

# CHAMPS Annotated Bibliography

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

**This annotated bibliography summarizes some of the key research findings related to foster parenting policies and practices. The research is grouped by topic area in these categories:**

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## COMPARING FAMILY-BASED CARE TO FOSTER GROUP CARE

*Research confirms that children fare better in family-based settings instead of group and residential care settings. The cost of group care is significantly more expensive, yet it generally does not yield benefits for children. Research has also found that foster parents show more commitment to children than group care providers.*

### **Institutions vs. foster homes: The empirical base for the second century of debate**

**Barth, R.P.** (2002). *Institutions vs. foster homes: The empirical base for the second century of debate*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC, School of Social Work, Jordan Institute for Families.

This paper examines the role of group care settings in the child welfare services system of care and finds that placement in group care is not an essential component of child welfare services systems of care for the vast majority of children. There is no substantial evidence to support the necessity or value of large centralized emergency shelters or residential treatment centers for most children involved with child welfare services. The costs of these placements are much higher than other placements, yet their efficacy appears to be no greater. Therefore, their use cannot be justified on a cost-benefit basis if any other levels of care can provide a safe place for children.

### **"I want to be there when he graduates:" Foster parents show higher levels of commitment than group care providers**

**Lo, A., Roben, C.K.P., Maier, C., Fabian, K., Shauffer, C. & Dozier, M.** (2015). "I want to be there when he graduates:" Foster parents show higher levels of commitment than group care providers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 51*, 95-100.

Researchers assessed whether foster parents show greater commitment to children than group care providers. Given that group care represents a number of living arrangements, they considered both shift care (where staff work shifts and do not live with the children) and cottage care (where staff live for extended periods of time with the children in a group living context). As predicted, foster parents showed higher levels of commitment than both shift care workers and cottage care providers, and the associations held when children's externalizing behaviors and the number of children the caregivers had cared for were controlled. The results suggest that foster care promotes greater commitment among caregivers than other out of home placements, and add to other findings that favor foster care as the out of home placement of choice for adolescents.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

*Child welfare agencies need the right tools to build and maintain an adequate pool of foster families to ensure that children have the support and stability they need while in foster care. The research offers some effective strategies for recruiting and retaining foster families:*

- Use word-of-mouth strategies and existing foster parents to help with recruitment
- Use data to better identify the need and appropriately target the right families for children, to track foster parent attrition, understand foster parent's motivations and needs, and to track timely permanence
- Listen and gather feedback from foster parents, and work more collaboratively with them as members of the child's team
- More adequately prepare foster parents for their roles with information and real expectations
- Help foster parents identify the right supports for their foster children

### **Extraordinary foster parents in Los Angeles County: Child Welfare Initiative's implementation of best practices in recruiting and retaining new therapeutic foster parents**

**Child Welfare Initiative.** (2013). Extraordinary foster parents in Los Angeles County: Child Welfare Initiative's implementation of best practices in recruiting and retaining new therapeutic foster parents. Retrieved from: <http://www.extraordinaryfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ITFC.pdf>

This report summarizes the implementation of approaches to recruiting and retaining foster parents in L.A. County and elsewhere. It examines characteristics and motivations of parents identified as "extraordinary foster parents" identified by six agencies in Los Angeles County. Their research revealed the following insights about recruiting and retaining foster parents: 1) understanding the motivations for fostering; 2) understanding and highlighting the rewards of fostering; 3) using existing foster parents to recruit others and offer ongoing support to understand the challenges of fostering; 4) understanding foster parent characteristics so that agencies can identify and target those parents for certain groups of children; and 5) responding to calls for change by listening to foster parents more.

### Factors associated with foster parents' perceptions of agency effectiveness in preparing them for their role

**Esaki, N., Ahn, H. & Gregory, G.** (2012). Factors associated with foster parents' perceptions of agency effectiveness in preparing them for their role. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 6*(5), 678-695.

The authors developed a survey for exited and continuing foster parents to obtain feedback on ways in which the agency could improve the recruitment and retention of foster parents. The findings in this study suggest that training was consistently the most significant factor contributing to foster parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the agency in preparing them for their role. Exited foster parents, however, had significantly higher perceptions of the effectiveness of the agency and of the adequacy of training than did continuing parents.

### Should I stay or should I go? A mixed methods study examining the factors influencing foster parents' decisions to continue or discontinue providing foster care

**Geiger, J.M., Hayes, M.J. & Lietz, C.A.** (2013). Should I stay or should I go? A mixed methods study examining the factors influencing foster parents' decisions to continue or discontinue providing foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(9), 1356-1365.

The purpose of this study is to understand what factors impact a parent's likelihood of continuing fostering based on an online survey to foster parents in one state located in the southwest. Findings based on this sample of 649 foster parents suggest foster families' intentions to continue fostering are positively impacted by their own intrinsic rewards and motivations, satisfaction with fostering, locus of control, and level of emotional and practical supports. Reduction in reimbursement rates, decreases in the amount of quality services available for foster children and for foster families, difficulty navigating the system, and individual-level family changes were cited as reasons foster parents would consider discontinuing fostering. Open-ended responses offer increased understanding about how these factors are perceived by respondents to impact their ability to continue to provide for our nation's most vulnerable children.

### Foster parent recruitment and retention: Developing resource families for Washington state's children in care

**Marcenko, M. O., Brennan, K. D., & Lyons, S. J.** (2009). Foster parent recruitment and retention: Developing resource families for Washington state's children in care. Seattle: Partners for Our Children. Retrieved from: [https://partnersforourchildren.org/sites/default/files/2009\\_foster\\_parent\\_recruitment\\_and\\_retention.pdf](https://partnersforourchildren.org/sites/default/files/2009_foster_parent_recruitment_and_retention.pdf)

The report is presented in three sections: 1) literature review, 2) trends, child and foster parent characteristics, and 3) Washington State policy and practice. Each section begins with a review of the data, followed by key findings. The report also includes a list of potential strategies that are based on a statewide assessment, recognizing the need to tailor specific approaches to a local context. These strategies include: 1) use data to better identify the types of foster families needed at the local level; 2) understand why some foster homes are not used; 3) track foster parent applicant attrition; 4) increase homes for children who are difficult to place (large sibling groups, teens, infants with special needs); 5) assess the extent to which boarding rates limit recruitment and retention efforts; 6) align foster parent licensing and adoption to promote more timely permanence, reduce costs and shorten lengths of stay; and 7) reduce organizational fragmentation.

