



Foster Parent Turnover: Why do Florida Foster Parents Leave the System?

Overview

Florida, like many states, is experiencing a shortage of foster parents. Although some foster parents stop caring for children because of typical life changes, it is believed that many others leave because of a lack of support from the Department and a general feeling of being unappreciated.

In order to determine the reasons foster parents are leaving the system, data from the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) was reviewed and telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of foster parents who no longer foster. The Office of Child Welfare and seventeen foster parents representing the Florida Foster Parent Association conducted the interviews. Interviews were conducted with a sample of forty-four foster parents who stopped fostering and indicated they were “no longer interested.”

What Does FSFN Data Tell Us About Foster Parent Turnover?

- 1,307 licensed family homes closed between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012.
- Of those, approximately 32% were closed by simply allowing the license to expire.
- There was a net loss of 248 family foster homes and 483 beds during the fiscal year.
- Approximately 20% of the licensed family homes that were closed were coded in a broad closure code of “no longer interested.”

During the course of reviewing FSFN data, two issues were identified:

- There are limited categories in FSFN to accurately reflect the reason why a licensed home was closed.

The category of “Other” was used in approximately 30% of the homes that were closed from July 1, 2011 through July 1, 2012; this is the second highest reason used for closure. The most used category (32%) was allowing the license to simply expire.

- Some community-based care (CBC) lead agencies were not aware of the closure codes in FSFN and none had security access to enter the codes. Currently, CBCs provide a summary report to the DCF regional office when a home needs to be closed. The DCF regional office staff review the report and determine the closure code.

What Does Interview Information Tell Us About Foster Parent Turnover?

For the most part, those interviewed indicated the licensing process was a positive experience; this included the home study, training, and availability of the licensing specialist. When asked how the child welfare system could improve, almost half of those interviewed cited better communication and case worker support, and the need for additional services, including more respite care. The following chart provides a summary of reasons noted during the interviews for why foster parents stopped fostering.

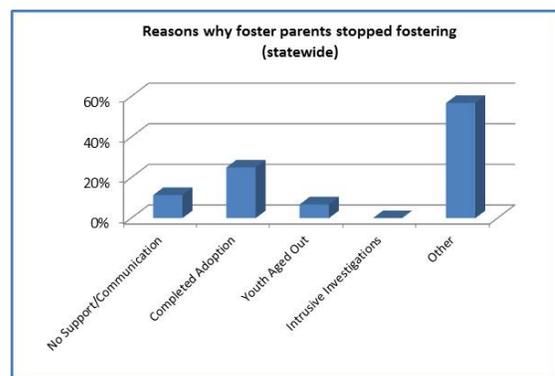


Chart 1

- 29.5% said they would not consider fostering again.
 - 68.2% said they have recommended to friends, families, church members, and others that they should consider becoming foster parents and 43.2% said they would consider fostering again.
 - 68.2% reported they were well respected by case managers and other professionals; the remaining 31.8% felt they were only somewhat respected or not respected at all.
 - 25% stopped fostering because they adopted the children in their homes.
 - 78.8% indicated that placements were generally made according to their age range and gender preferences.
 - 50% reported that even though they had indicated a specific age range or gender, they were often called upon to take other types of children.
 - 43.2% reported that they participated in foster parent support groups or other associations related to fostering
3. CBCs must work diligently to ensure case managers and other professionals treat foster parents with respect. Routine customer satisfaction surveys should be implemented and employee performance standards should be tied to positive interactions with foster parents.
 4. CBCs should reconnect with foster parents who left the system in good standing. A substantial number of foster parents indicated they would consider fostering again.
 5. CBCs should encourage current foster parents to engage with support groups and other associations as this provides a positive environment for learning and getting support from others.
 6. The Office of Child Welfare should explore the current practice of allowing licenses to expire versus taking action when needed to terminate a license.

Attachment 1 provides a summary of the interview responses by region. Attachment 2 provides a list of significant comments provided during the course of the interviews.

Separate from the interviews, two problems were identified and activities are currently underway to address these issues.

Considerations to Improve Practice

1. The Office of Child Welfare should continue to explore changes to FSFN to expand closure code options to more accurately record the reasons for closure.
2. The CBCs should be permitted to enter closure codes in FSFN directly. This will improve the reliability of data in FSFN.

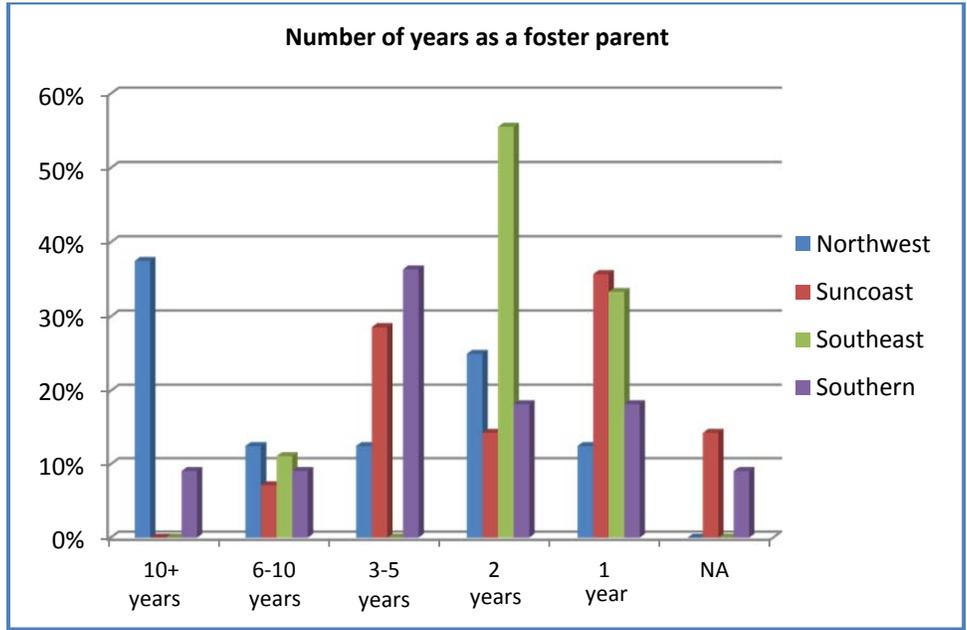
A special thank you to Ms. Carol Shauffer of the Quality Parenting Initiative, Mrs. Tanya Wilkins, Governor's Child Advocate for Foster Care and Adoption, and the Florida Foster Parent Association for their continued pursuit to improve the Florida foster parent system. These interviews would not have been possible without the help of the following foster parents who conducted interviews for this review.

Trudy Petkovich
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 Karen Condry
 Sharon Groover
 Coleen LaCosta
 Savatrie Forbes
 Maria Bond
 Dorothy Alvarez
 Harriett Wynn
 Calvin Burton
 Lillie Blackshear
 Curtis Byrd
 Gerald Waters

Attachment 1

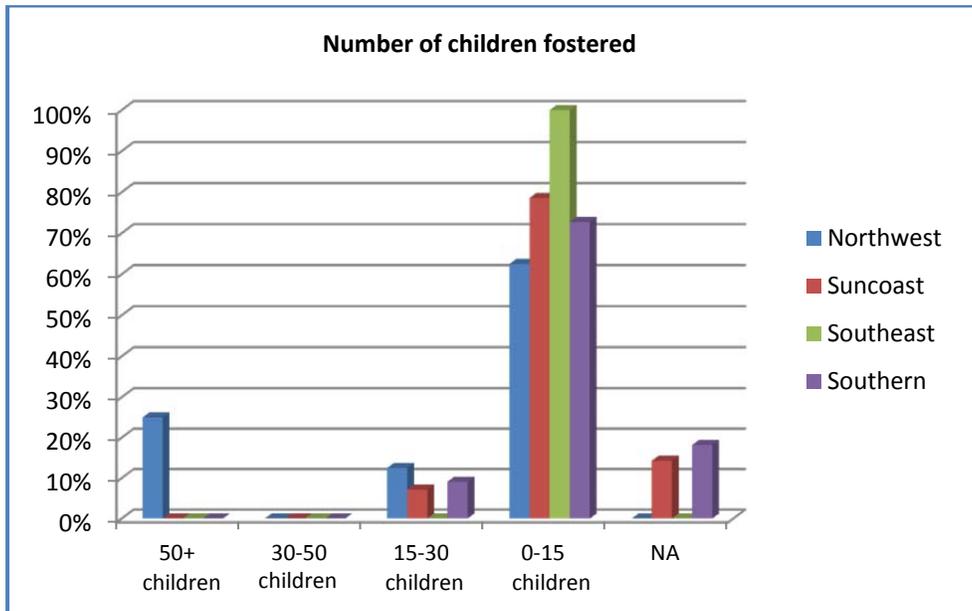
Survey Results by Region

Note: The northeast and central regions are not reflected in the following graphs because there was one or less foster parents from those regions interviewed.



