FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Foster Home Quality Workgroup

LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2017

Department of Children and Families

Office of Child Welfare

November 15, 2017

Mike Carroll

Secretary

Rick Scott

Governor

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Background

A Foster Home Quality workgroup was established in June 2017 by the Department of Children and Families (Department) in accordance with HB 1121 to identify measures of foster home quality, review current efforts by Community-Based Care (CBC) Lead Agencies to enhance foster home quality, identify barriers to high-quality foster homes, and recommend strategies for assessing and increasing quality in foster homes.

HB 1121 further requires the submission of a legislative report encompassing the findings of the workgroup by November 15, 2017. In addition to the items required below, this report includes a description of other efforts underway which impact the recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement practices within the CBC systems of care.

Section 409.996(23)(d), Florida Statutes states the following:
"The department shall submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by November 15, 2017. The report shall, at a minimum:
  1. Describe the important dimensions of quality for foster homes;
  2. Describe the foster home quality enhancement efforts in the state, including, but not limited to, recruitment, retention, placement procedures, systems change, and quality measurement programs, and any positive or negative results;
  3. Identify barriers to the greater availability of high-quality foster homes;
  4. Discuss available research regarding high-quality foster homes; and
  5. Present a plan for developing and implementing strategies to increase the availability of high-quality foster homes. The strategies shall address important elements of quality, be based on available research, include both qualitative and quantitative measures of quality, integrate with the community-based care model, and be respectful of the privacy and needs of foster parents. The plan shall recommend possible instruments and measures and identify any changes to general law or rule necessary for implementation."

Approach

HB 1121 became law on July 1, 2017 (Chapter 2017-151, Laws of Florida).

In response to this legislation, the Department formed a workgroup comprised of the following representatives:
  - Department staff, including Licensing Specialists and Children's Legal Services
  - The Florida Institute for Child Welfare (FICW)
  - CBC Lead Agencies
  - Foster Parents
  - Foster Parent Organizations
  - Youth, current and former
  - Guardian ad Litem

- Providers
- Other Child-Placing Agencies

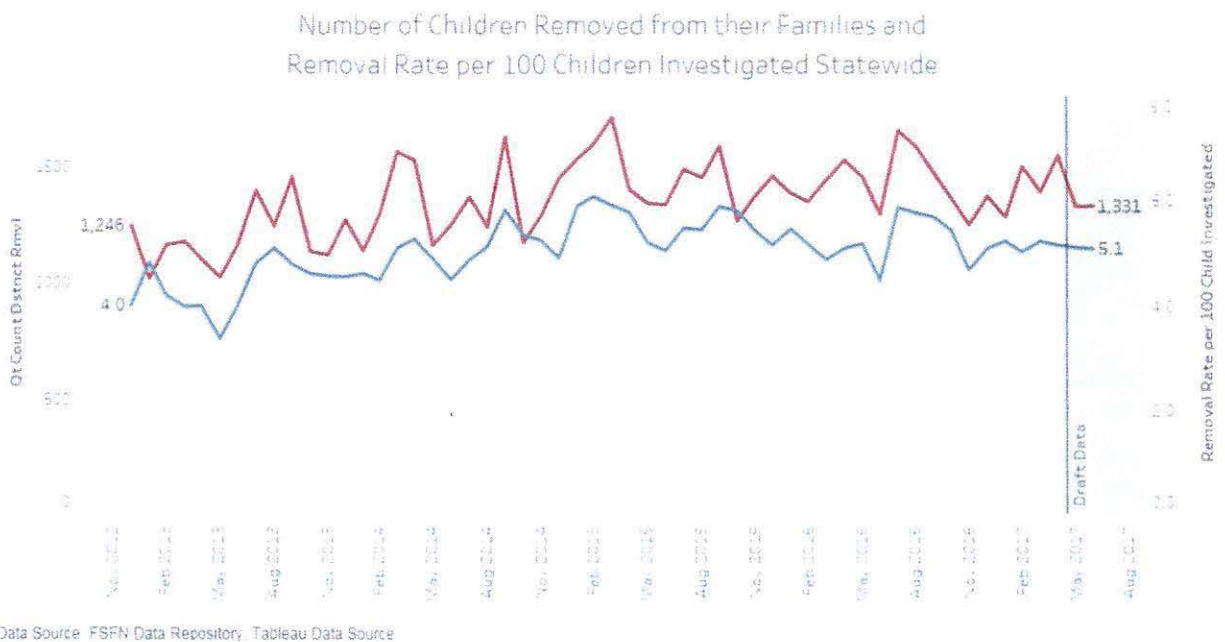A list of workgroup members can be found in **Appendix A**.

The workgroup first met, via conference call, on June 27, 2017. Three subgroups were formed, in addition to the efforts by the FICW as follows:

1. <u>Assessment of Current Quality Enhancement Efforts</u>. Developed a survey to determine foster home quality enhancement efforts by CBCs and their subcontractors, including positive and negative results, and covering the following topics:
   a. Recruitment and Retention;
   b. Placement Procedures;
   c. Quality Measurement Programs; and
   d. Other related Systems Changes.
2. <u>Measures of Foster Home Quality</u>. Tasked to identify the important dimensions of quality foster homes and recommend a means of assessing for quality to include both qualitative and quantitative measures.
3. <u>Youth Input</u>. This subgroup was created at the request of youth participants. Unfortunately, efforts to engage the youth members in subgroup activities were not successful.
4. <u>Research</u> by the FICW. Explored in-state and national research findings regarding high-quality foster homes to inform plan.

Members who did not join one of the subgroups remained involved in an "advisory council" manner. The Assessment of Current Quality Enhancement Efforts and Measures of Foster Home Quality subgroups conducted their work via conference calls and email. Recommendations were presented to the overarching workgroup via web-based meetings (a face to face meeting was planned but cancelled due to Hurricane Irma) during the week of September 18, 2017. The FICW contributed their survey response analysis and research findings.

Relevant Data

The number of children entering out-of-home care (OHC) and the type of OHC they are placed in has a significant impact on the array of placement resources needed within each CBC's system of care.

Number of Children Removed from their Families and
Removal Rate per 100 Children Investigated Statewide

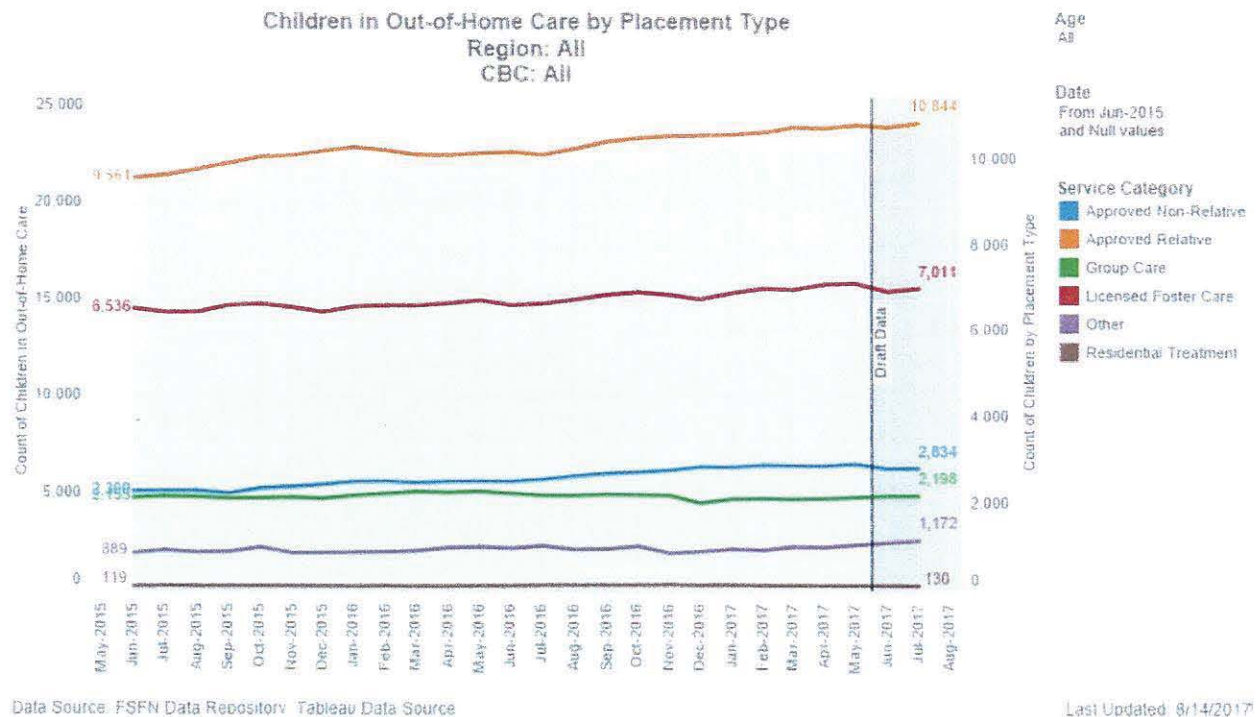Data Source: FSFN Data Repository; Tableau Data Source

There were 24,189 children in OHC on July 31, 2017, consistent with the upward trend in OHC observed since the middle of 2013. The trend for children receiving in-home services has remained relatively consistent for three years, with 11,783 children receiving in-home services on July 31, 2017.

Children Protected: In-Home vs. Out-of-Home Care

Data Source: FSFN Data Repository; Tableau Data Source
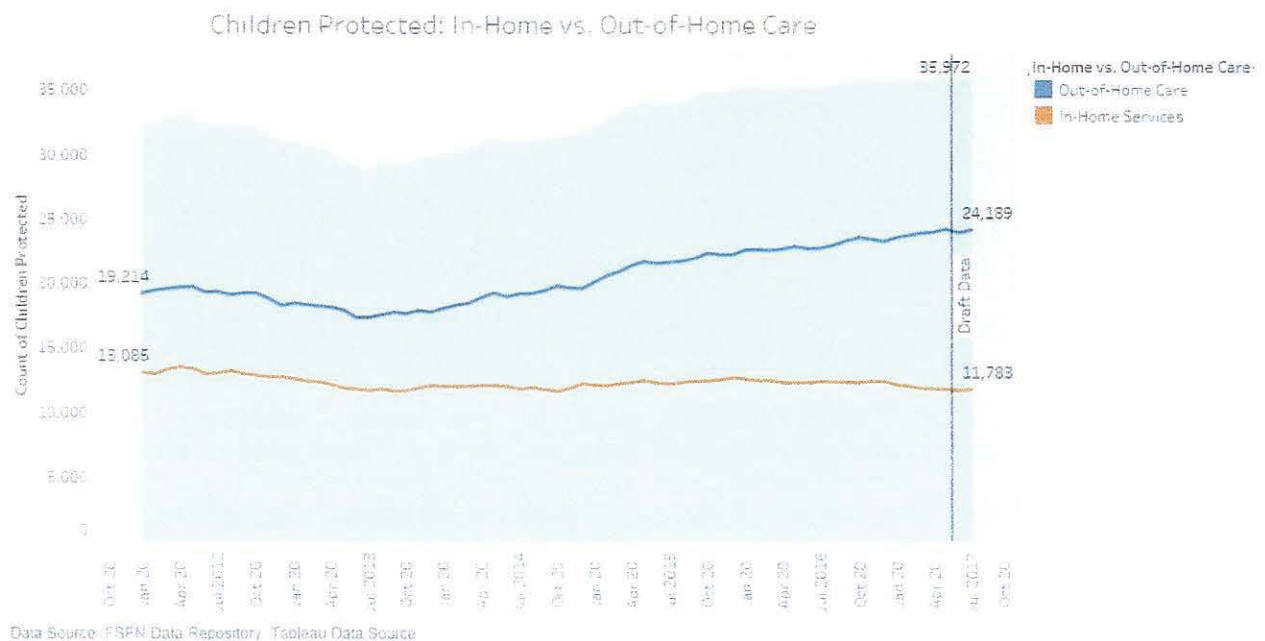
The Department and CBCs have emphasized use of relatives and non-relatives as placement resources for children in need of OHC placement. Programs such as non-

relative caregiver financial assistance have demonstrated increased use of this resource. Of those 24,189 children in OHC, 57 percent are placed with either relatives or non-relatives.

Children in Out-of-Home Care by Placement Type
Region: All
CBC: All

Age
All

Date
From Jun-2015 and Null values

Service Category
- Approved Non-Relative
- Approved Relative
- Group Care
- Licensed Foster Care
- Other
- Residential Treatment

Data Source: FSFN Data Repository Tableau Data Source
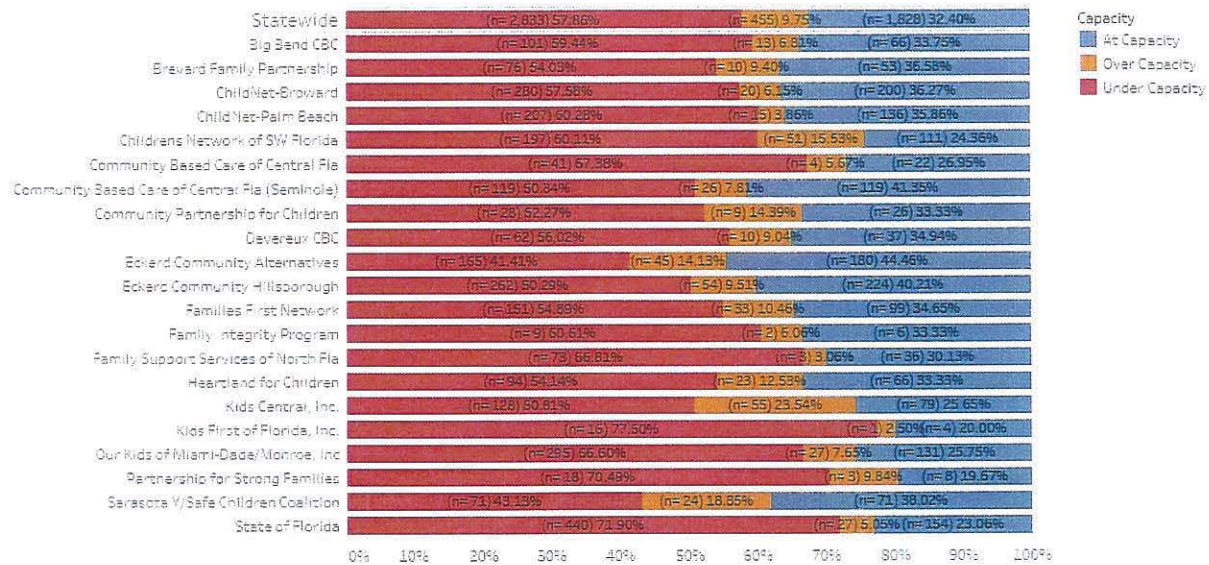
Last Updated: 8/14/2017

This graphic depicts placement types and the trend of children placed in licensed foster homes from July 2015 through June 2017; two state fiscal years. While there has been an increase in the number of children placed in all placement types to include licensed foster homes, there is concern that these numbers do not adequately meet the needs of the numbers of children entering OHC – a theme evident in the survey responses included in this report. In addition, the numbers reflective of the licensed foster home count are all licensed foster homes and not necessarily homes the CBCs consider to be of high-quality.

The chart on the next page shows the system of care had 5,238 licensed foster homes as of September 2017, with therapeutic foster homes comprising about ten percent.

Foster Home Status
Region: All
CBC: All

Data Source: OCWDRU Report #1090

Last Updated: 10/10/2017
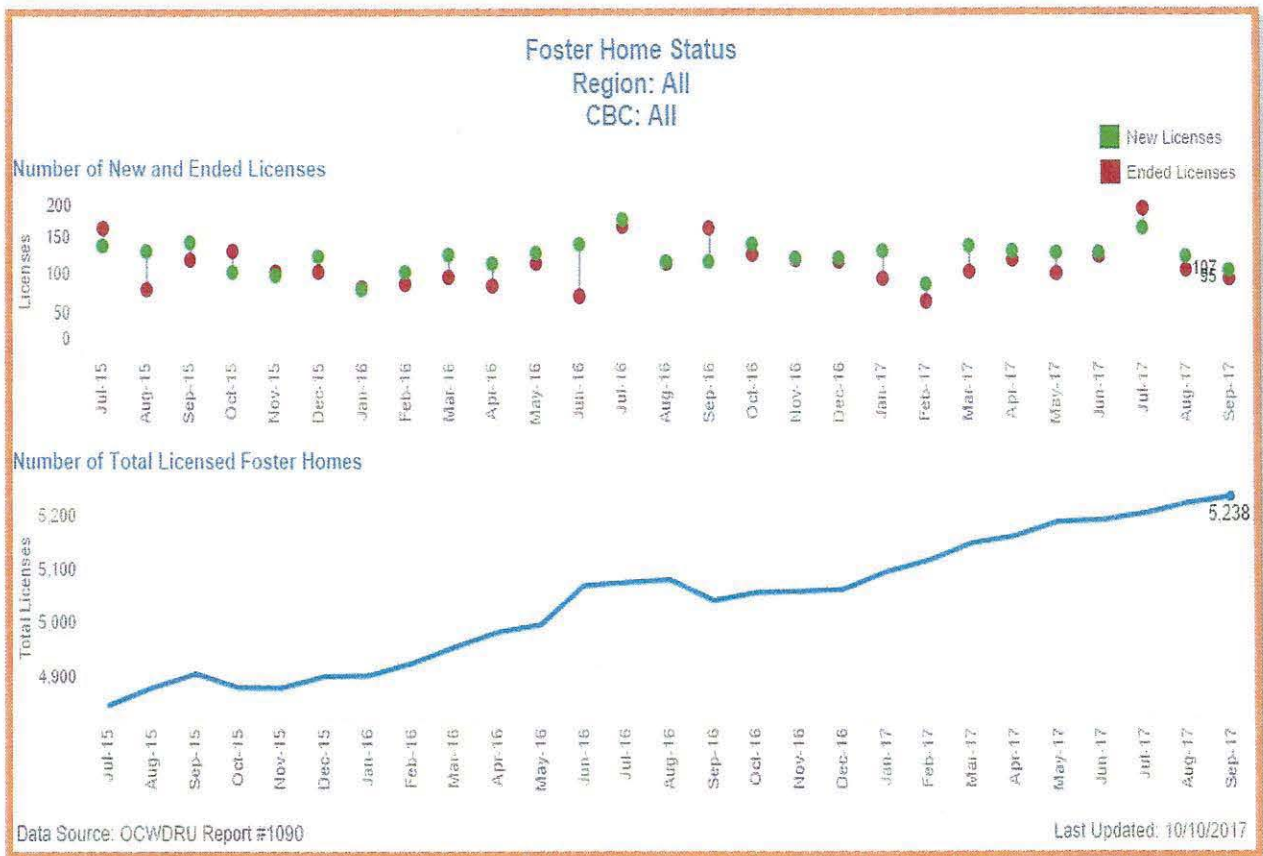
The next set of charts depict foster home capacity by count and percentage of homes that are at capacity, under capacity, or over capacity. CBCs report that many homes in the under capacity category are homes that are on hold for administrative action or due to a desire to take a break or homes that meet minimum licensing standards but not the CBC's own quality standards.

Number of Foster Care Providers that are Over, Under, or At Capacity as of July 31, 2017
("n=" represents the number of providers)

Provider	Under Capacity	Over Capacity	At Capacity
Statewide	(n= 2,833) 57.86%	(n= 455) 9.75%	(n= 1,828) 32.40%
Big Bend CBC	(n= 101) 59.44%	(n= 13) 6.81%	(n= 66) 33.75%
Brevard Family Partnership	(n= 76) 54.03%	(n= 10) 9.40%	(n= 53) 36.58%
ChildNet-Broward	(n= 280) 57.58%	(n= 20) 6.15%	(n= 200) 36.27%
ChildNet-Palm Beach	(n= 207) 60.28%	(n= 15) 3.86%	(n= 136) 35.86%
Childrens Network of SW Florida	(n= 197) 60.11%	(n= 51) 15.53%	(n= 111) 24.36%
Community Based Care of Central Fla	(n= 41) 67.38%	(n= 4) 5.67%	(n= 22) 26.95%
Community Based Care of Central Fla (Seminole)	(n= 119) 50.84%	(n= 26) 7.81%	(n= 119) 41.35%
Community Partnership for Children	(n= 28) 52.27%	(n= 9) 14.39%	(n= 26) 33.33%
Devereux CBC	(n= 62) 56.02%	(n= 10) 9.04%	(n= 37) 34.94%
Eckerd Community Alternatives	(n= 165) 41.41%	(n= 45) 14.13%	(n= 180) 44.46%
Eckerd Community Hillsborough	(n= 262) 50.29%	(n= 54) 9.51%	(n= 224) 40.21%
Families First Network	(n= 151) 54.89%	(n= 33) 10.46%	(n= 99) 34.65%
Family Integrity Program	(n= 9) 60.61%	(n= 2) 6.06%	(n= 6) 33.33%
Family Support Services of North Fla	(n= 73) 66.81%	(n= 3) 3.06%	(n= 36) 30.13%
Heartland for Children	(n= 94) 54.14%	(n= 23) 12.53%	(n= 66) 33.33%
Kids Central, Inc.	(n= 128) 50.81%	(n= 55) 23.54%	(n= 79) 25.65%
Kids First of Florida, Inc.	(n= 16) 77.50%	(n= 1) 2.50%	(n= 4) 20.00%
Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc	(n= 285) 66.60%	(n= 27) 7.65%	(n= 131) 25.75%
Partnership for Strong Families	(n= 18) 70.49%	(n= 9) 9.84%	(n= 8) 19.67%
Sarasota Y/Safe Children Coalition	(n= 71) 49.13%	(n= 24) 18.85%	(n= 71) 38.02%
State of Florida	(n= 440) 71.90%	(n= 27) 5.05%	(n= 354) 23.06%

Capacity
- At Capacity
- Over Capacity
- Under Capacity

Source: OCWDRU Ad Hoc Request #1669 as of July 31, 2017

Number of Foster Care Providers That are At, Over, or Under Capacity			
	7/20/2016	2/28/2017	7/31/2017
Over	368	425	455
Under	3339	2753	2833
At	1406	1880	1828
Total	5113	5058	5116

Source: OCWDRU Ad Hoc Request #1669, 3 point-in-time extracts

Percent of Foster Care Providers That are At, Over, or Under Capacity			
	7/20/2016	2/28/2017	7/31/2017
Over	7.2%	8.4%	8.9%
Under	65.3%	54.4%	55.4%
At	27.5%	37.2%	35.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: OCWDRU Ad Hoc Request #1669, 3 point-in-time extracts

Foster Care Providers with No Youth Placed			
	7/20/2016	2/28/2017	7/31/2017
Count	1713	1593	1642
Percent	33.5%	31.5%	32.1%

Source: OCWDRU Ad Hoc Request #1669, 3 point-in-time extracts

Note that the full report of Key Indicators is available at:
http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/qa/cwkeyindicator/KI_Monthly_Report_Augus_2017_Final.pdf.

Assessment of Current Quality Enhancement Efforts

The Assessment of Current Quality Enhancement Efforts subgroup was co-chaired by a CBC representative and a foster parent. In partnership with the FICW, this group developed a survey instrument to be completed by CBCs, Case Management

Organizations, Foster Parents, youth, and other key stakeholders as it was deemed to be the most effective approach for information collection in a short period of time. The survey was designed to gather input regarding:

- Efforts to enhance foster home quality;
- Recruitment practices;
- Licensing practices;
- Retention and support efforts;
- Placement practices; and
- Barriers.

