CHAMPS

children need amazing parents

POLICY PLAYBOOK

Contents

Introduction 2

Quality Caregiving 5

Parents as Partners 11

Quality Assurance 13

Resources

- Quality Caregiving 17
- Parents as Partners 22
- Quaity Assurance 24

CHAMPS Pledge 27

Introduction

CHAMPS is a national campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting.

CHAMPS -- which stands for CHildren Need AMazing ParentS – brings together national, state and local organizations with a shared interest in promoting positive outcomes for children and youth in foster care and their families. CHAMPS is a policy reform campaign based on research that shows loving, supportive families – whether birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children. The overarching goal of CHAMPS is to promote better outcomes for children by ensuring that foster parents, including relative foster parents, are equipped with the training, support and services they need to meet the complex needs of children in their care.

Although identifying and recruiting quality foster parents is critically important work, CHAMPS is not a campaign to recruit new foster parents. Rather, CHAMPS promotes policy changes that can help agencies achieve and sustain quality foster parenting by ensuring families have the supports they need to help children heal, grow and thrive. CHAMPS aims to spur reforms in 20 to 25 states over five years to prioritize quality foster parenting in both policy and practice.

Research shows that half or more of all foster parents quit within a year or after they finish caring for their first child. If systems can do a better job retaining foster parents, they will have to recruit fewer foster parents each year.

CHAMPS aims to show why the time is right for state leaders to focus on quality foster parenting. For example, a compelling body of research exists about the importance of quality parenting to the well-being of children, especially for children who have suffered trauma. Quality parenting improves stability and permanency for children, and many policy options to better support parents have no or low costs.

Quality parenting improves stability and permanency for children, and many policy options to better support parents have no or low costs.

Also, there are increasing examples of innovation and best practices that can inform the development of policy solutions, such as new tools to improve matches of children and caregivers. There also are expectations for further progress on ensuring normal adolescent opportunities for youth in care; these expectations can be met with greater attention to creating stable, high-quality placements with families who have the training and supports to help the young person thrive.

There's also an urgent need to identify policy solutions that support quality foster parenting given that many parts of the country are facing increasing demands for foster parents as more children are coming into care. Past approaches to foster parent shortages that have focused too narrowly on recruiting "enough" families have fallen short. Those lessons learned, plus what we now know from research and best practice, point to the need for lasting solutions to address the underlying problems that cause many families to give up or walk away from foster parenting, including inconsistent or too little support, and lack of access to critical services.

The CHAMPS Policy Playbook is grounded in evidence and provides policy examples that, when implemented, will pave the way for transformational change for children, families and systems. The Playbook is organized around three focus areas, (1) child-centered

policies that promote quality caregiving; (2) parents as partners in decision-making; and (3) quality assurance to help agencies maintain an ongoing focus on quality foster parenting. For each area, the Playbook includes policies that draw on real examples of foster parenting policies being developed and implemented by child welfare leaders around the country, including those involved in the Quality Parenting Initiative. The Playbook also includes recommendations from a wide range of issue experts, including parents and youth who have personal experience in the child welfare system.

NEXT ›› QUALITY CAREGIVING

QUALITY CAREGIVING

CHAMPS advocates for policies that promote quality caregiving.

Foster parents, including relative foster parents, are game-changers for children in foster care. Quality foster parenting can help children heal from trauma, keep siblings together, improve management of children's chronic physical and mental health conditions, increase stability and ensure that children achieve permanency through reunification with birth families, placement with relatives, or through adoption. A growing body of research about child and adolescent development provides critical insights on how agencies can develop policies that ensure children do not suffer further trauma, and support caregiving families to address the unique needs of children.

Dedicated Support Workers

Foster parents report that the single most important factor in their ability to care for children (and the factor that most influences their desire to continue fostering) is the ability to connect with someone they trust to discuss how best to meet the needs of children in their care. Support workers and supervisors with specialized expertise are particularly critical for vulnerable subpopulations of

children in foster care, such as adolescents and children with special health care needs. State policies can require that dedicated support workers be assigned to foster parents and set standards for these workers including thorough training in trauma-informed care and parameters for a reasonable caseload.

Effective Training

Rigorous research has identified a number of programs that help parents effectively care for children with behavioral and/or mental health challenges. These programs have now been adapted for the training of foster parents and can equip them with the skills they need to meet the needs of children in a family setting rather than having to rely on institutional placements. Much of the best training is individually tailored to meet the unique needs of each family in effectively parenting specific children. State policies can both require the implementation of and provide the funding necessary for such research-based training programs. In addition, these programs can support effective collaboration between foster parents, birth parents, and a child's health care provider. In addition, training for parents can be re-imagined to increase access and effectiveness by offering different models such as online learning and mentoring and coaching by experienced peer families.