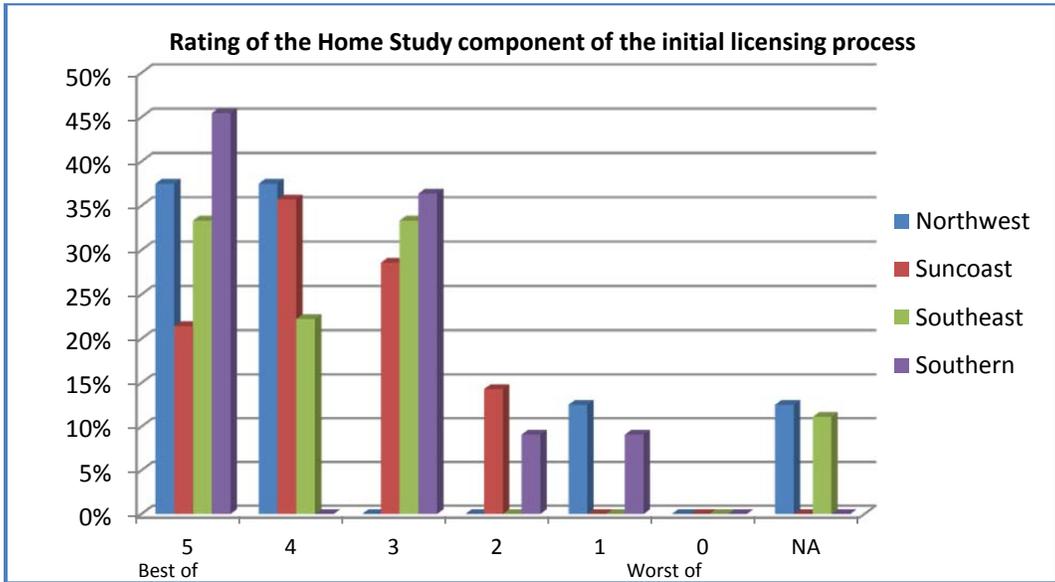
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 2



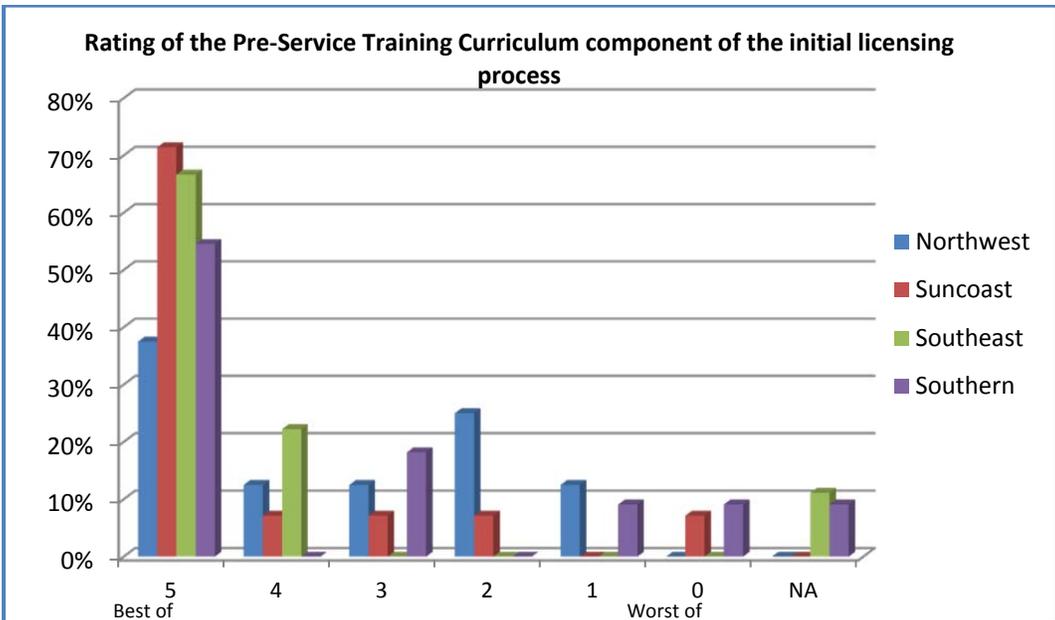
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 3



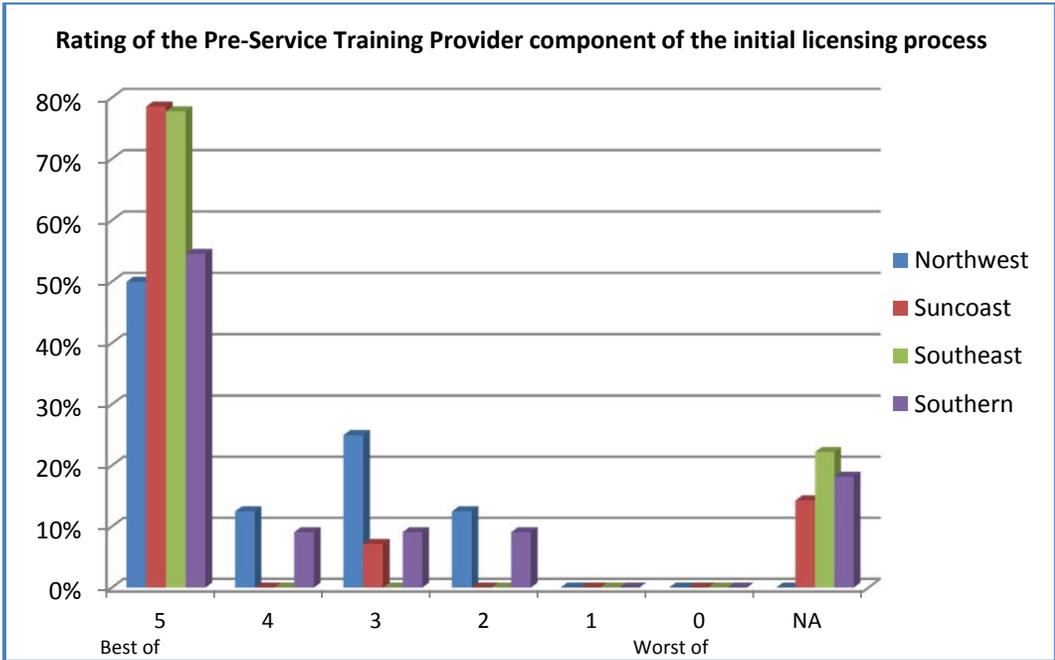
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 4