### Understanding foster parenting: Using administrative data to explore retention

**Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** (2005). Understanding foster parenting: Using administrative data to explore retention. Retrieved from: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/execsum/understanding-foster-parenting-using-administrative-data-explore-retention>

This study examines foster parent retention, including factors associated with licensure, provision of care, and length of service. The study used administrative data provided by child welfare agencies in three states: New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Oregon. Key findings include: 1) length of service in foster parenting is shorter than many managers would expect: between 47 and 62 percent of foster parents exited foster parenting within a year of the first placement in their home; 2) foster parent burn-out cannot be identified as a factor in length of service: higher foster home occupancy and higher levels of care for infants, adolescents, and children with special needs were consistently associated with greater length of service; and 3) one-fifth of the foster parent population provides 60 to 80 percent of all foster care. These foster parents may represent a core group of active and experienced foster parents, with whom child welfare workers feel most confident placing children.

### Recruiting foster parents

**Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** (2002). Recruiting foster parents. Retrieved from: <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-07-00-00600.pdf>

This report focuses on states' efforts to recruit foster care families. The report is based on a survey of foster care program managers in all 50 states and focus group discussions with child welfare staff and foster parents in five states. Key findings include: 1) recruitment efforts do not focus on families willing and able to care for the most challenging children; 2) states are underutilizing their most effective recruitment tool - foster parents; 3) poor public perceptions of foster care and cumbersome requirements have a negative impact on recruitment; and 4) states are unable to measure the success of their recruitment efforts.

### Retaining foster parents

**Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** (2002). Retaining foster parents. Retrieved from: <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-07-00-00601.pdf>

This report focuses on states' efforts to retain foster care families. The report is based on a survey of foster care program managers in all 50 states and focus group discussions with child welfare staff and foster parents in five states. Key findings include: 1) foster families desire greater opportunity to voice their concerns, 2) they experience limited caseworker support, 3) they need more help obtaining services for themselves and their foster children, 4) false allegations of abuse and investigations trouble foster parents, and 5) program managers lack data needed to improve retention.

### **A comparison of family foster parents who quit, consider quitting, and plan to continue fostering**

**Rhodes, K.W., Orme, J.G. & Buehler, C.** (2001). A comparison of family foster parents who quit, consider quitting, and plan to continue fostering, *Social Service Review*, 75(1), 84-114.

This study examines why some foster families continue to foster whereas others do not. It finds that reasons for quitting include lack of agency support, poor communication with caseworkers, lack of say in foster children's future, and difficulties with foster children's behavior. As compared with continuing foster parents, former foster parents and foster parents planning to quit say that they receive less post licensure training and are less likely to have a foster-parent mentor. As compared with continuing and former foster parents, current foster parents planning to quit are more likely to say they need day care, transportation, and help with health-care costs.

### **Barriers experienced by kinship and non-relative caregivers during the foster and adoptive parent licensure and home study process**

**Riley-Behringer, M. & Cage, J.** (2014). Barriers experienced by kinship and non-relative caregivers during the foster and adoptive parent licensure and home study process. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 8(2), 212-238.

This mixed-methods study examines differences in applicant characteristics and types of barriers experienced while fostering. It evaluated the Licensure and Home Study Process (LHSP) and used ecological systems theory framed the barriers-to-resources interplay among kinship and non-relative caregivers who withdrew or completed the LHSP. Results indicate that applicants responsible for other children in the home paired with welfare system barriers served as a tipping point for withdrawal. Relatives encountered the most barriers and all grandparents withdrew from the LHSP prior to licensure.

## FOSTER PARENT TRAINING & SUPPORTS

*Foster parents often experience multiple demands and need access to supports and resources in order to adequately fulfill their caregiving roles. Research indicates that foster parents may end placements as a result of fatigue and burnout, stress, feelings of being misunderstood, or lack of support or information from their agency. Foster parent training can create positive changes in parenting knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills which can lead to improvements in child behaviors. Training is also linked to foster parent satisfaction, increased licensure, retention and placement stability. Research has also shown that kin caregivers are less likely to use formal supports and services than non-kin foster parents. Studies note differences in access to caregiver supports, types of supports offered and type of support sought after by kin and non-kin foster parents.*

### **Foster parent training programmes for foster youth: A content review**

**Benesh, A.S. & Cui, M.** (2017). Foster parent training programmes for foster youth: A content review. *Child and Family Social Work*, 22, 548–559.

Well-trained foster parents can improve placement stability, reduce behavioral problems and encourage successful reunification or adoption. A review of the foster parent training programs can provide a better understanding of the current state of foster parenting training and inform future practice and policy-making. This review examined published and unpublished research on foster parent training conducted from 1970 to 2014 and provided an overview of the structure and content of 22 foster parent training programs. Common patterns in the content and structure of foster parent training programs are identified and discussed, highlighting trends towards multi-session in-service training with eclectic content. The authors recommend the development of new training programs with strong theoretical grounding that train foster parents on specific behavioral skills.

### Financial well-being in family-based foster care: Exploring variation in income supports for kin and non-kin caregivers in California

**Berrick, J.D. & Boyd, R.** (2016). Financial well-being in family-based foster care: Exploring variation in income supports for kin and non-kin caregivers in California. *Children and Youth Services Review, 69*, 166-173.

Kin and non-kin caregivers in two California counties responded to a written survey focused on the financial wellbeing and income supports available to families. Sources of support were associated with the availability and utilization of other child welfare services for caregivers and for children. Overall, the researchers found that the sample of kin and non-kin caregivers included in this study are more similar to one another than they are different. On the large majority of measures they did not detect differences in the characteristics of kin and non-kin. The study found that caregivers receiving a foster care subsidy were more likely to benefit from various child welfare services and the children in their care were more likely to take advantage of services, compared to caregivers who did not receive a foster care subsidy.