Emergency Foster Parents & Appropriate Transitions

Too often, one sees news headlines about children in foster care staying in hotel rooms or agency offices overnight, presumably due to a lack of quality alternative placements. States must have policies and practices to manage emergency care needs, and many experts argue that the best approach offers a continuum of treatment and placement options. In designing such a continuum, community and family-based approaches that minimize the need for future placement moves should be prioritized. Kinship, or relative care, should continue to be a priority option for emergency placements. And, importantly, state policy makers should seek solutions that avoid a return to a reliance on children's shelters, which are not only more costly than other settings but are associated with a number of harmful experiences and outcomes for children including less likelihood of family-based care. State polices can prevent children from unnecessarily experiencing shelter placements when transitioning into care or a new home by ensuring all existing and new foster families receive the specialized training, supports, and resources to receive children with little or no advance warning, assist with assessing the needs of the child and help to minimize the trauma of transition. Some states take a different approach

Research clearly demonstrates that for most children who must enter foster care, placement with a relative or a close family friend gives them the best chance for success.

Research shows that foster parents typically spend far more on the children they care for than they receive in support.

by designating 'emergency foster parents.' Under this approach, policies should ensure these families have specialized training in assessment, crisis care and trauma and can effectively work with child welfare to identify and make an effective transition to relatives or other qualified parents who will serve as the stable, longer-term home.

Support for Kinship Care

Research clearly demonstrates that for most children who must enter foster care, placement with a relative or a close family friend gives them the best chance for success. Kinship care is more stable and as safe as non-kin care, and it is less traumatic for children to live with someone they know. State policies can ensure that children are given every opportunity to be placed with a relative as a first placement, and that kin receive the same types of supports as non-kin foster parents. Policies should also recognize that kin caregivers often step in with little to no preparation to be foster parents, and that they face unique family dynamics that must be addressed to ensure they can fulfill their caregiving role. Policies that reflect the unique circumstances for kin families include an expedited/provisional licensing process, a process to waive non safety foster parent licensing standards that aren't relevant for kin (i.e. space requirements or rules for sleeping arrangements), specialized training that takes into account kinship care dynamics, and permanency options, such as subsidized guardianship, that allow them to make a permanent commitment to children and youth without permanently altering legal family relationships. State policy can also ensure kinship providers have access to tailored services and training specific to the issues that brought their children into care, such as caring for children impacted by parental substance use disorders (i.e. neonatal abstinence syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) and strategies to handle children's serious social, emotional or behavioral issues.

Support Youth Transitions to Adulthood

Parents typically help young people acquire the skills and experiences they need to successfully transition to adulthood and foster parents should be encouraged and supported in doing the same for youth in foster care. State policies can encourage or require supported transitions or at least remove the barriers that foster parents and youth in care have identified. For example, state policies can help foster parents defray the costs of insuring an additional driver, enable foster parents to help teach young people in care to drive and obtain drivers' licenses, open bank accounts, complete the college application process, have normal social and extracurricular experiences, and ensure they have access

to health insurance and their health records. Policies should also ensure foster parents can help young people prepare for work, find employment, and secure stable housing (for example, by enabling foster parents to co-sign leases). Policies should include accountability measures to ensure these supports and services are provided to young people prior to their transition out of foster care.

Reduced Financial Burden

Although the vast majority of foster parents are not motivated by the financial support they receive for caring for children, there is no doubt that fostering entails a significant financial burden. Research shows that foster parents typically spend far more on the children they care for than they receive in support. State policies can ensure that foster parents are provided sufficient financial support to at least cover the immediate additional cost of caring for a child in custody, and that resources to help children thrive are available, such as child care vouchers or supports and funding for extracurricular activities. Given that the cost of caring for children continues to rise, state policies can ensure that the level of financial support offered to foster parents is re-evaluated on a periodic basis or indexed directly to inflation. Policies should also ensure that support continues into permanency through adoption and guardianship. Policies should also take into account the changes in costs over time, especially as children get older and have opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities such as sports, music, and clubs. Other steps can be taken to help inform foster parents about available resources, such as developing an accessible clearinghouse of resources, or other dissemination of materials about foster parents' eligibility for supports, including federal and state tax benefits available to foster parents. States can also support safe transportation for children to visitation.