These topic areas were chosen for inclusion based upon the legislative requirement that they be addressed. However, workgroup participants agreed that these key components of a system of care are essential to effectively meeting the needs of children placed into licensed OHC. Recruitment to placement is a complex series of activities and all pieces need to be working well for success.

One survey instrument was administered. The majority of questions were administered to all respondents allowing for comparison of responses between groups. However, a few of the questions were varied to cater to a specific audience based on a respondent's type. The workgroup received 1,462 completed survey responses, of which 51% were foster parents, as depicted in the graphic below. The results included a mix of quantitative and qualitative data and samples are sized sufficiently to allow for comparative analysis.

Survey Participants (n = 1462)

Roles

- CBC — 16%
- Licensing — 10%
- Case Management — 13%
- Foster Parents — 51%
- Foster Youth — 1%
- Other — 9%
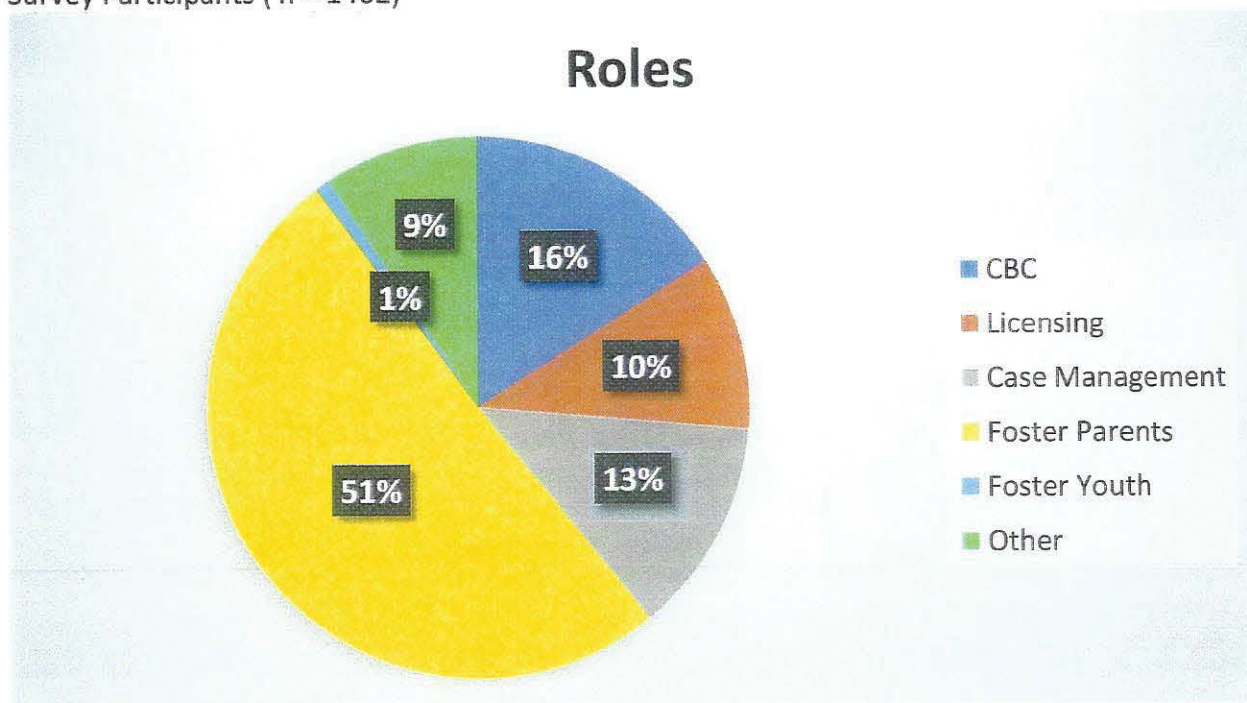
The complete bank of survey questions can be found in **Appendix B** and a full report of the survey responses, prepared by the FICW, can be found in **Appendix C**. The Discussion and Recommendation section has been taken from the FICW's report and is included below in the section titled Research and Survey Analysis. While responses from the survey are very informative, the level of detail anticipated related to specific CBC practices may be lacking. Additional survey analysis is still needed; but, also note that there are several related efforts underway that are expected to accomplish the same goals. These efforts are described below in the section titled Related Efforts.

Important Dimensions of Quality Foster Homes

The Measures of Foster Home Quality subgroup was also co-chaired by a CBC representative and a foster parent. This group recognized the challenge before them to both increase high-quality foster homes and be mindful of the complexities involved in the foster care system. Their purpose was defined as follows:

Identify the important dimensions of quality foster homes and recommend a means of assessing for quality to include both qualitative and quantitative measures.

This group was tasked with three key outcomes:
1. Define a quality foster home;
2. Make recommendations for how to assess quality; and
3. Identify barriers and solutions to implementation of recommendations.

In addition to utilizing their own experience, research, and survey results, this group developed a matrix to compare current standards articulated in Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code, which includes the Partnership Plan originally developed by the Quality Parenting Initiative. This exercise resulted in the realization that Florida has already articulated the standards for quality foster homes but had not clearly connected these expectations to licensing standards in Chapter 65C-13, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). Current standards used in practice mirror a minimum set of expectations and can be seen on the Licensing Checklist in **Appendix D**.

From this comparison activity, the subgroup developed a list of standards or expectations for quality foster homes that are representative of commonly held expectations but that go beyond the current minimum standards associated with licensing. These standards still need to be defined in a manner that will allow for objective assessment in a standardized manner and then be incorporated into new tools for use by licensing staff.

Quality Foster Home Standards

- Demonstrate commitment to meeting the child's physical, emotional, developmental, and social needs.

- Participate as a team member by attending court hearings, team meetings, staffings, and similar meetings.
- Openly communicate all issues and child related information in a timely manner with partners, remaining focused on what is in the best interest of the child and respectful of confidentiality standards.
- Provide a clean home in good repair and free from health and safety hazards.
- Respect the child's religion, culture, ethnicity, and special needs.
- Complete necessary training to improve skills and help meet the child's needs, including developing an understanding of complex trauma and trauma triggers.
- Respect and support a child's ties to the biological family.
- Mentor biological parents, when the plan is reunification and in partnership with agency staff, to improve the ability of parents to care for and protect their children and provide continuity for the child.
- Maintain records, awards, and photographs for the child and shares these when the child moves.
- Actively participate in meeting the child's needs for medical, dental, and behavioral health care.
- Support the child's educational success by participating in school related activities, extracurricular activities, helping with homework, teacher-parent meetings, and similar activities.
- Support the child in learning and mastering independent living skills.
- Support the child in age-appropriate activities, such as sleepovers, obtaining a driver license, and extracurricular activities.
- Transport children or arranges for transportation for visitations, appointments, school, and other activities.
- Use positive discipline and methods that are not severe, humiliating, or frightening. Corporal or physical punishment is never used.
- Is free of a criminal history that pose a risk to any child placed.
- Is in compliance with all statutory requirements of licensed foster parents.

These standards provide a method to define what a quality foster home shall or shall not do. A new subgroup has been formed to address implementation of these expectations into licensing standards. The Implementation of Quality Expectations Subgroup held their initial meeting in October 2017 and is tasked to:

- Define the quality expectations established by the Measures Subgroup and accepted by the Foster Home Quality Workgroup;
- Explore value of additional youth input;
- Develop licensing tools for implementation of these standards;

- Articulate a caregiver development plan process (formerly referred to as a corrective action plan); and
- Recommend rule changes to Chapter 65C-13, F.A.C. for implementation.

Although implementation of these standards will both standardize assessment and empower CBC Lead Agencies to only license and re-license high-quality foster homes as defined by these terms, the question of what characteristics are found amongst high-quality foster parents - and how to identify a high-quality foster parent – remains unanswered at this time. The research findings assembled by the FICW indicate that that there is a benefit to assessing prospective foster parents for their potential to be a high-quality foster parent and that there may be a set of characteristics or parenting attitudes that could guide this decision making. However, there are no empirical findings to inform how to go about doing this. There is a need for further study of these questions.

Research Findings and Survey Analysis

As stated before, the complete literature review and survey analysis completed by the FICW can be found in **Appendix C**. Included here are a few excerpts from the report and the full section titled Discussion and Recommendations.

> Ahn, et al. (2017) conducted a study to contribute to developing successful recruitment and retention policies and practices for foster parents. They reported that consistent with current knowledge, the majority of exited foster parents left due to a life situation change or moving followed by problems or lack of support from the agency. They recommend by assessing the resource needs of incoming foster parents and addressing those problems at the outset, agencies, in turn, may be able to identify at the beginning which families are more likely to quit early and thus turn them away from becoming foster parents. This could potentially save resources, time, and money that could be better utilized elsewhere, leading to improved retention.
>
> The key findings of the report on recruitment are messaging and branding, targeted versus general recruitment, child-specific recruitment, and foster parents as recruiters. The key findings on improving infrastructure are encouraging and welcoming prospective parents, decreasing response time, addressing barriers to facilitate licensing and other requirement, streamlining process and reducing paperwork, and developing performance indicators to measure success. The key findings for successful retention are being available and responsive, organized peer support, respite care, training, and tokens of appreciation. The Foundation's most important finding was that it is imperative that foster parents are engaged, developed, and feel supported by the respective child welfare agency. Additionally, the path of a successful foster parent program is not linear, but rather operates in a cyclical fashion as each stage of the process has either positive or negative influences on each of the successive stages.

Berrick, et al. (2011) conducted a study to understand the characteristics of high-quality foster parents to inform a marketing strategy and create a recruiting campaign. They report that the marriage of child welfare and business has yielded a new brand that taps into the fundamental characteristics that are featured in high-quality care. They reported that focus group participants routinely indicated that they had considered becoming foster parents for years, sometimes decades, before they made arrangements to get licensed. They identify that the seemingly divergent fields of marketing and child welfare can produce remarkable results if done correctly.

Rehnquist (2002) issued a report in her capacity as United States Inspector General titled, *Recruiting Foster Parents*. The report was targeted in identifying individual state's efforts to recruit foster care families. A list of recruitment methods was generated and are as follows:

1. Target recruitment efforts on parents for children who are the most difficult to place in foster care by tailoring recruitment campaigns to recruit families willing and able to care for these children.
2. Offer incentives to foster parents for successfully recruiting other foster families.
3. Use foster parents as facilitators during pre-service foster parent training classes.
4. Work collaboratively with foster care agencies to develop innovative recruitment methods.
5. Develop partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to heighten awareness of foster care needs and foster parenting opportunities.
6. Determine future foster care trends and needs and link to targeted recruitment strategies.
7. Determine recruitment goals necessary to meet the current and future needs of children in foster care.
8. Develop methods to assess the effectiveness of recruitment efforts.
9. Strive to sustain recruitment campaign efforts throughout the year.
10. Allow foster care agencies to recruit outside of their communities to maintain a steady influx of new prospective foster families.
11. Examine state licensing standards to identify barriers to recruitment.
12. Develop or enhance the pre-screening process of prospective foster parents.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (from the FICW's report found in Appendix C)

Recruitment

Only 42 percent of respondents reported using formal assessments to develop targeted recruitment practices to find high-quality foster families. The majority of respondents did not share personal stories of recruitment efforts. Rather, they indicated that they were aware of local advertising and a very haphazard response to those who responded to

recruitment campaigns. A need was voiced for a quicker response to interested applicants, a more streamlined application process, and less lag time between initial interest and actual fostering.

Approximately one-third (35.5%) of respondents identified "referrals from other foster parents" as a successful tool for recruiting foster parents, followed by "referral by faith leaders" (17%). Overall, respondents reported that the opinions and experiences of foster parents had the greatest influence on their decision to foster. Likewise, many identified faith communities as being influential in their decision to become foster parents.

Recommendations:

Given that research shows (Berrick, et al., 2011) that targeted recruitment is an important aspect of identifying quality foster families, it is recommended that Florida develop formal tools that are routinely used in the marketing and recruitment of high-quality foster homes.

Some recruitment efforts should continue to be targeted to certain groups. Research suggests that recruiting people who are in academic programs such as, health science, psychology, and social work could enhance the caliber of foster care and retention.

<u>Retention</u>

Respondents noted that foster home retention was most influenced by the following three factors: frequency of communication between child welfare staff and foster parents (17.5%), the way transition plans are developed (13.3%), and the manner in which home visits are scheduled (11.9%). Having the least influence on retention was foster parent appreciation events (5.1%). When asked to rate the following based on their impact on retention of foster families, participants responded that case managers and licensing staff had the greatest impact, although other foster parents were identified as having a major role in retention in three categories from extremely high to sufficient. As with recruitment, other foster parents are key supports in the function of retention.

When asked "How does your Community-Based Care Lead Agency or licensing agency support the retention of foster parents?" participants consistently rated communication between agency and foster family as essential to successful retention. Conversely, participants identified the lack of communication as a prime contributor to high foster family turnover. Lastly, respondents were asked what services, partnerships, or organizations were designed specifically to support foster parents? Foster and Adoptive Families Associations were cited most frequently; overall, however, the responses were limited in scope and suggest there may be a paucity of diverse methods of support for foster families.

The question, "What barriers do you face to effective retention?" met with diverse responses. Some focused on the need for better communication between CBCs and foster parents and feeling left out of the child welfare decision-making process. Foster parents become attached to the children who are often in their care for years and experience issues of loss that ultimately affects retention. Unresolved grief is indicative

indicative of: high worker turnover. In addition, the behaviors displayed by traumatized children can be difficult to manage and the expectations seem unrealistic that each family should be able to intervene effectively on behalf of the traumatized child without specialized training and timely ongoing support.

Recommendation:

A significant amount of respondents reported the need for better communication between agencies and foster parents and the need for more support from agencies. Research also confirms this need for support and communication (Geiger et al., 2013, 2017; Randle et al., 2017); therefore, it is recommended that this particular retention inhibitor be researched in a targeted manner so that practical solutions can be implemented.

<u>Licensing</u>

Participants were asked to rate the communication between foster families and the licensing agency on helpfulness, high-quality, professionalism, supportiveness, and openness/transparency. Approximately 25% of respondents found the communication helpful and supportive respectively. Whereas, only 6.3% found communication to be open/transparent. The lack of transparent communication is identified again when participants are asked about barriers to retention. The need for open communication about the requirements of the child(ren) being placed in the home appears to be a key component in creating and maintaining foster parent satisfaction.

All respondents were asked to identify efforts made to only license quality foster homes. The responses indicate the lack of a definition for what is meant by "quality foster home." For the licensing agencies, most of the comments reflect current recruitment and training practices rather than identifying innovative efforts being made to determine those who may be or become *quality* foster parents. The statement that "It is hard to know if the home is a 'quality home' until a client is placed" is indicative of the lack of a comprehensive (and required) assessment tool being used to identify high-quality homes or those who display characteristics of highly effective parenting. One respondent noted that everyone who meets the minimum standards is eligible to become a foster parent thus complicating the effort to recruit only high-quality homes. There may be uncertainty on behalf of licensing staff if the standards need to be raised for all potential homes or if there is meant to be tiers of quality.

Recommendation:

DCF should utilize the data from this survey and research review to create a clear definition of "quality home," such that child welfare agencies could begin to partner with stakeholders on establishing a level of quality in the licensing process.

Assessment of Quality

Regarding quality, respondents were asked if, in their experience, quality standards for foster homes exceed statutes and/or rules. Most respondents stated that they agreed with this statement, neither agreed nor disagreed, or they did not know. The remaining selected disagree and fewer selected strongly agree or strongly disagree. The same held true for all of following statements: preservice training prepares foster parents for placement, trauma training is regularly provided to foster parents, trauma training is regularly provided to relative caregivers, trauma training is regularly provided to staff, and foster parents are regularly involved with foster parent support groups. Many selected that they could not answer the question or did not know. It may be that the data was analyzed in the aggregate and did not distinguish among the roles of the respondents.

Participants were asked what expectations should be placed on high-quality foster homes. There were many responses to this question. The majority stated that a clean and safe home, and that loving the foster child and treating him or her as one's own, were essential to quality. Likewise, the foster parents' involvement with the child welfare team, providing transportation, and understanding the impact of trauma on a child's behavior were all hallmarks of a high-quality foster home. Because reunification is generally the case plan goal, foster parents should work well with the biological caregivers. One comment, "All our foster homes are licensed as high-quality foster homes as they meet all the standards for initial licensure. We expect all foster homes to equally be responsible in all fostering matters and to always uphold the highest levels of commitment and safety," reflected a general confusion over the term "high-quality" foster homes. Is a foster parent high-quality if they meet the statutes/rules or is there an additional dimension required to be designated as such?

There was limited response to the question "How is customer service with foster parents emphasized in your system of care?" Nevertheless, the overall sentiment is that customer service is lacking. What is meant by customer service is not clearly defined but given that it may represent good communication, support, and responsiveness to foster parents then this issue should be explored further. Understanding what good customer service would look like to foster parents could help to clarify some of the barriers to retention and improve client relations.

The majority of respondents (64%) believe that quality standards for foster homes are clearly defined. When asked to describe the quality standards the picture becomes less clear. The answers generally reflect the belief that the licensing rules and standards of practice define quality. The question was followed up by asking respondents what expectations *should* be placed on high-quality foster homes? The responses indicate that a safe and loving home is paramount to quality. Advocacy for the child in care is also identified as a hallmark of quality. There was some concern mentioned over what are considered standards that are too stringent and keep qualified foster parents out of the system while children are returned to less than satisfactory biological families. Financial stability of the foster home was also identified as a component of quality.

Twenty-three characteristics were listed as potential identifiers for high-quality homes. Respondents were asked to select as many as apply. The results were spread out fairly evenly across the choices. Only one characteristic, "family/friend support structure nearby," garnered more than 10 percent of the selections, followed by "employment stability" (9.92%). Items that were seen as having little effect on quality included "Race" (.31%), "Artistic" (.74%), "Is a booster/volunteer for local school/sports team," (.74%) and "Sexual orientation" (.81%). Although faith communities were often mentioned in the context of recruitment, as an identifier of high-quality, "church membership" (2.52%) and "attends church at least monthly (1.74%) were seen as poor indicators of high-quality homes. The write-in option for "other" echoed earlier results that indicated the capacity for love and nurturance should be the prime identifiers of a high-quality home.

Recommendations:

When there is a clear and concise definition of the state of Florida's quality standard for foster parents, assessment tools should be created, validated, and incorporated into the licensing process.

There should be effort in creating assessment tools that are not cumbersome, so that there is no extra burden on a process that is already labor intensive and time sensitive.

Barriers to Quality

Respondents were asked for their opinion on several barriers to high-quality care. When asked, "What barriers do you face to effective recruitment?" the most common responses were a lack of personnel, finances, and time. The lack of quality case managers was also cited. Without sufficient financing, staff feel they cannot attend recruitment opportunities or, if they do, their tables are not competitive with other agencies presentations. Recruitment staff feel stymied over introducing newer recruitment strategies like social media since there are strict protocol and bureaucratic hurdles for staff who want to post on behalf of the agency. Some respondents noted a lack of centralization for people who have an interest in fostering. They often go to an agency website that offers no means of direct contact or clear definition of the fostering process. It can be confusing to viewers and they may quickly lose interest in the project (recruitment of high-quality care). Lastly, fostering has a bad reputation due to unhappy foster parents in the CBC system. This is especially troubling because foster parents have been identified as highly influential recruiters.

Respondents were asked, "What barriers do you face to effective licensing?" The responses indicate a prior theme of a recruiting process that is slow to respond to interested parties and too few homes applying to become foster parents. At times, the standards make it difficult to license a home where there are financial barriers or families request higher compensation. Potential foster parents may be unwilling to provide essential services such as transportation to appointments and visitations. Unrealistic timeframes on the part of interested parents makes them lose interest before completing all of steps in licensing process.

Respondents were asked, "What barriers do you face to effective placement?" The most frequently cited barrier was the lack of available foster homes. This results in children being placed in homes with vacancies rather than in homes where the children's needs are matched to foster parents' strengths. Foster youth unanimously responded, "extremely low," to the question "There are enough homes in your area to meet the needs of children... Ages 12-18." This corresponds to the adults in the survey who noted a need for homes willing to foster teens and infants.

Many responses were given to this question, "To the best of your knowledge, what are the top three reasons for foster home closures in the last year?" The most salient (approximately 50%) were foster home closures due to adoption and lack of support/communication/respect from the CBC. Other features included families whose expectations were not met, child behaviors, burnout, and personal reasons such as illness or retirement. Although foster-to-adopt may have been a case plan goal and hence a positive outcome, the other issues raised cause concern. Clearly, CBCs must address communication and support between case managers and foster parents. This may help to alleviate other reasons for closure such as burnout, feeling overwhelmed, and difficulty managing challenging behaviors.

Recommendations:

The foster care process and licensing procedures should be clearly articulated and easily navigated on the Department's website.

Foster parent "mentors" or "peer supports" (fellow foster parents) should be formally utilized in order to fill in the support gaps for newer foster parents or long-term foster parents who need additional support (Rhodes, et al., 2017).

Related Efforts

1. Contract Oversight Unit and Monitoring of Community Based Care Lead Agencies

Beginning in July 2016, the Contracted Client Services office within the Department began to re-focus the way in which CBCs are monitored, moving from a compliance-based monitoring to a system analysis. Each CBC will be monitored every year, with an alternating schedule of on-site monitoring and desk reviews.

On-site monitoring is conducted by a team led by two representatives from the CBC Contract Oversight Unit (COU) and supported by two representatives from the Department and two representatives from peer CBCs. Prior to the on-site monitoring, the COU members will conduct an analysis of the CBC's performance and quality measures, as well as provide a summary of the CBC and the community they serve. Once the team is on-site, they will conduct interviews with CBC and Case Management Organizations staff, as well as child protective investigators, foster parents and Children's Legal Services to gather information in the seven key elements:

- Leadership and Governance
- Quality Management and Performance
- Workforce Management
- Placement Resources and Processes
- Child Welfare Practice
- Partnership Relations
- Community Relationships

The results of both on-site and desk reviews will be identification of areas that need critical action to improve and identification of other areas that can benefit from targeted improvement efforts (see **Appendix E** for monitoring schedule). The following topic areas, under Placement Process, are particularly relevant to the efforts of the Foster Home Quality Workgroup as they identify best practices related to foster home recruitment, retention, licensing, and placement practices. The below sections describe what is monitored under each area.

Family Foster Home Recruitment

The CBC has a Family Foster Home Recruitment Plan or sets expectations and monitors results if the activity is sub-contacted. This Plan establishes local targets to meet placement needs based upon segmented data with consideration given to:

- Special needs children (therapeutic, behaviorally challenged, developmentally delayed);
- Youth dually served by Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), or Behavioral Health Programs;
- Teens;
- Children who have experienced Commercial Sexual Exploitation or Human Trafficking;
- Children who meet criteria for Medical Foster Care;
- Sibling groups; and
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) youth.

The CBC has a cooperative agreement with agencies which share responsibilities for recruitment such as Children's Medical Services (CMS).

The CBC has, or if sub-contracted sets expectations for, an efficient customer friendly licensing process.

The CBC has a method to analyze success of recruitment efforts and develops enhancements or if sub-contracted sets expectations for enhancements to be developed based upon analysis.

Family Foster Home Retention Efforts

The CBC's retention efforts, either through direct work and support or by setting expectations of applicable sub-contracted providers, include:

- Annual analysis of family foster home retention;
- A process to routinely obtain feedback from foster parents;
- Use of data and information gathered from foster parents to develop plans focused on retention;
- A standardized escalation process for foster parents to channel complaints, concerns, or grievances with a focus on retention;
- Specific activities that support the culture of foster parent inclusiveness and partnership;
- Demonstration of appreciation of foster parents by recognizing foster parents and providing enrichment opportunities;
- Identification and communication to foster parents regarding resources that are available to support and meet the needs of children of all ages;
- Strategies to support foster parents regarding Medicaid eligibility/transfer, child care referrals, WIC referrals, and school enrollment; and
- Development of effective supports for foster parents.

