



Support and Retention Workgroup

July 10, 2014. 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

DFS Central Clark Room

Present

Heather Brockway (SAFY), Mike Pochowski (Foster Parent), Karlene Ulibarri (Bountiful Family Services), Angelic Thomas (Foster Parent), Towanda Brooks (Foster Parent), Mia Green (Pathways of Nevada), Dianne Brooks (Foster Parent), Andre Green (Pathways of Nevada)

DFS Staff Members- Lani Aiken, Denise Parker, Shannon Rooney, Audrey Rostenstein, Lauren Soskin

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Caregiver Survey
 - a. Caregiver Survey Submissions
 - b. Caregiver Survey Next Steps
 - c. Survey Results Timeline
 - d. Caregiver Survey Result Distribution
3. Foster Parent Champion Program
 - a. New Champions
 - b. Introduction of Program
 - c. Available Services

Minutes

4. Welcome and Introductions
5. Caregiver Survey
 - a. Caregiver Survey Submissions



- i. Response to the caregiver survey was great.
 1. Our goal of 125 was met in a little over a week.
 2. By the end of June, 276 surveys were fully complete and over 350 people had completed half of the survey (thus giving us some usable data).
- b. Caregiver Survey Data Analysis
 - i. Shannon spoke with Child Trends and gave them the data that we have and they were very pleased with it. Shannon was able to look at some of the raw results, and notes that most of the feedback was positive yet the data includes a good amount of teachable information as well.
 - ii. Child Trends discussed with Shannon the different ways that we can look at the data.
 1. We will be able to look specifically at the input collected from different demographic groups (i.e. those who have been with The Department of Family Services (DFS) for over 5 years).
 2. We will be able to compare the feedback we get from different groups (i.e. those who took PS-MAPP vs. Pride, agency homes vs. DFS homes).
 3. On many questions, respondents were also given an “other” option to check and write in their own answers.
 - a. We can look at these options and categorize anything that comes up consistently.
 4. We also received useful information for the Foster Parent Champion (FPC) program through the questions that asked caregivers what areas they could use extra help and services in.



- a. This feedback can help direct the development of the FPC program and will allow us to target the requested areas.
- c. The date for the caregiver survey has been extended to July 31st.
 - i. This was decided in response to feedback from a few people that said they had not yet had the opportunity to fill out the survey and/or had problems with the survey link.
 1. Based on our data analysis timeline, there is no reason to not include surveys submitted in July. Moving the cutoff date back made sense.
 2. Families are concerned that their voices will not be heard. When we hear this concern, we can encourage caregivers to take advantage of the extension and fill out the survey.
 - ii. An announcement, written by Lani, went out in the Caregiver Courier informing caregivers that they can complete it this month.
 - iii. Next month, we will send out an announcement to update caregivers on the next steps and timeline for the survey.
- d. It was noted, to inform those who have joined the group since the survey was started, that the survey was generated in response to the recognition that the group's discussions of how to best support foster parents consisted of a good deal of guessing. The survey was created in order to eliminate this guessing and target needs that foster parents have actually identified.
 - i. We want this group and this process to be open to foster parents.
 1. This is the only way we can move forward with collaborative effort as a whole.



2. It is important to give feedback, even if that feedback is not positive, so that we can move forward and do what's best for the children.
 - ii. It was brought up in the Communication workgroup that, depending on the survey results, some things should be dispersed to different workgroups.
 1. Workgroups will be clearly informed of specific needs identified by the survey that pertain to their area and tasked with addressing these specific issues.
 - iii. The survey started out small and has turned into a big thing that can hopefully be helpful across systems.
- e. Caregiver Survey Next Steps
- i. Analysis of results (with Child Trends)
 - ii. Reviewing results as a group
 - iii. Passing the results up to management
 - iv. Making decisions about what method to use to distribute the information
 1. Information distribution will most likely consist of an initial Town Hall meeting/community forum, followed by an article in the Caregiver Courier.
- f. Survey Results Timeline
- i. The raw data will be collected through July.
 - ii. Results will likely be passed up to management sometime in August.
 - iii. The Town Hall meeting to disseminate information would likely be early in the fall (September or October).
 1. It is probably best to do a Town Hall meeting as a first step in order to videotape the meeting and upload it to the QPI website.