Developmentally Appropriate Respite Care

When parents need to be away from their children temporarily, policies must ensure that respite care is child-centered, allows parents to make good decisions, and is a positive experience for children and youth. Policies that restrict the use of providers, limit the parent's ability to use the "reasonable and prudent parenting" standard to make reasonable respite decisions, or are not oriented toward preserving and strengthening the child's natural relationships with caring adults all pose barriers to developmentally appropriate respite care. State policies can help fund and ensure that foster and birth parents have funding when necessary for respite care, including providing appropriate flexibility for foster parents in identifying respite care providers (such as a weekend sleepover with a friend's family, a summer camp, or the child's

Given the special challenges their children face, foster parents can benefit from the advice and emotional support of others that are experiencing the same challenges.

State policies can help ensure foster parents can access needed physical and mental health services for the children in their care.

birth or extended family). Policies and funding can also encourage newly licensed families without a child to serve as respite providers, particularly if they have specialized skills or training that are needed.

Parental Leave

The latest medical research clearly demonstrates that a child's time with parents during family leave promotes improved caregiver bonding, more engaged parenting, especially for fathers, and improved child health and developmental outcomes. Children in foster care would benefit from the same type of support and job protection for their foster parents as other children whose biological parents have parental leave benefits. State policies can explicitly permit foster parents to take advantage of existing family and medical leave provisions in federal and state law. States can also support private businesses that have high quality parental leave for parents taking care of children in foster care, such as by offering tax incentives.

Peer Support

Given the special challenges their children face, foster parents can benefit from the advice and emotional support of others that are experiencing the same challenges. State policies can ensure that foster parents have mechanisms in place for peer support, including providing funds to foster parent associations that provide peer mentoring, support groups, and other opportunities for parents to connect with one another.

Liability Insurance

One barrier preventing many foster parents from caring for older youth is the fear of liability associated with the possible actions of youth responding to the trauma they have experienced. State policies can limit the liability of foster parents or provide insurance.

Access to Health Care

Properly managed physical and mental health conditions contribute to a child's overall wellbeing and improve the likelihood of the success of a foster family placement. State policies can help ensure foster parents can access needed physical and mental health services for the children in their care, ensure that their input (along with that of birth parents) is considered, ensure continuity of care and health homes, and create a mechanism for foster parents to say when the needed services are not being provided. This should include not only guidelines on the timeliness of accessing care for children in foster care, but also the resources to ensure children receive needed health services, including often underutilized critical early mental health interventions that promote and strengthen

attachment with parents, such as infant mental health services. In addition, state policies can ensure children have continuous health coverage through Medicaid, and that foster parents access affordable coverage so that they are also healthy.

Health information sharing

Timely access to the child's important health history and health insurance information is critical to ensure children receive care when needed. State policies can provide clear guidance on roles and responsibilities of caseworkers and foster parents, including guidance on arranging and bringing children to appointments with health care providers. Policies should clarify information that must be shared with foster parents for them to effectively parent and meet the physical and mental health needs of the child and family, and to promote coordination between foster and birth parents. In addition, policies should clarify the provision of consent for routine medical care. Ensuring that children can receive routine treatment when removed from their homes will improve their outcomes and support timely placements in family settings. State policies that require birth parent or state official consent for all health services can result in delayed access to routine treatment for conditions such as sinus infections, head lice or scabies. State policies should clarify the provision of consent for routine medical care to expedite children's access to needed minor health services. States should also support development of secure online health portals for children in out-of-home care to allow for tiered access to information (for birth parent, case worker, foster parent, physician/health care provider).

Other parent supports

Foster parents play a key role in ensuring that children exit foster care to a permanent family. Policies should support training and services for foster parents with information about their role in ensuring that children achieve permanency, including partnering with birth parents and working toward reunification, considering adoption themselves, and partnering with child welfare professionals to support transitions to relative or adoptive families. Foster parents and the children they care for also benefit from other supportive services such as mentoring, recreational activities for children and camps or retreats. Foster parents can also benefit from counseling or other support to help them deal with feelings of grief or loss when a child transitions from their home.

NEXT »
PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Parents As Partners

CHAMPS advocates for parents as partners in decision-making.

Foster parents are the child welfare system's primary intervention for helping children in foster care heal, grow and thrive. Families spend more time with the child than any other professional partner, and have valuable information needed to make decisions and identify services and supports to meet the child's needs.

> *When public agencies and private providers prioritize foster parenting and engage foster parents as valued partners, they enable excellent parenting and achieve better outcomes for children in foster care, including improved physical and mental health, development, education and permanency.*

Foster parent as priority partners

Increasingly, public agencies are incorporating the perspectives of experienced foster parents and birth parents into the development and delivery of training and education programs. This type of involvement should be extended to other aspects of the agency's management and planning activities to ensure that policies and practices reflect input from foster parents and better address the actual needs of families so they can provide the best possible care to their children. When agencies prioritize foster parents, improved outcomes will follow. State

policies should require agencies to establish foster parent advisory boards and require foster parent representation in agency planning. Stipends for participation should be made available.