Placement Process

The CBC has, or if service is sub-contracted sets, expectations for a process to match children at each placement based on currently available information which includes:

- Identification of best placement;
- Assessment of the level of care needed based upon available information;
- Determination of supports for the child and placement provider, if needed;
- A process to assess whether the placement is appropriate and what supports are needed for the child and placement provider;
- Training on CFOP 170-11 regarding the Child Placement Agreement and care precautions and behavior management plans for placement and case management staff; and
- A process to monitor the application of CFOP 170-11 and associated agreements/plans.

The CBC has, or if service is sub-contracted sets, expectations for a process or strategy to stabilize placements when issues are identified.

The CBC evaluates, or if service is sub-contracted sets, expectations to evaluate placement moves with a trauma informed lens.

2. Service Array Priority of Effort

The Department has established, as one of its priority of efforts (POE), a workgroup to address the service array needs for children served by the child welfare system. The placement continuum is considered a service and is being addressed through a subgroup. Key features of an adequate placement continuum includes the recruitment and retention of needed foster families. The Service Array POE includes the following steps:

1. Convene expert workgroups. The Office of Child Welfare will establish a workgroup to include CBCs and community stakeholders to inform the assessment and expansion of treatment and well-being services for children, and to enhance the availability of evidence-based and promising practices services within the service array continuum that will be supported by Casey Family Programs.
2. Complete literature and secondary research review. The Department will work with Casey Family Programs, a Harvard Fellow, CBCs, and other experts to:
   a. Identify the characteristics of children in the child welfare system by creating case profiles (groups of children by characteristics); and
   b. Identify the evidence-based or promising/research based services that are responsive to the needs of the case profiles and summarize the key components of those services.
3. Complete the gap analysis. The workgroup will develop an assessment to evaluate current CBCs' treatment and well-being services for children, including the placement array.

3. Placement Assessment Workgroup

In response to s. 39.523, F.S., the Office of Child Welfare will work with the CBCs on implementation of the new requirements related to the comprehensive assessment of children entering OHC as part of the placement process and on updating the website with requested data elements. This effort will be closely tied to the Placement Continuum Subgroup of the Service Array POE and, because it is related to effective placement matching, is expected to impact the entire foster home management process of recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement.

Although the survey responses did not provide the anticipated detail on current CBC practices, the data elements required in response to this new legislation will. The following items are required to be posted on the Department's website and updated January 1 and July 1 of each year:

(a) The number of children placed with relatives and nonrelatives, in family foster homes, and in residential group care.

(b) An inventory of available services that are necessary to maintain children in the least restrictive setting that meets the needs of the child and a plan for filling any identified gap in those services.

(c) The number of children who were placed based upon the assessment required in s. 39.523(2), F.S.

(d) An inventory of existing placements for children by type and by CBC.

(e) The strategies being used by CBCs to recruit, train, and support an adequate number of families to provide home-based family care.

4. FCC Strategic Initiatives

The Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) is comprised of membership that includes CBCs and providers from across the state. In partnership with the Department, they have constructed a strategic plan inclusive of goals and activities for the next three years. Some of these activities align well with the efforts and recommendations of the Foster Home Quality Workgroup. Since only the strategies that align well with the workgroup are included, numbering may not be consistent as the same numbering in the strategic plan has been maintained in this report.

Strategic Initiative 1: Effective Service Provision to Children and Parents / Relatives / Caregivers.
Objective 1: Develop a full array of services for children in the child welfare system and assure adequate capacity. This objective is compatible with the Service Array POE described above.

Strategic Initiative 2: Adequate Array of Placement Resources. This strategic initiative has two objectives related to improving the foster home management system.
Objective 1: Science of recruiting (location/ mix/ demographics).

Objective one of both Strategic Initiatives 1 and 2 aligns with the efforts of the Foster Home Quality Workgroup that states the Department will work with CBCs, Child Placing Agencies, Foster Parents, youth, and the Florida Institute of Child Welfare to:

- Conduct a survey to assess current practices regarding recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement practices.
- Define a quality foster home.
- Evaluate research findings for best practices.
- Make recommendations regarding the above in a legislative report due November 15, 2017, and for continued efforts needed to obtain the desired end state.

In addition, the following key activities are identified for state fiscal year 2017-2018:

- Review Foster Home Quality Workgroup findings and evaluate best practice recommendations for implementation.
- Service Array Placement Continuum Subgroup is to establish standardized guidelines to capture current inventory of available family foster homes and specialized foster homes based on child characteristics.
- Complete the assessment and identify current gaps of placement types.
- Establish recruitment strategies including partnership with Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), APD, CMS, Managed Care Organizations and the Managing Entity (ME) to ensure the proper array of placement services are available.
- Collect models and research developed by leading family-based treatment providers.

The desired end state is articulated as follows: Recruitment of foster parents and placement resources is based on local needs, addresses the individual needs of the children being served, and results in the licensing of high-quality foster homes. Reliable and relevant data is used to develop foster home recruitment campaigns and support of other community placement resources that are locally driven and based on the unique needs of each community. These campaigns will achieve and maintain an adequate supply of placement resources to meet the individual needs of children in OHC.

Objective 2: Retention strategies.

Objective two states that the Department and the FCC will utilize results of surveys, demonstration grants, and research to increase a sense of support for current and prospective foster families to improve retention rates. Key activities for state fiscal year 2017-2018 include:

- Review results of survey and findings as presented by the FICW.
- Review results and recommendations of the three federal diligent recruitment grant sites and their pilot activities.
- Implement statewide the Customer Service Model and Toolkit as piloted by Heartland for Children (CBC) and developed as part of the federal diligent recruitment grant.
- Continue work with the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment to improve foster parent retention and to identify national benchmarking of retention data. Note: The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment closed effective September 29, 2017, and has been taken over by the Capacity Center for States.
- Develop localized foster parent support and retention plans.
- Develop a system for tracking and analyzing data on prospective and current foster families to improve retention efforts to include:
  o identification of current retention rates and average tenure of foster parents by CBCs and foster care management agencies;
  o frequency for review and analysis;
  o review of needs and characteristics of children compared to available resources;
  o use information in above bullet to inform training and supports for foster families;
  o why foster families stay or leave; and
  o trends around length of stay of foster parents, length of placement, placement stability, utilization, and capacity.

5. Child and Family Services Review Performance Improvement Plan

In response to the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), the Department has developed a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The strategies and key activities listed in the PIP focus on and build upon improvement activities that are being implemented by the Department to positively influence safety, permanency, and child

well-being outcomes. The Department and partners identified three goals from the Department's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) 2015-2019 that support the themes for improvement that were identified through the CFSR. The full PIP can be found here: http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/qa/CFSRTools/4276%20Round%203%20FL%20PIP%205-22-17.pdf. Below are several tasks impacting the same outcomes as the Foster Home Quality Workgroup.

Goal 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect; safely maintained in their homes, if possible and appropriate; and provided services to protect and prevent removal from their homes.

> **Strategy B.** Improve families' ability to provide for their own and their children's needs through quality family assessments, family engagement, and appropriate supports to address identified needs.
>
> > 2. Conduct black belt project (part of the Lean Six Sigma performance improvement tools) to identify root causes of maltreatment in OHC and identify recommendation(s) for statewide implementation.

Goal 2: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations and the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

> **Strategy A.** Implement practice initiatives that will improve the permanency and stability of children's living situations.
>
> > 1. Increase the availability of quality placement settings for children in OHC, with a focus on homes for sibling groups.
> >
> > 2. Seek technical assistance from National Capacity Building Center for States on diligent recruitment of foster family homes, geo mapping and market segmentation, and implement at least one recommendation for improving recruitment of foster families.
> >
> > 5. Conduct black belt project to identify root causes of placement instability and identify recommendation(s) for statewide implementation.
> >
> > 6. Implement newly developed statewide operating procedure related to Child Placement Agreements, CFOP 170-11, Chapter 4, requiring child welfare professionals to work together with caregivers for children with identified behavioral management needs. The new operating procedure also focuses on the need to keep siblings together. The process for developing operating procedures involves extensive collaboration – the workgroup for this specific operating procedure included CBC representation, child welfare professional supervisors, legal, foster parents, and other related stakeholders. This practice modification results

from a pilot project conducted between 07/2016 through 12/2016 with five CBCs.

8. Ensure that caregivers receive actual notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard at all court hearings involving a child in their care.

Strategy B. Implement practice initiatives that will help ensure the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

2. Implement improved and/or expanded kinship search processes or procedures so that more children and sibling groups are placed quickly with relatives, as appropriate.

3. Conduct Just In Time training/technical assistance on maintaining a child's connections at quarterly Quality Parenting Initiative statewide meeting with foster parents, relatives, non-relatives, child welfare professionals, and providers.

Barriers to High-Quality Foster Homes

Based upon personal experience, survey responses, and research results, the Foster Home Quality Workgroup finds the following barriers:

- Although the Measures of Foster Home Quality subgroup found that most quality standards already exist, these expectations are not clearly connected to the minimum standards for licensing.
- Beyond establishing clear standards for high-quality foster homes and implementation of related licensing tools, defining a high-quality foster home in a quantifiable manner remains a question that has not yet been uncovered in the research conducted by the FICW.
- Understanding the personal characteristics or foster parenting attitudes that result in a caregiver being a high-quality foster home is also unanswered, despite several studies referenced in the research conducted by the FICW.
- Limited resources, child welfare case management staff turnover, and increases in OHC contribute to difficulties in maintaining a high-quality foster home management system inclusive of the following components: recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement.
- A stronger emphasis on placement practices over recruitment, licensing, and retention seems to exist. A lack of focus on strategic and targeted recruitment plans, efficient licensing processes, and customer service negatively impacts the ability to recruit, train, and license high-quality foster homes.
- There is some evidence that limited financial supports to foster parents has an impact on recruitment and retention although it isn't clear as to whether this concern is specifically related to high-quality foster homes.

Recommendations

As demonstrated by the efforts of the Foster Home Quality Workgroup, the FCC/DCF Strategic Plan, and other related efforts underway, there is desire on the part the system of care stakeholders to continue addressing these components and develop best practices for recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement. The Department and workgroup puts forth the following recommendations:

1. The Quality Foster Home Standards should be the minimum expectation for all foster homes. These standards need to be clear in Florida Administrative Code and will be incorporated into licensing tools. Foster parents will be required to acknowledge and agree to these standards for initial licensing and licensing staff will assess compliance during the year and at re-licensure. CBCs need the authority to revoke the license of foster families who are not meeting quality standards but also need the freedom to create caregiver development plans with foster parents who are struggling with the standards.

2. As FCC and Department partnership has resulted in a strategic plan that includes the recruitment and retention of foster families, along with an adequate array of placement resources, the recommendation of the Foster Home Quality Workgroup to continue efforts related to CBC practices is to coordinate with the FCC. The continued efforts should address findings and recommendations from the Foster Home Quality Workgroup and the FICW, and be inclusive of representatives from the workgroup, particularly foster parents. In addition, the workgroup recommends that child welfare case managers be engaged. Existing forums such as regional licensing meetings and statewide licensing calls should be explored as vehicles for information gathering and dissemination.

3. These coordinated efforts with FCC should include implementation of a Customer Service Model to improve communication with foster parents as well as use of marketing toolkits being developed by the Florida Intelligent Recruitment Project, a federal diligent recruitment grant. More information on this grant can be found in **Appendix F**.

4. The Contract Oversight Unit should continue reviewing CBC practices around strategic recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement; and regional leadership should consider emphasizing these areas in the development of corrective action plans. A formal review of recruitment plans should be incorporated.

5. The literature review completed by FICW should be supplemented with information from child welfare agencies in other states, to be requested via Casey Family Programs.

6. The Office of Child Welfare should explore how to incorporate efforts around high-quality foster homes into the Results Oriented Accountability process.

7. There is a need to continue efforts to reduce caseloads and decrease turnover to maximize the availability of time and expertise in case manager to foster parent interactions. Although not highlighted in the Related Efforts section, this is also

an area evaluated during the new Contract Oversight Unit monitoring process of CBCs.

8. The Department should explore requirements for preservice training curriculum to ensure that foster parents receive adequate information on complex trauma, identifying trauma triggers, and managing challenging behaviors. Opportunities to implement evidence-based parenting curriculums as described in the literature review should be explored.

9. The Department's partnership with the Quality Parenting Initiative should continue to maintain open lines of communication between foster parents and the system and promote continual improvement.

10. The FICW previously developed a recruitment readiness toolkit in response to a Department POE. The Department should ensure that this resource is available with other recruitment resources. This toolkit, "Effective Strategies to Recruit and Retain Foster Homes for Teens," can be found here: http://ficw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1106/files/pdf-files/2016%20FICW%20FosterHome%20Recruitment%20Toolkit.pdf.

11. Where promising practices related to recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement exist across the CBCs, an evaluation of their effectiveness should be conducted.

12. The Department and CBCs should continue to collaborate on reducing the number of children in OHC, including the continued efforts to place children with relatives and non-relatives.

Next Steps

1. The Department will provide support to the Implementation of the Foster Home Quality Standards subgroup.

2. The Department will coordinate with the FCC on efforts to address CBC practices around recruitment, licensing, retention, and placement as a component of the FCC/DCF Strategic Initiative Plan.

3. The Department will coordinate implementation of a gap analysis instrument for an adequate array of child-focused services, including the placement continuum, as a component of the Service Array POE.

4. The Department will implement requirements from s. 39.523, F.S., Placement in Out-of-Home Care regarding the comprehensive assessment of children prior to placement.

5. The Department will explore inclusion of these components into the Results Oriented Accountability process.

6. This legislative report will be shared with the Contract Oversight Unit.

7. Should the opportunity arise, the Department shall explore the development of an assessment instrument for prospective foster families based on empirically valid findings.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Foster Home Quality Workgroup

LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2017

Appendices

Department of Children and Families

Office of Child Welfare

September 30, 2017

Mike Carroll

Secretary

Rick Scott

Governor

Table of Contents

Appendix A

Workgroup Members

Foster Home Quality Workgroup		
Name	**Agency/Area**	**Member type**
Ashley Carraro	Brevard Family Partnership	CBC
Brandy Leo	FSSNF	CBC
Connie Werner	FFN	CBC
Denise Waninger	Devereux	CBC
Endea Mathis	Our Kids	CBC
Gordy Pyper	Big Bend CBC	CBC
Jennifer Hill	CPC	CBC
Joanne Robertson	Kids First	CBC
Laurallyn Segur	Eckerd Pinellas Pasco	CBC
Lori Feige	CNSWFL	CBC
Nicky Smith	Devereux	CBC
Robin Brisenso	Kids First	CBC
Sara Dawson	Sarasota Y	CBC
Stacy Shiver	FSSNF	CBC
Tenille Taylor	BBCBC	CBC
Kim Daugherty	Heartland	CBC
Krista Peters	Eckerd Pinellas Pasco	CBC
Wendy Smith	ChildNet	CBC/Foster Parent

November 15, 2017

Vanessa Snoddy	DCF	Central Licensing
Fawn Moore	DCF	Central Region
Debra Bass	DCF	CLS
Karlene Cole-Palmer	DCF	CLS
Natalie Clayton	DCF	CLS
Tricia Curl	Southeast Region/Camelot	CPA
Cynthia W	NW Region	Current Foster Youth
Xiomara Turner	DCF	DCF HQ
Kelley Diehl	NW Region	DCF Licensing
Bethany Gilot	DCF	DCF OCW HT
Sue Aboul-Hosn	DCF	DCF OCW HT
Janelle Hanaburgh	SunCoast Region	FBCH/CPA
Jessica Pryce	FICW	FICW
Makenna Woods	FICW	FICW
Jesse Wilson	NW Region/FSSNF	Former Foster Youth
Krystal Bingham	NE Region	Former Foster Youth
Londarius Clayton	NE Region	Former Foster Youth
Amanda Williams (Cruce)	NW Region	Foster Parent
Chris Johnson	Central Region	Foster Parent
Christina Nunez	SunCoast Region	Foster Parent
Cyndy Strickland	Central Region	Foster Parent
Jennifer Fresh	NE Region	Foster Parent

November 15, 2017

June Farrell	SunCoast Region	Foster Parent
Lauren Simao	NW Region	Foster Parent
Marisol Napoleon	SunCoast Region	Foster Parent
Scott Coker	NW Region	Foster Parent
Harriet Wynn	NW Region	Foster Parent/FAPA
Mark Young	Southeast Region	Foster Parent/FAPA
Gerald Waters	Circuit 1	Foster Parent/FAPA
Sherri Croom	Go Foster	Foster Parent/FPO
Thomas Croom	Go Foster	Foster Parent/FPO
Willy Bolander	Go Foster	Foster Parent/FPO
Trudy Petrovich	Southern Region	FPO
Kim DelGaudio	GAL	GAL
Michael Gagne	Southeast	GAL
Brian Strawser	SunCoast Region	Other
Carole Shauffer	QPI	Other
David Brown	QPI	Other
Lakeinya Mellion	DCF	Southeast Licensing
Evan Leach	DCF	SunCoast Licensing

Appendix B

Foster Home Quality Standards Survey

Welcome to the Foster Care Quality Standards Survey. This survey will help collect data on foster care quality, recruitment, retention, and resources. The information gathered from this survey with help to inform the Florida Legislature on the Quality Standards in the Florida Foster Care System. We appreciate your time and thoughtful answers to each question.

Demographic information:

1.) What Community Based Care Lead Agency do you work for/with?

Families First Network

Big Bend CBC Inc.

Partnership for Strong Families

Kids First of Florida, Inc.

Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc.

St. Johns County Board of Commissioners

Community Partnerships for Children, Inc.

Kids Central, Inc.

CBC of Central Florida

Heartland for Children

Brevard Family Partnership

Eckerd Community Alternatives

Sarasota Family YMCA, Inc.

Children's Network of Southwest Florida

Childnet, Inc.

Devereux CBC

Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.

2.) What is your role in Florida's foster care system?

Community Based Care Lead Agency (CBC)

Licensing Agency

Case Management Agency

Foster parent (traditional)

Foster parent (therapeutic)

Foster parent (medical)

Foster youth (in family home)

Foster youth (in group home)

Other

Section One: **This section is assessing the demographic characteristics of your community based care lead agency, licensing agency, case management agency, or other. (i.e.CLS) Please answer all of the following to the best of your ability.**

1.) How many years of experience have you had in the foster care system?

<1 year

1-2

3-4

4-10

10-15

15+

Section Two: The following section is about your jurisdiction as a whole. Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability.

1.) In your area/ experience...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know
There are enough placement options.	○	○	○	○	○	○
There are supportive services, groups, and organizations for foster families.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Childcare is available to foster parents at a free or reduced rate.	○	○	○	○	○	○

2.) There are enough homes in your area to meet the needs of children...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know
Ages 0-5	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ages 6-11	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ages 12-15	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ages 16-18	○	○	○	○	○	○

Section Three. This section is about recruitment, retention, and characteristics of quality foster families. Please read each of the following questions and respond accordingly.

1.) In your area/experience, the following factors impact foster home retention (please select all that apply):

The manner in which home visits are scheduled

The way transition plans are developed

Transportation of children to medical appointments

Transportation of children to behavioral health appointments

Transportation of children to parental visitation

Frequency of communication between child welfare staff and foster parents

Foster parent appreciation events

Foster parent organizations/support groups

Foster parent mentor programs

Teaming with foster parents

Other, please specify. _____

2.) In your area/ experience...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know
the "partnership plan for children in out of home care" is a central part of the foster care system. (	O	O	O	O	O	O
foster parents have been regularly included in case plan creation.	O	O	O	O	O	O
foster parents have been regularly included in case staffings.	O	O	O	O	O	O
children placed in family foster homes are placed based on a good match/fit.	O	O	O	O	O	O
the children placed in family foster homes are placed based on available space.	O	O	O	O	O	O

whatever the case resolution (reunification, adoption, Permanent Guardianship, Independent living, etc.), you are typically satisfied with the resolution.	○	○	○	○	○	○
respite care was available when needed/requested within the last year.	○	○	○	○	○	○
foster parents are encouraged to use respite care.	○	○	○	○	○	○
a formal approval (from case management, supervisors, court, etc.) is required for a foster family to take a weekend trip out of the county but still in Florida.	○	○	○	○	○	○

3.) What pre-service foster parent training curriculum did you use?

4.) Did you supplement this curriculum during pre-service foster parent training?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Did you supplement this curriculum during pre-service foster parent training ? = Yes

4a.) What did you use to supplement this curriculum during pre-service foster parent training?

Section Four: This section is assessing marketing and recruitment. Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability as it pertains to foster care marketing and recruitment in your area.

1.) In your area/experience, the successful tool(s) for recruiting foster parents is/are (please select all that apply)

marketing/advertising campaigns on the TV

marketing/advertising campaigns on the radio

marketing/advertising campaigns on social media

marketing/advertising campaigns in print (e.g. newspaper, local magazines)

Referrals from staff and agency professionals

Referrals from other foster parents

Referrals from pastors/priests/ministers or other faith leaders

Referrals from the biological family (in order to take the children)

Other _____

2.) In your area/experience, families are recruited specifically using the following terms (please select all that apply)

Fostering and/or adoption

Traditional foster care

Therapeutic foster care

Medical foster care

Foster to adopt

Legal risk

Special needs

High risk

Respite

Emergency shelter

Forever family

Teen

Other, please specify _____

3.) In your area/experience, formal assessment tools are used to develop targeted recruitment practices to find high quality foster families.

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If In your area/experience, formal assessment tools are used to develop targeted recruitment practic... = Yes

4.) What formal assessment tools are used to develop targeted recruitment practices to find high quality foster families.

5.) In your area/experience...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know
kinship/relative care is a priority placement option.	○	○	○	○	○	○

relative caregivers are encouraged to become licensed foster parents.

○　　○　　○　　○　　○　　○

agencies license homes that meet the minimum standards but are of low quality.

○　　○　　○　　○　　○　　○

foster care licensing is a barrier to recruitment.

○　　○　　○　　○　　○　　○

incentives are available to families who have personally recruited new foster parents.

○　　○　　○　　○　　○　　○

agencies offer incentives beyond the state board rate for families who are licensed for critical need areas.

○　　○　　○　　○　　○　　○

offering incentives beyond the

○　　○　　○　　○　　○　　○

state board rate for families who are licensed for critical need areas would be successful for meeting those needs.

agencies offer incentives beyond the state board rate for families who are licensed for critical need areas would improve the quality of care.

    ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

quality concerns permit agencies to reject foster home applications even if they meet minimum standards.

    ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

6.) In your own words, what recruitment efforts have you personally experienced.

<u>Section Five:</u> This section is assessing quality of the foster care system in your area. Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability as it pertains to the foster care quality in your area.

1.) How do you increase the likelihood that a child's first placement is their only placement?

2.) How are services coordinated for youth in foster homes?

3.) What efforts are made to stabilize placements?

4.) How do you assess that a child may need a higher level placement than traditional foster care?

5.) In your area/experience, quality standards for foster homes are clearly defined.

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If In your area/experience, quality standards for foster homes are clearly defined. = Yes

5a.) Please describe the quality standards.

6.) How have you structured your initial licensing process to decrease time from inquiry to license issuance?

7.) What innovative or effective recruitment strategies are you using?

8.) What efforts have you made to only license quality foster homes?

9.) What barriers do you face to effective recruitment?

10.) What barriers do you face to effective licensing?

11.) What barriers do you face to effective retention?