### Kinship care and service utilization: A review of predisposing, enabling, and need factors

**Coleman, K.L. & Wu, Q.** (2016). Kinship care and service utilization: A review of predisposing, enabling, and need factors. *Children and Youth Services Review, 61*, 201-210.

This systematic review identifies research studies examining factors associated with service use among kinship caregivers using key search terms in five computerized bibliographic databases and four journals. The search identified 337 potentially relevant studies. After screening and study eligibility assessments, a final sample of 13 studies was reviewed. Findings suggest that although children and their kinship caregivers are clearly in need of services, service use is low. Results suggested a need for more rigorous research designs and that the following factors may influence service use: child behavioral problems, caregiver mental health status, resources, provider characteristics, caregiver perceived need, and social support. More research examining help-seeking behaviors, perceptions of formal services, and effectiveness of kinship caregiver services in relation to child outcomes is needed to improve the wellbeing of kinship families in the child welfare system.

### The caregiver-reported value of participation in a kinship support center

**Hammond, R. J., Graham, J., Hernandez, A., Hinkson, K.** (2014). The caregiver-reported value of participation in a kinship support center. *Child Welfare, 93*(3), 77-92.

This study discusses kinship caregivers' evaluation of the benefit they received by participating in community-based kinship care support center programs, focusing on how participating helped to mediate hardships faced by them, their child, and their families. Results from a tri-county survey of caregivers who participated in one of three community support centers (N = 101) indicated that there was measurable benefit to the caregivers and their children. Self-reported improvements in well-being and functioning were identified in 23 of the 28 different areas in the lives of the caretakers, their children, and their families. Yet persistent problematic issues with the child's parents were identified in the majority of caregivers. Recommendations are provided for the types of services that ideally would be offered by kinship care centers.



### An investigation of foster parent training needs

**Hebert, C.G. & Kulkin, H.** (2018). An investigation of foster parent training needs. *Child & Family Social Work, 23*, 256–263.

Ongoing training for foster parents in America is not standardized. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (H.R. 3443) requires prospective foster parents to be trained, but it provides only general guidelines for the training content. The training offered differs by state. This research examines what a group of foster parents attending a state foster parent association conference felt they needed in the area of training, to help them fulfil their role. Foster parents were surveyed and ranked their training needs based on 10 pre-identified needs. They ranked training to enhance their ability to help the child adjust in their homes and manage challenging behaviors as most needed. The qualitative data suggested that foster parents have additional needs and some are not related to training, such as the need for respite services.

### Evidence-based practice in foster parent training and support: Implications for treatment foster care providers

**Piescher, K. N., Schmidt, M. & LaLiberte, T.** (2008). Evidence-based practice in foster parent training and support: Implications for treatment foster care providers. Saint Paul, MN: Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. Retrieved from: <http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/EBPFPTTrainingSupportComplete.pdf>

This report describes evidence-based practice in foster parent training and support, based on a comprehensive review of empirical literature conducted between May 20, 2008 and August 15, 2008 by the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) at the University of Minnesota's School of Social Work. The report was developed under the auspices of Federal Title IV-E Funding, the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, and the Foster Family-Based Treatment Association (FFTA) as part of the Technical Assistance to FFTA Project. The executive summary of this report highlights the key findings and discusses potential practice implications for treatment foster care agencies interested in implementing research-based practices of foster parent training and support. The complete findings are presented in the full text of the report, which includes a comprehensive review of literature and annotated bibliography.

### The impact of foster parent training on parenting skills and child disruptive behavior: A meta-analysis

**Solomon, D.T., Niec, L.N., & Schoonover, C.E.** (2017). The impact of foster parent training on parenting skills and child disruptive behavior: A meta-analysis. *Child Maltreatment, 22*(1), 3-13.

Children in foster care are at risk for behavioral and emotional problems that require higher levels of care than other children. To meet these needs and reduce placement disruptions, foster parents require effective parenting skills. Although a number of training models have been evaluated, the findings on the efficacy of foster parent training (FPT) are mixed. The authors conducted a meta-analysis of the FPT outcome research from 1984 to 2014 to develop a clearer understanding of the impact of such trainings. Fifteen samples (16 studies) were identified that investigated the impact of FPT on self-reported parenting skills and knowledge and child problem behaviors. Findings suggest that, on average, foster parents who were involved in the trainings reported fewer child behavior problems than parents who

did not receive the training. In addition, on average, parents in the treatment groups reported higher levels of skills and knowledge following training than did those in the control group. While these results are promising, more research is necessary to investigate the inconsistency in effect sizes across studies.

### Treatment foster care pre-service trainings: Changes in parenting attitudes and fostering readiness

**Strickler, A., Trunzo, A.C., & Kaelin, M.S.** (2018). Treatment foster care pre-service trainings: Changes in parenting attitudes and fostering readiness. *Child Youth Care Forum, 47*, 61–79.

Pre-service training of treatment parents is a requirement for all foster care models to ensure safety and well-being of children in care. Researchers theorize that treatment parents benefit more from enhanced pre-service trainings; however, no rigorous studies exist indicating the effectiveness of these trainings for treatment parents. This quasi-experimental study aimed to determine if an enhanced pre-service training developed for treatment parents is more effective than a basic pre-service training in increasing their parenting attitudes, personal dedication and willingness to provide foster care, and licensing rates. The study revealed that enhanced pre-service training participants were significantly more likely to become licensed as treatment parents than basic pre-service training participants. The findings suggest an enhanced pre-service training may have potential impact on changing some parenting attitudes and an increased licensing status as a treatment parent.

### Support needs and satisfaction in foster care: Differences between foster mothers and foster fathers

**Vanderfaeillie, J. & Holen, F.V., Maeyer, S.D., Gypen, L. & Belenger, L.** (2016). Support needs and satisfaction in foster care: Differences between foster mothers and foster fathers. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 25*(5), 1515-1524.

