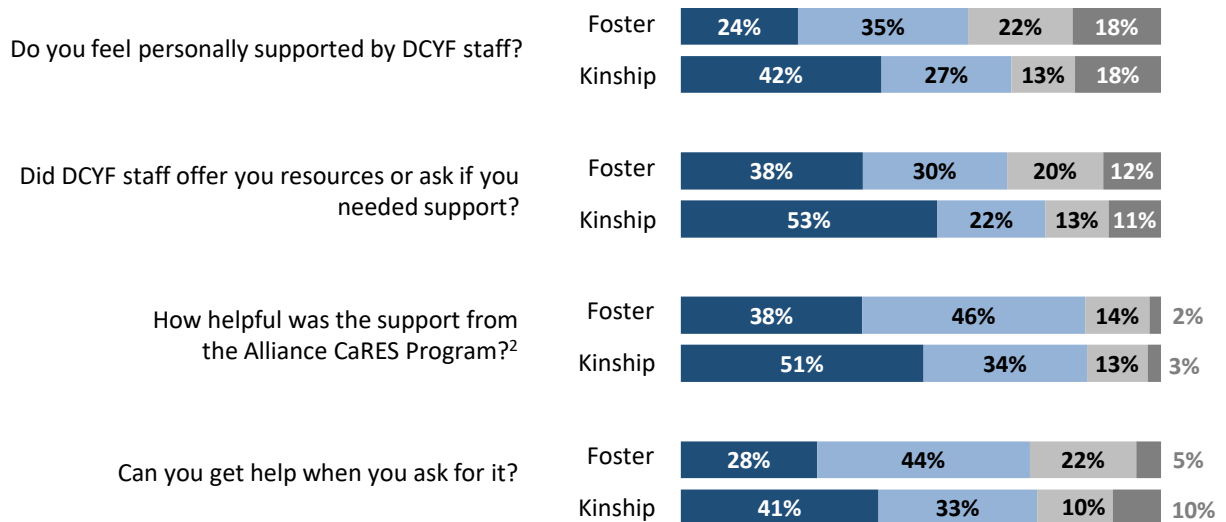
²Arrow indicates the difference from 2023 is statistically significant for that group of caregivers ($p < .05$).

*Difference between foster and kinship caregivers is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

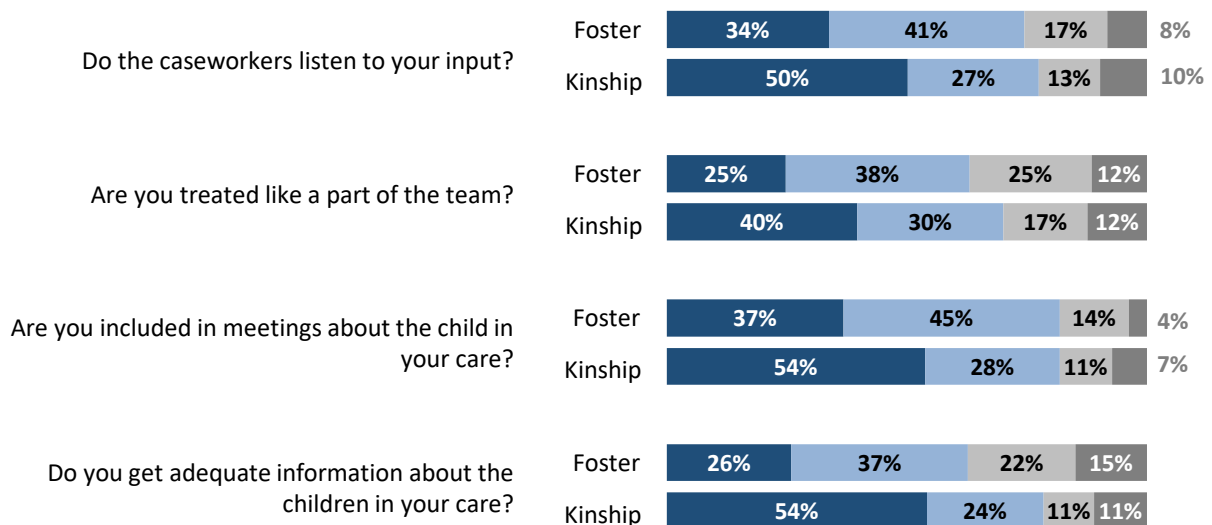
Foster and Kinship Caregivers, 2024 Full Distribution of Responses¹