2. It is important to use the information to facilitate open discussions, instead of simply “distributing” it without feedback (i.e. Caregiver Courier).
3. When disseminating the information, we can show both the successes (things that caregivers rated as positive experiences) and the areas that need improvement. We can address both specific improvements that we intend to move forward with as well as things that we recognize need improvement but are unable to address at the moment.
 - a. We can ask for suggestions for ways to address the areas of improvement as well, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in order to find solutions.

g. Relative survey

- i. One common piece of feedback we received was that we need to do a survey for relatives. The initial plan was to do one comprehensive survey, but it became too long and complex, and it was decided that the relative survey would be separate.
 1. This relative survey will need to be in the not-too-distant future.
 2. It is important to make sure we are working with all of our caregivers, not just our licensed ones.
 3. This survey will have some overlap, but will consist of a different set of questions that are designed to better address relatives’ concerns.

6. Training

- a. The number of foster homes we have was brought up, and the barriers to licensure (for both relative & non-relative homes).



- i. Denise has been looking at and tracking why we are not getting more foster parents, and notes that the length of time it takes to get licensed is a problem.
- ii. The QPI Training group is addressing this.
 1. They are currently working on “unpacking” some of the information and drilling down what the delays are.
 2. Some delays trace back to individual families not following through on steps.
 3. The QPI Training group is focusing on length of training as a barrier to becoming licensed and taking steps to mitigate this problem. These issues need to be address as well.
 - a. This group is working on getting together a focus group with Carol Schaffer from QPI to address this issue.
 - b. It was noted that some families who have maintained their motivation and stayed on top of everything were able to get licensed almost immediately following the training, but that this is extremely variable and the lengthy delays for a large number of families need to be addresses.
 4. It was noted that in the survey around 80% of respondents were satisfied with the training, and that those who took PS-MAPP reported a higher level of satisfaction than those who took Pride.
 - a. Side-by-side, PS-MAPP and Pride are very similar trainings, however, at the same time as DFS switched to PS-MAPP, we also changed to the process of having one licensing worker that supports a family through the training and



licensure process. This change likely played a role in the increase in foster parent satisfaction.

- b. Licensing workers do a good job recognizing that different families have different needs, and trying to modify the interaction and support to meet these needs. There could probably be a better transition and better support after families are no longer working with their licensing worker.
 - c. It would be very hard to provide the same level of support continued after the licensing process.
 - d. In other states, licensing workers are still expected to advocate for families after they have completed the licensing process.
 - e. Even though providing support to families is expensive, training new families and caring for children at Child Haven are also expensive, and supporting families can help prevent these expenses.
5. There were fewer positive responses about renewal licensure, etc.
 6. These observations are based off Shannon's quick scan of the data.
 7. QPI is supposed to be a "paradigm shift for the entire agency," and this is one of those areas where we need to find a way to refocus and make a commitment to being a team.
 - a. Once foster parents move past the licensing portion, they may feel ignored and that they are not included as a partner.



- i. It will take time to fix everything that needs to come together (courts, DFS, caregivers, etc.).

7. Foster Parent Champion Program

a. New Champions

- i. We have the opportunity to hire new Foster Parent Champions (FPCs).
 - 1. These will be part time positions.
 - 2. The individuals hired will be current, quality foster parents.
 - 3. The FPCs will be DFS employees, but will be advocates for all caregivers.
- ii. The FPC line will be answered Monday-Friday from 9AM to 7PM.
- iii. FPCs will support caregivers as needed:
 - 1. Will make support calls to new placements
 - 2. Will answer phone and email inquiries (Caseworkers can also refer people to the program.)
 - 3. Can go to CFTs with caregivers to help advocate for them
 - 4. Can help with registration for WIC, Urban League, other types of resources
 - 5. Available to all DFS families (licensed, unlicensed, relative/fictive kin)
 - a. Will not be available to agency homes, as agencies have their own rules and their own support system
- iv. This program previous had regular DFS Family Support Workers, but it was decided that it would be a better system to have current licensed caregivers as the FPCs.
 - 1. Foster Parents will be a better fit for this position and provide top quality support.