This study examines differences in support needs and satisfaction between 86 foster mothers and foster fathers for 120 foster children. There were no differences between foster mothers and foster fathers. Both foster parents had higher support needs regarding dealing with the birth parents compared to support needs in handling problem behavior of the foster child. For both foster mothers' and foster fathers' satisfaction with collaboration with the foster care worker, satisfaction with recognition experienced and satisfaction with reunification of the foster child, did not differ across these aspects. Satisfaction of foster parents can be increased by keeping in balance the rights and needs of birth parents and those of foster parents. Acknowledging that foster parents are experts on their foster child and consulting them on important decisions will also contribute significantly to their satisfaction.

### Young children in foster care: Multiple vulnerabilities and complex service needs

**Vig, S., Chinitz, S. & Shulman, L.** (2005). Young children in foster care: Multiple vulnerabilities and complex service needs. *Infants & Young Children, 18*(2), 147–160.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the foster care population and the kinds of medical conditions, mental health problems, and developmental disabilities experienced by young children in foster care, and to explore implications for intervention. By increasing their understanding of risk factors, vulnerabilities, and complex service needs, early childhood professionals can become effective advocates and provide services that ameliorate risk and optimize outcomes for these children and their families. The study found that foster parents need ongoing support and training to meet the needs of children with a variety of challenges and disabilities. For example, for children with developmental disabilities, parents need training about child development, information about community resources, and connections with other parents to share experiences and ideas.

## FOSTER PARENT AND YOUTH EXPERIENCES

*Understanding the characteristics and experiences of foster parents and the children in their care can help child welfare agencies better recruit for additional families, more appropriately match children in need of foster homes, and provide more realistic expectations for new foster parents. Research has reported a wide range of experiences of foster parents. Foster parents have indicated concerns about the complexity of the child welfare system and may find it difficult to navigate, communicate, and work effectively with child welfare agencies. In many cases, a small group of foster parents disproportionately foster more children than their counterparts. Research has also identified the characteristics of supportive foster homes for children which include creating a sense of belonging, structure, guidance, and consistency. This research underscores the important role positive relationships can play in foster youth's feelings of well-being. There is evidence that kinship foster families have fewer resources and receive less training, services, and support than non-kin foster families. Grandparent caregivers may experience an elevated level of parenting stress compared to other kin caregivers.*

### **Foster and adoptive parent perspectives on needs and services: A mixed methods study**

**Barnett, E.R., Jankowski, M.K., Butcher, R.L., Meister, C., Parton, R.R., & Drake, R.E.** (2018). Foster and adoptive parent perspectives on needs and services: A mixed methods study. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 45*(1), 74-89.

Few studies have examined foster and adoptive parents' perspectives on their needs and services. In this study, the authors analyzed four focus groups and one state-wide survey of foster and adoptive parents in one state. The results highlighted inadequate communication between providers and families, cultural and legal barriers, needs for parent training and preparation, the importance of several types of parent supports, and needs for specialized mental health treatment for the children. Surveyed parents identified children's behavior problems as their top challenge, and over half rated the availability of mental health providers who treat attachment and family as insufficient. The findings suggest specific areas in which state leaders could enhance training and supports for child welfare staff and foster and adoptive parents and improve mental health services for children in foster and adoptive care.

### The vital few foster mothers

**Cherry, D.J. & Orme, J.G.** The vital few foster mothers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(9), 1625-1633.

This study applies the Pareto Principle, also known as the 80–20 rule or Vital Few, as a framework to conceptualize the small proportion of foster parents who disproportionately foster more children than their counterparts. Two classes of mothers were identified: one accounted for 21% of mothers and the other 79%. The researchers refer to the former as the Vital Few and the latter as the Useful Many. Vital Few mothers fostered 73% of foster children — 10 times more than Useful Many mothers although only fostering three times longer. They adopted twice as many foster children while experiencing half the yearly rate of placement disruptions. Vital Few mothers were less likely to work outside the home, had better parenting attitudes, more stable home environments, more time to foster, and more professional support for fostering, but less support from kin. Further, they were as competent as the Useful Many on numerous other psychosocial measures. Understanding characteristics of these resilient Vital Few can inform recruitment and retention efforts and offer realistic expectations of foster parents. Respondents revealed a largely positive attitude toward the foster care system, but the majority also believed that the system needed change and reform. Additionally, the results of this study reflected respondents' positive opinions regarding the motivations of foster parents while acknowledging some concern regarding the idea of financial compensation for foster parents. Respondents indicated a larger body of knowledge regarding the foster care system than was initially expected.

### Risk, resilience, and complexity: Experiences of foster parents

**Cooley, M.E., Thompson, H.M. & Wojciak, A.S.** (2017). Risk, resilience, and complexity: Experiences of foster parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 76, 35-41.

The purpose of this study is to examine current and former foster parents' experiences within the child welfare system to better understand what their unique experiences have been and their perception of the need for changes to the system, specifically highlighting areas of resilience. This study included 39 current and former foster parents from across the United States. Three overarching themes were identified: concerns about the complexity of the child welfare system, personal narratives that highlight the complexity in the system, and means of navigating complex experiences within the child welfare system. Findings were described and discussed within the context of a resilience model. These findings have implications for foster parent training, support, and intervention with foster parents currently involved in the child welfare system.

### Kinship family foster care: A methodological and substantive synthesis of research

**Cuddeback, G.S.** (2004). Kinship family foster care: A methodological and substantive synthesis of research. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26(7), 623–639.

This article presents a methodological and substantive synthesis of kinship care research. Over the last decade or longer, the number of children in kinship care has increased dramatically. There is evidence that kinship foster families have fewer resources and receive less training, services, and support, as well as concern that kinship families are less qualified to foster than their non-kinship counterparts. However, the kinship literature has methodological limitations and significant gaps that restrict our knowledge. Suggestions for directing future research are made.

### Public perception of the foster care system: A national study

**Leber, C. & LeCroy, C.W.** (2012). Public perception of the foster care system: A national study. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(9), 1633-1638.