Partnering with faith communities

Many families interested in becoming foster parents are strongly motivated by their faith. One study found that two-thirds of foster parents attend religious services weekly, a rate 1.7 times that of the national average. The faith community has a long history of recruiting adoptive and foster families, both internationally and domestically. State policies should encourage child welfare agencies to reach out to leaders of all faiths to discuss opportunities to enhance foster parent recruitment activities, particularly in communities where large numbers of children are placed in foster care but agencies have had difficulty recruiting parents.

Joint partnership responsibilities

Foster parents are the child welfare system's primary intervention to helping children in foster care thrive, but barriers prevent foster parents from feeling fully respected as a partner working with the agency to meet the needs of children in their care. State policies can reflect the joint expectations and responsibilities of both parents and agencies in working together to care for children, including: 1) explicit permission and expectation for caseworkers to provide foster parents with necessary information about the children placed in their care, such as educational and health records and the expectation that the caregiver will be an advocate for the child's needs, 2) requirement that foster parents be invited and expected to participate in the case planning process as a valued partner, 3) a requirement that foster parents be invited and permitted to be heard in court proceedings, and 4) implementation of "reasonable and prudent parenting" standards consistent with best practice and the input of local foster parents.

State policies should encourage child welfare agencies to reach out to leaders of all faiths to discuss opportunities to enhance foster parent recruitment activities, particularly in communities where large numbers of children are placed in foster care but agencies have had difficulty recruiting parents.

NEXT »
QUALITY ASSURANCE

QUALITY ASSURANCE

CHAMPS advocates for quality assurance to help agencies maintain an ongoing focus on quality foster parenting.

Necessary elements of a quality assurance process include: clearly communicating expectations for quality foster parenting, providing solution-oriented feedback and support when issues arise that interfere with children receiving quality care, and ensuring systems of receiving feedback from parents, youth, birth parents, and other stakeholders about systemic and family specific successes and challenges. State policies can encourage post-placement evaluations (from youth, parents and caseworkers), partnership oriented processes for resolving challenge and clear processes for immediately addressing situations where families are unable to meet the expectations for quality care. In addition, other policies support quality assurance:

Foster Parent Census and Matching

Achieving quality foster parenting entails not only having enough trained and available families to meet the needs of a community, but that the best possible match between family and child occurs. Good matches between children and families is critical to ensuring placement stability, which benefits children's safety, permanency and well-being. Recruitment, retention and improved matching is

possible when child welfare agencies have the tools to make data-driven decisions. Yet, many child welfare agencies report having outdated or incomplete information about active foster parents, their skills, training, interests, background and availability. At a time when many states are experiencing an increased demand for foster parents, there is an opportunity to adopt policies that help agencies make data-driven decisions to improve their recruitment and retention efforts and ensure children experience greater placement stability by having the first placement be the best placement. A foster parent census is a policy approach to better utilize information about active, licensed parents. For example, through a yearly "foster parent census" report, an agency can provide information on the number of children in care, the number of approved/licensed foster homes and the number of children placed in those homes, as well as the number placed in non-family settings, and the duration of their stay in those homes. A foster parent census can help agencies monitor their overall foster parent capacity, including for specific groups of children (i.e. parents who are trained and available to care for infants, teens, or sibling groups). Another quality assurance measure is for states to design policies that trigger increased investments in foster parent recruitment and training when the 'census' falls below a targeted level, such as 150 of need for any specific population group. Agencies should also consider developing programs to invest in training and specialized support of foster parents when their pool of existing foster parents are not prepared to parent the population of children and teens in the state's care (such as when they have higher number of children with significant medical needs or behavioral challenges).

Supporting Birth & Foster Parent Partnerships

A key element of excellent foster parenting is nurturing the child's relationships with birth parents, siblings and extended family. Additionally, foster parents can play critical roles in supporting the child's well-being and case plan by co-parenting with birth parents and supporting birth families in working toward reunification. When agencies focus on effective co-parenting and eliminating barriers to partnership, the trauma of foster care is minimized for children, children benefit from improved relationships with their birth families, biological parents benefit from the support and relationship with foster parents that can help facilitate reunification and prevent re-entry, and foster parents gain a natural support system that can make parenting easier and ensure relationships are preserved after reunification. Agencies should develop policies that recruit, train, and support families to work with birth families as well as train and support agency staff to implement practices

A key element of excellent foster parenting is nurturing the child's relationships with birth parents, siblings and extended family.