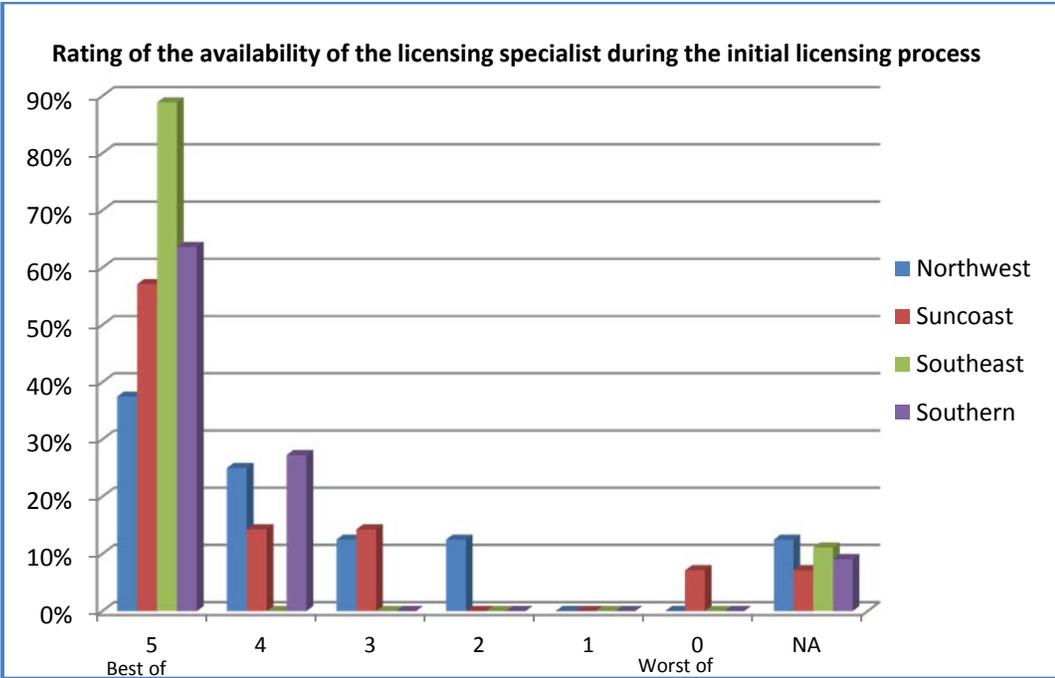
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 5



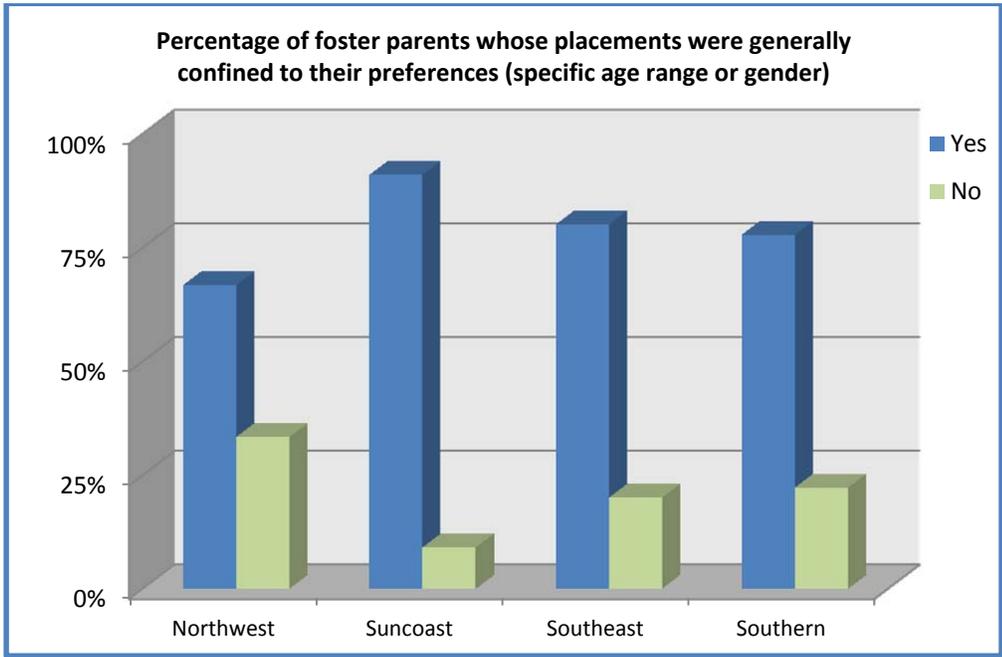
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 6



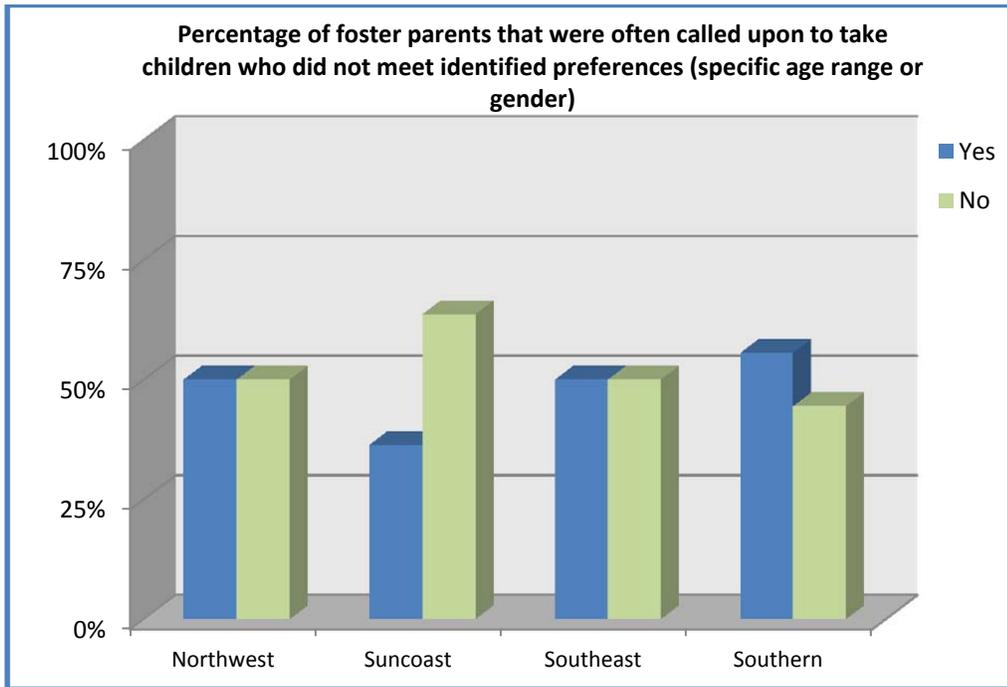
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 7



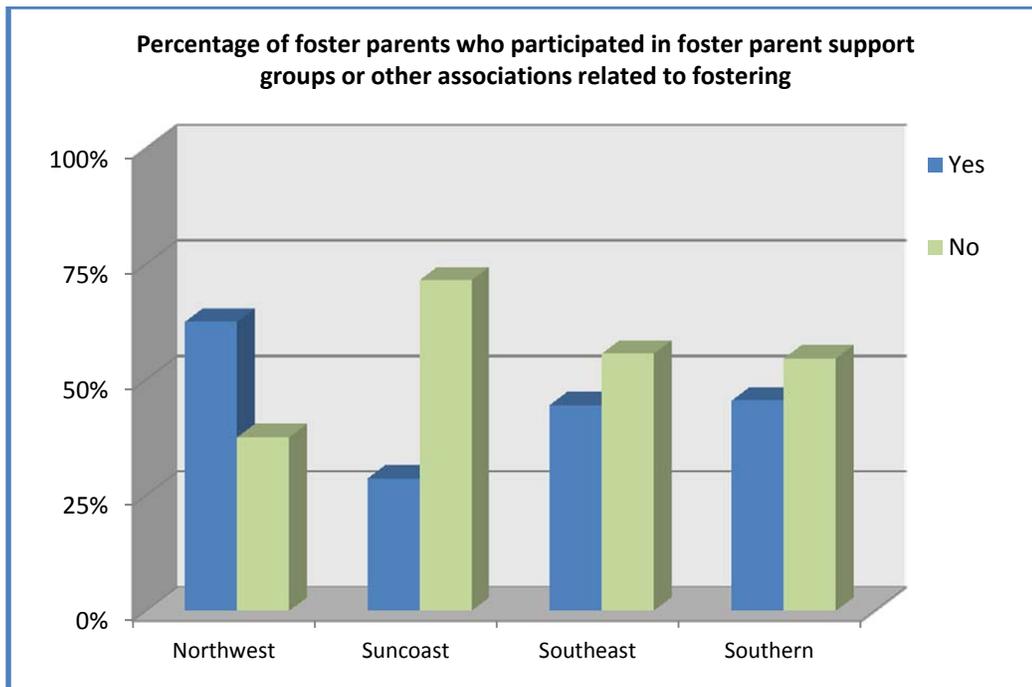
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 8