12.) What barriers do you face to effective placement?

13.) How is customer service with foster parents emphasized in your system of care?

14.) How do you assess what types of foster homes you need and where?

15.) Who are your recruitment partners?

16.) Do you have a quality measurement system in place for your foster homes?

Yes

No

17.) What quality measurement systems are in place for your foster homes?

18.) In your area/experience, most foster parents are motivated by (select all that apply)

Faith/Calling

Money/Resources

Community

Attention

Civic duty

Family obligaitons

Love of children

Available space

Possibility of adoption

Federal or state tax breaks

Other _____

19.) In your area/experience...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know
quality standards for foster homes exceed statute and/or rule.	O	O	O	O	O	O
preservice training (QPT, PRIDE, MAPP, etc.) prepares foster parents for placement.	O	O	O	O	O	O
trauma training is regularly provided to	O	O	O	O	O	O

foster parents.						
trauma training is regularly provided to relative care givers.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Trauma training is regularly provided to staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○
foster parents are involved with a local foster parent support group.	○	○	○	○	○	○

20.) Are you personally involved with a foster parent organization?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Are you personally involved with a foster parent organization? = Yes

21.) Please name the foster parent organization you are personally involved with.

22.) What services, partnerships, or organizations were designed specifically to support foster parents?

23.) In your own words, what expectations should be placed on high-quality foster homes?

Section Six: This section is about assessing prospective foster families. Please answer each of the following questions as it pertains to foster family recruitment in your area.

1.) In your area/experience, the following characteristics are helpful for identifying high quality homes (please select all that apply)

Education

Income

Home size

Number of biological children

Experience raising children

Faith

Church membership

Attends church at least once a month

Race

Sexual orientation

Family/ friend support structure nearby

Community involvement

Community activist

Strong advocate type

Active in outdoor recreation

Employment stability

Blue collar job (field worker, line worker, outside work, mechanical, etc.)

White collar job (management, leadership, office job, etc.)

High self esteem

Believes anything is possible

Home school family

Artistic

Is a booster or volunteer for local school/sports team

Other, please specify _____

2.) What recruitment efforts have you personally known to produce high quality foster homes? (please select all that apply)

Places of worship

Public schools

Private businesses

Daycare and childcare businesses

Restaurants

Beauty Salons

Dance/ marital arts studios

Local sports organizations (little league, pop earner, etc.)

Other, please specify _____

3.) In your own words, what motivates foster families?

Section Seven: **This section is assessing retention. Please answer the following questions as it pertains to foster family retention in your area.**

1.) To the best of your knowledge, what are the top three reasons for foster home closures in the last year?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

2.) Please rate each of the following based on their impact of retention of foster families:

	Extremely high	High	Sufficient	Low	Extremely low	I can't answer this question/ I don't know

Case workers	○	○	○	○	○	○
Licensing agency staff	○	○	○	○	○	○
CBC staff	○	○	○	○	○	○
Placement staff	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other foster families	○	○	○	○	○	○
Formally arranged mentors	○	○	○	○	○	○
Formal foster parent group (e.g. FSFAPA or local FAPA)	○	○	○	○	○	○

3.) In your area/experience, how often do licensing agency staff communicate with foster families?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

About every couple of months

Quarterly

About twice a year

Only when the foster parent calls them

Only when it is time for re-licensure

Before any changes are made

After any changes are made

4.) In your area/experience, communication between foster families and the licensing agency is:

Helpful

High quality

Professional

Supportive

Open/Transparent

None of these

5.) In your area/experience, a foster family with five years' experience can expect to be the subject of an allegation of abuse at least

Never

1 time

2 times

3 times

4 times

5 or more times

6.) In your area/experience...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know
abuse allegations negatively impact	○	○	○	○	○	○

retention of
foster homes.

foster parents
are notified of
court dates
within 72 hours
of the date.

    O   O   O   O   O   O

courts are
interested in
foster parent
input.

    O   O   O   O   O   O

foster parents
are
encouraged to
attend court.

    O   O   O   O   O   O

foster parents
are able to
easily network
with other
foster parents.

    O   O   O   O   O   O

communication
with licensing
counselors or
support
workers is
important to
retention.

    O   O   O   O   O   O

communication
with case
management
staff is
important to
retention.

    O   O   O   O   O   O

the foster care licensure process is a barrier to retention.	○	○	○	○	○	○

7.) In your own words, how does your community based care lead agency or licensing agency support the retention of foster parents?

8.) In your own words, what retention efforts have you personally known to maintain high quality foster homes.

9.) In your own words, what motivates foster families to stay?

<u>Section Eight</u>: Anchoring vignette. Please read the following vignette and respond to the questions accordingly.

1.) On payday [Robert] spent time with friends drinking and watching the game. After the game, he went home and was in a disagreement with his girlfriend [Amy]. The next day at school [Amy]'s daughter had a black eye and told the teacher her mom and boyfriend were in a fight and she tried to stop the fight. [Robert] accidentally hit her when she got in the way and that's why she has a black eye. The teacher, who is a mandatory reporter, calls the hotline and reports a suspected child abuse. After interviewing the child, [Amy] and [Robert], the social services investigator determines the child is not safe and they have been put into foster care. Neither [Robert] or [Amy] deny what happened and would like to change this, but neither can take time off from work to seek counseling and [Robert] can't move out because he doesn't have enough money for a deposit or utilities on his own.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I can't answer this question/ I don't know

You would say the children are in danger.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

You would say [Robert] is responsible for what happened.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

You would say [Amy] is responsible for what happened.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

You would say the teacher is responsible for what happened.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

If this happened in your area/experience, you would say [Amy] can easily get her children back.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

If this happened in your area/experience, the system would successfully solve this problem within 6 months.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

If this happened in your area/experience,

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

November 15, 2017

the system would successfully solve this problem within 12 months.

If this happened in your area/experience, the system would successfully solve this problem within 18 months.

   O   O   O   O   O   O

If this happened in your area/experience, the system would successfully solve this problem within 24 months.

   O   O   O   O   O   O

If I were a part of this case (investigator, case worker, foster parent, etc.) I could help [Amy].

   O   O   O   O   O   O

The child in this case will probably be reunified.

   O   O   O   O   O   O

The child in this case will probably be adopted.

○　　　○　　　○　　　○　　　○　　　○

The child in this case will probably age out of the system.

○　　　○　　　○　　　○　　　○　　　○

FLORIDA INSTITUTE
for CHILD WELFARE

FOSTER CARE QUALITY STANDARDS
REPORT

September 27, 2017

College of Social Work
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To fulfill the objectives of Florida HB1121, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) collaborated with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare to convene a workgroup to examine the quality of Florida's foster homes. The statute requires, at a minimum, that the workgroup, identify measures of foster home quality, review current efforts by lead agencies and subcontractors to enhance foster home quality, identify barriers to the greater availability of high-quality foster homes, recommend strategies for assessing the quality of foster homes and increasing the availability of high-quality foster homes. Additionally, the Institute was tasked with providing a literature review on recruitment, screening, training, retention, and child placement from the national and global research knowledge base. In this report, there is a review of the literature, followed by the results from the foster care quality standards survey that was administered to foster care professionals around the state. Recommendations are offered at the conclusion of the report.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The primary effort of this report is to obtain credible, validated research studies within the past five years. This is the primary inclusion criteria with the exclusion being any research outside this five-year parameter. However, there were occasions where this primary parameter obtained results too narrow for the present purposes. Subsequent research efforts then expanded to eight, ten and twelve years.

Search strings were specific to each following section with the primary first variable of foster parent, foster caregiver, foster, kin, kinship, and kinship caregiver. For each subsequent section, the search strings were made to be more specific and included the following terms/variables: placement, stability, disruption, recruitment, screening, assessment, training, and quality improvement. Expansion of these terms/variables became more specific with causes, findings, evidence-based, behavior, behavior problems, mental, mental health, mental illness, trauma, trauma-informed, marketing, and maltreatment.

The initial search was conducted using the Florida State University library search engine, OneSearch. The specific parameters included peer-reviewed, full text available, and available at FSU. Under the disciplines to be searched, the following were included: law, life sciences, politics and government, psychology, public health, social sciences and humanities, social work, and sociology. Articles were drawn from a total of twenty-seven journals and databases encompassing primarily social work and psychology with occasional articles drawn from journals on economics, law review journals, and pediatrics. The majority of articles came from the following journals: *Children & Youth Services Review, Adoption & Fostering, Journal of Child & Family Studies, Journal of Human Resources, Child Abuse & Neglect, Child Welfare, Child Maltreatment, Child & Adolescent Social Work, and Child & Family Social work* for a total of thirty of the fifty-eight articles included in this review, accounting for approximately fifty-two percent. Specific databases utilized were: Casey Family Programs, childwelfare.gov, partnersforourchildren.org and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Child Placement

The issue of child placement is a confounding issue as it encompasses the full range of initial placement, disruptions (to be addressed in the following section), and permanency outcomes. The range of responses throughout the entire United States child welfare systems is diverse, and the following articles provide an overview.

Buckles (2013) investigated the issue of remuneration to foster parents as it specifically relates to adoption. Utilizing data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting (AFCARS) systems, Buckles conducted a wide-ranging study encompassing the totality of data available for the years 2000-2006 with 315,855 reported adoptions. Her findings led her to report that adoptive parents, and specifically foster parents caring for the child, respond to the financial incentive of the adoption subsidy program as evidenced by the increase in the number of adoptions total for those parents making receipt of the payment compared to those who do not.

The next set of articles addresses the issue of placement decisions within various contexts and their impacts on stability for the respective foster children.

Macgill and Summers (2014) investigated the issue of the types of dependency hearings held and subsequent placement decisions and their outcomes. They found that when the judge took the time to become engaged with the family, kinship placements increased thus diverting those children from the non-relative placement pool, which indicates that increased engagement leads to better maintaining of the child within their respective kinship community.

Crampton, et al. (2011) investigated the effects of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family-to-Family Initiative on placement outcomes. They reported that the findings were not conclusive, but were promising. The Family-to-Family initiative has key elements that relate significantly to the permanency of children, such as increased family participation and engagement of parents.

Koh (2010) studied the difference in permanency outcomes among those children placed with kin and those who were not. Koh utilized the AFCARS with the data submitted by five states participating in the Fostering Court Improvement project: Arizona, Connecticut, Missouri, Ohio, and Tennessee. Koh reported that this study showed significant advantages of kinship foster homes in all five states on the issue of placement stability, specifically that stability increased in kin care as compared to non-relative care.

Koh and Testa (2011) conducted a study to assess for differences in foster care re-entry rates between those who had been in kin care versus non-relative care. They utilized AFCARS to obtain their data sample of 20,360 children, whose information had been processed through the system. Reunification was higher for children and youth placed with kin versus those with non-relatives, and their rates of foster care re-entry were significantly lower.

Fisher, et al. (2005) from the Oregon Social Learning Center, conducted a study on the Early Intervention Foster Care (EIFC) Program as it relates to permanency outcomes. In collaboration with the Oregon Department of Human Service – Child Welfare Division in Lane County, all incoming three to six-year-olds in need of a new placement were included in the study. The

EIFC children obtained permanency at a 90 percent rate compared to 64 percent of those who remained in traditional foster care.

Disruption Causes

Disruption is an issue regarding placement, specifically the problem of maintaining removed children in their initial and subsequent placements. Disruption is a multi-faceted issue that can be traced to foster parent application to the broadly utilized "behavior issues" and related to many other facets important to effective foster parenting. The following articles highlight these difficulties and various attempts to address the disruption issue successfully.

Hurlburt, et al. (2010) conducted a study seeking to expand on original findings regarding the utilization of the Parent Daily Report (PDR) as it related to the prediction of future disruptions by youth entering the system. The participants were 395 prospective foster parents undergoing training. They reported that their findings had policy implications for three domains: 1) level of prediction can be generated utilizing this tool; 2) specific definitions of risk for placement disruption; and 3) how information generated can be used to determine services offered to children and foster families. Overall, children with high PDR counts are at a greater risk of future disruption.

Meloy and Phillips (2012) investigated the issue of childcare assistance and placement stability. They utilized information made available to them by the State of Illinois' database on childcare assistance programs and foster children under the age of five. Their findings reported a positive correlation between the use of childcare and placement stability.

Crum (2010) conducted a study to identify parenting characteristics of foster parents that would likely increase placement stability. Foster parents who orient to an authoritarian discipline modality might create more difficulties or exacerbate foster children's present maladaptive behaviors, thus instigating or creating conflict with the placed children where conflict may not necessarily need to be.

Jakobsen (2013) conducted a study to understand the mechanisms behind adolescents and placement disruptions. This was a qualitative study utilizing twelve young people in care and their caregivers for a total participant pool of $N = 45$ and a longitudinal, quantitative study utilizing data from two hundred and twenty-five adolescents. He reported that the issue of "behavior problems" is incorrectly stated and understood as the majority of research on disruption has relied on caseworker files and reports thus biasing the concept of "behavior problems" to a place that has become less and less meaningful in understanding why adolescent disrupt from their placements. He contends that the results of his study highlight how behavior related issues are misunderstood because the specific issue(s) is (are) removed from the social context in which the behavior was occurring.

Solomon, et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of foster parent training (FPT) outcome research from 1984 to 2014. Fifteen samples (16 studies) were identified that investigated the impact of FPT on self-reported parenting skills and knowledge and child problem behaviors. The mean effect size for child disruptive behavior using a random effects model was small but significant at .20 (95% confidence interval [CI] ¼ [.39, .01], Z ¼ 2.05, p < .05), suggesting that,

on average, foster parents who were involved in the trainings reported fewer child behavior problems than parents who did not receive the training.

Fisher, et al. (2011) conducted a study to investigate two issues: 1) replicate the findings of Chamberlain, et al. (2006) that the number of daily child problems at entry to new foster home predicts subsequent disruptions and 2) determine if treatment foster care can act as a mitigating factor in reducing disruption rates. Participants were 117 preschoolers wherein sixty were in regular foster care (RFC) and fifty-seven were in treatment foster care (TFC). Findings showed that foster caregivers' reports of child problem behaviors during the first three months predicted placement disruption in RFC but not the TFC group. They recommend that identifying young children at risk for problem behaviors, specifically in preschool, would increase the effectiveness of preventative interventions and utilizing the PDR is a reliable, cost-effective tool for identifying children at risk of preventable problem behaviors that typically leads to disrupted placements.

Pac (2017) conducted a study to determine if foster and kinship homes that received monthly stipends provide greater stability to the children in their care. A sample of 1076 was drawn from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II) over a period of five years. Pac reported that the study findings revealed larger monthly stipends are associated with a twenty-seven percent (27%) decreased risk of disruption and possibly long-term placement stability. The effect was more pronounced in kinship homes. Specifically, Pac's findings showed that a one percent (1%) monthly stipend increase led to a 27 percent decrease in disruption.

Quality Improvement

Quality improvement as a concept is difficult to define on any single paradigm. The concept devolves to overall issue of both attracting and obtaining good foster parents, managing to retain them and the vast service array that is provided, and may be necessary, for ensuring maltreated children receive the best possible care while a permanency plan is affected.

Advocates for Families First, a research and advocacy group, published a Public Policy Agenda in June 2014, which highlighted the various areas of current policy regarding child welfare practices and specifically increasing the quality of care for youth brought into the system. They identified the following goals as necessary for improving the quality of systems to respond to maltreated children's needs:

- Prioritize family-based care
- Ensure children and youth are full participants in their respective cases
- Ensure children, youth and their families have the supports they require
- Ensure foster and kin care providers are prepared and able to meet the specific individual needs of children in their care
- Ensure children and youth grow up in permanent families, not residential facilities

Akin, et al. (2014) conducted a study consisting of semi-structured, individual interviews with twenty-eight child welfare practitioners implementing Parent Management Training, Oregon (PMTO) model. Researchers found that most practitioners described PMTO in positive terms and as highly applicable to child welfare families. Implementing PMTO (or any evidence-based foster parent training methodology) usually involves outreach and education to both external

and internal stakeholders. Informing courts about the new program was crucial to a smooth implementation. This study highlights key factors to facilitate and constrain implementation in a real-world situation. They report that implementation of an evidence-based intervention (EBI) is complex and resources, both tangible and intangible, must be leveraged to successfully operate an EBI.

Mariscal, et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study of youth with foster care experiences. A total participant pool of $N = 16$ was utilized. They reported that based on their analysis of the interview answers, the following issues arose: more comprehensive preparation for parents and youth, more knowledge, skills and effective treatments to respond to children's trauma and behavioral health needs, more intensive post-adoption services for families, youth mentorship, continuity in state-sponsored benefits and a well-integrated and coordinated system. Specifically, the researchers state that the recommendations listed above lay the foundation for a trauma-informed environment that will foster timely, stable, and lasting adoptions.

Lopez and del Valle (2016) conducted a study with 200 Spanish foster families (kin and non-kin) in relation to motivation to becoming foster caregivers, sources of stress and reward and satisfaction the services and their needs. This report is included to show that these problems are experienced internationally as well. They reported that the participants did not feel they were compensated financially sufficiently, specifically as it regards to: 1) raising a foster child; 2), the lack of sensitivity and support from the children's social workers;3) simpler and faster procedures for obtaining service support;4) availability of specialized psychological services for the children; and 5) better information about the incoming foster children and help dealing with the children's biological families. They report that the results of the study raise concerns most specifically about the existing deficiencies in support and training for foster caregivers.

Rast and Rast (2014) conducted a controlled study with propensity analysis on the Neighbor to Family (NTF) program. They utilized a participant pool of $N = 417$ receiving NTF and $N = 417$ receiving services as usual. They reported their findings were strongly positive for NTF for promoting various protective factors while reducing additional trauma imposed through placement in foster care. They reported that the approach results in more recruitment of foster parents to serve whole sibling groups, placements closer to friends and communities, placements with siblings, more stability in placement, quicker reunification and permanent placement, and stronger connections to family and the program costs less per child than traditional services.

Recruitment

How does a child welfare agency attract and obtain the services of good foster parents? This is the question at the heart of the issue known as recruitment. As the previous sections have noted, this is not a one-dimensional issue, but rather multi-faceted and amenable to numerous approaches.

Ahn, et al. (2017) conducted a study to contribute to developing successful recruitment and retention policies and practices for foster parents. They reported that consistent with current knowledge, the majority of exited foster parents left due to a life situation change or moving followed by problems or lack of support from the agency. They recommend by assessing the

resource needs of incoming foster parents and addressing those problems at the outset, agencies, in turn, may be able to identify at the beginning which families are more likely to quit early and thus turn them away from becoming foster parents. This could potentially save resources, time, and money that could be better utilized elsewhere, leading to improved retention.

Casey Family Programs issued a report in December 2014, *Effective Practices in Foster Parent, Recruitment, Infrastructure, and Retention*. This report was a summary of six public and private agency programs that demonstrated effective strategies in their recruitment, retention and/or foster parent development efforts. The list is as follows:

- Florida's Foster Family Initiative
- Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)
- Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained (KEEP)
- Extreme Recruitment
- Mockingbird Family Model (MFM)
- Anu Family Services
- Iowa's Performance-Based Contracting

The key findings of the report on recruitment are messaging and branding, targeted versus general recruitment, child-specific recruitment, and foster parents as recruiters. The key findings on improving infrastructure are encouraging and welcoming prospective parents, decreasing response time, addressing barriers to facilitate licensing and other requirement, streamlining process and reducing paperwork, and developing performance indicators to measure success. The key findings for successful retention are being available and responsive, organized peer support, respite care, training, and tokens of appreciation. The Foundation's most important finding was that it is imperative that foster parents are engaged, developed, and feel supported by the respective child welfare agency. Additionally, the path of a successful foster parent program is not linear, but rather operates in a cyclical fashion as each stage of the process has either positive or negative influences on each of the successive stages.

Partners for Our Children issued a report in May 2009, *Foster parent recruitment and retention: Developing resource families for Washington State's children in care*. They identified the following issues as particularly relevant to the recruitment and retention of foster providers which are: reimbursement rates, training, childcare allowances, money for clothing, school activities and special needs, assistance obtaining services, managing high-needs children effectively, input into decisions affecting children in their care, support and communication with caseworkers, and managing involuntary closure of homes.

Beltran and Epstein (2012) of Generations United and the American Bar Association Center on Children and Law (respectively) issued a report on improving foster care licensing standards across the US. They investigated each state's standards for licensing approval and either the consistency or inconsistency of the respective state's standards. One of the key recommendations they made was for a standardization of certain standards, namely the "core" standards for foster home physical requirements (i.e., flushing toilets, running water, smoke detectors, etc.). The crucial recommendation they made for reviewing standards and

determining licensing requirements would be to convene a group of child development and safety experts who would then establish clear answers and guidelines to the following questions: Which training standards are sensible? Which capacity standards make sense? How best should the subjective inquiries during home study interviews be handled to address safety concerns while limiting potential bias on the part of the caseworker? The authors report that if such a procedure were undertaken, a larger pool of potential foster parents would open and thus the present population of foster care providers would increase.

Habel, et al, (2013) conducted a study to address the question of whether certain individuals currently in the process of obtaining undergraduate and graduate degrees in the areas of health, education, arts and the social sciences could be a potential pool of future foster care providers. These individuals could be able to handle high-needs children more effectively than recruitment efforts in the population at large. They report that targeted recruitment of higher educated people in the fields of psychology, health sciences, education and other welfare-related disciplines shows evidence of being a pool of potentials who could enhance placement stability and improve educational attainment.

Leon, et al. (2016) conducted a study comparing the outcomes of a Family Finding intervention and a comparison group to assess any differences in outcomes. They found that the utilization of Family Finding was associated with the discovery of more relatives and specifically, more relatives who were considered positive attachment figures for the children.

Feldman, et al. (2016) reviewed the initiative "Parent for Every Child" (PFEC) with the goal of establishing two objectives: 1) effective recruitment strategies and 2) improved permanency outcomes. Overall, they report that PFEC indicates diligent recruitment work done for hard-to-place youth can be effective in connecting those youth to caring adults to establish long-term, committed relationships.

Berrick, et al. (2011) conducted a study to understand the characteristics of high-quality foster parents to inform a marketing strategy and create a recruiting campaign. They report that the marriage of child welfare and business has yielded a new brand that taps into the fundamental characteristics that are featured in high-quality care. They reported that focus group participants routinely indicated that they had considered becoming foster parents for years, sometimes decades, before they made arrangements to get licensed. They identify that the seemingly divergent fields of marketing and child welfare can produce remarkable results if done correctly.

Rehnquist (2002) issued a report in her capacity as United States Inspector General titled, *Recruiting Foster Parents*. The report was targeted in identifying individual state's efforts to recruit foster care families. A list of recruitment methods was generated and are as follows:

1. Target recruitment efforts on parents for children who are the most difficult to place in foster care by tailoring recruitment campaigns to recruit families willing and able to care for these children.
2. Offer incentives to foster parents for successfully recruiting other foster families.
3. Use foster parents as facilitators during pre-service foster parent training classes.

4. Work collaboratively with foster care agencies to develop innovative recruitment methods.
5. Develop partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to heighten awareness of foster care needs and foster parenting opportunities.
6. Determine future foster care trends and needs and link to targeted recruitment strategies.
7. Determine recruitment goals necessary to meet the current and future needs of children in foster care.
8. Develop methods to assess the effectiveness of recruitment efforts.
9. Strive to sustain recruitment campaign efforts throughout the year.
10. Allow foster care agencies to recruit outside of their communities to maintain a steady influx of new prospective foster families.
11. Examine state licensing standards to identify barriers to recruitment.
12. Develop or enhance the pre-screening process of prospective foster parents.