State policies can require child welfare agencies to develop a sound quality assurance system to regularly collect feedback from foster parents.

that encourage effective co-parenting. Agencies can also implement policies that eliminate barriers to and facilitate the relationship between parents such as ice-breakers, and "shared family time" visitation.

Foster Parent Feedback

Most private industries, and many public systems, seek input and feedback from consumers so that they can continually improve products and services. However, there is little evidence that public child welfare agencies regularly seek feedback from foster parents about what has or has not helped their efforts to provide the highest quality of care for children. Foster parents have expressed a strong interest in having more opportunities to share their insights and experiences so that more can be done to address barriers and enable foster parents to succeed. State policies can require child welfare agencies to develop a sound quality assurance system to regularly collect feedback from foster parents. In addition, child welfare agencies should regularly collect and report information on the rate of foster parent turnover as well as on reasons why parents stop fostering (such as through required exit interviews of parents). For example, in Georgia, an online 'exit interview' tool is used to gain information on why parents stop fostering. In addition, child welfare agencies can regularly collect and report information on the rate of foster parent turnover. States may also want to update and improve grievance procedures and also consider ways to collect feedback from case workers.

Modernize Foster Parent Licensing Processes

Foster parent licensing is intended to ensure child safety, assess the suitability of a foster family's home, provide practical information to inform a plan of care and give foster families the knowledge and skills they need to be strong caregivers and partners. Unfortunately, many licensing regulations currently impose standards largely unrelated to ensuring safety and unintentionally exclude good potential foster families, especially relative foster parents who often step in to care for children unexpectedly without time to adapt their homes to meet current requirements. State policies should require agencies to review foster home licensing requirements to model standards and propose recommendations to eliminate or modify unnecessary requirements that may impede recruitment of foster parents, including kinship caregivers. State policies can offer more flexibility while also ensuring safety. For example, some agencies are using mobile fingerprinting systems, designing more flexible home studies, developing flexible and online training programs that accommodate family work and child care needs and involving

existing foster families to help new families navigate the licensing process. Non safety-related licensing requirements, such as the number of available bedrooms or bathrooms in a home, might also be subject to flexibility, based upon the best interests of children in specific circumstances.

Timely & Fair Investigations

With so many stakeholders involved in the care and oversight of children in foster care it is almost inevitable that at some point a foster parent might become subject to an investigation related to their parenting. It's important that allegations be taken extremely seriously to identify possible harm to children and youth in foster care, while also exploring the possibility that allegations may be rooted in unaddressed tensions between foster parents, the young people in their care, families and communities. Poorly handled investigations will cause unnecessary fear and anxiety for all members of the family. It may also have a chilling effect on foster parent recruitment efforts. Investigations must first and foremost be focused on ensuring the safety and well-being of children, resolving issues as quickly as possible, and ensuring the process is coordinated, transparent and fair to families. At the same time, allegations that prove unfounded may provide an opportunity to intervene to address problematic relationships between foster parents and young people, their families, and the community at large. A state agency might employ former or retired employees to support investigations of complaints or create dashboards for managers to better track the progress of investigations.

Data sharing.

Nearly all children in foster care are automatically eligible for Medicaid health care coverage, although the level and consistency of data sharing between state child welfare and Medicaid agencies varies by state. Some states have established effective data sharing arrangements across agencies that are helping to drive positive outcomes. As a matter of quality assurance, state policies should promote collaborative data sharing between child welfare and Medicaid agencies to ensure that foster parents receive all appropriate health information regarding children in their care. State systems should also ensure that children become established in a medical home, and that a child's medical home also has access to all appropriate health information about the child.

State policies should promote collaborative data sharing between child welfare and Medicaid agencies to ensure that foster parents receive all appropriate health information regarding children in their care.

NEXT ❯❯
RESOURCES

RESOURCES

CHAMPS advocates for policies that promote quality caregiving.

Dedicated Support Workers

Anu Family Services is a leader and innovator in child welfare with expertise in treatment foster care, respite foster care, family search and engagement, parent coaching and parent support services, Parent Coaching Certification, training and consultation. See Anu's resources: www.anufs.org

Effective Training

The Incredible Years is a leader and innovator in child welfare with expertise in treatment foster care, respite foster care, family search and engagement, parent coaching and parent support services, Parent Coaching Certification, training and consultation. Program and training information is available at:

www.incredibleyears.com

The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program offers effective evidence-based parenting programs. Triple P gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children's behavior and prevent problems developing. Triple P has been shown to work across cultures, socio-economic groups and in many different kinds of family structures. Program and training information is available at:

www.triplep.net/glo-en/home

Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a child and parent psychotherapy model for children who are experiencing significant emotional and behavioral difficulties related to traumatic life events.