This study explores the American public's knowledge and perception of both the foster care system and foster parents, while examining the public's opinion of the foster care system's importance relative to other national social issues. Using random digit dialing techniques, this study asked 301 nationally representative respondents to complete a survey seeking their general knowledge and perception of the foster care system. Respondents revealed a largely positive attitude toward the foster care system, but the majority also believed that the system needed change and reform. Additionally, the results of this study reflected respondents' positive opinions regarding the motivations of foster parents while acknowledging some concern regarding the idea of financial compensation for foster parents. Respondents indicated a larger body of knowledge regarding the foster care system than was initially expected. However, when comparing the foster care system to other national social issues, respondents consistently placed the foster care system as less important and less serious than other social issues.

### Parenting stress of grandparents and other kin as informal kinship caregivers: A mixed methods study

**Lee, E., Clarkson-Hendrix, M. & Lee, Y.** (2016). Parenting stress of grandparents and other kin as informal kinship caregivers: A mixed methods study. *Children and Youth Services Review, 69*, 29-38.

This mixed methods study, using a survey and focus groups of grandparent and other kin, examines predictors and sources of parenting stress. Quantitative findings suggested that the kinship family's needs and the caregiver's health and emotional well-being adversely affected parenting stress. Grandparent caregivers experienced an elevated level of parenting stress compared to other kin caregivers. Qualitative findings suggested that financial strains, concerns over children's behavior, navigating service systems and difficult relationships with birth parents contributed to their stress. It appeared that grandparent caregivers faced special challenges due to generational gaps, guilt and concerns over birth parents.

### Treatment foster parent satisfaction: Survey validation and predictors of satisfaction, retention, and intent to refer

**Mihalo, J.R., Strickler, A., Triplett, D.R. Trunzo, A.C.** (2016). Treatment foster parent satisfaction: Survey validation and predictors of satisfaction, retention, and intent to refer. *Children and Youth Services Review, 62*, 105-110.

Based on previous research and available foster parent satisfaction surveys, the researchers developed a brief 28-item scale that measures four constructs related to overall treatment foster parent satisfaction: Professional Parenting Role, Treatment Foster Parent Efficacy, Support from Staff, and Quality of Training. Additionally, the scale assesses overall satisfaction, likelihood to continue as a treatment foster parent, and likelihood to refer others to become treatment foster parents. Results can be used to target interventions to improve treatment foster parent satisfaction. All of the survey constructs had high reliability alphas. The support construct predicted higher satisfaction, intent to continue fostering and refer.

### What can agencies do to increase foster carer satisfaction?

**Randle, M., Miller, L., & Dolnicar, S.** (2018). What can agencies do to increase foster carer satisfaction? *Child & Family Social Work, 23*, 212–221.

Greater foster parent satisfaction is associated with increased retention and is therefore critical in securing such stable homes for children. Conducted in Australia, the purpose of this study is to determine which factors associated with foster care agencies contribute to higher levels of foster carer satisfaction. Results from a longitudinal study of 137 foster carers indicate that perceived adequacy of agency support, preplacement training, money to cover placement expenses, and a good match between the carer and the child are predictive of higher foster carer satisfaction. A mediation model further points to the provision of preplacement training as key to ensuring higher levels of satisfaction. Results offer new insights into factors related to foster carer retention and provide guidance to foster care agencies about actions that they can take to maximize the retention of foster carers.

### In search of connection: The foster youth and caregiver relationship

**Storer, H.L., Barkan, S.E., Stenhouse, L.L., Eichenlaub, C., Mallillin, A., Haggerty, K.P.** (2014). In search of connection: The foster youth and caregiver relationship. *Children and Youth Services Review, 42*, 110–117.

The goal of this paper is to provide a descriptive account of the foster youth and caregiver relationship, and explore what qualities and experiences foster youth desire from their caregivers. Qualitative data were gathered from 9 focus groups. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis approaches. Foster youth, caregivers, and child welfare staff described relationships lacking in formative bonds and connection, where youth didn't "fit in", and chaotic homes marked by reactivity and judgment. Characteristics of supportive foster homes include a sense of belonging, structure, guidance, and consistency. This research underscores the important role positive relationships can play in foster youth's feelings of well-being and points to the need for foster parent training to include tangible strategies to develop stronger bonds.

### Parenting stress and parenting behavior among foster mothers of foster children with externalizing problems

**Vanschoonlandt, F., Vanderfaeillie, J., Holen, F.V. Maeyer, S.D. & Robberechts, M.** (2013). Parenting stress and parenting behavior among foster mothers of foster children with externalizing problems. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(10), 1742-1750.

In this study, the parenting stress and parenting behavior of 39 foster mothers of recently placed foster children with externalizing problems are studied. Foster mothers' scores on different parenting stress and parenting behavior subscales were compared to published norms. Foster mothers of children with externalizing problems experienced more parenting stress than the norm group. The prevalence of specific dysfunctional parenting behaviors (e.g., less involvement in positive parenting) was small to moderate, but nearly half of the foster mothers could be classified as making dysfunctional adaptations to their parenting environment. Moreover, only the minority of foster mothers provided an adaptive parenting context (e.g., more than average involvement in positive parenting). The implications of these results for pre-service training and on-going support for foster parents are discussed.

## HEALTH

*Research suggests that foster parents may need additional supports to identify and navigate the complex physical and mental health needs of the children in their care. The inability for foster parents to address children's physical and mental health needs may lead to placement instability and increased agency costs. Other studies have found that caregivers have the ability to advocate for their children, but there are often barriers to working effectively with other professionals to secure specialty services or navigating Medicaid to secure health services.*

### **Foster caregivers' perspectives on the medical challenges of children placed in their care: Implications for pediatricians caring for children in foster care**

**Greiner, M. V., Ross, J., Brown, C. M., Beal, S. J., & Sherman, S. N.** (2015). Foster caregivers' perspectives on the medical challenges of children placed in their care: Implications for pediatricians caring for children in foster care. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 54(9), 853-861.