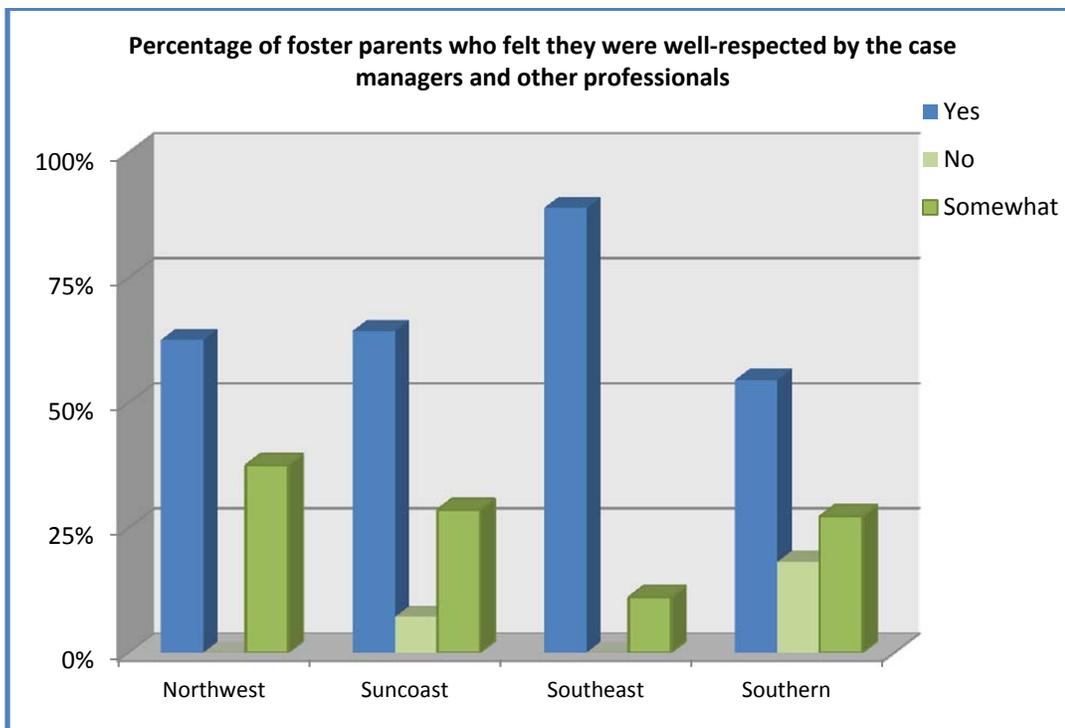
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 9



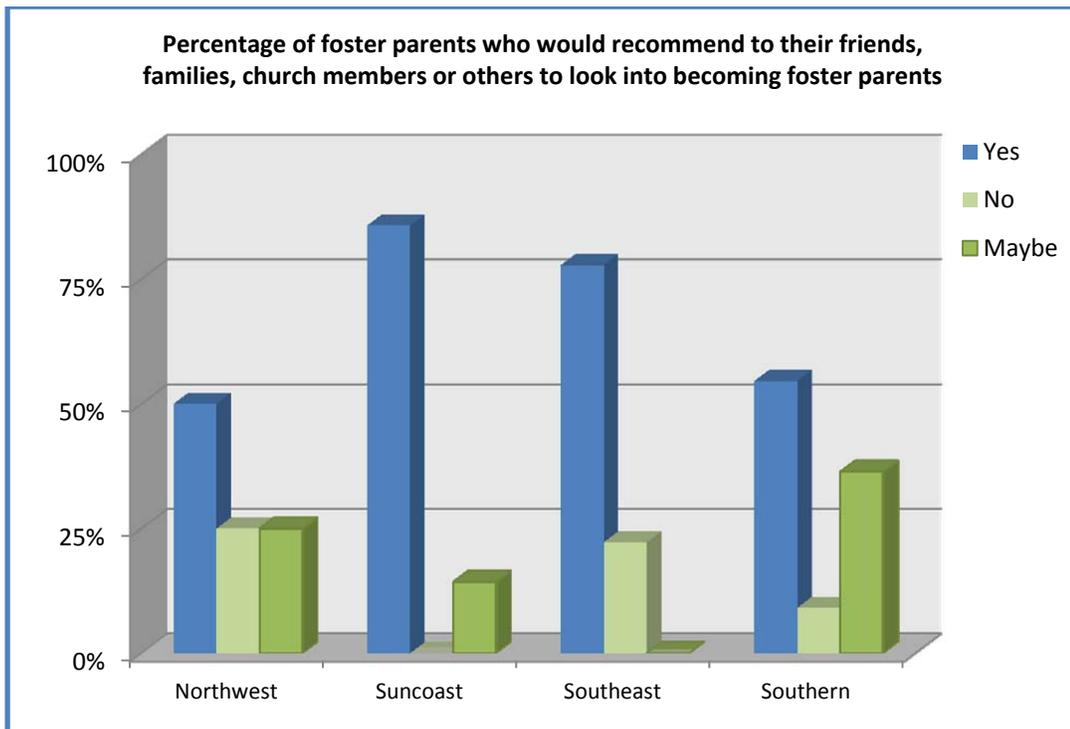
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 10



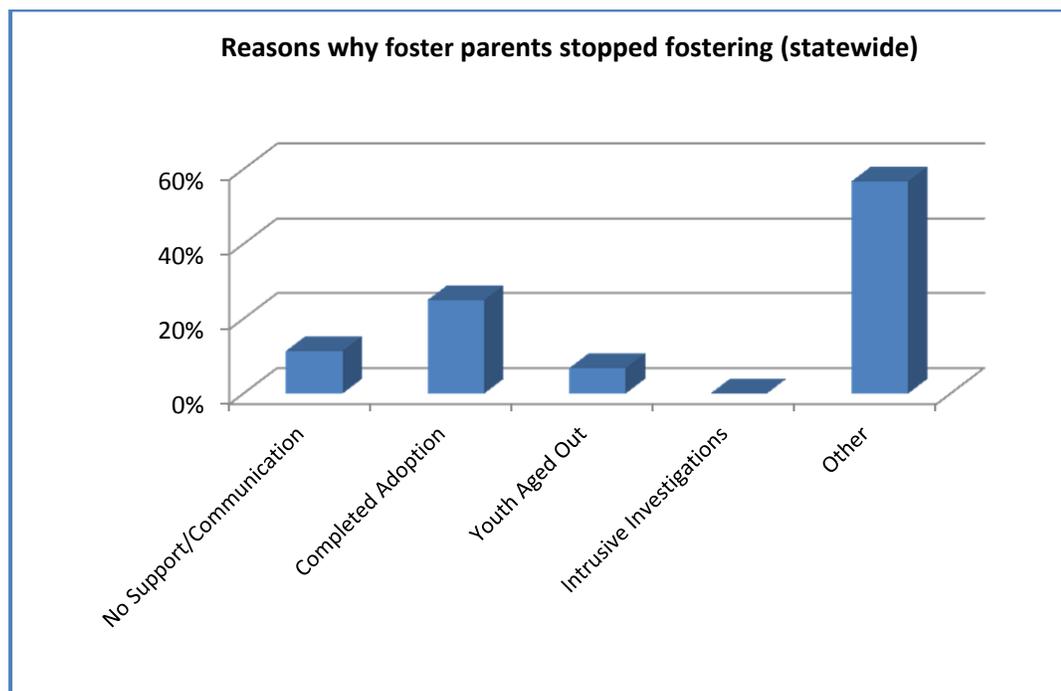
Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 11



Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 12



Source: Foster Parent Interviews 11/2012

Chart 13

Attachment 2

Interview Comments Provided by Foster Parents

1. Please describe why you originally wanted to be a Foster Parent.

- My husband was adopted out of the foster care system and my sister had adopted 4 of her foster care children. It was a family decision.
- I just love children. Many children need someone to show them love and teach them right from wrong and to be an honest person.
- A way to give back to the community & I just love children.
- Used to foster in NJ - only went through licensing process for one child (who resides in NJ) but never actually fostered child.
- I was/am an attorney and represented foster kids for a number of years. My husband and I only had one biological child and had the financial resources and room in our hearts.
- I just love children and like being a servant. I have a degree in counseling and social work and there are so many kids who need help out there.
- Nancy reported "felt we had a lot to offer. Have 6 sons. Felt a deep desire to help. Heard a lot about fostering and adopting on WRMD radio station and prayed about it."
- We have a desire to help children and we want to pass on blessings.
- For adoption only.
- Grandchildren out of state in Michigan; State Law required me to become licensed.
- To help children have a stable home, to give them a good home
- Met wife at 40 years old, bought a large house and thought about having children. Next door neighbor had fostered and convinced me I would be perfect.
- Children they wanted to adopt were legally at risk, so had to become foster parents in order to adopt
- Loves children and was willing to help.
- They met a child who needed a home.
- "To get my granddaughter from New Jersey"
- Because she didn't have any kids and she wanted to adopt.
- A couple in the neighborhood was fostering a little boy who would play with our children. The little boy told his story and "it broke our hearts." Then they saw the movie Blind Side and it motivated them to become foster parents. They know several couples from their church who adopted babies from foster care and they hoped to do the same.
- Decision husband and I made. Wanted to provide safe place for children who need it.
- Worked with kids for many years
- Because I wanted to have a girl and couldn't have babies for medical reasons so looked into adopting and got my first girl and then mom had another baby and we got that one and now happy with what we have.
- Applied to adopt. They wanted me to foster.
- Husband was adopted, wife works with students from low income families
- Wanted to adopt. All these years wanted to. Didn't know single parents can adopt. Always wanted to.
- It was a good time in my life to devote time and attention to a child. My children were grown and my

husband had died. My sister had fostered for years. I was a backup for my sister.

- I wanted to become a foster parent because I thought that my family and I had something to offer children who were in foster care and especially wanted to help siblings and keep them together in placement. We also wanted to help parents in their efforts to get their children back.
- She said that she originally was interested because she wanted to eventually adopt a child and she also wanted to learn about the process.
- "Wanted to help kids who needed a home." She also indicated that she has an only child and thought it would be a good experience for him to have someone else in the home.
- "I wanted to help children." She and husband decided they would foster while waiting to have their own children. She said she wanted to be a part of helping children.
- Her sister is an adoptive parent. She wanted to provide a home for children in need. She said "there are a lot of kids out there who need a home."
- I wanted to help kids
- to help children
- "Couldn't have children. Started through mentoring program. Met a family. Worked specifically with the family. Got licensed to help the children within that family. Got license through Place of Hope."
- I just love children, I always have. I worked with kids at a private Christian school for ten years. I never stopped wanting to be Mom.
- Fostered hoping to adopt & to help out
- Wanted to help the children.
- To give children the opportunity to grow up in a safe environment
- I went to adopt
- I saw the need to help a child.
- I love children and I was a nurse
- They wanted to become a foster parent in order to get a child from Alabama. Once they got the child they did not want to continue fostering. The process was very long and they are glad it is over.
- Foster Parent stated they became foster parents to help the children. Foster Parent stated it gave them joy to help these kids that needed a place to stay and needed help.
- Carmen Acevedo, was a Foster Child herself, she was a part of the Peter Pan Project. And wanted to give back to other children in care.
- Interviewee was a foster parent years ago and decided to become a foster parent again after getting to know a little boy from Sunday school. He had been living in another foster home when she got to know him. Then he was reunited with his mother, but re-entered care not long after. The previous foster mother refused to take him back but said she would take his siblings. So, this foster mother accepted the sibling group and kept them together through adoption.

2. On a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 representing the best of experiences and 0 representing the worst of experiences, how would you describe the Home Study component of the initial licensing process?

- Process was fine. They were told they had to lock things up, etc. but they basically told them no one would ever check on it again - which was odd.
- Tedious but necessary
- Appointments were made in a timely manner and I was kept abreast of everything.
- Little bureaucratic and frustrating. The nit picking about some of the things we had to have in our home was a little silly to me since we raised our sons, but I understood. Like a safety exit plan...we have a small house.
- It was very invasive - took hours and hours. We had to do stacks of paperwork. There was no give and take. It was costly and time-consuming.
- They lost some of our paperwork; concerned over personal information.
- Very frustrating. Had to take a day off work for the home inspection. His house was less than 1 1/2 years old and figured he would pass with no problems. Failed inspection because he didn't have a thermometer in the refrigerator. It was a brand new refrigerator. Had to take another day off from work for the follow-up inspection and then passed. Was told that the list he was given before the inspection listed a thermometer but he didn't look closely at the list since his house and appliances were all so new.
- Process was quick, but the foster parent thought the focus was on the wrong things.
- Wanted me to have beds and I said wait for you to give me kids.
- I give it a one because it is between 1 and 2. Process difficult, had to redo and resend everything several times. Should be detailed.
- The process wasn't a bad experience, just a long process, tedious and it felt like I filled out the same forms over and over.
- She said the process was "somewhat tedious" and she was supposed to be reimbursed for the cost of checking her water but she never received reimbursement.
- Foster parent indicated parts of the home study were very intrusive. However indicated they understood the need for this.

3. On a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 representing the best of experiences and 0 representing the worst of experiences, how would you describe the Pre-Service Training Curriculum component of the initial licensing process?

- I liked the idea of what they were trying to get across in training. Training could be geared more towards what to expect in fostering instead of role-play. It would be nice to know about what is and isn't compensated for.
- The training doesn't help at all. It's boring and turns people off. All of the information is common sense and it doesn't teach specific enough information to actually be helpful. The classes frustrate people to no end.
- Pretty good. Only way to improve upon it would be to explain the court process because many new foster parents don't understand it.
- C.H. was amazing and fantastic. Still keep in contact. Always followed through. When saw her in the office one of the most pleasant people.

- Don't feel that MAPP covers enough basics
- The curriculum was a broad range of topics covering a lot of topics.
- "It was very good; I learned lots of things that I had no idea about. It really opened my eyes"
- The curriculum was MAPP. The former foster mom said "it was too much information to process at one time."
- Horrible, Love instructor- R.M. Curriculum terrible.
- It was very time consuming. I went through it twice because I was licensed two separate times.
- The training seemed more like a cover your booty course than a training to help me learn more about fostering. A process to cover the agency rather than making sure that I can do a good job.
- She said that she is a special needs teacher so didn't feel that she learned very much. Said it was "just alright."
- They liked MAPP.
- Stated they were involved with two different providers and each did things a little differently.
- Did not prepare us for all the cultural difference. They painted a rosy picture and we believed it because that is how we wanted it to be.
- The training curriculum is so cumbersome. "It takes over your life."

4. On a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 representing the best of experiences and 0 representing the worst of experiences, how would you describe the Pre-Service Training Provider component of the initial licensing process?