Program and training information is available at:

www.cebc4cw.org/program/trauma-focused-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/detailed

KEEP – Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained is a program to give parents effective tools for dealing with their child's externalizing and other behavioral and emotional problems including trauma and to support them in the implementation of those tools.

Program and training information are available at:

www.cebc4cw.org/program/keeping-foster-and-kin-parents-supported-and-trained/detailed

Minnesota policy requires foster parents to be trained for mental health and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

A description of MN's policy is here:

www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_164899.pdf

Child Adult Relationship Enhancement (CARE) is a trauma-informed modification of specific PCIT skills for general use by non-clinical adults who interact with traumatized children and their caregivers within various milieu settings.

Program and training information is available at:

nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/promising_practices/CARE_fact_sheet_3-20-07.pdf

Kinship Care

Model Home Licensing Standards were developed in collaboration by The American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Generations United and the National Association for Regulatory Administration. The national standards help ensure children in foster care are safe while also establishing a reasonable, common-sense pathway to enable more relatives and non-related caregivers to become licensed foster parents.

www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Model%20Licensing%20Standards%20FINAL.pdf

Grandfamilies.org is a national legal resource in support of grandfamilies – including kinship caregivers for children in foster care. It is a project of Generations United, the American Bar Association and Casey Family Programs:

www.grandfamilies.org

Support Youth Transitions to Adulthood

Helping Youth Transition to Adulthood is a fact sheet developed by the Child Welfare Information Gateway, an information service hosted by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/youth_transition.pdf

Ready, Set, Fly! is a parent's guide to teaching life skills, developed by the Casey Family Programs. www.casey.org/media/CLS_ResourceGuides_subdocs_ReadySetFly.pdf

Community Connections Youth Project is a project of FosterAdopt Connect (formerly the Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association) that provides voluntary, strength-based case management services for youth who transitioning from foster care. Participating youth receive assistance in finding housing, jobs, healthcare coverage, crisis-intervention services, educational assistance, identification and driver's licenses, birth certificates and other essential elements/ indicators of independence and adulthood.

www.fosteradopt.org/southwest-mo/programs/community-connections-youth-project/

Defray Financial Burden

Hitting the M.A.R.C. is a report that presents the first- ever calculation of real expenses of caring for a child in foster care in the United States and offers a methodology for a 'foster care minimum average rate for children.

http://childrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/hitting_the_marc_summary_october_2007.pdf

Family Foster Care Reimbursement Rates in the U.S.: A Report from a 2012 National Survey on Family Foster Care Provider Classifications and Rates is a survey of states' full rate structures and how they classify children and providers. Findings are summarized and states are individually profiled at:

www.childtrends.org/publications/family-foster-care-reimbursement-rates-in-the-u-s-a-report-from-a-2012-national-survey-on-family-foster-care-provider-classifications-and-rates/

Casey Child Welfare Financing Survey: Family Foster Care Provider Classifications and Rates: https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2013-19FosterCareReimbursement3.pdf

Developmentally Appropriate Respite Care

TAKING A BREAK Creating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Respite Care in Your Community is a report issued by Adopt US Kids. It serves as a manual to help parent group leaders partner with public agencies to develop respite care programs.

www.adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf

Creating and Sustaining Effective Respite Services is a report issued by Adopt US Kids that summarizes key research findings on the effectiveness and value of respite that may be useful to child welfare agency leaders and parent support organizations. https://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/AUSK/respite-program/creating-and-sustaining-effective-respite-services.pdf

Parental Leave

A legal summary of federal and state medical leave policies published by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). States that specify leave for foster parents include Connecticut, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Washington State. www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx

A list of employers that are benefit leaders on foster parent policies for employees, identified in 2017 by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption: https://dciw4f53l7k9i.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_BestAFW_Foster_Care.pdf

Descriptions of employer "leave" policies published in 2016 by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption that highlight several companies' policies that offer leave for foster parents. https://davethomasfoundation.org/dtfa-lp/pdfs/AFW-Foster-Friendly-2016.pdf

Peer Support

Michigan Association for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents:
http://www.michigan.gov/fyit/0,4585,7-240-44309-164051--,00.html

Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York: http://affcny.org/

Liability Insurance

Promoting Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care by the Juvenile Law Center Is a guide to help states implement the federal law requiring a 'reasonable and prudent parent standard" in support of normalcy for youth in foster care.
http://jlc.org/resources/publications/promoting-normalcy-children-and-youth-foster-care

Going Places is a state policy campaign led by First Focus and the SPARC initiative (State Policy Advocacy Reform Center). It provides research and state policy examples to help advocates promote policies that reduce barriers for youth in foster care in obtaining driver's licenses and state IDs.
https://www.youthgoingplaces.org/