Hanna, et al. (2017) conducted a study on the recruitment of minority individuals and the application of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explain and understand the recruitment effort. Upon analysis, the researchers report the most significant lesson learned is the importance of taking the time needed to develop a good, trusting, mutual and collaborative relationship with the community the agency serves. Specifically, as regards minority communities, they are more apt to welcome the presence of the child welfare agency when the agency comes with the attitude of servitude, acknowledgment of past mistakes, and sustained commitment to collaboration.

Retention

Retention is ever an issue in child welfare as the workforce evinces a low retention rate of not just caseworkers but also foster parents. Various questions all boil down to a single one – "Why do foster parents quit?" The following articles seek to address this issue and what evidence has been found specifically answering that question.

Geiger, et al. (2013) conducted a study to understand what factors influence a foster parent's decision to continue fostering. The participant pool was $N = 649$ and a mixed methods procedure was utilized. They report their findings are consistent with prior research, namely that locus of control and social support are directly related to fostering satisfaction and intent to continue. Specific issues that arose which contribute to foster caregiver dissatisfaction and intent to leave are adequate financial compensation, the need for stable, consistent, committed and caring caseworkers, and systemic reform as it relates to children and parental rights.

Geiger, et al. (2017) conducted a study in a southwestern state of the US of 1,095 foster parents on what they believed the respective child welfare agency was doing well and suggestions to improve the relationship between the agency and foster parents. They reported their findings consistent with previous research. Specifically, that foster parents were more satisfied when they felt they were "part of the team" and that their opinions and contributions were valued.

Herbert and Kulkin (2016) investigated the issue of grief as experienced by foster parents and how to improve retention efforts through the use of a grief awareness training program. They

found that the relationship between worker and parent, their communications and specifically the attention given to the foster parent's grief all play a significant role in retaining the foster parent.

The US Department of Health and Human Services – Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation issued a brief report in 2005 based on a study conducted to determine issues surrounding foster parent retention. Key findings of the report were: median length of foster parenting ranged from eight to fourteen months, suggesting many children are in care longer than the typical foster care provider is. They found that in the three states studied, 47 percent and 62 percent of foster parents exited within a year of the first placement in their home. They found that higher rates of foster home occupancy and a higher level of care for infants, adolescents, and children with special needs were consistently associated with greater length of service. They also found that approximately one-fifth (1/5) of the foster parent population provides 60 percent to 80 percent of all foster care. These foster parents may represent a core group of active and experienced foster parents with whom child welfare workers feel most confident placing children.

Randle, et al. (2017) utilized a sample of 205 foster parents and conducted them to an a posteriori segmentation analysis to identify which ones of the sample were dissatisfied with their role. A key finding was that one-fifth (1/5), approximately 41 foster parents, were primarily dissatisfied with the agency managing the placement of their child and most specifically the lack of inclusion by that agency of them in any planning or efforts related to the child. One of the key issues that emerged was that the foster parents desired their work to be considered a profession and not a voluntary act.

Doyle, Jr. and Peters (2006) conducted an empirical study of the impact of foster care subsidies on retention. Their overall findings were that the rates of incoming foster parents increased concomitant to subsidy increases. The implications for retention were left unanswered.

Rhodes, et al. (2001) did a study on why foster parents quit compared to why others continue to foster. Their summation was that the majority of foster parents quit because they believe their families and foster children are not receiving adequate services and they have no say in the children's future.

Screening

Screening (and the following section on assessment) is a difficult issue to address. The issue encompasses various facets such as desirable characteristics of applicants, comprehensive review of applicants to ascertain the presence of such issues as substance abuse/addiction, family violence, pedophilic tendencies and/or presence of a pedophile, and empathy/concern for children. The following articles do not identify a single screening tool but rather the dangers that exist within the foster care sphere and thus the need to create effective screening tools so that already maltreated children are not maltreated while in care.

Font (2015) conducted a study utilizing statewide administrative data to estimate the association between placement type and any subsequent investigation for child maltreatment. Font reported that in approximately eight (8) percent of foster homes a maltreatment investigation

occurs. Lifetime risk of maltreatment, either investigated or substantiated, is highest in TANF funded Informal Kin Care placements. Risk significantly decreases for both Non-Relative Foster Placements and Foster Kin Care placements after the initial three months of placement. The primary issue identified for risk of maltreatment report or incident, and it being highest in non-licensed kin homes, is likely due to a lack of support and formal oversight of the placement.

Font (2015) studied the issue of kin versus non-kin placement and subsequent maltreatment risks. TANF funded, non-licensed foster homes were reported to have a six (6) percent maltreatment rate (either reported or substantiated) compared to three (3) percent of either non-relative or relative licensed foster home. Recommendation made that children placed with family who are not licensed should be supervised more thoroughly and assistance and help made available to reduce this rate of maltreatment.

Uliando and Mellor (2012) reviewed extant literature to provide an overview of the nature and consequences of children being abused while in care. The researchers identified that at the time, all they or anyone else had to go on, where estimates of abuse with no clear ability to confirm rates or percentages of abuse that had occurred or was occurring. They identified a number of alarming trends, which all together place children coming into care at heightened risk of abuse while in care. Those issues identified were:

- number of children entering care increasing
- children who are removed entering care with increasingly complex problems
- the inability of the foster care system to address these growing mental and behavioral health concerns
- the issue of multiple placements and disruptions
- poor retention and high turnover of CPS caseworkers
- a lack of services provided to the families and children being reunified where subsequent incidents of abuse may be kept hidden

Katz, et al. (2017) investigated the relation of pre-foster care maltreatment and subsequent maltreatment while in care. Utilizing data from the Midwest Evaluation of the Functioning of Former Foster Youth, they subjected the data to analysis to answer their questions. They report approximately one-third (1/3) of the youth in the sample reported neglect by a foster parent and approximately one-fourth (1/4) reported physical abuse. Within the sample, one-fifth (1/5) of the females reported suffering sexual abuse.

Assessment

The issue of certified or critically reviewed assessments for utilization in the application process of potential foster parents is difficult. Due to the nature of child welfare in this country, the assessments which are utilized tend to be specific to either the state, the locality within the state and most specifically the third-party vendors who are contracted for the purpose of recruitment, screening and licensing of foster parents. Each state has different statutes relating to the process of application and licensure which creates a strong tendency to resist any standardization of the assessment process.

A thorough review of the California Evidence-Based Clearing House – Child Welfare produces no results that specify any assessment process or procedure – either as a critically reviewed tool or a tool that is still being assessed – is available. A thorough review of the Cochrane Library also produces no results. The issue of assessment appears to be primarily relegated to the issue of assessing children either entering the child welfare care system or presently in it who are disrupting from their placements.

The most recent overall assessment of individual state policies, laws and procedures regarding the issue of assessment of foster parent applicants comes from the Children Bureau's March 2014 report. This report, "Home Study Requirements for Prospective Foster Parents" (2014) is the most comprehensive overview of the process as it stood over three years ago but has not been updated since. Within this report is not to be found a validated or confirmed assessment tool but rather specific delineations of individual state statutes, licensing requirements and most crucially the grounds for denying an applicant(s).

In attempting to ferret out more specific means of assessing applicant parent(s), Combs-Orme & Orme (2014) conducted a rigorous study of [then] current foster parents. They subjected their study subjects to a number of psychological tests and assessments (Dyadic Adjustment Scale [DAS], Partner Abuse Scale {nonphysical} [PASNP], Family Assessment Device – General Functioning Subscale [FAD-GF], Brief Symptom Inventory [BSI] and the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory [AAPI]. The couples studied had gone through the Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) application and training process. Combs-Orme and Orme found an alarming result when they completed their analysis of the data generated from the above referenced tests and assessments. As they wrote in their conclusion on p. 78, "The relatively high rates of clinically significant problems such as psychological (20% of couples), low levels of empathy for children (33.3% of couples) and inappropriate developmental expectations (20.2% of couples) are alarming, particularly since parents in this sample were those who had completed MAPP training, which is designed to 'select out' inappropriate candidates." While this is only a single study, the comprehensive nature of the testing and assessment lends credibility that any consideration of the MAPP procedure should perhaps be guarded as opposed to enthusiastic.

Delgado & Pinto (2011) conducted a similar study of the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory – Applicant Version (CFAI-A) which is part of the screening process the Annie E. Casey Foundation created for utilization in the application and screening process. Their findings were that the CFAI-A is a tool which may have good utility by providing foster care teams with the necessary information for making placement decisions that support stability. While this tool is more geared for the placement process, it also has utility in helping those screening applicants by providing a reliable tool for assessing the overall picture presented by the applicant(s).

With the ongoing push for maintaining family connections for children removed from their origin home, kinship care has been coming more and more to the fore. The issue that arises is that there has been an apparent attitude towards assessing kin for appropriateness of any placement and also for signs of potential harm or abuse. Often, the respective CPS agency tends to automatically assume that kinship placement is a safer placement compared to non-kin

placement. This is an area of the field that the research identifies as lacking rigor in the placement process, especially as in the rush to find a placement following an initial removal, family who volunteer often have the children placed without any comprehensive initial assessment to determine appropriateness and safety.

Crea, et al (2011) conducted a study on the issue of home studies and child-specific recruitment. While outwardly this study does not appear to address the purpose of this report the research team identified a crucial issue for states and jurisdictions – namely the lack of standardization. They did not identify a specific tool or procedure, simply making reference to a long-standing process known as the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) and that placement stability and child safety would increase the more standardized the application and licensure process is within any given locale. They also identified, based on their interviews with foster recruiters that the present home study formats lack the rigor necessary to assess appropriateness, stability, and safety regarding any children placed in the home.

Finally, to be found on the National Association of Social Workers website is a reference to a book published in 2015 titled, *How to Screen Adoptive and Foster Parents*. This book is specific to the entire process of application and screening and focuses on an interview methodology named the Dickerson-Allen-Pollack Model (DAP). This methodology addresses many of the key issues that most present home studies and assessments are not sensitive enough to detect – namely child pornography, substance abuse, and mental illness – which all contribute to placement stability and specifically, child safety.

In sum, a comprehensive and thorough search of the available databases and information clearinghouses reveals a paucity of research and study on the specific issue of assessment. This is likely due to the fact that most studies and research conducted on the application and screening process refer to specific programs or designs such as SAFE, MAPP, CFAI, etc. Basically, the results of these literature searches reveal that researchers are primarily focused on the overall, broad picture of the foster care process from recruitment to assessment to training to case management support and so forth. The vast majority of literature to be found on the issue of assessment in the foster care process is primarily targeted at the children/youth either entering care for the first time or who are continually disrupting and how to locate appropriate placements for them.

Training
Piescher, et al (2008) conducted a thorough review of evidence-based practices in foster parent training and what the implications are for treatment foster care providers (it is highly recommended that the reader read this report separate from this literature review for a full comprehension of the data made available). The training programs investigated and reviewed are as follows:

- NOVA
- Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE)
- 1-2-3- Magic, Behaviorally-Oriented Training
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

- Foster Parent Skills Training Program (FPSTP)
- Incredible Years (IY)
- Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported (KEEP)
- Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP)
- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)
- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care – Preschool (MTFC-P)
- Nurturing Parent Program (NPP)
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Parenting Wisely (PAW)

The authors report that the review of the research and literature attached to each of the above referenced training programs are most able to create positive changes in parenting knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, behaviors, skills, and to a lesser extent – child behaviors. These trainings also have evidence in the research database for having effects on such matters as foster parent satisfaction, increased licensing rates, retention, placement stability and permanency.

Green, et al. (2016) report on their findings from the Maryland KEEP project. Total participant population was N = 113, with 65 participants receiving the KEEP training and 48 receiving traditional services to be utilized as the control group. They report that overall, KEEP was an effective modality for reducing problem behaviors in children in OOHC and that the trainings increased the skill level of foster parents and increased the level of care to the children in their homes.

Dorsey, et al. (2008) conducted a study on then current evidence-based training programs for foster and treatment foster parents. They noted that approximately half of the states within the US had utilized at one time or another one of two curriculums – MAPP or PRIDE. They reported that contrary to any public belief, there is a paucity of empirical research confirming the claims made by the progenitors of MAPP and PRIDE. They report that when looking wider, the then present status of the various evidence-based curriculum had little substance to their claim of being empirically validated.

This literature review articulates the efforts in foster care quality in a broader sector, though in the next section survey results from Florida will be presented.

FOSTER CARE QUALITY STANDARDS SURVEY REPORT

To fulfill the objectives of Florida HB1121, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) collaborated with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare to convene a workgroup to examine the quality of Florida's foster homes.

The workgroup comprised 52 members representing the DCF Office of Child Welfare and Licensing Staff, Florida Institute for Child Welfare, community-based care lead agencies, child placing agencies, foster parents and foster parent organizations, service providers, Guardian Ad Litem, and Children's Legal Services. A subgroup was formed to develop an online survey that

was disseminated statewide to community-based care agencies, licensing staff, case managers, foster parents and foster youth. The survey focused on recruitment and retention of quality foster homes, placement practices, and barriers to maintaining the availability of high-quality foster homes.

METHODOLOGY

In an effort to capture information regarding quality assessment standards for foster homes/families within the state of Florida, the Florida Institute of Child Welfare was contacted to create an online survey to administer to those who work for or are involved with Foster Care services in the state of Florida. The survey was created by the workgroup and questions were appropriate for all case management agencies, licensing agencies, community-based care lead agencies, foster parents, foster youth, Children's Legal Services and Guardian Ad Litem.

Upon survey creation, dissemination occurred through an anonymous link. No identifying information was collected ensuring complete anonymity for all respondents. Respondents were asked which community-based care lead agency they were affiliated with as well as what their role is in Florida's foster care system. The survey was coded in a way that made it possible to give respondents auto-populated questions that pertained to their individual roles within the foster care system to understand the different perspectives of foster home quality assessment standards in the state of Florida.

Each survey consisted of eight sections, each section asking respondents to discuss their agency-wide efforts in regards to retention, marketing, recruitment, quality assessment, assessment of prospective foster families, and retention. A final section of the survey gave respondents a vignette to apply their expertise in child welfare to a situation in an effort to understand how each respondent reacts to the family system.

Data collected from the survey was exported from the Qualtrics system into a .CSV (excel) file for descriptive analysis.

RESULTS

A total of 1,462 surveys were completed. Participants included foster parents ($n = 734$), community-based lead agencies ($n = 232$), case management ($n = 188$), licensing ($n = 152$), foster youth ($n = 20$), and "other" ($n = 136$). Given the large volume of qualitative data, selections have been made based on their representativeness of the entirety of written responses. The quotations are provided in bulleted format.

Survey Participants (*N* = 1462)

Roles

- CBC — 16%
- Licensing — 10%
- Case Management — 13%
- Foster Parents — 51%
- Foster Youth — 1%
- Other — 9%
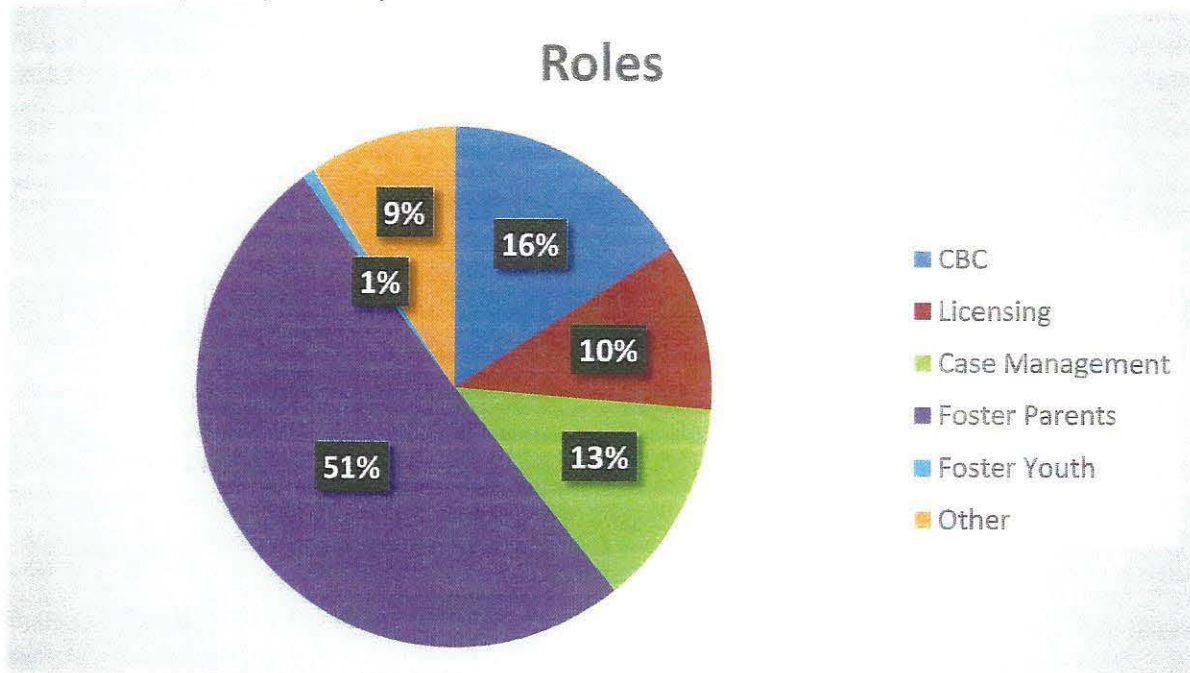
Recruitment

In your area/experience, formal assessment tools are used to develop targeted recruitment practices to find high-quality foster families.

Yes — 42%

No — 58%
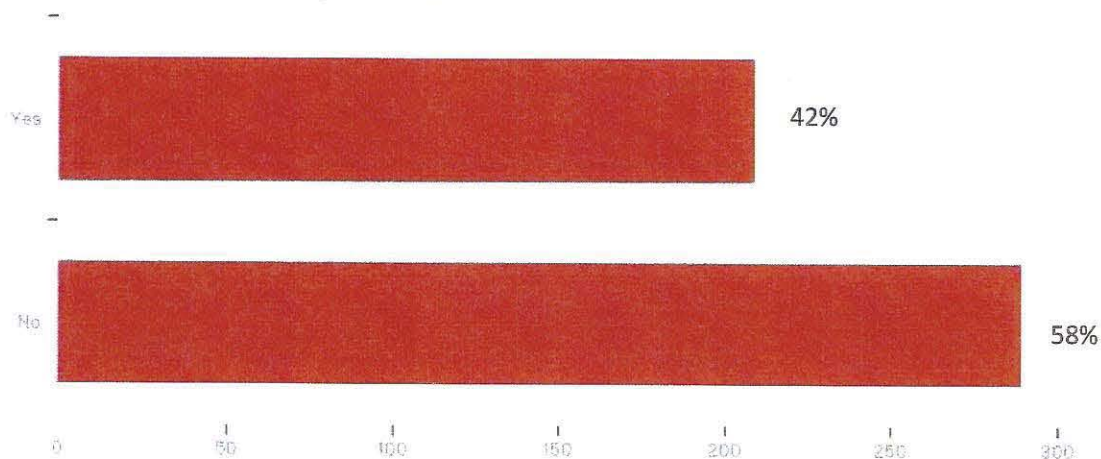
In your own words, what recruitment efforts have you personally experienced.

- "I have seen advertisements. Perhaps the most effective are non-licensing agency groups and non-profits who seek to support, recruit, and retain. Often times, these groups have access to potential families that traditional CBC's don't (in our area, Emerald Cost Orphan Care or Go Foster) Supporting the recruiting efforts of these groups would be beneficial. Also, CBC's partnering more with other licensing agencies like FBCH [Florida Baptist Children's Homes] or UMCH [United Methodist Children's

Home] (expanding licensing contracts etc). to gain better access to faith based community would be helpful. These organizations provide more support to licensed families that fill in gaps the CBC's have...increasing retention."

- None
- "I have not personally experienced any recruitment efforts."
- None really.
- "Very haphazard, no one knows where to turn, who to call, no centralization, no hub, no visible efforts - while it is a spoken priority it is not pulled together & led strategically. Needs a strategic plan especially when there are multiple licensing agencies. Lags in time frames from initial contact to class to license. Some agencies get numbers based on the foster parent wishing to work with that agency over the agency they were licensed with."

In your area/experience, the successful tool(s) for recruiting foster parents is/are (please select all that apply)
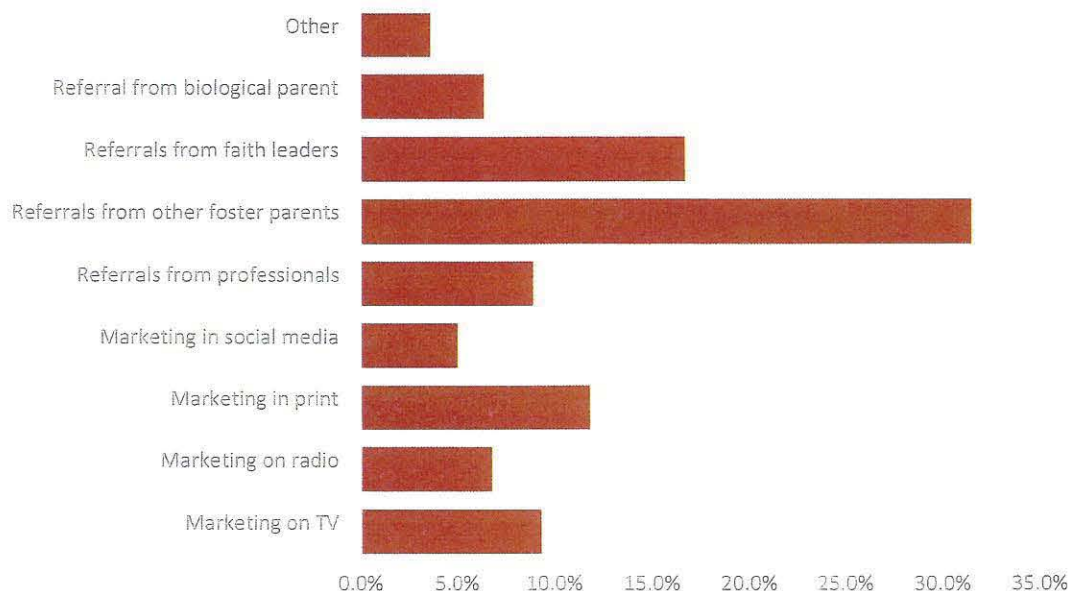
Retention

In your area/experience, the following factors impact foster home retention (please select all that apply):

Factors	Percent
The way transition plans are developed	13.3
Transportation of children to medical appointments	5.3
Transportation of children to behavioral health appointments	4.9
Transportation of children to parental visitation	10.5
The manner in which home visits are scheduled	11.9
Frequency of communication between child welfare staff and foster parents	17.5
Foster parent appreciation events	5.1
Foster parent organizations/support groups	8.2
Teaming with foster parents	9.4
Other	6.4

Please rate each of the following based on their impact on retention of foster families:
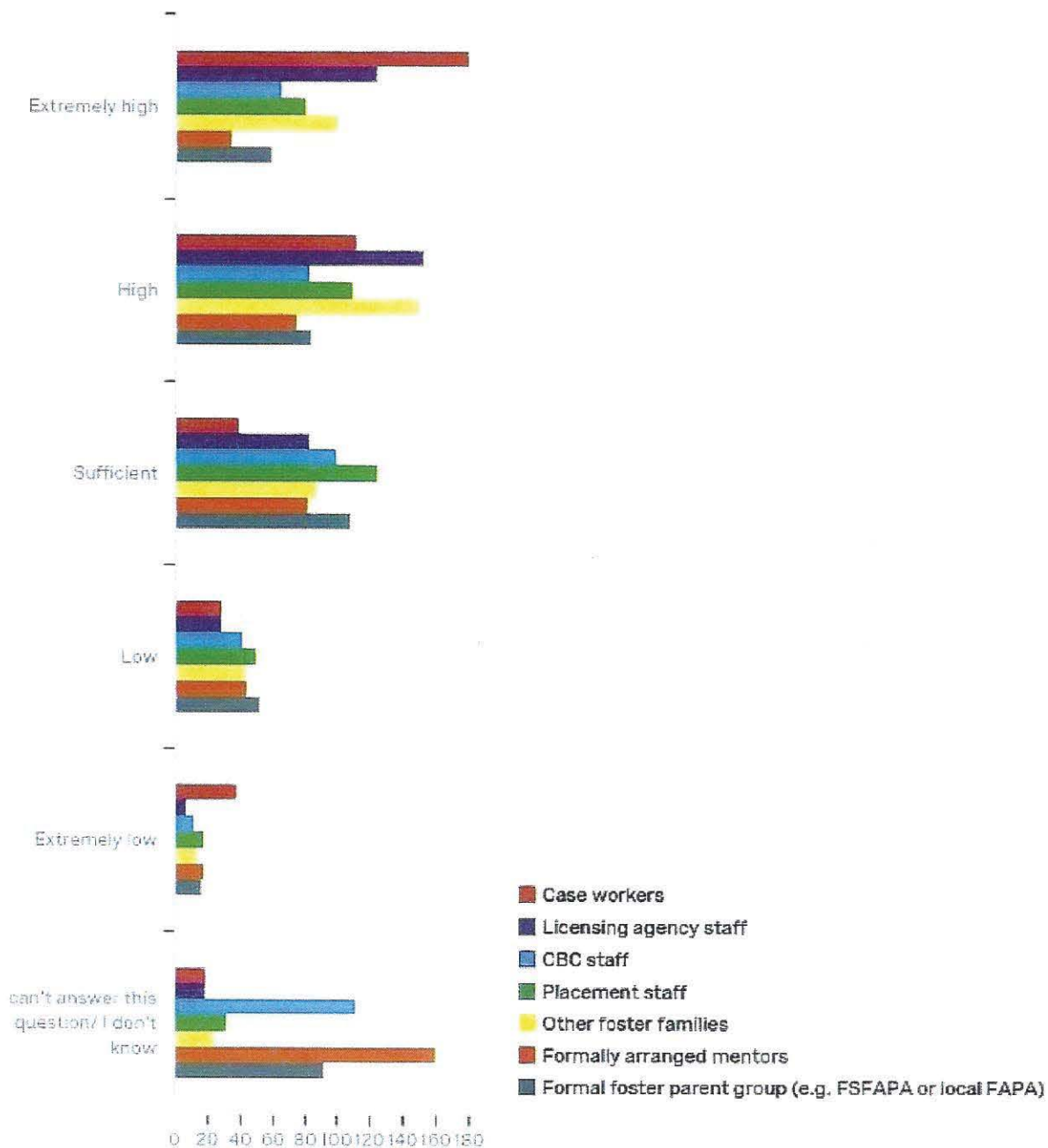
Legend:
- Case workers
- Licensing agency staff
- CBC staff
- Placement staff
- Other foster families
- Formally arranged mentors
- Formal foster parent group (e.g. FSFAPA or local FAPA)

Categories (top to bottom): Extremely high, High, Sufficient, Low, Extremely low, can't answer this question/ I don't know

X-axis: 0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

In your own words, how does your community based care lead agency or licensing agency support the retention of foster parents?