- They need to explain more about the licensing agencies. There was a brief orientation and then we were told to pick an agency. I knew about them from being an attorney in the system but most foster parents did not. Most picked the one closest to their home and it was a random pick.
- Presenter talked about pros and cons but gave a lot of worst-case scenarios. It almost seems like she was trying to talk us out of it. Some people dropped out.
- They (DCF of Lake Worth) really explained everything!
- Laura did a great, great job. She not only taught the class, she brought her own experience and foster children to class.
- Good - think birth parents should have training like this
- Not sure what this is referring to but he thinks he used some of the tools. He has also gone back to trainings and provided foster parent input. Everything about the MAPP classes was great!
- K.J. was the trainer and "she was awesome! She really went the extra mile."
- A little disorganized, a lack of continuity and communication efforts.
- Trainers are not knowledgeable of all the cultural differences that come with these children. They did the best with what they had.

5. On a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 representing the best of experiences and 0 representing the worst of experiences, how would you describe the availability of the licensing specialist during the initial licensing process?

- Paperwork was lost; calls for visits/inspections were same day.
- Excellent - 3 different staff came to my home. They were very nice and interviewed me.
- No bad experience. No problems. Transferred from a case manager to licensing. One of the brightest people he worked with. He would put him above everybody. He had him as a case manager previously and he continue to take his calls an answer questions. Hope he's still with the agency. He went out of

his way to help his kids.

- Any calls were returned promptly.
- They were backed up at the time.
- It took more than 3 months to become licensed and they were licensed for a month before the agency ever let them know. They went through the licensing process the same time her brother and sister in law did and "they got their license much quicker."
- The staff is very supportive and responsive.

6. Please talk about both the good and not-so-good experiences you had as a Foster Parent.

- Having to retake the courses turns people off to fostering.
- I loved being a foster parent
- Bad: You should be trained on what is actually going to happen when you foster.
Case workers should be more prepared when going to court (documentation, etc.)
Case workers are overloaded.
I always kept more documentation than the case worker.
Good: I had good case workers and most of the kids in my home ended up being adopted out.
- Classes were horrible. Waste of funding. Was licensed but no children were ever placed with her.
Received a check in the mail twice from the state for cribs & etc. that didn't apply to her since she didn't have any foster children. Sent the checks back but very concerned about how the state is spending her tax dollars.
- I know this as both a foster parent and an attorney... there needs to be better communication between the sheriff's office and the provider at the initial hand-off. For example, the first newborn I fostered was exposed to Hepatitis C (both parents were known IV drug users and both were Hepatitis C positive). Nobody asked the questions or got the birth record to find this information. The GAL finally found it and told me, but only after the baby had been with us for a while exposing my whole family including my 6-year-old daughter to Hepatitis C.
Also, my 6-year-old got very attached to the foster kids we took in and it was a hard process for her when they left. The system ignores foster siblings relationships. They have nothing in place (no services) to accommodate foster sibling bonds.
- A lot of good experiences: good licensing coordinators. Several great case workers until P.J. (he was the worst). Mr. J didn't follow through on anything (med evals, etc.), he never did the pre-placement questionnaires to determine if children were a good fit for the home, and I felt like he didn't care about the foster parents. Until end, experiences were great.
- "It was the most challenging thing we ever did. My husband started drinking because it was so overwhelming as he really tried to be the very best father to the 2 boys."
"We could not help the 10 year old and his sexual abuse issues; it broke our hearts."
- We had a caseworker who was amazing - P. Any problems we ran across he could solve. We had one before him, and she was unable to help with anything. We wound up doing so much ourselves the first time. We also had a lady who came out once who was rude - not even sure of her role. She came with P. one day, unannounced. She upset our foster child.
- The overall experience of becoming licensed was fine; however, we indicated that we were only interested in becoming licensed for the purpose of adopting, and that we wanted a child age 3 or younger. We received phone calls for all ages, sometimes at 1 or 2 a.m. in the morning, and generally not for children who were available for adoption. We were being asked to foster children who were

- not available, and that was clearly not our desire.
- Didn't have either
 - Not so good - children write on the walls, a foster parent has to be careful about religious services and must keep the parent satisfied, when the children visit their parents, they come back and say they don't have to attend church.
 - 1) Oldest child had issues that required counseling. Had trust issues with males and was given a 6'4" male counselor for a six-year old blonde girl. Not happy at first but he did gain her trust but then left the provider.
 - 2) Legal system is very slow. Even judge said case was very difficult and had taken an inordinate amount of time.
 - 3) Frustrated that by the time his oldest foster child turned six she revealed what had happened to her by her mother's boyfriend. Kept pushing for someone to do something. Each new person would say it must have been missed in the file and wouldn't do anything. He finally got G.B. as his case manager and she started the ball rolling. Mother was finally prosecuted and put in jail.
 - 4) He tells everyone to be patient with the system...some meetings and court hearings were very frustrating.
 - Not good - The different experiences that they had with the children.
 - Good: The children were best, making them smile, giving them hugs. They appreciate the small stuff...
Not so good: Sometimes the children took advantage of her, the ones who were seasoned and streetwise; she was not prepared for certain behaviors.
It was easy for them to falsely accuse her and get her in trouble. The children sometimes played her against the system.
 - Good: What they were able to provide to the children. What they experienced and what they learned from the children.
Not so good: Not a positive experience. Caseworkers were hamstrung by deadlines and paperwork and procedures.
 - The classes were very informative.
 - They were licensed as foster to adopt parents and were told they would be able to adopt this child. "An aunt came forward who was a pregnant single mom with many children and they placed with her."
 - No negatives in the experience. It was less than a year & proceeded with the adoption. Did not care for the contact with the bio parent.
 - Good, seeing progress we were able to make with child to help.
Not so good, Turn over with case workers and people with services, GAL AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR GREAT.
 - No bad experience all kids. All kids were good with no complaints.
 - Very, very good.
 - Bring kid on Friday; kid very difficult; nobody wanted; gave me nothing/no info for hospital.
No best experience.
 - Dealt with really, really good people.
Good relationships.
System of care with getting disability, I would say very bad; child was receiving disability and now they say I owe the government \$8,000.
Basically coerced to go to court ask parents to turn over their rights which was horrific.
 - All good; adopted daughter and no bad.

- I didn't accept children I didn't feel I could care for. I am a LPN. I felt successful when I cared for children with medical needs. I didn't like depending on other nurses to support me. Sometimes they didn't show up and I had the child alone for 18 hours or longer. Children requiring a lot of medical care are draining and require a lot of energy. I opened my home and my heart but it was tiring.
- The good experiences were being able to help families, have open communications with them, and to model parenting skills.
- She said she liked the training.
She said it was "shocking" that the children came to her without any paperwork, health information, medication information, developmental information. She was expecting a packet of information. She said one girl came to her with a broken arm but no indication of who the doctor was.
- Good: Enjoyed it - the child was reunified and then she stopped fostering.
Not-so-good: She said the case worker was "horrible" and "really, really mean." She said the case worker ruined her experience. It got so bad that her husband told the case worker only to deal with him.
- Not-so-good: The first child they placed with her was "a nightmare" because she and her husband were not given any information about the child, she was supposed to be medicated and wasn't, and they eventually had to Baker Act her. She described it as "horrific."
With the second and third children who were sisters, it was a good experience except for one bad case worker who appeared not to like her job and tried to tell the foster parents how to be parents.
Good experience with the fourth child and they adopted the child.
Good experience with the fifth child who went straight to adoption.
- She was asked to foster a 3-year-old child. She went to the service center and met the former foster parent and several case management professionals. The child was obviously ill, coughing and having difficulty breathing. The case management folks told her she needed to take the child to the doctors immediately. She did so, the child was prescribed medication but did not get better, and they ended up in the hospital emergency room on a Sunday. They were in the ER all night and the child was admitted into the hospital. The next day the Case Manager "chastised" the foster mother for not calling her to report the child was at the hospital. Foster Mom and her family took turns staying with the child during the hospitalization. No one from the Case Management Organization came to the hospital to check on the child.
- the case manager was not good
- Good: Loved the kids.
Bad: Tarnished by DCF getting 3 kids adopted into 1 family; although not recommended. Children came back into care when the adoptive parents surrendered their parental rights. The children were brought back to me for licensed placement. They lived with me about 1 year, then issues from when they were with the adoptive people came up; they needed more therapy than I could give them so their placement was changed.
- This family provided care for a sibling group for approximately 3 years. When the subject of adoption came up, this family felt that a younger couple would best serve the needs of the children. The couple maintained the children until an adoptive family was located, according to Mrs. L.; her family was very much a part of the adoption process and was slated to be the foster grandparents. Prior to the adoption, the L.'s allowed the children to have contact with the biological grandparents. Once the adoption was finalized, the bio grand dad told the children that their parents still loved them, the new adoptive family did not like this and cut all ties with all grandparents and the foster parents. Mrs. L. said had she known they would never see the children again, they would have adopted them. The