Access to Health Care and Health Information Sharing

Healthy Foster Care America (HFCA) is an online resource center and initiative of the American Academy of Pediatrics and its partners to improve the health and well-being outcomes of children and teens in foster care.

https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Pages/default.aspx

Fostering Health: American Academy of Pediatrics Standards of Care for Children in Foster Care is a manual designed for use by medical, mental health, and developmental health care professionals, as well as foster parents, social welfare agencies, members of the legal community, health insurance agencies, and policy makers. It can help ensure integration of the health care plan with child welfare's permanency plan for each child or adolescent in foster care.

https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Pages/Fostering-Health.aspx

Helping Foster and Adoptive Families Cope with Trauma is a guide by the American Academy of Pediatrics that supports adoptive and foster families by strengthening the abilities of pediatricians to: 1) identify traumatized children, 2) educate families about toxic stress and the possible biological, behavioral, and social manifestations of early childhood trauma, and 3) empower families to respond to their child's behavior in a manner that acknowledges past trauma but promotes the learning of new, more adaptive reactions to stress.

https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Documents/Guide.pdf

Foster caregivers' perspectives on the medical challenges of children placed in their care: implications for pediatricians caring for children in foster care, a research study that finds that foster parents receive insufficient health information despite caring for children who have complex needs.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25561697

Other parent supports

Six Reasons to Offer Supportive Services to Resource Parents by Adopt US Kids is research-based framework describing the importance of support services to foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

http://nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/6-reasons-to-offer-support-services.pdf

SUPPORT MATTERS Lessons from the Field on Services for Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Care Families was published by Adopt US Kids as a resource guide intended to equip State, Tribal, and Territorial child welfare managers and administrators — as well as family support organizations — with current information about effective strategies for developing data-driven family support services and research findings that who the importance for implementing and sustaining these services.

www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/AUSK/support-matters/support-matters-resource-guide.pdf

Young Children in Foster Care: Multiple Vulnerabilities and Complex Service Needs was published in the professional journal Infants and Young Children. It describes the foster care population and the kinds of medical conditions, mental health problems, and developmental disabilities experienced by young children in foster care, and discusses implications for intervention that ameliorate risk and optimize outcomes for these children and their families

http://journals.lww.com/iycjournal/Abstract/2005/04000/Young_Children_in_Foster_Care__Multiple.7.aspx

Evidence-Based Practice in Foster Parent Training and Support: Implications for Treatment Foster Care Providers is a research report highlighting practice implications for treatment foster care agencies interested in implementing research-based practices of foster parent training and support.

https://www.cascw.org/portfolio-items/ebp-in-foster-parent-training-tfc-pub/

CHAMPS advocates for parents as partners in decision-making.

Foster Parent as Priority Partners

Treat Them Like Gold: A Best Practice Guide to Partnering with Resource Families was developed by the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work and provides tools and strategies for child welfare agencies to sue to build, refine, and sustain partnerships with resource families.

http://affcny.org/wp-content/uploads/Partnering_with_Resource_Families.pdf

Using Customer Service Concepts to ENHANCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRACTICE is a publication of the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids. It provides guidance that can help agencies with recruitment and retention of foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/using-customer-service-concepts-to-enhance-recuitment-and-retention-practices.pdf

A set of resources on foster care review boards published by the Child Welfare Information Gateway, an information service of the Children's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/administration/partnerships/oversight/foster/

Partnering with Faith Communities

Foster Movement U is published by the Christian Alliance for Orphans and offers a growing collection of powerful short training videos and PDF tools to help build foster care movements in communities.

- Session 3: Helping Child Welfare Professionals. This session explores the church's relationship with local child welfare professionals and provides practical ways to strengthen it: https://cafo.org/nfci/fmu/#session3

- Session 4: Church and State Partnership. This session explores the importance of the church state relationship and offers key insights and tools to foster the relationship: https://cafo.org/nfci/fmu/#session4

- Session 6: Principles of Building a Foster Care Movement. This session provides practical principles of starting and growing a local foster care movement and provides the tools to begin implementing: https://cafo.org/nfci/fmu/#session6

- Session 7: Partnering with Political Leaders on Behalf of Kids in Foster Care. This session provides insights and practical tools necessary to prepare yourself for these partnership opportunities: https://cafo.org/nfci/fmu/#session7

Joint partnership responsibilities.

California Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care: Teamwork, Respect, Nurturing, Strong Families:

http://centervideo.forest.usf.edu/qpi/ConversationAug13/CA_Partnership_Plan_Final.pdf

Florida Department of Children and Family Services Partnership Plan for Children in Out-of-Home Care:

http://www.qpiflorida.org/pages/documents/Partnership%20Plan_English.pdf

Partnership Plan Information and Tools published by the Quality Parenting Initiative:

http://www.qpiflorida.org/pages/PartnershipPlan/PartnershipPlan.html

Missouri Foster Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities: Examples of

https://dss.mo.gov/cd/info/cwmanual/section1/ch3/sec1ch3attacha.htm

Louisiana Foster Parent Bill of Rights:

http://www.lfapainc.org/billofrights.php

CHAMPS advocates for quality assurance to help agencies maintain a priority focus on quality foster parenting.

Foster Parent Census and Matching

Oklahoma enacted legislation (2017) on foster parent census:
http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2017-18%20SUPPORT%20DOCUMENTS/BILLSUM/House/SB727%20CCR%20A%20BILLSUM.PDF

Best practice resources from the Quality Parenting Initiative on placement and matching:
http://qpi4kids.org/pages/bestPractices.html

Promoting Placement Stability, a report published by the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. The report contains a series of articles by researchers and professionals dedicated to improving placement stability outcomes, as well as the perspectives of people who have been involved in the child welfare system:
http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CW360_2010.pdf

Supporting birth and foster parent partnerships.

Best practice resources from the Quality Parenting Initiative on co-parenting, visitation and fostering relationships: http://qpi4kids.org/

A Continuum of Contact tool from the Quality Parenting Initiative that outlines ways foster parents can help bridge the gap with birth families:
http://qpi4kids.org/documents/2017_newSitesConference/Foster%20Parents-Bridge%20Gap.pdf

Iowa's Parents Partners Program is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Human Services. It advances innovative changes by facilitating collaborating between social works and families: http://dhs.iowa.gov/parent-partners

A series of state examples of foster and birth families working together, published by the Child Welfare Information Gateway, an information service of the Children's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/resources-foster-families/working-together-foster-families-and-birth-parents/

Foster Parent Feedback

Online foster parent exit interview developed by the Georgia Department of Georgia Department of Human Services: www.surveymonkey.com/r/fosterparentexitinterview

Report on the Arizona Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey, commissioned by the Arizona Department of Child Safety in 2014. The report includes recommendations for the agency based on survey responses from 1,095 foster parents across Arizona. https://dcs.az.gov/sites/default/files/media/Foster-Parent-Satisfaction-Survey-2014-FINAL.PDF

Online foster parent exit interview developed by the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nfapaexitsurvey

Modernize Foster Parent Licensing Processes

Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards propose national guidelines to guide states in their efforts to license homes. The standards were developed jointly by the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Generations United and the National Association for Regulatory Administration: www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Model%20Licensing%20Standards%20FINAL.pdf

Timely and fair investigations.

Resources on investigations from the Florida Quality Parenting Initiative: http://www.qpiflorida.org/pages/investigations.html

Washington State Policy on Child and Family Ombudsman: http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=74.13.333

Child Welfare Investigations in Resource Homes: A Guide for Resource Parents to Understand Their Rights and Responsibilities, developed by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services: http://www.okdhs.org/OKDHS%20Publication%20Library/13-20.pdf

Data Sharing

The Intersection Between Medicaid and Child Welfare, Chapter 3 of a report by the (Chapter 3) Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission describes federal law requirements for data sharing: www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Intersection-of-Medicaid-and-Child-Welfare.pdf

Making Medicaid Work for Children in Child Welfare: Examples from the States is a report by the Center for Health Care Strategies that offers real examples of data sharing.

Medicaid and Children in Child Welfare, is an issue brief published by SPARC (State Reform Advocacy and Resource Center, First Focus) that offers an example of data sharing in Illinois:

https://www.chcs.org/media/Making_Medicaid_Work.pdf

Health Care Coverage for Youth in Foster Care and After is an issue brief by the Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/health_care_foster.pdf

Please visit the CHAMPS website for more information and resources related to the Policy Playbook. In addition, please contact the CHAMPS campaign team to share your ideas or news of foster parenting policies in your state.

www.fosteringchamps.org

Like us on Facebook

Follow Us on Twitter:
@fosteringCHAMPS

View our stories on YouTube

NEXT »
CHAMPS PLEDGE

Sign the Pledge!

I/we pledge support for the goals of CHAMPS, a national campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality foster parenting. Specifically, I/we agree that:

- Foster parents are game-changers for children.
- Loving, supportive families – birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children.
- Children do best in families, and quality foster parenting is key to helping children heal, grow and flourish
- Quality foster parenting helps children thrive and succeed in school, relationships and in life.

CHAMPS
children need amazing parents

Visit
http://fosteringchamps.org/the-champs-pledge/
to sign the pledge