- v. An email has been sent to all caregivers that we had email addresses for to recruit for this position.
 - 1. Next time FPC positions are opened they will be advertised in the Caregiver Courier as well.
 - 2. They will also be sent through licensing workers and to Agency directors.
 - a. Agency foster parents are interviewing and are eligible for the position as well, and would just need to become more familiar with DFS practices if hired.
- vi. The program staff is in the process of creating an extensive resource bank for FPCs to access and share with parents.
- vii. Things FPCs do:
 - 1. FPCs have gone to CFTs and court to support caregivers. An example is that we are currently working with a grandma and her licensing worker on getting the resources she needs (Urban League, WIC, setting up a pool fence) and helping her coordinate everyone together so she gets everything she needs.
 - a. Initially the Grandma was panicky, and the FPC program was able to assist.
 - 2. The program is also currently working with another foster parent who has a child who has been in the hospital for several weeks and is very tired from being at the hospital 24/7. The FPC program has helped her to get help by arranging to have volunteers sit with the child in the hospital so that she can be home with her other children and manage all of her other daily family needs.



- viii. The program Mission is to “Make Caregivers Lives Easier” in any way possible.
- ix. When the FPC staff feels unable to provide the needed support, the issues can escalate to Shannon (FPC Supervisor) and then Michael Knight (AD) if needed - FPCs and Shannon will work hard to make sure it does not escalate to this level.
- x. Shannon is passionate about this program and will bring in a passionate staff to help our caregivers
- xi. The survey will help inform this process as we move forward.

8. Grievance Policy

- a. Denise has met with Shauna and Karlene, and they have determined that DFS does not have a well-publicized grievance policy; even when searching internal policies, there is not a “grievance/complaint/concern” policy.
- b. Denise has done some research on grievance policies in other states and has put together an outline.
 - i. It seems that in most jurisdictions the grievance policies mimic each other, and that Clark County can use these and will need to “fill in the blanks” to write our own grievance policy.
- c. Our Ombudsman, Tisa Evans, is available through the Clark County Website, and can address case-specific issues. When she receives a complaint she will conduct an investigation.
- d. In regards to general complains the Children’s Alliance also takes care of some issues.
- e. The department needs to formalize a policy so that families know who they can talk to regarding issues they may have, and that if the issue doesn’t get resolved, they need to have a place to go.



- f. One thing to help alleviate this issue would be caseworkers having a consistent outgoing message to families. When a family calls a caseworker, they should get the supervisor's name and number to contact if they can't get in touch with the caseworker.
 - i. Caseworkers have a fear of distributing their supervisor's number, and worry that if the supervisor gets contacted that means they are in trouble. It needs to be clearly laid out so that families can go up the chain of command to get help, and that simply talking to a supervisor doesn't necessarily mean that anyone is in trouble.
 - 1. This should be written as a policy with the department's stamp of approval, and handed out in the caregiver handbook.
- g. It needs to be emphasized in the training that it is OK for caregivers to go to caseworker's supervisor and should feel safe doing so without retaliation.
- h. Denise has talked to Lauren Wagner about how to cover this in training.
 - i. How do we know that going up the chain of command doesn't mean that worker is necessary in trouble?
- i. Some of the things that Karlene was looking at showed different steps that can be taken if things aren't resolved after each step. If the resolution is not to the satisfaction of the foster parent, there should be somewhere where an independent review committee makes recommendations.
 - i. This committee should be similar to an ombudsman, but ideally would be not affiliated with DFS, and able to handle any type of complaint.
- j. Karlene is waiting on New Mexico to send their policy, and Denise has already received Florida's.