adoptive parents called in an abuse report on an injury that was two years old, the youngest child had a burn mark from a curling iron. The family is still grieving the loss of the children; they describe themselves as heart broken. They did foster two more rounds, but had a sibling group that sexually acted out and they were afraid of being falsely accused of something related to the children's acting out behavior. Ms. L. said, they were taught in pre-service about helping children move to permanency, but she is not as strong she thought she was. I reminded her, that she thought of the children's wellbeing when they refused to adopt to give the children a chance to have younger parents. The L.'s are in their mid to late 50's, the youngest child was three years old at the time.

- Bad was the politics -regulations. The travel order & surgery (tubes in ears) - court system slowed normal parenting things down.
- Stated there were problems with disconnect and different areas doing things different when they had kids from out of county.
- Did not receive all materials when children were dropped off.
- The last time we had a foster child DCF away help the parent when the parent was wrong
- I have a lot of good
- I only has one problem when a boy said that he was going to kill me and my family
- Good - the kids needed someone and we were glad to help them. They brought us much joy and vice versa. They did what they did for kids for them not for the state. Stated since foster care went private they have not been as happy with things. Said feels like UFF (United For Families) is in it for the money. Things were so much better when the state handled it. Stated communication was better when the state had it as well. Stated they were not happy with the last baby they had and she transitioned to friends of theirs and they have had her almost a year and wanted to adopt and now UFF wants to put her with two older sibs who she has never lived with. States the child cries just going to visits and tis has left a real sour taste in their mouths.
- It just took a long time to get the process done, would not want to do it again
- Felt unsupported by Agency, was told child was the client and had to keep satisfied. Took child's word and never discussed anything with us. Given all the responsibility and NO authority.
- The not-so-good experiences center around knowing what these kids have been through and they now have issues that can be challenging. The good part is knowing what you're giving these kids now and supporting their educational needs and giving them a loving home life. The mother actually voluntarily surrendered because she knew how good the kids were doing in this foster home with people who wanted to adopt them. Another not-so-good thing is that you don't get much time to be alone with your spouse. But, they manage to get out occasionally because the churches really help out.

7. Do you feel you were well-respected by the case managers and other professionals while you fostered?

- Case workers were good because parents made them, but the system is overloaded.
- Felt everyone was always professional and polite. They may not have liked him, because he always pushed for his foster kids, but they didn't show it. He was especially impressed with G. and L. If he left a messages would always get a call back within 30 minutes. Still keeps in touch, even after he has adopted the children.
- The Florida caseworkers were very nice.
- The first one was terrific but the second didn't know what he was doing.

- I was asked to love and treat the children like they were my own and I was able to do that without a problem, but then to be treated like a paid baby sitter - being given directions for care when I was better equipped.
- Did comment that everyone seemed overworked.
- She described a "horrible" case worker on her case but did indicate that other case workers who would come to her home on behalf of the primary case worker - indicated they were nice.
- Well-respected by most except for the one case worker who reportedly did not assist and/or help them and handled the case poorly.
- She said she felt overwhelmed and alone.
- Lazy
- They were great - she feels lucky
- We thought we would be treated like partners; instead we were treated like employees and not very good ones at that.
- Interviewee feels staffs were "wonderful" and they "really cared about me."

8. Did you participate in foster parent support groups or other associations related to fostering?

- There were none available close to where I lived
- Did not know about them.
- Not because they weren't available - we just had already been through everything by the time support was offered. Support was slow in coming.
- Came back to help with 4 or 5 MAPP classes, participating as a foster parent and telling about his experience. Wouldn't mind helping in the future with MAPP classes.
He didn't feel he needed support. The kids are not the problem. The parents are the problem. His oldest foster daughter asked to keep the light on in her bedroom after she had been with him 2 years. He asked why all of a sudden she wanted the light on. She said before she was scared to tell him she was afraid of the dark but now she wasn't. He said he broke down and cried.
- "good experience"
- She was not informed of foster parent support groups or associations.
- Yes they did. Stated they were helpful but did not like it when they would go to a meeting expecting a speaker and the speaker did not show and someone would wing it talking to them about something else. He stated it happened more than once or twice.
- No one told us about the groups. I found out after about 1 year and then started communicating with other foster parents.
- Interviewee feels the foster parent support groups and the association really help foster parents get through some tough times and provide excellent advice and counsel when needed.

9. What was the primary reason you decided to stop fostering?

- Husband decided to stop fostering. He was tired of seeing kids going in and out of the system. These kids are desperate and they have potential and they want consistency - it's hard to see good kids go back to bad situations. It's very daunting.
- I needed a break after 18 years!
- Relicensing - have to fill out the same forms every year despite the fact that no info had changed -

- should be able to say that nothing has changed as opposed to filling out the paperwork again.
- Child who they became licensed for was placed back in home with bio mother.
 - I made a career shift and opened my own firm and didn't feel like I had the time to foster anymore. My career required more hours and more responsibility. Fostering children is very intense because they are usually way behind on medical and you have to spend a lot of time catching them up... its very time consuming.
 - The caseworker, P.J., was horrible. I submitted 16 concerns about him. He had an emergency meeting with a judge and they stopped placing children with me. I would have loved to keep doing it.
 - We were not told the truth. Wanted only 1 child, we were pressured to take 2 brothers and we were told they it was best to keep them together, but they hated each other. It was not good.
 - Purpose of becoming licensed was for adoption only; DCF was really pushing fostering children who were not available for adoption.
 - Wasn't going to foster. Only get my grandchildren
 - It was too hard to train the children to fit into my life and home. They don't know discipline. It seems like they make some progress and then they start the same problem behaviors again. The birth parents need training too.
 - Hasn't stopped. Have 3 children he has adopted and always thought he might take more kids once things settled down. Is planning to call L. after holidays. Hopes L. is still the licensing staff as he was so knowledgeable. Asked that we let him know who to contact if L. is no longer there. Doesn't want them to contact him at this point.
 - She was licensed twice, first time she quit, the children were difficult. The second time she quit because she was falsely accused of abuse which she did not commit...
 - I only became licensed so I could get my granddaughter from New Jersey, once she was adopted we didn't renew our license.
 - It was too hard on our children. They cried for days when the child left. It was especially hard for our 12 year old who had experienced many friends and family members move away.
 - We adopted and then had a baby.
 - Moved.
 - I have the children I want.
 - Wanted to adopt not foster
 - Currently supposed to relicense.
Been asking to get child placed.
Get calls for a child then 1 hour later system does not have anyone to pick child up from daycare.
 - My extra room was a loft and did not have a door. I felt they could have figured something out to compromise with funds to place door.
 - It may have been a misunderstanding but I had a bad taste after I prepared to take a child with special needs and was told the day before the placement that I was not able to care for the child. They placed the child with someone else. I had sacrificed a lot including my church time to prepare for the child. They never fully explained to me what I hadn't done. There was no real answer.
 - I became frustrated with the process, the constant in and out. I adopted my last foster child and I have moved out of the state of Florida.
 - Became engaged to a man who also had a six year old (she herself had a two year old at the time). She said she got "too busy" with both children once she became engaged.
 - "Horrible" case worker. She indicated that she would gladly do foster again except for the terrible