This study examines foster caregivers' perspectives related to the medical needs of children placed in their care. Fifteen foster caregivers were individually interviewed using a semi-structured open-ended question guide. The following 4 themes were identified: 1) the fragmented histories provided to foster caregivers and difficulty in obtaining information; 2) the unique medical complications that children in foster care experience; 3) the difference between "doing what is expected" and becoming a proactive foster caregiver; and 4) the support needs of foster caregivers. The study concluded that foster caregivers receive insufficient information despite the evidence that these children are likely to have complex needs. It is, therefore, necessary for the pediatrician to recognize existing medical problems, identify new medical problems, educate foster caregivers, and communicate with the multidisciplinary team.

### **Placement stability and mental health costs for children in foster care**

**Rubin, D.M., Alessandrini, E.A., Feudtner, C., Mandell, D.S., Localio, A.R. & Hadley, T.** (2004). Placement stability and mental health costs for children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 113(5), 1336-1441.

Although prior population-based studies have found that children in foster care use more mental health services than their Medicaid peers, less is known about how different experiences in foster care impact the likelihood of mental health service use. The primary aim of this study is to test the hypothesis that instability of foster care placements is associated with higher costs for mental health care services. The secondary aim is to test the hypothesis that foster care children are also more likely to generate high costs for mental health services if they generate higher costs for non-mental health claims. The study found that foster care placement instability was associated with increased mental health costs during the first year in foster care, particularly among children with increasing general health care costs.



### The caregiver as gatekeeper for accessing health care for children in foster care: A qualitative study of kinship and unrelated caregivers

**Schneiderman, J.U., Smith, C. & Palinkas, L.A.** (2012). The caregiver as gatekeeper for accessing health care for children in foster care: A qualitative study of kinship and unrelated caregivers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(10), 2123-2130.

The objective of this qualitative study is to examine issues that unrelated and kinship foster caregivers in Los Angeles, CA, have in seeking help and accessing and using health care for children in foster care. There were four themes identified for all caregivers: 1) "Doing Our Best" (caregivers advocated persistently and creatively for health care); 2) "Support from Others Helped" (caregivers relied on caseworkers, organizations, and their social network); 3) "Child has Complicated, Serious, Chronic Health Problems" (caregivers had difficulty securing specialty services and with Medicaid insurance to meet health care needs); and 4) "Caregiver Competence in Meeting Health Needs" (caregivers noted their ability to attend health appointments and understand instructions). An additional theme of "Differences between Unrelated and Kinship Foster Caregivers" highlighted more difficulties among kinship caregivers in finding and using primary health care services and more financial stress, whereas unrelated caregivers were less satisfied with child welfare caseworker help. Despite wide-ranging stressors and serious frustrations with the child welfare and health care systems, caregivers emerged as powerful drivers of health care for foster children.

## CHILD OUTCOMES

*The quality of the foster parent-child relationship plays an important role in the success of children in foster care. Research has found that support of foster parents aimed at reducing the use of negative discipline practices and promoting the use of supportive parenting may have a positive effect on the development of foster children. In addition, targeted selection, training, and support improve the experience of foster caregivers, and their continued preparedness to foster to positively impact child outcomes.*

### **Preadoption adversities and postadoption mediators of mental health and school outcomes among international, foster, and private adoptees in the United States**

**Harwood, R., Feng, X. & Yu, S.** (2013). Preadoption adversities and postadoption mediators of mental health and school outcomes among international, foster, and private adoptees in the United States. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 27(3), 409–420.

This study analyzes data from the National Survey of Adoptive Parents to investigate differences in outcomes among three groups of U.S. adopted children: international, foster, and private. Results indicate that compared with privately adopted children, (a) children adopted from the foster care system were more likely to be identified with special health care needs, and (b) internationally adopted children showed on average poorer school performance as indexed by math and reading. Analyses yielded both direct and indirect paths between preadoption adversities and child outcomes, with the majority of associations mediated or partially mediated by quality of parent-child relationships and/or special health care needs status. The results of these analyses highlight the heterogeneity among different groups of adopted children within the United States and also underline the important mediating roles that the quality of parent-child relationship and children's special health care needs status have on adopted children's selected mental health and academic outcomes.

### **Association of caregiver social support with the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in child welfare**

**Rajendran, K., Smith, B.D. & Videka, L.** (2015). Association of caregiver social support with the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 48, 150-158.

Focusing on families having contact with the child welfare system, this study aims to assess whether caregiver social support is associated with the three primary child welfare goals: child safety, permanency and well-being. The study uses a national probability sample of children having contact with the child welfare system and a prospective study design. It includes both caregiver and caseworker indicators of social support. Consistent with previous research, study results suggest that different indicators of caregiver social support are associated with different child welfare outcomes.

Notably, when caregivers were more satisfied with their social support and caseworkers rated caregiver social support as adequate, children were less likely to be placed out of the home. Also, caregivers who had more people to call on for support rated their children as having less severe behavior problems. Implications for practice are addressed.

### Financial therapy in foster care

**Smith, T.E., Malespin, T., Richards, K.V., & Shelton, V.M.** (2017). Financial therapy in foster care. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 27(3), 165-170.

Foster youth need guidance in the financial arena to create a more stable and successful future after emancipation. This article suggests that exposure to financial stability is an important factor in making sound financial decisions later in life, considering that youth who spend time in foster care gain far less exposure to healthy financial behaviors, have fewer interactions with banking systems and are unaware of services offered by other financial institutions. The authors make the case for needing an empirical evaluation of a financial literacy prevention model to demonstrate its value with transitioning foster youth.

### Treatment foster care for improving outcomes in children and young people: A systematic review

**Turner, W. & Macdonald, G.** (2011). Treatment foster care for improving outcomes in children and young people: A systematic review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 21(5), 501–527.

This review of treatment foster care evaluation studies notes that targeted selection, training, and support combine to improve the experience of foster caregivers, and their continued preparedness to foster. They note that support includes direct support but also access to other services. Data suggest that treatment foster care may be a useful intervention for children and young people with complex emotional, psychological and behavioral need, who are at risk of placements in non-family settings that restrict their liberty and opportunities for social inclusion.

