



Training Objectives

1. Participants will learn reasons resource parents leave agencies
2. Participants will learn strategies for building a foundation of retention
3. Participants will discuss ways to improve resource parent and agency collaboration
4. Participants will strategize on ways to impact resource parent retention in their respective agencies.

Why is retention important?

- Number of children in OOHC vs. Number of available homes
- Homes that aren't being utilized
- Costs associated with recruiting and training homes
- Improves quality of care for children
- Fewer moves means less trauma

What the research says

- Length of service is shorter than expected
- "Burn-out" is not typically a factor
- 1/5 of the foster parent population provides 60 to 80 percent of foster care services



Why parents leave

1. Perceived lack of agency **responsiveness, communication** and **support**

The **entire agency** must work to retain a pool of engaged, well-trained and well supported resource families

The Foundation of Retention

1. Good case management
2. Quality training and professional development
3. Collaboration as partners serving children
4. Collaboration as partners in the agency



Keys to good case management

- Relationship development
- Responsiveness is a priority
- Information sharing is vital
- Encouraging use of respite services



Dealing with expectations

What foster parents want their agencies to know:

- “ As a new foster parent, I may have **unrealistic expectations**. I may be broadsided by shattered assumptions. ” p.23

Strategy: Understand common expectations and create ongoing conversations about them



Common Expectations

1. Our love will be enough
2. We will feel love for and connection with this child quickly
3. This child will step into our family and easily function with our rules, goals and ambitions
4. Our biological children will embrace this new child as a sibling
5. Our child will fit well into our extended family and be welcomed by them
6. Our friends and acquaintances will validate our role as parents and support us through this fostering process
7. We will never feel regrets or ambivalence in adopting this child with a traumatic past

Source: Schooler, J. (2009). Why are foster parents leaving?. Retrieved from www.fosteringfamilies.today.com

What agencies should know...

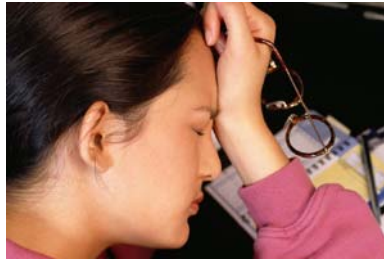
“ Although I have had the training, I do not have life experience in **living** with traumatized children. I **will** have emotions and thoughts that catch me unaware.” p. 24



Source: Schooler, J. (2009). Why are foster parents leaving?. Retrieved from www.fosteringfamilies.today.com

Key elements of parental response to trauma

1. Believing and validating the child's experiences
2. Tolerating the child's affect
3. Managing their own emotional responses



Source: Schooler, J. (2009). Why are foster parents leaving?. Retrieved from www.fosteringfamilies.com

Final thoughts

“ My family will go through a transformation, that fostering isn't a job, but a lifestyle change for the entire family. Our family may be changing and no one supports and guides us through those changes— ones we may not like. ” p. 24

Source: Schooler, J. (2009). Why are foster parents leaving?. Retrieved from www.fosteringfamilies.com

What agencies can do

1. Link new parents to experienced parents
2. Utilize supportive and effective home visits
3. Provide opportunities for families to interact socially



Source: Schooler, J. (2009). Why are foster parents leaving?. Retrieved from www.fosteringfamilies.com

Questions for home visits

1. How do you see yourself? How has that changed since the child entered the family?
2. What does your support system look like? How have your social activities changed?
3. How have you been impacted by the responses from family and community regarding the issues you face with the child? How have these responses made you feel?
4. How are you managing strong feelings? How do you see your spouse managing strong feelings? Has that changed since the child has entered your family?
5. Do you feel competent as a parent? If not, when did it change for you?
6. If you have other permanent children in the household, how would you describe changes you've seen in them? Positive? Neutral? Negative?
7. Do you feel safe? Do your children feel safe?
8. Do you react to triggers connected to the child's trauma experiences?
9. Do you feel you have control over your life?
10. Do you believe you can influence the behavior of your(the) traumatized child?
11. Have you noticed any changes within yourself as a result of the stress under which you live? (numbing, hypersensitivity, or increased sleeplessness)
12. Do you use outside resources to help in decision-making? (self-protection and setting boundaries)

Source: Schooler, J. (2009). Why are foster parents leaving?. Retrieved from www.fosteringfamilies.com

Quality training and professional development

- Use foster parents as trainers
- Relevant topics- with input from parents
- Convenient times and locations
- Send the message that partnership is important



Collaborate as partners

- Communication
- Include them in decision-making
- Recognize their contribution



What partnership looks like

- Survey resource parents annually
- Involve resource parents in policy review and development
- Involve resource parents in recruitment
- Create and update a realistic description of foster parenting

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