- k. A team to handle grievances should be created, comprising of DFS representation, agency representation, and representation from the Children's Alliance. This team could look at the issues together.
 - i. Denise's hope is that we wouldn't ever need to get to this group, and that we can create a system where grievances can be handled through interaction between the licensing worker, the FPCs, etc.
 - l. The more we educate both our workers and foster families, and weed out people who are not interested in QPI, we may no longer have need for this type of board.
 - i. Hopefully this is true, however, for the time being, it would probably be a good idea to continue to work towards the creation of some sort of grievance policy.
 - m. Has DFS started working with the judicial system for improvement?
 - i. Yes, we have been working with District Attorneys (DAs) on information, transition and confidentiality.
 - 1. Ex: With regards to transitions, making sure that the child is able to say goodbye.
 - ii. Some of the judicial system is already buying in to this. For example, Judge Frank S. is connected with every QPI update. When he met Denise, he already knew who she was.
9. Anything else?
- a. Do we know what percentage of families that we are losing and what the reasons for this loss are?
 - i. Some of the foster parents in attendance brought up that one of the biggest issues that angered a number of foster parents was the issue with the pictures.



1. A number of families feel that, in regards to this situation, they should not have to pay for what a small number of families did.
 2. Many families were ready to give up their license over this issue.
 3. Some caseworkers' responses and lack of following up contributed to this problem.
 4. Foster parents felt that when they asked questions about the incident that lead to this, responses were vague.
 5. Foster parents have particularly expressed concerns about taking pictures of their biological children's rooms, as they have no control over where these pictures go and worry about potential safety issues.
 6. Caseworkers need to be respectful when taking pictures; they can inform parents that these pictures need to be taken, but they should give parents the opportunity to put away personal things before taking the pictures.
 7. Foster parents want to feel like members of the team, and the picture taking becomes more upsetting when the caseworkers taking the pictures aren't treating the parents like team members.
- ii. Denise noted that the picture issue has been brought up at least once in every group's meetings at some point. Nevada is the only state that didn't take pictures prior to this incident, and nationwide this is the norm due to a historical list of incidents such as child injury, etc.
 - iii. DFS's error was to not clearly communicating WHY the pictures need to be taken.



- iv. Individual case workers need to work with and speak with foster parents in a way where they do not feel violated, and instead makes them feel respected.
 - 1. Pictures do need to be taken, but this can be done in a respectful way that accomplishes what needs to be accomplished.
- v. Are foster parents actually closing their licenses?
 - 1. The attrition rate for 2014, as of March 15th, was 23 homes. By June 30th, it had leveled off and we are currently about even for 2014.
 - 2. About 20 homes close per month.
 - 3. An exit survey has been designed to give to homes that are closing.
 - a. Data from this survey will hopefully help us address some of the reasons for closure and help us figure out why we are losing these homes.
 - b. Some homes that are not quality homes do need to close, and these homes will not be surveyed.
 - c. This survey will ask those who voluntarily close their homes or give up their licenses questions about what could have influenced their decision and potentially led to them not closing.
 - d. This information will be analyzed, and hopefully DFS will be able to react in a way that helps us keep more homes open in the future.
 - 4. Workgroups need to listen to and really hear the input that foster parents bring in and use the information to improve.



- vi. A foster parent shared the experience that recertification was different than the initial licensure, and that in her most recent experience the worker went through everything, including soaps, toothpastes, etc.
 1. The worker told her that a number of products she owned contained ingredients that were not allowed and that she would need to switch.
 2. The worker informed her that the rules were changing and becoming stricter.
 3. It is important to Licensing to be consistent. It sounds like this is a worker who had an extreme interpretation of the rules.
 - a. Workers need to be on the same page and consistent.
 4. It is important that when information changes, it is disseminated in a public way, such as a town hall meeting, so that foster parents don't feel violated and upset when things happen.
 - a. Foster parents feel like they are not informed about policy changes.
 - b. Something should not be introduced via case manager without prior information dissemination.
 5. Foster parents are sometimes sent a checklist prior to relicensing, but prior to this incident one was not received.
 - a. Licensing needs to make sure there is a clear guideline and that workers understand it.
- b. Current concerns: Consistency, information-sharing, working as a team in the best interest of the child.
- c. In order to best implement new policy, foster parent feedback should be sought regularly.