### Children placed in long-term family foster care: A longitudinal study into the development of problem behavior and associated factors

**Vanderfaeillie, J., Holen, F.V., Vanschoonlandt, F., Robberechts, M. & Stroobants, T.** (2013). Children placed in long-term family foster care: A longitudinal study into the development of problem behavior and associated factors. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(4), 587-593.

This study investigates the development of problem behavior of 49 foster children on a case level and the association of global, contextual, familial and child factors with the increase or decrease of problem behavior. Over a two-year period 18 foster children had more, 23 just as much and 8 less problem behaviors. An increase was associated with the use of more negative parenting strategies by the foster mothers. A decrease was related to the use of supportive parenting. Support of foster parents aiming at reducing the use of negative discipline practices and promoting the use of supportive parenting may have a positive effect on the development of foster children. Strengthening supportive parenting of foster parents may reduce behavioral problems.

## PLACEMENT STABILITY

*Research indicates that children who are older, have more behavioral problems, have a history of residential treatment, or have multiple prior placements are most likely to experience an unplanned move. Research also shows that placement instability and other family chaos is associated with disrupted development of the brain's prefrontal cortex, which is involved in executive functioning. The amount of emotional and social support a foster parent receives has a significant impact on increasing foster placement stability. Other important approaches include strong tracking and case planning, early intervention, increasing the availability and use of placement choice, and increasing multi-agency support.*

### **Why do children experience multiple placement changes in foster care? Content analysis on reasons for instability**

**Cross, T.P., Koh, E., Rolock, N & Eblen-Manning, J.** (2013). Why do children experience multiple placement changes in foster care? Content analysis on reasons for instability. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 7(1), 39-58.

This study examines reasons for moves in 53 child welfare cases with placement instability. Coding from case records of reasons for placement moves revealed three categories in most cases: 1) caregiver-related reasons, such as maltreatment by caregivers or changes in caregivers' lives; 2) child behavior-related reasons such as aggressive behaviors; and 3) system- or policy-related reasons, such as the need to use temporary placements or the aim of placing children with siblings. The researchers determined that children's previous instability should be considered in choosing and supporting caregivers, providing mental health resources, and considering moves to improve care.

### **Foster parent parenting characteristics that lead to increased placement stability or disruption**

**Crum, W.** (2010). Foster parent parenting characteristics that lead to increased placement stability or disruption. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 32(2), 185–190.

The purpose of this study is to identify parenting characteristics of foster parents that are likely to increase placement stability or disruption. Foster parents of public child welfare agencies were asked to complete the Parent–Child Relationship Inventory to measure parental characteristics and the Parenting Alliance Measure to determine perceived alliance between foster parents. In his analysis of placement stability and disruption, Crum found the amount of emotional and social support a parent received had a statistically significant impact on increasing foster placement

stability. Results of the multiple regression revealed a significant relationship between the predictor variables, parenting support and limit setting on placement stability. No significant relationship was found between the predictor variables on placement disruptions.

### **A translational neuroscience perspective on the importance of reducing placement instability among foster children**

**Fisher, P.A., Mannerling, A.M., Van Scoyoc, A. & Graham, A.M.** (2013). A translational neuroscience perspective on the importance of reducing placement instability among foster children. *Child Welfare, 92*(5), 9-36.

This paper reviews and synthesizes child welfare practice and policy related to placement stability among foster children. The paper examines 1) the connection between placement instability and poor outcomes; 2) sources of information that can be employed to reliably predict risk for placement instability; and 3) interventions designed to mitigate the effects of placement instability. The available empirical evidence suggests that placement instability and other family chaos is associated with disrupted development of the brain's prefrontal cortex, which is involved in executive functioning. Poor executive functioning is implicated in elevated risk for ADHD, disruptive behavior disorders, substance abuse, and other forms of disinhibitory psychopathology. This might help to explain the high rates of psychiatric medication prescriptions for foster children. Notably, however, recent research findings have shown that placement instability is both predictable and preventable and that interventions to address placement instability have the potential to mitigate neurobiological and psychiatric effects of prior adversity.

### **Children and youth in foster care: Distangling the relationship between problem behaviors and number of placements**

**Newton R.R., Litrownik, A.J. & Landsverk J.A.** (2000). Children and youth in foster care: Distangling the relationship between problem behaviors and number of placements. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 24*(10), 1363-1374.

The purpose of this research is to provide a prospective look at the relationship between change in placement and problem behaviors over a 12-month period among a cohort of foster children. The sample contained 415 youth, and was part of a larger cohort of children who entered foster care in San Diego, California and remained in placement for at least 5 months. The authors found moves in care contributed to negative internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Their study showed, for children who had originally scored in the normal range on behavior scales, the number of placements was strongly correlated with increasing behavior problems. The results suggest that volatile placement histories contribute negatively to both internalizing and externalizing behavior of foster children, and that children who experience numerous changes in placement may be at particularly high risk for these deleterious effects. Initial externalizing behaviors proved to be the strongest predictor of placement changes for the entire sample.

### Disruptions in foster care: A review and meta-analysis

**Oosterman, M., Schuengel, C., Slot, N.W., Bullens, R.A.R. & Doreleijers, T.A.H.** (2007). Disruptions in foster care: A review and meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*(1), 53–76.

This review examines risk and protective factors associated with placement breakdown across 26 studies of 20,650 children in foster families. A series of meta-analyses were performed to assess the average effect sizes across multiple studies on the same factors. Older age at placement, behavior problems, a history of residential care and previous placements showed significant small to moderate associations with placement breakdown. Unexpectedly, kinship care did not show a significant association with placement breakdown. Other potential protective factors of placement breakdown referred to the quality of foster caregiving and other foster care related aspects, which showed small to large effect sizes. However, findings were contradictory when univariate and multivariate results were compared. Results of multivariate studies suggested mediating and moderating effects of variables related to the children's background. This might suggest that more insight in the processes leading up to placement breakdown may be derived from causal models.