■ Always or Almost Always ■ Usually ■ Seldom ■ Almost Never or Never

SUPPORT AND HELPFULNESS



CASEWORKERS AND OTHER STAFF



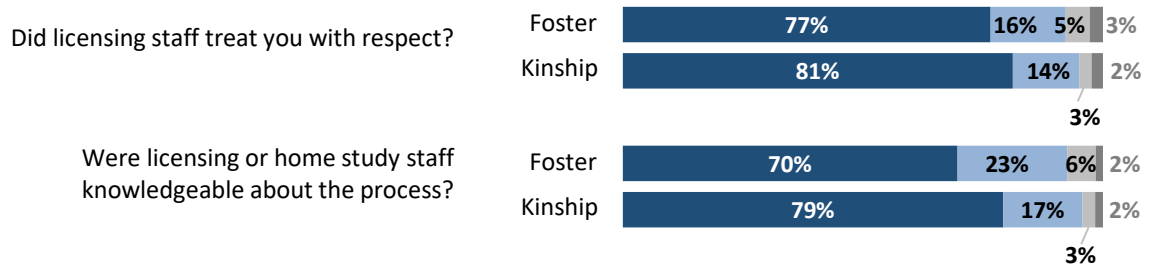
¹Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

²Response categories are Very Helpful, Somewhat Helpful, Slightly Helpful, Not at All Helpful.

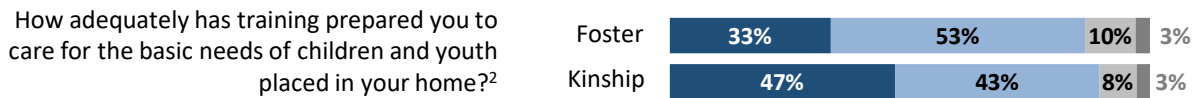
Foster and Kinship Caregivers, 2024 Full Distribution of Responses¹, continued

■ Always or Almost Always
■ Usually
■ Seldom
■ Almost Never or Never

CAREGIVER LICENSING



ADEQUACY OF TRAINING



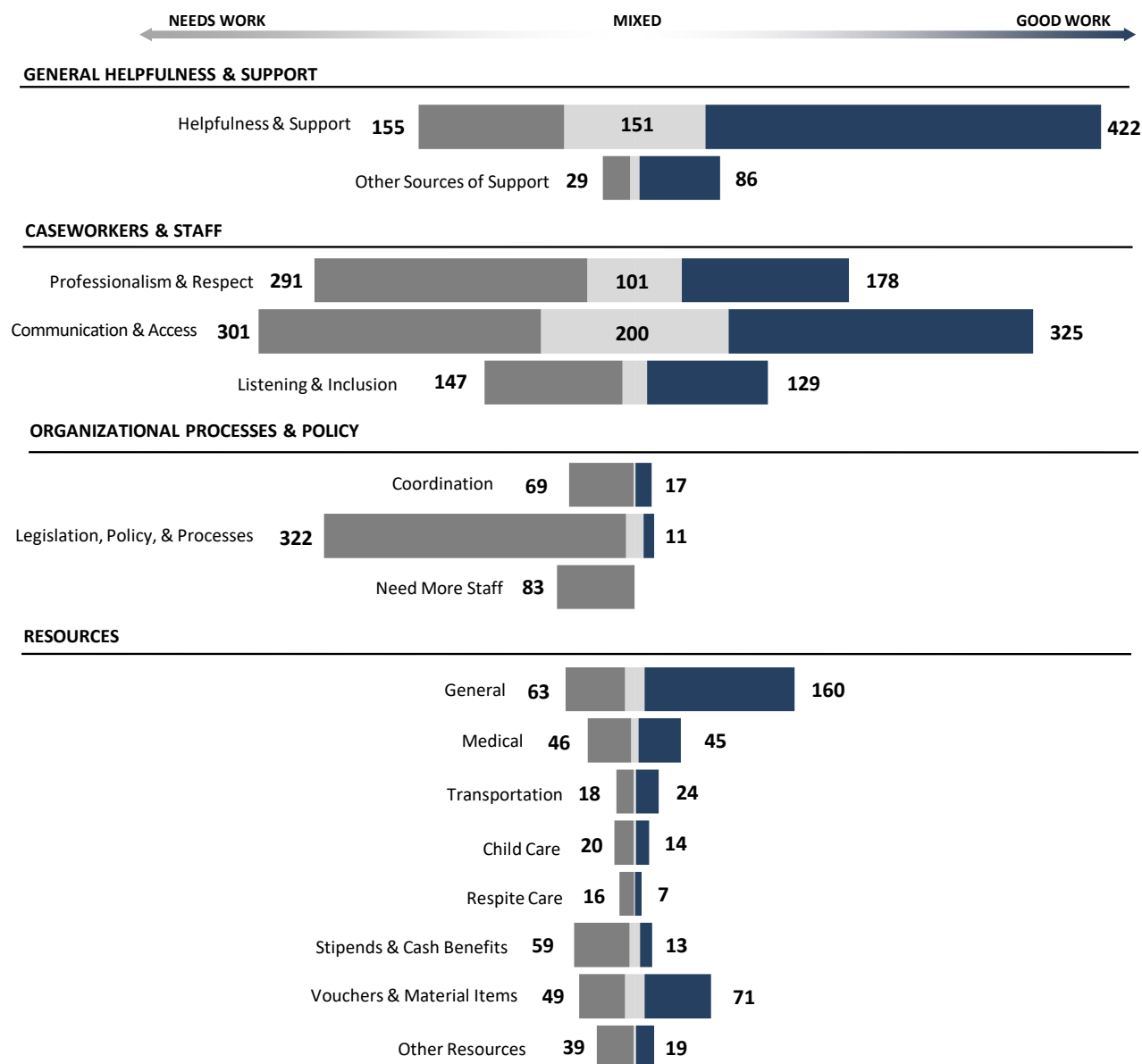
¹Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

