Child Welfare Reform: Supporting Foster Parents and Caseworkers

NCSL Human Services Chairs Meeting
Monday, October 2, 2017       Nashville, TN
Child Welfare Reform:
Supporting Foster Parents and Caseworkers

Part 1: Supporting Foster Parents
- **Presenters:**
  - Senator A.J. Griffin, Oklahoma
  - Dr. Linda Davidson Sagor, MD, MPH, University of Massachusetts Medical School, American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Foster Care, Adoption, and Kinship Care Executive Committee Member

- **Moderator:**
  - Rob Geen, Director Policy Reform and Advocacy, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Part 2: Supporting Caseworkers: Efforts in Colorado and Tennessee
- **Presenters:**
  - Dr. Dawn Matera Bassett, MSW, LCSW, PhD Associate Professor, College of Professional Studies, Chair Colorado Child Welfare Caseworker Resiliency Task Force, Colorado
  - Dr. Michael Cull, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner, Child Health, Tennessee Department of Children and Families
Child Welfare Reform: Supporting Foster Parents and Caseworkers

- 427,000 children and youth in foster care in U.S.
  - 269,509 entered foster care
  - 243,060 exited foster care
  - 191,842 children in non-relative foster care (45%) (AFCARS, June 2016, Report #23)
  - Dramatic decline in foster care caseloads until 2012
    - Increase in foster care
    - Increase in child maltreatment reporting rates
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) like abuse and neglect can contribute to lifelong negative health.

Safe, stable, nurturing relationships promote resilience and can help mitigate the effects of ACEs.

Foster parents and caseworkers can both provide that support and help children heal.
Do you have enough foster parents to place all children for whom a family placement is appropriate?

Is it getting harder, easier, or about the same to recruit foster parents?

Do you feel like you have accurate and accessible data on your foster parents?

Are you concerned about the quality of the foster parents you have and the ability to care for the children needing homes?

If you had more high quality foster parents, could you safely reduce your use of shelters or group homes?

What are the issues facing caseworkers in your states? What solutions have you considered?
Supporting Foster Parents

Senator A.J. Griffin, sponsor, Oklahoma 2017 SB 727

- Collaborative process between parents and DHS - actively engage parents around child placement decisions
- Strengthen long-term accountability at DHS – yearly reports on #s of available foster homes, child welfare staff workloads and other key metrics
- Increase support and resources for foster parents; strengthen the Foster Parents Bill of Rights
- Reduce liability for foster parents
Dr. Sagor joined MA DCF in 2016 as Medical Director.

Established program placing medical social workers in each of the 29 state area offices.

They work with caseworkers and foster parents to ensure children access needed medical, dental, and behavioral health care.

Rate of recommended medical visits statewide has increased 383%.
A Campaign to Ensure Bright Futures for Kids in Foster Care

www.fosteringchamps.org
Do We Have a Foster Parent Recruitment or a Retention Problem?

**Foster Parent Consideration**

- **36%**
  - Adults ages 18-65 interested in
- **26%**
  - Have already considered becoming a foster parent
- **8%**
  - Would consider becoming a foster parent with resources

**Foster Parent Retention**

- **56%**
  - Foster parents quit within 1 year

Source: 2017 Harris Poll

Source: US Dept. Health & Human Services
2017 Colorado HB17 -1283

- The bill creates a task force to organize county-level versions of and guidelines for child welfare caseworker resiliency programs (task force) modeled on national resiliency programs. The membership of the task force is outlined; written findings and recommendations must be submitted to the Joint Budget Committee and the Joint Health and Human Services Committee by December 31, 2017.
Supporting Caseworkers

Evidence-based Strategies to Advance a Safety Culture in Child Welfare

Michael Cull, PhD
Supporting Caseworkers

Safety Science

- Interdisciplinary science that draws on psychology, engineering, medicine, architecture/design and may other related fields.
- Concerns itself with understanding how humans interact with and within complex system so those systems can be made more safe and reliable.

Safety Culture

- A one in which organizational values, attitudes, and behaviors support an engaged workforce and reliable care delivery.
Supporting Caseworkers

Leaders in a safety culture:
- Strive to balance systems and individual accountability; and
- Value open communication, transparency, and continuous learning and improvement.

Teams in a safety culture
- Monitor themselves, their colleagues, and their system for stress
- Anticipate and respond to unexpected events
Child Programs – All Regions

- Percent Positive Response
- Emotional Exhaustion
- Safety Organizing
- Psychological Safety
- Safety Climate

2013 (n=347)  
2015 (n=345)  
2017 (n=331)
CPS Investigations – All Regions

Percent Positive Response

2013 (n=182) 2015 (n=195) 2017 (n=200)

Emotional Exaustion
Safety Organizing
Psychological Safety
Safety Climate
CPS Assessment

Percent Positive Response

- Emotional Exaustion
- Safety Organizing
- Psychological Safety
- Safety Climate

Year | n | Percent Positive Response
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2013 | 268 | [Data points]
2015 | 258 | [Data points]
2017 | 228 | [Data points]
Staff Turnover - FY16 and FY17 (to survey period)

- Monthly Voluntary Attrition Count
- Staff Turnover
  - FY16 and FY17 (to survey period)
  - Child Programs
  - CPS
  - All
  - Linear (All)
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NCSL Tracks:
- Foster Care Bill of Rights
- Access to Liability Insurance
- Educational and Medical Consent Laws
- Foster Parent Voice in Court
- Caseworker Dedicated to Foster Parents
- Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard
- Child Welfare Workforce
- Child Welfare Enactments – maltreatment, foster care, adoption, kinship care

(Site: http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/child-welfare.aspx)