### The impact of placement stability on behavioral well-being for children in foster care

**Rubin, D.M., O'Reilly, A., Luan, X. & Localio, A.R.** (2007). The impact of placement stability on behavioral well-being for children in foster care. *Pediatrics, 119*(2), 336–344.

This study seeks to identify the impact of placement stability on behavioral outcomes. Placement stability over the first 18 months in out-of-home care for 729 children from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being was categorized as early stability (stable placement within 45 days), late stability (stable placement beyond 45 days), or unstable (never achieving stability). Taking into account children's initial behavioral status, the study found that placement instability had a significant negative impact on children's well-being. Early stabilizers were more likely to be young, have normal baseline behavior, have no prior history with child welfare, and have birth parents without mental health problems. After accounting for baseline attributes, stability remained an important predictor of well-being at 18 months. Unstable children were more likely to have behavior problems than children who achieved early stability across every level of risk for instability.

### Placement stability in child welfare services issues, concerns, outcomes and future directions

**The Center for Human Services.** (2008). Placement stability in child welfare services issues, concerns, outcomes and future directions. Davis, CA: The Center for Human Services UC Davis, Extension, University of California. Retrieved from <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/res/pdf/PlacementStability.pdf>

This literature review provides a summary of current knowledge and empirical research on factors that affect placement stability for children in the child welfare system. The review highlights how important it is to minimize the number of changes children experience. It identified the key components for improving practices for increasing the probability for placement stability, which include: 1) strong tracking and case planning to ensure that —foster drift□ is avoided to achieve permanence 2) early intervention 3) increasing the availability and use of placement choice; and 4) increasing multi-agency support.

## FOSTER PARENT INTERVENTIONS/MODELS

*Several foster parent interventions and models have emerged as promising approaches to improve the fostering experience, provide more support and training to foster parents, and to increase foster parent recruitment and retention to lead to better child outcomes. Research has been conducted on interventions such as Parenting Plus, Individual Social Skills Training and the KEEP Program (Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained). Research has indicated positive impacts from some of these programs. The implementation of these interventions can provide insight into the barriers and opportunities to help reshape current foster care parenting models.*

### Dimensions of high quality foster care: Parenting Plus

**Berrick, J.D. & Skivenes, M.** (2012). Dimensions of high quality foster care: Parenting Plus. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(9), 1956-1965.

This study includes an international sample of U.S. (n = 87) and Norwegian (n = 54) foster parents selected for providing high quality care to children. The study is designed to identify whether effective caregiving mirrors strong parenting among typical parents or whether a set of additional skills is required to parent foster children responsively. Some of the principle features of quality caregiving for children are described particularly in the domains of family integration, relationships with biological parents, and support for children's special needs. Findings from the study have implications for foster parent recruitment, training, and support.

### Implementation and evaluation of linked parenting models in a large urban child welfare system

**Chamberlain P., Feldman S.W., Wulczyn F., Saldana L. & Forgatch M.** (2016). Implementation and evaluation of linked parenting models in a large urban child welfare system. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 53*, 27-39.

In this paper, the implementation and evaluation of a policy-driven large system-initiated reform is described. Over 250 caseworkers and supervisors were trained and supported to implement two evidence-based parent focused interventions in five private agencies serving over 2,000 children and families. A third intervention was implemented to train the social work workforce to use evidence-based principles in everyday interactions with caregivers (including foster, relative, adoptive, and biological parents). In this paper, the authors describe the policy context and the targeted outcomes of the reform. Training and ongoing consultation strategies used are described as are some of the barriers and opportunities that arose during the implementation. The reform effort was evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative methods; the evaluation design, research questions and preliminary results are provided.

### **A randomized effectiveness trial of individual child social skills training: six-month follow-up**

**Kjøbli, J. & Ogden, T.** (2014). A randomized effectiveness trial of individual child social skills training: six-month follow-up. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, 8*(1).

This study examines the effectiveness of Individual Social Skills Training (ISST) immediately and 6 months after the termination of the intervention. Individual Social Skills Training (ISST) is a short term, individually delivered intervention (8-10 sessions) that promotes social skills in children with emerging or existing conduct problems. These results suggest that compared to the control group, ISST had limited effects in ameliorating child problem behavior. These data suggest that it is not sufficient to provide ISST when aiming to reduce conduct problems in children.

### **Effects of a foster parent training intervention on placement changes of children in foster care**

**Price, J.M., Chamberlain, P., Landsverk, J., Reid, J., Leve, L. & Laurent, H.** (2008). Effects of a foster parent training intervention on placement changes of children in foster care. *Child Maltreatment, 13*(1), 64-75.

This study examines the impact of a foster parent training and support intervention (KEEP) on placement changes and to determine whether the intervention mitigates placement disruption risks associated with children's placement histories. The sample consisted of 700 families with children between ages 5 and 12 years, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Families were randomly assigned to the intervention or control condition. The number of prior placements was predictive of negative exits from current foster placements. The intervention increased chances of positive exit (e.g., parent/child reunification) and mitigated the negative risk-enhancing effect of a history of multiple placements.

### **Effects of the KEEP foster parent intervention on child and sibling behavior problems and parental stress during a randomized implementation trial**

**Price, J.M., Roesch, S., Walsh, N.E. & Landsverk, J.** (2015). Effects of the KEEP foster parent intervention on child and sibling behavior problems and parental stress during a randomized implementation trial. *Prevention Science, 16*(5), 685-695.

The primary goals of this investigation were to (a) examine the effectiveness of the KEEP intervention in reducing child behavior problems, as delivered by a community agency; (b) determine if the effects of the KEEP intervention generalize to more than one child in the same home; and (c) examine the effectiveness of the KEEP intervention in reducing parental stress associated with child behavior problems. The data from 335 foster and kinship families with children between the ages of 5 and 12 years were analyzed to address these objectives. Families were randomly assigned to the intervention or control condition. The results indicated that the KEEP intervention was effective in reducing child behavior problems when delivered by a community agency. These results expanded prior research on the KEEP intervention, revealing that the intervention was effective in reducing the behavior problems of more than one child in the same household and in reducing parental stress levels associated with the behavioral issues of the focal child.