- experience she had with a "mean" case worker.
- They adopted the last two foster children.
- She would like to continue fostering but not with the same agency. She said went to a meeting to be relicensed but received no help in accessing the required training hours. She did not have a computer and asked if she could come to the office to do on line training but the licensing counselor, L., did nothing to help her.
- Place of Hope told me I had to turn in my license once the children went to another placement.
- Heart broken when adoptive family broke off all communication between foster family and children.
- Adopted 2 - no room in house.
- Stated bad experience with foster to adopt of ten year old. Would not go into detail.
- Was working on Saturday and was told she could not be a foster parent.
- My age.
- I was sick and the child wanting to kill me.
- Stated their adopted son who is nine needs their full time attention and it was not good for him to have kids coming and going out of their home.
- Interviewee said she's 57 years old and now that she and husband have adopted the 3 kids, much of her time is devoted to seeing that they get what they need growing up.

10. Would you recommend to your friends, families, church members, or others that they should look into becoming foster parents?

- For people looking to adopt and for those who want to be a good role-model and thinks they can handle it.
- Used to foster in NJ and always said that if people have time and patience they should foster.
- I used to recommend my friends to be foster parents and I even recruited a few. But I don't recommend anymore because of the way I was treated. Many of my friends who were foster parents are no longer foster parents because of the way they were treated.
- Had such a horrible experience and a sense of failure with those 2 boys.
- We encouraged two people from church - they are in process!
- Yes, we recommended to our neighbors.
- Do quite often and have a couple now that he took to dinner last night to talk about foster parenting experience. Encouraging them to get involved.
- Oh definitely.
- Let them know you really don't know what it is like until you get in it. Need to do lots of soul searching.
- I tell everyone this is not for the fainted heart.
- Always does.
- I would never deny a child a home that they need so much. I still know many people who are fostering. My feelings are mine and I haven't made those known to others who want to foster.
- Definitely.
- She said she would except to warn them about the case workers.
- She said, "Yes, with reservations." She expanded on that by saying that she really would like people to foster children but that they also need to know what they are getting into and understand the reality of what comes with it.
- If it were a different agency than the one she worked with in Lee Co.

- Yes & still does.
- Did not get this.
- Stated in the past, yes he would have recommended it but not so much now. The foster parent stated with privatization and the situation with their last foster child - which was previously discussed they are not so ready to recommend fostering.
- With Caution.
- Interviewee says she is always an advocate and talks about fostering and adopting every chance she gets.

11. Would you consider fostering again?

- Called last week about it but can't until March (when next class is). Shouldn't have to go through 10-wk training again but instead should be able to be trained and re-certified in certain areas since I have been certified before.
- Maybe at a different time in life. Fostering can be a strain on marriage because every second outside of work is spent care giving - so that's another consideration.
- Currently looking into working with Children's Home Society. Also interested in training or helping foster parents.
- She still is in contact with her one foster child and sees her regularly. However, doesn't really want to foster again because had a bad experience with the case worker.
- She says she might once her adopted children are grown. She doesn't want to do it now because her girls are stable doing well and she doesn't want to disrupt that.
- With a different agency than the one she worked with in Lee Co.

12. In your opinion, what is the primary way DCF can change or improve their systems in order to retain and maintain quality Foster Parents?

- DCF is doing a great job - because I know it's a difficult job.
Main concern is that once you take courses and become licensed - if you let your license lapse for a little while for whatever reason - you have to retake all of the courses and classes. I think the home study and some other aspects need to be done annually. But the course work is the same and you should be able to receive credit for it (as you would at a college) for a certain number of years. I have a couple of friends who have stopped fostering or are planning on stopping because of this. Also if you have children already you have to find a babysitter during this time and the courses are very time consuming.
- No changes! Had a great time fostering, thought DCF did a great job, responses were always great, and I always got help when I needed it.
- There has to be a way to get case workers better and more accurate info when going to court. Also, everyone within department should work together to keep better documentation and for the child. There needs to be better organization across the board.
- Make classes better and allow foster parents in the courtroom. Also if you have a remove a child from their parents twice they should never have to go back there.
- There is a constant push and pull between foster parents and biological relatives. You tell foster parents

to be a family and give this child a home and then if the child becomes ready for adoption there is a shift for biological relatives. There is more value placed on biological relatives than on foster parents after they have the child for an extended period of time. It's cruel to the foster parents, cruel to the foster child, and to the other children in the home.

- Case workers act like they don't know about community resources for the children (i.e. counseling) and they aren't following through with resources and services. Since work in the school system I know about these and didn't ask my case workers for much but other parents might not know.
- "Telling the truth. We did not get full disclosure and we feel it hurt the children."
- Less intrusion/extensive and meaningless requirements. Seemed like people were in our home for weeks, every other day, and we didn't even know who they were.
- For the purpose of when someone is giving their preferences for fostering, DCF needs to make sure that is reflected in our system and respect when making calls.
- I didn't ever get to know the system well enough
- Birth parents need a lot of training. They should go with the foster parents so that they can work together. Children would be more responsive if all of the parents were working together.
- Case workers were spread too thin and had too much to cover, causing too much turnover. His case manager moved to licensing due to burnout.
- If the process was easier, less paperwork, it would be easier for foster parents and everyone else.
- Do better assessments regarding family member the children are being placed with. Don't tell us we can adopt and then move the child.
- SYSTEM, don't know if agree with the system
Parent who are just not going to do it. The kids should not be in limbo so long.
The emphasis is too much over what the parent needs and not what the children needs.
- To many changes in case workers.
- No comment.
- Keep kids in one home not move them around.
Kids that don't have parents to adoption.
- All of the above.
Foster Care Laws.
Kids coming into system revamp parental rights.
Waiting too long to prove neglect or abuse on the parents. Need to change law wording so NO loop holes for the parents to prolong taking the parents' rights away.
- Assisting with meeting requirement when costly.
- Get the politics out of placement. Be fair to all foster parents who want children for placement. Don't show favoritism to those who have fostered the longest time. I will never discourage anyone who wants to help a child.
- It is unfair to single out case workers all the time; the responsibility should be extended to upper management who hands down directives and training. There should be full continuity of care that includes everyone involved in the concerns of children in foster care - courts, attorneys, foster parents, etc. Better communication is key.
- Suggests that each child should come with relevant medical and developmental information, and social security care, etc.
- The only suggested she offered was "look at the job of the case worker." She was very firm about this and said they are underpaid and overworked. And stated that it should not be an entry level position.

They should be offered support and help with all the paperwork. She commented that, aside from the one bad case worker she had, the others were great and the adoptions worker was "phenomenal."

- Support new foster parents.
- "More communication. Listening to therapists/foster parents about where children should be placed for adoption."
- For transition from foster home to adoptive home.
- Education on how the system works was equal - red tape training.
- Communication and everyone do things the same.
- Hold the parent to case plan.
- Don't overload caseworkers. Changing caseworkers frequently is difficult for the kids and foster parents. Better communication about court hearings etc. Stated they would get notified a day or two before court hearings etc. and that is difficult to do when you work. Stated communication was better when DCF handled foster care there were not as many communication problems. Provide foster parents with all information about the kids and what appointments etc. they have. States felt like a glorified babysitter at times rather than a parent to some of the kids.
- Interviewee says the babysitting issue is a tough one; it's so restrictive, convoluted and complex that going out to dinner with your spouse becomes a huge problem. She also said that there should be more outings with other foster/adopt families, fellowship, and normalcy.