²Response categories are More than Adequate, Somewhat Adequate, Somewhat Inadequate, Very Inadequate.

Responses to Open-ended Questions about Support

Questions about Support: Now, think about all the partners in Washington’s child welfare system, including DCYF, private agencies, and your social workers and licensors.

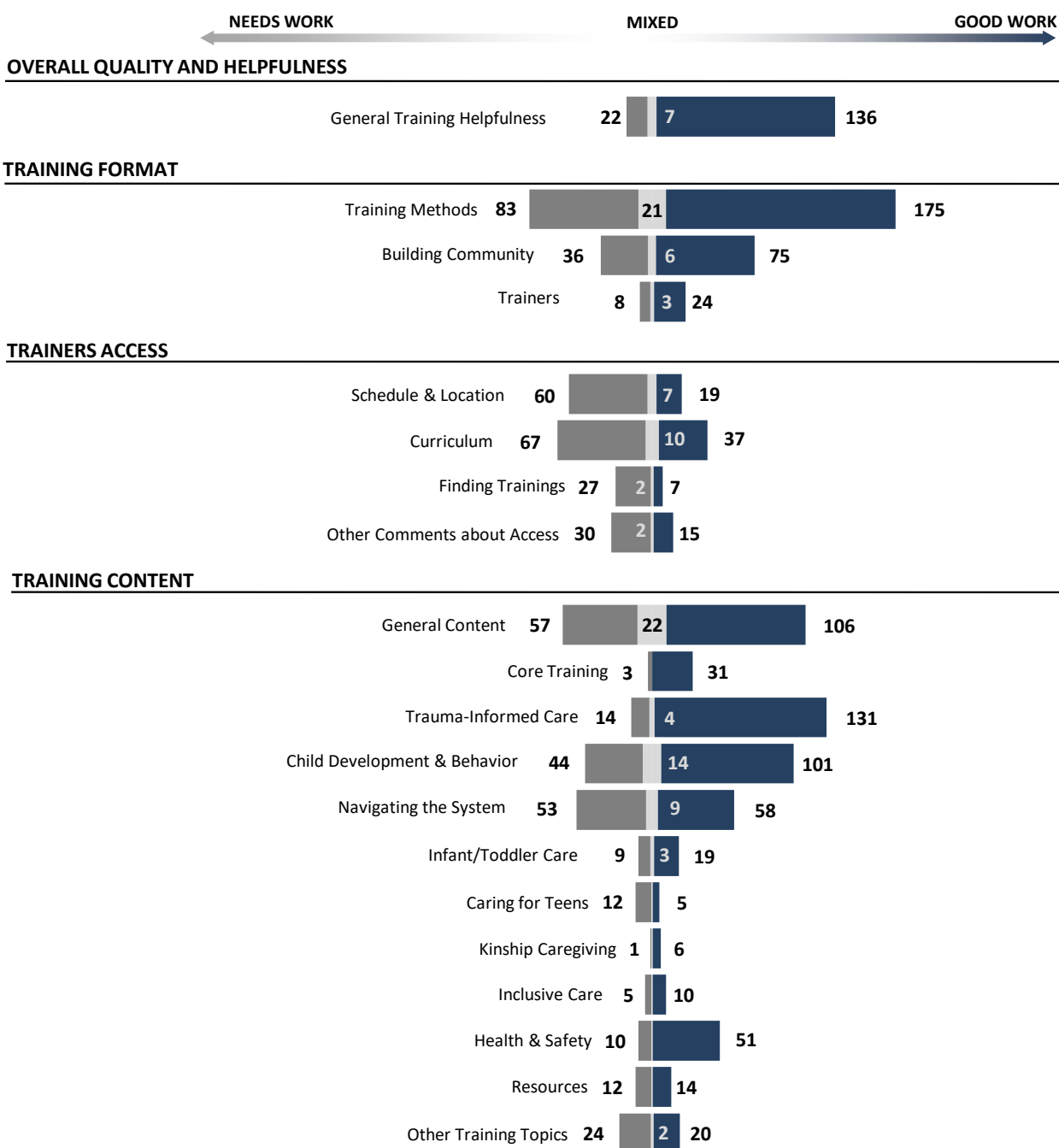
- What do they do well to support you?
- What could they do better to support you?