- "more frequent communications and doing something about the communication to right the problem would be very helpful."

- "I don't know"
- "The licensing agency tries to make sure they are available for a foster parent."
- "They encourage foster parents to attend FAPA [Foster/Adoptive Parent Association], they send foster parents to the Annual Education Conference, they provide Mentors, they give gift certificates to foster parents who've gone above and beyond. Very encouraging and helpful with questions"
- "When communication is high quality then retention is there."
- "The CBC and support the retention of foster parents by good communication - actually including the foster parents in the partnership plan. Placements can help with retention by reaching out and sending cards of thanks and encouragement to families that go above and beyond and families they know of that may be struggling. As far as we have experienced...they don't care. They don't care if we quit. We are 3 months from relicensing and still haven't done our 4 hours of classes...we would like to continue but may not be able to due to this."
- "There is one particular employee who has - whether she knows it or not - been vital to retaining us as foster parents. After hitting dead ends with child placement agencies and case workers who were uncommunicative, she was able to get us information we needed. Except for her actions, I haven't felt much effort has been put into retaining foster families."
- "They're overworked, meaning less time, assistance, communication with foster parents thus causing unnecessary problems. Particularly when it comes to experience with DCF investigators, their incomplete work makes our jobs so much more difficult causing foster parents to give up on the system the first time around."

What services, partnerships, or organizations were designed specifically to support foster parents?

- OSFCA [Orange/Seminole Foster Children's Association], OFCA [Ohio Family Care Association]
- LGBTQ Child Welfare Workgroup provides resources, education and legal aid for LGBTQ identified youth or anyone that is a party to their case.
- Foster parent support groups and KC [Kinship Care]
- Go foster
- Broward FAPA [Foster/Adoptive Parent Association]
- not sure
- "There are two foster parent associations in my area, there is also a foster parent workgroup/QPI [Quality Parenting Initiative] hosted by the CBC."
- Not sure
- FAPA meetings
- "very few, there is a monthly meeting for an hour."

- "Partnerships with Local Churches. The church members and the pastors do the support."
- "We have a Quality Parenting Initiative that works and supports foster parents."
- CBC foster parent liaisons who have foster parent experience
- Pride training and CMOs [Care Management Organization]

Licensing

In your area/experience, communication between foster families and the licensing agency is:
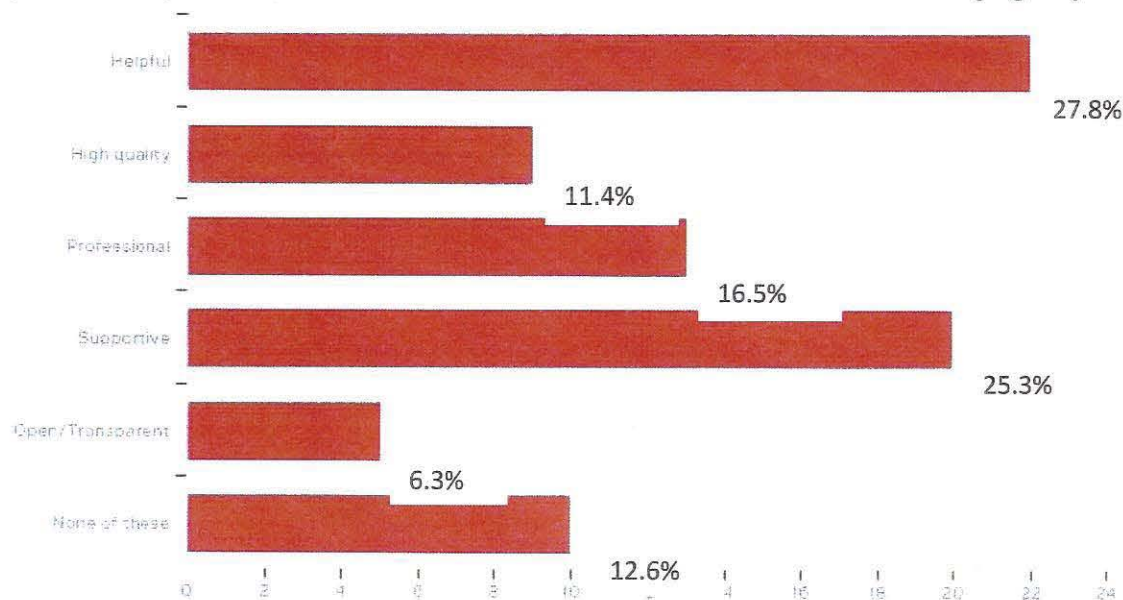
What efforts have you made to only license quality foster homes?
- "It is hard to know if the home is a " quality home" until a client is placed"
- "Our process is specific to caring for children with more severe mental health symptoms as we are an STFC [Specialized Therapeutic Foster Care] provider. The training is longer. We spend more time establishing rapport with the family and presenting potential scenarios as an STFC caregiver and facilitating activities for them to demonstrate how they would respond to such scenario. Online support groups like SCF [Super Cool Foster] and offline groups like FAPA."
- "screening process is more intensive; intensive quality assurance strategies."
- "This is a misleading question. All have value, some cannot meet statute criteria, this is where they would have a disqualifier. Because one person is of the opinion that a home is not 'quality' that should not be a rule out, there should be support to that. When you call it a quality home because they facilitate 3 visits a week

and work with the bio parent that is all well and good, but when it is a working foster parent who is unable to do that all the time, that does not make them any less quality nor should their economic state. Quality is in the nurturing of the child. This is where the thought process & recruitment is lacking. The quest for quality is not understood and the expectations are not realistic under the realms of normalcy. Simplest recruitment - generate an interest by increased awareness (collective beyond social media), cultivate the interest, court the person, engage, access, based on their ability not biased personal opinion."

- "In depth interviews, frequent visits to the home, we have teams that support the homes and all members are present in the home and work together to support the homes through each placement, extensive pre services and ongoing training including target specific training to improve skills and confidence. exit interviews and quality control standards."

- "The home study"

- "Completing licensing check list. However, because of the limitation on having to license a family that meets minimum requirement, it makes it hard to get a 100% of quality homes."

- "Screening out process"

Assessment of Quality

In your area/experience:

Chart categories (top to bottom): Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, I can't answer this question/ I don't know

X-axis: 0 5 10 15 20 25
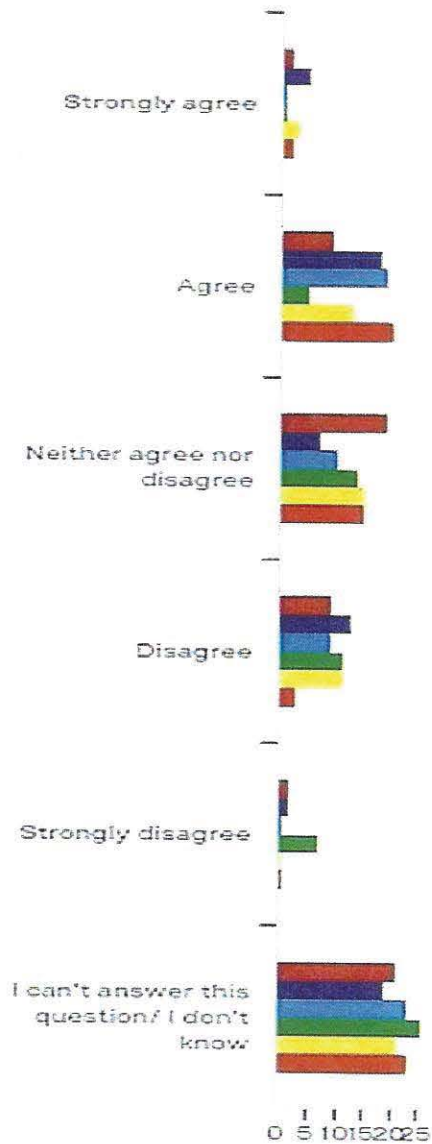
Legend:
- quality standards for foster homes exceed statute and/or rule.
- preservice training (QPT, PRIDE, MAPP, etc.) prepares foster parents
- trauma training is regularly provided to foster parents.
- trauma training is regularly provided to relative care givers.
- Trauma training is regularly provided to staff.
- foster parents are involved with a local foster parent support group.

What expectations should be placed on high-quality foster homes?

- Transporting to all appointments, and involving children in extracurricular activities"."
- "Transport the children to medical and dental appointments, co-parent (if possible), understand and practice trauma informed care, work in partnership with child welfare agencies HIGH standard of care for the children, the use of alternative discipline tactics"
- "The families must have a love and desire to help children in need. They also need to be flexible and open to working with many different groups and individuals all working toward the best interest of the child."
- "Maintain clean home, stable income that exceeds monthly expenses so to not have to wait for a monthly stipend to purchase clothing for a child, expectation that the foster parent will treat, incorporate and parent the child as if they were their own child i.e.: transport to regular medical, dental, mental health appointments, include in family vacations etc."
- "All our foster homes are licensed as high-quality foster homes as they meet all the standards for initial licensure. We expect all foster homes to equally be responsible in all fostering matters and to always uphold the highest levels of commitment and safety."
- "Work as a team with foster parents, case manager and providers Advocate who will stay in constant communication with the family."
- "Those outlined in the licensing contract work well."
- "All of the statutes met with the expectation that the foster parents work as a part of the professional team"
- "The expectations for any foster home is to provide a stable and loving environment for the children, to treat the children as they would their own children and to ensure the needs of the children are met."
- "to assure that they are protecting and nurturing children, meeting their developmental needs, supporting relationships with their bio families."
- "The expectation should be to look out for the best interest of the child as it pertains to permanency and stabilization. Caregivers should co-parent, ensure visitation with siblings and parents is occurring, and be patient and understanding with the child's behavior due to trauma and attachment. They should practice normalcy to ensure that the child is included in the caregiver's family vacations and gatherings. They should also ensure child is engaged in extracurricular activities. "
- "Maintain a clean, hazards free home. Provide trauma informed responses. "
- "Communicate and follow up if assistance is needed to meet the child's needs. Work in partnership with case managers, licensing and bio families."

- "Foster parents should understand that children placed in care are temporary placements whose primary objective is to have them reunify with their families if appropriate. They should understand that although some families are able to go from foster to adopt, they should not expect that to be the case in all instances. They should also research the agencies through which they are becoming licensed through as some agencies have more resources to provide to them than others."
- "Loving and nurturing environment"
- "Understanding of the trauma of children who are coming into care"
- "Working with bio parents for more successful reunifications"
- "responsiveness to their agency and the department, maintains the CRR [Child Resource Record] and record keeping, seeking out more training on their own, advocates for the foster child"
- "The parents should be expected to treat the children as their biological children, respect and empathy for the children and biological family."

How is customer service with foster parents emphasized in your system of care?

- "It is not "
- "customer service within regular foster care is reported to be inconsistent at best. "
- "It's not really. I feel it's strongly lacking and a huge part of retention."
- "The parents are told they are supported and a message of support is offered but the delivery is not there."
- "In my system of care, the need to work with and support foster parents is strongly stressed in various trainings, support groups and amongst agency leaders."

In your area/experience, quality standards for foster homes are clearly defined.

Yes — 64%

No — 36%
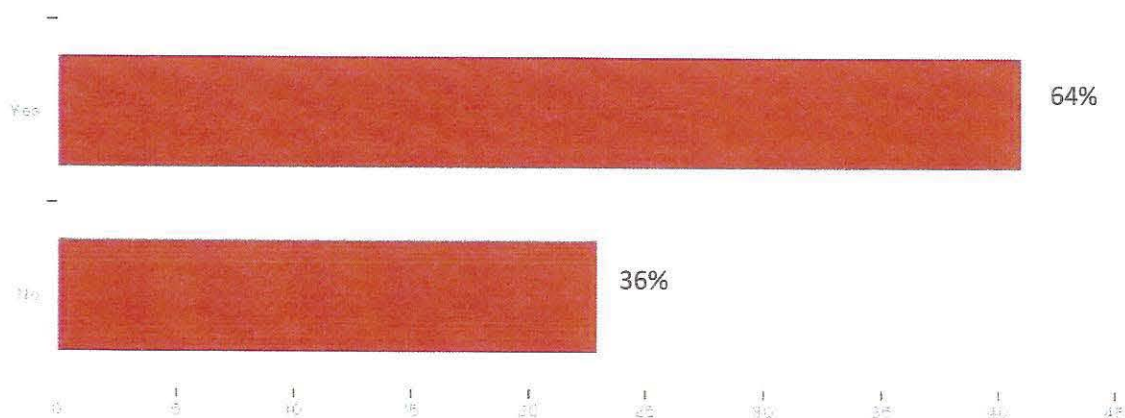
Please describe the quality standards

- "This is not my area, but I know that foster parents are required to have a complete background check done, their fingerprints processed, home-study done, and 8 hours of yearly training."
- Not sure
- Five Star System
- Licensing rule, and professional standards of practice.
- not sure
- "Outlined in documents **occasionally there are unspoken ones..."
- "Christ-follower in a local, healthy church. Following Jesus as a true disciple."
- Meeting the FAC [Florida Administrative Code] and other licensing requirements.
- code standards
- Providing a safe and nurturing environment for a child.
- "Space, income, co-parenting, extracurricular activities, seek additional training, professionalism, partnership"

In your own words, what expectations should be placed on high-quality foster homes?

- "Safe and healthy environment filled with love. "
- "Being a committed advocate for your kids: ensuring they get the help and resources they need, connecting them to the activities and events that are important to them; encouraging their contact with family (as appropriate); maintaining a sense of teamwork with their teacher and potential tutor."
- "Be a parent. Love children as if they were your own."
- "I think the standards are so much more stringent then they need to be!!! When I see the homes that these kids go back to, I feel like either standard for these kids placements (non foster) needs to be raised or standards for foster homes need to be relaxed somewhat. We almost gave up when we had to go thru the process."
- "Good clean home environment. One where FP [foster parent] can easily afford the child. I have often seen where a FP can't afford to "front the money" $30-40 to get a basic need for a child. Or a microwave breaks and FP can't afford a $60 microwave. These are red flags for the possible stability of the home."

In your area/experience, the following characteristics are helpful for identifying high-quality homes (please select all that apply).

#	Answer	Percent	Count
1	Education	8.52	220
2	Income	6.63	171
3	Home size	7.36	190
4	Number of biological children	3.64	94
5	Experience raising children	8.25	213
6	Faith	8.14	210
7	Church membership	2.52	65
8	Attends church at least once a month	1.74	45
9	Race	0.31	8
10	Sexual orientation	0.81	21
11	Family/friend support structure nearby	10.77	278
12	Community Involvement	5.50	142
13	Community activist	0.85	22
14	Strong advocate type	5.77	149
15	Active in outdoor recreation	1.55	40
16	Employment stability	9.92	256
17	Blue-collar job (field worker, line worker, outside work, mechanical, etc.)	0.85	22
18	White-collar job (management, leadership, office job, etc.)	1.01	26
19	High self-esteem	4.22	109
20	Believes anything is possible	6.74	174
21	Home school family	1.20	31
22	Artistic	0.74	19
23	Is a booster/volunteer for local school/sports team	0.74	19
24	Other (please specify)	2.21	57
	Total	100	2581

"Other" (representative selection)

- "love, all it takes for a high-quality foster home is love and feeling appreciated and engaged in the system where the child's best interest is in mind"
- "Love to nurture and care for children"
- "These attributes are too specific...People looking to make a difference in their community period."
- "I am retired; participate in many things, have many interests, but I don't think any of the above can prove a good foster parent or not. If they are not strong advocates, their caseworker will fight for the child. Many families are just good people, wanting to do good for the kids."

What pre-service foster parent training curriculum did you use?
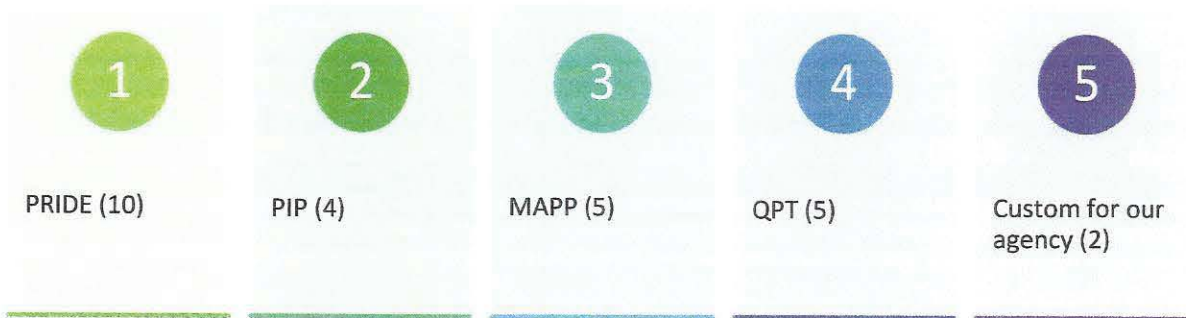
1	2	3	4	5
PRIDE (10)	PIP (4)	MAPP (5)	QPT (5)	Custom for our agency (2)

Did you supplement this curriculum during pre-service foster parent training?

Yes   28.6%

No   71.3%

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35   40   45   50   55
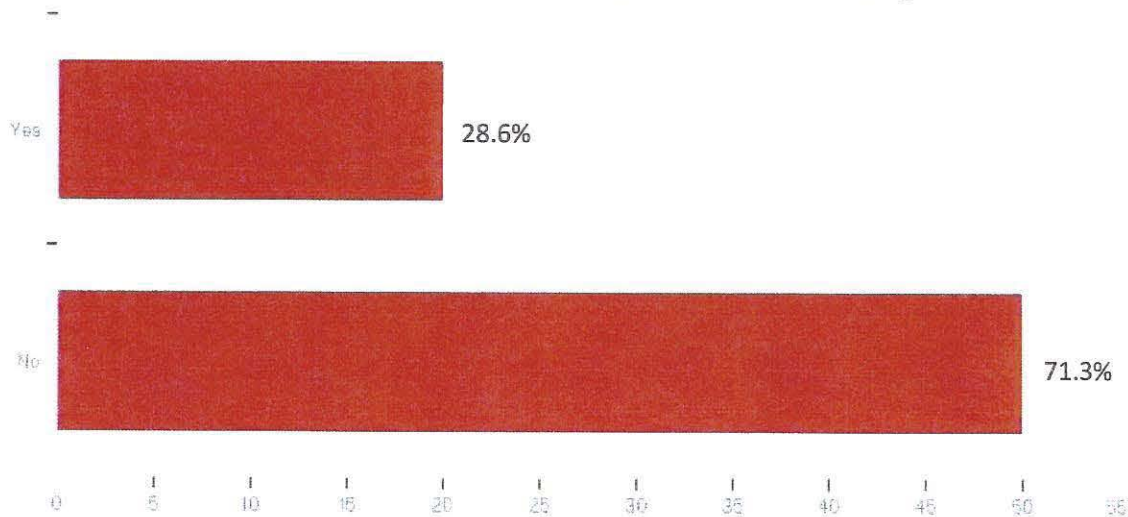
Barriers to Quality

What barriers do you face to effective placement?

- Lack of homes
- Too many children placed in family foster home settings.
- "Too few homes too many children not able to match the child to family - child in home with available bed."
- "Not enough licensed homes, foster homes being too full, and children having too many behaviors."
- "People are not always willing to give up their entire way of life, beliefs and culture in order to cater to the child welfare system that is often times very restrictive."
- "Not enough homes for teenagers and babies. Most people want toddlers and children."

What barriers do you face to effective retention?

