

## Foster Parent Retention

### What are your current challenges?

1. “Under the gun” such as pressure to find homes to keep up with admissions and unrealistic expectations from administrators, managers, and colleagues in other units
2. There is agreement that finding kin is critical, however the table mentioned that interpersonal issues among kin are challenging to overcome
3. Supporting homes with teens seem to demand more caseworker time; more crisis driven casework impacts the overall work
4. Services seem to be child-driven not foster parent-driven; somehow there needs to be more balance
5. Concurrent planning
6. The “One and Done” family (when they adopt they don’t foster)
7. Matching children with a home
8. At the end of the day, money drives what you do or can do

### What is working?

1. Foster Parent Support Group
2. Flexible Funding Stream to help certify a home e.g. pay for a medical exam; purchase a bed, smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector etc. (if a voluntary agency family receives item then ACS reimburses them)
3. Debriefing/Exit interview after a disruption or home closure
4. Supports provided e.g. foster family contacts, transport, child care, respite  
Recognitions – formal events dinners, barbecues or as simple as thank you cards
5. A local prevention program has a recreation specialist who will do one-on-one with children, take to an activity or an event
6. A LDSS has a Kinship Specialist who works with kin after placement. Currently the kin specialist receives a referral after a child who has been placed would benefit from 1x1 services. The county is considering enhancing the program which would involve the kin specialist in home finding at intake.

### What is not working?

1. Respite happens too late sometimes so it’s not effective
2. Reluctance to approve childcare...\$\$\$
3. MAPP curriculum needs to be revisited and foster parents need more specializing and foster parent driven training based on their needs
4. Bureaucracy is slow to change; need a crisis to create meaningful change
5. Flexibility to try new ways

### If money and permission were not a factor, what would you do differently to address retention?

1. Provide emergency child care (like a few days or one week duration e.g. medical emergency such as physical therapy three times a week, jury duty, death in family)
2. Have a unit that solely supports the foster parent e.g. transportation, advocacy role, school issues
3. Metro cards for foster parents
4. Contract with Uber for transportation
5. More caseworkers, decrease caseloads
6. Establish a Foster Parent Helpline Statewide; or county/local; or Regional
7. Find a way to have less school suspensions of foster children

### Any lingering thoughts?

1. Agency cultures need to change – recruitment and retention is everyone’s responsibility (community/agency/administration/colleague) it should not all fall on “homefinder”

2. More face-to-face contacts between caseworkers, foster parents, and children are key to supporting them adequately and effectively
3. Some way to shift the training focus after certification to doing individualized training plans for foster parents
4. Have enough foster homes to have one child or one sibling group per home