Responses to Open-ended Questions about Training

Questions about Training:

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



2024 Caregiver Demographics¹

		All Caregivers N=1,352		Foster Caregivers N=468		Kinship Caregivers N=884	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Household Income	Under \$10,000	40	3%	1	0%	39	5%
	\$10,000 to \$24,999	99	8%	7	2%	92	11%
	\$25,000 to \$49,999	199	15%	26	6%	173	20%
	\$50,000 to \$74,999	220	17%	68	15%	152	18%
	\$75,000 to \$99,999	186	14%	86	19%	100	12%
	\$100,000 to \$150,000	233	18%	95	21%	138	16%
	More than \$150,000	183	14%	115	26%	68	8%
	Don't know/refused	136	10%	50	11%	86	10%
	Total N for %	1,296	.	448	.	848	.
Caregiver Race or Ethnicity (WSRDAC/M)		#	%	#	%	#	%
	American Indian/Alaska Native	32	2%	3	1%	29	3%
	American Indian/Alaska Native, Multiracial	51	4%	12	3%	39	4%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	26	2%	4	1%	22	2%
	Black/African American	66	5%	16	3%	50	6%
	Black/African American, Multiracial	22	2%	7	2%	15	2%
	Hispanic/Latino	163	12%	39	9%	124	14%
	Multiracial, Other	11	1%	3	1%	8	1%
	White	849	63%	324	71%	525	59%
	Unknown Race	122	9%	50	11%	72	8%
	Total N for %	1342	.	458	.	884	.
Primary Caregiver Age		#	%	#	%	#	%
	Age 15-19	3	0%	0	0%	3	0%
	Age 20-29	102	8%	33	7%	69	8%
	Age 30-39	325	24%	155	34%	170	19%
	Age 40-49	422	31%	172	38%	250	28%
	Age 50-59	269	20%	56	12%	213	24%
	Age 60-69	161	12%	29	6%	132	15%
	Age 70-79	51	4%	12	3%	39	4%
	Age 80+	9	1%	1	0%	8	1%
	Total N for %	1,342	.	458	.	884	.
Primary Caregiver Gender		#	%	#	%	#	%
	Male	175	13%	61	13%	114	13%
	Female	1,155	86%	396	86%	759	86%
	Unknown	12	1%	1	0%	11	1%
	Total N for %	1,342	.	458	.	884	.

¹Household income and caregiver race or ethnicity were provided by the survey respondents. Other characteristics are from FamLink data provided by DCYF.

2024 Caregiver Demographics¹ (continued)

		#	%	#	%	#	%
Secondary Caregiver Age	Age 15-19	3	0%	0	0%	3	1%
	Age 20-29	80	9%	27	7%	53	10%
	Age 30-39	232	25%	116	31%	116	21%
	Age 40-49	301	32%	160	43%	141	25%
	Age 50-59	179	19%	45	12%	134	24%
	Age 60-69	99	11%	21	6%	78	14%
	Age 70-79	30	3%	4	1%	26	5%
	Age 80+	5	1%	1	0%	4	1%
	Total N for %	929	.	374	.	555	.
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Secondary Caregiver Gender	Male	745	56%	303	66%	442	50%
	Female	177	13%	69	15%	108	12%
	Unknown	420	31%	86	19%	334	38%
	Total N for %	1342	.	458	.	884	.
		#	%	#	%	#	%
DCYF Region	Region 1	220	16%	70	15%	150	17%
	Region 2	160	12%	43	9%	117	13%
	Region 3	204	15%	70	15%	134	15%
	Region 4	174	13%	70	15%	104	12%
	Region 5	223	17%	92	20%	131	15%
	Region 6	339	25%	113	25%	226	26%
	Statewide/No Region	22	2%	0	0%	22	2%
	Total N for %	1,342	.	458	.	884	.

¹Household income and caregiver race or ethnicity were provided by the survey respondents. Other characteristics are from FamLink data provided by DCYF.

2024 DCYF Caregiver Survey Report



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