- "Many families struggle when children are required to transition from STFC level of care to less or more restrictive level of care. Dealing with loss related issues impacts retention."
- "Not sure lack of communication between foster care parents and social workers. Lack of communication between GAL's and social workers."
- "As a two time foster/adoptive parent the biggest problem for retention is the roller coaster of time children are in your home with their cases knocked down the road over and over again. 4 years is to long for a child whose parents never completed one thing on their case plan to be stuck in the system. Bio parents should have rights and in most cases, they should get a case plan; however, the children's right need to be equal to the parents. How can you expect FP to love and protect a child while bios continue to hurt them only to let the children go back home. I can't answer this. The question does not allow for an N/A"
- Extensive paperwork
- "The level of demands, rules and restrictions placed on foster parents, also unrealistic expectations for the potential to adopt. In addition, many foster parents have unrealistic expectations for the demands of a foster parent in dealing with children who have been through extreme trauma, educational neglect, and other situations that have caused behavioral/educational difficulties."
- "The CBC turnover in workers results in overworked, ineffective workers in the homes. These under prepared workers cannot support their assigned children, often do not know how to interact with foster parents, cannot get the needs of the child met and add due stress to the families and they are not able to be proactive to avoid troubles. Such as asking a foster parent to supervise visitation when bio family has threatened the foster parent. Where is the judgment? I have to encapsulate a minimum 12-15 issues to a supervisor or higher for resolutions at least weekly."
- "There are not enough supports for the foster homes and they are treated poorly when they ask for day care, clothing, assistance with transportation because they have to work at a time of an appointment they did not schedule"
- "expecting all situations to fit in a made to fit basket. Some children need more or something unique if we address the need the parents will stay. We fail to everybody loses."
- Poor treatment
- Lack of communication with caseworkers and child protective investigators

What barriers do you face to effective licensing?

- "When families are recruited the Network fails to follow through with the process and we end up losing a potential home."
- "Individuals with background issues, not enough space in home for our children, individuals whom are not financially capable, individuals whom express they have to get paid a certain board rate in order to foster, Families that are financially driven or have

inappropriate homes in regards to cleanliness. Untimely exemption determinations on the part of DCF."

- "unrealistic expectations of prospective resource parents, time frames"
- "Insufficient amounts of available homes"
- "Poor communication from case management and foster parents do not have a voice about the children even though they know them best"
- "Legalities. Previous abuse reports with the case closed "not substantiated" raises concerns for the agency but is hard to prove possible future harm for a child."
- "Caregivers not wanting to transport clients to appointments and visitations"

What barriers do you face to effective recruitment?

- Staff, finances, and time.
- "Language barrier. We have Spanish speaking families that want to become foster families and otherwise meet criteria. However, we are unable to place in their homes as many of the children in need do not speak Spanish. The incredibly low quality of CA's. The lack of welcoming and the low employee satisfaction ratings of their jobs and the agency. "
- Not sure
- "Not enough money to sign up for certain events. Not enough money to make our table look presentable at events. Hands tied as far as social media and trusting us to be post things on behalf of our agency."
- "Misconceptions about youth in care."
- "The level of demands, rules and restrictions placed on foster parents, also unrealistic expectations for the potential to adopt."
- "Segregated, not centralized, haphazard, no clear line of contact, no clear knowledge of source of options, each agency is out to meet their own goals instead of a collective energy. Simply look it up online in the various areas & you will see what I mean - play with it via Google search. Look at what you find and see if you understand what it means if you weren't in the biz."
- "The bad rap fostering has due to so many unhappy foster parents in the larger CBC system, no tools to offer immediate relief is a bad fit happens or the child needs exceed the foster parents' skills, child care has been removed so now it costs parents to foster, the invasive unsupportive manners of the CBC licensing folks as if everyone is bad until proven good and they have to keep proving it over and over."
- "Another serious barrier in this community is the GAL [Guardian ad Litem] office who act as if they are self-appointed investigators. They treat every foster parent and support staff has if they are all criminals that just have not been caught yet. Further, they expect everyone to adhere to their standards which are NOT culturally sensitive. Foster parents are not all wealthy, well educated, or worldly. That does not make them bad parents. In fact, it often makes them more tolerant, more committed and more sensitive. The GAL office needs serious oversight and should not be held harmless."
- Personnel

To the best of your knowledge, what are the top three reasons for foster home closures in the last year?

1	2	3
adoption	family issues	no longer interested
ADOPTION	LACK OF SPACE	MOVE
Case management	Personal	Child behaviors
issues with case management	feelings of lack of support	personal issues
Adoption	Overwhelmed	Medical issues
case management lack of: communication/ support/ respect	Personal reasons to focus on family / family related	
Caseworkers	Adoptions	Burnout
Lack of Support	Children's Behavior	Foster Parent Lack of understanding children in care.
ill equipt to handle behaviors	lack of support	not paid enough
ICPC child specific	life happened	foster was too hard
adoption	laqck of support	bad case managemnet
adoption	abuse reports	disillusioned and aggravation by lack of support or inability to make a difference
bad casemanagement	adoption	lack of support
case management	lack of communication	personal issues
Adoption	Relocation	Family changes
adoption	retired	frustration
adoption	move out of area	personal/health
Health	Adoption	
moving to a better agency	adoption	was not happy with cbc
personal issues	adoption	medical issues
Mistreatment from CMO	Lack of support	Frustration with the system
verified allegations	move out of state	loos of interest
life changes	burned out	quality concerns
retirement	moving	adoption
personal life (illness)	employment (working too much)	old
Fostering expierence was not what they expected	moving	no longer wanting to foster

Every participant was asked to read the following scenario and then answer the questions:

On payday [Robert] spent time with friends drinking and watching the game. After the game, he went home and was in a disagreement with his girlfriend [Amy]. The next day at school [Amy]'s daughter had a black eye and told the teacher her mom and boyfriend were in a fight and she tried to stop the fight. [Robert] accidentally hit her when she got in the way and that's why she has a black eye. The teacher, who is a mandatory reporter, calls the hotline and reports a suspected child abuse. After interviewing the child, [Amy] and [Robert], the social services investigator determines the child is not safe and they have been put into foster care. Neither [Robert] or [Amy] deny what happened and would like to change this, but neither can take time off from work to seek counseling and [Robert] can't move out because he doesn't have enough money for a deposit or utilities on his own.

RESPONSES:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor
disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

I can't answer this
question/ I don't
know

	The children are in danger.
	Robert is responsible for what happened.
	Amy is responsible for what happened.
	The teacher is responsible for what happened.
	Amy can easily get her children back.
	The system would successfully solve this problem within 6 months.
	The system would successfully solve this problem within 12 months.
	The system would successfully solve this problem within 18 months.
	The system would successfully solve this problem within 24 months.
	If I were a part of this case I could help Amy.
	The child in this case will probably be reunified.
	The child in this case will probably be adopted.
	The child in this case will probably age out of the system.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment

Only 42 percent of respondents reported using formal assessments to develop targeted recruitment practices to find high-quality foster families. The majority of respondents did not share personal stories of recruitment efforts. Rather, they indicated that they were aware of local advertising and a very haphazard response to those who responded to recruitment campaigns. A need was voiced for a quicker response to interested applicants, a more streamlined application process, and less lag time between initial interest and actual fostering.

Approximately one-third (35.5%) of respondents identified "referrals from other foster parents" as a successful tool for recruiting foster parents, followed by "referral by faith leaders" (17%). Overall, respondents reported that the opinions and experiences of foster parents had the greatest influence on their decision to foster. Likewise, many identified faith communities as being influential in their decision to become foster parents.

Recommendations:

- Given that research shows (Berrick, et al., 2011) that targeted recruitment is an important aspect of identifying quality foster families, it is recommended that Florida develop formal tools that are routinely used in the marketing and recruitment of high-quality foster homes.
- Some recruitment efforts should continue to be targeted to certain groups. Research suggests that recruiting people who are in academic programs such as, health science, psychology, and social work could enhance the caliber of foster care and retention.

Retention

Respondents noted that foster home retention was most influenced by the following three factors: frequency of communication between child welfare staff and foster parents (17.5%), the way transition plans are developed (13.3%), and the manner in which home visits are scheduled (11.9%). Having the least influence on retention was foster parent appreciation events (5.1%). When asked to rate the following based on their impact on retention of foster families, participants responded that case managers and licensing staff had the greatest impact, although other foster parents were identified as having a major role in retention in three categories from extremely high to sufficient. As with recruitment, other foster parents are key supports in the function of retention.

When asked "how does your community based care lead agency or licensing agency support the retention of foster parents," participants consistently rated communication between agency and foster family as essential to successful retention. Conversely, participants identified the lack of communication as a prime contributor to high foster family turnover. Lastly, respondents were asked what services, partnerships, or organizations were designed specifically to support foster parents? Foster and Adoptive Families Associations were cited most frequently; overall, however, the responses were limited in scope and suggest there may be a paucity of diverse methods of support for foster families.

The question, "What barriers do you face to effective retention?" met with diverse responses. Some focused on the need for better communication between CBCs and foster parents and feeling left out of the child welfare decision-making process. Foster parents become attached to the children who are often in their care for years and experience issues of loss that ultimately affects retention. Unresolved grief is indicative of another retention issue: high worker turnover. Inexperienced, overworked and underpaid case managers do not have the time or skills to provide the supports needed by grieving families. In addition, the behaviors displayed by traumatized children can be difficult to manage and the expectations seem unrealistic that each family should be able to intervene effectively on behalf of the traumatized child without specialized training and timely ongoing support.

Recommendation:

- A significant amount of respondents reported the need for better communication between agencies and foster parents and the need for more support from agencies. Research also confirms this need for support and communication (Geiger et al., 2013, 2017; Randle et al., 2017); therefore, it is recommended that this particular retention inhibitor be researched in a target manner so that practical solutions can be implemented.

Licensing

Participants were asked to rate the communication between foster families and the licensing agency on helpfulness, high quality, professionalism, supportiveness, and openness /transparency. Approximately 25% of respondents found the communication helpful and supportive respectively. Whereas, only 6.3% found communication to be open/transparent. The lack of transparent communication is identified again when participants are asked about barriers to retention. The need for open, honest communication about the requirements of the child(ren) being placed in the home appears to be a key component in creating and maintaining foster parent satisfaction.

All respondents were asked to identify efforts made to only license quality foster homes. The responses indicate the lack of a definition for what is meant by "quality foster home." For the licensing agencies, most of the comments reflect current recruitment and training practices rather than identify innovative efforts being made to determine those who may be or become *quality* foster parents. The statement that "It is hard to know if the home is a 'quality home' until a client is placed" is indicative of the lack of a comprehensive (and required) assessment tool used to identify high quality homes or those who display characteristics of highly effective parenting. One respondent noted that everyone who meets the minimum standards is eligible to become a foster parent thus complicating the effort to recruit only high-quality homes. There may be uncertainty on behalf of licensing staff if the standards need to be raised for all potential homes or if there is meant to be "tiers" of quality.

Recommendation:

- DCF should utilize the data from this survey and research review to create a clear definition of "quality home," such that child welfare agencies could begin to partner with stakeholders on establishing a level of quality in the licensing process.

Assessment of Quality

Regarding quality, respondents were asked if in their experience quality standards for foster homes exceed statute and/or rule. Most respondents stated that they agreed with this statement, neither agreed nor disagreed, or they did not know. The remaining selected disagree and fewer selected strongly agree or strongly disagree. The same held true for all of following statements: preservice training prepares foster parents for placement, trauma training is regularly provided to foster parents, trauma training is regularly provided to relative caregivers, trauma training is regularly provided to staff, and foster parents are regularly involved with foster parent support groups. Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the responses were the many who selected that they could not answer the question or did not know. It may be that the data was analyzed in the aggregate and did not distinguish among the roles of the respondents.

Participants were asked what expectations should be placed on high-quality foster homes. There were many responses to this question. The majority stated that a clean and safe home and that loving the foster child and treating him or her as one's own were essential to quality. Likewise, the foster parents' involvement with the child welfare team, providing transportation, and understanding the impact of trauma on a child's behavior were all hallmarks of a high-quality foster home. Because reunification was generally the case plan goal, foster parents should work well with the biological caregivers. One comment, "All our foster homes are licensed as high-quality foster homes as they meet all the standards for initial licensure. We expect all foster homes to equally be responsible in all fostering matters and to always uphold the highest levels of commitment and safety," reflected a general confusion over the term "high-quality" foster homes. Is a foster parent high quality if they meet the statute/rule or is there an additional dimension required to be designated as such?

There was limited response to the question "How is customer service with foster parents emphasized in your system of care?" Nevertheless, the overall sentiment is that customer service is lacking. What is meant by customer service is not clearly defined but given that it may represent good communication, support, and responsiveness to foster parents then this issue should be explored further. Understanding what good customer service would look like to foster parents could help to clarify some of the barriers to retention and improve client relations.

The majority of respondents (64%) believe that quality standards for foster homes are clearly defined. When asked to describe the quality standards the picture becomes less clear. The answers generally reflect the belief that the licensing rules and standards of practice define quality. The question was followed up by asking respondents what expectations *should* be placed on high-quality foster homes? The responses indicate that a safe and loving home is paramount to quality. Advocacy for the child in care is also identified as a hallmark of quality. There was some concern mentioned over what are considered too stringent standards that keep qualified foster parents out of the system while children are returned to less than satisfactory

biological families. Financial stability of the foster home was also identified as a component of quality.

Twenty-three characteristics were listed as potential identifiers for high-quality homes. Respondents were asked to select as many as apply. The results were spread out fairly evenly across the choices. Only one characteristic, "family/friend support structure nearby" garnered more than 10 percent of the selections, followed by "employment stability" (9.92%). Items that were seen as having little effect on quality included "Race" (.31%), "Artistic" (.74%), "Is a booster/volunteer for local school/sports team" (.74%) and "Sexual orientation" (.81%). Although faith communities were often mentioned in the context of recruitment, as an identifier of high quality, "church membership" (2.52%) and "attends church at least monthly (1.74%) were seen as poor indicators of high-quality homes. The write in option for "other" echoed earlier results that indicated the capacity for love and nurturance should be the prime identifiers of a high-quality home.

Recommendations:

- When there is a clear and concise definition of the state of Florida's quality standard for foster parents, assessment tools should be created, validated and incorporated into the licensing process.
- There should be effort in creating assessment tools that are not cumbersome, so that there is no extra burden on a process that is already labor intensive and time sensitive.

Barriers to Quality

Respondents were asked for their opinion on several barriers to high-quality care. When asked "What barriers do you face to effective recruitment?" the most common responses were a lack of personnel, finances and time. The lack of quality case managers was also cited. Without sufficient financing, staff feel they cannot attend recruitment opportunities or, if they do, their tables are not competitive with other agencies presentations. Recruitment staff feel stymied over introducing newer recruitment strategies like social media since there are strict protocol and bureaucratic hurdles for staff who want to post on behalf of the agency. Some respondents noted a lack of centralization for people who have an interest in fostering. They often go to an agency website that offers no means of direct contact or clear definition of the fostering process. It can be confusing to viewers and they may quickly lose interest in the project. Last, fostering has a "bad rap" due to unhappy foster parents in the CBC system. This is especially troubling because foster parents have been identified as highly influential recruiters.

Respondents were asked "What barriers do you face to effective licensing?" The responses indicate a prior theme of a recruiting process that is slow to respond to interested parties and too few homes applying to become foster parents. At times, the standards make it difficult to license a home where there are financial barriers or families request higher compensation. Potential foster parents may be unwilling to provide essential services such as transportation to appointments and visitations. Unrealistic timeframes on the part of interested parents makes them lose interest before completing all of steps in licensing process.

Respondents were asked "What barriers do you face to effective placement?" The most frequently cited barrier was the lack of available foster homes. This results in children being placed in homes with vacancies rather than in homes where the children's needs are matched to foster parents' strengths. Foster youth unanimously responded, "extremely low," to the question "There are enough homes in your area to meet the needs of children... Ages 12-18." This corresponds to the adults in the survey who noted a need for homes willing to foster teens and infants.

 "To the best of your knowledge, what are the top three reasons for foster home closures in the last year?" Many responses were given to this question. The most salient (approximately 50%) were foster home closures due to adoption and lack of support/communication/respect from the CBC. Other features included families whose expectations were not met, child behaviors, burnout, and personal reasons such as illness or retirement. Although foster-to-adopt may have been a case plan goal and hence a positive outcome the other issues raised cause concern. Clearly, CBCs must address the problem of communication and support between case managers and foster parents. This may help to alleviate other reasons for case closure such as burnout, feeling overwhelmed, and difficulty managing challenging behaviors.

Recommendations:

- The foster care process and licensing procedures should be clearly articulated and easily navigated on DCF's website.
- Foster parent "mentors" or "peer supports" (fellow foster parents) should be formally utilized in order to fill in the support gaps for newer foster parents or long-term foster parents who need additional support (Rhodes, et al., 2017).

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LICENSING STANDARDS CHECKLIST FOR
24-HOUR FAMILY CARE 65C-13

Check One: ☐ Initial Licensing Standards Checklist ☐ Relicensing Standards Checklist ☐ Amendment

Check One: ☐ Foster ☐ Shelter ☐ Therapeutic ☐ Dual ☐ Respite ☐ Therapeutic/IRT

Name of Substitute Parent(s)	Home Phone Number	Work Phone Number

Address of Substitute Parent(s): Street Number/Apt. No.	City	State	Zip Code

Child Placing Agency (Supervising Agency)	Licensing Counselor (Supervising Agency)

There are 4 sections to this checklist:
- A. **FORMS** requiring verification of completion
- B. **OBSERVATIONS** requiring verification of compliance
- C. **INFORMATION GATHERED** required content to be included in the Family Assessment
- D. **OTHER REQUIREMENTS** of responsibility

Status Codes:
C – Compliance
N/C – Non-Compliance: Items marked N/C require a written request for a waiver. Requests for waivers of licensing standards must be in writing and submitted to the approving authority with a copy of the waiver attached.
N/A – Not Applicable: Any N/A entry requires an explanation.

"*IN*" indicates that the standard applies to initial licensing only. "*RL*" indicates that the standard applies to relicensing only. Items not marked with "*IN*" or "*RL*" apply to initial licensing and relicensing.

A. FORMS requiring verification of completion (current numbered forms available in DCF Forms on Internet)		
STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (disclose results)
1. Application for License to Provide Out-of- Home Care for Dependent Children (CF-FSP 5007).		
2. Release of Information for Foster Parent or Adoptive Parent Application (CF-FSP 5090) signed by applicant(s) and adult household members.		
3 Affidavit of Good Moral Character (CF 1649) signed by each applicant and adult household member being screened and notarized by all persons age 18 or older. *IN*		
4. Employment history check obtained. If current employment is less than two consecutive years in duration, secondary employment references shall be obtained. *IN*		
5. Confidentiality Agreement (CF-FSP 5087).		
6. Copy of Partnership Plan between the supervising agency, lead agency and potential licensed out-of-home caregiver. If the home is being licensed by a non-contracted agency, the agreement will be between the supervising agency and the potential licensed out-of-home caregiver.		
7. Authorization for Release of Health and Medical Information for Prospective Foster or Adoptive Parents (CF-FSP 5230).		
8. Floor plan documented. *IN*		
9. Description of any household pets, exotic pets, or livestock including immunization verification. Animals requiring vaccinations shall be current.		
10. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall have all vehicles insured. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall not allow foster children to be transported by any person not possessing a valid diver's license or auto insurance.		
11. Documentation of verification of legal residency for applicants not born in the United States. *IN*		

STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (disclose results)
12. Verification of financial capability and income.		
13. Satisfactory home environmental health inspection report form completed by the a licensing specialist who has been trained by the state or local health department to conduct such inspections.		
14. A Fire Inspection report (where required by zoning laws) shall be provided to the licensing authority for review when requesting issuance of a family foster home license.		
15. Family foster homes located in counties designated by the Department of Community Affairs Florida Radon Protection Map Categories as "intermediate" or "elevated Radon Potential" areas shall be tested to determine the level of indoor radon as required in Section 404.056, F.S. Radon levels shall be at a level which does not affect the safety and well-being of children in the home. **IN** Upon initial submission the file must contain documentation of Radon testing results.		
16. Re-testing of licensed family foster homes for radon gas shall take place as required in Section 404.056, F.S. Radon testing results (if applicable) shall be provided to the licensing authority when requesting re-licensure of a family foster home. **RL**		
17. A minimum of 21 hours of approved pre-service training completed. **IN**		
18. Prior to the renewal of a license, each licensed out of home caregiver shall successfully complete at least 8 hours of approved in-service training. Document in FSFN a list of all applicable training, including dates, number of hours and topics. **RL**		
19. The supervising agency shall conduct a minimum of one face-to- face visit to the home and interview all household members prior to re-licensure. **RL**		
20. There are no more than two infants under 2 years of age in the home. Assessment approvals for no more than two infants under twenty-four months shall be given prior to placement in writing by the Regional Administrator or Chief Executive Officer of the CBC lead agency only to accommodate a child in four specific situations, including the licensed out-of-home caregiver's child.		
21. Therapeutic foster homes are limited to the placement of two children.		
22. There are no more than five children in the home (including the substitute care parents' own children in the home) unless the home is being licensed as a child specific license for a sibling group larger than five. Assessment approvals for the rule of five shall be given prior to placement in writing by the Regional Administrator or Chief Executive Officer of the CBC lead agency only to accommodate a child in four specific situations.		
23. Licensed out-of-home caregivers that have contracted with a lead agency are authorized by Section 409.1671, F.S., to provide child care as a Licensed Family day Care Home, as defined in Section 402.302(7), F.S., if they choose to do so and meet the requirements for licensing. A dually licensed foster home cannot provide care for more than five children, including biological, foster, and adopted children. Therapeutic or Medical Foster homes cannot be dually licensed. Hours of operation shall only occur between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.		

B. OBSERVATIONS requiring verification of compliance

STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (disclose results)
1. Storage of guns shall comply with the requirements in Section 790.174, F.S.		
2. All medications, poisonous chemicals, and cleaning materials must be in a locked place, inaccessible to children. Hooks, child safety latches and other baby proof devices do not qualify as locked storage.		
3. A First Aid kit must be available and accessible.		
4. Alcoholic beverages should be stored out of reach of small children.		
5. All animals shall be well cared for and maintained.		
6. Children's access to potentially dangerous animals must be restricted.		
7. Toys and equipment must be clean and sanitary.		
8. Access to a telephone must be immediately available for use in emergencies.		
9. The home must be free from fire hazards.		
10. All combustible items must be stored away from sources of heat.		
11. The home must not be heated by unvented oil or gas heaters unless equipped with an oxygen depletion sensor and carbon monoxide alarm.		
12. An evacuation plan is posted in a conspicuous place and shared with the children		
13. Fire drills are held at least two times a year and log shall be documented by the foster parent including the date, the beginning and ending time, the specific location and the participant's names.　　　*RL*		
14. All fireplaces, space heaters, steam radiators and hot surfaces must be shielded against accidental contact. A barrier shall restrict access by children less than six years of age.		
15. Except in a disaster, extension cords cannot extend from one room to another. Multiple electric outlet adapters shall not be used for more than two extensions at one time		
16. Bedrooms above ground level must have a means of escape that will allow for safe exit. Each bedroom must have two means of exit.		
17. The home is equipped with an operating smoke alarm in each bedroom area and one on each floor.		
18. The home is equipped with an inspected and tagged portable chemical fire extinguisher adjacent to the kitchen, size 2A10BC and for each floor of the home.		
19. The home is equipped with exits; stairways and hallways shall not be used for storage or otherwise obstructed.		
20. The home is equipped with locks on all doors and are capable of being opened from inside. There must be two exits in the home.		
21. The home is equipped with each bedroom having two means of exit in case of emergency. If the home is equipped with burglar bars, the caregiver must demonstrate that: 　(a) The burglar bars can be released to allow exit. A key placed near the window does not qualify as an approved emergency release method. 　(b) Age appropriate training on opening of the burglar bars shall be provided to each child upon placement.		Type of emergency release listed on the bars:
22. The home must be clean and free of hazards to the health and physical well being of the family.		

STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (disclose results)
23. The exterior of the home and premises must be free from objects, materials, and conditions which constitute a danger to children. All garbage and trash shall be covered and removed regularly. There shall not be large, potentially dangerous items stored in the safe outdoor play area such as refrigerators, stacks of lumber and unregistered vehicles or boats.		
24. The home must have a safe outdoor play area as part of the property or within reasonable walking distance. All outdoor play equipment shall be kept in good repair. If the home is located on a busy street, there shall be a safety plan for supervision.		
25. SWIMMING POOLS (If no pool, skip this section.) **In Ground Swimming Pools.** Swimming pools shall have a barrier on all sides at least four feet high. The barrier may consist of the house plus a fence on the remaining sides or fence enclosing the pool. If a wall of a dwelling serves as part of the barrier, it must **not** contain any door or window that opens to provide access to the swimming pool. **Above Ground Pools.** If the sides of an above ground pool are four feet tall, they may be used as the barrier for that pool. Swimming pools shall be equipped with one of the following life saving devices: ring buoy; rescue tube; flotation device with a rope; or a shepherd's hook of sufficient length to cover the area.		
26. All access through the barrier of an in ground or above ground swimming pool must have one of the following safety features:		
a. Alarm		
b. Key lock		
c. Self-locking doors		
d. Bolt lock or other lock not accessible to children		
27. Above ground or in ground, when the swimming pool is not in use, all entry points must be locked.		
28. Steps or ladders leading to above ground pools must be secured, locked or removed when the pool is not in use.		
29. Hot tubs and spas not physically connected to an in-ground pool shall be required to have a safety cover that is locked when not in use.		
30. All Swimming pools must be equipped with one of the following life-saving devices (specify which one):		
a. Ring buoy		
b. Rescue tube		
c. Floatation device with a rope attached.		
d. Shepherd's hook of sufficient length to cover the area		
31. Foster parents and children who are placed in family foster homes which are adjacent to any body of water or that have swimming pool shall be instructed in water safety.		
32. Children shall be supervised visually at all times when they are in close proximity to any body of water. Access to swimming pools and bodies of water shall be restricted when supervision is not available and children shall never be left to swim alone.		

STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (disclose results)
33. Wading pools shall be set up and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. Wading pools shall be emptied and stored when not in use and shall be filled with clean water before each use.		
34. Each child must be provided with adequate storage space for personal belongings and a designated space for hanging clothes in or near the bedroom occupied by the child.		
35. Bedrooms shall have adequate space for the number of children sleeping in the room.		
36. Each child shall be provided with a clean, comfortable, permanent bed and mattress of his/her own. No infant will be allowed to sleep in a drop side crib. All cribs shall be maintained in good and safe condition and have a clean and comfortable mattress that fits snugly in the crib frame. Cribs shall not be placed close to windows with curtains or cords in which the child might become entangled. [		

37. Sleeping Composition
    a. Male/female over 36 months cannot share a room
    b. Infants under 12 months old can share a room with an adult, but must have their own crib.
    c. No child over 12 months may share a bed with an adult unless specific conditions are met.		

C. Information in this section must be documented in the Home Study

STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (evaluate information in assessment)
1. Appropriate and timely criminal history checks shall be completed before an applicant shall be licensed as an out-of-home caregiver, and before any children are placed in the home.		
2. Local criminal records check completed on all persons over the age of 12 who live in the home.		
3. Records of any responses to the home by law enforcement that did not result in criminal charges or 911 calls.		

4. For children between the ages of 12 and 18, the background screening shall be limited to FDLE and does not require fingerprinting.
   a. Fingerprinting has been completed on all persons age 18, turning 18 or older who reside in the home.
   b. Young adults age 18 through 22 who are receiving services through Chapter 65C-31, F.A.C. and who have had no break in service provision are not required to be screened.
   c. New adults residing in the household. All new household members shall be fingerprinted within 5 days of residence and those fingerprints shall be submitted to FDLE within 5 days of receiving the fingerprints by the supervising agency.		

5. FDLE criminal records check obtained every 5 years. *RL*		
6. A prospective out-of-home caregiver shall ensure that any previous licensing, registration or certification as an out-of-home caregiver in Florida or in any other state or country be considered. *IN*		
7. Records checks through the department's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) regarding child abuse and neglect investigations. .		
8. If the applicant or any other adult household member has resided in any other state over the past five years, requests for abuse and neglect histories must be made of those states, and the results of such requests included with the application packet.		
9. Civil court records checks regarding domestic violence complaints and orders of protection.		
10. Three satisfactory personal references obtained. References shall not be related to the applicant being screened and shall have known the applicant for at least two years. Reference responses may be obtained in writing or documented by the supervising agency staff. *IN*		
11. School reference obtained on all school age children in foster home. References shall be obtained from the childcare provider of any preschool age child who is enrolled in a childcare program. *IN*		
12. For re-licensing, two community reference checks using the "Quality of Licensed Caregiver's Home – Community Input" form (CF-FSP 5225). *RL*		
13. The supervising agency responsible for completing the relicensing home study shall obtain and review the "Case Manager/Case Worker Review of Foster Parent" form (CF-FSP 5223). *RL*		
14. The license out of home caregiver shall not have driving violations less than five years old on file with the Department of Motor Vehicles, which relate to driving under the influence of alcohol, or drugs. A copy of the licensed out of home caregivers record shall be provided to the licensing authority at the time of initial licensure and at each relicensure.		

STANDARD	STATUS	COMMENTS (evaluate information in assessment)
15. Parenting figures living together shall both be licensed. **IN**		
16. Childcare for children in the custody of the department shall be with a licensed or registered child care provided. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall assume the cost of childcare to the extent that subsidized childcare is unavailable. Describe childcare arrangements, including transportation to and from the day care provider, if applicable.		

17. Medical history including physical and mental health and other treatments for all household members shall be explored, including debilitating, communicable or progressive diseases or conditions. The staff person completing the home study shall explore an document in the home study any health concerns of the applicant and household members. This discussion should include the following:
  a. Smoking and alcohol use by household members; and,
  b. Any history of alcohol or substance abuse.		

18. A licensed out-of-home caregiver shall cooperate with the child's services worker arranging opportunities for a child to participate in the faith of his or her choice or that requested by the child's family. The child's service worker shall coordinate appropriate arrangements for that child's attendance at religious activities in partnership with the licensed out-of-home caregiver.		
19. Explore prohibitions against celebrating holidays or birthdays.		
20. Licensed out-of-home care providers are expected to provide supervision, structure and daily activities designed to promote the individual physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development of the children in their home according to each child's age and developmental level.		
21. A minimum of two visits to the applicant's home completed, to include inspection of the entire indoor and outdoor premises, document the conditions and conduct face-to-face interviews with all household members. The dates, names of persons interviewed and summary of these interviews shall be documented in the home study. **IN**		
22. References from two neighbors, or in the absence of neighbors, references from two community members shall also be obtained to include the name and address of the reference, how long they have known the applicant and any concerns they may have about the applicants suitability to become a licensed out of home caregiver. **IN**		
23. Pre-service biographical profile. **IN**		
24. The home study (assessment) summary shall be reviewed, and signed by the licensing counselor and the counselor's supervisor. **IN**		
25. The prospective out of home caregiver shall have read, completed and signed all documentation required for licensing as listed under 65C-13.025(6)(b) and shall be provided copies of all documents signed upon request. **IN**		
26. Discipline. A description of the methods used by the applicant's own family while growing up; discipline methods used by the applicant on his or her own children.		

D. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. When children are present, rooms shall be free of tobacco smoke.

2. Applicants have been informed that fire drills must be held at least twice per year.

3. Substitute parent must have transportation available 24 hours a day. All vehicles used to transport children must be in compliance with applicable motor vehicle laws of the state, and equipped with seat belts and/or approved car seats for children less than 4 years of age. Vehicles shall be smoke free when foster children are being transported. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall have the ability to safety transport the number of children in his or her own care. Children in care shall use seat belts or age and size appropriate safety seats when being transported in motor vehicles.

4. The licensed out-of-home caregiver shall not operate the home as an adult boarding or rooming home or an adult daycare facility.

5. Children over the age of twelve months may share a bedroom with an adult when it is deemed to be medically necessary. A doctor's note shall be placed in the licensing file of the department and supervising agency.

6. Children over the age of 12 months shall not share a bedroom with an adult. The only exception to this rule is if one of the children sharing a bedroom turns 18 and the out of home caregiver and the supervising agency approve the sleeping arrangement; this exception does not apply to new placements.

7. Children over 36 months of age may not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.

NARRATIVE: Note any violations related to the above compliance requirements, any concerns or significant activity (e.g., investigations, corrective action plan, etc.) that would impact the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Note capacity, restrictions, ages, gender and any other information pertinent to the recommendation or utilization for the home to be licensed.

All documentation, background screening, and other elements required under s. 409.175, Florida Statutes, and 65C-13, Florida Administrative Code, for issuance of an initial or renewal foster care license are in compliance and have been completed, compiled and reviewed by the undersigned on behalf of the Licensed Child Placing Agency (Supervising Agency) and support that this application packet for licensure should be approved.

Signature of Counselor (Supervising Agency)	Date	Signature Supervisor (Supervising Agency)	Date

Appendix E

Contract Oversight Unit Monitoring Schedule

Lead Agency	FY 2017/2018 COU Monitoring Date	Contract #	DCF Contract Manager
Family Integrity Program	11/6 - 9/2017	NJ206	Clint Conner
Families First Network (Lakeview Center)	10/23-27/2017	AJ495	Lisa Carden
Community Partnership for Children, Inc.	12/4-8/2017	NJ205	Lori McCray
Partnership for Strong Families	2/12-16/2018	CJ149 SOC	Melissa H. Trentham
Eckerd Community Alternatives-Pinellas/Pasco	3/5-3/9/2018	QJ511	Danette Brewer
Eckerd Community Alternatives - Hillsborough	3/5-3/9/2018	QJ3E0	Danette Brewer
ChildNet Inc.-Broward	4/9-13/2018	JJ212	Raul Ocampo
ChildNet, Inc. - Palm Beach	4/9-13/2018	IJ706	Raul Ocampo
Kids Central, Inc.	5/7-11/2018	PJL04	John Pridham
Big Bend Community Based Care	Jan-18	BJ101 SOC	Regina Pleas
Brevard Family Partnership	Feb-18	GJ401	Amy Hammett
Children's Network of SW Florida	Dec-17	HJ300	Victoria Hynes
Community Based Care of Central FL.	Nov-17	GJL57	Sumer Bray
Devereux	Mar-18	ZJK85 SOC	Nancy Wall

Family Support Services of North Florida Inc.	Feb-18	DJ038	James E. Taylor
Heartland For Children	Dec-17	TJ501 SOC	Melinda Bozeman
Kids First of Florida, Inc	Oct-17	DJ039	James E. Taylor
Our Kids	Nov-17	KJ114	Yanina Menendez Debra Kuhn
Sarasota Family YMCA, Inc.	Nov-17	QJ2BO	Kayetrenia Nichols

*Schedule as of 9/26/17. Note that sites with specific dates are scheduled to receive an on-site monitoring, while those with a month and year will receive a desk review.

Appendix F

Segmented Marketing and Resource Parent Recruitment

Project Overview and Preliminary Findings: August 2017

Project History

In 2013, the State of Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) was awarded a five-year federal Diligent Recruitment (DR) grant to implement the Florida Intelligent Recruitment Project (IRP). A collaborative initiative between DCF and three CBC Lead Agencies, Big Bend Community Based Care, Heartland for Children and Kids Central, the IRP seeks to improve out-of-home care options and permanency outcomes for older youth in foster care (aged 9-15) whose parental rights have been terminated for more than one year.

While the award requires IRP partners to assess the alignment of statewide policy, practice and procedure with all components of the Diligent Recruitment framework, the project's major focus is the implementation of research-driven, values and behavior-based approach to segmented marketing to recruit quality foster and adoptive parents for youth in the target population. The process, *Intelligent Imagination™*, was developed by GOLD & Associates

> The project team found foster parents in the targeted area were most likely to:
> - Be middle-aged and college educated;
> - Have strong-willed "helper" personalities with a heart for children;
> - Have raised their own biological children;
> - Feel a deep sense of "calling" to care for children who have suffered—usually tied to their personal religious faith; and
> - Have often experienced some form of trauma or have been exposed to the child welfare system.

and previously deployed for their clients, such as Disney, GEICO, the National Football League and other Fortune 500 organizations. Using this approach, the project team intends to break recruitment 'plateaus' and achieve permanency for some of Florida's most difficult to place foster children.

Approach to Segmented Marketing

During project's planning phase, input from partners and stakeholders throughout the state was used to create research instruments for interviewing foster and adoptive parents in each partner's catchment area who had successfully cared for youth in the target population. Data collected by GOLD & Associates was used to: 1) Determine the fundamental motivations of foster and adoptive parents who have successfully cared for children from the target population, as well as those of prospective parents (psychographics); 2) Identify where they were most likely to live, congregate, shop, eat, and worship

(demographics and geographics); 3) Identify the most compelling way to communicate the immediate need for foster and adoptive parents (messaging); and 4) Determine media vehicles most likely to be relied upon by prospects (television, radio, newspaper, etc.). The findings were then verified with a larger statistical online survey among foster and adoptive parents and prospects.

Together, the psychographic, demographic and lifestyle characteristics of successful foster and adoptive parents were used create a market profile and advertising strategy for each Lead Agency.

Project Impact

As the project team enters the final year of the project, results are preliminary, yet encouraging. Post-campaign statistical research indicates marking approaches stimulating the highest number of responses include:

> Messaging most likely to resonate and motive families to foster or adopt contain the following core elements or characteristics:
> - It is simple, bold, direct, unencumbered with non-essential information and has a clear call-to action;
> - It communicates how the need is local, how it is urgent, and how the target audience is uniquely qualified to help;
> - It resonates with the sense of callng felt by high-quality prospects with the desired demographic and psychographic traits;
> - It is customized based on the composition of the local market demographics and market conditions;
> - It focuses more on the children in need than on the parents who provide the assistance.

- Paid media spending that controls the message, raises awareness for the need, combats negative perceptions, and reinforces public/media/community relations efforts; (Partners who dedicated a higher percentage of their FIRP marketing budget on paid media placements achieved a higher prospect response rate than those who spent less.)

- Offline media, as it has produced the highest level of message recall and has pushed respondents to launch an online investigation; and

- Use of visuals showing the children in need (meeting IRP target population demographics), as well as local settings to reinforce how the need exists in the local community.
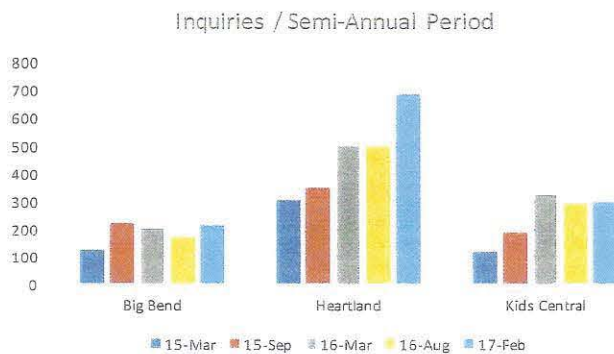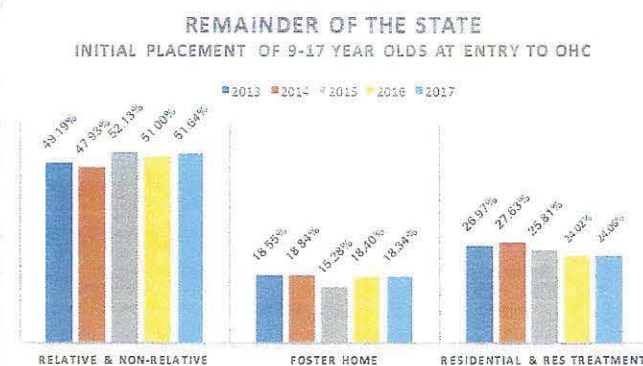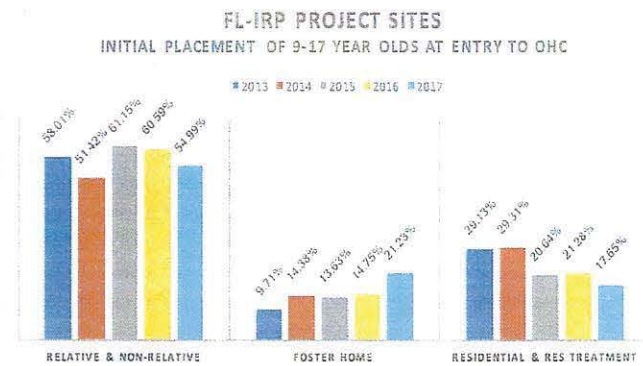
Finally, faith-based marketing has also been effective, especially the use of pastor "champions" to communicate the need to their peers, along with community presentations.

Since implementing their segmented marketing plans, each of the project partners have demonstrated a statistically significant increase to the public's interest in becoming foster or adoptive parents. Over the past thirty months, Initial inquires across the three sites increased between 69% and 148%.

Project partners have varied in their ability to convert inquiries into licensed foster or approved adoptive homes. However, it appears this result reflects the lead agency's capacity to handle this increase and effectively engage recruited families through the entire training and licensing process. Kids Central has demonstrated the greatest success, posting a 290% increase in recruitment since 2013. It is important to note, however, that the agency expended significant effort prior to the grant to streamline and improve multiple aspects of their recruitment, home study, training and licensing workflow. The agency was also positioned and prepared to implement their segmented marketing plan twelve months before earlier than the other partners.

Inquiries / Semi-Annual Period

Legend: 15-Mar, 15-Sep, 16-Mar, 16-Aug, 17-Feb

FL-IRP PROJECT SITES
INITIAL PLACEMENT OF 9-17 YEAR OLDS AT ENTRY TO OHC

Legend: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

Categories: RELATIVE & NON-RELATIVE, FOSTER HOME, RESIDENTIAL & RES TREATMENT

REMAINDER OF THE STATE
INITIAL PLACEMENT OF 9-17 YEAR OLDS AT ENTRY TO OHC

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Collectively, project partners have demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their ability to place youth in the target population in a least restrictive setting at the time of removal. Initial placements into foster care have increased, while placement into residential care & treatment have declined. They also have a slightly higher percent of youth placed in relative & nonrelative settings. When 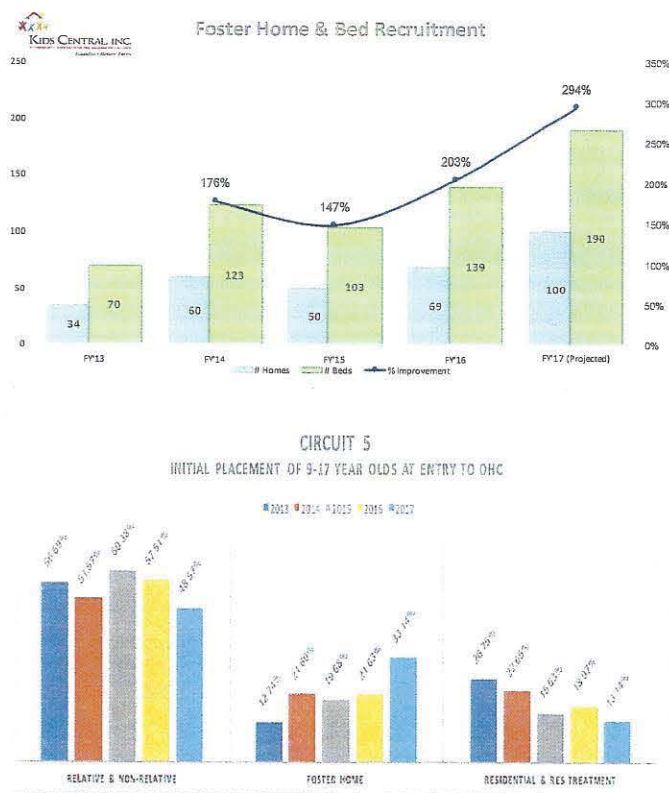comparing 2013 data to 2017 (IRP Sites to the remainder of the state) using a chi-squared analysis (p<.05), the IRP sites show a significant change in their ability to place youth in less restrictive settings, while the remainder of the state has not experienced a significant change in performance.

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Additional Systemic Changes

Project partners have also made changes surrounding their approach to recruiting resource parents. To some degee, each partner has modified aspects of their recruitment and licensing workflow in an effort to improve efficiencies and expidite the process. They also report emphasizing the need for resource parents willing to care for older youth during orientation sessions and training classes. The degree to which these changes may have influenced recruiting outcomes is difficult to assess.

Conclusion

Foster Home & Bed Recruitment

CIRCUIT 5
INITIAL PLACEMENT OF 9-17 YEAR OLDS AT ENTRY TO OHC

Based on changes to inquiries, recruitment volume and initial placement settings, segmented marketing plans implemented by IRP partners appear to significantly improve the ability of these agencies to place youth in least restrictive settings. Though the long-term impact of these recruitment efforts on permanency continue to be assessed, it is clear the use of segmented marketing can play a key role in improving multiple aspects of foster and adoptive parent recruitment.

NOTICE OF FILING

Reporting Agency:	Department of Children and Families
Recipient Agency:	GOVERNOR, SENATE PRESIDENT, HOUSE SPEAKER, MINORITY LEADERS
Subject: Foster Home Quality Legislative Report	
Report Due Date:	November 15, 2017
Statutory Requirement:	Section 409.996(23)(d), F.S.

Abstract:

The department, in collaboration with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare, shall convene a workgroup on foster home quality. The workgroup, at a minimum, shall identify measures of foster home quality, review current efforts by lead agencies and subcontractors to enhance foster home quality, identify barriers to the greater availability of high-quality foster homes, and recommend additional strategies for assessing the quality of foster homes and increasing the availability of high-quality foster homes.

The workgroup shall include representatives from the department, the Florida Institute for Child Welfare, foster parents, current and former foster children, foster parent organizations, lead agencies, child-placing agencies, other service providers, and others as determined by the department.

This report provides information on:
• Describe the important dimensions of quality for foster homes;
• Describe the foster home quality enhancement efforts in the state, including, but not limited to, recruitment, retention, placement procedures, systems change, and quality measurement programs, and any positive or negative results;
• Identify barriers to the greater availability of high-quality foster homes;
• Discuss available research regarding high-quality foster homes; and
• Present a plan for developing and implementing strategies to increase the availability of high-quality foster homes. The strategies shall address important elements of quality, be based on available research, include both qualitative and quantitative measures of quality, integrate with the community-based care model, and be respectful of the privacy and needs of foster parents. The plan shall recommend possible instruments and measures and identify any changes to general law or rule necessary for implementation.

Copies of this report may be obtained by contacting:

Dept. of Children and Families
Office of Child Welfare
1317 Winewood Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700
Attn: JoShonda Guerrier, 850-717-4382 email: Joshonda.Guerrier@myflfamilies.com

CF 1610, Oct 96

LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED REPORT – STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

REPORT TITLE	STATUTORY REFERENCE	SPECIFICATIONS
Foster Home Quality Workgroup	Section 409.996(23)(d), F.S.	(d) The department shall submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by November 15, 2017. The report shall, at a minimum: 1. Describe the important dimensions of quality for foster homes; 2. Describe the foster home quality enhancement efforts in the state, including, but not limited to, recruitment, retention, placement procedures, systems change, and quality measurement programs, and any positive or negative results; 3. Identify barriers to the greater availability of high-quality foster homes; 4. Discuss available research regarding high-quality foster homes; and 5. Present a plan for developing and implementing strategies to increase the availability of high-quality foster homes. The strategies shall address important elements of quality, be based on available research, include both qualitative and quantitative measures of quality, integrate with the community-based care model, and be respectful of the privacy and needs of foster parents. The plan shall recommend possible instruments and measures and identify any changes to general law or rule necessary for implementation.